

Transformation of Lincoln Blvd. – Update

Corridor Plan

While the Lincoln Blvd. Task Force has made great progress, we are really excited about the next phase, a formal Santa Monica City 'Lincoln Neighborhood Corridor Plan'. This will begin in a few months and will be under the guidance of Peter James, who led the Ocean Park Blvd. Green Street project for the City. The Plan boundary will extend from the I-10 Freeway to the Venice border, including the Freeway overpass.

The Neighborhood Corridor Plan will address a variety of issues including a streetscape design that will consider the potential for landscaping, new 'smart' crosswalks with flashing warning lights, medians, gateway features at the Santa Monica/Venice border, street furniture, pedestrian lighting and public art.

The Plan will also contemplate transit enhancements, improved on- and off-street parking strategies (including shared parking pools for local employees) and sustainability features to capture and treat urban runoff and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. Importantly, the Plan will pursue business improvement issues with an eye towards ameliorating visual blight, lack of maintenance and general "ownership" of the boulevard.

Once the City selects a consultant to facilitate the process, the City will hold a series of public workshops and festivals. The current target is to have the consultants selected by July 1, 2014 with workshops later this calendar year.

The current timeline of the Neighborhood Corridor Plan is for the design phase to last about 18 months and, pending funding, construction drawing preparation another year. Phased implementation of the project may commence in 2017, pending receipt of construction funds.

Transportation and Infrastructure

In August 2013, Lincoln was repaved and re-stripped, but, unfortunately, the promised quieter, rubberized pavement was not suitable for Lincoln for several technical reasons. We did get some of the requested 'Keep Clear' pavement signs to facilitate turns when Lincoln is gridlocked. We are currently trying to add a few more intersections missed during last summer.

The re-stripping was done in anticipation of a future priority bus lane, which was deferred pending further parking analysis by the Big Blue Bus and work with the City of Los Angeles to eliminate bottlenecks at two key intersections: Venice Boulevard and Washington Boulevard. LADOT now feels that the cost of the fixing these two intersections will exceed the current budgeted amount and the projected cost of \$5 million won't be available for 3 to 5 years. Therefore, traffic relief is not in the near-term.

The Transportation/Pedestrian Subcommittee, headed by Cynthia Rose, is involved with various Big Blue Bus and other transportation infrastructure improvements, notably bike amenities, such as the Michigan Ave. MANGO project to create a safe route to the Samohi as well as create a bicycle corridor from the Expo line to the beach. The only positive change on Lincoln for biking is the wider parking lane (to accommodate a bus priority lane) that offers a little extra room – Lincoln may never be really safe for bikes until a priority lane is created that has 'sharrows' to allow bikes.

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Finally, the LBTF requested the addition of four speed feedback devices, which fell into the “no budget” trap. We are still working on this and hope to get resolution before the City concludes its traffic survey that could result in an increase in the current 35 mph speed limit.

Murals and Landscaping

The mural painting efforts of Evan Meyer’s “Beautify Lincoln” group, and others, is adding some visual excitement to the street. This has spurred other businesses to spruce up their properties between the I-10 Freeway and Ocean Park Blvd. where most of the new murals are located. A new ‘Corner of Love’ was created at Pier and Lincoln by the new business, Cardio Barre, in addition to other enhancements to other storefronts nearby.

Two businesses, the Santa Monica Motel and LeMans auto body, have spruced up their streetscape and two new restaurants have moved in: Hanashi Sushi replaced MisoFishy, and Satdha, a vegan Thai restaurant, replaced Ameci Pizza. Both have added attractive signage and other visual improvements.

On the landscaping front, the City has promised to plant 33 new trees on Lincoln in currently empty tree wells. Public Works wanted to wait for better planting weather and the hiring of a new Urban Forester before proceeding with the new trees. Both of those conditions have been satisfied, so we anticipate new trees in 2014.

Clean Up Events

In 2013 there were two street clean up events coordinated by Killeen ‘KC’ Pilon, a Lincoln Blvd. Task Force survey team volunteer. The first event was on Earth Day, April 20, and another on November 2. Over 50 volunteers collected approximately 40 bags of weeds and debris on each day. KC is now known as the Queen of Clean on Lincoln! Applause, applause!

Zoning and Business Changes

Bob Taylor and Zina Josephs are pursuing on-going updates to the City zoning regulations along Lincoln, along with a new group headed by Judy Abdo, which addresses all of Ocean Park zoning changes. The issues on Lincoln include height and density limits that impact traffic, as well as parking and other urban design considerations such as conditional use permits.

In addition to the new restaurants that replaced MisoFishy and Ameci Pizza, Lincoln has several new neighborhood serving businesses, such as Vapor Delight and the mobile phone repair shop. Other changes include the new Walgreens at Pico, the proposed replacement of Tommy’s Hamburgers with a Starbucks (OMG, another one?), and a remodel of the strip mall behind Tommy’s, which is often referred to as the Transit site by the City in the LUCE.

On a very sad note, Lincoln will lose Lincoln Pipe at the end of March 2014 after 65+ years; this neighborhood serving business will be missed. We hope that the transformation of Lincoln will not replace all local, independent businesses with national, corporate chains as has happened on Third Street.

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Interestingly, the Pico/Lincoln intersection was considered an ‘opportunity’ site for mixed use with taller structures and greater density. Fortunately, the adaptive re-use by Walgreens and the single story remodel of the strip mall behind Tommy’s match the Lincoln Survey opinions of 638 residential respondents:

- Adaptive re-use was favored by 72%, and
- 73% preferred heights of three floors or less at the Pico/Lincoln intersection.

Furthermore, height limits of three stories or less at the larger Albertsons ‘opportunity’ site was favored by 70% of residential respondents.

The proposed zoning on Lincoln would allow three stories if the development were 100% housing. However, the Survey results indicate that only 37% favor affordable housing while 45% oppose more affordable housing, suggesting additional height and affordable housing on Lincoln may face resident resistance.

Code Compliance

David Tann heads up the Code Compliance activities on Lincoln and to date the City has addressed 129 Code cases on Lincoln, of which 89 were resolved, 29 are still open and another 11 resulted in citations. The primary focus of this activity was to address the visual blight that violates various City Ordinances.

A summary of common citations will be shared later this year so that anyone can report compliance issues using the Santa Monica ‘GO Helpline’. This summary will describe common violations, reference definitions contained in the City’s Municipal Code, and include a photo example to better understand when to report a suspected violation.

Conclusion

So, stay tuned for notices on Lincoln Corridor Plan workshops!

The future will be here before we realize it, so there is no better time than now to get involved. Attend meetings; speak out about what you would like Lincoln to become.

Let your voice be heard!

Go to <http://www.opa-sm.org/lincoln> to learn more and to volunteer