

Lincoln Blvd. Task Force Update: July 2015

Three and a half years ago, a group of Ocean Park Association Board members met to form what is now the Lincoln Blvd. Task Force (LBTF), a grassroots organization created to “fix Stinkin’ Lincoln” from the Freeway to the Venice border.

We invited members of other neighborhood associations along this stretch of Lincoln to join us, including members of the Friends of Sunset Park (FOSP), Pico Neighborhood Association (PNA), as well as the Borderline Neighborhood (BNG) at the southern border of Ocean Park. Interest at the time included others from the Pico neighborhood and a former OPA Board member, who initiated early outreach discussions with neighborhood groups in mid-2011.

The timing of these early meetings anticipated the planned acquisition of the highway from CalTrans, which occurred in June 2012. The discussion points in these early meetings included a list of obvious issues and potential solutions on Lincoln:

- Address visual blight,
- Reduce traffic congestion and improve public safety,
- Enhance the pedestrian experience, and
- Add trees, landscaping and public art.

Now, after the first Lincoln Neighborhood Corridor (LiNC) Plan workshop on February 23, 2015, we see many of these same issues included in the scope of the City’s project that focuses on three key areas: Streetscape design that includes the total pedestrian experience, Transportation, and Business Improvement.

One of the main ground rules that the LBTF adopted was to work collaboratively with the City, rather than become another grassroots organization that creates an adversarial position with City Hall. The feeling was that we could have a greater impact in getting our positions and voices heard by doing this.

We held our first meeting with City Staff from Planning and Public Works and followed this up with meetings with the City Manager’s office, and finally a more formal meeting in October 2012 with additional representatives from Traffic Management and Code Compliance. The LBTF presented a four page “Wish List” focusing on Code issues, priority bus lanes, public safety, additional trees, public art, as well as, an interest to encourage/help form a Business Improvement District.

We advocated for the immediate implementation of one of our wishes, “Keep Clear” signage on the new pavement along Lincoln when the street was resurfaced in August 2013. This signage helps to facilitate traffic turning from Lincoln to side streets, particularly during the peak commuting times. We didn’t get safer crosswalks, another wish, but we had a good start getting to know key personnel at City Hall.

While we continue to advocate for preserving the adjacent neighborhoods, we also support measures that allow sensible development to proceed with adaptive reuse of existing structures where possible. We prefer to not have an “Activity Center” at the current Haggen site (it already is an activity center!), nor do we think that denser development is prudent or necessary to attract neighborhood-serving businesses. Single story buildings at the intersection of Pico and Lincoln also seem to suit the businesses there, including the strip mall recently renovated behind the new Starbucks. The LUCE envisioned multi-story, mixed use, commercial/residential development at Pico and Lincoln. The quest for passing motorists to notice a business (Lincoln endures 45,000 to 50,000 vehicle trips per day) seems to have been more important than multistory buildings.

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What else has the LBTF done? We have:

- Encouraged Code Compliance to address signage violations,
- Conducted three cleanup events (two in 2013 and one last year),
- Collaborated with Beautify Lincoln (now known as Beautify Earth) as it emerged as a creative force adding color and interesting murals on Lincoln,
- Supported the efforts of FOSP as it worked with Common Ground to create a “Good Neighbor” agreement,
- Conducted a residential survey with 638 respondents and a business survey that attracted less, but important, participation.
 - The survey marketing included delivering flyers to 100% of the 150 or so businesses on Lincoln.
 - The residential flyers were delivered to the majority of residential addresses from 6th to 11th Streets along Lincoln.
- Worked with Peter James, the City’s project coordinator for the LiNC Plan, in helping to define the scope of the Plan.

Once we had the data from the surveys, the LBTF had interesting data to share and use to guide the next steps: Residential survey respondents voiced their opinions and we listened. What did they say?

- 55% wanted priority bus lanes during peak commute times; a slightly higher percentage wanted bike “sharrows” in the bus lanes.
- 67% wanted “smart crosswalks” with flashing lights, preferably with a median safe refuge for pedestrians.
- 63% wanted better sidewalk lighting
- 72% wanted development to use adaptive re-use of existing structures if possible
- 91% wanted more trees
- 77% were concerned with increased traffic, which was the number one issue for residents

The results of the February 23, 2015 LiNC Plan Workshop had very similar concerns and opinions. The event had a significant presence of the biking community and those that appreciate mural art, some of the grassroots “movers and shakers” in our community! This well attended function had over 75 local residents interested in the plans for Lincoln.

Each participant at the workshop received 10 shiny Lincoln pennies to vote for a variety of options presented on the flipcharts for each subject area. One could add the pennies to any option, or all pennies for a single option. How did the voting go? Here are the highest votes (# of votes):

- Peak Period Bus Lane (81)
- Pedestrian Refuge in a Spot/Median (55)
- Murals & Public Art (51)
- Pedestrian Lighting (38)
- Freeway Bridge Improvements (33)
- Adaptive Reuse (31)
- Street Trees (28)

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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!

Stay tuned for future announcements.

For more information:

LiNC Plan: [http://www.smgov.net/Departments/PCD/Plans/Streetscapes/Lincoln-Neighborhood-Corridor-Plan-\(LiNC\)/](http://www.smgov.net/Departments/PCD/Plans/Streetscapes/Lincoln-Neighborhood-Corridor-Plan-(LiNC)/)

Beautify Earth: <http://beautifyearth.org>