

# We're improving ways to walk, roll and bike safely around Union Station.



## LA UNION STATION ALAMEDA ESPLANADE AND LA STREET IMPROVEMENTS Fact Sheet – Utility Survey Archaeological Investigations

### Project Overview

The Los Angeles Union Station (LAUS) Alameda Esplanade and Los Angeles Street Improvements Projects will enhance pedestrian and bicycle access and safety to and from Los Angeles Union Station and surrounding communities. These projects implement a piece of the Connect US Action Plan, which was finalized in 2015 and identified active transportation improvement projects in the vicinity of Union Station to create safe access for people walking, bicycling and rolling to and from Union Station. Construction is expected to begin in early 2022. Prior to construction, investigations will be undertaken to identify buried utilities, which may result in exposing archaeological remains that exist below the streets.



Los Angeles Union Station (courtesy of LAPL)

### Early History

Inhabited since prehistoric times, the area immediately west of the Los Angeles River once supported a wide Gabrielino network of residential, ceremonial, religious, meeting and procurement sites known as *Yaanga*. Of note was the 60-foot tall sycamore tree known as El Aliso, a landmark seen from great distances. Also known as the Council Tree, it was a Gabrielino sacred site. Tribal council meetings were held beneath its branches. Burials of important tribal members were said to be interred near the ethnographic village of *Yaanga*. In 1781, Spanish explorers founded *El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de Los Angeles* here. Due to flooding, the Pueblo later moved away from the Los Angeles River to its current location on Olvera Street. The Spanish Plaza, still present today, served as the settlement's social center.

Vineyards, orchards and gardens soon surrounded the Pueblo and the Native American village was pushed south and southeast along Commercial Street. The *Zanja Madre*, built by Native American workers, irrigated these fields.



1850 map of Los Angeles (courtesy of UCLA)

Between 1821-1848, now under Mexican control, cattle ranching came to overshadow the agricultural economy. In 1848, after the Mexican American War, California became part of the United States, and with the Gold Rush and influx of capital, the city's population grew.

## Growth and Expansion

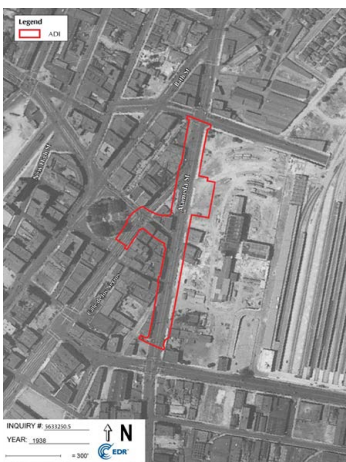
Chinese vegetable vendors, dependent on the nearby fields, settled close to the plaza. By the 1880s, Chinatown had expanded east of Alameda Street, where LAUS now stands. In the early 1900s, it occupied 15 streets and alleys. Thriving despite substandard tenement housing and poor living conditions, the Chinese residents worked in restaurants, vegetable gardens, as vendors and in laundries, which dominated the streetscape.



*Chinese Merchant Shop, 1920 (courtesy of LAPL)*

In the 1890s, houses of prostitution openly advertised to and attracted outside clientele. Numerous brothels and “cribs” (sparsely furnished rooms), concentrated along Alameda Street, and later Aliso Street. Saloons and gambling houses multiplied within the red-light district.

Construction of LAUS displaced existing residences and businesses. The 1938 aerial photograph below depicts LAUS at the time of its opening. The red polygon represents the area of the current project improvements.



*1938 aerial photo (courtesy of EDR)*

## Archaeology

The area's cultural resources, including archaeological sites, are protected by federal, state and local laws, and will be treated according to the Cultural Resources Management Plan prepared for the projects.

Today, the LAUS area is highly sensitive for prehistoric and historical archaeological discoveries. While the former potentially include remnants of Yaanga, Native American artifacts and burials, the latter is represented by architectural ruins and artifacts from the early Pueblo days, Chinatown and the red-light district's saloons and cribs.



*Archaeologists conducting fieldwork*

Archaeological investigations will coincide with geotechnical and utility investigations. Archaeologists will explore sediments exposed beneath the ground surface to identify vestiges of these bygone days. Artifacts and other evidence of past lifeways of Native Americans, Spanish, Mexican and Chinese inhabitants can help us understand how these people lived in the past. All archaeological discoveries will be treated in accordance with the project's Cultural Resources Management Plan. Treatment will include documenting the discoveries through drawings, mapping and photographs, removing artifacts for laboratory analysis and conducting archival research. A final report will be prepared that documents the archaeological materials and research, to contribute to a deeper understanding of the history of this area and the people who once lived and worked here.

## CONTACT US

For more information, questions, comments or requests to join the mailing list, please contact:

