For three years I watched pedestrians cross the intersection of Hollywood and Highland every morning while I brushed my teeth. I lived on a hill two blocks away, just far enough away to feel like I was gazing down upon a distant, miniature city, but close enough to see people waiting for the 780 bus as it sighed to a halt.

What I remember most about living so close to Hollywood and Highland were the horns. Honking at drivers trying to turn left on a very yellow arrow. Or huge, horned vehicles taking up the entire lane while, a horn would be punctuated by a smash.

City is planning to add a “scramble” crosswalk where all directions of traffic will stop to let walkers by. But there’s no better place to do it. Hollywood is home to one of LA’s most notable landmarks which just happens to be all about walking. The terrazzo stars draw millions of pedestrians to Hollywood every year to examine these blocks on foot: you can’t see the sidewalks from a car or a tour bus. Imagine if the Walk of Fame not only celebrated famous Angelenos but also honored LA’s pedestrians, too.

Help Los Angeles Walks make walking in LA safe, accessible, fun, and equitable
DONATE ONLINE
losangeleswalks.org/donate

Alissa Walker is a Los Angeles Walks steering committee member, a writer, and a walker in LA
Santa Monica and Western
Mehmet Berker is a Los Angeles Walks steering committee member, cartographer, and GIS analyst.

I pass through a magical space any time I’m headed east of Vine. I pass through a place that is at once the stucco strip mall, noir dystopia, and the bustling, diverse heart of the promise of the United States’ 21st century frontier—embodiment Los Angeles. It is a place where, as if by sorcery, ordinary people are transmuted from pedestrians to transit riders, and back again. The spell enables a Cuban Narnia to exist a block away from what is most definitely not a Tiki bar. A coffee roaster that delivers by bicycle shares the area with an absolute rash of family-run, minority-owned businesses. In this space as well as the enterprises not confined by four walls: the fire couldn’t: squelch the economic vitality of the neighborhood. We know from the 2013 Bike and Ped Count conducted by LACBC and Los Angeles Walks that the intersection of Santa Monica and Western hosts a lot of people walking. 3,930 people walking over six hours a period of three days, according to the count. What are they folks doing, and how did the intersection do them a service or disservice?

Many people were most likely taking transit—either walking to or from the bus stop, or crossing the street to switch from the 704/4 to the 757/207 or 175, or vice versa. Since this is one of the busiest transit intersections in Los Angeles (around 30,000 people riding the 704/4 per day; almost 35,000 on the 757/207), it is the only natural that there is one covered bus shelter for all the corners of the intersection. Only two benches to go between four stops! People walking to or from the bus lean against the walls of buildings at angles designed to place any awnings between them and the sun. Checkpoints form where señoritas, moms with strollers, guys headed to work, and dudes on bikes (not mutually exclusive from guys headed to work) mix at these nebulous bus stops. Since the building on the southeast corner went up in flames last year, people walking here can no longer buy shoes at Payless, or buy lottery tickets from the shuttered shogun store at the 704A/4 stop. However, they can still get almost anything else from the street vendors that were there before the fire and are still there after. People walking here can still line up for the most popular fruit cocktail guy ever, who’s always posted up in front of the T-Mobile store. Until the City legalizes street vending, there is some zero-sum war between different tribes of drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians (transit riders are usually omitted—since who cares, they don’t need space on the road, right?) out there on our streets and in our intersections. As kumbaya as it is to say, we are all more than how we are getting around town at one particular moment. And, what every Angeleno wants is the safest and quickest way to wherever they’re going regardless of how they’re getting there. A little street life and beauty doesn’t hurt either. This choice is what’s eluding us. It’s about the strip mall on the southwest corner is mostly pretty easy for the stores on Santa Monica and Western. Most of the buildings are from the 1920s and 1930s, so people just go on in. They can walk straight from their home to buy gum, or shoes, or whatever. Some buildings, however, lengthen the threshold. These are buildings built during or after the 1980s. To get to the Wingstop, or either of the two dentists in back-to-back strip malls, you have to cross a bunch of parking which is there because the City has said it’s essential. This is in a neighborhood where 30 percent of all households don’t own any vehicle at all. I guess all the other businesses in the old buildings must all be in complete chaos and about to shut down from a lack of customers. The best part about the strip mall on the southwest corner was that, in addition to a parking lot, it also came with a free street widening!

All the people walking for all these different reasons mix with people riding bikes, riding the bus, and driving or riding in cars. At some point they may even transform themselves from one to the other, magically “mode switching” before our very eyes! I am so very tired of the pedantic, petty, and frankly pedestrian notion that the best part about the strip mall on the southwest corner was an urban planner for the City of Lakewood and a UCLA graduate. I became acquainted with Westwood Village when I went off to college at UCLA. I didn’t know it at the time, but that place planted a seed in my mind. Today I can describe what makes it great; charming historic buildings, shops that come up to greet the sidewalk, streets that (mostly) aren’t so wide and loud as to preclude conversation. Back then, I could only look at it and be amazed. Growing up in the suburbs, I hadn’t seen anything like it. Living in a dorm with no parking, walking wasn’t a choice; it was essential to everyday life. My feet could take me to so much more than I ever thought possible. In class, I heard about what greenhouse gas emissions were doing to the climate, the public health crisis caused by sedentary lifestyles, the financial violence being inflicted on real people by high housing costs. What was I going to do about it, and how could I call myself an educated person if “to know and not to act is not to know”?

Edwin and Harold Janss, the Westwood developers of the 1920s, figured out something that 21st century Americans have forgotten. They pointed to the solution to problems they didn’t even know existed, and their elegant creation is still sitting there, hiding in plain sight, waiting for us to find it. Or to put that in wordier terms, they laid the foundation for a dense, mixed-use, low-carbon neighborhood that makes it easy and pleasant to walk. If you build an environment that encourages people to drive, people will drive to visit their next-door neighbor. If you build an environment that encourages people to walk, their hearts will exult in the joy of the stroll. We need places to walk, but even more than that, we need reasons to walk.

Without Westwood, I might never have fallen in love with cities. Without falling in love with cities, I would have never decided to become a city planner. For that, I owe Westwood a great debt.
7TH STREET AND ALVARADO

Miguel Ramos is the Bicycle Outreach Coordinator for Multicultural Communities for Mobility (MCM)

The intersection of 7th Street and Alvarado serves as a major hub for a predominantly working-class community of color. With the availability of bus, rail, and bike lanes adjacent to this intersection, people use and depend on walking, biking, skateboarding, and public transit as their primary mobility options. In the Westlake neighborhood, 40 percent of commuters take public transportation and 24 percent of commuters walk to work, according to the city-initiated Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles. Like many densely-populated Los Angeles neighborhoods, Westlake is in need of better facilities for those on foot or traveling by bike.

Pedestrians here are vulnerable to severe injuries and deaths, often caused by motor vehicles. This lively, high-traffic intersection gives pedestrians access to the vibrant MacArthur Park area with its rare green space for recreation. The adjacent street vendors, community centers, clinics, small businesses, schools, churches, and pop-up tienditas provide many other necessities to the community.

This location exemplifies the resilience of a community and how people transform a space that reflects cultural practices fostered in their homelands. A preacher’s voice is amplified by a megaphone; cumbia music bumps off a store’s speakers. This is a valued public space made possible by people whose cultural heritage enhances the fabric of their neighborhoods and flourishing street life.

This neighborhood is on the verge of facing dramatic changes led by investors and city agencies, whose planned revitalization places existing residents on the path to displacement and despair in exchange for profit. But conflict is not new to 7th and Alvarado, with its history of street vendor raids and police sweeps attempting to erase the visibility of the houseless. The turbulent context of this community mirrors this intersection filled with people moving in many directions by bus and car, as pedestrians on foot, or rolling through on wheels.

Wilshire and Western: What if??

Will Wright is the Public Affairs Director for AIA Los Angeles

Tethered to the four corners of the intersection of Wilshire and Western is a shade structure thirty, forty feet above: a cable truss draped with vines of chardonnay and bougainvillea. The vines cool the air and shade the smiling faces of all the people walking by, enjoying a sense of place—a place that welcomes pedestrians with a sense of grace. Brightly painted wooden benches flank the corners and serve as comfortable spots for neighbors to sit, read, relax, and people watch. Three Rastafarians cross the street to catch the 720. Several school kids with neon-colored sneak- ers scurry past to catch the train. Three friends play Frisbee in the middle of Wilshire Boulevard. They wear gray felt hats, with a peacock plume aligning the brim.

Along Western, a dozen athletic runs play a game of basketball in front of a small audience. A neighborhood kid hawking bags of popcorn and peanuts topped with honey- soaked bacon bits, hollers out, “Sustenance in a bag! Sustenance in a bag! Who wants sustenance in a bag?” Half a dozen, maybe seven picnic tables are located throughout the plaza above the Metro station—a place for picnics, a chess match, a yoga class, a twins debate, a book club of cocktail philosophers. A woman plays the banjo and sings a song, “You can’t grow an onion upside down.”

A couple of quiet old men teach each other their latest watercoloring techniques—a flurry of camel hair brushes and droplets of ochre, amber, and crimson. There’s even a picnic table with an old-fashioned barbeque grill slow roasting a brisket. A thin curl of smoke rises above into the sky like a rope attached to a cloud.

Several teenagers donning GoPro cameras applaud each other’s skateboarding stunts, catching air along the marble edge of a planter holding together a jet spray of orange California poppies. The shade canopy above the Metro portal has photovoltaics and wind-turbines, which harvest the energy to power the vending kiosks in the subway station below. Along the sidewalks and into the streets, unpaved vending kiosks in the subway station below.

What if all intersections in Los Angeles were places designed to perform as habitats and ecosystems for people to thrive together? My future LA will be a Los Angeles of greater equity and vitality to keep alive the heartbeats of the people enjoying the wildness of the intersection. All in all, Wilshire and Western is a place to be more than a place to pass by.

Habitat is comfort. Ecosystems thrive. Wilshire and Western has become its own microcosm—its own microclimate. The dead leaves as they fall from above; the soil, nutritious and alive—a living soil to grow the grape vines to shade our walk and flavor our shoes with the joy of smashed grapes. What if this was our Wilshire and Western?

Colleen Corcoran is a Los Angeles Walks steering committee member and a graphic designer

Sunset starts east and bends north, hugs the haunted hills and heavenly fields. A haven for free minds, lost souls: communists and revolutionaries, a new community, where anyone can be, anything goes. The sun sets on the lake, a final sparkle on tall streams of water. Peacocks’ “kaw-kaw, kaw-kaw” and a train whistle’s blow echo through the valley, where Sunset begins.
Los Angeles Walks is pleased to share the results of the 2013 Pedestrian Count conducted jointly with the Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition and community partners from across the City of Los Angeles. The data was collected on multiple days in September 2013. Trained volunteers collected data on pedestrians and bicyclists during three shifts: Weekday 7:00–9:00am, Weekday 4:00–6:00pm, and Saturday 11:00am–1:00pm.

People Crossing Intersections on Foot in Los Angeles

Total pedestrians from three peak counts (2013)

- 0-1,000
- 1,000-2,000
- 2,000-5,000
- 5,000-10,000
- 10,000+

Essay included in this issue of Footnotes
**MOBILITY PLAN 2035**

On Tuesday, August 11, I had the honor of helping to pass the City of Los Angeles’s new Mobility Plan 2035, marking a historic shift in the way the City will conduct its transportation planning. The plan seeks a balance between the needs of all road users and creates an integrated and connected network for all modes of travel. Right now, 47% of the trips people take in LA are less than three miles and 85% of those trips are in cars. Giving people safe and convenient options that allow them to choose not to drive will take cars off the road and address congestion throughout the city. The Mobility Plan 2035 estimates that it will take 219,000 trips off LA roads every day if fully implemented.

**1st Street and Alameda**

Dan Koeppel is a Los Angeles Walks steering committee member and organizer of the two-day annual walk The Big Parade.

Zoom upwards from the intersection of 1st and Alameda and you see Los Angeles, past, present, and future. Start with the Metro Gold Line and the rejuvenated, walking-friendly 1st Street Bridge; wind through Little Tokyo and the Arts District; ascend further to see where there’s still work to be done to truly transform Los Angeles into a city where walking takes its proper place: at the forefront of all means of human locomotion.

My own walking event, The Big Parade, is now seven years old. We’ve crossed this particular junction five times. The most popular walk I lead other than the Big Parade, the Ten Bridges Walk, crosses the Los Angeles River repeatedly. Each time, I think about how the lesson of 1st and Alameda can and should be applied to the other crossroads we visit.

In the past five years, walking in Los Angeles has become a thing. The ultimate incarnation of that comes from Robert Imman, my Big Parade collaborator and personal LA walking guru. He developed the “Imman 300,” which has established itself as the first serious, complete, all-on-foot urban through-hike. Of course, it passes right by 1st and Alameda.

Neither Robert nor I were the first to offer walks to the public in Los Angeles. Nor will we be the last. But what the walking-in-LA explosion hasn’t yet accomplished is the final step. Los Angeles is a city that has discovered it always worked, but there’s so much we need to do to improve our walking. The future needs to hold repairs and extensions of our sidewalks. The right of people to walk everywhere—on our iconic bridges; on our public stairways and paper streets; in our parks and (even) along, over, and under our freeways—must not be denied by private interests or elected representatives who work too often to compromise with destructive forces. We need a more humane future if our city is to survive.

Places we have to save right now include the Glendale/Hyperion Viaduct; the Corralitas Red Car Property; Walnut Canyon Place in Glassell Park—all still within walking distance of 1st and Alameda. This intersection acts as a lovely centerpiece to LA’s transformation, but it can’t yet be seen as a symbol of a mission accomplished. It is just an overture, the introduction and signpost pointing to the most difficult and important job we have.

**7TH STREET AND FIGUEROA**

Melanie Smith is the Planning and Urban Design Principal at Meléndrez.

One intersection that personifies the proverbial “corner of Main and Main” in downtown Los Angeles is the corner of 7th Street and Figueroa. It’s a point between the ballooning residential populations west of the 110 freeway, and the residential, retail, and hotel explosion to the east near L.A. Live’s grand hotel and plaza in rising on the northwest corner of the Grand Hotel, the Figueroa 7th retail center is booming on the southwest, and there’s a mix of old and new development on the east side of the intersection, rising over one of the busiest Metro stations in the whole system! Every block between Fig and Olive, on 7th Street, has something new and exciting happen- ing on it, including a major re-envisioning of The Bloc (formerly known as Macy’s Plaza), the recent acquisition of Grand Place and plans for its transformation, and new buildings rising to the south of 7th as well. There are over 40 buses stopping per hour on this stretch of 7th Street, and it’s also a planted eastbound route for the restored streetcar system, in addition to the existing Metro subway portal, soon to be connected underground to the Bloc.

When the proposed pedestrian scramble crossing for 7th and Figueroa was part of our 7th Street improvements project, emanating from the Wilshire Grand Hotel project, the model assumptions included 2500 vehicles and 2500 pedestrians in the morning peak hours and 2200 vehicles and 3200 pedestrians in the afternoon peak. The advice given to us in our 7th Street design process was “if you’re going to continue to accommodate all of these modes on one street, it does better.” So, a scramble crossing at 7th and Fig, consolidated transit boarding platforms, protected bike lanes connecting to the “MyFig” protected lanes, on-street flex space for people to use, bike share, or district valet to populate—whatever the imagination can dream up, is the response. Clearly, the car is no longer king in Downtown Los Angeles.

Councilmember Mike Bonin Represents the 11th District, on the Los Angeles City Council

Mobility Plan 2035 is a great thing for our neighborhoods because it is a smart and strategic way to reduce traffic in LA. I have communities in my district that are hungry for the types of projects that the plan will make possible, neighborhoods like Mari Vista and Playa del Rey that have reached out to me for solutions to congestion and speeding vehicles. They are looking to increase safety and accessibility for all road users as a way of revitalizing their main streets so they function less like highways cutting through their community. I look forward to seeing these types of forward-thinking projects that improve safety and address our city’s congestion issues implemented throughout Los Angeles.

**The Meléndrez team is working on the streetscape design for several blocks of 7th Street in Downtown.**

On September 16 and Saturday, September 19, 2015, Los Angeles Walks and the Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition are planning, design, and implementation that considers all users. Safety should come first, especially for the most vulnerable users: people on foot.
The interaction of Colorado Boulevard and Eagle Rock Boulevard is the commercial core of Eagle Rock. It is where the neighborhood’s main thoroughfares converge and the sidewalks come to life. Bus passengers wait for their cross-town transfer, cafe customers enjoy the street scene, students walk to school; every week, on the southwest corner, a group protests war. Despite being somewhat automobile-oriented—gas stations anchor two of the intersection’s four corners—the sidewalks here see a variety of activities from a broad cross-section of users.

However, this was not always the case. In fact, the intersection became a natural center of commercial activity in the twentieth century because it was where local trolley lines crossed paths. As Los Angeles’s streetcar era declined the intersection became more automobile-focused. Today the neighborhood’s center is hardly distinguishable from most typical city intersections, but its history remains embedded. Only the southeast corner of Colorado Boulevard and Eagle Rock Boulevard, a historic building block, has remained pedestrian-oriented since the streetcar era passed, and it houses desirable, iconic storefronts. Although the surrounding area transformed over the past several decades to cater to the automobile, this intersection demonstrates there is no substitute for human-scaled buildings, and that sidewalks are still among the most democratic, inclusive, and vital spaces in the neighborhood.

Pedestrians on Soto Street in Boyle Heights. Photo by Rudy Espinoza.

Los Angeles's first Parklet near York and Avenue 50.

Pedestrians were counted at Cesar Chavez and 1st St, where a trip underground will reveal a giant bird’s nest installation in the Soto Gold Line Station.

1,400 pedestrians were counted at Colorado and Eagle Rock, where a 2013 road diet introduced bike lanes and signalized mid-block pedestrian crossings.

2,940 pedestrians were counted at Cesar Chavez and 1st St, where a trip underground will reveal a giant bird’s nest installation in the Soto Gold Line Station.

Cesar Chavez and Soto intersection swarms daily with pedestrians, transit riders, cyclists, and street vendors. It exemplifies how Latinos are transforming LA’s auto-designed streets to promote walking. Decades ago, Cesar Chavez (Brooklyn Avenue in those days) and Soto was the historic heart of the city’s Jewish community. Today it is one of the busiest Eastside shopping areas. The ubiquitous gas station lies on the southeast corner, and zero-lot-line buildings are on the other three. Latinos have retrofitted these buildings and their façades and have turned them into a King Taco. The “El Corrido de Boyle Heights” mural by East Los Streetscapers livens up the southwest corner facing Soto. There have been plans by residents or business owners themselves. Signs are hand-painted or crafted and exude individuality rather than consistency. Merchandise is frequently placed out on the sidewalk to entice buyers. Building setbacks are inconsistent; some storefronts are simply built-out extensions of people’s homes.

The result is an environment that is tactile, full of a particular visual and sensual energy, containing a sort of wilderness of the residential area, you have the opportunity to experience one of the most vibrant corridors in Los Angeles. From 2011-12, I wrote my master’s thesis about the characteristics of York Boulevard, based on data and observation-based research. My thesis talked about how features like bicycle infrastructure, art events, small businesses, and residents’ mixed feelings about gentrification are all shaping the evolution of the street and neighborhood.

Many of these trends have become more pronounced today and can be seen through the simple and pleasant act of walking the neighborhood and noticing how people are using its spaces. York is home to a full-service business corridor with everything from taco trucks and car repair to high-end furniture boutiques and a French bistro. I’ve heard it referred to as the Champs-Élysées of Los Angeles. I’ve never been to Paris, and I don’t know about their mobile food culture, but I definitely agree with the sentiment that York is a great street!

James Rojas is an urban planner, community activist, and artist.

York and Avenue 50

Elizabeth Gallardo is a planner in the LADOT Bike Program and a Highland Park resident.

A practice of urban hiking is one of the best ways to get to know and experience your neighborhood. The best times of day for this brand of exploration are morning and night; both times have cool temperatures and social qualities of life and atmosphere. For my walks, I take neighborhood streets because that’s where there’s interesting (read: vernacular) stuff to see.

Highland Park is nice to walk around because the houses and yards are so unique. This has started to change with house flipping and the resulting prescription of horizontal wooden fences. Unfortunately, this homogenization of Highland Park housing aesthetics derails from the neighborhood’s character and thereby detracts from its walkability. If I wanted to live somewhere where everything and everyone looked the same, I would live in a planned community.

I digress. Luckily in Highland Park, our community still has plenty of character. This makes walking to York a reward in itself. Once you finish with the urban wilderness of the residential area, you have the opportunity to experience one of the most vibrant corridors in Los Angeles. From 2011-12, I wrote my master’s thesis about the characteristics of York Boulevard, based on data and observation-based research. My thesis talked about how features like bicycle infrastructure, art events, small businesses, and residents’ mixed feelings about gentrification are all shaping the evolution of the street and neighborhood.

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Pedestrians on Soto Street in Boyle Heights. Photo by Rudy Espinoza.

Los Angeles's first Parklet near York and Avenue 50.
Bob Inman is the author of Finding Los Angeles on Foot. Your first impression when hearing of the corner of Van Nuys and Laurel Canyon might be, “Wait a second; those are parallel streets.” If you say that, you are speaking from a south San Fernando Valley perspective. Yes, if you are looking from Ventura Boulevard, these streets parallel each other, exactly three miles apart. But in the northern Valley, Van Nuys bends 45 degrees right and Laurel Canyon turns 45 degrees left; the two meet at a right angle. That makes navigation around here by foot a bit confusing. The flatland streets on the south edge are laid out according to the Jeffersonian grid. Headed north, the streets are laid out just as they were in the nearby independent City of San Fernando. They parallel or make 90 degree angles with the diagonal slice of the Southern Pacific Railroad.

This intersection lies close to the boundary of Pacoima and Arleta, two working-class communities that are 71 to 85 percent Hispanic. Ritchie Valens (“La Bamba”) grew up nearby and there is a park named for him one half mile northwest. Whitehaven Airport is a mile northwest of this inauspiciously named “Pacoima Spreading Grounds” are a mile away to the southwest. Here excess water is stored in the aquifer thanks to percolation (remember a day when there was an excess?) storm water is stored in the aquifer thanks to percolation (remember a day when there was an excess?) storm. The inauspiciously named “Pacoima Spreading Grounds” is an important link in the Pacific Flyway. Those who walk near Van Nuys and Laurel Canyon are not likely to do so as hobbyists. People walk to school, they walk to the market, they walk to the bus—or make 90 degree angles with the diagonal slice of the Southern Pacific Railroad. The flatland streets on the south edge are laid out according to the Jeffersonian grid. Headed north, the streets are laid out just as they were in the nearby independent City of San Fernando. They parallel or make 90 degree angles with the diagonal slice of the Southern Pacific Railroad.

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