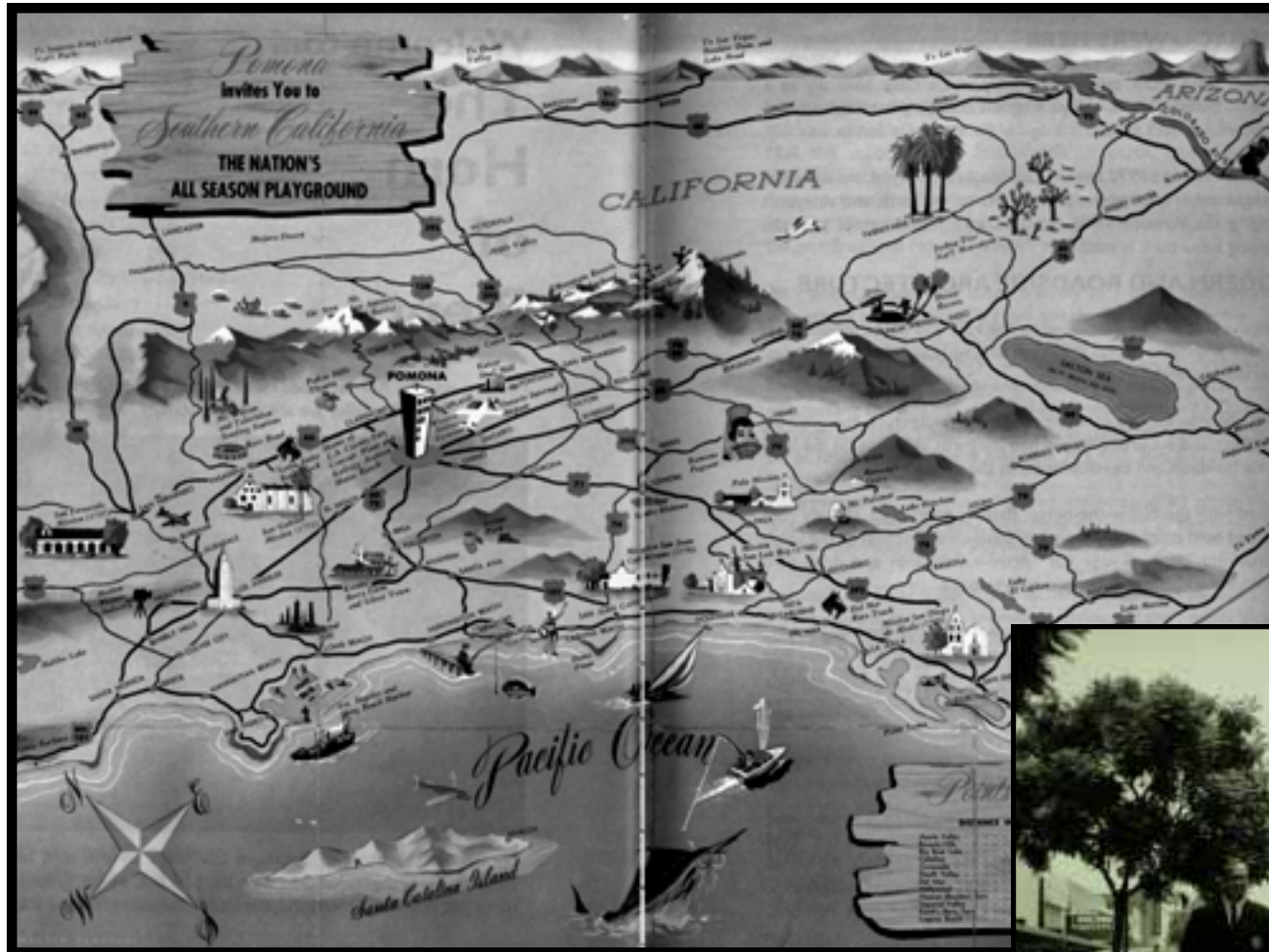


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March 16th, 2000
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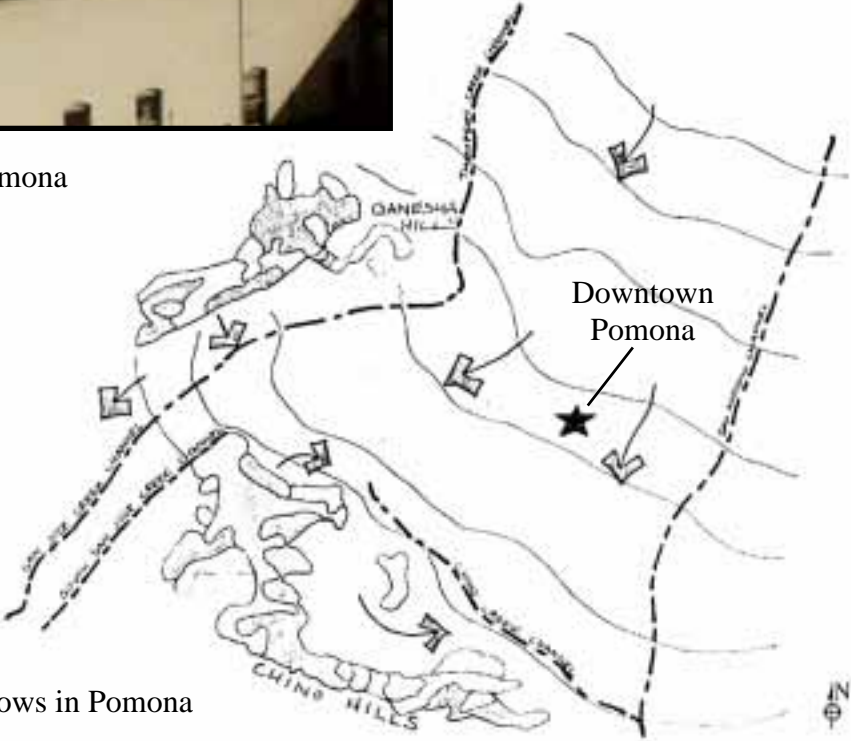
Pomona's Downtown Mall: Lost But Not Forgotten



The Pomona Downtown Mall



View North-Northeast From Downtown Pomona



Alluvial Flows in Pomona

Second Street and the Pomona Downtown Mall

I History

A. Physiographic Conditions

The City of Pomona is located at the western edge of the Pomona Valley, 28 miles to the east of Los Angeles. It is at the far eastern border of Los Angeles County with only Claremont between it and the neighboring county of San Bernardino. Just across the county line to the east lies Montclair. To the north, very prominently, are the San Gabriel Mountains.

The San Gabriel Mountains form the northwest drainage of the Santa Ana River watershed, as well as the northeast drainage of the San Gabriel River watershed; Pomona Valley is a subset of these systems. Furthermore, Pomona is bounded by the Puente Hills to the southwest and the Ganesha/San Jose Hills to the northwest. There are a few remnant streams that flow through the valley, although they have been confined to concrete box channels. Thompson Creek and San Jose Creek on the west flow to the San Gabriel River, while San Antonio Creek and Chino Creek on the east and south, respectively, flow to the Santa Ana River.

The site topography includes Foothill terrain, but is primarily represented by alluvial valley and alluvial fan deposits. The alluvial fan deposits are primarily a result of outflow from San Antonio Canyon to the north. These deposits underlie much of the City, causing the topography to slope gently to the south. The alluvial sediments are quite deep, perhaps up to 3,000 feet below the surface. These sediments form very fertile topsoils that drain rapidly, thus Pomona's agricultural legacy has proven to be very successful.

Earthquake faults in the immediate vicinity of Pomona include the Chino Fault and the San Jose Fault. These are of the dip-slip type common to coastal southern California. Nearby faults include the San Andreas Fault and the Sierra Madre Fault zones. The San Andreas is located approximately 20 miles north-northeast of Pomona, while the Sierra Madre is situated just at the base of the San Gabriel Mountains also to the north-northeast.

Groundwater aquifers in the Pomona area include the Pomona, Chino, and Spadra basins. Groundwater has been pumped from these aquifers such that the water table is significantly lower than in pre-development times. Therefore, the loss of groundwater and also intrusion of pollutants has made the region completely dependent on imported water from northern California and Arizona (Colorado River).

The climate is considered Mediterranean due to the short rainy season and the prolonged hot, dry summers. The winters are very mild, but typically the summer temperatures remain in the mid to high 90's through mid-October. Rainfall is 14-16" annually, but can range from 7-33".



The Pomona Downtown Mall

B. Modern Development

Historically, the area was along a trade route used by Native Americans, and was established by Europeans as part of a Mexican land grant in 1837. Transition to the United States followed, in which the grants were honored, but drought and taxation forced the rancho owners to foreclose; by 1870, the town, called Spadra, was owned by Louis Phillips.

Up to this time, cattle ranching was the primary local economic base, but in 1875 the Santa Fe Railroad laid track through the valley and Pomona, the Roman “Goddess of Fruit” was born. Incorporation came in 1888 and the economy was well on its way toward becoming a citrus-based economy.

Also during the 1880’s, the town center was laid out in a grid system of small square blocks averaging 260 feet in length. As Pomona rapidly grew following World War II, the impact of this design would be felt in the central business district.

C. Post-World War II Development

The Pomona Valley was a station for many servicemen during World War II and they took note of the prime location. The conversion of agricultural land to residential suburbs of Los Angeles had started in the 1930’s, however, this trend escalated rapidly as the former servicemen settled in the area and took jobs in the new military industrial economy.

Freeways were being built during the 1950’s and this also hastened the population boom. Cheap housing, well paying jobs, and the southern California climate proved irresistible to those with recent roots to the east.

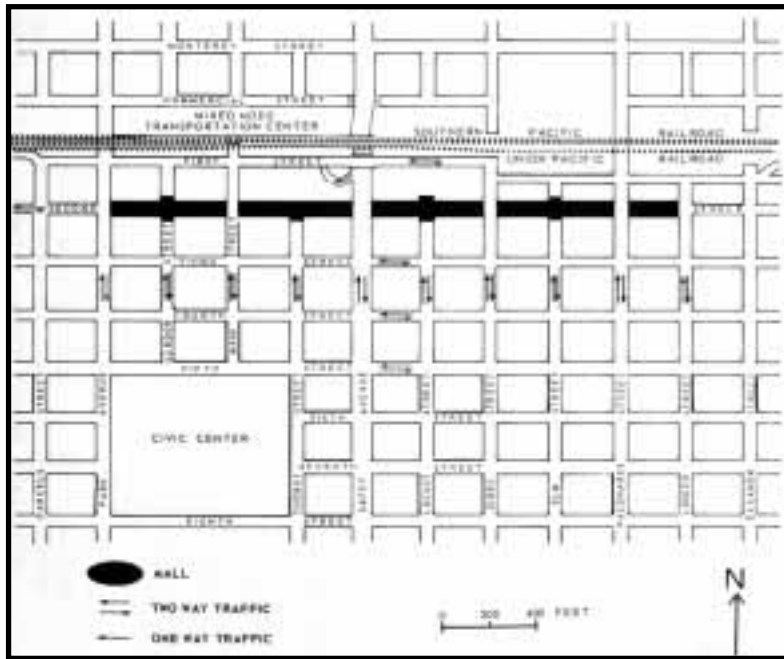
The inland valley contained other communities that were also burgeoning. Claremont, Upland, Montclair, and Chino were all hotbeds of suburban development, and remain so to this day.

The socio-economic makeup during the 1950’s and 1960’s was predominantly white middle class. The Claremont Colleges and Cal Poly provided higher education opportunities, but most of the new arrivals were high school graduates because the military industrial economic base was such that this proved adequate to earn a comfortable living.

Second Street in Pomona was the main shopping district in the Pomona Valley into the 1950’s, but the sprawling suburbia and single-source economic base foretold change.

D. Current Development Trends

Typical land development in the United States is such that prices go up as an area stabilizes. Land value, cost of living, and competition usually dictate a cycle of demographic transition. Pomona has not been unsusceptible to this, and as the residential fill reached capacity, the land prices went up. Not only did this put pressure on the middle class high school graduate, it also made cheaper land elsewhere look good to employers in the industrial economy.



Plan of Downtown Pomona Projecting the Mall



Plan of Trajan's Forum; Market is to the Right

Predictably, starting in the late 1960's, companies started moving out of the area, and their employees followed. This left an economic vacuum, and Pomona's socio-economics started changing. Once the economic base changed, the land values started dropping, and the middle class make-up of the city trended downward economically. As economic pressure rose, so did crime, and government services were less available to those suddenly in need. In 1978, Proposition 13 changed the budgeting process for cities all across California, many taking several years to adjust. Unfortunately, Pomona, for many people, became a place to avoid.

Pomona is currently a very affordable place to live. The population is now 51% Latino, a historically lower economic group. Demographic trends point towards increasingly strong political and economic strength by this group, so Pomona's future could be very bright, perhaps positioned for a boom such as that which followed World War II, especially with a strong California economy that has moved away from the single source military industrial complex.

E. Second Street and the Pomona Pedestrian Mall

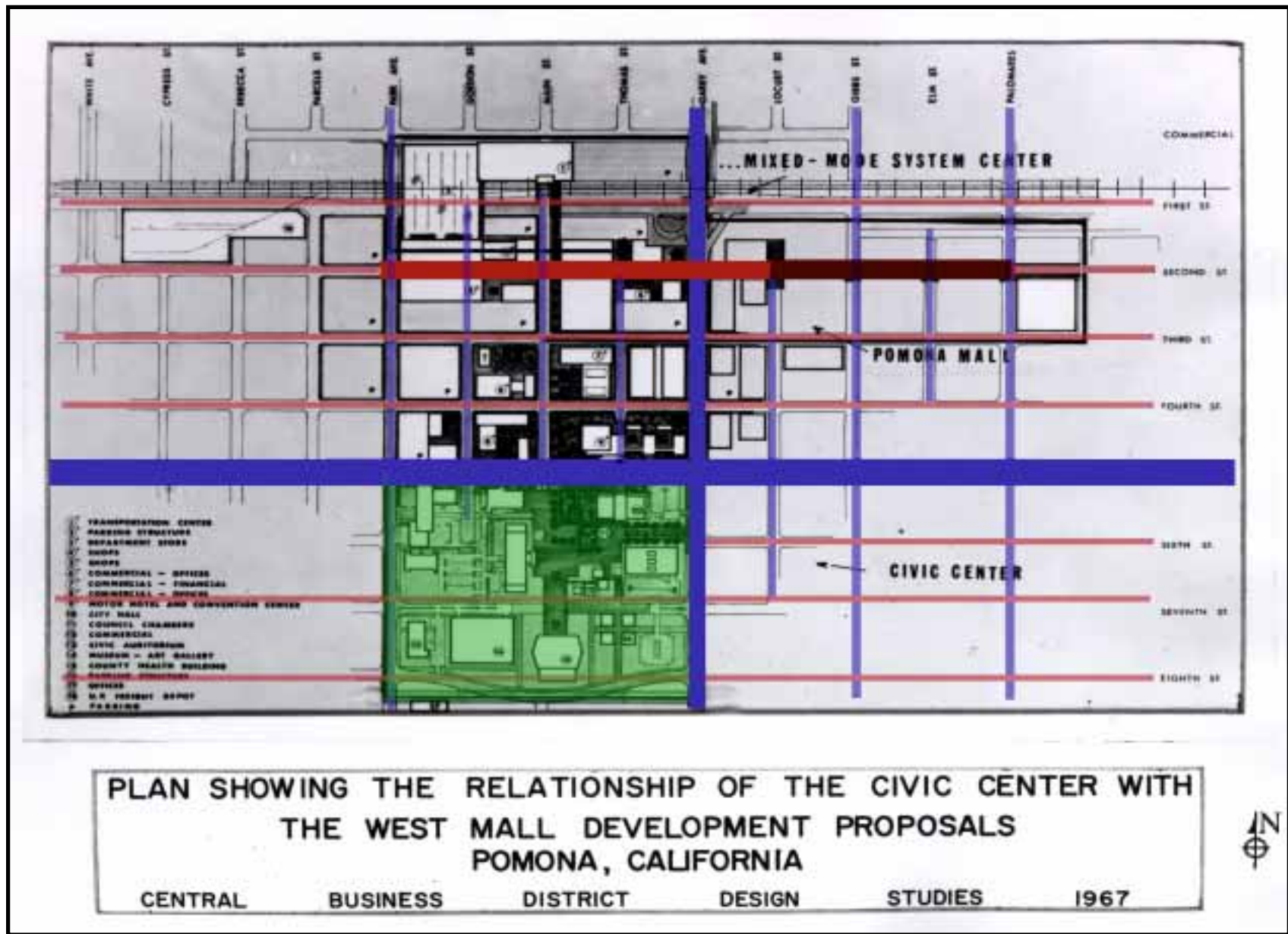
Second Street, as previously mentioned, was the commercial hub of the Pomona Valley until the 1950's. It was a typical town in the U.S. with a two-lane road flanked by individually owned business establishments. During the day of the horse and buggy, one would spend all day here, however, the automobile made a quick trip very convenient. Driving right up to the storefront was no problem, until there were so many cars that finding a place to park became the main objective of the trip downtown! Still, Second Street was the place to go, as competing choices were few.

During the 1960's, established suburban tracts, freeways, and other new commercial hubs became the mechanism that drew shoppers away from this area. The Eastland Mall in West Covina, and Montclair Plaza in Montclair were loaded with stores, plenty of parking, and modern air conditioning.

The business owners of Second Street could see the need for change, and began planning for alternatives in the late 1950's by planning for something called a "Pedestrian Mall". Eventually, in 1962, Pomona became the first California community to construct a permanent Pedestrian Mall, a nine-block area of Second Street.

Pomona had (and still has) problems typical in central business districts such as antiquated and deteriorating buildings that are inflexible to change, poor parking, and poor circulation. The Pedestrian Mall concept was seen as a way to draw people, regardless of these problems. The feeling was that giving people the opportunity to shed their car and shop in a "park-like" atmosphere would be extremely attractive.

The Pedestrian Mall concept is not a modern concept, it has its origins in ancient Greek and Roman culture where malls took the form of arcades—covered walk areas. The term today applies to any open area exclusively for the use of pedestrians, covered or not.



1967 Plan Overlain to Demonstrate the Strong Cross-axis that Impeded Success of the Mall

The most famous mall from ancient times was the Forum Trajani located in Rome. Built by the Emperor Trajan between 107 and 113 AD, the forum included a marketplace, Trajan's Market, which was a commercial center of about 150 shops and offices. Covering 25 acres, it was the largest and last fora built by the Roman Empire. Monumentally grandiose and functional, it was typical of ancient Roman urban form with the flexibility of indoor/outdoor space, and provided a powerful visual link with the Forum of Augustus, the empire's founder.

The mall concept did not reach acclaim in the United States until the 30's when the effective separation of areas exclusively for pedestrians was demonstrated for the first time by Rockefeller Center in NY and Maiden Lane in San Francisco. The success of these two projects helped to provide the impetus for similar projects elsewhere. Shortly after World War II, the Pedestrian Mall concept emerged in new commercial shopping centers developing in the suburbs across the U.S. As these new shopping facilities began to capture retail sales formerly made in the local community's older core area, many downtown interests realized that their future was dependent on direct competition with the suburban community complexes and began to analyze their own environment.

The first permanent Pedestrian Mall on a public right of way in a central business district was in Kalamazoo, Michigan in 1959. The three block long mall was on Burdick St. near its intersection with Michigan Avenue, a major downtown thoroughfare. The "Burdick Mall" was only part of a major downtown plan.

The initial success in Kalamazoo, though, was criticized by J. Ross McKeever, Associate Editor of *Urban Land*, who contrasted the development of suburban shopping facilities under single ownership with the conversion of a downtown street. He stated that the downtown street

"Serves multiple parcels of property held in separate ownership having individual structures built at various times and for various purposes. The street provides access for services. It is also the corridor for circulation to the immediate buildings and to others on other streets. Parking may be near, or it may be several blocks away. The street is a confusion in space required for movement of pedestrians and for vehicles. To transform these complex conditions into a setting for a shoppers' mall means doing more than making a mere street closure with trees and benches brought in for furniture."

Unfortunately, Pomona did not heed this warning. By 1968, there were signs that the initial success of the Pomona Pedestrian Mall was fading. By the early 1970's, it was clear that the mall was a failure, as 30% of the businesses were vacant, the rents were rock bottom, and the street was virtually deserted.

Other California pedestrian mall projects of note occurred in Fresno and Riverside. They met with varying success, but Fresno has emerged as the most stable of the three projects because it attempted a more comprehensive plan for the district that included the mall, as opposed to in Pomona and Riverside where the planning took place almost exclusively within the mall boundaries.



The Pomona Downtown Mall

II Morphology

A. A Mall is Born

The Pomona Downtown mall project was completed in 1962 and all automobile traffic through the entire nine block area was eliminated. The design of the mall was done by local artist Millard Sheets; he is well known for the murals that adorned the Ahmanson family's Home Savings of America buildings all over California (now Washington Mutual).

The most notable feature of the mall was the stone planter boxes that lined either side of the street, 70 in all. The stones for the planters were native to the region's alluvium, and evoked a Craftsman era style; in each planter was a shade tree. Also, the paving where the two-lane street used to be consisted of pebbles in concrete, although these were imported from Rosarita, Mexico.

In addition to the planters, there were five pools with fountains, modern-style lighting, and a public address system.

The former neo-classical business district was facelifted and several new modern-style buildings were constructed. Much of the architectural adornments were stripped or covered with stucco, and the new buildings took on a consistent un-adorned architecture. These were large structures, especially the Home Savings Bank, and Buffum's department store.

The classic grid, with its uniform symmetry, was still in place, however now there was a separation from the other elements as the cars were forced onto back lots and side streets, and some streets were truncated as well.

The former crowded street, smelly from congestion and auto exhaust, was now a carefree, pleasant stroll through a long string of retail and financial businesses. Pomona celebrated its shiny new downtown addition!

B. Good Times Gone Bad

The mall was a smashing success. Business thrived for three to five years, but then the mall became emptier and emptier.

The reasons were many, but the extensive length of the mall (nine blocks), the extreme linearity and uniformity of the design, lack of facilities and eating establishments, staid retailing, and external pressures all led to the decline. Also, people wanted easy access to and from their cars. Shoppers were forced to park in a variety of places that were not convenient or free.

Although it remains a very pleasant place, its core purpose as the mall was designed for was shopping, and the shopping was better elsewhere. Leisure activities require a program that is different from shopping activities, such as seating, amenities, and events. Leisure and shopping can be combined, but the needs of both activities must be thoroughly addressed in the face of competing opportunities in the region.



The Pomona Downtown Mall

C. The Here and Now

The Pomona Downtown Mall, now referred to once again as Second Street, has the potential to attract people, but the area has evolved (devolved?) into a mixed bag of eclectic styles as the local merchants struggle in fits and starts to find the right mix of retail and event oriented establishments.

Today, Second Street has been partially returned to a vehicular thoroughfare, with 4 blocks remaining traffic free. Interestingly, the western four blocks are the most popular, these being open to automobiles. In addition, some of the signature stone planters were removed because they were too dominant a feature, and did not offer multiple uses such as seating, game playing, etc.

This western section is referred to as the Arts Colony and houses several art studios, retro shops, and loft housing.

The eastern section of the former mall is called the Antique District and has a mix of shops of which many are antique dealers. The first block of this five block section is open to traffic, while the last four blocks are converted department stores that house the Western Osteopathic School of Medicine.

III Summary and Perceptions

Pomona's Second Street downtown mall has a rich architectural heritage that has been covered over by attempts to modernize and gain economic benefit. This has been done without a comprehensive planning and implementation process, thus, the area has deteriorated into an eclectic mix of 'glued on' urban styles and form.

Second Street runs parallel to the direction of major traffic patterns, with only Garey Avenue being a major perpendicular axis bisecting the nine-block street. Perhaps a plan to minimize vehicular traffic in this north-south direction would be a key to achieving the goals of the pedestrian mall planners.

There are lots of intriguing pieces and parts in the overall downtown area, and a concerted public-private effort could result in a vibrant and enticing downtown scene.

