Adapting Boundaries:
Maintaining Small Retail Strip Malls
While Expanding Affordable Housing

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Abstract

The strip mall is a ubiquitous building type across North America. These structures function as blank slates for any commercial operation to fill their shells, from the original grocery and retail tenants of the mid-20th century to today’s business and healthcare retrofits. In many of these sites, a boundary exists between the large-scale commercial development and the small-scale, single-family residential behind. A result of single-use zoning, this boundary is often resolved with a privacy fence separating grassy lawns from loading docks. This research and design intervention addresses the recurrent boundary condition between a strip mall’s rear face and the neighborhood behind, promoting medium-density housing and encouraging neighborhood connectivity.

The site of investigation is a strip mall in the Los Angeles neighborhood of North Hollywood. Los Angeles was selected for its legacy of post-war urbanism, its history as the birthplace of strip malls, and the recent California legislation promoting commercial to residential site conversions. This project offers an alternative to the large-scale redevelopment of retail centers with incremental housing that preserves small-scale retail tenants, often vital to communities. Designed to fit on sites with limited depth, the primary living space of the shallow housing units are raised above the ground for visual porosity and the flow of activities beneath. Strategies developed in this project can be distilled and replicated on strip mall sites across the United States to provide housing for communities in need.
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Introduction

In 2022, for one of the first times in US history, more building projects are renovations than new construction. Although most attention is given to the adaptive reuse of historically significant urban buildings, other ordinary buildings outside the traditional also deserve similar creative attention. Strip malls, indoor malls, and gas stations are a few of these buildings with cloudy futures. It is important to note that this commercial development born in the mid-20th century is swiftly aging, some of these buildings being over 50 years old, which Alexandra Lange has pointed out, is arguably also historical. As communities in North America are progressively suburbanizing, these typologies require architects and urbanists to address their future.

Often called “mini malls” or “shopping centers,” strip malls are incredibly flexible buildings that function as blank slates for any commercial operation to fill their shell, the primary identity of the store being given through signage. Some companies even capitalize on the continual turnover of these businesses, operating for short periods in the relic of a former business. While criticism of these buildings is valid, it is important to remember that they often provide important services for a community, particularly ethnic enclaves. Catherine Opie’s “Mini Mall” photo series addresses this subject by documenting several strip malls in the Koreatown area of Los Angeles in the late 1990s. Opie’s large format prints capture the way that these overlooked buildings can anthropologically telegraph a community, particularly through signage.

In many strip mall sites, a boundary exists between the large-scale commercial development and the small-scale, single-family residential behind. This characteristic is a result of the rise of automobile culture and has been noticed for decades, a prime example being Learning from Las Vegas. In this text, Venturi, Scott-Brown, and Izenour explain that “Service stations, motels, and other simpler types of buildings conform in general to this system of inflection toward the highway through the position and form of their elements. Regardless of the front, the back of the building is styleless, because the whole is turned toward the front and no one sees the back.” A result of single-use zoning, a divide in program, scale, and walkability is created and often resolved with a privacy fence separating grassy lawns from loading docks. The following research and design proposal addresses this recurrent boundary condition between a strip mall’s rear face and the neighborhood behind, promoting density and green space, along with neighborhood connectivity.

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1 Bloomberg, “One Nation, Under Renovation.”
2 99% Invisible, “Meet Us by the Fountain.”
4 Guggenheim, Catherine Opie: American Photographer.
Thesis Questions

1. How can the boundary between strip mall sites and neighborhoods be altered to benefit the two?

   This boundary often creates cut-off streets and cul-de-sacs in the residential areas, encouraging automobile use to travel from residence to retail, instead of a direct walk. In the design phase of this project, the boundary between strip malls and the residences behind is re-imagined in a more complex way, encouraging foot traffic and a porous boundary between the two zones.

2. Are there strategic infill housing opportunities in commercial strip zones that retain modest, small-scale retail and re-green paved sites?

   Recognizing the importance of increased density when considering suburban retrofits, high-density, low-rise housing can act as a transition between retail corridors and the existing single-family housing to the rear. The introduction of housing can begin to create a new type of mixed-use space in suburbia, incrementally introducing housing in areas of existing retail concentration and promoting green space in place of large surface parking.

3. Can these strategies help provide affordable housing opportunities for communities in crisis?

   While recognizing the importance of density in suburban environments, the United States is also experiencing an affordable housing crisis. This project provides a new location to increase the supply of this important resource.
Fig. 5: Strip Mall Signage, 2022, Photos.
The Boundary

Fig. 6: (Edited Painting) Edward Ruscha, *The Old Tech-Chem Building*, 2003, Painting.
As decentralization and expansion are not viable solutions for urban growth, architects and urbanists are advocating for ways to retrofit suburbia for a more sustainable and equitable future. When researching and designing in these environments, it is important to consider their advantages and disadvantages. In “Two Hundred and Fifty Things an Architect Should Know,” influential architect and critic, Michael Sorkin, lists many different subjects that should be familiar to architects, two of them being “76 – The pleasures of the suburbs” and “77 – The horrors.” Sorkin brings a neutral attitude towards these environments that can be carried through this research. Some pleasures the suburbs have to offer include convenience, affordability, increasing diversity, and most importantly – potential. Horrors to consider include automobile dependency and un-walkability, environmental impact, and homogeneity.

In general, United States suburbs have gradually been growing in population and diversity since their initial explosion. This was recognized in the 1990s with John Palen’s sociological perspective on suburb demographics. Palen analyzes minority groups moving to suburban areas, beginning to break the preconceived notion of the racially “white suburbs.” Other researchers have also recognized this demographic change in more recent publications. In these diversifying suburbs, the strip mall becomes an important place, containing local businesses like grocery stores and health clinics along with community spaces, such as religious institutions and bingo halls.

The strip mall rose out of the automobile-influenced urbanism of the mid-20th century when retail outlets migrated from central downtown to the suburbs. Richard Longstreth chronicles this development in a thorough history of Los Angeles retail outlets. In architectural discourse, analysis of strip malls and suburban typology gained prevalence with Venturi, Scott-Brown, and Izenour’s study of the Las Vegas strip. This study provided an important precedent for looking “non-judgmentally” at the existing landscape and studying a vernacular largely ignored by architects. Contemporary strip malls have not evolved much from the typology studied in Las Vegas and exemplify the “decorated shed”

1 Sorkin, “Two Hundred and Fifty Things an Architect Should Know.”
3 Longstreth, City Center to Regional Mall.
4 Venturi, Scott-Brown, Izenour, Learning From Las Vegas.

Fig. 7: Commercial and Residential Interaction.
that was theorized – the function of the building recognized by large signage and not architectural recognition. Subsequently, some of the most creative strip mall proposals can be seen in the BEST stores by SITE, where these outlets were preemptively thought of as ruins. Moving forward, it is important to consider these historical projects, but not overemphasize their precedent, as these projects analyzed the condition of a new typology, not an outdated one.

In the 1990s, many retail trends revolved around continued suburban development, a common theme being the decline of local retail and the rise in chain retailers. This development still has an impact on urban environments, specifically urban retail corridors near suburban building types, noted in Talen and Parks’ analysis of retail vacancy in Chicago. The rise of chain retail was driven by the subsequent rise of big box stores, such as Walmart and Kmart. Big box store sales index spiked around 1995 and continued upward into the early 2000s. This rise in these stores contributed to the decline in the department stores of mid-century retail, losing their departments to big box retailers.

In more recent history, it is becoming evident that strip malls are becoming increasingly irrelevant due to current retail trends. In the past several decades, there has been an increase in retail vacancies, particularly in strip malls. While not an issue in all cities, it is very apparent in some. Many of the latest trends in retail vacancy stem from the 2008 financial crisis. Since the crash, scholars have been studying retail vacancy at a national level, finding a continued growth in retail space in the United States, however, a vacancy rate that ebbs and flows, depending on the year. This analysis is ongoing since private real estate firms such as CoStar and Newmark are interested in the analysis of urban vacancy as it relates to neighborhood vibrancy and consumer habits. In analyzing retail closure after the 2008 financial crisis, real estate management consultant Donald R. Cavan concluded that while there was a national increase in retail closure, overall vacancy rates were decreasing as of 2016. Although minimal quantitative research has been located, presumably this vacancy rate has changed since the Covid-19 pandemic, but research addressing the state of retail during the pandemic is not yet available.

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Fig. 8: Retail Space Per Person
Despite the ebb and flow of retail vacancy rates, the United States is a massively over-retailed country, with 24 square feet per person dedicated to retail space in 2017.\footnote{Lange, Meet Me by the Fountain, 223.} For comparison, Canada has 16.8, the United Kingdom has 4.6, and China has 2.8 square feet per person. With the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic, more people have noticed empty retail space in the United States and many retailers have transitioned to complete or partial online sales. While a significant amount of retail space in the U.S. is experience-based and likely to rebound after the pandemic, any surplus could be re-imagined maintaining the embodied energy or the cultural importance of these buildings.

The Urban Land Institute categorizes retail centers based on their scale and theoretical catchment areas. The largest of these scales is the regional, which includes large malls.\footnote{McKeever and Griffin, Shopping Center Development Handbook.} The smallest, neighborhood scale will be the subject of investigation for this research, as it often contains local retailers and typically occupies a partial city block, creating the boundary between retail and residential that has been described.

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\[\text{Fig. 9: Retail Center Scales}\]
Fig. 10: Strip Mall Typology in Section
Fig. 11: The Boundary
Retrofitting Suburbia: Urban Design Solutions for Redesigning Suburbs
Ellen Dunham-Jones and June Williamson

This book provides a guide for architects and urban planners retrofitting suburban environments. Plenty of background is given about the negative impacts of decentralization and the current relevance of retrofitting these spaces for community improvement, environmental consideration, and social equity. The three primary retrofitting strategies given in the book are re-inhabitation, redevelopment, and re-greening. The authors define re-inhabitation as the reuse of spaces for social and community-serving purposes, while redevelopment is defined as the replacement of structures and new construction to promote mixed-uses and density. This thesis begins to combine all three strategies, promoting the importance of dense, mixed-use development and community building.

In the chapter titled “Retrofitting Shopping Centers: The Middle Scale,” the authors explain that there are 40,000 shopping centers of small and medium sizes in the United States. Solutions for this scale of shopping center include re-greening areas with little urban growth, incentivizing municipal redevelopment, and introducing more density. Since the authors focus on abandoned sites having the greatest potential, they acknowledge that “most potential suburban retrofit sites are not on transit lines.” This poses an issue to transit-oriented development, which promotes dense development along mass transit. If transit-oriented development includes retrofits to strip malls, a model for retrofitting an active site is needed. Additionally, the book promotes large-scale retrofit projects as the solution to suburban sprawl. While large retrofits should be pursued and can make a significant impact, a precedent for small-scale rehabilitation can also be considered. As the authors mention when talking about larger projects, “As a result, one successful retrofit tends to breed another;” smaller projects can still build up to create a significant, systemic impact.

This book is a pioneering guide for retrofitting suburban environments and a primary source for this thesis. Dunham-Jones and Williamson mention that “Today, instant cities and suburban retrofits are for the most part more exciting programmatically than architecturally.” In recognizing the importance of diverse programs and mixed uses, this thesis accepts the call to explore a thoughtful, architectural example for these important retrofits.

2 Ibid, 11.

1 Ibid, 14.
affordable housing be convenient to mass transit and convenient to job opportunities, reducing the need for the automobile to an option. This is a key factor to keep in mind when locating sites for the thesis design intervention. While Dunham-Jones and Williamson claim sites away from mass transit have the most potential for retrofits, Calthorpe’s arguments for transit-oriented development can also be considered.

Rethinking the Retail Strip: Transforming Old Uses to Meet New Needs.
Chris Kuschell, Jessie Partridge Guerrero, and Tim Reardon.

The publication from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council of Boston uses a retrofit in the suburb of Woburn as a case study in rethinking strip malls. The authors describe the community benefits that the Woburn Mall retrofit provided and provide a methodology for locating other potential sites in the Boston area. Their interactive map showing potential retrofit locations provides an important methodological precedent in selecting prime retrofit locations. Major criteria used to determine a favorable retrofit include parcel size, walkability, flood risk, and transit service. Additionally, the authors advocate for strip malls as a particularly prime retrofit candidate due to their ubiquity, economic under-performance, environmental harm, cloudy future, and near-term opportunity.

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1. Dunham-Jones and Williamson, _Retrofitting Suburbia_, 11.
Retrofitting Strategies

Large-Scale Re-Development
- Advocated by Dunham Jones and Williamson
- Has the potential to create large-scale impact
- Can be seen in many places across North America

Converting Vacant Spaces to Other Commercial Use
- Also advocated by Dunham Jones and Williamson
- Functions well in areas with high retail vacancy
- Can be seen in many places across North America

Fig. 12: Mizner Park, Cooper Carry
Fig. 13: Indian Creek Library, Multistudio
Converting Vacant Spaces to Housing
- Requires significant building re-work for light, air, and egress requirements
- Only feasible in specific economies with high retail vacancy and low housing opportunity

Infill Development While Preserving Existing Retail
- Benefits existing small businesses by preventing relocation and improving property
- Can be seen in a limited number of places, particularly in the Los Angeles area.
- Infill development typically occurs in existing parking lot.

Fig. 14: Cleveland, MS Strip Mall Conversion

Fig. 15: La Placita Cinco, TCA Architects and City Fabrik
The Site

Fig. 16: Edward Ruscha, *The Back of Hollywood*, 1977 Painting.
Los Angeles, California

Los Angeles was chosen as the site of investigation due to its post-war urban growth, legacy of strip malls and current affordable housing crisis. The state of California has passed legislation in the past decade as a response to these affordable housing issues. Most applicable to this research is the recent “Middle Class Housing Act,” comprised of Senate Bill 6 and Assembly Bill 2011. Both effective in July of 2023, SB 6 allows housing on sites previously zoned for commercial or retail across the state of California. AB 2011 builds on SB 6 but provides incentives for affordable housing and mixed income housing.¹ Reasons for this housing crisis are complicated, one important factor being the decline in single-family residential lot inventory in major U.S. cities.² Los Angeles, despite being perceived as an expansive city with plenty of land, has the lowest single-family lot availability in the United States. The following quote by Los Angeles based architecture and urban design professor, Dana Cuff, highlights these pressing issues and raises important questions when considering the future of housing in Los Angeles.

“But what about more innovative forms that might actually serve affordable housing? So where do we find excess land? Where is there excess capacity that hasn’t really been seen before? …I think of it as free land, because it is land that is already purchased, but unoccupiable for one reason or another.”³

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Literature Review

Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies
Reyner Banham

In this influential book, Reyner Banham explores the unique architectural and cultural characteristics of Los Angeles through four distinct ecological regions: the Beach (Surfurbia), the Freeways (Autopia), the Foothills, and the Flatlands (The Plains of Id). The Plains of Id, according to Banham, are the vast, flat expanse of the Los Angeles valleys characterized by their suburban sprawl, with endless miles of tract houses, shopping centers, and parking lots stretching out to the horizon. Banham argues that the architectural and cultural landscape of the Plains of Id is a direct response to the unique environmental and social conditions of the region.

A key factor shaping the architecture of the Plains of Id is the automobile. Banham notes that the suburban sprawl is characterized by extensive streets and freeways with little regard for pedestrian or bicycle access. This car-centric culture is reflected in the design of shopping centers, which are typically located on large, sprawling parking lots, with little regard for walkability or urban design. Despite these critiques, Banham argues that the architecture of the Plains of Id can still be appreciated, praising the shopping centers, with their brightly colored signs and kitschy architecture.

City Center to Regional Mall: Architecture, the Automobile, and Retailing in Los Angeles, 1920-1950.
Richard Longstreth

In this book, Longstreth provides a thorough history of automobile use in Los Angeles and the resulting regional mall away from downtown department stores. This history of strip malls in Los Angeles can also be translated to the history of strip malls across the U.S. In the chapter titled “Markets in the Meadows,” Longstreth explains that the largest boom in this new typology of shopping centers happened in the post-war era alongside the explosion of single-family residences in suburbs. Additionally, these new shopping centers were created to compete with downtown, not simply complement it as before. For a while, these suburban shopping centers borrowed typologies from the typical main street, particularly pedestrian-oriented storefronts and scale, once people arrived from a parking lot. Over the remaining 20th century, these typologies began to place less emphasis on the pedestrian and more importance on the parking lot and marquis signage. Moving forward with the thesis design, consideration can be placed on converting these suburban retail environments from places that consider the automobile back to places that consider pedestrians.
Housing Precedents

Lorcan O’Herlihy Architects - MLK1101

Location: 1101 W. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. - Exposition Park Area of LA

Program: Previously Unhoused and Low-Income Affordable Housing

Year Completed: 2019

Building Size: 34,000 SF

Stories: 4

Unit Count: 26

Unit Types: Studios, 1-Bed/1-Baths, 3-Bed/2-Baths

Amenities: Community Space, Supportive Services, Community Garden

Source: https://loharchitects.com/work/mlk1101-supportive-housing

Fig. 18: Street View of MLK1101

Fig. 19: Second Floor Plan of MLK1101
Bestor Architecture - Blackbirds

Location: Echo Park Area of LA

Program: Market Rate Housing

Year Completed: 2015

Unit Size: 1,930 SF and Under

Stories: 3

Unit Count: 18

Unit Types: 2-Beds and 3-Beds

Amenities: Central "Living Street"

https://bestorarchitecture.com/portfolio-2/project-one-2f6hk-dsebk

Fig. 20: Courtyard View of Blackbirds

Fig. 21: Axonometric View of Blackbirds
Michael Maltzan Architects - Crest Apartments

**Location:** 13604 Sherman Way, Van Nuys, CA (4 Miles from Project Site)

**Program:** Affordable Housing for Previously Unhoused Veterans

**Year Completed:** 2016

**Building Size:** 45,000 SF

**Stories:** 5

**Unit Count:** 64

**Unit Types:** Primarily Studios

**Amenities:** Community Spaces, Social Service Offices, Community Gardens


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**Fig. 22:** Street View of Crest Apartments

**Fig. 23:** Second Floor Plan of Crest Apartments
Fig. 24: North Hollywood Location
North Hollywood

2020 US Census Statistics

General:
Population: 87,241
Median Household Income: $56,579

Housing:
Housing Units: 31,666
Median Year Built: 1967
Occupied Housing Units: 29,072
Owner Occupied Housing Units: 7,379
Renter Occupied Housing Units: 21,693
Median Value of Occupied Housing: $671,300
Median Gross Rent (LA): $1,641

Fig. 25: North Hollywood Neighborhood Map
Located in the San Fernando Valley, just north of Hollywood, the current neighborhood of North Hollywood was originally subdivided as ranch land in 1887. The 1887 grid is approximately 1,300 ft. by 1,300 ft. and remains mostly intact in the street grid. North Hollywood began experiencing fast urban growth in the post-war suburban boom, and like the rest of LA, saw the development of new retail centers in the 1950s. Valley Plaza was the most prominent retail center development in the neighborhood and remains to this day.

Being so close to Hollywood, yet separated by the Santa Monica mountains, North Hollywood has an interesting relationship with Hollywood. Relatively shortly after its subdivision as ranch land, post war housing development took over and established homes for early Hollywood stars such as Bing Crosby, Bette Davis, and Bob Hope. Even in more recent pop culture, North Hollywood continues to be a subject for the Hollywood industry. In recent releases, both *Euphoria* and *Licorice Pizza* filmed in areas of the neighborhood, and North Hollywood is a recent movie set and filmed in the neighborhood.

Today, North Hollywood is transitioning from its foundation as a single-family neighborhood to more dense housing typologies, particularly mixed use, wood framing over concrete, podium buildings. These buildings are mostly clustered around the primary artery of Lankershim Boulevard in the NoHo Arts District and near the B Line Metro Stop. Although the neighborhood still consists primarily of single family residences, most census tracts in the area consist primarily of renter-occupied housing, with pockets of owner-occupied housing occurring closer to the City of Burbank to the east.

Fig. 26: Celebrity Home Postcards
Fig. 27: Lankershim Subdivision Map, 1887
Fig. 28: USGS Map, 1932
Fig. 29: USGS Map, 1948
Fig. 30: USGS Maps, 1966

1966 (Collaged for Comparison)
Fig. 35: Photographs Along Lankershim Boulevard. Author, 2023.
Map Exploring the Correlation Between Population Density, Building Height, and Renter vs. Owner-Occupied Households

Legend

- City of Los Angeles
- North Hollywood
- Metro Line

Occupied Housing

- Owner-Occupied Housing Units
- Renter-Occupied Housing Units

Population per Square Mile

0 - 6,400
6,401 - 13,000
13,001 - 22,300
22,301 - 39,000

Building Height

0 - 10 Ft.
10.1 - 18 Ft.
18.1 - 25 Ft.
25.1 - 50 Ft.
50.1+ Ft.

Fig. 36: North Hollywood Population Density and Occupied Housing
Strip Mall Network and Potential

Site Selection Criteria:

Retail or Former Retail Program
Street-Facing Parking Lot
Typically 2+ Tenants
Typically 1 Story

Retail Leasing Rate:
Approximately $3.00 - 4.50 / SF Year

Fig. 37: North Hollywood Strip Mall Network
The site of investigation is a typical neighborhood retail center with a grocery store anchor at the corner of Lankershim Blvd. and Erwin St. Upon visit to the site, several of the tenant spaces were vacant, the parking lot being only partially full during a weekday morning. Activity on the site consists of parking for the retail spaces, a bus stop at the corner of Lankershim and Erwin, and temporary vendors that set up along Erwin St, primarily selling food.

In the surrounding neighborhood blocks, building heights generally increase across Lankershim Blvd. to the west, where there is also an intermediate zone of multi-family residential between the commercial buildings on Lankershim and the single-family housing behind. On the east side of Lankershim, the residential abuts the existing commercial project site. Commercial buildings in the area are exclusively located on Lankershim, while residential buildings primarily occupy the side streets and blocks behind.
Fig. 39: Additive Figure Ground of Project Site

Fig. 40: Subtractive Figure Ground of Project Site

Fig. 41: Project Site Building Heights

Fig. 42: Project Site Commercial and Residential Use
Fig. 43: Photos Near Project Site, 2023
Fig. 44: Photos of Building Tenants, 2023
A New Typology

Fig. 45: Edward Ruscha, *Expansion of the Old Tires Building*, 2005, Painting.
Knowing that strip mall sites already sell and rent off pieces of parking lot for satellite buildings...

We can imagine a scenario where the rear of the site is sold off for development. This provides opportunity for an owner who isn’t an experienced developer to sell off slivers of land similar to the satellite building.

A developer can then build housing with perhaps a better analogy—a commercial ADU.

Fig. 46: Project Site Strategy
Project Phasing

Existing Strip Mall. Identify Vacant Tenant Spaces.

Infill Housing. Owner Makes Profit from Sale of Land.

Establish Zones for Housing and Circulation Based on Existing Activity.

Incrementally Provide Community Services While Maintaining Existing Commercial Spaces.

Fig. 47: Project Phasing
Design Process

Sample:  First and First, Utile Architecture and Planning
- Approx 2,400 SF (Floor Plate), 4-Story Units
- (2) Car Garage, 3 Bedrooms, 2 Bathrooms

Sample:  St. Thomas and Ninth, Office of Jonathan Tate
- Approx. 1,600 SF 3-Story Units
- Outdoor Parking, 3 Bedrooms, 2.5 Bathrooms

Sample:  Harold Way Apartments, Koning Eizenberg Architecture
- (5) Story Buildings (Underground parking), Approx. (238) 1 & 2-Bedroom Unit Mixture

Fig. 48: Initial Scale Collage
Fig. 49: Initial Site Massing
Fig. 50: Residence Section Process

Fig. 51: Boundary Section Progress
Design Intervention

20 New, Fee Simple, Owner-Occupied Townhomes.
Typical Unit: 14’ x 50’ and +/- 1,800 SF

Intended to be affordable, market rate housing, individual plots are subdivided, like the strip mall satellite building, and sold to a developer for housing. This fee simple model is intended to mimic the real estate model of the typical single-family residence across the street; however, the proposed housing provides more density. This model would work well for a non-profit developer whose mission includes affordable housing construction. The proposed units are affordable due to low land cost, modest unit size, wood framed construction, and the mass production of units.

The new housing wraps the rear perimeter of the strip mall while pedestrian pathways cut through the vacant tenants in the existing strip mall and large swaths of paving are removed for trees, planting, and permeable paving. The primary living space of the residences are raised above ground level to provide visual porosity across the site. New, community-focused programs such as daycares and co-workspaces can be introduced in previously vacant housing, and at the front of the site, the satellite building has been converted to a market building. From the front of the site, the residences can be seen peaking above the existing strip mall parapet.

Fig. 54: Cropped Site Axonometric
Fig. 55: Site Axonometric
Fig. 56: Site Circulation

Fig. 57: Site Plan
Fig. 58: View of Unit Facade
Unit Massing Diagrams

Establish Available Footprint  Extrude Simple Stack  Rotate Lower Volume

Visual Porosity  Provides Outdoor Space  Relationship to Housing Across Street

Unit Variation

Type I: Rear Oriented  Type II: Front Oriented

Courtyard  Service Area  Park  Skinny Footprint

Fig. 59: Unit Massing Diagrams  Fig. 60: Unit Variation
Fig. 65: Massing Model
Fig. 66: Boundary Section - Existing

Fig. 67: Boundary Section - Proposed
Conclusion

Fig. 68: Edward Ruscha, *Cheese Mold Standard with Olive*, 1969. Painting.
Replication

This thesis contributes to the greater task of retrofitting suburban environments by addressing the specific boundary between strip malls and neighborhoods, proposing a new typology of suburban, mixed-use space. Typically, mixed-use developments are conceived as brand-new, large-scale interventions, but introducing new housing in under-performing retail sites can also be considered. This type of development can begin to reclaim these spaces of neoliberal commodity by considering community needs, not just corporate profit.

This project is primarily intended to be a typological study, not necessarily site-specific. The ubiquity of the building type lends credibility to this approach; however, individual building locations are nevertheless rooted in communities, an important consideration in research and design, as consideration of the community in North Hollywood was documented in this project. Additionally, many local zoning ordinances across North America do not allow this type of density in suburban environments. This project recognizes zoning as a limitation, particularly outside of California, but advocates for denser, mixed-use developments in the future. Finally, one can begin to imagine the replication of this housing type across areas of Los Angeles and North America.

Fig. 69: (Opposite) Strip Malls in the Greater Los Angeles Area
Fig. 70: (Opposite) Replication
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Fig. 10: Strip Mall Typology in Section Diagram by Author

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Fig. 12: Mizner Park, Cooper Carrey Source: https://www.coopercarrey.com/projects/mizner-park/

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Fig. 14: Cleveland, MS Strip Mall Conversion Drawings by Author

Fig. 15: La Placita Cinco, TCA Architects and City Fabrik Source: Mustard, Tim. “La Placita Cinco: A Strip Mall Redevelopment for Housing Affordability and Neighborhood Revitalization.” Planetizen.


Fig. 17: View from the Griffith Observatory Photograph by Author, 2023

Fig. 18: Street View of MLK1101 Source: https://www.archdaily.com/950370/mlk1101-supportive-housing-lorcan-oherlihy-architects

Fig. 19: Second Floor Plan of MLK1101 Source: https://www.archdaily.com/950370/mlk1101-supportive-housing-lorcan-oherlihy-architects

Fig. 20: Courtyard View of Blackbirds Source: https://www.archdaily.com/796713/blackbirds-bestor-architecture

Fig. 21: Axonometric View of Blackbirds Source: https://www.archdaily.com/796713/blackbirds-bestor-architecture

Fig. 22: Street View of Crest Apartments Source: https://www.archdaily.com/897050/crest-apartments-michael-maltzan-architecture

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