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CITY OF LOS ANGELES
ANIMAL CARE AND CONTROL

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HUMAN DEMOGRAPHICS

The city of Los Angeles is divided into four major geographical areas: the Harbor, Central, Western and San Fernando Valley regions. For several decades, up through the early 1970's, the city's most densely populated areas were in the Central and Western regions. This concentration occurred despite the higher growth rate in the San Fernando Valley. Results of the 1980 census, however, reveal a shift in the demographics of the Los Angeles region. While the most intensive concentration is still located in the Central region, the Western region has lost a significant number of people since 1970. This decline can be explained by the presence of the low density San Monica mountains in the west, which reduces the developable acreage and the rapidly increasing housing costs in this region.

In contrast to the Western region, the San Fernando Valley continues to grow rapidly despite the fact that land for expansion was largely used up by 1980. New housing patterns have made this possible as large developments, multi-family structures, and condominiums are built. The valley is home to more than one third of Los Angeles' residents and is expected to attract much of the city's potential growth. It is interesting to note, that the growth of the central region has not experienced the same shift toward multi-family dwellings as the valley. Growth despite the small increase in housing stocks may be partially explained by an increase in cooperative type housing and larger families.

While these three major geographical regions have remained in a state of relative flux, the Harbor area continues to grow at the same approximate rate as the city as a whole. The Harbor region, which contains about five percent of our population and housing, is dominated by non-residential uses. Large tracts of industrial land and established housing have held growth levels to a minimum. Infill housing appears to be a major mode of growth. The populations of these four regions are displayed in Table I.

TABLE I

Population by Area 1980 Census

Valley	1,107,848
Central	1,450,135
Western	346,251
Harbor	152,616
Total	2,966,850

Since the 1980 census, the city has realized a population growth of 74,444 persons for a 2.5 percent increase. During this same period total housing and occupied housing units rose at lower rates, 1.8 percent and 1.5 percent respectively. This brought the city in October 1982, to a record total population of 3,041,294 and a record total housing stock of 1,210,701. The overall vacancy rate in housing, although still considered low by national standards, has increased from 4.5 percent in 1980 to 4.8 percent in 1982. In Table II, the 1982 estimated population and housing totals have been compared with figures from the 1970 and 1980 censuses.

TABLE II

City of Los Angeles
Comparison of 1970,1980,1982
Population, Total Housing and Household Vacancy Rate

	1970 Census	1980 Census	1982 Estimate
Total Population	2,811,801	2,966,850	3,041,294
Total Housing Units	1,074,173	1,188,992	1,210,701
Occupied Housing Units	1,024,873	1,135,491	1,152,325
Vacant Housing Units	49,300	53,43	58,376
Vacancy Rate	4.6%	4.5%	4.8%

* The 1982 estimate provides the most current information available from the City of Los Angeles Department of Planning

There has been local concern over a high number of undocumented aliens within the city. Using U.S. Immigration Service statistics, it has previously been estimated that undocumented aliens in the city may number as high as 400,000 persons. Neither an undercount figure nor the undocumented alien estimate has been included in these data estimates for two reasons: (1) their inclusion would make it impossible to compare the current estimate with previous estimates; and (2) the figures in the current estimate attempt to reflect the total population that would be identified had another enumeration been conducted on October 1, 1982.

The most dramatic change in the population demographics of the city, has been the large increase in the Hispanic population in recent years. From 18.5 percent in 1970, an increase of 296,128 people, has made the Hispanics the second largest group. As of 1980, Hispanics represented 27.5 percent of the population. The Asian population has also shown a significant gain, from 3.7 percent in 1970 to 6.6 percent in 1980. The percentage of the city's population that is Black has decreases slightly, form 17.3 percent to 17 percent in the same period of time. The American Indian population has increased significantly from 9,350 to 16,594, which currently represents 0.6 percent of the total population. These gains were offset by a loss in the White population from 60.1 to 48.3 percent.

ANIMAL CONTROL

Due to the lack of specific census data on the dog and cat populations for this region, we have had to rely on various estimates on pet ownership derived from human demographic information. The following estimates are based on the formula described by Dr. Andrew Rowan in his paper; "Animal Control, Animal Welfare, and Proposals for an Effective Program." Extrapolating from figures from the Northeastern United States, in which 36.4 % of households own a dog and 25.2% own a cat, there would be 440,695 dogs an 305,097 cats in the 1,201,701 housing units in Los Angeles.

To validate the above mentioned numbers, Nassar and Mosiers' (1980) data on the number of dogs impounded as a percent of the total population was used. In their study of the pet population in Manhattan, Kansas, these researchers found that 16% of the dog population passed through the shelter in one year. Applying this to an estimated population of 144,695 in Los Angeles, we would have expected 70,511 dogs to be impounded. This figure is much higher than the 44,818 dogs that were actually impounded in fiscal year 1982-83. If we start with the actual number of dogs impounded, assuming this represents 16 percent of the total population, an estimate of 280,000 dogs is derived. To estimate the cat population, the percentage difference between the 1982-83 dog/cat impounds was applied to the 280,000 dog population, giving a city cat population of 173,600. The wide disparity between these population estimates illustrates the need for accurate census data, such as could be collected by the U.S. Census Bureau.

In view of the lack of accurate population estimates, I have found my department's work statistics to be more useful in determining the changes in the pet population and in the success of our programs. The shelters are mirrors of our society, they tell us what dog breeds are popular and what health conditions prevail for pets in our cities. We can gauge the success of our programs by looking at the numbers and types of dogs and cats impounded, the number of animal bites, cruelty cases and stray dogs.

SPAY/NEUTER PROGRAMS

While much debate has surrounded this issue, there is no question that a public sponsored, low-cost pet sterilization program is essential to animal care and control. The very basic arguments in favor of such a program are difficult to dispute. Firstly, low cost pet sterilization enables those pet owners who cannot otherwise afford it, the means to sterilize their pets. Secondly, there is a substantial education in the numbers of unwanted dogs and cats. In the city of Los Angeles, the establishment of a low cost spay/neuter program combined with other factors such as a reduced license fee to sterilized dogs and humane education, has resulted in sterilization rate of 49% among licensed dogs.

Prior to 1971, when the clinics were opened, less than five percent of our licensed population was sterilized, and the number of animals impounded was twice that of today. In face of a growing animal population explosion, we decided to implement a cooperative program between the government and the pet owner to increase the number of sterilized animals. We believe that the success of a combine low-cost sterilization program and differential licensing is illustrated by the dramatic decrease in the number of animals impounded in our shelter. In 1970, Los Angeles, was impounding an excess of 144,000 dogs and cats and destroying over 80,000 of these. By 1982-83, however this rate has dropped 50%, with a total of 72,454 dogs and cats impounded. Table III summarizes some important statistics on departmental activities and pet demographics.

TABLE III

Item Description	Shelter Statistics				
	<u>City of Los Angeles</u>				
	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85
Total Animals Handled	81,661	81,545	80,488	94,698	84,942
Animals Destroyed	49,183	51,285	52,218	54,950	54,037
As % of Total Handled	60.2	62.9	64.9	58.0	63.6
Dog licenses and Applications Issued	178,879	141,251	183,439	177,383	173,819
Altered as a % of Total Licenses	48.8	50.6	50.8	49.0	47.6