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Living Landscapes: Re-Imagining the Role Los Angeles Parks Play in Communities

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LIVING LANDSCAPES

RE-IMAGINING THE ROLE
LOS ANGELES PARKS
PLAY IN COMMUNITIES

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Client: Kounkuey Design Initiative
Advisor: Dr. Vinit Mukhija

with support from the UCLA Lewis
Center for Regional Policy Studies

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00
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over 41,000 Angelenos alone are unhoused, and we need short term ways to deal with this crisis through means that are dignified, sanitary, and recognize our shared humanity. Parks are often an epicenter for homelessness, which in turn becomes a point of contestation with housed neighbors and park visitors. With two major research questions:

1. What are the current conditions of unhoused park dwelling in Los Angeles, and

2. How may parks adapt to support unhoused alongside housed neighbors?

this project seeks to develop physical, programmatic, and policy strategies to enhance feelings of safety and welcome for unhoused Angelenos in ways that benefit all park visitors.

Why parks, particularly when the Los Angeles region is already plagued with equity concerns over open space (Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation, 2016)? Parks come with pre-existing systems of infrastructure - water, power, parking, services, maintenance - which are not necessarily in place on other vacant city-owned lands. In the City of Los Angeles, many parks are in the midst of dense areas, meaning they also bring transit connectivity and potential access to geographically bounded social workers, case managers, and medical assistance. Perhaps even more importantly, parks are dignified and welcoming spaces: they are not forgotten or out of sight; they are beautiful and traditionally attached to notions of freedom and play; and, in their fundamental imagining, parks are meant for all. However, through what Don Mitchell refers to as "The Annihilation of Space by Law," unhoused people have been systematically - legally - excluded from and pushed out of public space, including parks, in acts that deny their very personhood (Mitchell, 1997). California and Los Angeles in particular have some of the most aggressive anti-homeless legislation, drawing from a long history of anti-vagrancy laws and leading to today's 32 "anti-homeless" restrictions (Berkeley Law policy Advocacy Clinic, 2016). This legislation and criminalization threatens public space for all - once we can remove unhoused Angelenos simply for their status and the behaviors they must enact to survive in increasingly hostile spaces, we set a dangerous precedent for limiting access to public space to the broader public sphere. Dedicating parts of parks for living, in the midst of a housing crisis with no clear endpoint, is an act of reparations, an act of dignity, and a recognition that all Angelenos have a place in our city. Doing so with thoughtful design and expansion of services for both unhoused and housed park visitors stands to not only provide new resources for unhoused Angelenos, but create new relationships and understandings with housed neighbors through stigma-reduction and acts of care. Additionally, these moves can be a source of funding for maintenance, staffing, and programming that under-resourced parks in particular sorely need (Los Angeles City Controller's Office, 2017).

For this study, I used a mixed-methods approach combining spatial analysis of park-based encampment reports in the City of Los Angeles from 2015-2020; case studies; a literature review over the history of park dwelling in the Los Angeles region and best practices for conflict mitigation; interviews with park-dwelling unhoused individuals and activists; and analysis of three study sites: Echo Park Lake, Lafayette Park, and MacArthur Park.

I found that 17% of all encampment reports in the City of Los Angeles are from park areas. Pairing this with qualitative research reveals that these reports often reflect neighborhood tensions. For example, at oft-reported Penmar Golf Course and Recreation Center, news reports relay that Venice homeowners self-professed to "declare war on" their unhoused neighbors, who saw encamping on the fringe of this green space as a COVID-safe practice (Schrank, 2020).

These tensions are far from new. Despite frequent framing as a modern problem beginning in the 1980s, encampments have been persistently present in Los Angeles since at least 1870 (Lytle-Hernandez, 2014). Instead, as represented in case study Design x Policy, cities regulate and criminalize unhoused persons' bodies, belongings, and behaviors in every square foot of park space by a series of codes that offer no meaningful alternatives (Jared Edgar McKnight, 2020).

Individuals emphasized this inequity in interviews, which revealed unequal policing, limited services misaligned with needs, social stigma, and lack of sanitation areas in park space. One man shared how policing is a tool not only to remove, but also to shame and degrade him: "[gentrifiers] call police to extricate and shame me from the park - they take pictures, ask for more patrols... They insinuate that I'm sick or wrong." Another woman pointed out that there is no place she can go to rest in private without being disrupted by the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD): "I need a tent up. I have a health condition; I want to rest without being bothered by LAPD. Other people rest in the park. I just need a place to be." In all interviews, subjects attested to the need for guidance from unhoused Angelenos on policy, design, and programming; the need for more wellness-based interventions; and their right to personhood. Interviewees stressed that needs of the unhoused, for food, water, sanitation, and shelter, are basic human needs, which, when provided in park space, stand to serve a broad range of Angelenos: housing and food-insecure households, mothers and children, older adults, and others.

I further explored conditions in three parks to bring the research questions into specific and contested local spaces. Lafayette and MacArthur Parks have more conventional conditions for Los Angeles, with unhoused park dwellers seen as outsiders, dirty, or dangerous. Contrastingly, before a police-led mass displacement in March 2021, a persistent and organized encampment at Echo Park Lake "showed us what is possible" (Lovich, 2020). The "Echo Park Rise Up" encampment residents ran their own showers, a community garden open to housed and unhoused, a staffed kitchen and pantry, and a donation funded-jobs training program compensating dedicated sanitation and security workers. In addition to traditional recommendations, summarized on the next page, I suggest three speculative interventions for these parks: a City fact-finding mission and study in collaboration with the displaced community at Echo Park Lake; a designated encampment zone at MacArthur Park with commensurate infrastructure and maintenance; and a gathering space at Lafayette Park outfitted for art workshops serving housed and unhoused park visitors. These interventions, intended as a guiding imaginary for shorter-term and more broadly situated recommendations, illustrate what could be.

... needs of the unhoused, for food, water, sanitation, and shelter, are basic human needs, which, when provided in park space, stand to serve a broad range of Angelenos: housing and food-insecure households, mothers and children, older adults, and others.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

SPECULATIVE INTERVENTIONS

DESIGNATED SPACE

Decriminalize and formalize park-based encampment zones through a pilot program, including supportive infrastructure and design guidelines serving unhoused and housed park users.

PARTICIPATORY PLANNING

Establish regular, compensated advising opportunities for unhoused Angelenos to provide input on the efficacy of current programs, encampment guidelines, and unmet needs in parks and beyond.

STAFFING & MAINTENANCE

Improve and augment park staffing through jobs-training partnership programs with designated encampments, including sanitation, maintenance, service (food and health), and public safety roles.

PROGRAMMING

Promote low-cost, high-impact park-based wellness programming for housed and unhoused visitors to highlight shared needs and benefits.
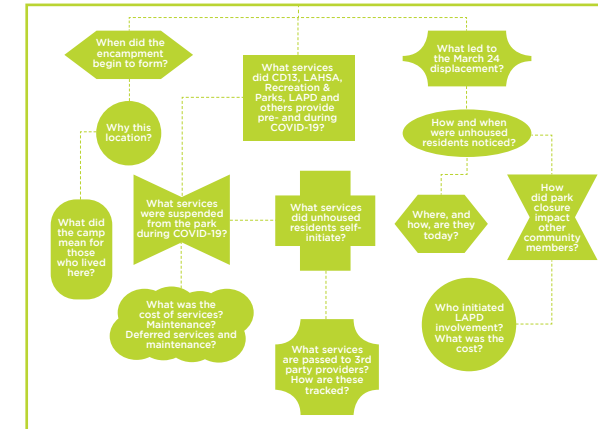
At Echo Park Lake, a fact-finding mission provides a formal and documented means to learn from the successes and challenges at the Echo Park Rise Up encampment, including displacement. Engagement with this highly organized collective of unhoused individuals also creates a chance to hear from and collaborate with unhoused persons themselves on what policies, programs, and projects hold potential, and which have insurmountable difficulties.

At MacArthur Park, formalizing a currently informal encampment area as part of a cross-Los Angeles pilot program creates infrastructure for both unhoused dwellers and vendors. Jobs training and maintenance/staffing pledges attached to the encampment provide an opportunity to address longstanding community concerns that this park is dirty and dangerous through a new approach to public safety.

At Lafayette Park, an abandoned reflecting pool becomes an outdoor arts classroom, hosting programming by neighboring institutional partners (Los Angeles Public Library and Heart of Los Angeles youth enrichment) and a new set of unhoused-serving partners. Underutilized green space is transformed into a community garden bordered by indigenous, drought-tolerant planting.

01
INTRODUCTION

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

In the City of Los Angeles,

At least **41,290** individuals are unhoused,

and **150,000** are at risk of homelessness.

Since 2015,

163,638 encampments have been reported

17% of which are in or immediately adjacent to City parks

As early as

1855, California anti-vagrancy laws stripped the rights of unhoused Angelenos.

Today, **32** "new anti-vagrancy laws" limit access to and use of public space for unhoused Angelenos.

BACKGROUND

The City of Los Angeles faces a deficit of both housing and public open space, issues which have each been magnified through the COVID-19 pandemic. Parks - one of the few shaded and public spaces of the city, and thus appealing both to housed visitors and to unhoused dwellers - have become increasingly contested spaces subjected to larger socio-economic forces. Yet, this time of significant uncertainty and need also presents unanticipated opportunities for innovation: the COVID-19 pandemic has forced Parks and Recreation Departments across the county to reinvent themselves, and take on roles and temporary infrastructure that would have been unthinkable just a few months ago. Applying these same principles of urgency, flexibility, and increased amenity to both short- and long-range solutions presents the opportunity to re-imagine the role parks play in communities to better address an increasingly diverse constituency with dramatically different needs. Focusing on the perspective of unhoused park dwellers, whose bodies are on the frontlines but whose voices are rarely centered, this project seeks to develop physical, programmatic, and policy strategies that will enhance feelings of safety and welcome for all.

Such programs will have little effect - and do nothing to further long-term goals of housing production - without also breaking down discriminatory policy and engaging the support of housed neighbors. As a bountiful source of public land and frequent site of contact and contestation between housed and unhoused neighbors, parks offer an ideal site for interventions to confront these policies and pilot new programs serving a wide spectrum of Angelenos. This strategy of meeting on equal ground and in the context of shared programming stands to break down barriers of stigmatization and othering which have long affected housed Angelenos' views of their unhoused neighbors, and by extension proposals to construct affordable and permanent supportive housing.

To demonstrate possibilities and existing limitations, this project proposes speculative interventions in three City of Los Angeles Parks, selected for their occurrence of Encampment Reports from 2019-20: Echo Park Lake, Lafayette Park, and MacArthur Park. Content of these interventions stems from interviews with community members, global case studies of resource-rich park spaces, and emerging best practices laid out by civic practitioners and activists alike.

To understand the evolution and current state of park-based unhoused encampments in Los Angeles

To identify barriers to service provision for unhoused Angelenos in study park areas

To speculate on how accommodating unhoused dwellers in a dignified manner could benefit all park users, through amenities, community connection, visible and inclusive service provision, and physical built or landscape interventions.

To consider how new, compassionate, equitable understandings of public safety in Los Angeles parks could promote dignity, privacy, and comfort for all park users.

Gus Wendel, cityLAB-UCLA

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METHODOLOGY & DATA

SPATIAL ANALYSIS
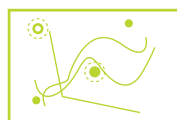
4 CASE STUDIES

LITERATURE REVIEW

5 INTERVIEWS

3 STUDY SITES

SPATIAL ANALYSIS OF PARK-BASED ENCAMPMENT REPORTS, 2015-20

To understand the occurrence and characteristics of park-based encampments across LA, I analyzed "Homeless Encampment Service Requests" made to Los Angeles 311, a call center for non-emergency City services, from January 2015 - mid December 2020. This data is openly available through the "Los Angeles Open Data" portal maintained by the City of Los Angeles.

These "Service Requests," reported as a subcategory of Public Right of Way Investigation, are pursuant to Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) 56.11. Creating the service request refers requestees to the 8 step process for encampment "removal" or "clean-up" within a rapid time frame (24 hour notice and 15 minute pre-confiscation voluntary relocation windows for encampment residents). In this case, "service" applies to the housed reporters, who receive the public benefit of a cleared right of way, rather than the unhoused encampment dwellers, who are not necessarily offered any services while under threat of forced displacement. Given this crucial distinction, I refer to "Homeless Encampment Service Requests" as "Encampment Reports'' throughout this study.

I derive two primary data insights from these reports: first, location of the reported encampment, and second, through spatial autocorrelation, the prevalence of such reports. Because these datapoints represent voluntarily initiations by (presumably) aggrieved or otherwise unsatisfied Angelenos, the data speaks just as much to neighborhood tension (and who has access to 311) as it does encampment presence. This is to say, someone would not choose to report an encampment which did not in some way affect or distress them, whether in a direct or perceived manner. This data is subject to inherent bias. Yet, that bias is, in itself, useful: revealing areas of tension also reveals where thoughtfully enacted interventions could most stand to improve stability, belonging, and welcome for unhoused individuals while reducing othering and improving comfort on behalf of housed neighbors.

In this 5 year time span, LA 311 users reported 168,638 geographically identified encampments in the City of Los Angeles. Overlaying these reports with outlines of Los Angeles' 452 parks (excluding subparks) obtained through the City of Los Angeles open data portal revealed that approximately 4,500 encampment reports - 2.8% of all reports - were within park areas. However, half of these reports indicate an approximate
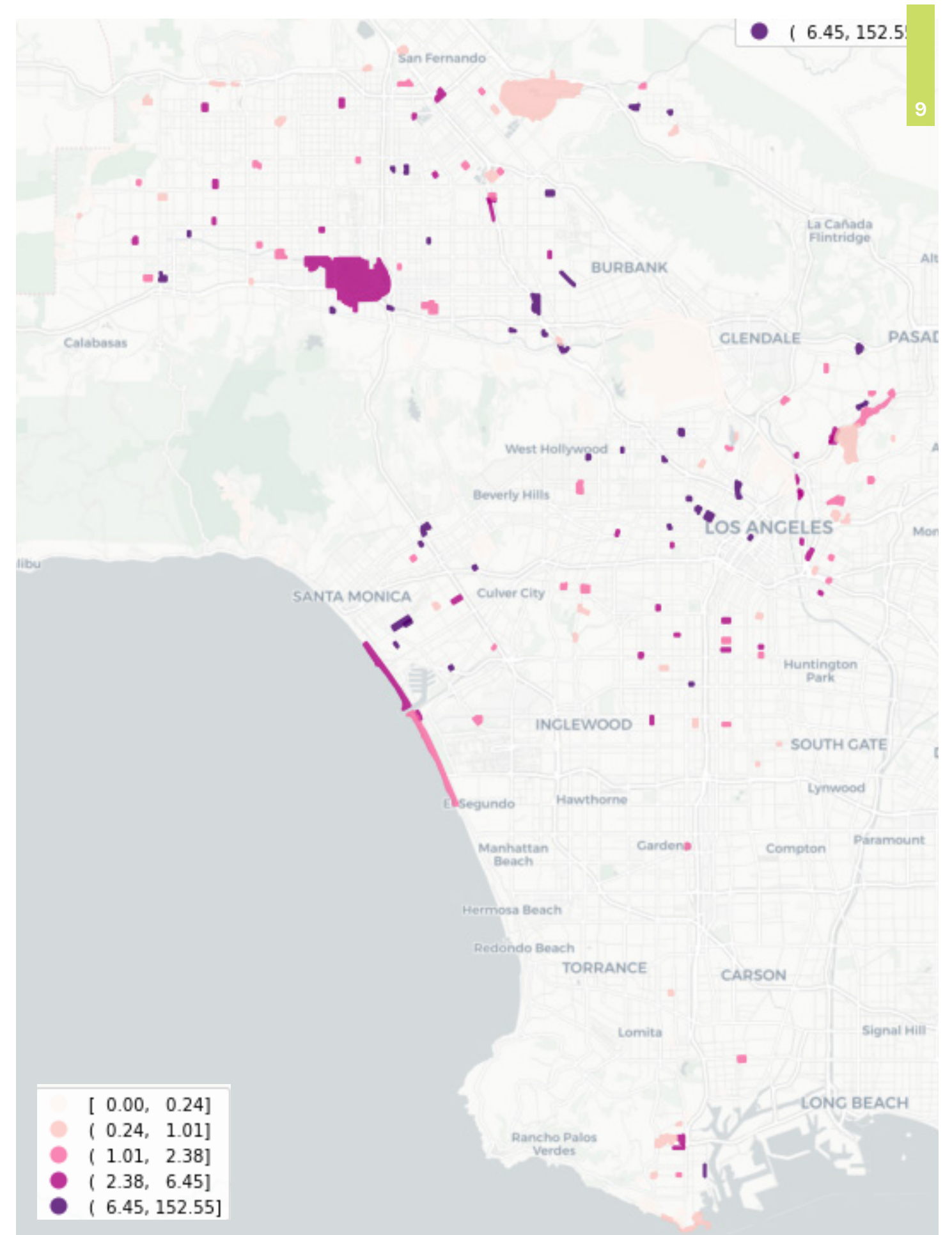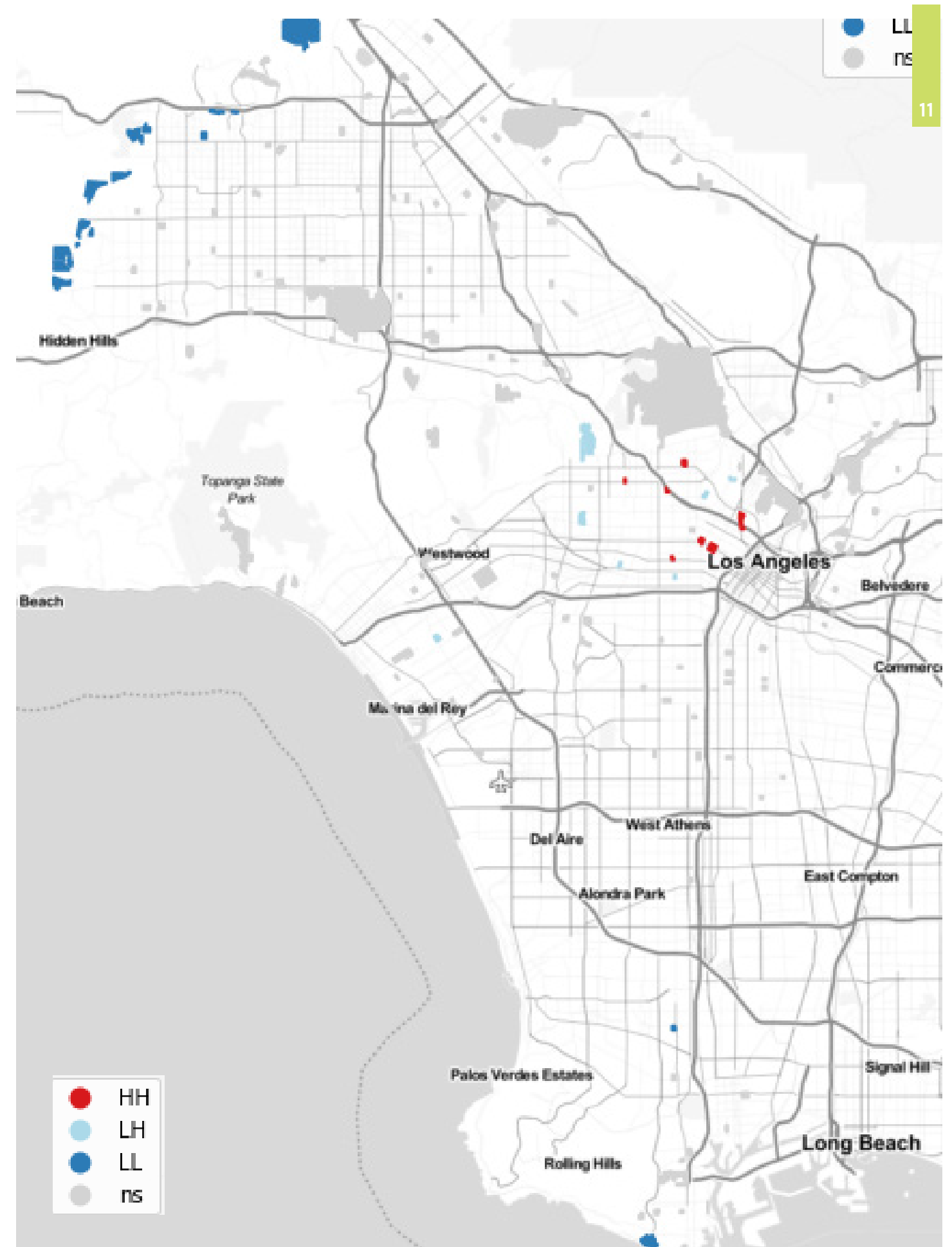
or not verified location. Visual analysis showed similar inaccuracies: the overlay fails to capture encampment reports geo-coded at the very edge of parks; nor reports identified with an intersection or a neighboring building as a reference point. Adding a buffer zone of a half-block radius captures approximated reports and increases park-based encampment reports by 506% (27,800, or 17% of all reports).

Determining relative parks with the most encampment report requires normalization and establishing parameters on park size. Los Angeles' parks range dramatically in acreage: nearly ⅓ are "Park Nodes" of under ¼ acres, or "Pocket Parks" under 3 acres, while vast Regional Parks like Sepulveda Basin and Griffith cover thousands of acres. Normalizing to measure park based encampment reports per acre creates the ability to sort by parks with the highest per acre density of encampment reports. However, this also led to an outsized representation of Node and Pocket parks, which are not an ideal size for service provision. Further limiting this data to parks of 3 or more acres (Neighborhood, Community, and Regional parks) provides a better indication of which parks have a high density per acre of encampment reports and enough open space to host permanent or pop-up interventions at scale.

Finally, I conducted a spatial autocorrelation analysis on the normalized data to determine which parks had both a high number of encampment reports per acre overall, and a high number of encampment reports per acre when compared with neighboring parks. Establishing a spatial lag using k=8 and a highly statistically significant P value of .005 revealed seven parks, concentrated around the area Northwest of Downtown. To select three study parks from these seven, I combined qualitative and quantitative methods: both analyzing the normalized and un-normalized data, with a concentration on recent (2019-20) numbers, as well as examining the social and physical context of each park.

Chosen study parks include Echo Park Lake - 10.5 acres where an active, organized encampment has already established inroads with neighbors and pandemic response initiatives have garnered both praise and criticism; MacArthur Park - a 35 acre historic park with a contested past where a broad array of neighborhood services already take place; and Lafayette Park - 11 acres bordered and intersected with mission-driven organizations that have an active influence on park events and character.

Reference Distribution

Moran I: 0.11

Moran Local Scatterplot

Spatial Lag of Encampments per Acre

Encampments per Acre

LH   HH

LL   HL

HH

LH

LL

ns
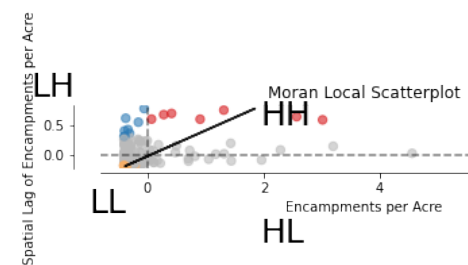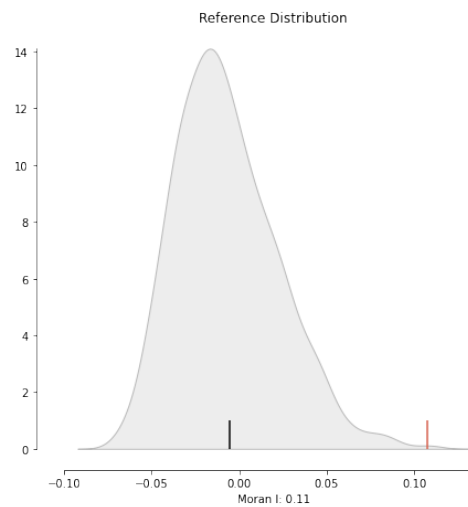
MAPPING FEATURES
OF 3 STUDY PARKS

In lieu of detailed site visits deemed unsafe under worsening pandemic conditions in Los Angeles, careful mapping of the facilities, furnishings, and resources available within each park cross referenced with site photos, google maps, and review by frequent park users allowed me to strategically examine areas for intervention. Initial mapping included shade trees, paths, furnishings, specified programmatic areas (ie, soccer fields, playgrounds, skate parks), structures (restrooms, recreation buildings, libraries, etc), and sculptures. Spatializing this data provided a better understanding of the scope of resources available in each park at a given time, potential anchor programming for interventions, and nodes of activity.

Paola Ovando, UCLA undergraduate researcher, provided linework for MacArthur Park and augmentation of Lafayette Park linework.
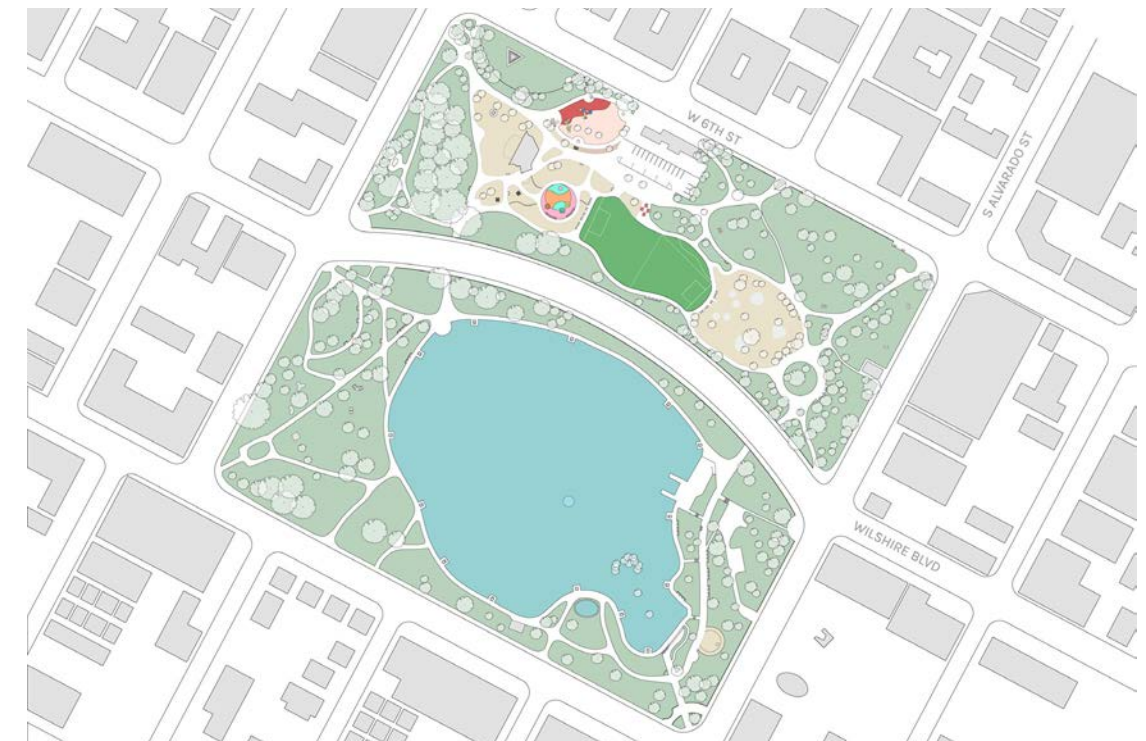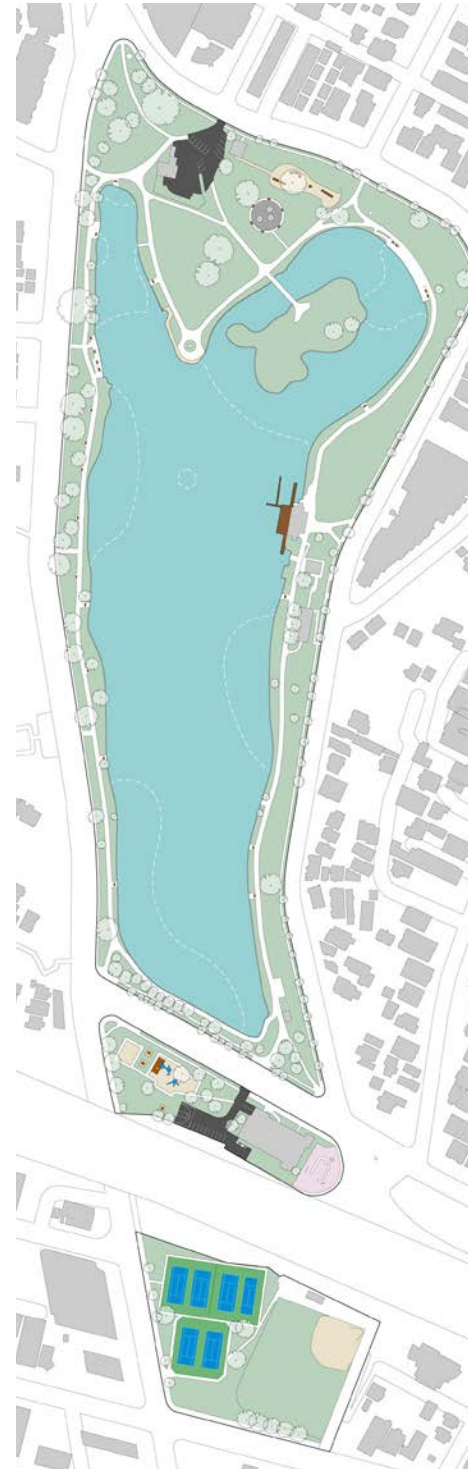
INTERVIEWS

To better understand the types of resources and modes of resource delivery that would provide connection, I spoke with unhoused park inhabitants and activists with experience in service provision in January-February 2021. This included individuals such as an unhoused man living in a Downtown LA Park, and a former LAHSA employee / current Landscape Architecture scholar seeking to develop resource-rich, equitable park spaces. Unhoused individuals are the largest group of experts on unhoused needs, yet are rarely directly asked to advise on policy, design, or programming of services directed at them. While I had initially structured interviews to be more loosely addressing concerns and desires with unhoused individuals while posing technical questions on specific policy limitations and concerns to advocates, unhoused people are intimately familiar with exactly which codes, regulations, and reports lead to their forced displacement and exclusion from public space. With input from prospective interviewees, I developed a parallel set of questions, asking each group about both policy and experience, as well as benefits and limitations of park-based living and service provision in public open space.

Following these static questions, each interviewee and I engaged in a free-flowing conversation on stories, opinions, and perceived needs of the specific study areas: MacArthur Park, Lafayette Park, and Echo Park Lake.

Many of these interviews, conducted over phone and zoom, were deeply personal, and interviewees often recounted painful and traumatic experiences of experiencing or directly observing exclusion, loss of agency, discrimination, and psychological or physical harm. Due to the sensitive and personal nature of these interviews, I chose not to record, but rather transcribed detailed notes. For similar reasons, interviewees remain anonymous throughout this report. To draw conclusions and recommendations, I compared notes across interviews, highlighting areas of convergence and divergence.

My interview strategy differed by group: for unhoused park dwellers, I took a "snowball" strategy beginning by contacting an unhoused leader, who shared my information on a public forum for unhoused Southern California residents after our interview. This led to three further interviews. For activists, I contacted two prominent organizations who have each conducted extensive outreach and partnerships with park-based encampments across my study area, who in turn introduced me to those interviewed.

As most of the interviewees were speaking "off the clock" - whether unemployed or engaging in volunteer work outside of their employment - I offered compensation of $50 plus fees (phone or hotspot minutes) to interviewees speaking in a non-employed role. No obligations (interview length, detail, etc) were attached to this compensation.

5 Interviewees Included:

3 Unhoused Individuals

- An unhoused man who lives in a Chinatown park

- A recently housed woman with severe health complications who formerly lived in a vehicle next to Echo Park Lake

- A temporarily housed man who formerly lived in vehicles and tents throughout several LA Parks

2 Activists

- A former LAHSA employee and public arts activist

- A formerly unhoused single mother who works with unhoused women

UNHOUSED EXPERIENCE	ACTIVIST EXPERIENCE
In your experience, what are the benefits of staying in park space, as opposed to other unsheltered spaces? The difficulties?	What do you think are the benefits and weaknesses of park space as service space?
How would you describe your interactions with housed people in park space?	Are you aware of initiatives, designs, or programs that have facilitated connections between housed and unhoused neighbors?
What are your top concerns when using park space?	-
Are there particular rules, regulations, or norms that make being in park space difficult for you?	In your experience, what are the biggest barriers to providing service or resources for unhoused people in park space?
What services and/or resources do you have particular difficulty accessing?	What services or resources do unhoused Angelenos have particular difficulty accessing?
What resources would you like to see in park space?	
(Open conversation around MacArthur Park, Lafayette Park, and Echo Park Lake-specific characteristics, needs)	

CASE STUDIES

Unhoused individuals have existed in (and been excluded from) park space for well over 100 years, and cities are more often accepting the need to better serve this growing constituency. I use case studies to understand existing and speculative interventions across urban settings, which have experienced various degrees of success. Detailed alongside my Literature Review, these include park redesigns that simply accept and, through phased renovation, refuse to displace unhoused individuals; propositions detailing full lists of exclusionary policies for parks within the LAMC and suggestions for what may take their place; and programmatic interventions, like a small game cart which led to full-time case management in an Atlanta park. The chosen case studies alternate between design, programming, policy, and staffing, and demonstrate that holistic solutions draw on all four of these levers to create lasting change. In general, I prioritize case studies which are housing first: that is, where design and implementation of park-based programming is an augmentation to or in service of plans to provide permanent supportive housing with no barrier to entry. Case studies include:

- Decades-long redesign(s) of Pershing Square (Downtown Los Angeles)

- A flexible rennovation of Lafayette Square (Oakland)

- Restrictive regulations in Gladys Park (Downtown Los Angeles)

- Service provision in Woodruff Park (Atlanta)
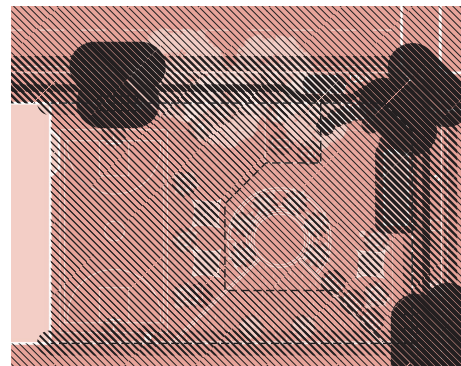
DATA LIMITATIONS

It should come as no surprise that measuring homelessness is a notoriously imprecise and difficult science, particularly in an area like Los Angeles County, where over 70,000 unhoused individuals not only lack housing, but also safe and desirable areas to legally rest. Census tract level analysis generalizes point in time counts, making park-specific analysis difficult. Encampment reports provided an incomplete proxy to this data, but fail to account for the large amount of "rough sleeping" (that is, sleeping without a tent, tarp, or informal covering) which occurs throughout LA Parks. Rough sleeping is particularly common as LAMC 63.44 bans tents and other "bulky items" and "personal property" in these parks. In non-pandemic conditions, visiting the park at various times of day and night to talk to park users and conduct point in time counts would have been a priority to augment encampment report data.

Most obviously, my interview data collection was severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and its particular, inequitable impact on the unhoused Angeleno community. Both to protect my own health and to avoid any potential spread to vulnerable community members, housed and unhoused, I did not conduct any site visits post-December 2020 (when the Los Angeles County caseload dramatically increased and a new, California variant identified), nor did I conduct in person interviews or interview outreach. While unhoused Angelenos often have cell phones, connectivity depends on access to a charging area and their particular service plan - meaning I did not necessarily have reliable ways to contact potential interviewees without in-person outreach and a chance to solve logistics together. Similarly, I was not able to sample specific park-based encampments in MacArthur Park, Lafayette Park, and Echo Park Lake. Ideal research (and research to come) would include targeted, in person interviews; shared park walks and observations in real time with unhoused individuals and activists; surveys throughout the more settled encampments; and most crucially, shared visioning sessions, to not only name potential services (as interviewees did), but to locate these areas on a map and illustrate, diagram, and analyze potential spaces together.

Echo Park Lake, Luis Sinco, Los Angeles Times

03

LITERATURE REVIEW

OVERVIEW

This literature review draws from a broad base of research to lay the theoretical groundwork for a series of pragmatic potential interventions in three parts:

1. *a contextualization of the Los Angeles houselessness crisis*

2. *overview of the trials and tribulations of "life in public" faced by unhoused Angelenos today, and*

3. *a query of what it means to be "neighborly"*

The presence of unhoused individuals in City of Los Angeles Parks - or more accurately, the desire to deter the presence of unhoused individuals in these parks - has driven park design (Crawford, 1995; Schindler, 2014; Perry, 2013), policy (Vitale, 2010; Speer, 2014; Interboro Partners, 2013), and enforcement (National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, 2019; Stuart, 2014; Amster, 2003; Beckett & Herbert, 2010) for decades. A great deal has been written on park surveillance, usually connected to critiques of privatization and over policing in the neoliberal city (Marr, 2015; Vitale, 2010; Mitchell, 1995), and such moves are now broadly understood to make parks less desirable for all visitors, not simply "undesirables" (Mozingo, 1995; Jost, 2009). Critiques of this targeted criminalization of the unhoused in public space sometimes "raise the stakes" of such removal by linking to discussions of democracy, right to the city, and public belonging (Speer, 2014; Purcell, 2003; Toft, 2014). Such critiques share roots with questions on how housed residents tend to describe their unhoused neighbors, and how shifting this language and the accompanying framework of understanding each other's personhood can grow compassion, trust, and opportunity for inclusion (Hodgetts et al, 2011; Toft, 2014).

Today, over 41,290 unhoused individuals live in the City of Los Angeles (LAHSA, 2020). Understanding the basics of how this crisis came to be, how various approaches to encampments and houselessness in parks have been broached, and the demographic breakdown of unhoused Angelenos sets the stage to consider best practices and desirable services moving forward. In considering immediate shelter needs, there has been an increase in recent scholarship on condoning or legalizing informal encampments (Malson & Blasi, 2020; Jones et al, 2015), which are understood to have stabilizing benefits for their inhabitants (Rowe, 1989). However, little scholarship connects the specificity of encampments and park space beyond general recognition of their common colocation. To supplement this lack of explicit research, this analysis includes a number of "case studies" - analysis of relevant built works of policies in place that demonstrate opportunities and concerns.
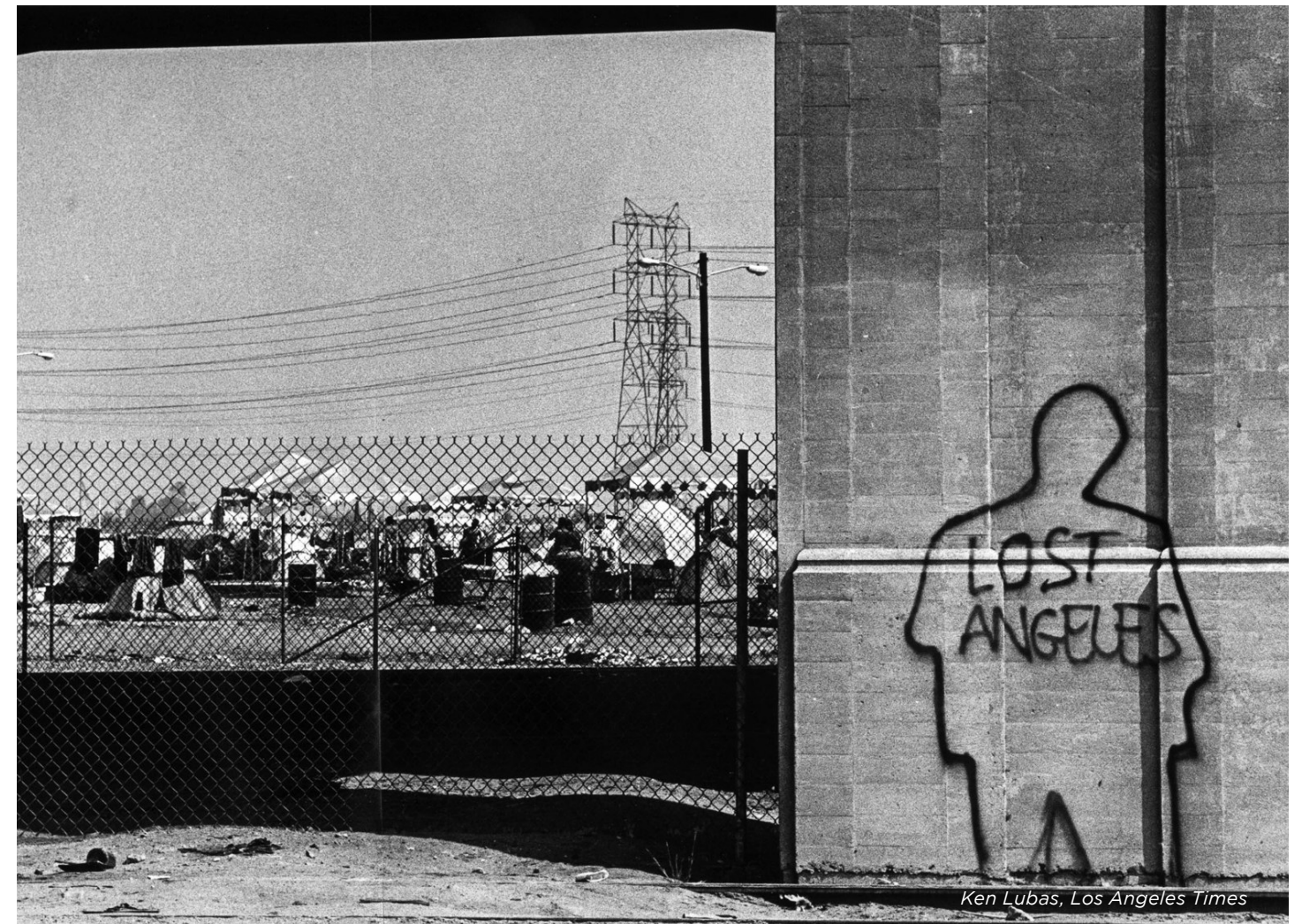
Ken Lubas, Los Angeles Times

1. UNHOUSED IN LOS ANGELES: CONTEXTUALIZING A CRISIS

1.A A BRIEF HISTORY OF HOUSELESSNESS IN LOS ANGELES

Extensive research into the origins of today's homelessness crisis implicates both federal and state policy changes regarding labor, mental health, housing production, policing, mortgage assistance, and welfare (Tsemberis, 2010; Stuart, 2016). The Mayor's office lists stagnant wages, housing shortage, cuts to mental health care, domestic and sexual abuse, challenges with the implementation of criminal justice reform, and lack of resources for veterans as the six primary driving factors of homelessness in Los Angeles (Office of Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, 2020).

Houselessness has been documented in Los Angeles long before the turn of the 20th century. Kelly Lytle Hernandez (2014) writes of the "tramp panic" that swept the US from 1870-1910, as the nation grew to fear these "vicious," "worthless," and "degenerate" itinerant workers. Los Angeles, described as long "a heaven spot for the hobo," made no provisions for their presence other than incarceration for a range of thinly veiled crimes - "public drunkenness, disorderly conduct, and vagrancy.... Comprised more than 90% of inmates in Los Angeles." Influential Los Angeles Times owner Harrison Gray Otis relied on the opinion of Josiah Flynt, billed as one of the "nation's leading trampologists," to sway public policy. Flynt wrote of purging the "parasites," who were "contagious...[and] must be quarantined." A statewide Anti-Vagrancy Act soon criminalized the very existence of the men in question, paving the way for a "war on the tramp order" which led to a rapid expansion of Los Angeles' prison system. This "war on tramps" did not slow until the 1910s, as enlistment for World War I became a popular option (and then mandate) for unemployed white men (Lytle Hernandez, 2014, pp. 413-4, 428-30, 444-5). In a similar cycle, houselessness again spiked during the Great Depression, when Los Angeles joined the score of American cities dotted by "Hoovervilles". As the economic landscape of America again shifted in response to World War II, most Hoovervilles dissolved within a decade (Malson & Blasi, 2020).

Getty Images

## An Abridged Timeline of Houselessness & Right to Public Space in Los Angeles
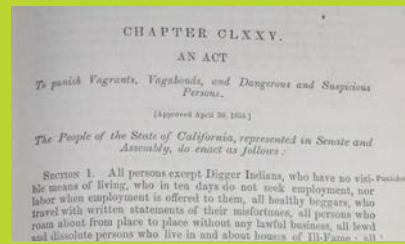
1855 California Passes the Anti-Vagrancy Act. The act allows for incarceration for up to 90 days for "all those who do not have or accept employment, prostitutes, and drunkards." Native Americans and Mexican-Americans are particularly targeted.
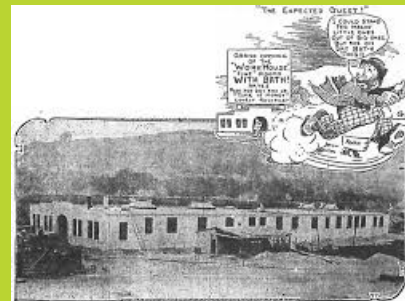
1870-1910 "Tramp Panic" sweeps the US, leading to a slew of legislation and public opinion pieces. Encampments appear around Los Angeles.
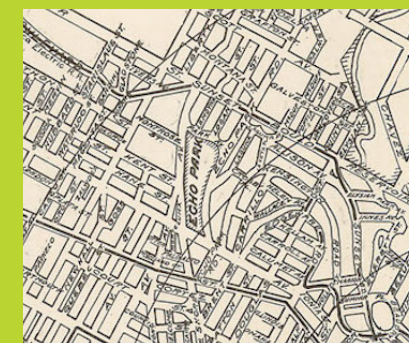
1910 The "City Beautiful" movement inspired a wealth of park development, incarcerated labor was the primary source of civic improvement. This included a large number of incarcerated "tramps" and "vagrants."

1917 The Selective Service Act of 1917 (Draft Act) and war-related economic development leads to a lull in houslessness

Ken Lubas, Los Angeles Times

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Though houselessness did not disappear in the nearly 40 year interim, the crisis as we know it today began in the 1980s. Neoliberalization throughout the 1970s yielded a region where "work became more precarious and social housing contracts crumbled" (Ruddick, 2019, p. 167). Job loss in South Central Los Angeles as HOLC and FHA mortgage subsidization for white families and businesses drove suburbanization and, as a result, inner-city deindustrialization and disinvestment proved catastrophic for Black families (Ruddick, 2019; Stuart, 2016). As in the 1980s, an increase in policing, predominantly for enacting the same activities housed Angelenos had the means to conduct in private, placed many unhoused Black Angelenos into a vicious cycle of incarceration that disqualified them from many forms of welfare, which were simultaneously being slashed. This racial disparity persists in unhoused homeless counts to this day: Black Angelenos make up only 8% of Los Angeles County's residents, yet 34% of the County's unhoused are Black (Camp, 2012). At the same moment, deinstitutionalization in response to horrific conditions and practices in America's asylums led to a catastrophic drop in funding for mental health, shifting care to short term hospitalizations rather than long-term residencies. As families declined to or were unable to take in mentally ill relatives, more Americans found themselves on the streets without healthcare or guidance.This included veterans returning from Vietnam, Korea, and the Gulf War, no longer welcomed home with the generous benefits provided by the VA in the 1950s (Stuart, 2016; Reuter, 2017). Though the County did not begin formally counting unhoused residents until 2004 (Berk, Kriegler, & Ylvisaker, 2008), a "guesstimated" 35,000 unhoused Angelenos lived in the streets (Reuter, 2017). The language and policies employed by the City in response to their presence was familiar: metaphors of sanitation and moral purity abounded, even as an antagonistic City administration confiscated toilets from Skid Row and swept the area's denizens into an empty dirt lot (Reuter, 2017; Malson & Blasi, 2020).

In the 40 year interim, funding for permanent supportive housing, court rulings against anti-vagrancy laws as "cruel and unusual punishment," and the establishment of nonprofits, advocacy groups, and government branches like the County's Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) offer hope for a more equitable future (Tsemberis, 2010; Camp, 2012). Yet progress has been slow, and funds limited. We need bold new programs to provide immediate relief for unhoused Angelenos.

1.A.i ENCAMPMENTS

"Vagrants" formed early encampments, or tent settlements, during the 1800s "war on tramps." These areas were routinely stormed by the Sheriff and deputies (Lytle Hernandez, 430). More recent history of encampments within the Los Angeles context has been expertly detailed by Hilary Malson and Gary Balsi in "For the Crisis Yet to Come: Temporary Settlements in the Era of Evictions" (2020). As they write, encampments proliferated across the United States in the wake of 1929's Black Tuesday, which plummeted the national economy into the decade-long Great Recession. Within a year, residents termed these "tent cities" "Hoovervilles," a clear indictment of the federal government's role in their genesis. As the New Deal and World War II sparked renewed economic activity through America's cities and towns, the Hoovervilles dissipated. Yet, historic and socioeconomic echoes remain: for example, today an encampment exists on the exact Florence-Firestone parking lot where a well-documented Hooverville once stood.

Similar large-scale encampments did not have a notable presence in Los Angeles until the 1980s. In 1987, responding to nearly a decade of exponentially increasing houselessness, the City of Los Angeles opened the "Urban Campground," pictured here. A 12-acre dirt plot downtown meant to accommodate 600+ unhoused individuals, the area was quickly renamed "Camp Dirt" by inhabitants. These "campers" were forcefully relocated by LAPD as the City closed 800 of its 1,000 shelter beds in favor of the hasty execution of a plan announced by Mayor Tom Bradley only twelve days prior. A mixture of Salvation Army, private security, and LAPD patrolled the site between frisking newcomers, predominantly Black unhoused residents of Skid Row. The site was routinely over capacity, with as many as 300 cots left under open-air canopies as security regulated tents to one side of the lot. The resulting conditions functionally served as a prison, rather than a shelter or encampment. The "Urban Campground" closed within the year, with the same violence and dispossession which it began: California Conservation Corps began the closeout by overturning cots and possessions while bulldozers approached (Malson & Blasi, 2020).

1930s As job loss and poverty rose during the Great Depression, tent cities known as "Hoovervilles" sprung up across the nation. Hundreds of thousands of Americans live in Hoovervilles.

1946 Sweeping drafts and industrialization during WWII again lessen the prevalence of encampments. Upon their return, the Los Angeles City Housing Authority erected temporary huts in Griffith Park for veterans and their families. The area was razed and returned to park space in 1954.

Larry Bessel, Los Angeles Times

1951 Popular, lush, yet "seedy" Pershing Square in Downtown Los Angeles undergoes renovation to dissuade undesirable behaviors - including homelessness. After striping back shade and seating, and fencing the park in, few visitors find the space appealing. In time, unhoused and others reclaim the space.

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

REPORT OF THE

CALIFORNIA LAW

REVISION COMMISSION

1961 The California Legislature revises Anti-Vagrancy laws, deeming them discriminatory for criminalizing status rather than behavior.

Ken Lubas, Los Angeles Times

In both its execution and its ideation, the Urban Campground serves as a clear reminder that agency, respect, and dignity are necessary for the success of encampments. Both the opening and closure of the Urban Campground relied on forced removal (or stripping of agency) of unhoused Angelenos by LAPD and others, exclusion from spaces used by or view corridors of housed neighbors, and surveillance practices throughout the under-serviced camp area. Yet, even as the City engaged in dehumanizing and often unconstitutional responses to houselessness in public space, scholars began to track the impact of informally constructed encampments on their residents: by 1989, Stacy Rowe was interviewing residents and stressing to policy makers the ways in which the "alternative social networks" formed in encampments served as a renewed source of pride and belonging for some unhoused residents, thus improving their chances for self-determination (14).

Los Angeles - and the nation at large - is again experiencing a spike in encampments. A national study indicated that "the number of unique tent cities… has increased 1,342% since 2007" (Malson & Blasi, 2020, 20). And while the West Coast has become a leader in sanctioning "sites where unhoused people can simply exist," (Ibid) little has changed in Los Angeles. A federal court ruling requiring the City to compensate unhoused individuals who had possessions destroyed by sweep employees (Garcia v City of Los Angeles, 2020) has triggered the greatest change in the dispersement of encampments, but incidents of stolen and ruined property continue. Legitimizing encampment sites chosen by unhoused Angelenos for their access to amenities and resources; seeking opportunities to reduce stigmatization and othering of unhoused individuals by housed neighbors; and focusing on services, not sweeps, for both groups may serve to provide interim, lifesaving measures for encampment dwellers. Simultaneously, such interactions stand to reduce the very tension which has further delayed the construction of affordable housing and increased stigmatization of unhoused residents in many Los Angeles neighborhoods.

Incarceration ... consolidated and amplified the exclusion of itinerant white men ... while incorporating their marginalization into the making of the modern city.

1.A.ii PARKS

Civic concerns of unhoused dwellers in parks dates back to their very inception - and yet, in many cases, the very laborers shaping these landscapes of public recreation were incarcerated, unhoused "tramps". As Kelly Lytle-Hernandez (2014) writes of the making of many of Los Angeles' iconic locals during the City Beautiful movement of the early 1900s,

> In the process, incarceration and convict labor forged a new place for tramps and hobos in Los Angeles. Swept from the streets and the dry riverbed, the menacing threat of white male itinerancy loitering in the heart of the city was transformed into a story of convicts—civil outsiders formally denied any right to be in Los Angeles, and unfree street workers impressed into performing what had formerly been largely Mexican labor in the rapidly growing Anglo American metropolis. Incarceration and convict labor, in other words, consolidated and amplified the exclusion of itinerant white men from the Aryan City of the Sun while incorporating their marginalization into the making of the modern city. (441)

Though Los Angeles' primary labor demographics shifted, civic attitudes towards unhoused dwellers in parks held steady. A particularly notable case study is the multi-billion dollar, over century-long saga to reform downtown Los Angeles' most infamous (and possibly most re-designed) park, Pershing Square. A case study illustrates how repeated efforts to push out unhoused park dwellers (along with other "unsavory" users) instead further alienated its intended audience.

But a comparably quiet moment in Pershing Square's storied history is worthy of further examination: once again, the 1980s prove a pivotal moment in understanding the modern state of houselessness in Los Angeles and the nation at large. The same neoliberalization which drove a new increase in houselessness invited a multi-decade burst of international land and real estate speculation, in which imaginaries of "clean," "productive" inner cities filled with retail and tourism took top dollar. Cities across North America looked back to the 'civility' laws of the early 1900s, when "tramps" had been liberally imprisoned - new laws deemed everything from panhandling and loitering to sleeping and informal sitting 'disorderly' activities, opening a legal loophole for police discrimination. Unhoused urban dwellers once again found their very existence criminalized (Stuart, 2014, 1911-12). Though a variety of court victories have curbed some of the more egregious of these civility laws, cities, including Los Angeles, still maintain broad police powers, particularly over public space like parks.

1964 Businesses join forces to re-design Pershing Square again. As before, striping back "mis-used" amenities yields an undesirable space for all.

1980s Economic and political pressures throughout the 70s and 80s leads to displacement and houselessness at a level not seen since the 1930s. The "homelessness crisis" in its contemporary form begins.

1986 Mayor Tom Bradley institutes the Urban Campground in Los Angeles. Up to 5,000 people are swept from Skid Row and other areas into the policed, cramped, and barren plot of dirt, which is closed in a manner of months.

- Community Park
- Community Regional Park
- Neighborhood Park
- Not Analyzed
- Park Node
- Pocket Park
- Regional Park
- Special Use
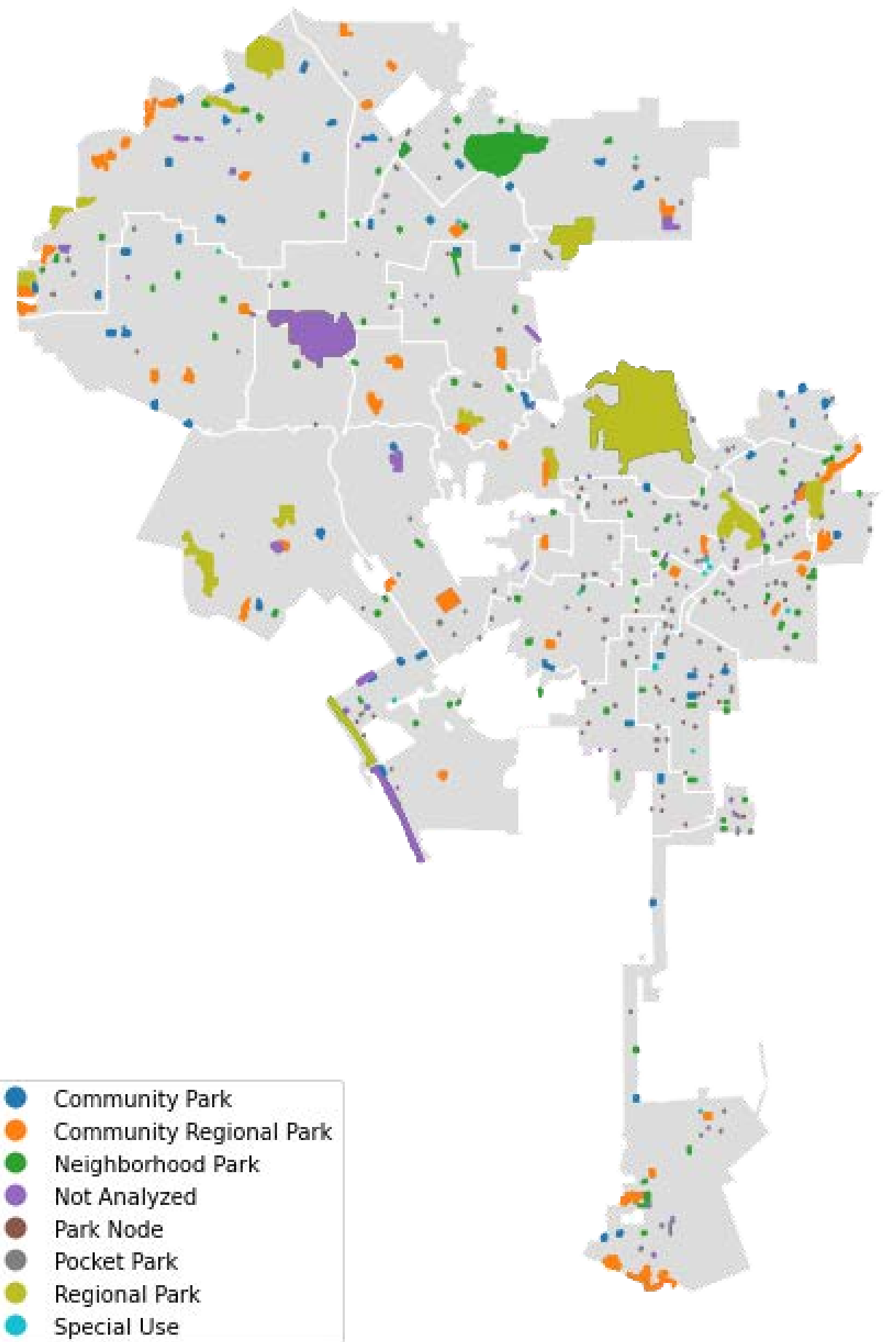
CASE STUDY: PERSHING SQUARE

Pershing Square in Downtown Los Angeles has been characterized by, yet actively antagonistic to, unhoused Angelenos for decades. Writing on the plans to pave over once lush and popular Pershing Square in 1951, LA Times contributor Timothy G. Turner noted "There are no nut trees but, phenomenon of phenomena, there are lots of nuts in Pershing Square. It has been noted for them since this century began." Amidst Turner's lamentation of the loss of foliage and statuary sit the purported cause: unhoused individuals seeking shade and shelter, who re-design regulated to the edges of a less-shaded, fenced-in park, along with the "gay cruisers and drug users" (Bloch, 2019). The efforts were unsuccessful: dissuading "unsavory" users through a design intended to make lingering uncomfortable drove even casual visitors away. As the once popular park became a quiet, neglected space, those deemed "deviates and criminals" by the Los Angeles Times and local business owners moved back in. In 1964, another round of amenity stripping removed more trees and seating, in "hopes that only law-abiding citizens will frequent the place, and that the local gangs and the homeless transients who have claimed the square in the recent past will stay away," (Whiteson, 1994). More of the park's character and resources were removed, and history repeated: "efforts to sanitize and secure the park ended up driving away the very people they had hoped to attract" (Douglass-Jaimes, 2015). While the park arguably became safer, it was no more hospitable or valued, instead seen as ""a sort of last resort for people sleeping off the night before or dozing off the rest of their lives." Yet, repeated failed attempts at change offered few lessons for the City. A 90s redesign featured similar issues, described in the Los Angeles Times in new language du jour: "Pershing Square was an island of seediness amid downtown Los Angeles' booming financial district... in a downtown with no other parks, [office workers] shunned Pershing Square" (Newman, 1995).

Progress has yet to be made on Pershing Square's sixth redesign, announced in 2016. The winning design to date has no benches and only one tall, dappled shade structure. Designer Lauren Hamer explained that "Shade creates shelter... And Los Angeles obviously has a very conflicted position towards creating shelter in the public realm, which is reflected in attitudes toward homelessness." In Hamer's opinion, this is the reason the City shunted an award-winning, never implemented proposal from 1986: "it would be too inviting... a place for people to hang out" (Bloch, 2019).

Rick Loomis, Los Angeles Times

1.B STATUS OF UNHOUSED LOS ANGELES POPULATION

In 2019, City and County Rapid Re-Housing, Supportive Housing, and other Permanent Housing programs housed 22,769 individuals, a modest 5% increase from 2019 and nearly double 2015 numbers (LAHSA, 2020). Yet, as the number of unhoused Angelenos soars to 41,290 (a 16% annual increase) amidst the economic and social pressures wrought by a global pandemic , these housing rates simply do not do enough to serve the unhoused and increasingly large at-risk population. As LAHSA explains, "Inflow has increased in 2020: L.A. housed more people then [sic] ever, yet our housing affordability crisis drove a net rise in homelessness." They also find that an astounding 555,105 LA households are "severely rent burdened," paying more than 50% of household income to rent and thus considered housing insecure (LAHSA, 2020).

This year's survey paints a particularly clear image of the types of services which may be effective in assisting unhoused Angelenos: LAHSA reports that the percentage of unhoused seniors rose 20%, families 45.7%, and transition age youth (TAY) 19%. Of adults, 41% live with a substance use disorder, a serious mental illness, or both (LAHSA, 2020) Though more targeted information is needed to best serve encampments while also creating new opportunities for positive relationships with housed neighbors, these statistics offer a starting point to speculating what services might be both useful and desirable.

2. LIFE IN PUBLIC: UNDERSTANDING PATTERNS OF UNHOUSED DWELLING IN PARK SPACE

After over a century of stigma towards unhoused existence in park space, progress in advocating for more equitable regulations and enforcement has been slow. In a 2017 National Recreation and Park Association study, 45% of urban park and recreation agency directors indicated that they viewed the homeless population as a nuisance to other park users, an answer doubly coded as "i.e., 'get them out'" (3). Further understanding how this history has impacted the concept of belonging and who the "public" of the public sphere reflects, as well as interrogating specific Los Angeles park policies highlights "sore spots" with potentials for change.

This year... LAHSA reports that the percentage of unhoused seniors rose 20%, families 45.7%, and transition age youth (TAY) 19%. Of adults, 41% live with a substance use disorder, a serious mental illness, or both.

1986 A third Pershing Square revitalization competition is held. The wining entry, full of shade and spaces to linger, is never built.
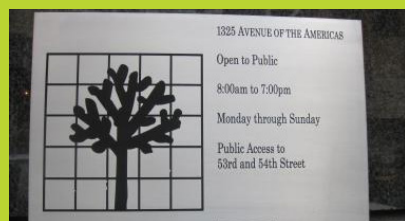

1980-90s As globalization and neoliberalism change socioeconomic dynamics of urban development, public/ private partnerships and treatment of public space as a "product" are popularized. Los Angeles and other cities look back to Anti-Vagrancy laws in search of ways to "sanitize" public space.

1993 Santa Monica proposes "locals only" parks as a way to ban unhoused park users. The motion is denied.
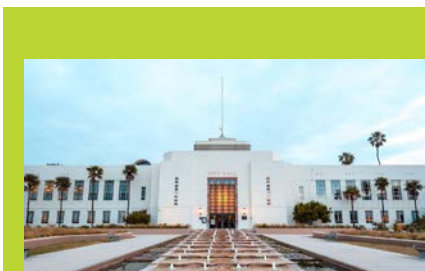
1993 Asked where homeless are supposed to go after a proposed ordinance suggests closing Santa Monica parks at midnight, a Councilman says "City Hall" - triggering a three month camp-in protest on the front lawn.

1994 Pershing Square is redesigned in its modern form, raising questions of hostile architecture and park security norms.

2016 Los Angeles City Council repeals and replaces LAMC 56.11 with stricter regulations for personal belongings in public space. This further incriminates unhoused right to space.

... studies often demonstrate a progression from familiar, demoralized or "victim" narratives to those of self-empowerment when unhoused individuals feel welcome in space.

2.A BELONGING & THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Regulating the right of an unhoused individual to exist in public space, as so many of Los Angeles' past and current civility (or nuisance) laws do, constitutes more than an irritant or barrier for unhoused life. On a moral and psychological level, these regulations impact unhoused individuals' sense of self-worth, humanity, right to the city, and belonging in both public space and democratic society at large.

The texts which address this contraction are, notably, often among the most persuasive in the body of research because they center on the personhood of unhoused park dwellers, often quoting the unhoused themselves and highlighting commonly shared desires of public space: desires for beauty, bonding, and a sense of freedom (Michell, 1995; Beckett & Herbert, 2010; Hodgetts & Stolte, 2016). Furthermore, studies often demonstrate a progression from familiar, demoralized or "victim" narratives to those of self-empowerment when unhoused individuals feel welcome in space (Perry, 2013; Toft, 2014; Hodgetts & Stolte, 2016). In his passionate defense of San Francisco's People's Park, Don Mitchell succinctly describes the irony of unhoused life and their simultaneous public visibility yet erasure:

> "In part, the desire to sweep the homeless from visibility responds to the central contradiction of homelessness in a democracy composed of private individuals ... Although homeless people are nearly always in public, they are rarely counted as part of the public. Homeless people are in a double bind. For them, socially legitimated private space does not exist, and they are denied access to public space and public activity by capitalist society which is anchored in private property and privacy. For those who are always in the public, private activities must necessarily be carried out publicly...public parks and streets begin to take on aspects of the home; they become places to go to the bathroom, sleep, drink, or make love-all socially legitimate activities when done in private, but seemingly illegitimate when carried out in public." (118)

Though this conversation may seem more theoretical than the grounded history of encampments and park exclusion, the stakes are all too real: Talmadge Wright (2000) reminds us that "The subsequent social death which homeless persons endure is all too often accompanied by real death and injury as social exclusion moves from criminalization of poverty to social isolation and incarceration in institutional systems of control - shelters and prisons" (27).

CASE STUDY: LAFAYETTE SQUARE

Before a redesign by landscape architect Walter Hood in 1998, Lafayette Square was called "Old Man's Park" in reference to the older, unhoused population that frequently congregated in this Oakland, CA park. It was also a popular service site: weekly food drop-offs, clothing donations, and healthcare service visits added to the park's appeal for unhoused locals. Through the design process, Hood heeded community requests to focus on creating "a space for everyone" - including unhoused park dwellers and visitors (Mozingo, 1995, 47). Embracing a phased renovation schedule, so that parts of the park were functional throughout construction, and maintaining intentionally flexible spaces allowed redevelopment to meet multiple needs with dignity. Hood compares the redesign of the park to a series of rooms, where disparate events can occur side-by-side without disruption or crowding (Bressi & Salvadori, 2001, 13). Images show how this flexibility and informality promotes unhoused resources and culture in the park: whether playing dominoes or setting up a barber shop in a restroom, needs are met easily and improvisationally.

Hood Design Studio

2.B RELEVANT LOS ANGELES PARK POLICIES

As of 2016, the City of Los Angeles had enacted 32 Anti-Unhoused restrictions and 17 Anti-Unhoused laws, which have been frequently expanded and re-litigated in recent years. As defined by researchers at the Berkeley Law Policy Advocacy Clinic who authored "California's New Vagrancy Laws: The Growing Enactment and Enforcement of Anti-Homeless Laws in the Golden State," these restrictions prohibit:

- Standing, sitting, and resting in public places (daytime)
- Sleeping, camping, and lodging in public places (nighttime)
- begging or panhandling
- food sharing with unhoused individuals (2, 8)

Perhaps the most well-known of these regulations in Los Angeles is Los Municipal Code (LAMC) 56.11, which criminalizes private property in public space. Expanded and re-adopted in 2016, the "Declaration of Legislative Intent" of the draft ordinance initially stated that,

> Public areas should be accessible and available to residents and the public at large for their intended uses... sanitary and accessible condition to prevent the misappropriation of public areas for personal use, and to promote the public health and safety by ensuring that public areas remain readily accessible for their intended uses. (Draft Ordinance 1841182, 2)

After extensive public outcry, the City officials amended the Ordinance to emphasize that some belongings (more specifically, a 60-gallon trash can's worth) must be allowed for individuals "who have no other alternatives for the storage of personal property" (Ordinance 1841182, 1). However, the ordinance's intent - banishment and criminalization - remain. The explicitly anti-unhoused nature of similar ordinances have been legally challenged in a variety of cities. In particular, ordinances that criminalize status rather than behavior violate the Eighth Amendment of the United States Constitution - "a state may not criminalize conduct that is an unavoidable consequence of being homeless" (Williams). Yet, as summarized below, LAMC continues to walk this narrow line with extensive regulations.

Racial Discrimination Against Unhoused Angelenos

When considering how regulations on public health and welfare are often inequitably yielded to limit unhoused right to space, it is also important to recognize that a disproportionate amount of unhoused Los Angeles County residents are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC). Most disparately, 34% of unhoused Angelenos are Black, as compared to 8% of County Residents, Compounded with racial profiling in policing - "Black adults are 3.8x more likely to be issued non-traffic infractions than white adults" - unhoused Black Angelenos in particular face active, systemic discrimination in public space (Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights, 16).
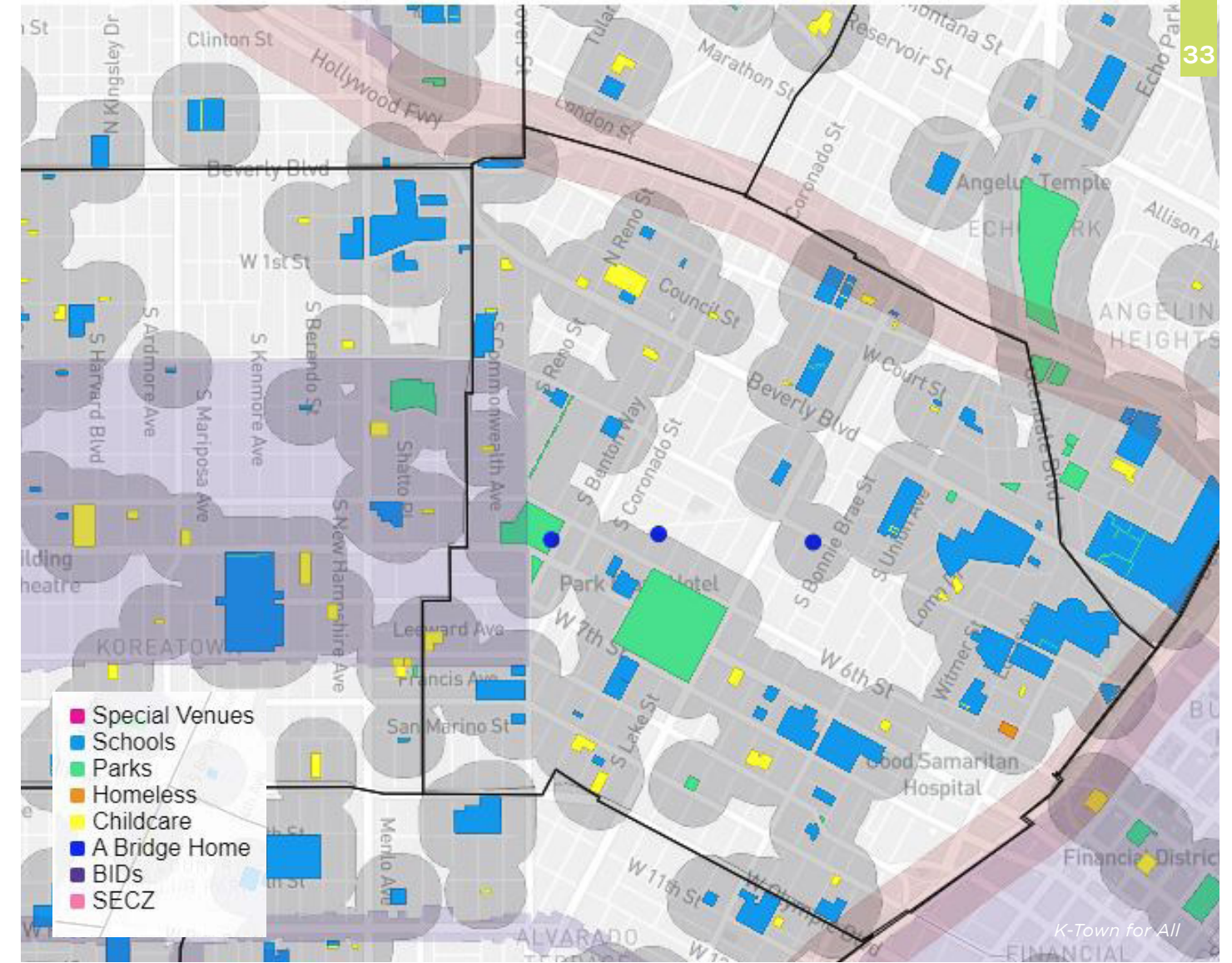
LAMC ORDINANCES COMMONLY USED FOR PARK-BANISHMENT

Los Angeles has some of the most extensive anti-unhoused laws and restrictions in the county. Many of these are used to criminalize unhoused status in park space, serving as a powerful tool of exclusion and othering. These are a few of the most commonly cited statutes from the Los Angeles Municipal Code.

PARK BANISHMENT (LAMC 63.44)

Regulates "entering, remaining, staying, loitering, camping and the use of tents in City parks."

SIT-LIE LAW (LAMC 41.18)

Criminalizes sitting or lying in the public right of way, including sidewalks, park paths, streets, underpasses, etc.

CONTAINER LAW (LAMC 56.11)

"Bulky Items" or amassed belongings which do not fit within a 60-gallon trash can may be confiscated if in the public right-of-way.

TENT LAW (LAMC 56.11)

Tents may only be erected in public space between 8PM and 6AM unless it is raining or the temperature is below 50 degrees.

PARK BANISHMENT (LAMC 63.44)

Regulates "entering, remaining, staying, loitering, camping and the use of tents in City parks."

CASE STUDY: "POLICY x DESIGN," GLADYS PARK

Produced by Jared Edgar McKnight for "Spatial Politics of Homelessness," a Landscape Architecture graduate course at the University of Southern California in Fall 2020, these diagrams of Gladys Park near Skid Row in Downtown Los Angeles use hatching to demonstrate where park regulations make the criminalization of unhoused park visitors possible. As McKnight writes, " in Los Angeles, when we are "welcomed" to a park, we are often greeted with a list of the rules of what we CANNOT do there..." Using such a sign at Gladys Park as his guide, McKnight uses denser hatches reveal areas of more severe citations. As is below, some level of behavior is prohibited in every part of the park.

Moving beyond analysis, McKnight projects a series of future possibilities for park regulations at Gladys. Instead of being greeted by rules signs, which he argues are " ultimately to make it easier to reference for the LAPD to write citations," visitors are met by signs that maintain shared expectations of park space while also pointing to meaningful, readily available alternative actions and services. The three drawings to the right break down the areas affected by the regulations to their right, while proposing new, "more welcoming," signs.

3. KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOR

3.A STRATEGIES FOR BREAKING BARRIERS OF COMMUNICATION AND PERSONHOOD

As evidenced in Lytle Hernandez (2014) and Reuter's (2017) work, using terminology that "others" unhoused individuals - especially when flattering housed neighbors' own self-perception by comparison - has been common for well over a century. Work by Toft (2014) and Hodgetts et al (2011) explicitly discusses how these linguistic patterns allow housed individuals to mentally distance themselves from unhoused individuals. Hodgetts el al (2011) employ the now loaded term "social distancing" as a well-established framework to describe "into the ways in which individual preferences, based in a person's membership of specific social in-groups, influence social relations with people from other out-groups" (1740). Though this term helpfully holds both complexity and specificity, I will employ the more simple "othering" to avoid confusion with the physical social distancing with which we have all become familiar with throughout COVID-19. For Hodgetts et al (2011),

> social distance [othering] can be increased by tarnishing the character of homeless persons as somehow flawed, deviant, mentally unstable, diseased and substance-dependent. Conversely, social distance [othering] is diminished through accounts of similarity, common humanity, neighbourliness and affinity. Distance [othering] is diminished when a domiciled woman is mistaken for a homeless person or others play football with homeless people or simply wave to a homeless man living in the park by one's building.... here distance [othering] is maintained through policy, ideology and institutional practices, including the policing, displacement and regulation of homeless bodies in urban settings. (1746)

Genaro Molina, Los Angeles Times

Suzanne Stein, Los Angeles Times

In "Contesting the Deviant Other: Discursive Strategies for the Production of Homeless Subjectivities," Toft further examines how linguistics reinforce such othering. Whether it is the way that City and Parks representatives re-phrase acts of sweeping, dispersing, or otherwise forcefully removing encampments as "cleaning," thus furthering associating unhoused individuals and their belongings with disposable, unsanitary waste that the City must remove; or the way that unhoused individuals themselves must then use binary, oppositional language to defend themselves (ie labelling camps as 'clean,' 'sober,' or 'safe' as a means to defend their own humanity); activist, antagonist, and policy language all reinforce tropes of unhoused existence as separate from housed dwelling (2014). False norms force unhelpful dichotomies, and the language of addressing these problematic bifurcations distances and disenfranchises unhoused individuals rather than building towards shared solutions or addressing root issues. This further contributes to Hodgetts et al's (2011) understanding of othering, and demonstrates how mental and semantic distancing pave the way for moral condemnation, further distancing identities, bodies, and even space. The authors call for an increase in shared spaces, dialectically (Toft) and physically/socially (Hodgetts et al). For Hodgetts et al (2011), questions of citizenship and belonging in the public sphere (discussed in section 3.A) intertwine with a need to break down othering: "If we are to ensure the inclusion of homeless people as citizens, we must develop ways to manage social distancing [othering] processes in urban setting" (1751).

CASE STUDY: WOODRUFF PARK

As revitalization plans and a wave of economic investment transformed downtown Atlanta in 2016, community stakeholders called for an equitable evolution of Woodruff Park. The park was a hub for unhoused Atlantans, but few other visitors. Initial outreach revealed a distrustful unhoused community: most people had negative prior experience seeking or receiving services and housing, and there seemed few opportunities for connection. Staffers took an innovative approach: improve the area with low-cost, non-displacing tactile urbanism interventions while building relationships with park dwellers. Movable furniture and a game cart, staffed by a "trust agent"- someone "friendly, helpful, and outside of formal systems"," like disadvantaged youth, or formerly unhoused or incarcerated persons - offered a first look at what the future park could be. In addition to games, the cart lends chargers, helps connect with services, and more. After two years of relationship building, the park was able to move in a full-time social worker, who has since found permanent housing for over 100 park dwellers. The game cart remains popular among both housed and unhoused visitors (Madison, 2020).

Central Atlanta Progress

Central Atlanta Progress

04
FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

OVERVIEW

Drawing from spatial analysis of park-based encampment reports, four diverse case studies, five interviews with unhoused individuals and activists, and asset mapping of three study parks (Echo, MacArthur, and Lafayette), I am able to paint a robust image of the issues faced by unhoused Angelenos dwelling in park spaces and the opportunities at hand.

Spatial Analysis provides a guide for where interventions could be most impactful, and informed selection of the three study parks. Case Studies show what is possible while providing insight into community response. Interviews center the voices, opinions, experiences, and desires of unhoused park dwellers, who are almost always excluded from the process of planning services, new regulations, outreach processes, and more. Finally, asset mapping and contextualizing the three study parks allows a deeper dive into divergent and shared characteristics between encampments, community perceptions, and park challenges.

Findings draw from:

1. **Spatial Analysis of Park-Based Encampment Reports**

2. **Case Studies**

3. **Interviews**

4. **Asset Mapping of 3 Study Parks**

MacArthur Park, German in Venice

Echo Park Lake, Luis Sinco, Los Angeles Times
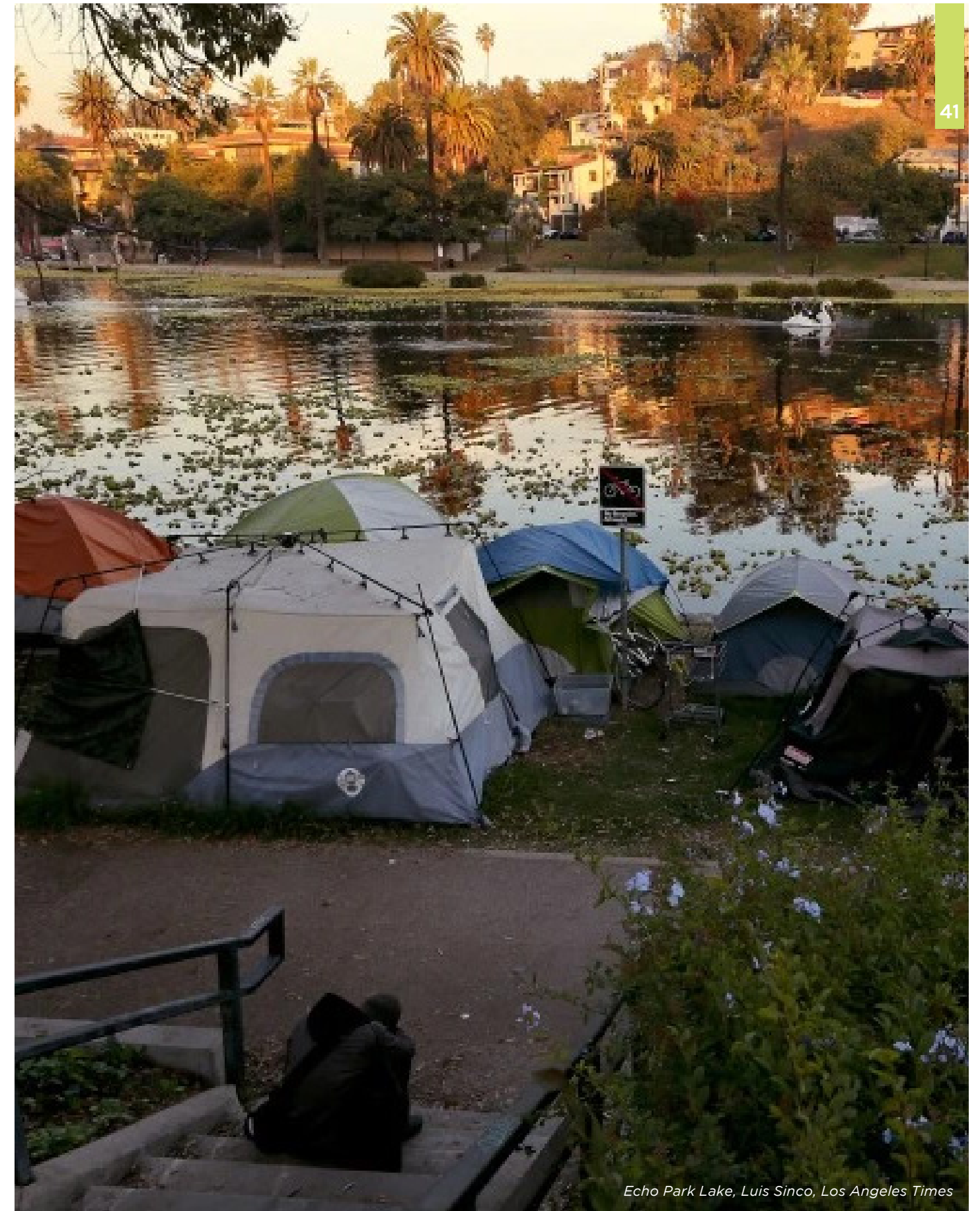
SPATIAL ANALYSIS

My analysis examines encampment reports made to Los Angeles' 311 call center from 2015 - mid December 2020 located within a 1/2 block radius of parks. I pay particular attention to reports in parks over 3 acres, with the goal of bolstering services for both housed and unhoused neighbors at locations where encampments are frequently reported. The goal of this research is to understand occurrences and characteristics of park-based encampment reports, and to select three statistically significant parks for further study.

ENCAMPMENT REPORTS
Overall, concatenating annual data from the City of Los Angeles between 2015-mid December 2020 revealed a steady increase in annual encampment reports, with a drop-off in 2020. As news reports, alternative data sources, and daily observations make it clear that occurrences of homelessness and encampments are more prevalent than ever, we can confidently assume that urban conditions under COVID-19 impacted this trend.

311 users reported a total of 163,638 encampments from 2015-20, in nearly every occupiable area of the City of Los Angeles (Fig 4.2). Reports are primarily concentrated in the downtown area, with secondary nodes on the westside (Venice Beach and VA areas) and in the San Fernando valley (Fig 4.1).

Approximately 27,800 (17%) of these reports were in park areas, with nearly all of Los Angeles 420 parks receiving multiple reports.

ANALYSIS GOALS

1. Understand where park-based encampments are reported

2. Typologize Parks
- *Size*
- *Number of Encampment Reports*
- *Spatial Autocorrelation*

3. Interpolate where services could be most impactful

Encampment Reports in Los Angeles, 2015-20

Fig. 4.2

Los Angeles Parks

- Community Park
- Community Regional Park
- Neighborhood Park
- Not Analyzed
- Park Node
- Pocket Park
- Regional Park
- Special Use
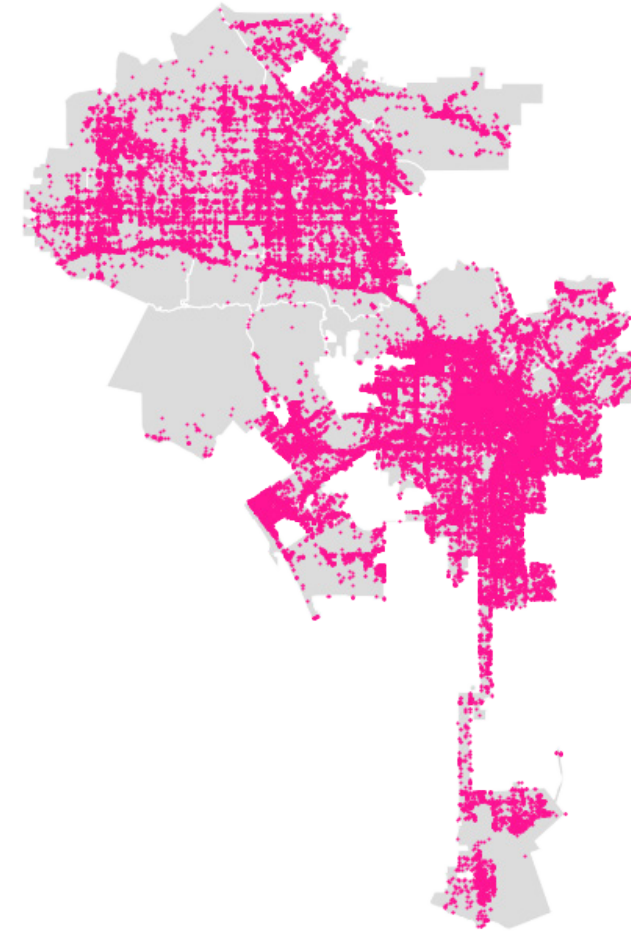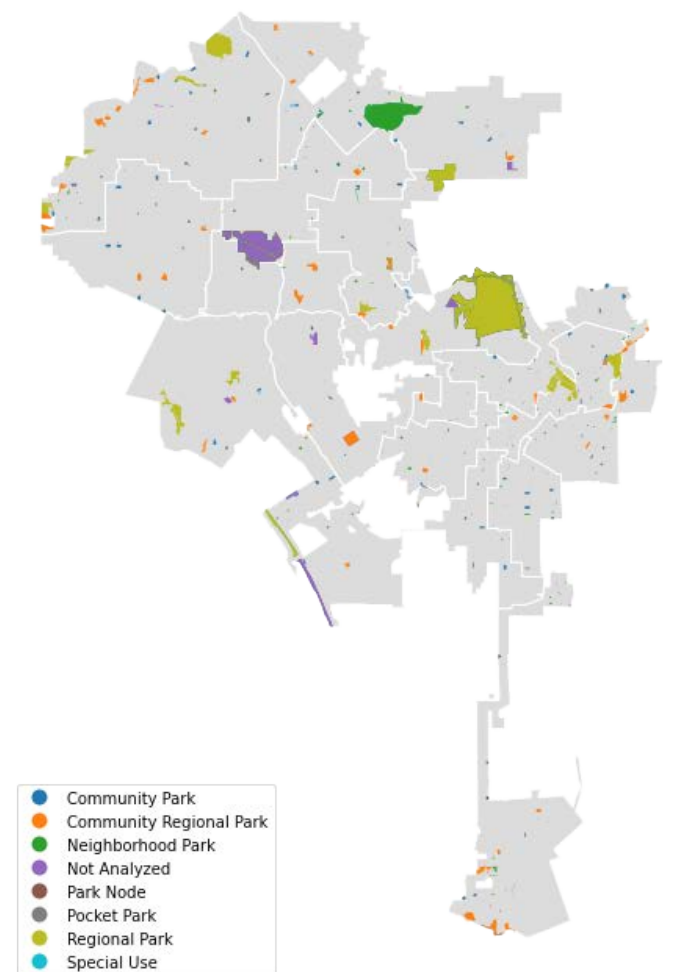
Fig. 4.3
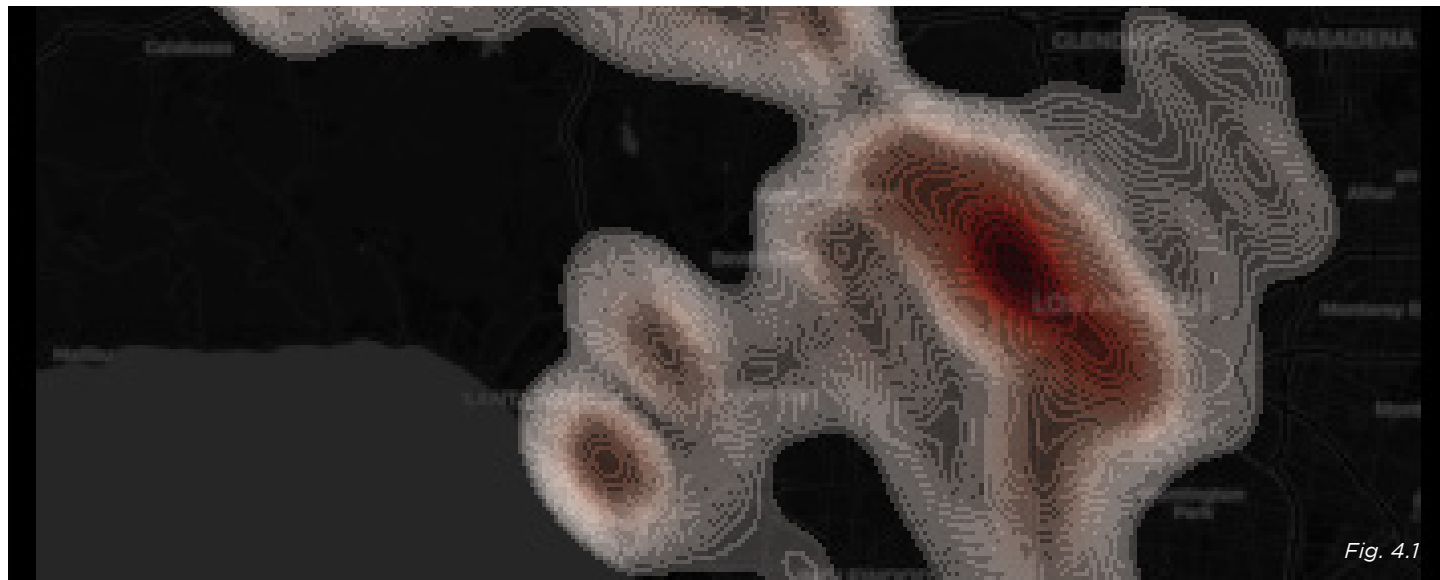
Fig. 4.1

CHARACTERISTICS OF PARK-BASED ENCAMPMENT REPORTS
An initial review (Fig 4.4) reveals two notable park areas: Sepulveda Basin, which received over 6,990 reports (25% of all park-based encampment reports), and combined Penmar Golf Course and Recreation Center, which received 2,885 reports, 2,500 of which users filed in 2020 alone. To better understand why these parks had such outsized reporting, I looked for qualitative data - news articles and social media posts. Briefly summarized to the right, these two contested park areas demonstrate that encampment reports speak just as much to neighborhood tension and the perceptions of housed neighbors as they do to the overall number of encampments in an area. In attempting to re-imagine the role parks play in communities, this is a productive data bias to identify.

NORMALIZING PARK-BASED ENCAMPMENT REPORTS
As seen in Fig 4.5, normalizing reports by park size (acreage) yields a different mix of parks with the most reports. Because small node and pocket parks are not ideal for adding additional programming/services, particularly while carefully managing relationships with housed neighbors, normalized analysis only includes parks of 3 or more acres. Notably, case study Pershing Square appears here. As previously mentioned, after a near-century of redesigns intended to push out unhoused Angelenos, the park is still a clear hub of unhoused dwelling - and little else.

Fig. 4.4

LA cleanup of Sepulveda Basin homeless camps begins final phase in the 'Bamboos'

At Sepulveda Basin, a large nature preserve and park has become a refuge for encamping individuals also seeking to avoid harassment by authorities (despite heightened attention due to fires in the area). Sepulveda Basin was swept, region by region, in January 2020. However, with no long term solutions available, many unhoused individuals have returned. Some have lived in the Basin for 6 years or longer (Chou, 2020).

Where Unhoused People Saw Freedom, Their Venice Neighbors Saw A 'War Zone'
BY AARON SCHRANK IN NEWS ON NOVEMBER 24, 2020, 6:22 PM

Penmar Golf Course became a contested node in 2020. Amidst a global pandemic, Venice homeowners targeted their complaints at a series of encampments providing shelter on the fringes of the Penmar Golf Course and Recreation areas (Schrank).

LA Park Areas with the Most Encampment Reports

Fig. 4.4

LA Park Areas with the Most Encampment Reports per Acre
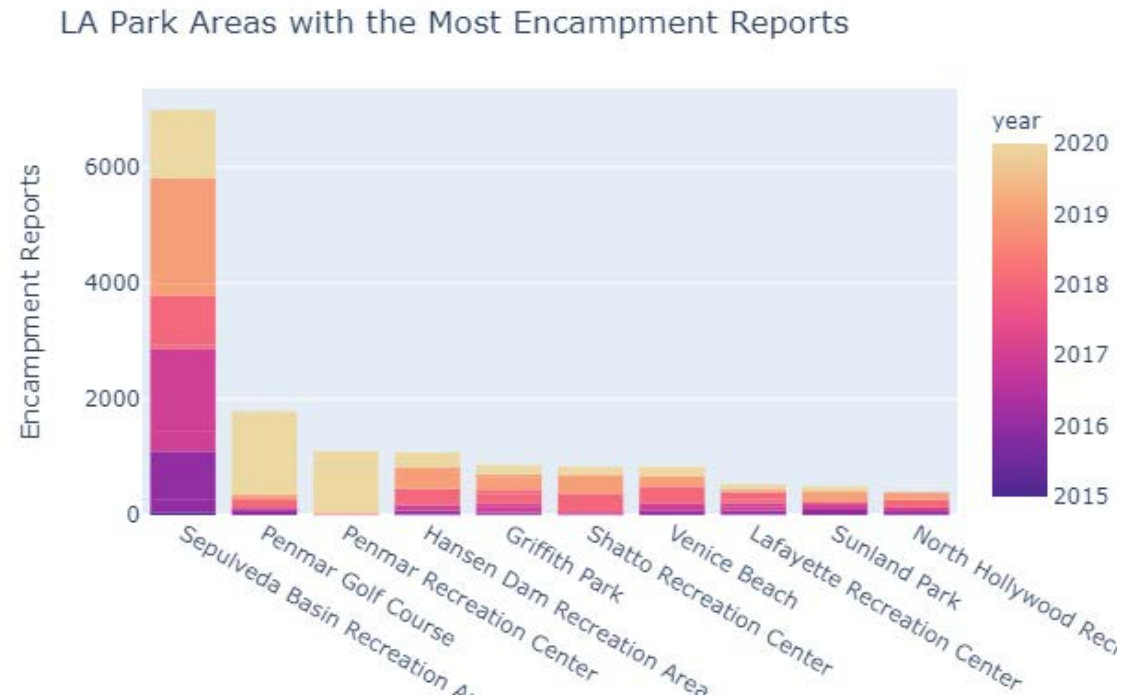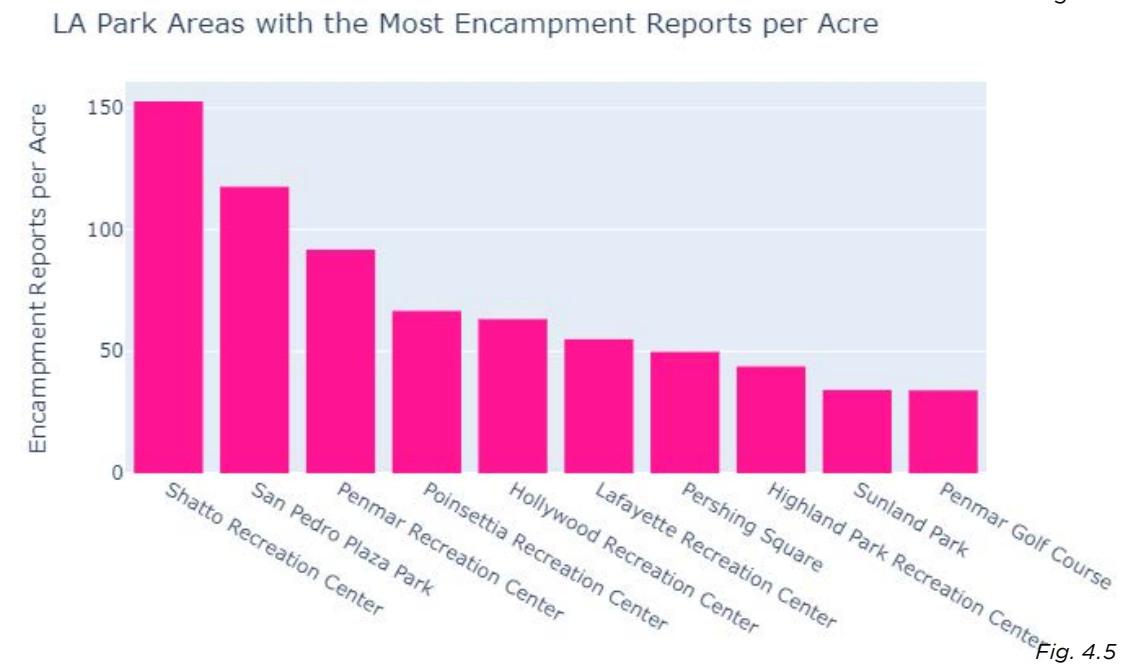
Fig. 4.5

STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT CLUSTERING
Mapping park-based reports per acre alone begins to reveal clear spatial axes through the city (Fig 4.7). Returning to the idea of neighborhood tension, I sought to compare parks with a high number of reports overall and a high number of reports compared to surrounding parks. I achieved this through assigning spatial lag and undertaking a spatial autocorrelation.

Parks with a statistically significant number of encampment reports per acre - in other words, parks where the amount of encampment reports per acre are both independently high and high when compared to neighbors - are clustered in the neighborhoods northwest of downtown (Fig 4.6).

Among these, the selection process for three study parks was comparatively subjective. I sought three parks with differing conditions in terms of size, character, and general perception. The final study parks include Echo Park Lake - where an organized encampment established inroads with neighbors pre-displacement - MacArthur Park, and Lafayette Park, which have vastly different perimeter conditions and levels of privatization/policing.
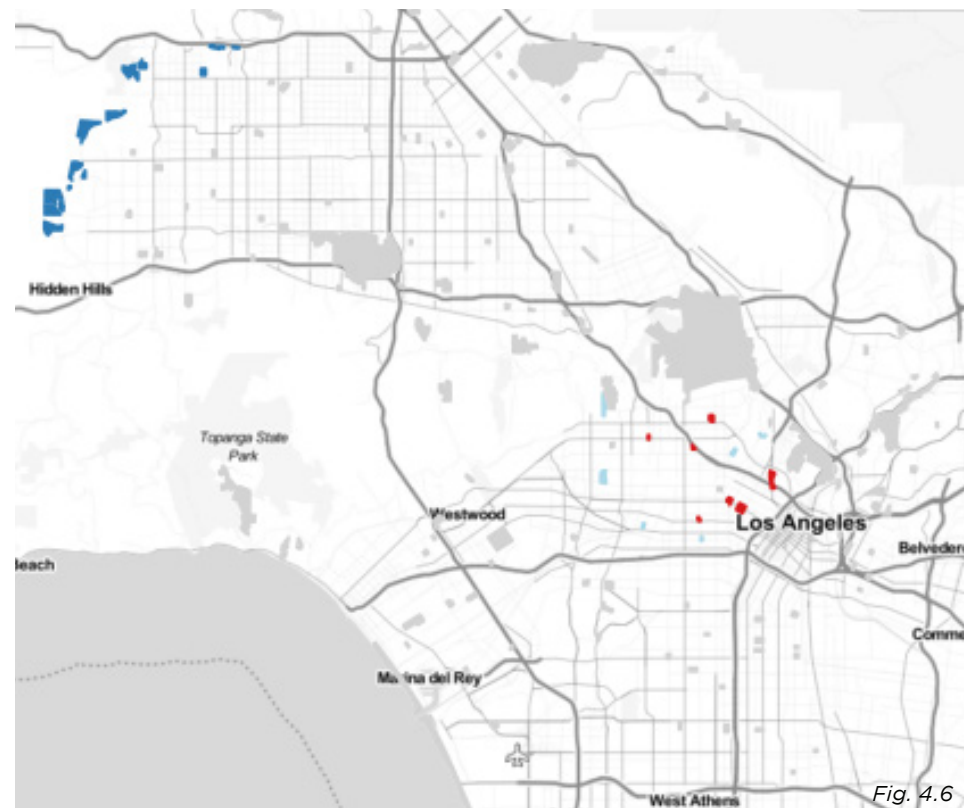
Fig. 4.6

TAKEAWAYS

- Encampment reports indicate more than the presence of an encampment: they are also a measure of neighborhood tension.

- Encampments are reported in nearly all of Los Angeles' over 400 parks.

- Park nodes and pocket parks receive a high number of reports, but their size may preclude scalable interventions.

- Parks with a statistically significant number of encampment reports per acre are clustered northwest of Downtown (Fig 4.6). They include:

  - Hollywood Rec Center
  - Lemon Grove Recreation Center
  - Barnsdall Park
  - Echo Park Lake
  - MacArthur Park
  - Lafayette Recreation Center
  - Seoul International Park

(6.45, 152.5

[0.00, 0.24]
(0.24, 1.01]
(1.01, 2.38]
(2.38, 6.45]
(6.45, 152.55]
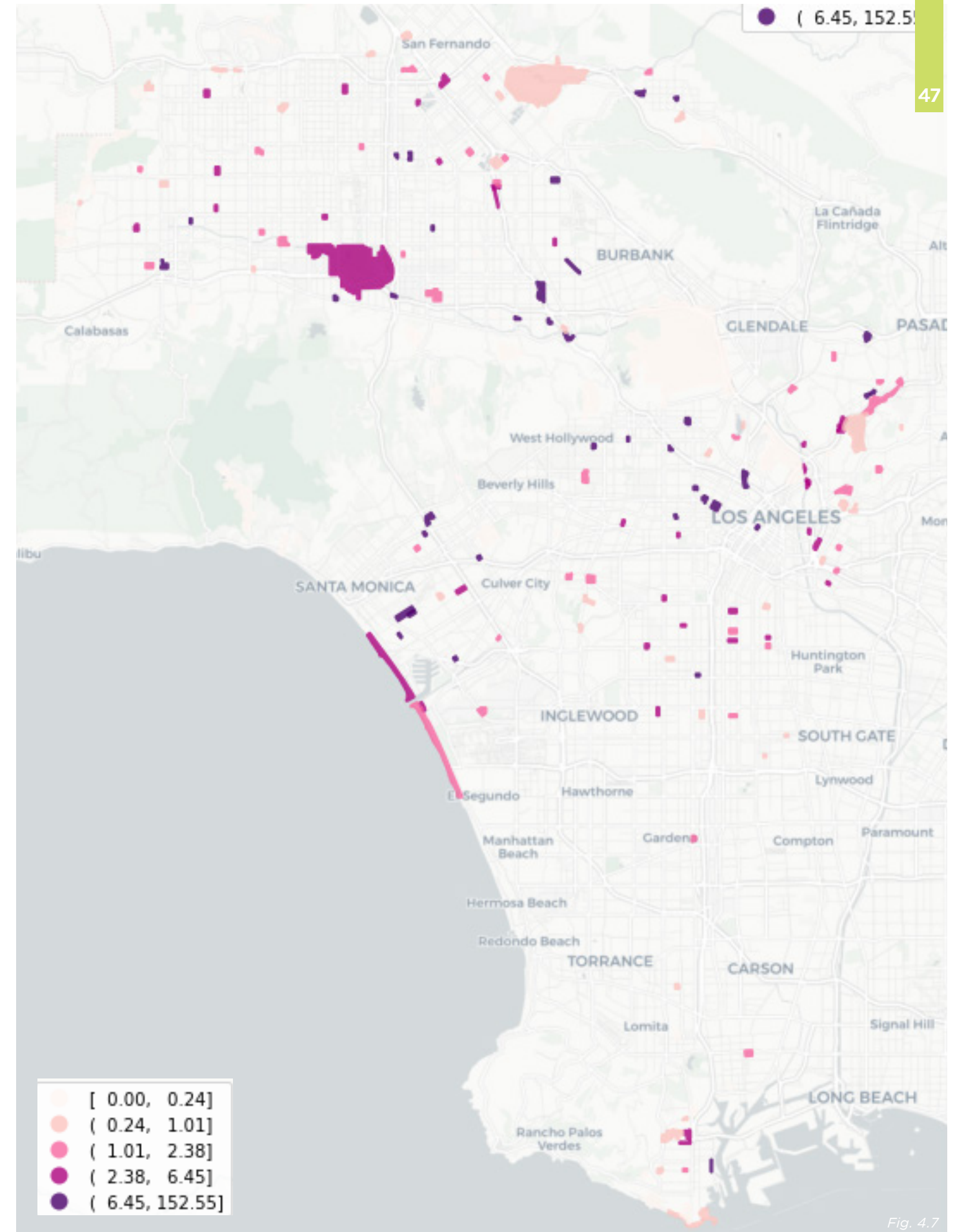
Fig. 4.7

CASE STUDIES

The four case studies highlighted in the Literature Review provide a range of lessons and guidelines.

- Attempts to "combat" houselessness by peeling away desirable amenities (shade, seating/resting areas, restrooms, security fences, etc), as in Pershing Square, also dissuade casual visitors of all domestic status from using the space. As the area becomes under-visited, dis-invested, and thus less policed, "undesirable" activity resumes.

- Instead, designing for flexibility of use and multiple populations - as in Lafayette Square - creates the opportunity to meet housed and unhoused park needs without sacrificing resources. Yet, recent reviews pulled from Yelp highlight how lack of maintenance and staffing has limited the park's long-term success.

- Many of the regulations present in parks, like Gladys Park, criminalize the act of being homeless and possessing personal belongings without offering alternatives.

- This leads to uneven policing - like when sit/lie laws justify removing unhoused Angelenos from parks without disrupting housed visitors engaging in similar rest/leisure - and furthers "othering" while degrading trust of city officials and systems.

- Approaches that begin with building trust - like the Woodruff Park Game cart, staffed by a helpful, positive, and non-institutional steward - are more likely to achieve success. Having an in-park case mananger was only possible and productive once this trust was in place.
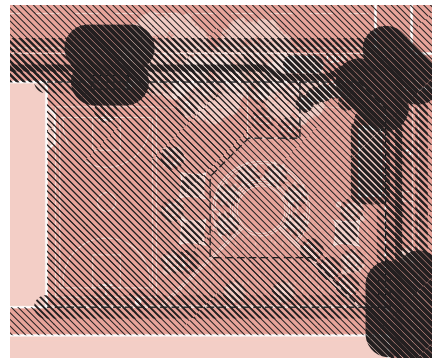
TAKEAWAYS

- Removing amenities limits visitors of all housing statuses

- Designing for a multiplicity of activities can mitigate tension; strategic staffing and dedicated maintenance enhances these efforts

- Inequitable regulations lead to inequitable policing without offering alternatives

- Building trust opens a path to lasting change

Hood Design Studio

INTERVIEWS

Interviews with three unhoused individuals and two activists revealed a variety of concerns, predominantly centered on policing; sanitation; service provision and unmet needs; and desires for more inclusive park space, summarized here. The word cloud in Fig 4.8, produced from interview notes, emphasizes priority wants & concerns. Appendix A provides a further breakdown of opinions and proposals by interviewee.

"They call police to extricate and shame me from the park - they take pictures, ask for more patrols... They insinuate that I'm sick or wrong."

"There's not enough services broadly, and those we do have aren't actually informed by unhoused people, their needs and asks"

"Both mental and physical wellness, and being able to see yourself as beautiful and important, are key for self-esteem."

POLICING

Every interviewee expressed concerns about policing. These concerns extended beyond LAPD to park staffers, rangers, and Business Improvement District employees with authority over parks, and in two interviews, to LAHSA, who frequently partner with LAPD. Interviewees spoke of fear of being ordered to move, having belongings taken, and a reticence to access services in any way linked to policing. One interviewee admitted to rough sleeping (only using a sleeping bag, as opposed to tent or tarp) solely to avoid being incriminated under tent or bulky item regulations, despite concerns for his own health, comfort, and personal safety. At the same time, two interviewees also cited gang activity as a concern in park space, further illustrating the unequal policing: unhoused Angelenos fear being policed for minor infractions, while fearing violence and illegal activity from others. Two interviewees further mentioned the stigmatization promoted by the expression of discriminatory regulations: large signs indicating danger (in particular for children) promote a view of unhoused park dwellers and visitors as a dangerous "other," rather than people living in public space.

SANITATION

All interviewees expressed a desire for better sanitation facilities, including more frequent trash and litter pick up, restrooms, and showers. They perceived sanitation as a primary source of stigma. The lack of ability to regularly shower and difficulty in reliably finding open restrooms dramatically restrict personal hygiene options, even as unhoused people are frequently stigmatized as dirty and thus further excluded from the same services which enable personal care. These requests were further contextualized within public safety concerns: several interviewees expressed support for port-a-potties but doubts about their overall level of sanitation and accessibility. Interviewees perceived conventional bathrooms as more sanitary, including for menstruating individuals, though one interviewee emphasized the necessity of privacy from "peeping toms." Interviewees emphasized the need for showers across the board, highlighting the precedent of beach showers, and the shared need of park athletes. One interviewee suggested these be coin or token operated as a soft deterrent to misuse. Interviewees also resented being blamed for waste in parks, particularly when park staffers refuse to clean around encampments or provide an adequate number of receptacles.

SERVICE PROVISION

Perceptions of success of existing services varied widely. In particular, interviewees offered contesting opinions on LAHSA: two had been housed through LAHSA outreach, two more found LAHSA's link to LAPD an insurmountable barrier to service access.

Interviewees emphasized the need for clear, upfront, and accessible communication about services. They expressed the difficulty of coordinating dozens of appointments with extensive regulations and limited information. These concerns also connected to the "trap" of conditional services, like being forced to move miles away as part of a service. Encounters like this further degrade trust between unhoused park dwellers and service providers, and lead to reticence to begin the long, precarious, often unsuccessful path to housing.

One service provider reflected on how re-building trust takes time, which is extremely limited when service providers seek to access multiple parks or other public spaces a day. This is further complicated by high turnover rates, which destroy the relationships case workers build with constituents and lead to individuals "slipping through the cracks."

UNMET SERVICE PROVISION

Four out of five interviewees emphasized a desire for mental health, harm reduction, and/or wellness services in park space. Suggested formats included pop-ups, semi-permanent stalls, needle drops, and workshops/classes. These ranged from drug use and psychiatry clinics to more casual programs, like activity-based support groups or "beauty wellness" classes to restore sense of agency and pride in appearance. One interviewee currently organizes similar workshops for single mothers, including unhoused mothers, and found that they offer a comfortable setting for unhoused and housed neighbors to engage. The same interviewee admitted worrying about the impact of publically mentally unwell or substance abusing unhoused individuals on her children, expressing that she remembers feeling uncomfortable around unhoused people as a child and knows her kids feel the same.

Three interviewees highlighted how Mutual Aid practices often fill service gaps, and tend to do so with no conditional requirements or stigma. One cited Mutual Aid's foundational grounding in abolition theology as key to this success.

DESIRES

Interviewees each proposed a place for unhoused people to safely, legally dwell in parks, ranging from a place where tents could be up all day to Safe Parking. They conditioned such proposals with need for active involvement in co-creating the parameters of these spaces. They highlighted how often, spaces for unhoused dwelling are in undesirable areas, overly policed, and subject to restrictions that disqualify a large number of people with the most need (like safe parking lots requiring license, registration, a working vehicle and no criminal record).

One interviewee expressed the need for a change of view among LA park users: that (often wealthier) housed neighbors treating parks as a product to use rather than a place to be (a more Central American convention) has negatively changed the role of parks in neighborhoods and further excluded unhoused park users. Several interviewees suggested classes and library programs, whether for reading, science, or art - opportunities which would appeal to the wider community. One interviewee proposed pairing learning opportunities with a community garden filled with indigenous plants.

Fig. 4.8

- **"Nothing for Us Without Us"** interviewees want to see more services and allowances for dwelling in park space, but worry such provisions will continue to be over-policed and discriminatory if not planned with active involvement from unhoused individuals.

- **"A Place to Be"** unhoused individuals, especially those not living in a vehicle, have no destigmatizing, welcoming place to go to participate in everyday life. Even when visiting a park for pleasure or leisure, unhoused Angelenos are seen as living in the park and subject to code violations. Furthermore, interviewees point out that they are inequitably criminalized for activities - like recreational drug and alcohol use - which housed people regularly undertake in their own homes. Allowing tents up in designated areas "without being bothered by LAPD" would create a space to feel safe, to rest, and offer dignity through a small bit of privacy.

- **"Wellness"** interviewees highlighted the need for mental, as well as physical wellness, ranging from therapy to harm reduction to wellbeing classes and workshops, which could utilize park amenities or inspire new ones, like indigenous planting gardens.

- **"I am a Person - no 'too'"** interviewees emphasized how being denied access to sanitary services, including from lack of public showers and restrooms, as well as refusals by City officials to clean park-based encampment areas or provide more sanitation tools, increases perception among housed neighbors that they are dirty and different. They stressed that discriminatory signage also implies they are dangerous.

- **"Unhoused Needs are Human Needs"** the vast majority of suggestions made by interviewees - more resources, pop-up programing, gardens, more clean restrooms - are opportunities that also benefit housed neighbors.

STUDY SITE: ECHO PARK LAKE

CONTEXT

As with many of Los Angeles' early parks, real estate speculation drove Echo Park Lake's 1892 development from resevoir to park: as Alvarado St began to form a spine through then-wealthy Los Angeles, developers favored the idea of park-and-waterfront housing (Echo Park Historical Society). The young park thrived until the 1940s, when the beginnings of suburbanization, auto reliance, and shifts of banking centers to the growing west side led to a dispersal of wealthy citizens (Davis, 1990). Immigrants - particularly Mexican and Central American families - moved in, and the area began a new era as an ethnic enclave. The park decayed after decades of urban disinvestment, but was still positively portrayed in Mexican-American art from this era, particularly the works of Carlos Almaraz (Carlos Almaraz: Playing with Fire, 2017). In the late 1980-90s, a wave of urban renewal paved the way for the neighborhood's rapid gentrification over the past 15 years.

Until Council District 13 permanently fenced the park in late March 2021, it was known for its prolific vending scene, active lake, and as the center of unhoused encampment politics in LA. The encampment exploded in size and level of organization after LAMC 56.11 was partially suspended in light of COVID-19. Encampment residents identify as "Echo Park Rise Up," a self-organized community (Echo Park Rise Up: A Vision of Love and Community, 2020). In the words of arts activist Kristy Lovich, they "showed us what is possible... serv[ing] as visionary experts with the skills and insight necessary not only for ending unsheltered homelessness but for transforming the well-being of all residents in our communities" (2020). Echo Park Rise Up consistently organized to keep encampment dwellers safe, sanitary, and socially supported. When city park officials said they would stop cleaning around the encampment, Rise Up organized cleaning teams of unhoused park dwellers and housed visitors. When the City cut plans for showers, Rise Up built their own wooden shower cubicles, complete with water heaters. And when the City cut off water sources to the encampment, Rise Up joined forces with an activist group to organize water donations and maintain COVID-safe sanitation stations. Rise Up also ran an auto-constructed community kitchen with a donation-based pantry, a pop-up medical tent, charging stations, and community garden open to both housed and unhoused. They encouraged crafts like landscaping, lighting, and signage outside of tents, and weekly faith services. The encampment sought to compensate everyone who undertook service work, from cooking to cleaning, as part of their established Jobs Program (Echo Park Rise Up: A Vision of Love and Community, 2020).

Echo Park Lake by the numbers:

Initiated in **1860** as a reservoir,

In **1892** Echo Park Lake was christened.

Today, it consists of:

a **13** acre urban lake surrounded by

16 acres of recreational open space,

which hosted over **100** tents with varying numbers of occupants until March 24, 2021.

Upon reopening on May 26, 2021, the park is fully fenced, with only 4 entry points.
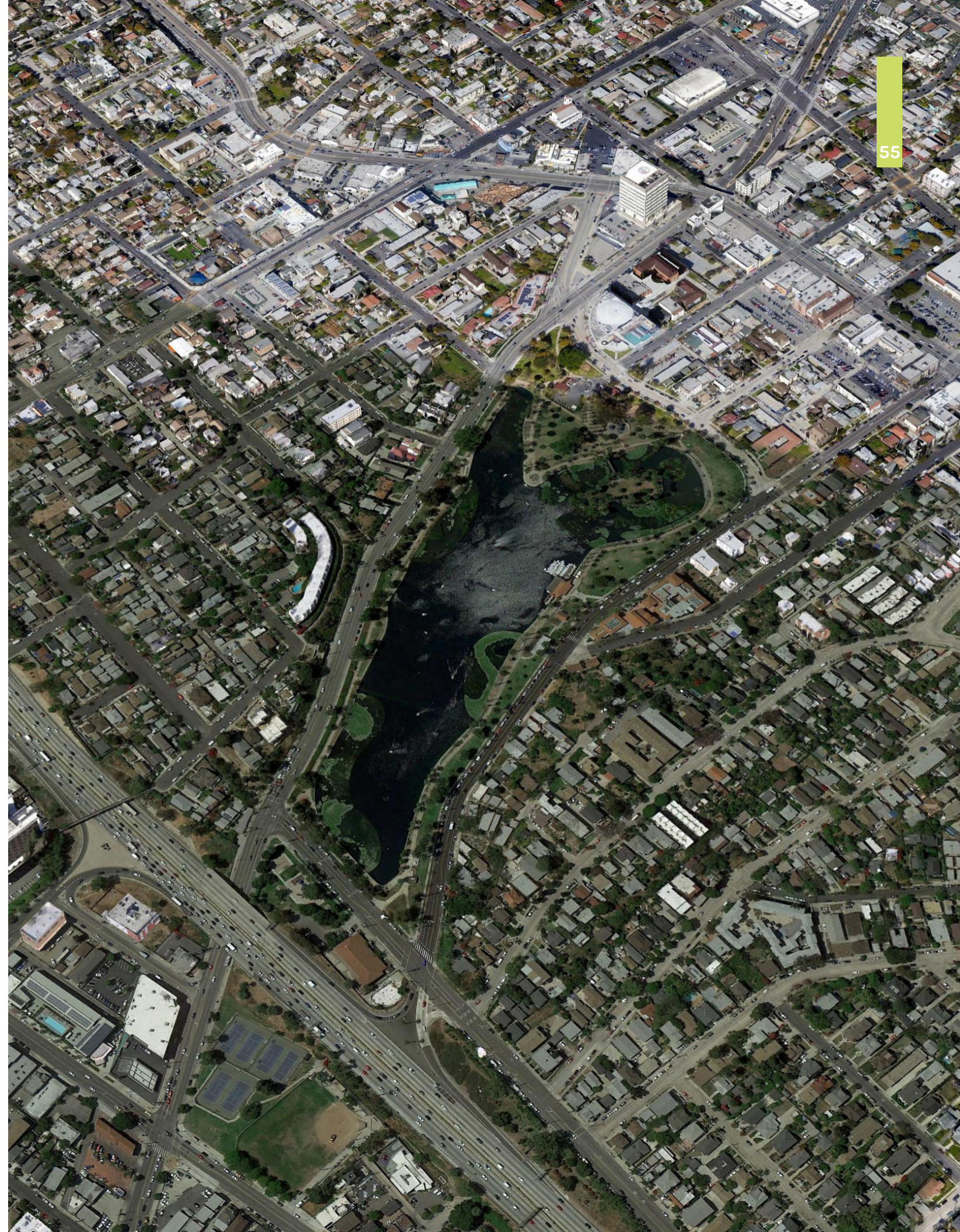
The 101 Freeway and Bellevue Ave bisect the southern tip(s) of the park, separating many of the sports fields and dedicated program areas from the main park. Encampment tents are concentrated at the northern lake inlet, spilling out to ring the lake. Tents are denser to the East, near Echo Park Ave.

PASSIVE PROGRAMS
13 Picnic Tables
40 Benches
Birdwatching

ACTIVE PROGRAMS
- Recreation Center
  - Classrooms
  - Multipurpose Room
- 6 Tennis Courts
- 2 Basketball Courts
- Baseball Diamond
- 3 Playgrounds
- Fishing
- Pedal Boats
- Outdoor fitness station

RESOURCES & AMENITIES
- 2 Restroom Blocks, both closed

AUTOCONSTRUCTED AMENITIES
- Community Kitchen + Pantry
- Charging Center
- Community Garden
- 2 Showers
- Worship/Shrine Space

TAKEAWAYS

- Tents are present in every area of the park

- The City has consistently cut services to the encampment, which has persisted with limited community support

- Echo Park Rise Up offered lessons on what resources encampment dwellers seek in park space, and how autonomous communities organize self-care
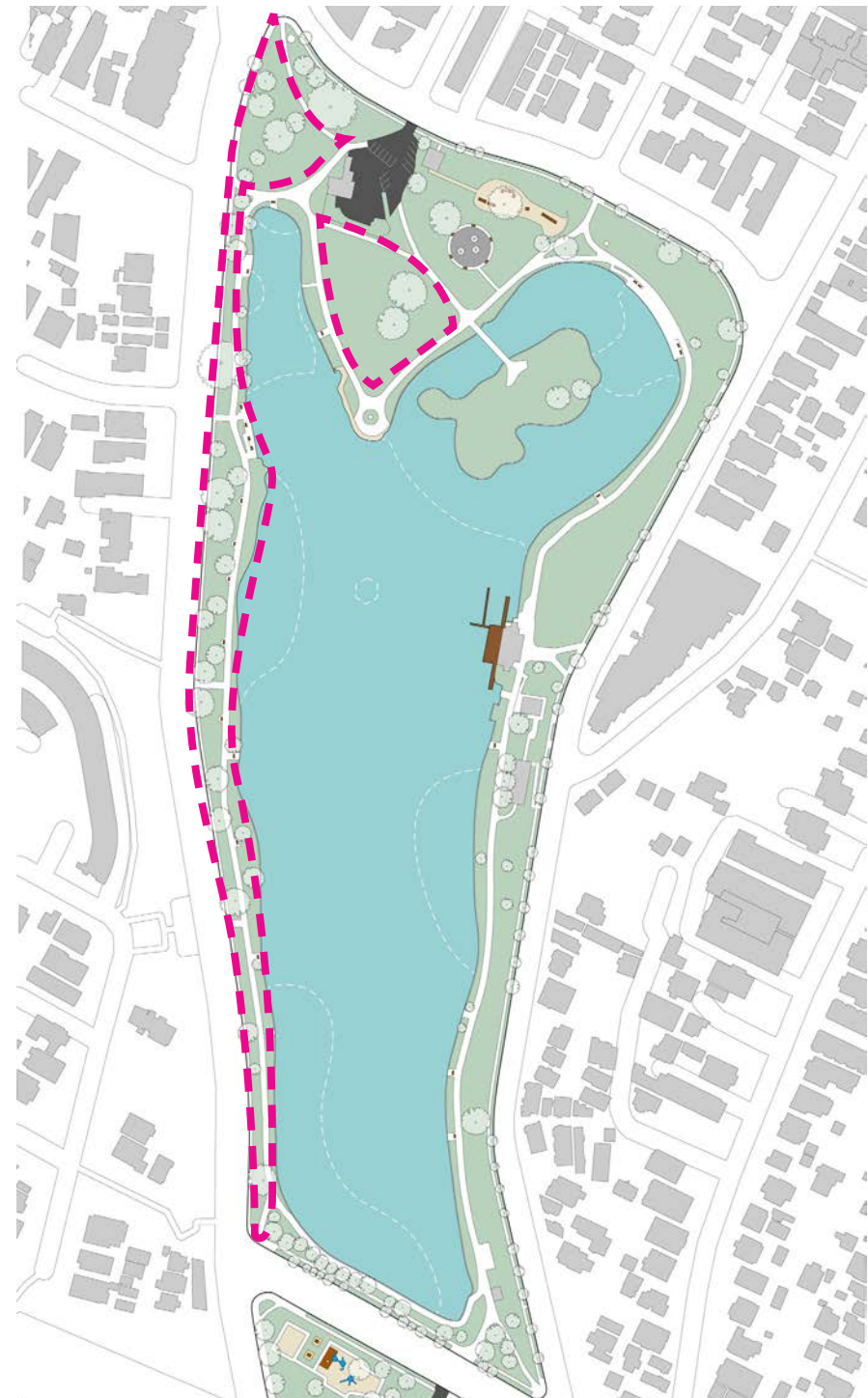
existing encampment*

*prior to March 24 park closure and mass displacement
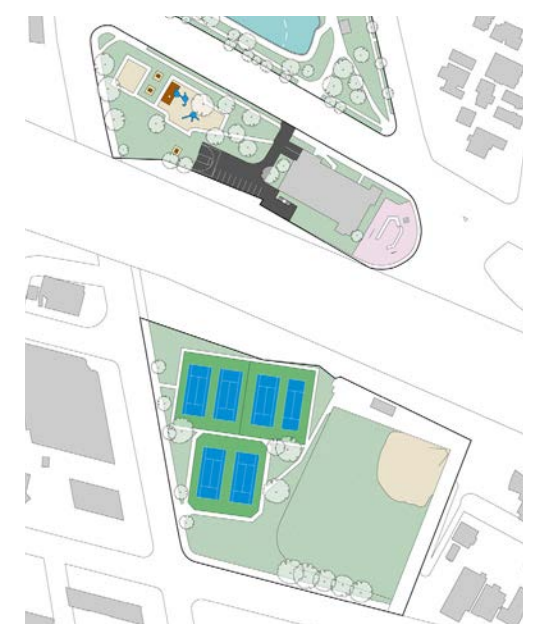
STUDY SITE: MACARTHUR PARK

CONTEXT

Initially a 35-acre, all-but-unmarketable swamp, real estate pressures in the Westlake neighborhood incentivized the transformation from undeveloped dump into park space in 1886. Designed as a 35-acre park for lakeside recreation and leisure, in 1934 a Wilshire Boulevard extension bisected the park and shrank the lake footprint (Los Angeles Conservancy). In the same decade, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation redlined much of Westlake for its mixed-use character, aging housing stock, and "ethnic mixing" (Digital Scholarship Lab, 2016).

As redlining limited financing opportunities for the neighborhood and housing stock continued to degrade, the neighborhood evolved - first into a working class, job-adjacent center and then into an immigrant neighborhood as Central American and Mexican migration accelerated in the 1980s. The park evolved in turn: from a space of leisure to one of protest, gay cruising, informal economies (street vending and drug dealing), arts (including Levitt Pavilion), and a shelter of last resort for the growing unhoused population (Los Angeles Conservancy; LA Controller, 2017). These complex histories often lead to contested narratives of who MacArthur Park is "for," stereotyping of the park space as dirty and dangerous, or evidence of the park as a site of Los Angeles' multicultural hybridity.

In addition to underresourced services, persistent encampments have contributed to this perception of dirtiness and crime - as established by Kathryn Reuter in "Bodies Made Public," housed people often equate the "homeless body" with being "unclean" and "unwell" (2017, 6). In 2017, a Los Angeles Controller's Office report grading parks on "cleanliness, amenities, and more" listed MacArthur as the park "most afflicted" with homelessness, citing 20 tents and broken items (9). Accordingly, the Controller rates the park a "C-,"the lowest grade given, with overall cleanliness and restrooms each graded an "F" (3, 40). The same report suggests social services staffing as a priority solution, as "Evicting the homeless... will not solve the problem if they have nowhere to go" (9).

From an outside perspective, the encampment at MacArthur Park is not as clearly organized as that at Echo Park Lake was. Yet, many long-standing neighborhood groups regularly organize for unhoused and food insecure individuals. For example, "Lunch in the Park" began serving twice a week in late 2019, and Revolutionary Autonomous Communities LA (RAC LA) has served every Sunday since 2018 (Brown, 2020; RAC LA, 2018).

MacArthur Park by the numbers:

In **1865**, after an unsuccessful attempt to sell a plot of undeveloped swampland, future MacArthur Park became an informal city dump.

In **1886**, nearby real estate developers won the right to begin a four year park transformation.

Today, it consists of:

32 acres of recreational open space and a large lake,

Divided by Wilshire Boulevard in 1934.
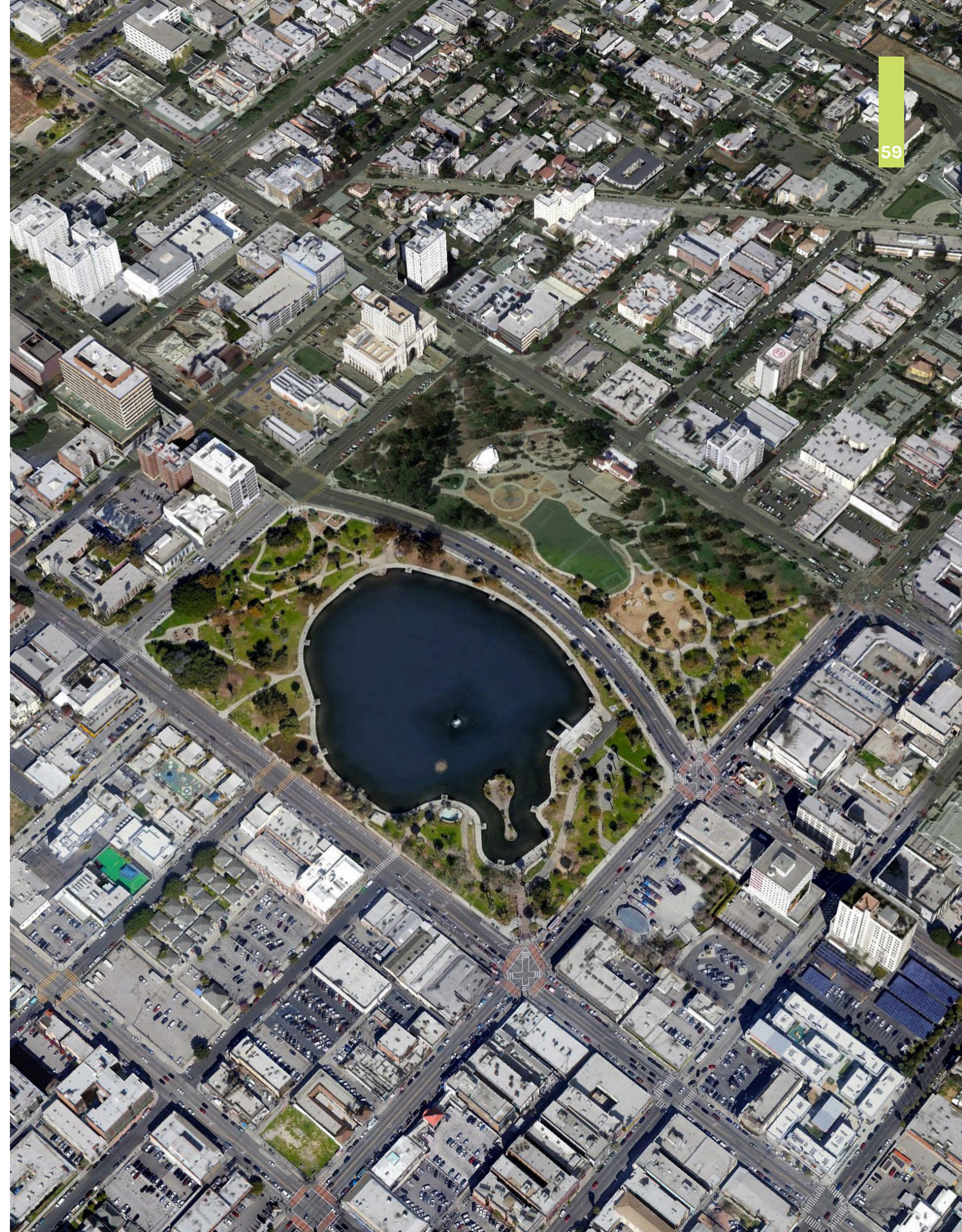
Wilshire Boulevard divides "North Park" (soccer field, playgrounds, and performance pavilion) from "South Park" (lake, vendors, and encampments). Encampment tents are concentrated along the Southern sidewalk of Wilshire (possibly to avoid citation for being "in" the park), and the Northeast corner of South MacArthur Park.

PASSIVE PROGRAMS
- 14 Artworks / Monuments
- 5 Picnic Tables
- 82 Benches

ACTIVE PROGRAMS
- Recreation Center
  - Classrooms
  - Multipurpose Room
- Soccer Field
- Levitt Pavilion
- 2 Playgrounds
- BBQ Pits
- Fishing
- Pedal Boats
- Outdoor fitness station

RESOURCES & AMENITIES
- 1 Restroom Block (exterior restrooms welded shut in 2017 at LAPD request)
- 1 Sanitizing Station
  - 2 port-a-potties
  - 1 ADA port-a-potty
  - 1 handwashing station

TAKEAWAYS

- The encampment lacks social, service-oriented, and infrastructural resources

- Neighbors include both active volunteers and strong opponents of unhoussed living in park space

- This park is frequently described as dirty and dangerous

existing encampment

STUDY SITE: LAFAYETTE PARK

CONTEXT

In many ways, the founding of Lafayette Park mirrors the history of MacArthur - which lies only 4 blocks to its east and was initially meant to connect through a green belt along Wilshire, now being revisited in plans for the Wilshire Boulevard Eco Corridor (City of Los Angeles Urban Design Studio, 2020). Characterized from an early period by park-based arts efforts and social clubs, the 1929 dedication of still-standing Felipe de Neve Branch Library cemented the park's history of public-private and public-institutional relationships (Historic Resources Group, 2014). Like MacArthur, the park struggled with disenvestment in the mid 20th century, though was still beloved by neighbors. In an informal conversation, a current park-adjacent worker described Lafayette as "the park my parents would let me go to growing up" (in contrast with MacArthur). New development is rapidly reshaping the park, but relics of disinvestment still stand - notably the drained reflecting pool and neglected garden behind the library, which is where encampments tend to cluster. institutions set into the Park shape and activate Lafayette, with varying levels of public access: the Superior Court to the northwest (1972), branch library to the north (1929), Heart of Los Angeles (HOLA) after school enrichment center to the northeast (2020), Recreation Center to the east, and Hope on Lafayette (a Bridge Home shelter) to the south (2021).

Unhoused presence in and around the park is a primary concern at monthly neighborhood Security Committee meetings, which I have attended intermittently since September 2019. These concerns are especially strong among stakeholders who serve children and families, and have led to occasional reticence for more services that could potentially attract more unhoused park dwellers and more litter (such as hot food distribution). According to Security Committee representatives, some locals also express that it is enough to take care of "their own" - why should they also struggle to help unhoused individuals from other neighborhoods or even other states? The "othering" at hand is then twofold: othering as unhoused, and othering as presumed outsiders.

Hope on Lafayette replaces Lafayette Park's tennis courts with 87 temporary shelter beds (Mayor's Office, 2019). While undeniably a positive, this approach differs sharply from the intents of this research: the shelter is heavily secured, inaccessible to non-sheltered housed or unhoused neighbors, and the catalyst for a proposed Special Enforcement Zone (SEZ), which funds and allows aggressive anti-unhoused policing throughout the park area. Temporary housing is the sole goal of the project, with local-themed artwork along the exterior nodding to but not actively engaging with the broader park or community.

Lafayette Park by the numbers:

In **1899**, 35 acres of tar and oil-land was donated to the City explicitly as park space.

In **1924**, Felipe de Neve Branch Library and associated gardens were dedicated.

In **1963**, a senior center was added. It was re-dedicated as a recreation center in 2011.

Today, it consists of:

9 acres of recreational open space,

Bordered by the **2020** HOLA Campus

and **2021** Hope on Lafayette Shelter

Lafayette Park is fully fenced. Combined with the presence of institutional neighbors, this may account for the perceived increased safety over MacArthur Park. Yet, combined with SEZ policing, this helps enforce a barrier to equitable park access by unhoused Angelenos.
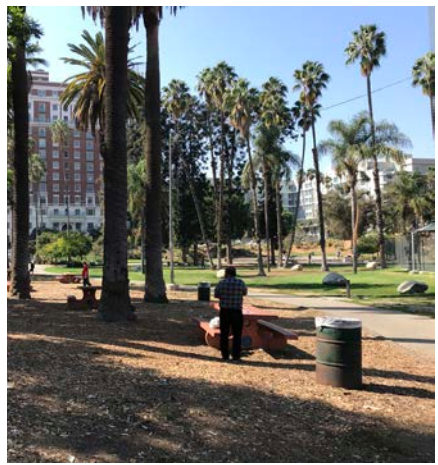
PASSIVE PROGRAMS
- 14 Picnic Tables
- 6 Benches + informal seating on retaining walls

ACTIVE PROGRAMS
- Recreation Center
  - Classrooms
  - Multipurpose Room
  - Cooling Center
- Soccer Field
- 2 Basketball Courts
- Tot Lot + Playground
- Skate Park

RESOURCES & AMENITIES
- 1 Restroom Block
- 12 Trash Bins
- Felipe de Neve Branch Library
- Heart of Los Angeles (HOLA)

TAKEAWAYS

- Lafayette Park is characterized by public-institutional and private spaces within the park

- While the park is home to many community-serving uses, the only explicitly unhoused-serving use (shelter) is exclusively for its own residents, and the policing it instigates further limits unhoused existence in park space.

- Neighbors stigmatize unhoused park dwellers on their cleanliness, wellbeing, and status as "outsiders"

known encamping areas
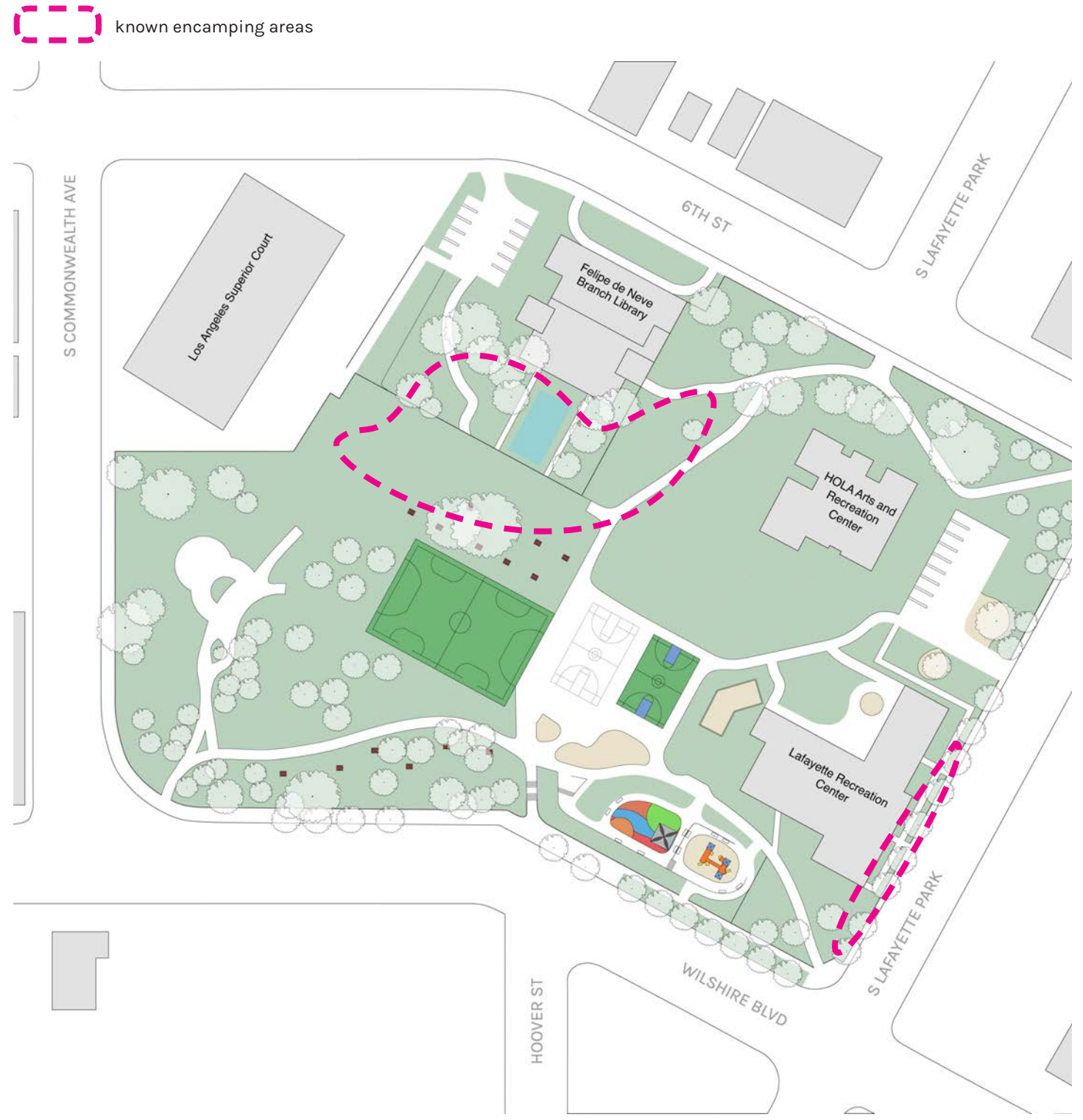
4. CONCLUSION

Though the spatial analysis, case studies, interviews and study parks each reveal different narrative threads, the findings from each analysis component begin to build a cohesive story. As evidenced by the sheer number of encampment reports; the "Policy x Design" case study highlighting how regulations effectively and inequitably limit unhoused use of every square foot of park space; and first-person accounts in interviews, unhoused living and *being* in park space is highly policed. Established throughout my literature review, to varying degrees, encampments have been prevalent in the City of Los Angeles, including in park space, since the late 1800s. Policing of these encampments and other unhoused activity in parks has been documented for just as long. And yet - homelessness in park space, and tension with neighbors, persists. Paired with stripping away shade, rest areas, and other amenities, as in case study Pershing Square, policing still fails to mitigate presence of unhoused dwellers, much less address the root causes. Swept encampments frequently return, as evidenced by repetitive reports and in the stories of Sepulveda Basin and Penmar Golf Course, in addition to all three study parks. As interviewees attest, in these cases policing only further disrupts both trust and progress toward stability for unhoused individuals, who current regulations criminalize for owning belongings in public space; for resting; for asking for help. If the same codes which enable this policing are meant to ensure public health and safety, it is difficult to claim they have effectively improved either: parks are receiving low grades for cleanliness in county assessments, which actively encourage more supportive staffing (as at MacArthur), and interviewees claim the rules themselves actually imply unhoused individuals are themselves a threat. In short, in varying ways each analysis metric demonstrates that policing and the current system of regulations fail to meaningfully address or alleviate the problems associated with park-based dwelling, for unhoused or housed park users. The City of Los Angeles must acknowledge that encampments have been part of our urban fabric since before the founding of Hollywood (1887), and that the same cycles of displacement and disinvestment will only yield the same tragic results.

Instead, case studies, interviewee suggestions, and analysis of the existing conditions of three study parks lay the groundwork for an alternative approach, based in providing resources over penalization, re-building trust, and opening paths to housing instead of ticketed stumbling blocks. With funding and staffing, these shifts are possible, and stand to benefit housed neighbors as well. This mutual benefit is crucial, as destigmatizing the very existence of unhoused Angelenos is a necessary step towards long-term open space and housing interventions. Examples follow in "Recommendations."

Sara Suarez, Hyperallergic

05
RECOMMENDATIONS

OVERVIEW

After over 150 years of encampments being present in Los Angeles, it is past time to contend with the reality of this informal interim housing measure in a way that is supportive and service-oriented. By building relationships with both unhoused Angelenos, many of whom are distrustful of City and County systems that have previously disenfranchised or forgotten them, and housed Angelenos, many of who have long-held stigmas against unhoused people, the City stands to become a leader on addressing homelessness and the tensions which frequently limit housing production. The recommendations which follow - for designated space, participatory planning, staffing/maintenance, and programming - seek to address these needs.

In addition to these comparatively high-level recommendations, I suggest three specific interventions in each of the study parks: Echo, MacArthur, and Lafayette. These interventions are meant to bring recommendations to a humanistic level while testing particular locational preferences and needs, and to demonstrate that interventions serving unhoused park dwellers may also serve to make the park more dignified for all. Speculative interventions rely heavily on design-thinking, but have ramifications and considerations extending into systems design, rather than solely physical design. Interventions proposed here include:

- a City fact-finding mission and study in collaboration with the established encampment at Echo Park

- a designated encampment zone at MacArthur Park with commensurate infrastructure and maintenance

- a gathering space at Lafayette Park outfitted for arts workshops serving housed and unhoused park visitors

The theory of a "speculative urban intervention" draws from the UCLA Urban Humanities Initiative and cityLAB-UCLA, both of which attest that these future projections offer a new way to consider urban change.

Examples of speculative interventions (pictured to right) include a proposal for a new "ecological certification" for urban design; a performance art piece by CODEPINK protesting urban housing priorities; a by drawing by Kosmos speculating how a riverbed could form a new park for Basel; and renderings by Gensler imaging how a "new town square" may look.

1. DESIGNATED SPACE

Decriminalize and formalize park-based encampment zones through a pilot program, including supportive infrastructure and design guidelines serving unhoused and housed park users.

As expressed in interviews and evidenced in encampment report data, case studies, and LAHSA reports, unhoused Angelenos need a place to be. That includes a space to access all basic human needs: rudimentary shelter (shade and privacy), sanitation (toilets, sinks, and showers), power and device charging, and access to food and a safe way to prepare it. Further needs that may be met by providing designated spaces for informal unhoused dwelling include regular access to health services (mental and physical), temporary storage space, and long-term building of relationships with service providers who may be able to establish a path to housing. As unhoused interviewees themselves pointed out, many of these resources benefit everyone: particularly low income park users. Paired with staffing and maintenance (Recommendation #3), such resources can have a transformative affect on park spaces.

A pilot program to allow encampment zones in designated Los Angeles parks, particularly if informed by participatory planning (Recommendation #2), would legitimize such efforts, which are already being auto-constructed by collectives of unhoused individuals across the city. Incorporating design guidelines into this pilot program is one way to "design for dignity" while also ensuring safety and strategies to mitigate between public park space and more private dwelling space.

1. Decriminalize equitable park use for unhoused Angelenos by identifying and amending specific codes and regulations, such as LAMC 56.11.

2. With encamped park dwellers, identify underutilized and resource-adjacent areas in a selection of test parks.

3. Look to existing examples of designated encampment zones, particularly in the Pacific Northwest.

4. Consult with unhoused residents, designers, and social workers to form spaces and community agreements that offer privacy, security, and dignity without following restrictive and de-humanizing carceral logics.

Echo Park Rise Up residents & supporters

Microhouses and tents in Olympia's Nickerson Encampment, Tony Overman

2. PARTICIPATORY PLANNING

Establish regular, compensated advising opportunities for unhoused Angelenos to provide input on efficacy of current programs, encampment guidelines, and unmet needs in parks and beyond.

Unlike their housed neighbors, unhoused park dwellers often do not have the time or means to participate in community meetings on the neighborhood or City level. With rare exceptions, City outreach efforts focus on attempting to advocate for City and County services, rather than systematically inquire as to why some unhoused park dwellers are reticent to access these services. As such, unhoused input on programs and policies is frequently erased or otherwise unacknowledged. Taking time to interview, brainstorm, and plan with unhoused individuals - who are experts in their own lives, needs, and the policies which affect them - will provide new and sorely needed points of view, while re-centering the perspective of those who are most affected. Bringing in unhoused advisors and concentrating on unhoused community outreach also addresses interviewee concerns that designated encampment zones would simply be shoved to the least desirable park areas. Finally, as with any type of community input, these efforts contribute to a sense of agency and belonging in the resulting spaces.

1. "Nothing about us without us" - identify all City boards and agencies that directly impact unhoused Angelenos and identify potential advising or consulting opportunities.

2. Codify the need to include unhoused input, beyond general community input, on projects which seek to serve, displace, or otherwise directly impact unhoused individuals and encampments.

Formerly incarcerated staffers at San Francisco's Civic Center Commons

4. PROGRAMMING

Promote low-cost, high-impact park-based wellness programming for housed and unhoused visitors to highlight shared needs and benefits.

While interviewees expressed mixed opinions on the efficacy of various existing programs, all agreed that there is a gap in providing wellness programming. Even advocates expressed a desire to see and utilize such programming, whether for an arts workshop or a wellbeing class (such as mental health skills, beauty, yoga, etc). Particularly given Los Angeles' existing wellness culture and well-funded wellness industry, this is an exciting and powerful lever for connecting traditionally divergent communities. Interviewees expressed ways in which this is already at play: a beauty workshop for single mothers is frequently joined by unhoused mothers; and a semi-regular free clothing swap is picked over by young housed and unhoused park visitors alike.

While more traditional (and still necessary) health-based wellness programs (therapy, harm prevention, psychiatry) bear a higher cost, these more playful yet still impactful workshops can be put on at a low cost and with comparatively limited coordination. Such programming promotes new "neighborly" relationships, provides all participants with helpful outlets and life skills, and energizes parks while engaging with broader planning goals around health and wellbeing.

1. Issue a targeted call for community partners to plan and coordinate park-specific programming, with city funding or subsidy.

2. Pilot a parks improvement program to include program-oriented amenities in addition to existing expectations for passive or self-organized park use.

3. Regularly ensure, through interviews and reviews, that funded or subsidized events serve both unhoused and housed community members. Adjust expectations and guidelines according to feedback.

3. STAFFING & MAINTENANCE

Improve and augment park staffing through jobs-training partnership programs with designated encampments, including sanitation, maintenance, service (food and health) and public safety roles.

While ingrained and socially produced perceptions of unhoused persons as "dirty" or "unsanitary" and Recreation & Park's frequent refusal to clean encampment zones both contribute to perceptions of encampment-hosting parks as dirty, even apart from encampments areas each of the three study parks are undermaintained. Overflowing trashcans, litter, waterfowl droppings, urine, tagging, cracked concrete and peeling paint are a few common issues. Social complaints - of harassment, erratic behavior from mentally unwell or drug-using individuals, and illicit behaviors - are also prevalent, and not well addressed by existing programs (park staff, BIDs, or LAPD). Staffing and maintenance, in encampment areas and parks at large, are key to success and overall park perception.

Even with LAHSA training programs, Recreation & Park staffers do not appear to have the support or capacity to equitably serve unhoused park dwellers. In addition to increasing funding for staffing and maintenance, jobs training programs developed with encampment residents (as pioneered by Echo Park Rise Up) offer new ways to think about public safety and upkeep while building the capacity and self-reliance of unhoused individuals. Notably, unhoused and formerly unhoused staffers in programs like San Francisco's Great Streets initiative have expressed that their own experiences allow them to empathize with and negotiate with "problematic" spatial uses and behaviors. These can range from hoarding to visible drug use. Pairing these skills with explicit community agreements between the City, Park Staff, encampments, public, and other relevant parties will help clarify boundaries and expectations.

1. Identify causes of under-servicing park based encampment areas and adjust policy, funding, and resources appropriately.

2. Identify Los Angeles' least serviced parks, particularly where this correlates with encampment presence.

3. Near designated encampment zones, work with residents to develop jobs training programs that meet the needs of housed and unhoused neighbors. Programs in San Francisco (Civic Center Commons) and Atlanta (Woodruff Park Game Cart) may serve as starting examples.

4. Prioritize new approaches to public safety and sanitation which focus on amenities rather than restrictions, and establishing new community agreements rather than displacement.

Destigmatizing Lava Mae Care Villages provide services recognizable to all

INTERVENTION: ECHO PARK LAKE

A City fact-finding mission and study in collaboration with the displaced residents of the Echo Park Lake encampment offers a unique opportunity to learn directly from unhoused Angelenos. Simultaneously, this offers a chance to examine how different agencies enact redundant, contradictory, or mismatched services which fail to meet existing needs.

The encampment succeeded in building relationships with activists and maintaining their own services, previously detailed. The encampment also had significant challenges with housed neighbors, unequal LAPD enforcement (particularly at the time of displacement), shifting City policies systems, and crime.

Given ongoing City, Council Office, County, and LAHSA tensions as well as lack of trust on the part of previous residents, consulting with a third-party reviewer may incentivize good-faith engagement.

Learning about the encampment's strengths and challenges from unhoused neighbors will reveal new ways of seeing both systemic and specific issues, and provide unprecedented opportunities for unhoused feedback on potential policies and programs moving forward.

Studying how the network of various jurisdictions - City, County, Council District, LAPD, LAHSA, Recreation & Parks, etc - interacted with the encampment, and how residents perceived these interactions, will reveal service gaps, redundancies, breakdowns, and success models in communication between various offices.

Genaro Molina, Los Angeles Times

ECHO PARK RISE UP: UNDERSTANDING THE INCEPTION, PRESENCE, AND DISPLACEMENT OF LOS ANGELES' LARGEST PARK-BASED ENCAMPMENT

- When did the encampment begin to form?
- Why this location?
- What did the camp mean for those who lived here?
- What services were suspended from the park during COVID-19?
- What was the cost of services? Maintenance? Deferred services and maintenance?
- What services did CD13, LAHSA, Recreation & Parks, LAPD and others provide pre- and during COVID-19?
- What services did unhoused residents self-initiate?
- What services are passed to 3rd party providers? How are these tracked?
- What led to the March 24 displacement?
- How and when were unhoused residents noticed?
- Where, and how, are they today?
- How did park closure impact other community members?
- Who initiated LAPD involvement? What was the cost?

INTERVENTION: MACARTHUR PARK

Formalizing and decriminalizing an existing encampment at MacArthur Park offers an ideal test site for a cross-LA pilot program. This intervention asks: How can designating space and infrastructure for a park-based encampment also address longstanding community concerns in park space, both regarding "othered" unhoused bodies and additional concerns of safety, sanitation, and contested spaces? In this case, space to support MacArthur Park's established culture of vending without blocking busy sidewalks.

A "power strip" retaining wall stretches along the sidewalk-side of the encampment, serving both encamped individuals and existing street vendors while allowing a firm claim to space for each. On the encampment side, temporary storage areas and counter space with access to water and power is formed. The vending side expands the sidewalk while offering dedicated space for seating or display.

Shade structures stretch across the two zones, augmenting the limited shade cast by young saplings and older palms.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

tent
vending

former boat house

temp. sanitation station

bus stop

PROPOSAL

tent
vending

^ permanent sanitation area at former boat house

INTERVENTION: LAFAYETTE PARK

Leveraging park-based learning partners including Felipe de Neve Branch Library, an after-school program, and the Recreation Center, underutilized space transforms into an outdoor classroom outfitted for arts and wellness workshops serving housed and unhoused park visitors. The Library's abandoned reflecting pool is the primary site of intervention, surrounded by a learning garden with draught-tolerant, indigenous planting.

Improving access and adding strategic shade features to the empty reflecting pool behind Felipe de Neve Branch library creates an outdoor learning space for existing park partners and unhoused service providers. By converting a formerly abandoned area, this intervention provides a new resource for all visitors without detracting from limited green space.

Flexible furnishing and storage options, housed within the Library and adjacent after school spaces, enable various modes of workshops and activities.
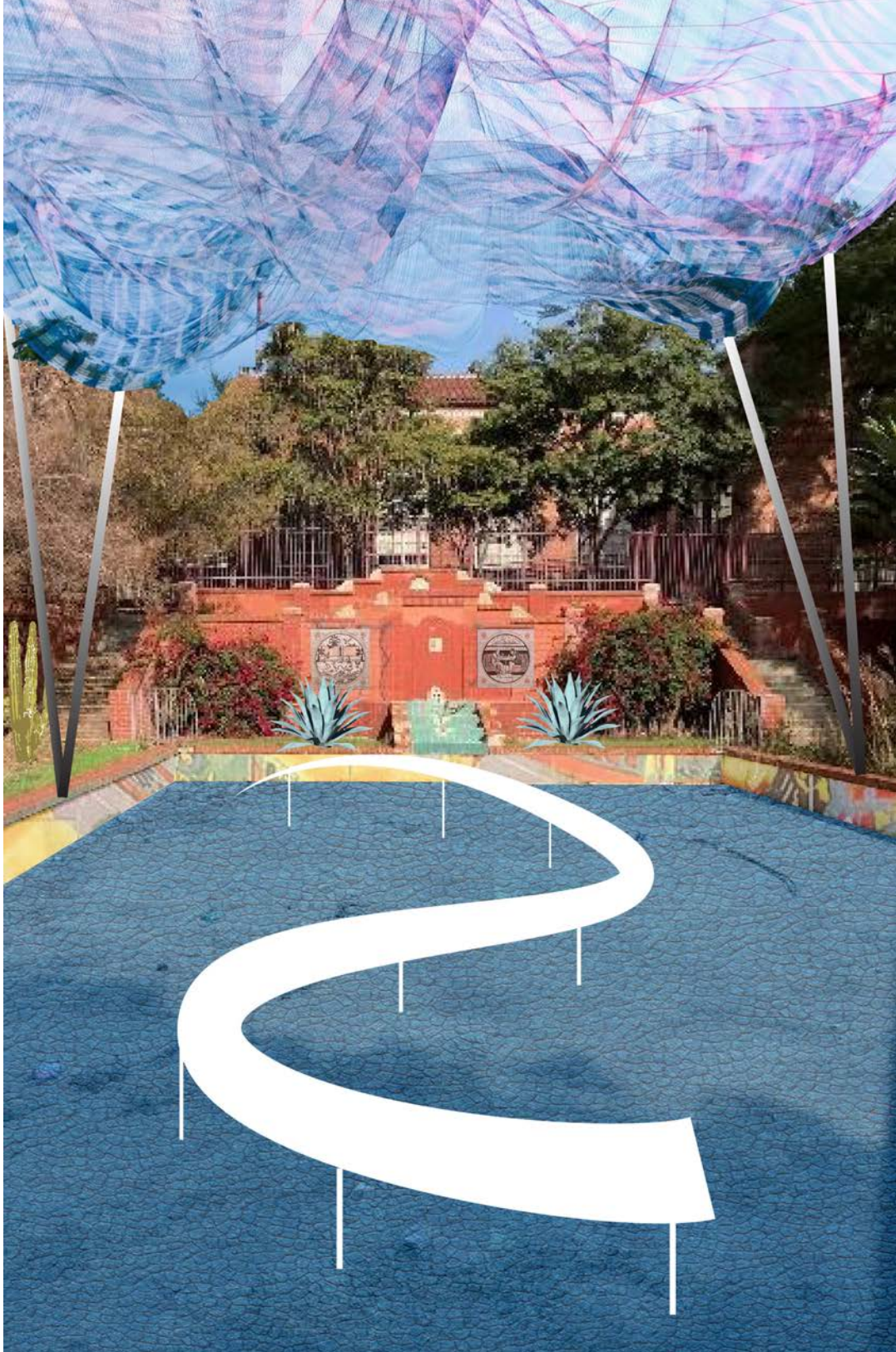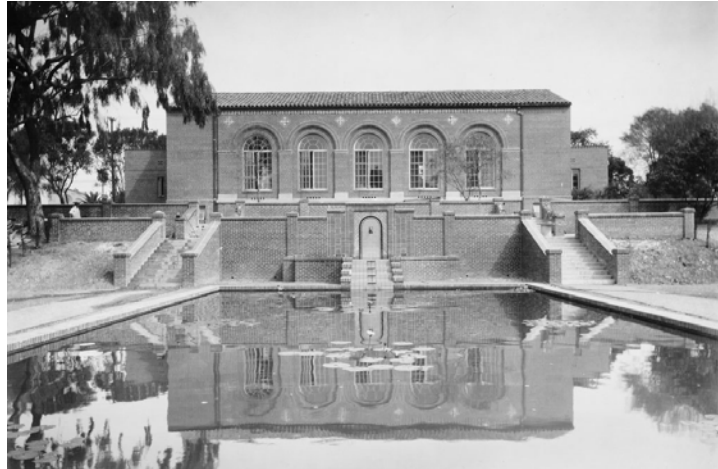
06
CONCLUSION

AN ADDENDUM

I completed much of this research on March 19, 2020; the week before Los Angeles Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell ordered the largest sweep in contemporary City history at Echo Park Lake. This order to remove and "house" some 200 (if we are to believe the Councilmember's numbers) unhoused residents of the Echo Park Rise Up Lotus Collective was met with resistance from over 500 protestors, whose numbers dwindled by the time of the late night mobilization of over 400 LAPD and LASD officers to "protect" the fencing in and displacement of Echo Park Lake residents. Inside the fence, representatives from LAHSA and Urban Alchemy offered not housing, but rather short-term shelter options run under carceral logics that make life, progress, and resilience untenable to unhoused Angelenos; leaving anyone who refused (and some who accepted) out on the street without the community protection and collaboration which had offered social and physical security at Echo Park Lake. At the date of my writing, public Echo Park Lake remains fully fenced and closed to all community members, housed and not.[1] LAHSA, Mitch O'Farrell's office, and other outlets continue to give mismatched statistics on the number of people relocated, with the terminology of this relocation shifting rapidly from permanency to transience: "housing" to "housing solutions" to now "transitional housing." In an email recap of a LAHSA "Final Report," the City and County placed only 22 of 183 relocated individuals into a program designed for permanency: Project Homekey, (LAHSA, 2021) which nevertheless has failed to detail how service-poor hotel rooms could convert to permanent housing without further displacement. The Echo Park closure persists in the midst of a still-ravaging global pandemic in which outdoor space remains one of the only safe spaces to gather, relax, and, for vendors who have served the area for decades, make a living. The City's forced eviction of unhoused residents through the mobilization of an armed police force, against LAHSA and CDC guidelines for sheltering in place, should cement the link between policing and displacement in the public eye.

It is this policing and parallel carceral logics - systems of curfew, corralling, and forced displacement of opposition - which continue to undermine the explosion of high-profile design solutions that have followed the Echo Park Lake displacement. "Tiny Home Villages," which I will refer to by their product name: Pallet Shelters,[2] and "Safe Sleep Zones" eerily reminiscent of Bradley's Urban Campground, now set on large expanses

1. Echo Park Lake reopened at 3PM on May 26, 2021; two months after the closure and after the completion of this report.

2. There is a long history of "tiny home villages" as a sustainable and autonomous or semi-autonomous means to address homelessness, either through City programs in the Northwestern United States (particularly Portland and Seattle) or as grassroots efforts to formalize and legitimize existent encampments. In these programs, "unhoused" occupants usually share equity in their tiny home, which is a small but well-constructed and private space intended for permanent or semi-permanent inhabitancy. These conditions differ dramatically from those of Los Angeles' Pallet Shelter clusters, which are more comparable to a dispersed Bridge Home model - temporary shelters designed for 1-2 persons a Pallet with more typical congregate services distributed throughout the site; where users are not granted keys to their own shelter, may only bring in two bags of belongings, and must abide by strict regulations. Pallet Shelters themselves are 64 SF, pop-up structures which flat-pack into 7 pieces the size of a standard pallet and may be assembled in 1 hour with no tools. They are safe (offering natural light; power; ventilation; wind, fire and snow load resistance; a lockable door; and a 10 year material lifespan) but admittedly sterile. Even when painted and set upon a stable foundation, a Pallet Shelter is little more than a shack; differentiating it typologically and materially from known Tiny Homes in addition to the programmatic and equity differences between known programs. See "Our Shelters" at palletshelter.com.

Echo Park Lake displacement, LA Tenants' Union
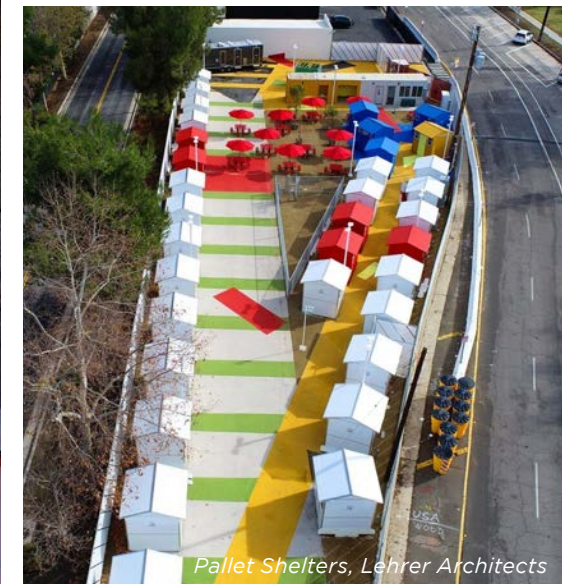
Pallet Shelters, Lehrer Architects

Rampart Village Safe Sleep Village, Barry Lank

of asphalt rather than dirt, are proliferating. In a vacuum, each offers promising shifts in policy and design: Pallet Shelters mark the first time Los Angeles has allowed rapid enclosure construction in park space to assist vulnerable people since 750 Quonset huts formed Rodger Young VIllage in Griffith Park to temporarily house 1,500 veteran families post-WWII (Herr & Mahoney, 2021); and the Safe Sleep Zone, piloted in San Francisco takes a step towards the type of encampment legitimization found in the Pacific Northwest, which has proved a stabilizing force in the lives of many residents (Jones et al, 2015). This willingness to rapidly test new solutions paired with staffing and services marks a dramatic departure from decades-long policy promoting only permanent housing (Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office, 2016) - which, when delivered at all has come in such low numbers as to have a negligible effect on the lives of the over 70,000 Los Angeles County residents who need it - or ineffective, if not actively harmful, congregate shelters. Indeed, it is only through the rapid proliferation of a "continuum of accommodation," a scale which recognizes the need for yet slow delivery of permanent supportive housing while also legitimizing and promoting more flexible, innovative, and socially sustainable "homing" solutions, that unhoused people, policy makers, service providers, and designers may together make meaningful change. However, the incredibly short-term thinking of these interventions paired with the carceral logics embedded in the very root of these so-called "revolutionary" new programs, painted as models for all of LA, in fact make them untenable. Rather than acting on a continuum, the short-term thinking of these models (neither of which is suitable for long-term inhabitation) reinscribe a cycle of transiency made dangerous, even deadly, by their pairing with carceral logics.

Consider a common "case study": An outreach worker offers an unhoused Angeleno, currently encamped with a tent and some personal belongings collected to aid in survival, comfort, and dignity, space in one of these shelter programs. The service provider defines a narrow window of time to arrive and claim space: usually under two hours. The potential resident is only allowed to bring in two bags of personal belongings, which are stringently restricted by long lists of banned items: everything else must be stored off site. In order to keep their belongings, this unhoused person would need to acquire costly storage, sort and transport their things, and find reliable and direct transportation to the shelter area - which is not guaranteed to be close to their current encamped home or storage sites - in under 120 minutes, or else forfeit their belongings. Crucially, this almost always includes their primary means of back-up shelter: their tent. Upon arrival, they must agree to contracts which usually include strict curfews (often 7PM-7AM in Project Roomkey sites), the right of service providers to search their spaces at will, inability to have visitors, and more. This curfew alone poses significant problems with work hours;[3] with commute times from provider appointments for health, wellness, and continuing a path to housing, particularly for people who accept placements far from their existing networks; for individuals with pets; for maintaining crucial social networks; and for having autonomy over one's own time and personhood. Continual searches and refusal to give residents keys to their own spaces reinforce a mindset that these people are criminal, wrong, and untrustworthy, rather than simply people without homes seeking

3. In sharing his own story to Streetwatch LA, evicted Echo Park Lake resident Gustavo offered his own experiences as a poignant example. A handyman with an existing network of clients in the Echo Park area, Gustavo was offered temporary shelter through Project Roomkey. LAHSA employees then told him his tools were not allowed belongings, and the only available rooms were in Downey - 30 minutes away by car, a means of transport Gustavo does not possess. The over 1 hour bus ride would not only put Gustavo in close proximity with other commuters in the midst of a pandemic, but also further limit his work hours between stringent curfew times. Between geography, curfew times, and limiting possessions, Gustavo's only offer of shelter - for an undisclosed amount of time - would have robbed him of his livelihood, social connections, and proximity to known services.

to engage in the same behaviors, acts, and schedules which housed Angelenos enact in private. Such regulations further create a system in which unhoused residents live in fear of being evicted once more, this time without the possessions necessary for survival which service providers previously made them relinquish in order to receive care. And yet this eviction may still happen upon careful compliance with regulations: when funding recedes, so does service provision, leading to the sudden and violent closing of these inadequate spaces, seen today in the closing of Project Roomkey sites with little notice and eviction of residents back onto the streets.

Predicated on such uncertainty, an unhoused person who recognizes these limitations to their needs, livelihood, or simply own dignity and personhood faces criminalization. As more sites of service become available, the denial of service offers, even in light of legitimate concerns around their efficacy (Oreskes & Smith, 2020) and carceral nature (Letzker, 2021), become grounds to further criminalize and sweep away unhoused individuals re-asserting their own right to public space and self-determination. Individuals who exercise their right of refusal are met with eviction nonetheless: police intervene with threats, citations, and even physical violence; tents and belongings are taken; public spaces (like Echo Park) are cordoned off. Regardless of the complex feelings certain planners and individuals (often homeowners) may have regarding upholding public "safety," stripping individuals of their right to public space does more than further complicate lives of unhoused Angelenos. It threatens the status of these spaces - as open zones of equality - for all of us (Mitchell, 1997). We, as designers, as makers of space and the codes that govern it, as Angelenos and as neighbors, face a fundamental crisis of increased policing and limited personhood which make it impossible to achieve our goals through even the most radical, dignified, or welcoming public space design. We must legally reinscribe the "public" nature of public space back into the codes and norms of our neighborhood spaces in order to ensure what we design and build is able to meet our stated goals.

I believe in the power of Tiny Home Villages; of designated encampment zones in areas where people already are and in new zones to which they never had access to before. I believe in the power of design to make these not areas of exclusion and disinvestment, as we have seen practiced under Crime Prevention through Environmental Design principles, but instead areas of abundance, of agency, of welcome, and of dignity for both unhoused dwellers and housed neighbors through practices which can radically reimagine the spatial relationships of our day-to-day communities. I believe that, when paired with policy, programming, staffing, and investment, design is a way to mitigate tensions, to reveal possibilities, and to open opportunity in everyday life, especially in park space. In many senses, Los Angeles' better-funded and resourced parks already play this role for the more fortunate among us. But as long as a force of armed city employees are able to forcefully remove and unequally criminalize individuals based on housing status, the role of design has little to offer beyond aestheticizing systems of carcerality, criminalization, and fundamental urban inequality.

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3	Luis Sinco, *Los Angeles Times*
7	Gus Wendel
13	MacArthur & Lafayette Park linework by Paola Ovando
15	Luis Sinco, *Los Angeles Times*
16	Myanna Dellinger; Hood Design Studio; Jared Edgar McKnight; Central Atlanta Progress
19	Ken Lubas, *Los Angeles Times*
20	LA Poverty Department; *Los Angeles Times*; Getty Images
21	Ken Lubas, *Los Angeles Times*; Los Angeles Public Library Map Collection; Public Domain
22	Sueddeutsche Zeitung Photo; *Los Angeles Public Library*; Ken Lubas, *Los Angeles Times*
23	Larry Bessel, *Los Angeles Times*
24	Metro Transportation Library and Archive; Stacy Rowe; Ken Lubas, *Los Angeles Times*
26-27	unknown postcard; Los Angeles Conservancy; Metro Transportation Library and Archive; Myanna Dellinger; Agence TER & SALT; Rick Loomis, *Los Angeles Times*
28	James Wines; Jill Colvin, DNAinfo; Santa Monica Mirror
29	Myanna Dellinger; Santa Monica Daily Press; Matt Tinoco, *LAist*
30-31	Hood Design Studio
33	Christopher Giamarino
34	Jared Edgar McKnight
35	Google Earth Pro
36	Genaro Molina, *Los Angeles Times*
37	Suzanne Stein, *Los Angeles Times*
38-39	Central Atlanta Progress
40	German in Venice
41	Luis Sinco, *Los Angeles Times*
44	David Crane, *Los Angeles Daily News*; Chava Sanchez, *LAist*
48	Myanna Dellinger; Hood Design Studio; Jared Edgar McKnight; Central Atlanta Progress
49	Hood Design Studio
55	Google Earth Pro
56	City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation & Parks; CBS LA; Suzanne Stein, *Los Angeles Times*
59	Google Earth Pro
60	Gus Wendel, cityLAB-UCLA
61	Linework by Paola Ovando
63	Google Earth Pro
64	Gus Wendel, cityLAB-UCLA
65	Linework by Paola Ovando
67	Sara Suarez, *Hyperallergic*
69	David Maddox; CODEPINK Women for Peace; KOSMOS; Gensler
70	Tony Overman, *The Olympian*
71	Echo Park Rise Up
72	Cassie Hoeprich
73	Lava Mae
74	Genaro Molina, *Los Angeles Times*
78	Los Angeles Public Library; Brian Hsu
81	LA Tenant's Union; Lehrer Architects; Barry Lank

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SUMMARIES

	UH Interviewee #1	UH Interviewee #2	UH Interviewee #3	A Interviewee #1	A Interviewee #2
Age Range	46	30-50	39	30-40	42
Identity	Male	Female	Male	Female	Female
Race	Black	Latinx	Latinx	White	Latinx
Housing Status	Unhoused, unsheltered	Housed, formerly "unhomed" (living in vehicle)	Housed via Project Roomkey, formerly "unhomed" and unhoused	Housed, activist/advocate, former LAHSA	Housed via Reclaiming Our Homes, formerly couch surfed
Other	Diabetic, various health needs	Wheelchair user, severe health issues; married	Criminal record (former gang member) complicates housing, can't live with wife	Pursuing landscape architecture @ Cal Poly, mother	Notes anxiety and depression from her time in housing insecurity; single mom
Park - Cons	Staffers (park, BID) Policing aggressive gentrifiers Stigmatizing, especially against kids Resources closed to unhoused (charging, bathroom, etc)	Park Rangers Policing Rules on moving vehicle	Gang members Policing - esp if registration out	Policing (looming law enforcement)	Unhoused folk with mental health issues; drunk/drugs Gangs Cleanliness - sanitation, trash Hard to find parking
Park - Pros	Familiar community Potential resources	Port-a-potties or restrooms nearby Generally ok to find parking	Bathrooms Parking available (or used to be)	Low barrier to service - picnic blanket, snacks Beautiful, non-clinical Safety in numbers	Daughters can run around, play Free programming Food distribution
Experience with housed people	Used to know community, people helped. He tutored kids. Now, gentrifiers + NIMBYs aggressive. Want him out of park, away from kids.		Service providers came up to me a lot. Others ignored me.		
Experience with unhoused people				Good space to break stigma. Meaningful conversations build trust. Mutual Aid - not stigmatized, no law enforcement, no conditions Clothes swap - housed + unhoused people used	Lots of mental health issues, drugs, alcohol, lack of sanitation. Was scared as a young girl in MacArthur Park. Her daughters are scared today in Boyle Heights.
Top Concerns in Park Space	Policing/Criminalization Othering from NIMBYs etc	Safety Policing / moving car Making all appointments Entertainment (movies on phone)	Gang members	Policing What your body feels like in that space	Safety, comfort Parking Sanitation
Relevant Rules/Regs	Bulky items rules BID regulations	Have to move car. Easy if you can, hard if doesn't run. Occasionally try to remove everyone	Tent rule - up at 8/9 PM only, down by 6AM	High turnover of case managers, people and cases get lost Services not informed by unhoused people	
Hard to Access Services	Showers Heating/cooling centers - have to travel so far	Any flyer that doesn't have a URL, address, phone number, time to call or go creates barrier to service Safe parking - need insurance, license	Anything that requires an address. Only recently got Social Security payments started now that he has an address and so does his wife.	Anything with policing (ie PATH seen as much more approachable than LAHSA) Conditional services - eg, you have to move 50 mi away	Wellness and wellness-centric services
Wants	Resources planned WITH rather than for unhoused community. Worries designated zones for tents etc would be in horrible areas or policed, become oppressive/punatative unless co-planned with unhoused (ex: Safe Parking policing) Showers Open shelter Pop-up services, like power-up station Harm reduction Needle boxes	Designated areas to keep tents up all day Outreach with clear information A place where LAPD doesn't harass unhoused	More LAHSA or LA Housing outreach Mental Health services - psychiatry Toilets, regular bathrooms instead of Port-a-potties if possible, sanitized and safe Showers	Showers - even beach has showers. Could be coin operated Park as a place to be, not product to use (Central american vs suburban american mindset) Cover basic human needs Food hub Flexible structures that can be transformed for weather. Outdoor classrooms, not locked community rooms	Better sanitation (trash pickup and available products) Safe Parking Showers Harm reduction services Mental/holistic Healthcare Wellness programs (ex: single mom support, beauty wellness) Library Programs + Classes Community garden + education on natural herbs Shade
Park specificity	These parks stigmatize unhoused - signs that you need to watch your children and other hostile signage insinuating they are a problem, not part of community. COVID-19 shelter in place will intensify displacement in these areas.	Echo park needs a zone for tents, so you can relax, sit down, have tent door open to see out when its hot or rainy or just because you're older or heave a health issue Need a place to not worry about LAPD coming through. Then feel somewhat secure.	Echo Park is beautiful. Things were good until cops started harassing. Only flaw cops + peeping toms in bathrooms		MacArthur - unhoused situation bad since she was young, scary. And neighborhood overcrowding is part of that too. Levitt Pavilion programming is great - daughters participate.