The "Assignment" for the Housing Working Group discussion of January 22nd.

Introduction: One goal of the Housing Working Group is to cultivate a more detailed understanding of the housing systems and typologies in Sacramento as a foundation for evaluating policy and interpreting unfolding dynamics today. Those of us who do so can serve as resource on some of these issues for the rest of the group.

To do this, we will be dedicating part of each monthly meeting to a somewhat more structured discussion based on some readings.

To begin, we will draw on the Strong Towns text *Escaping the Housing Trap* (EHT) to get our hands around the idea of housing systems and how they might relate to housing markets. This is 'big picture' thinking to provide a framework for the more granular work on housing practices, histories, and typologies that we'll do over time.

Of course it would be helpful if you would do the readings that we will discuss each month. But we want to make clear that you are welcome to attend and participate even if you haven't been able to do all, or even any, of the reading we will discuss in any given month.

The Assignment:

We will be drawing on the Introduction and Part 1 of EHT. We will concentrate on the material up to page 34 that describe the elements of the **traditional and suburban housing systems.** These pages ask *what makes the traditional system more adaptable and complex and what makes the suburban experiment more rigid and fragile?* The material on pp. 34 – 70 covers the financial crises starting in the 1970s through the housing finance crisis of 2008-9. We're unlikely to work through this material in any detail. Below is more specific guidance to key pages.

NOTE: the following pages are posted to the HWG google drive at this link:
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1d59xesWXaZKvzib5Ht4wTSR6YtgQRzXF?usp=drive_link

- p. xii-xv [p 12-14 pdf] from the Intro, starting with the paragraph "In the history of.." on p. xii. This provides a high-level overview of elements of housing systems in the US and distinguishes the suburban experiment from the previous more traditional form of housing development.

- p. 8 – 9, [p21-22 pdf] "Understanding the Housing Market", a parable that raises questions about the relationship between the housing market and housing systems. [Optional: we may not get to this.]

- p. 16 – 19, [26-29 pdf] "Understanding the Traditional Development Pattern": what are the assumptions and elements of this pattern or system?

- p. 19 – 25, [29-34 pdf] Housing Reform and Long-Term Loans: Changes to the traditional housing system. What did this make possible?

- p. 29 -34: 37-40 pdf] Mechanical Permanence: setting the trap. A new ideology?

- pp. 34 – 70: [40 – 51 pdf] Stages of housing finance, crises, and fixes. QUESTION: what is the big picture narrative being presented here? How is it part of the 'housing systems' that shaped our cities? It is still operating today?

Please note any questions and comments you have for discussion!

Here are some of my questions:

On Housing Systems:

- What other 'systems' can we think of that are in some ways analogous to housing systems?
- What are the components of the traditional and suburban models of development as housing systems?
- How much redevelopment of earlier forms of housing really occurred in the 'traditional development model'?
- How much of what distinguishes the traditional from the suburban development model is explained by the widespread adoption of cars?
- What about differences in the scale of development?

A Few Broader Questions:

- What are the differences and relationships between 'the housing market' and housing systems?
- Do housing systems help us think about this claim: "the problem today is that we don't have enough housing supply to meet the demand. Its Econ 101! That's why housing is unaffordable and building lots of housing will bring prices down."
- What is the relationship between rent and housing prices? Does understanding the underlying price of land help us figure this out?
- What determines the price of land anyway?