



Photo 7.10: View points exist on both Buena Vista and Radio Hills. This one on Buena Vista Hill is currently closed to vehicular traffic. Returning auto access and improving pedestrian paths to the Point may help to reclaim the area for Park use.



Photo 7.11: This undeveloped piece of property along Broadway could become the entrance to a pedestrian link up the ravine to the top of Radio Hill (seen in the background). After the development of Central City North has substantially increased commercial and residential densities in the area, this improvement might be a very reasonable way to encourage better use of Elysian Park in an increasingly urban environment.

DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES INSIDE AND OUTSIDE ELYSIAN PARK

Elysian Park represents an opportunity for mixing several planning disciplines into one effort to ensure that the Park will continue to serve its dual role as an historic and recreation resource. Such an effort is made all the more timely by the existence of several proposals for urban real estate and infrastructure development in and around the Park.

Developed from a four day planning charette held in December 1989, the City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning has proposed *A Plan for City North* as an illustrative guide to development for the areas better known as Chinatown, El Pueblo, The River and Elysian Park. Current uses in the area include industrial, manufacturing, commercial retail and government functions. The new plan proposes changes to emphasized land uses, including large amounts of residential and mixed-use development. A large amount of land is also proposed to be zoned as open space, creating a new riverside park district with view corridors towards Elysian Park. Currently, the plan is only advisory in nature.

The potential impacts of the proposed plan on Elysian Park are both positive and negative. Increased traffic levels around and through the park may negatively impact the park, while the introduction of a new open space/park link to the Los Angeles River may increase awareness, understanding and use of both the Park and the River. As proposed, this open space link between Elysian Park, Broadway and the Los Angeles River would align almost directly with Radio Hill, the most under-utilized area of Elysian Park. A piece of undeveloped street front property exists along Broadway, just below Radio Hill, that might make an appropriate new pedestrian entrance/link to the Park [Photo 7.11]. As the vast majority of Radio Hill is surrounded by occupied private properties, this opening may provide one of the only chances to improve access to and use of this Park area. While current uses and density surrounding this proposed link are not yet intense enough to justify such an improvement, in the wake of the amount of development proposed by Central City North, the proposal may be viewed as a reasonable public improvement.

Also along Broadway, the Plan proposes to increase commercial and residential development and to include a light rail corridor along the street to allow denser urban uses than currently experienced. This development may provide a much needed visual and pedestrian link between Chinatown and the historic Fremont Gate entrance to Elysian Park. A potential negative impact might arise from a proposed pedestrian overpass, connecting the light rail line across Broadway to the Fremont Gate entrance to the Park. Other ideas presented in the plan may transverse park lands, removing them from public use. These proposals include an aerial tramway from Chinatown to Dodger Stadium, and the alignment of the Pasadena light rail.

Inside of Elysian Park, several development plans exist that may impact the recreational uses of the Park. The Police Academy [Photo 7.12] is in the planning stages of a proposal to expand their facilities by three times their current size. While it is uncertain whether or not they will remain in Elysian Park, Police Department representatives have stated their preference for remaining at the current site. Such a large scale redevelopment of this non-park use will have a large impact upon transportation in the Park, as well as to the historic look and feel of the area around the Police Academy. Development of a new Police Academy facility is discussed in depth in Chapter 4.

Other potential impacts to the Park arise from proposals to re-route both Stadium Way south of Scott Road, and to add lanes to the southbound Pasadena Freeway. The Stadium Way re-routing may threaten the existence of the Avenue of the Palms, which is a Los Angeles City

of the park's 125 year history. These areas of research included topography, geology, soils, hydrology, drainage, utilities, circulation, vegetation, wildlife, architecture, uses, management, and security. Because each category was considered over the Park's entire history, there was no need for an historic preservation element - in essence, the document integrated historic preservation into its every fiber. The various areas of research were then considered based on how each might impact the other. For example, excessive pedestrian circulation in an area of the Park might lead to the forging of new trails, destroying vegetation, promoting erosion and effecting drainage in the park. Certain relations were observed, and park-wide problems were identified. The park was then divided into precincts, based on watersheds, viewsheds and manmade elements, such as streets. Finally, potential improvements were ranked using a weighted point scale, and with an recognition of certain political and financial realities.

Throughout the process of developing the plan for Central Park, a series of six principles for managing and restoring the park were developed.⁹ These included:

1. Protection and Preservation: To maintain its use as a park, Central Park supporters and managers must not accept intrusions by other interests.
2. Historic Character: As a living resource, the Park will change over time, both in content and composition. The intentions of historic plans are more important to follow than a slavish restoration of the original setting.
3. Public Safety and Enjoyment: A park must not only be safe, it must appear safe, and be well maintained to promote a sense of law and order in the park. A constant flow of information should let the public know about services and activities - and that their park is alive and well. Increasing the public's interest in, respect for and enjoyment of a park will help make it safer.
4. Maintaining Cleanliness and Structural Soundness: A dirty, littered park encourages careless and inconsiderate behavior on the part of its visitors. Good routine maintenance and consistent public education builds respect for the park.
5. Horticultural Beauty and Ecological Health: For most parks, the quality of "parkness" lies in the appearance of their trees, turf and water. Good forestry and horticultural practices are essential to ensure a park's continued beauty and health.
6. Functional and Structural Integrity: Piecemeal approaches to park improvements can be more detrimental than beneficial, and can result in fragmentation of the park, as certain areas are improved and other areas left for dead. A central management team should be in charge of all planning for the park.

Unfortunately, no plan exists for Elysian Park that is as detailed as the one for New York City's Central Park. However, less detailed plans have been made for Elysian Park, through the Park's 1971 Master Plan, and more recently, through proposals for the development of an expanded Police Academy and Central City North.

4. There must be some assurance that the municipality has the expertise to carry on successfully with the UCP program.

UCP is a true state and local partnership, as all state funding for the program must be heavily leveraged at the local level (local matches: 90% for capital programs; 75% for program start-ups; 50% for planning). Each district works to develop its own Master Plan within the community, but then all Master Plans are revised annually by a group representing each of the cities participating in the UCP program. If a program similar to UCP were developed in California, Elysian Park and the nearby El Pueblo State Historic Park would be natural candidates for a cultural park based on the Spanish founding of the Los Angeles pueblo.

In Los Angeles, Historic Preservation Overlay Zones (HPOZ) serve some of the same functions as New York's UCP program. While HPOZs provide no on-going access to funding for improvements to areas, they do allow a community to take control of a historic neighborhood and regulate the amount and types of development that occur. For each HPOZ created, a community run design review board exists to review all proposed development inside the historic district. The ordinance behind the HPOZ gives the community review board the power to bring violators to court, fine them for infractions, and on rare occasions, even require the unapproved improvement to be demolished.⁴ Created as a planning tool in 1983, the first HPOZ was declared in the community of Angelino Heights, and may be a beneficial regulatory tool for use in certain historic areas of Elysian Park.

A natural progression from the formation of historic districts or HPOZs is the drafting of historic resource/district design guidelines. In addition to defining historic areas, these guidelines present more in-depth analysis of architectural styles in the larger community, and sometimes consider environmental concerns, such as view corridors. Excellent examples of such design guidelines can be found in San Francisco⁵, Seattle⁶ and Cincinnati.⁷ Because they integrate disciplines from fields of historic resource planning, physical planning, and urban design, these types of documents contain methodologies that are perhaps closest to the type of work that is required to help understand existing problems in the under-utilized areas of Elysian Park. The only barrier to applying their approach to Elysian Park lies in the fact that these types of planning documents are not as commonly developed for non-built or park environments, and that they often overlook user groups (an important element of park planning).

One of the most comprehensive examples of park planning that incorporates many elements of physical planning, historic resource planning and user analysis is Rebuilding Central Park: A Management & Restoration Plan. Management and Restoration Plans for Large Urban Parks; Completed in 1985, the report deals with all areas of New York's Central Park, discussing both general and specific problems and long-range solutions. Interestingly, the authors of the report found that many large urban parks share similar problems, recognizing that "...of great importance, too, is the methodology devised for dealing logically and rationally with the complex set of factors acting upon Central Park and other large urban parks."⁸ In fact, in the way that they have been cut-off from everyday use and neglected through non-routine maintenance, sections of Central Park are quite similar to areas of eastern Elysian Park. Because of the quality of the Central Park report, and the similarities between the problems faced by both parks, some detail should be given to the methodology presented in Rebuilding Central Park.

The planning process for the restoration and improvement of New York's Central Park was divided into three stages: 1) survey and analysis; 2) synthesis and interpretation; and 3) planning and implementation. First, major aspects of the park were considered over the length

elements of both. In each, elements of traditional historic resource or park planning have been integrated with social user analysis or physical planning techniques.

These examples come from government programs, academic exercises or even popular journalism. An article in *Chicago* magazine about Chicago's Historic South Side Industrial District is a good example of how a popular magazine can educate an audience regarding an under-utilized historic district.² The article discussed the area's historic industrial uses, its wealth of ethnic groups and neighborhoods, and how social and economic forces had changed the area over time, threatening the stability of its historic manufacturing uses. The intrinsic relationship between industrial and residential areas helped to develop a strong sense of specialized neighborhoods within the larger community.

These relationships form very real boundaries for the residents. For example, changes in historic racial boundaries between residential neighborhoods were considered as tangible as borders between alternate industrial uses. One long time resident of the South Side transcended the social barrier of race into a strong physical image, calling the color lines "walls." The physical and social image of the community are important pieces of information to communicate, and the *Chicago* article includes an illustrated tour map of the community to help outsiders develop a public image or "mental map" of the area. While this approach is not directly applicable to Elysian Park, a similar popular study of the Park could be done that would include discussions of how various social and physical changes have occurred in the Park over time, and could make these changes graphically evident through an interpretive map. In the same way that industrial uses influenced residential communities on Chicago's South Side, the potential study could consider how the surrounding communities have related to Elysian Park as a neighborhood resource.

A similar approach to bridging the gap between social history and physical development exists in the Power of Place's tour of Los Angeles.³ In that example, the expansive history of Los Angeles' development was focused through the economic contributions of early women and minorities in the City. While the tour does not limit itself to a single community or group, it does define a historic theme or context for Downtown Los Angeles. Also, by including histories of many of the groups that helped create Los Angeles, the tour appeals to a greater variety of people. This work could provide a local case study for an possible social history project that might be conducted regarding Elysian Park.

The previous two examples applied social and economic history at the academic level, through analysis, writing and publications. The State of New York's Urban Cultural Parks program takes such histories one step further by developing urban cultural and historical parks and districts from historic areas that are otherwise difficult to interpret or commemorate. The program provides funding not only for improvements to historic resources and visitors centers, but also for festivals, programming, planning and related capital projects, such as sensitively planned in-fill development in the districts. The thirteen cities participating in the program have developed historical district themes ranging from women's reform movements to business & capital to transportation. The criteria for being chosen were based on four points:

1. District must be in urban settlement area;
2. District must be historically significant both at the local and state level;
3. Development of district must produce opportunities for educational benefit;

time than an oversight on the planner's part. In the past, the historic preservation and interpretation of large physical sites or resources in Los Angeles were not planned contextually using traditional physical planning techniques. Instead, existing historic preservation techniques and organizations developed to help preserve small sites, usually single buildings, and were rarely powerful enough or sufficiently experienced to plan for large expanses of the "non-built" or natural environment. Such open space preservation has usually been left to land trusts or conservancies, such as the Santa Monica Mountain Conservancy, that serve as the custodian of a valuable public resource. Such a concept of conservatorship has not yet been transferred to historic preservation advocacy groups in Los Angeles, except in those rare cases when the advocacy group owns or manages the controlling interest in a property. While the concept of true conservancies has yet to be adopted, historic preservationists, like land trust advocates, have increasingly being forced to consider larger and larger physical areas and contexts for preservation, both in built and non-built environments.

Large-Scale Historic Resources Planning

At such a large scale, the use of site specific historic resource planning techniques begins to falter, and the need for a confluence of traditional physical and social planning and historic resource planning is required. Perhaps the first examples of such a technical integration can be seen in the designation of large downtown Los Angeles historic districts in the 1970s and 1980s. The Broadway Theater District nomination to the National Register of Historic Places is a good example. While it did not include an element regarding social uses, the nomination did consider the historic use of the buildings as theaters. In addition, the National Registry considered the importance of each building in the district and how even an historically insignificant building might change the quality of the district. Therefore, an understanding was required of not only how the historic buildings related to each other, but how other non-historic buildings and gaps (vacant sites) in the urban fabric might affect the district. By introducing the interactions between individual historic resources and the larger physical context, a more comprehensive form of historic resource planning was applied.

Recently, examples of such confluence of historic preservation planning and large-scale physical planning issues have become more common in Los Angeles. The idea of neighborhood preservation, in which the basic quality of an area, historic or not, is sought to be maintained, is a good example of how preservation issues have expanded past the single site and into the community. The proposed redevelopment of the historic Ambassador Hotel is another example of how preservation advocates have broadened their view past the historic structure, entering areas of physical planning and large scale mixed-use development and design, such as sensitive in-fill construction. At the Ambassador, preservationists have specifically encouraged potential developers of the property to consider alternatives to demolition, including adaptive re-use of the hotel with new construction on other areas of the property that is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. El Pueblo Historic Park is another example in which physical redevelopment of an historic district is being proposed to help increase public use and enjoyment of the district, while also helping to improve the historic interpretation of the area's multi-cultural background.

For Elysian Park, such an integrated and contextual planning approach is crucial. Fortunately, many parks and historic districts across the country have dealt with similar situations in the past. The following examples show how a few cities have tried to deal with the problems of under-utilization, poor access and general public uncertainty about the existence of historic or recreational areas. Some approaches are little more than marketing, while some provide valuable educational benefits. These two extremes need not be mutually exclusive, of course, and supporters and managers of Elysian Park may wish to consider programs that contain

More subtle, but just as detrimental to the long-term use and health of Elysian Park, are park areas that have been removed from everyday use not because of intrusive or non-conforming uses, but simply because of poor physical access or lack of knowledge of their existence. Some areas were discussed in the analysis of existing conditions in the eastern areas of Elysian Park presented above. In a park that is constantly fending off proposals for non-park facilities on parkland, these "no-man's lands" represent a continuing threat to the continued success of maximizing enjoyable recreational uses on Park property. Areas such as Radio Hill, Buena Vista Point and the Victory Memorial Grove are fringe areas that, in part due to the existence of non-conforming uses and their physical separation from the main part of the Park, have developed into "no-man's lands." Fortunately, these "no-man's lands" are not yet lost and are still potentially useable as high quality park areas. The development of improved recreational uses, user access and visual connectedness to the rest of the Park may be the first step in an effort to stabilize these "no-man's lands" and begin to associate them with park users' "mental images" of what is Elysian Park. Today these areas represent under-utilization of Elysian Park - lost recreation possibilities in a City that desperately needs parks and open space. Unless the fundamental reasons for this under-utilization are discovered, and plans made to encourage the reclamation of these areas for recreational use, this Park acreage may be permanently lost from public use.

Any further losses of Elysian Park land would be disastrous not only for the recreational potential of the Park, but also for its considerable historic significance to the City. Simply the fact that Elysian Park's 585 acres represent the last major undeveloped parcel of the original Spanish land grant that created Los Angeles, makes the Park historically significant. Many specific sites within Elysian Park have also played important roles in Los Angeles development throughout the decades. From the earliest Spanish era there is the 1769 campsite of Don Gaspar de Portola, the first non-Indian visitor to the Los Angeles area. The Park also figured in the development of Los Angeles' early water system, with Buena Vista valley serving as the location for the City's third drinking water reservoir (1868). Shortly after Elysian Park was founded in 1886, it became the location of the first botanical gardens in Southern California (1893). More recently, the Park was the site of the country's first modern freeway (1949), an improvement that would have ramifications far past its alignment through Elysian Park. Indeed, in addition to its recreational mission, Elysian Park serves as an important physical resource in the historic context of Los Angeles growth and development.

DISCUSSION OF PRECEDENTS

Elysian Park Master Plan

As both a recreational and historical resource, Elysian Park faces special challenges when planning for its future. If the Park is to build upon its historic character and provide increased recreational opportunities for current and future users, new large-scale and long-range planning techniques must be used. An Elysian Park Master Plan was developed in 1971 to help with such concerns, analyzing Park facilities, wildlife, users and recreational uses, to document existing conditions and propose improvements. Unfortunately, the Plan has only been implemented in a limited manner. The Plan was produced by a landscape architecture firm, and may have unduly emphasized botanical issues and traditional park facilities development. In addition, the Park was not sufficiently considered as an historic resource, therefore the Plan contained little in the way of recommendations to improve the historic interpretation of the Park.

The lack of detail given to these physical development and historic preservation issues in the 1971 Master Plan is more a testament to the planning priorities and techniques in vogue at the

Existing vegetation obscures views and makes it difficult to maintain one's bearings in relation to developed areas. Again, in some situations, being "lost" in a rural park setting could be a charming relief to the everyday order of the city, but when the experience borders on becoming truly lost, the charm is soon gone.

An unrecognized contributor to what makes the area feel removed in time and place is the Pasadena Freeway. While a noxious use in the way it isolates the eastern Park from the main areas, it adds motion, activity and visual interest to many of the views from the Park, and can serve as a wonderful counterpoint to the passive activities of the Park. In its original incarnation as the extension of Figueroa Street, the right of way (what is now the northbound lanes) needled through the Park, peaking out from tunnels and speeding along in the pastoral landscape. By using tunnels instead of cutting away at the landscape, the original Figueroa Street right of way was rather unobtrusive, and allowed for the maintenance of direct physical connections between all areas of the Park. The design of the 1930 roadway is also quite handsome in its tunnel fascia and detailed retaining walls, and when viewed from certain points in the Park, can be a positive contributing element to the urban/rural landscape. The juxtaposition of the outside urban context, both through views of the downtown skyline and the hub-bub of the freeway, can serve as a romantic reminder of the surrounding city.¹

PROTECTING ELYSIAN PARK FROM FUTURE INTRUSIONS

The Pasadena Freeway is usually considered a detrimental intrusion to Elysian Park, and so the positive interpretation of how it might become a benefit may not be shared by many people. However, it is clear from a study of Elysian Park, as well as other urban parks, that not all non-park uses or intrusions are necessarily harmful to valuable urban recreational open spaces. Certainly, New York's famous Central Park and its mission of providing an idyllic, rural surrounding for passive recreation has weathered the introduction of major built resources, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, a municipal reservoir and many other active recreation facilities (baseball diamonds, skating rinks, tennis courts). Elysian Park shares similar intrusions, including its own reservoir, a major highway that isolates sections of the Park, and other municipal uses (a police training facility, a city radio tower, water pumping stations). Elysian Park is also adjacent to Dodger Stadium, home of a Major League baseball team. How these non-park uses have encroached upon Elysian Park is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6 of this document.

While non-park uses admittedly take valuable Park space from public use, these uses are not always detrimental to enjoyment of the Park. For example, a citizens group interested in preserving Elysian Park is currently working to keep the 85-year-old Elysian Park reservoir from being covered with an aluminum roof. Although the reservoir is not accessible to park users and usurps forty acres of parkland, it has become an important visual element, and one that many interested community members feel should remain open to view. Similarly, while the Police Academy located in Elysian Park can be considered a noxious land use in the way its pistol firing range contributes to noise pollution, at the same time its presence gives some park users an added sense of security while visiting what is essentially an inner-city park. Unfortunately, the benefits these two non-park uses return to Elysian Park are overwhelmed by the number of non-conforming, intrusive land uses that provide no compensatory benefits for their land takings. An isolated radio transmission tower, a closed and unstable landfill, an eight-lane divided highway and a water pumping station are just a few non-park uses that take valuable parkland and return no positive side effects. They are uses that have essentially removed recreation possibilities from many acres of Elysian Park.

Park users in the eastern areas of Elysian Park tend to be slightly different than those in the more frequented areas. While the main picnic areas of Chavez Ravine and Solano Canyon tend to attract large groups and families, users in the Buena Vista Hill area tend to be in smaller groups, rarely larger than the size of a small nuclear family. At the very eastern fringe of the Park, along the railyards, there is a greater chance for teenagers and young couples to be seen hanging out alone or in groups. Although not as much as in other sections of the Park, a fair number of users in the eastern areas simply sit in their cars and watch the action, read or talk to their passengers.

Closer to the access road entrance to Buena Vista Point single men are often seen socializing, just standing around. On Buena Vista Hill, along the trails and fire roads it is not uncommon to pass by single men out for a walk in the Park, especially on the weekends. In spite of its reputation as a gang hang-out, no such activity occurred during this writer's visits, and the young men observed did not show any outward signs of gang affiliation. Still, the appearance of men congregating around the entrance to a secluded vista point made it appear, at first glance, that some unsavory activity may be taking place. An easy way to solve this image problem might be to provide better defined social spaces near the entrance to the view point so that the men's activity is seen for what it truly is. In addition, signs announcing the view point and showing its close proximity to the turnoff location (it's only a matter of a few hundred feet) could improve users' image of the Point as an easily accessible area, and perhaps encourage more visitors to use the spot. The racial make up of these users is predominantly Latino, with some Asian.

As mentioned above, Radio Hill attracts very few Park visitors. However, it does draw a fairly permanent group of homeless and transient people. Discussions with informed community members have suggested that Radio Hill has always served such a residential function for transients, and has often had hobo camps along its crest. While no people were observed in the temporary shelters assembled on Radio Hill, several people were observed coming to and from the area. From observations, it appears that the users of this area are a bit different from the rest of the Park. They tend to be white males, ranging in age. Although an historic use of the area, the hobo or transient encampment will probably serve to keep other Park users from visiting the area. If Radio Hill is to remain isolated from the remainder of the Park, this may be a tolerable use. However, if the Park land is to be reclaimed for recreational use, the issue of displacement of the "residents" of Radio Hill will need to be addressed.

Image of the Park

As a result of limited access and limited use of certain areas by park visitors, many of the eastern areas of Elysian Park have taken on an abandoned, isolated and rather imposing character. The areas have developed reputations for certain activities that may be risky for outsiders to stumble upon unexpectedly, such as gang activities on Buena Vista Hill, or hobo encampments on Radio Hill. While it is not clear how well these uses are known, they may discourage use by visitors.

Away from the three main improved areas, most of the eastern sections of the Park are overgrown. Walking through them, one often comes across areas that were, at one time, well developed with amenities, but now stand unused and abandoned. Happening upon these places introduces a sense of passing time into the Park, an element that could be used to complement and help interpret the historical aspects of Elysian Park. While this sense of "ruins" can lead to wonderfully reflective moments in some settings, within the existing context it produces an uneasy feeling of isolation. The feeling of isolation is exacerbated by the lack of visual connectedness between the Park's eastern areas and with the surrounding urban landscape.