



# City Center to Regional Mall: Architecture, the Automobile, and Retailing in Los Angeles, 1920-1950

*Richard W. Longstreth*

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Winner of the Lewis Mumford Prize for Best Book Published in American City & Regional Planning History 1995-1997 From the 1920s to the 1950s, Los Angeles did for the shopping center what New York and Chicago had done for the skyscraper. In a single generation, the American retail center shifted from the downtown core to the regional shopping center. This rise of the regional shopping center is one of the most significant changes to the American city in the twentieth century, and no other American city has done as much as Los Angeles to spur that change. Ten years in the making, *City Center to Regional Mall* is a sweeping yet detailed account of the development of the regional shopping center. Richard Longstreth takes an historical perspective, relating retail development to broader architectural, urban, and cultural issues. His story is far from linear; the topics he covers include the emergence of Hollywood as a downtown in miniature, experiments with the shopping center as an amenity of planned residential developments, the branch department store as a landmark of decentralization, the evolution of off-street parking facilities, and the obscure origins of the pedestrian mall as a spine for retail complexes. Longstreth takes seriously the task of looking at retail buildings--one of the most neglected yet common building types--and the economics of real estate in the American city. He shows that Los Angeles in the period covered was a harbinger of American metropolitan trends during the second half of this century. Over 250 illustrations, culled from a wide variety of sources, constitute one of the best collections of old LA photographs published anywhere.

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