

## X. POSTWAR GROWTH, DIVERSIFICATION, AND REDEVELOPMENT (1946-1980)

### Summary Statement

In post-World War II Pomona, the city dramatically grew in population and diversified in residential, commercial, civic and institutional, and industrial character. Pomona experienced several waves of growth, recession, and redevelopment from the late 1940s through the 1970s.

During this period, residential development was mostly composed of single-family tract development, multi-family residences, and some trailer parks. Commercial activity continued to expand beyond downtown along several commercial corridors that connected north, south, and west Pomona. In the 1960s, redevelopment projects were prevalent in Pomona, including completion of the Pomona Mall and Civic Center. Institutional development was located throughout the city to cater to the growing population, and particularly to serve new residential subdivisions.

In summary, the postwar period transformed the character of Pomona's industrial, commercial, and residential development. White flight plagued the city and integration was a contested battle in a city with rapidly changing demographics. Pomona experienced one of the most dramatic ethnic shifts among Southern California cities in a relatively short period of time.

This context examines Pomona's growth, diversification, and redevelopment in the decades following World War II.

### Historical Background

The end of World War II ushered in a time of prosperity and optimism in American life. For Southern California, it was also a time of great population growth. Many veterans had come through Southern California during the war on their way to the Pacific theater—experiencing the mild climate and broad vistas firsthand. Others learned of the promise of California through national magazines that focused on ideas about postwar lifestyles rooted Southern California's gentle climate and ample opportunity.

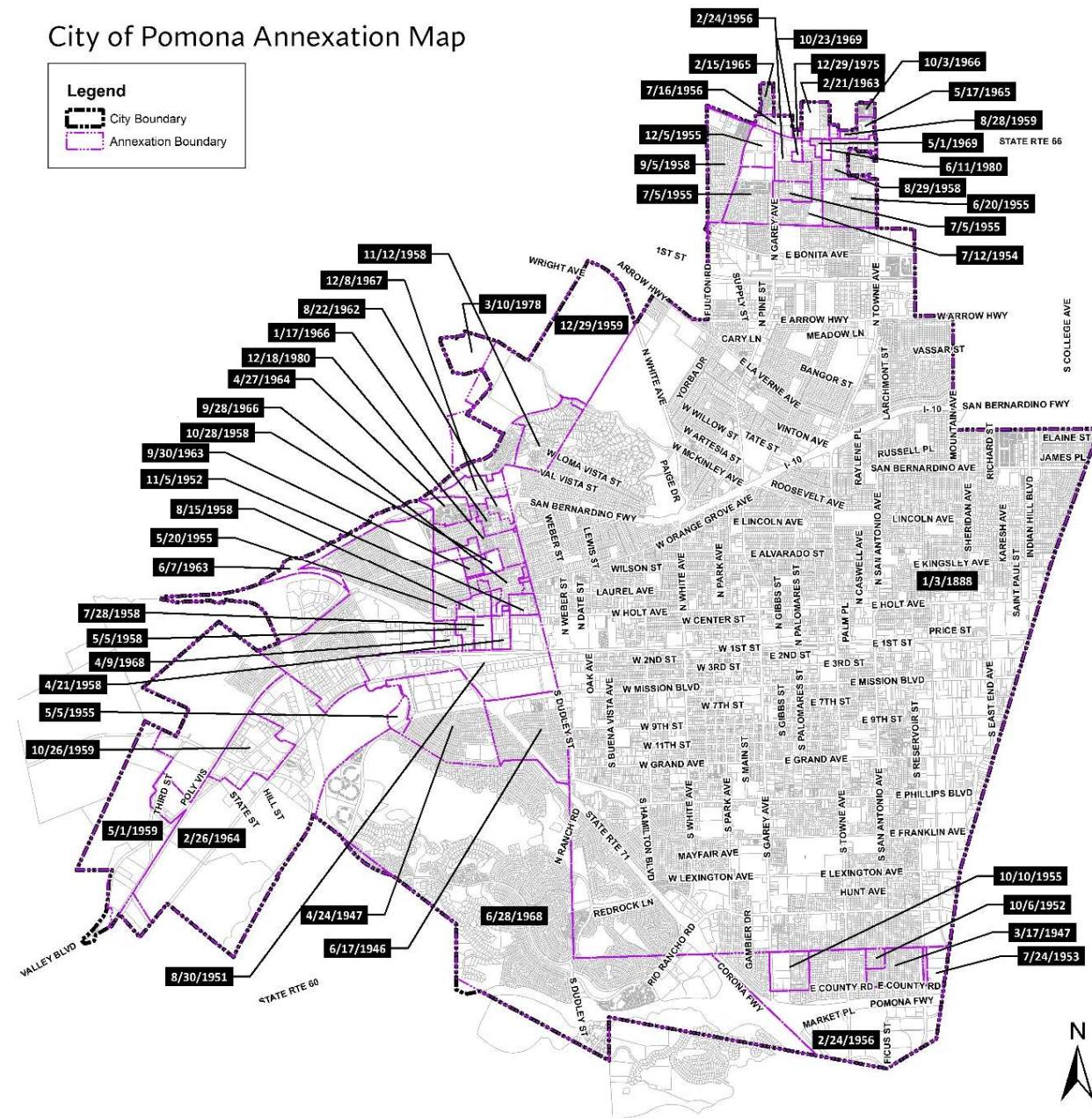
In Pomona specifically, the population rose to 50.4% between 1940 and 1950 to 35,405 residents; between 1950 and 1960 it rose 89.7% to 67,157 residents. The decade between 1960 and 1970 saw another 30.1% increase, with residents numbering 87,384 at the end of the decade.

Pomona had over 50 annexations between the years of 1946 and 1980 (shown in the map below). These were mostly limited to the northern and western regions of the city and included the small area that historically encompassed Spadra (annexed in 1965). This annexation added 3,000 people to the city's population and included the Pacific Colony Hospital. Spadra's post office had already been subsumed into Pomona's postal system in the late 1950s.<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> "Spadra Area Annexed by Pomona," *Los Angeles Times*, January 9, 1965.

## City of Pomona Annexation Map



City of Pomona Annexation Map, 2022. *Historic Resources Group*.

This era also saw the growth of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. In the 1940s and 1950s, postwar opportunity did not extend to all residents, as housing restrictions, school segregation, and other discrimination was rampant in communities throughout the country. This extended to the opportunities in local government. Expanded city infrastructure and economic incentives in the postwar years did not translate to the integration of the local government. By 1969, people of color comprised approximately 40% of the city's residents, however, of the 685 civil servants employed by the City, fewer than 100 identified as African American or Latino.<sup>333</sup> Most of these workers were assigned to either the sanitation or parks departments. Frustrated at the lack of representation, in the Spring of 1969, community advocates called for the City to hire more people of color. During the early 1970s, Black residents joined the police force and the school district's staff, but the transition proved difficult, and in 1973, the City was sued for its discriminatory practices.

One of the most influential factors in the postwar development of Southern California was the freeway system. Interstate 10, also known as the San Bernardino Freeway (and as the Ramona Freeway), was completed in 1954 linking Pomona with downtown Los Angeles. Interstate 10 traversed some existing residential neighborhoods in the western portion of the city, resulting in several homes being moved, others destroyed, and some neighborhoods divided in half. It otherwise cut its path through agricultural lands and the new subdivisions of the early 1950s were planned around it.

U.S. State Route 60, also known as the Pomona Freeway, built in the early 1970s, traversed an undeveloped area at the very southern tip of the city. California State Route 57, also known as the Orange Freeway, was developed in the early 1970s as well, along the pathway of Route 272. By the mid-1970s, the expanded freeway network between the foothill communities and Orange County stimulated a new wave of residential construction. The expanded freeway system made Pomona a convenient commute to Orange County as well as Los Angeles.

As the city grew, car culture increased, and commercial and residential developments were increasingly located away from downtown. As a result, the downtown area began to decline. In response, the City of Pomona initiated a major redevelopment project to reinvigorate the historic core of the city.

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<sup>333</sup> "Pomona Requested to Hire More Minority Workers," *Pomona Progress Bulletin*, April 22, 1969, 37.