



Photo 7.1: The Pasadena Freeway serves as a barrier between Elysian Park East and the main sections of the Park. When originally built as Figueroa Street in 1930, the right-of-way was not nearly so intrusive, peeking in and out of tunnels through the Park, allowing direct contacts to remain between the two areas of the Park. In 1949, Figueroa Street was expanded into the Arroyo Seco Parkway, the southbound lanes were built, and deep cuts were made into the landscape, permanently detaching the two areas.



Photo 7.2: The historic Solano Avenue residential community separates Radio Hill from Buena Vista Hill.

## RECLAIMING LOST SPACE

The quote above is as applicable to Los Angeles' Elysian Park today, as it was to pre-Central Park New York City over 125 years ago. What were problems of sufficient urban open space, public access to parks and assurance of on-going recreational uses in the 19th century are still real concerns for potential park users in Los Angeles. Indeed, with a little imagination, Elysian Park is easily interchanged with the park mentioned in the quote. Elysian Park and its fragmented 585 acres of open space is the place "where no stroll is possible." Millions of Los Angelenos unaware of the resources of Elysian Park are the "villagers shut off from their one poor chance of recreation." In addition to the real highways and railroads that split and bind the Park, a number of other intrusive non-park uses can be considered the "hateful railroads ... and highways" that present real barriers to enjoyment and use of Elysian Park.

However bleak the situation might sound, there are solutions to such problems as fragmentation of the Park's image, under-utilization in remote areas of the Park, poor access to the unimproved areas and limited community awareness of the Park's overall facilities. Through the application of an integrated, contextual planning approach, problem areas can be identified, better understood, and hopefully improved through the implementation of long-range objectives and facilities upgrades. Successful past examples of such an integrated approach have mixed several different planning disciplines, including elements of traditional park planning, user analysis and physical planning. Often, planners studying older parks have also included historic resource planning in their synthesis of a comprehensive planning approach. A fine example of how such a planning approach can be applied is evidenced in *Rebuilding Central Park*, a Master Plan that was developed for New York City's largest urban park. That plan will be discussed as an in depth case study later in this chapter.

Elysian Park might benefit from the adoption of similar integrated, long-range planning techniques. This chapter will present ways in which Elysian Park's historical significance and its importance as a recreational center can both be enhanced through user and physical resources analysis, and physical planning. Specific analysis of existing conditions and the potential effects of facility improvements and parkland use changes will be presented for the Park's under-utilized eastern area. This section of the Park includes the historic Fremont Gate and Park Nursery area, Buena Vista Point and Valley, and the remote Radio Hill. Precedents for applying such physical and social planning techniques to parks and historic districts will be considered, with examples from across the country. The potential effects of development proposals both inside and outside the Park will also be discussed, especially how the proposed development of Central City North may impact Elysian Park. Finally, this chapter will make some basic recommendations regarding potential Park improvements that may improve use of the eastern areas of the Park.

## ELYSIAN PARK EAST: EXISTING CONDITIONS

The eastern section of Elysian Park consists of two main areas known as Buena Vista Hill (~58 acres) and Radio Hill (~35 acres). These rugged and hilly areas are isolated from the main areas of Elysian Park by the Pasadena Freeway (I-110) [see Photo 7.1] and from each other by an historic residential area known as Solano Valley [see Photo 7.2]. These two park areas contain some of the most established recreational facilities in the Park as well as some of the most consistently undeveloped, under-utilized and seemingly abandoned areas of Elysian Park.

Currently the three established park facilities in the Park's eastern areas are the lawns near the Fremont Gate [Photo 7.3], the original Park nursery (now a "by reservation only" picnic

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## ENDNOTES

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  8. The Central Park Conservancy, "Rebuilding Central Park: A Management & Restoration Plan" (New York: The Central Park Conservancy, 1985): 7.
- Copies of this report can be obtained for \$10 each by writing to: The Dairy, c/o The Arsenal, Room 103, 830 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10021.
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  11. Los Angeles City, Department of Recreation and Parks, "Elysian Park Master Plan," (Los Angeles: City of Los Angeles): 55.