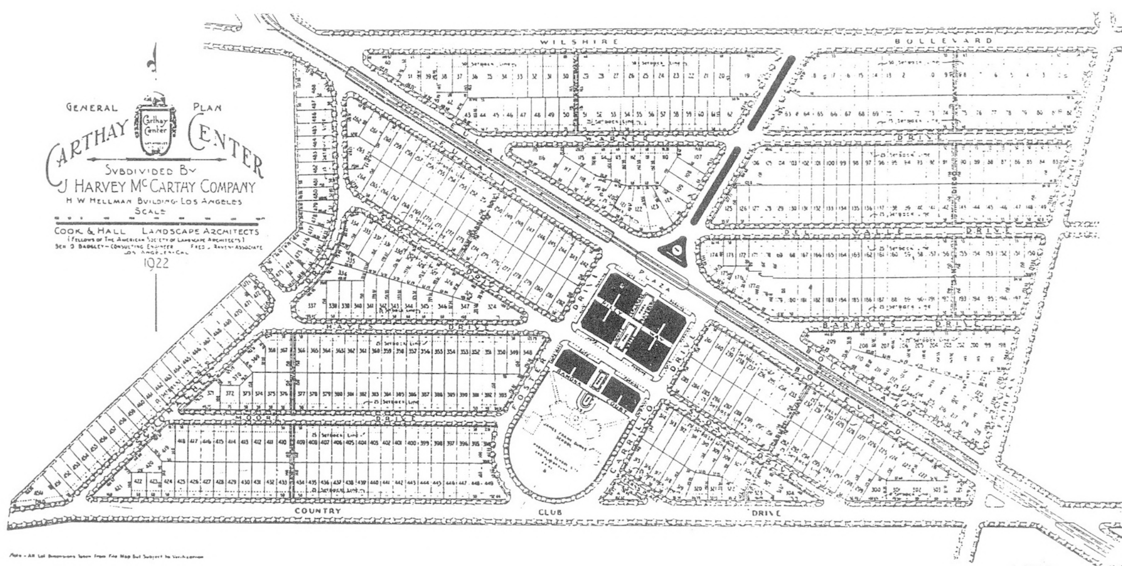
During the early 1920s, when the taste for Mediterranean allusions converged with the fast-growing demand for stores of high caliber situated outside the urban core, southern California became a proving ground for retail complexes organized around sheltered outdoor pedestrian space. In configuration no less than in image these developments were intended to underscore regional distinctiveness, proclaiming, as it were, the advantages afforded by a salubrious climate and relaxed, domestic-oriented environment. Probably the first and certainly the most ambitious such project was devised as part of the master plan for Carthay Center, a 136-acre subdivision south of Wilshire Boulevard and east of Beverly Hills. Designed in 1921–1922, the endeavor was conceived by real estate developer J. Harvey McCarthy to bring high standards of planning and architecture within reach of medium-income households. The scheme called for community facilities, including a church, school, playhouse, and "shopping center."[3] As in model company towns of the previous decade, these public functions were centrally grouped and given visual prominence, yet were contained so as not to encroach on residential blocks beyond (figures 190, 191). Similarly, too, little differentiation was made between the appearance of commercial and institutional components. The ensemble had a campuslike quality and bore particular resemblance to the 1916 master plan of the California Institute of Technology, by Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, with whom Carthay Center's architect, Carleton Winslow, Sr., was associated.[4]

Among other aspects, Goodhue's campus plan probably served as the conceptual springboard for the most unusual aspect of Carthay Center, its extensive use of segregated pedestrian spaces as routes for access to businesses. The spine of the complex consisted of a broad paved mall, while a network of walkways and patios was woven through the building groups to either side. Here was a place where shoppers could meander in an envi-

190
Carthay Center shopping district, San Vincente Boulevard between Foster and Carillo drives, Los Angeles, preliminary scheme, 1923, Carleton Winslow, Sr., architect. J. Harvey McCarthy Company advertisement. (*Los Angeles Times*, 19 August 1923, V-6.)

191
Carthay Center, site plan, 1923, Cook & Hall, landscape architects. (*California Southland*, November 1923, 19.)



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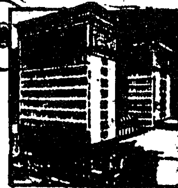

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ronment totally divorced from the street—a setting more cloisterlike even than those proposed for Palos Verdes.

McCarthy believed that his shopping center would attract a considerable trade, since the nearest retail activity at that time lay some miles to the east along Western Avenue and scarcely less far removed to the west at the still nascent Beverly Hills Business Triangle. However, piecemeal zoning variances granted along Wilshire Boulevard nearby, including those for the Miracle Mile, scuttled the enterprise.[5] A few, convenience-oriented outlets were built at Carthay Center, but the major element was the playhouse, itself transformed during the preliminary design stage into a movie theater.[6] Had the initial scheme been realized, it might have reshaped regional patterns of retail development. On the other hand, Carthay Center might have remained an anomaly, for nothing on its scale was proposed again. Where Winslow's plan does appear to have had some local influence was in fostering the patio arrangement, which soon became a popular means for configuring enclaves of specialty shops.

192

Mercantile Arcade, 538–546 S. Broadway, 539–545 S. Spring Street, Los Angeles, 1923–1924, Kenneth MacDonald, Jr., architect; altered. (*Los Angeles Times*, 24 October 1928, I-7.)

Small shops—each containing only a few hundred square feet at the most and purveying a very limited stock, often unusual in nature—had seldom been able to find space in top retail locations of the modern urban core owing to the high rents those locations commanded. Usually such outlets were scattered toward the edge of downtown, frequently on side streets where leading retailers would never think of operating. The rapid expansion of city centers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries meant that these tiny stores were in an ongoing state of flux. Efforts to protect small-scale merchants from ever-escalating land values and to bolster their patronage began in the 1880s by grouping a substantial number of such shops at a central site while organizing them in such a way as to minimize costs. These ends were achieved through a revival of the commercial arcade, a type well known in European cities but not found in the United States save for a handful of examples constructed in the 1820s.[7] The arcade's success depended on connecting two streets heavily traveled by pedestrians more or less at midblock. Retail space could be distributed along the arcade's entire length rather than concentrated at the streetfronts and could also be placed at one or two upper levels, enabling an affordable per-square-foot rent schedule. As long as the urban retail structure remained centralized, demand for such space remained strong. Dozens of arcades were constructed in the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[8]

Los Angeles boasted one of the nation's largest examples, the Mercantile Arcade (1923–1924), which was strategically placed as "a new thoroughfare" linking the financial district on Spring Street with the shopping district on Broadway, between Fifth and Sixth streets. The complex included two ten-story office blocks rising above "a new Main Street, three stories high" and three hundred feet long (figure 192).[9] Promoters stressed that the galleria afforded welcome respite from the elements as well as from sidewalk crowds; it was destined to become a hub of commercial activity. But such ventures could not stem the swelling exodus of small

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stores to less expensive and more conveniently located land removed from the city center. Even as the Mercantile Arcade opened, alternatives were being planned for the same kind of specialty shop, placing consumers out-of-doors in intimate settings that carried no vestige of their urban forebears. Some three decades later, the arcade would provide an important point of departure for the enclosed regional shopping mall.[10] During the interim, it had no distinguishable impact on tendencies to create outside-oriented havens for pedestrians, which were posited as preferable to anything found in the core.

Called shopping courts, shopping streets, and sometimes even shopping arcades, pedestrian-oriented complexes in outlying areas were modest in size and domestic in scale. Few had more than a dozen shops, cafes, and other compatible establishments, all at ground level. Sometimes a second story was included to house offices and studios. Almost all businesses faced internal open spaces—a linear walkway or a more expansive

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patio—rather than the public domain. The type seems to have been introduced after the first world war, drawing from the broad historical precedent of courtyards in Latin America and the Mediterranean basin. By 1930, the Los Angeles metropolitan area spawned by far the largest number of shopping courts, although examples could be found in other regions that enjoyed mild climates as well as in cities such as Chicago where conditions were less hospitable.[11] Nevertheless, these complexes were identified foremost with southern California, where they were seen as testaments to the state's Hispanic legacy, fulfilling the contemporary quest for a distinct regional character.

Shopping courts were extolled for economic no less than for associational reasons. The arrangement provided an atmosphere conducive to consumption. The internalized setting could be completely controlled and made to suggest another world—tranquil, private, protected, intimate, close to nature, and even somewhat exotic—that stood in sharp contrast to most commercial landscapes: a place where shopping could be at once leisurely and slightly adventurous. The use of Latin imagery was praised for its links to a regional past, but for many middle-class patrons the experience may have seemed more analogous to sets from the movies, affording a passive sense of adventure marshaled to stimulate purchases (figure 193). A quantifiable advantage of shopping courts was that, like commercial arcades, they could utilize deep and often irregularly shaped parcels of land to maximum benefit for small retail outlets. Far more selling space could be gained by organizing units around a pedestrian way than to the street.[12]

193
La Floreira, El Jardin Patio, 455 Main Street, Ventura; Webber, Staunton & Spaulding, architect, 1927. *Pacific Coast Architect*, July 1928, 16.)

Despite its attributes, the shopping court remained a limited phenomenon because the types of businesses to which it was tailored did not comprise a significant growth area in retailing. Most tenants specialized in unusual, even one-of-a-kind, craft, apparel, or accessory goods. Other occupants purveyed services for which there was never widespread demand or which were by nature small in scale. Out-of-the-ordinary functions were essential to operation, since trade was based on the reputation of individual establishments, not on widely recognized store names, advertising, or a conspicuous streetfront presence. Moreover, the diminutive size of the units ran counter to the trend toward increased dimensions for many types of retail outlets, and the secluded character of these places defied the impulse to design store facades that could capture the motorist's attention. The kinds of tenant who would find the shopping court attractive, in turn, limited the clientele to persons of some means. As a result, realized examples tended to be built near affluent residential areas (Hollywood, Beverly Hills, Pasadena) or in resort communities (Palm Springs, Santa Barbara). Yet the shopping court gained more recognition than its numbers or narrow purpose might suggest. The type not only embodied much that was seen as distinct to southern California, but helped establish the perceptual framework that contributed to the acceptance of the regional mall some two decades later. Perhaps most important, the shopping court's tenant mix and its festive atmosphere would become important features of

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many regional malls, balancing the larger-scale operations of chain and major local stores.[13]

Perhaps most influential in diffusing the idea of an inward-looking, pedestrian-oriented retail center were three much-celebrated projects, each of which was a departure in some aspects of both its appearance and its business complexion and each of which became a major destination. The first of these was Olivera Street, which extended one block from the Plaza, the core of the Spanish colonial settlement, lying just to the north of downtown in an area that had long remained a center for Mexican-Americans. By the late 1920s, most of these inhabitants had moved further afield; storage and industrial facilities were more common than housing. Such functions were likely to permeate the district in the future since a nearby site seemed the most probable one for a mammoth union station.[14] The setting was an unlikely one for a retail center.

The creation of that center was propelled largely by sentimental concerns. In 1928, condemnation of the early nineteenth-century Avila house, thought to be one of the oldest buildings in the city, led an ardent and socially well-placed Hispanophile, Christine Sterling, to revive her previously unsuccessful attempts to rejuvenate the Plaza area. For southern California, she asserted, the dwelling held a historical significance equiva-

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lent to that of Mount Vernon for the East. Sterling gained the cooperation of the City Council and enlisted a cadre of prominent citizens, led by *Times* editor Harry Chandler, as directors of a corporation that would restore the house and develop tangent Olivera Street into "an important Latin-American trade and social center."[15]

Opened in 1930, Olivera Street was rechristened El Paseo de Los Angeles, although it became known by the slightly abbreviated name of Olvera Street. The block was closed to vehicular traffic and lined with open-air concessions operated by Mexican-Americans. Sterling's intention was to create the atmosphere of a traditional Hispanic marketplace as well as to provide an outlet for Hispanic artisans and merchants. At a time when popular sentiment for things Spanish ran high but lay almost entirely among the Anglo population, this enterprise was both novel and altruistic in its pursuit of authenticity. At first the treatment was direct and simple, with scattered stalls on brick pavement, framed by buildings little changed for decades (figure 194). Within a few years, however, the setting became more genteel. Street fountains and sculpture were added; plantings grew more numerous; building walls were patched and painted; flags, banners, and other festive paraphernalia proliferated (figure 195). Still, with the profusion of open-air displays and people jamming the long, linear space,

194
Olvera Street, Los Angeles, as remade into pedestrian shopping area, 1929–1930. Photo "Dick" Whittington, ca. 1930. (Whittington Collection, Department of Special Collections, University of Southern California.)

195
Olvera Street. Photo "Dick" Whittington, ca. 1938. (Whittington Collection, Department of Special Collections, University of Southern California.)

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Olvera Street seemed the antithesis of the store blocks popularized by Morgan, Walls & Clements, where Spanish imagery was used in a theatrical manner to provide lavish streetfront landmarks (see figure 69).

In reality, Olvera Street was almost as much a contrivance. Most of the saved buildings were part of Anglo development from the late nineteenth century and fronted parallel streets to either side. This new center of trade had functioned as a service alley for much of its existence. The stalls that now lined it bore some resemblance to the temporary booths found in Latin American cities, but one of the most basic street functions, through vehicular movement, was impeded by the plan. As the ambience became increasingly ordered and clean, Olvera Street verged on being a Hollywood interpretation of a street market. Merchants were under the strict control of Sterling's corporation. The crafts, novelty items, food, and entertainment purveyed were oriented toward the Anglo population. Thus, like the contemporary shopping court, Olvera Street was an invention of the twentieth-century city. Residual space was compressed through ephemeral adornment and in the process converted into an oasis of prime space—an outdoor corridor, stuffed with miscellany like a long-forgotten attic, stretched precariously across a long-neglected precinct. The complex was never a true Hispanic center but rather a mecca for the

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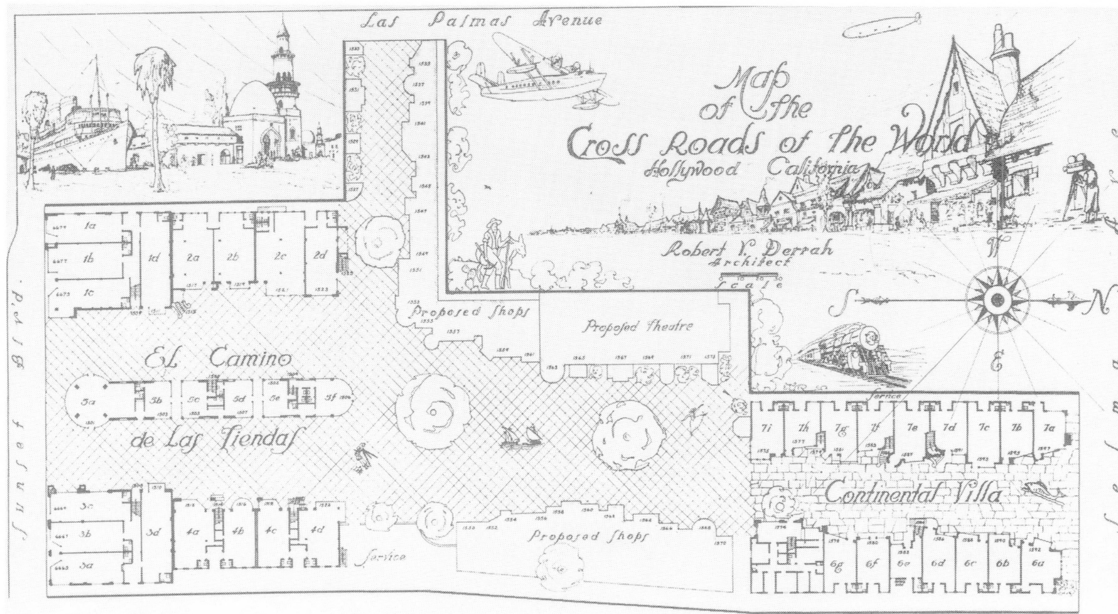

196

Crossroads of the World, 6665–6679 Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles, Robert V. Derrah, architect, 1936–1937. Photo late 1930s. (Security Pacific Historical Photograph Collection, Los Angeles Public Library.)

197

Crossroads of the World, site plan. (*California Arts & Architecture,* January 1937, 24.)

newcomer, a place so different from anything else in the region that even Angelenos could feel like tourists. Within a few years, tiny Olvera Street grew to be so important a southern California attraction that it was used as a symbol of the city itself.[16]

One of the largest and last of the shopping courts realized during the interwar decades was equally important for the recognition it brought to pedestrian shopping. Called Crossroads of the World, the complex was built in 1936–1937 on Hollywood's Sunset Boulevard several blocks from the business core. Crossroads was intended to be an "outstanding landmark and civic attraction as well as a centralized shopping district" that would draw a markedly larger trade than other shopping courts. The project was conceived by Ella Crawford, who, like Sterling, was unbound by normative modes of retail development. While the general nature of tenancy echoed that of earlier examples—"a wide variety of high class shops, cafes and professional offices, exclusive of drug stores, grocery stores, filling stations and the like"—the appearance was more overtly suggestive of a stage set than most predecessors.[17] Building exteriors were designed as a composite, the parts alluding to the traditional architecture of England, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, Spain, Italy, Algeria, Turkey, Persia, and Mexico as well as of colonial New England. The centerpiece of this mélange was a streamlined pile suggestive of a cruise ship, its "foremast" a beacon to passing motorists (figures 196, 197). The resulting character was far less akin to earlier shopping courts than to the midway of a world's fair, especially the 1933 Century of Progress Exposition at Chicago. There, the Streets of Paris, Belgian Village, Midget Village, Oriental Village, and even a mock Hollywood stage set stood in proximity to one another, visually anchored by a rambunctious Art Deco shaft, the multistoried Havoline Thermometer.[18] Much like a world's fair, too, the pedestrian space at Crossroads was not secluded and intimate but seemed expansive and tied to the public realm.

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Like a midway, Crossroads exuded a playfulness and exaggeration to a degree unusual even in Hollywood. Yet these qualities were devised for the pragmatic purpose of creating an indelible image in the minds of consumers. About a year after the complex opened, a writer for the real estate community observed:

> [Crossroads] can not be confused in the mind of any Los Angeles resident or in the mind of any tourist or city visitor with any other project in the city. . . . It would be practically impossible to mention the place in the city to any person who would not know what you were talking about. It is the type of thing also that elicits plenty of free advertising, and shop and office tenants have the advantage of a constant stream of publicity.[19]

Crawford was as meticulous in selecting tenants as she was in creating the ambience. She successfully courted film stars, whose patronage, in turn, broadened Crossroads's popular appeal. Unlike earlier shopping courts, the wide pedestrian spaces invited people in number. Here the pedestrian-oriented retail center was no longer so exclusive and remote a place; it was more overtly commercial and public, sufficiently well known and admired to fulfill its role as a shopping destination.

Novelty was no less central a factor in the more or less contemporaneous development of another specialty center, the Farmers Market, which transformed the shopping court idea into a new kind of retail establishment. The project was conceived by Roger Dahlhjelm, a veteran of real estate and other business endeavors who had lost most of his assets in the depression. Dahlhjelm sought to provide a service for which there was substantial demand—making fresh produce and meat available to prosperous urban households—but which could be begun in a modest way. When the market opened in 1934, it consisted of just eighteen booths set in an open field, offering an array of goods far from the rural areas and wholesaling districts where they could normally be procured (figure 198). The site was strategically located in the Wilshire corridor between Holly-

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198

Farmers Market, 633 Third Street and 140–166 S. Fairfax Avenue, Los Angeles, begun 1934. Early view, showing temporary stalls. Photo ca. 1934. (Security Pacific Historical Photograph Collection, Los Angeles Public Library.)

199

Farmers Market, as realized in permanent form, begun ca. 1935–1936, John Deleena and Edward Barber, designers. Photo "Dick" Whittington, 1941. (Whittington Collection, Department of Special Collections, University of Southern California.)

wood and Beverly Hills, several blocks north of the Miracle Mile. Lack of capital was used to advantage. With little outlay, a bazaar-like atmosphere was cultivated to enhance the experience so that shopping for food would seem more akin to a leisure than a routine pursuit. Fueled by an aggressive advertising campaign, the Farmers Market began to attract an affluent trade of movie stars and others who sought the unusual goods sold there and took pleasure in the novel ambience.[20]

A swelling trade led to a sequence of enlargements, so that by 1941 eighty-five merchants were installed on the premises in a permanent structure. The range of food also was expanded to encompass many more hard-to-find items. One outlet specialized in game birds, another in corn meal and wheat flours, a third in tropical fruits. Early on, shoppers started to consume some of the foods they purchased while going from booth to booth; soon, a number of vendors began catering to them. The first of several restaurants followed not long thereafter. A host of other outlets was added as well, selling everything from pet supplies to Mexican pottery. There was a post office, telegraph office, laundry call station, and a tourist information bureau. In 1941 work began on the Gilmore Village Stores, a complex of sixty small specialty shops that lay adjacent to the market.[21] While undertaken by another business concern, the store group was planned to function as part of the ensemble, greatly increasing the range of merchandise available, drawing from and at the same time bolstering

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the Farmers Market as a trade magnet. The cumulative result was a retail center that combined aspects of a conventional farmers' market, a great downtown food emporium, a neighborhood shopping district, and an exclusive shopping court.

Despite its size, the scale of the Farmers Market was kept small, the atmosphere informal, with concessions remaining open-air, set in five linear ranges. Walkways were narrow, creating an intimate, festive atmosphere, much like that of Olvera Street (figure 199). Similarly, too, the design sought associations with the region's past to establish its identity. Here nineteenth-century western agrarian buildings provided the basis for a casual imagery that seemed the product of no conscious design, much as with many of the "ranch" houses well-to-do Angelenos were then building as country retreats and year-round domiciles (figure 200).[22] The configuration was equally unorthodox. The complex was neither oriented to nor conspicuous from the street, in striking contrast to siting practices of most stores in the region. Even the big "ranch" markets of the late 1930s, operated by major retailers but located along arteries in peripheral sections of the metropolitan area and built in the guise of greatly enlarged roadside stands, emphasized frontality with long curbside facades.[23]

The Farmers Market stood as an island amid a car lot more than twice its size, suggesting a circus or some other fete staged in an open field, with the surrounding acreage consumed by parked cars for the occa-

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sion (figure 201). Olvera Street and other shopping courts evoked the preindustrial city; at the Farmers Market this precedent was absorbed into a larger setting where rural associations predominated. But while both the layout and the character reinforced allusions to the countryside, only in a metropolis could one find such an array of specialized products. The basic idea of internalized pedestrian traffic surrounded by circumferential parking was a complete departure from convention. Although more an outgrowth of the complex's ad hoc beginnings than the product of a conscious plan, the arrangement would become an important characteristic of the regional shopping mall. While the regional mall did not embrace rustic allusions, it did present an atmosphere similarly emphatic in breaking from standard commerical settings.

For the present, the efficacy of Dahlhjelm's enterprise was underscored by the creation of several similar complexes. The Producers Public Market (1938) in the Southwest district emphasized product quality but also low prices, utilizing converted warehouses next to a railroad spur to generate a festival atmosphere, here calculated to attract the moderate-income families that predominated in that area. On the other hand, the Marketplace (1941) and the Town and Country Market (1941–1942) were targeted toward a more affluent clientele and included a number of nonfood stores from the start. Situated just across the street from the Farmers Market, the Town and Country was particularly elaborate. Portrayed as a "small 'town' of 100 smart shops," the complex was more regular in plan and more pretentious in appearance than its progenitor (figure 202).[24] The Town and Country also gave greater emphasis to its function as a place of entertainment. Twenty-six restaurants featuring a wide choice of menus were housed within the compound, which was promoted as an ideal

200
Farmers Market, general view from Fairfax Avenue. Photo "Dick" Whittington, 1946. (Whittington Collection, Department of Special Collections, University of Southern California.)

201
Farmers Market, aerial view. Photo "Dick" Whittington, 1938. (Whittington Collection, Department of Special Collections, University of Southern California.)

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place for families to spend a weekend afternoon and to bring guests from out of town.

Variations on the Farmers Market idea continued to be built in the region and elsewhere in the state through the end of the decade. By that time, the type had gained widespread recognition among Californians and food retailers nationwide.[25] Yet the specialized nature of such places, which necessitated a novel ambience and was mostly targeted to persons of some means, limited their applicability in the retail sphere. Perhaps the greatest impact the type had on broader patterns was in demonstrating that a sizable inward-looking establishment could attract a commensurate trade. It did not have to abut, or be particularly conspicuous from, the street. A lot filled with cars could catch the eye as much as a building and perhaps be an even better adverstisement. The relation of architecture to cars did not yield strong visual results, however. The character of these new complexes seemed to exist in spite of the automobile; the attractions lay in a secluded realm beyond.

Divorcing the shoppers from both the street and the parking lot proved quite another matter for outlets that were less specialized or exclusive in nature. Beyond the stillborn proposal for Carthay Center, only two others for complexes structured to meet routine shopping needs incorporated a mall as a central feature prior to World War II. Only one of these was realized. That shopping center was at Greenbelt, the prototypical Resettlement Administration town near Washington, D.C.[26]

EXPERIMENTS

The Greenbelt center epitomized what housing reformers considered an essential feature of community development, just as a previous generation

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