Land Use Analysis

1958 VENICE ZONING

Residential Downzoning and the Reduction of Housing Capacity in Los Angeles

Published
September 2, 2020

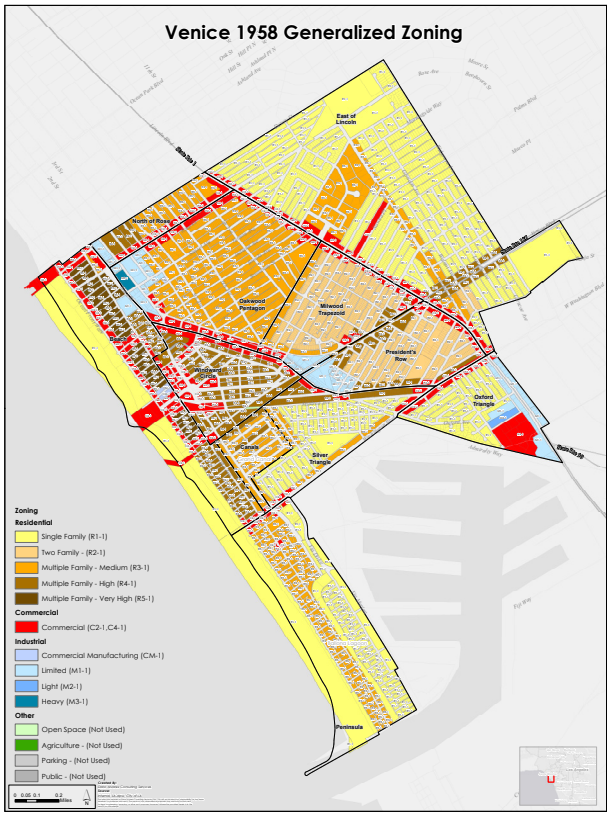
AUTHORS
Dario Rodman-Alvarez, MCP
Rudi Mattheis-Brown, RA, NCARB
Luis Ricardo de la Rosa, B. Arch

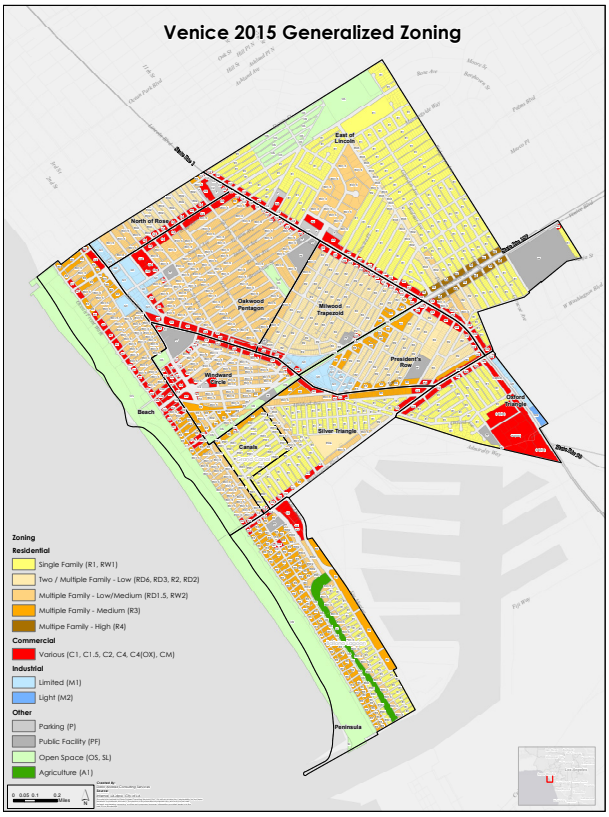
SUGGESTED CITATION
Rodman-Alvarez, et al (2020) *Downzoning is the New Redlining; 1958 Zoning and the Reduction of Housing Capacity in Los Angeles.* Los Angeles, CA. Pacific Urbanism. Retrieved from https://www.pacificurbanism.com/research-publications

ABSTRACT
Downzoning is the practice of reducing an area's dwelling unit capacity. The consequences are housing scarcity, unaffordability, and displacement, among others. Now is an opportunity to rectify errors of exclusionary zoning practices and codify fairness in housing in order to build a better, more equitable Los Angeles.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF PACIFIC URBANISM
Pacific Urbanism is a community serving enterprise that specializes in policy research and evaluation, data modeling, and community building. Our mission is to serve as a resource to communities throughout California for data driven and multidisciplinary planning support tools. Our goals are environmental justice, public health, safety and welfare of all peoples, regardless of income, ethnicity, gender identity, national origin, religion, age, or ability. We believe that by working together, these goals are well within the reach of the communities that we serve.

Sincerely,
Dario Rodman-Alvarez





2015 Venice Zoning Maps compared to 1958 represents a 51% decrease in dwelling unit capacity, i.e. downzoning, whereas population for the region increased 91% over the same period.

Downzoning is the New Redlining

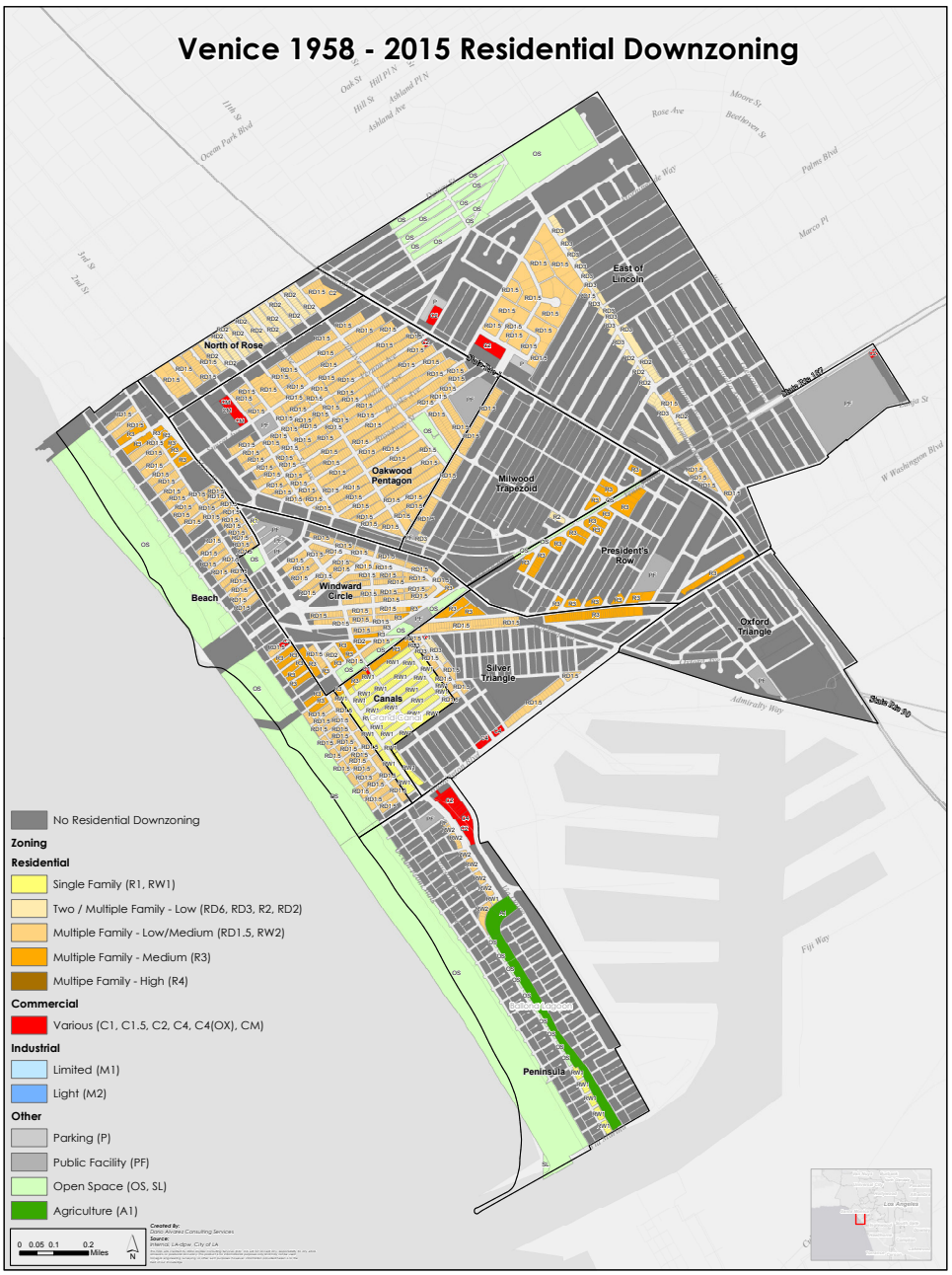
Redlining, the practice banks used to deny loans in predominantly Black and racially diverse neighborhoods morphed into other systems that stifle community investment and decrease housing access near jobs and good schools. Now is the moment for bold action, as the economy recovers, to build a Los Angeles that is better than before the pandemic.

The term redlining comes from actual maps with red lines around areas where the FHA would not insure mortgages, which was common from the 1930s to the 1960s. Ultimately, redlining determined where and by whom land could be owned and developed, which unfairly conferred socioeconomic and environmental benefits on some while denying them to others.

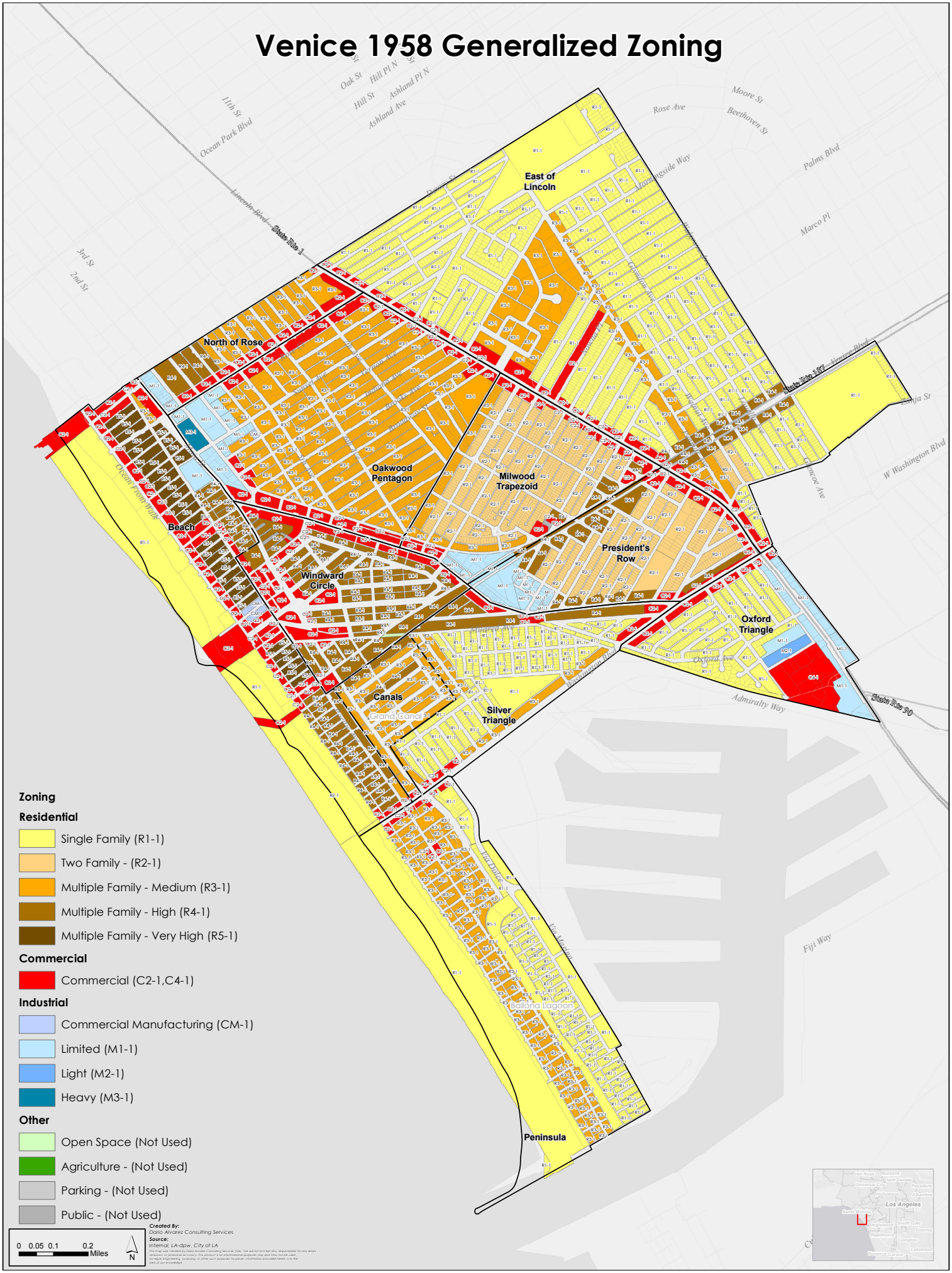
In 1948, the U.S. Supreme Court deemed racially restrictive covenants unconstitutional, and, in 1968, the federal Fair Housing Act outlawed racial discrimination. By then, redlining had cemented the long-term marginalization of many communities. Some of these communities developed economic and social

VENICE DOWNZONING

The areas in color indicate locations of downzoning. The current zoning is reflected in this map. All neighborhoods in Venice have experienced some downzoning since 1958.



Venice 1958 Generalized Zoning



Zoning

Residential

- Single Family (R1-1)
- Two Family - (R2-1)
- Multiple Family - Medium (R3-1)
- Multiple Family - High (R4-1)
- Multiple Family - Very High (R5-1)

Commercial

- Commercial (C2-1,C4-1)

Industrial

- Commercial Manufacturing (CM-1)
- Limited (M1-1)
- Light (M2-1)
- Heavy (M3-1)

Other

- Open Space (Not Used)
- Agriculture - (Not Used)
- Parking - (Not Used)
- Public - (Not Used)

0 0.05 0.1 0.2 Miles

N

Created By:
Dario Alvarez Consulting Services
Source:
Internal, LA-dpw, City of LA

1958 RESIDENTIAL LAND USE ANALYSIS

Zone	Description	Zoned Acres	Max Dwelling Units Per Acre	Planned Dwelling Unit Capacity	Reasonably Expected Dwelling Unit Capacity	Persons Per Dwelling Unit	1958 Planned Population Capacity*	1958 Reasonably Expected Population Capacity*
R1-1	Single Family Dwellings	507.5	9	4,567	2,284	2.47	11,281	5,641
R2-1	Two Family Dwellings	127.0	17	2,159	1,079	1.96	4,231	2,116
R3-1	Multiple Dwellings - Medium	324.2	54	17,509	8,755	2.00	35,018	17,509
R4-1	Multiple Dwellings - High/Medium	120.7	109	13,159	6,579	2.03	26,712	13,356
R5-1	Multiple Dwellings - High/Medium	31.7	218	6,921	3,461	2.03	14,050	7,025
Total		**1,339.0**		44,315	**22,158**		91,293	**45,646**

*Notes:

1. Population capacity calculated for residential zones only.
2. Persons Per Dwelling Unit value for 2010 based on Venice Community Plan.

1958 VENICE ZONING

The land use plan and zoning map for Venice CPA in 1958 allowed for a reasonably expected population capacity of 45,646 within a reasonably expected housing capacity of 22,158 dwelling units.

resilience. However, since the prohibition of redlining, downzoning, while not specific to racial discrimination, but rather to social and economic stratification, creates similar discriminatory results.

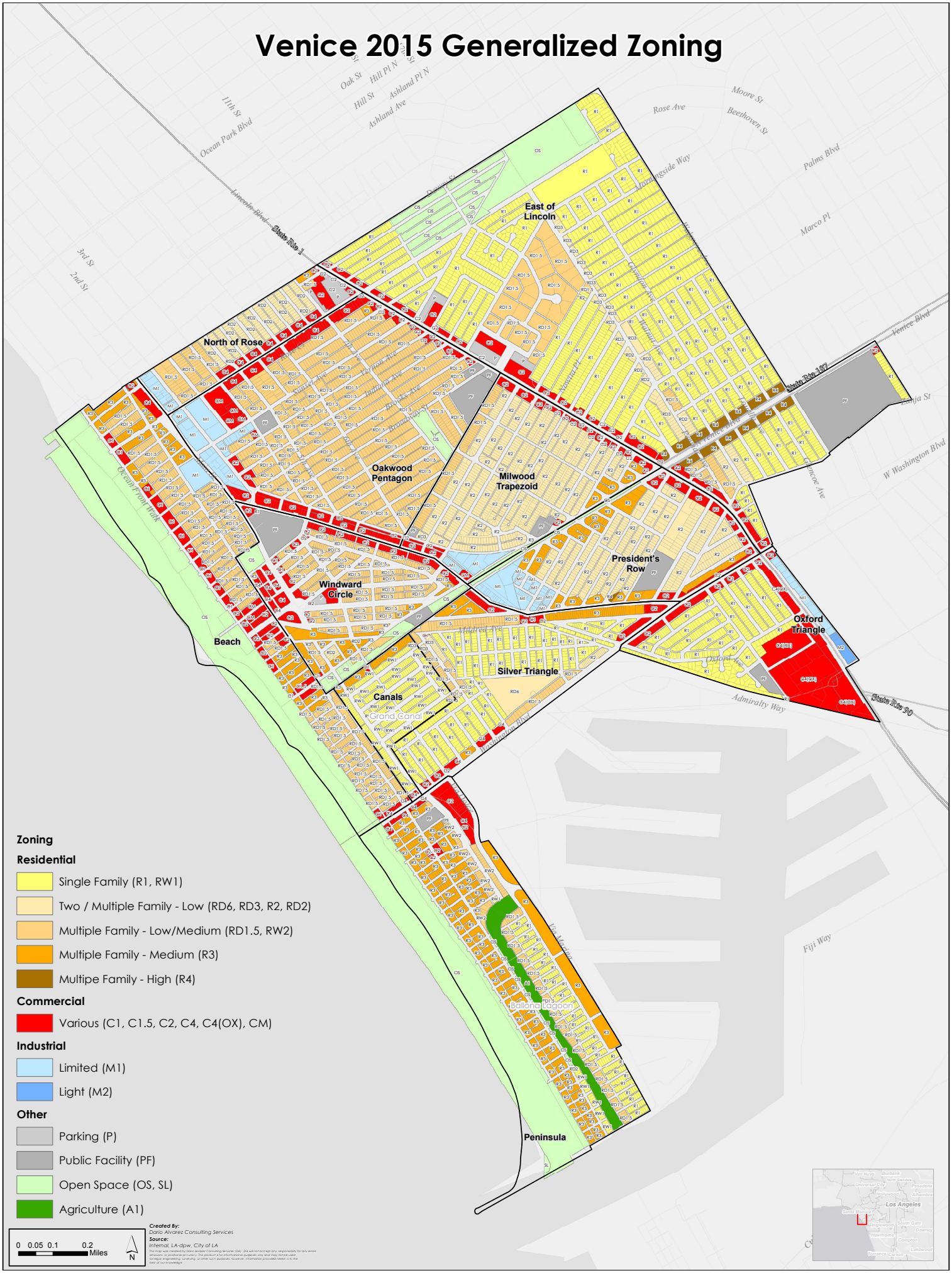
Downzoning is the practice of reducing an area's dwelling unit capacity, whether by forbidding or limiting multiple-family dwellings, or through restrictive regulations, such as increased parking requirements, larger minimum lot sizes and building setbacks. These strategies should not be confused with anti-mansionization ordinances that restrict the size of extra-large single-family homes.

In the 1970s and 80s, downzoning reduced LA's planned population capacity from 10 million to 4 million. A mobilized association of affluent and politically connected homeowners succeeded in downzoning specific areas of the city by changing zoning classifications from multi-family to single-family and, in areas still open to multi-family development, by lowering density classifications, for example, from R3 to a new reduced density RD-1.5 zone. These more restrictive zones drastically lowered the number of allowable units and, in many areas, even reduced the zoning capacity to below the density of units already built.

While mostly affluent areas were downzoned, areas already suffering from overcrowding, less open space, struggling schools, and strained police precincts were upzoned to provide a disproportionate share of needed housing. Just as with redlining, public policies were co-opted by those with greater influence. Ironically, many of the adverse effects of these policies are now borne by all residents, including the affluent. For example, the upzoning of residential areas far from employment and services produces traffic and pollution that affects everybody. While COVID-19 may temporarily result in less traffic currently through increased virtual commuting, even the pandemic has disproportionately affected lower income and communities of color, among other reasons, because essential workers are disproportionately people of color.

Whether by design or neglect during this same period, the percentage of Black population in Los Angeles decreased from 16 percent to 8 percent, while the over representation of Black people among those experiencing homelessness increased to 34 percent.

Venice 2015 Generalized Zoning



Zoning

Residential

- Single Family (R1, RW1)
- Two / Multiple Family - Low (RD6, RD3, R2, RD2)
- Multiple Family - Low/Medium (RD1.5, RW2)
- Multiple Family - Medium (R3)
- Multipe Family - High (R4)

Commercial

- Various (C1, C1.5, C2, C4, C4(OX), CM)

Industrial

- Limited (M1)
- Light (M2)

Other

- Parking (P)
- Public Facility (PF)
- Open Space (OS, SL)
- Agriculture (A1)

0 0.05 0.1 0.2 Miles

N

Created By:
Dario Alvarez Consulting Services
Source:
Internal, LA-dpw, City of LA

2015 RESIDENTIAL LAND USE ANALYSIS

Zone	Description	Zoned Acres	Max Dwelling Units Per Acre	Planned Dwelling Unit Capacity	Reasonably Expected Dwelling Unit Capacity	Persons Per Dwelling Unit	2015 Planned Population Capacity	2015 Reasonably Expected Population Capacity*
R1	Single Family Dwellings	334.2	9	3,008	1,504	2.47	7,430	3,715
R2	Two Family Dwellings	124.8	17	2,122	1,061	1.96	4,160	2,080
R3	Multiple Dwellings - Medium	100.0	54	5,400	2,700	2.00	10,800	5,400
R4	Multiple Dwellings - High/Medium	10.1	109	1,105	553	2.03	2,244	1,122
RD1.5	Restricted Density Multiple Dwellings	295.7	29	8,576	4,288	1.96	16,810	8,405
RD2	Restricted Density Multiple Dwellings	21.1	29	612	306	1.96	1,200	600
RD3	Restricted Density Multiple Dwellings	11.0	15	165	83	1.96	324	162
RD6	Restricted Density Multiple Dwellings	9.5	12	114	57	1.96	224	112
RW1	Single Family Residential Waterways	26.7	19	508	254	1.96	995	498
RW2	Two Family Residential Waterways	4.3	38	164	82	2.00	327	164
Total		**937.6**		21,775	**10,888**		44,513	**22,257**

*Notes:

Population capacity calculated for residential zones only.

1958 Reasonably Expected Residential Zones Population Capacity	45,646
2015 Reasonably Expected Residential Zones Population Capacity	22,257
Downzoned population capacity	**-23,390**
% Residential Downzoning	**49%**

2015 VENICE ZONING

Through the successive community plan updates since the 1970s, population and housing capacity in the Venice CPA has been reduced by more than 50%. The current dwelling unit count exceeds the downzoned capacity by 90%. The consequence of these exclusionary land use policies is a loss of dwelling units in an area that faces sharp housing price inflation.

Housing that is affordable to workers and the middle class has been eliminated through zoning. The city as a whole needs 8 times the current rate of supply of housing, the westside needs 15 times more. However, as a result of public policies, the market is dominated by a slow supply from large buildings with 50-plus dwelling units, which would need to increase production overall up to 17 times in order to meet the need. Unfortunately, some areas will continue to experience a net loss in dwelling units under the current zoning code, which exacerbates unaffordability and displacement. Consequently, regional economic productivity decreases, family and community connections suffer, industries leave, new businesses are discouraged from locating, and networks of social capital are lost.

Unfortunately, some local density bonuses, like Transit Oriented Communities (TOC) under Measure JJJ, which could benefit organized labor and are intended to concentrate housing production near centers of transit, have two significant limitations: 1) TOC bonuses have been applied to many downzoned areas where total existing dwelling units already exceed the new capacity, even after including the density bonus, and 2) TOC density bonuses are largely applied to prized commercial areas; since commercial space commands higher rents than apartments, those areas historically only develop to 10% of their residential capacity. Therefore, there is not likely to be a significant net increase in dwelling units.

The consequence is too few, very large buildings, produced by a small number of big builders, at an average annual rate of 3,300 dwelling units per year, less than 6% of the required annual target of 58,000. By contrast, 87% of all current housing stock consists of buildings under 50 units. Those interested in downzoning perhaps never thought that they were contributing to the creation

COMMUNITY PLAN AREA	EXISTING DWELLING UNITS	TARGET NET NEW DWELLING UNITS BY 2029	TARGET TOTAL DWELLING UNITS BY 2029	TARGET NET NEW HOMES ANNUAL
VENICE	20,381	15,806	36,187	1,976

2029 RHNA TARGETS

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) has determined through its Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) that the City of Los Angeles is required to produce 455,564 net new dwelling units by 2029.[1]

of more buildings with 50-plus units by fewer, mostly corporate builders, but that is exactly what happened. Big buildings alone will not remedy economic discrimination in housing. Removing hindrances to small and medium infill buildings in areas outside of TOC zones could synergize a bridge in the housing production gap.

This is the perfect moment for LA to address its housing crisis. The flow into homelessness has increased year over year due to the lack of affordable housing. Cries for racial justice and systemic reform demand that repressive policies be re-examined. Crucial steps should be taken NOW to create housing affordable to workers, built by local members of neighborhood communities, displacing as few residents as possible. The Regional Housing Needs Assessment calls for 455,564 net new dwelling units in the City of Los Angeles by 2029. Communities would benefit more from increased homeownership rates and economic spillovers from a generation of decentralized and local community designers, builders, financiers, maintenance workers, and landowners, than from the model of community wealth-extraction by corporate builders.
Communities should:

- Facilitate production of buildings between five and 24 dwelling units by re-classifying the density of areas and/or by changing the definition of zoning classifications to restore pre-downzoning capacity;
- Repeal minimum parking requirements;
- Incentivize affordable workforce housing below 150 percent area median income;
- Foster development of ADUs, including in Coastal zones;
- Expedite the division of larger multiple-bedroom units into two or more units to create more affordable rentals;
- Incentivize ownership, such as condominiums, townhomes, and tenant purchase options, which would contribute to the broadest range of homeownership and investment in the local economy;
- Incentivize smaller units, including SRO's and innovative low-cost designs, prefabricated, and modular construction.

The adoption of these intermediate measures could supply a large portion of the additional dwelling units needed in the City of LA within a year, which would ameliorate housing price inflation, reduce vehicle miles travelled, locate housing near jobs and quality schools, and away from environmental hazards.

Downzoning picked up where redlining left off, but there is an alternative to either nibbling at the edges of reform or the status quo of picking winners and losers and doubling down that has existed for decades. Now there is a clear opportunity to codify fairness in housing and to stimulate an economic rebound through good construction jobs, access to affordable housing, and a better, more equitable Los Angeles.

[1]Southern California Association of Governments. (2020). 6th Cycle RHNA Draft Allocation. Retrieved from http://www.scag.ca.gov/programs/Pages/Housing.aspx

BIBLIOGRAPHY

California Department of Housing and Community Development. (2017, January). California's Housing Future: Challenges and Opportunities (Public Draft).

California Department of Housing and Community Development. (2018, November 30). Affordable Rental Housing in Los Angeles County. Retrieved from https://www.hcd.ca.gov/about/contact/affordable-housing-rental-directory/index.shtml

Choy-Brown, M., Stanhope, V., Tiderington, E., & Padgett, D. K. (2016, July). Unpacking Clinical Supervision in Transitional and Permanent Supportive Housing: Scrutiny or Support? Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research, 43(4), 546-54. doi:10.1007/s10488-015-0665-6

Corporation for Supportive Housing. (2012). Unlocking the Door: An Implementation Evaluation of Supportive Housing for Active Substance Users in New York City. The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University. Retrieved from https://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/report_casafullreport_712.pdf.pdf

Ecker, J., & Aubry, T. (2017, August). A Mixed Methods Analysis of Housing and Neighbourhood Impacts on Community Integration Among Vulnerably Housed and Homeless Individuals. Journal of Community Psychology, 45(4), 528-542. doi:10.1002/jcop.21864

Graves, E. M. (2011, April). Mixed Outcome Developments. Journal of the American Planning Association, 77(2), 143-153. doi:10.1080/01944363.2011.567921

Henry, M., Wayy, R., Rosenthal, L., & Shivji, A. (2016). The 2016 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress. Office of Community Planning and Development. Retrieved from https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/ahar/#2016-reports

Henwood, B. F., Cabassa, L. J., Craig, C. M., & Padgett, D. K. (2013, December). Permanent Supportive Housing: Addressing Homelessness and Health Disparities? American Journal of Public Health, 103(2), 188-192. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2013.301490

Homebase for Housing - A Program of Legacy Counseling Center, Inc. (2017, June). Housing Type Definitions. Retrieved from Homebase for Housing: http://homebaseforhousing.org/housing-education/housing-type-definitions/

Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles. (2020, June 24). HACLA Asset Management Residential Properties. Retrieved from https://home.hacla.org/amportfolio

Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles. (2020, June 24). HACLA Asset Management Senior Residential Properties. Retrieved from https://home.hacla.org/amportfolio

Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles. (2020, March 01). Public Housing Sites Statistics & Demographics Overview.

Jewkes, Melanie; Delgadillo, Lucy;. (2010, November). Weaknesses of Housing Affordability Indices Used by Practitioners. Journal of Financial Counseling and Planning, 21(1), 43-52. Retrieved from https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2222052

Los Angeles City Controller. (2017, February 27). Affordable Housing Monitoring Data. Retrieved from https://controllerdata.lacity.org/Audits-and-Reports/Affordable-Housing-Monitoring-Data/5gc4-smjq

Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health. (2017, March 6). Housing Developments Funded Under Special Needs Housing Program. Retrieved from https://dmh.lacounty.gov/our-services/housing/mhsa/special-needs/

Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health. (2017, March 6). Housing Developments Funded Under the MHSA Housing Program. Retrieved from https://dmh.lacounty.gov/our-services/housing/mhsa/special-needs/

Los Angeles County Development Authority. (2017, January 1). Public and Affordable Housing. Retrieved from https://wwwb.lacda.org/public-housing/public-and-multi-family-housing-sites

Los Angeles County Development Authority. (2020, August 26). Housing Authority Profile. Retrieved from https://pic.hud.gov/pic/haprofiles/haprofilelist.asp

Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. (2020, July). 2020 Housing Inventory Count. Retrieved from https://www.lahsa.org/documents?id=4659-2020-housing-inventory-count.xlsx&ref=hc

Minnesota Population Center. (2016). United States Census Bureau Data. National Historical Geographic Information System. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.18128/D050.V11.0

Nelson, G., Stefancic, A., Rae, J., Townley, G., Tsemberis, S., Macnaughton, E., . . . Goering, P. (2014, April). Early Implementation Evaluation of a Multi-Site Housing First Intervention for Homeless People with Mental Illness. Journal of Evaluation and Program Planning, 43, 16-26. doi:10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2013.10.004

O'Sullivan, T., & Gibb, K. (2002). Housing Economics and Public Policy. Blackwell Science Ltd. doi:10.1002/9780470690680

Public and Affordable Housing Research Corporation. (2015). National Housing Preservation Database. Retrieved from https://www.preservationdatabase.org/nhpd/login.aspx

Schuetz, J., Meltzer, R., & Been, V. (2009, October). Thiry-One Flavors of Inclusionary Zoning. Journal of the American Planning Association, 75(4), 441-456. doi:10.1080/01944360903146806

Southern California Association of Governments. (2020). 6th Cycle RHNA Draft Allocation. Retrieved from http://www.scag.ca.gov/programs/Pages/Housing.aspx

Southern California Association for Non Profit Housing. (2015, June). SCANPH Affordable Housing Database.

Taylor, M. (2016, February). Perpsertives on Helping Low-Income Californians Afford Housing. Retrieved from https://lao.ca.gov/Publications/Report/3345

Tiderington, E. (2017, January). The Paradox of "Permanent" Housing and Other Barriers to Recovery-Oriented Practice in Supportive Housing Services. Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research, 44(1), 103-114. doi:10.1007/s10488-015-0707-0

Tsai, J., Mares, A. S., & Rosenheck, R. A. (2010). A Multisite Comparison Of Supported Housing For Chronically Homeless Adults: "Housing First" Versus "Residential Treatment First". Journal of Psychological Services, 4(2), 219-232. doi:10.1037/a0020460

Tsemberis, S., Gulcur, L., & Nakae, M. (2004, April). Housing First, Consumer Choice, and Harm Reduction for Homeless Individuals With a Dual Diagnosis. American Journal of Public Health, 94(4). doi:10.2105/ajph.94.4.651

United States Census Bureau. (2015). American Community Survey. Retrieved from https://www.census.gov/acs/www/data/data-tables-and-tools/data-profiles/2015/

United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2017, June). HUDUser Glossary. Retrieved from HUD User: https://archives.huduser.gov/portal/glossary/glossary.html

United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2018, August). Rapid Re-Housing. Retrieved from https://www.usich.gov/solutions/housing/rapid-re-housing

Wasserman, J. A., & Clair, J. M. (2011, December). Housing Patterns of Homeless People: The Ecology of the Street int he Era of Urban Renewal. Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 40(1), 71-101. doi:10.1177/0891241610388417

PACIFICURBANISM.COM