Theme Park in the City: Disneyland and the Aesthetic of the ‘Anaheim Resort’

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Abstract

The Disneyland Resort in Anaheim, California is the original model of the most well-known and most visited amusement park franchise in the world, yet of its now five sister resorts (with over 11 theme parks between them) it is the only one that lies entirely within the borders of an existing city. When it was founded in 1955, the park was located in the middle of a mostly empty farm area, with the City of Anaheim to its north detached at the new Interstate 5 Freeway. However, in its over fifty years of existence, a lot has changed around the Disneyland Resort as hotels, restaurants and a number of entertainment venues have set up shop near the park to benefit from the high tourism traffic to which the resort has given rise.

Through an examination of the park’s history from its early beginnings to the present day, this study examines how Disneyland and the Disney Company have influenced the area in the park’s vicinity by defining a specific aesthetic for that area. Disneyland Resort is today the centerpiece of the larger Anaheim Resort project that the City of Anaheim undertook in the late 1990s in order to revitalize its strong tourism economy and to unify the area around Disneyland. How this level of uniformity in visual appearance came to be, however, is a long and complex development. This analysis therefore examines Disneyland’s relations with its local government (the City of Anaheim), its influence over the local economy and business climate, and how these two ideas have interacted to create the specifically ‘Disney’ aesthetic for the Anaheim Resort, even before the formal designation of that area. While Disneyland has been somewhat restrained by its urban location, then, it is clear that the theme park has still had a high level of power and influence in the local area, redefining how the city in its vicinity can look and, moreover, how that city functions. The question becomes: is Disneyland simply a theme park in the city, or is Anaheim so affected by Disneyland that it has become the archetypal Disney City?
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Introduction

The identities of modern American cities are determined by a number of factors: Detroit is known as an auto-making capitol, Philadelphia and Boston are valued for their historical importance, Las Vegas caters to its sin city image, and San Francisco is a mecca of alternative culture. Much of what defines these identities, however, is the image that is marketed in advertising and tourism promotion to attract outsiders to the city. To a large extent the city (its architecture, buildings and environmental character) and its population may conform to this identity, but these elements are certainly not inherent in every individual’s experience of the city.

The study that follows, however, examines this question of identity in the context of a city built on (or, at least, remodeled by) the tourism industry. The City of Anaheim in Orange County, California is the home to the Disneyland Resort, the original example of the Disney Theme Park that inspired a worldwide franchise and a new industry built on the experience of the themed environment. Like other cities, Anaheim is very affected by the presence of this powerful entity, becoming ground zero of the tourism industry in Southern California and developing a visitor-oriented city plan that emphasizes hotels and entertainment venues. But unlike its counterparts, Anaheim is directly under the influence of a theme park, a business oriented exclusively toward tourism and a sense of escapism (that is, a distinct separation) from the outside world. This aspect of Disneyland’s existence and its unique methods of entertainment make for a set of aesthetic and societal principles that are quite distinct from the guiding principles of the standard business-focused city. In fact, by most accounts Anaheim is not what one would consider to be this type of city, yet I argue that its aesthetic and its methods of operation suggest a model of what is perhaps a new model of the business city. As cities are increasingly losing the hard industry and military installations that at one time formed the
backbone of their economies, cities like Anaheim are demonstrating a way for the city to redeem themselves through a strong basis in tourism. For Anaheim, playing host to the Disney behemoth has provided a strong economic stimulus and has allowed the city to grow at a far faster rate than its neighbors and to maintain an emphasis on city services that is virtually unparalleled in the region.

In order to examine this unique case in urban identity, the following analysis uses three lenses to view the interaction between Disneyland and its urban home. There are admittedly a number of perspectives through which one could view the interactions between Disneyland and Anaheim; however, I focus on these three lenses to best frame the narrative of how Disneyland has not only redefined Anaheim’s city goals but has also seeped its way into less tangible aspects of the city’s identity—especially its urban aesthetic. Disneyland has certainly had an impact on the social fabric (in particular the population boom) of the city and on the city’s tax structure, but aspects like these tell little about how Disneyland has had a definitive influence over city politics and how its entry into the area has redefined the types of businesses that succeed in Anaheim. Rather, through an examination of the formal (i.e. official) interactions between the city government and the theme park, Disneyland’s impact on the local business climate, and the less formal (albeit equally direct) influence the park has had on the aesthetic of local businesses and the local area, it is clear that Disneyland’s goals have been not only self-involved but have also focused on gaining almost autonomous control over the theme park and the local area.

Part I discusses the first aspect: the interaction between the city government and the leadership of the Disneyland Resort. Disneyland—from its early stages as a mere idea in Walt Disney’s mind to its current status as the Disneyland Resort—has continuously exercised a weight and a level of influence in the city government that far exceeds the power of any other
business or industry within the city (and perhaps at times exceeds even the voices of city residents). The section examines three episodes in the parks development: the decision process that landed Anaheim as the home of Disneyland and the mutual wooing that process entailed, a feud over zoning in the local area that established the first steps towards Disneyland’s control of the local environment, and the ultimate transformation of the surrounding area into the “Anaheim Resort.” This examination reveals not only that Disney has had almost unilateral influence over the decision-making process in the City of Anaheim, but also that this influence has evolved a complex rhetoric and style of interaction that Disney officials have called upon in every episode as a way to mask the unforeseen or potentially damaging impacts of their actions and to convince policy makers and the general population of the honor in their intentions. It is through this style of interaction that Disneyland has been able to define and refashion the aesthetic in its surrounding area and to establish its power as the central force in Anaheim’s economy.

In the second section, I examine this economic influence via an analysis of the ways in which Anaheim has redefined the business climate in the local environment. Early accounts of the city and its identity demonstrate that in the early 1950s, as the Disney Company was selecting a site for its illustrious theme park, the city of Anaheim was a center of the industrial migration from the city center in Los Angeles to the surrounding suburbs. Industrial giants were choosing Anaheim as their home by the hundreds annually as its location on the new Interstate 5 Freeway made it easily accessible from the entire L.A. Basin. But as other cities continued to grow as industrial centers nationwide, Anaheim suddenly lost its industrial growth. On the other hand, raw economic growth continued in Anaheim, but in the form of a rapid expansion of motels, restaurants and businesses (at times less-than-respectable) appealing to the sharp growth in visitors arriving at Disneyland. Today the local area is almost exclusively oriented toward the
tourism industry, leaving the city strong in raw economic growth but lacking a diverse economy that could protect it in the event of a downturn in the tourism industry. To prevent losing its stronghold in this industrial sector, then, Anaheim has taken a number of measures to establish itself as the tourist destination of choice in the Southwest, not the least of which is an emphasis on an aesthetic that emphasizes the city as a resort destination.

In Section III, then, I examine how Disneyland has not only indirectly influenced this aesthetic, but also how the park’s influence has become physically and formally manifest in the surrounding area. The process began early in the park’s history as businesses—in particular hotels—began to imitate Disneyland’s methods of theming its environments, even if those attempts at theming fell far short of the park’s ability to create a multi-sensory escape. More recently, however, the city and the park worked together to create the Anaheim Resort and its associated Specific Plans (smaller sub-sections of the city’s General Plan), which establish specific aesthetic goals for the local area as well as design principles aimed at redefining the public space within the tourist-focused area around Disneyland. Today the area around Disneyland feels almost as if Disneyland is no longer contained within the gates of its resort but has expanded to incorporate the large area that surrounds it. The boundaries between theme park and city become, therefore, less clear, making the city and the theme park seem at times one-and-the-same.

This analysis presents a picture of Disneyland which previous authors have rarely shown—a picture of Disneyland’s influence in the local community through the lens of an aesthetic framework, rather than through its larger implications for the urban region or for American society. Disneyland has been long examined as an example of American culture’s changing attitudes or as a catalyst toward the consumer-oriented service economy that defines
the modern United States; but this study is interested more in the way Disneyland has influenced its local community’s look and form. Amusement parks, stadiums, museums and numerous other entertainment venues have all had an impact in the communities they serve, and, while Disneyland is to some degree unique in the level to which it takes the entertainment and other-worldly environment, it stands as a quintessential example of how entertainment-oriented industries can determine a city’s appearance as well as its identity.

As the sections that follow will show, the presence of Disneyland in Anaheim has created a city that is certainly concerned with its residents’ social and economic needs, but that is heavily focused on creating a mecca for visitors. Anaheim is therefore somewhat of a transient community—a community whose population can swell by many tens of thousands during peak tourist seasons as hotel rooms and restaurants, not to mention Disneyland itself, fill with a number of non-Anaheim residents. Creating an aesthetic that feels welcoming to this group of visitors has proven a relatively uncomplicated task for Disneyland and Anaheim, as Disneyland is well-versed in creating a welcoming environment for the day-long visitor. Ultimately that became the goal of the city in the tourist district surrounding Disneyland as well: to create an environment that is pleasing for a temporary visit of a few days, but not an environment designed to be a permanent destination, or a permanent home, for the city’s residents. The Anaheim Resort is just what its name suggests—a resort designed to entertain vacationers. The situation in Anaheim is a very unique urban planning framework, for it is one rare case where planners are concerned not with community building, but almost with anti-community building, or at least with the construction of a simulated community aimed at the needs of tourists. To urban planners and city officials alike, this case may serve as an example of a new type of city model,
something of a non-resident city, the city designed for temporary experiences. It is this aesthetic that defines modern Anaheim, the city built with the Disney touch.
Part I: Formal Influence on City Government

In the interest of defining their marketed identities and strengthening their economies, cities have historically catered to powerful businesses and business-owners in order to keep these vital economic engines within city borders. Cities from Detroit to Las Vegas to Dubai have often forgone any and all local concerns in the interest of attracting investment that conforms to their existing identity. As a result, many of these cities have come to be defined and driven by these businesses and their needs, leaving the concerns of the local population as little more than secondary in government decision-making. The focus becomes not the development of a strong living environment, but the promotion of the idea of the city and the sale of the mass-marketed identity of the city’s big business.

In Anaheim, California, like in these other cities, the relationship between the city and its most powerful employer exemplifies the way an industry and a business can define and engulf that city. However, Anaheim illustrates a very unique situation in the relationship the city has with its tourism economy. Disneyland, the famed theme park developed by Walt Disney in 1955, has become not only the city of Anaheim’s largest employer, but has also redefined the fundamental *modus operandi* of the city’s government and community relations structure. Before the arrival of Disneyland, Anaheim was just a small farm and bedroom community known for its orange groves and its prime location on the developing Interstate-5 freeway. Since Disney’s arrival, however, much of the industry that originally moved out to take advantage of the freeway location has since disappeared, to be replaced by hotels and other tourist-oriented businesses. Disneyland has essentially co-opted all industrial clout in the city, leaving Anaheim’s city government largely dependent on its survival to provide a strong tax-base in tourism.
The analysis in this section will examine the ramifications of this altered power structure for the city of Anaheim, through an examination of three episodes in the over 50-year history of relations between the city and Disneyland. First, the narrative of how the park developed in Anaheim provides a number of early clues to the way that the city often bends over backwards for Disneyland and to how relations would function in future. Second, a conflict that was mainly between Disney and a local hotel developer (Sheraton) in the 1960s illustrates how the city has historically intervened on the behalf of Disney in its conflicts with other community entities, leaving competing powers more or less impotent in the face of the Disney organization. Finally, the story of the development of the ‘Anaheim Resort’—a formally-designated, tourism-centered district surrounding Disneyland and the city’s convention center—illustrates the way that Disneyland cemented the co-dependent relationship between the city and the theme park to gain a strong influence in local planning.

As these episodes illustrate, Disney has, in its relations with the city of Anaheim, not only defined a framework of interactions that gives it exclusive power in governmental relations, but it has also defined a particular rhetoric designed to mask the reality or alter the perception of the impacts its desires will have on the city as a whole. This style of interaction, while here focused on Anaheim, is in fact emblematic of a rising tendency among city governments toward preferential treatment for businesses that can in many cases leave residents behind. Using economic arguments that focus on Disneyland’s importance to the city of Anaheim’s economy, the company tends to emphasize the increased tourist dollars and hotel taxes that it has drawn into the city. What is lost, however, are such issues on the impact of local residents, the lack of affordable housing for Disney employees in the local area, and the inability of other local businesses to have their say when they oppose the Disney view. Thus, a focus on controversies
with the city will show Disney in its most confrontational light, illustrating the way in which it has used its own style of government interaction to gain a preferred status in relations with the city of Anaheim. Although interactions between Disneyland and the Anaheim City Council and Planning Commission have been for the most part convivial, Disneyland has historically exercised a preferred status in its formal interactions with Anaheim that has compelled the city to put the interests of Disney above other voices in local planning decisions. In the end the community of Anaheim falls by the wayside because city officials, buying into Disney’s emphasis on its own economic importance instead of focusing on other needs of the local community, tend to place Disney’s concerns over those of any other party in their decision-making process.

The Tourist Government: Literature Review

The literature on Disney’s relations with the city of Anaheim is understandably lacking; however a great deal of research has been undertaken on the impact of Disney in Orlando and, more generally, on the importance of tourism in urban environments. Perhaps the foremost researcher on the influence of Disney on its local governments has been Richard Foglesong, whose work *Married to the Mouse: Walt Disney World and Orlando* (2001) is the preeminent examination of the relationship between the Walt Disney World Resort in Florida and the four adjoining local government bodies with which it has interacted in its over 40-year history. Foglesong’s analysis uses a carefully crafted marriage metaphor to describe relations primarily between Orlando and officials of the Walt Disney Company. Foglesong shows the development of those relations from an initial “Seduction” via a series of attempts by both parties to sell their value to the other, through relation-souring “Abuse” of benefits and an ultimate attempt at reconciliation, or “Therapy.” The author takes a narrative-based chronological tour through the
various ways that specific major players have at one time or another defined and reconditioned
the system of interactions between one urban government and a Disney theme park resort.

Where Foglesong’s analysis differs from the one that follows, however, is in the context
in which it is analyzing the Orlando-area resort. While Orlando, along with a number of other
municipalities surrounding Walt Disney World, is heavily influenced by the presence of Lake
Buena Vista (the independent unincorporated municipal area owned by Disney that contains the
resort), it does not have direct power of governance over the resort. Rather, the resort was
granted status as an independent municipality, so governance falls jointly to the two county
governments that oversee the Lake Buena Vista territory (Osceola and Orange Counties) and
Florida state government. Thus, the Disneyland Resort in Anaheim is unique in the way it is
overseen by one sole, and in many ways more powerful, city government. Rather than
interacting on the level of neighbors akin to two adjacent urban powers, Anaheim and
Disneyland are legally and symbolically intertwined with each relying on the other and
influenced by the other’s presence. The Disneyland Resort, therefore, is more alike a major
business headquartered in its city than it is like its counterpart in Orlando.

In this light, then, the scholarly debate regarding the influence (and perhaps over-
influence) of commercial businesses and tourist enterprises in central business districts and cities
emphasizes the evolution of urban governmental reliance on major investors to fill city coffers.
Clarence Stone’s (1989) elaboration of Urban Regime Theory has of late defined the analysis of
how systems of power develop to define the interactions between an urban government and its
private businesses. Stone and his sympathizers argue that since the end of the Model Cities
Program and the decreased presence of federal funding that began with the Reagan
administration, cities have been forced to rely on investment from private powers to fund their
local redevelopment efforts. Thus, as is illustrated in a number of examples of downtown revivals (Stone 1989; Judd and Swanstrom 2004, Ch. 13; Newman 2002; Reichl 1999; McGovern 1998), stadium-building projects (Delaney and Eckstein 2007; Coats and Humphreys 2000; Cagan and deMause 1998; Danielson 1997), and arts-center developments (Strom 2002; Tibbot 2002), cities have been forced to work with the local business community to develop projects designed, in the end, to attract more private business investment. More recently, some researchers have widened the focus on urban government and business firms to include in the spectrum such entities as local “destination marketing/management organizations” (i.e. a tourism bureau) that seek more generally to market the city as a destination (Sheehan et al 2007), environmental lobbying groups that argue for sustainable tourism (Bakic 2005; Hassan 2000), and citizens’ interest groups seeking to ensure that other crucial interests are not overlooked in the decision-making process (Paskaleva-Shapira 2007). The general consensus among these theorists, however, is that the ultimate analysis of how revitalization and large development projects are carried out is defined by a narrative of interrelated powers, public and private, attempting to find compromises to serve their individual interests in drawing more investment into the city.

The second major line of thought focuses on the Disney-esque method of destination creation—that is, the transformation of municipalities into multi-day destinations with specific (and often themed) identities. Scholars of this viewpoint tend to focus less on the actors and the agency involved in fashioning a strong business climate and more on the steps that go beyond the fostering of that climate to develop an imposed and often artificial identity (Bordas 2005; Tibbot 2002; Mommas 2002). From this perspective, cities are reconstructing their organic character with identities imposed by the power structures that be and in the process becoming primarily
tourist destinations and secondarily places of residence. In the process, emphasis on local issues—such as the affordability and availability of housing, infrastructure improvements in non-tourist districts, and the plight of lower-income residents take a back-seat to the city’s self-promotion efforts (Paskaleva-Shapira 2005). City identity is thus a confused amalgam of the organic and the marketed identity.

The examination that follows takes primarily a regime-oriented approach, but will also consider the question of how Anaheim’s identity has changed as a result of Disneyland. While Disneyland—like stadiums, art-centers and other major investments—is a significant influence in the city business community, it must also be considered in terms of its more intangible effects. Thus, in considering Disneyland’s interaction with the Anaheim city government, this analysis will look, much like Foglesong, at the way the Disney Company has treated relations with the city government on an almost personal level despite their status as a separate group. An examination of primary source documents, including newspaper articles, city council minutes, and planning documentation will show how these relations developed in the early years of the park’s establishment and still define, in many ways, current interactions between the park and the city government. Disneyland has, unlike many other such projects, uniquely dominated the decision-making process for the tourist-centered area around it, and this interaction stands out as a particular case that illustrates how theme parks can distinctively influence and be influenced by the local government bodies overseeing them.

The Early Years

From its earliest beginnings, Disneyland has consistently used its power as a strong business and a tourist magnet to exercise a certain level of pull over the Anaheim City Government. When Walt Disney first considered building a theme park, he had intended for it to
be located on a small site adjacent to his film company’s studio in Burbank, CA. However, he quickly realized that the 10 acre plot he was considering would be far too small for the ideas he had developed, so he hired the Stanford Research Institute to conduct a study of the entire Southern California region to find a site suitable for his park. Among other qualifications, the site had to be approximately 150 acres or more in size, it had to have relatively consistent temperatures year round with limited rainfall, and it had to be easily accessible to most of the population of the Los Angeles area. The tale of the discovery of the site in Anaheim is one of lore in Disney history, as Stanford Research Institute (SRI) had not even considered the site until just before their report for Disney was finished. As the report describes, Fred R. Wallich, an Anaheim resident and real estate professional, had brought the site to the group’s attention when he noticed that 17 property owners with adjacent plots were looking to sell their parcels which, together, totaled about 140 acres. After further research, SRI determined the site to have ideal weather and to be perfectly located near the proposed Santa Ana Freeway (the eventual Interstate-5). Similarly, it had the potential to be changed from Residential-Agricultural zoning to Commercial zoning and was mostly located within the City of Anaheim, which offered lower tax rates than land in unincorporated Orange County. Thus early on a series of coincidences attracted Disney officials to Anaheim, and were it not for Wallich and Anaheim’s efforts to get access to the developing freeway it is doubtful whether Disneyland would be located where it currently stands.

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1 Walt’s initial plans, as cited in Richardson, Adele (2003). *The story of Disney (Built for Success).* North Mankato, MN: Smart Apple Media.
2 Part of the land was actually located in then unincorporated area, which had it not been annexed to Anaheim would today be in the city of Garden Grove. See: Price, Harrison A., William M. Steward, Redford C. Rollins (1953). “An Analysis of Location Factors for Disneyland.” Prepared for Walt Disney Productions. Stanford, CA: Stanford Research Institute, August 28, 1953. SRI Project No. I-877. Available at the Anaheim History Room
When the site was selected, however, getting all 17 landowners to sell to the same organization and agglomerating all of the parcels was a complicated process, especially since only a select few individuals in Anaheim actually knew who was working to acquire all of this land. As Earnest (or “Earne,” as he is often called) Moeller described in an interview he gave in 1980 for the Anaheim History Room, only himself, Keith Murdoch (future City Manager), and a very select number of individuals actually had heard the slight *suggestion* of a rumor that Disney was the entity purchasing all of these lots on Harbor Boulevard and Ball Road. Rather than purchasing all of the land under the Disney name, officials from the company hired outside realtors to set up a puppet company and work towards purchasing the land and getting it to form one contiguous lot.³ But without the efforts of Moeller and two of his associates, Hank Porcella and Bob Wurgaft (Treasurer and Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, respectively), it is possible that Disney officials would never have decided on Anaheim as an ideal location. Burr Williams, an associate of Moeller’s, says in an addendum to the aforementioned interview,

> I would say that if Earne Moeller, Hank Porcella, and Bob Wurgaft, representing the City of Anaheim, hadn’t made such a good impression on that first visit with the officials at Disney Studios in Burbank, Disneyland probably would not have moved down here at all. If there had been a different attitude on the part of these gentlemen, the Disney officials would probably have been turned off on the area, but the way they handled everything was conducive to getting them to like the people in Anaheim.

³ Earnest Moeller is quoted as saying, for his history room interview: “It must be kept in mind that no evidence exists to show that any representative of Disney or Stanford Research ever exposed themselves to an Anaheim city or chamber of commerce official, nor to any other person or persons in the area, until after their failure to acquire their prime site, namely the Ball Road Subdivision, its seventeen individually (sic) owned parcels.” For an in-depth description of the real estate dealings before the acquisition of the site, see Appendix II to “An Historical Sketch,” entitled “Anecdotes—Vignettes—Trivia.”
Moeller, Porcella and Wurgaft, three leaders of Anaheim’s business community (and thus privy to the sorts of concerns Disney would face), effectively sold Anaheim by suggesting the benefits of Anaheim’s government as overseer. Little relationships and encounters like these, it turns out, were the foundation of why Disney came to Anaheim. They were also why Disneyland’s leadership would expect exclusive treatment, many times on a very personal level, from city officials.

On top of the series of coincidences that brought Disneyland to its current site, the park’s site was initially not located completely in Anaheim. Only the portion of the site above Harbor Boulevard was within the incorporated city, while the bulk of the property was in unincorporated Orange County. Before beginning construction and the permitting process, therefore, Disney officials wanted to incorporate their land within Anaheim in order to have only one governmental body with which to deal and, of course, to pay lower taxes. As the *Anaheim Gazette* reported in October, 1954, “The city’s annexation of Disneyland…has been held up since the first of September by William M. and Dyke Lansdale, Moore Built Homes and Walnut Co. Ltd., when represented by Attorney James E. Walker, they filed a petition asking, that the city be restrained from annexing the area.” The three plaintiffs in this court battle alleged that by allowing for annexation they would be losing their business on the site: the Lansdale brothers operated water service to the property; Moore Built Homes was building a large housing development nearby and worried about the influx of tourists; and Walnut Co. Ltd was responsible for a variety of services on the property. They feared that, were the property annexed, they would lose valuable business with the Disneyland site, and so filed suit against Disney and the City of Anaheim to hold off the annexation.
As per standard procedure, the annexation proposal first had to go to ballot among the property owners in the area to be annexed and the residents of the city. The property owners voted in late September, 1954, to approve the annexation by a 56 to 2 count at the same time Anaheim residents approved the annexation by a 56% margin of approval.\(^4\) So this court case remained the only block to annexation, and as the controversy mounted Disney officials became less and less willing to compromise and pressure on the city only grew stronger. After about a month of deliberation, Anaheim officials decided, under pressure from Disney officials and local business owners, to pen a compromise. Ultimately, the city agreed to refrain from imposing its services (and gaining the associated revenue) on the property and would instead allow the former operators to provide utilities to the property, adding that the increased tourism would create great economic growth in the area (quelling the concerns of Moore Built Homes).\(^5\)

This early history of how the site was selected and how Disneyland made its way into Anaheim reveals the extreme resilience that was required in order to bring to life the Anaheim property, as well as the way that city officials were willing early on to concede almost anything to bring Disneyland to Anaheim. Earne Moeller best captures the thoughts of Anaheim officials when he says, “A great sense of pride was activated by Disney’s choice of Orange County as the site for an amusement park on such a grand scale—a facility that the average person would normally associate with Hollywood, not rural Orange County.” Most residents, and most officials, had little idea how to deal with a project of this type and magnitude and Disneyland was therefore seen as a sort of beneficent outside force that was going to bring positive development and a large tax base to the city. What is key, though, is that at the time Disneyland seemed to be just one of the many firms investing their money in sites in Anaheim. Meanwhile,

\(^4\) *Anaheim Gazette*, 9/30/1954  
\(^5\) *Anaheim Gazette*, October 1954 (specific publish date unlisted)
a large number of industrial plants were developing Anaheim’s job base, which was one of the
many reasons the site in Anaheim was also a strong choice for Disney.6 In the end, however,
Disneyland would come to redefine the direction that Anaheim would take. Even in its earliest
beginnings, Disneyland was seen as a powerful benefactor that would bring wealth and growth to
Anaheim, and it was treated to preferred status in city affairs as reward for having chosen
Anaheim as its home.

**Pressure from the Outside**

Because it has often had its wishes easily granted, Disneyland has been at the center of
very few controversies during its fifty-two year history in Anaheim. Nonetheless, the park has
occasionally been involved in its share of conflict with respect to city planning decisions. One
particularly telling example occurred early in the park’s history, as Disneyland began to feel the
effects of its influence in Anaheim as hotels and tourist businesses became more and more
ambitious in the local area. In 1963, the Sheraton brand of hotels had found a lot two city-blocks
away from the Disneyland site on which it hoped to develop its new “Sheraton West Anaheim”
hotel, a towering skyscraper of a hotel designed to rise over one hundred feet into the skies of
Anaheim. There was only one roadblock—a height restriction of 35 feet existed within the
Commercial-Recreation Zone established around Disneyland in its first few years in operation.7
It was logically what the city needed most—hundreds of hotel rooms, within close walking
distance of Disneyland, and perfectly in line with tourism development in the area. For Disney
officials, however, there was a major problem: the hotel would be visible from within
Disneyland.

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7 *LA Times*, 7/10/1964
To the average business, this may not seem like a major concern: seeing another building does not usually affect day-to-day operation. To Ed Ettinger, Disneyland’s Community Relations Manager in 1963, and his coworkers, however, the sight of such a behemoth of a hotel could ruin the other-worldly illusion Walt Disney had strived to create within the park. In December of 1963, Ettinger was quoted in the *Anaheim Bulletin*: “[Ettinger] told The Bulletin that park officials were concerned about the ‘visual intrusion’ of the high rise development. He said if a solution cannot be worked out with the developers of the hotel before the Planning Commission’s approval becomes final, then the council will be asked to hold a hearing.”

Ettinger and the Disney contingent were threatening—politely—to bring the issue before public authority and to have a zoning regulation maintaining a low height restriction instituted if Sheraton officials would not concede what Disney officials saw as the essential need to have the outside world feel completely separate from the inside of the park. These officials also felt that without the prevention of this visual intrusion, the entertainment value (and, by extension, the tax revenue) of the park would be seriously endangered—to such a level that it could be an issue of public debate in the city council. Not only did Disneyland shift the debate from height limits, a rather petty issue, to the overall entertainment value of the park, but it avoided discussing the practical implications of this restriction (limiting hotel development, residential zone impact, etc.) in favor of emphasizing its ability to create a world where visitors can escape the outside.

Ultimately, Sheraton and Disney officials were unable to reach a compromise, and the issue came before the city council for the first time July 9, 1964 (shortly before the park’s ninth anniversary on July 15). City council minutes reveal a complex debate dominated by the arguments and sympathizers of the Disney perspective. When the issue was first raised, in December 1963, Mayor Rex Coons was quoted as saying “that Disneyland, a $50 million

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8 “Disneyland May Ask Council for Height Limitation on Hotel,” *Anaheim Bulletin* 12/15/1963
investment, deserves ‘some protection’… [and that] the council should recognize Disneyland’s concern about the Sheraton-West.”⁹ This foreshadowed a number of the arguments made by supporters of the Disney viewpoint at the city council meetings that followed. At the July council meetings, arguments were impassioned from either side but no decision was made. At the next meeting, August 25, Ettinger presented a series of studies to the council determining sight lines from within the developed areas of Disneyland Park. He proposed that the city council not only regulate the construction of the Sheraton Hotel but also that a series of height limits be instituted within the local area, with sequential increases in the permissible height as the distance from Disneyland increases. It was the first showings of a Disneyland zone of influence, an area in which uses (or at least building height) were regulated based on their relation to Disneyland.

Since December 1963, community members from Virgil Pinkley, Editor-in-Chief of the Anaheim Bulletin (one of two local newspapers in the city at the time) to Walt Disney himself had weighed in on the issue publicly and in reports to the city council. Pinkley, a believer in the potential value of Disneyland but a critic of the influence the park had in the city, published an Op-Ed piece January 9, 1964 that accurately captured the views of a number of opponents of the Disney viewpoint. Pinkley wrote:

In the case of Disneyland, it would be the height of folly for the City of Anaheim to let any enterprise operate in the area surrounding Disneyland if that enterprise would be essentially hostile to and destructive of the park, which is a highly successful private business and a tremendous asset to the community.

But that’s all Disneyland is—a highly successful private business which is a tremendous asset to the community.

⁹ ibid
It is neither a sacred shrine nor a natural resource. It is called a park in the sense of ‘amusement park,’ not ‘national park.’ Pinkley agreed that Disneyland is important to the City of Anaheim, but, apprehensive of the sense of power Disney would gain were its position to be validated by the council, Pinkley argued that a height restriction is “an unreasonable and immoderate intrusion of government in the private business of those landowners [in the area around Disneyland].”

Walt Disney, however, felt differently. In a letter to the Anaheim City Council written in July 1964, Disney argued that part of Disneyland’s foundational concept is to keep the outside world out and that failing to do so would compromise the business viability of the park. “While we believe in encouraging construction of hotels and motels for visitors,” the Disney letter reads, “I find it hard to understand how anyone willing to make such an investment can fail to see or comprehend the importance of Disneyland’s basic concept, to their own best interests as well as ours.” Disney believed not only that it was foundational to his business’ “basic concept,” (in whatever sense) to keep the outside hidden, but also that those hotels that depended on the success of Disneyland should respect its secluded ambiance in order to keep guests (of Disneyland and of the hotels) coming to Anaheim. Appealing to the city council through economic and fantastical rhetoric that evoked the important impact Disneyland has had, Disney further wrote:

Our main idea has always been to have a place where visitors could leave the everyday world behind them and enter worlds of yesterday, tomorrow, adventure and fantasy.

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Part I: Formal Influence on City Government

It is my belief that this concept is chiefly responsible for the fact that Disneyland has attracted more than 40,000,000 visitors to Anaheim from throughout the world.11

To have a hotel such as this within sight of the park would compromise the Disney Company’s ability to draw visitors and, Walt seemed to suggest, might sour relations with the city, which was failing to protect the company’s investment. The use of phrases such as “yesterday, tomorrow, adventure and fantasy” and of numerical statistics on the number of visitors link Disneyland’s magical feel—which was apparently threatened by the sight of a hotel—with its economic impact, skirting the issue of whether demand for hotels would decrease or whether guests were truly so affected by the sight of this hotel. If it was to continue to attract millions of annual visitors to Anaheim, Disneyland expected to have its interests unconditionally protected in the face of opposition, and Walt himself used a rhetoric that tied fantasy to economic viability to appeal to the hearts (and wallets) of Anaheim’s leadership and guarantee that protection.

At its August meeting, the City Council resolved to decide (in a joint meeting with the Planning Commission) on September 1 a resolution to the height restriction question. At the meeting, Chairman Mungall of the Planning Commission concurred with the overwhelming opinion that a 35-foot restriction was unrealistic in the surrounding area and that protection could still be afforded to Disneyland with an expansion to the limit. He also noted that it was important to provide some protection to single-family houses in the residential area nearby so as not to impose into their ability to live with as little impact as possible from the Commercial-Recreation District. The council considered the charts provided by Ettinger showing sequential height limits from 75 feet to 200 feet, stretching as far as a mile from the park. While the council

seemed at this point relatively supportive of the position of Disneyland, Commissioner Gauer’s statement that “Disneyland Park is a work of art with nothing like it in the world; that the development of the Park has been as originally proposed and presented to the City by Mr. Disney; and that the illusions created within the park, which are screened and protected by trees and the berm, should be given definite consideration,”\textsuperscript{12} is of particular note for its idyllic support of Disneyland. While the discussion was quite long, the City Council ultimately voted 6-0 with one absence in support of the Disney-advised height restrictions. As advised by a local resident, George O’Brien, the council and planning commission did not directly adopt the Disney figures, but advised on their integration as guides in future development and required all properties within the area to obtain Conditional Use Permits for height changes.\textsuperscript{13} This act—symbolically rather than actually—disconnected the council decision from the desires of Disneyland officials.

As a result of these changes, Sheraton ended up with a significantly restricted hotel that stands today behind the Anaheim Convention Center, though the company also owns a second hotel slightly farther from Disneyland on Harbor Boulevard.\textsuperscript{14} While the recommendations of Disney officials were not adopted in original form as City Council policy, the city council essentially adopted the principles proposed by Ettinger, symbolically granting unconditional support to the Disney perspective. Furthermore, a pattern of interaction that reflects Disney’s power of influence within the city developed: the largest controversies are those when Disney must directly confront another major investment power (such as Sheraton or, as will be seen soon, the major real estate developer SunCal). It would be a framework of understood preference and a rhetoric that emphasized Disney’s ability to bring tourists into Anaheim that

\textsuperscript{12} Anaheim City Council Minutes, 9/1/1964
\textsuperscript{13} ibid
\textsuperscript{14} Personal observation
ultimately gave Disney the upper hand in all confrontations, and allowed the park to see its objectives always supported, and often adopted, by the city itself.

**The Resort Solution**

Current relations between Anaheim local government and Disneyland have only grown more intimate over time, due in large part to a 1990s redevelopment project known as the Anaheim Resort Plan. By the early 1990s, it was clear to Anaheim officials and to Disneyland executives alike that tourism, thanks mostly to Disneyland and to Anaheim’s world-class Convention Center (constructed in 1967), was central to Anaheim’s continued economic growth. Feeling the pressure from increased regional tourism to places such as San Diego, San Francisco, and the booming entertainment mecca Las Vegas, officials determined that it was time for Anaheim’s Commercial-Recreation district to be revitalized and refashioned to attract longer stays and a stronger tourist experience.¹⁵ In early 1994, then, the Anaheim Planning Commission was charged with developing an environmental impact report (EIR) for the Anaheim Resort Specific Plan, a new amendment to the Anaheim General Plan that would formalize a series of design principles and governing regulations unique to the area surrounding Disneyland and the Convention Center. This was to be primarily a publicly-funded revitalization effort. As the plan developed and was subjected to criticism, however, a completely different funding and organizational picture would develop. What resulted was one of the largest public-private collaborations in American history, not to mention a working relationship between the city and Disney that was closer than it had ever been.

In 1991, the Planning Commission presented a first draft EIR for its initial improvement plan to the Anaheim City Council. The proposals presented in this EIR and in subsequent presentations to the city council were ambitious, including: re-designating local zoning

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categories to reflect the specific Anaheim Resort CR (Commercial-Recreational), PR (Public-Recreational) and MHP (Mobile Home Park) zones; an “Anaheim Resort Identity Program” that imposes certain design details in the area “to create a consistent visual theme and unify the Anaheim Resort”; transformation of the area to reflect a landscaped garden image; and a uniform signage style for local businesses. Unfortunately, the city could only find $55 million from its General Fund budget to fund this expansion, which was expected to cost at least $1 billion with the implementation of all suggested improvements. As a result, the city simply imposed what Joel Fick, Planning Director at the time, called “a modest expansion of the convention center and some minor streetscape improvements.”

Fortunately for officials in Anaheim, Disneyland executives had been working on expanding their single theme park and adjoining hotel into more of a destination, designed to capture visitors for multiple days and to provide a more inclusive and complete experience. Between 1991 and 1994 city officials and Disney representatives met numerous times to attempt to refine Anaheim’s plans and to unify those plans with Disney’s expansion proposal. In December of 1993, then, the Planning Commission first presented the Disneyland Resort Specific Plan—the plan covering Disneyland and its planned areas of expansion (including the construction of a second theme park)—to the city council. Because the plan was undertaken by a private entity (Disney) using funding entirely from that organization, the city council approved the plan immediately with the overwhelming support of the local community. For Disney, approvals such as these were simple and routine.

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16 Anaheim City Council Minutes, 9/20/1994 (these ideas were copied verbatim from the goals of the earlier 1991 plan)
17 Lockwood
18 ibid
In August of 1994, though, the Planning Commission faced significantly more difficulty getting the Anaheim Resort Specific Plan approved. At a meeting on September 20, major objections were raised from local residents who feared the financial impact to taxpayers who may or may not see direct benefit from this project, but rather negative impacts, such as increased traffic and a higher smog level. Representatives from the city of Garden Grove (which neighbors the resort district one block to the south) also argued that its concerns were not being considered—mainly in that the increased traffic and drainage needs, as well as a lack of new housing for resort employees, would also impact Garden Grove with no consideration given to its need to improve infrastructure and facilities. Finally, a number of objections were raised to the visual intrusion imposed on local residents by new road, highway and freeway structures proposed in the plan. However, representatives from the Planning Commission argued that the financial impact would be lowered by the use of outside funding. In particular the city would apply for funds from Orange County’s new Measure M, which increased county sales tax by 0.25% to pay for transportation improvements by local governments, as well as other state and federal funding. Addressing Garden Grove’s concerns, Mr. Fick pointed out that the added tourism would spill over into increased tourism business (especially in hotel construction) in Garden Grove, mitigating the fiscal impact of the requisite infrastructure improvements. Finally, the visual intrusion was believed to be less significant than argued because it would be wholly hidden by landscaping as well as additional construction in the resort area, construction that was all set at least 150 feet away from any residential land.19

By October of 1994, the City Council approved the new Anaheim Resort Specific Plan, implementing a series of sweeping aesthetic and infrastructure improvements that forever changed the appearance of this area of Anaheim. By the time initial consulting for the plan and

19 Anaheim City Council Minutes, 9/20/1994
the first steps toward implementation were taken in 1997, however, it was clear that the cost of the specific plan would be significantly higher than the $172.5 million predicted in 1994. To ensure that the plan was implemented, and to protect its $1.5 billion investment in its own expansion efforts, the Disney Company quickly came to the rescue of its beleaguered local government. In the fall of 1997, the city issued $545 million in municipal bonds to fund the additional costs of the project, $150 million of which were to be used for a massive expansion of the convention center, and $90 million for the construction of an accompanying parking structure. The remaining $305 million was needed for the full implementation of the Anaheim Resort Specific Plan. However, in order to secure financing for the bonds, the city needed a strong financial backer—and Disney was the ideal choice. The Disney Company provided backing for all $545 million in bonds, and as a result the bonds were sold within one month of their issuance.20 The partnership was completed—and it seemed that, at least financially, the city became tied more to Disneyland than Disneyland was tied to Anaheim. Disney’s influence in Anaheim had become more than simply that of local business and urban government—Disney now had proprietary power (arguably) over an entire area of the city.

The story of the relations between Disneyland and the City of Anaheim is a long and convoluted history of interdependence and, in many cases, the preference of Disney’s interests over those of other parties. Recently, this policy has come under fire as Disney faced a direct conflict with a housing developer (SunCal) over a plot of land that falls within the bounds of the Anaheim Resort District. In April of 2007, the City Council decided that, despite the zoning designation for the resort district, it would allow housing in the plot designated by SunCal in

20 Lockwood
consideration of a strong need for affordable housing in the local area.\textsuperscript{21} In May, however, Disney officials responded by forming a coalition with a small number of local tourism business owners and Anaheim residents called SOAR (Save Our Anaheim Resort, another example of the circuitous rhetoric often employed by Disneyland in its dealings with the local community) to collect signatures from the local community and bring the issue to ballot.\textsuperscript{22} After a summer filled with argument and an inability for the two sides to reach a compromise, the issue was eventually approved for placement on the ballot on November 6, 2007. At the end of October, however, the property owner of the potential housing plot undertook measures to back out of its contract with SunCal, claiming that SunCal had failed to make an October 1 payment to extend the length of its purchase agreement until after the issue was decided. Then, on November 27, the city council reversed its decision in favor of a housing development on the site, realigning its views with Disney and leaving the SunCal development seemingly inert. It seems Disneyland has proven itself once again to be under the favor of the city council, and the Anaheim Resort will likely remain a purely tourist area, with no available housing for the thousands of service-employees working in the area.

\textbf{Conclusion}

As the preceding episodes in the long history of Disneyland’s relations with its local city government have shown, the nature of relations between Disney and the city of Anaheim tend to give Disney a favored position in comparison to its challengers in dealings with city government. Specifically, by emphasizing its economic value in the area and using a rhetoric that emphasizes the fantasy elements of the park and the importance of those elements to its success, Disneyland


is often able to convince the city government to see its view with little concern to its negative
effects or its limited perspective. Whether Disneyland has come into conflict over its inclusion
into the city of Anaheim, over the visibility of a high-rise hotel from within the park, or over a
housing development within its self-tailored resort district, the theme park has consistently been
granted concessions and had its desires satisfied in conflicts settled by the city government. The
last development, the conflict with SunCal over housing development, shows just to what
extreme Disney can utilize its preferential treatment, even when the city council initially held
views in conflict with the park. In the end, however, the city council was left to do little but
concede the importance of tourism in the Anaheim Resort district, effectively setting a precedent
that allows Disney to define what sorts of developments can go into the resort, reasserting its
proprietary strength.

The relationship that Disney holds with the city government of Anaheim serves as the
basis for its ability to redefine the aesthetic of the area surrounding it, especially considering this
new-found power over the Anaheim Resort. Disneyland is not only a major employer in the city
of Anaheim; it has become something much more in its over fifty years in the city. Today
Disneyland is almost on the level of the City Planning Office in that it can, at its will, choose
what can develop and what cannot within its zone of influence. Much like its sister resort in
Florida, the Disneyland Resort has today gained an independence of action and development in
its local area. Unlike in Florida, however, Disneyland has a number of residents living within its
zone of influence. The aesthetic of Disneyland, therefore, is not only apparent in Disney’s
ability to gain concessions from the city government; moreover, it has begun to influence the feel
of the local community, especially local business development. As the development of the
Anaheim Resort has shown, Anaheim has seen the virtual expansion of Disneyland to encompass
the entire resort area. Where Disneyland ends and Anaheim proper begins has become blurred.
Disneyland is poised to define a new type of city in Anaheim: a city that exists primarily for the
entertainment of tourists and the growth in number of temporary (or visiting) residents. It
remains to be seen whether Anaheim will accept its identity as Disney City, or whether, as the
SunCal controversy might suggest, Anaheim will pull itself away from being solely home to
Disneyland. The ultimate result will prove a prime example for tourist-heavy cities worldwide.
PART II: Disneyland and the Business of Entertainment

If its relations with the city government provide little definite evidence as to whether the city has embraced or shunned its Disney identity, Disneyland’s impact on the city’s business climate provides a much more one-sided picture. Today, Anaheim’s economy is in many ways defined by the fact that it is home to Disneyland—but that was not always the case. The Stanford Research Institute Report commissioned to find a location for Disney’s dream park details the appeal of Anaheim’s location for multiple reasons: the city’s easy access to transportation networks and the low tax rates in Anaheim, for example, but perhaps most important among the reasoning behind this choice of location was the substantial economic growth developing in the city. With the boom in industrial development that characterized much of Southern California after the World War II, Anaheim was no stranger to the increased out-migration of industrial production from Los Angeles into the growing suburbs. As one of the oldest cities in Orange County and with prime access to the elongating 101 (currently the I-5) freeway, Anaheim was poised to be the ideal location for industrial development. Descriptions of the business climate around the time of the park’s arrival show that in 1953, before any mention was even made of the arrival of Disneyland, Anaheim was benefiting greatly from this trend, serving as a center of Orange County business.

In 1955, though, the business climate changed drastically with the arrival of the Disney Park. The change came in stages: first came the motels and the restaurants that sprang up to take advantage of the increased tourist traffic visiting Anaheim because of Disneyland. Then came bigger hotels and resorts, not the least of which was the Disneyland Hotel, which sought to keep tourists overnight and to benefit the park’s income with those longer stays. With the increased pressure for tourist land and as deindustrialization took its toll in Anaheim, the industrial plants
and jobs that had originally occupied Anaheim before Disneyland quickly were replaced with service industries and their lower wages.

An entry in the Anaheim Bulletin of 1958, describing the reasons for the Disney Company’s choice of Anaheim as the eventual site of Disneyland, says the following, “How did the Anaheim area come to be chosen? Very tediously simple! A large map of California was laid out and the geographic locations of thousands of items sold, used, or manufactured was pinpointed on the map.” At the time, Anaheim was, at least by this analysis, the virtual center of commercial and industrial activity in the Los Angeles basin, a developing powerhouse of employment and activity. To Walt Disney and his Imagineers, this must have been a very compelling argument in favor of the choice of Anaheim, but they could not have known what would develop in the city after their arrival. Disneyland, it seems, had an even bigger impact than they would have predicted, and as the nation entered the 1960s and 1970s and deindustrialization began to take hold in cities nationwide, the presence of industry and the developing bastion of commerce that Anaheim was to be were but a figment in the imaginations of Anaheim officials and Disney proponents. While the reports that came out of Disney’s public relations office talked only of growth in employment and in raw spending in the Anaheim area, behind the tales spun by these reports was the fact that the jobs that were increasing were service jobs, which paid only the bare minimum and employed mostly the high school and college students who could afford to live off their salaries.

In the section that follows, I examine the way that this larger trend is also due in part to the growth of the Disneyland Park and to its relative sphere of influence. The caveat in the case of Disneyland is not that the transformation to a service industry took place—it certainly did—but that this deindustrialization was accentuated and built upon by the arrival of the
entertainment giant. Disneyland essentially exerted itself onto its surroundings in such a way that the types of businesses that existed around the park eventually became only tourist businesses. So when the Anaheim Planning Commission sought to create the Disneyland Resort Area in 1998, formalizing the designation of the surrounding area to zone only for tourist-related businesses (hotels, restaurants, and similar endeavors) it was more a case of confirming what already existed. Other types of industries that existed in the area were permitted to remain, but by the time the resort was formally designated few of these other industries existed. The Disneyland area had literally become Disneyland’s area, with all businesses surrounding the resort existing primarily in support of or to benefit from the high tourist traffic at Disneyland.

The dramatic shift from industry to tourism underscores an important point: Disneyland and its officials did not consciously set out to change the appearance of the surrounding area. The influence of Disneyland in an aesthetic sense is thus not limited to its design choices and its governmental influence, but also to this informal and implicit influence affected by its mere choice to locate within an area. As the following section will show, Disneyland’s influence on the aesthetic of the ‘Anaheim Resort District’ that surrounds it is not exclusively a one-sided influence. While Disneyland made a specific choice to locate within Anaheim because of its demonstrated growth in employment and jobs in the LA Basin, the growth in the tourism industry that it inspired was not entirely its own doing. The type of business development and the economic growth that Disneyland inspired was largely the result of choices by numerous businesses owners to locate their businesses in Disneyland’s vicinity in order to take advantage of the number of visitors it drew to Anaheim. Anaheim would become a city driven by tourism as a result of Disneyland, and its identity would never be the same once the choice to locate the park in this city was made.
Center of Industry

Anaheim began, like most cities in the L.A. basin, as a farming community. Incorporated in 1873 (and later reincorporated in 1878), the city was founded by a group of German vintners and grape growers who named the city ‘Annaheim,’ German for “home on the Santa Anna River.” As early as the 1920s, Anaheim was already becoming a center of development and culture in the south of the Los Angeles Basin, developing as a powerful suburb with a strong urban core. In the post-war period, the city was quickly becoming a center of development with the post-war boom in industrial development and housing construction that defined the Los Angeles region.\textsuperscript{23} As mentioned, it was also selected to be on the route of the expanded US Highway 101 (now the Interstate 5 Freeway) in the late 1940s, opening up the city to expanded development and a great deal of economic potential. By the early 1950s, industrial powers were choosing to locate in Anaheim in droves, and along with the growth in the business sector was coming a great deal of growth in residential development. In 1953, Anaheim’s growth in the industrial sector seemed without bound, especially to city residents and community leaders (the photo at left shows the way that industrial development, interspersed with an occasional housing plot, was quickly scooping up Anaheim’s abandoned

\textbf{Image 2.1.} Aerial photo of Anaheim, looking East toward the 101 (I-5) freeway and Disneyland under construction (top right), 1954. Courtesy Anaheim History Room.

farms in 1954). A report on Anaheim’s economic forecast, published in 1953, describes the growth in very concrete terms: “Since 1945…38 new plants have been established in Anaheim, boosting the industrial employment from 400 in 1938 to better than 4,500 today.” The growth, argues this report, was due to the “speedy freeway system that can whisk commuters in to the metropolitan areas in a matter of minutes actually quicker than it takes to reach one part of Los Angeles from another.” In fact, since the 1920s, Anaheim had been a center of growing industrial production, largely due to its attractive tax rates and abundant land, resulting from a shift from orange groves to more lucrative industrial production. On top of this, Anaheim’s leaders and its powerful Chamber of Commerce had been actively boosting their city and drawing industrial giants out of Los Angeles and into their city, where taxes were lower and pollution controls—though present—were a bit more lenient.

To journalists and residents in this early period, however, there was little reason to think that Disneyland might potentially be counteractive to that industrial growth. When word of the choice to establish Disneyland in Anaheim was received, a number of residents were not only proud that their city had been chosen, but also felt that the arrival of Disneyland would only add to the growth their city had been experiencing. Howard Loudon, editor of the Anaheim Bulletin, wrote in 1953, “Any business established to bring happiness cannot develop into a detriment to the community in which it is situated.” An Op-Ed piece by Roy Disney in the Orange County Register in 1954 touts the park in a similar way, saying, “Disneyland will be a park free of nuisance….It will not be a honkytonk annoyance, but a credit to the community. We think of Disneyland as another phase of show business, and we won’t be out of our element in promoting

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26 ibid
its impact will not only be national, it will be international."\textsuperscript{27} In much the same way, Disney officials had viewed Anaheim as a beneficial location because it was clear that the city was growth-oriented, increasing the potential market that the park would reach. To these officials, an Anaheim location not only brought low taxes but also extreme potential because of its location along the I-5 and because it was clearly established as a center of growth in Orange County. One Anaheim historian writes, "Disneyland was the catalyst that changed the lives and the lifestyles of long-time residents. As the appeal of Anaheim mushroomed, city government rushed to meet demand that would create an environment under which these tremendous changes could flourish. In the mid-'50s, Anaheim became a modern day boom town with an astounding growth rate that consumed everything in its path…By the end of 1955, Anaheim was four times its size in 1953."\textsuperscript{28} City leaders and Disneyland officials mutually benefited from growth, but the loss of an industrial boom that had been built upon thirty years of growth would be felt very heavily in a city establishing itself in the shadows of Los Angeles.

In the 1960s and 1970s, and even as early as the late 1950s, Anaheim would begin a shift away from this industrial identity, predicated primarily on its newfound fame as the home of Disneyland. In raw economic terms, Anaheim was booming—its economic footprint was rapidly increasing and sales tax revenue was growing at a pace that kept the city’s budget well balanced through much of the fifty-some years since the park’s arrival. Behind that raw growth, however, was the fact that the growth was concentrated in the service industries, as Disneyland’s workforce grew with each year’s growth in visitors and as restaurants, hotels and entertainment venues in the vicinity increased in number and in customers. In 1964, the Disneyland Park

\textsuperscript{27} Both newspaper articles available courtesy of the Anaheim History Room.

commissioned a report from Economic Research Associates (ERA) on its economic impact, and that report, which was presented to the City Council as part of Disneyland’s annual progress report, talks in bright and positive descriptions of the value that the resort has had in Anaheim’s economy. “The analysis shows,” the report states, “that a $46 million private investment in the Park brought twelve times that amount of economic activity to the City of Anaheim in the first decade of its operation,” activity concentrated in tourist spending in and around Disneyland. As a result, the report stipulates that Disneyland “is the prime force back of the total commercial recreation impact in Anaheim.”\(^{29}\) The commercial-recreation impact, as the report calls it, was the sole source of that growth and economic activity. Yet in the positive analysis that this report was intended to give, that was all that was important—raw economic growth. As is evident today, however, raw economic growth has little value to most cities; rather, a diverse economy with a strong industrial sector and business environment is most valuable to a city’s sustained growth and survival.

When Disneyland arrived in Anaheim, the city was on the heels of a rapid expansion in industry that had begun in the 1920s but had shot to staggering levels in the early 1950s; however, just as that growth was beginning to take hold in the city and as industrial jobs increased more than ten-fold in under a decade, Disneyland arrived and forever changed the course of Anaheim’s economic growth and business climate. Like many suburban cities of its era, Anaheim was attempting to benefit from the expansion and out-migration of industrial plants outside of central city areas, and it had proven itself rather successful, especially in Orange County. Yet Disneyland changed the climate, making the area a haven for out-of-town visitors and the motels, restaurants and other activities that sought to benefit from the new development.

This environment was not very welcoming for industrial plants, which required the large tracts of abandoned farmland of the type that Disneyland had consumed. As the 1970s arrived and industrial production declined significantly in the United States, Anaheim’s plants would disappear almost completely, leaving little more than a tourist hub populated by commuters and dominated by strip malls and service jobs. Today, the landscape of Anaheim, especially in the area surrounding Disneyland and the former center of industrial development just to its north, shows a picture of a city dominated and driven by tourism (and Disney).

**The City of Magic**

Anaheim’s identity today is due very much to its economic character, and the aesthetic and appearance of the city is equally as much determined by the types of businesses located within the environment. In the area surrounding Anaheim, today known as the Anaheim Resort, zoning and Specific Plan designations require all new developments within the area to conform to a service-related purpose for the local area, a designation that is determined on a case-by-case basis but generally includes primarily hotel, restaurant, entertainment and shopping developments. This excludes non-tourist industries (such as commercial offices with non-tourism products, housing developments and of course, industrial plants) that were not established within the so-called Anaheim Resort District before the designation was completed in 1993. Naturally, a survey of the businesses within the resort district shows an overwhelming domination by service industries—primarily in the form of accommodations, restaurants and gift shops. The same survey in the area north of Disneyland, across the Interstate 5 Freeway, shows that this area, which early photos (see Image 2.1) show was a major center of development in the 1950s is today dominated by similar, albeit more locally focused, service industries: supermarkets, banks, and gas stations. The Disneyland Resort has altered the types of businesses
that can succeed in its local area, and as a result it has fundamentally defined the business aesthetic of the Anaheim area. In another light, however, the resort may have been a well-timed and prescient placement in the city, preparing Anaheim for the service-economy focused city model that dominates American cities today.

Within the Anaheim Resort, with its requirement of a tourism nature, and in its near vicinity, the types of businesses are heavily weighted toward the main components of a visitor-focused area. Figure 2.1 shows the category-by-category breakdown of businesses within the Anaheim Resort District (bounded by the I-5 Freeway, Katella Avenue, Harbor Boulevard, Ball Road and the edge of the Disneyland Resort on the western side of Disneyland Drive). Hotels and other forms of accommodation comprise over 23% of businesses in the area, constituting the single largest category, if fast-food and full-service restaurants are in separate categories. Those

![Figure 2.1. Business types in and near the Anaheim Resort District, 2007 (Data from ReferenceUSA).](image-url)
two types of businesses, then, comprise 11.71% and 14.15% of businesses within the resort area, together totaling over 25% of businesses—a full quarter of the total economic entities within the area in Disneyland’s immediacy. In fact, restaurants, gift shops, accommodations and other food service (such as cafés and ice cream stands)—the five largest categories—comprise 62.93% of the businesses in the area. Most of the other categories found in this area are similarly auxiliary tourist businesses—convenience stores, entertainment groups, car rentals and travel agencies—so that over 86% of businesses in the area can be said to be tied to the tourism industry (see Appendix A for full calculations). Furthermore, the other businesses that exist within the area are all service-oriented businesses, focused on providing such products as movie rentals and animal care which are focused primarily on entertainment and convenience. This level of domination is truly characteristic only of the Anaheim Resort and is achieved by way of its specific designation as a tourist area.

The picture in the area north of Disneyland—specifically in the portions of Harbor

![North of Disneyland Businesses](chart.png)

Figure 2.2. Businesses along Harbor Boulevard, directly north of Anaheim (see Appendix for full data).
Boulevard that are north of the Interstate 5, which for all practical purposes is the main business corridor of this portion of Anaheim—paints a slightly different picture but leads ultimately to similar conclusions. The business types in this area, quite expectedly, focus less on accommodations and visitor services and more on practical needs: healthcare (15.19%), legal services (mostly law firms, at 12.66%) and financial services (banks and miscellaneous, such as bail brokers, at 10.76%). As this schematic and Figure 2.2 on the next page demonstrate, the diversity of enterprises is much more extensive within the area, including some remaining industrial producers—four engineering firms and three wholesale producers (two of three of which are metal refiners). This demonstrates that hard industry still makes a showing in the area, yet it has been significantly reduced in its presence and heavily limited to the more technologically-heavy industrial enterprises, perhaps a result of a general trend toward high technology industry in the region.\(^\text{30}\) The overwhelming majority of businesses in the area, however, focus most heavily on service-based business that provides not a physical product but a more ephemeral service, such as those mentioned before or real estate and insurance companies. These industrial clusters focus more on local residents than the types of enterprises that exist in and around the Anaheim Resort, yet they remain largely service oriented—if grouped together engineering and wholesalers (who themselves questionably constitute industrial producers) are only total 4.43% of the enterprises in the area, a fact that leaves them about as prominent as photo development and print shops. Before the arrival of Disneyland, however, this was clearly not the defining characteristic for the area, which was known as a growing industrial center with easy access to downtown Los Angeles and a number of new Orange County residents. Today, Anaheim’s economy is focused more heavily on entertainment and on the necessary services for

its large and diverse population, which lends the city to a completely different identity than that
which it had sought before Disneyland’s arrival.

It is widely noted, however, that the general trend for many of the urban centers at the
turn of the century, of which the Los Angeles region is one, has been a tendency towards
industrial out-migration and more focus on the service industries. It could be possible that
Anaheim was just a victim of the same trend; however, there is one defining fact of Anaheim’s
development that makes this explanation not completely viable. The fact remains that
Anaheim—and Orange County, in fact—was a center of the technological industries since the
1950s and 1960s, as a number of military bases as well as large tracts of land left from the
decreasing citrus industry and easy access to Los Angeles’ booming population via the automobile
made it a prime location for these growing industries. At first, aerospace and light industry
dominated many of the county’s new cities, leading to an ideal environment for expansion during
the technological explosion during the 1990s.\textsuperscript{31} Moreover, Anaheim is, for all its attempts to
become an urban core of Orange County, first and foremost a suburb of Los Angeles. During the
period of industrial out-migration nationwide, it is well recognized that suburbs were the largest
beneficiaries (until more recent overseas migration).\textsuperscript{32} Anaheim followed the pattern more of
central cities, and its industrial economic cycle was therefore slightly more accelerated than the
trend among many of its neighbors. To say, therefore, that Disneyland had no role would
suggest that Anaheim without Disneyland would have quickly become the center of
entertainment and tourism, or at least of a service economy, as it stands today would discount the
critical role that Disneyland played in Anaheim’s development. There is undeniably a Disney

\textsuperscript{31} ibid
\textsuperscript{32} Findlay (1993)
atmosphere in Anaheim that has created a city with businesses and an economy oriented toward the service aesthetic that Disneyland inspired.

More than an Economic Giant

The transformation of Anaheim’s economic identity that resulted from the arrival of Disneyland represented the critical turning point in the history of Anaheim’s growth and development. Today, Anaheim remains focused on a commitment to service and commercial industries, with the bulk of its city budget and its economic drive coming from the spending and hotel stays in the Anaheim Resort area. With the onset of the Anaheim Resort District, the city government formally required that the Commercial-Recreation area around Disneyland focus solely on the entertainment industry, with uses and zoning requirements specifying that the new developments must focus solely on enhancing the resort atmosphere and the tourist-oriented nature of the area. This affect, however, served only to formalize an already existing trend: businesses around Disneyland were little more than auxiliary enterprises serving the needs and desires of visitors and tourists pouring through Anaheim en masse, as a result of the growth of Disneyland’s popularity. The path of Anaheim’s industrial growth, while still tending toward growth, therefore veered in 1955 from that of a booming industrial suburb to an entertainment capital, equally as powerful in its stature yet completely different in nature. As mentioned in Part I, the sorts of industries that a tourism focus attracts tend to be relatively low-paying industries that, as housing prices in Anaheim increased, drew from a larger area where employees could afford housing. Anaheim is therefore a city of visitors, built on an industry that hires workers from outside the city and attracts customers from far around the region and the country. The area around Disneyland is not meant to be a place of residence; rather, it is a
visitor’s haven full of hotel rooms and restaurants, but without the need to concern itself with services that residents would otherwise need.

Disneyland is more than simply Anaheim’s economic driving force, however. Numerous other cities from Detroit with its automakers to San Jose and the growth of the Silicon Valley have been defined by the industries and the companies that concentrate within their boundaries. In many ways, the arrival of Disneyland was essentially the same—the Disney Park provided a catalyst for an explosive tourism and entertainment industry that would remain the driving force behind Southern California’s growth through the present day. But there is a special distinction in the way Disneyland has affected Anaheim, for it is not solely Disneyland’s economic impact that has been felt in Anaheim. Considering the impact of the park in Anaheim, it is perhaps most noticeable that the park has affected—quite simply—the very appearance of its surroundings. From the décor of local businesses to the resort-like feel and dominant color schemes of the local area, Disneyland has, through the direct action mentioned in part I and indirect influence raised here, affected the visual feel of Anaheim and its urban character. Ultimately, the local government has made choices to impact that appearance and local businesses have taken on a certain character as well as a Disney-esque attention to service and to appearance that is undoubtedly a result of the need to attract customers looking for the complete Disney experience. It is this economic necessity that is primarily behind the visual appearance of the city around the theme park. In the end, Disneyland’s influence is not only economic, not only political, but is—perhaps most of all—visual. Disneyland has redefined Anaheim in many ways, but, as the next section illustrates, the visual impact of the park is its most enduring and most significant effect.
PART III: The Disneyland Aesthetic and the Themed City

Today, the Anaheim Resort District that surrounds Disneyland looks almost as if the distinction between the park and the city no longer exists. But long before the city government and the park agreed to the sweeping changes that brought into existence this “resort,” Anaheim was very much the product of Disneyland. Visually, the appearance of Anaheim has, since the park’s existence, been tied in some way or another to Disneyland: once the park drew its first visitors, tourism became the dominant industry in the city. The evolution of the tourist aesthetic that now defines central Anaheim paints a very interesting picture of how Disneyland has influenced that city—at times, the park has caused, as discussed in the last section, only tourist businesses to develop in its vicinity, and of late it has essentially directed the appearance of the local area down to the smallest details.

In the pages that follow, I will examine how closely Anaheim resembles Disneyland in a number of ways visually, and what this implies for the city built around the theme park. While Anaheim, as stated earlier, never intended to become the tourist mecca that it is known as today, it has spared little effort in embracing that identity and affecting an appearance in the local area that makes the borders of Disneyland and the city appear, at times, seamless. Disneyland, in many ways, has its own unique aesthetic that was created by Walt Disney and the original “imagineers” and has, in effect, guaranteed the park’s success in helping its guests to escape and to forget the outside world. As the park’s popularity grew, along with Anaheim’s need to accommodate visiting tourists, however, this aesthetic began to slip outside of the park. At first, simply the appearance of motels and roadside attractions was the only testament to the expansion of the Disney aesthetic outside of the resort. But as the park’s popularity grew and as businesses came to recognize the value of the Disney look, hotels and restaurants began to pick up their own
“themes” and to become, more or less, Disneyfied. While many authors have spoken about the Disneyfication or Disneyization of American and world urban landscapes, Anaheim is ground zero for the spread of this urban influence in America’s cities. What was once a farming town on the verge of an industrial boom is today a city that is a little less concrete, a little less practical—in short, a Disney city. The Disney Company may have built their model town in Celebration, Florida, but they needed look no further than Anaheim, their first home, to see that the Disney experience had been available in urban form long before.

The Disney Aesthetic: Imagination in Built Form

To speak of Disneyland and its environment as an original concept created by Walt Disney out of his imagination perhaps assigns too much value to the thoughts and ideas Disney had. While much of the idea for the park and its theming strategies did originate with Walt, it is important to recognize that Disneyland is as much a product of the film and television industry in which Walt and Roy Disney built their careers as it is of one man’s mind. As Charles Findlay, a noted author on western cityscapes, writes, “At a time when Americans spoke about the demise of motion pictures, Walt Disney ensured that, through theme parks and through television, Hollywood and the West became not less influential but more so.”

Disneyland built on the foundations of the developing Los Angeles region: it was based on films made in studios in Burbank, it catered to an automobile culture and was purposefully located just off of the Interstate 5 freeway, and it reflected, many might argue, the ideals and dreams of a suburban middle class—which soon came to form the bulk of residents in Disneyland’s home, Orange County.

The Disneyland aesthetic is based around one fundamental principle, which is the idea that a guest at the park is looking not to be reminded of the outside world, but to get away and

33 Findlay (1993).
escape for a day of enjoyment and peace of mind. To that end, the park is truly a virtual world built to emulate other landscapes and nostalgic imagery that, as Umberto Eco would argue, does not in reality exist. But to Walt Disney, the park was not an exercise in artificiality, but rather the natural extension of an experience he had come to know quite well as a famed creator of animated films: the escape provided by the cinema-going experience. There are three fundamental principles that cooperate in the creation of this experience: the concept of “theming” environments (an idea that Disney in essence invented for this park), a seemingly obsessive attention to detail and cleanliness, and an overall coherence and order to an area’s design. These three principles, while seemingly simple in their nature, combine to create a park environment that is able, like no other, to inspire in its guests a feeling of authentic escape.

The first of these principles, the idea of theming, was at the time a relatively new concept in the amusement park industry but it has today become foundational in both the amusement industry and in urban planning as a way to create a more engaging built environment. Theming is, in essence, the re-creation of an environment other than the one at-hand by tailoring buildings, foliage and other features to replicate the styles in the recreated environment. It is, in the Disneyland sense, the creation of Main Street, U.S.A. in reference to the main streets of numerous small towns in the American Midwest, or the construction of a hotel that resembles a villa in the Swiss Alps in the sunny Mediterranean climate of Southern California. It is the creation of an architectural motif with the intension of immersing the patron in another place, whether that place be historically or geographically different or altogether imagined. In Disneyland, there are today eight “lands” which define the overarching themes for specific areas of the park, serving at once to unify an area as well as to provide inspiration for the attractions.

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34 Eco (1995)
that appear within that area. These lands are “Adventureland,” “Tomorrowland,” “Fantasyland,” “Main Street, U.S.A.,” “Frontierland” (the original five), “Toontown,” “Critter Country,” and “New Orleans Square.” Each one, as their names suggest, represents an area or idea that may be historical (as in Main Street, U.S.A. or New Orleans Square or, to some extent, Adventureland with its allusions to early colonial Southeast Asia) or fantastical (as with the imagined future of Tomorrowland or the simulated animated world in Toontown). To enter Disneyland is to find oneself in a completely different environment, one in which the urban buildings and the freeways of surrounding Orange County seem a world away. This, in the end, is the point—to take the guest out of Southern California and to transport him or her into a different, but completely believable, world. The theme is the key to the escape.

In order to create an effective theme and to truly immerse the guest in another environment, then, attention to detail is essential. To Walt Disney, detail is what sets the Disney theme apart from simple theming for most publicity or marketing purposes—details such as the décor in a building or the type of metal used to create a guardrail are all important in making the themed environment as authentic as possible. Much like an animated film, the emphasis is on

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attention to the little things that guests will see as they experience the park and its attractions, places that an individual’s eyes might divert or that might catch the attention of a child waiting in line for an attraction. Designers are actually encouraged to think up silly quips and details to include in attractions, which in some ways can add to the feeling of authenticity in the attraction. For example, the signs at right include puns interspersed with actual locations, suggesting that Big Thunder Mountain is an actual geographic location. At the same time, the distances given to actual locations (such as Spiral Butte, which is in Washington State) suggest the lack of location of this attraction, and thus its fantastical and nonexistent nature. To Disney theme park creators, details such as these—details that add a small touch of humor and fantasy to the park—are critical to assuring the believability of the escape the park is attempting to provide.

Along with an attention to these small details, the level of cleanliness in the park is emphasized to an essentially supernatural level. Cleanliness is so heavily emphasized that it is common for a dropped napkin or an empty bottle that could not find a trash can is picked up by a custodial worker within ten seconds of its appearance on the ground, an act that goes almost unnoticed to guests. The park is spotless: garbage, paint scratches, browning plant leaves and stained curtains simply do not exist within its gates—they are simply removed or replaced virtually the moment they appear. In order to ensure this level of cleanliness, an omnipresent but almost invisible crew of custodians is constantly surveying the park to ensure that any object that

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is out of place or damaged is quickly removed from sight, guaranteeing a seamless clean
environment. The fact that this level of cleanliness is surreal in its nature did not bother
Disneyland’s creators, however: “[quote from Marling].” To Disney and his Imagineers,
Disneyland was an upgrade of sorts, an improvement on current urban forms which provided
only uncontrolled and, to Walt, unnatural environments. John Hench, a designer at the
Disneyland park, once said,

“In modern cities you have to defend yourself constantly and you go counter to
everything that we’ve learned from the past. You tend to isolate yourself from other
people…You tend to be less aware. You tend to be more withdrawn. This is counter-
life…I think we need something to counteract what modern society—cities have done to
us.” (quoted in Findlay, p. 67).

To Hench, the whole idea behind Disneyland was to create an environment where cities and
urban environments could be made into their best, to demonstrate the value of good urban
planning and environmental design. It was less artificial than real cities because it was an
environment where people felt free to be themselves and to interact as comfortable, sociable
individuals, free from the stifling environment of the city.

The attention to detail that characterizes Disneyland and its sister parks would be for
naught, however, without a complementary set of principles that define a strong sense of
coherence within the park and its lands. The park emphasizes an overall structure that is divided
up by its lands, and each attraction, shop, restaurant and piece of décor within those lands
complements the theme of the land. For example, buildings in Adventureland (as in Image 3.1)
emphasize a British Colonial architectural style and the plants in the area complement that image

Flammarion.
by suggesting the jungles of India or Southeast Asia. This one example also illustrates another caveat of the Disney aesthetic: the simplified or glorified version of history it presents, for while Adventureland may be a happy place, the colonial outposts it is suggesting were not always known for their humane treatment of the locals. The primary goal, however, is escape, and the escape is best achieved when the entire area seems as if it truly another world, through a unified design vision. Not only must the trees and buildings conform to an area’s image, but likewise its employees must wear outfits befitting the era they are representing and sign fonts must resemble fonts used in that same era. Thus it is that an attention to small details complements the overall scheme for an area, resulting in a coherent design theme that is key to Disneyland’s sensory and wholly immersive experience.

These three principles: theming, attention to detail and cleanliness, and cohesive design all contribute to the comfortable and fantastic experience that is Disneyland. If they were not packaged as an entire experience, the lands and buildings of Disneyland might seem completely unbelievable. But because so much emphasis is placed on the complete experience and on immersing the visitor in an environment that limits exposure to the outside world, Disneyland is able to induce in its guests feelings of security and comfort—making for a complete vacation from the outside. This environment is in one light a positive contribution: Disneyland effectively proved that individual behaviors, especially behaviors that were antisocial or destructive to the societal environment, could be largely controlled by design of the built environment and constant attention by omnipresent “cast” and security personnel.\textsuperscript{39} On the other hand, Disneyland is little more than an escape, an environment that is nice as a day-long (or multi-day) vacation, but offers little as a functioning urban environment with residents and a governance structure. Just the same, the environment around Disneyland has, since its existence, come to model itself in many ways.

ways on this environment, emphasizing the principles of comfort and escape established by the park. As Disneyland expands outward in influence, then, it begs the question: can the fantastical, comforting and controlled environment of Disneyland be replicated in urban environments to create the society envisioned by Walt Disney when he created Disneyland?

**Disneyization and its Discontents: Academics on the Societal Impact of Disneyland**

Before continuing the exploration of the aesthetic of Anaheim, it is useful here to survey current thought surrounding the influence of Disneyland in society—especially in urban planning—since its development. In the over fifty years since its opening, Disneyland has often been derided as an anti-urban environment heavily oriented to the middle class. It has been the subject of numerous new, largely derogatory, terms in the English language—terms like *Disneyfication*, *Disneyesque*, or even the adjective *E-ticket*.40 The impact of the theme park, more than the movies and other products of the Walt Disney Company, has been highly noted in American and world society. Today themed experiences are almost so prevalent that an Irish pub or a Polynesian hotel in a central business district seems almost second-nature. However, as numerous authors have noted, Disneyland has more than any other entity been the catalyst behind these developments, turning our urban environments and our social spaces into something completely different—for better or worse. The debate surrounding Disneyland has been heated as its critics and its champions have found it difficult to decide for certain whether the changes in urban planning and social structure that have resulted since the 1950s and Disneyland have created more functional urban spaces or a less authentic society.

Disneyland was, from its opening, accepted as an artificial and surreal environment designed to provide escape from the world surrounding it—namely, Los Angeles. But not until the 1980s did the idea take hold that this escape might in fact have a negative influence on our

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society. Umberto Eco, the famed Italian thinker and social analyst, coined in his 1975 essay “Faith in Fakes” the term hyperreality to describe the phenomenon then overtaking urban landscapes in America largely as a result of the popularity of Disneyland and Walt Disney World. To Eco, the problem arises in the creation of an environment based on history or fantasy, an environment with no basis in reality except that it exists in three dimensions. “For historical information to be absorbed, it has to assume the aspect of a reincarnation,” Eco says. “To speak of things that one wants to connote as real, these things must seem real. The ‘completely real’ becomes identified with the ‘completely fake’.”

To Jean Beaudrillard, a French thinker writing two years before Eco, the tendency was not the result simply of Disneyland but of a larger trend toward a less practically oriented society. Beaudrillard argues, “The Disneyland imaginary is neither true nor false, it is a deterrence machine set up in order to rejuvenate in reverse the fiction of the real.”

To both of these authors, the environment that is Disneyland is one that blends the real and the imagined or artificial, taking it to a level where real and fake become blended and, thus, indistinguishable. To the visitor to Disneyland, Eco and Beaudrillard would argue, the actual West of the frontier era is little distinguishable from the version presented in Frontierland: he or she would imagine the original to conform to its copy. Much like the way a city like Paris, New York or San Francisco can become romanticized by its representation in cinema, the lands in Disneyland romanticize and idealize (and, for that matter, sanitize) the worlds of fantasy and history to create an artificial reality that legitimizes this inaccurate representation of the past.

Drawing off of these conceptions of Disneyland as hyperreality in its purest form, John Findlay examines in his work *Magic Lands: Western Cityscapes and American Culture after*...

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1940 the impact of Disneyland within the larger context of the Los Angeles region. Findlay finds that Disneyland is not purely its own entity, but that it is better examined as the product of a regional culture focused on the entertainment industry. While it was made to provide an escape from the overwhelming scope and culture of Los Angeles, it is very much the product of that region. “[Disneyland] was intended not to resemble a particular site or region—least of all a large and confusing metropolis,” says Findlay. “In a way, it was supposed to be placeless, even though it was very much the product of a particular place and also an influential force in the reshaping of that place.” Findlay argues, rather, that the goal was to create “a living set for television,” an environment in which the guest became part of the movie and the television show. After all, much of the funding for Disneyland’s construction came from ABC, which was given a weekly TV series chronicling the park’s development in return. Disneyland is an artificial environment because it is, quite literally, a stage built to be seen and to be experienced selectively. Guests are never exposed to “backstage,” or to the outside world once they are on stage in Disneyland.

These authors, however, theorize in mostly philosophical or abstract terms that anticipate the effects of such a change on society. Alan Bryman, a sociologist by trade, examines the influences of Disneyland and its sister parks through a more concrete lens, analyzing specific ways in which the Disney Company has changed built environments and cultural norms since the arrival of Disneyland in 1955. Bryman does not take as heavily critical a tone as the previous authors in his analysis of Disneyland’s influence on our society; in fact, he specifically defines the term Disneyization apart from Disneyfication, claiming that the latter has become overly steeped in negative connotations and a tendency to be associated with a directly Disney influence.

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43 Findlay (1993), 54
44 Quote from Walt Disney, *ibid*, p. 59
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(i.e. a Mickey Mouse statue in a downtown square) rather than indirect influences (such as the general trend toward theming). In Bryman’s analysis, it is this indirect impact that is more important, and, while he admits the impact is not due purely to Disney, he argues that the influence of Disneyland and the Disney Company in modern society is more far-reaching than is often acknowledged. The goal, Bryman posits, is to persuade consumers, through theming and the adoption of the service culture of Disney employees, to consume more than they might normally out of necessity. Ultimately, to Alan Bryman, Disneyland is more than an influential power in society; it has in essence defined a new framework under which modern society should be analyzed—the framework of modern consumerism (or, perhaps, over-consumption).

In recent years the influence of the Disney style in urban planning has grown as a result of a turn toward greater nostalgia for the small-town feel of Disney’s Main Street and the influence of a movement among planners calling itself the New Urbanism. New Urbanism was established by the Congress for a New Urbanism in 1993 as a response to the perceived planning faults of the nation’s seemingly endless suburban sprawl, with the goal of reforming the way new towns are developed and with the aim of encouraging more walkable and sustainable urban regions. The principles outlined in the Congress’s Charter, published at that first meeting in 1993, establish three levels of planning—the region or metropolis, the neighborhood and district, and the block, street and building—each with nine respective principles related to the key goals of mixed-use development (mixing commerce and residential development, for example), transportation-oriented development, a decreased emphasis on the automobile, and residential areas that mix affordable housing with market-rate units. These principles were built off of the collective experiences of Andrés Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zybeck, Peter Calthorpe and many of their contemporaries in cities and towns around the world that emphasized this small-town,
More recently, however, many of their principles have been criticized as, in practice, overly focused on creating a nostalgic feel for a history in American cities that may never have existed. For example, most of the narrow streets and mixed-use areas in cities like New York, Boston or even Paris and Rome developed because cities were designed before the automobile dominated transportation; thus, they were pedestrian-friendly by virtue of the goals of their era and not because it was a specific design goal. “[The New Urbanism] is a utopian vision of ‘small-town America’ embodied in Disneyland’s Main Street,” points out one author. It is the embodiment of a dream for a place that never existed—in essence, a themed environment.

In fact, in 1998 the Disney Company did in fact popularize the ideas of the New Urbanism by undertaking the development of its own town named Celebration, just outside of Walt Disney World in Florida. The development implemented many of the principles espoused by the New Urbanism, but with a particularly Disney bent—the company developed, along with the town, a narrative describing the town’s founding in the early twentieth century and the history of its various buildings. Of course, the town was built on undeveloped land, so such a history did not in fact exist. Outside of this artificial history, however, the town fundamentally exemplifies the street and neighborhood level goals of the Congress for a New Urbanism, leading to further criticisms that the New Urbanism is essentially promoting the disneyfication of American suburbs. On the other hand, this disneyfication may not be such a bad consequence. The New Urbanist principles aim to promote livable cities with a strong sense of community due to their emphasis on local character. New Urbanism may in fact be an urban design manifestation of Disneyland’s principles, but it may be worthwhile for modern urban

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46 Shilbey 1998, p. 81
47 See, for example, Bryman’s (2004) analysis of Disneyland’s influence on local development.
environments to emulate Disney’s principles to increase the level of comfort and community in the urban environment.

**Disneyland and the Outside: Like You Never Left**

Whatever its influence on the larger American society and urban form, Disney’s influence in the aesthetic environment its local area is very pronounced, from its passive influence on local businesses and their appearance to its active influence on the design and implementation of the Anaheim Resort District (see Section I). Early photos of the Disneyland area show Anaheim to have been a completely different town before the arrival of the park. The photo above shows the Disneyland sight in 1954, as the land had just been cleared and construction was beginning. As is clearly visible in the photo, most of the surrounding area, including along Harbor Boulevard (the street at the right edge of the sight), was farmland. Only across the site of the new freeway (the diagonal at the top of the photo) is development apparent, with most of that development resulting from the city’s industrial growth (see Part II). In its most basic sense, however, this photo shows the simple way that Disneyland altered the urban landscape of Anaheim, introducing development into an area that was previously empty farm land, and, as illustrated in Section II, altering the direction of economic development from a focus on heavy industry to an entertainment and tourism economy.
A photograph from only a couple years after the park’s opening, in 1958, shows the way these developments quickly took hold in the park. As is visible in the image below, many of the farm plots that originally had surrounded the parking lot and park site, especially at key intersections (such as the one at bottom left), were replaced with hotel developments catering to the already strong visitor population. As the park entered its second five years in the 1960s, the level of development would become so strong that Walt Disney would remark on the often sleazy nature of the tourist area surrounding the park, ultimately leading to the decision to build Walt Disney World in Florida (with the benefit of a large, secluded land area). Ultimately Disneyland would win out in the area, however, as themed hotels and family-oriented experiences became the focus of the city’s tourism drive and, in the 1990s, the Anaheim Resort District developed.

More than its basic development and economic impacts, however, Disneyland has had a very influential role in defining the visual appearance of the area around it. By examining the aforementioned characteristics of a Disney theme park—theming, attention to detail, and, later, an emphasis on cleanliness—and their manifestations within the city, it is clear that whether intentional or not, Disneyland’s influence in its surrounding urban area is stronger than many other large developments. For Disneyland, the impact, much like the idea behind the park, is aesthetic and intangible, felt more in the feel and experience of the environment than in the type of environment itself.

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The Themed City

Theming in the area surrounding Disneyland is today virtually commonplace, as the Anaheim Resort District has created an environment in which hotels, restaurants and entertainment venues in the surrounding area seek to appeal to tourists who are in Anaheim to have a Disney experience. Before the development of a tourism-focused district around Disneyland and the eventual development of the Anaheim Resort District, the area around Disneyland had experienced a gradual shift. Businesses in the local area originally did not conform to Walt Disney’s vision of what should have developed—instead of bars and strip malls Walt would have preferred much more control over the appearance of the local area. In 1964, Walt expressed his regret at not having purchased the surrounding land and leaving that land open to speculators, saying, “Our biggest mistake was not buying more of the land around Disneyland. Then we could have had more control over the theme and nature of the construction.”

Theming the local area, then, was what Walt envisioned as the ideal circumstance for his Disneyland, and may have been part of the reason he proceeded to purchase a veritable city’s worth of land in Florida in 1964 for Walt Disney World. But what Walt did not recognize was that, despite its seemingly tawdry appearance at the time, the area in Disneyland’s surroundings would eventually become one of the most themed urban landscapes in the country.

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49 As quoted in Findlay, p. 107
The process of how that theming came about was partly described in Part I, as much of the appearance today in the local area has resulted from the “resortification” (a term I will use to describe the process of converting the area into a resort) of that area. Before 1998 brought the complete renovation of the local area, Disneyland’s surroundings had been known for their distinctly unorganized feel. A seemingly random clutter of hotels and motels, gas stations, restaurants and bars made the area outside the park seem very incongruent with the family environment inside the park. The separation between outside and inside was, in a word, striking, perhaps most so in the cleanliness of the inside as compared to the grunginess of the outside. A photo down Harbor Boulevard in 1974 (at right) shows exactly the type of appearance issues this created for the park. Behind the Disneyland sign can be seen equally dominant signs advertising such venues as “Cosmic Age Lounge” and the “Seven Seas Restaurant,” two examples of the kitschy and tourist-centered businesses that arrived in the area (as well as of the spread of themed experiences outside of Disneyland). When the Anaheim Planning Commission and the Disneyland Resort began working together in 1991, however, the level of regulation of the local area increased, much to the Disney Company’s delight. Image 3.6, below, shows a part of Harbor Boulevard today with its lush bush-lined sidewalks and the overwhelming number of palm trees that now line the streets. In addition to the foliage that now dominates the landscape, the Anaheim Resort Specific Plan (and its sister Specific Plans) incorporates a number of elements which essentially “theme” this area of Anaheim to be a resort destination, compliant with all of Walt Disney’s in-park wishes.

The goals laid out in the Anaheim Resort Specific Plan all concentrated on one overarching aim: to turn Anaheim into a more coherent and attractive tourist destination. As Las Vegas and numerous other tourist destinations in the Southwest began to encroach on
Part III: The Disneyland Aesthetic and the Themed City

Disneyland and Anaheim’s stake in Western tourism, Anaheim government officials and Disney executives began to worry about the viability of the resort in the long term. For this reason, the resort plan lays out four primary aims:

- To maintain and encourage Anaheim’s position as a nationally recognized tourist, convention and recreation center;
- To increase sales tax yields and further enhance the economic base of the community, thereby lessening the tax burden on real property;
- To encourage the development of quality facilities which complement conventions, family entertainment and recreation within appropriate areas; and
- To maintain the integrity of commercial-recreation area (now referred to as the Anaheim Resort) by permitting only compatible land uses within this designated area.

Essentially, the plan aimed to encourage longer stays in the resort (to increase sales tax and hotel tax revenue) and to encourage the seamless transition between the resort and Disneyland.

To that end, the resort plans establishes what is essentially a garden aesthetic for the entire area, requiring specific setbacks from the roads, planting roadsides with a large amount of plant life, and requiring businesses to use signs of a specified design and height (so as

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http://anaheim.net/citydepartments/planning/specific_plans/anaheim_resort/
to avoid the level of signage in Image 3.5). The specific requirements of the plan and the types of plants, signage and other requirements that the plan requires of businesses in the local area make clear that the city around the park has become, today, what is essentially a themed city.

Before resortification the area surrounding Disneyland was, as I have pointed out above, essentially an endless maze of big signs, tacky shops, endless strip malls and a variety of hotels, motels and restaurants. To a visitor such an environment could seem, put simply, very chaotic. Today, however, entering the resort district (by car, of course) is like driving into another world where plants thrive in a luscious garden environment and the hot Southern California sun seems not as daunting as it does in Garden Grove. The area is an artificial garden world, planted with imported palms, shrubbery and grass that was chosen based on its ability to create “a festive

Image 3.8. Anaheim Resort District map (City of Anaheim Planning Department).
Part III: The Disneyland Aesthetic and the Themed City

atmosphere” in the area.\textsuperscript{52} The environment is, ultimately, not the organic—and often sporadic—type of development that had once characterized the area, but rather has an imposed theme with the intent of unifying and giving resort-like character to the entire area.

There are several elements to the Anaheim Resort Specific Plan that make this image and this unified identity possible, but rather than provide a laundry-list of the extremely detailed requirements of the resort plan it is perhaps more efficacious to highlight elements that illustrate the level of detail that this imposed aesthetic requires of businesses and developments within the district. In a number of ways the fact that such a level of detail was achieved suggests that this development is much more than a traditional public-private partnership, as the aesthetic has taken on a great deal more than most zoning requirements in other localities. The Specific Plan, which applies to an area designated as the Commercial-Recreation Area in 1961 largely spanning an area bounded by Harbor Boulevard, Katella Avenue, the renamed Disneyland Drive (West Street), and the Interstate 5 Freeway (see map on previous page). The Anaheim Resort District, which is the area bounded in purple on the map, actually includes three separate specific plans which all incorporate the same general design elements: the aforementioned Anaheim Resort Specific Plan, the Disneyland Resort Specific Plan, and the Hotel Circle Specific Plan (which applies to the small white area along Katella Avenue). The two other plans gave the Disneyland Resort the ability to expand its resort (including the addition of a second theme park, two new hotels and the Downtown Disney shopping area) and allowed a selection of hotels to expand their facilities, while simultaneously requiring the same design elements in all three plans. As a report on the plan demonstrates, each plan incorporates the planning features developed by Cooper Robertson & Partners of New York, a design consulting firm that had initially been

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid. “Design Plan.”
The plan, then, imposes certain visual guidelines and models on the public areas within the resort: the sidewalks, roadways, and setbacks over which the city had control. To that end, the main requirements of the plan were actually changes undertaken by city funding: newly landscaped walkways, new signage and the five “gateways” established at key entry points were funded by municipal bonds backed by Disneyland.

Perhaps the most notable element of the redefined aesthetic, then, is the signage that all businesses located within the resort area are required to use (although, the use of additional signage, so long as it is not excessively high or imposing, is permitted). The signs are, in the plan, intended to “reinforce the landscape character of the Anaheim Resort,” “direct visitors efficiently,” and to appear traditional in aesthetic, with a trellis design that is either squared (vertical line-crosses) or diamond (diagonal crosses). A consistent color system that emphasizes pastels and plant-like greens is also required of all signage within the area. The signs and the level to which they are imposed apply to three areas in the district region: the public realm (roads and sidewalks themselves), the setback realm (the edge of private property, where business signs are located) and the private realm (private property). In each of the three cases, however, the same trellised and

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traditional designs and the same color schemes unify the resort aesthetic. Like the themed lands of Disneyland, it is this feature that unifies the resort aesthetic and creates an overall design coherence.

In the public realm, most signage includes street signs, directional and traffic signs and informational signs that can be used to provide custom messages for arriving visitors. The most overwhelming of these signs, perhaps, are the gateways that are found on the major roadways at the boundaries of the Resort District. As the photograph on the previous page illustrates, the gateway is a relatively unimposing marker of arrival in the Anaheim Resort, which serves more to introduce the aesthetic of the area than to mark a boundary or to provide a welcome sign for the district. It also illustrates the trellis design and the green colors that are emphasized in all elements of the resort district, unifying it with the other signage in the area. Ultimately, the main goal of signage in the public realm is to mark the arrival within the resort as well as to emphasize the unity of the area, in order to create a comfortable area for visitors.

In the setback area are placed business signs for the various tourist-oriented businesses that are located within the resort district. Much like the signs in the public area, these signs all follow the same design elements and color scheme, serving to unify the businesses. In another light, the signs impose a de facto level of sameness on the businesses within the area, forcing all businesses to use the same style of sign and to seem, at least on some level, equal in their ability to advertise and appeal to passers-by. For

Image 3.10. Anaheim Resort Center sign (photo credit: Andrew Reovan).
example, the sign at left for a selection of stores calling themselves the Anaheim Resort Centre shows the uniform style for all signs within the resort, with the trellis style (highlighted by a floral emblem at the top of columns) featured on the sides of the sign, the address number at the top, and the main sign space open to design by the business owners. The sign appears very traditional and very unimposing, two goals that the specific plan calls for in all signage within the area. As a requirement of local businesses, however, not only does the sign make the businesses seem equal and non-descript in their advertising, but it also imposes a sort of theme on the area—on that is traditional and trellised, but themed just the same. Without imposing requirements on private property, the uniform sign requirement remains an effective way to theme and to unify the resort district.

In the private realm, the requirements are much less explicit and lean towards guidelines rather than requirements, guidelines that the Planning Department may use in determining whether to approve or modify a development within the district. The guidelines, however, request that businesses within the area emphasize the visual appearance of their buildings and landscaped areas, suggesting, among other site plan ideas, that buildings be sufficiently set back from the walking areas to allow for maximum visual appeal and that their façades emphasize pastel colors and a plant and nature aesthetic. Of particular note is one section that details “Amusement Park, Theme-Type Complexes, [and] Back of House Service Area.” Within this design guideline are the stipulations that businesses “Screen service areas and loading docks from public view” and that they “Use landscaping to soften the visual appearance of service areas.”\(^{55}\) The fact that this section describes these proposals as “theme-type” or “amusement park” in style emphasizes the way that many of the design elements used in the plan take the design features of Disneyland and emphasize them in the urban environment. Drawing its basis

\(^{55}\) ibid
off the Disneyland Park, the resort plan demonstrates that the influence of the park has, especially in recent years, spread far outside the park to define the appearance and feel of the Commercial-Recreation area in its vicinity.

While Disneyland has had this aesthetic influence on the city, the question of how the city has had its own aesthetic influence over Disneyland, especially considering that this is the only Disney amusement resort to be located within the boundaries and jurisdiction of one local government. Building codes, height restrictions and health standards have of course been imposed on the park, but these elements are requirements with which other Disney parks must deal, to some extent. Disneyland’s mountain attractions and its castle are noticeably smaller than those at other resorts, but this fact is easily masked by an adjustment of the scale of design and a reduction in the surroundings in order to make the building seem larger than it actually is. At the same time, however, Disney has had to adapt to its urban location. Parking, for example, as developed in the Disneyland Resort Specific Plan, is provided primarily by way of a massive parking structure that stands as one of the largest such structures in the world.\(^5\) Similarly, as the land on which Disneyland is located is a slightly smaller lot than the Magic Kingdom at Walt Disney World and at the other international parks, many of the attractions are packed closer in and require more compact designs than their counterparts. But if nothing else, Disney’s famed Imagineers—the designers, engineers, planners and artists behind the parks and their attractions—are masters of adaptation. Disneyland’s location within a developed, urban area is a unique challenge that its planners have successfully integrated into park plans. After all, the fact that the area is now urban and highly developed is due quite significantly to Disneyland’s choice to locate itself within this location. Later parks recognized the challenges this provided and sought to overcome the obstacle of local government by claiming city-sized plots, but

\(^{5}\) Lockwood (2000).
Disneyland stands as a testament to the fact that Anaheim and Disneyland are, for better or worse, intimately intertwined.

**Identity Formation in Anaheim**

The impact of the Disneyland Resort in Anaheim is perhaps most strongly felt in the purely visual way in which the resort has affected and modified, directly and indirectly, its surroundings. Since Disneyland’s arrival in 1955, the part of Anaheim surrounding it has become significantly more characterized by a tourist-focused appearance: “themed” business façades and experiences, rapid urbanization in the local area, and an emphasis on a welcoming, garden-like environment as a result of the area’s conversion into the Anaheim Resort District. The city’s transformation from a small farm town into a thriving center of Orange County urbanization has been due in no small part to Disneyland, which began by drawing millions of tourists annually into the area and has left its mark in the form of a bustling tourist district and an emphasis on the city’s service economy. Appearances and the aesthetic in the local area are very much the product of Disneyland’s arrival; in fact, before Disneyland the area was farmland, whereas today it is a thriving center of hotel accommodations, restaurants and entertainment venues the likes of which would only be possible in the vicinity of a world-class theme park. The Anaheim Resort, as it is known today, is truly an archetype of the tourist city and the visual impact that tourism has in an urban environment.

In many cases, the success of the Anaheim Resort in Anaheim has served as an example in the planning field of how districting—and theming—an area can not only create a more unified identity but can also create a more enjoyable experience for the all-important visitor. In the end, the theme, the unified appearance, and the theme park aesthetic are all imposed with the aim of pleasing and providing for the visitor, for an outsider who will basically know the city
based on these, essentially, manufactured environments. Little has been said, however, in the city’s documents or in media reports about the area in consideration of local residents, who as far as it seems are unaffected by the artificial feeling of their environment. For all practical purposes, the Anaheim Resort is not home to any residents—only a few surrounding neighborhoods have residents but, as was illustrated in Section I, housing is explicitly disallowed from the Resort District. It also is certainly not a downtown of any sort—Anaheim and other Orange County residents may visit to dine or even to visit Disneyland, but it is not a business center or even an established center of urban activity. Yet the area is home to Downtown Disney and it emphasizes “traditional” forms in its aesthetic vision, forms that are designed to feel comfortable and, arguably, homelike. The goal therefore is not to become a real urban environment, but to emulate and to simulate elements of comfortable urban environments to create an area that feels as enjoyable and comfortable as possible, at least for the time that a visitor spends within the area.

The value of such a district and environment to the city of Anaheim goes without saying—it is intended to attract visitors for longer stays and to ensure that they are more immersed in the experience they receive in Anaheim, stopping by not just for the day to see Disneyland but spending a number of days in the Anaheim Resort. This was not only an opportunistic attempt to maximize spending on tourism by city leaders, but also a response to increased competition in a tourist industry that has become more and more geared towards family-friendly experiences in themed environments (such as Las Vegas’ transformation and, to a lesser extent, the emphasis on Fisherman’s Wharf and Pier 39-type experiences in San Francisco). But Anaheim is not the only city to have renovated a part or the whole of its core in order to appeal to tourists and to present a unified theme, especially through symbolic
representation of the historic identity of an area (such as the use of a maritime aesthetic in districts that were once industrial ports). The use of such theming techniques not only creates a stronger identity for a district, but provides, as in the Anaheim Resort, a stronger sense of the area’s importance to the city and the community it serves. While residents of Anaheim may not frequent the Anaheim Resort as often as outside visitors, the district is still recognized as a specifically entertainment-oriented area and, perhaps more significantly, has served to establish Disneyland’s prominence in the local community. Disney may have, in one light, expanded outward as a result of the change to the Anaheim Resort, but in many more ways that expansion had begun the moment the site was selected in 1953.
Conclusion

As the preceding analyses have shown, Disneyland’s role in its urban space has been one that is much more than economic or political, but rather the park has expanded its role outside of the boundaries of the Disneyland Resort to become the defining power in the local aesthetic. The picture that emerges is one of Disneyland overtaking the local community in a very visual way, as if the themed imagery and vacation-focused design of the park spread into the city like a viral infection. But the spread that occurred was, as shown, not entirely random and not at all unintended: the city, its businesses and the amusement park in many ways collaborated to ensure that the visual imagery of the Disneyland model could be encountered outside of Disneyland.

From the arrival of Disneyland through to recent debates over housing and the development of the Anaheim Resort District, the city government has been, with little exception, accommodating of the Disney Company’s wishes and of the growth of the amusement park’s influence in the city’s economy and overall character. It is through this accommodation that Disneyland now holds visible and virtually autonomous control over decisions made about its local area, which leaves local residents with virtually no say in this isolated tourist district.

Tendency to favor Disneyland’s wishes, in many cases over those of other equally influential parties, was illustrated in the three episodes highlighted in Part I. Disneyland won the city over by choosing Anaheim as its home in the early 1950s, and when the park felt threatened by potentially tall buildings or an influx of housing in its vicinity, the city ultimately favored the concerns of the park over all others. Through an emphasis on the park’s ability to survive economically—by entertaining its guests and creating the illusion of a complete escape from the outside world—Disney officials were able to argue that the city’s interests (in protecting its increasingly tourism-centered economy) aligned with the interests of Disneyland itself. It is this
rhetoric that has allowed the amusement park to claim a virtual dominion over decision-making and aesthetic choices in the tourist district that surrounds it.

In Part II, however, Disneyland’s influence in the local community was revealed to involve more than its relations with the public entity of the city government. Rather than directly determining which businesses grew and which were not welcome in its vicinity, Disneyland was able to influence through less direct means the character of its surroundings. As the theme park’s economic power in the local community grew—i.e., as more and more visitors came to experience the park each year—businesses in the vicinity of Disneyland developed in ever greater numbers to take advantage of the higher traffic and the need of services like restaurants and accommodations. The present Anaheim Resort District is over 86% comprised of businesses focused on direct tourism needs and auxiliary services associated with tourism, and as it stands the area is zoned to allow only businesses of a similar type to be present within its boundaries. More astounding than this simply high concentration of tourist businesses, however, is the way in which Disneyland has quite literally redefined the city of Anaheim. When the theme park arrived, Anaheim was well on its way to becoming a center of industrial development as the combination of easy access on the I-5 freeway and low property taxes for business lead to a rapidly expanding economy. But the same incentives attracted Disney officials to the site in Anaheim, and since that pivotal arrival the tourism industry has taken off within the city and the once-prominent industrial sector has been replaced with hotels, restaurants, and tourism services. The lack of a diverse economy may prove to be a difficult conundrum for the city if a significant downturn in tourism reduces visitors to the Disneyland area, and thus it remains to be seen whether the decision to favor this development has been more a benefit or a setback for the city.
Regardless of whether the city followed the right path by favoring a tourism economy, the city has been a willing and influential party in the shift towards a uniquely Disney-esque aesthetic. Focusing on an attention to detail and a coherent and themed garden design, the City of Anaheim and the Disneyland Resort recently collaborated to create the Anaheim Resort Specific Plan, which ties in a unified aesthetic and zoning changes that further emphasize the tourist businesses in the area. Even before the plan, however, Disneyland’s influence on the local aesthetic could be felt in the theming of hotels and restaurants as well as direct influences such as the restricted business heights described in Part I. This was in fact the initial step toward the Anaheim Resort district, as a de facto tourist-centered area existed long before the resort designation was created. Today, the district in which Disneyland lies is zoned exclusively for tourism, comprising a special part of the city set aside to hold visitors and to orient itself toward their concerns and needs. Disneyland’s aesthetic has literally made its aesthetic—and thus its influence—visibly felt in the surrounding area. The urban area that surrounds Disneyland has become as a result not so much of a city with residents and local concerns, but a public space with private economic goals, a place designed to promote tourism and to represent an image of what the vacation destination in city form should be.

The implications of this design goal for the city lead to an interesting series of conclusions. As the area surrounding Disneyland has an artificially imposed identity (of a garden resort), it is, like Main Street, U.S.A. in Disneyland, an inauthentic urban space. It is an area designed to simulate urbanism for a week or less, to serve as an exciting destination but not to be a long-term home to any resident or employee. What, then, has become of Anaheim’s actual identity? Despite playing home to two sports teams and being home to over 350,000 residents, the city is still primarily known as being home to Disneyland and has little to offer in
terms of an urban identity, having been formed primarily as a suburb of Los Angeles. This lack of identity is actually very clear in the official name of the city’s home baseball team: “the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim.”

The city has taken a strong stance toward forming its own identity, however, as it constructs a new large-scale, mixed-use and high-density development known as Platinum Triangle around the Angels Stadium. The development seeks to bring an influx of thousands of new residents as well as a new urban core that the city’s planning department has envisioned as a “unique opportunity in the heart of Orange County” or a sort of new downtown for the county’s residents. The city has also focused on revitalizing its own city center with a new high-rise city hall facility, the development of large mixed-use apartment complexes in the vicinity of City Hall and the Anaheim Public Library, and new community facilities throughout the central city area. The biggest challenge for the city, then, is overcoming its strong tourist identity and seeing the successful completion of these identity-shifting projects—and the non-tourism jobs they aim to provide. The city’s economy has a lot to gain in these new projects, and if the city can overcome its Disney-centric past, its success as a rising urban center in Southern California is almost guaranteed.

While Anaheim serves as a very striking example of the influence of one dominant tourist enterprise within a city, a number of city’s nationwide are today facing the same sorts of challenges that Anaheim has faced in deciding whether to focus their identity solely on tourism or to aim to focus more on business investment and standard economic pursuits. In the modern economy it is virtually essential for cities—especially those with the biggest losses from industrial out-migration—to have an aspect of tourism promotion as a way to attract economic stimulation. Attracting tourists, however, involves a much more complex set of principles than
does attracting business investment—primarily the same principles that Anaheim utilized to institute the Anaheim Resort. To continually attract visitors (especially repeat visitors), cities are forced to focus not only on their attractions and amenities, but more importantly they must emphasize the visual appearance of their urban spaces. This creates a tendency to create spaces that, like the Anaheim Resort, simulate the urban environment rather than creating authentic and organic urban environments. A tourist environment is admittedly beneficial to an urban environment, but without a strong urban identity cities (like Anaheim) face becoming solely destinations and not great places to live and work. Ultimately cities must balance their need to be effective living environments with the need to attract outside visitors and tourists as an economic stimulus.

The issue raised here therefore is not simply an issue of city identification, but of the more fundamental problem of how city’s can balance their identities with their marketed identities. As cities promote themselves and their tourist amenities—through regular advertising as well as through an alteration of the aesthetic of the urban environment—the image of the city as livable space is threatened. Anaheim serves as a promising model, however, one that has accepted its role as a tourist destination and has chosen to distinctly separate that identity from the rest of the city, through zoning and district creation. And as the city focuses increasingly on a more diversified economy its steps toward separating the entertainment-tourism uses from other city uses contribute to a more balanced city, barricading Disneyland and its associated uses from the rest of the city. While Disneyland has managed to spread its influence visually and otherwise outside of the park, its extent has been siphoned off by zoning boundaries—a virtual tourniquet to stop the flow the Disneyfied city. Anaheim is lucky in that it is able to isolate the tourism element in its city, most cities do not have that luxury. For those cities tourism and its
visual influence are not so easily cut off, and the tourist city is simultaneously the resident city. Perhaps the key in those cities as well is to allow certain areas and districts to emphasize tourism, allowing the associated aesthetic to focus in those areas while the rest of the city can embrace an organic and lived-in appearance.
## Appendix A: Business Data

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<th></th>
<th>92802 (Anaheim Resort Area)</th>
<th>92805 (North of Resort Area)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants - Fast Food</td>
<td>17  8.29%</td>
<td>6   3.80%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Restaurants - Full Service</td>
<td>24  11.71%</td>
<td>2   1.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accomodations</td>
<td>48  23.41%</td>
<td>7   4.43%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gift/Novelty/Souvenir Store</td>
<td>29  14.15%</td>
<td>Garden Supplies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food Service - Other</td>
<td>28  5.37%</td>
<td>Technology Sales</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial Services</td>
<td>11  2.44%</td>
<td>Healthcare</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apparel &amp; Accessories</td>
<td>8   3.90%</td>
<td>Financial Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>2   0.98%</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking Services</td>
<td>2   0.98%</td>
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<td>Temp Employment</td>
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<td>Service Agencies</td>
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<td>Arcades, etc.)</td>
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57 All data compiled from Reference USA’s database of US Businesses ([http://www.referenceusa.com/index2.asp](http://www.referenceusa.com/index2.asp)), © 2008 infoUSA, Inc. Omaha, NE.
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<th>92805 (North of Resort Area)</th>
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Sources


Sources


