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Emerald City

Daniel Solomon, Susan Haviland

It's Jack Benny's mythical train ride forty years later. "All aboard for Anaheim, Azuza and C-u-u-u-camonga (laugh track)." Except it's not a train anymore, it's a freeway or lots of freeways, and there are more places, or names of places: Monrovia, Glendora, Anawanda. The culture of the freeway is incredibly evolved.

...That was the Prez, March 18, 1938, Lester Young, tenor, Buck Clayton flugel horn, Freddie Green guitar, Philly Joe Jones with those gentle brushes and this is KLON, Long Beach, Jazz Radio 88.1. If you're heading east on the 210 there is an overturned tanker at the 91 south transition. Looks like a toxic spill blocking all lanes. 134 eastbound, we have a 5 car injury accident with a burning vehicle in the middle lane, 2 miles east of the 405...

The music is always the best, the information clear, current and vital. In southern California the definite article is an honorific for a freeway. It's the 405, the 210, the 5, but 97, 91, 57, 55 get no article. They are too new, too unannointed in suffering and blood. No one has been through much with them yet.

The Road Warrior landscape that stretches south from Pasadena is called the Inland Empire. It's not so far inland really. If you go at 4 a.m., you can be at the beach in half an hour. But the sweet

breath of the mighty Pacific never makes it to Monrovia. Each day it is beaten back by a great brown cloud rising from the surface of the earth like a hundred hydrogen bombs in slow motion.

Roads, cars, buildings, and communities continue to evolve in form so that people can spend their whole day driving. The car phone was a big step and the car FAX has just arrived. Frank Lloyd Wright, of course, anticipated these things fifty years ago. One of the great innovations of his Usonian plan is that you can drive directly to the kitchen. Driving to the kitchen has become something more than a standard. It is like an inalienable right, something the absence of which is unimaginable. The rest of the Usonian House vanished long ago, but driving to the kitchen stuck.

In order for more and more people to drive farther and farther, the inhabited world must spread. It spreads out into the land and it spreads into the towns that were there before the final triumph of the Road Warriors. From Azuza and Glendora the developers roll into Pasadena flushed with victory to sack the old town. The six pack is mostly their creation.

To build a six pack one must buy a lot or two in the old town and tear out the bungalows, the gardens, or the Mission Revival courtyards. One then makes a big driveway and pays careful attention to the Uniform Building Code, 1978 Edition, which allows you to blast away half your



The Road Warrior Landscape

lot, with a ramp and a 24-foot wide driveway half a level down and still call it a two-story building.

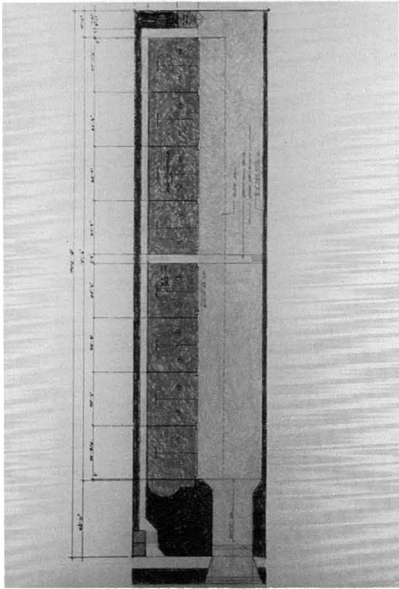
Put a row of units side by side, 2 cars under each one, enter from the little sideyard. But who walks in from the street? You can drive to the kitchen and it looks like Monrovia. The sun never sets on the Inland Empire.

But many good citizens of Pasadena are like the Romans of Aquilea after the coming of the Visigoths — defenders of civilization and teachers of their conquerors.

In the late nineteenth century a group of midwesterners, eager for a less oppressive climate, purchased a large tract of land in

Southern California and gave it the name Pasadena, meaning "crown of the valley" in Chippewa. The climate in those days, before the smog rolled in, was truly glorious — clean, sunny, warm, dry. It must have seemed like paradise. It was certainly touted as a cure for various respiratory illnesses. Myron Hunt, later to design the Rose Bowl and other important civic buildings, came to Pasadena to provide a cure for his wife's tuberculosis. Other health seekers and pleasure lovers were similarly entranced. Hotels opened. Grander hotels opened. Houses were built, big and small, and the Santa Fe Railroad laid a line west to Los Angeles and east to Chicago and thereby to the rest of the world.

Pasadena as a resort town was wildly popular. In addition to enjoying the salubrious climate, visitors could take trips



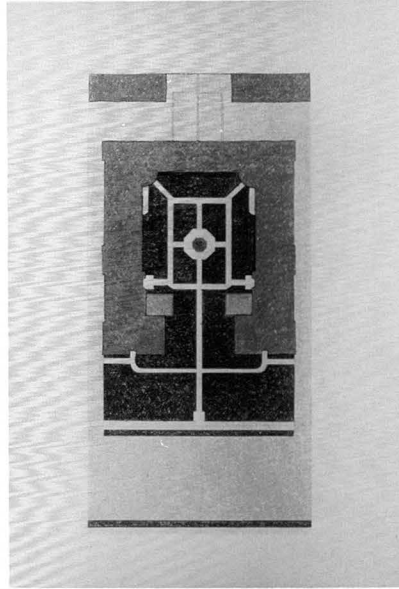
Six Pack Plan



Six-Pack

up Echo Mountain on an included railway, ride ostrich at a local ranch, enjoy the landscaped splendor of Busch Gardens, go the theatre at the Pasadena Playhouse, and do the usual outdoorsy stuff in the San Gabriel Mountains which were well equipped with trails and lodges. The biggest seasonal draw was, of course, the Rose Parade and the Tournament of Roses, tourist attractions begun in 1890 and so well publicized that the name of this small California city became known throughout the entire nation.

Pasadena thrived as a resort until the Great Depression which put a temporary end to tourism. Most of the grand hotels closed in the 30's. By this time, however, the city had attracted a considerable number of permanent residents, from the affluent to the bohemian, and had developed the kinds of



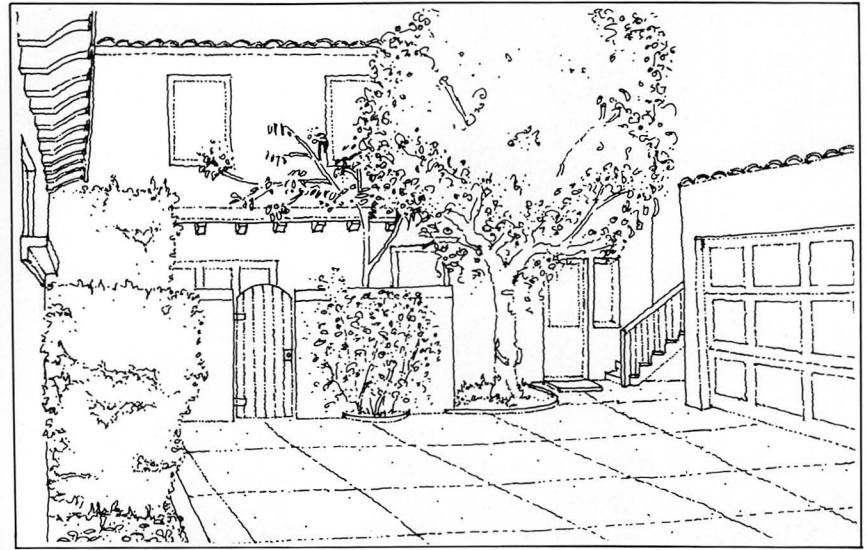
Traditional Pasadena Plan



Traditional Pasadena

housing and the kinds of neighborhoods that give it its special character and charm. The population that created Pasadena did not come there, by and large, because of economic opportunity. People came to Pasadena because they were looking for a way of life. The nature of the city to this day retains something of this original goal — Emerald City, the perfect place to live.

As it became more and more apparent to both the city government and the average citizen that new development within the traditional sections of Pasadena was rapidly destroying it, various things happened. No growth and slow growth movements began to pick up momentum and the city appointed a Multi Family Housing Task Force, composed of city planning staff, architects, developers, and other concerned citizens and City officials.



A City of Gardens

The task force eventually decided to hire consultants. The team they assembled consisted of the Center for Environmental Structure in Berkeley (Christopher Alexander with Artemis Aninou and Fisco Broeksma), Daniel Solomon and Associates in San Francisco (the authors plus Kathryn Clarke) with Phoebe Wall, a Pasadena Architect, serving as a consultant to CES and DSA. Our task was the draft of a new multi-family zoning ordinance that would allow Pasadena to continue to develop without losing its soul.

What we conceived for Pasadena is an elaborately negotiated truce between the pillagers and the preservers. It goes by the name of *A City of Gardens*. More discussion, more compromise, more anxiety and more time went into its conception than the treaty of Brest-Litovsk. It is easier by far to redraw the map of Europe and achieve consent of reasonable people like Von Hindenburg and Trotsky.

The main idea of the ordinance is a simple one. Pasadena is a city of gardens. People came to the arid valley east of Glendale around the turn of the century and defied the desert. They planted palms, magnolias, jacarandas and green lawn by the mile. They made an Edenic landscape as feverishly and obsessively as their great grandchildren now build freeways. The trouble with the six-pack is that it obliterates the record of all this activity,

paves it over and leaves just a little green residue around the edges like the tarnish on unclean teeth.

A major concern was the production of an ordinance that fit the place. We started with an analysis of the character of the traditional multi-family residential areas of the city.

Pasadena, first of all, is defined by its gardens. Glimpses of gardens are everywhere, around the sides of bungalows, through mysterious arched and gated passageways, or offered freely and directly to the street. Wide, green lawned setbacks turn the streets themselves to drives through gardens.

Automobiles do not dominate, though it's clear that they are much loved. This is California after all. Cars in a traditional Pasadena neighborhood slip up the sides of lots on long, narrow, leafy driveways to garages in the rear which often form small news-like enclaves of their own.

The tree lined streets of traditional Pasadena are civic spaces, not mere conduits for automobile traffic. Houses and bungalows face the streets across their broad lawns. Generous porches, embellished front doors, large windows, and balconies form these faces, providing signals of the life within and gracious entry for the visitor from the street. These urbane streets are in marked contradistinction to the new suburban norm which lines a street with garage doors and



Traditional Pasadena

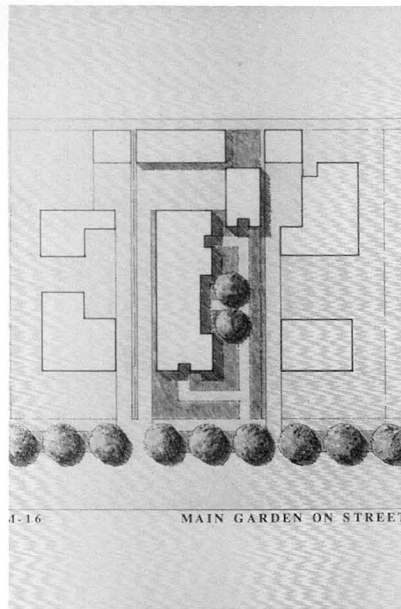


Bungalow

turns it into a pragmatic service drive providing pick-up and delivery to backs of houses that have no real fronts, that give no hint of an inner life. Streets in Pasadena are more dignified, more ceremonial. The houses are more forthcoming. They acknowledge each other's presence. The cold shoulder created by a typical suburban infill in an environment like this is enormously destructive. It's not the size or density so much, though that tends to be excessive — a result of optimistic rezoning sometime after World War Two — it's the lack of a face.

The new ordinance focuses on these three areas — the importance of gardens, accommodation of the automobile, and the nature of buildings.

The biggest departure from usual planning and zoning practice is the primacy of gardens. All projects in multi-family areas are required to have a main garden in addition to any garden areas created by front setbacks. This main garden is quite different from the usual sort of open space requirement. It is not just landscaping of the space left over once the buildings are set. The garden must be a configured, well defined area of rectangular form. Although its actual size is determined by the overall size of the lot, the minimum dimension of the garden, no matter what, is 20 feet.

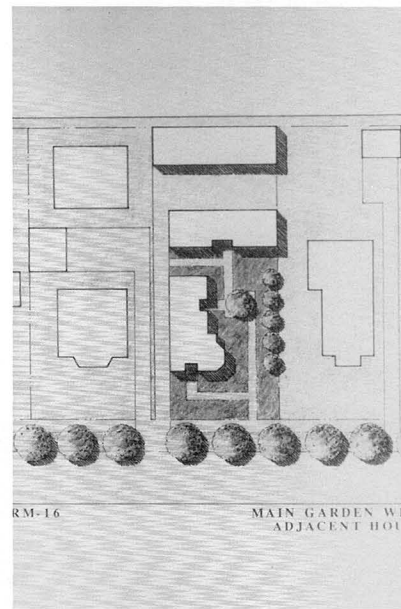


A City of Gardens

In addition, the garden must make a contribution to the neighborhood in general rather than merely provide amenity for its particular project. There are several ways in which we tried to ensure this contribution. One is by making sure that the garden is visible from the street. Another is where the garden is located on the site. The ordinance provides six specific modes of location: adjoining an existing garden on a neighboring site; adjoining a front yard; creating a courtyard; preserving mature trees; adjoining the side yard entries of a neighboring six-pack; or adjoining a single family house.

Unless parked in an underground garage, cars in a multi family project must be parked in the rear 40% of the lot (later amended by the city to 60%). They may be parked at grade in carports or garages. They may be parked in fully or partially subterranean garages with gardens over them (in no case can the gardens be more than 2'-8" above the sidewalk). The infamous gouged-out tuck-under, however, is simply not recognized as a viable parking type. This, plus the restriction of parking to the rear of the lot, breaks the back of the six-pack.

Because front setbacks are an important component of the streetscape, the ordinance requires that new development must respect existing setbacks on a street. Side setbacks, on the other hand, tend to

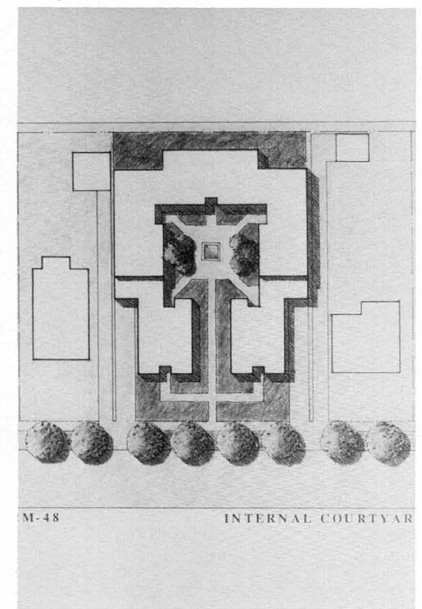


A City of Gardens

produce weedy, unused side yards, and consume valuable square footage on a lot. We proposed the elimination of side and rear setbacks and the introduction of zero lot line development for all density zones in the city. The rhythm of smaller buildings on the street was preserved by a 15-foot minimum building separation at the front of the lot. This was accepted by the City for all but the lowest density zone.

We required that all new buildings incorporate some manner of craftsmanship in their design. We required that new buildings incorporate some typical building characteristics of Pasadena, such as entry porches or balconies under eaves. But most importantly, by requiring entries, major windows, and other signals of habitation on the street and on the main garden, we reintroduced the idea that buildings should have fronts and that these fronts should face, and enhance, the street and the garden as civic space.

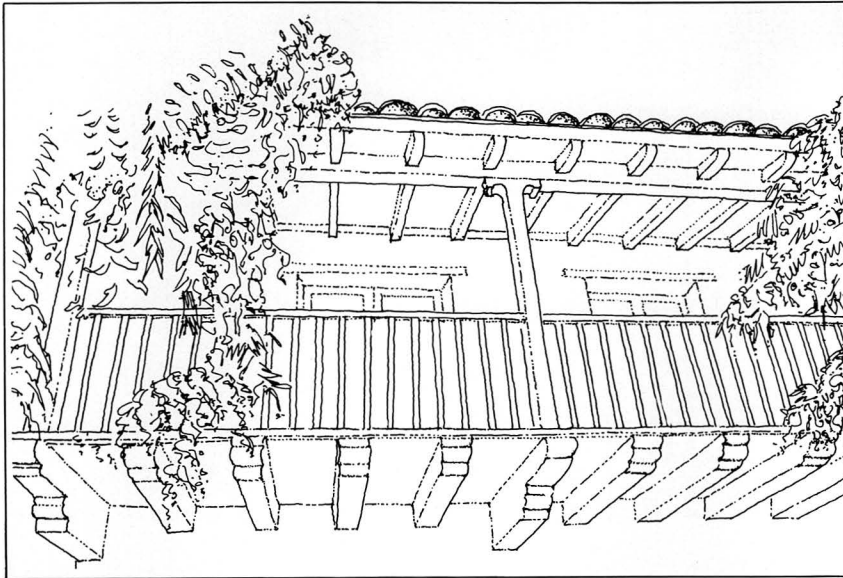
Pasadena was the birthplace of the Bungalow, which was not just a type of house but a way of being. The bungalow movement was disseminated from Pasadena by two journals, *Bungalow* and *Craftsman*, which portrayed their standardized house plans as emblems of a new, egalitarian, healthy life. Like *Sunset*



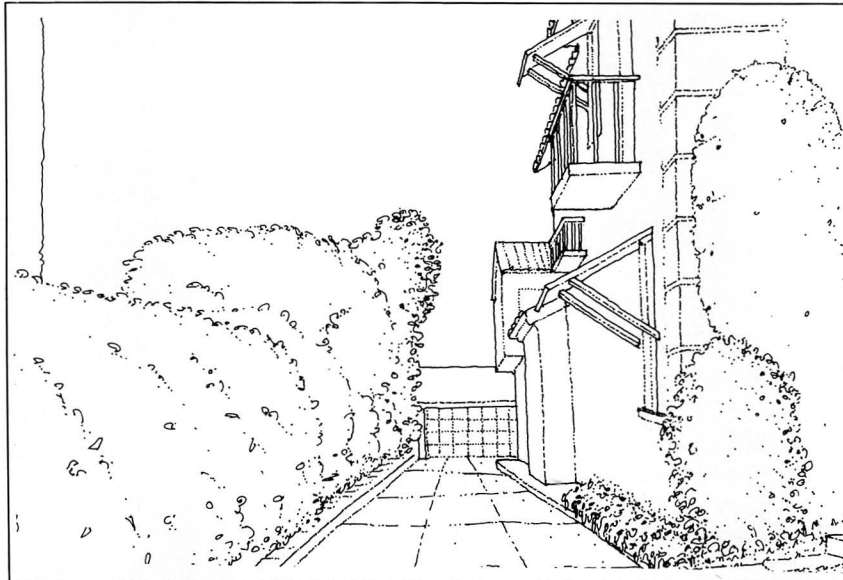
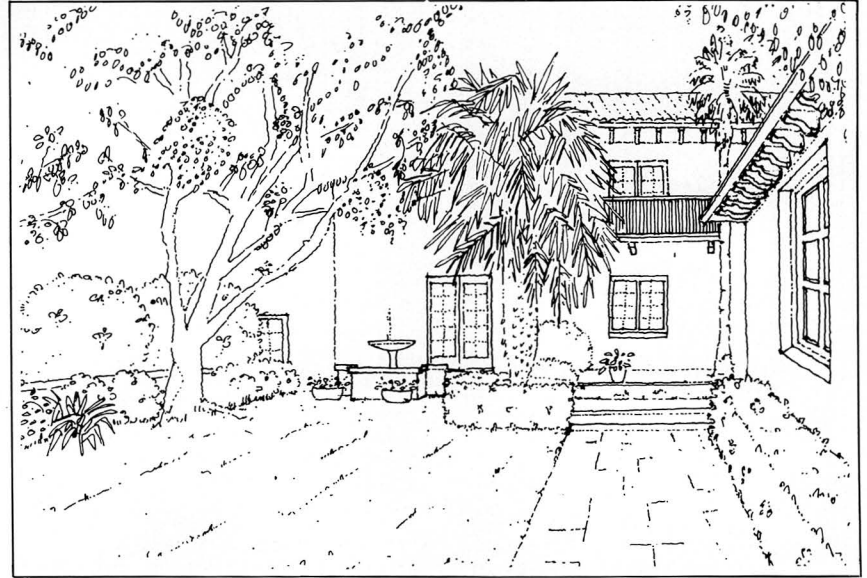
A City of Gardens

magazine in the 1950's, *Bungalow* and *Craftsman* had articles on the nurture of vegetables, recipes, exercise, and do-it-yourself projects with architecture portrayed as accessory to a life of new found liberty from gloomy Victorian proprieties. Curiously, if one reads through the entire set of these journals, it is impossible to find a single mention of the subject of town planning. Today bungalows are admired, not so much for their virtues as dwellings but for the ways in which they contribute to beautiful streets and neighborhoods. It is as if in the teens and twenties the habits of graceful town building were so ingrained in the American psyche that any mention of the topic was superfluous. People took it for granted that houses had obligations to streets and to neighbors. The porch front bungalow was a house with a town, a very nice and civilized town implicit in its plan and its multiplication.

The bungalow's shortcomings as house designs were in precisely those areas where the polemic that promoted the bungalow movement made great claims. Kitchens were as dark and almost as sequestered as those designed for Victorian servants. Backyards may have accommodated vegetables but they were separated completely from living spaces. The *sine qua non* of bungalows, Green and



A City of Gardens



Green's great Gamble house in Pasadena is dark as Pharaoh's tomb. It was not until Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonia Houses of the late 1930's and 40's and the Case Study Houses of the 1940's and 50's that the bungalow ideals of sunlight, integration of daily life with the out-of-doors and liberation of the housewife from the servant's quarters were finally accomplished.

Joseph Eichler, a great devotee of Wright, put the Case Study aesthetic into mass production and Eichler houses radically and permanently changed the American

home building industry. Today home builders may scoff at Eichler houses stylistically and claim that modernism doesn't sell. But there could be no retreat from the spacious, airy, cheerfulness that these houses provided.

The bungalow disappeared from the scene because it failed to do what its designers claimed it would. It is appealing and interesting today because of its success in areas in which its designers professed no interest. Bungalows make nice towns but the successors to the bungalow make horrible towns. The street

of porches gave way to the street of driveways and garage doors. The house gained and the town lost.

Any designer of houses who cares about the quality of towns must find ways to do what the bungalow designers did but must also do what they didn't. It is a complex task, but by no means an impossible one — achieving the public virtues of the bungalow and the private virtues of the bungalows successors simultaneously.

A City of Gardens helps the designers of housing to perform this trick. It demands that new dwellings grace the streets of Pasadena like the city's historic bungalows. But the garden requirements of ordinance, provide opportunities for private amenity that the mutant auto dominated 6-pack never achieved. If it all works as intended, *A City of Gardens* permits the best of both. All that is sacrificed is the opportunity to drive to the kitchen.