

ESCAPING THE HOUSING TRAP



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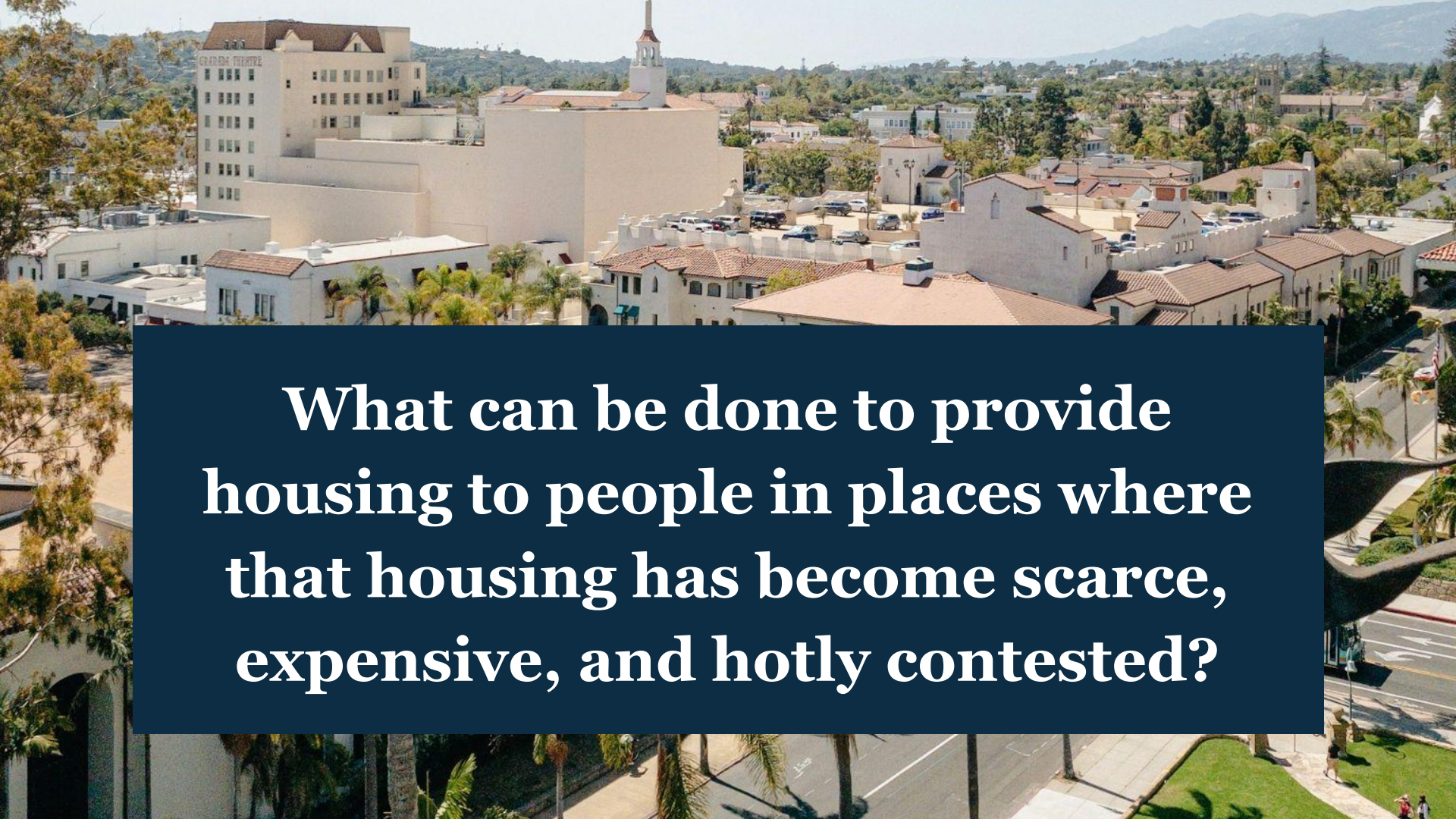
**STRONG
TOWNS**

An aerial night view of a city, showing a dense grid of lights and a major highway with light trails from traffic. The city extends far into the distance under a dark sky.

“The prevailing pattern of development is making North American cities and towns weak and fragile.

We seek to change that.”

**STRONG
TOWNS**

An aerial photograph of a city, likely Los Angeles, showing a mix of architectural styles. A prominent white building with a sign that reads "GRAND HOTEL" is visible in the upper left. A church with a tall steeple is in the center. The city is surrounded by green hills and mountains in the background. A dark blue banner with white text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

What can be done to provide housing to people in places where that housing has become scarce, expensive, and hotly contested?

NATIONAL BESTSELLER

CHARLES L.
MAROHN, JR.

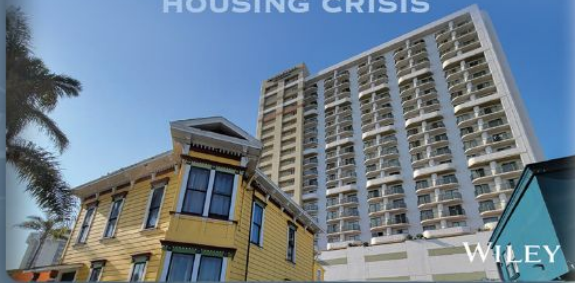
DANIEL
HERRIGES

ESCAPING THE HOUSING TRAP

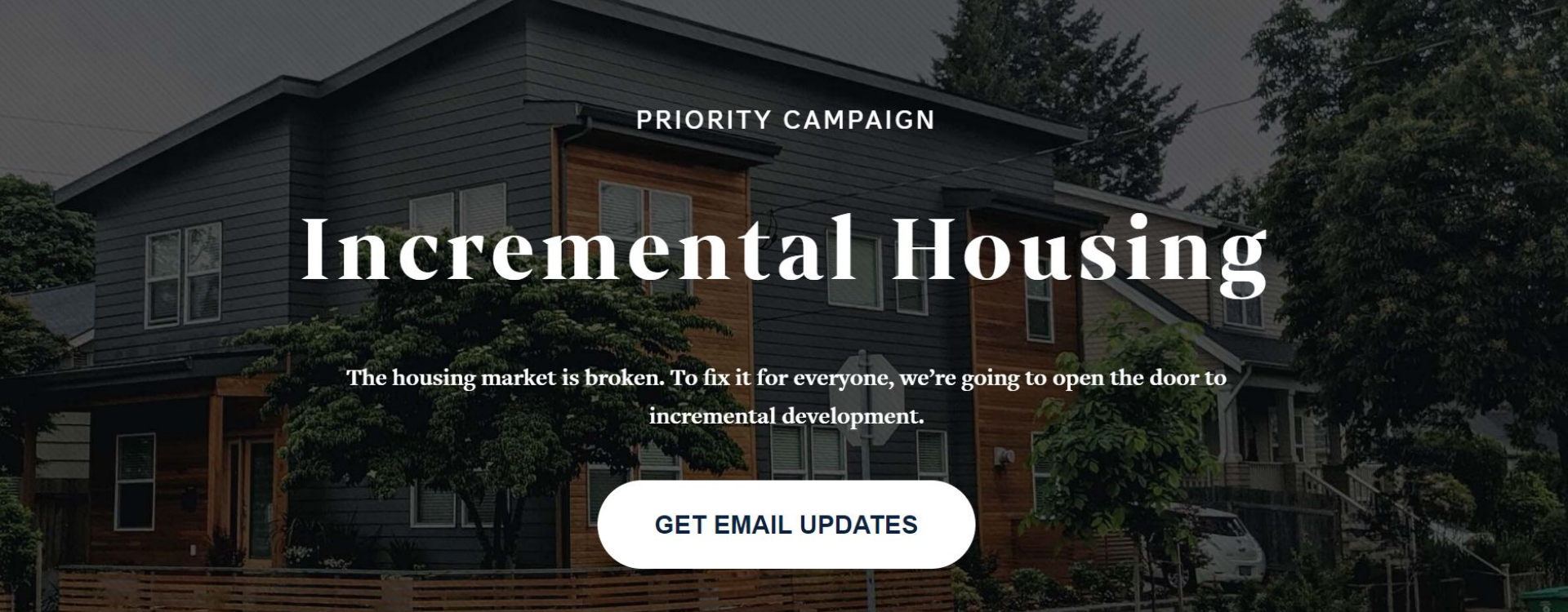
THE

STRONG TOWNS

RESPONSE TO THE
HOUSING CRISIS



WILEY



PRIORITY CAMPAIGN

Incremental Housing

The housing market is broken. To fix it for everyone, we're going to open the door to incremental development.

[GET EMAIL UPDATES](#)

The next increment of development should be allowed, by right, in every neighborhood in America.

CORE MESSAGE

Our current path, meant as a means of securing prosperity for all, has unwittingly trapped us in a system that is incapable of building lasting prosperity

CORE CONVICTION

Local and iterative actions are the best approach to gradually create and sustain local prosperity





CORE PRINCIPLE

**No neighborhood should be
subject to radical change**

**No neighborhood should be
exempt from change**

PREDICAMENT

While we mobilize, we will seemingly be part of a worsening problem and the housing relief won't immediately materialize

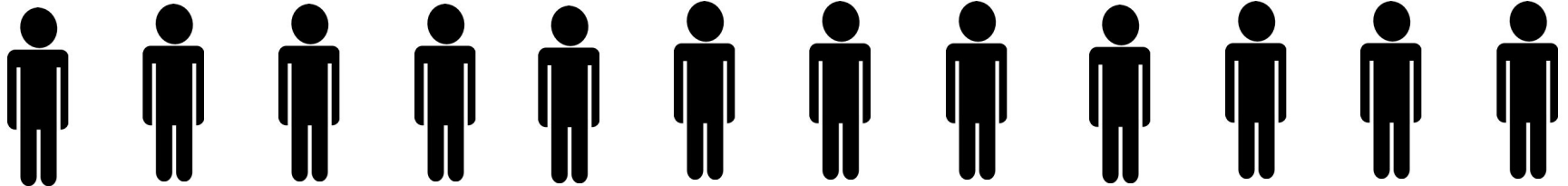
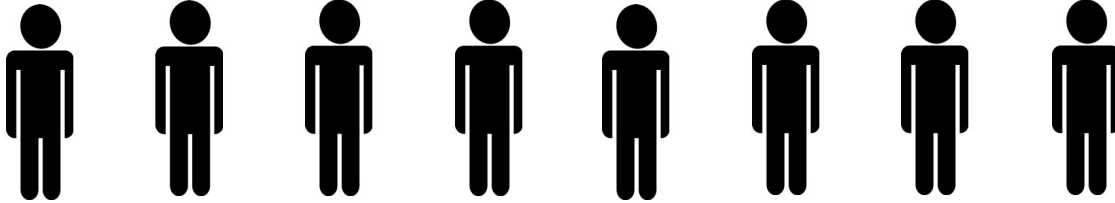
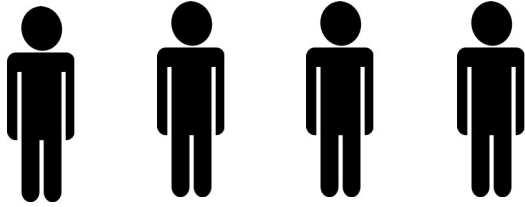



A night sky with a bright star and a comet-like streak. The star is located on the right side of the image, and the streak is a long, curved line of light that starts from the top left and ends near the star. The background is a dark blue sky with many small stars. In the bottom left corner, there are dark silhouettes of trees.

NORTH STAR

**The traditional development
pattern offers a reliable path to
freedom
from the housing trap**

Agriculture Trap





Policy, subsidies, and a flurry of construction resulted in a dramatically simplified method of building out cities (the Suburban Experiment)

**WE TRADED COMPLEXITY AND
ADAPTABILITY FOR GROWTH AND
PREDICTABILITY**



Complex



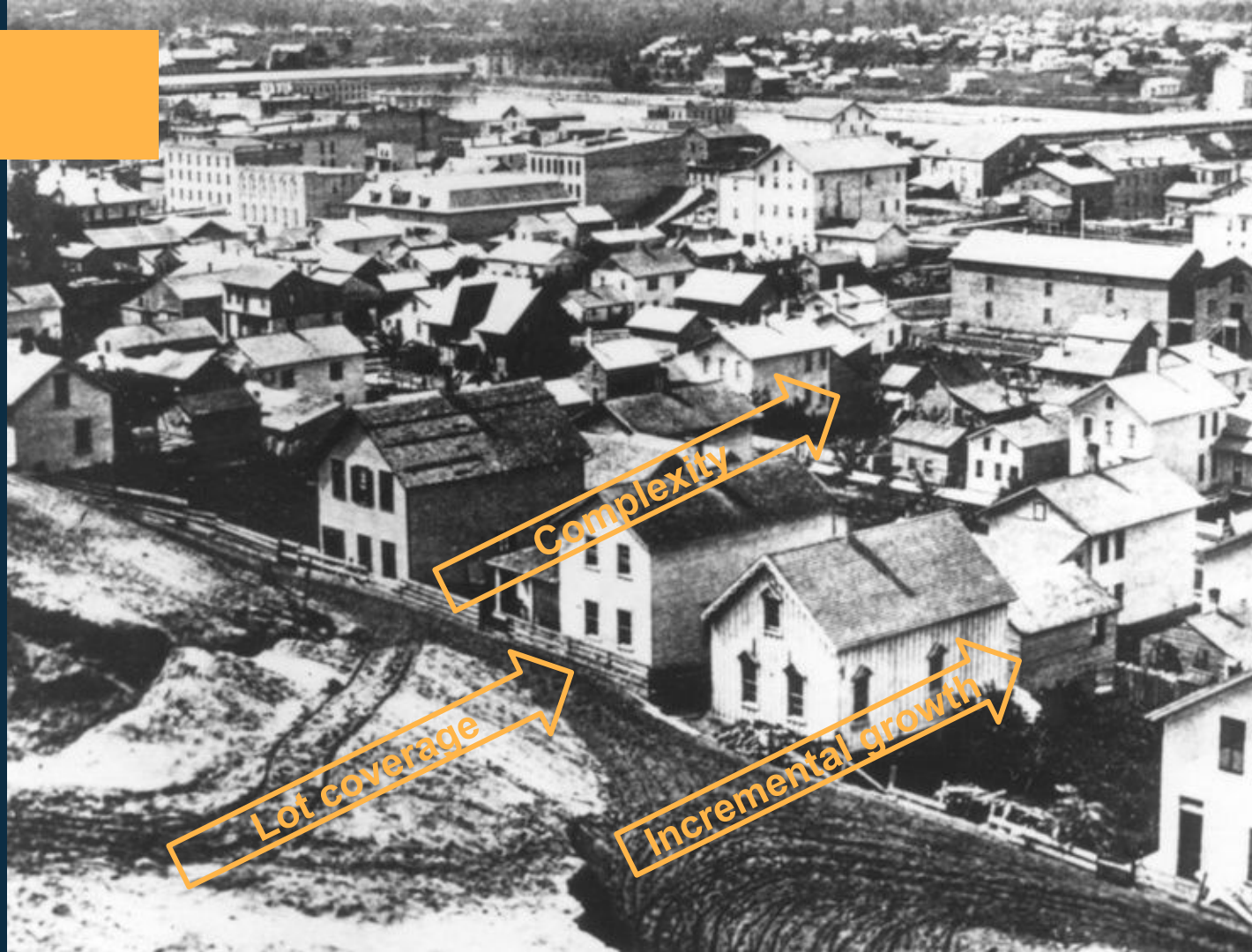
Complicated

Urbanization

1870s

Notice the mix
of sizes & uses

1. Complexity
2. Lot coverage
3. Incremental growth & adaptation



1929-1939



1933



“We have taken another important step toward the ending of deflation which was rapidly depriving many millions of farm and home owners from the title and equity to their property.”

- Franklin D. Roosevelt

Home Owners Loan Act of 1933

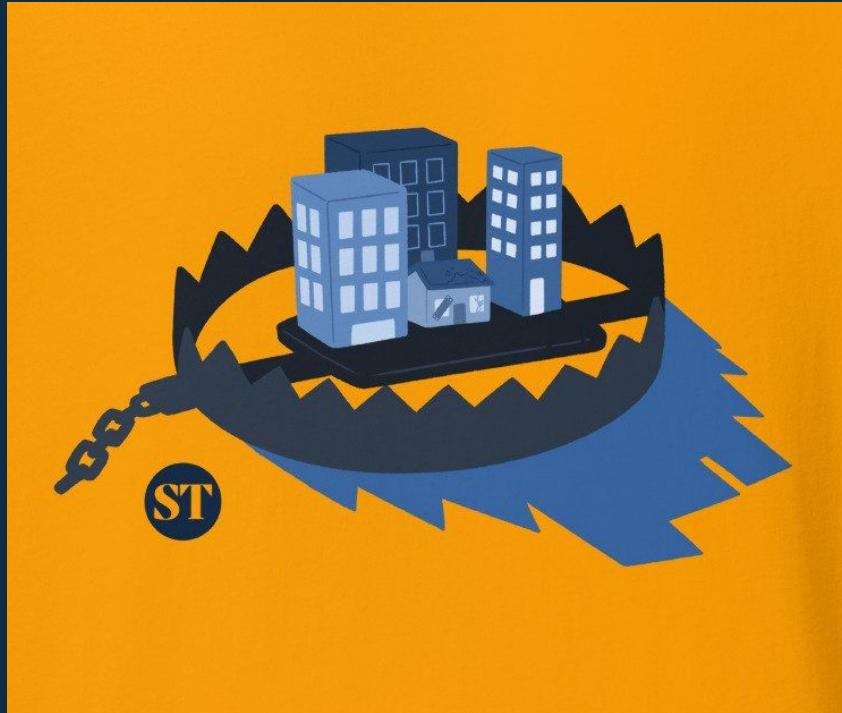
WORLD WAR II



“Were the war to end suddenly....there would be ushered in the greatest period of unemployment and industrial dislocation which any economy has ever faced.”

Paul Samuelson (1943)

Make it easier for more people to borrow more money to pay more for housing.



Lending term increased

Land opened up with assurances of services and deterrence of alternatives

Highway spending unlinked from local budgets

LEVITTON, NY

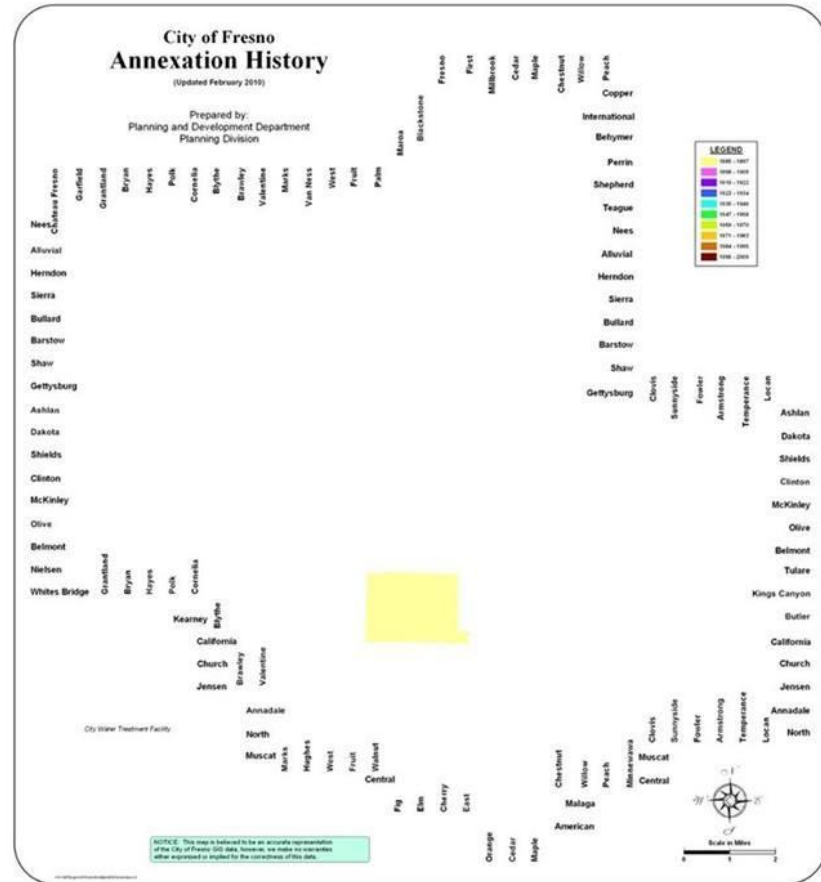
1947-1951

**AN EXCEPTIONAL
GROWTH MACHINE**

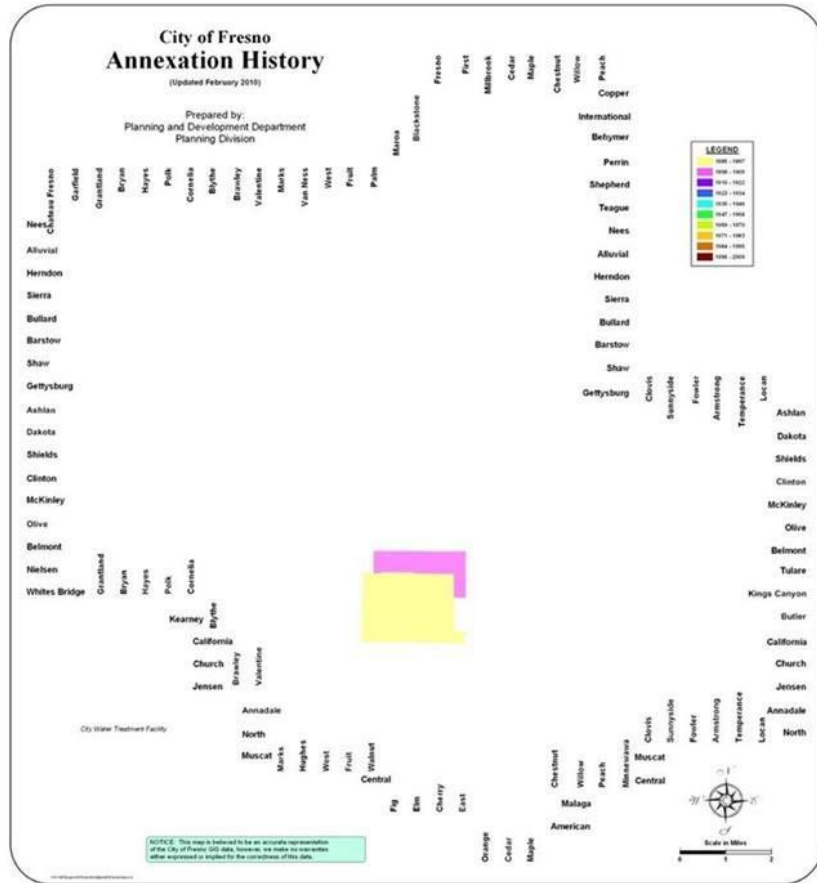


FRESNO, CA

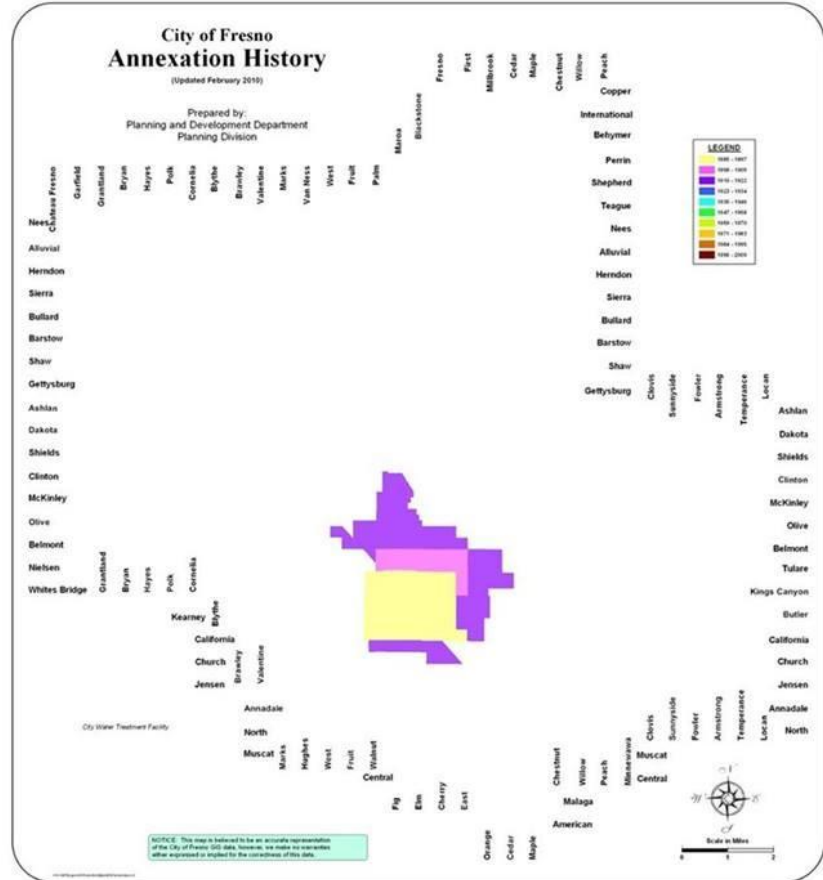
1897



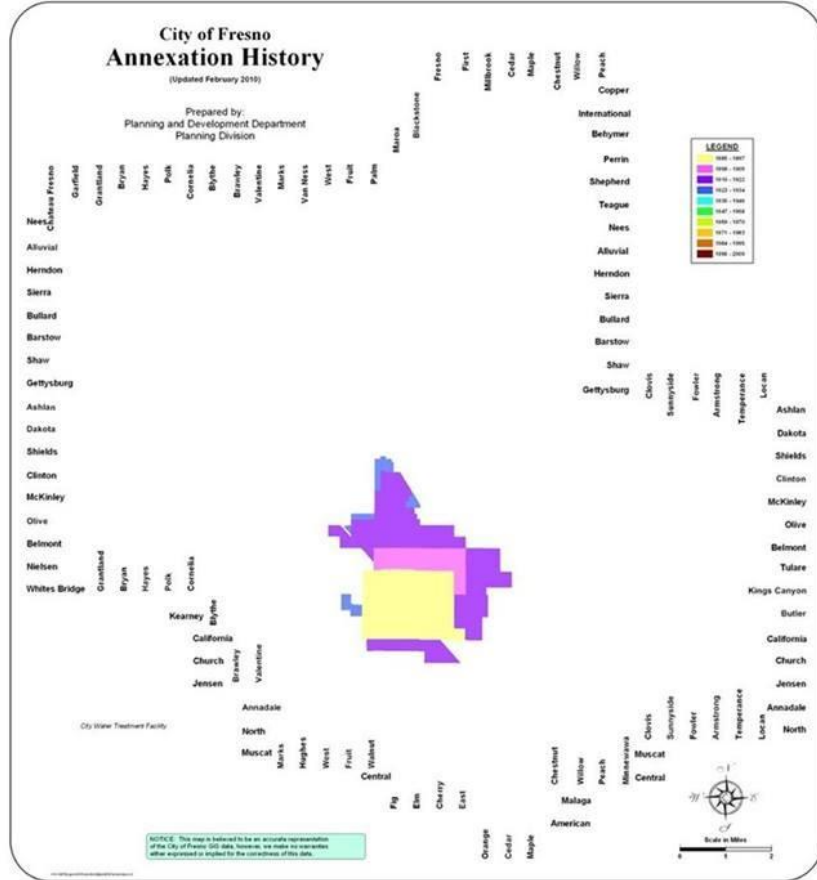
1909



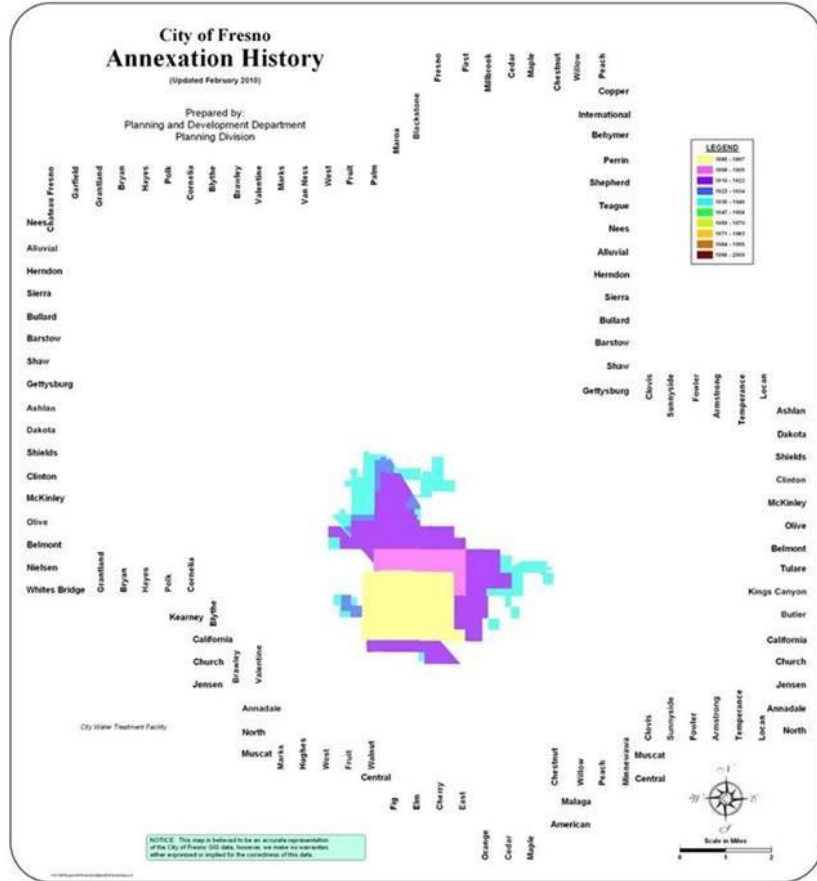
1922



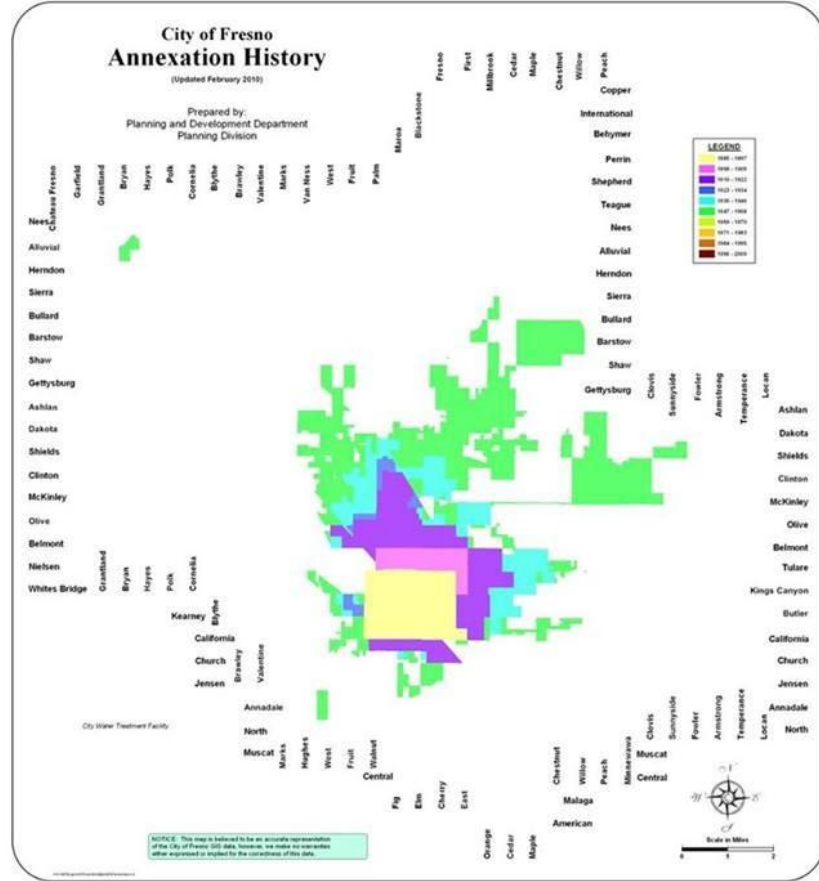
1934



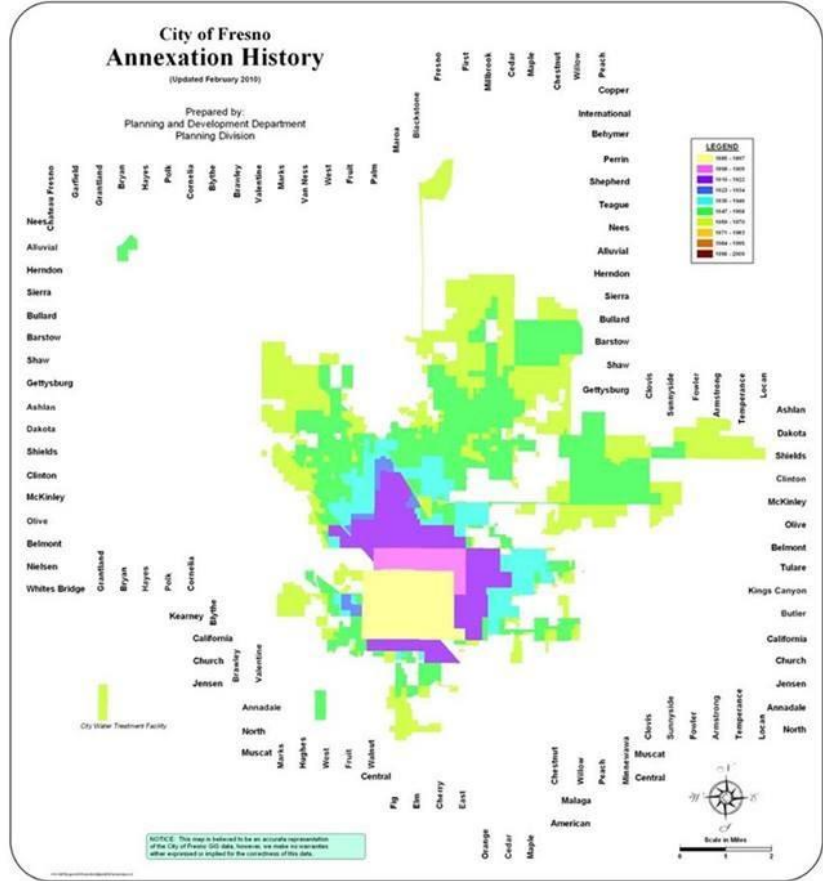
1946



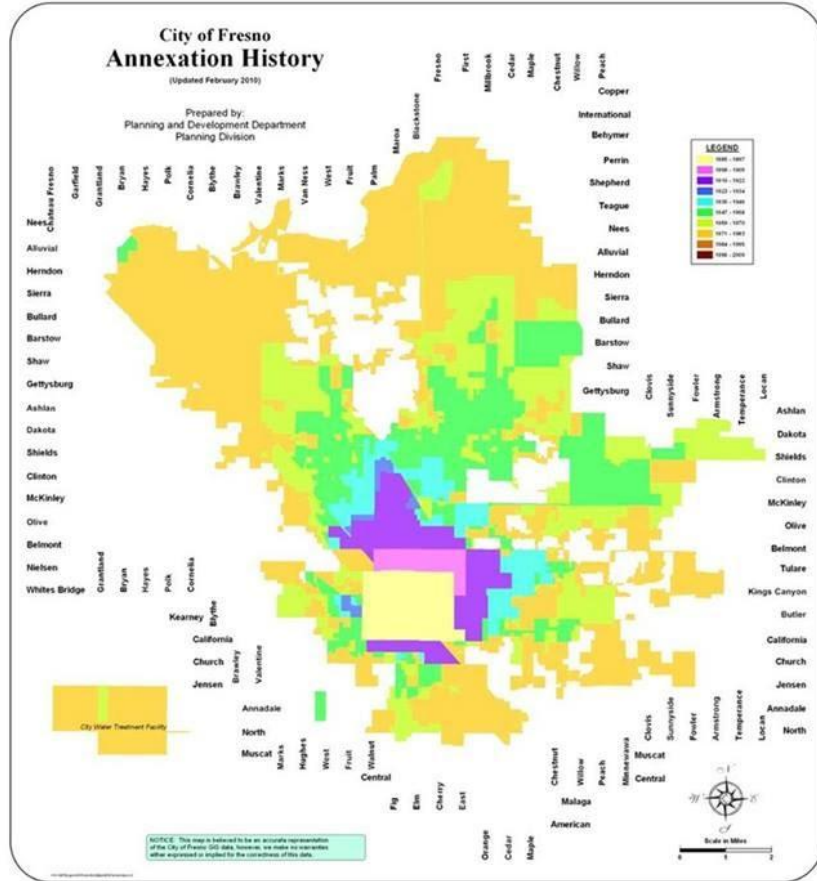
1958



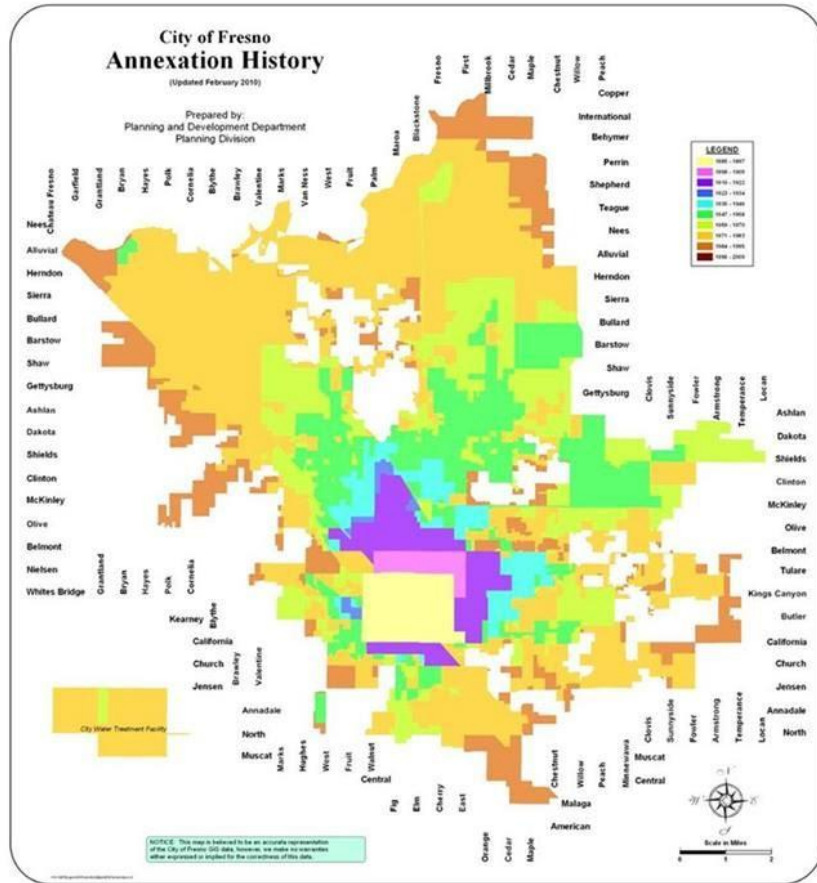
1970



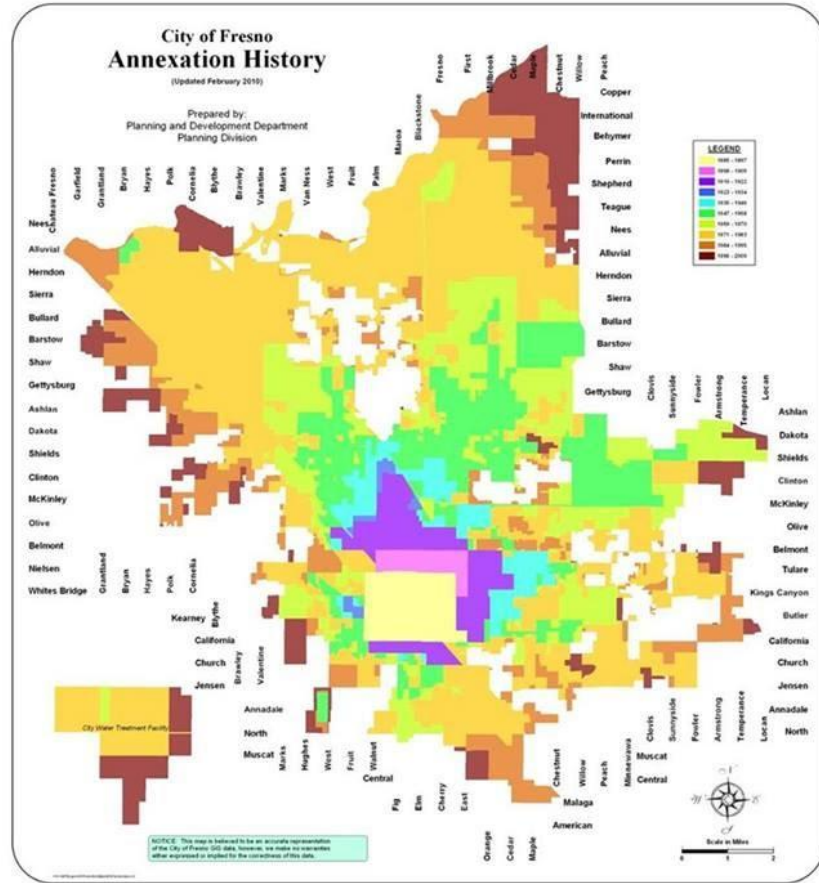
1983

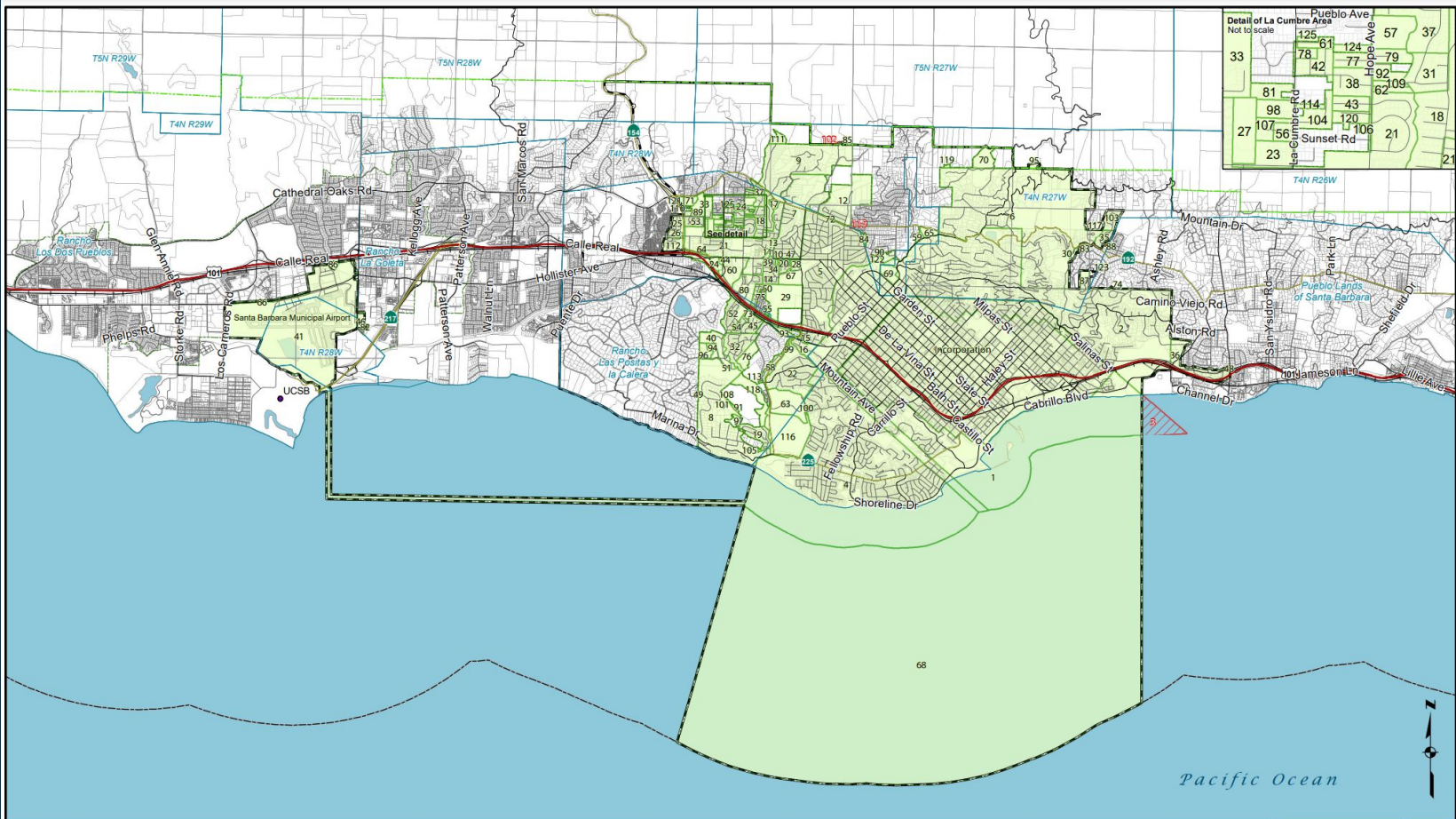


1995



2010

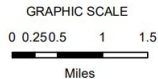




City of Santa Barbara

Compiled by the Office of the County Surveyor on 08/24/2022. Incorporated April, 1850.
 Last Action: 125, 726 N. La Cumbre Rd. Cometa Reorg., LAFCO number 19-03 & resolution 21-01, 9/8/2021.
 Sphere: 2/3/2011, Last amended 9/3/2020.

See boundary activity table at: <https://www.countyofsb.org/1731/incorporated-Cities>
 NOTICE OF DISCLAIMER: This data is for reference only. Although every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of information, errors and conditions originating from physical sources used to develop the database may be reflected in this data. Santa Barbara County shall not be liable for any errors, omissions, or damages that result from inappropriate use of this document. No level of accuracy is claimed for the boundary lines shown hereon and lines should not be used to obtain coordinate values, bearings or distances.





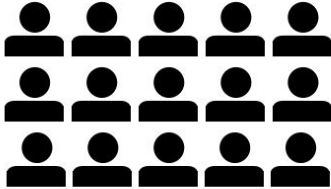



Legend

- Freeways
- Highways
- Roads
- Railroads
- City Boundary
- Sections
- Ranchos and Townships
- County Boundary
- Parcels
- Sphere of Influence
- Out-of-Agency
- Annexation
- Incorporation
- Detachment
- Los Padres National Forest




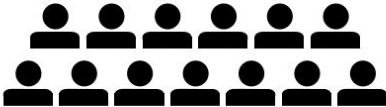



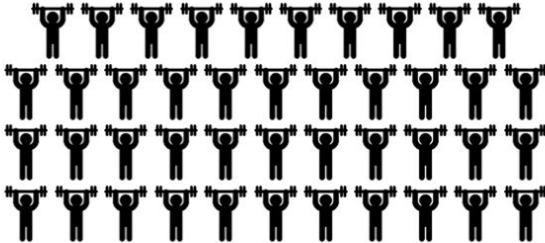


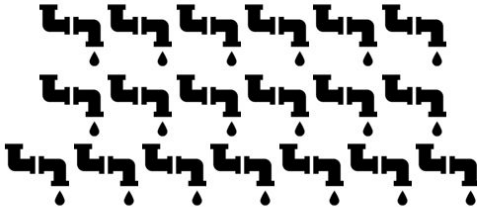
Sewer System Change Over Time

Kansas City, KS

	1910	2010	Change
Population 	82,331 	145,786 	1.8x
Feet of Sewer Per Person 	1.1 	30.1 	27x

Sewer System Change Over Time

South Bend, IN

	1960	2020	% Change
Population 	132,445 	103,453 	-22%
Lift Stations 	3 	43 	1,333%
Miles of Force Main 	0.3 	19 	6,452%



Cash Reserves ↓ → **Bonds** ↓ →
Insolvency

“We have lost sight of what it takes to build
lasting prosperity”

America's Growth Ponzi Scheme

Charles Marohn · May 18, 2020

The North American pattern of development is an [unprecedented experiment](#). For thousands of years, humans around the world built their habitat in similar ways, at similar scales, in patterns still familiar. In the wake of the Great Depression and World War II, settlement patterns across the North American continent were completely reimagined. From the top-down, we transformed everything about how we live, discarding [centuries of accumulated wisdom](#) in the metaphorical blink of an eye.

It's difficult for us to think about the modern American city as a massive experiment because, for most of us, this collection of frontage roads, big box stores, strip malls, cul-de-sacs, franchise restaurants, and single-family homes are all we've ever experienced. Yet, take an ancient Roman and drop them into an American city of 1920 and they'd likely be impressed with the grand, yet familiar, setting. Set them loose in a typical American city of 2020 and they'd be completely disoriented.



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Perpetual adolescence



The Suburban Experiment

A radical departure from the traditional development pattern



A photograph of a suburban street scene. On the left, a portion of a light-colored house with a chimney and a window is visible. In the center, a paved road with a white line runs towards the background. On the right, there is a two-story white building with a dark roof and several windows. Bare trees and a utility pole with a street light are also present. A yellow text box is overlaid on the left side of the image.

The Suburban Experiment

Entire neighbourhoods built all at once
to a finished state



Traditional Development Pattern
Assemblies of (increasingly)
independent neighbourhoods



Traditional Development Pattern
Incremental responses to local
pressure capitalizing on proximity



The Traditional Development Pattern

Concentration of activity and
prosperity-building opportunities



The Traditional Development Pattern

Ongoing adaptation to local pressure –
accepting incremental change and ensuring
greater financial opportunity through proximity

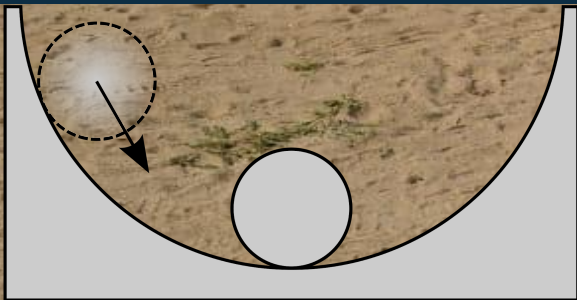
A photograph of the JW Marriott Las Vegas Resort & Golf building at night. The building is illuminated with warm lights, highlighting its architectural details, including arched windows and a central tower. Several tall palm trees are in the foreground, and a sign in the lower right corner reads "JW MARRIOTT LAS VEGAS RESORT-SPA & GOLF".

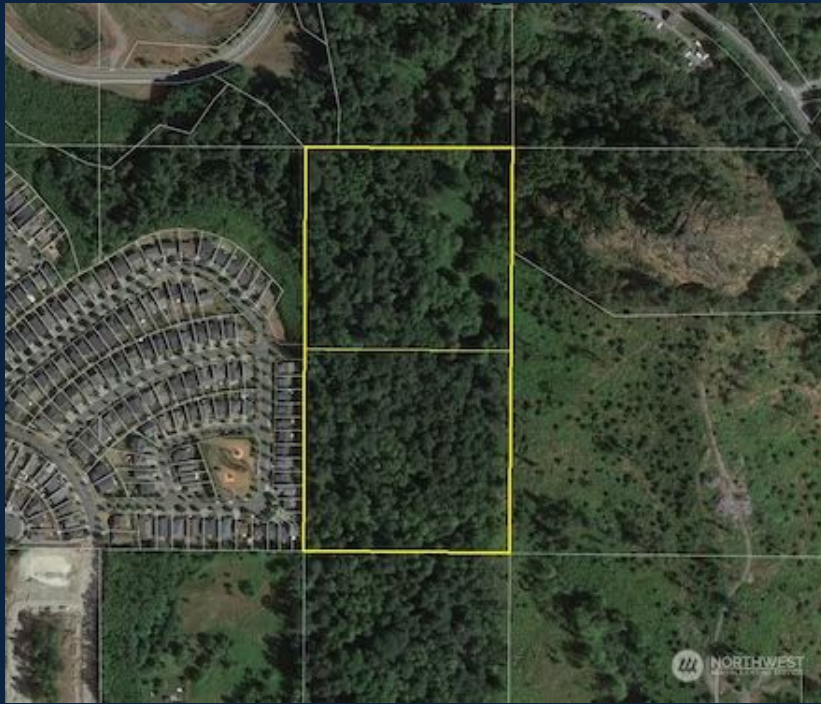
Strangling Exclusion & Rolling Blight

Our neighbourhoods are changing: will they become more exclusive and expensive or inclusive and diverse?

Complex systems have means of correction that bring you up and down through the equilibrium zone with quite a bit of frequency

The suburban experiment is marked by resistance to change, exclusion by class, and mandatory car ownership





Expectations

- water, sewage, garbage, fire, police, schools, bussing
- easy (rapid) access to amenities *and substitutes in home (gym, coffee bar, pool)*

Political Demands

- low taxes per acre
- “equal” services

We have traded a robust incremental approach for a complicated and fragile pattern of suburban-style development

1329 State St

(0.1 acres)

\$25.3 million/acre

(\$2,533,374)



Annual Property Tax:

\$287k/acre

(\$28,732.80)



← 20 W Figueroa St

20 W Figueroa St
(0.12 acres)

\$22.6 million/acre
(\$2,709,131)



Annual Property Tax:
\$258k/acre
(\$31,020.52)



1311 State St
(0.05 acres)

\$43.5 million/acre
(\$2,174,314)



Annual Property Tax:
\$484k/acre
(\$24,218.94)

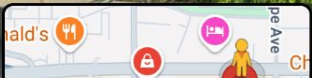


3805 State St
(8.79 acres)

\$4.4 million/acre
(\$39,035,808)



Annual Property Tax:
\$48k/acre
(\$419,051.88)

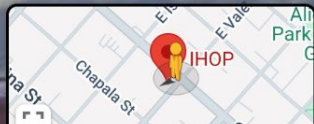


1715 State St
(0.72 acres)

\$3.6 million/acre
(\$2,592,421)



Annual Property Tax:
\$38k/acre
(\$27,532.36)



Change in Development Pattern

“We have lost sight of what it takes to build lasting prosperity”

State Street Must Serve as a Platform for Building Wealth
Concentration vs. dilution has massive impact

