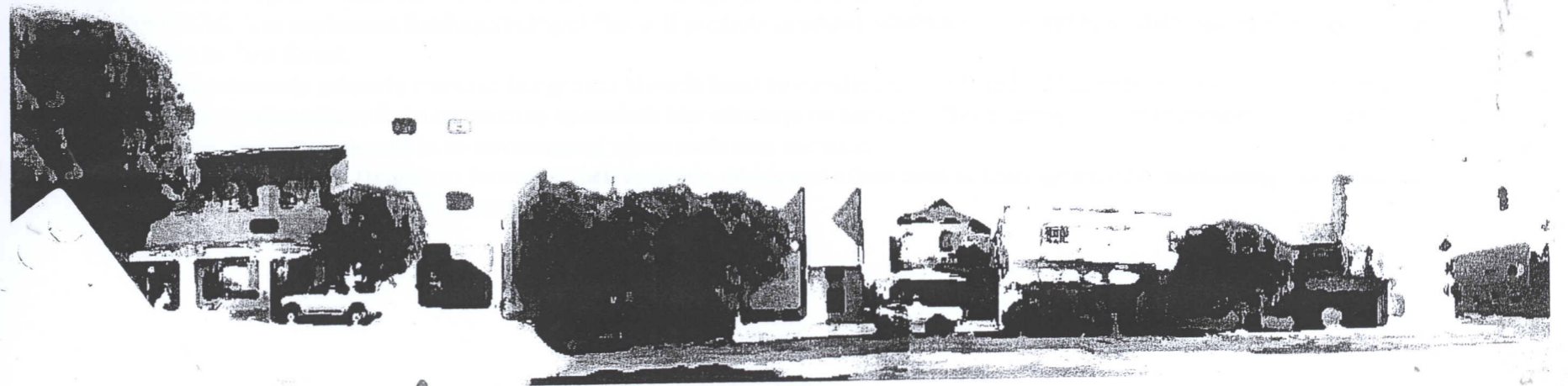


# Boyle Heights

UCLA Comprehensive Project, 2009

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# Executive Summary

Boyle Heights has a strong history of community involvement in the arts. Today, the neighborhood is home to many art galleries, stores, theatres, and studios that serve as spaces for art education as well as venues to showcase art. Many of these artistic establishments are located on First Street. Although the network of artists in Boyle Heights is long standing, this group and the greater Boyle Heights community could greatly benefit through the formalization of an arts block on First Street.

This document seeks to identify strategies to strengthen the artistic, social, and commercial viability of the existing artist community on First Street. In the course of this project, strong emphasis has been put on finding ways that the community can promote arts uses while simultaneously avoiding the harms of gentrification. Rather than settling for simply filling vacant storefronts with arts-related uses, we focused on locating and activating other opportunities from within the community to complement these uses and create a more vibrant place to live. Quite simply, this plan is about allowing the neighborhood to shine through use of the existing resources in the community instead of an infusion of outside capital.

In order to further activate First Street as an artistic space, we recommend that the following changes occur:

## Community/Culture Recommendations

1. Partner with the Hollenbeck Center to expand artistic opportunities for youth in the community.
2. Establish an annual festival that will encourage residents to express their artistic voice, will provide a community forum for artists to show their work, and will promote resources for young artists.

## Economic Development Recommendations

3. Draw upon existing economic base in community by encouraging hybrid arts/retail establishments on First Street.
4. Involve CRA/LA to implement funding strategies that will promote financial assistance to community artists and enable physical improvements to First Street.
5. Establish a community property resource fair geared towards local businesses, residents and artists, with instruction on small business ownership and presentations from community specialists like attorneys or bankers. This event will instruct community stakeholders on how to ensure economic success in an environment where rents may increase.
6. Encourage artists in Boyle Heights to formalize their network, which will allow them to leverage existing relationships to create much stronger bonds among artists in the community.

### **Urban Design Recommendations**

7. Establish a participatory design strategy that will involve community members evaluating the current activities and uses on First Street and identifying existing assets and areas for improvement. Also, local artists will be funded to facilitate artwork in the community that serves as a source of identity and empowerment for residents.
8. Implement streetscape improvements in the form of windows, signage, awnings, security grilles, lighting, building facades, planters, and informational signage. Public art should take advantage of pre-existing assets and help create a vibrant community on First Street.
9. The First Street underpass and Lani Vest Pocket Park are currently underutilized as places for celebrating art and could both serve as focal points for signaling the presence of arts on First Street.

### **Transportation Recommendations**

10. Reconfigure First Street to prioritize alternative transportation modes.
11. Remove the left-turn lanes at most intersections, which would reduce the total width of the roadway used for travel and parking, and would provide space for wider sidewalks, bump-outs at corners and crosswalks, bus pockets at bus stops, medians, or bicycle lanes.
12. Enhance the pedestrian environment through repairing damaged sidewalks, improving sidewalk cleanliness, updating sidewalk and curb ramps to ADA standards, improving street furniture, improving pedestrian underpass at freeway, and introducing elements to promote community "identity" (e.g. street banners, more murals, sidewalk art, decorated street furniture).
13. Less intensive modifications could be implemented using paint, large planters, and stone or concrete blocks placed strategically to make use of excess roadway space.
14. Limit access to parking lots, as many of these driveways are blind and put bicyclists and pedestrians at risk. Access should be through the rear alley, and parking lots should be eliminated or consolidated into shared facilities where possible.
15. Create a parking district in the First Street Neighborhood. Permit parking for neighborhood residents will help distinguish between the residential and commercial uses, and will help prevent congestion. Parking fees could provide revenue for streetscape improvements and also encourage patrons and residents to use non-vehicle alternatives to travel to First Street.
16. Enforcement of parking regulations and replacement of broken meters should also be a priority as part of a plan to improve parking conditions for the area.

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# About the UCLA Comprehensive Project

Each year a group of UCLA Urban Planning master's program students work together to address a major theme or issue in the planning world. The resulting study, typically completed on behalf of a particular client or community, brings together the students' diverse set of skills and knowledge. This year's Comprehensive Project, Boyle Heights *Brilla*, focuses on the Boyle Heights community of Los Angeles, specifically along First Street between Chicago and the Golden State Freeway overpass. Our project explores how art can be a tool for economic development and community revitalization in this section of Boyle Heights.

## Acknowledgements

We have many people to thank for supporting our efforts. We would like to first thank Councilmember José Huizar for giving us the opportunity to work on this project. We would also like to thank the members of Councilmember Huizar's staff, especially Edel Vizcarra and Celina Mancía, who made their time available to us and provided us with guidance. Staff members at the Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency, including Josh Rohmer, Regina Kirschenbaum, and William Mason were also gracious enough to share their expertise with us. Stanley Hoffman and Bravish Rau of Stanley R. Hoffman Associates also advised our team on economic development methods and strategies. Additionally, we would like to acknowledge the work and efforts of our advisor, Dr. Leobardo Estrada and the support of the department of Urban Planning at UCLA. Most importantly, we would like to thank all the artists and community members we spoke with in Boyle Heights as part of this project who provided invaluable insight.

# UCLA Comprehensive Project

## Introduction: Boyle Heights *Brilla*

The arts are alive in all of us. Some communities exist to embrace this presence, giving members of these communities the ability to let their artistic sides thrive. These communities shine as a home for the arts, as places where artists can congregate and facilitate artistic expression among members of the community as well as visitors who flock to the neighborhood to share in the arts.

Los Angeles Councilmember José Huizar approached this year's UCLA's Urban Planning Comprehensive Project Class with a request to facilitate the creation of an arts-focused community in the Los Angeles neighborhood of Boyle Heights. Specifically, Huizar's idea for the area called for ways to embrace and intensify art and community activity on First Street in Boyle Heights, to create a community where the arts can shine.

Located just east of Downtown Los Angeles, Boyle Heights is one of the city's oldest communities. The community was initially developed as a residential suburb in the late 1800s, and over the next few decades many of Los Angeles' first public buildings were constructed in the neighborhood. However, subsequent demographic shifts, the construction of several freeways through the community, and other factors have led to challenges for Boyle Heights. While in many ways the neighborhood remains a vibrant and cohesive community, poorly maintained infrastructure, inadequate services, and sluggish economic development have prevented Boyle Heights from achieving its full potential.

Our report is meant to serve as background research for a potential "arts district" on First Street centered between the Golden State Freeway (I-5/I-10) overpass and Chicago Street. First Street already serves as the home of a few arts-related businesses that are beginning to embrace and facilitate the neighborhood arts-related vision. We hope that this analysis can provide information for the community plan and provide a set of actions needed to create Boyle Heights *Brilla*, a neighborhood where the arts shine brightly.

As urban planning students, we were able to bring specialized knowledge in areas of cultural planning, economic development, urban design, and transportation planning to this document. Using information gathered through field observations, community interviews, case studies, and other background research, this report examines how art and art-related resources that already exist in Boyle Heights could be activated and supported along First Street.

The primary objectives of this report are to:

- Identify underutilized space in the Boyle Heights neighborhood
- Explore potential avenues for activating this space
- Recommend specific improvements for the community

We address these objectives in four areas within this report: Culture, Economic Development, Urban Design, and Circulation.

Figure 1-1  
GIS Map of Boyle Heights

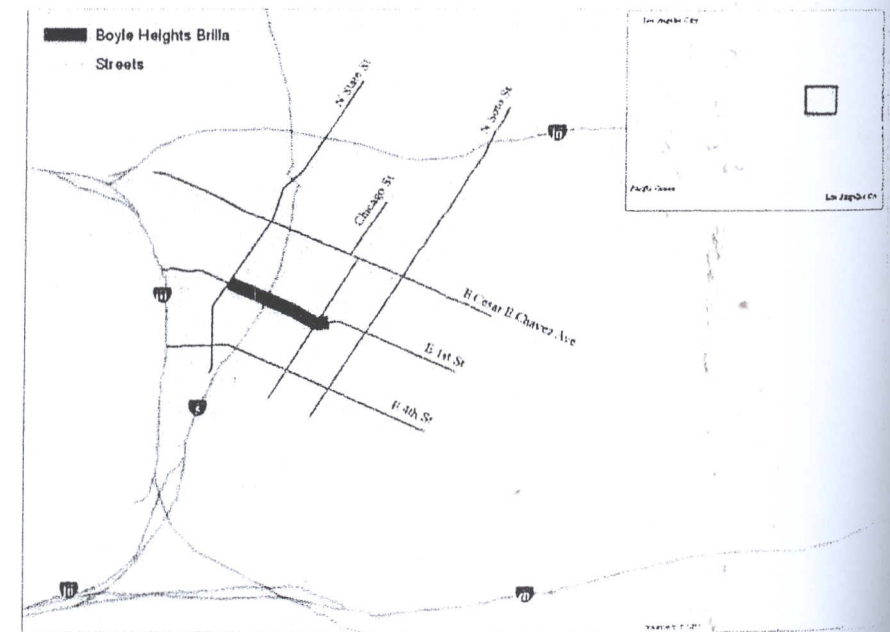


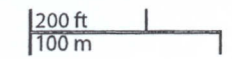


Figure 1-2  
Base Map of First Street



BOYLE HEIGHTS BASE MAP

Fall 2008



# Chapter 1: Culture Section

## Background and Demographics

### Background

*"Boyle Heights is a very magical place, and sometimes it seems like a novel come to life...[it] is where Latino culture has branched off from other parts of the nation...It was the entry way for Mexican immigrants coming into the U.S...it is the home of so many art pieces, so many books, so many stories, so many chisme, so many families... You know, la gente se va a otras partes del pais, del mundo: pero siempre regresa because it is beautiful here, and we have a very specific culture, and it is very unique because it is a blend, there is magic here."*  
- Lydia Avila-Hernandez<sup>1</sup>

Boyle Heights has served as a point of entrance for many immigrant groups who have come to Southern California. Prior to the post-war economic boom, Boyle Heights was home to large Jewish, Russian, Japanese and Yugoslavian communities. Later it became home to a predominately Mexican immigrant population. Today, Boyle Heights is a mixture of multigenerational Latino immigrant families.<sup>2</sup> Its residents have generated a neighborhood that has used arts as a venue to express not only their accomplishments and frustrations, but also as an opportunity for the community to engage in city making. As noted in the Los Angeles Times, "Los Angeles is often called the mural capital of the world – and no place is this truer than on the streets of Boyle Heights, where hundreds of walls at pharmacies, general stores, guitar shops and even churches have been transformed into urban artwork."<sup>3</sup>



Boyle Heights Murals

<sup>1</sup> Avila Hernandez, Lydia, Juan Devis, KCET "Departures: Boyle Heights," 2006, [http://www.kcet.org/explore-ca/departures/boyle\\_heights/audio\\_popup\\_p1.php](http://www.kcet.org/explore-ca/departures/boyle_heights/audio_popup_p1.php), accessed 19 January, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Thirteen WNET New York, "The Chicano Murals of Boyle Heights," Thirteen WNET New York, <http://www.thirteen.org/artsandculture/the-chicano-murals-of-boyle-heights>, Accessed February 7, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Daniel Hernandez, "Mural or Graffiti? City Draws Line," Los Angeles Times, 25 August 2005.

# UCLA Comprehensive Project

## Demographics

Before understanding the art uses at Boyle Heights, we sought to get a snapshot of the general neighborhood. The 2000 Decennial Census provided information for block groups 2044.10 and 2044.20, which is the area immediately surrounding Boyle Heights *Brilla*. Ninety-five percent of the population in the area is of Latino descent. It is a predominately Spanish-speaking community, as 50 percent of the households are linguistically isolated and 93 percent of those households speak Spanish. At the time when the survey was conducted, 36 percent of its population was 17 years old or younger. Finally, 90 percent of the housing is renter occupied, 60 percent is defined as overcrowded, and the median household income is \$21,000.<sup>4</sup>

Although the Census shows that the area is a low-income community, it was important for us to step away from the common deficit perspective usually used by planners when looking at predominately Latino communities. Literature on Latino communities in the United States “has generally focused on the socioeconomic challenges [faced]...However, viewing murals and [other forms of public art] as a sign of the strength of the Latino community represents a dramatic departure from prevailing deficit perspectives. Such a change in paradigms also facilitates the engagement of Latino communities by better conveying an inventory of their resources, history, and needs to the external community.”<sup>5</sup> By embracing the presence of arts-related uses on First Street in Boyle Heights and empowering the community to capitalize upon its long history with the arts and the artistic sense inside all of us, this project can help the area in many ways.

4 US Census Bureau, 2000 US Census, Summary File 3 (SF3)

5 Melvin Delgado and Keva Barton, “Murals in Latino communities: Social indicators of community Strengths,” *Social Work*, 43 no.3 (July 1998), 17.

Figure 1-3  
Percent Youth Population by Block Groups

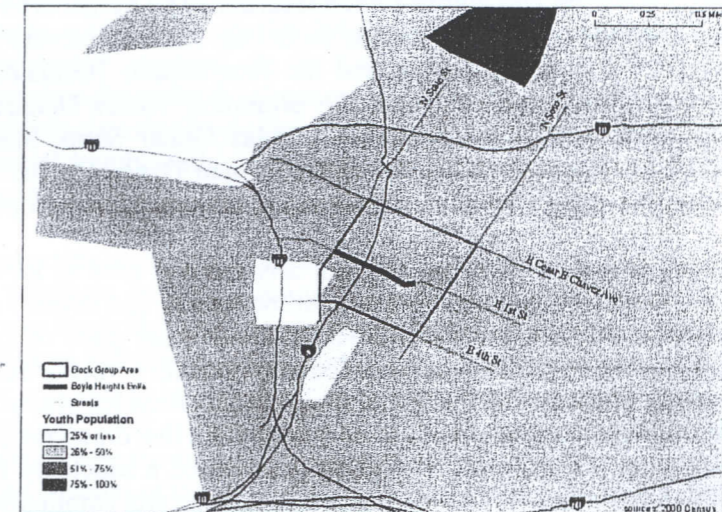
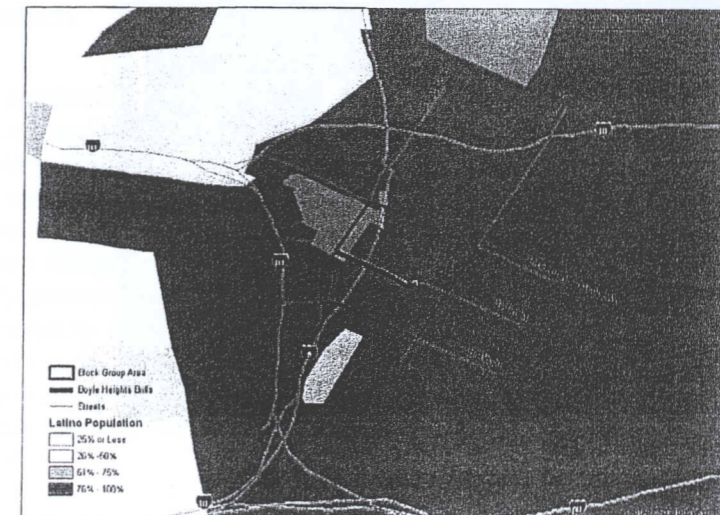


Figure 1-4  
Percent Latino Population by Block Group



## Culture Section

### Historic Art Contributions

Boyle Heights has a long and colorful artist tradition. The neighborhood is linked to a number of famous artists, including Ruben Guevara of the popular 1970's rock band Ruben and the Jets; Maceo Hernandez, the world's first professional Chicano taiko drummer; Tomas Delgado, third generation owner of the landmark Candelas Guitar Shop; Stella Matsuda, modern dancer formerly of Gloria Newman Dance Company; jazz trombonist Lionel "Chico" Sesma; and trumpeter Paul Lopez.

Mariachi Plaza is one of the most important arts-focused sites in Boyle Heights and it is directly linked to the neighborhood's rich and diverse art culture. Mariachi musicians from Boyle Heights and other parts of Los Angeles gather at Mariachi Plaza, in search of employment for parties or other events. Mariachi Plaza is also the site of the annual Los Angeles Mariachi Festival, a cultural celebration of this unique artistic form that draws people throughout Southern California. The plaza is considered a sanctuary for musicians reflecting the neighborhood's rich and diverse arts community. The Plaza is now undergoing renovations as part of the Gold Line extension.



Mariachi Plaza

### Art Education and Services to the Community

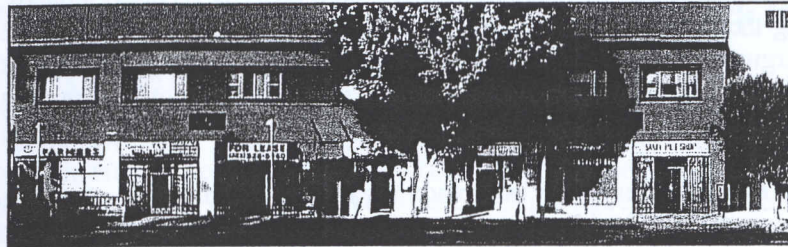
Boyle Heights has a long and colorful artist tradition. Today, Boyle Heights is home to a set of galleries, stores, and other arts uses that serve as spaces to showcase art and venues for art education. These spaces provide a set of events that include musical performances, fashion shows, visual art exhibitions, and the annual Boyle Heights Latina Independent Film Extravaganza (B.H.L.I.F.E.). In addition to providing entertainment and artistic expression, these events also educate and empower the local community. This artistic momentum that is already existent in Boyle Heights could catalyze the creation of Boyle Heights *Brilla*. We consulted with the artists who lead these endeavors, and it is clear that they have strengthened the tradition of arts in Boyle Heights and are very interested in helping community members to further embrace their artistic talents.

Boyle Heights is also home to many workshops that complement these events. Just on First Street, places such as Casa 0101, Liliflor Studios, Brooklyn & Boyle, and Teocintli provide a variety of poetry, art, drama, and music workshops, which are open to the general public. Most of these uses already have an intentional focus on local residents and youth. Casa 0101 has served as the primary theater space for the community, where artists and playwrights from the community and from around the world are able to take the theater stage. Liliflor Studios provides a vibrant and multi-use space where artists hold workshops, musicians perform, and works are displayed. Brooklyn & Boyle contributes to First Street by holding writing workshops for up-and-coming playwrights and screenwriters. Teocintli, a cultural store on Fourth Street, provides important art workshops to youth 18 years or younger at no cost.

Nearly all the services provided by these organizations are funded primarily through private donations, ticket sales, fundraisers, and art donations. Despite their invaluable contribution to the artistic development of the community, many of these businesses struggle to locate enough funding to make ends meet. As a result, many of these spaces employ creative

## UCLA Comprehensive Project

strategies to pay for leased space. For example, Teocintli provides a variety of products for purchase at the store while Liliflor Studios relies on shared space to distribute the cost of the rent. The spaces provide a service to the community that contributes to the spiritual well-being of local residents and youth. As stated by Lilia Ramirez from Liliflor Studios, arts education is a “tool for healing and transformation.”<sup>6</sup>



Casa 101

### Engaging Artists on First Street

During the development of our plan for Boyle Heights *Brilla*, we facilitated two community meetings, one aimed at artists and the other aimed at a broader segment of the community. We held these meetings in part to better understand the long history of fostering community pride and development through art. The community's reactions to *Brilla* ranged from feelings of excitement and hope for more local art on First Street to fear of displacement. The artists in the community include actors, painters, poets, muralists, musicians, and many others. These artists are already aware of the unique venues each has created, but some of them are concerned that the competition over scarce artistic resources will take precedence over the artistic vision they all shared. They also stressed a key concern over the idea of “outsiders” imposing their own vision on the community. Instead, the art community wants to embrace all types of art, regardless of the profit the artists receive (or do not receive) from their creations or the form that creativity might take.

<sup>6</sup> Ramirez, Lilia. 2008. Interview via e-mail by Carolina Martinez. Los Angeles, CA, October, 27.

<sup>7</sup> Abel Salas, “Soul Not for Sale: an Art Renaissance at Boyle Heights,” *New Angles*, August 2008 <http://www.newanglesmonthly.com/article.php?id=194&IssueNum=15> accessed, 24 January 2009.

These reactions capture the development paradox of “Razaification vs. gentrification” best described by photographer and conceptual installation artist Sandra de la Loza. “Razaification [is] the way working class Latino immigrants enrich our city by bringing culture... while reinvigorating neighborhoods,” explains de la Loza. “Gentrification is a top-down transformation driven by development and capital’s attempt to create profit.”<sup>7</sup> Although it is clear that Boyle Heights would benefit from developing cultural and art uses that embrace the community, it is also important to acknowledge that the planning process should be one where local residents are actively engaged.

The local artists we talked to are already well-aware of the consequences of outside pressures on their community, as some spoke of outsiders already moving into Boyle Heights. To ensure that Boyle Heights remains a community that embraces indigenous art, we must continue to involve both the artists and their community in any conversations about changing the fabric of their neighborhood. Their energy for the idea of reclaiming Boyle Heights as a community where the arts take a central focus reinvigorated us several times during the creation of this plan. One of the main strengths of Boyle Heights is this vibrant sense of the proper place that art should have in a community, and only through the involvement of artists will Boyle Heights truly shine.

### Approach

While conducting research for this project, we sought to gain the indigenous support and participation for our plan from the Boyle Heights community. Doing so meant employing asset-based approaches to planning for this community. This asset-based approach aims to locate community strengths and accentuate them.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, our asset-based approach keeps two things in mind. First, we recognize the significant resources currently present in Boyle Heights, such as the existing commitment from the community to embrace an arts-focused environment. Second, rather than settling for simply filling vacant storefronts with arts-related uses, we focused on locating and activating other opportunities from within the community to complement these uses and create a more vibrant place to live.

## Culture Section

Contrary to the asset-based approach described previously, need-based approaches are typically manifested in compiling an inventory of community “deficiencies.” Assisting a community of people to identify their own so-called deficiencies fails to comprehensively evaluate existing strengths and actively engage residents to participate in the planning processes. Moreover, stressing “deficiencies” in an insensible manner has significant impacts that may directly and indirectly lead community members to internalize these external negative views. Instead of embracing an arts focus, a need-based approach to planning for Boyle Heights would likely replace the vibrant artistic community with one focused on the needs of people who do not live in the area. Instead, Boyle Heights *Brilla* will look first to the plentiful resources already located in the neighborhood, and will facilitate community development by activating these resources.

In our case, Boyle Heights harbors myriad historical, cultural and artistic resources that may not be considered assets in an evaluation that prioritizes values and characteristics foreign to the Boyle Heights community. Therefore, the asset-based approach allows and encourages community residents to seek out resources available in their community and, simultaneously, supports the community’s existing sense of pride. While community asset-mapping employs a “ground-up” approach, its use here does not attempt to vindicate or ignore the fact that minority-majority communities, such as Boyle Heights, have traditionally been underfunded by decision makers. While the addition of the Gold Line, construction of a new police station, and maintenance of a pocket park (all on First Street near our focus area) are steps away from the underinvestment of Boyle Heights, the deteriorating infrastructure and unrealized economic potential is proof of historic neglect. Nevertheless, engaging the community through an asset-based approach will ensure indigenous participation and achieve a greater sense of solidarity and community among artists, community members, local agencies and politicians, and will preserve the ability of the community to embrace its artistic vision.

### Avoiding Gentrification

In a comprehensive effort to avoid gentrification on First Street, we stress the importance of community involvement and participation. The intense community participation that influenced the Watts Housing Project discouraged outside influence that could have compromised the existing values and intentions of the Watts community (see case study on the next page). Similarly, maintaining the integrity of Boyle Heights *Brilla* is a priority second to none. While arguments in favor of gentrification exist, the stigma associated with this phenomenon presses for an approach that avoids the intentional displacement of community members.

The Boyle Heights community is already aware of gentrification, as rising rents and speculative building purchases have already begun. Given the concerns over gentrification that the community has raised, we have worked to utilize the neighborhood’s existing assets and minimize the level of outside resources. Abating outside resources and facilitating community involvement will increase grassroots participation, which will play a key role in shrinking the gentrification phenomenon. Quite simply, this plan is about allowing the existing neighborhood to shine through use of the existing resources in the community instead of an infusion of outside capital.

### Local Government Agencies

Boyle Heights is located in the City of Los Angeles, and falls under the jurisdiction of many government agencies. First Street and the surrounding areas are part of City Council District 14, currently represented by Councilmember José Huizar. Various City of Los Angeles departments, such as the Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP), Department of Public Works (DPW), and Department of Transportation (LADOT) are responsible for different physical components of the neighborhood. The Benjamin Franklin Library at the southeast corner of First and Chicago is a branch of the Los Angeles Public Library system. The Golden State Freeway, which crosses over First Street near Cummings, is part of California’s freeways system, owned and operated by Caltrans, a state agency. These government agencies are important to note since they will likely be responsible for implementing and funding enhancements to First Street.

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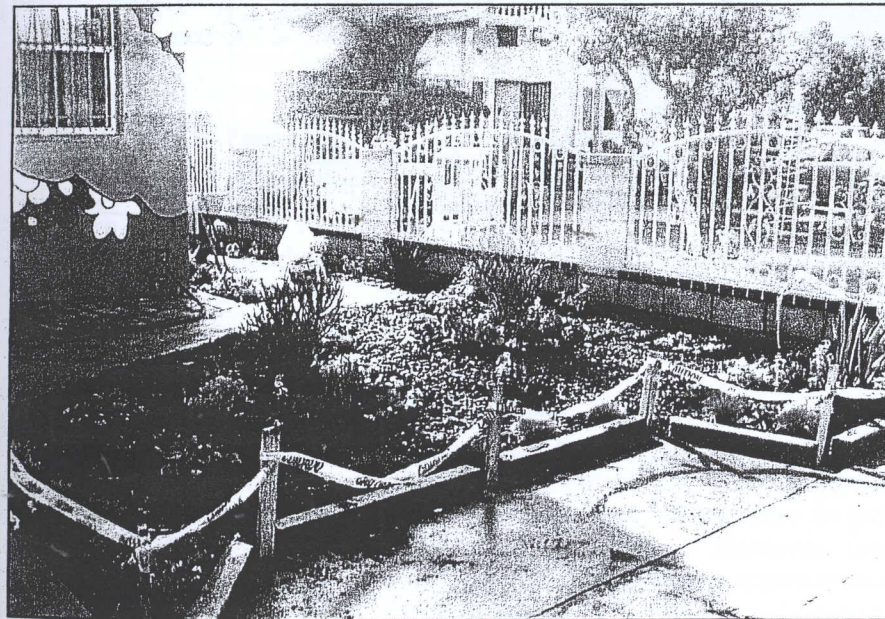
8 Bo Beaulieu, Rural Health Institute. Mapping the Assets of the Community: A Framework for Building Local Capacity. <http://srcd.msstate.edu/02health/pdfs/beaulieu.pdf>, Accessed January 15, 2009

## UCLA Comprehensive Project Case Studies

Arts and culture have the capacity to bring communities together through events, celebrations and a sense of identity. Additionally, arts organizations play an important role in stimulating economic development by attracting people to a certain location, improving the quality of life, and defining the character of a place. One of the goals in Boyle Heights is to increase and strengthen the vibrant arts culture that already exists in the neighborhood by working with residents, local artists, and community arts groups. To this end, the case studies we feature in this plan focus on community-driven efforts to increase opportunities for art-making, art appreciation, and community interaction.

### Watts House Project: A Collaborative Artwork in the Shape of a Neighborhood Redevelopment

The Watts House Project (WHP), launched in September 2008, is an artist-driven community development program located on 107th Street near the Watts Towers in Los Angeles. WHP, which is based on a similar arts program in Houston called the Project Row Houses, is the vision of local Los Angeles artist and WHP Executive Director Edgar Arceneaux. Arceneaux's goal is to refurbish 20 homes on 107th Street and to create new exhibition spaces, cafes, gardens and artists residences over the next five years.



Picture Garden Planted at 1768 107th St.

The work is done primarily by volunteers from Los Angeles colleges, artist networks, and nonprofit organizations. Activities include beautifying the neighborhood through façade improvements, building renovations, landscaping, and streetscape design. As a result of these projects, the built environment will tell a story of the history of Watts, the experiences of the residents, and the creative expression of the community. As Arceneaux states, "Instead of using clay, we're using time and space to sculpt a neighborhood and relationships."<sup>9</sup> These improvements will provide new spaces for social programs and arts events. One of the main strengths of Boyle Heights is this vibrant sense of the proper place that art should have in a community. The continuing involvement of artists will make Boyle Heights truly shine.

Community participation is a major aspect of the program. WHP hosts numerous community meetings to receive feedback on their work. Edgar Arceneaux has spent time knocking on doors and speaking with community members about WHP, and inviting residents to volunteer and share their construction skills and artistic talents during the volunteer service days. Additionally, urban planner James Rojas conducted an interactive planning workshop at the launch event in September where residents made physical models of the neighborhood and proposed ideas that they would like to see implemented in the future design efforts.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the Watts House Project serves as an example of a way that a community has utilized its endogenous artistic resources to shape its future while improving the physical state of the community for everyone.

<sup>9</sup> Lynell George, "Watts House Project: art meets architecture near the towers" Los Angeles Times, November 2, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> The Watts House Project, [www.wattshouseproject.net](http://www.wattshouseproject.net), Accessed January 17, 2009, [www.newangeles-monthly.com/article.php?id=194&IssueNum=15](http://www.newangeles-monthly.com/article.php?id=194&IssueNum=15) accessed, 24 January 2009.

## Culture Section Case Studies

### Donpirang, South Korea

Donpirang is a typical small fishing village in Tong-Young city, in South Korea. "Dong" means "the east" and "Pirang" means "hill" in Korean. With no major visual characteristics, other than a beautiful view of the sea, the village has a lot of low income housing, and has suffered economic hardship for a long time.

In 2006, the local government, which owns this land, planned to tear down the area and create a public park. After city announced the plan, a non-profit organization, "Blue Tong-Young 21," and community members started discussing the future of the Dongpirang neighborhood. Residents didn't want to leave the area, nor did they want the city to redevelop the land as a public park. They needed some ideas to find a way out of this situation.

In October, 2007, as a result of a community-driven process, Donpirang hosted a mural contest, offering 30,000 dollars in prize money. Residents offered the exterior walls of their homes, and other buildings as the canvas for the murals. 19 teams (36 young artists) from all over the country participated in this contest and painted on 19 buildings, during a one week period. As a result, empty alleys became out-door galleries showcasing the murals.

The contest turned out to be very successful. The murals became famous, and over 200 tourists visited during the weekend following the contest. The village now goes by a new name: "Montmartre of Korea." Finally, the local jurisdiction abandoned the redevelopment plan and is, instead focusing on how the vacant lots within the village can be used to economically benefit the residents.

Now Dongpirang plans to open the mural contest every two years and already started other community events, such as a composition contest, and music concert in 2007. These events became a great resource for for the community and they are proud of their neighborhood. With these collective efforts, the small village, Donpirang turned into a beautiful art village.



Donpirang Murals



## *UCLA Comprehensive Project* **Strategies**

We have identified several strategies for building on the existing cultural strengths of Boyle Heights that are consistent with our asset-based approach. Some of these strategies are already in place on an informal level in the neighborhood. These strategies include working with nonprofits that serve the youth population to expand their arts programming, linking artists to vacant spaces along First Street, and creating an arts and culture festival in the area.

### **Local artists utilizing vacant sites**

While some planners might see the vacant commercial retail sites along First Street as a challenge, we instead see these spaces as an opportunity to increase the number of arts uses in Boyle Heights. Some Boyle Heights artists already use space in a flexible way, including the shared space at Liliflor Studios, and we suspect others would be open to sharing space to accommodate short-term projects. Alternatively, if a landlord has difficulty leasing a space, that landlord could offer the space to a local arts group on a short-term lease at a reduced rate, provided that the arts group vacate the property if a long-term tenant signs a lease. This allows the arts group to use the space for a few weeks to host an art exhibition or as a music venue for a few nights to feature an act from out of town. These flexible ways of using space not only help fill storefronts and create a more inviting visual environment, but also help build the community's artistic bonds. There is a strong desire for more opportunities for organic community-building in Boyle Heights, and these spaces provide a perfect opportunity to bring this desire to reality.

### **Youth oriented/ "gang" intervention**

When we spoke with Councilmember Huizar's Boyle Heights Field Deputy, Celina Mancina, she emphasized the pervasiveness of gangs in the area. According to the Hollenbeck Patrol Division of the Los Angeles Police Department, there has been a general decrease in gang activity in this community over the past ten years. However, there is still a gang presence in Boyle Heights, as there are approximately eight active gangs with 350 members in the neighborhood.<sup>11</sup>

Many of the gangs in Boyle Heights have been in the area since the early 1970s and are considered generational, in that membership in the gangs is passed from parent to child. As such, it is important that a component of this plan involve encouraging young people in Boyle Heights to find an identity in other ways, potentially through art. Several of the artists we spoke with regarding this project stressed the need for cultural opportunities to draw young people away from gangs and violence, and we feel that helping them embrace their artistic talents is a great way to provide opportunities for the community.

Boyle Heights is home to a large youth population, and several organizations already provide classes, activities, and a space for them to come together. It is important to collaborate with these institutions that are already well-known to the community, since they are already recognized in the neighborhood for their work and serve as a direct link to the youth.

One of the most prominent organizations in the area is the Hollenbeck Youth Center, which provides programs to thousands of youth both locally and nationwide. Since incorporating in March 1972, the Hollenbeck Youth Center has remained committed to its goal of helping the community's young people avoid gang and criminal activities. The Center has immense support from California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. The Center reaches thousands of children annually through innovative recreation, education and entrepreneurial programs designed to decrease crime by instilling a strong sense of value and purpose in young people. The 15,000-square foot Center was built in 1976 entirely from private contributions.

Although Hollenbeck Youth Center has strong roots in the community, many residents feel as though the site is underutilized. During the day, when teenagers are in school, the Center sits nearly vacant.

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<sup>11</sup> Interview with Detective Ricard, Los Angeles Police Department, on November 15, 2008. Police define an active gang member as an individual who has been arrested or charged with a gang related crime within the last five years.

## Culture Section

Instead, the Hollenbeck organization could open its facility to multiple generations, as the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks does with their sites where seniors use the Department of Recreation and Parks recreation centers during the day and teenagers are offered programs in the afternoon once school lets out.

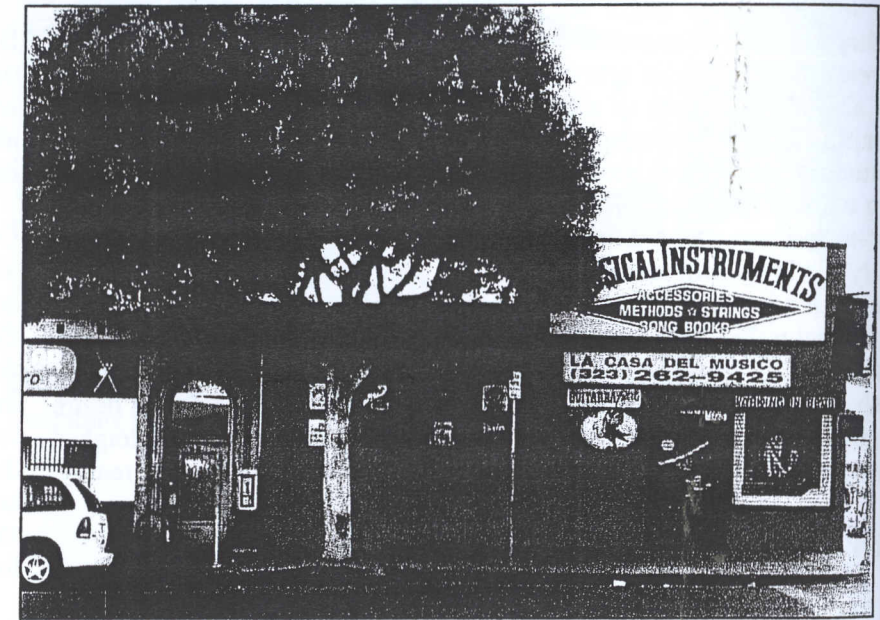
As part of Boyle Heights *Brilla*, we hope the Hollenbeck organization and other community nonprofits could embrace the community's artistic assets. We must also recognize the realities of the gang boundaries in the neighborhood and provide multiple locations where youth-focused activities can be held, as some young people are intimidated from leaving areas where their safety is guaranteed.

With its history of being a birthplace for Chicano art, Boyle Heights is home to many seasoned artists who can serve as mentors to young, aspiring artists, including muralists, painters, and actors. These community mentors are very willing to share their knowledge with the community if they were given the opportunity. Alternatively, the Hollenbeck Center could serve as places for youth-initiated events such as arts exhibitions or large performances by cultural organizations. Just as artists have shared space in Boyle Heights to help build community, so too could existing youth athletic organizations build bonds between young people of different interests.

### Arts and Cultural Festival

The distinction of having an arts district with strong youth involvement is one way of making Boyle Heights enjoyable for residents and an attractive and unique destination for visitors. Another is the creation of an arts festival, where artists could come together to display their creations, solicit new involvement for their organizations, and celebrate the artistic passion of Boyle Heights.

This festival could adopt its name from the new sense of community fostered by the arts: "Boyle Heights *Brilla*" or, in English, "Boyle Heights Shines." The name reflects the area's Latino majority and by using the word "shine" makes reference to the new Metro Gold Line, which is expected to bring new attention and resources to the neighborhood. A cultural festival utilizing resources from the community would be another step in building community and creating strong bonds among artists.



First Street

## Chapter 2: Economic Development Section

# An Art Strategy for Economic Development

Boyle Heights *Brilla* reflects the artistic and innovative talent that Boyle Heights embodies holistically. Consequently, highlighting these talents to spur endogenous economic growth becomes vital for community development to be successful. Community development expert Bo Beaulieu suggests it is beneficial to distinguish between “development of the community” and “development in the community.”<sup>12</sup> Development in the community suggests that an external entity supplies the tools for development without regard to what community members desire. Alternatively, development of the community means utilizing community resources for endogenous growth, capitalizing upon talent present in the community. Economic development of Boyle Heights *Brilla* means honoring what existing community members have in mind as much as it honors what a healthy economic base for a neighborhood would be.

In investigating the economic gains that neighborhoods can generate by providing artist spaces and places, research indicates that arts create jobs, stimulate innovation and attract income to neighborhoods.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, one recommendation asserts that “state and local governments should use the many tools at their disposal to help create appropriate spaces for artists and embed such centers in their neighborhoods.”<sup>14</sup> It is worth noting that arts spaces already exist in Boyle Heights. These arts spaces are connected only by an informal network of friendships and business associations, in the same way that other neighborhood residents are linked. During our community meetings for Boyle Heights *Brilla*, artists noted the importance of having more meetings so that they can find a common voice and advocate for solutions to their common problems instead of working on these issues in a vacuum or competing against each other for space and business.

Furthermore, bringing the community’s artists together in a more formal way will create a critical mass that will facilitate the “spill-over” economic effects that agglomerated cultural centers exhibit. Such a formalized group, embodied in an email listserve, a non-profit organization,

or a community-based union could more easily share information and encourage landowners in the area to rent to members of the group. The synergy of artists coming together and speaking with one voice would certainly not be lost on the broader Los Angeles community, and it could serve as a model for other artist enclaves to follow. Such a group could also encourage other artists to join and offer other benefits in the same way a Chamber of Commerce functions. Thus, instead of an infusion of outside capital to accomplish Boyle Heights *Brilla*, we aim to concentrate cultural centers on First Street and use the community’s resources for its own benefit.



Victory Theater on First Street

<sup>12</sup> Bo Beaulieu, Rural Health Institute. Mapping the Assets of the Community: A Framework for Building Local Capacity. <http://srcd.msstate.edu/02health/pdfs/beaulieu.pdf>, Accessed January 15, 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Markusen, Ann and Amanda Johnson. Artists’ Centers. Evolution and Impact on Careers, Neighborhoods and Economies. February 2006. [http://www.hhh.umn.edu/img/assets/6158/artists\\_centers.pdf](http://www.hhh.umn.edu/img/assets/6158/artists_centers.pdf), Accessed

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

# UCLA Comprehensive Project Financing

## Introduction

Our region is currently facing a serious economic downturn. Thus, we need to give consideration to what type of financing is feasible during such economic times. In this section, we look at the ways arts districts in North Hollywood, Downtown Los Angeles, and Denver have financed their development and marketed their communities. In addition, we explain the financing that is best suited for Boyle Heights *Brilla*.

## Community Redevelopment Agency Financing

The use of redevelopment agency funds for reshaping Boyle Heights will surely be unsuccessful if redevelopment is pursued in a way that does not respect the desires of the community. Many redevelopment projects in California have not properly involved community members in the planning process, and thus we recommend involving a redevelopment agency to work with this community only after ensuring that arts-focused community groups have a place at the planning table.

The buildings along First Street in Boyle Heights *Brilla* fall into the Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Los Angeles' (CRA/LA) Adelante Eastside project area.<sup>15</sup> CRA/LA is the official redevelopment agency for the City of Los Angeles and was established to encourage neighborhood development by eliminating blight throughout Los Angeles. To do so, CRA/LA works to increase the supply of housing for low- and moderate-income families, provide infrastructure for commercial and industrial development, create jobs necessary to maintain acceptable levels of employment, and renovate, remove, or replace deteriorated or dilapidated structures.<sup>16</sup>

CRA/LA also makes sure that the citizens are engaged in the decision-making process every step of the way by creating Project Area Committees (PAC) for review and input of redevelopment plans. The Adelante Eastside PAC has 16 members representing homeowners, renters, business owners, and members of other local community organizations.<sup>17</sup>

CRA/LA has already facilitated some neighborhood improvements in Boyle Heights and we hope to capitalize upon these accomplishments for the benefit of Boyle Heights *Brilla*. For example, CRA/LA joined with Los Angeles Department of Public Works to administer, fund and operate a clean up and beautification program along the Cesar E. Chavez Avenue commercial corridor, just north of First Street. Through collaboration with the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (DOT), CRA/LA funded the installation of pavement markings and new traffic and pedestrian signals to address serious and pressing traffic and pedestrian hazards.<sup>18</sup> These programs are important to note because they reflect CRA/LA's commitment to improving Boyle Heights, and more importantly, the Agency's ability to fund projects designed to enhance the experience of residents and visitors to the area.

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<sup>15</sup> CRA/LA, "Eastside Region Page," [http://www.crala.net/internet-site/Projects/Regional\\_Areas/castside\\_region.cfm](http://www.crala.net/internet-site/Projects/Regional_Areas/castside_region.cfm), Accessed January 19, 2009.

<sup>16</sup> CRA/LA, "Who We Are," [http://www.crala.org/internet-site/About/who\\_we\\_arc.cfm](http://www.crala.org/internet-site/About/who_we_arc.cfm), Accessed January 19, 2009.

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<sup>17</sup> CRA/LA, "Public Meetings," <http://www.crala.org/internet-site/Projects/Adelante/meetings.cfm>, Accessed January 19, 2009.

<sup>18</sup> CRA/LA, Adelante Eastside Project Area Proposed Five-Year Implementation Plan (FY2005 – FY2009), CRA/LA, May 2004.

## Economic Development Section

### Case Studies

#### North Hollywood

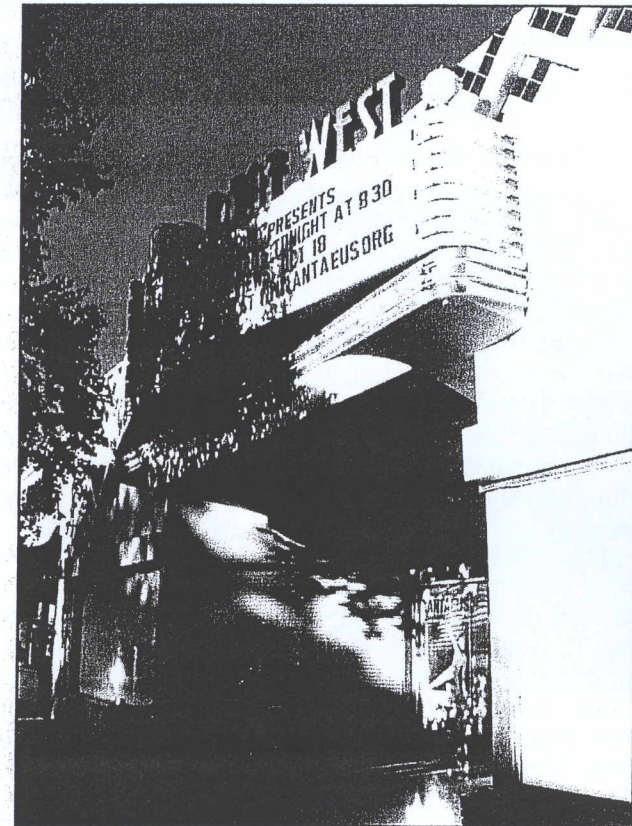
The North Hollywood (NoHo) Arts District is located in the east San Fernando Valley and is home to a variety of art and cultural facilities, including theatres, art galleries, public art, and professional dance studios. NoHo came about as the result of an official movement by the City of Los Angeles, where the area was designated as an Arts District in 1995 with the enactment of a city ordinance.

CRA/LA played a strong role in supporting the creation and improvement of the NoHo Arts District. For example, CRA/LA implemented a Public Art Program in the district funded by a Cultural Trust Fund, as stipulated in the NoHo Redevelopment Plan. The plan requires that 1 percent of all tax increment revenues received by CRA/LA be placed in a Cultural Trust Fund to be used for cultural facilities or public art in NoHo.<sup>19</sup> From 2001 to 2005, the Cultural Trust Fund provided a total of \$617,392 for art and culture related works in NoHo, including the installation of public art, the enhancement of art components as part of several CRA/LA redevelopment projects, and the construction of an entryway sculpture at Burbank and Lankershim Boulevards.

CRA/LA also has implemented an Arts Retention Program in the area.<sup>20</sup> Through the program, CRA/LA has offered business development workshops to the owners of theaters and galleries in NoHo on topics like fundraising and advertising, geared towards enabling these arts-related businesses to thrive as economic conditions in the district improved. We stress that North Hollywood does not serve as our prototype for arts districts in Los Angeles. Boyle Heights *Brilla* will be a much more endogenous effort and may not require official designation by the city. At the same time, we can still learn from the methods that planners employed in making North Hollywood a different type of arts center.

<sup>19</sup> CRA/LA, 2007. North Hollywood Redevelopment Project 5-Year Implementation Plan- FY2006-FY2010. [http://www.crala.org/internet-site/Projects/North\\_Hollywood/upload/NHIP0610.pdf](http://www.crala.org/internet-site/Projects/North_Hollywood/upload/NHIP0610.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Kirschenbaum, Regina, Assistant Project Manager for CRA/LA North Hollywood Project Area, Interview, North Hollywood, CA, November 17, 2008.



NoHo Theater

## UCLA Comprehensive Project Case Studies

### Downtown Los Angeles Arts District

Downtown Los Angeles may be a better example of a community-driven artist community that emerged independently of any city involvement. As it was more organically created, it offers insights for Boyle Heights *Brilla* separate from those of North Hollywood.

The major uniting factor in Downtown Los Angeles is the Downtown Art Walk, held on the second Thursday of every month. The Art Walk is a free, self-guided tour of the many art exhibition venues in Downtown Los Angeles and functions as a way for the outside community to appreciate the art created in the community, and as a driver of community reinvestment. Main Street, which is the core street of the event today, had been plagued by panhandling and drug dealing until the Los Angeles City Council adopted the motion to designate a portion of the Historic Core district along Main and Spring Streets from 2nd to 9th, as Gallery Row in 2003.<sup>21</sup> In 2004, Bert Green, owner of Bert Green Fine Art Gallery, initiated the Downtown Art Walk. It started with only eight galleries in 2004, and the number of visitors for the first Art Walk was only 75.<sup>22</sup>

The number of exhibitors and visitors has gradually increased as the event has grown more popular. Today about 40 exhibitors participate, and the Art Walk attracts many thousands of people every month. The Art Walk also has boosted local businesses, such as restaurants, bars and stores. The current major sponsors are Patina Restaurant Group, the Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council (DLANC), the Historic Downtown Business Improvement District, CitizenLA, the Los Angeles Downtown News, Metromix, and the Onion.<sup>23</sup> The DLANC offers two free shuttles which transport visitors to the event after 6pm.<sup>24</sup>

While Downtown Los Angeles gives us an example of a way that an artist district can facilitate community involvement, it does not have the long artistic cultural background that Boyle Heights does. Instead of a sense of the arts emerging from the community, artists in Downtown Los Angeles flocked to the area in search of low-rent warehouses in which to create art. In Boyle Heights, the artists are already in the community and are battling gentrification caused by similar outside forces. Thus, while we can take lessons from the Downtown Art Walk as a way to build community, we must also remember that Downtown Los Angeles, like North Hollywood, is not a prototype we should be copying.



Downtown Artwalk

<http://vargasresents.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/12/art-walk-aug08-no1.jpg>

21 Downtown Art Walk, "History", <http://www.downtownartwalk.com/>

22 Ibid.

23 Downtown Art Walk, "Press Release", [http://www.downtownartwalk.com/press/daw\\_press\\_release.pdf](http://www.downtownartwalk.com/press/daw_press_release.pdf)

24 Downtown Art Walk, "Home", <http://www.downtownartwalk.com/>

## Economic Development Section Case Studies

### Santa Fe Drive, Denver

The Art District on Santa Fe Drive in Denver, Colorado is an art and cultural district with over 40 galleries, restaurants and shops located in a racially diverse section of West Denver where 60 percent of the residents are Hispanic.<sup>25</sup> This arts district has one of the longest histories of any we studied as a part of this project, as Santa Fe Drive has housed art galleries for at least 30 years. The number of galleries in the area increased greatly in the late 1990s as a result of increasing rents in other city areas.<sup>26</sup> Like Downtown Los Angeles, Santa Fe Drive can be distinguished from Boyle Heights *Brilla* on this basis. At the same time, Santa Fe Drive offers us an opportunity to look at ways that another community has utilized hybrid land uses to create a successful arts-focused environment.

Santa Fe Drive was organized as a non-profit corporation to support arts uses in the community, and just as in Downtown Los Angeles, Santa Fe Drive hosts an art walk each month. On the day of the event, galleries stay open late and people gather in the district to socialize and enjoy art. It brings some 4,000 to 5,000 people to Santa Fe Drive every month.<sup>27</sup>

The Santa Fe Drive Art District has received support from other local organizations and serves as an example of ways that Boyle Heights *Brilla* can involve organizations unrelated to the arts to contribute to an arts community. For example, the district collaborated with New West Side Economic Development (NEWSED) Community Development Corporation to install street banners on Santa Fe Drive.<sup>28</sup> Like what CRA/LA did with the use of LADOT funds to beautify Cesar Chavez Avenue in Boyle Heights, the Santa Fe Drive Art District and the neighborhood Maintenance District worked together to tackle graffiti and to beautify the streets and sidewalks.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, NEWSED constructed a mixed-use building that offered 38 affordable apartments, along with office and retail space.<sup>30</sup> A local architectural firm developed 17 art studios, a gallery, a coffee shop and eight live-work lofts in a former 7-Up bottling plant.<sup>31</sup> Five of these lofts were offered at below-market rate and aimed at allowing long-time residents to stay in the area. Thus, providing affordable housing has attracted artists to the area while also attracting other successful businesses.

The City of Denver has supported the artists on Santa Fe Drive as well. The Denver Office of Economic Development (OED) has provided \$9.8 million in small business and real estate loans utilizing federal Community Development Block Grants along Santa Fe Drive over the past 25 years.<sup>32</sup> The funds have been used for start-up businesses and the expansion of established businesses.<sup>33</sup> For example, a new upscale Mexican restaurant opened in November 2007 with the assistance of these funds.<sup>34</sup>



Santa Fe Drive, Denver

[www.denver.org/images/memberimages](http://www.denver.org/images/memberimages)

25 Moore, Paula, "Along the Santa Fe (arts) trail", Denver Business Journal, 24 March, 2006, <http://denver.bizjournals.com/denver/stories/2006/03/27/story3.html>

26 Ibid. Santa Fe gallery rents averaged \$1,450 a month for 1,200 square feet of space (around \$1.20 per square foot) in March, 2006

27 Ibid

28 Ibid

29 Ibid

30 Stich, Sally, "Community a canvas of ethnic, artistic layers", The Denver Post, 23 July, 2006, [http://www.denverpost.com/search/ci\\_4082287](http://www.denverpost.com/search/ci_4082287)

31 Ibid.

32 AlanD, "City Marks Revitalization of Santa Fe Arts District", City of Denver, 17 December, 2007, <http://www.denvergov.org/DenverGovHome/tabid/37891/newsid97029/690/CITY-MARKS-REVITALIZATION-of-SANTA-FE-ARTS-DISTRICT-/Default.aspx>

33 Ibid

34 Ibid.

# UCLA Comprehensive Project

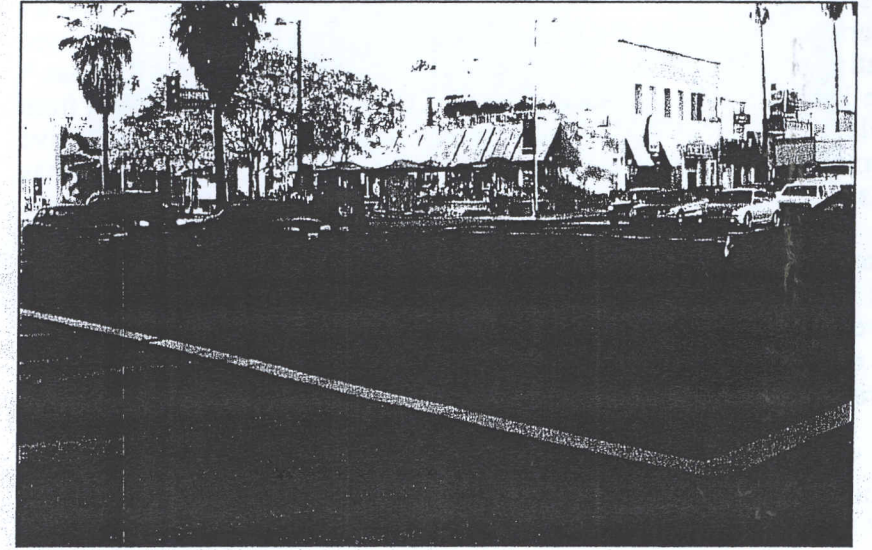
## Case Studies

### Lessons Learned

In the case of Boyle Heights *Brilla*, we believe that the support from CRA/LA is indispensable. For example, a Cultural Trust Fund for Boyle Heights would serve as an attractive financing tool for securing funding for art-related investment. Creating this Cultural Trust Fund would require working with CRA/LA to amend its Adelante Eastside Redevelopment Plan. A CRA/LA Arts Retention Program similar to the one in place in North Hollywood would help artists and local business owners in Boyle Heights adapt to its changing economic environment. Finally, CRA/LA affordable housing projects already underway in Boyle Heights will offer artists places to live.

Taking a cue from Santa Fe Drive in Denver, we should also pursue the development of hybrid uses, or businesses serving different community purposes. First Street is already home to many buildings that offer mixed uses, with some buildings having apartments located above retail uses on the ground floor. Other hybrid commercial uses are also possible. For example, a neighborhood coffeehouse or restaurant might also serve as a gallery for neighborhood art or as a performance space. A gift store on First Street offering greeting cards and artifacts might also offer classes in how to create works of art at home. A monthly Art Walk event may also be an effective marketing tool to attract people to First Street. The event will connect galleries and theaters to local businesses, and offer visitors opportunities to explore the area. This will enhance community ties and boost the local economy as well.

It is clear that, Boyle Heights is not North Hollywood or Santa Fe Drive. Boyle Heights *Brilla* is a community-focused plan that depends more upon taking advantage of the assets of the community than on encouraging outsiders to invest there. While thousands of visitors to Downtown Los Angeles every month might be considered a success for that arts district, encouraging thousands of outsiders to descend upon Boyle Heights could easily upset the balance of the community. Gentrification is already occurring in Boyle Heights, so preserving the unique arts community that currently calls Boyle Heights home will take a similarly unique blend of community involvement and a sensible level of outside funding.



NoHo



# Economic Development Section Market Study

## Introduction

Making Boyle Heights *Brilla* a priority will clearly have economic impacts for the area. Given that our intention is to enliven the community through the use of resources found within Boyle Heights, we hope that these economic consequences are wholly positive. In this section, we will measure the potential economic benefit from Boyle Heights *Brilla* in terms of retail revenue, reduction of commercial vacancies, and job creation.

A priority of this project is to create a community arts space that creates a sense of ownership among artists and other residents of Boyle Heights. It would be to the community's disadvantage to create an artistic space that attracts outside investment such that local commercial and housing rents increase. Outside investment, including speculative land purchases and chain stores moving into the area, will push out existing residents and neighborhood businesses, and would destroy the value of the project. Instead, Boyle Heights *Brilla* must not only cater to the community's artistic needs, it must aim to draw primarily from the surrounding area's customer base.

The establishment of hybrid shops that feature arts space alongside retail sales could be a sustainable financing strategy for fledgling arts businesses. These sorts of shops allow artists to diversify their business so they can draw from customers who may not be in the market to purchase art, but desire to be engaged in an emerging artist community.

In order to identify the most advantageous types of potential hybrid retail shops and to expand other commercial uses on the street, a market study was conducted to determine the retail needs of the surrounding community. This study will identify retail store types that are currently underrepresented in the neighborhood's economy and will examine the impact of adding new retail stores to First Street. This information will help quantify the project's benefits to the community, and will serve artists and business owners who seek to revitalize or initiate new retail establishments.

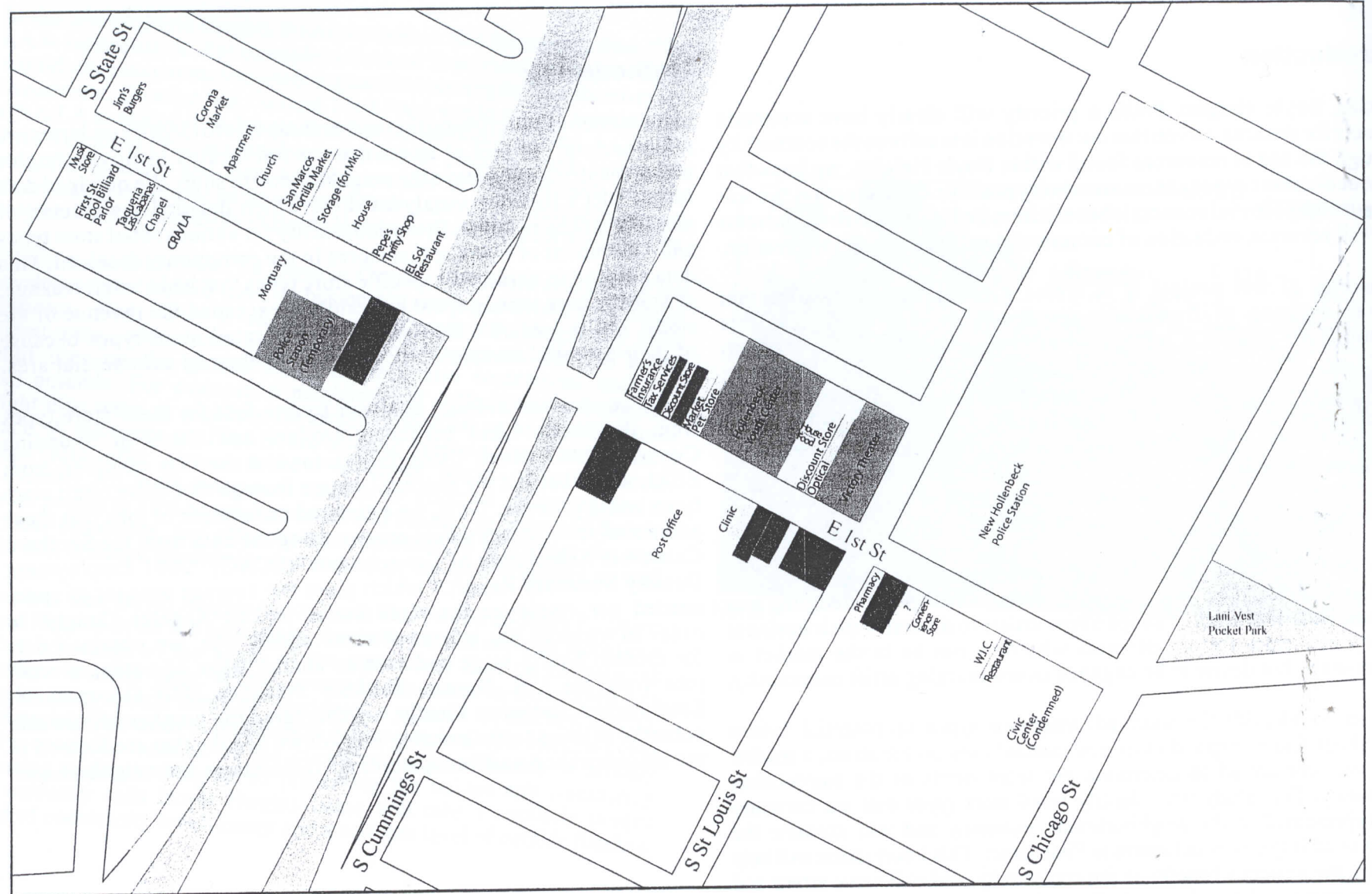
## Methodology

Our first step in undertaking the market study was to identify underserved retail sectors, or types of stores that are not located in Boyle Heights where residents must leave the neighborhood to shop. We obtained data from ESRI's Business Analyst Online which detailed the amount of money spent by residents in the community for various retail store types and the amount of revenue that stores in the community received. This data allowed us to identify specific store types that had a retail leakage, or stores where money spent by residents exceeded the revenue of the stores in the area. We then selected three retail store types because of their potential compatibility with an arts-themed commercial area.

Next, we obtained average sales per square foot for these store types from the Urban Land Institute's Dollars and Cents of Shopping Centers, 2008 edition. Using this factor and the data obtained from ESRI, we calculated the potential square footage that these retail store types could generate. Next, we estimated the amount of jobs that these additional retail stores would require using the data from the Southern California Association of Governments' (SCAG) "2001 Employment Density Summary Report," which gives the average amount of space needed per employee for retail stores in Los Angeles County. In order to measure the impact of these added jobs, we obtained data for median hourly wage and median annual wage of potential retail jobs from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2007 Occupational Employment Statistics. Finally, we compared the number of jobs and potential salaries to the existing breakdown of jobs that are located in the neighborhood and occupations of residents in the neighborhood.




# UCLA Comprehensive Project

Figure 2-1  
Observed Uses on First Street



BOYLE HEIGHTS

Fall 2008

-  Potential Site for Programs
-  Vacant Store
-  Existing Arts Use

200 ft  
100 m



# Economic Development Section

## First Street Assets

We can assess the condition of the existing businesses on First Street from the ways that the existing buildings on First Street are being used. Table 2-1 lists a breakdown of uses by square footage for First Street. The largest single use is government, which comprises 40.0 percent of the total building square footage on the street. This government use is concentrated in the U.S. Post Office and the existing Hollenbeck Police Station. Aside from these public buildings, there is a lot of vacant space along First Street, as 26.0 percent of the total square footage along First Street is vacant, with 17.5 percent estimated as being vacant commercial storefronts and 8.5 percent as vacant office or residential spaces.

A large amount of vacant property usually indicates that retail demand in a commercial corridor is low, but we temper this analysis with the realization that economic conditions in the greater Los Angeles area have deteriorated over the past few years. In examining the surrounding retail opportunities in this neighborhood, it appears that First Street vendors have strong competition from retailers on nearby Cesar Chavez Boulevard. Boyle Heights *Brilla* could distinguish the area from the commercial district on Cesar Chavez Boulevard. Empowering the community to create arts-focused businesses could serve as a catalyst to increase the commercial viability of all businesses in the area, while also reducing vacancies and visual blight on First Street.

**Table 2-1**  
**Building Use by Square Footage, 2008**

Use	Square Footage	Percent of Total
Vacant Commerical	31,182	17.5%
Vacant Office/Residential <sup>1</sup>	15,145	8.5%
Medical	1,782	1.0%
Commercial	53,454	30.0%
Restaurant	5,345	3.0%
Government	71,272	40.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>178,181</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

1. Figure based upon estimation of square footage for second floors of vacant retail buildings and existing single family home

Sources: City of Los Angeles ZIMAS

## Established Market Area

In order to measure the financial and economic impacts of Boyle Heights *Brilla* on the community, we defined a distinct Market Area for our analysis. As seen in Figure 2-2, the Market Area is coterminous with the boundary of the 90033 zip code, an area that roughly includes residents who live within one mile of First Street and St. Louis Street. We chose this area because we anticipate the commercial uses in the arts district will draw heavily from residents in this area, preserving the endogenous nature of the project.

**Figure 2-2**  
**Market Area**



□ Boyle Heights Brilla Project Area

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

## Market Area Spending and Business Trends

As seen in Table 2-2 and Figure 2-3, the amount of money spent by area residents, or their demand for goods and services, totals about \$187.2 million. The revenue brought in by local businesses, or the supply of these goods and services, adds to \$326.7 million. These figures show that, on balance, people who do not live in the Boyle Heights *Brilla* area are traveling there to purchase retail items and to frequent the area's restaurants more than neighborhood residents are leaving to shop elsewhere, to the tune of \$139.6 million per year. Although this data would appear to suggest that there is no retail shortage in the area, when we examine retail spending and revenue by retail store type it is clear that there are opportunities for certain store types on the First Street corridor.

**Table 2-2**  
Retail Leakage in Market Area, 2008

Store Type	Demand	Supply	Surplus
Retail Stores	\$162,357,720	\$262,022,063	\$99,664,343
Food & Drink Businesses	\$24,808,440	\$64,721,541	\$39,913,101
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$187,166,160</b>	<b>\$326,743,604</b>	<b>\$139,577,444</b>

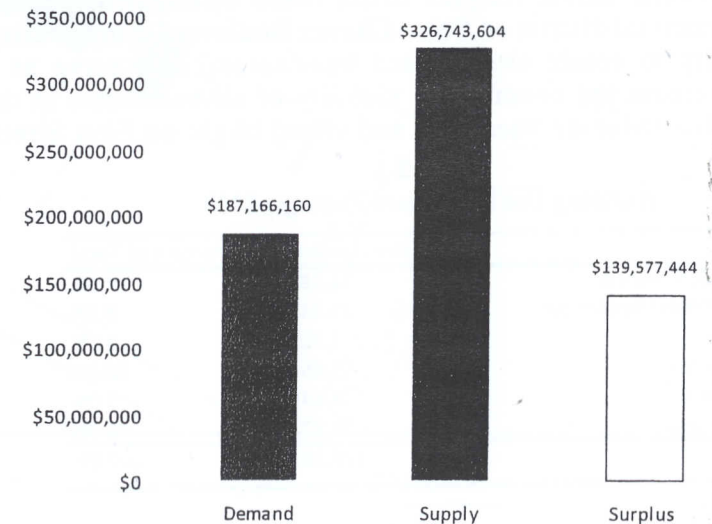
**Table 2-3**  
Potential for Retail Development by Store Type, 2008

Store Type	Demand	Supply	Leakage
Automobile Sales and Parts Dealers	\$79,633,202	\$14,695,817	-\$64,937,385
Furniture and Home Furnishings Stores	\$14,203,304	\$4,148,414	-\$10,054,890
Electronics & Appliance Stores	\$5,586,200	\$3,045,178	-\$2,541,022
Department Stores	\$8,360,846	\$6,072,474	-\$2,288,372
Nonstore Retailers	\$4,328,569	\$3,582,299	-\$746,270
Office Supplies, Stationery, and Gift Stores	\$1,071,626	\$641,679	-\$429,947
Bars/Nightclubs	\$575,483	\$148,843	-\$426,640
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$113,759,230</b>	<b>\$32,334,704</b>	<b>-\$81,424,526</b>

Sources for Tables 2-2 and 2-3: ESRI Business Analyst Online

Table 2-3 shows some of the estimated retail shortages in the First Street area by retail store type. The difference between the money spent by area residents at each type of store and the revenue created by stores in the area is labeled "Leakage." This leakage represents opportunities for commercial development, or types of stores that would do well in a neighborhood-focused commercial area like Boyle Heights *Brilla*. According to this table, neighborhood residents travel outside their community to purchase a wide variety of goods and services, from automotive parts to nightlife. Although this table suggests that many different types of stores could do well in Boyle Heights, it is important to encourage retail store types that are compatible with arts uses and can be potential hybrid retail stores. Some Boyle Heights residents are wary of attracting some types of uses, like tattoo parlors or liquor stores, which can potentially attract an unsavory element to the area. For this reason, we examined the potential impact of encouraging three types of complementary uses to locate in Boyle Heights *Brilla*: Electronics & Appliance Stores, Office Supplies, Stationery, and Gift Stores, and Bars/Nightclubs.

**Figure 2-3**  
Retail Leakage in Market Area, 2008



## Economic Development Section

### Potential Economic Development

Table 2-4 estimates the retail development potential for the area if the demand for the three types of uses we identified were completely satisfied. We calculated this figure using the retail leakage figures mentioned earlier and the average annual sales per square foot for each store type as outlined in the Urban Land Institute's Dollars and Cents of Shopping Centers, 2008 Edition. The three complementary store types could add a total 14,530 square feet of retail space to First Street, which would result in a 46.6 percent reduction in vacant commercial space along First Street.

**Table 2-4  
Potential Square Footage of New Retail  
by Selected Store Type in Project Area, 2008**

	Bars/Nightclubs <sup>1</sup>	Office Supplies, Stationery, and Gift Stores	Electronics and Appliance Stores
Average Annual Sales Per Square Feet	\$130	\$152	\$302
Retail Potential within Market Area	\$426,640	\$429,947	\$2,541,022
Potential Square Feet	3,288	2,829	8,414
	Potential Square Footage of New Retail		14,530
	Percent of Current Vacant Commerical Square Footage		46.6%

1. Sales per Square Feet for Bars/Nightclubs was calculated using sales and square footage data for existing establishments in market area

Sources: Urban Land Institute Dollars and Cents Shopping Centers, 2008  
ESRI Business Analyst Online

Increased retail development would also result in the creation of new jobs in the Market Area. Table 2-5 depicts the estimated number of new jobs that will be added to the Market Area as a result of this project.

We estimated the number of jobs created from Boyle Heights *Brilla* using the space required per employee for retail stores as figured by SCAG's "2001 Employment Density Study Summary Report." The addition of these three store types could result in 35 new employees in the Market Area, with 8 new employees for Bars/Nightclubs, 7 new employees for Office Supplies, Stationery, and Gift Stores, and 20 employees for Electronics and Appliance Stores.

**Table 2-5 Estimated Total Job Creation by Selected Store Type,  
2008**

	Bars/Nightclubs	Office Supplies, Stationery, and Gift Stores	Electronics and Appliance Stores
Potential Square Feet	3,288	2,829	8,414
Average Square Feet per Employee <sup>1</sup>	424	424	424
Number of Potential Employees	8	7	20
	Estimated Total Job Creation		35

1. Calculation is based on average for non-regional retail in Los Angeles County, as outlined in SCAG 2001 Employment Density Study Summary Report

Sources: SCAG 2001 Employment Density Study Summary Report  
ESRI Business Analyst Online

## UCLA Comprehensive Project

Table 2-6 shows the potential hourly median wage and annual median wage for select jobs in these retail store types.

The job creation associated with Boyle Heights *Brilla* will be beneficial for local residents in search of employment. Table 2-7 lists the occupational breakdown of area residents in 2000 as stated in the 2000 U.S. Census. In 2000, 14,099 area residents over the age of 16 were employed. 886 people in the total workforce were employed in Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations. Workers with this background could be suited to gain new employment in the Bar/Nightclub sector as a server or bartender. Similarly, the 1,316 people in the Market Area who have experience in Sales and Related Occupations might be attracted to new sales jobs created by Boyle Heights *Brilla*. As many residents travel outside of their neighborhood for work, these employment opportunities in Boyle Heights *Brilla* will reduce the time and cost that some workers spend commuting.

**Table 2-6**  
**Hourly Median Wage and Annual Median Wage of New Potential Occupations, 2007**

	Hourly Median Wage	Annual Median Wage
<b>Food Service Occupations</b>		
Waiters and Waitresses	\$8.31	\$17,290
Bartenders	\$8.56	\$17,800
Hosts and Hostesses	\$8.60	\$17,890
<b>Retail Occupations</b>		
Cashiers	\$8.25	\$17,160
Retail Salespersons	\$9.69	\$20,150
Sales Floor Stock Clerks	\$9.85	\$20,490
Retail Sales Managers	\$16.57	\$34,470

Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics 2007 Occupational Employment Statistics

**Table 2-7**  
**Occupational Breakdown of Market Area, 2000**

Occupation	Number of Employees	Percent of Total
<b>Management, professional, and related occupations:</b>	<b>516</b>	<b>3.7%</b>
Management occupations, except farmers and farm managers	350	
Farmers and farm managers	10	
Business and financial operations occupations:	156	
<b>Professional and related occupations:</b>	<b>1,263</b>	<b>9.0%</b>
Computer and mathematical occupations	21	
Architecture and engineering occupations:	3	
Life, physical, and social science occupations	33	
Community and social services occupations	75	
Legal occupations	26	
Education, training, and library occupations	524	
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media occupations	386	
Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations:	195	
<b>Service occupations:</b>	<b>3,054</b>	<b>21.7%</b>
Healthcare support occupations	356	
Protective service occupations:	275	
Food preparation and serving related occupations	886	
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations	929	
Personal care and service occupations	608	
<b>Sales and office occupations:</b>	<b>3,102</b>	<b>22.0%</b>
Sales and related occupations	1,316	
Office and administrative support occupations	1,786	
<b>Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations:</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>0.4%</b>
<b>Construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations:</b>	<b>1,662</b>	<b>11.8%</b>
Construction and extraction occupations:	1,046	
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	616	
<b>Production, transportation, and material moving occupations:</b>	<b>4,446</b>	<b>31.5%</b>
Production occupations	2,930	
Transportation and material moving occupations:	1,516	
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,099</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Average Household Income (in 2006 adjusted dollars)</b>	<b>\$37,079</b>	

Sources: US Census Bureau; 2000 Decennial Census  
California Consumer Price Index 1999, 2006

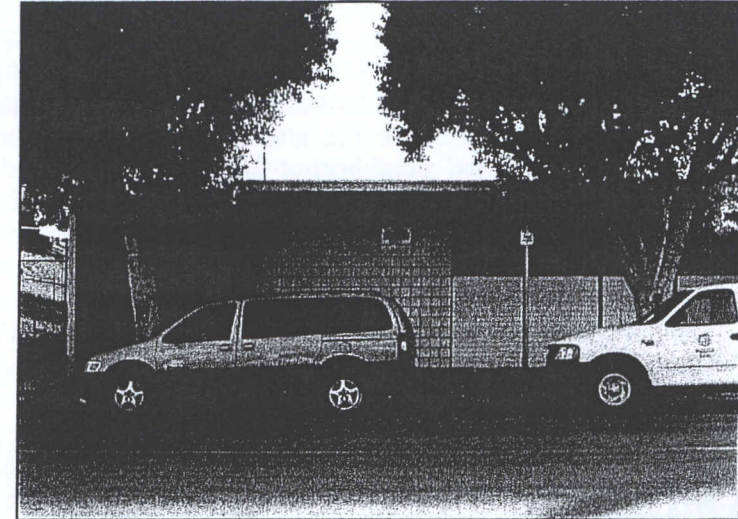
## Economic Development Section

Table 2-8 lists the industries and estimated number of employees at the businesses surrounding First Street. Health care and social assistance-related organizations are the largest employer in the Market Area, with an estimated 37.6 percent of the 17,290 total workers in the area working in this field. Next is wholesale trade, which contains 17.1 percent of the total jobs in the Market Area. Boyle Heights *Brilla* could add 35 new retail jobs to this total.

**Table 2-8**  
**Estimated Breakdown of Employment by Industries in**  
**Market Area, 2006**

Industry	Number of Employees	Percent of Total
Construction	109	0.6%
Manufacturing	1,548	9.0%
Wholesale trade	2,961	17.1%
Retail trade	1,516	8.8%
Transportation & warehousing	79	0.5%
Information	4	0.0%
Finance & insurance	257	1.5%
Real estate & rental & leasing	80	0.5%
Professional, scientific & technical services	709	4.1%
Management of companies & enterprises	186	1.1%
Admin, support, waste mgt, remediation services	251	1.5%
Educational services	401	2.3%
Health care and social assistance	6,493	37.6%
Arts, entertainment & recreation	45	0.3%
Accommodation & food services	1,706	9.9%
Other services (except public administration)	941	5.4%
Unclassified establishments	4	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,290</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Average Annual Salary</b>	<b>\$44,359</b>	

Sources: US Census Bureau; 2006 County Business Patterns



First Street

# UCLA Comprehensive Project Recommendations

## **Building Up Boyle Heights *Brilla***

Making Boyle Heights *Brilla* a strong presence in the community will first require the participation of First Street stakeholders and local artists in developing an economic strategy. After this strategy is in place, these stakeholders will then be involved with sharing and promoting the area with both Boyle Heights residents and the larger regional community. While Boyle Heights *Brilla* will utilize endogenous resources to improve the entire neighborhood, offering its goods and services to the community is essential for real change to occur.

There is already a great deal of institutional support for reshaping First Street and improving Boyle Heights, as evidenced by Councilmember Huizar's interest in creating an arts district here and the CRA/LA's inclusion of the area in a redevelopment district. More important than institutional support, however, is the support from area artists and community members. These stakeholders will be essential for bringing soul to the project and encouraging arts-related uses to locate in the area: Artists have stressed that Boyle Heights should not be perceived as only for "certain types of artists" in terms of experience, genre, and notoriety; it should instead be a place for an organic artistic community to thrive, a place where all types of expression are honored and respected. While the city can be supportive of the arts district in many ways, the long-term viability of Boyle Heights *Brilla* will depend on developing a sense of ownership in the community among those who live there.

## **Community-Based Strategy**

A key component of community-focused economic development is helping to promote and enhance existing businesses while avoiding gentrification. A community property resource fair or workshop, with instruction on small business ownership or presentations from community specialists like attorneys or bankers, would help educate local businesses and residents on how to ensure economic success in an environment where rents are increasing. A resource fair would also encourage artists and entrepreneurs from the community, not from well-heeled parts of Los Angeles, to invest in the area.

The members of an informal network of artists in Boyle Heights already engage each other in some aspects of community-focused economic development, but this organization should be formalized and strengthened. When we sat down and spoke with a group of about a dozen neighborhood artists to discuss this project, we were enthusiastically received and the meeting lasted well beyond the time we had allotted for it. The thirst for artistic collaboration, not competition, is already present in Boyle Heights. One step in creating a community-based strategy for economic development would be to formalize this network, leveraging existing relationships to create much stronger bonds among artists in the community. Government officials at the City of Los Angeles might also be involved in these conversations, facilitating a community-wide conversation about the future of Boyle Heights. Through public meetings and smaller forums, the City can help focus on issues that may be of particular interest to the needs of local businesses. This may mean holding separate meetings for the different sub-communities of artists, business owners, commercial tenants, and local residents in order to get a balanced perspective, but it is also important to gather the community as a unit to discuss its future.

Following this, the next step is to examine how the community can help finance the needs identified in these meetings. Common strategies for funding sources include self-taxing in the form of a Street Maintenance District or Business Improvement District. Both of these mechanisms would be governed by the community itself with assistance from City officials, and would result in improved public services such as street cleaning, beautification, and promotion of the area. By drawing upon the aspects of the community that are already successful, developing special or regular events such as an Art Fair or Art Walk may help attract visitors from other parts of the city and help bring new investment into the community.



## Economic Development Section

### Government-Initiated Strategy

While a community-inspired economic strategy is the preferred method of reshaping First Street into Boyle Heights *Brilla*, we should also remember the resources available from the City of Los Angeles and other public sources. At the same time, new uses for First Street might bring challenges from existing landowners as being incompatible with long-standing businesses on First Street, and we should be aware of any potential legal challenges to introducing a more arts-centric idea for Boyle Heights.

First Street is already the home of some arts-related uses, and most of First Street is currently zoned C2-1. This zoning classification allows most types of commercial development including the existing arts uses, and as such it would not prevent any landowners from introducing more arts-related businesses to the area.<sup>35</sup> Thus, applications to the city for rezoning this area to allow more arts-focused uses such as art galleries and small theaters would not be required.

Arts districts in Los Angeles can also be created by adding a set of new requirements, or a zoning “overlay,” to the existing land use regulations in an area. Such an overlay limits the types of permissible land uses to create a consistent arts focus throughout the district. The City of Los Angeles has created an arts-focused zoning overlay, the Commercial and Artcrafts District designation (“CA District”), to encourage the formation of enclaves for artisans to live, create, and market their wares.<sup>36</sup> Planners used the CA overlay to help facilitate the creation of the North Hollywood Arts District.<sup>37</sup> CA districts restrict land use to housing and those uses consistent with creating artistic works, such as metal engraving and silk screening. The CA designation also permits some arts-related commercial uses such as galleries and theaters. CA districts require a high level of community investment in the district, as 75 percent of the landowners in a proposed CA district must give their consent for such a district to be created. Thus, CA districts are better suited for neighborhoods that already have a strong arts focus and are full of landowners willing to limit the use of their land for arts-related purposes.

<sup>35</sup> Los Angeles Municipal Code Sec. 12.14.

<sup>36</sup> Los Angeles Municipal Code Sec. 13.06.

<sup>37</sup> Los Angeles Ordinance 170,549.

While a CA designation binds an entire area to certain uses, the CRA/LA can target its resources at certain parcels. This serves as a much more flexible way to drive economic development, and one that can better take into account the community-focused basis for our plan. CRA/LA’s resources allow neighborhood-focused uses to remain that would otherwise not comply with the CA requirements and not be allowed to locate in the area. CRA/LA can also assist private developers in purchasing properties or rehabilitating them, helping bring some of the architecturally significant spaces in Boyle Heights back to life. We feel that the flexibility offered by CRA/LA assistance is a better choice for Boyle Heights *Brilla* than the fundamental change a CA zoning overlay would bring.

One type of CRA/LA resource available to developers and other business owners are non-recourse loans. These loans are structured so that if the qualifications of the loan are satisfied, the loans are forgiven. For example, CRA/LA recently loaned the developers of the Boyle Hotel, located several blocks west of our project area at First and Boyle, \$2 million in pre-development funding to help offset the costs of historic rehabilitation and rent subsidies. Without this funding, the Boyle Hotel may have remained vacant for years. Another CRA/LA program provides funding for façade or landscaping improvements. A similar program has been in place in the Reseda/Canoga Park area in the San Fernando Valley with great results.<sup>38</sup>

At the same time as we advise Boyle Heights residents to join with CRA/LA in creating Boyle Heights *Brilla*, we should remember that many of the most successful arts enclaves emerge organically, without public funding or input from urban planners. Where a CA zoning overlay may be more appropriate for a much larger commercial district in need of fundamental redevelopment like North Hollywood, a more context-sensitive solution is appropriate here. Our solution, which will involve working with property owners to pursue a community-based plan, and which will involve encouraging the community to create their own economic benefits, is a better option for accommodating the existing uses on First Street while still pursuing a new creative focus for the neighborhood.

<sup>38</sup> CRA/LA, “The Upside – West Valley / Spring 2008,” [http://www.lacity.org/cra/regional\\_newsletter/West-Valley/spring2008/frontpage.html](http://www.lacity.org/cra/regional_newsletter/West-Valley/spring2008/frontpage.html), Accessed January 20, 2009.

## Economic Development Section

### Youth-Based Strategies

Given the large proportion of young people in Boyle Heights, youth-based strategies that empower children and young adults in the community should serve a fundamental role in Boyle Heights *Brilla*. While public funding for arts continues to decline, some local artists are already providing a social service that addresses these educational voids. A well-rounded education is important for any job seeker, so developing the artistic senses of area youth should be a crucial component in community development. Engaging youth in the larger economic process not only supports short-term strategies, but invests in long-term social and economic capital that continues the active arts legacy characteristic of Boyle Heights' history.

### Marketing

The long-term marketing strategy for Boyle Heights *Brilla* should be geared towards emphasizing the distinct and special nature of Boyle Heights. The history of art in the area is already well-known to those who grew up there, and the artists we spoke to noted their ability to encourage artists to "come back home" to Boyle Heights and create art. Boyle Heights *Brilla* will capitalize upon this well-established sense of artistic pride in Boyle Heights both for artists relocating to the neighborhood and for the community who would patronize the arts there. The upcoming rededication of Mariachi Plaza will attract arts-related attention to Boyle Heights. The neighborhood and its artists should use this attention as a way to celebrate the arts-focused energy found throughout Boyle Heights, not just at Mariachi Plaza or in a few other spaces on First Street.

Visual arts provide easy marketing tools for showing off the community. The artwork in Boyle Heights is a testament in itself of the life of the community, and the neighborhood can incorporate these images into marketing materials for community celebrations intended for a wide audience. One important initial step for establishing Boyle Heights *Brilla* as an economic driver would be the creation of a website for the arts uses along First Street. The website would allow visitors to see the area and

connect with artists before visiting, and also allow them to remain connected to community events after visiting. The website should also highlight nearby restaurants and bars, which would allow people to plan an evening out on First Street. Restaurants might also market themselves towards visitors to the community and could also serve as art spaces. For example, restaurants could display art or at least let patrons know when nearby gallery shows are happening that same night. Building a presence of people on First Street will be critical to establishing Boyle Heights *Brilla*.

Artists have already mentioned that some restaurants in the area are remaining open later at night to accommodate the visitors flocking to the area for arts-related events, and this energy should be captured and extended in an organic fashion. Encouraging existing businesses to take advantage of the new energy in Boyle Heights is one way of promoting community development from within the community. While a website is an effective means of making information available once people know to look for it, it is not a substitute for creating community and support on the ground level, especially among those in the community who lack internet access. To address this, artists could engage the entire community through creative ways. For example, the neighborhood should consider engaging in "guerrilla" art tactics to draw attention to its presence in less traditional ways. This might involve closing the street for a day of temporary art on sidewalks, roads, and the freeway overpass. Events should be promoted in local press, such as Brooklyn & Boyle, and could result in attention from major media sources like La Opinion and the Los Angeles Times.

## Chapter 3: Urban Design Section

# Urban Design on First Street

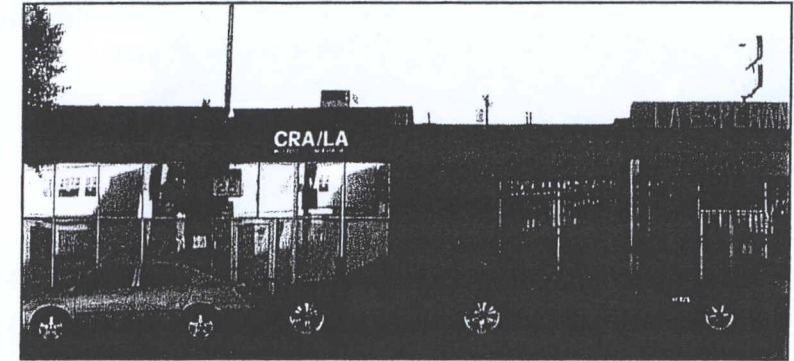
An effective urban design strategy for Boyle Heights *Brilla* will embrace the feelings that are already inspired by Boyle Heights as well as define the space as a symbolic home for the arts. In addition to the district's effects on people who live there, creating a distinct sense of place, history, and community will draw people to the area and encourage them to return. This section identifies existing assets that would support the community-focused creation of Boyle Heights *Brilla*. We describe one potential vision for the future of the neighborhood, primarily through specific improvements to streetscape, facades, and pedestrian amenities.

### Current Built Environment

First Street serves as an ideal environment for centralizing arts in Boyle Heights because of its existing physical assets. The scale of the street is typical of an older neighborhood in Los Angeles, as few of the buildings are more than three stories tall.

First Street is also blessed with storefronts adjacent to the sidewalk, giving pedestrians a more interesting visual environment. There are only a few breaks in the building massing along the street, ensuring an uninterrupted experience, while breaks along a street would lead visitors to target only one location.

The architecture of the buildings and the murals that decorate them are two examples of historic resources available to the community. Historic buildings help to establish a deep rooted sense of place, reflective of the neighborhood's position as one of Los Angeles's first neighborhoods. The pedestrian-friendly scale of the buildings and their architectural details provide the perfect environment in which to develop an arts-focused community. The murals and other smaller works that adorn the sides of many buildings describe a more recent history of Boyle Heights. The area's murals serve as a way to distinguish Boyle Heights from other places in the city, especially other areas recognized as arts districts. More importantly, murals connect the community to the street by communicating a shared understanding or identity. The architectural buildings in the area and the artwork throughout the street represent a unique sense of continuity that further supports an artist community.



Pedestrian Scale on First Street

# Urban Design Section

## Future Vision

### Participatory Design for Arts and Culture Integration

We recommend the following practices for participatory design:

- observation,
- conducting outreach with the community, and
- hiring local artists.

Urban design is about how people use, interact with, and relate to a given space. Community involvement in a planning project can range from providing the public with information to engaging the public in collaborative decision-making. We elaborate on these participatory practices below. Outreach with residents, merchants, artists and community members who frequent First Street is a necessary component of a community-focused arts neighborhood, as their involvement in the design of the physical environment is as important as the sense of economic ownership we hope to inspire with Boyle Heights *Brilla*.

### Observation: Understanding user groups

As already stated, First Street is the home to many physical assets that could easily accommodate the diversity of uses needed for Boyle Heights *Brilla*. These various establishments attract people to the street at different times of day on weekdays as well as weekends, and the urban design elements we propose recognize these different uses along First Street. For example, the churches that hold services on Sundays attract a different crowd than Casa101, which hosts evening plays and film screenings. Vacant storefronts function as visual blight, and filling these spaces would go a long way towards improving the urban design of the area. We accommodate the varied uses and user groups in Boyle Heights with our design recommendations. More importantly, murals connect the community to the street by communicating a shared understanding or identity. The architectural buildings in the area and the artwork throughout the street represent a unique sense of continuity that further supports an artist community.

### Outreach: What do people want to see?

Urban design outreach in Boyle Heights would involve asking community members what they like and what they do not like about their neighborhood. In asking these questions, the neighborhood should address both the needed improvements for the community as well as the urban design elements that already work well. As gangs and violence still plague parts of Boyle Heights, these questions should take into account feelings of safety, not just aesthetic beauty. Planners might also organize a workshop where attendees could build models of First Street and share their creative ideas for a future urban design, as the community did for the Watts House Project in South Los Angeles.

This outreach should also involve a discussion of the types of uses not normally planned for in urban planning studies. Unstructured and creative uses of space, or those uses not connected to a specific building or location, abound in Boyle Heights and on First Street. These uses include street vendors, artists, mariachi bands, kids playing, and simply watching the neighborhood pass by. Art is found throughout a neighborhood, not just in formal galleries or theaters, and sensitive planners should take into account the wide variety of ways that Boyle Heights residents create art.

### Local Artists: Neighborhood identity through public art

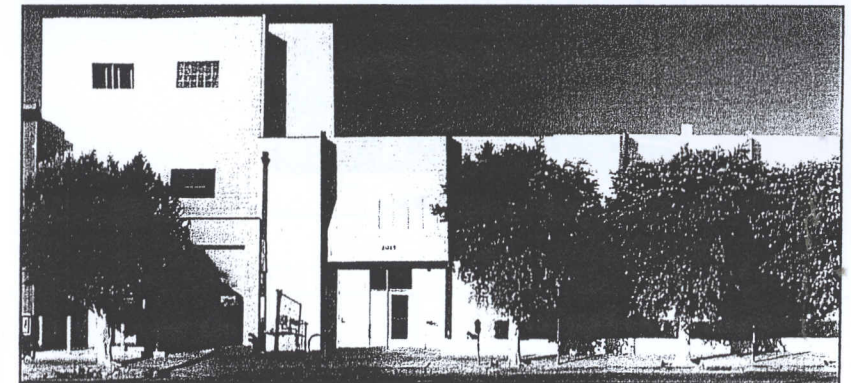
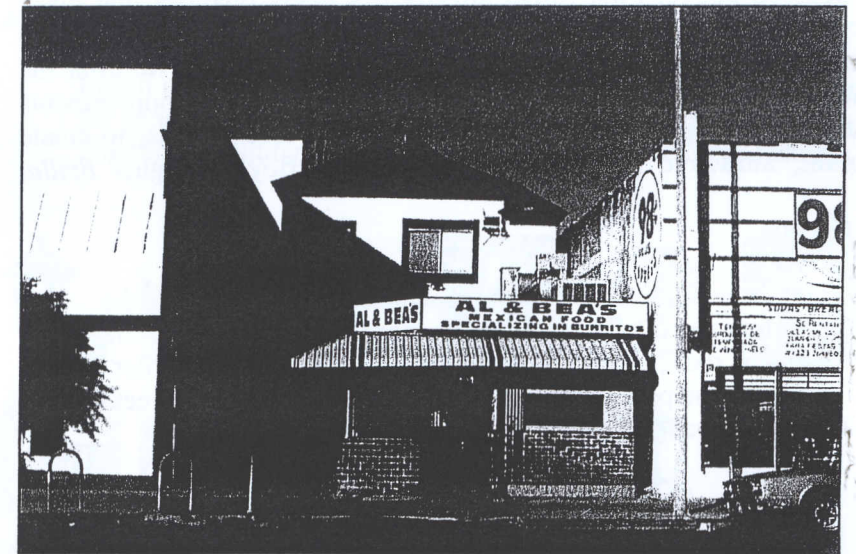
Any arts or culture district should, at least in part, be the result of community initiative and be a source of pride and empowerment. As we have repeatedly stressed throughout this plan, in order to support the activities that already exist in Boyle Heights and make improvements, it is key to involve the public in each stage of decision-making. Many of the proposed design interventions in this report are public art, such as sidewalk design treatments, murals, and art bus benches. In order to accomplish these public projects, we will need to involve local government agencies responsible for the maintenance of these areas. The following agencies have jurisdiction over property on First Street and have departments that oversee public arts projects: The City of Los Angeles, through its physical

## *UCLA Comprehensive Project*

agencies such as the Department of Public Works; Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro); and Caltrans. Once an agency has obtained financing and chosen the location for the artwork and procured any needed permits from government agencies, they can issue a Request for Qualification (RFQ) or a Request for Proposals (RFP) for artists to submit their ideas for the public art. The RFP will define who is eligible to apply for each public art project.<sup>39</sup>

To ensure that local artists design the public art in Boyle Heights, we recommend either that any future RFP stipulates the artist lives or works in the neighborhood, or that the review panel strongly weighs this as a factor when reviewing the applications and selecting an artist. In addition, the RFP should stress to artists that their commission may include all materials needed to create the art or that the funds needed to pay for the art will not be required at the time of application. After an artist is selected, we suggest that the artist involve members of the community in the conception of the public art piece. This can be done informally through conversations at community meetings, or it may be written into the RFQ.

Urban design enhances both the function and visual cohesion of a neighborhood and serves as a tool to integrate community ideas into the physical environment. We have met with artists and residents and conducted initial research into design improvements for Boyle Heights, and this process informs our design recommendations. However, further community participation will be needed in future phases of the project.



First Street

<sup>39</sup> City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, <http://www.ci.la.ca.us/CAD/publicart/publicpercent.html>, Accessed on January 17, 2009.

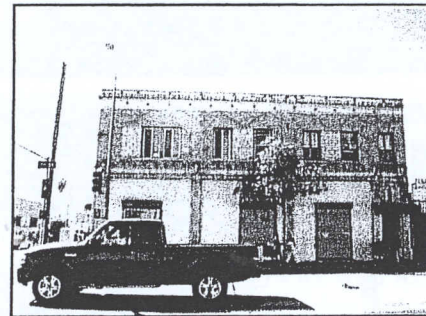
# Urban Design Section

## Streetscape Recommendations

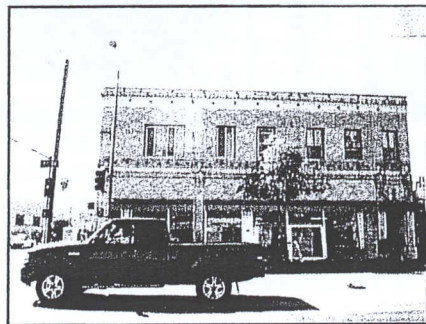
As discussed above, First Street already has many qualities that make it a perfect fit for a new focus on arts-related uses. To assist with the physical framework that is already in place on First Street, we offer the following recommendations. The goal of these streetscape improvements is to take advantage of the physical assets of the area in order to create a vibrant, attractive physical environment for Boyle Heights *Brilla*.

### Windows

- Use large and clear windows whenever compatible with the building use in order to promote more visual interest on the street.
- Replace dark, reflective, and boarded-up windows in order to improve the pedestrian environment and activate the street.
- Create street galleries in windows



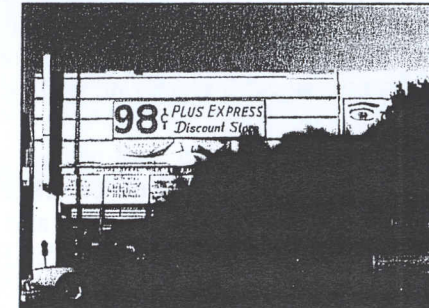
Existing Windows



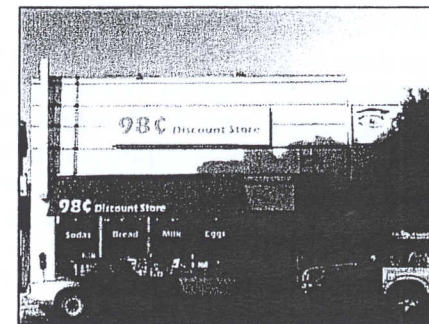
Proposed Windows

### Signage

- Install signs that are clear and uncluttered
- Remove obstructions to views into and out of stores
- Use distinctive lettering styles, artwork, icons, and logos
- Aim for signs consistent with local character and building type



Existing Signage

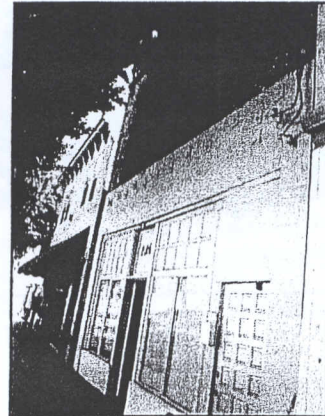


Proposed Signage

# UCLA Comprehensive Project

## Awnings

- Install awnings to provide shade, storefront definition, and color interest to the streetscape
- Use awnings as an additional form of attractive business identification



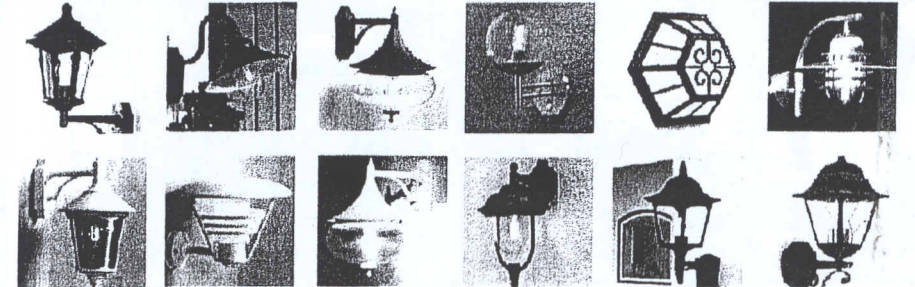
Existing Conditions



Proposed Awnings

## Lighting

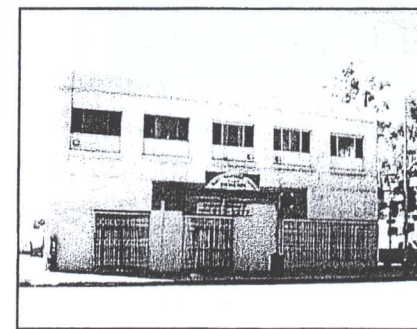
- Install uniform lighting and fixtures that are appropriate in scale for pedestrians to promote safety and visual continuity
- Highlight building elements, signs, or other distinctive features



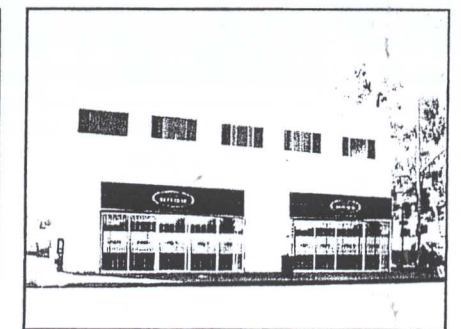
Examples of Lighting

## Security Grilles

- Install security grilles inside of the display glass in order to be less visible.
- Opaque, solid security grates make the streets feel unsafe and interrupt window shoppers to see the merchandise.



Existing Grilles

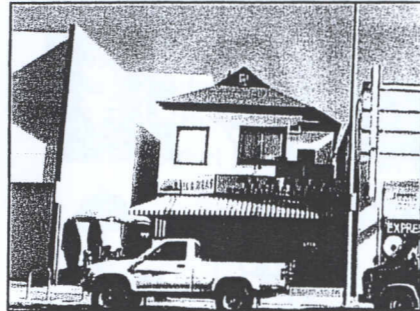


Proposed Grilles

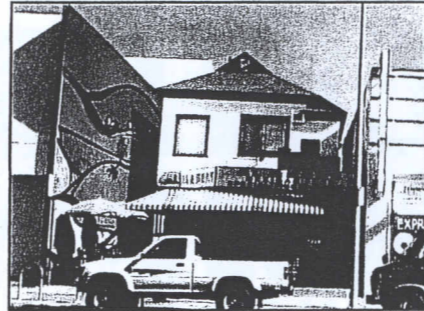
# Urban Design Section

## Building Façades

- Maintain original details of the building façade in order to give the area an identity and emphasize historic assets
- Discourage windowless blank walls or parking entrances facing First Street to improve the continuity of the street

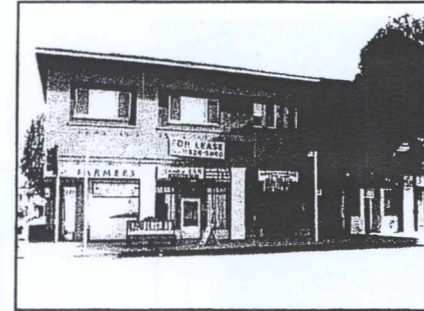


Existing



Proposed

## Building Type 1

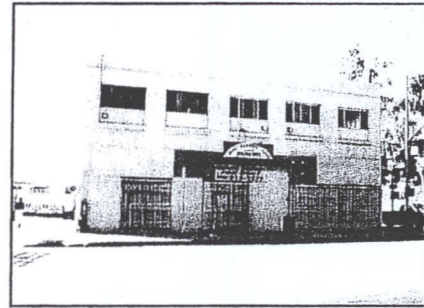


Existing

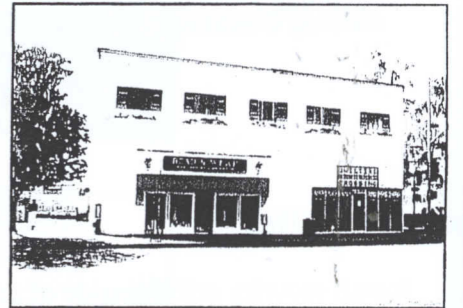


Proposed

## Building Type 2



Existing



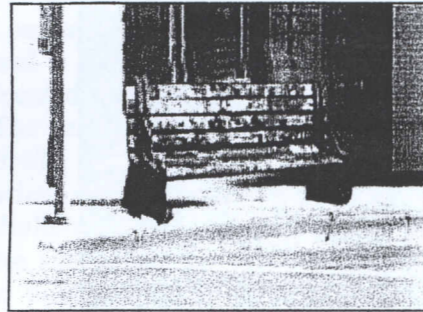
Proposed



# UCLA Comprehensive Project Pedestrian Amenities

## Seating

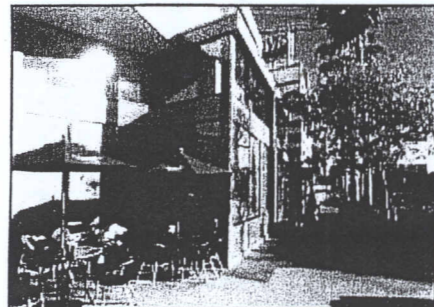
- Install additional benches and refurbish existing ones to make the area more pedestrian friendly
- Encourage sidewalk seating and outdoor merchandise displays to create inviting building entrances and streetscape



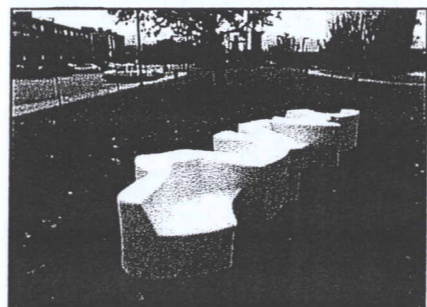
Artistic bench



An Example of an Outdoor Cafe



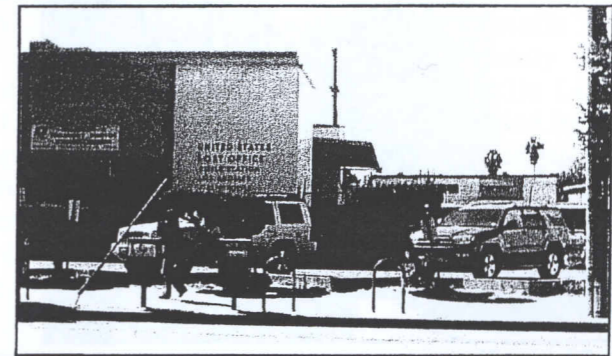
An Example of Outdoor Seating



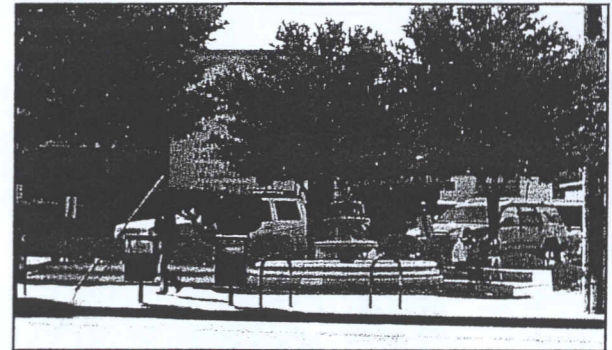
Cameron Van Dyke's Work

## Plants and Fountains

- Use planters as an additional buffer between pedestrians and the street and as a way to beautify the area
- Install fountains as places for resting and social gatherings for residents and visitors



Existing



Proposed with new plants and a fountain

## Urban Design Section

### Information Kiosk & Signage

Assist visitors in finding arts uses and enhance the sense of place in Boyle Heights *Brilla* through informational kiosks and signage.



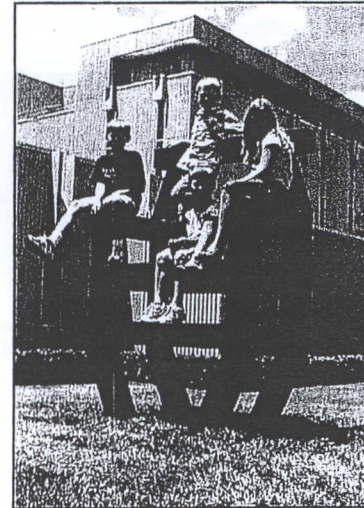
Arts District Signage



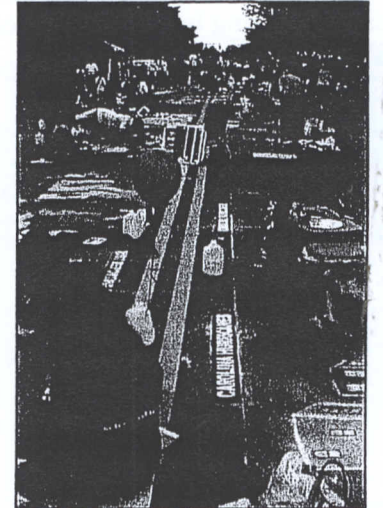
Information Kiosk

### Public Art

Add beauty and aesthetic atmosphere with interactive and thought provoking public art, highlighting the uniqueness of the community.



An Example of Interactive Art Work



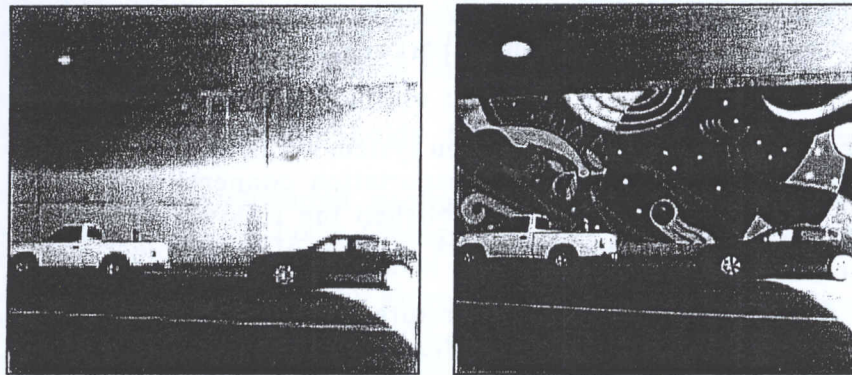
An Example of Street Painting

## UCLA Comprehensive Project Other Opportunities

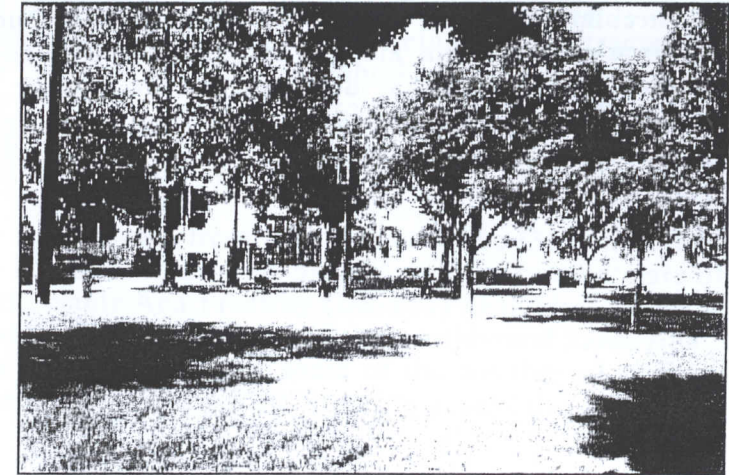
Two additional sites in the area present unique design opportunities: the First Street underpass at First and Cummings, and the Lani Vest Pocket Park at First and Chicago.

The First Street underpass is poorly lit and unfriendly to pedestrians and serves as a barrier to exploring the community instead of an enticing gateway. The NoHo Arts District installed such a gateway over Lankershim Boulevard near the entrance to its arts-focused community, and a similar welcoming feature for Boyle Heights *Brilla* could be located in or near this now-uninviting landmark of the neighborhood. The underpass could even serve as the focus point for Boyle Heights *Brilla*, as a distinct landmark for marketing purposes and as a way to orient visitors to the neighborhood. Also, developing one of the biggest challenges of the neighborhood into its focal point will increase the safety and attractiveness of a dingy underpass and could serve as another opportunity to incorporate public art into the community.

Community members and public officials all agree that Lani Vest Pocket Park is underutilized. The park is currently equipped with benches and a public toilet and offers nearby apartment dwellers a place to stretch out and enjoy a bit of green space. As the freeway underpass at Cummings could serve as one bookend for the focal area of Boyle Heights *Brilla*, Lani Vest Pocket Park could function as the matching bookend and as another source of artistic celebration. Adding benches with artistic details or installing decorative trash receptacles could immediately increase the attractiveness of the park. The Benjamin Franklin Library, across First Street from the park, is currently surrounded by a tall fence, functioning as a visual barrier for the community's pedestrians and a symbol of disconnect with the broader community. Just as the First Street underpass would serve as one focal point for Boyle Heights *Brilla*, so too could the library and Lani Vest Pocket Park be another place to celebrate the community's artistic vision.



Existing Overpass and proposed changes



Existing Conditions at Lani Vest Park

## Chapter 4: Circulation Section

# Creating a Successful Circulation System

The public thoroughfares surrounding Boyle Heights *Brilla* serve two functions:

- Public space - a place for commerce, activity and social interaction, which embodies the character of the district and its community.
- Circulation - routes for residents and visitors to access work, school, shopping, and entertainment by multiple modes First Street and the streets and sidewalks around it already accommodate multiple modes of transportation, including motor vehicles, bicycles, and transit. Each of these modes is a critical part of the circulation network, and a successful circulation system takes into account all modes. Taking account of non-motorized transportation is especially important in Boyle Heights, where there are fewer drivers than in other neighborhoods and where the pedestrian scale of the neighborhood is one of its biggest assets.

A successful circulation system serves both purposes. As such, a successful circulation system along First Street will support the community-focused economic development we outline in earlier sections of this report. A successful circulation system will also complement other improvements to the street environment.

### Goals

A successful Boyle Heights *Brilla* will increase the number of visitors to the area dramatically. In order to accommodate these new patrons, we need a strategy to improve the existing transportation system in the area. Such a plan will enhance the overall walkability of First Street, improve bicyclists' safety, and increase the availability of parking in and around Boyle Heights. We have established the following goals that work towards improving circulation for Boyle Heights *Brilla*:

- Encourage a strong pedestrian environment by making sidewalks and paths along First Street safe, accessible and pleasant for pedestrians.
- Improve safety for bicyclists so they can share the road with motorized vehicles
- Expand the availability of commercial parking and preserve the amount of residential parking in the neighborhoods surrounding First Street.

Along with improving the circulation system within Boyle Heights, we also need to improve the transportation connections in and around First Street. We have established the following goals to promote the transportation network outside of the project area:

- Improve the connections to future Gold Line stations, existing bus stops, and public buildings on First Street for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Maintain low traffic speeds on First Street as Gold Line Stations open and the First Street connection to downtown Los Angeles is restored

## UCLA Comprehensive Project Vehicles

First Street in Boyle Heights is a neighborhood collector street, as it delivers traffic from the immediate area to higher traffic streets, but does not serve as a high traffic east-west thoroughfare.<sup>40</sup> First Street in this area is three lanes wide, with a lane each way and a center left turn lane in some intersections and a center lane in other places, such as in front of the existing police station just west of the Golden State Freeway underpass. Police cruisers currently use the center lane near the police station for parking.

The pace of traffic on First Street is fairly slow and accommodates pedestrian activity. We noted above that the pedestrian nature of First Street is one of the neighborhood's assets, and we should work to preserve this important feature of the community. There is curb parking along most of First Street, as well as many curb cuts that lead to driveways and surface parking lots. These curb cuts allow access to existing commercial uses, leading to a lot of cars entering and exiting the traffic flow, keeping traffic speeds low. The Metro bus lines that serve the area also slow traffic. Buses leave the traffic lane to allow passengers to depart and to pick others up, and then these buses return to traffic, disrupting the traffic flow both when they leave the traffic lane and when they reenter. The same holds for cars parking at the curb.

There are non-synchronized stoplights along First Street at Boyle, Bailey, Cummings, St. Louis, Chicago, and Soto, further limiting traffic flow through the area. First Street also has slight turns at Chicago and Breed Streets, naturally slowing traffic at those intersections. The combination of the driveways, curb parking, bus traffic, police cruisers often parked in the median, and First Street being a two-lane street makes it a neighborhood-focused street, one that is less attractive to through traffic than other streets for arterial east-west use.

Existing traffic conditions along First Street do not give an accurate picture of the true traffic patterns on the street. The First Street Bridge over the Los Angeles River, about  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile west of

the Golden State Freeway Underpass, is a link between Downtown Los Angeles and Boyle Heights. This bridge closed in November 2008 to accommodate construction of the Gold Line light rail line, meaning that the traffic observations we made during this project are not representative of normal traffic on the street. The bridge will be closed through November 2010, forcing traffic to use alternate routes and altering traffic flow through the neighborhood.

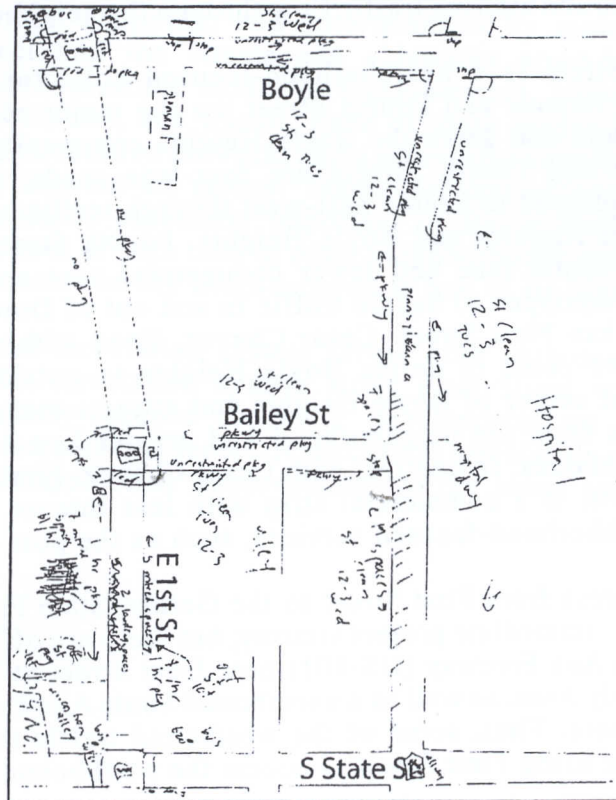
While First Street is a neighborhood-focused collector street, Cesar Chavez Avenue and Fourth Street are the major east-west arterial corridors that serve the Boyle Heights community. Both Cesar Chavez and Fourth Streets are four-lane roads, making them better equipped to handle east-west through traffic between Downtown Los Angeles and Boyle Heights. Fourth Street, with its reversible center lane and fewer commercial uses and curb cuts, is better equipped to handle traffic in and out of Downtown Los Angeles than First Street. Cesar Chavez, lined with vibrant shops that have come to define Boyle Heights to outsiders, is the commercial center of Boyle Heights and attracts many more motor vehicles from the neighborhood and greater Los Angeles than First Street does. In contrast with Cesar Chavez, First Street as it now exists, is a commercial strip with less intense traffic and more neighborhood-focused services, such as the post office.

There is no access from First Street to the Golden State Freeway (I-5/I-10) in the immediate project vicinity, but there are off ramps from the Santa Ana Freeway (US-101) near First Street at Pecan, west of the Study Area, as well as a northbound Santa Ana Freeway access point there. Thus, some of the westbound traffic through the area may be using First Street to access the northbound Santa

<sup>40</sup> Federal Highway Administration, "Functional Classification," <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/flex/ch03.htm>, Accessed January 20, 2009.

## Circulation Section

Ana Freeway, as the First Street onramp is the only northbound US-101 ramp between Whittier Boulevard to the south and Cesar Chavez Avenue to the north. The Golden State Freeway is served by on- and off-ramps at Fourth Street in both directions, making Fourth Street much more popular for drivers bound for I-5 and I-10.



### "Road Diet"

As previously mentioned, First Street is already well-suited to be the center of an arts-focused community. However, should the community desire some modifications to slow traffic or improve, we have a few suggestions.

First Street could be reconfigured by removing the left-turn lanes at most intersections, which would reduce the total width of the roadway used for travel and parking. First Street could also be reconfigured to accommodate angle parking if the left-turn lanes are removed. The space taken from the travel lanes could be used to widen sidewalks, add sidewalk bump-outs at corners and crosswalks, create bus pockets at bus stops, install a median, or stripe bicycle lanes. New configurations of First Street could include:

- Two travel lanes, parallel parking, and 21-foot sidewalks throughout (increased from their current width of 11.5 feet)
- Two travel lanes, angled parking, 16-foot sidewalks and 27-foot wide bump-outs at intersections
- Two travel lanes, bicycle lanes, parallel parking, a 16-foot median, and 9-foot wide sidewalks

Expanding the sidewalks would allow restaurants and other businesses to use the new space for a variety of uses, such as movable tables and chairs for the public or outdoor dining areas for restaurants. Wider sidewalks also facilitate the addition of landscaping and trees, and better accommodate arts fairs, markets, or production and display of locally-produced art. Less intensive modifications can be implemented using paint, large planters, and stone or concrete blocks placed strategically to make use of excess roadway space. The New York City Department of Transportation has used movable features to convert portions of road into a public plaza quickly and inexpensively.<sup>41</sup> The access to parking lots could also be limited, as many of these driveways are blind and put bicyclists and pedestrians at risk. Access should be through the rear alley, and parking lots should be eliminated or consolidated into shared facilities where possible.

<sup>41</sup> New York City Department of Transportation. "NYC Plaza Program"; Accessed January 15, 2009. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/sidewalks/publicplaza.shtml>

## UCLA Comprehensive Project Parking

Parking along First Street consists primarily of curb parking, at both metered and un-metered spaces. Parking meters line First Street, though several meters on the block between Cummings and Chicago are broken or have been removed. These meters limit drivers parking on First Street to one hour of parking at a cost of \$1 per hour, making parking in Boyle Heights relatively inexpensive. There are also a few loading spaces along First Street, and several red curbs, especially near bus stops.

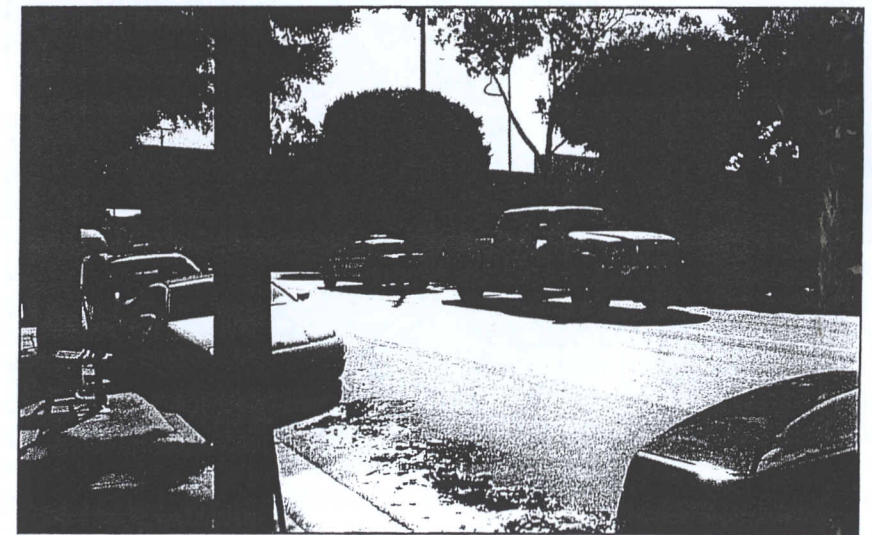
Streets intersecting First Street also provide parking. Most of the uses on the blocks adjacent to First Street are zoned multi-family residential, and these spaces do not have meters as the spaces on First Street do, but they are also more heavily used. Street cleaning limits parking between 10am and noon in these residential areas one day per week. Parking for vehicles displaying a disabled permit is also available on side streets. These ADA-compliant parking spaces are in front of residential buildings and would probably not service the commercial portion of First Street.

We visited First Street many times during our creation of this plan, and on each of our site visits, parking spaces were generally available along First Street. One problem we observed was at the current Hollenbeck Police Station. Many police vehicles were parked illegally on side streets and in the First Street median, indicating that the police station lacked sufficient parking for its vehicles. While this is only a temporary problem until construction of the new facility at First and St. Louis is completed, it contributes to congestion and visual blight in the area.

Another concern raised by community members and business owners along First Street regards potential parking problems once the neighborhood improves. As businesses become more popular, parking will become increasingly scarce. A few privately-owned parking lots already exist along First Street, which will help relieve some of the parking spillover into the residential area. However, these lots, whether for private

businesses, churches, or the library, are not always open and they are often restricted for use by patrons only. As Boyle Heights *Brilla* develops, however, these parking lot proprietors will surely see the value of offering parking to paying customers, and we see these off-street lots as assets for our plan.

As we hope Boyle Heights *Brilla* will attract businesses of all types to the area, we recommend that the neighborhood pursue the creation of a parking district. Permit parking for neighborhood residents will help distinguish between the residential and commercial uses and help prevent congestion. While the current parking availability on First Street and in off-site lots seems adequate, business owners might also consider expanding the use of existing surface parking lots for public parking and increasing the parking meter fee. The increased fees could provide revenue for streetscape improvements and also encourage patrons and residents to use non-vehicle alternatives to travel to First Street. We also suggest improved enforcement of parking regulations and replacement of broken meters as part of a plan to improve parking conditions for Boyle Heights *Brilla*.



First Street

## Circulation Section

# Pedestrians

Boyle Heights, and First Street in particular, is already well-populated with pedestrians who enjoy the pleasant scale of the walkable streets. Preserving and strengthening the existing pedestrian environment will be a crucial component for accommodating the expected growth in popularity associated with Boyle Heights *Brilla*. A more walkable transportation network will improve mobility throughout the First Street corridor for all community members, including those without access to private vehicles. An improved pedestrian environment can also help stimulate local economic development by making the area more inviting to potential customers. An increase in the number of pedestrians passing galleries and shops will lead to higher patronage of local businesses. These traits will be important for the economic development of local businesses and the overall mobility of the area.



A Pedestrian on First Street

The following actions are recommended to improve the pedestrian environment in the short-term (2-5 years) and long-term (5-10 years):

### Short-term Recommendations

- Address code violations in the area, like parking in setbacks, lack of trash enclosures for multi-family housing, loading zone painted red, sign violations
- Cleaning/Maintenance: clean sidewalks, empty public trash cans, graffiti removal
- Identify and repair high priority sidewalk damage
- Identify and bring into compliance high priority curb ramps, sidewalks, and other streetscape elements that don't meet current ADA design standards

### Long-term Recommendations

- Improve pedestrian path between First and Second Street
- Identify and repair low priority sidewalk damage
- Identify and bring into compliance low priority curb ramps, sidewalks, etc that don't meet ADA standards
- Plant street trees on blocks along First, Second, and cross streets that do not have them
- Install bus benches and/or shelters at stops without them
- Remove landscaping and other obstacles that block sight distance at driveways
- Install uniform street lighting along First Street
- Install/improve street furniture such as trash enclosures, bike racks, multi-space parking meters
- Improve pedestrian underpass at freeway
- Widen sidewalks
- Introduce elements to promote community "identity" (e.g. street banners, more murals, sidewalk art, decorated street furniture)
- Discourage the creation of new curb cuts and consolidate/remove excessive existing curb cuts



## UCLA Comprehensive Project



First Street

### Methodology

To evaluate the condition of the existing pedestrian environment within the Study Area, we conducted a field survey of area roadways on First Street, Second Street and Pennsylvania Avenue between Boyle Avenue and Soto Street. The following elements were included in this survey:

- Sidewalks
- Sidewalk condition
- Marked crossings
- Street trees and landscaping
- Street furniture (pay phones, wastebaskets, bus shelters and benches, bike racks, sidewalk cafes)
- Street lighting
- Curb ramps
- Building facades
- Outdoor art and murals
- Off-street parking
- Existing pedestrian hazards, such as cracked sidewalks

The existing pedestrian environment in Boyle Heights has a number of advantages, such as the scale and orientation of the buildings on First Street and the prevalence of murals throughout the neighborhood. However, there are also many opportunities for improvement within the district. Walking is a popular mode of transportation in the area, but many of the sidewalks in the neighborhood are damaged and can be dangerous to pedestrians. We conducted a survey of pedestrian conditions between 8:30 AM and 11:00 AM on a weekday, a time when many residents and shoppers were observed walking to their destinations or just spending time on the sidewalk. Because of the high number of pedestrians in the neighborhood, it is important to consider how pedestrian safety, connectivity, and aesthetics affect the walking experience. Based on these observations, we then suggest ways to improve the pedestrian environment to encourage more walking.

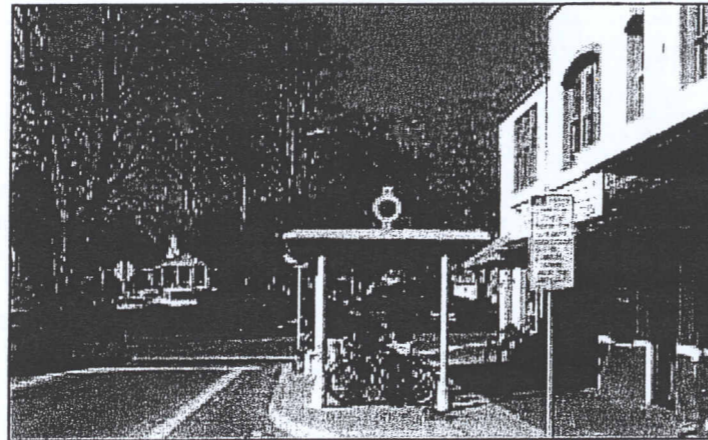
## Circulation Section

### Walkability

The three key components of any plan to create a walkable pedestrian environment are safety, connectivity, and pleasant aesthetics.

Safety is an important element of walkability because pedestrians are more likely to walk and feel comfortable in areas that are perceived to be non-threatening. Features that promote safety features in walkable communities include:

- Sidewalks or other barriers that separate pedestrians from vehicular traffic
- Well-marked pedestrian crossings
- Lighting to facilitate nighttime walking and ensure personal security
- Roadways designed to maintain vehicle speeds of 18 miles per hour or less <sup>42</sup>
- Laws that protect pedestrian rights and enforcement of those laws



Example of a walkable pedestrian environment  
[www.pedbikcimages.org](http://www.pedbikcimages.org)

Walkable areas also exhibit strong connectivity to a variety of destinations. Pedestrian connectivity is closely related to safety, and many of the elements that improve safety, such as sidewalks and pedestrian underpasses, also improve connectivity. Some aspects that are characteristic of pedestrian connectivity are:

- Key pedestrian routes in walkable areas are not blocked by barriers such as fences, freeways, or large parking lots
- Walking routes are direct and convenient, so that pedestrians do not have to walk far out of their way to get from one place to another
- Pedestrian routes are easily navigable by all people, including the elderly and disabled
- Land uses such as markets, health clinics, and jobs are within easy walking distance (1/4 to one mile) of residences and transit stations

Finally, walkable communities have pleasant aesthetics. Though the definition of “pleasant” varies from person to person, walkable environments are generally clean and well-maintained, with undamaged sidewalks and street furniture. Building facades in walkable areas are typically located adjacent to sidewalks, and may include interesting or decorative architectural elements. Street art, murals, outdoor cafes, parks, and other green spaces also enhance walkability, and the murals are well-known already to residents of Boyle Heights and visitors to the neighborhood. Importantly, walkable streets are designed at a human scale. Building heights and articulation, street widths, and other streetscape elements work together to create a sense of enclosure and “comfort” for pedestrians. As we have stated numerous times in this report, the compatible scale of the buildings along First Street already provide an attractive place in which to create a new community-centered arts district.

<sup>42</sup> According to the World Report of Road Traffic Injury Prevention, pedestrians have a 90 percent chance of surviving crashes at speeds of 30 km/h (18 MPH) or below, but less than a 45 percent chance of surviving crashes at speeds over 45 km/h (27 MPH).

# UCLA Comprehensive Project

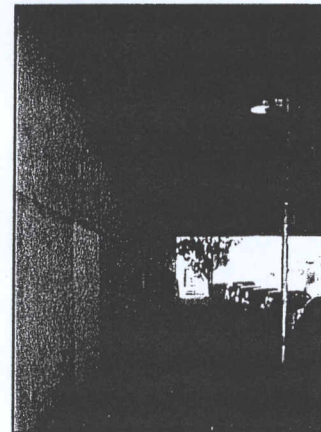
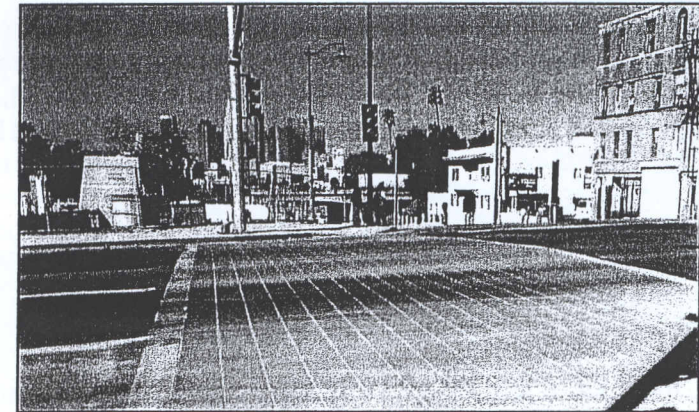
## Safety

Sidewalks improve pedestrian safety by physically separating individuals from vehicular and bicycle traffic and would play an important role in welcoming visitors to Boyle Heights as well as making arts-related uses accessible to community members. With the exception of Cummings Street adjacent to the freeway, sidewalks are in place on all roadways near Boyle Heights *Brilla* and function as a starting point for maintaining neighborhood safety.

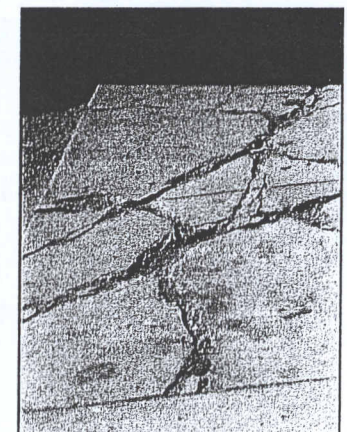
The raised crosswalks on First Street at Boyle Avenue serve as a way to slow traffic proceeding through the area. Adding raised crosswalks at the intersection of First Street and St. Louis Street could similarly slow traffic and create a more pedestrian-friendly environment. Pedestrian security is enhanced by the street lighting that is provided throughout most of the area, as well as the visible presence of law enforcement officers at the Hollenbeck Police Station.

However, there are also a number of factors that work against creating pedestrian safety. Many sidewalks in Boyle Heights are damaged from street tree roots or due to a lack of maintenance. The cracks and bumps in these sidewalks make walking a potentially hazardous endeavor, particularly for the elderly and people with poor vision. In addition, the freeway underpass, alleys, and the pedestrian pathway between First and Second Streets have limited lighting and they are isolated from building entrances and windows. Sitting pedestrian amenities near building entrances and windows ensures the existence of other people, deterring crime.

The intersection of Cummings Street, a one-way street, and First Street just east of the Golden State Freeway underpass is problematic, as the diagonally-parked cars on Cummings south of First and trees at the intersection can prevent drivers from seeing pedestrians at the intersection. Installing traffic calming measures such as chicanes or bulb-outs on Cummings south of First Street would slow the vehicles approaching the intersection, creating a safer environment for pedestrians.



First Street



## Circulation Section

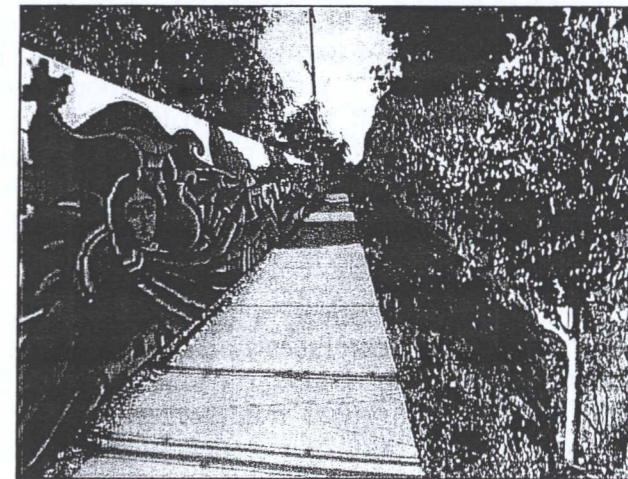
### Connectivity

Pedestrian connectivity in Boyle Heights is one of the community's strongest transportation assets. Streets are arranged in a grid pattern with short blocks, which allows pedestrians to choose from multiple routes and prevents them from having to walk far out of their way to reach their destinations. In many locations, particularly along First Street, building entrances are located adjacent to the sidewalk and pedestrians do not have to cross parking lots to access buildings. Perhaps most important asset is the variety of land uses in the neighborhood. Commercial and service uses are within easy walking distance of the homes that surround First Street. Schools, medical buildings, and a park are also nearby. This arrangement makes it easy for people to walk between their homes and other destinations, and allows them access to multiple necessities without driving or taking transit.

Nonetheless, there are a few barriers to connectivity within the district. The First Street underpass, while it does not physically prevent people from walking along First Street, is not a particularly inviting place to walk. Similarly, the pedestrian path between First and Second Streets can be considered a barrier in spite of itself because of its safety and aesthetic problems. Finally, ADA standards for sidewalk width and curb ramp design are not met in some locations within the neighborhood, making walking less enjoyable for all people, not just the disabled.



First Street



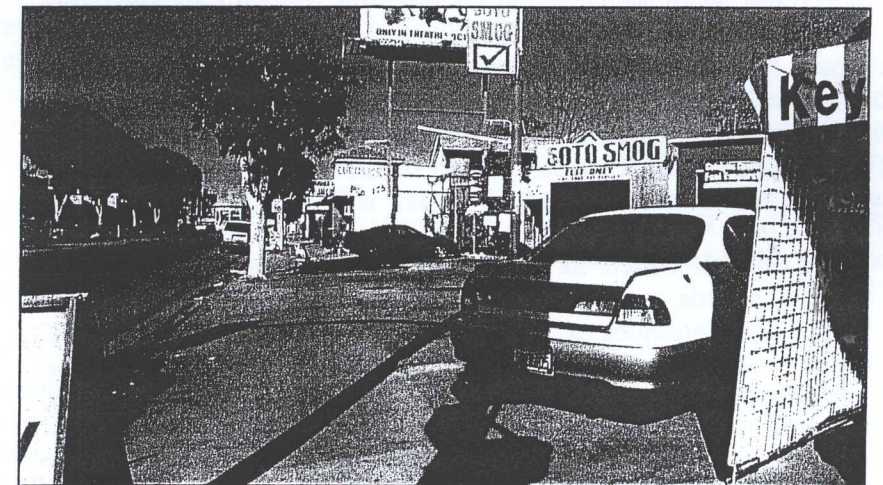
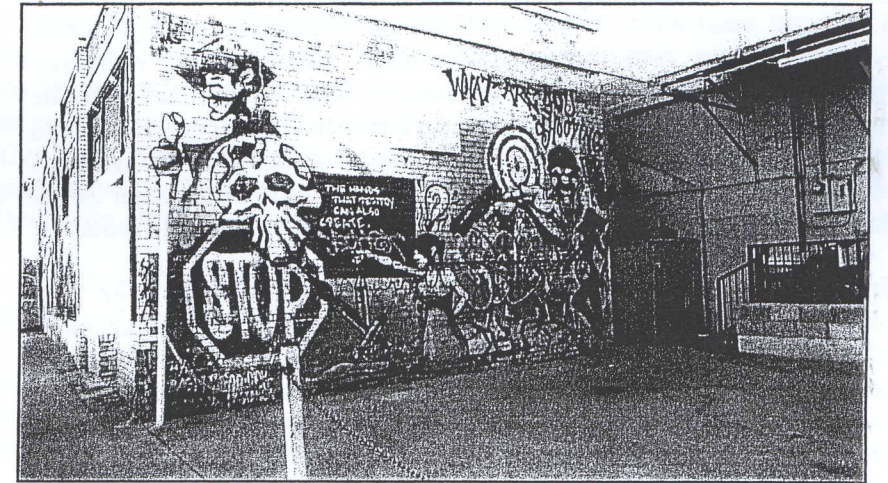
Proposed Walking Path Upgrades

# UCLA Comprehensive Project

## Aesthetics

The pedestrian environment in the Boyle Heights *Brilla* area has some strong aesthetic assets. For example, there are numerous murals painted on walls throughout the area, primarily on private buildings. Street trees are in place along many of the area roadways which add greenery and provide shade for pedestrians. A few restaurants in the area also provide outdoor seating, which makes walking more interesting and pleasant for diners.

However, many aspects of the pedestrian aesthetic experience in Boyle Heights require significant improvement. First, more regular street maintenance, such as gum removal from the sidewalks, more frequent trash pick-up, and graffiti abatement would greatly contribute to a more pleasant atmosphere. Utility boxes are currently undecorated but could serve as another opportunity for local artists to decorate the street. Similarly, street tree grates and bus benches could be made more appealing. While buildings front the sidewalks along much of First Street, facades could provide more visual interest and clear visibility for pedestrians. Other opportunities to improve the aesthetic quality of Boyle Heights *Brilla* include encouraging more visual and architectural interest along the sides of buildings and the removal of chain-link fences. Additional landscaping and improved maintenance of existing greenery will also enhance the overall attractiveness.



First Street

## Circulation Section

# Bicycles

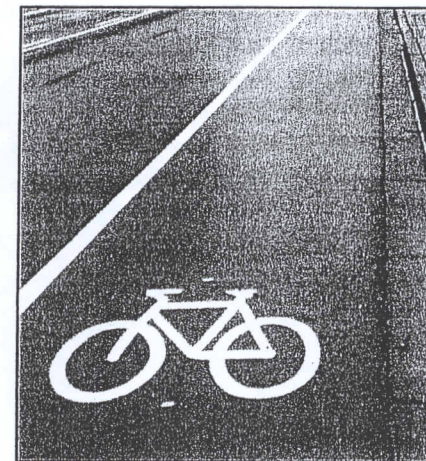
Bicycles are versatile tools for increasing mobility. In addition to exercise and recreation, they reduce motor vehicle ownership, which allows families to save money and reduces traffic and air pollution. Bicycles are useful for short- or medium-length trips, and can be taken on transit vehicles to bridge the “last mile” between transit and a final destination. Encouraging visitors to travel to Boyle Heights by bicycle could set Boyle Heights *Brilla* apart from other artist enclaves and reduce the strain on the neighborhood’s parking resources.

Unfortunately, there are no existing bicycle routes located near First Street, and bicycle facilities on First Street consist of a few bike racks installed by the City. We did, however, observe many bicyclists using First Street during our site visits. Nearly all of these cyclists were riding on the sidewalk, which is both dangerous and illegal, but it merely shows that the existing bicycle facilities in Boyle Heights are insufficient. A City-sanctioned bicycle route exists on Eighth Street, several blocks south of First Street and south of the 5 and 60 freeways, roughly between Soto Street and Olympic Boulevard. Another bicycle route follows Lorena Street south from Cesar Chavez Avenue. However, these bicycle routes are too distant from Boyle Heights *Brilla*, serve few destinations, and are merely designated by elevated street signs. Thus, they are of no practical benefit to residents of First Street. The City is currently updating its Bicycle Master Plan and determining which routes will be added to the plan.

First Street is well suited for cycling due to its low traffic volume, low vehicle speeds, and connection to Downtown Los Angeles. First Street also provides a path under the Golden State Freeway and a way to avoid the motor vehicle traffic associated with the freeway on-ramps on Fourth Street and Cesar Chavez Avenue.

The following improvements would help enhance the environment for bicycling:

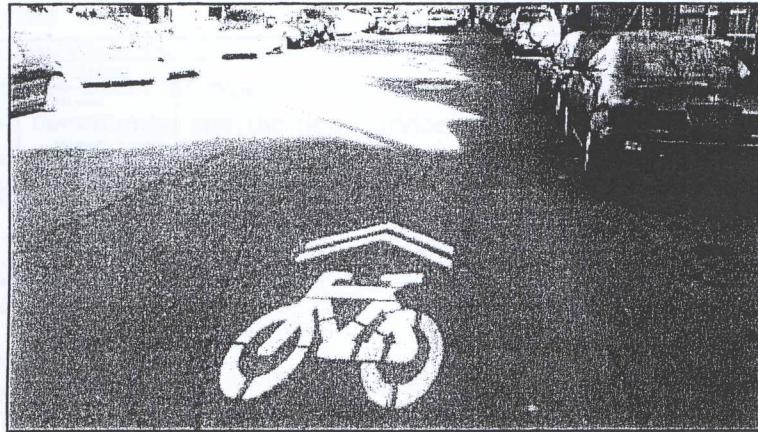
- Striping bicycle lanes or “sharrows” (marks painted on the road indicating a shared space for bicycles) along First Street
- Installing additional bicycle racks throughout the district, potentially designed by community artists
- Converting old parking meters to bicycle racks rather than removing them upon installing new multi-space meters
- Marking bicycle routes to link First Street with adjoining neighborhoods with the new Gold Line stations, Hollenbeck Park, and local schools
- Programming events, such as a ‘bike parade’, swap meet, or car-free Sunday in Boyle Heights to encourage cycling and promote bicycle safety



Example of a bike lane

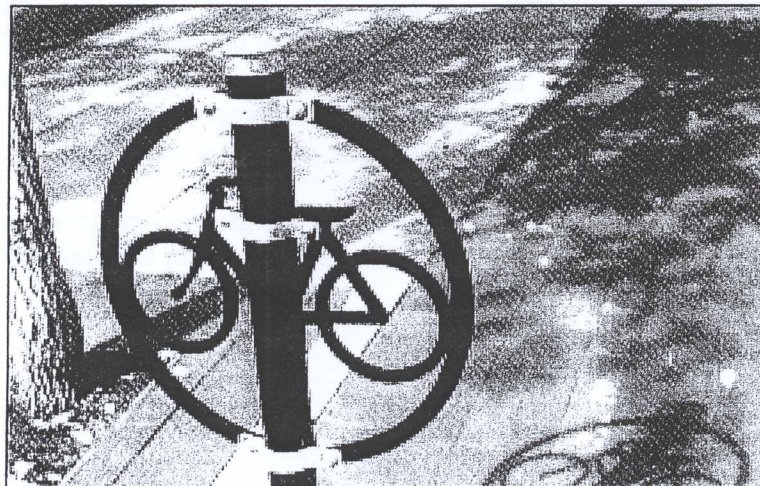
[www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)

## UCLA Comprehensive Project Transit



Example of a sharrow

[www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)



Parking meter turned into a bike rack

[www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)

Transit serves many public purposes. Among the most important are affordable mobility, congestion management, and economic development.<sup>43</sup> Bus lines and the new Gold Line light rail service will be an important component of creating a successful arts-oriented community. Currently, Boyle Heights is well served by public transit, provided primarily by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro). Within the Study Area, there are many transit lines:

- Metro bus lines 30/31 run along First Street, connecting East Los Angeles Community College to the Pico-Rimpau Transit Center in Mid-City. Lines 30/31 run 24 hours a day, with a frequency of less than 12 minutes throughout most of the day. Stops along First Street are located at the intersections of Boyle Avenue, State Street, Cummings Street, Chicago Street, and Soto Street.
- Metro line 620 is a circular route that provides local service every 20 minutes, Monday through Friday. Traveling counter-clockwise, mostly along Cesar Chavez Avenue, Boyle Avenue and State Street, Line 620 provides access to many Boyle Heights institutions including Mariachi Plaza, White Memorial Hospital, Los Angeles County/USC Medical Center, and Roosevelt High School.
- Running north/south along Soto Street, Metro Rapid Line 751 connects Lynwood and Cypress Park while making a stop on First Street and Soto Street in Boyle Heights.
- Metro Rapid Lines make fewer stops, run more frequently during peak hours, and minimize commute times compared to regular bus service. Metro Rapid Line 751 is also supported by lines 251/252, which run mostly the same route. However, lines 251/252 provide 24-hour services, more stops, and less frequency.
- In addition, transit in Boyle Heights will significantly improve with the completion of the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension, due to open in Summer 2009 (see: Planned Changes).

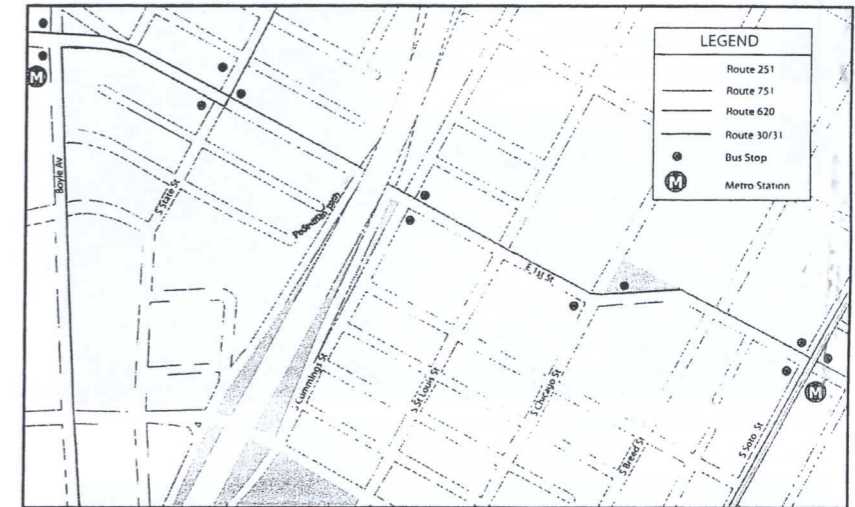
<sup>43</sup> Federal Transit Administration. Public Transit in the United States. [http://www.fta.dot.gov/publications/reports/other\\_reports/publications\\_134.html](http://www.fta.dot.gov/publications/reports/other_reports/publications_134.html), Accessed January 20, 2009.

## Circulation Section

The Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension is the latest light-rail project in the Metro Rail System and will feature eight stations that span six miles from Union Station in downtown Los Angeles to Atlantic/Pomona Boulevards in East Los Angeles. The Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension, slated to open in summer 2009, will have two underground stations within the Study Area: a Mariachi Plaza station at First and Boyle and another station at First and Soto. The \$898 million project is estimated to have an average daily ridership of 23,000 riders by 2020,<sup>44</sup> creating opportunities for increased activity along First Street between Mariachi Plaza and Soto Street Stations.

In February 2009, Metro plans to hold a series of public hearings on the proposed rerouting of several bus lines to serve the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension. Most significant to Boyle Heights is the proposal to reduce service frequency of Metro line 30/31 along First Street between Alameda Street and Atlantic Boulevard.<sup>45</sup> These changes could significantly affect the ability of artists to travel from their homes in Boyle Heights and could affect the ability of people from outside the area to take advantage of a reinvigorated arts community in Boyle Heights. On balance, however, the introduction of the Gold Line will enhance the ability of Boyle Heights residents to make their community shine once again.

Figure 4-1  
Bus Routes in Boyle Heights



<sup>44</sup> Federal Transit Administration. 2007. Los Angeles Eastside Corridor LRT. [www.fta.dot.gov/documents/CA\\_LA\\_Eastside\\_Profile\\_07.doc](http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/CA_LA_Eastside_Profile_07.doc), Accessed January 3, 2009.

<sup>45</sup> Metro, "Metro Service Sectors to Hold a Series of Public Hearings on Proposed Metro Bus Service Changes and Enhancements." [http://www.metro.net/news\\_info/press/Metro\\_007.htm](http://www.metro.net/news_info/press/Metro_007.htm), Accessed January 30, 2009



## Implementation of Recommendations

The City of Los Angeles Department of Planning is preparing to update the Boyle Heights Community Plan, and as part of our project we hope this plan for Boyle Heights *Brilla* will be incorporated into the update. Community Plans are created through a series of public workshops and comprise the Land Use Element of the General Plan of the City of Los Angeles. Community Plans reflect the communities' desires for their neighborhoods and designate land for the range of uses needed in a community, including housing, jobs, transportation and amenities. Community Plans also affect the types of development will be permitted, the densities and intensities of that development, plans for updating the infrastructure in the community, and the new services and facilities needed to accommodate planned growth. Community Plans are an important tool in the development of the City, and the current update presents an opportunity to guide the future direction of Boyle Heights. The conversations we have begun in the community should help put these Community Plan public workshops into perspective for neighborhood residents.

## Conclusion

First Street in Boyle Heights is well-suited to become an integral part of East Los Angeles's thriving arts scene. The vibrant community surrounding First Street already places great value in artistic expression; therefore, the purpose of this document is to facilitate a community discussion of the form Boyle Heights *Brilla* should take.

The artistic vibrancy of the community is not currently being matched by its economic vibrancy. Encouraging new arts-focused uses to relocate to First Street to complement the already existing facilities such as CASA 0101 and Liliflor Studios can create a new economic base for the region. This new economic base can attract other businesses to move to First Street and capitalize upon the vacant storefronts that line First Street. While encouraging these uses, however, we need to be mindful of gentrifying the area, which tends to destroy the organic feel of a genuine artist community and stunt its value. Balancing the need for new commercial uses in the area with the problems of gentrification will be one of the most difficult tasks in creating an energetic artist district on First Street.

The physical framework, the desire for improving the area, a proud neighborhood, and the economic know-how are all in place on First Street. We hope that this plan is the next step in facilitating the rebirth of First Street as a magnet for the expression of artistic talent in East Los Angeles.

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# Appendix B: Business Inventory on First Street

**Existing Businesses and Vacancies  
First Street between State Street and Chicago Street - SOUTH  
October 2008**

Address	Name	Observed Use/Notes	Building (SF)	General Plan Land Use
1900 E 1ST ST	Musical Instruments	Commercial Retail	1,915	Neighborhood Office Commercial
1904-1906-1908-1908 1/4-1908 1/2 E 1ST ST	First St. Pool Billiard Parlor	Bar	8,580	Neighborhood Office Commercial
1906 E 1ST ST	Taqueria Las Cabanas	Restaurant		
1910-1912-1914 E 1ST ST	Muebleria Latina	Furniture Store	3,000	Neighborhood Office Commercial
1916 E 1ST ST	Vacant		3,690	Neighborhood Office Commercial
1920 E 1ST ST	Parking Lot	Police Station Parking Lot		Neighborhood Office Commercial
1926-1928 E 1ST ST	Vacant	Former Homeboy Industries	1,156	Neighborhood Office Commercial
1930 E 1ST ST	Bagues Felipe Mortuary		6,512	Neighborhood Office Commercial
1936-1940 E 1ST ST	Hollenbeck Police Station	Police Station	16,000	Neighborhood Office Commercial
1946 E 1ST ST	Mills Elisio Medical Corp	Medical Offices	4,487	Neighborhood Office Commercial
2000-2002-2004 E 1ST ST	Vacant	Office and Apartments	10,680	Highway Oriented and Limited Commercial
2008-2016 E 1ST ST	Post Office		5,364	
2020-2022 E 1ST ST	Salima A. Multani M.D.	Medical Offices and Clinic		Highway Oriented and Limited Commercial
2024 E 1ST ST	Vacant			
2026 E 1ST ST	First Street Studios	Art Exhibit	6,038	Highway Oriented and Limited Commercial
2028 E 1ST ST	American Lead & Color Works	Hardware Store		
2032-2036-2034-2038 E 1ST ST	Vacant	Storefront	8,256	Highway Oriented and Limited Commercial
2100-2102-2104 E 1ST ST	Pharmacy	St. Louis Pharmacy	7,432	Highway Oriented and Limited Commercial
2102 E 1ST ST				
2106 E 1ST ST	Vacant	Storefront	3,464	Highway Oriented and Limited Commercial
2108 E 1ST ST	Salva Market	Market	4,539	Highway Oriented and Limited Commercial
2110-2112-2114 E 1ST ST	Vacant	Storefront	1,320	Highway Oriented and Limited Commercial
2118 E 1ST ST	Vacant	Storefront	1,320	Highway Oriented and Limited Commercial
2120-2122-2122 1/2 E 1ST ST	Zeena's Nutrition	WIC Program Office	4,320	Highway Oriented and Limited Commercial
2122 E 1ST ST	Los Antojitos	Restaurant		
2124-2126-2128-2130 E 1ST ST	Vacant	Condemned Building	32,480	Highway Oriented and Limited Commercial

Source: ZIMAS, "Property Information," <http://zimas.lacity.org/>, Accessed October 7, 2008.

**Existing Businesses and Vacancies  
First Street between State Street and Chicago Street - NORTH  
October 2008**

Address	Name	Observed Use/Notes	Building (SF)	General Plan Land Use
1901 E 1ST ST	Jim's	Restaurant	1,600	Neighborhood Office Commercial
1913 E 1ST ST	Corona Market	Market	3,310	Neighborhood Office Commercial
1917-1919-1921 E 1ST ST		Apartment	3944	Neighborhood Office Commercial
1923-1925 E 1ST ST	Iglesia Bethesda Tabernaculo	Church	3,464	Neighborhood Office Commercial
1927-1929-1931 E 1ST ST	San Marcos Tortilleria	Market	2,750	Neighborhood Office Commercial
1933 E 1ST ST		Storage	6750	Neighborhood Office Commercial
1939 E 1ST ST		Residence	1,162	Neighborhood Office Commercial
1943 E 1ST ST	Pepe's Thrifty Store - Tienda de Segunda	Thrift Store/Antiques/Furniture	3,718	Neighborhood Office Commercial
1949 E 1ST ST	El Sol Taqueria Panaderia	Restaurant/Bakery	2,010	Neighborhood Office Commercial
2001 E 1ST ST	Farmers Insurance	Insurance Agent	17,232	Highway Oriented and Limited Commercial
2001 1/2 E 1ST ST	Santos Tax	Tax Agent		
	Vacant	For Rent		
2005 E 1ST ST	CAB T-Shirts	Copy Store		
2007 E 1ST ST	La Villa Market	Market		
2009 E 1ST ST	CASA 0101	Performance Space/Theater		
2011 E 1ST ST	Samy Pet Shop	Pet Store		
2015 E 1ST ST	Hollenbeck Youth Center	Youth Center		Highway Oriented and Limited Commercial
2025 E 1ST ST	Al & Bea's Mexican Food	Restaurant/Residence	1,742	Highway Oriented and Limited Commercial
2029 E 1ST ST	98 Cent Plus Express Discount Store	Store	2,520	Highway Oriented and Limited Commercial
2033 E 1ST ST	Optical	Medical office	8,120	Highway Oriented and Limited Commercial
2035 E 1ST ST	Meralta Theater - Victory Outreach	Church		
2130 E 1ST ST	Boyle Heights Civic Center	Police Station/Government Center		Highway Oriented and Limited Commercial
2201 E 1ST ST	Lani Vest Pocket Park	Park		Highway Oriented and Limited Commercial

Source: ZIMAS, "Property Information," <http://zimas.lacity.org/>, Accessed October 7, 2008.