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Santa Monica's Recent Economic and Social Trends

A Case Study with Regional Comparisons

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RR-A5222-1-v2

About This Report

In this report, we examine recent economic, social, and governance trends in Santa Monica, California. Through comparisons with peer cities, we find that Santa Monica experienced a pronounced post-pandemic economic downturn in several areas, including tourism, retail sales, and employment. Our interviews with city officials, business owners, developers, and other stakeholders raised long-standing concerns that Santa Monica's regulatory and fiscal policies have discouraged business activity and development. More positively, these interviewees also suggest that the city has recently become more responsive to and proactive about addressing these concerns. Recent changes, such as streamlining housing development policies, implementing economic development initiatives, and shifts in policing and homelessness policy, indicate that the city is actively attempting to grow its economy and address many of the concerns highlighted in our interviews. We recommend additional potential reforms drawn from our interviews and other research for the Santa Monica City Council and the City Manager's Office to consider.

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This work was conducted in RAND Education, Employment, and Infrastructure, a division of RAND that aims to improve educational opportunity, economic prosperity, and civic life for all. For more information, visit www.rand.org/eei or email EEI@rand.org.

Funding

Funding for this research was provided by gifts from RAND supporters and income from the operation of RAND Education, Employment, and Infrastructure.

Acknowledgments

We thank the interviewees who shared their insights and thoughts on Santa Monica and the Santa Monica City Manager's Office for participating in early discussions about the city's challenges and for providing connections to other city staff and data access. We also thank Chris Redfearn of the University of Southern California and Casey McCormick of MAREA.ai for data analyses and consultation on local housing production issues. Finally, we thank our RAND colleagues Heather Schwartz and Alice Huguet, as well as Paavo Monkkonen of the University of California, Los Angeles, for their reviews of this report. In addition to engaging expert human peer reviewers, the quality assurance team used assistive artificial intelligence tools to suggest writing improvements to the authors.

Organizational Interest Disclosure

At the time of publication, RAND owns its office building in Santa Monica. This had no influence on the conclusions or recommendations in this report, which are based on empirical analysis and stakeholder interviews.

Summary

Recent media coverage has portrayed the City of Santa Monica as uniquely troubled—a city experiencing economic decline, rising crime, and disorder. Drawing from our empirical analyses and interviews with experts, we find that the data support this media narrative in some cases, but in other cases, the city's trajectory simply reflects regional trends. Additionally, we find that Santa Monica's new leadership has recently undertaken substantial policy reforms that may improve the city's economic trajectory.

In this report, we combine a wide variety of data analyses of Santa Monica and multiple comparison cities in the Los Angeles metropolitan area with interviews of 14 experts from the public and private sectors in Santa Monica and these comparison cities. We find that concerns about tourism, retail sales, and other business indicators are warranted: Santa Monica is performing worse in these areas than most of its peers. But other common beliefs, such as those around worsening homelessness and crime, are only partly supported by the data. Finally, interviews with people involved with other local city governments suggest that some of the negative trends concerning Santa Monica may reflect changes in macroeconomic conditions, commuting preferences, and other factors that are beyond the city's direct control. Our findings are descriptive, and our interview sample, while informative, centers business and development perspectives.

Key Findings

Santa Monica's Economic Downturn Has Been Larger Than in Peer Cities

Many aspects of Santa Monica's economy have declined more than in peer cities, such as Beverly Hills, Culver City, and West Hollywood, over the past decade. For example, Santa Monica experienced a large downturn in sales across most retail sectors, with clothing and accessories down 75 percent and food services down 24 percent from 2015 to 2025. These declines in sales revenue began around the onset of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, but following an incomplete recovery, resumed a negative trend shortly afterward that is ongoing. These trends reflect both reduced visitor counts—recently still at only 58 percent of the pre-pandemic peak—and persistently high vacancy levels along the city's iconic Third Street Promenade and Santa Monica Place mall. Some interviewees suggested that this situation may represent a structural oversupply of commercial space in a highly tourism-dependent city. While Santa Monica's hotel occupancy rate has fared well compared with that of peer cities, revenue is nonetheless declining. Employment in the tourism sector has also declined more than in multiple comparison cities.

Regarding commercial development broadly, interviewees described Santa Monica's past "extractive mindset" in dealing with entities seeking to do business in the city while acknowledging that this has changed meaningfully in recent years, as evidenced by recent policies attempting to incentivize new business formation. Interviewees from both the public and private sectors pointed to

several current headwinds for economic growth in the city. These include a recently adopted law focused on mandatory rehiring requirements and labor peace agreements for lessees of city-owned commercial properties, high tax rates on parking and hotel occupancy in the region, and the city's sanitation and public works departments presenting new businesses building out commercial spaces with unexpected, discretionary requests for property upgrades, even when the new business is engaged in the same activity as the prior tenant.

The Homeless Population Is Stable but Concentrated Downtown, Where Visibility to Businesses and Visitors Is Highest

Citywide homeless counts have been relatively stable over the past decade and declined modestly in 2026. But homelessness is highly concentrated downtown and along the beachfront, where it is most visible to businesses and visitors, and of the comparison cities examined, only Venice and Los Angeles had similar levels. Santa Monica business owners pointed to the role of unsheltered individuals with significant mental health problems or untreated substance use disorders in making it difficult to attract and retain customers due to concerns about crime and disorder. Changes to the city's homelessness services are underway, including relocating key homelessness services out of downtown, which may contribute to reducing the concentration of homelessness.

While Incidents of Aggravated Assault and Robbery Have Increased Downtown, Crime Has Been Otherwise Stable in Most of Santa Monica

Incidents of aggravated assault and robbery have roughly doubled in Santa Monica since the early 2010s, peaking in 2018 (before the COVID-19 pandemic), and remain elevated. These increases are overwhelmingly a downtown phenomenon. Additionally, these offenses, like other violent and property crimes examined, are highly concentrated downtown. Half of aggravated assaults and 71 percent of robberies occur in the 5 percent of the city's area with the most crime, which is overwhelmingly downtown. However, Venice and Los Angeles had similar increases in serious violence.

Most other forms of property and violent crime examined have been stable in Santa Monica over the past two decades, and outside of downtown, serious violence has not increased notably in the city. Consistent with national trends, however, grand theft auto spiked citywide during the pandemic. The opioid epidemic likely contributed to perceptions of crime and disorder as well: Drug overdose deaths have more than doubled in Los Angeles County since 2016.

According to interviewees, there have been several recent changes to Santa Monica's policing, including full staffing for the first time in 20 years, a new downtown substation, increased foot and bike patrols, and greater coordination with city attorneys to increase prosecution rates. The impacts of these changes on public safety remain unclear.

Santa Monica Has Made Substantial Reforms to Its Housing Development Policies, but Addressable Barriers Remain

From 2018 to 2025, Santa Monica had the lowest level of housing production per resident of any of our comparison cities, except for Beverly Hills. We find that, on average, it takes more than six years for a housing project to be built and ready for occupancy in Santa Monica, with much of this time preceding the issuance of a building permit. However, housing production is poised to temporarily increase as a result of the city's 2022 exposure to California's builder's remedy policy, which allowed a slate of large apartment buildings (representing thousands of new units) to be approved during a window when the city's land use and zoning regulations were effectively suspended. There have been subsequent reforms, including a pilot affordable housing program that provides greater flexibility for development projects to meet requirements to include affordable units. Interviewees characterized Santa Monica's entitlement process as dramatically improved, with one land use attorney stating that they would "rather propose a housing project in Santa Monica than literally any other jurisdiction in the entire state." However, these reforms have not yet translated into an increase in new unit construction.

Interviewees pointed to factors that may act as barriers to housing development and that are within the city's power to address. They cited the inconsistent use of inspector discretion in the field during the construction phase, as well as late-stage demands from city departments for modifications or improvements. Interviewees also pointed to the city's two-step architectural design process as cumbersome and arbitrary. Other factors, such as the role of the California Coastal Commission in development across a large swath of Santa Monica's most densely populated areas, are beyond the city's direct control.

Recommendations for Santa Monica

Business and Commercial Development

- Continue to expand the city's new business concierge service and strengthen its role in helping the city identify and address recurrent issues that new businesses face.
- Develop clear guidance and decision chains for staff from key departments, such as transportation and sanitation, to reduce idiosyncratic judgments in the field about compliance issues for tenant improvement projects.
- Pursue multiple efforts to reduce vacant commercial space and increase foot traffic. Consider the possible benefits (and drawbacks) of temporary pop-up concepts to fill vacant retail space, further increasing the number of festivals and other events, large-scale redevelopment of disused spaces, and the possibility of actively courting employers into specific sectors where Santa Monica could grow.
- Comprehensively review the implications of the city's recently adopted law on right-to-rehire and labor peace agreements for leases on city-owned land given substantial concerns among city staff, business owners, and other stakeholders.

Homelessness, Crime, and Disorder

- Adopt more-frequent and -detailed measurements of homelessness around the city to facilitate more-effective responses and monitoring of policy outcomes and progress, including developing public-facing key performance indicators and other data resources.
- Given that homelessness and crime are highly concentrated downtown, efforts to proactively engage with high-risk populations located there are likely to be resource-efficient means of improving public safety and reducing disorder.
- Consider restarting the Homeless Community Court program to address the small number of homeless individuals playing outsize roles in using public services and criminal justice resources.

Housing Production

- Expedite the completion and certification of the city's Local Coastal Program plan to reduce barriers related to project-level review of new development (both residential and commercial) by the California Coastal Commission, including publicly committing to a timetable for implementation.
- Consider approaches to further incentivize the adaptive reuse of commercial real estate beyond the city's 2024 ordinance, including such feasible financial incentives as additional fee waivers.
- Reconsider the costs and benefits of the city's two-stage architectural review process, which contributes to longer development timelines and greater uncertainty.
- Develop a robust, transparent open data portal with a clear set of resources on the city's development pathway, including guidance on what to expect, managing factors not directly within the city's control (e.g., utilities), and a data history of stage-by-stage timelines, including the division of time between the city and applicants.
- Conduct educational outreach to regional builders and institutional capital managers to publicize important recent reforms to housing policy and approval pathways to dispel outdated perceptions of the difficulty of building in the city.
- Take steps to further streamline the design review process by assessing where the required number of reviewers could be minimized. Reconsider the practice of every application automatically going to all departments for signoff even when certain project aspects are routine and were approved during the plan review process.
- Increase early interdepartmental coordination in the plan review process to reduce discretionary decisions made at the level of individual departments later in the development process.
- Increase resources available for the city's inspection process to facilitate a shorter and more efficient construction phase, including hiring and retaining additional experienced inspectors and exploring the greater use of deputy inspectors.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In this report, we evaluate the economic, social, and governance trends in the City of Santa Monica, California, in recent years and compare the city's trajectory with multiple peer jurisdictions in the region. Like many other small cities in Southern California and elsewhere, Santa Monica experienced a severe economic downturn during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, but recent media coverage has portrayed the city as uniquely beleaguered (Gumbel, 2025; Kiernan, 2026; Moss, 2026; Mejía, 2024).

The results of this study provide empirical evidence about how Santa Monica has fared compared with the neighboring peer cities of Beverly Hills, Culver City, Los Angeles, and West Hollywood. We focus on recent trends in the following key areas:

- business revenue
- crime
- homelessness
- commercial property
- housing production.

We combine quantitative analyses with qualitative insights gleaned from a series of interviews. Between March and August 2026, we interviewed 14 people with relevant experience and expertise in the above key areas, including

- current and former city staff focused on city management and economic development
- current and past elected representatives and a candidate for city office
- local business owners and a general manager from the service and hospitality sectors
- attorneys focused on land use law and negotiating development agreements
- architects and a small developer with experience in Santa Monica and peer cities.

We attempted to recruit a total of 19 people using email-based outreach, where we shared a brief document outlining the study and providing some basic consent language, for an overall response rate of 74 percent.

For the quantitative component of this study, we compiled and analyzed data on business registrations, labor market indicators, commercial leasing, crime, homelessness, housing production, tax revenue, and municipal finances. Using these data, we compared Santa Monica with the comparison cities previously listed. (In most cases, we include only select areas of Los Angeles near Santa Monica, and in select cases, we consider additional cities in Southern California.) We selected these peers primarily based on geographical proximity to Santa Monica. While there are obvious differences across them, including size (Santa Monica has a population of around 90,000 living in an area of around 8 square miles, while Beverly Hills' roughly 30,000 residents occupy roughly 6 square

miles, and the City of Los Angeles has 3.8 million residents living in more than 500 square miles), they are all economically integrated into the Los Angeles metropolitan area and share many economic fundamentals, including a relatively heavy reliance on tourism, high local tax levels, and stringent regulation of housing and commercial development relative to much of the United States. By comparing Santa Monica with these cities, we aim to better understand which of Santa Monica's challenges are unique to the city and which reflect broader regional trends.

In each of the topically focused chapters that follow (Chapters 2–5), we present quantitative analyses of trends in Santa Monica compared with peer cities. We then put these trends into context by drawing from our interviews and other data sources, including media reports and other research. We highlight common themes that our interviewees raised and more-distinct perspectives on certain issues across different subsamples of interviewees (for example, city staff and elected officials compared with business owners). We also discuss the extent to which the views expressed by interviewees are supported by our quantitative analyses, as well as how newly adopted policies, not yet reflected in available data, may alter the trajectories that we assess. In Chapter 6, we propose a set of policy recommendations and discuss both opportunities and challenges around their potential adoption in Santa Monica. Appendix A contains details on our methods and data sources for the quantitative and qualitative analyses. Appendix B contains additional figures and tables that support the analysis of commercial activities. Appendix C contains additional figures for the homelessness analysis. Appendix D contains additional figures for the crime analysis, and Appendix E contains an additional figure for the housing production analysis.

The intended audience for this report is policymakers and city staff from Santa Monica and other cities in the region. We also aim for this report to be of interest to residents of Santa Monica with a desire to learn more about the city's recent economic and social trends and other interested members of the public living in the peer comparison cities or elsewhere.

Limitations

This report has some limitations worth flagging. First, due to resource and timing constraints, we limited our quantitative analysis to select data sources, meaning that we did not analyze some aspects of commercial development projects, such as tenant improvements, trends in tourist visitations, or changes in commuting patterns, among other topics. Second, these constraints also meant that we were limited in the number of interviews that we could conduct. Because of this, we focused on city government officials, representatives of small and medium-size businesses, and parties involved in commercial and multifamily development (architects, attorneys, developers). We were thus unable to include other relevant stakeholders, such as those with lived experience of homelessness, representatives from the Santa Monica Police Department (SMPD) or other local law enforcement agencies, union representatives, or representatives from the affordable housing development community. Overall, our findings are descriptive, offering quantitative and qualitative insights about key citywide trends, but they cannot establish causation and likely omit some perspectives that would diverge from those conveyed by the stakeholders whom we interviewed.

Chapter 2

Business Activity Declined More in Santa Monica Than in Peer Cities

In this chapter, we compare changes in revenue over time in Santa Monica and comparison cities.[1] We first look at overall trends in retail sales revenue, then disaggregate revenue by major business categories to consider the relative health of various retail sectors, then proceed to examine retail and office vacancy trends, and finish by examining trends in hotel occupancy and revenue.

As we show, Santa Monica's retail sales revenue never fully recovered to pre-pandemic levels (in real dollars), whereas revenue in other nearby municipalities recovered more quickly and more fully, though they too have experienced some declines in recent years. Santa Monica's decline in revenue appears to be continuing into early 2026, down by about one-third compared with pre-pandemic levels. This decline occurred in nearly every type of business, though the magnitude varied substantially by business type. Retail and office vacancy rates remain high in Santa Monica compared with those in some peer cities. While hotel occupancy trends in Santa Monica are favorable compared with those in peer cities, hotel revenue remains below pre-pandemic levels in real dollars and is declining.

Santa Monica's Retail Sales Have Not Returned to Pre-Pandemic Levels and Continue to Fall

Figure 2.1 presents trends in taxable sales revenue over time by municipality.[2] Note that this is the revenue to retailers, not only the fraction the government collects as tax revenue. For all four cities, sales revenue fell sharply during the COVID-19 pandemic, but the timing and level of recovery varied. Santa Monica recovered to only 89 percent of its 2015 baseline level in mid-2021 and has since fallen further, to almost 60 percent of the 2015 baseline level by early 2026. In the sectors where we observe

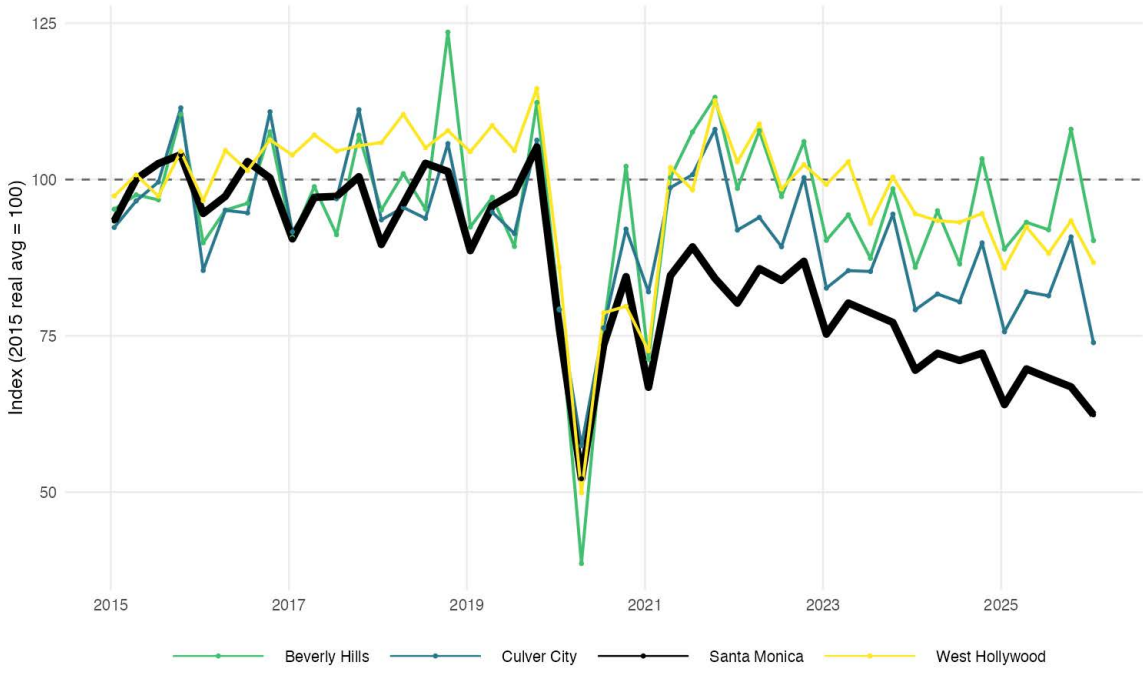
[1] We excluded Los Angeles from this comparison because it is more heterogenous and likely less comparable to Santa Monica in this area. The data that we used for this analysis did not allow us to focus on specific parts of Los Angeles, as we could in analyses discussed later.

[2] In assessing trends over time, we indexed values to the quarterly average of 2015 in each city, such that revenue is relative to 2015 levels. This indexing removes level differences across cities; for example, Santa Monica had overall higher taxable sales revenue throughout this period than the much smaller city of West Hollywood. Also, these analyses use 2015 real dollar values, which have been adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Price Index (CPI) (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, undated). So, for example, an index value of 80 means that, at a given period, revenue in inflation-adjusted terms is 20 percent below the baseline level.

the largest declines, business closures are likely a major source of declining sales (such as the exit of large downtown retailers on the Third Street Promenade and in the Santa Monica Place mall).

The comparison municipalities saw similar revenue impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic, but all three cities recovered more fully than Santa Monica. Beverly Hills, Culver City, and West Hollywood all returned to their pre-pandemic sales levels by late 2021. Since then, they too have experienced declines, but by the end of 2025, sales revenue in Beverly Hills and West Hollywood was down only 10 to 15 percent, relative to baseline, while Culver City experienced a larger decline of 25 percent. Across cities, Santa Monica's recovery was weaker and its subsequent trend more steeply downward.

Figure 2.1. Trends in Taxable Sales Revenue in Santa Monica and Comparison Cities



SOURCE: Authors' calculations from California Department of Tax and Fee Administration (CDTFA) data (accessed at CDTFA, undated).
NOTE: Levels are indexed to the city-specific averages for 2015. Nominal dollars were converted into 2015 real dollars using the CPI (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, undated).

Table 2.1 focuses on Santa Monica in more detail for the years 2015 and 2025 (the last year of complete data). Specifically, for various business categories, it shows the 2015 taxable sales revenue, the 2025 taxable sales revenue (in 2015 real dollars), and the change in dollar and percentage terms, as well as the share of Santa Monica's total taxable sales that each business category accounted for in 2015 (column 2) to help gauge the overall influence of each.

Table 2.1. Taxable Sales Revenue in Santa Monica, by Business Category, 2015 Versus 2025

Business Category	Share of 2015 Total (%)	2015 Level ($M)	2025 Level (2015 $M)	Change (2015 $M)	Change (%)
Motor Vehicle & Parts	16.6%	538.5	479.1	−59.4	−11.0%
Home Furnishings & Appliances	3.2%	102.9	34.1	−68.8	−66.9%
Building Materials & Garden	2.2%	72.4	85.9	13.5	18.6%
Food & Beverage Stores	3.7%	120.3	107.8	−12.5	−10.4%
Gasoline Stations	3.2%	104.1	54.1	−49.9	−48.0%
Clothing & Accessories	13.5%	436.3	108.7	−327.7	−75.1%
General Merchandise	1.4%	46.1	41.9	−4.2	−9.1%
Food Services & Drinking	19.7%	637.2	485.5	−151.7	−23.8%
Other Retail	12.2%	394.7	192.5	−202.2	−51.2%
All Other Outlets	24.2%	784.3	585.4	−198.9	−25.4%
Total	**100.0%**	**3,236.9**	**2,175.0**	**−1,061.9**	**−32.8%**

SOURCE: Authors' calculations from CDTFA data (accessed at CDTFA, undated).
NOTE: The second column presents a breakdown of the relative contribution of each category to the 2015 taxable sales amounts in the third column. The fourth column contains inflation-adjusted totals for 2025 (expressed in 2015 real dollars using a CPI deflator). The fifth column is the level difference (in real 2015 dollars), and the last column shows the percentage difference between 2015 and 2025 levels. Values may not sum because of rounding.
M = million.

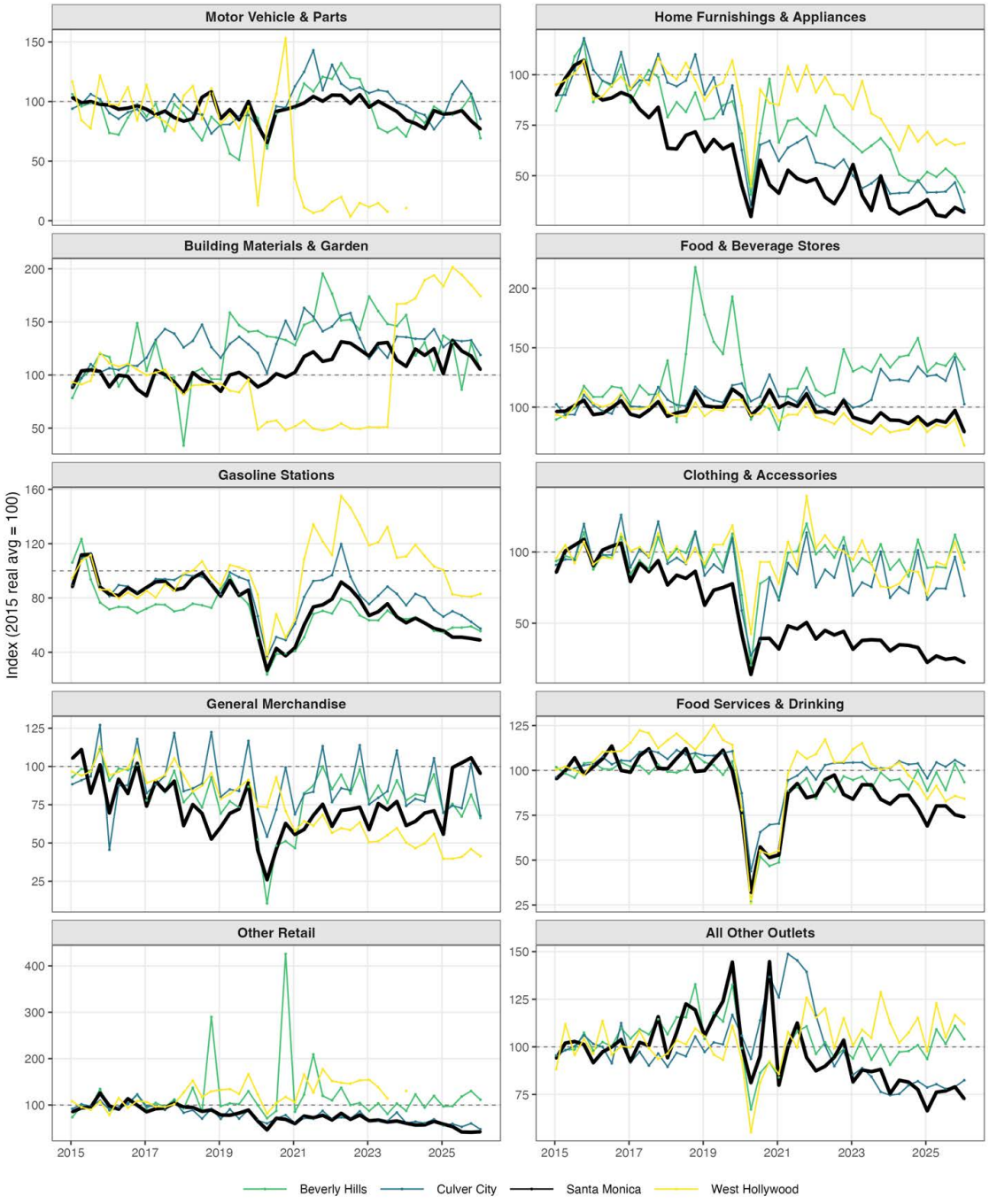
While declines varied in magnitude across business types, the decline was broad-based, with nearly all retail sectors contributing. Table 2.1 shows that Santa Monica's 32.8 percent decline in sales from 2015 to 2025 reflected declines in every business category except *building materials and garden*, a roughly $1.06 billion decline in 2015 dollars. The single largest contributor, in both percentage terms and dollars, was a steep decline in *clothing and accessories* ($327.7 million, or 75 percent). Revenue in the *other retail* and *all other outlets* categories fell by roughly $200 million each, and revenue in the *food services and drinking* (e.g., bars and restaurants) category declined by $151.7 million (23.8 percent).

Figure 2.2 compares these sectoral trends in Santa Monica's taxable sales revenue with those in comparison cities. For some business types, Santa Monica had exceptionally large relative declines (e.g., *clothing and accessories*, *food services and drinking*); for others, the trends resemble those seen in the comparison cities (e.g., *motor vehicle and parts*, *gasoline stations*). Santa Monica did not fare exceptionally well in any category.[3]

These data do not include summer 2026 figures, when the World Cup brought tens of thousands of additional tourists to Los Angeles County and provided an economic boost to the region estimated at $892 million (Chkarboul, 2026). Santa Monica hosted six weeks of special events and tournament-related activities that brought hundreds of thousands of visitors into the city (Edgar, 2026; Hall, 2026c), activity that may mark a break with the recent downward trend.

[3] Table B.1 in Appendix B shows each city's business type–specific and overall taxable sales revenue for 2015, which provides additional context on baseline-level differences.

Figure 2.2. Sector-Specific Taxable Sales Revenue Trends in Santa Monica and Comparison Cities



SOURCE: Authors' calculations from CDTFA data (accessed at CDTFA, undated).
NOTE: Levels are indexed to the city-specific averages for 2015. Nominal dollars were converted into 2015 real dollars using the CPI (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, undated). Note that the y-axis ranges vary among the panels of this figure.

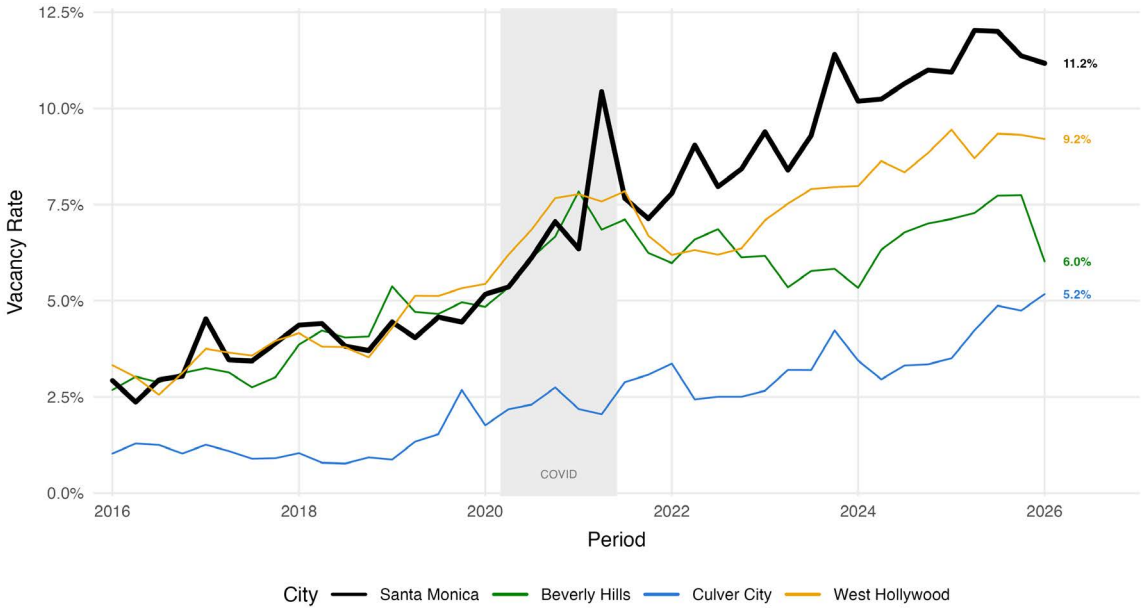
Retail and Office Vacancies Remain High in Santa Monica

We compare the performance of retail and office properties across four cities, measuring vacancy rates, as another marker of Santa Monica's business activity trends. Overall, retail and office vacancies have been rising in Santa Monica and remain one of the highest rates among comparison cities, reflecting a declining demand relative to the current stock of commercial space.

For context, Santa Monica and the three comparison cities each has a roughly similar number of retail properties (see Figure B.1 in Appendix B), but the composition of uses of these properties varies somewhat across cities. Santa Monica has the most auto dealerships, auto repair shops, and freestanding retail properties and the fewest storefront retail spaces and restaurants (see Figure B.2 in Appendix B).

To assess retail property vacancy trends, we used retail vacancy rates from CoStar, a major provider of commercial property data. CoStar calculates the *vacancy rate* as available square footage divided by total retail space. Figure 2.3 shows that Santa Monica's retail vacancy rate was rising before the COVID-19 pandemic, along with the rates of peer cities, but continued to rise at roughly the same rate afterward, whereas increases in the retail vacancy rates of the three comparison cities either moderated or declined in some post-pandemic years. Santa Monica's retail vacancy rate has been the highest among the four cities since late 2021, with some evidence of it leveling off toward the end of 2025—a trend reflected to varying degrees in West Hollywood and Beverly Hills and least in Culver City, though Culver City's retail vacancy rate is the lowest of the four across the time frame considered. We estimate that at least 45 percent of Santa Monica's retail vacancy rate is related to properties on the Third Street Promenade and Santa Monica Place, though data limitations in our ability to observe some properties suggest that this share may be higher.

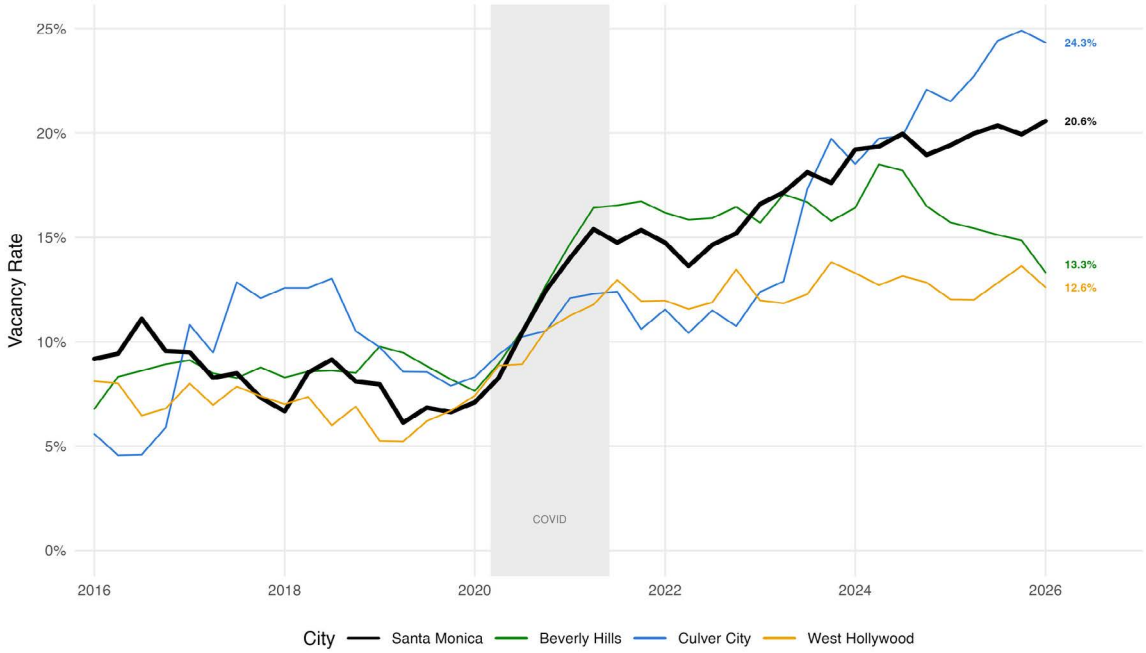
Figure 2.3. Retail Property Vacancy Rate, 2016–2026



SOURCE: Features proprietary CoStar market reports data.

Santa Monica also had the second-highest office vacancy rate behind Culver City, at more than 20 percent in June 2026 (Figure 2.4). However, Culver City, which saw a large amount of office completions between 2021 and 2024, has about a 24-percent vacancy rate (Boswell and Yeh, 2026). Compared with the other three cities, Santa Monica has the most office properties (panel A of Figure B.3 in Appendix B) and the largest volume of office space available for rent (panel B of Figure B.3 in Appendix B).

Figure 2.4. Office Property Vacancy Rate, 2016–2026



SOURCE: Features proprietary CoStar market reports data.

Hotel Occupancy Has Nearly Recovered, but Revenue Remains Below Pre-Pandemic Levels

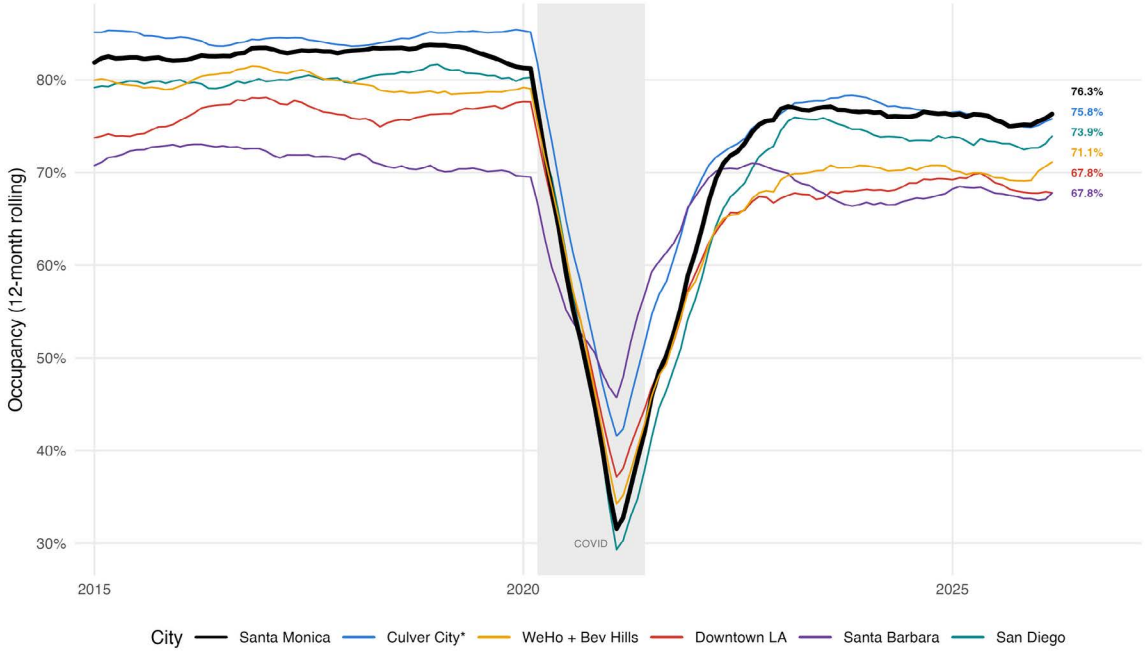
Given the importance of tourism to Santa Monica's economy and its tax revenue, we also investigate the performance of hotels. Specifically, we examine the hotel occupancy rate in several submarkets, including the three comparison cities shown previously, as well as Downtown Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, and San Diego. We include these three places to help understand whether the observed trends reflect overall conditions in Southern California or in Los Angeles County or are specific to Santa Monica. CoStar publishes hotel fundamentals by *hospitality submarket*, which is slightly different from city boundaries. West Hollywood and Beverly Hills are in the same submarket, and Culver City is included in the Los Angeles International Airport submarket. *Hotel occupancy rate* is measured as the 12-month rolling average of occupied rooms divided by total hotel rooms.

Figure 2.5 shows that none of these hotel submarkets have recovered to pre-pandemic occupancy rates. Compared with hotels in the other submarkets, Santa Monica's hotels experienced one of the

largest declines in occupancy during the pandemic (only faring better than San Diego). Coming out of the pandemic, Santa Monica's hotel occupancy rate increased, reaching 76 percent by March 2026, the highest across all submarkets.

To compare the depth of the pandemic-related decline and pace of recovery on a common scale, Figure B.4 in Appendix B presents the same series indexed to 2015 hotel occupancy rates. At the February 2021 trough, hotel occupancy in Santa Monica had fallen to 38 percent of its 2015 level, second lowest among all submarkets, while hotel occupancy in Santa Barbara had fallen to only 63 percent. Santa Monica returned to within 10 percent of its 2015 hotel occupancy rate in September 2022, among the strongest recoveries of the comparison cities. By March 2026, the Santa Monica hotel occupancy rate had reached 93 percent of its 2015 level. Overall, the hotel occupancy trend suggests a relatively robust, albeit incomplete, recovery in Santa Monica.

Figure 2.5. Hotel Occupancy Rate, 2015–2026

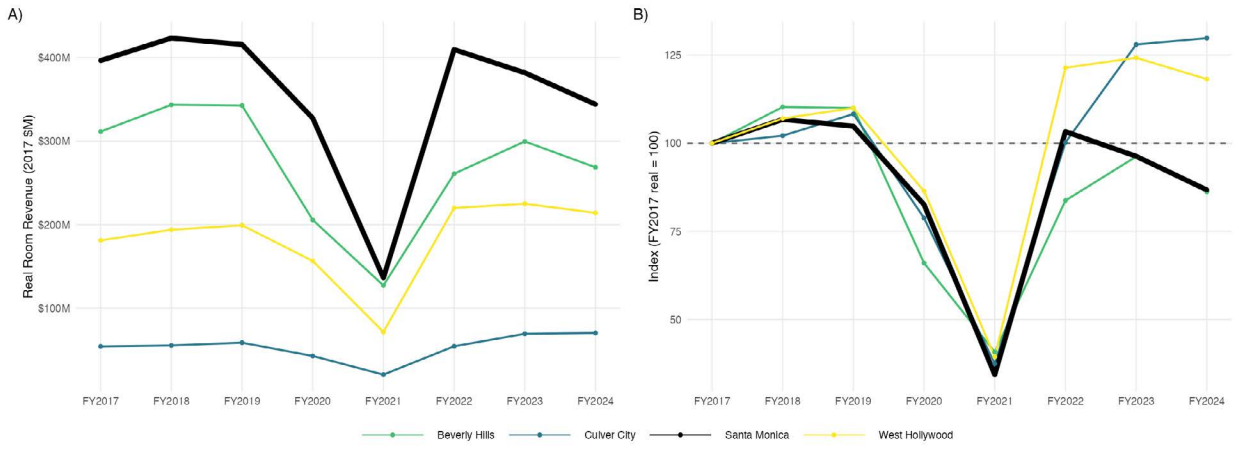


SOURCE: Features proprietary CoStar market reports data.
NOTE: For hospitality properties, CoStar reports only submarket-level performance. Submarket definitions meet the city boundaries for Santa Monica, Santa Barbara, and San Diego. However, Culver City is included in the Los Angeles International Airport submarket, and West Hollywood and Beverly Hills (WeHo + Bev Hills) are combined to form one submarket. LA = Los Angeles.

While Santa Monica's hotel occupancy rate outperforms those of other submarkets, the underlying revenue tells a different story. Figure 2.6 reveals that Santa Monica suffered a decline in real-dollar short-term lodging revenue during the COVID-19 pandemic, fully recovered by fiscal year (FY) 2022, and then began a more gradual decline. Hotel revenue in Santa Monica fell further in 2025, by about 13 percent, according to recent data published by the city's travel and tourism board (Santa Monica Travel & Tourism, 2025).

In panel B of Figure 2.6, we index the trends to remove level differences between cities, using a baseline value reflecting each municipality's revenue in FY 2017 (and adjusting revenue in subsequent years to 2017 real dollars). Beverly Hills followed a very similar downward revenue trajectory to Santa Monica's, whereas Culver City's and West Hollywood's real-dollar revenues were higher in FY 2024 than in FY 2017. The discrepancy between hotel revenue and occupancy suggests that Santa Monica's hotels have been adjusting prices downward (in real-dollar terms) to boost occupancy. If so, this practice may be helping sustain retail and services spending in the city beyond what might otherwise have occurred.

Figure 2.6. Trends in Short-Term Lodging Revenue in Santa Monica and Nearby Municipalities



SOURCE: Authors' calculations from transient occupancy tax (TOT) revenue data from California State Controller's Office, 2025.
NOTE: All dollar amounts are in 2017 real dollars.

More generally, Santa Monica's tourism sector has not fully recovered. In Appendix B, we measure the total number of entries and exits of tourism-related businesses in these same four cities and calculate year-over-year growth rates for the sector from 2019 through 2024.[4] Figure B.5 in Appendix B shows that Santa Monica was most affected by the pandemic, on average, across the four cities. From 2019 through 2024, the change in the number of tourism-related businesses in Santa Monica was slightly negative (−1 to −2 percent, on average) except for a small increase in 2021, while other cities had mostly positive growth rates, including some large year-over-year increases (up to 8 percent). From 2023 to 2024, the growth rate of tourism-related businesses across all four cities was negative, between zero and −2 percent, with Santa Monica on the lowest end of that small range.

Changes in employment levels in the tourism sector fluctuated between roughly 10 percent and −15 percent across the four cities (Figure B.6 in Appendix B). Between 2020 and 2024, Santa Monica had the lowest relative employment growth among the four cities in the sector for three of the five

[4] We received data from Data Axle for 2018 through 2024, but we had data quality concerns with 2018 data, so we dropped that year from our analysis. We calculated the growth rates as percentage changes in the number of tourism-related businesses (Figure B.5 in Appendix B) and total employment in these businesses (Figure B.6 in Appendix B).

year-over-year periods. In 2024, Santa Monica's tourism-related employment declined by around 16 percent from the previous year's level, relative to a decline of 5 percent in West Hollywood, the city with the highest level of tourism-related employment growth that year.

These trends are consequential given the importance of tourism to Santa Monica's economy. Annual visitors to the city are at 58 percent of the pre-pandemic baseline of 7.5 million, according to city staff.[5] Recent, across-the-board declines in tourism to the United States since 2025 have likely weakened any recovery (Levin and Wilson, 2026). One of the largest declines in U.S. visits is from Canadians, who have long been an important source of tourism for California and Santa Monica specifically (McHardy, 2025; Ha and Gambrell, 2026; Folliott, 2023).

Context from Expert Interviews, Other Sources, and Recent Santa Monica Policy Changes

High Commercial Vacancy Levels Attributed to an Oversupply of Space Appear Especially Challenging to Address on the Third Street Promenade

Interviewees from city government and the private sector attributed high commercial real estate vacancy levels to an oversupply of retail and hospitality space relative to demand. A local architect described being hired for multiple tenant improvement jobs involving reverting vacant specialty commercial spaces to generic layouts or subdividing larger spaces into multiple smaller ones to make vacant properties more appealing to potential tenants.

The high level of retail vacancies along the city's Third Street Promenade retail corridor, which had a vacancy rate of 31 percent as of August 2026, was a persistent topic in our interviews.[6] Interviewees cited unique challenges in reviving the Promenade compared with those a single mall might face, since the Promenade comprises many individual properties with different owners, creating significant coordination challenges. A local business owner said that the city and owners needed a "come to Jesus" moment to work out a way forward. Santa Monica's historical ambivalence toward chain businesses and past regulations limiting them and prioritizing certain commercial uses were cited by multiple interviewees as contributing to vacancies on the Promenade, though interviews with city staff indicated that such regulations were no longer city policy, citing a recently opened new national chain restaurant on the Promenade as evidence. City staff indicated that such factors as a high local minimum wage, local paid sick leave requirements, and hotel worker wage and benefit requirements may put Santa Monica at a competitive disadvantage with some of its regional peers. On a more positive note, city staff reported that they are coordinating with Promenade business owners and stakeholders to develop and implement a program of phased improvements timed around the 2028 Summer Olympics.

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[5] The city's tourism level declined to a low of roughly 25 percent of the pre-pandemic peak in 2020, and recent numbers have likely been boosted meaningfully by activities coordinated around the 2026 World Cup finals mentioned earlier (Hall, 2026c).

[6] This vacancy rate is calculated from 37 distinct retail properties on the Third Street Promenade listed in CoStar data. Unleased retail space is concentrated in large properties: Buildings over 30,000 square feet are 47 percent vacant, compared with 12-percent vacancy for those under 10,000 square feet. Four properties are completely vacant; among them are three of the largest spaces on the Promenade.

A *vacancy spiral* may exist on the Promenade, including the nearby Santa Monica Place mall: As businesses and offices close and remote work patterns have solidified, customer foot traffic declines, which in turn leads to more business closures. Although we did not directly study this phenomenon in Santa Monica, research has described the process in other places (Portas, 2011; Kickert and vom Hofe, 2018). Drawing on other research, Kickert and vom Hofe (2018, p. 1050) point out that "temporary retail tenants, rent abatements, food trucks, temporary festivals and other programmed activities are other examples of 'tactical' measures to maintain a critical mass of business activity in commercial areas."

Along these lines, an official with West Hollywood, which has faced similar challenges with recovering from the pandemic's negative effects on retail growth, highlighted a recent effort to facilitate the use of vacant retail space as "pop-up" concepts, where, for example, manufacturers of clothing and accessories open a dedicated retail space to promote a brand and test the local market. West Hollywood has focused on facilitating the rapid approval of these pop-ups, which are often quite time-sensitive. Our interviewee said that West Hollywood has had luck with these retail experiments, which have led to new permanent storefronts opening in the wake of successful pop-ups, and viewed this as a useful strategy to incubate new businesses.

A Recent Labor Ordinance Might Act as a Barrier to New Businesses

City staff also cited a recently adopted labor ordinance establishing new regulations for businesses operating on land leased from the city to rehire laid-off workers and to observe "labor peace" provisions intended to ease union organizing (Hall, 2025) as a potential barrier to attracting new businesses to the Santa Monica Pier and other commercial properties on city-owned land. Multiple interviewees and media accounts attributed the adoption of these new rules by the Santa Monica City Council to heavy lobbying by UNITE HERE Local 11, the Southern California hospitality workers union, which interviewees and media reports claim has long been influential in local elections (Hall, 2026a).[7]

The ordinance was cited in the termination of negotiations for a new operator of a large restaurant space on the pier (Hall, 2026b). City staff expressed concerns that the law could lead to business closures across a large number of city-owned parcels as existing leases expire in coming years. City staff also cited a recent case in which a nonprofit declined to pursue a lease on city-owned property because it was concerned that the new law's reach might be extended beyond food service establishments in the future.

[7] Notably, the Santa Monica City Council declined to adopt these same rules promoted by UNITE HERE Local 11 in 2018 during a much more positive business climate for the city (Casuso, 2025). Interviewees also highlighted the large role played by Santa Monicans for Renters' Rights, a longtime tenant organization active in issues around the city's notably robust tenant protection laws, in making highly influential endorsements for city council.

Santa Monica Has Historically Been Perceived as Difficult for Businesses to Work With, but This Reputation Is Changing

Nearly all interviewees brought up the city's past business relations as a negative factor in current trends. Santa Monica's historical governance style was widely characterized as "an extractive mindset" that was "built into the DNA of the city" with a goal of obtaining as much revenue from commercial activity as possible. One interviewed attorney, who has represented applicants in development negotiations with the city, told us that the city had long been so concerned with negotiating substantial amounts of community benefit provisions for allowing development that the city would often kill the deal, without even considering the costs in city resources of "getting to no."

Santa Monica's historical business stance was compared by a former Culver City elected official with Culver City's long-standing focus on attracting commercial development, which he attributed primarily to the "fiscalization of land use" that many cities pursued as a result of California Proposition 13's effect on the growth of local property tax revenue (Wassmer, 2002; Public Policy Institute of California, 1999).

Most interviewees agreed that Santa Monica's historical approach has changed. The city has recently taken a much more active role in incentivizing and facilitating new investment and business formation. However, business owners and management with whom we spoke suggested that the city, like many others in the region, still tends to focus primarily on raising revenue through taxes and fees while discounting the costs of these policies. One interviewee claimed that "governments don't deal with costs; they just try to raise revenues [with the costs] just dumped onto employers." Another reflected that "politicians always think it's a revenue issue, not a cost issue. But it's both."

Santa Monica has the highest city tax rates among many tourism-oriented cities in Southern California, including hotel and home-share taxes, parking taxes, and sales taxes (see Table B.2 in Appendix B). An interviewee from Santa Monica's hotel sector suggested that hotel taxes may not matter much to the average tourist, but they do matter for conference planners booking large blocks of rooms when rates in nearby cities, such as Laguna Beach and Newport Beach, are 20 to 30 percent lower. A local business owner told us that increased parking taxes were hitting his employees hard because none of them live in the city due to its high housing costs and, thus, drive into work every day.

Chapter 3

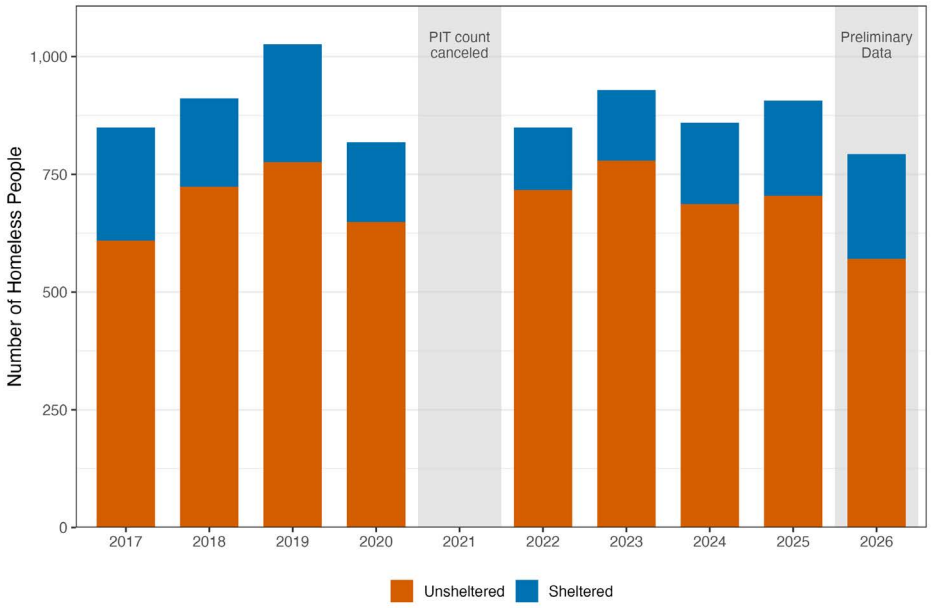
Homelessness Has Been Relatively Stable, with Slight Decreases, and Remains Concentrated Downtown

In this chapter, we draw on data from the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority's (LAHSA's) annual point-in-time (PIT) homeless count, which estimates the sheltered and unsheltered homeless populations in Los Angeles County. We find that homelessness levels have been relatively stable over the past decade (as in several peer cities) and appear to be declining recently. We also find that homelessness remains concentrated in downtown Santa Monica. Drawing on interview data, we find that concern over the challenges posed by homelessness in Santa Monica is common. We attempt to square the finding of relatively stable homelessness levels with the perceived challenges that homelessness now poses for the city.

Homelessness Has Declined Modestly in Recent Years

Figure 3.1 plots the PIT homeless counts for Santa Monica from 2017 to 2026. Notably, homelessness has been relatively stable over this period, both overall and in terms of unsheltered individuals specifically. Also, the largest increases in homelessness predated the COVID-19 pandemic, with the highest count being in 2019 (N = 1,026), though homeless counts increased again from 2020 to 2023. The lowest count during this period occurred in 2026 (N = 793), though the 2026 PIT data are preliminary. Thus, there has not been a large increase in homelessness in Santa Monica, and insofar as there were increases, they were not simply because of the pandemic.

Figure 3.1. Point-in-Time Homeless Counts for Santa Monica, by Sheltered Status



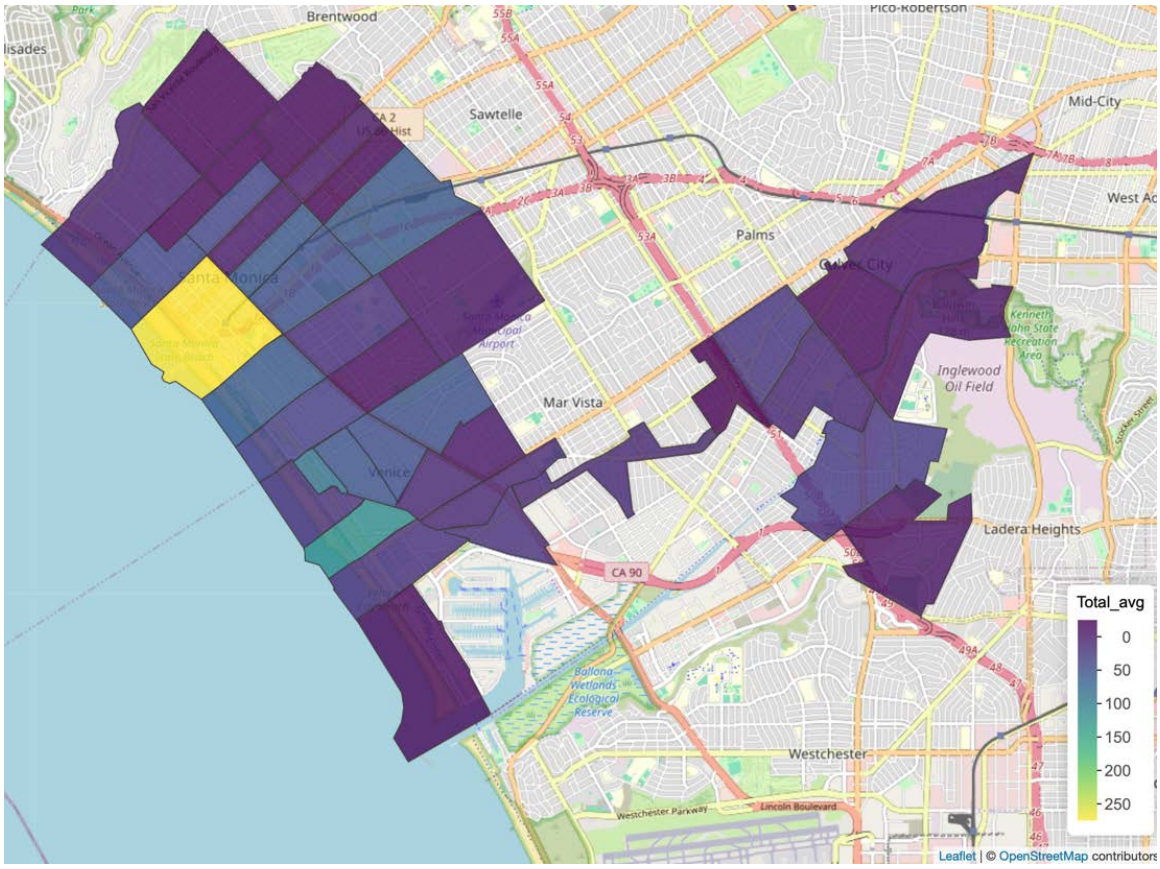
SOURCE: Authors' calculations from LAHSA PIT homeless count data (LAHSA, undated).
NOTE: We used U.S. Census tract–level (and sub-tract–level) data from LAHSA and weighted tents, vehicles, and makeshift shelters that were counted under the assumption that there were, on average, 1.7 homeless individuals per structure to generate the total counts shown in the figure.

Figure C.1 in Appendix C breaks down Santa Monica's homeless counts by U.S. Census tract. It shows that homelessness is consistently concentrated in tract 701902, which is downtown Santa Monica. This tract is influential for changes in citywide homeless counts over time. However, while homelessness is most concentrated downtown, it is not a downtown-only phenomenon. Although no other Santa Monica tract has as much homelessness, other tracts collectively contain more homeless individuals than downtown. Overall, the spatial distribution of homelessness has been highly stable over the past decade.

Santa Monica's Homelessness Is Highly Concentrated Downtown; Only Venice Is Similar Among Comparison Cities

Figure 3.2 is a tract-level map of homelessness in Santa Monica, Venice, and Culver City, using the average PIT homeless counts from 2023 to 2025. Clearly, downtown Santa Monica contains the most homelessness (the yellow area of the map), but adjacent tracts have nontrivial levels. There are large parts of Santa Monica with essentially no homelessness, such as near the airport and toward Brentwood. Much of Venice has high levels of homelessness, whereas Culver City does not have a tract of concentrated homelessness with levels comparative to those of Santa Monica and Venice. Figure C.2 in Appendix C is like Figure 3.2 but counts only unsheltered homelessness; it reveals a similar spatial distribution to that of total homelessness.

Figure 3.2. Distribution of Homelessness in Santa Monica, Venice, and Culver City

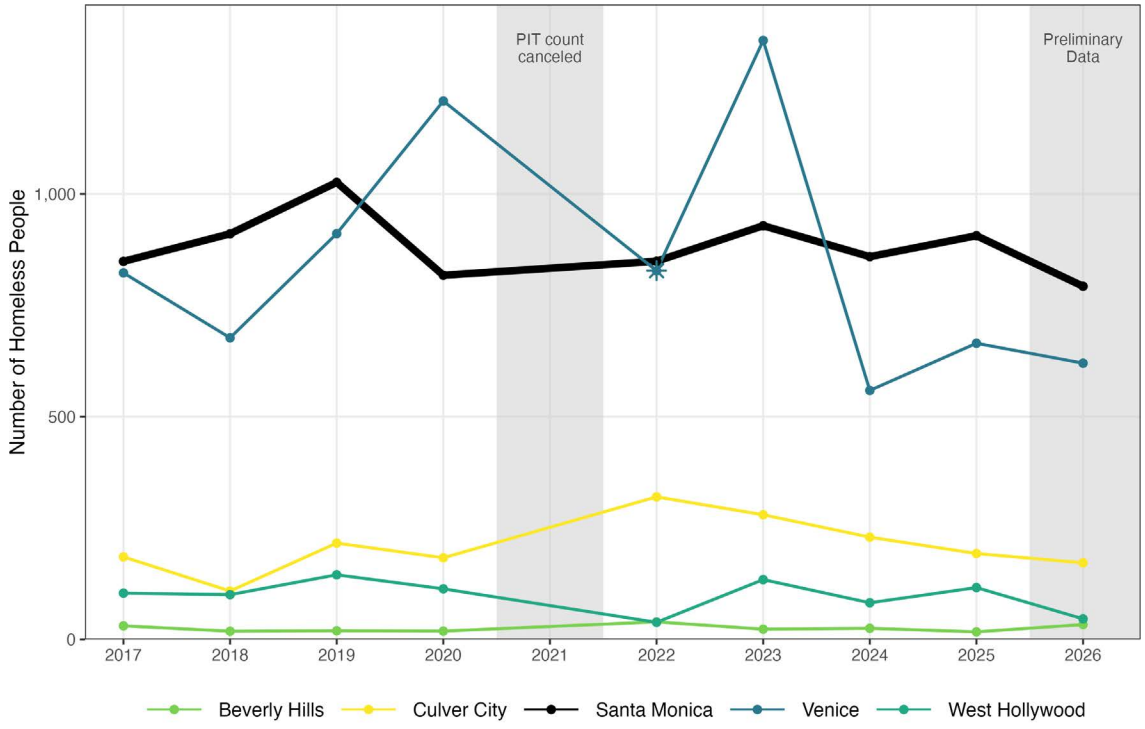


SOURCE: Author calculations from LAHSA PIT homeless count data (LAHSA, undated). Basemap data are from OpenStreetMap, undated (https://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright).
NOTE: We used data from LAHSA aggregated to the tract level and weighted tents, vehicles, and makeshift shelters that were counted under the assumption that there were, on average, 1.7 homeless individuals per structure to generate the total counts shown in the figure.

Figure 3.3 compares trends in total homelessness (sheltered and unsheltered) in Santa Monica versus other nearby cities (we chose Venice instead of all of Los Angeles given Venice's proximity and historical social and economic integration with Santa Monica). Over the past decade, only Venice among our comparison areas has had levels of homelessness similar to Santa Monica's, with far fewer homeless individuals counted in Culver City, Beverly Hills, and West Hollywood. Venice has exhibited large swings in its homeless population, especially from 2023 to 2024.[8] Culver City experienced a nontrivial increase in homelessness from 2020 to 2022 before gradually returning to pre-pandemic levels. Excluding Venice, the dominant pattern across both Santa Monica and comparison cities is relatively stable levels of homelessness over the past decade.

[8] The 2022 count is artificially low due to an error with PIT homeless data in one census tract (Smith, 2022). Using alternative data collected by RAND to correct this error would raise the Venice total for 2022 to between roughly 1,000 and 1,200 (Ward, Garvey, and Hunter, 2023).

Figure 3.3. Point-in-Time Homeless Count for Santa Monica and Comparison Cities



SOURCE: Authors' calculations of LAHSA PIT homeless count data (LAHSA, undated).
NOTE: Venice's 2022 PIT homeless count is known to be an undercount due to a data-recording issue. We used U.S. Census tract– and sub-tract–level data from LAHSA and weighted tents, vehicles, and makeshift shelters that were counted under the assumption that there were, on average, 1.7 homeless individuals per structure to generate the total counts shown in the figure.

Context from Expert Interviews, Other Research, and Recent Santa Monica Policy Changes

Santa Monica's History of Homelessness and of Homeless Service Provision Is Distinct from Most Peer Cities

Santa Monica has long had relatively high levels of homelessness for a small regional city. While our analysis of PIT homeless count data goes back only to 2017, a 2006 city-funded homelessness plan and report from the Urban Institute cites an early PIT homeless count that estimates the city hosted 2,000 of the roughly 66,000 people experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County (Burt and Aron, 2006). In contrast, our analysis of the most recent PIT homeless count estimated 793 homeless individuals, suggesting that homelessness has declined meaningfully in the city over the past two decades. It is possible that the PIT homelessness count methodologies shifted over these two decades, but it is clearly not the case that homelessness is a new feature of Santa Monica.

Santa Monica also has a long history of robustly funding and providing services to homeless individuals, including past experimentation with such novel approaches as a Homeless Community Court program that began in 2007 and ran for more than a decade (Buenaventura, 2018).

In contrast, our main comparison cities rely largely or entirely on the county for homelessness services. According to interviews with city officials, Beverly Hills and Culver City are more inclined to remove homeless individuals from their downtown or commercial areas—where they would be highly visible to visitors—and city officials in those cities acknowledged that such policies simply shift the challenge to other locations. (We were unable to verify or measure the extent to which this is done differentially across municipalities.)

Santa Monica is currently engaged in several planned major shifts in policy that our city staff and elected interviewees all highlighted. These include the closing of SaMoShel, the longtime, 60-bed shelter within blocks of the Metro E Line terminus, and a plan to replace this facility with a more distributed set of sites throughout the city (Hall, 2026d). City staff whom we interviewed also pointed to increasing fare enforcement on the Metro E Line and the city's funding of more ambassadors to effectively manage the use of parks and public restrooms.

Several Factors May Have Affected Homelessness in Santa Monica

The city's challenges with homelessness have likely been affected by several shifts in policy and context around the COVID-19 pandemic: The city adopted a more permissive policy around tent encampments due to concerns over virus transmission (Yehia, 2020); the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority's "end of the line" policy at the Santa Monica terminus of the E Line contributed to increases in people camping overnight in the city (an issue raised by both city staff and those in the business community); and several changes in homelessness policy in the City of Los Angeles around encampments have been employed extensively in nearby Venice (He, 2022; "Park Pushes New 41.18 Zones as Displacement Continues," 2025; Zahniser and Molina, 2023).

Interviewees also raised the issue of Los Angeles County implementing policies, including the siting and operation of facilities and the county's harm reduction program, over which Santa Monica has little control. This has motivated renewed discussion in city hall about exploring approaches for the city to claim more authority over local service provision.

Homelessness Is a Challenge for Downtown Business Activity, Which May Have More to Do with Its Acuity Than Levels

Homelessness in Santa Monica regularly came up in our conversations with business owners and operators. While all emphasized that they understand that homelessness is a real challenge and a nuanced issue, they focused on the role of unsheltered individuals with significant mental health problems or untreated substance use disorders in making it difficult to attract and retain customers to businesses due to broader concerns about crime and disorder. One business owner said, "Homelessness is the number one issue. Dealing with the *same four people* every day." Another said that they observed a gradient in the severity of homelessness, with the most severe cases downtown and people who were "more together, less severe" living in other parts of the city.

There is a tension between our findings that Santa Monica's level and distribution of homelessness have been quite stable, even declining modestly over the past decade, and widespread perceptions that homelessness has become out of control in the city. All private-sector interviewees who were asked ranked disorderly activity and crime connected to homelessness as the number one problem for downtown businesses and quality of life. It is unlikely that these widespread perceptions are entirely imagined or that the LAHSA PIT homeless counts would have missed a large change in homelessness.

One possible explanation is that while the level of homelessness has been stable, associated problem behaviors have become more salient, especially downtown. Interviewees were not simply concerned with the number of homeless individuals but with mental health issues and disorderly and antisocial behaviors. Though we lack data to measure changes in the *acuity* of homelessness (the presence of physical or mental disabilities, substance use disorders, and other challenges) or disorderly behavior, these may have worsened during a period of relatively stable or even falling levels of homelessness. RAND research on unsheltered populations in Los Angeles has found that as numbers of unsheltered individuals declined, levels of acuity have remained constant (Smith, 2025). As we show in Chapter 4, serious violence has increased downtown relative to a decade ago, which could be related. If perceptions of homelessness have shifted while levels have not, it may be possible to address those perceptions even if large reductions in homelessness are infeasible, perhaps by targeting the conditions that make people feel especially unsafe or uncomfortable (Brands et al., 2025).

Chapter 4

Serious Violence Increased Downtown, but Most Other Violent and Property Crimes Have Been Stable Citywide

In this chapter, we consider trends in property and violent crime in Santa Monica and comparison cities, as well as the spatial distribution of these crimes. We find that whether the crime rate is up or down in Santa Monica depends on the offense type examined and on the reference period. It is not simply the case that Santa Monica used to have less crime and that this has recently changed. Aggravated assault and robbery increased sharply, starting in 2013 and peaking in 2018—an increase that was overwhelmingly driven by incidents in downtown Santa Monica. For most other offenses and neighborhoods, crime has been relatively stable for the past couple of decades, though grand theft auto increased citywide during the COVID-19 pandemic, consistent with national trends.

Robbery, Aggravated Assault, and Grand Theft Auto Have Increased, but Other Property and Violent Crimes Are Stable

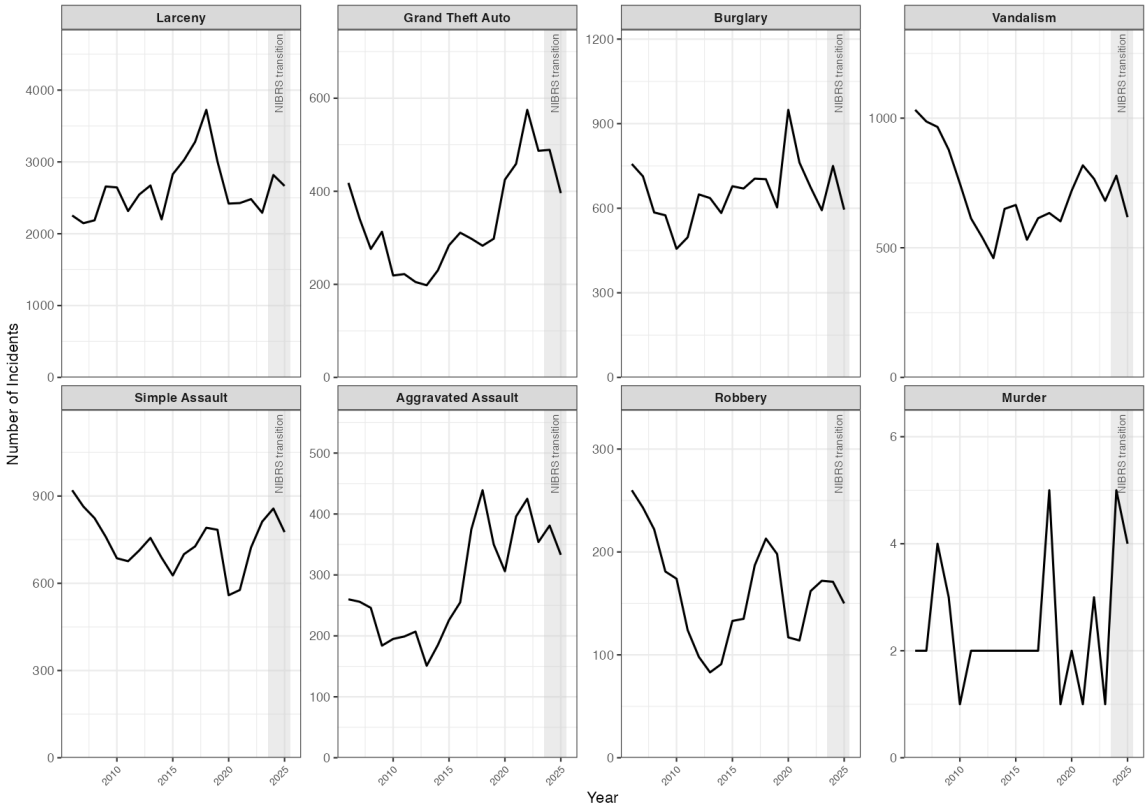
Figure 4.1 presents 20 years of crime trends for eight offense types. Incidents of three offense types have clearly increased recently in Santa Monica. First, grand theft auto spiked upward around 2020, consistent with national trends (Lopez and Boxerman, 2026). Second, aggravated assault increased by more than 100 percent, starting in 2013 and peaking in 2018, then stayed high. Third, robbery also roughly doubled, starting in 2013 and peaking in 2018, though it remains less common than it was 20 years ago. Given the timing of increases in aggravated assault and robbery, they were not simply a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure D.1 in Appendix D shows these crime trends broken down by zip code. It reveals that while the increase in grand theft auto occurred citywide, the increases in aggravated assault and robbery were almost entirely driven by incidents in downtown Santa Monica. Figure D.1 also shows that, generally, violent and property crime are as low as they have been in the past two decades in the rest of Santa Monica. Declines in public safety in Santa Monica are primarily a downtown phenomenon.

Importantly, these violent and property offenses exclude several signs of social and physical disorder that, regardless of whether they are criminal, may influence people's perceptions of crime (Brands et al., 2025). For example, experiencing homelessness is not a crime, and unstable, but not

criminal, public behaviors that may feel threatening are not captured by our crime data and may have changed over time. As one interviewee noted, disorder-related offenses may be important for shaping perceptions of crime and safety in the city, such that looking at violent and property crime trends does not tell the full story.

Figure 4.1. Trends in Santa Monica Crimes, by Offense Type, 2006–2025



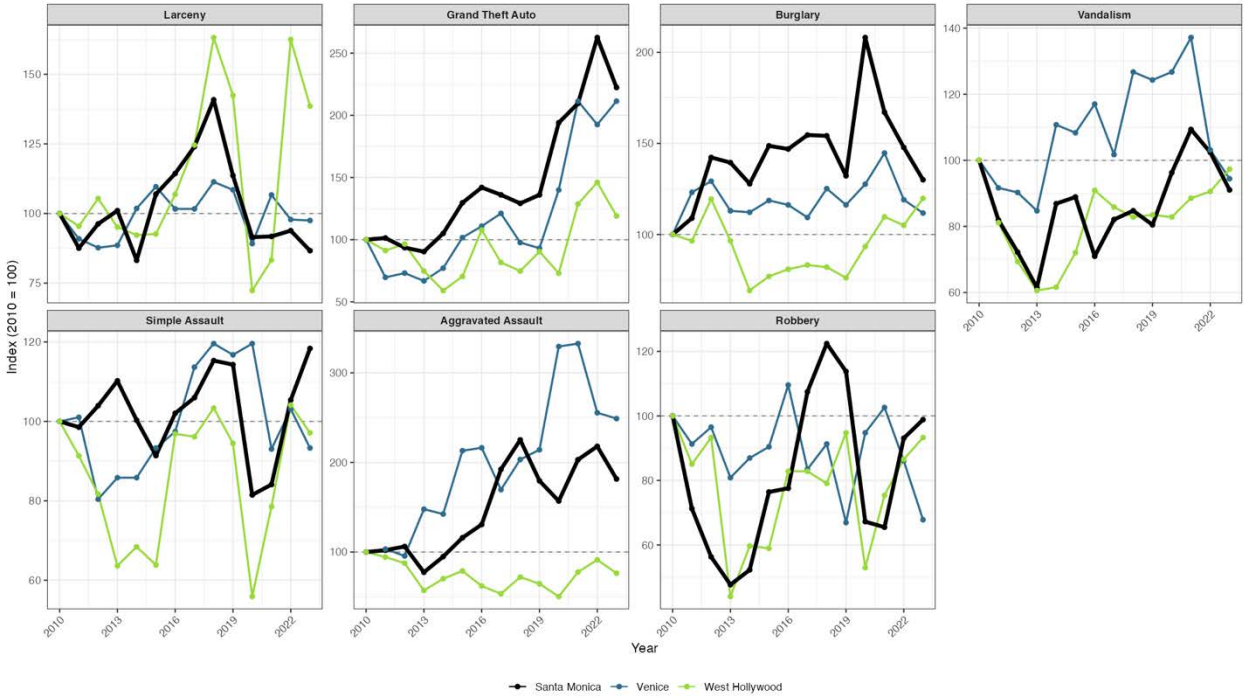
SOURCE: Authors' calculations from SMPD crime records (accessed at City of Santa Monica, undated-g) and 2024–2025 data from the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) provided to the authors.
NOTE: The city transitioned crime data recording systems in 2024 as it began reporting to the NIBRS. We have formatted these NIBRS-style data to be consistent with data from prior years, but the transition may have nonetheless affected crime-recording patterns. The y-axes are on different scales across panels.

Also, note that changes in crime levels may not correspond to changes in the risk of criminal victimization. In particular, if there are fewer people present in an area, then even a stable crime rate could mean that the risk of victimization has increased. Therefore, the increases in violence in downtown Santa Monica may have had an especially large impact on perceptions of safety if they coincided with a reduction in the number of people downtown. Unfortunately, we could not get a sufficiently reliable measure of downtown foot traffic to measure exposure-adjusted risk.

Santa Monica's Crime Trends Are Not Exceptional Compared with Those in Venice and West Hollywood

Figure 4.2 compares Santa Monica's crime trends with those in Venice and West Hollywood, from 2010 to 2023, with cities indexed to their 2010 crime levels to facilitate comparisons. (This is the first year for which we have data for all three cities. We omit Culver City and Beverly Hills due to data limitations.) Santa Monica's crime trends appear unexceptional by comparison. For example, Venice had an even larger proportional increase in aggravated assault since 2010, though West Hollywood did not experience an increase. Burglary and grand theft auto are exceptions: Though they increased everywhere, they did so earlier and to a greater (proportional) extent in Santa Monica. Even for grand theft auto, however, all cities experienced their largest increases around the time of the pandemic.

Figure 4.2. Trends in Crime by Area and Offense Type, Indexed to 2010



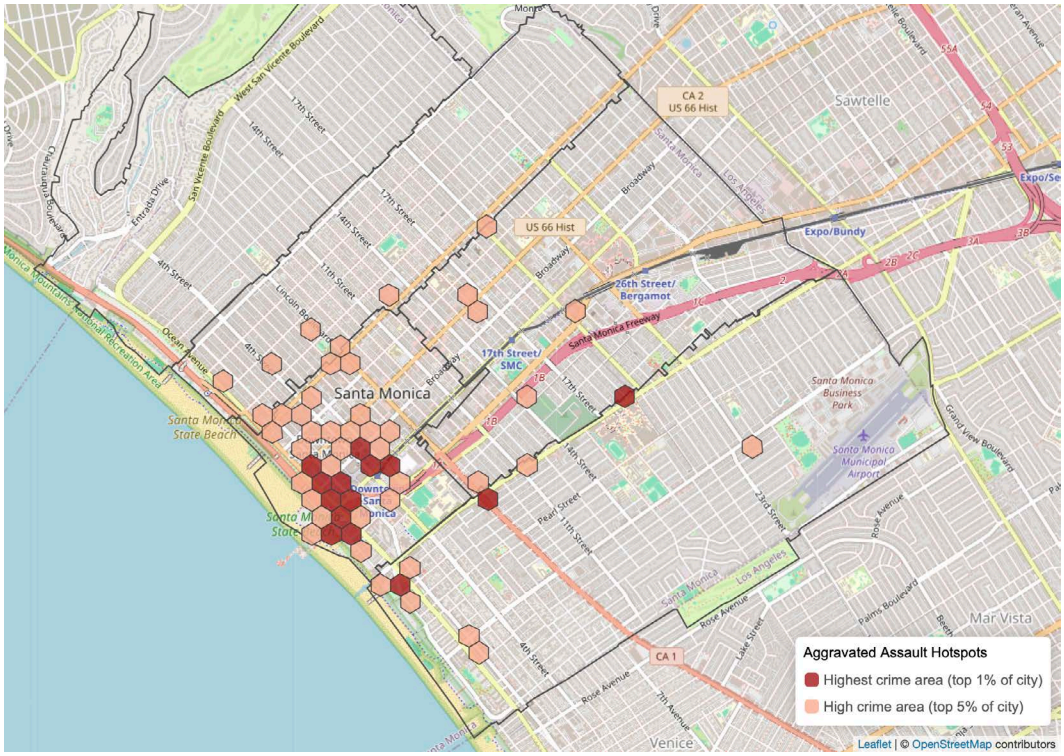
SOURCE: Authors' calculations from SMPD crime records (accessed at City of Santa Monica, undated-g) and 2024–2025 NIBRS data provided to the authors; for Venice, from City of Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) crime records (accessed at Los Angeles Open Data, undated); and for West Hollywood, from Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department crime records (Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, undated).
NOTE: We omit homicide from this figure because its rarity would make this type of indexed plot unreliable.

Crime Is Overwhelmingly Concentrated in Downtown Santa Monica

Figure 4.3 shows the location of the 5 percent of Santa Monica's area with the most incidents of aggravated assault (the top 1 percent are shaded darker red).[9] Together, this 5 percent of the city accounted for 50.6 percent of the city's aggravated assault incidents from 2023 to 2025. These crime hotspots are overwhelmingly concentrated next to each other in downtown Santa Monica, particularly the portion of downtown mostly west of Lincoln Boulevard.

For brevity, we do not plot the other offense types, but an examination of those maps revealed that they generally look very similar to Figure 4.3, with the hotspots of most offense types concentrated downtown. This is especially true of other violent offenses (i.e., robbery and simple assault), as well as larceny. Those offenses also have a similar degree of concentration (about half of these incidents occurred in 5 percent of the city), though 71 percent of robberies occurred in 5 percent of the city.

Figure 4.3. Location of Aggravated Assault Hotspots in Santa Monica, 2023–2025



SOURCE: Authors' calculations from SMPD crime records (accessed at City of Santa Monica, undated-g) and 2024–2025 NIBRS data provided to the authors. Basemap data are from OpenStreetMap, undated (https://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright).
NOTE: The hexagons shown are those in the top 5 percent (light red) and top 1 percent (dark red) of the city for the most aggravated assault incidents, drawn from a larger hexagonal grid that covers the entire City of Santa Monica.

[9] To identify these crime hotspots, we covered Santa Monica's map with a grid of 500-foot hexagons. There were 1,144 such hexagons, of which the 57 plotted in Figure 4.3 are those that had the most offenses from 2023 to 2025.

There are three main exceptions, where hotspots are not concentrated downtown: Grand theft auto hotspots are spread more widely across the city, as is burglary, which has a notable concentration on the western portion of Wilshire-Montana and is most concentrated downtown to the east of the Third Street Promenade, and vandalism, which has several hotspots in Ocean Park. These offenses are also less spatially concentrated, with about 30 percent occurring in 5 percent of the city's area.

Drug Overdose Deaths Have More Than Doubled Since 2016

Like other cities, Santa Monica was hit by the fentanyl epidemic in recent years. A data report from the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health on drug overdose deaths reveals the scale and timing of this epidemic (Health Outcomes and Data Analytics Division, Substance Abuse Prevention and Control Bureau, 2026). Drug overdose deaths increased dramatically in Los Angeles County, starting around 2019 and accelerating during the COVID-19 pandemic years, before declining, beginning in 2023. Still, as of 2025, there were about twice as many drug overdose deaths (N = 2,298) in the county than a decade prior (N = 1,123 in 2016). These trends resemble countrywide patterns. While we do not have Santa Monica–specific drug overdose death data, Service Planning Area 5—which contains Santa Monica—closely resembled much of Los Angeles County in terms of the degree of change in fentanyl overdose death rates and timing. While clearly devastating in itself, the extent to which this epidemic shaped the nature of homelessness, disorder, and crime in Santa Monica remains unclear. That said, several of the crime increases in Figure 4.1 predated the entry of fentanyl into Los Angeles County's illicit drug market.

Context from Expert Interviews: The Effects of Recent Changes to Policing in Santa Monica Remain Unclear

One public-sector interviewee alleged that there was a policing slowdown in 2020, in the aftermath of protests following the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, in which the SMPD effectively stopped enforcing minor quality-of-life and homelessness-related offenses. This observation is consistent with changes in levels of policing in other settings, which some have linked to the national spike in homicides (Lopez and Boxerman, 2026), though other research has found weak linkages between these policing slowdowns and public safety measures (Roman et al., 2025; Winter, 2020).

This alleged slowdown may raise concerns that Santa Monica's recent crime trends (presented above) may be inaccurate due to changes to police recordkeeping. That is not the case: We compared trends in 911 call volumes against recorded crimes for the same offenses, and they track each other closely (see Figures D.2–D.4 in Appendix D). We did not examine, however, the extent of change in police enforcement during the alleged slowdown for quality-of-life offenses.[10]

Interviewees, including city officials, described a police department that has undergone several changes in recent years. City-affiliated interviewees said that a new chief of police with high rank-and-

[10] Additionally, recent research has found evidence that the reporting of gunshots declined around the United States in the wake of George Floyd's murder, though it is unclear whether such an effect would be more or less likely to occur with more-minor crimes (Ang et al., 2025).

file support was leading the department toward more proactive enforcement (i.e., not simply reacting to calls for service). They also described such recent changes as hiring up to full staffing levels (for the first time in 20 years), the creation of a substation at Santa Monica Place, a large increase in downtown patrols (including by foot and bike), the opening of a real-time crime center, the use of license-plate readers, and working with city attorneys to increase prosecution rates. One interviewee cited a previously low rate of prosecutions as an additional disincentive for officers to issue citations and make arrests.

Despite the large number of changes in the SMPD in recent years, it is difficult to say how the department's actions have affected crime in the city. Many of these changes are quite recent, but beyond that, attributing changes in crime to police actions requires confronting alternative explanations. There have been large changes in crime in much of the United States over the past decade, and Santa Monica's trends are not even exceptional compared with those in nearby cities, suggesting that they are not simply the result of the SMPD's actions.

Chapter 5

Santa Monica Has Reformed Its Housing and Commercial Development Pathways, but Bottlenecks Remain

Santa Monica has among the highest costs of housing in California. Last year, median rent in Santa Monica was roughly 50 percent higher than the statewide average and second only to Beverly Hills in the Los Angeles metropolitan area (Alin, 2025). Notably, this level of rental costs exists in a city with some of the strictest rent control in the region (City of Santa Monica, undated-f). These conditions naturally motivate a focus on housing production as key to economic and demographic growth. We demonstrate that housing production has been slowed in Santa Monica. Recent policy changes show promising improvements. We identify several bottlenecks related to current administrative processes and regulations on housing production.

Permit Applications Increased in Santa Monica After the Builder's Remedy, but This Has Not Yet Produced Completed Units

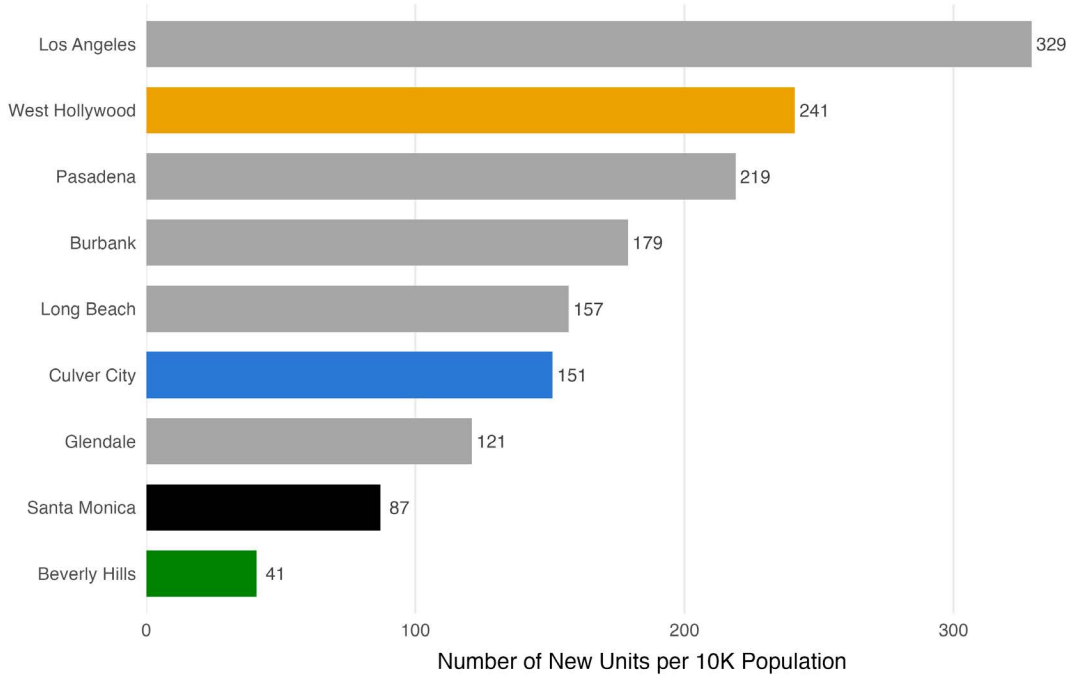
In recent years, housing production in Santa Monica has been low relative to both historical production and current housing goals (Abundant Housing LA, 2022; Gruber, 2019; City of Santa Monica, 2022). Figure 5.1 shows realized housing production per 10,000 residents over an eight-year period for Santa Monica, our main comparison cities, and a set of four additional cities (Burbank, Glendale, Long Beach, and Pasadena) with various similarities to Santa Monica by population or proximity. The figure shows that Santa Monica has the second-to-lowest level of housing production among these nine jurisdictions, only higher than that of Beverly Hills.

The number of permit applications per 10,000 residents was also lower in Santa Monica for most years between 2018 and 2024, while proposed projects in the city have tended to have a larger number of units than in peer cities (see Figure E.1 in Appendix E).[11] There was a surge in permit applications in 2022 and 2023 (panel A of Figure E.1 in Appendix E), which was driven by a unique event: In late 2021, Santa Monica was opened up to the California builder's remedy policy, allowing developers to

[11] We omit Los Angeles from this comparison because it is much larger and more heterogeneous, which makes it less comparable to Santa Monica. The data on building permits do not support disaggregation to the more comparable West LA Area Planning Commission (APC), which we use in later analyses.

gain automatic approval for any housing development with a minimum share of affordable units that did not pose a clear threat to public health or safety.[12] Between February and October 2022, developers submitted 16 housing development applications proposing a total of 4,260 units (Ward, 2022), before a revised housing element was deemed acceptable. In May 2023, the city reached a settlement allowing these projects to be refiled as new multifamily projects with expedited processing (Casuso, 2023). Following this, the number of applicants and total proposed units declined sharply.

Figure 5.1. Number of New Units per 10,000 Residents, 2018–2025



SOURCE: Authors' calculations of data from *State of Los Angeles County Housing and Neighborhoods* (SOLACHAN) annual reports (accessed at USC Lusk Center for Real Estate, undated).

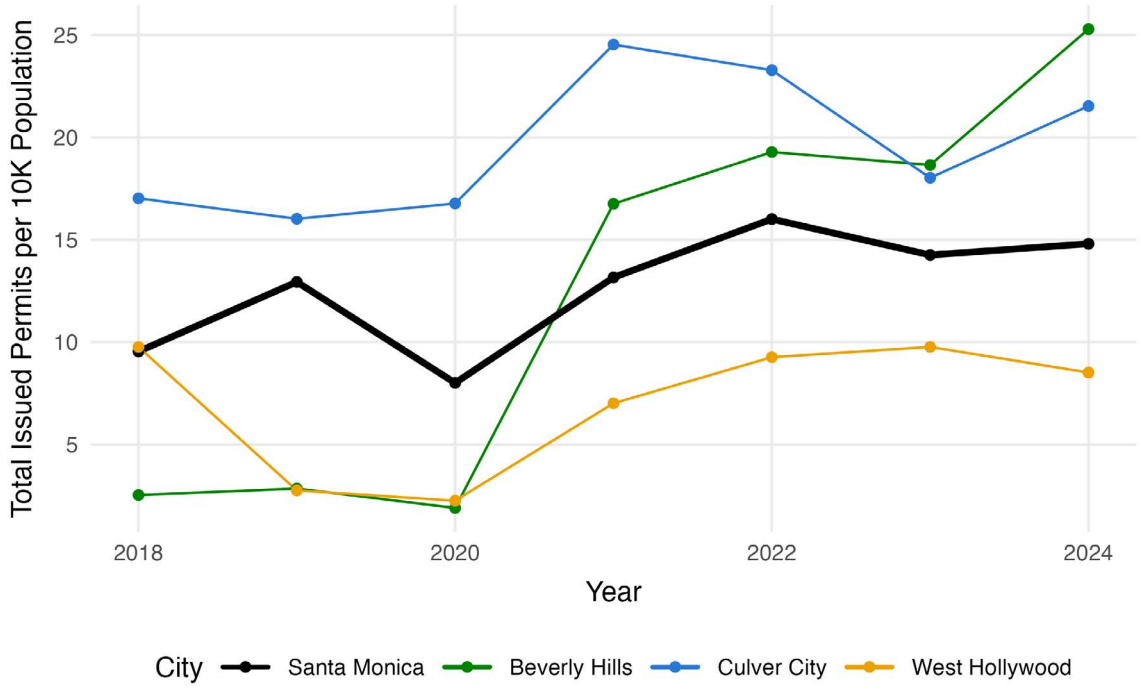
As of 2024, these builder's remedy units were not yet reflected in permit issuance. Between 2018 and 2024, Santa Monica issued fewer building permits per 10,000 residents than nearby Culver City and was overtaken by Beverly Hills in 2021 (Figure 5.2). Permit issuance in Santa Monica fluctuated between about 10 and 15 permits per 10,000 residents during this period.

The recent increases in housing applications and permit issuance related to the builder's remedy and the city's affordable housing pilot program mark a departure from Santa Monica's development environment over much of the preceding decade. Historically, larger developments that exceeded base zoning standards often faced discretionary review (Gruber, 2016; Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies, 2023). Under the city's previous tiered land use framework, projects seeking additional height

[12] This policy is a provision of the Housing Accountability Act that sanctions a local government for failing to produce a *housing element* (i.e., a plan to identify and, if necessary, rezone sufficient land to allow for the production of enough housing to meet state-mandated targets) that is in compliance with state law (City of Santa Monica, undated-a).

or floor area could be required to provide negotiated community benefits, and major projects required individually negotiated development agreements (Duarte, 2015; Sharp, 2020). This process gave the city substantial discretion over project approval but also increased the time, uncertainty, and cost of development.

Figure 5.2. Building Permit Issuance per 10,000 Residents, 2018–2024



SOURCE: Authors' calculations of data from annual progress reports (accessed at California Department of Housing and Community Development, undated).
NOTE: Total number of permits issued are standardized by population size. Population data are from the American Community Survey's 2020–2024 five-year estimates (U.S. Census Bureau, 2026).

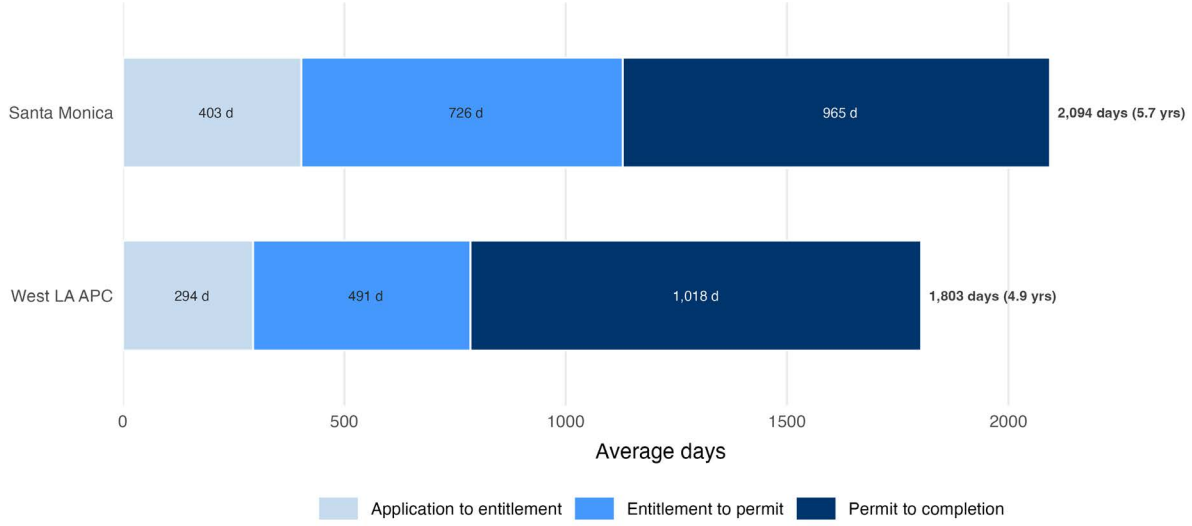
We calculated the average time for Santa Monica to process a building permit application, using data from the city's permit databases. Figure 5.3 shows that it takes an average of 403 days to earn entitlement, 726 days to get building permit approval, and 965 days to get the final permit after completion (usually a Certificate of Occupancy for multifamily buildings).[13] On average, it takes more than six years for a housing project to be built and ready for occupancy in Santa Monica. This is substantially longer than projects in the west of the City of Los Angeles governed by the West LA APC,[14] which take an average of 4.9 years. The main difference lies in the entitlement and permitting

[13] We note that this period may include discretionary delays by the developer between permit issuance and construction start because we lack data to identify the start of construction, and building permits are typically valid for one year without construction beginning.

[14] Under the current LA zoning code, the West LA APC consists of eight Community Plan Areas: Bel Air-Beverly Crest, Brentwood-Pacific Palisades, Westwood, West Los Angeles, Palms-Mar Vista-Del Rey, Venice, Westchester-Playa del Rey, and

stages, which are mostly within the city's control, while the permit to completion stage depends on the actual development process and takes similar time in both places.

Figure 5.3. Average Days for Each Stage of Permit Process



SOURCE: Authors' calculations from public permit data (accessed at Los Angeles City Planning, undated-b; City of Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety, 2025; and City of Santa Monica, undated-h) and proprietary City of Santa Monica data provided to the authors.
NOTE: Development durations are calculated for three stages: application to entitlement, entitlement to building permit, and building permit to project completion. Bars show the average number of days in each stage. Among sample projects, the earliest application dates are February 2010 in Santa Monica and January 2010 in West LA APC, while the latest observed project completion dates are May 2025 and January 2026, respectively.

The Role of the California Coastal Commission in Slowing Housing Production

Housing development along Santa Monica's coastal region faces an additional regulatory process from the California Coastal Commission. Santa Monica's Coastal Zone extends from the shoreline inland by four to eight blocks. Although Santa Monica has a California Coastal Commission–certified Land Use Plan, it does not yet have a fully certified Local Coastal Program (LCP). As a result, development in the Coastal Zone, which requires a Coastal Development Permit, must obtain approval from the Coastal Commission in addition to city approvals. Coastal Commission review considers such issues as public coastal access, visitor-serving uses, and coastal hazards (City of Santa Monica, Local Coastal Program, 2018; California Coastal Commission, undated).

Interviewees identified this additional jurisdictional layer as an important source of delay for projects in western Santa Monica. Our analyses of entitlement and permitting timelines support these

Los Angeles International Airport (Los Angeles City Planning, undated-a.). We do not include Beverly Hills, Culver City, or West Hollywood in this analysis because the permitting timeline data are not available for these jurisdictions.

accounts. Table 5.1 compares development timelines inside and outside the Coastal Zone in both Santa Monica and the portion of the City of Los Angeles covered by the West LA APC. In Santa Monica, projects inside the Coastal Zone took, on average, 77 percent longer from application to entitlement approval, compared with timelines for projects outside the Coastal Zone (701 days versus 396 days). The subsequent period from entitlement approval to building permit issuance was 12 percent longer in the Coastal Zone (1,072 days versus 958 days). However, the permit-to-completion stage took somewhat longer outside the Coastal Zone in Santa Monica (1,121 days) than within it (918 days).

Table 5.1. Housing Production Timelines Inside and Outside the Coastal Zone, in Days

	Santa Monica			West LA APC		
Phase	**Outside Coastal Zone**	**Inside Coastal Zone**	**Difference**	**Outside Coastal Zone**	**Inside Coastal Zone**	**Difference**
Entitlement application to entitlement approval	396 days	701 days	305 days (77%)	385 days	775 days	390 days (101%)
Entitlement approval to building permit	958 days	1,072 days	114 days (12%)	27 days	468 days	441 days (1,633%)
Building permit to certificate of occupancy	1,121 days	918 days	–203 days (–18%)	954 days	962 days	8 days (0.8%)
Total number of projects	**233**	**32**		**293**	**10**	

SOURCE: Authors' calculations from public permit data (accessed at Los Angeles City Planning, undated-b; and City of Santa Monica, undated-h) and proprietary City of Santa Monica data provided to the authors.
NOTE: MAREA.ai assisted the authors in analyzing these data. The data include seven projects that have not yet received entitlement approval, so the "entitlement application to entitlement approval" estimate is likely biased downward in magnitude. The "building permit to certificate of occupancy" stage may include discretionary delays by developers between the issuance of a permit and the start of construction that we cannot measure in our data. The "entitlement approval to building permit" phase in Los Angeles includes the time that applicants may spend going through the city plan review process on an at-risk basis while the entitlement process is underway (where the uncertainty of the Coastal Commission process appears to reduce this practice versus higher expectations that a project will go on to be entitled outside of the Coastal Zone).

The slowed pattern of housing production within the Coastal Zone is even more pronounced in the neighboring portions of Los Angeles. Entitlement took an average of 775 days for projects in the Coastal Zone compared with 385 days for projects outside it, which is twice as long. The Coastal Commission's influence over entitlement timelines can also be seen in the time between entitlement approval and building permit issuance, which averaged 468 days inside the Coastal Zone, compared with only 27 days outside it. The remarkably short time between these milestones is because applicants in Los Angeles may begin the plan review process for permit approval on an at-risk basis while the entitlement process is underway, and many pursue this option outside the Coastal Zone. Navigating the uncertain outcomes of the Coastal Commission process reduces the use of this practice, leading to projects beginning the plan review process only after it is clear they will be entitled. Post-permit construction time was similar inside and outside the Coastal Zone in Los Angeles.

These comparisons suggest that the Coastal Zone approval process substantially increases preconstruction project timelines. Longer timelines can raise project costs by increasing the time during which land and other predevelopment costs must be financed and by exposing projects to greater risks of increased construction costs or new regulations that may affect financial feasibility (Ward and Schlake, 2025). While coastal projects in our sample may differ from noncoastal projects in size, complexity, land value, design, and other characteristics, the magnitude and timing of the differences indicate that Coastal Commission review is an important factor in project timelines, consistent with interviewees' descriptions of Coastal Commission review as an additional preconstruction constraint. The city is updating the LCP, and a fully certified LCP will allow applicants to obtain local and coastal development permits directly from the city, which could shorten entitlement and permitting timelines (City of Santa Monica, undated-d).

Context from Expert Interviews, Other Research, and Recent Santa Monica Policy Changes

There Have Been Important Housing Reforms in Santa Monica

In recent years, both state housing law and local policy changes have substantially altered the entitlement environment in the city. Since 2020, Santa Monica has authorized administrative approval for qualifying housing projects, and its current housing plan (i.e., the sixth-cycle housing element) further expanded streamlined approval. In 2023, the city eliminated its previous tier system, increased allowable height and floor-area standards for housing projects, updated its density-bonus rules to conform with state law, and expanded administrative approval (City of Santa Monica, 2023b; City of Santa Monica, 2023a; Tanemori, 2023).

Additionally, Santa Monica City Council recently implemented a pilot reform to the city's affordable housing ordinance requiring affordable units in market-rate projects. The pilot adds flexibility to pay in-lieu fees or to develop affordable units off-site, as well as relaxes a prior requirement that market-rate projects could not receive a certificate of occupancy until an associated off-site affordable project had been completed (Alin, 2026).

The reform has been credited with reviving several apartment projects in the city that had been entitled but had since stalled (Chi, 2026). Two interviewees involved in Santa Monica land use policy (on the public and private sides) attributed these projects being put on indefinite hold to the adoption of Measure GS in 2023. This voter-approved ballot initiative established a new 5.6 percent real-property transfer tax on transactions valued at $8 million or more (City of Santa Monica, undated-c). The tax serves as a substantial disincentive to new housing development that may require a sale after construction to a long-term operator, since the 5.6 percent tax represents more than 30 percent of a typical expected return on a development project, a reduction in profitability sufficient to make many projects infeasible in Santa Monica.

A recent RAND study on a similar policy in the City of Los Angeles (United to House LA, also known as Measure ULA) showed that this type of transfer tax has led to a major decline in multifamily housing production in Los Angeles (Ward et al., 2026). The RAND study and an additional study also showed that the revenue raised by large transfer taxes of this type, which in both

cases are earmarked for supporting affordable housing production and tenant protections, is substantially offset by lost municipal revenue from property taxes, impact and development fees, sales taxes on building materials, and other sources (Ward et al., 2026; Green et al., 2026).

Overall, interviewees from both the public and private sectors described Santa Monica's reforms as highly consequential for housing development. An experienced land use attorney stated, "I would rather propose a housing project in Santa Monica than literally any other jurisdiction in the entire state of California." These interviews suggest that the city's entitlement process has been streamlined and that the affordable housing pilot program has made development feasible, even with the headwind of the Measure GS transfer tax. Note, however, that we have not tested the effects of these reforms with quantitative data and are not aware of any such analysis.

Slow Permitting and Inspection Bottlenecks Remain Barriers

Despite these substantial reforms, interviewees also pointed out that success in reforming the entitlement path can only make so much of a difference. Growing entitlement activity has yet to translate into actual construction. The binding constraints on construction are closely associated with costs, interest rates, and uncertainty in the broader economy. At least part of the costs appears to come from the still-slow permitting process. Figure 5.3 and Table 5.1 above show dramatic differences in the period between entitlement approval and permit issuance.

Such delays may involve some factors beyond the city's control, including coordination with utilities, but these same issues largely exist in Los Angeles as well. Santa Monica maintains a formal architectural review process that is absent in Los Angeles and most other medium-size to large cities in the region. The process includes a review by the city's urban designer followed by a distinct architectural review board review. One interviewee with experience shepherding projects throughout the city suggested that their experience had long been that the architectural review board did not appear to consider the urban designer's review, meaning that changes made to satisfy the first review had no bearing on what the board might require in the subsequent review. If this is a common pattern, it could slow the development process.

Interviewees also consistently raised similar challenges with inspections in the field. First, inspectors apply their discretion inconsistently: A project that one inspector approves may be rejected by another. Second, departmental silos remain a lingering issue in permitting. For instance, interviewees noted that reviews related to trash/recycling and public works reviews can generate consequential and costly demands in the mid- to late-build phases rather than during the plan review. One local developer appreciated the city's combination inspection process, where inspectors can cover multiple systems in one visit, but they said that inspectors appeared to often be overworked and would show up with the ability to do multiple inspections but the time to do only one, leading experienced developers to prebook multiple inspections, which likely makes the overall process less efficient. City staff interviewees said that the city has struggled with retaining experienced inspectors, with moving to the private sector being the common reason for their leaving.

Additionally, permit approvals are automatically routed to every city department regardless of whether a department needs to weigh in, and interviewees said that because of this practice, many departments raise issues on matters that applicants believed were settled during the plan review phase.

While city interviewees indicated that Santa Monica is working to minimize the use of Conditional Use Permits (CUPs), which are historically a bottleneck, interviewees from the architectural and development sectors said that lingering CUP requirements still create significant holdups. Slow construction is costly: A local developer we interviewed estimated that a two-month delay during construction "could cost $600,000 at the peak of the construction loan, the most expensive time to have a delay." A veteran architect noted that new construction is only financially feasible at relatively high rents (between $3,500 and $4,500 per month for a one-bedroom unit), so new production remains infeasible for unsubsidized projects with a goal of charging rents that are affordable for middle-income households.

Commercial Development Has Improved, but Concerns Remain

Commercial development and assisting new businesses through the city's process is an area where city staff interviewees appeared strongly focused, and it has been an area where the city has made strides in streamlining and increasing transparency. However, according to private-sector interviewees, barriers remain, including seemingly arbitrary requirements from the city's Resource Recovery and Recycling Division (RRR; i.e., sanitation) and from the Department of Transportation for costly upgrades to commercial spaces during tenant improvement and core-and-shell work, even when the new business has the same use as the prior business in the same space.

Interviewees acknowledged that many of the city's older retail buildings have features, such as narrow alleys and smaller loading zones, that create infrastructure challenges. But they pointed out that placing all these costs on the next business to occupy a space and doing so well into the process of a buildout creates significant financial risks and is a disincentive for new businesses to open in the city. Santa Monica has a relatively new business concierge program that city staff highlighted, though we were unable to speak with any businesses that had used it.

Additional policy reforms—aimed at lowering water fees, a major discretionary expense the city has levied on new businesses (typically $1,000 per seat); lowering parklet fees; creating entertainment zones allowing consumption of alcoholic beverages in certain public spaces, including parts of the Third Street Promenade (City of Santa Monica, undated-b); and limiting the use of CUPs, among other recent changes—may help at the margins with business formation in the coming years.

Chapter 6

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

In this brief conclusion, we highlight our main results and outline policy reforms we believe the city should consider as it continues to pursue economic recovery and future growth.

Retail Sales and Economic Activity

We found that Santa Monica experienced larger declines than most peer cities in retail sales revenue and in the growth of tourism-related businesses and employment. The hotel sector showed a more mixed picture: The city's hotel utilization recovered better than that of some peer cities, but that recovery appears at least partly tied to lower revenue in real-dollar terms.

Many interviewees said that the city has improved its historical "extractive" stance toward business and commercial development, and multiple recent reforms appear to mark a meaningful break with the past. These include the city's new business concierge service, lowered water and parklet fees for local food service businesses, and plans to coordinate the revitalization of the Third Street Promenade.

Yet interviewees also mentioned higher tax rates, difficulties posed by high-acuity homeless individuals downtown, the city's recent adoption of controversial labor standards for businesses on city-owned land, and other factors as ongoing challenges for commercial growth.

Interviewees and our own research have highlighted multiple ways that Santa Monica could support the feasibility and establishment of new businesses:

- Consider expanding the city's business concierge service to go beyond its current focus on helping users when they "get stuck" toward systematically addressing recurrent issues that are within the city's purview to reform or streamline.
- Develop citywide guidance for staff from key departments, such as RRR and transportation, to potentially reduce idiosyncratic judgments about compliance issues, which our interviews (while a small sample) suggest may commonly arise when businesses are financially committed to a project and vulnerable to unforeseen cost increases.
- Pursue multiple efforts to reduce vacant commercial space and increase foot traffic. Temporary pop-up concepts are likely a low-risk means of filling vacant space and, potentially, attracting customers. Another likely low-risk way of attracting foot traffic is to increase the number of events, festivals, and other activities held in the city. Steps in this direction are

underway, for example, with several 2026 World Cup events and the Ocean Way Festival.[15] Larger-scale redevelopment, such as that of the Civic Auditorium, may help serve as an anchor that draws in foot traffic and benefits other nearby business activity. Yet another possibility may be to actively court employers in sectors where Santa Monica could grow (for example, as San Diego's Life Science Industry Accelerator program does) by providing resources and personnel to facilitate targeted commercial development projects in the sector (City of San Diego, undated). This could include dedicated project managers in the city, fee waivers, and streamlined reviews and inspections. Importantly, we have not considered the potential payoffs and risks to these strategies; we raise them as options to consider in attempting to revive business activity.

- Review the implications of the city's recently adopted law on right-to-rehire and labor-peace agreements for leases on city-owned land. Both city staff and numerous business community stakeholders expressed substantial concerns about this law, and real negative consequences are already accruing. The Santa Monica City Council appears to have adopted the law without substantial research into either its potential benefits or costs.

Homelessness, Crime, and Disorder

We found that homelessness has been stable in recent years and declined in the most recent LAHSA PIT homeless count. Yet homelessness in Santa Monica remains high relative to West Hollywood, Culver City, and Beverly Hills and is highly concentrated downtown, creating an outsize impression on business owners, tourists, and downtown visitors. Interviewees from some peer city governments claimed that differences partly reflect these cities' practice of moving homeless individuals out of high-profile areas through enforcement that is disconnected from services aimed at providing housing or shelter. But even leaving aside the use of such practices, there are other differences between those cities and Santa Monica that influence patterns of homelessness. Santa Monica has historically taken an active role in trying to address homelessness at the municipal level, and the city is now undertaking a major reconsideration of its homelessness policies. City-based interviewees also suggested that policing for minor crimes committed by homeless individuals has become more active, though our quantitative analysis did not examine how policing has changed or what effects that has had.

Perceptions that the city has become less safe are supported by our analysis of crime data, but with major caveats. Some crimes have increased over the past decade, most notably aggravated assault and robbery, which are concentrated downtown. Yet, outside of downtown, levels of violent and property crimes have generally been stable over the past decade or two in Santa Monica. Santa Monica's crime trends are most closely paralleled by Venice, which is immediately adjacent, suggesting that municipal differences in policing or local governance decisions may not play a large role in these trends.

[15] The inaugural Ocean Way music festival was canceled in mid-September 2026 due to storm surf and associated runoff from Hurricane Marie (Bartlett, 2026).

In addition to plans that the city is undertaking to effectively manage homelessness and reform policing practices, we suggest that the city consider the following approaches:

- Adopt more-frequent and -detailed measurements of homelessness around the city to facilitate more-effective responses and monitoring of policy outcomes and progress, including developing public-facing key performance indicators and other data resources. This would be valuable because existing data give only a minimal portrait of the level and distribution of homelessness once per year.
- Given that homelessness and crime are highly concentrated downtown, efforts to proactively engage with high-risk populations located there are likely to be resource-efficient means of improving public safety and reducing disorder. The city has taken steps in this direction, for instance, by opening a police substation in the Santa Monica Place mall and with its Homeless Liaison Program. Maintaining a visible presence at the highest-risk crime hotspots through patrols and/or technology is important (especially at high-risk times), and programs that identify high-risk populations to connect them with services should be considered and supported. While arrests and prosecutions can be useful tools, these recommendations are not mutually exclusive and have the added benefit of not needing to wait until an offense has occurred to act.[16]
- Existing evidence and our interviews both point to a small number of homeless individuals playing outsize roles in using public services and criminal justice resources (Compton et al., 2022; Ku et al., 2014). Santa Monica should consider restarting its Homeless Community Court program to address high-acuity individuals who are repeat service users. The former program targeted individuals with the most severe mental health needs, offering a voluntary court with a progressive plea-bargaining system and flexible, noncarceral sentencing to induce hundreds of participants to obtain needed assistance and reduce recidivism. A similar countywide program operates in Los Angeles (Lopez, 2026).

Housing and Commercial Development

We also examined housing production in Santa Monica. The builder's remedy policy boosted production, and the city has made important strides in streamlining entitlements, but negative perceptions tied to the city's past discretionary process appear to be sticky. Remaining challenges include long timelines between entitlement approval and permitting related to the city's two-step architectural review process, Coastal Zone project approvals, and bottlenecks in the city's inspection process. We recommend that the city consider the following steps to facilitate greater levels of both housing and commercial development:

- Consider what additional incentives could be combined with the city's existing adaptive reuse ordinance to further incentivize office-to-residential and commercial-to-residential projects in the city, including additional feasible financial incentives, such as additional fee waivers.

[16] Not all downtown crime is caused by homeless individuals, so while homelessness-targeted public safety programs are valuable, the city should consider more-general means of reducing crime downtown at the same time.

Furthermore, research on the City of Los Angeles's experience with its 1999 adaptive reuse ordinance highlighted the importance of clear, consistent guidance on applying the ordinance in the field to help reduce uncertainty on costs and timelines for these financially risky developments (Ward and Schwam, 2022). Converting commercial into residential space could help meet state housing goals while adding new residents to stimulate local business activity.

- Reconsider the costs and benefits of the city's current architectural review process, including whether it is a necessary step for a city seeking to lower housing costs and increase economic growth.
- Develop a robust, transparent open data portal with a clear set of resources for the city's development pathway, including guidance on what to expect and how to manage factors not directly within the city's control, such as navigating Coastal Commission approval and working with local utilities. The portal should also include metrics on the distribution of timelines and outcomes for each step, including the share of time an application is in the hands of city staff and how much of the time it is in the applicant's hands.
- Conduct outreach to publicize the city's recent successes in streamlining and reforming the housing production pathway. Interviewees who recognized the city's substantial progress also noted that its reputation as a place to avoid remains widespread. Engaging with builders through local and regional organizations in the sector may help shift outdated perceptions.
- Take steps to reduce the design review process by assessing where the required number of reviewers could be minimized (reconsidering the practice of automatically sending every application to all departments for signoff, even when certain project aspects are routine and were approved during the plan check process) or where second or third review rounds could begin for applicable categories before the entire round is completed.
- Our analysis suggests that delays in inspections are a barrier to development that can increase project costs. Focus attention on the city's inspection process to facilitate shorter and more-efficient construction phases. A greater reliance on deputy inspectors, a program commonly used in the City of Los Angeles, is one potential solution. We also heard suggestions from interviewees that earlier, coordinated interdepartmental plan review that pulls in sanitation and transportation departments at the front end, as Los Angeles does, would be beneficial.

Overall, we found that Santa Monica has struggled more than peer cities in recent years on some important dimensions. While the COVID-19 pandemic affected the city in many ways, negative trends were not simply a result of the pandemic; some, such as increased crime, worsened before the pandemic, and others, such as the downturn in retail revenue, rebounded after the pandemic only to then decline again. Another notably recurrent finding across the topics we considered is that these challenges are primarily concentrated in downtown Santa Monica, including business activity, homelessness, and violent crime patterns. Citywide statistics do not always reflect trends outside of downtown Santa Monica, with other neighborhoods in the city typically faring better. Efforts to improve the city's trajectory should therefore focus on downtown. Some of Santa Monica's recent trajectory reflects factors beyond the city's control, but there are opportunities for fruitful reforms. Broadly, Santa Monica's new leadership and staff are pursuing substantial pivots and reforms that could position the city to improve its outcomes within a few years.

Appendix A

Data Sources and Methods

Quantitative Methods and Data

We compiled data from multiple sources. We obtained data on retail business establishments and employment from Data Axle (see Data Axle, undated). We also used taxable sales revenue from the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration (CDTFA). For each of the four main comparison cities, CDTFA data capture the real-dollar value of taxable transactions by business type. Note that even though these are data collected by the government for tax purposes, we do not measure tax revenue in this report. Rather, we focus on the revenue to retailers that is subject to taxation—that is, their taxable sales revenue. We used detailed data on monthly vacancies for retail, office, and hotel buildings from CoStar.

CoStar data also provide counts of available rooms and bookings for hotel properties (see CoStar, undated-a). City-level transient occupancy tax (TOT) data for FY 2017–FY 2024 come from the California State Controller's Office. The municipality-specific TOT applies to hotels, vacation rentals, and other forms of short-term lodging. Our analysis focuses on short-term lodging revenue trends, which we calculated as tax revenue divided by the tax rate (for a given municipality and year), for Santa Monica and peer cities. All dollar amounts are in FY 2017 real dollars to adjust trends for inflation.

We also examined housing production over time in Santa Monica and the comparison cities. We compiled housing permit data from the California Department of Housing and Community Development's annual progress reports and calculated the number of units built in each year using property-level characteristics from Los Angeles County Assessor's parcel roll data.

To understand Santa Monica's social conditions, we analyzed the spatial and temporal trends in homeless populations and crimes. Data on the number of homeless people come from the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority's (LAHSA's) annual point-in-time (PIT) homeless count, which covers most of Los Angeles County. We use the publicly available U.S. Census sub-tract–level PIT homeless count data from 2017 to 2026 and exclude the 2021 count because that year's count was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2026 PIT homeless count data used are preliminary.

These data count all forms of unsheltered homeless adults and homeless individuals staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing, and safe havens.[17] We weight all structures used by unsheltered homeless people—such as tents and vehicles—under the assumption that there are, on average, 1.7 homeless individuals per structure. This weight is approximately equal to the average aggregate weight that LAHSA has used over recent years. (Applying this weight to small-area counts

[17] We note that these categories do not add up to the total PIT homeless count since they exclude unsheltered youth and other forms of shelters, which account for a relatively small portion of overall homelessness.

may introduce a degree of error.) More generally, the PIT homeless count is subject to measurement error, but it represents the best available homelessness data for Santa Monica, allowing an examination of trends over time, spatial distribution, and comparisons of homelessness with nearby cities.

Santa Monica crime data for 2006 through 2025 come from a mix of publicly available Santa Monica Police Department (SMPD) records and more recent records provided to us by the SMPD. We focus on four property and four violent crimes that together make up a large share of all recorded offences and include several of the most serious offenses: homicide, aggravated assault, simple assault, robbery, burglary, larceny (i.e., most forms of theft), grand theft auto (also known as motor vehicle theft), and vandalism (e.g., destruction of property).

During 2024, the SMPD transitioned crime record management systems as part of its transition to reporting to the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). The city provided us with crime data for 2024–2025. We applied the hierarchy rule to make these records consistent with the old reporting system; still, this transition may have caused slight changes in crime-reporting practices.

We drew Venice crime data from publicly available records released by the City of Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD). West Hollywood's primary law enforcement agency is the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, and we drew publicly available crime records from its website. We standardized offenses across agencies, a task made easier by the fact that most of the offenses are index crimes, yet reporting differences may still exist. However, it is unlikely that city-specific changes in crime-reporting practices would drive our findings.

Most of the quantitative analyses visualize trends over time and map the spatial distribution of outcomes, typically by aggregating data into larger spatial and/or temporal units. These analyses do not employ statistical models.

Qualitative Methods and Data

Sampling and Data Collection

We recruited interviewees through a combination of purposive and snowball sampling. Our sampling framework was developed through early discussions with Santa Monica city leadership about this potential study; they identified topics for which the city would like more input to help more effectively deliver improved services and reforms. We therefore sought to recruit interviewees with professional roles in select areas, described in Table A.1. To identify potential interviewees, we drew on our existing knowledge about certain key individuals with substantial experience in economic development agreements and land use and identified city officials in Santa Monica and comparison cities based on their current or past positions. We solicited initial respondents in a snowball sampling approach to find subsequent participants. Interviews were intended to surface perspectives and patterns among our sample, not to estimate the prevalence of views among all stakeholders.

Table A.1. Interview Recruitment and Participation, by Category

Interviewee Category	Description	Invited	Participated
City staff	Staff focused on economic development in Santa Monica and comparison cities	3	3
Elected officials and candidates	Elected officials, former elected officials, and candidates for office in Santa Monica and comparison cities	6	3
Business owners and operators	Local business owners and operators with experience working with city regulations and agencies to start or operate new business ventures	5	3
Development-sector participants	Individuals involved in residential and commercial development, including developers, attorneys, and architects	5	5
Total		**19**	**14**

The interviews were semistructured, lasted about 45 to 60 minutes, and were conducted between March and August 2026, some in person and some virtually. Interviewees were emailed interview prompts in advance (included below), and while these served as an interview guide, the interviews also explored other germane topics not covered by these prompts.

Four of the discussions were automatically transcribed. After each of these interviews, we conducted a transcript review, flagging mistranscribed policy terms, acronyms, and proper nouns; iterated to resolve ambiguities; and produced a thematically organized written summary. The remaining interviews were documented with detailed notes.

Analysis

We used an agentic artificial intelligence tool (Claude Code, Opus 4.7) to analyze the interview transcripts and notes, identifying key themes. We conducted both deductive and inductive analyses. To identify major themes and crosscutting topics in our small interview sample, we adapted a Braun and Clarke–style thematic approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006): reading across the full corpus of interview notes and transcripts and organizing recurring themes into the report's four topical chapters, as well as a fifth crosscutting synthesis of finances and governance themes that did not map cleanly onto any single topic. For each theme, we highlighted common threads, points of disagreement between interviewees, and how views did or did not differ between private-sector and public-sector respondents.

All discussions were conducted under the consent language contained in RAND's Human Subjects Protection Committee's determination for this study (Study 2025-N0542), which limits attribution to generic role descriptions, with no names, titles, or organizational affiliations disclosed.

Interview Prompts

- Please identify and discuss what you think are the most critical barriers to new housing production, new business formation, and general economic growth in your municipality.
- Please identify and discuss what you think are the most promising policies or reforms that could lead to increased new housing production, new business formation, and general economic growth in your municipality and discuss why you think these ideas are particularly relevant in your local setting.
- Please discuss what, if any, structural or policy barriers could hinder adoption of these policies and what steps would be required to address such hindrances.
- Please discuss any city-specific factors that you think would more broadly inform the potential success or failure of policies or reforms meant to promote greater levels of new housing production, new business formation, and general economic growth, including considerations related to
    - development costs (e.g., materials, labor, land, fees)
    - permitting and other approval processes
    - costs related to local taxation or fees
    - administrative capacity of your local government
    - other factors not previously discussed.

Appendix B

Additional Figures and Tables for Commercial Activity Analysis

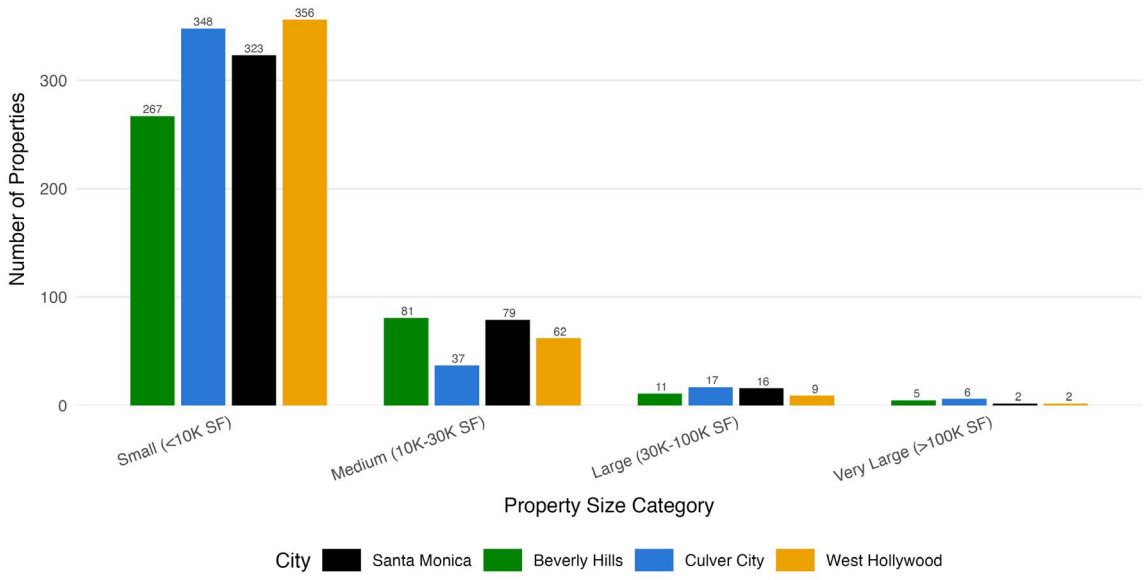
In this appendix, we provide additional tables and figures on the characteristics and performance of the retail sector, building performance, and tourism-related businesses in Santa Monica and comparison cities. Specifically, Table B.1 shows taxable sales revenue for the retail sector. Figures B.1 to B.4 show the characteristics and performance of retail, office, and hotel buildings. Figures B.5 and B.6 show employment trends for tourism-related businesses. Table B.2 shows various tax rates in Santa Monica and several other cities in Southern California.

Table B.1. Taxable Sales Revenue, by City and Business Category, 2015 ($ millions)

Business Category	Santa Monica	Culver City	Beverly Hills	West Hollywood
Motor Vehicle & Parts	538.5	219.1	403.3	31.2
Home Furnishings & Appliances	102.9	151.4	53.1	154.2
Building Materials & Garden	72.4	33.7	4.0	34.5
Food & Beverage Stores	120.3	64.7	32.4	108.9
Gasoline Stations	104.1	100.9	28.2	33.6
Clothing & Accessories	436.3	189.6	1,175.4	124.6
General Merchandise	46.1	379.9	162.3	83.4
Food Services & Drinking	637.2	257.7	381.4	436.6
Other Retail	394.7	162.9	193	118.7
All Other Outlets	784.3	231.8	463.3	208.9
Total	**3,236.9**	**1,791.7**	**2,896.5**	**1,334.6**

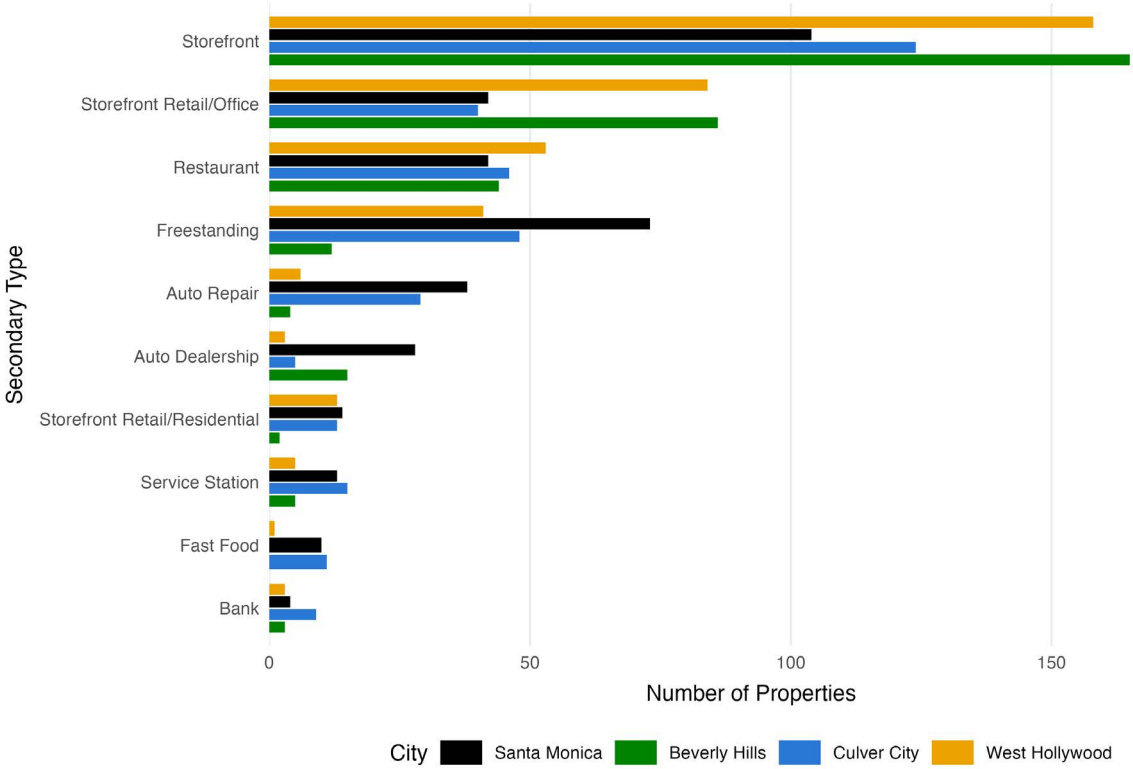
SOURCE: Authors' calculations from CDTFA data (accessed at CDTFA, undated).
NOTE: Revenue values are expressed in millions of nominal dollars. Values may not sum because of rounding.

Figure B.1. Retail Property Counts, by Property Size, as of April 2026



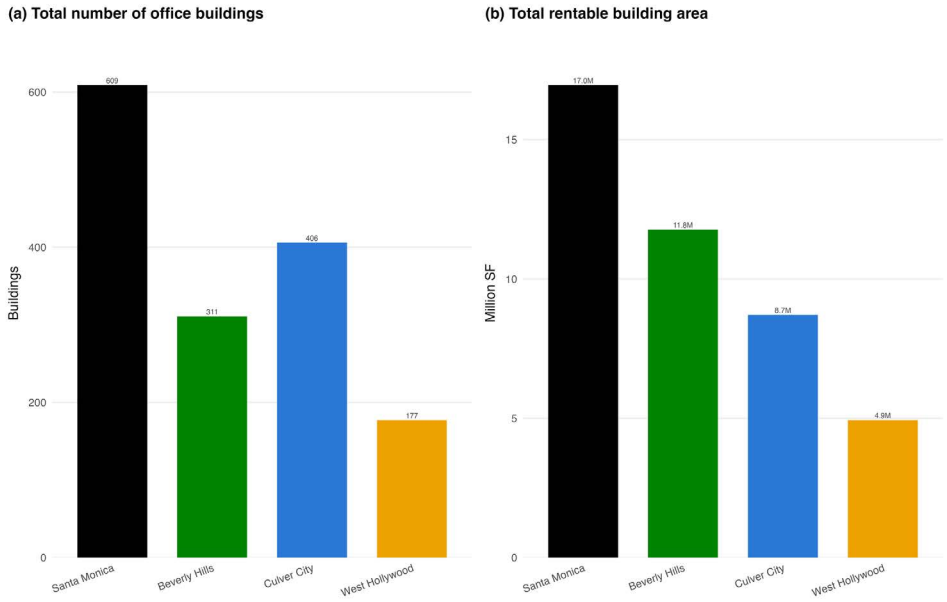
SOURCE: Authors' calculations from proprietary CoStar market reports data.
NOTE: K = thousand; SF = square feet.

Figure B.2. Retail Property Counts, by Property Type, as of April 2026



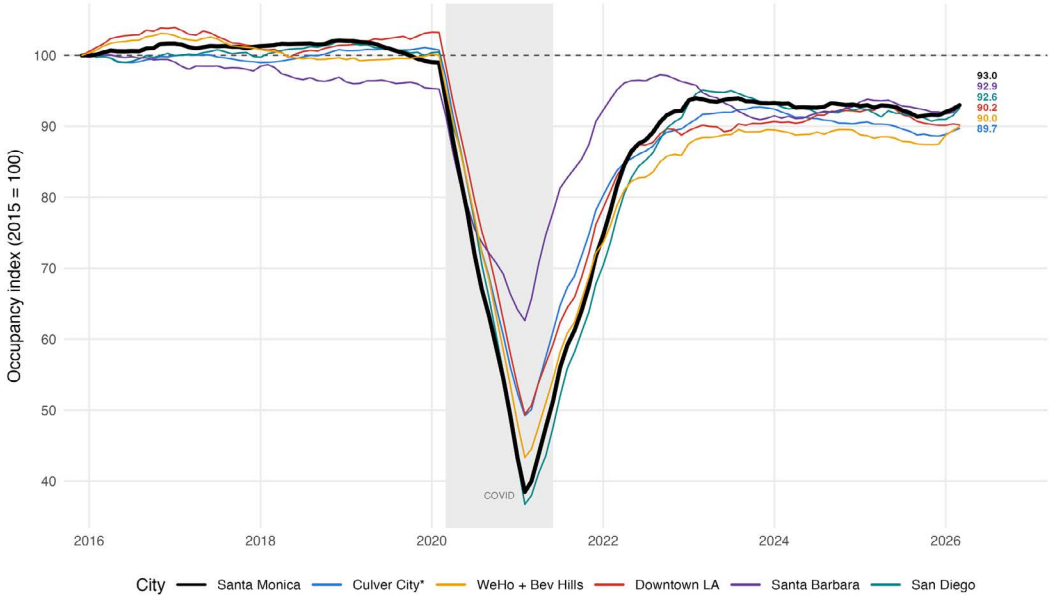
SOURCE: Authors' calculations from proprietary CoStar market reports data.
NOTE: CoStar defines *storefront retail* as "one-story and 100% retail that fronts onto the street and has no parking or limited parking in the rear." *Storefront Retail/Office* refers to a "two-story multi-tenant building consisting of ground floor retail and offices above. The retail portion must be 50% or more of the property's gross building area (GBA) and the office portion 50% or less." *Storefront Retail/Residential* refers to a "multi-story, multi-tenant building that is less than 10,000 square feet in GBA and less than 5 residential/multifamily units. 50% or more of the property's GBA must be retail and 50% or less residential or multifamily." *Freestanding* refers to "a single-tenant general purpose commercial-retail building that is free standing with open parking. Fast food restaurants are a good example of freestanding retail, as are larger 'big-box' structures such as Best Buy and Circuit City, as long as they are not part of a shopping center." A full list of definitions is provided in the CoStar Glossary (CoStar, undated-b).

Figure B.3. Office Property Characteristics, 2015–2024



SOURCE: Authors' calculations from proprietary CoStar market reports data.
NOTE: SF = square feet.

Figure B.4. Hotel Occupancy Rate Index, 2015–2026

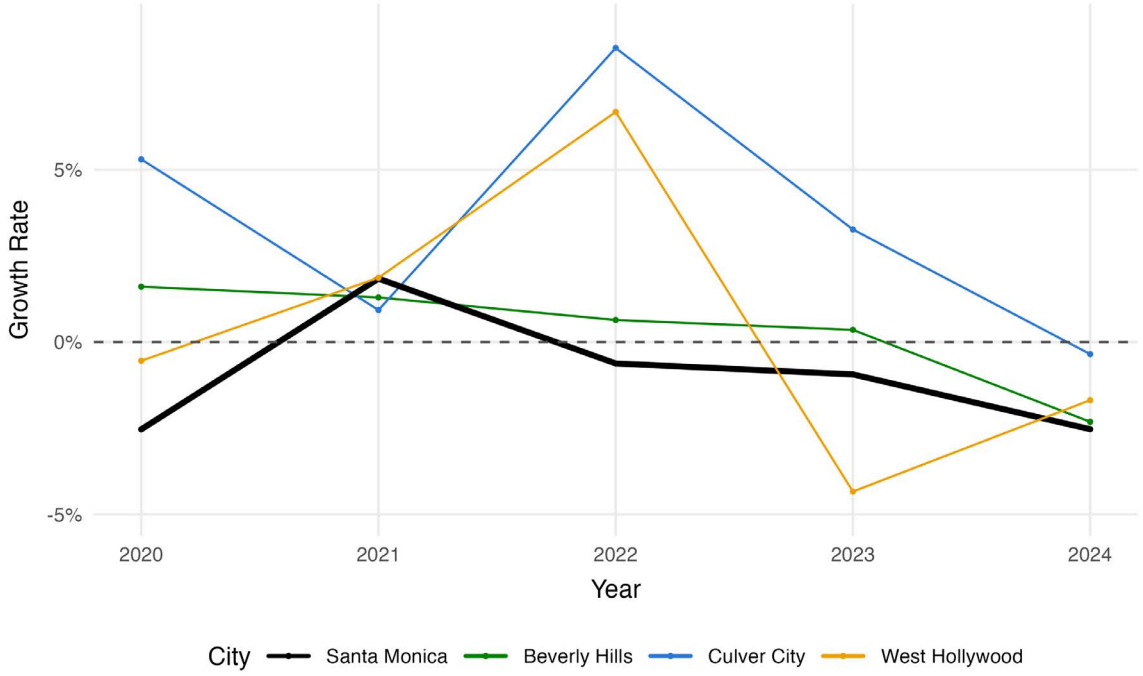


SOURCE: Authors' calculations from proprietary CoStar market reports data.
NOTE: Figure values show CoStar 12-month rolling occupancy rates, indexed to each submarket's 2015 average to 100. A value of 90 means that the occupancy rate is 10 percent below the 2015 average. The shaded area marks the COVID-19 pandemic. CoStar's hospitality submarkets are not cities. West Hollywood and Beverly Hills (WeHo + Bev Hills) are combined into one submarket, and Culver City is part of the LA International Airport submarket.

Figures B.5 and B.6 use data from Data Axle to show changes in the number of businesses and the number of employees in various sectors. We focus on tourism-related businesses, which we define to include food service, multiple retail categories (footwear, jewelry and leather goods, specialty food, beer/wine/liquor, sporting goods and hobby, books, florists, gifts, used merchandise, department stores, and other miscellaneous retail), arts, entertainment and recreation (including fitness and recreational sports centers), accommodation, and travel services.

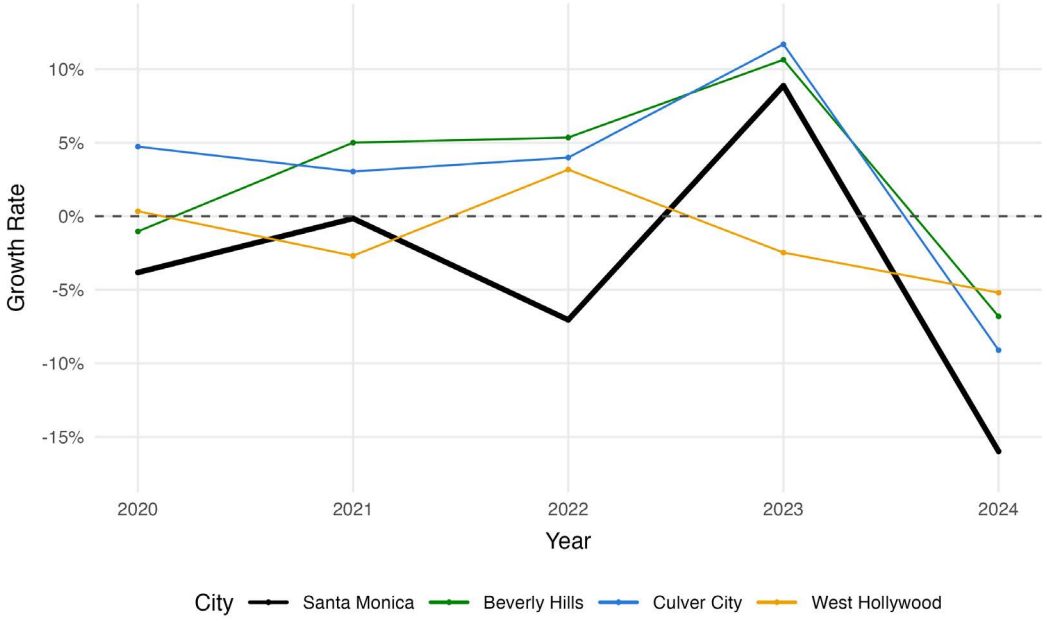
The figures show changes in both the number of establishments (Figure B.5) and the number of employees (Figure B.6) from a year prior to the year indicated in each figure. So, for example, the data points for 2020 reflect, for each city, the rate of growth or decline from 2019 to 2020.

Figure B.5. Tourism-Related Business Growth Rate, 2019–2024



SOURCE: Authors' calculations from proprietary Data Axle data provided to the authors.
NOTE: The universe of the data is private establishments located in each city. We use the four-digit codes from the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) to identify visitor-serving businesses and define tourism-related businesses. Specifically, we include food service, visitor-related retail (i.e., footwear, jewelry and leather goods, specialty food, beer/wine/liquor, sporting goods and hobby, books, florists, gifts, used merchandise, department stores, and other miscellaneous retail), arts, entertainment and recreation (including fitness and recreational sports centers), accommodation, and travel services in our calculations. Business counts are of distinct establishments, measured as unique Data Axle establishment identifiers present in a city-year; the chart carries one record per establishment-year, so counts are of physical business locations, not the number of firms at a location. A multilocation business contributes one establishment per location. Growth is the year-over-year percentage change, with 2019 as the unplotted base year.

Figure B.6. Tourism-Related Business Employment Growth Rate, 2019–2024



SOURCE: Authors' calculations from proprietary Data Axle data provided to the authors.
NOTE: The universe of the data is private establishments located in each city. We used the same four-digit NAICS codes as those used in Figure B.5 to identify tourism-related businesses. Employment is the sum of establishment-level reported employment across all tourism-related establishments in a city-year; missing values (0.4 percent of records) were treated as zero. Growth is the simple year-over-year percentage change in that city-year total, and 2019 is the unplotted base year.

Table B.2. City Tax Rates as of April 2026

City	Hotel TOT	Home-Share TOT	Parking Tax	Utility Users Tax	Sales and Use Tax
Santa Monica	15%	17%	18% (private) 10% (public)	10%	10.75%
Beverly Hills	14.00%	N/A	None	None	9.75%
West Hollywood	12.50%	N/A	None	None	10.50%
Culver City	14%	N/A	None	11%	10.75%
Long Beach	13%	13%	None	5%	10.50%
Los Angeles	14%	14%	10%	9–10%[a]	9.75%
Manhattan Beach	14%	14%	None	None	10.25%
Laguna Beach	12%	12%	None	None	7.75%
Newport Beach	10%	10%	None	None	7.75%
San Diego	11.75–13.75%[b]	11.75–13.75%[b]	None	None	7.75%
Santa Barbara	12%	12%	None	None	9.25%

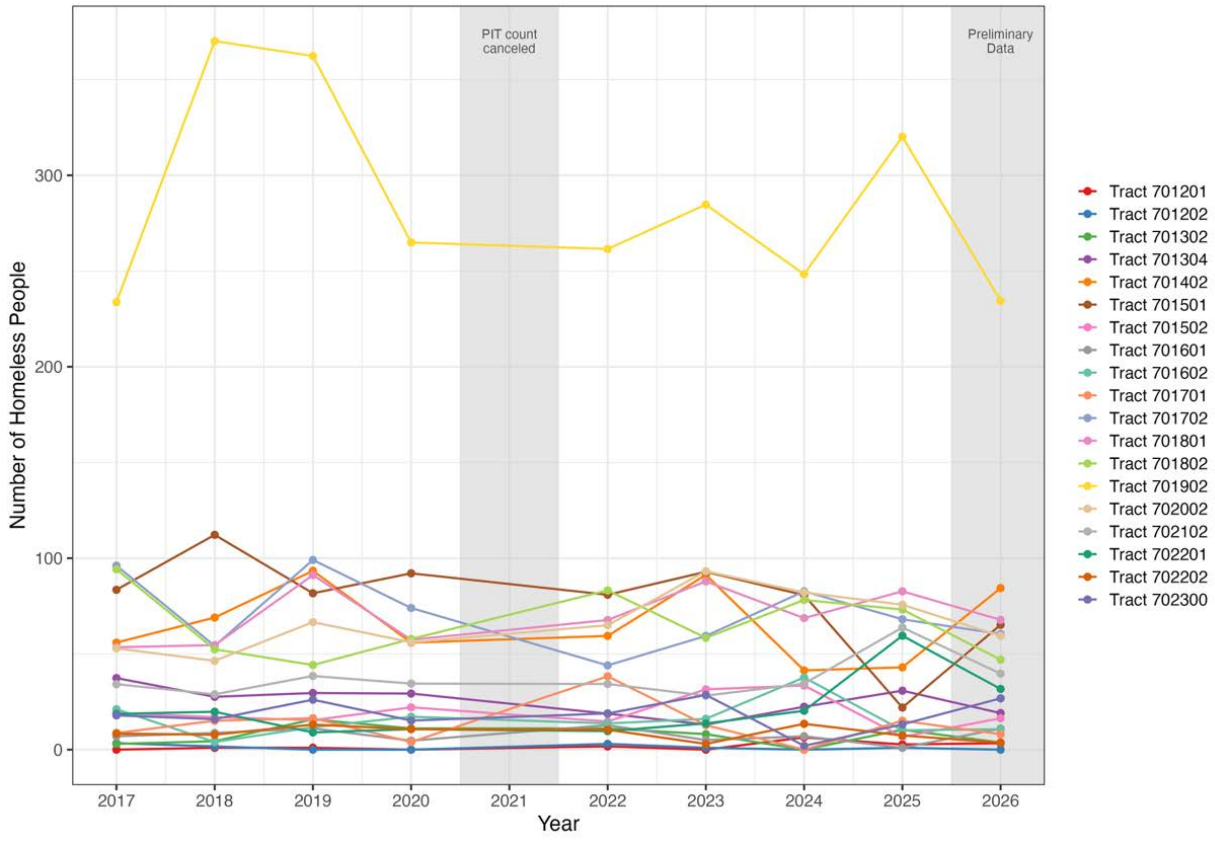
SOURCE: Features city government data from various webpages, such as City of Santa Monica, undated-e; Culver City, undated; City of Long Beach, undated; Los Angeles Office of Finance, undated; Utility Users Tax Information, undated; CDTFA, 2026; and Cal State LA, undated.
NOTE: N/A stands for not applicable, which means that the tax category does not exist. "None" means 0 percent tax rate or cannot find specific information, which is likely no tax.
[a] San Diego TOT varies by zone.
[b] Los Angeles's utility users tax rates differ across communication (9 percent), gas (9 percent), and electricity (10 percent).

Appendix C

Additional Figures for Homelessness Analysis

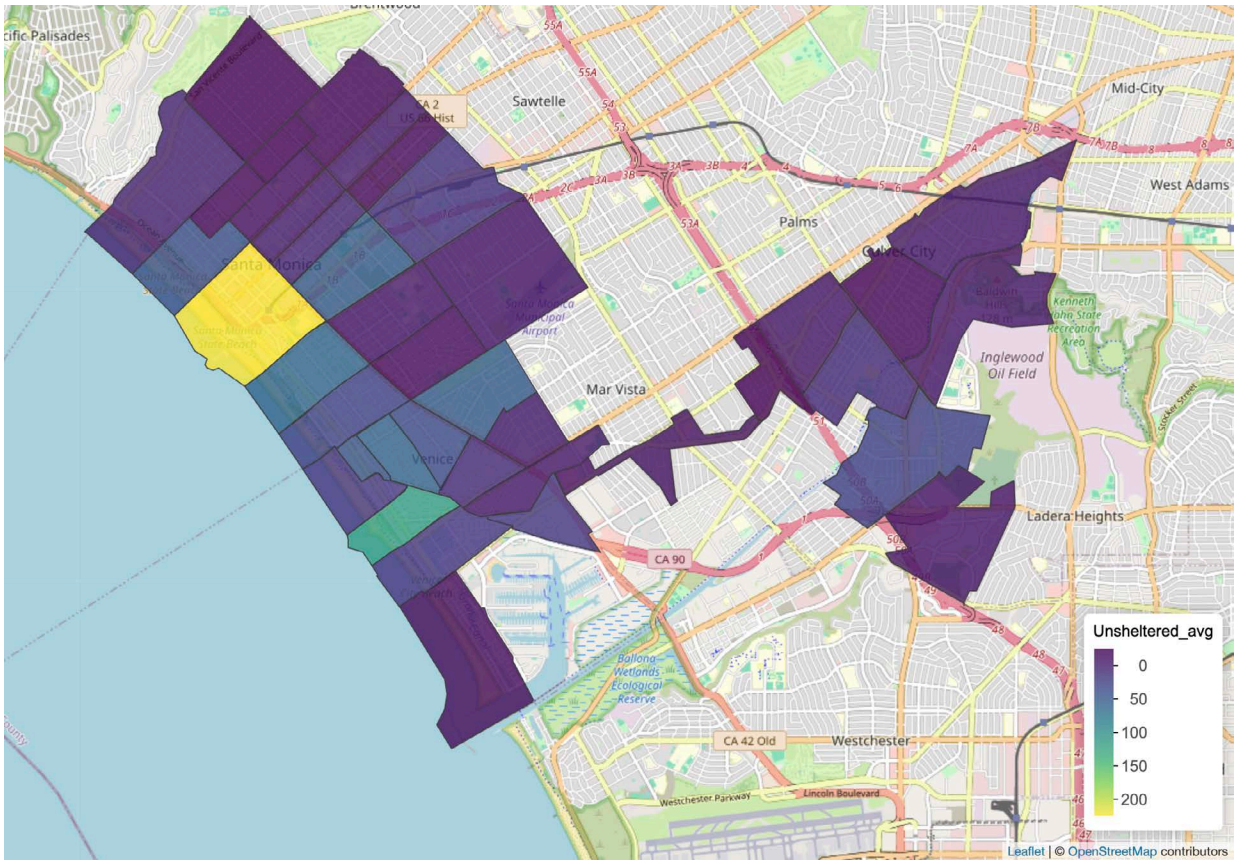
This appendix provides additional figures on PIT homeless counts by U.S. Census tract in Santa Monica. Figure C.1 shows trends in PIT homeless counts by census tract. Figure C.2 shows the spatial distribution of unsheltered homelessness in Santa Monica, Culver City, and Venice from 2023 to 2025.

Figure C.1. Point-in-Time Homeless Counts for Santa Monica, by Census Tract



SOURCE: Authors' calculations from LAHSA PIT homeless count data (accessed at LAHSA, undated).
NOTE: We used data from LAHSA aggregated to the U.S. Census tract level and weighted tents, vehicles, and makeshift shelters that were counted under the assumption that there were, on average, 1.7 homeless individuals per structure to generate the totals shown in this figure.

Figure C.2. Distribution of Unsheltered Homelessness in Santa Monica, Venice, and Culver City



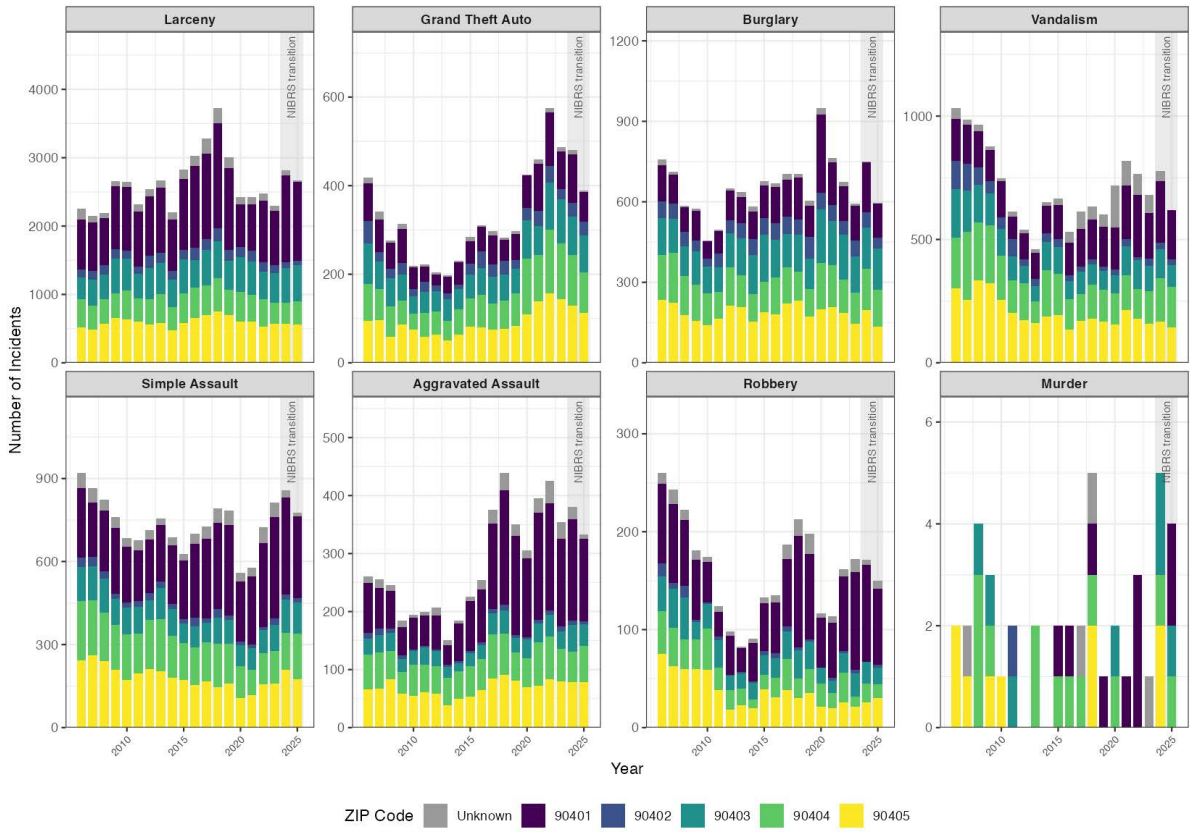
SOURCE: Authors' calculations from LAHSA PIT homeless count data (accessed at LAHSA, undated). Basemap data are from OpenStreetMap, undated (https://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright).
NOTE: We used data from LAHSA aggregated to the U.S. Census tract level and weighted tents, vehicles, and makeshift shelters that were counted under the assumption that there were, on average, 1.7 homeless individuals per structure to generate the averages shown in this figure.

Appendix D

Additional Figures for Crime Trend Analysis

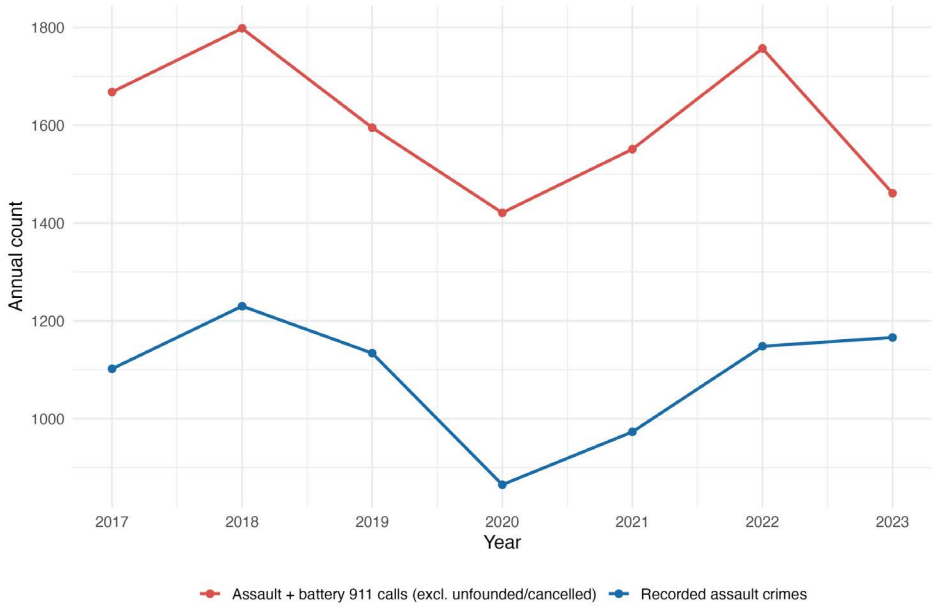
In this appendix, we provide additional figures on crime trends in Santa Monica. Figure D.1 shows trends in different types of offenses across zip codes between 2006 and 2025. Figures D.2, D.3, and D.4 show trends in 911 calls and recorded crimes for assault, robbery, and burglary, respectively.

Figure D.1. Trends in Santa Monica Crimes, by Zip Code and Offense Type, 2006–2025



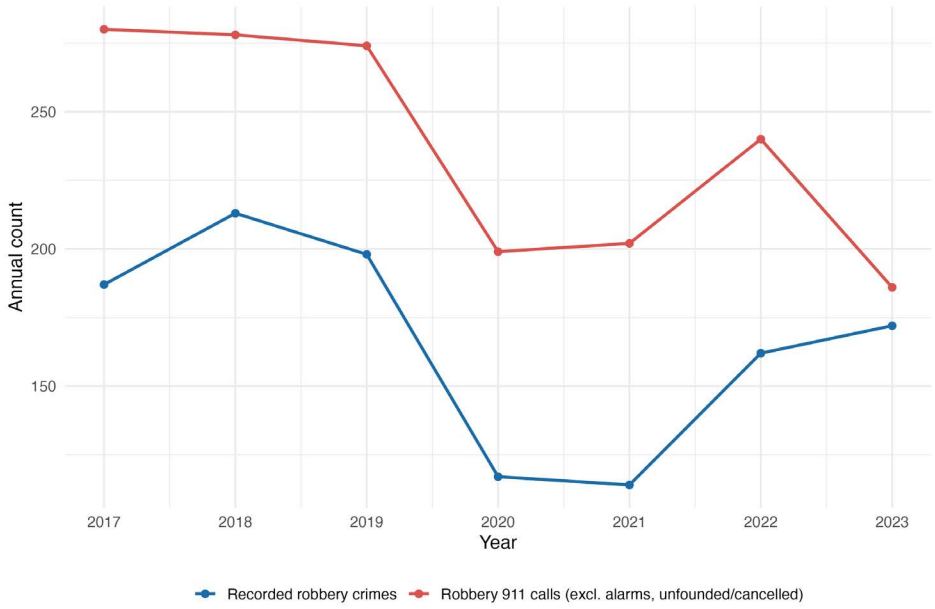
SOURCE: Authors' calculations from SMPD crime records (accessed at City of Santa Monica, undated-g) and 2024–2025 NIBRS data provided to the authors.
NOTE: The city transitioned crime data recording systems in 2024 as it began reporting to NIBRS. We have formatted these NIBRS-style data to be consistent with data from prior years, but the transition may have nonetheless affected crime-recording patterns. Downtown Santa Monica is located in the 90401 zip code.

Figure D.2. Trends in 911 Calls and Recorded Crimes for Assault



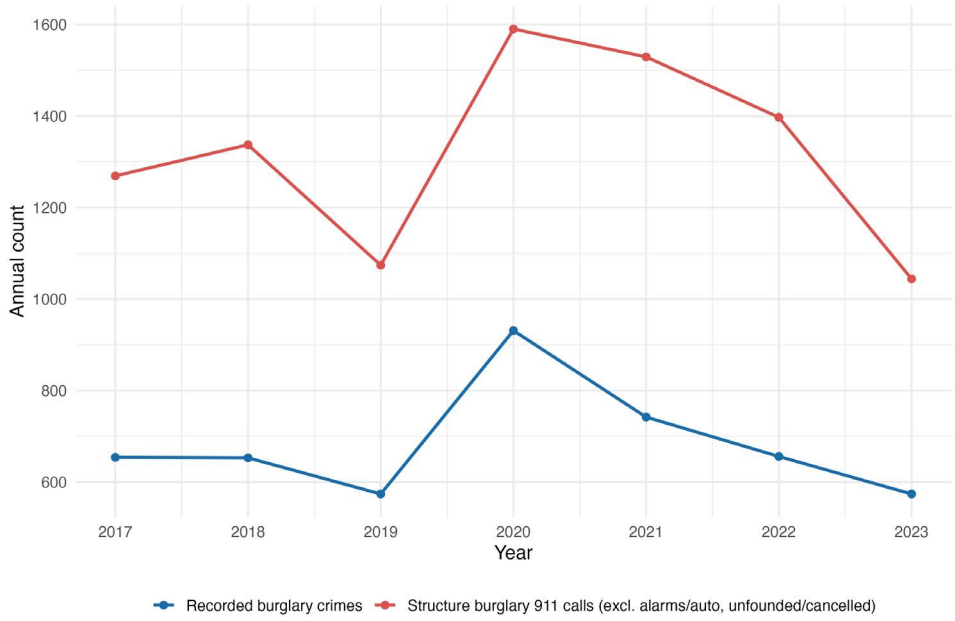
SOURCE: Authors' calculations from SMPD 911 call and reported crime data (accessed at City of Santa Monica, undated-g).
NOTE: Data for 911 calls exclude canceled and unfounded calls and count both assault and battery. The SMPD crime records combine simple and aggravated assault.

Figure D.3. Trends in 911 Calls and Recorded Crimes for Robbery



SOURCE: Authors' calculations from SMPD 911 call and reported crime data (accessed at City of Santa Monica, undated-g).
NOTE: Data for 911 calls exclude canceled and unfounded calls, as well as calls triggered by alarms.

Figure D.4. Trends in 911 Calls and Recorded Crimes for Burglary



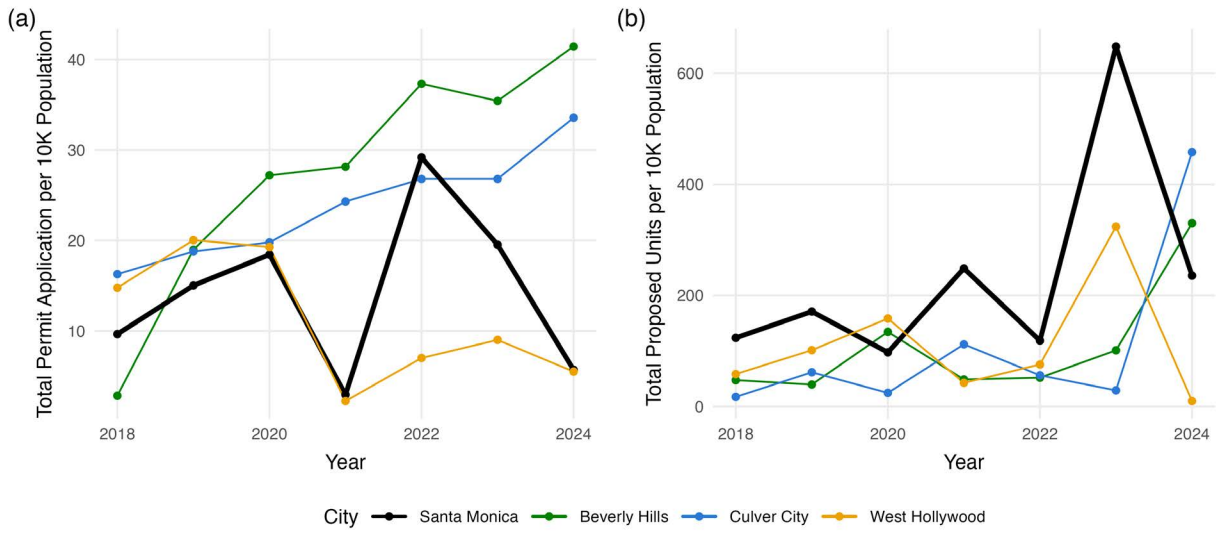
SOURCE: Authors' calculations from SMPD 911 call and reported crime data (accessed at City of Santa Monica, undated-g).
NOTE: Data for 911 calls exclude canceled and unfounded calls, calls for "auto burglary," and alarm-triggered calls.

Appendix E

Additional Figure for Housing Production Analysis

In this appendix, we provide an additional figure on housing production in Santa Monica and comparison cities. Figure E.1 shows the building permit applications and proposed units across four cities, standardized by population size.

Figure E.1. Building Permit Applications and Proposed Units per 10,000 Residents, 2018–2024



SOURCE: Authors' calculations of data from annual progress reports (accessed at California Department of Housing and Community Development, undated).
NOTE: The total number of building permits and unit applications are standardized by population size. Population data are from the American Community Survey's 2020–2024 five-year estimates (U.S. Census Bureau, 2026).

Abbreviations

APC	Area Planning Commission
CDTFA	California Department of Tax and Fee Administration
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CUP	Conditional Use Permit
FY	fiscal year
GBA	gross building area
LA	Los Angeles
LAHSA	Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority
LAPD	City of Los Angeles Police Department
LCP	Local Coastal Program
NAICS	North American Industry Classification System
NIBRS	National Incident-Based Reporting System
PIT	point-in-time
RRR	Resource Recovery and Recycling Division
SMPD	Santa Monica Police Department
TOT	transient occupancy tax

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