"Neither Community Is Going Anywhere": Indirect Impacts of Revitalization on the Homeless

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Abstract
The hyper-marginalized status of the homeless makes them particularly vulnerable to processes of urban restructuring, including Downtown renewal. Downtown Los Angeles is a focal point of homelessness and urban revitalization. Within this context, I examine some of the effects of revitalization on the homeless using Los Angeles’ Skid Row as a case study. Through a series of interviews with individuals involved in, or impacted by, Downtown redevelopment, this research identifies some of the indirect impacts of revitalization on the homeless. I explore various stakeholders’ perceptions and reactions as homelessness and revitalization intersect and I present their thoughts on how revitalization can be made more equitable for those involved. I conclude that understanding the subtle and indirect impacts of revitalization on homelessness can contribute to our knowledge of these two contemporary urban processes. Key words: revitalization, homelessness, Los Angeles.

Introduction
In the heart of Downtown Los Angeles’ Historic Core, a boom in revitalization activity has been taking place as architecturally and historically significant buildings are gutted and then transformed into residences and live-work units. Prior to the launch of the first adaptive reuse project, Tom Gilmore, the developer who almost single-handedly jumpstarted the process, described his vision thus:

In Los Angeles we're ashamed of our Downtown. We have dozens of beautiful old buildings, the kind that people die for in New York, and we treat them like eyesores, as if we're waiting for them to fall down so we can sweep the bricks away and build another parking garage. Those buildings can be filled with people (Jones 1999).
A decade later, the plans have come to fruition, in a sense; more and more residential activity can be seen in the Core. Thousands of new construction and adaptive reuse units have been added to the Core, new residents are becoming part of the scene, and a certain buzz is in the air. Families with strollers, people walking dogs, and art walks and farmer’s markets are not uncommon sights today; a decade ago these sights would be very out of place.

But also near this heart of Downtown is Los Angeles’ Skid Row, one of the largest service-dependent ghettos in the country. Thousands of people live on the streets of Skid Row and in its residential and single-room-occupancy (SRO) hotels. Mental illness, addiction, or physical disabilities afflict many of the homeless, and families, women, and children are new components of the homeless demographic (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority 2007). The support system that provides for the homeless is at times frayed dangerously thin.

The juxtaposition of these two processes is at the heart of this research. Since 1999, Los Angeles’ Historic Core has experienced increasing revitalization directly adjacent to the landscape of misery that is Skid Row. The locations of the Historic Core and Skid Row within Downtown Los Angeles are shown in Figure 1. The proximity of Skid Row to the Historic Core is vital to understanding the starkness of the contrast between the two. Uneven development characterizes this part of Downtown: there is a steep drop-off from the Core to Skid Row. Decades of containment of the homeless here, coupled with structural factors such as southern California’s high cost of living and housing, have made Skid Row a center of stark poverty.

This research investigates some of the indirect effects of revitalization on the homeless in Los Angeles’ Skid Row. Specifically, I focus on service provision and residential hotels and how they are impacted by revitalization. Some geographic research has studied these two issues simultaneously (see Fennell 2003) but there is incomplete information on the full spectrum of potential impacts. I argue that understanding some of the subtler ways that the two processes intersect provides useful information about revitalization and homelessness, and potentially aids policymakers and others in mitigating negative aspects.

There is an inexorable conflict between the hyper-marginalized homeless and the resource-rich forces of revitalization. The conflict is
Figure 1.—Locations of the Historic Core and skid row in downtown Los Angeles.
not over resources; the homeless have few material resources. In Skid Row, however, they do have a certain claim to territory. As revitalization and homelessness intersect in this defined space, geographers are well-placed to be able to report on the intersection.

Data and Methodology
This study combined qualitative methods with field observations to address the research question. Fourteen semi-structured interviews were conducted in the summer of 2007 with participants from two broadly defined stakeholder groups: "revitalizers and observers," and "service providers." Seven individuals made up the "revitalizers and observers" group: a major Downtown Los Angeles adaptive reuse developer, two Downtown Los Angeles business leaders, a high-ranking Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) officer, a representative of the city's Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), an anonymous representative of a government social service agency, and an anonymous Los Angeles researcher. Seven individuals made up the "service provider" group: two providers from large Skid Row missions, a provider at a smaller "storefront" service shelter, a social service provider at a nonprofit organization, a provider of Single Room Occupancy hotel housing, a homeless community advocate, and an anonymous service provider. Interviewees were selected to ensure a sample of individuals from varying perspectives both within and across groups. Service providers were oversampled to provide the clearest understanding of the impacts of the revitalization on the homeless from the perspectives of those who work with them. Additional information comes from questions posed by the author to LAPD Chief William Bratton via telephone, a public radio broadcast on the redevelopment of Downtown Los Angeles that discussed the homeless being swept away by the area's boom, as well as extensive archival research and a broad range of secondary materials. The direct data collection process generated eighty-three single-spaced pages of transcripts for analysis, more than seventy of which were interview transcripts. Due to the nature of the questions and the participants' positions, the participants are not identified by name.

Additionally, field observations were made in Skid Row and the Core during the period 2005 to 2009. Observations were undertaken at different times during the day and night, as well as on weekdays, weekends, and holidays. During these observations, photographs were taken and field notes were collected. A guided tour of Skid Row,
unimportant, or that they are undeserving. No advocate can feel the negative impacts in the way that a homeless individual does.

**Literature Review**

Although significant work in urban geography has been done on the topics of homelessness, gentrification, and the use of space (both public and private), this article contributes most specifically to the subset of the literature that addresses the processes of revitalization and homelessness simultaneously.

Studies on gentrification inform this research. Over time, the role of government as a facilitator of gentrification has increased. Hackworth and Smith (2001) argue that government intervention has increased due to: (a) the devolution of federal activity onto the states, which in turn makes them pursue redevelopment, (b) the profit risks of gentrification being beyond the means of individual capitalists, and (c) post-Keynesian governance removing the state from the protection of the working class through welfare reform and restructuring. In the case of Downtown Los Angeles presented here, I examine the effects of increased government intervention, including the provision of developer incentives that started the process of adaptive reuse, on the homeless. Conversely, it is possible that government involvement can help mitigate negative impacts.

The city itself mediates the processes of revitalization and homelessness. Some see the city as being punitive, as Smith’s model of the revanchist city puts forward (1996). Others posit a more ambivalent model, such as DeVerteuil’s poverty management model (2006). Vehicles for the circulation and institutionalization of the poor into new settings include jails, hospitals, SRO hotels, and streets, which also have the net effect of managing poverty (DeVerteuil 2003), making them less visible in urban areas that view homelessness and poverty as problems to be removed. A mechanism for the expression of municipal revanchism has been the various laws and ordinances that change public space to target and exclude the homeless (Mitchell 1997, 2003). Cities actively enforce these laws to protect and enhance their global image (Belina and Helms 2003). Exclusionary acts have accompanied the latest waves of revitalization in Downtown Los Angeles. For example, several interviewees cited more aggressive policing by the LAPD and various Business Improvement Districts’ (private) security patrols as having particular impacts on the homeless. Accessing stakeholders’ perspectives on
the nature of the city and the access of the homeless to private and public space builds on the above research.

Similarly, studies on homelessness, especially those set in Los Angeles, inform this research. Wolch and Dear (1993) provided a comprehensive foundation for an examination of homelessness in Los Angeles. Their detailed study of the aspects of spatial exclusion and ghettoization faced by the homeless, as well as the series of local structural factors that contribute to homelessness, provides an excellent context for this article to draw on.

In Los Angeles, twelve years after being declared the nation’s homeless capital, only four jurisdictions in the entire country had issued specific policy statements on homelessness. The vast majority of cities had “no policy toward homeless people, homelessness prevention, or homeless programs” (Wolch 1996, 412). A local official quoted in Wolch stated: “Our city would like to do something to help the homeless...but frankly we don’t want to end up being a magnet for homeless people” (1996, 412). The sociospatial Not In My Backyard or NIMBY syndrome is an important factor here. NIMBYism and containment⁴ have helped shape policy responses so far, and this research touches on aspects of NIMBYism among the new residents of Downtown Los Angeles.

Understanding funding sources is also important. Many municipal responses have focused on obtaining external funding from federal and state governments, as well as assistance from the voluntary sector to provide shelter and services (Stoner 2002, 222). In a move that seems to be fiscal NIMBYism, there seems to be reluctance on the part of local jurisdictions to allocate their own funds for homeless services. Stunningly, in a 2005 study, sixty-four of the eighty-eight cities in Los Angeles County reported making no expenditure for homeless services or housing. Municipal engagement with homelessness was mostly centered on the urban core of Los Angeles (Flaming 2005). What are the consequences of these types of fiscal policies when new attention (and pressure) is focused on Skid Row? Leaving aside the question of the slew of implications of this Balkanization of the Los Angeles region, the impacts of revitalization in Skid Row are also shaped by the resources available regionally. The results of fiscal NIMBYism contribute to the expression of homelessness in Skid Row and in turn influence what solutions can or cannot be pursued.
This article draws upon the literature on homelessness and revitalization by extending their findings to the case study at hand in Downtown Los Angeles. An enhanced awareness of how these two processes operate separately and in tandem provides important insight that can be used to better understand and apply the results of this research.

**Los Angeles: Skid Row and the Historic Core**

**Skid Row**

Documenting the changing temporal trends in skid rows is a fruitful topic for geographic research. Geographers writing after World War II found both urban poverty and the skid rows that sheltered it a waning phenomenon, due to the shrinking number of impoverished individuals as a result of postwar affluence and redevelopment, respectively. Postwar urban redevelopment sought out blighted areas for transformation and, in the process, targeted the skid rows that heretofore had sheltered the transient population (Wallace 1965; Bahr 1973; Metraux 1999). While a broad demolition of skid row on the scale seen in the past seems unlikely today, the trend in skid rows has generally been a decline due to forces of downtown change and urban renewal (Bahr 1967; Hoch and Slayton 1989; Hart and Hirschoff 2002) along with a potential for subsequent polynucleation of the homeless population (Ruddick 1996). Polynucleation over time seems to have been the case in Los Angeles: major clusters of homeless individuals are found in Skid Row, Santa Monica, and Hollywood (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority 2007). One outcome of revitalization is that the archetypal skid row might be seen today as a relic, no more than “a temporary aberration in the evolution of the North American city” (Ford 1994, 83). In this vein, the expanding process of adaptive reuse in Los Angeles’ Historic Core carries with it the prospect of a comparable decline of the city’s contemporary Skid Row.

However, Skid Row remains the most important concentration of homeless persons and services in Los Angeles. In particular, the density, visibility, and the demographics of the population are unique and significant.

A large concentration of the homeless in Los Angeles lives in Skid Row’s fifty square blocks. The 2007 count conducted by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority found 5,131 homeless individuals in Skid Row (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority 2007).
Thus, Skid Row's 0.18% of Los Angeles' area contains 12.8% of the city's homeless population. Skid Row has traditionally served as a point of congregation for the homeless; in the words of one of the interviewees, "no other part of the city is called 'Skid Row.'" Also, Skid Row is a compact area with a higher-than-average homeless "density." In addition, the demographics of its subpopulation differ from those in other parts of the city: the proportion of African Americans among the sheltered and unsheltered homeless countywide is 50.5%, but in Skid Row the proportion of African Americans is 64.7% (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority 2007). Nodes of homelessness such as Hollywood or Santa Monica have different demographics. Finally, Skid Row has vital importance because of the concentration of resources in the area: while Skid Row represents 0.18% of the city's area, it has 33% of the shelter beds available citywide and just under 20% of the beds available countywide (Wolch et al. 2007, 18). These factors make Skid Row a focal point of homelessness in Los Angeles.

**Single-Room-Occupancy Hotels**

Geographic research has also examined specific parts of the skid row landscape, such as the residential hotels and shelters that are typical features of skid rows. The residential hotels—one of the primary land uses in Skid Row—serve important functions by acting as a stepping stone between being housed and unhoused. In Los Angeles, starting in the 1950s and 1960s, redevelopment and rehabilitation related to seismic and other concerns slashed the number of SROs from 15,000 to 7,500 (Wolch et al. 2007, 4). Fennel (2003) provides a helpful description of the single-room-occupancy hotels and low-income central city populations as two variables in the process of adaptive reuse. Not only are the populations of these hotels often vulnerable, but SROs may also house subpopulations that are even more vulnerable. For example, Rollinson (1991) argues that the specific subpopulation of elderly hotel residents is spatially isolated from the outside world, restricting movement patterns to tightly constrained spaces in which the elderly feel safe.

The typical SRO room has space for only one person, and restroom facilities are sometimes shared. These hotels are subsidized housing, the housing of last resort. They often serve as a safety net that keeps people off the streets or provide a space of transition, a stepping stone between being housed and being unhoused. Twelve service providers in the Skid Row area offer emergency, supportive, and transitional housing; of these, three are SRO housing providers. The
two largest SRO providers operate just over three thousand units in forty-six buildings. Downtown Los Angeles contains a disproportionate amount of the SRO housing available citywide, with 76% of the residential hotels in the entire city located in Downtown (Los Angeles Housing Department 2005). Figure 2 shows the location and concentration of SROs in and around Skid Row. The Madison Hotel (Figure 3) is an example of a newer SRO.

Economic factors heighten the spatiotemporal mobility of the SRO population: the amount of General Relief (GR) that a qualified individual can obtain on a monthly basis is $221, which is the same amount that it was in 1981. The salient difference is that in 1981 GR could fund four weeks of stay in an SRO, whereas today the grant is only sufficient for a single week of stay (Wolch et al 2007, 16).

**Revitalization in the Historic Core**

Since 1999, $6.4 billion in investment in residential projects has produced 7,000 new residential units in Downtown Los Angeles and led to rapid demographic change (Downtown Center Business Improvement District 2008). As a new population with a higher socioeconomic status entered the area, Downtown’s dynamics gradually changed and more attention became focused on Skid Row. The residential population grew 65.4% from 2004 to 2008, and today about 39,537 people reside Downtown. Table 1 compares a few of the attributes of new Downtown residents with the overall county population.

Table 1. Selected demographic characteristics of Downtown residents vs. Los Angeles County.

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<th>Downtown Residents</th>
<th>County Population</th>
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<td>Percent holding a college degree</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>27%</td>
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<td>Median income</td>
<td>$96,200</td>
<td>$51,315</td>
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*Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2007, Downtown Center Business Improvement District 2008*

Unsurprisingly, this new demographic is vociferous about its concerns with the challenges that homelessness presents. The developers producing market-rate housing units, and the residents consuming them have made increasingly strident calls for something to be done for (or about) the homeless. Responses to articles about Skid Row and homelessness, posted on blogs such as blogDowntown.com⁵ and
Figure 2.—Locations of SROs in and around Skid Row.
Figure 3.—The Madison Hotel.

Web sites such as those for the Los Angeles Times (latimes.com) or the Los Angeles Downtown News (laDowntownnews.com), provide insight into how some new residents approach these issues with a certain degree of negativity or intolerance.

**Revitalization and Single-Room-Occupancy Hotels**
Revitalization affects the availability of properties for use by service providers. The adaptive reuse of underutilized buildings has generated demand for a variety of buildings, including residential hotels. The loss of SRO units, especially, has the potential to impact the near-homeless by reducing the housing stock that is available to them. Between 1995 and 1999, Los Angeles lost five SRO hotels that contained 105 units; from 2000 to 2003 the city lost another five SRO hotels with a combined total of 982 housing units (Los Angeles Housing Department 2005). Some of the larger residential hotels that exist today, such as the Rosslyn and the Cecil, are better targets for developers due to their size and the buildings' unique historical and architectural details. However, the conversion of larger hotels may displace residents into smaller SROs or onto the streets.
Revitalization also affects the prices of properties. With new residents in the area, demand for property increases, followed quickly by values. This pushes the price point of properties above what any nonprofit (such as an SRO provider) can afford. When acquiring properties service providers also face more difficulties than developers due to the additional costs nonprofits incur (for example, the costs to provide supportive and security services), the circumstances of the clientele (most of whom are on fixed incomes), and the less liquid sources of funding that nonprofits draw on.

In a 2005 report to the mayor and City Council, the Los Angeles Housing Department highlighted seven SRO hotels containing 2,270 housing units that it considered at risk of being lost (Los Angeles Housing Department 2005). In May 2006 the city council passed an interim control ordinance, known as an SRO moratorium, which would prevent SROs from being converted or demolished; this ordinance has been renewed twice since. As a result, Los Angeles has followed the lead of other California cities, such as San Francisco and San Diego, both of which passed similar moratoria to stabilize the stock of affordable housing after the loss of SROs (Los Angeles Housing Department 2005). Also, under state law California’s redevelopment agencies are mandated to “set aside” 20% of the annual tax increment generated by a given redevelopment project area to fund affordable housing projects and/or programs (Haluza, K., Planning Manager, Planning and Building Agency, City of Santa Ana, 12 October 2007, e-mail). In September 2007, the CRA applied for permission to acquire seven SRO hotels with a total of 1,323 units in order to enter them into 55-year covenants that would guarantee additional, permanent, affordable housing Downtown. In the face of vocal opposition by developers and other revitalizers, however, the plan was slashed to acquire only one hotel containing 293 units (George 2007).

The public discourse about these hotels is varied and complex. On one hand, supporters point out the functions of SROs as housing of last resort, given the lack of affordable housing regionally and in Downtown in particular. On the other hand, new residents, writing on blogDowntown.com and other Web sites, criticize “nuisance motels” as eyesores that lower property values and are centers of crime, especially drug-related activity. Unsurprisingly, most of the complaints of new residents are focused on the larger hotels near the Core/Skid Row boundary.
Indirect Impacts of Revitalization on the Homeless

During the interview process, each group of stakeholders presented unique perspectives on the issues and impacts. The participants noted a range of direct and indirect effects based on their roles and positions. The main indirect effects mentioned were impacts on the facilities that serve the homeless and reduced ability of service providers to operate. In the remainder of this article, I present and discuss some of the indirect and interrelated effects of revitalization on the homeless.

Impacts on Service Providers

Several participants addressed how revitalization affected the facilities that serve the homeless. Service provision in Skid Row happens at multiple scales, and having a range of interviewees allowed an assessment of how revitalization was perceived as impacting the operations of a variety of groups: large missions, small storefront service providers, homeless advocates, ancillary service providers, and nonprofit SRO developers. In addition, the responses of “revitalizers and observers” are important.

Revitalization impacts the ability of service providers to continue or expand services in a variety of ways. Increased policing in Skid Row can affect the homeless who are there to seek assistance. The anonymous provider provided an example:

I’ve seen guys walk down the street. Two cops walk up to them, put their arms against the wall, put their hands against the wall, pull their pants down, search them, talk to them for a minute, leaving the guy standing up against the wall with his pants around his ankles in the middle of the street. OK. If that happened to me, there would be (an) ACLU suit in a day.... On Skid Row, where everybody’s a minority and has no rights, they would do this.

Calls—often made by revitalizers—for the homeless to be dispersed also affected providers. For example, a large mission provider explained how the dispersal of the homeless from Skid Row due to increased pressure and policing might affect his operations:

We’re heavily “brick and mortar” invested in the neighborhood but maybe we need to find ways to be more flexible and be more in neighborhoods that have transitioned to have a greater need now than perhaps Skid Row will. That’s a whole other discussion for a nonprofit like ours, but we are looking at it, you know. We’re looking at should we be down in South Central or South
Los Angeles, or some other parts of the city where economic and community development will be more beneficial and where emergency services are needed.

Property values also impacted providers. A provider of SRO housing stated that one effect was a rapid increase in land prices: "it makes it more difficult to offer housing." Surprisingly, a Downtown business leader agreed that a potential consequence of redevelopment was that of increasing land values. As new residents move to the area and demand for property increases, so do property values, which could make it more difficult for nonprofits and service-oriented organizations to expand or move into Downtown.

On the other hand, the developer addressed the charge that speculative development prices service providers out of the area. Speaking of service providers, he pointed out that not all parts of the area had increased in price: "their ability to buy on this perimeter (Skid Row's perimeter with the Historic Core) began to get lower and lower and lower because these prices were going up, but in their own backyard their prices didn't change at all." He replied to the providers:

Without paying any attention to any of the needs of the homeless they were willing to continue to densify Downtown. It was that this was the path of least resistance and so what they were going to do is solve all of Los Angeles County's problems in a twenty-block area. So they really wanted to expand to get houses because they were like, "We need to expand Skid Row because that's how we're going to help people," and never were willing to deal with the fact that Skid Row was an inherently disastrous model.

Thus, a theme repeatedly brought up in the discourse of some revitalizers is the claim that policy failures have made Skid Row into a place that is, by its very nature, dysfunctional, disorderly, and dangerous. Media reports and the complaints of new residents about the crime and squalor that exist in Skid Row are depicted as proof of the area's degeneration. The argument that Skid Row has spiraled out of control frames a perspective that in turn allows some to argue for the end of the area as it currently exists, or at the very least against the expansion of Skid Row, as can be seen above.

Revitalizers also mentioned that in an era of government retrenchment, homeless service providers were actually increasingly funded by business interests. This is an accurate observation: two of the larg-
est Los Angeles missions do not accept any government assistance; their funding is completely sourced from private contributions. Thus, whether missions do not accept government assistance because of a relative paucity of funds, or for other reasons (such as wariness toward being unable to engage in their religious objectives, for example), the net result is that businesses and developers actually contribute to the very service providers that they seem positioned in opposition to. Conceptualizing the revitalizers as being consistently arranged in static opposition to the providers, while convenient, can be deceptively simplistic; the workings of service-provision funding illustrate the complexity of the relationships at play in the area, and their sometimes counterintuitive nature.

**Impacts on Residential Hotels**

The city’s 1975 redevelopment plan provided funding for the acquisition and rehabilitation of SRO hotels. Acting as the agency of redevelopment, in the 1980s the CRA set up the major nonprofit housing corporations that provide SRO units today (Spivack 1998). The CRA representative discussed how revitalization had generally assisted facilities in keeping, expanding, or increasing services. He mentioned that his agency had rehabilitated or replaced over 2,800 units of SRO housing—a substantial proportion of the SRO housing that remains in Downtown Los Angeles today. The anonymous government representative agreed that revitalization had helped the homeless to the extent that the CRA had stabilized SRO housing programs, but it had also hurt as new developments were not mixed-income. The developer provided a rebuttal, arguing that there are reasons why there has been more market-rate than affordable development:

> A healthy city, any healthy city I would say has a sustained ratio of 80% market rate housing and 20% affordable housing. I think that most people can grab that within a few points, 75%–25%, whatever it is.... In 1999, it was 80% affordable to 20% market. That’s an out-of-balance city.

A business leader provided a different perspective. While he conceded that there was not enough supply...

> The SROs are full; you can’t get into them.... There aren’t probably enough of those units.
...he argued that homelessness was more an addiction or mental health issue than a housing issue. However, a large mission provider argued that this was not quite the case:

What do we do with the available housing stock? Do we let it go with the market forces, or do we decide that housing should be protected? In a global sense, the end of homelessness is housing. No matter where you are in the continuum of care, the goal is to get housed.

He added that supportive services were a necessary supplement to the housing that is provided:

If you give a crackhead a house, it becomes a crackhouse. The wraparound (social) services need to be mandatory.

Finally, the conversion of residential hotels was mentioned as having an impact. A large mission provider explained who was affected by these conversions:

Not the chronic homeless, but the near-homeless in the sense that many of those persons can barely afford to live there a full thirty days. Some of them don’t. Some of them in fact live two or three weeks and then spend a week in the missions...that particular population I think is being impacted.

The small shelter provider concurred, observing that with the impacts on some of the SRO hotels, the individuals who used to reside in them were spending less time out of Skid Row and were returning sooner:

Some of our people who used to get housing, either occasional housing or even sort of semi-permanent who used to live in the so-called welfare hotels, the Frontier, the Alexandria, the Cecil, those hotels no longer have access to them (sic) or if they do, it’s much shorter periods. A lot of the people down here use their public assistance checks or their disability checks for several days of hotel stay and then they run out of money and they come down here and that’s been shortening the time that they’ve been out of the Skid Row area and they come back sooner.

The SRO housing provider mentioned that the constant threat from hotel conversions on the borders of Skid Row had psychological impacts:
There's clearly a fear, and I know a lot of times we’ll have to meet with our residents and really try and allay their concerns by saying “we’re here for the long haul, we’re not here to make money. We’re here to provide a service that is desperately needed.”... But when they see a new development or when they see a piece of property go up for sale, I think it's a knee jerk reaction that “oh my god, they’re getting closer, it could happen here.”

A large mission provider noted that the larger hotels were targets for developers who could price providers out of the market:

For example, the Rosslyn and the Frontier Hotel, with about 700 rooms, clearly the nonprofit developers want to convert those. The owners are sitting on a hot market, and the price point goes beyond what the nonprofits can afford.

A provider of SRO housing concurred:

The challenge for us is that there are limitations on how much we can pay for a building. Whatever that appraised value is, we can pay it.... But we can’t pay one or two million dollars over, and so we’re being priced out. Or we are not even able to acquire the property because they’re thinking “why should I sell to you when I can hold on and sell to a high-end developer who’s going to turn my property into lofts.” So that is a challenge. It's made it more difficult for us to acquire properties because of the thought that they can sell a building that's worth seven million dollars for eleven or twelve million.

Dueling stakeholder perspectives contest the spaces that are afforded by residential hotels. Revitalizers presented a discourse that minimizes the role of housing and frames affordable housing as being too prevalent in the Downtown core. Again, when Downtown’s pre-revitalization situation is framed as being imbalanced or unhealthy, the current wave of market-rate housing can be justified as a logical adjustment. Providers pointed out that when the provision of market-rate housing impacts low-income or affordable housing, it can affect the crucial role of residential hotels in housing low-income populations. When a hotel is converted or even threatened with conversion, the impacts can be felt at various scales. From micro-scale influences on a homeless individual’s weekly mobility patterns and psychological sense of security, to macro-scale effects on the planning and acquisition strategies of an SRO service provider, impacts on residential hotels can have a variety of effects on the homeless.
Minimizing Negative Impacts

A motivating factor in this research is an effort to go beyond a mere documentation of revitalization's impacts on homelessness in Downtown Los Angeles and to elicit explicit policy recommendations. The next section of stakeholder responses addresses their perspectives on how negative impacts of revitalization could be minimized to achieve a win-win between revitalization and homelessness. As respondents point out the inequity of revitalization vis a vis homelessness, what policy prescriptions do they envision to make it more equitable? Again, participants have different visions of how negative impacts could be minimized. A variety of ideas are presented regarding the recommendations that could lead to a win-win outcome for revitalization and homelessness.

Members of the revitalizer group expressed consistent disapproval of the containment policy. The business leader referred to the need for dispersal of services among the eighty-eight cities in the county:

"Downtown Los Angeles has the burden for the entire region, and these things need to be spread through all eighty-eight cities, not just one." The developer mentioned that balance was needed between the differing factions. He mentioned that the process of revitalization had brought a lot of people together to try to figure out better ways of addressing the homeless without moving them. From his point of view, he saw the issue as "not us (developers) versus them (providers), it's us and them," and he decried what he termed "divisive social policy."

The service providers brought up several themes, including housing and the role of government; interestingly, most providers accepted development in Downtown. The nonprofit housing provider mentioned that all groups needed to work together to provide a better Downtown for all communities that are here. In an echo of the aforementioned developer comment, a large mission provider stated that there was a need to balance private and public sector interests. The executive director of a job placement agency that works with the homeless mentioned the broad range of people who have a stake in Downtown: "If you look at the whole picture, what we are creating is an environment where it's not just poor people, but it's poor people, middle-income people, and wealthy people."

With respect to housing, the CRA representative mentioned that the provision, retention, and expansion of adequate affordable housing and wraparound services would minimize negative impacts. Two
other respondents also mentioned deconcentration in this connection: they felt that housing and onsite supportive services should be provided Downtown and region-wide.

Both providers with different-sized shelter operations discussed the option of providing alternative types of housing. The small shelter provider mentioned the model of the old boarding house, where “people got a room and they got some meals...it wasn’t necessarily a hotel room but it was a room of their own,” while a large mission provider brought up another model:

Dormitory housing for adults, in that there are some people who just simply need a place. (They) don’t have the ability physically or otherwise to sustain much more than a roof over their heads, and there ought to be a way that we have that type of safe housing, and where services are necessary supporting safe housing, but it doesn’t have to be fantastic. It just has to be functional.

In terms of government’s role, the social services provider remarked that because developers are naturally going to build more luxury housing units versus affordable housing units, it falls upon the city to incentivize affordable housing or promote inclusionary zoning. A large mission provider put forth the idea of a draw rather than a win-win; while people should definitely have the choice to live in more upscale places if they want to, government should balance the desire of the developers to make a profit by ensuring that certain places are off limits for market-driven redevelopment.

The community advocate declared that a win-win could be accomplished by not displacing the homeless, increasing housing provision, and increasing green space in the area. She mentioned that if the free market fails poor people, government’s role is to correct the failure. In her opinion, the municipal government had only looked to make it easier and cheaper for upscale development to happen. The Los Angeles researcher stated that a developed strategy should be in place to address homelessness, coupled with a financial mechanism such as a 5% set aside on the new development of Downtown projects that would go into a homeless housing trust fund.

The anonymous provider pointed out that the developers were there to do what they do and he was there to do what he does. He continued that eventually the business community needed to realize that chasing the problem (through policing) a few blocks one
direction or another would not solve it; when (not if) in the future the police leave the area the dispersed homeless would return and the developers would realize that they need to try to be a better part of the solution.

Overall, comments about possible solutions were mixed. Echoing their earlier responses, the developers started with the containment policy’s failures in Downtown and Skid Row and continued on to make the argument that the area carried a disproportionate burden and that the homeless should be deconcentrated. An implicit part of this is a reduction in the “density” of service provision in Downtown. For their part, providers mentioned the deconcentration of service and housing provision as part of a solution that would maintain service provision Downtown and expand services regionally. The providers also mentioned that the preservation of affordable housing, as well as the possible introduction of nontraditional types of housing, coupled with wraparound services, could represent a win-win. However, in other comments, both revitalizers and providers brought up the fact that deconcentration would be difficult and that NIMBYism would contest any attempts at deconcentration. Finally, the various calls for balance and unifying (as opposed to divisive) policy illustrate how various stakeholders, even those that seem diametrically opposed, can demonstrate a degree of mutual awareness and flexibility.

**Discussion and Conclusions**

While homelessness and revitalization have both been arenas for geographic research, this research contributes to the literature that considers the intersection of the two processes. In this article I argue that assembling multiple perspectives makes a modest contribution to the literature by providing insight into how stakeholders, the actors actually involved at the ground level, perceive the impacts of revitalization on the homeless. Knowing how these stakeholders see and react to the processes around them sheds light on how the processes eventually play out. Impacts on the facilities that provide services will ultimately impact the homeless in ways that may be more subtle and less distinctive. Interviewee responses underscored the subtlety and complexity of the indirect impacts.

The findings of this research extend our knowledge of revitalization’s impacts on the homeless. For example, revitalizers generally presented a perspective that emphasized the failures of containment and the initial unevenness of the housing mix. The provision of...
market-rate housing can then be justified as having improved the conditions in Downtown and “balanced” the housing mix. On the other hand, providers discussed a wide range of impacts. From direct impacts on the civil rights and psychological well-being of the homeless, which in turn affect service provision and providers, to indirect impacts such as rising property values and threats to SRO hotels, an imbalanced, profit-driven revitalization can affect the homeless at multiple scales. Further, stakeholders put forth a range of possible solutions, from deconcentration and a more equitable distribution of resources and housing, to the provision of additional housing and services. Providers also cited a more proactive government response as part of the solution, whether in the form of incentivizing affordable housing or maintaining a balanced housing mix through zoning.

The interviews revealed that the providers did not cling to a pessimistic assessment of the situation and did not demonize development per se. Instead, their comments demonstrated an awareness of the situation’s political and fiscal realities and a willingness to work within the existing structures with developers in the Historic Core. Terms such as “us and them,” “win-win,” and “draw,” used by both revitalizers and providers, seem to indicate a more pluralistic mindset than would be expected with the binary of “winners” and “losers.” Some providers looked to a future in which revitalization could exist side by side with homelessness. A large mission provider articulated this:

I think there can be a mix.... I do think it’s appropriate to have various levels of housing within various neighborhoods. Not everybody needs to live behind a gate, if you know what I mean. Or at a mission.

The nonprofit housing provider concurred:

I think there is a win-win. By working together to say, “It’s not about Downtown west of Los Angeles (Street), it’s about all of Downtown. It’s about everybody who lives down in Downtown.” How do you make a better community for everyone?

The anonymous service provider seemed to echo this sentiment:

It’s about this new thing called coexistence. What I’ve been calling coexistence. Neither community is going anywhere. And therefore the homeless community, the poor community is not going anywhere, cannot will not go anywhere. So therefore other
than putting them all in jail, what do we do? We can’t buy the Midnight Mission and build condos. It’s not going to happen.

These statements seem to reveal a more ambivalent and managerial understanding of the role of the city, which may reflect DeVerteuil’s poverty-management model (2006), as opposed to the more punitive perception of Smith’s revanchist city (1996). Although the different positions and motivations of the various stakeholders meant that specific perspectives about impacts or solutions were not always aligned, having each group of stakeholders express their awareness of the other groups’ needs illustrated one precondition for compromise and coexistence.

Some broader implications can be extracted from this research. First, some of the results above, such as the issue of service-provider funding, illustrate how stakeholders who seem diametrically opposed may be closer than they appear. The fact that a certain common ground exists may explain some of the mutual awareness noted in the responses. The nature of partnerships, coalitions, and funding relationships is sometimes tangled and unclear, and the political economy of revitalization and service provision is an interesting and potentially understudied area (but see Gibson 2004 for a notable exception). Further, strong social networks and personal connections were apparent between and across the two groups of stakeholders. This was unanticipated, but not surprising given the area’s compact nature and the degree of intersection between the various processes and parties. Also, the role of government is (unsurprisingly) ambivalent. Political, economic, and social factors push policy decisions to favor different groups at different times. Overall, this “common ground” complicates and adds nuance to studies of the intersection of revitalization and homelessness.

Second, understanding how a city’s affordable housing stock is affected by revitalization can help to ensure that the housing stock is better protected. Revitalization is not a negative process per se, but if negative outcomes are minimized, revitalization can be made more equitable for those around it. For example, if Los Angeles had adopted a “Housing First” policy similar to that implemented by Portland, Oregon, it would have been able to house 7,500 chronically homeless people and 5,200 homeless families, and add 2,250 units of supportive housing, based on the relative sizes of the two cities, their populations and budgets (Blasi 2007).
A third implication, especially crucial in an era of neoliberal urbanism, is the role of the state. Governance plays an important part in shaping outcomes. On one hand, the city of Los Angeles produced the preconditions for the current wave of revitalization by passing the Downtown Adaptive Reuse Ordinance, and it maintains the current status quo through increased policing in Skid Row. On the other hand, the CRA and city council have made notable efforts to protect affordable housing. Mitchell’s work on the annihilation of space by law has important extensions in the case of Los Angeles. As indicated in this article, the quasi-private spaces of SRO housing that shelter the near-homeless are threatened by the legal acts of the city and developers as well as the complaints of new Downtown residents; but conversely, legal measures have been undertaken to protect SRO housing. Having a more consistent set of guidelines that takes into consideration the spectrum of potential impacts can enhance policy effectiveness.

A more complete understanding of the various stakeholder perspectives allows for similarities and differences to be identified and discussed. For example, the providers agreed with the revitalizers that the previous conditions in Skid Row were horrible. Also, all groups praised revitalization’s physical improvements to the area. In other (more contentious) areas, such as impacts on service provision and residential hotels or possible solutions, each group emphasized the issues that affect them the most. I contend that combining the points of view of both sets of stakeholders provides a more comprehensive understanding of the impacts, which can then be taken as a starting point for policymakers and others to identify the most meaningful effects and alleviate them.

This research concluded with the interviewees’ thoughts on various ways that negative impacts could be mitigated. While homelessness is a complex issue for which there is no silver bullet, creative win-win answers were deemed possible at revitalization’s intersection with homelessness. An awareness of the perspectives of stakeholders and the positive and negative relationships between revitalization and homelessness makes it possible to better envisage and implement these win-win solutions.

Further research can take a deeper look at this issue: obtaining the perspectives of the homeless or SRO residents on the effects of revitalization would be a valuable extension of this project. Researchers can also take a broader look: a host of other groups have a stake
in what happens in this area, from the proprietors of Latino busi-
nesses on Broadway, to the professionals in Bunker Hill offices, to
the wholesalers in the Wholesale District south of Skid Row. Finally,
the rapid changes over the past two years in the areas of housing
and service provision add to the importance of this topic. Further
research can assess impacts against the backdrops of a cooling real
estate market, increased poverty, and reduced funding for social
service provision. 7

Los Angeles can be viewed as a prototype; the processes discussed here
occur at smaller scales in cities around California and nationwide.
Polarization in this urban area brought the homeless warehoused in
Skid Row into contrast with the shining towers scant blocks away on
Bunker Hill, and now with the new residential projects even closer
in the Historic Core. This juxtaposition is reflective of the inequal-
ity that exists in many urban areas. With their spatial perspective,
geographers have a valuable insight to offer to better understand
the problems arising from the convergence of these two processes
and identify possible solutions. All of humanity is interlinked, and
homelessness, with its social and economic costs, involves and af-
ects all in the greater society. In the words of the anonymous service
provider, “neither community is going anywhere.” It is important,
when dealing with these two contemporary urban issues, that the
relative scarcity of voices or resources of the homeless not hinder
policymakers from understanding and alleviating the negative con-
sequences at their intersection.

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1 Although references are made to groups (e.g., "service provider group"), no group interviews were conducted.

2 Many of the revitalizers took pains to mention that the adaptive reuse of underutilized office and commercial buildings in the Core was not classic gentrification because no "original population" had been displaced. When the business leader was specifically asked about the displacement of individuals due to SRO conversion, he responded that homelessness was more of an addiction and mental-health issue than a housing issue.

3 Containment refers to Los Angeles' long-term policy response of concentrating service provision for the homeless near the low-income housing in Skid Row, while surrounding areas are underserved. The NIMBYism expressed by residents of surrounding areas reinforces containment and contributes to Skid Row’s development as a regional hub of homelessness.

4 For comparison, African Americans represent only 8.9% of the overall population of Los Angeles County (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007).

5 BlogDowntown.com is one of the leading blogs on living in Downtown Los Angeles. Started in 2005, it provides new residents with news and information about development, arts and culture, food and nightlife, politics, and opinion.

6 City ordinances and other legal measures actively aid developers. The 1999 passage of the Downtown Adaptive Reuse Ordinance provided financial and temporal incentives for conversion, and it jumpstarted the current wave of revitalization.

7 Signs of the economic downturn are now increasingly visible. Some hotels that had been slated for market-rate conversion may now be (at least partially) converted to affordable housing. For example, low-income residents were evicted after the 2003 purchase of the Bristol Hotel for conversion to a boutique hotel. In March 2009, however, the hotel was sold to a group that intends to convert it to affordable housing.
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