

DEFINING THE CITY OF GARDENS:
THE CONSERVATION OF PASADENA'S BUNGALOW COURTS

By

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The garden, by design, is concerned with both
The interior and the land beyond the garden

Stephen Gardiner

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Abstract

In 1909, builders constructed the first bungalow court in Pasadena, California. The building type, often comprised of a series of simple, vernacular structures, subsequently thrived throughout the region and gained favor from Pasadena's citizens for its landscaped-dominated composition and community-oriented courtyard space. This unique form of multi-family housing remains relevant today, largely in part to Pasadena's radical and multifaceted preservation efforts in the last thirty years.

As this thesis will demonstrate, a combination of community members, architects, urban planners, public officials, and developers all played an important role in acknowledging Pasadena's bungalow courts as a valuable and practical building type. Together with a progressive policy measure known as the *City of Gardens Ordinance*, the density and design concepts inspired by the bungalow courts live on through replication and reconstruction in several multi-family housing projects throughout the city. The result is an urban environment demonstrating walkability, communal engagement, affordability, and regionally-inspired architecture: all trademarks of sustainably-minded cities.

This study aims to consider this building type as a practical housing solution while also considering if its context in Pasadena is inimitable in other cities. Can the bungalow court model work where property values are declining? Can form-based

regulation, such as the *City of Gardens* Ordinance, function without the support of a broad array of interest groups, as was the case in Pasadena. Finally, what are the shortcomings of the bungalow court in comparison to the amenities offered in suburban living?

Introduction

Pasadena, California is a city renowned for its picturesque landscapes scattered along the sweeping vistas of the Arroyo Seco. Its unique architectural history complements its geography with an abundant stock of historic Craftsman and California bungalows: features which are indisputable assets to the region's value, both from an economic and an aesthetic perspective. Yet its celebrated architecture and geography only touch the surface of the city's most valuable resources. More importantly, beneath the tactile exterior of the city, lie the cultural and social values that help define and structure the way space is used.

A study of the history and preservation of the city's bungalow courts reveals these space-informing values, such as the appreciation of accessible outdoor space and pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods. These unique structures first appeared at the turn of the twentieth century and have not only remained a relevant building type but have also helped to dramatically shape both current and future construction practices throughout the city.

The bungalow court building type is original to Pasadena and remains a prolific form throughout the region. Courts often consist of a complex of single-story, detached bungalows positioned around a central courtyard. As important as the architecture, prominent landscape features and the courtyard form provide significant value to these structures as they offer communal outdoor space without

sacrificing the privacy provided by detached structures. This combination of character-defining features is quite rare for multi-family housing structures, especially so because the courts do not use the maximum allowable density zoned for each lot.

This tension between heritage and density runs through the history of the bungalow court. During the post-war escalation in new construction, bungalow courts were systematically threatened by upzoning, followed by eventual protection through downzoning, and ultimately enshrined as a preferred building type by the *City of Gardens Ordinance* in 1991. This paper seeks to document both the efforts to preserve the building type and the subsequent policy measures informed by it as a multi-family housing model. Still today, because of these efforts, contemporary architects and developers continue to follow the creative models of construction and design used to conserve this unique form of multi-family housing.

Of the contemporary architects, Stefanos Polyzoides stands out as a notable advocate for the conservation and proliferation of the bungalow court building type. Mr. Polyzoides, an architect and urbanist practicing in Pasadena with his wife and partner Elizabeth Moule, were (along with Andrew Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, Dan Solomon, Peter Katz, and Peter Calthorpe) founding members of the Congress for New Urbanism. The CNU began in 1993 with the desire to promote walkable, mixed-use communities and to counter the negative effects of sprawl by encouraging a more thoughtful approach to design and construction.

Given Pasadena's pre-automobile infrastructure, it is no wonder that Mr. Polyzoides chooses to live and work there, constantly endorsing the values that are defined in the CNU charter: pedestrian-friendly development, adopting a regional aesthetic, and promoting environmental consciousness whenever possible. Yet in addition, he is also a pioneer among his compatriots in the CNU for his interest and reliance on historic preservation in his practices. As a result, his work often utilizes Pasadena's historic building stock in combination with new infill construction (Figure 1.0)



Figure 1.0: Del Mar Station, Pasadena. Photo by Author.

In addition to the work of Moule & Polyzoides, Heritage Housing Partners offers a similar, contemporary model for development, combining old and new construction

in building a hybrid bungalow court. This hybrid continues to enrich Pasadena by providing innovative multi-family housing options while also providing affordable home-ownership opportunities to its tenants.

Yet, as we shall see, the inspiring work of Moule & Polyzoides and Heritage Housing Partners would not be possible without several key factors. Namely, the preservation of the city's historic bungalow courts and a progressive policy measure known as the *City of Gardens* Ordinance.

To this day, the city of Pasadena remains exemplary for its landscaped-based approach to urban planning and design reform. The preservation of the city's bungalow courts and the *City of Gardens* Ordinance, while not cure-alls for the city's multi-family housing needs, offers encouraging results for both the city's sustainability model and for retaining its valuable cultural heritage. In order to accomplish these efforts, however, several key players, including architects, developers, preservationists, and urban planners had to work in concert to highlight and prescribe design characteristics of the city.

While this regulatory approach has worked well in Pasadena, what remains to be seen is whether a model of prescriptive zoning could serve as an efficient tool for other cities. Pasadena is also a famously affluent suburb of Los Angeles with beautiful building stock and progressive building codes and design regulations, which has allowed the city to preserve their rich heritage. We can only hope that

this model can serve as inspiration for other regionally focused form based approaches to preservation and new development.

Chapter One

Pasadena's Bungalow Courts

The bungalow that had once been the symbol of retreat to the countryside became the architecture of the city and its suburbs...Be it ever so humble, it embodied an ideal for the majority of Americans- the free-standing, single-family dwelling set down in a garden- an ideal that clings to us today.

Robert Winter
American Bungalow Style

At the turn of the twentieth century, Southern California experienced an immense population increase resulting from the advent of rail transportation and the discovery of oil within the region. Single-family homes and multi-family residential buildings began to infuse the once sparse landscape to accommodate the growing number of families migrating to the area. While this era marked a “major shift from preceding idioms of American dwelling types”, this new development predated Southern California’s post-war flux of suburban development and accordingly had a more modest approach to massing and scaling.¹ In addition, historic references were common in multi-family housing, such as the Spanish Colonial style, Mediterranean, Neo-Classical, and the California Bungalow style.²

In Pasadena, California, the single family detached home dominated all other building types during the 1910s and 1920s. In this region, the Craftsman Bungalow emerged as a prolific architectural form with its wide porches and overhanging eaves, offering both access to the outdoors year round and protection from the strong Southern California sun. World-renowned architects Charles and Henry Greene made this style popular with impressive designs of such bungalows as the Gamble House and the Blacker House, (Figure 1.1).

¹ Keylon et al., “Garden Apartments of Los Angeles: Historic Context Statement,” 10.

² In the succeeding inter war era, historic references would be abandoned in favor of more Modern, stream-lined and unadorned structures.



Figure 1.1: Gamble House, Pasadena. Photo by Author.

In addition to the city's abundant Craftsman Bungalows, Pasadena is also considered the birthplace of the bungalow court building type. The first documented bungalow court, known as St. Francis Court, was constructed in 1909 in Pasadena.³ Though another bungalow court is also documented to have been built in Santa Monica later in the same year, the building type was overwhelmingly more prevalent in Pasadena and so considered native to the city.

³ Chase, "Eden in the Orange Groves: Bungalow and Courtyard Houses of Los Angeles," 33.

Looking at these two examples shows how important it is to differentiate between a bungalow court and a bungalow. The bungalow court can represent one of several different historic architectural forms. A bungalow, however, is defined simply as a single story, detached structure, often with a porch.⁴ The etymology of the word traces back to British Colonialism:

Throughout the period in which bungalow building flourished, authors of books and magazine articles traced the source to the Indian province of Bengal. There, the common native dwelling and the geographic area both had the same root word, *bangla* or *bangala*. Eighteenth century huts of one story with thatched roofs were adapted by the British, who used them as houses for colonial administrators in summer retreats.⁵

With respect to architectural form, the Craftsman bungalow typically incorporates a low-pitched roof-line, deep overhanging eaves throughout and deep eaves above a front porch often with tapered wood columns and with hand-crafted stone bases. These features are also exemplary in several bungalow courts, yet not always so. Craftsman bungalows are typically made of wood, brick, or stucco. California bungalows took on a regional form and were not characteristically constructed with brick because of the mild climate in the region and its lack of structural fortitude against seismic activity. Additionally, California bungalows were often one story and comparably smaller than the traditional Craftsman bungalow (Figure 1.2). California bungalows abandoned formal housing components, such as servants' quarters and entertaining spaces, such as dining rooms and music parlors favoring a plan that

⁴ *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*.

⁵ Winter, *American Bungalow Style*, 13.

was simple and modest, with only the basic needs and uses for a more modern society.⁶



Figure 1.2: California Bungalow on Fair Oaks Court, Pasadena. Photo by Author.

Stefanos Polyzoides, a practicing architect and urban planner based in Pasadena, has written extensively on bungalows and courtyard housing in his book “Courtyard Housing in Los Angeles”. There he describes the relationship of the California Bungalow to the courtyard as “A factor leading to the canonization of courtyard housing as the dominant high-density type in the southland was the proliferation of the wooden bungalow at the turn of the century.”⁷ Indeed, bungalow courts are

⁶ Byers, “The Bungalow Court Idea Shown in Practical Operation.”

⁷ Polyzoides, Sherwood, and Tice, *Courtyard Housing in Los Angeles*, 16.

indebted to both the Craftsman architectural movement and to the Southern California aesthetic.

Separate from the bungalow, the bungalow court was a specific, regional building type that flourished throughout Southern California. By definition, the bungalow court is “a form of multi-family housing that involved groupings of small one-story individual houses or duplexes oriented around a common landscaped courtyard, usually on one property.”⁸ Although multi-family housing was less common in Pasadena than in other parts of Los Angeles, this form of housing offered opportunities for traveling workers coming to the region and it offered developers a more profitable use of the land.

Because of the region’s diverse demographics, multi-unit courts were considered “Los Angeles’s unique compromise between apartments and single-family homes.”⁹

While bungalow courts were originally designed to serve a more transient population, their uses evolved into more permanent residences as Pasadena continued to grow. So much so that by 1912, their popularity in the region had inspired publications and notoriety across the country:

The ‘community court’ idea, or plan, consists of taking two, and sometimes three or more, city lots, each about forty or fifty feet wide and from 120 to 150 feet deep, located reasonably close to the business part of the city, and constructing on the plot...thus creating a number of up-to-date and modernly equipped cottages, or

⁸ City of Pasadena, “Bungalow Court Survey.”

⁹ Chase, “‘Eden in the Orange Groves: Bungalow and Courtyard Houses of Los Angeles,’” 29.

bungalows, through the center of which runs a sort of park-way, or court. Such plots of ground will allow the building thereon of from eight to fifteen of these little individual homes.¹⁰

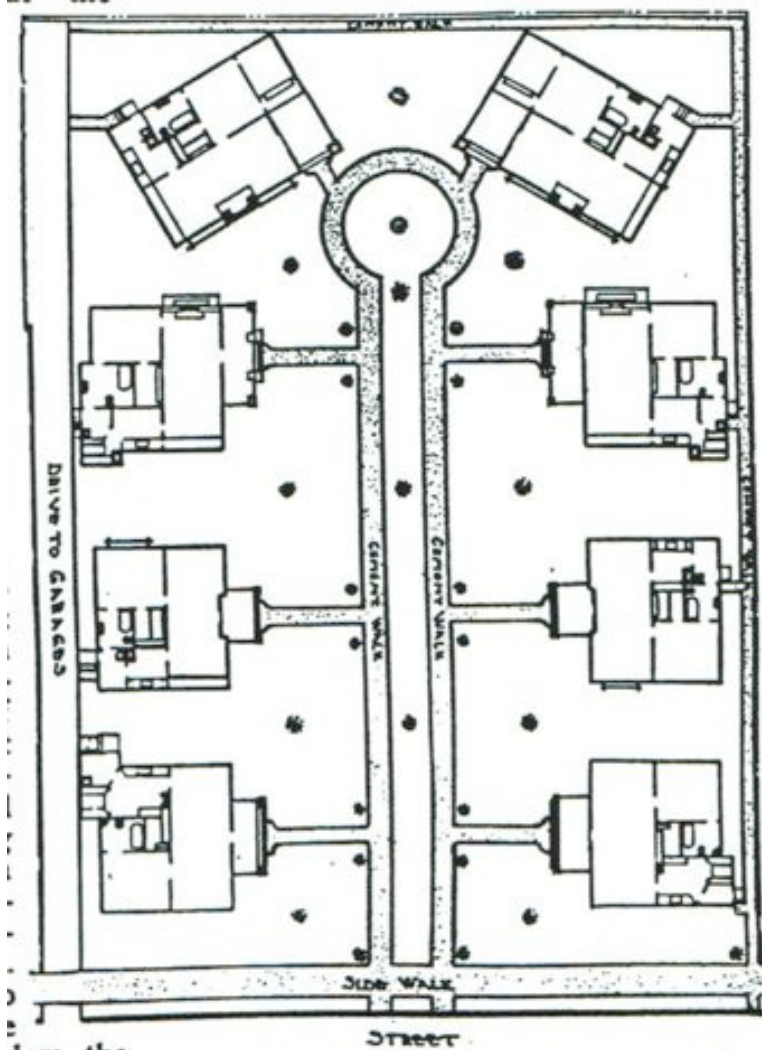


Figure 1.3: Bungalow Court Plan. Courtesy of Byers, "The Bungalow Court Idea Shown in Practical Operation."

As seen in Figure 1.3, the bungalow court building type often resembled a U-shape formation around a central garden with a repetitive and consistent architectural style, although the type of style ranged across many historic types. This diversity of

¹⁰ Byers, "The Bungalow Court Idea Shown in Practical Operation," 696.

styles can be seen in the bungalow court nomination for Historic Landmark Status in Pasadena.

Generally, courts were constructed between 1910 and 1930, although a few were built later. Architecturally, courts reflected the changing design trends over this period. Each, however, adhered to a single style to create a harmonious scheme. Craftsman design dominated the early courts, while from the mid-1910's onward revival styles such as the American Colonial, Spanish Colonial, and Tudor were the most popular. During this time, Mission Revival, Art Deco, and simplified Craftsman designs also appeared. Design quality varied, ranging from simple execution of the general court format to creative use of space...The architectural treatment concentrated on the building elevations facing the open courtyard and street. In contrast, rear elevations remained plain, since they adjoined the perimeter service zone.¹¹

While the architectural styles varied, bungalow courts were well suited to complement the aesthetics of the Pasadena cityscape, purposefully designed to subtly integrate into the existing architectural fabric of the neighborhood, (comprised mainly of California and Craftsman bungalows) and to retain the focus on the natural landscape and community outdoor space, as opposed to a specific architectural flourish or design style. As the bungalows were detached structures, the configuration did not appear to have the heavy massing typical of more traditional multi-family housing complexes.

At 25 miles per hour most people do not really notice bungalow courts. The success of these complexes is, indeed, that they are so well integrated into their

¹¹ City of Pasadena, "National Register of Historic Places Inventory- Nomination Form."

neighborhoods that they don't stand out. A bungalow court is a set of detached houses arranged around a central courtyard that runs the depth of the lot. Southern California's benign climate allowed pedestrians to approach the individual units through a year-round garden rather than within an enclosed corridor: the units themselves, which fronted the courtyards, related strongly to the outside through porches, patios, and generous window openings.¹²

Indeed, the central courtyard serves as the most distinctive criteria for the bungalow court. Without the original configuration, the individual buildings lose a great deal of their historic integrity. While the typology is difficult to define in adherence to one particular architectural style. Joseph Giovanni said it best, that "the bungalow court was simply an early form of a building type that had many variations."¹³ Therefore, the spatial configuration and the modestly-sized, single-story, detached homes became the defining characteristics of the bungalow court (Figure 1.4). Additional features include porches, overhanging eaves, minimal exterior decoration, and sometimes a stone threshold at the entrance to the court.¹⁴

¹² Giovanni, "'Pasadena: Bungalow Courts, Sneakers, and Power.'"

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Kaufman, "Nomination of 636 North Holliston as a Pasadena Historic Landmark."



Figure 1.4 Bowen Court, Pasadena. Photo by Author.

In addition to distinguishing between the bungalow and the bungalow court, to approach the significance of this form one must also distinguish between the bungalow court and the more general forms of courtyard housing and garden apartments. Courtyard housing can be broken down into several different categories, such as the *cortijo* or hacienda and the urban *callejon* (Figure 1.5).¹⁵

¹⁵ “The two words *cortijo* and *hacienda* refer to the same building idea: the isolated and freestanding farm complex...It’s precise, square-walled configuration sets it up almost as a fortress. (It was found) in the countryside, isolated from the rapid change of the city. Both the lives and the forms of the *cortijos* conserve the simplicity of rural existence and the purity of vernacular form,” Polyzoides, page 26. A *callejon* is a “dead-end urban street, typical of the Arab cities of Southern Spain...(It was the)most direct ancestor of the majority of the Los Angeles courts of the working class at the turn of the century”, Polyzoides, page 28.

These categories are further defined according to their spatial configuration around a central courtyard, their different scales and massing, and their variety of uses. All of the subcategories of courtyard housing include multi-family dwelling units, either in attached or multi-story structures. The most common element within all courtyard housing, aside from their central open space, is the prioritization of the pedestrian over the automobile.¹⁶ Entrances and passageways in these structures are intended to accommodate foot traffic without the impediment of driveways and garages. The bungalow court is the only detached form of courtyard housing and it is known to have originated in Pasadena with its most prolific period occurring between 1909 and 1942.¹⁷

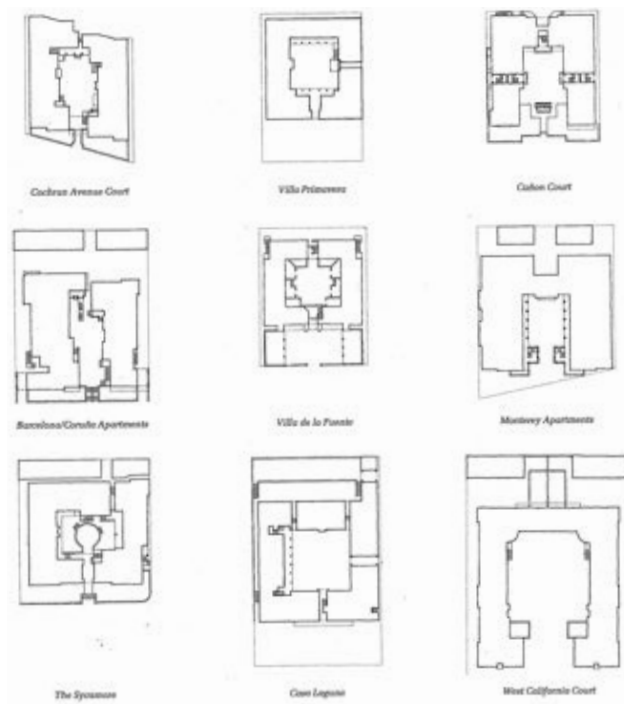


Figure 1.5: Courtyard Typologies. Courtesy of Polyzoides, Sherwood, and Tice, *Courtyard Housing in Los Angeles*, page 28.

¹⁶ Polyzoides, Sherwood, and Tice, *Courtyard Housing in Los Angeles*, 30.

¹⁷ Kaufman, "Nomination of 636 North Holliston as a Pasadena Historic Landmark."

Like courtyard housing, garden apartments present another similar typology to the bungalow court. Garden apartments however refer more generally to any type of residential, multi-family structure that is incorporated into a landscaped garden or courtyard. Garden apartments are generally considered to be post World War II residences, are often quite large, and sometimes as big as a small town.¹⁸

Distinguishing between garden apartments and courtyard housing more generally, we see that the bungalow court focuses special attention on pedestrian scale and access. Since the courts predated the proliferation of the automobile, they were never designed to accommodate or prioritize cars above the needs of the pedestrian. Today, over a hundred years later, and with car-ownership ubiquitous, the bungalow court's pedestrian-focused design is again a model, as builders and urban planners now, more than ever, look for more pedestrian friendly design options. Consider, for example, the careful processional paths exemplary of bungalow courts:

With the almost universal "U"-shape building configuration, specific placement of architectural features, and restriction of vehicular traffic to the property edge, the central courtyard emerged as the visual focal point and route of pedestrian access. Entrance to the bungalow court often commenced at the sidewalk, with passage through a torii, between piers, or through an opening in a wall or hedge. From this point, one or two walkways extended the length of the court, connected via shorter to each unit...Lawn, shrubbery, and other plantings created attractive landscaping, at times with an exotic ambience. The frequent use of front porches enhanced the appeal and

¹⁸ Keylon et al., "Garden Apartments of Los Angeles: Historic Context Statement."

accessibility of the courtyard by integrating exterior and interior spaces.¹⁹

At the time of their construction, bungalows of this size and orientation were generally small in comparison to the common standards of a single family home. Despite this modest size, these structures were often considered much more agreeable than multi-family housing alternatives, offering the privacy and quietness of a detached structure, modern amenities, such as outfitted kitchens and bathrooms, as well as sometimes providing furnishings to the tenant (Figure 1.6). In 1910, the kitchen was only just beginning to incorporate the conveniences that we find commonplace today, such as refrigerators and ice boxes, counter space, and large sinks and faucets, yet we find them in the bungalow court.



Figure 1.6: California Bungalow Floor Plan. Courtesy of Byers, "The Bungalow Court Idea Shown in Practical Operation."

¹⁹ City of Pasadena, "National Register of Historic Places Inventory- Nomination Form."

In addition to providing a meaningful source of multi-family housing, the bungalow court and courtyard housing were advantageous building strategies for the available land because of the deep size of city lots in Los Angeles, Pasadena, and throughout Southern California. On Los Angeles' typical parcels, "rear portions are useless except to those who desire to cultivate extensive gardens. The only other alternative...had been to erect rear buildings with roads leading to them on the sides of lots."²⁰ The notion of a side road was undesirable at the turn of the century (before the advent of car ownership and driveways) and therefore made alternative building typologies less advantageous to developers and contractors. However, the greater the depth of the lot, the more advantageous the bungalow courtyard became. "Because you create your own frontage not only on the street, but on the main approach to the several houses fronting on the center of the lot, which are removed from the external influences of neighboring improvements."²¹

The bungalow court building type became so successful in Southern California that it quickly inspired similar spin-offs across the country. Developers and contractors found them to be successful investments with steady occupancies while tenants enjoyed the communal outdoor space, specifically in regions with more temperate climates, as described in an article from 1914:

The bungalow court idea, which had its inception five years ago, has met with considerable favor throughout the country. Its object, primarily, is to furnish for the same money greater comfort and independence than is

²⁰ White, "Bungalow Courts in California'," 2.

²¹ Ibid.

possible in an apartment...Each bungalow possesses three rooms- a combination living room and dining room, one bedroom and the kitchen- besides the bathroom and a rear screened porch. The living room contains either a fireplace or a gas grate, and a built-in wall bed; the bedroom has a large closet, and the kitchen, the customary conveniences. The interior finish is in good taste, and the equipment is modern and complete. In the living room the walls are papered, and in most instances there are built-in bookcases and a window-seat.²²

In Pasadena's most recent survey, 112 extant bungalow courts were identified.²³

Although they were first constructed over a hundred years ago, they have remained a relevant and useful building type to the community of Pasadena with contemporary multi-family housing projects often modeled after this historic building type. Yet their survival and proliferation cannot solely be attributed to their practicality: several exemplary efforts in urban planning and preservation activism specifically helped to sustain their continuation.

²² Byers, "The Bungalow Court Idea Shown in Practical Operation," 318.

²³ City of Pasadena, "Bungalow Court Survey."

Chapter Two

Upzoning, Downzoning, And Community Activism

Markets are not mere meetings between producers and consumers, whose relations are ordered by the impersonal “laws” of supply and demand. For us, the fundamental attributes of all commodities, but particularly of land and buildings, are the social contexts through which they are used and exchanged.

Logan and Molotch
Urban Fortunes

The construction of bungalow courts began to slow during the Great Depression and ultimately concluded during World War II. During the war, housing efforts were predominantly focused on migrant workers, but like many parts of North America, Pasadena enjoyed a boom of population and economic growth following the war, which resulted in a surge of new housing construction. In the late 1940s and 1950s, large numbers of people immigrated to the region and commercial businesses flourished in the downtown business district. During this period, the city started to shift its reputation as an affluent resort destination to a self-sustaining suburb of Los Angeles. As a result, Pasadena became a budding metropolis and a need for higher density housing arose. Automobile ownership also increased and greatly affected the style of these higher density structures that were being built.

In 1961, the city of Pasadena considered a new ordinance to allow for high-rise apartment construction as part of an effort to redevelop the city and encourage economic growth. The law allowed for two basic categories of multi-family housing, 15-story structures and “garden” apartments of three stories or less, both of which would include new parking requirements for their tenants. Planners offered the ordinance with the assumption that the interspersed, spot-zoned building types would create enough physical space between the buildings to discourage a dramatic shift in the city’s landscape.²⁴ Yet the proposed ordinance was not without opposition. Richard Jencks, the chairman of the West Pasadena Residents

²⁴ Birkinshaw, “High Rise Law to Allow Two Sizes of Building,” 1.

Association, argued that “the high rise apartments in the proposed zone would destroy an area of single-family homes well maintained and distinguished.”²⁵

Ultimately passing this 1961 ordinance led to a dramatic shift in the value of Pasadena’s real estate from the 1960s through the 1980s. Before the zoning changes, value was predominantly calculated through the building on the property. Slowly after density began to increase on these lots, the value shifted from the buildings to the land. As reported in Pasadena Heritage’s quarterly newsletter,

Major problems materialized: land speculation, absentee ownership, lack of property maintenance, and extreme reluctance on the part of the lending institutions to finance lower density uses. These conditions are intensified in the areas closest to the downtown commercial district.²⁶

Ironically, while the higher-density ordinance had been created to reduce blight, by discouraging any kind of maintenance or upkeep in older, historic properties with lower densities, it had the opposite effect. Many of these properties, bungalow courts among them, were adjacent to the downtown commercial district and therefore more vulnerable. Increased parking requirements combined with the rising land and building costs sealed the bleak fate of historic multi-family housing, as any kind of rehabilitation or upkeep would require the developer to include parking for all of his or her tenants, whether the historic parcel originally included them or not.

²⁵ Ibid., 2.

²⁶ Pasadena Heritage, “Zoning- The Key to Stability.”

Pasadena citizens and activists rallied to find a solution to the dramatically shifting landscape of the city. On one hand, they needed to increase a certain amount of density in order to accommodate economic growth. On the other hand, they wanted to encourage more thoughtful building practices and retain the architectural integrity of the renowned and historic city. Activists voiced their concerns over the new, higher-density developments that arose, illustrating how many of these developments lacked a thoughtful approach to architectural design and considerations of pedestrians and tenants (Figure 2.1). Their designs were often dominated by garages and driveways and they offered very little landscaping or accessible outdoor space.

These structures, known as “six packs” for their standardized unit matrix, were typically enclosed without access to outdoor space and built above semi-subterranean parking to accommodate the city’s parking requirements. Unfortunately, this approach forced the structures up half or an entire level above the street entrance, further alienating the pedestrian, prioritizing the automobile, and degrading the overall aesthetic value of the neighborhood.²⁷

²⁷ Wilson, Discussion of the City of Gardens Ordinance.



Figure 2.1: High Density Building Construction on Marengo Street in Pasadena. Photo by Author.

In reaction to these changes, several measures were taken by the city's urban planners and city council members. In 1975, planners reacted by revising the General Plan, which downzoned several older neighborhoods. Going further, in 1976 the Planning Commission began a larger, citywide downzoning program, which reduced density allowances and hindered redevelopment.²⁸ Downzoning was discussed as a necessary, yet potentially temporary, measure to protect specific areas of the city that were threatened with demolition while a more comprehensive plan was underway. These actions eventually led to the city's adoption of Urban Design Guidelines of 1979, which were in direct opposition to the growing number

²⁸ Pasadena Heritage, "Zoning- The Key to Stability."

of “six pack” apartments.²⁹ While the Design Guidelines were a promising step forward, they still relied on the developer to take initiative in implementing them. A step, as it turns out, few developers were willing to take.

Hoping to encourage preservation, activists went further pushing through a “No Demolition” ordinance and a landmark district ordinance to identify the historic fabric of the city.³⁰ The “No Demolition” ordinance, also known as Proposition 2, was enacted in 1989 with a ten year expiration date. Proposition 2 required that demolition of housing could not have “a significant adverse impact upon the city’s ability to meet its affordable housing obligations.”³¹ In conjunction with this action, progressive activists sought to list eligible districts on the National Register of Historic Places and to create a Landmark Overlay District to distinguish contributing properties that were otherwise ineligible for landmark status but nonetheless important structures to the community as a whole.³²

A neighborhood known as Bungalow Heaven became Pasadena’s first landmark district in 1989 (Figure 2.2).³³ This section of the city features single family homes, predominantly of the California bungalow style, that were modest in size. In addition to Prop 2, the historic neighborhood adopted their own regulations about

²⁹ Wilson, Discussion of the City of Gardens Ordinance.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ “A Bungalow Bill: Pasadena Needs to Protect Remaining Bungalow Courts.”

³² Pasadena Heritage, “Zoning- The Key to Stability.”

³³ City of Pasadena, “Bungalow Heaven Landmark District Conservation Plan.”

what can and cannot be done to houses within their boundaries. These progressive efforts remain an exemplary form of neighborhood-wide preservation activism.



Figure 2.2: California Bungalow in Bungalow Heaven, Pasadena. Photo by Author.

While many of these actions by the city of Pasadena have been typified in contemporary historic preservation cases across the country, the city was still somewhat ahead of its time in California. In the 1970s, San Francisco had the only extant California-based local advocacy group for preservation issues. Pasadena looked to San Francisco as well as the State Office of Historic Preservation for guidance on how to retain its historic character. The city held public hearings to consider “the degree to which an area has retained its lower density character” and

to gauge the amount of community support for the (down zoning) measure” and the “No Demolition” ordinance.³⁴

During this period of community support for preservation and of uprising against careless development, advocates created the nonprofit Pasadena Heritage to document and fight for preservation issues within the city. Already by the time Pasadena Heritage was founded in 1977, high-rise development had claimed many older bungalows north of California Boulevard, yet many of the bungalows and bungalow courts south of California still remained. In this vulnerable environment, the founders of Pasadena Heritage, Claire Bogaard, Katie Harp Maclane, Bill Ellinger, Jim Marrin, and later Sue Mossman began their plea to preserve these structures and fight for zoning amendments and a landmark ordinance in order to protect the existing historic building fabric.³⁵

While the anti-demolition ordinance and design guidelines were temporarily effective as the city planned the future of its residential neighborhoods, these methods negatively limited commercial development within the city as they restricted choices for parking locations in the downtown center.³⁶ In 1981, a Pasadena-based urban planner named Marsha Rood served as the city’s development administrator and worked on a comprehensive plan to rehabilitate downtown Pasadena’s economic district. Ultimately, the parking requirements of

³⁴ Pasadena Heritage, “Zoning- The Key to Stability.”

³⁵ Bogaard, Discussion of Pasadena Heritage’s Bungalow Court Preservation Efforts.

³⁶ Rood, Discussion of Old Town Pasadena Revitalization.

Old Town Pasadena were amended to accommodate the rehabilitation of existing structures and city-subsidized shared parking garages were created to encourage more commercial traffic to the city center (Figure 2.3).³⁷

Mrs. Rood fundamentally believed that to not support historic preservation was to not support economic development in the city. She argued that the two agendas were symbiotic, yet historic value and the economic value of “place making” were often ignored by the bottom line of development proformas.³⁸ Mrs. Rood said later of her theory,

Development proposals must be accomplished within the context of the overall community vision, goals, and objectives...Community-based urban design standards should have as their goal the creation, preservation, and enhancement of uniqueness of place, not uniqueness of individual buildings. To address place in city-building, a public sector balance sheet should be developed to evaluate development in terms of community goals and objectives, much like a private sector balance sheet (or proforma) determines private project feasibility. Criteria for the public balance sheet should be based upon community values and reflect the community’s desires for its unique quality of life...Uniqueness of place must be the overriding objective.³⁹

Mrs. Rood’s efforts to amend the city’s parking requirements and setbacks had an invaluable impact on the economic vitality of Pasadena’s city center. The restoration efforts of Old Town Pasadena are still considered a success in economic

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Rood, Marsha. Interview.

³⁹ Rood, *Reinventing the “Good Life” for the Future: Redevelopment in California*.

revitalization and further enhance the unique personality of the pedestrian-friendly city.



Figure 2.3: Old Town Pasadena Parking Garage. Courtesy of Rood, "Parking Once in Old Pasadena."

Though not always without controversy, the efforts made by Pasadena Heritage and the City of Pasadena were not intended to limit economic growth, but to encourage a thoughtful approach to development. They strived to conserve the character of the city, which reflected its gardens, courtyards, bungalows, walkable streets and pre-automobile infrastructure; and indeed many of these characteristics would later become hallmarks of environmentally-conscious urban centers. In an article in the Herald Examiner, Mike Sergieff writes:

Growth is by in-fill rather than bulldozer- a growth that is much more organic than starting off with a clean state

of land. Community associations are trying to downzone those areas that need the law to protect them against the pressures of speculation. Zoning design is perhaps the most effective tool at the disposition of Pasadena's neighborhood associations, and they are active in using it. Historic Preservation need not be an isolated goal in itself. In Pasadena, preservation is a symbol of community, a tool of neighborhood organization, a subject of interest in the community, and a valid approach to environmental improvement. It is finally a way of seeing buildings as homes, neighborhoods and community rather than only as real estate.⁴⁰

Pasadena was not unique for taking this approach. In fact, growth management became a common approach to preservation in the 1980s and 1990s. A survey of growth management and statewide comprehensive land-use planning acts taken in 1996 reveals that all twelve states used in the study included historic preservation as a goal or a required planning component.⁴¹ While the two agendas share certain attitudes towards new development, growth management also considers broader issues such as reducing traffic congestion, countering the effects of sprawl, conserving natural resources, and conserving affordable housing.

What makes Pasadena's growth management successful, however, was the city's careful consideration of these strategies and their success in implementing zoning amendments. These amendments were thought to have the added benefit of "enhancing the economic sustainability of historic resources by reorienting the

⁴⁰ Sergieff.

⁴¹ Listokin, "Growth Management and Historic Preservation: Best Practices for Synthesis."

direction and location of development.”⁴² In addition, the work by local preservationists from Pasadena Heritage saw that economic revitalization was inherent to the concept of restoration, not in tearing down and rebuilding. Mrs. Bogaard reiterated this in an interview with the Los Angeles Times in 2003, saying “All of us could see the quality that existed in Old Pasadena. Some people thought we were crazy to want to save the old buildings. That was the mentality of the day.”⁴³

Indeed, concepts of growth management and preservation have consistently been criticized for their limitations. Yet rather than see these efforts as a form of “moth balling”, local officials and activists saw them as essential tools for community growth. While opponents of downzoning and historic landmark districts charged that these approaches were “elitist and antigrowth, and that a whole city adopting this point of view will eventually stifle itself,” as Mrs. Rood and Mrs. Bogaard clearly argue, the effort was, in fact, rooted in a pro-growth initiative based on social value, use value, and characterizing Pasadena’s unique qualities. ⁴⁴

Of these unique qualities, the bungalow courts emerged as one of the most distinctive features of the city. Aesthetically, they were exemplary of Pasadena’s garden-dominated landscapes, the bungalow architectural style, and Southern California’s courtyard housing building type. They also countered arguments of preservation elitism. The bungalow courts were affordable, multi-family housing

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Daunt, “A Passion for the Old Pasadena.”

⁴⁴ Giovanni, “Pasadena: Bungalow Courts, Sneakers, and Power,” 2.

that the city desperately needed (yet often could not afford to keep as more expensive new development loomed). As Claire Bogaard argued to the Pasadena City Council in 1990,

Bungalow courts offer a unique housing solution today, just as they did when first conceived more than eighty years ago. Their design offers both privacy and a sense of community and allows them to fit unobtrusively into single family neighborhoods while providing increased density. In higher density zones, the low profile and garden setting of a bungalow court can blend nicely while adding diversity and green space. The historic importance of a bungalow court, its typically sound construction, and the attention to detail in the design of each unit make this form of housing especially desirable today.⁴⁵

At the time of their construction in the 1910s and 1920s, bungalow courts were relatively inexpensive to construct, making them accessible to small-time developers as there was no need for much up-front money for land. The land was both inexpensive and plentiful.⁴⁶ Yet in the 1970s and 1980s in dense and affluent suburb of Los Angeles, the land value precluded all other development incentives. The bungalow courts were no longer valuable to land owners and they often met the fate of the wrecking ball.

In 1933, there were 414 bungalow courts in Pasadena. By 1989, due to widespread demolition, the number had decreased to 112. Even during the city's historic bungalow court resource survey, eleven courts were demolished.⁴⁷ Currently, of the city's remaining bungalow courts, forty-three have a form of historic designation and twenty-

⁴⁵ Bogaard, "Letter to Pasadena City Council."

⁴⁶ Giovanni, "'Pasadena: Bungalow Courts, Sneakers, and Power.'"

⁴⁷ Kaufman, Laura, Nomination of Holliston Court page 10

one are ineligible for designation because of alterations to their original design, configuration, or location.⁴⁸ Pasadena's oldest bungalow court ever documented, St. Francis Court designed by Sylvanus Marston, has also lost its historic integrity as only five of the original eleven bungalows remain and are scattered on individual lots away from the court's initial location.⁴⁹

As Mrs. Bogaard argued above, these structures were inherently useful on a social level and they responded to real needs from the community, yet their value was being ignored by the bottom line and a lack of creativity in considering alternative options for their viability. Stewart Brand stated in his seminal work *How Buildings Learn: What Happens After They're Built* that "every building leads three contradictory lives- as habitat, as property, and as component of the surrounding community."⁵⁰ He argued that these contradictory uses pose endless tensions, but that the most resilient structures would not assume their form and function based on market forces. He reiterated the problematic approach to ignoring inherent social value in buildings in saying that "seeking to be anybody's house it becomes nobody's."⁵¹ For the bungalow courts of Pasadena, the buildings were not satisfactory as pieces of property alone, yet they were invaluable as habitats and as components of the community, giving them a stronger sense of social value than their exchange value as commodities. The strongest evidence of their social value and practicality is seen in their transcendence as a relevant and useful form of housing over a hundred years after their prominence.

⁴⁸ City of Pasadena, "Bungalow Court Survey."

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Brand, *How Buildings Learn*.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Use value is defined as satisfying a human need or want.⁵² The use-value of a product responds to social needs and not to market forces and is considered to have a positive benefit for society. Pasadena's urban planners and preservationists were forward thinking in their understanding of *use value*. They did not want to preserve the bungalow courts just for the sake of preserving heritage. It was also a genuinely practical decision. Charles Lockwood, architectural author and advocate for California's nascent architectural history, argued that

The respect and reuse of historic structures is not just some warm ad fuzzy thing that we should do. These buildings create distinctive neighborhoods, and they're instrumental in attracting tourists. You get enough historical buildings together and you have an economic engine that's never going to wear out.⁵³

Yet perhaps more importantly, the courtyards served the housing needs of Pasadena's growing population and provided a quality, affordable alternative to the abundant single-family homes throughout the city. Designed carefully to the unique qualities of the region, they were originally built in relation to the land, to the sun, and to the local climate. Accordingly, their tenants enjoyed living in them and found them preferable to most multi-family housing alternatives and "the dulling isolation of the suburbs."⁵⁴ Finally, they were preferable to the city in providing denser housing than the average single-family home with a focus on communal living and less reliance on the automobile.

⁵² Logan and Molotch, *Urban Fortunes*.

⁵³ Kaufman, "Nomination of 636 North Holliston as a Pasadena Historic Landmark."

⁵⁴ "A Bungalow Bill: Pasadena Needs to Protect Remaining Bungalow Courts."



Figure 2.4: Bowen Court, Pasadena. Photo by Author.

The bungalow court activists were also forward thinking in seeing their efforts shape the larger urban design of Pasadena. The bungalow courts were not simply a cluster of small houses, but a unique spatial configuration with carefully defined enclosures and common, outdoor space. They welcomed the pedestrian with a level ground plane, inviting landscaped outdoor space, and a modest and humane scale (Figure 2.4). As Stefanos Polyzoides' study of Courtyard Housing shows:

There is no serious divergence of goals or methods between preservation and urban design. The value of buildings lies in their capacity as "building blocks" to generate the city and the life that is acted out within it. In the process of urban change, the sense of order in any

given district has to be established in order to guide its future development.⁵⁵

Although it reads as a harmonious urban setting now, that sense of order did not come easily to the city of Pasadena. It had to be carefully cultivated by activists, architects, and planners who acknowledged the value of the bungalow courts and who tirelessly worked to protect them.

⁵⁵ Polyzoides, Sherwood, and Tice, *Courtyard Housing in Los Angeles*, 211.

Chapter Three

Case Studies in Bungalow Court Preservation

The scale of this type of house is generally modest. Its importance does not depend on its monumental qualities but rather arises out of its being repeated as many times as necessary in order to define the city.

Stefanos Polyzoides
On the Roman Peristyle Court
Courtyard Housing in Los Angeles

Gartz Court Case Study

In the early 1980's, Pasadena's changing zoning codes and infringing new development threatened the existence of many of the city's bungalow courts. Several exemplary efforts in preservation helped to reverse this trend, such as the conservation of Gartz Court, which was slated for demolition in order to incorporate an expansion of the parcel's landowner, Montgomery Engineering. The complex of bungalows was originally built in 1910 and is the oldest, surviving bungalow court in Pasadena.⁵⁶



Figure 3.1 Gartz Court Bungalow, Pasadena. Photo by Author.

⁵⁶ Pasadena Heritage, May 1995

The bungalows of Gartz Court were designed with a timber-framed exterior, likely inspired by the English Tudor Revival occurring in residential building during the early twentieth century (Figure 3.1). The eclectic design incorporated columned entrances and stone chimneys, built from nearby Arroyo Seco stone. As with other bungalow courts, the landscape design was crucial in relating the structures to their historic context.

The bungalows, while exemplary forms of architecture on their own, achieved greater significance from their original U-shape around a central courtyard. The landscaped space included a rose garden surrounded by four individual bungalows and two attached bungalows at the far end. Each bungalow had a dramatic threshold with a stepped-out, columned entrance and large over-hanging eaves (Figure 3.2). They were at once welcoming while also providing a cohesive path of procession from the entrance of the court throughout the entirety of the complex, encouraging mingling amongst its residents and strengthening a sense of community.



Figure 3.2: Gartz Court Bungalows, Pasadena. Photo by Author.

In order to salvage the Gartz Court from demolition, the City of Pasadena partnered with Pasadena Heritage to fund the relocation of the courts from their original address on 270 North Madison Street to 745 North Pasadena Avenue. Pasadena Heritage's funding came from a revolving Preservation Fund established "primarily for the purchase and rehabilitation of endangered historic buildings in Pasadena."⁵⁷ Combined with a matching grant by the State Office of Historic Preservation, the relocation effort became a viable option for preservation. Because of the value of Gartz Court's original land, market forces would have been insufficient without these supplementary sources.

⁵⁷ Pasadena Heritage, May 1995.

On the evening of May 30th, 1984, crowds gathered to watch a crew pick up the structures, load them onto trucks, and drive off towards their new address across town (Figure 3.3). According to Pasadena Heritage's records,

Almost immediately, new foundations were constructed and new cement walkways were poured. New garages were framed. The five bungalows were gently and meticulously lowered onto the cured foundations...Masons learned the art of building Arroyo boulder walls, foundations, and eventually chimneys. The careful re-use of the Arroyo boulders was a priority for the restoration work...and the results have been remarkable.⁵⁸

Polyzoides and de Bretteville were the architects in charge of the relocation venture with Platt Construction serving as General Contractor. In preparation for the relocation, the architects executed plans, specifications, and working drawings for the proposal. After relocating the bungalows, their job consisted mainly of constructing new roofs, wiring, and plumbing. In addition, new garages and landscaped backyards were added to the exteriors of the bungalows, allowing the original inner courtyard format to stay intact while also providing an unobtrusive solution to the needed parking requirements.

⁵⁸ Pasadena Heritage, Spring 1984.



Figure 3.3: Gartz Court Relocation. Courtesy of Pasadena Heritage Quarterly Newsletter, Spring 1984.

Gartz Court remains an exemplary form of multi-family residential preservation, a form of conservation that is infamously difficult to pull-off without historic tax credits or additional economic incentives, such as a façade easement or use of California’s Mills Act. The moderate density of the court also makes it a difficult project to preserve when compared to a multi-family structure that incorporates a higher floor-area ratio and no outdoor landscaping. Pasadena Heritage and the City of Pasadena pooled all of their resources and executed a near-impossible task by trucking the cluster of bungalows across town. Additionally, Polyzoides’ and de Bretteville’s considerable knowledge of bungalow courts helped maintain the original integrity of Gartz Court while also incorporating more modern needs for its tenants, such as parking and access to private outdoor space.

In addition to Gartz Court's preservation success, the courts helped provide the city with essential stock of moderate-income housing. In its relocated site, the neighborhood consists mainly of larger, one-story single-family homes. The courtyard complex mixes nicely in with the existing infrastructure while also providing crucial access to more affordable housing as well as more density, executed in an inconspicuous and cohesive way.

Well ahead of his time, Stefanos Polyzoides had predicted the need to conserve this form of multi-family construction when he wrote his analysis of historic courtyard housing forms in Los Angeles in 1982.

These protected courts will challenge us to define new buildings that match their qualities of place, their high standards of construction, and their suggestions of the possibility of a full and serene life in the city.⁵⁹

Indeed, the sheer effort, resources, and time required to move the cluster of structures from Gartz Court is rarely available. The very fact that Pasadena was willing to help fund this effort illustrates the important role that historic bungalow courts played in the city's architectural and urban matrix.

⁵⁹ Polyzoides, Sherwood, and Tice, *Courtyard Housing in Los Angeles*, 209.

Don Carlos Court Case Study

In 1982, the neighborhood of South Marengo became a Historic District in Pasadena. Though none of the South Marengo structures were by Pasadena's Charles and Henry Greene, the district featured exemplary forms of Craftsman period architecture, with structures dating as early as 1901. The bungalows "stressed a horizontal orientation, the extensive use of wood, gently-pitched gabled roofs with extended eaves, and the display of structural elements of ornamentation."⁶⁰ The district also incorporated several bungalow courts of various architectural styles (Figure 3.4)



Figure 3.4: Bungalow Courtyard, Marengo Street, Pasadena. Photo by Author.

⁶⁰ Pasadena Heritage, "Flyer for South Marengo Historic District."

Although the district was listed on the National Register, new development still loomed and several courtyards were threatened with demolition. Don Carlos Court, located at 374 South Marengo Avenue, was one of the threatened sites. The complex of Mediterranean bungalows retained a great deal of integrity with few alterations since their construction in 1927. The court consisted of six detached bungalows positioned in a U-shape around a central courtyard with a two-story structure on the far end. The landscaping featured lush and abundant plants and trees, which offered substantial shade from the strong Pasadena sun. Each bungalow, although modest in size, offered a comfortable living space for a family and at a much more affordable price than a single-family home.

In the early 1980's, controversy arose over proposals for an 18-unit project that was proposed to replace the historic bungalows of Don Carlos Court. The plans were considered by the City Director Bill Paparian and appeared to fall in line with the city's zoning codes and design guidelines. Fortunately, the project was delayed by a surge of activism that ultimately proved effective.

On January 28, 1989, Janet Sporleder wrote to the Pasadena Star in a plea to save the proposed demolition of her residence at 374 South Marengo Street. In her letter, Ms. Sporleder wrote

Life in the courtyard is special for several reasons. It's a charming place with its red-tiled roofs and shaded walk. It is an acknowledged historic landmark, included on the National Register of Historic Places. Also special is the way the courtyard's shared space brings the people who live there together. We have our separate little

houses but share the central courtyard. It's a sort of communal living space where we meet for barbecues and birthday parties or just to chat. There are families with small children, a retired couple...and, over the years, an assortment of singles who all relate in ways unfamiliar to people living in apartments or single-family dwellings. The central courtyard draws you out and into what has become for me a sort of extended family. I feel safer in an environment where the neighbors are watching out for each other.⁶¹

This letter emphasizes one of the crucial aspects of the bungalow courtyard's preservation, namely as a means of conserving cultural value as well as historic value. Preservationists throughout the city were already making very effective cases for the significance of the courtyard's historic legacy in Pasadena. Yet Ms. Sporleder buttressed their arguments with a necessary personal element, one that shed light on their invaluable importance to the community.

In addition to her discussion of the unique social elements intrinsic to the courtyard design, the letter also touched on the important topic of affordable housing. Ms. Sporleder writes that,

For all of us who live in the courtyard, this is affordable housing that will be difficult to duplicate. Several of the residents will be forced to leave Pasadena. The city will be losing more than a cultural and historic landmark. It will be losing people who have called Pasadena home for many years. And it will be losing much-needed affordable housing."⁶²

⁶¹ Sporleder.

⁶² Sporleder, Janet. Star News Letters to the Editor, January 28, 1989.

One could argue that affordable housing could, in fact, be duplicated if Don Carlos Court were to be demolished. In all likelihood, a developer could create a high-rise, high-density complex with low-income subsidies that could end up costing tenants less than the cost of living within Don Carlos. Yet Ms. Sporleder's letter highlights the central reason why that kind of development would not suffice as a replacement. She noted the significance of courtyards in giving their tenants a feeling of community while also offering the pleasures of privacy and access to outdoor space. These elements are usually referred to as amenities, unnecessary but pleasurable additions to a basic rental apartment. In much of the affordable housing stock in this country, these amenities would not exist. As the letter demonstrates, Pasadena had the fortunate advantage of offering these amenities to its residents in the form of its historic bungalow courts. Not only were they aesthetically pleasing to the garden-centric landscape of the city, but they also contributed in precious ways to its community and citizens.

In addition to the Star News letter, an editorial was posted in the same paper on April 26, 1989 in support of preserving Pasadena's bungalow courts. The article noted that

As the city of Pasadena incorporates the affordable-housing protections of the growth-management plan passed by voters as Proposition 2 into its policies, we're glad to note that one of the effects will likely be to protect the remaining bungalow courts sprinkled throughout town...Now that Prop 2 requires demolition of housing not to 'have a significant adverse impact upon the City's ability to meet its affordable housing obligations,' most courtyards are probably safe for the time being. But we agree with the Cultural Heritage

Commission that a separate limited moratorium on the destruction of bungalow courts is a good idea. They are a valuable part of Southern California's architectural legacy, and can be a model for humane and esthetic future housing solutions as well. We need to make sure the courtyards that have escaped demolition are around for the long haul.⁶³

In an effort to augment Ms. Sporleder's argument with a strong knowledge of the city's historic resources and experience with alternative options for preservation development, Claire Bogaard of Pasadena Heritage wrote to the Pasadena City Council on February 5, 1990 urging them to consider the need to protect bungalow courts and the need to consider other solutions. Mrs. Bogaard wrote,

There have been several alternative solutions developed for individual courts in Pasadena, which have been endangered in recent years. Gartz Court, a 6-unit court of English Arts and Crafts design dating from 1910, was moved and rehabilitated by Pasadena Heritage and the City of Pasadena in a joint venture project which won several awards. Several other courts have been converted to office or retail use...We understand that you will be addressing a project involving a bungalow court in South Pasadena this week. We respectfully urge you to investigate alternatives which will preserve the bungalow court as part of South Pasadena's rich architectural and cultural resource base.⁶⁴

Although Pasadena Heritage was a relatively new organization in 1990, they were persuasive and found a significant amount of community support in favor of the preserving the bungalow courts. Even so, the economic model for their preservation was problematic. Each court incorporated a large amount of outdoor space, and

⁶³ "A Bungalow Bill: Pasadena Needs to Protect Remaining Bungalow Courts."

⁶⁴ Bogaard, "Letter to Pasadena City Council."

while this was an attractive amenity to the tenants and the surrounding neighbors, it did not maximize density or dollars per square foot available on a desirable parcel of land in the central business district. Accordingly, a creative approach to their preservation was necessary in order to capitalize on the valuable land.

Ultimately, the city sided with Pasadena's preservationists and denied the eighteen-unit project. Don Carlos Court would not be demolished, but in order to salvage the structure, adjustments had to be made to make the complex economically viable. Alexander P. Tan, a Pasadena architect, designed a series of new structures in the lot directly east of the original court to be connected to the original landscape through "internal passages" designed by landscape architect S. Roy Kato (Figure 3.5).⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Pasadena Heritage, Summer 1988.



Figure 3.5 Don Carlos Court Internal Passage, 374-386 South Marengo Street, Pasadena. Photo by Author.

The new construction blended seamlessly with the historic bungalows through a sensitive approach to the design and a regional aesthetic. Tan's plan included eight new units to the northeast of the existing court and nine units to the southeast of the court (Figure 3.6).⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Ibid.

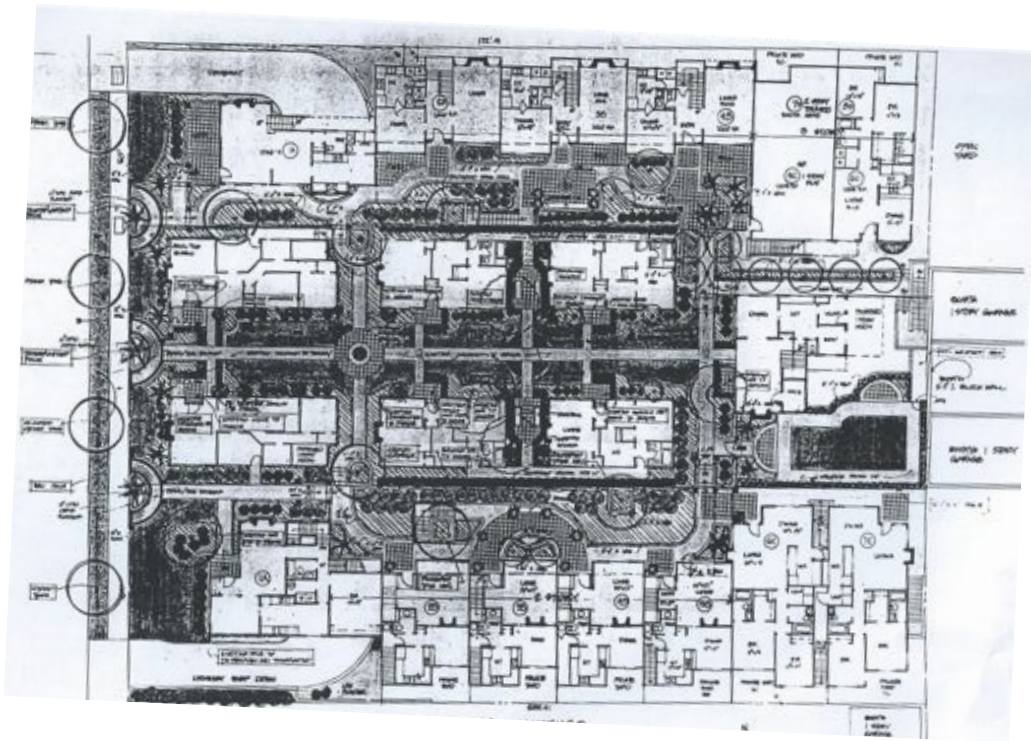


Figure 3.6: Don Carlos Plan. Courtesy of Pasadena Heritage, Don Carlos Archives.

The final product is a fascinating example of preservation blended with new construction. The new bungalows integrate evenly with the original historic bungalows (Figure 3.7). The central courtyard remains in tact but it is delicately connected to smaller, weaving passageways, which provide a crucial element of landscape connectivity to the new buildings. All through, the conservation methods of the original bungalows were left uncompromised. Yet this approach to preservation is often overlooked, especially as it involves multi-family housing, a

form of preservation that is more often seen in adaptive reuse projects. This method did, in fact, raise a few eyebrows from preservationists due to the slight change in context, but it ultimately won favor because of the delicate architectural balance. While new construction is an unconventional tactic when considering preservation development, in this case, it was entirely necessary and quite effective. In an article from the Pasadena Star News on February 21, 1993,

Under the encouragement of the Pasadena City Director and Pasadena Heritage, the Don Carlos Court project represents a direction for future development in the city by demonstrating that there are options available to developers which allow Pasadena's prized heritage to be preserved.⁶⁷

Indeed, future development could be quite meaningfully impacted by this example of infill and preservation. This progressive take on multi-family housing conservation continues to have a strong influence throughout the city. While the work of seen from both Tan and Polyzoides serve as commendable forms of preservation and are inspiring and encouraging, regrettably they are still exceptions within the broad spectrum of development in Pasadena. Their design knowledge and thoughtful approach to regional aesthetics are rare yet crucial elements to these projects' success.

⁶⁷ Editorial, "Don Carlos Court Offers Both Harmony and History."



Figure 3.7: Don Carlos Elevation. Courtesy of Pasadena Heritage, Don Carlo Archives.

Both the Gartz Court and Don Carlos Court projects were considered successes by Pasadena Heritage and the City of Pasadena. Realizing the important cultural and social significance that the courts contributed to the city, Pasadena Heritage hoped to spread their knowledge of the building type and its unique and effective ability to serve important housing needs decades after its original period of significance.

In June of 1991, Pasadena hosted the California Preservation Foundation in a workshop titled “Conserving Housing, Preserving History”. The goal of the conference and workshop was to spread knowledge and skill sets to assist in both preservation of historic structures and in the conservation of multifamily units, such as the bungalow courts, which retained an element of affordability within the affluent city’s mostly single-family home neighborhoods. Topics included historic tax credits, low income tax credits, and architectural best practices. Claire Bogaard spoke on behalf of Pasadena Heritage sharing her experience with the Gartz Court project, including both its complications and triumphs.⁶⁸ The conference was an important acknowledgement of Pasadena Heritage’s role in the city’s development,

⁶⁸ Bogaard, Discussion of Pasadena Heritage’s Bungalow Court Preservation Efforts.

a point which was further stressed by a pivotal policy amendment to the city's multi-family housing development standards earlier that year. Furthermore, Pasadena's presence as both host and educator proved that their bungalow court preservation methods were applicable on a larger scale and were also gaining deserved attention for their practicality.

Chapter Four

The City of Gardens Ordinance

A building or a town will only be alive to the extent that it is governed in a timeless way. It is a process which brings order out of nothing but ourselves; it cannot be attained, but it will happen of its own accord, if we will only let it.

Christopher Alexander
The Timeless Way of Building

In 1991, shortly before the California Preservation Foundation’s conference in Pasadena, an important policy measure made its way through city council. The policy, ultimately known as *The City of Gardens Ordinance*, was introduced in reaction to the city’s perceived “undesirable” multi-family housing, which had earlier inspired downzoning measures and the inception of Pasadena Heritage. Over time, this policy would not only have a dramatic effect on future construction within the city, but importantly had roots in the city’s bungalow courts and their character-defining gardens.

In 1988, the city began wrestling with the ideas that eventually inspired the ordinance. Although the city’s frustration with new construction of multi-family housing had been thoughtfully addressed in the previous decade, there were still significant tensions between local developers, preservationists, and urban planners. Though united in their desire to retain Pasadena’s original character while also promoting thoughtful methods for growth, each group felt differently about the necessary methods for creating new housing.⁶⁹ While an important step, preservation efforts and downzoning methods were not effective enough in preventing poorly planned developments from sprouting up, as Sam Kaplan writes,

More common these days is the “ding bat” or “shoe box” multiunit structure, filling up a lot with a long, narrow building sitting awkwardly on a raised parking garage. What setbacks are required usually do not provide any usable open space, other than a place to store trash cans, nor do they tend to prevent the buildings from shading adjoining buildings and back yards.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Wilson, Discussion of the City of Gardens Ordinance.

⁷⁰ Kaplan, “Emphasis on Gardens.”

One of the biggest concerns with this form of construction was the lack of usable, open space. While developers were maximizing density, their spaces often lacked a certain kind of humanity that outdoor space provided.

To consider this deficit from multiple perspectives, the city pulled members of each of these different interest groups and created a “Multifamily Housing Task Force”. The Task Force was charged with creating an ordinance that would serve their various personal objectives, a process that would, as it turns out, require a great deal of compromise and negotiation. The task force hired a group of authors to draft the ordinance and began collaborating with them to find the best approach to its design.

Tasked with an obligation to draft regulations for future development of all multifamily housing, the committee began their project as a study of urban design elements, both characteristic to Pasadena and timeless in the design of dynamic and healthy urban centers. Tellingly, the authors chose to call their study *The City of Gardens* as it represented the landscape-dominated character of historic Pasadena. The authors included Christopher Alexander, Artemis Anniou, Friso Brocksma, Daniel Solomon and Associates (Daniel Solomon, Kathryn Clarke, Susan Haviland), and Phoebe Wall Wilson. The goal of the task force was to encourage all subsequent development to follow the efficient models of historic multifamily construction within the city. Courtyard housing, specifically, served as the design model, with the garden element providing the character-defining feature of all future multifamily

construction. Choosing the garden as the defining feature built upon the city's heritage both as an agricultural region and as a residential district of lush gardens and well-manicured lawns (Figure 4.1).



Figure 4.1: Courtyard Housing Rendering. Courtesy of Multi Family Housing Task Force, Pasadena California Municipal Code- RM District General Development Standards.

While all of the authors of the *City of Gardens* Ordinance are notable in their own right, Christopher Alexander is undoubtedly a more universally known and influential actor in the world of urban and architectural reform. Though a trained architect, he is most well known for his seminal work of 1977, *A Pattern Language*. Alexander, known as a strong critic of Modernism and specifically modern urban planning, which he has condemned as lacking use-friendliness and as heavily reliant on the automobile, focuses instead on historic models of design, reasoning that the building's user should inform the design more than the architect. For this reason, his

architectural theory is often cited in anti-sprawl literature. In another of his treatises, *A New Theory of Urban Design*, written in 1987, he analyzes successful tools for developing cities that can accommodate growth in effective, thoughtful ways. Here too, he stresses the need for preserving *positive* outdoor space; arguing that while according to current practices, most outdoor space is residual, leftover, and undesirable, outdoor space should be considered a priority and not an afterthought.⁷¹ He adds that there are inherent rules in urban design that can inform these spaces more effectively, writing that,

(In) all cultures which produced great cities and buildings, space was understood as a positive thing created by the buildings. The rule says simply: Every building must create coherent and well-shaped public space next to it. To make this idea easy to understand, we have formulated a set of rules which identify five types of elements- pedestrian space, buildings, gardens, streets, and parking- and then prescribe the necessary relationships between these elements. In essence, the rules guarantee that the pedestrian space, gardens, streets, and parking spaces, are formed by the buildings, not vice-versa.⁷²

Alexander goes on to say that “the space becomes the main focus of attention, and the buildings become merely the tools with which this all-important space is created.”⁷³ This is a radical notion, as modern cities are often designed around attention-grabbing buildings, accessibility to the automobile, and visible signage, not unbuilt space. Alexander further defines the form-based rules that he considers effective for urban development, arguing that

⁷¹ Alexander, *A New Theory of Urban Design*, 66.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

The five sub-rules are:

4.1. Each time a building increment is built, it is shaped and placed in such a way that it creates well-shaped pedestrian space.

4.2. The building volume of the increment is itself also simple and well-shaped.

4.3. Often (but not always) the building will also be shaped to create a garden. This garden will also be a compact and simple shape, but more intimate and quiet than the nearby pedestrian space.

4.4. The nearest road is also extended to give direct access to the building...unless the building is already touching an existing road.

4.5. A tally is kept of total available parking space. If there are not enough nearby parking spaces, a new parking garage must also be built, within 500 feet, and the building is always placed in such a way as to shield the parking.⁷⁴

In these rules the treatise shows the burgeoning prescriptions that would be developed in the *City of Gardens* theory. Alexander's arguments centered on the notion that urban design should be informed by voids rather than positives (buildings). He accentuated the need for voids (outdoor space, gardens, and pedestrian-friendly accessibility), as they are often undervalued in our contemporary cities. As a commodity, open space without investment potential can be difficult to protect. Alexander and the rest of the *City of Gardens* authors were rare in their ability to recognize that cities with thoughtful approaches to voids were in fact, in the long run, much more investor-friendly in their ability to conserve outdoor space for the appreciation of future generations.

⁷⁴ Alexander, Christopher. *A New Theory of Urban Design*, page 66.

The original draft of the ordinance went through heavy modifications but was ultimately approved by the Task Force before going to city council.⁷⁵ As could be expected, the regulatory approach of the ordinance received its fair share of opposition. Both developers and architects worried that *City of Gardens* was overly restrictive to the detriment of creativity and growth. To support the ordinance, council member Rick Cole countered that the standards were imperfect, but argued that “they can be corrected through experience.” Moreover, he added that “the city needs a new approach...because the current code has produced projects that are absolutely unacceptable to any kind of quality of life for the people who live in them or have to live next to them.”⁷⁶ Finally, Mr. Cole argued that if the city allowed builders to continue constructing such projects, residents would demand a halt to all construction, and the result would be a “mindless no-growth policy.”⁷⁷

The authors’ work paid off. In 1989, after the task force submitted their draft, the city of Pasadena approved and adopted the *City of Gardens’* Preliminary Plan to adopt Development Standards for future construction within the metro area of Pasadena. Phoebe Wall Wilson, one of the ordinance’s authors, noted that “We want to emphasize the garden character that graces our streets and distinguishes our city.”⁷⁸ Courtyard housing, including both bungalow courts and the attached multi-family housing of garden apartments, was the prototype for conjuring their vision of

⁷⁵ Wilson, Discussion of the City of Gardens Ordinance.

⁷⁶ Ward, “Putting the Bloom Back in New Housing Pasadena Task Force Calls for a ‘City of Gardens’ Ordinance With Flowery Language.”

⁷⁷ Kaplan, “Emphasis on Gardens.”

⁷⁸ Ibid.

the “garden character” (Figure 4.2). The authors considered Pasadena’s neighborhood character and quality “to depend on the coherence, embellishment, and visibility of courts and gardens, on the size and consistency of front yards, and on the frequency and uniformity of street trees.”⁷⁹ They hoped to create a repetition and pattern through the proliferation of courtyard housing, one that would further define the unique character of the city.

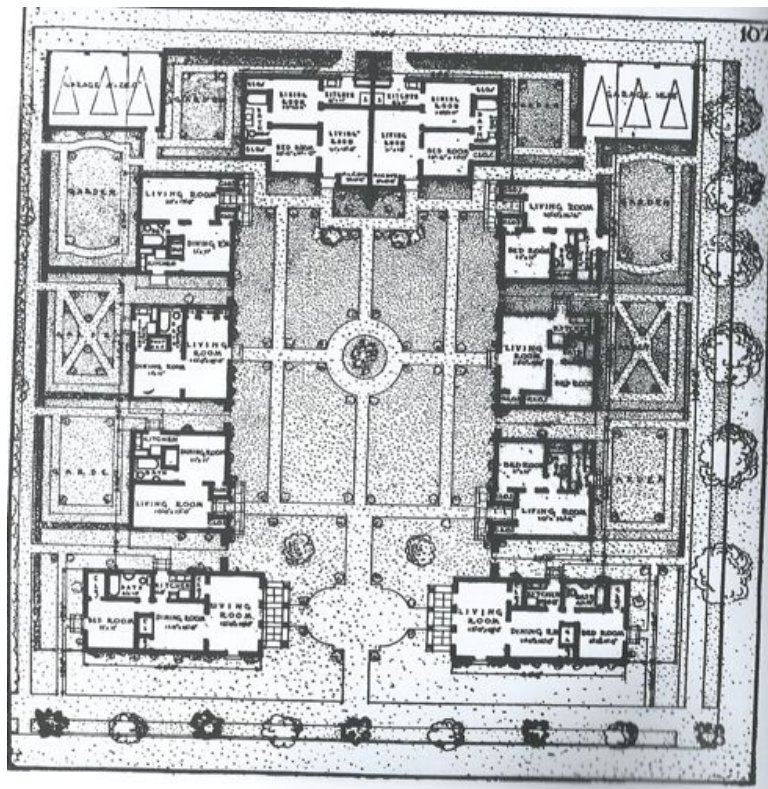


Figure 4.2: Garden Court Typology. Courtesy of Polyzoides, Sherwood, and Tice, *Courtyard Housing in Los Angeles*.

Specifically, the ordinance’s purposes were stated in the following excerpt from the Architectural Development Standards:

- A. Provide appropriately located areas for medium and

⁷⁹ Unknown, “What Does City of Gardens Signify?”.

high density residential neighborhoods that are consistent with and implement the Medium Density, Medium-High Density, and High Density Residential, land use designations of the General Plan, and with the standards of public health and safety established by this Zoning Code;

- B. Promote multiple-family residential developments having maximum economic life and stability;
- C. Integrate the street and the site visually and functionally as a total environment;
- D. Achieve an appropriate level of design quality consistent with or better than the surrounding neighborhood and the price range of the development;
- E. Relate new development to the existing environment in scale, material, and character so that Pasadena's inherent human scale, visual, and functional diversity may be maintained and enhanced; and
- F. Restrict alterations to the existing grade, except for minor grading for landscaping purposes and for subterranean parking.⁸⁰

Within the plan, several “Garden Requirements” proposed a minimum square footage of green space for every new development seeking permits zoned in RM-16, RM-32, and RM-48 districts.⁸¹ For projects with a lot width less than 80 feet, 19% of the space was required green space. For those with a lot width of 80-160 feet, 17% of green space was required, and for those with over 160 feet, 20% of the square footage had to be reserved for landscaping.⁸²

⁸⁰ Multi Family Housing Task Force, *Pasadena California Municipal Code- RM District General Development Standards*.

⁸¹ RM refers to Residential Multi Family structures and their various density allowances.

⁸² Pasadena, California. Municipal Code 17.22.060.

Also within the ordinance were mandates to incorporate a “main garden” within the design. It was not enough for projects to include sections of landscaped outdoor space, but they also had to have a centralized element to the design (Figure 4.3).



Figure 4.3: Don Carlos Court, 374-386 South Marengo Street, Pasadena. Photo by Author.

Importantly, the main garden was specifically defined by the ordinance, rather than left to the interpretation of the project developer:

Each multi-family project shall have a landscaped open space as its central focus. This space may take the form of a main garden, private garden or landscaped court. It shall be a well-defined, coherent area that is an essential component of the project design, not merely space left over after the building mass is placed.⁸³

⁸³ Multi Family Housing Task Force, *Pasadena California Municipal Code- RM District General Development Standards*.

Because the task force had determined that this form of multifamily housing was historically successful in Pasadena, they sought to encourage courtyard housing through the ordinance (Figure 4.4). In addition, because most examples of courtyard housing were built before car ownership was prolific and before the advent of suburban development, this method further accentuated the pedestrian scale that the city of Pasadena hoped to secure. As small, vernacular structures, it is impressive that these courtyard designs were repeated throughout the region for decades; this longevity only reaffirms their social value.

Courtyards were first developed in Southern California nearly 100 years ago in the form of modest bungalows to provide inexpensive housing for the waves of newcomers settling here and others who vacationed here. With front porches and common areas encouraging mingling, the courts, became, in effect, small, friendly neighborhoods in an increasingly anonymous city.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Kaplan, "Emphasis on Gardens."

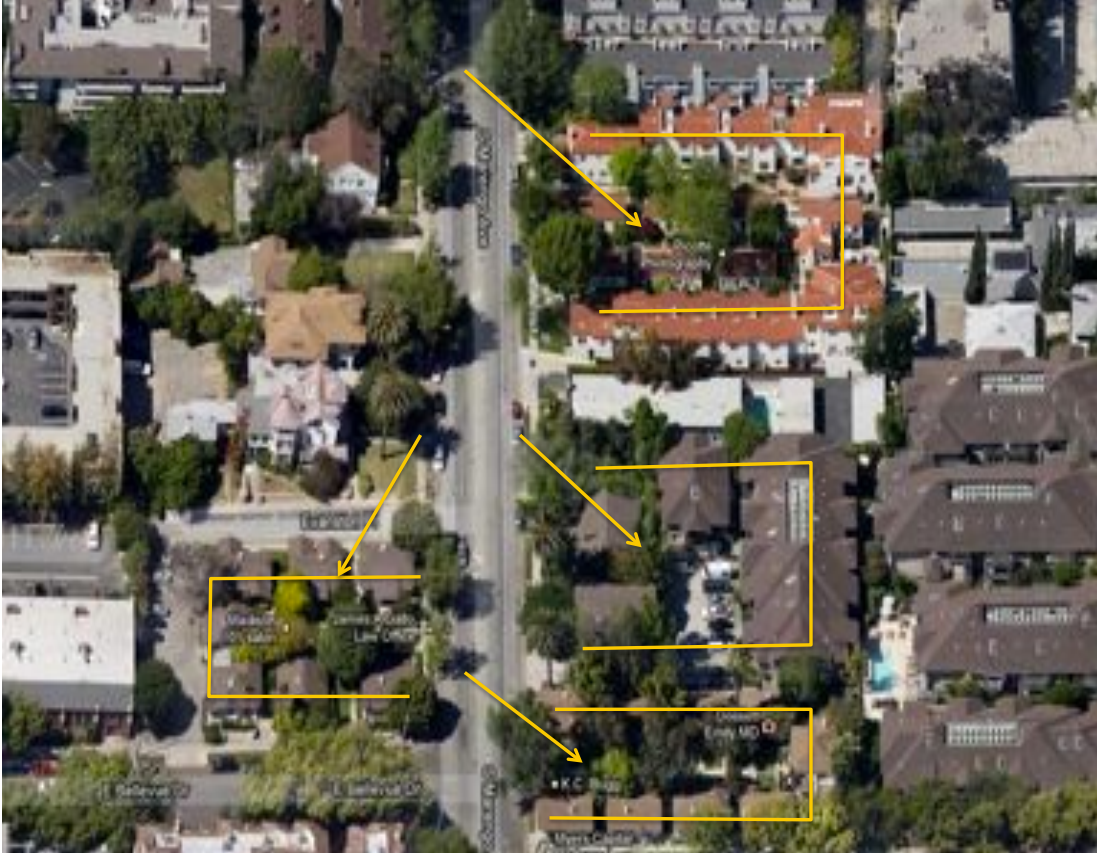


Figure 4.4: Aerial View of Historic Bungalow Courts, Marengo Street, Pasadena. Source: Google Maps.

The main garden was then codified further, by the following regulations,

1. Main garden location. The placement of a main garden shall comply with at least one of the following standards. Additional alternatives may be approved through the Design Review process.
 - a. The main garden may be placed so that it and an existing garden on an adjacent lot work together to create the effect of one large garden or a wide connection between two spaces.
 - b. The main garden may adjoin the minimum front setback line creating a deep, combined garden on the street. Decorative fences or other landscape elements shall be constructed so that the main garden is visible from the street.
 - c. The main garden may be an internal courtyard, entirely contained within the site, but visible from the street.

- d. When a site contains a large, healthy tree or some other exceptional feature, the main garden may be placed to retain and take advantage of that feature.
- e. When an existing development on an adjoining site has entrances which face the proposed project and are close to the property line, the main garden may be placed so that those entrances are on the edge of a large contiguous space.
- f. When the adjoining lot contains a single-family house, the main garden may be placed so that there is a large space next to the house.⁸⁵

The main garden was further described as “a rectangle with a minimum 20-foot dimension in all directions,” essentially prescribing a central, rectangular court in some fashion.⁸⁶ In addition to the mandated green space, the plan required projects to have roofed balconies, tile fountains, or other attractive features to their exteriors.

The ordinance emphasized the landscaped elements and importantly de-emphasized any automotive-related construction, such as parking spaces, driveways, and garages. Within the task force’s report to the city, findings revealed character-defining features of Pasadena’s historic housing, which would ultimately serve as the future design regulations. The report cited that,

The traditional Pasadena quality depends very much on the fact that parking is invisible...Driveways that are beautiful in Pasadena are like mysterious paths, leading through trees or shrubs, to some place in the back. Projects where a wide asphalt aisle with parked cars

⁸⁵ Multi Family Housing Task Force, *Pasadena California Municipal Code- RM District General Development Standards*.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

entirely dominates half of a 50-foot lot completely lose this character.⁸⁷

In speaking of “traditional Pasadena”, the authors were referring to the city’s legacy as a pedestrian-friendly and ecologically-minded region. This legacy dates back to the late 19th century when Pasadena grew exponentially as a rail-oriented suburb of downtown Los Angeles. Up until that point, the city was largely an agricultural region known for its orange and lemon groves. Citizens not involved in the agriculture business were usually drawn by the clean air and mild climate, making it a popular winter destination for wealthy Midwesterners or a year-round retreat for victims of tuberculosis. After the rail arrived on September 16th, 1885, commercial businesses began to flourish and a downtown business center was established adjacent to the large, single-family homes of the resort community. The city continued to grow steadily on the foundations of its pre-automobile infrastructure, which has now, in contrast to Los Angeles County’s more automobile-dependent infrastructure, become one of its strongest character-defining features. Therefore, the move to carefully consider Pasadena’s development patterns and encourage walkability fell perfectly in line with the city’s historic infrastructure.

When the ordinance was signed into law, growth dominated city conversations in Pasadena, both as an economic necessity and for the implications that growth had on sustainability.⁸⁸ Significantly, because the ordinance dictated that all future

⁸⁷ Ward, “Putting the Bloom Back in New Housing Pasadena Task Force Calls for a ‘City of Gardens’ Ordinance With Flowery Language.”

⁸⁸ Scheid, *Downtown Pasadena’s Early Architecture (CA)*, 99.

developments would limit the use of floor area ratios intrinsic to each parcel's zoning guidelines, potentially limiting developers ability to maximize profits and possibly inhibiting growth. Yet the city was hopeful that the market would remain competitive, especially considering the development of the Gold Line, scheduled for completion by 2003. This line was designed to connect downtown Pasadena with downtown Los Angeles and East Los Angeles, important transportation links that Pasadena hoped would ultimately encourage transit-oriented growth. While investment opportunities were not necessarily strictly limited from the ordinance, there were potential arguments in the ordinance's limitation to maximize density, as the density is frequently discussed as a necessary element to achieving more sustainable cities. Indeed, the density of future developments was restricted, although it is short-sided to say that this is a prohibitive measure for keeping Pasadena efficient.

Density can be a double-edged sword; on the one hand it can encourage pedestrian-friendly development, on the other hand, however, it can subvert necessary services such as privacy, access to outdoor space, and access to natural light. The theory expressed in the *City of Gardens Ordinance* is based on the assumption that multifamily housing can incorporate moderate density while still supplying these amenities, thus providing attractive housing opportunities that can compete with the appealing spatiality of the suburbs. Douglass Farr illustrates this tension when he writes that,

Density is the hot button of sustainable urbanism. On one hand, it is a sustainability silver bullet, providing

across-the-board reductions in per-capita resource use....(is also) provides local, regional, and global benefits. On the other hand, density is a third rail, inciting local hostility to new developments in direct proportion to their density. The global benefits of reduced per capita VMT appear to be in direct conflict with local benefits. Neighbors come out of the woodwork to oppose dense development, perceiving it as a threat to their quality of life. However, tempers flare more often over traffic, parking, and occasionally blocked sunlight, than over the population density itself...To overcome the emotions that arise around density, sustainable urbanism needs to strike the right balance between local impacts and global benefits.⁸⁹

In Pasadena, courtyard housing seemed to answer the needs of multi-family housing without “praying to the density gods” of most large-scale construction projects. This allowance helped establish an element of humanity to zoning and a relief from efforts to maximize the floor area ratio and height limits:

The consequence of the design idea of the court was the seamless incorporation of density into a Neighborhood. A court next to a single-family house signaled an unobtrusive and virtually invisible increase of density by at least four to six times between these two adjacent lots.⁹⁰

In addition to the ordinance’s prescription of a thoughtful form for future construction, preservationists were pleased with its reference to the legacy of Pasadena’s historic urban form, complementing its historic bungalow courts and its landscape-dominated neighborhoods.⁹¹ In effect, the *City of Gardens Ordinance*, while intended for new construction, helped the preservation efforts of older bungalow courtyards as well. By requiring more of an outdoor element and

⁸⁹ Farr, *Sustainable Urbanism*, 103.

⁹⁰ Polyzoides, “The Bungalow, the Street, and the Court.”

⁹¹ Wilson, Discussion of the City of Gardens Ordinance.

subsequently less floor area ratio, it leveled the playing field of new and old construction, making demolition of the older, historic structures less attractive on a purely financial level. These older courtyards already incorporated the necessary landscape requirements and they had the added benefit of *use value*.

Not only was the *City of Gardens* theory a progressive approach to urbanism, but it also represented a more environmentally conscious form of design. In effect, the landscape of the building is prioritized over all other features, helping to realize Christopher Alexander's intention for urban design. The landscape is then realized as a more fundamental part of our built world, rather than a subsidiary element, a form of urban planning sometimes referred to as *Landscape Urbanism*. Although Pasadena's approach is still not entirely environmentally conscious urban design as it does not prioritize living processes, flows, and the importance of ecological infrastructure (several of the hallmarks of Landscape Urbanism), it does encourage a hybrid of "nature and city that functions like a living ecosystem."⁹²

Since the ordinance's approval twenty years ago, it has been amended several times, both praised and criticized by many. As it was largely a reactionary measure, it remains to be seen if it is a sustainable regulation for long-term growth within the city. One of its largest criticisms has been its inability to regulate transitional space, such as the corners linking residential streets and commercial corridors. Critics

⁹² Neyfakh, "Green Building: Are Cities the Best Place to Live? Are Suburbs OK? A Fight Grows in Urban Planning, with Harvard at the Center."

have proposed that a corner condition to the ordinance is necessary in order to accommodate the higher land value of these spaces.⁹³ Courtyard housing is largely considered to be effective and aesthetically pleasing in the middle of neighborhoods as it was written for multi-family infill amongst single-family home neighborhoods. Yet the ordinance does not as easily address transitions and it still requires that only a courtyard can be built, no matter the nuanced context of its surroundings.

In addition to its transitional limitations, the ordinance does not incorporate any language on frontage conditions. Several *City of Gardens* projects have been condemned for how their buildings front the street. Considering the extensiveness of design specifications within the ordinance, it is a peculiar element to leave out.⁹⁴ Historically, bungalow courts' street frontage was a character-defining feature of the architectural typology, as described by Stefanos Polyzoides,

The two bungalows at the head of a court were designed as typical porch-dominated houses facing the street, no more and no less so than any other single-family house adjacent to them. The space between the bungalows, slightly larger than typical side yard setbacks, became the entrance to the court.⁹⁵

As an antidote to some of these concerns, the city adopted Design Guidelines (lacking the strength of the ordinance but an important stepping stone) in 2009, which were controlled by the design commission. The 2009 guidelines were written by Elizabeth Moule and Stefanos Polyzoides and included a study and critique of the

⁹³ Bharne, Discussion of City of Gardens Ordinance.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Polyzoides, "The Bungalow, the Street, and the Court."

existing design guidelines and zoning code.⁹⁶ Moule and Polyzoides stated that the study was “illustrated with a wealth of imagery demonstrating both good and bad examples of each component, the Guidelines stipulate the preservation of Pasadena’s character, scale and traditional urban design form.”⁹⁷ Ultimately, they further stressed the need for regional references and historic models. Their new guidelines of 2009 also incorporated Contemporary Pluralism into the wide breadth of historic architectural styles recognized by the city.⁹⁸

While the ordinance is still not a cure-all for form-based zoning, the city of Pasadena has adapted the *City of Gardens Ordinance* many times over the years as the need presents itself. It continues to inform thoughtful building practices and it helps to define the urban fabric of the city by repeating the bungalow court building type.

⁹⁶ Bharne, Discussion of City of Gardens Ordinance.

⁹⁷ Polyzoides, “City of Pasadena Design Guidelines.”

⁹⁸ Bharne, Discussion of City of Gardens Ordinance.

Chapter Five

Contemporary Uses for the Bungalow Courts

In the new garden, in all the parts,
In cities now, modern, I wander

Walt Whitman
Excerpt of In the New Garden In All the Parts

Throughout the policy discussions of the *City of Gardens Ordinance*, Pasadena Heritage continued to advocate for preservation throughout the city. This included, among many endeavors, historic site documentation and garnering community support and awareness. After their efforts with the Gartz Court relocation process in 1986, they hoped to continue working on the development side of preservation, specifically with multi-family housing projects. While the nonprofit worked on a several other preservation development projects in the 1980s and 1990s (not including Don Carlos Court as it was not owned or funded by Pasadena Heritage although the nonprofit worked to advocate for its preservation) they ultimately found that they would need an affiliate to work on the development and rehabilitation of older structures on a larger scale and in a more direct way.⁹⁹

As part of this effort, in 1998, Heritage Housing Partners branched off as a separate entity of Pasadena Heritage and formed a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit with the goal of focusing on preservation development. The company's mission was to preserve, restore, and build affordable housing in Pasadena as a form of neighborhood revitalization. These goals mirrored those of Pasadena Heritage and the two organizations continued to work together to accomplish them.

One of the first HHP projects was the restoration of a historic Craftsman bungalow in 2002. The Merrill House, as it was known, was originally designed by Charles and Henry Greene in 1910 but had been left vacant and in severe disrepair for many

⁹⁹ Bogaard, Discussion of Pasadena Heritage's Bungalow Court Preservation Efforts.

years before Heritage Housing Partners acquired it in 1999.¹⁰⁰ Although HHP's rehabilitation efforts were not considered preservation in the strictest meaning of the term (or by the Secretary of the Interior's definition, which would require the original building material to be conserved), it does fall under the "rehabilitation" guidelines for its adherence to its original use as a single-family home.¹⁰¹ The structure retained the integrity and substance of Pasadena's bungalow legacy while simultaneously offering an element, often neglected in the pricey world of preservation, of affordability, made possible by Heritage Housing Partner's combination of historic tax credits and low income tax credits. Though this kind of arrangement is difficult, the concept of creating affordable housing was very much a priority for Heritage Housing Partners, no matter how complicated it was to rehabilitate an older, derelict home. To the organization, the integrity of the home was tangentially related to the historic nature of the neighborhood, which was a decidedly more modest part of Pasadena with a strong need for affordable homes and a large stock of older bungalows.

Fifteen years later, HHP's founder, Charles Loveman, continues to preserve the integrity of Pasadena's affordable neighborhoods with this kind of rehabilitation work. Only now, HHP works on larger scale projects that focus on multi-family housing (Figure 5.1). Many of their projects recall the redevelopment models of the bungalow courts preservation efforts in the 1980s, such as Gartz Court and Don Carlos Court. Mr. Loveman said the following of his work,

¹⁰⁰ Loveman, Discussion of Heritage Housing Partner's Projects and History.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

We consider what we do to be neighborhood preservation. We take historic houses in historic neighborhoods and fix them up. Where there was a blighting influence in the middle of an established neighborhood, we're bringing (the architectural fabric) back. In some cases, where there's just an empty lot, we will be doing infill new construction that's compatible with the neighborhood, in terms of architecture, density and form.¹⁰²

Mr. Loveman is somewhat of an anomaly in the development world. He considers himself a preservationist, though not a purist. He is an advocate for affordable housing, for sustainable materials, for efficient forms of building, and for walkable neighborhoods that are less reliant on the automobile. His background is in urban planning, both for Los Angeles' City Planning Department and for Los Angeles' Community Redevelopment Agency. Through the CRA, he began to work heavily with the older building stock in downtown LA, especially within the Broadway historic district known for its defunct commercial buildings in need of rehabilitation.

Mr. Loveman's tenure with the city's planning department and the CRA preceded a massive boom in rehabilitation in downtown Los Angeles as a result of the city's 1999 Adaptive Reuse Ordinance. Because of the ordinance (and its abatement of setback and parking requirements), many of downtown's unused historic buildings were revitalized and rehabilitated. Loveman left the CRA and began advising developers about the economics of rehabilitation. Through this position, he was able to meet several influential developers, among them, Wayne Ratkovich, a prominent

¹⁰² Gringeri-Brown, *American Bungalow Magazine*.

developer who specializes in renovating historic buildings. Mr. Ratkovich inspired Mr. Loveman to step into world of private development; encouraging his ability to actively instill change in the built world, as opposed to creating the framework for change and waiting for it to occur.



Figure 5.1: Hasket Court by Heritage Housing Partners, Pasadena. Photo by Author.

Several years after restoring the Merrill House, HHP began work on a larger-scale project known as Fair Oaks Court. The development included a large, newly constructed building for multi-family dwellings and commercial space on the ground floor as well as the rehabilitation and restoration of a handful of small, single-family bungalow residences. The bungalows were salvaged from other parts

of the city, relocated across town, and repositioned to align in a courtyard formation with the new construction serving as a bookend to the U-shaped court. This project recalls both the Gartz Court project in its relocation method and Don Carlos Court in its combination of preservation and new construction. These two redevelopment models were and are still quite rare, yet Mr. Loveman was convinced of this form of building and maintained faith in the project's potential success.

For the design, HHP hired Moule & Polyzoides Architects to help create the new structure on the side of the court end that faces a commercial corridor. The two firms collaborated on all aspects of design, from interior floor plans and elevations to the courtyard configuration. Both firms also brought their various experiences with Pasadena Heritage and a mutual appreciation for the historic landscape of the city. They planned references to the historic bungalow courts in the neighborhood, a method which fit perfectly in compliance with the *City of Gardens Ordinance*. The bungalows are well below the allowable density for the block, a feature which Mr. Loveman preferred as the project retains a low profile, further accomplished by subterranean parking for residents beneath the new construction at the end of the court and accessible from the commercial corridor. This design also allowed for the residents within the court to enjoy their communal space without the intrusion of vehicles or driveways.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Loveman, Discussion of Heritage Housing Partner's Projects and History.

In addition to the bungalow court configuration, the new construction was designed and inspired by a regional aesthetic. The architectural features referenced Pasadena's early 20th century Craftsman building styles with shingles, clapboard siding, arroyo stone ornamentation, large porches, low-pitched roof lines, overhanging eaves, and deep decorative brackets underneath the eaves. All of the older, relocated bungalows were relatively modest in scale, similar to most small bungalows peppered throughout Pasadena and in abundance within nearby *Bungalow Heaven* (Figures 5.2 and 5.3). Yet in other parts of the city, these modestly sized homes are still comparably more expensive, with the median home in Pasadena costing around \$680,000. Fair Oaks Court, in contrast, offers bungalows for home-ownership starting as low as \$108,000.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Kuzins, "A Peaceful Place: The Bungalow Court, Revivied."



Figure 5.2: Bungalow along outer face of Fair Oaks Court, Pasadena. Photo by Author.

The economic feasibility is achieved through HHP's unique development model, which includes funding sources from both Federal and State Historic Tax Credits as well as Low-Income Tax Credits and New Market Tax Credits.¹⁰⁵ Realizing its community impact, the City of Pasadena also provided generous terms of credit with the organization. Heritage Housing's proformas are complex and unique, though undeniably successful (Fair Oaks Court won two Gold Nugget awards, both for

¹⁰⁵ Loveman, Discussion of Heritage Housing Partner's Projects and History.

Outstanding Attached Project and for Residential Community of the Year-
Attached).¹⁰⁶



Figure 5.3: Fair Oaks Court. Courtesy of Gringeri-Brown, *American Bungalow Magazine*.

While projects like this have been undeniably successful in Pasadena, the question remains whether other cities have resources and demographics comparable to Pasadena necessary to pull off similar development endeavors. Pasadena has a legacy for appreciating its built heritage. It is also a rather affluent community that can afford to focus on issues of heritage conservation, and specifically multi-family housing conservation such as with the bungalow courts. In addition, policy decisions, like the *City of Gardens Ordinance*, have dramatically altered the built realm of Pasadena and allowed for lower density, community-driven courtyard spaces to thrive where other cities could not so easily achieve similar models. It is because of these factors that Pasadena can boast its landscape-dominated and

¹⁰⁶ “Fair Oaks Wins Golden Nugget Award.”

community-centric cityscape as a model for environmentally and socially conscious urban areas. Yet the unique nature of its history and public policy muddle the applicability of this type of development as a model of best practices for other cities beyond its borders.

Similar to Fair Oaks Court, other developers and architects working in the Pasadena area have taken advantage of the city's existing housing stock and used it to revitalize entire neighborhoods with larger-scale multifamily housing projects dominated by their courtyard configuration. One of the most well known projects of this kind is the Vista del Arroyo Bungalows, particularly recognizable for their contentious and long-fought preservation battle. The Vista del Arroyo Bungalows consist of a mix of new construction and rehabilitation of existing structures (Figure 5.4). The property was originally comprised of twenty-four bungalows and a large hotel built in the 1920s, with several of the bungalows designed by famed architects Myron Hunt and Sylvanus Marston.¹⁰⁷ Their designs ranged from the Spanish Colonial style with stucco and terracotta-tiled roofs to more traditional Neo Colonial bungalow interpretations. They were also somewhat larger than a standard bungalow, with several two-story variations.

¹⁰⁷ Pasadena Heritage, December 2001.



Figure 5.4: Vista Del Arroyo Bungalows, Pasadena. Courtesy of “Vista Del Arroyo Bungalows, Pasadena, CA.”

Towards the end of World War II, the Federal Government seized the hotel and surrounding bungalow structures and used them as a military hospital. Ultimately, after the war, the bungalows remained vacant for the next forty years. Although most of the buildings were structurally sound, they fell into horrible disrepair over this extended time period. During the 1980s, Pasadena Heritage documented the litigious battle to preserve the structures, which included an argument between the Judges of the United States Court of Appeals, who occupied the original hotel tower, potential developers who presented various project designs for the restoration of

the surrounding bungalows, and preservation advocates. The court ultimately intended to bulldoze the bungalows for added parking lots.¹⁰⁸

Eventually, the conservation efforts of Pasadena Heritage helped to resurrect eight of the original bungalows in the late 1990s with the combined design work of Moule & Polyzoides. The architects made a strong case for the economic feasibility of their design having worked on similar projects of multi-family housing conservation in Fair Oaks Court and having effectively rehabilitated the bungalows of Gartz Court. Additionally, Moule & Polyzoides were contemporaries of Claire Bogaard and Sue Mossman at Pasadena Heritage, scholars of courtyard housing, and self-proclaimed Urbanists with a desire to revitalize historic neighborhoods in much the same way as Heritage Housing Partners. Stefanos Polyzoides, writing on behalf of this experience,

It is time that preservationist efforts begin to shift their focus away from the obsession of saving single buildings and toward breathing new life into urban districts of unusual quality. The value of these districts should be determined not only by the concentration of individually distinguished buildings within them but also by the capability of all buildings, new and old, landmarks and simple fillers, to generate a city form of distinction.¹⁰⁹

Moule & Polyzoides designed several new and inconspicuous bungalows and repositioned them around a series of small courtyards, in compliance with the *City of Gardens*. The bungalows originally peppered a rolling hillside in a scattered

¹⁰⁸ Mossman, Discussion of Preservation of Vista del Arroyo Bungalows.

¹⁰⁹ Polyzoides, Sherwood, and Tice, *Courtyard Housing in Los Angeles*, 206.

manner, yet they were now required to frame a series of gardens. The new-construction structures also incorporated unobtrusive parking underneath (Figure 5.5). The combination of preservation and new construction was the only economically viable method for retaining the original character of the historic bungalows. The city favored the design, believing that this was the best use for the buildings and that their preservation was both crucial to retaining Pasadena's historic integrity and also to emphasizing the formation of multifamily courtyard housing, which was badly needed in the area.¹¹⁰



Figure 5.5: Vista del Arroyo Bungalows, New construction with parking entrance, Pasadena. Photo by Author.

¹¹⁰ Mossman, Discussion of Preservation of Vista del Arroyo Bungalows.

Although the process (including city council meetings, advocacy efforts, and various design proposals) took almost twenty years, the completed Vista del Arroyo Bungalows were successfully restored in 2004. The complications involved in this project illustrate the imperative need for cities to have their key players in agreement in order to accomplish effective urban reform. Planners, architects, political figures, preservation and development interests all have to work in accordance to achieve a city's goals.

The bungalows were important historic structures listed on the National Register. Their architectural integrity and pedigree were significant factors in their conservation. Yet Polyzoides, like Christopher Alexander in his treatise on Urban Design, believed that urban spaces such as the patio, the courtyard, the square, or the plaza, were all urban forms with an equal measure of historic precedence as any element of architecture.¹¹¹ His integration of courtyards into the new design for Vista del Arroyo reintroduced a historic urban space with regional significance into the unique design.

After years of disrepair and vacancy before their rehabilitation, the Vista del Arroyo Bungalows are now fully inhabited. Part of the project's success can be attributed to the more closely connected courtyard setting, as the structures were relocated from their original, widely separated configuration. In compliance with the *City of*

¹¹¹ Simmons B. Buntin, "An Architecture of Place: Interview with Stefanos Polyzoides."

Gardens, the enclosed courtyard is both inviting and intimate, fostering a communal feel to the complex.

Conclusion

This study began out of a simple curiosity: under what conditions could preservationists and New Urbanists work successfully together in the city of Pasadena? Reading widely into the history of Pasadena's urban planning, architectural legacy, and preservation activism, the subject of the bungalow courts emerged as a unique topic spanning all of these interest groups and representing many of the principles of the CNU: pedestrian focused housing with accessible outdoor space, affordability, a regional aesthetic, and a human scale. The bungalow courts, over a hundred years after their origination in Pasadena, remained the embodiment of these ideals and served as models for a progressive urban reform policy. Not only were they original to the city, but they have remained largely undocumented beyond local Pasadena publications and nominations for historic landmark status. This thesis sought to contextualize the bungalow court building type as both a significant architectural typology and also as an exemplary tool for urban planning policy and architectural design guidelines.

One of several factors making this topic relevant is the increasing awareness among cities of the need to grow "sustainably". Pasadena aspires to serve as a leading example of urban sustainability. The city boasts an endorsement of the United Nations Green Cities Declaration and Urban Environmental Accords, an endorsement of the US Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, an adoption of a Green City Action Plan, an adoption of an ordinance creating an

Environmental Advisory Commission, and an adoption of a Green Building Program.¹¹²

One of the most unique features of Pasadena's sustainability model is its approach to multifamily housing construction and preservation. Both the historic bungalow courts and all new construction created from the *City of Gardens*, offer a form of housing that exists within the city center while still providing many of the amenities of the suburbs, such as landscaped gardens and private, detached houses. Similar to Pasadena's courts, a contemporary movement for sustainable cities has inspired the "pocket neighborhood" movement, a concept championed by architect Ross Chapin. The theory of the pocket neighborhood relies on the notion that a city's carbon footprint can be reduced by grouping smaller, single-family homes around "gardens and amenities that would occupy more land if duplicated for each individual house."¹¹³ Several pocket projects have recently been constructed with the hope to provide "affordable housing enclaves(s) that strengthen a neighborhood and protect the environment."¹¹⁴

Another factor making this topic especially significant is the current preservation activism focused on historic garden apartments in Los Angeles. In October 2012, the Los Angeles Conservancy, inspired by several threatened projects within the area,

¹¹² Simmons B. Buntin, "An Architecture of Place: Interview with Stefanos Polyzoides."

¹¹³ Benfield, "An Affordable Housing Enclave That Strengthens a Neighborhood and Protects the Environment."

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

contracted Architectural Resources Group to complete a survey of the city Los Angeles' garden apartments. The Conservancy commissioned the survey in hopes to broaden awareness of garden apartments' historic and social value to surrounding communities. The building type was accredited to urban reformers "who believed that all people, regardless of income, social standing, and in many cases, ethnicity, were worthy of better and more humane housing."¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, despite the progressive theory behind their production, garden apartments are increasingly vulnerable to demolition in order to make way for large-scale projects that are not reliant on a significant landscape element within the design. Within the survey, the bungalow court, the often larger courtyard apartment, and the much larger garden city apartment complex were all categorized as relevant building types within the historic context statement.

One particular project that has garnered a lot of recent publicity is the proposed demolition of a garden apartment complex in Boyle Heights known as Wyvernwood. At the date of submission for this thesis, the outcome of the proposed new development was still unclear as residents within the community have rallied to fight for its preservation. In a recent publication, protestors attempted "to gather support for their efforts to block the project that would dramatically alter the privately owned 70-acre community by more than doubling the number of housing units and the construction of high-rise buildings. They claim approval of the

¹¹⁵ Keylon et al., "Garden Apartments of Los Angeles: Historic Context Statement."

redevelopment would result in the loss of affordable housing in an area where much of the population is low-income.”¹¹⁶

While the scale of Wyvernwood is considerably larger than any of the bungalow courts in Pasadena, the fundamental argument against their proposed replacement development is quite similar, as both cities’ residents argue that they do not necessarily need denser buildings in order to grow effectively. In addition, the inclusion of accessible outdoor space, while expensive to developers, should not have to be a luxury amenity in multi-family housing. The issue that arises in both cases is not only how to protect and conserve the architectural heritage of these structures, but also how to conserve affordable housing and how to affectively conserve outdoor space, both of which are incredibly difficult tasks to take on.

The lessons of the *City of Gardens* Ordinance is that landscape design should not be an afterthought, but a condition to creating urban environments with appreciative value. If the question remains as to the efficacy of this kind of prescriptive policy in areas outside of Pasadena, it should not obscure its positive value to the city. It would be very difficult to accomplish this kind of policy in a younger city with a primarily automobile-centric urban design, dominated by strip malls, high-rise single-use structures, large parking lots, and highways. The bungalow court model thrives in walkable cities, even if these are growing increasingly more difficult to come by. Additionally, the most important distinction of Pasadena is its heritage as a

¹¹⁶ Castillo, “Wyvernwood Protests Pick-Up, Push Anti-Profit Message.”

prosperous suburb of Los Angeles. The bungalow courts are rare exceptions within the city's large demographic of single-family homes. It is difficult to say whether or not they could have survived without the aid of the city's philanthropic-minded activists and nonprofits. The wealth in Pasadena has also had a considerable effect of its central business district's prosperity, driving investment opportunities and making the surrounding neighborhoods desirable places to live.

This research encourages several questions for further study. First, and perhaps most importantly, is the *City of Gardens* Ordinance too prescriptive for other cities to consider as a policy for urban reform? Beyond arguments against the ordinance's application to transitional spaces and frontages, what are further concerns to the ordinance's ability to regulate multi-family housing design and potentially inhibit creativity and adaptation?

Another issue of concern is whether or not the bungalow court model works effectively in areas where property values have declined or are declining? An inarguable reason that the city is able to regulate with such authority is the rising property value and appeal of living in Pasadena. In a city such as Detroit, where property values are near nonexistent, what would be a more realistic form of sustainable multi-family housing?

Finally, this study encourages the reader to question this housing model in a completely different context: the suburban environment. Is the bungalow court

model restricting the American Dream that is so easily provided in the suburbs?
Donald Elliot said of the nuanced desires of single-family dwellers, “New Urbanism, cluster developments, and Smart Growth have shown us that the yards can be smaller and that (some households)...will agree to live without a yard, but real estate agents will tell you that the desire for a private yard is still deeply engrained.”¹¹⁷ While bungalow courts offer a slight compromise to this ideal, their legacy as both a practical building type and a much more sustainable development model prove that they are not a fleeting trend.

¹¹⁷ Elliott, *A Better Way to Zone*, 146.

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