

# Letter to Hawthorne

Dear Mr. Hawthorne,

Your article, "On the Boulevards: Our streets, on the move" (May 13, 2012) has generated much interest and discussion within the newly formed Lincoln Boulevard Committee in Santa Monica. This committee started within the Ocean Park Association and now includes residents representing three other neighborhood groups: Friends of Sunset Park, Pico and Borderline.

Our committee will address the portion of Lincoln in Santa Monica, from the I-10 freeway to Venice border being acquired by the City from Caltrans, on or before July 1, 2012. Concurrent with this transfer, the City applied for a \$300,000 grant from Caltrans to study the streetscape options in a charette process to be conducted by the City. We supported the grant request and will work with City staff as the details of this process unfold.

We envision a boulevard that is unlike the label given it by many residents: "stinking Lincoln"; instead, we believe that it should be: "Safe, Clean, Beautiful and Green". Toward that end, the Committee created a Vision statement to summarize our objective: Harness a local, grass-roots effort, using the talents of our community, including artistic, cultural, architectural, and financial expertise, to transform Lincoln Boulevard into an attractive neighborhood-serving street that reflects the needs and desires of our neighborhoods.

Today, thirty percent of the businesses along this stretch of Lincoln are auto-centric businesses ranging from mom and pop operations to large, corporate businesses like Firestone tire. We also have an over abundance of fast food, drive through chains. And, lots of TRAFFIC!

We hope to influence the outcomes of the charette process by becoming experts in what can be done and then support those efforts that match the desires of our residents and business community. Currently we have a Committee of ten volunteers and expect to add eight to ten new volunteers working on six subcommittees: Code Enforcement, Surveys, Zoning, Streetscape Design, Transportation, and a documentary Film.

Initially we are focusing on code enforcement of existing ordinances addressing signage and neglected/illegal business activity and parkway maintenance along Lincoln. Next, we plan a survey of both residents and businesses to explore desirable options ranging from zoning issues to streetscape design to the potential formation of a business improvement district.

We are involved in updates to the City's zoning codes, which are now being modified to be consistent with the City's award winning strategic policy document, the Land Use and Circulation Element. Our efforts will encourage more neighborhood serving businesses in order to transition from an auto-centric past to a more inviting pedestrian oriented environment with more restrictions on adult businesses, massage parlors, liquor stores, auto related businesses and low rent motels.

Our streetscape design initiative starts with a somewhat blank palette and will propose design elements ranging from public art, bike racks, new trees and lighting to a potential planted median and an iconic gateway arch to Santa Monica at the Venice border.

One of the more interesting activities of our Committee will be a documentary film to illustrate the current condition and, more importantly, suggest a brighter future. The film will mix

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images of Lincoln past and present, along with supporting interviews with business owners, residents and City Staff, as well as respected urban planners. We will explore streetscape design elements used elsewhere in Santa Monica, as well as other locations in Southern California and in progressive cities such as Portland, OR.

We hope our efforts are of interest to you; we believe that sharing our story will help other communities to take back their streets and boulevards. It all starts with concerned citizens, who push the levers of government to make change and work with City staffs in a collaborative role.

Any assistance you can give us to help achieve our vision will be greatly appreciated. Your assistance can range from including Lincoln in future boulevard articles to speaking with one of our very active neighborhood groups to participating in a Lincoln Boulevard Forum at one of several City Manager Town Hall meetings later this year.

We look forward to talking with you and hope that you agree that our proactive, grass-roots efforts are newsworthy.

Sincerely,

Roger Swanson

Lincoln Boulevard Committee

Cc: Douglas Suisman