

# Goals for a Big City

by WILBUR E. PEREIRA

**P**UBLIC response to a newly instituted Goals Program in Los Angeles has not been great, in fact, quite disappointing. In our section of the city where about 65,000 people live, only 130 people came to the three meetings recently held in the neighborhood. The drive is on to encourage the people to express their opinions and desires through questionnaires. So far only 6000 were returned throughout the city.

At one of the neighborhood goals program meetings I found that a certain kind of property taxation, when explained, drew a response, and a second grouping occurred to discuss briefly the idea of taxing increased property values as a source of revenue for building and operating the transit system. Voters are tired of the "scattergun" type of property taxation which taps the many for the benefit of the few. But when the "rifle" method was explained—taking those increments created by publicly paid systems to pay for the improvements—then the reaction was different. This, they felt, might be the ultimate answer to our improvement problems.

The Los Angeles City Charter assigned to the Director of Planning the responsibility for preparing a master plan for the physical development of the city, as defined by the California State Planning Law. It must deal with all aspects of physical development, both large and small, over a time span ranging from the immediate present to a generation or more.

The key issue is not only a technological change but the preservation of man in the city. At the broadest scale a master plan includes such concepts of future development as a transportation plan, an open space and park plan, and

Wilbur E. Pereira, an airline executive and member of the Board of Directors of the HGS in Los Angeles, is one of the most acceptable and prolific of letter writers to the press and public officials. In his active responsibility to the community he puts to shame the many who say there is nothing they can do. However, not all can marshal their facts as well or as agreeably as he when taking issue with a discrepancy or praising someone for a courageous stand. For he is as often commendatory as critical. Apparently he misses nothing in the newspapers relevant to the civic dilemma and he is therefore extremely well informed.

a land use plan. At its smallest scale it may concern no more than a single block or the width of a local street. Zoning and subdivision regulations are among the legal means required to carry out the plan.

Los Angeles families have long considered the single-family residence to be the most satisfying of dwellings, but land for such residences close to the center of the city is scarce. The Goals Program must therefore consider the city's shape. Urban form is created by spaces, buildings and channels of movement, and by the arrangement of these various facilities. Los Angeles took its form mainly as a consequence of uncontrolled economic forces. The unprecedented demand for housing has resulted in its unwieldy expansion.

At the outset there was little need to restrict the use of any area because of the abundance of land, but the complex urban form of today has created many problems, and their correction will require major reshaping. Freeways and highways have taken extensive areas. Hundreds of residential acres have been converted to higher density residential or non-residential uses by private de-

velopment. In the future even more dramatic changes will occur, with the government significantly influencing land use and transportation patterns.

In the past most city planners formulated goals they believed the community should have. Citizens were asked to react to these goals in their final forms, and too often they were little more than the planners' views which did not reflect public opinion. In this program the City Planning Director has requested the help of professional, business and civic groups in developing the policies on which to base the master plan.

The increase of air pollution is listed as one of several major problems. Air is a basic natural resource and its pollution is a recognized potential detriment to health and agriculture. Freeways and highways, mass transit systems, aerial transit systems and techniques to reduce or eliminate air pollution, and other facilities and techniques, can be incorporated into the proposed plan, which could include grade separation and landscaped buffers, as well as the use of air rights over public streets for structures.

Successful and substantial conservation programs have been undertaken in America, but most have been chiefly applicable to mining, forestry, erosion control and irrigation. Less attention has been paid to the destruction of natural resources within the urban area, where horizontal expansion has eliminated much valuable agricultural land, where the extraction of oil and mineral resources has blighted large areas, and where intensive development of land has made valuable deposits permanently unavailable. On the other hand, if Los Angeles had not imported water from the High Sierra the city would never have reached its present growth.

Land for commercial and industrial use can be provided near population concentrations and major transportation systems. Planned industrial lands can be protected from development

temporarily by appropriate interim uses, pending their need for industrial occupancy. In order to make them more compatible with adjacent land uses, performance and development standards can be applied to industrial and commercial facilities.

Retail centers can be located conveniently to residential areas, while wholesale uses can be located near places of production and distribution, or connected by efficient freight transportation. Assistance and incentives can be provided for the establishment of small business. A supply of commercial and industrial lands can be provided somewhat in excess of the anticipated maximum so as to permit the competitive process to operate more efficiently. For substandard commercial and industrial facilities, public and private programs can be established for rehabilitation. Intensified efforts can be applied to induce and assist new industry and business to locate in the metropolis.

Children born in 1970 will lead considerably different lives in 1985 than did the 15-year olds in 1950. Future generations will be born into a rapidly changing society, and many of the traditional values and constraints will be gone. Therefore the challenge to adults in 1968 is not to foresee how our lives will differ in 1985, but to attempt to assess what must be done for the next generation. Half of the Los Angeles population of 1985 is under seven years of age today.

In urban development, open spaces are essential to the population's physical and psychological needs to bring harmony and beauty into metropolitan areas. To assure their adequate provision requires that an open space plan be adopted and an acquisition program be established. In spite of economic pressures for land development, open spaces should be preserved with the help of zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations and land taxation policies.