

# footnotes

## Walks for All Ages

For this issue of *Footnotes*, Los Angeles Walks' third report on the state of walking in LA, we are taking a different approach and dedicating the entire edition to issues of mobility for older adults in LA. As Los Angeles Walks embarks on Safe Routes for Seniors programming this year, our annual publication presents personal stories of triumphs and tribulations for seniors walking in LA, highlights policy changes that can make aging in place easier across the city, and offers examples of simple fixes that can make walking safer, more comfortable, and more convenient for our rapidly growing senior population.



## LOS ANGELES WALKS

### A Letter from Our Founder

Since our last issue of *Footnotes* in 2015, Los Angeles Walks has achieved major milestones. We hired our first full time staff person; received a Community Benefit Grant from the Kaiser Foundation Hospitals, Southern California Region, allowing us to develop the LA Vision Zero Alliance; and we raised the largest amount of supporter donations in our 18-year history.

In the past year, Los Angeles Walks has established itself as the backbone of the Los Angeles Vision Zero Alliance, a unique coalition of organizations dedicated to supporting and influencing the City's ambitious Vision Zero goal: to reduce traffic fatalities and serious injuries—particularly among people walking and biking—to zero by 2025. Facilitating the Vision Zero Alliance includes intensive coordination with City agencies, including the Department of Transportation, Police Department, County Department of Public Health, and others. The role also offers standing seats within the City's Vision Zero structure, including core team, task force, and sub-committee meetings. Los Angeles Walks is proud of the national attention the LA Vision Zero Alliance has received for its efforts to enhance community engagement within the Vision Zero framework, maintaining a focus on equity in engineering investments and enforcement strategies.

This year also saw the launch of Los Angeles Walks' first *Walk This Way/Caminale* wayfinding signage program. The youth-led, community-based project installed eleven signs on Central Avenue from 33rd Street to 45th Street in South Los Angeles. The signs provide information on walking and biking times between various destinations, show connectivity between neighborhoods, celebrate community history and assets, and encourage walking. A pilot program, Los Angeles Walks will use this experience to develop a *Walk This Way* toolkit for easy implementation in other LA communities.

We continue to walk the walk, too. Our ten group walks this year brought hundreds of people to dynamic and diverse neighborhoods across the city, all led by our volunteer Walk Ambassadors. In addition to our monthly walks, you can find us at every CicLAvia hosting Los Angeles Walks' very own WalkLAvia.

Your financial support for Los Angeles Walks is critical to our success in actively addressing the issues that we all face in walking the streets of Los Angeles. Please donate today.

All the best and safe streets for all,  
**Deborah Murphy**, Founder and Executive Director

### SRFS CAMPAIGN

**Emilia Crotty** is Los Angeles Walks' Policy and Programs Manager.

Why dedicate an entire issue of *Footnotes* to LA's seniors—one segment of a diverse and enormous city? As nearly every article in this issue highlights, the senior population in Los Angeles is booming. And just like national statistics show, seniors in Los Angeles are overrepresented in fatal and serious pedestrian crash data. As the "grey wave" approaches, can a city with notoriously deficient sidewalks, disabled access, and street crossings meet the safety and mobility needs of our grandparents, our parents, all of us?

In Purposeful Aging Los Angeles, a three-year plan released in May, Mayor Garcetti, City agencies, and partner organizations say 'yes, we can, and we will.' By addressing eight domains of livability, including trans-

portation, outdoor spaces, and social participation, Los Angeles is slated to become a premiere age-friendly city.

One critical component of the plan, and one Los Angeles Walks is excited about, involves engaging older adults to assess their communities' needs, then supporting seniors to become agents of change. That's why Los Angeles Walks is proud to launch Safe Routes for Seniors programming in Westlake this fall. In the coming months, we will meet with senior residents to identify obstacles to walking, develop a set of design solutions to improve walkability and safety for senior residents, and advocate for physical changes on the street and sidewalks seniors frequent.

As the title of this issue suggests, a city that serves seniors also serves people of all ages. Safe routes for seniors are safe routes for everyone, which perfectly fits Los Angeles Walks' mission to make walking in Los Angeles safe, fun, and accessible for all Angelenos.

*Help Los Angeles Walks  
make walking in LA safe,  
accessible, fun, and equitable*

**DONATE ONLINE**

[losangeleswalks.org/donate](http://losangeleswalks.org/donate)



Comic by **Joe Linton**, a longtime urban environmental activist and currently the editor of Streetsblog Los Angeles.

# PURPOSEFUL AGING

Ana Guerrero is Chief of Staff  
to Mayor Eric Garcetti.

Cities embrace the future—and determine their destiny—by constantly reinventing themselves.

In Los Angeles, we are in the midst of a historic transition away from our reputation as the car capital of the world. Today, a growing mass transit network is redefining how people think about commuting to work, getting to afternoons at the beach, and enjoying nights out with friends.

And when they're not exploring our city on new rail and bus lines, more Angelenos than ever are embracing LA's walkability. But what does this movement toward a more pedestrian-friendly city mean for people who are growing older?

## Almost a quarter of pedestrian casualties involved people 65 years of age and older.

The years may bring invaluable wisdom and experience—but for many, aging also means new challenges in mobility and sensory awareness. Those challenges require adjustments to how people get around and to their needs in terms of infrastructure.

We must help our residents rediscover their communities on foot, but that comes with an equally important obligation to make that experience more safe, accessible, and comfortable. That is especially important when we talk about LA's older adult population, which is expected to grow dramatically in the coming years. Currently, there are about a half-million residents age 60 and older in the City of Los Angeles; that number is expected to increase by 50% over the next two decades.

In light of this demographic shift, Mayor Garcetti in May signed an Executive Directive on Purposeful Aging. It commits all City of Los Angeles departments to specifically considering the needs of older adults in all new policy, infrastructure, and programming.

Basic safety is a primary concern in a city where, over a seven-year average, almost a quarter of pedestrian casualties involved people 65 years of age and older. That's why Mayor Garcetti directed the Department of Transportation to compile a report singling out those intersections that are most dangerous for older adults. That information will enable us to understand what we can do to minimize risk for older Angelenos.

Mayor Garcetti's Purposeful Aging Executive Directive also requires the Bureau of Street Services, along with the Department of Aging, to determine which corridors would most benefit from the addition of street furniture and shade structures. These improvements would be targeted in neighborhoods with larger populations of older adults—improving the lives of all pedestrians while providing particular benefits for older adults who need shelter from the elements and convenient places to rest.

These may seem like small steps, but they make a huge difference in people's lives. LA must be a place where people of all ages can thrive, and Mayor Garcetti is determined to see to it that City Hall leads the way.



Mayor Garcetti signs Executive Directive on Purposeful Aging.

## A Future of Walking on Age-Friendly Streets

**Caroline Cicero PhD, MSW, MPL** is a gerontologist and teaches at USC Davis School of Gerontology.

On May 18, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti unveiled the Age-Friendly City Initiative: Purposeful Aging LA, which is his 17th Executive Directive in the three years he has been mayor. With the Initiative, Los Angeles joins 90 other American cities and three others in California—San Francisco, Saratoga, and West Sacramento—in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities. The World Health Organization (WHO) birthed the Age-Friendly movement in 2006, and a year later, WHO suggested steps cities can take to improve livability for older adults in its 2007 publication *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide*. While WHO invited Portland and New York to join the original Age-Friendly network, no other major American jurisdictions were selected.

Stereotypes would suggest that Los Angeles could never be a part of such a network, because of our expansive geography, reputation for congested traffic, short history of rail transit, high cost of housing and health care, and assumed Hollywood obsession with youth. However, the half million 60+ adults living in the city are culturally, economically, and racially diverse. Local Baby Boomers are maturing from middle age workers and residents to vibrant older adults, and this large demographic group necessitates that Los Angeles thoughtfully respond.

LA City Department of Aging General Manager Laura Trejo will be responsible for implementing the Mayor's Initiative in coming years. She has been working diligently with the LA County Community and Senior Services Director Cynthia Banks to develop the directive, along with four other partners: Paul Irving and the Milken Institute Center for the Future of Aging; the local AARP; the USC Leonard Davis School of Gerontology; and the UCLA Los Angeles Community Academic Partnership. Additionally, Purposeful Aging Los Angeles is a regional effort on the part of all the partners, engaging Southern Californians in envisioning a future that improves the lives of residents throughout their lifespans.

Mayor Garcetti's effort to join the Age-Friendly movement is important, not because it claims that we are already hospitable to our diverse residents' aging, but because it signifies his administration's commitment to examining and enhancing the daily experiences of our city's older adults and to making Los Angeles a

safer, healthier, and more engaged place for people to age. The Mayor has ordered his City departments to convene a Purposeful Aging Task Force, which will conduct a needs assessment, create a strategic plan in compliance with AARP and WHO's Age-Friendly guidelines, and hold city agencies accountable for ensuring a safer, more prosperous, and well run city which ultimately provides a more livable community—to benefit older Los Angelenos and all of us.

This new directive allows our aging residents to maximize the potential that a world-class city such as Los Angeles offers. The balmy weather, combined with fantastic cultural, economic, social, health, and intellectual opportunities, provide a climate in which we all want to age in our own communities. If we can maintain access to quality housing, transportation, and neighborhood resources, providing safe sidewalks, vibrant social connections, and grounded civic programs, we can pursue an older age in which we thrive. For Los Angeles to give an honest recognition and validation to the process of aging is an important step in combating ageism in our industries, in our families, and in our public places. We are all aging, and our Mayor's directive now recognizes and affirms that truth.

The work of Los Angeles Walks is important to this affirmation process, as it encourages residents of all ages to get out of their homes and onto streets and sidewalks in the community. Older adult pedestrian safety is a main point of the Age-Friendly City Initiative, in connection with the Mayor's Executive Directive 10, the Vision Zero safe streets initiative of 2015. By January, 2017, the Department of Transportation must report to the Mayor on those intersections that present highest risk for older pedestrians and how the Department will respond. With its Safe Routes for Seniors programming and its work coordinating the Vision Zero Alliance, Los Angeles Walks is already bridging the two initiatives.

**For more information:**  
[lamayor.org/mayor\\_garcetti\\_s\\_executive\\_directives](http://lamayor.org/mayor_garcetti_s_executive_directives)

**To consider how you or your organization can be involved in the regional partnership, check out: [purposefulagingla.com](http://purposefulagingla.com).**

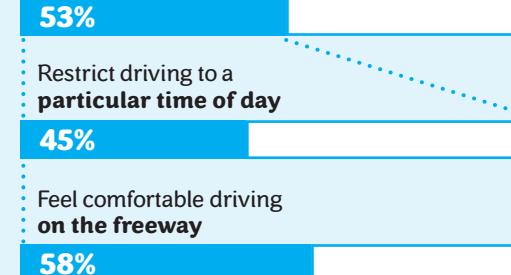
## Older Adult Mobility Survey 2016

From July 1–August 12, 2016, the Department of Aging surveyed 345 seniors at 24 senior centers throughout the City of Los Angeles. What follows is a snapshot of particular survey results.

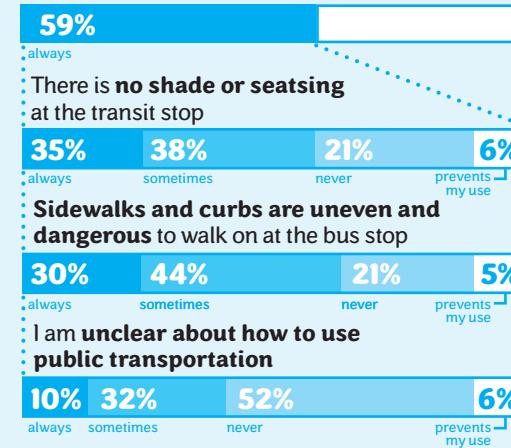
**20% of respondents age of 70-74**

**49% of respondents age 75 and over**

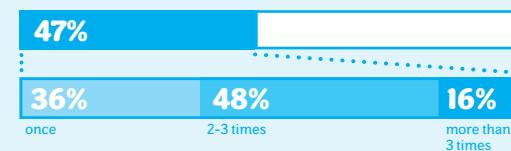
### Seniors who drive



### Seniors who ride public transit



### Seniors who have fallen because of the sidewalk condition



### Suggestions

**Some trees and shade at bus stops would be good.**

**Where I live there are no sidewalks.**

**Bus drivers often park too far from the curb and often are too high. You have to jump off the bus.**

**Clean bus stops, seating and lighting!**

**Some of the bus drivers do not know their stops. It would be really helpful if they knew, because I don't use the internet, and I have a hard time reading.**

# Designer Gere Kavanaugh on 50 years of Dog Walking in LA

Los Angeles Walks Steering Committee member Colleen Corcoran interviews her former neighbor **Gere Kavanaugh**, a celebrated designer of textiles, furniture, housewares, interiors, and much more. Gere will design anything, and for 35 years she has lived in her eclectic house in the neighborhood of Angelino Heights, where she walks everyday.

**CC:** Starting off, I wanted to ask you about walking in your neighborhood—Angelino Heights, the historic neighborhood just north of Downtown LA, with streets lined with century old Victorian homes and sidewalks nearly as old. It's a community that's very connected through people's interactions walking around the neighborhood, walking their dogs on the streets and sidewalks. Who are some of the neighbors that you've met on the street this way? In what way has dog walking been an important form of social connectivity for you?

**GK:** I think dog walking is very, very important. In fact, I tried to get someone from the New York Times a number of years ago to write about the importance of dog walking as a form of communication. I know a lot of people on Carroll Ave a couple blocks over, who I've met dog walking. We all gather intermittently with our dogs. It's quite pleasant and nice conversation because they're all very smart people.

You just can't help but meet people dog walking—it's very pleasant, nice, and informative—a very human thing to do. Recently there was a young woman I met walking. She was reading a book, and I asked her what it was—*Pillars of the Earth*, by Ken Follett. I just asked her what she was reading, and we had this chat all the way up the block.

**CC:** I'm in awe of your work ethic and that you're so productive in your career as an industrial designer in your 80s. With so many ongoing projects—kitchenware, textiles, and much more. I was wondering if you see walking and the social interaction that you get from it as part of the way you maintain your health, physical activity, and mental agility.

**GK:** Yes, definitely! Last year I had to have a minor surgery and the doctor said to me "I want you to walk every morning and afternoon," and I said "What do you think I've been doing for the past 35 years!"

**CC:** I remember that you had been injured on the broken sidewalks here on your street. What happened?

**GK:** Nothing happened after that. They never fixed the sidewalk. Another time I fell on Carroll Ave, when my dog Tippy took off after another dog. I flipped up into the air and fell on my wrist. My neighbors sprang into action: one got the number of my doctor's office and called them, one took Tippy home and got my purse and medical cards, then took me to the ER. They came to look in on me after I got home too. How better could neighbors be? All of these people being helpful and concerned—they all knew me from seeing me out walking with Tippy.

**CC:** Did those times that you fell change the amount that you walked?

**GK:** No, I still continued to walk everyday.

**CC:** I wanted to ask you about when you first moved to Los Angeles to work for Victor Gruen's architecture firm—after you graduated from Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan.

**GK:** I came here in 1960 to work for Victor Gruen and lived in Westwood with my mother. Westwood was very walkable—there was a book shop, Luther Hines, the butcher, the Japanese grocery, two theaters, Bullocks, and Jergensons (the place to go and shop). My mother and I would walk around and window shop.

**CC:** 1960, that was right around the time the Red Car Trolley system was dismantled.

**GK:** Yes, it was dismantled a couple years before I came, but a lot of designers used to talk about how they could take it from Downtown to the beach, how it was a safe way to travel.

**CC:** Gruen was someone who came to Los Angeles as an immigrant and was so shocked by the dominance of the automobile and how there was this loss of community and social interaction. And he developed the first designs for the shopping mall as a response to that.

**GK:** He was the one who created the shopping mall. He also did a fabulous city plan for the City of New York, where cars were less dominant.

**CC:** Working for Gruen during this time, when LA was becoming so car-dependent, and with his concern that we were losing our city centers—was there anything that you learned about the importance of walkability?

**GK:** A sense of community is what he helped develop and restore—the shopping centers created a sense of community and collectively a better situation for these places that were becoming so sprawling.

**CC:** Did you think about that in the context of your work?

**GK:** Not so much, because I worked on interiors there mostly, but Reyner Banham has written a lot about that, comparing LA to London as a collection of towns.

**CC:** After you left Gruen's Office and went out on your own, you shared a studio with the architects Frank Gehry and Greg Walsh, and the graphic designer Deborah Sussman, as well as the furniture designer Don Chadwick.

**GK:** Yes, Frank, Greg, Deborah and Don Chadwick (and also a man that used to write the Laurel and Hardy movies). We were there from '64-'72. Frank, Greg, and I had shared a bungalow in Santa Monica for two years before that.

**CC:** All designers of great public spaces. In Gehry's buildings can be found very human scale interior spaces; Deborah's vibrant colors and paper scaffolding structures for the '84 Olympic Village; your store designs for Joseph Magnin—and many other delightful interiors. I know you all discussed your work with each other. Did you all ever talk about public space and human interaction within it?

**GK:** No, it wasn't talked about as much then. It was talked about in the field of landscape architecture or in the context of shopping centers or strips (like Wilshire, or the Sunset Strip I mean). The Sunset Strip was [near our office on La Cienega and] a great place to walk. There were restaurants, shoe shops, dress shops, beauty parlors—a real mix. There was a fabulous view of Downtown LA, and the The Aware Inn was a place where the younger crowd went. It was a really fun time.

**CC:** Were you still living in Westwood then?

**GK:** I had moved to Selby and Wilshire when I still worked for Gruen. Wilshire was also a very walkable strip.

**CC:** I wanted to also ask you about your relationship to driving here in LA. You moved here at the height of car culture taking over the scene. How has your relationship to driving changed over the time you've lived here?

**GK:** Well, I moved here from Detroit, after being in school there at Cranbrook, and I definitely drove a lot in Detroit before I moved here. There was even more of a car culture there! You'd meet a friend and ask them not "How are you?" but "What are you driving?" I was happy to get away from that when I moved here. There's more of a sense of freedom here in California. You can see where you're going, for one. There are so many places to explore here in California and all over the Southwest. It was very exciting for me to be here.

**CC:** Did you go on road trips?

**GK:** Yes! I've taken a lot. I love New Mexico. I've been to a lot of the Indian ruins and the Lightning Fields. I've spent a lot of time in Santa Fe, and I've been to Roswell, (because of a client). There's such a freedom of mind out here, because of the space, because you can see where you're going. I freak out taking the subway in New York because you can't see where you're going. You're just in a black tube.

**CC:** Is it different than driving in other cities because of the open space? Has driving in Los Angeles changed over the time you've lived here?

**GK:** Traffic has gotten hideous. But I always thought it was a lot better driving here than Detroit. Drivers are more polite.

**CC:** For the first time in 50 years, we have a train that takes us from Downtown to the beach.

**GK:** Yes, but it needs feeders to go into it.

**CC:** Right, it's not easy to get to for everyone now. But do you think the mobility situation in LA is changing?

**GK:** It will change the attitude and eventually people will become more aware of how to ride transit and take the bus.

**CC:** 50 years from now, how do you imagine LA?

**GK:** I don't think the car will be as dominant. It will be a smaller system. Like my neighbor Miguel next door has a smart car—there will be more of those smaller cars and Minis. We'll shrink down. We don't need the cars as big as they have been.

**CC:** You talk about driving as a sense of freedom. You still drive everywhere, and it seems an important part of your freedom to get around.

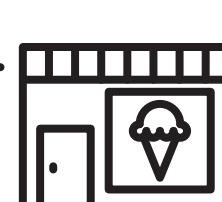
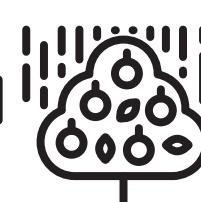
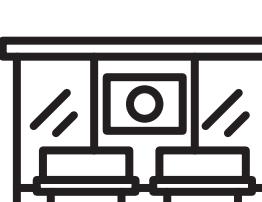
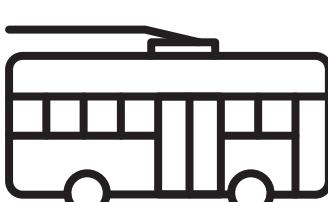
**GK:** It's part of the automobile industry indoctrinating that into our culture. You had this independence—you just got in your car, and you went.

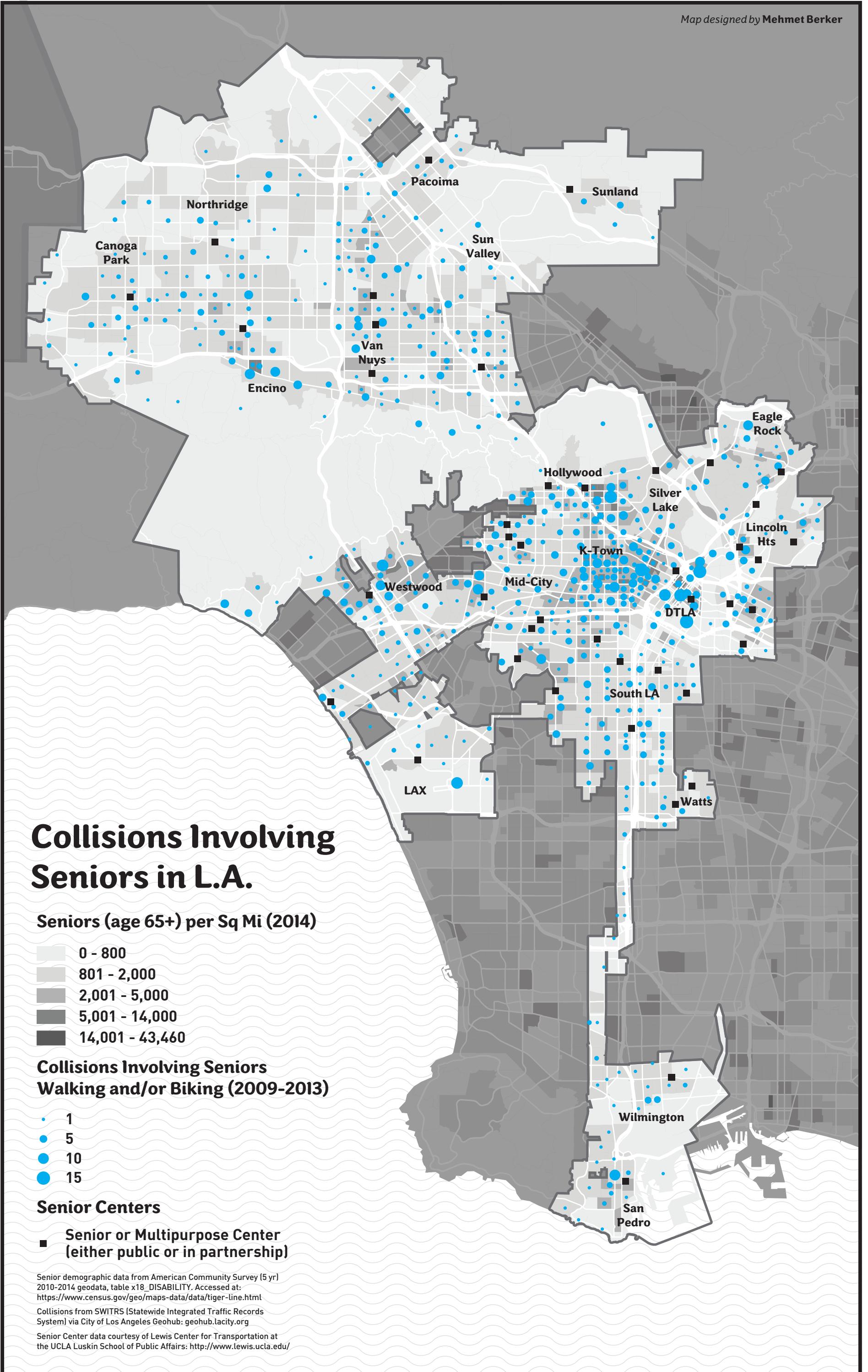
**CC:** I was so sorry to hear about your dog Tippy who just passed away. Can you share a memory of walking with her?

**GK:** I loved walking with her. In her last years when she declined, she couldn't see, and she sniffed her way through the neighborhood. But she was a good walker. I got her at 3 years old at the Pasadena Humane Society. She was a sweetheart. She would stand very still next to me, but waving her tail very deliberately so I would see she wanted something.



Gere Kavanaugh walks with her dog Tippy, in the alley behind her house in Angelino Heights. Summer, 2015. Photo: Stephen Villavaso





# TAKE MY PICTURE GARY LEONARD

Gary Leonard has been photographing Los Angeles for 40 years. He first made a name by chronicling the city's punk clubs and nightlife. He's centered mostly in Downtown now, photographing Los Angeles in transition. Leonard's new photos can be seen weekly in his column, *Take My Picture* and at his gallery at 109 W 9th Street (between Broadway and Main).



Photos by Gary Leonard of seniors exercising on stair streets

## ESTABLISHING SAFE ROUTES FOR SENIORS IN LOS ANGELES

Rachel Bennett, MPH, MURP is an Associate Program Manager at Prevention Institute where she works to promote healthy, equitable policies and community environments. Her favorite walks in LA include the Secret Stairways, WalkLAvia at CicLAvia, and any route that ends with Mexican food.

The American population is aging. Our nation has a greater number of seniors (aged 65 or older) than ever before, and they are living longer into old age. While there are ongoing national conversations about how the growing number of seniors might impact our health care system and entitlement programs, our society has paid little attention to the unique mobility needs of seniors. For many older adults, the ability to safely walk to destinations is a critical determinant of their access to resources such as healthy food, arts and cultural centers, and parks. Walking is the second most common travel mode and the most common form of physical activity among seniors, helping to reduce the risk of disease and falls and increasing mental wellbeing and longevity.

In spite of these benefits, the pedestrian environment poses a number of risks to seniors. Barriers to safe walking include a lack of sidewalks, crowded or obstructed sidewalks, broken or uneven pavements, unsafe street crossings (including inadequate time provided to cross the street), and fear of personal security. Due to their physical frailty, seniors are significantly more likely to be seriously injured or killed in a crash compared to younger pedestrians. On the whole, senior pedestrians are at greater risk of injury and death from vehicle crashes than any other group except children. It may be useful, then, to draw lessons from a program promoting child pedestrian safety to enhance the safety and viability of walking among seniors.

Like Safe Routes to School, Safe Routes for Seniors programs use a location-based approach to improve pedestrian safety; instead of a school, however, Safe Routes for Seniors programs are anchored around a senior-serving facility such as a senior center, senior housing, or other social service provider.

***Ultimately, what is good for senior pedestrians is good for all pedestrians...  
The Safe Routes for Seniors program is a promising strategy to transform Los Angeles into a safe, enjoyable place for people of all ages to walk.***

The Safe Routes for Seniors model was pioneered nearly 15 years ago in New York City by the organization Transportation Alternatives, which also established the nation's first Safe Routes to School program. As is the case in many cities (including Los Angeles), there were limited data on senior pedestrians in New York. Transportation Alternatives collected baseline data on the needs and opportunities for senior pedestrians through three methods:

- **CONDUCTING WALK AUDITS** with local seniors and community groups to document unsafe walking conditions using cameras, maps, measuring wheels, and stopwatches; and having seniors suggest design interventions to enhance the safety and comfort of their local walking environments.
- **OBSERVING PEDESTRIAN BEHAVIOR** including street crossing times.
- **SURVEYING SENIOR RESIDENTS** (750 in total, over a five-year period) to learn what they like about walking, their common walking destinations, and the barriers they face in safely getting around the city on foot.

The combined efforts of Transportation Alternatives and the New York City Department of Transportation (NYC DOT) have significantly improved senior pedestrian safety, reducing the incidence of crashes that result in senior pedestrian injuries by as much as 29%. In Senior Pedestrian Focus Areas throughout the city, NYC DOT implements a suite of interventions to improve seniors' safety and comfort such as increasing lighting, adjusting crosswalk signal timing, installing crosswalk countdown signals, creating median islands and curb bulb-outs, and slowing the speed of motor vehicle traffic. Transportation Alternatives also advocates for maintaining clean streets and clear street markings, fixing potholes in a timely manner, having ADA-compatible curb cuts on every sidewalk, and creating "leading pedestrian intervals" at all intersections (to provide pedestrians with 5 to 7 seconds of exclusive crossing time before turning vehicles can move). As a result of these interventions, there have been greater safety improvements in these Senior Pedestrian Focus Areas than in areas without the program's intervention.

According to the 2010 Census, the city of Los Angeles is home to nearly 400,000 residents aged 65 or older and an additional 375,000 residents aged 55 to 65. According to the LA County Department of Community and Senior Services, the number of seniors in the county is projected to double by 2030, from 1.4 million to 3 million. In light of the growing population of seniors, their unique mobility needs, and the risks they face as pedestrians, there is great potential to apply the Safe Routes for Seniors model in the city of Los Angeles.

### Key Lessons from New York City's Safe Routes for Seniors program

- 1 Collect timely and accurate data documenting the unique vulnerability of senior pedestrians.
- 2 Establish geographically bound priority areas for intervention, starting in "high need" areas.
- 3 Capitalize on existing civic infrastructure and political support.
- 4 Engage in a collaborative planning process with a variety of partners, including local seniors, community based organizations, community leaders, local government agencies and elected officials, media outlets, universities, and health professionals.
- 5 Ask seniors about their mobility and safety needs and barriers to walking.
- 6 Develop multi-lingual and multi-cultural materials and outreach strategies.
- 7 Have a suite of design interventions available.
- 8 Use small-scale success to lobby for larger-scale change.
- 9 Take advantage of federal funding programs. (NYC DOT obtained funding for its Safe Streets for Seniors initiative from the Federal Transit Administration's New Freedom mobility grant program and the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality program.)

Establishing a Safe Routes for Seniors program would align with numerous ongoing efforts to promote active transportation, complete streets, and public health in Los Angeles. The recently updated Mobility and Health Elements of the City's general plan, in particular, provide the opportunity to leverage a Safe Routes for Seniors initiative in Los Angeles. The City and County Departments of Transportation, City Planning, Aging, and Public Health (among others) could collaborate to leverage the newly designated "Pedestrian Enhanced Districts" throughout the city to promote the safety and comfort of senior pedestrians, including enhanced crosswalks, automatic pedestrian signals, reduced street crossing lengths, wider sidewalks, sidewalk seating, and street lighting.

Developing a Safe Routes for Seniors program would be good policy—and good politics. Ultimately, what is good for senior pedestrians is good for all pedestrians. And, given that older adults are a vocal, engaged constituency, framing programs to address senior needs is a savvy way to secure political support for pedestrian initiatives. Overall, the Safe Routes for Seniors program is a promising strategy to transform Los Angeles into a safe, enjoyable place for people of all ages to walk.

*A Conversation with Grace E. Moremen and Jacqueline Chase, authors of*

# LOVING LA THE LOW CARBON WAY



**Grace Moremen and Jacqueline Chase**, dedicated walkers who prefer not to drive in Los Angeles, are the authors of *Loving LA the Low Carbon Way: a Personal Guide to the City of Angels via Public Transportation*, a guide book for those going car-free in LA. The two seniors spoke with Los Angeles Walks about their urban adventures, inspiration, and hopes for the city they love.

**LOS ANGELES WALKS:** Could you tell us a little bit about yourselves?

**Jacqueline:** Grace was born and grew up in LA. I'm a native of New York City, but I've lived in Southern California for over twenty years. We are seniors; we love big cities, and we love to walk.

**LW:** Why write a book about public transit and walkability in a city that's notoriously car-centric?

**Grace:** Public transportation in LA has improved in recent years and can relatively easily be combined with a walking trip. Jacqueline and I traveled countless miles on foot, train, bus, subway, and light rail to gather material for our book, which offers trip ideas and itineraries, but which also contains practical advice, particularly for seniors. For example, not only do we explain how to find a restroom while in transit, but we also remind readers that Metro offers travelers over age 65 a good discount, as well as an infoline (323-466-3876) where a live operator tells you how to get from point A to point B any place within the Metro system.

If you are a walker, public transit can carry you to your starting point. Seniors have more time, perhaps, to enjoy a slower pace, and we encourage them to get out for a walk.

**LW:** Do you have any favorite places to walk in Los Angeles?

**Jacqueline:** We like to stroll in places such as tiny Biddy Mason Park (behind the celebrated Bradbury Building on South Broadway), where a wall tells the life story of a remarkable African American woman in the mid-19th century Los Angeles. We also love to walk slowly in the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, with its alabaster light, or around the Observation Deck atop City Hall for a 360-degree view.

The Rose Garden at Exposition Park offers a lovely amble, as do Echo Park, the east side of the Los Angeles River Greenway at Atwater, and the boardwalk at Santa Monica beach. And one of *Loving LA*'s more unusual destinations for walkers is the almost mile-long Great Wall of LA near Burbank.

**LW:** Grace, how has your life changed as transit has developed and expanded in the LA area?

**Grace:** Improved transit (like Metrolink, more bus service, and expansion of subway and light rail) has made all the difference to me in getting to know my native city in a new way. It has given me access to places like Watts Towers, Griffith Park, and Santa Monica.

**LW:** And Jacqueline, as a native New Yorker, what significant transit differences can you see in LA compared to New York?

**Jacqueline:** I remember the New York transit system, mostly the subway system, as getting me anywhere I wanted to go either in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens,

or the Bronx. I traveled to high school in Brooklyn mainly during rush hours. I haven't traveled in New York City in many years by public transportation, but even at that time the subway was crowded with wall to wall people (and most of the time the cars weren't very clean).

It was relatively safe in the 50's, keeping in mind that like in all big cities one needed to keep alert to one's environment. In comparison, LA's transit system is young in its development, modern, clean, safe, and has new routes coming on line, which is exciting.

**LW:** How did you first decide to embark on writing this book? What inspired you about LA or otherwise?

**Grace:** Although I am a native Angeleno and grew up on the West Side, my knowledge of the city was limited to landmarks such as Olvera Street, the Observatory, the Tar Pits, and the Natural History Museum; I knew little about the city as a whole. Now a resident of Claremont, I became interested in re-discovering LA because Metrolink could easily transport me there.

Then, around 2003, I happened to take a walking tour of Downtown LA with Bob Herman, a retired professor of sociology at Pomona College, and author of the excellent book, *Downtown Los Angeles, A Walking Guide*.

Inspired by Bob's book, over the next ten years or so, I occasionally took friends on similar tours, always by public transportation. In December 2013, three of these friends persuaded me to write a book of my own. I agreed, if Jacqueline Chase would co-author it with me.

**LW:** For both of you, what would you say was the most significant thing you learned in the process of writing this book?

**Grace:** Oh my! By walking and taking local buses, Jacqueline and I began to see how the many neighborhoods of LA are connected. Each trip we took was a voyage of discovery. To cite one example: finding treasures hidden in plain sight, such as the elaborate ceilings in many of the box office lobbies in old movie theaters.

**LW:** Jacqueline?

**Jacqueline:** I loved discovering the story of how Los Angeles was named. Reading the original journals of Father Juan Crespi, the Franciscan priest traveling with Gaspar de Portola, was exciting. Crespi named the river El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de Los Angeles de Porciuncula because August 2nd was the feast day of Our Lady Queen of the Angels of Porciuncula. Thus Los Angeles was named.

I enjoyed learning about the history of the people that lived and cultivated the different neighborhoods explored in the Adventures. The story of the artist and teams of young people who painted the murals all around LA is especially intriguing.

Because we explored the city by public transportation, we were able to stroll and slowly take in the beauty and culture of the city. We were inspired and deeply nourished in our experiences of LA. Best of all, I love the deepening of my friendship with Grace during this project.

**Grace and Jacqueline's book Loving LA the Low Carbon Way: 24 Adventures in the City of the Angels Via Public Transportation is \$15 and is available at Amazon.com.**

# The Mar Vista Art Walk

**Lenore French** is the founding member of Green Communications Initiative, a nonprofit located in Mar Vista, which focuses on responsible consumption and improving community walkability.

The Mar Vista Art Walk is a free, fun, art-filled community event held the first Thursday evening of each March, June, September, and December. Behind that simple statement lies a clear agenda to improve the walkability of one local community, positively impacting its seniors along with everyone.

People will not walk unless they have some place interesting to which to walk. Art walks are a proven way to accomplish this. Not only do they highlight the amazing outpouring of art and artists happening organically in a community, they also provide a thoroughly engaging and walkable destination for people looking to enjoy their neighborhoods.

In 2014 Mayor Garcetti announced the Great Streets Program, activating the 6,500 miles of Los Angeles roadways by highlighting a one-mile strip in each of its 15 council districts. With this in mind, the first Mar Vista Art Walk was held in December 2015. The art walk showcases all the wonderful creativity happening on the CD-II Great Street of Venice Boulevard between Inglewood Boulevard and Beethoven Street, Mar Vista's central hub. The concentrated one-mile stretch makes the walking of the art walk doable.

Two elements make this art walk a walking hit. First, art is already an organic part of the community. (For more on the history of art in Mar Vista go to: [gcinitiative.org/marvistaartwalk](http://gcinitiative.org/marvistaartwalk)). Second, it is truly walkable. Special attention is paid to elements of sidewalk engagement. Like Hansel and Gretel's breadcrumbs, the Mar Vista ArtWalk encourages walking by sprinkling the art all around. Art is not just indoors, inside four walls, it happens everywhere—on sidewalks, in parking lots, in alleys and garden cafes.

The Mar Vista Art Walk is a multi-generational activity. It is equally accessible to small children in strollers and seniors on scooters. Future plans include pedicab shuttles.

Over time, it is anticipated that the fun, regularly scheduled quarterly art walk will change the perception of the local community about the accessibility of its local hub and lead to ever greater improvements in the safety, sustainability and culture of walkability.

The art walk is a collaboration between the environmental nonprofit Green Communications Initiative (GCI), the community of local artists, arts venues, and local business with public support from the Mar Vista Neighborhood Council and Councilmember Mike Bonin. The Mar Vista Art Walk is made possible in part by grants from the Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with Community Partners and Sony Pictures Entertainment, and with the generous support of our sponsors.

**For more info about Mar Vista Art Walk:**

[facebook.com/marvistaartwalk](http://facebook.com/marvistaartwalk)

**Instagram:** [marvistaartwalk](http://marvistaartwalk)

[gcinitiative.org/marvistaartwalk](http://gcinitiative.org/marvistaartwalk)



# Getting Good Food to our Elders



All ages at the farmers market. Photo via Los Angeles Food Policy Council.

By Clare Fox, with assistance from Karen Law (UCLA Luskin Leadership Fellow).

**Clare Fox** is the Executive Director of the Los Angeles Food Policy Council.

Our elder population is one of the most at risk for hunger and food insecurity. Nationally, the rate of food insecurity among adults 40 years old and older is 17.3%, which translates to approximately 24.6 million people. Los Angeles County is home to 2.5 million senior citizens, and approximately 11% of those elders living below the federal poverty line are experiencing food insecurity.

Most of us understand what "hunger" means, but what exactly is "food insecurity?" I always think it helps to describe what food insecurity means in quality of life terms. Food insecurity looks like skipping meals when you are hungry to save money, or eating less than you desire to save food for later. It means an aching belly and poor nutrition. Food insecurity is correlated with higher incidence of depression and other mental health issues, malnutrition, and increased odds of hospitalization. In Los Angeles County, over half-a-million households are food insecure.

Of course, for our elders, not receiving enough nutrition exacerbates other health issues that come with age. A body that lacks nourishment will be less able to fend off illness. Other factors exacerbate the pangs of food insecurity and hunger for seniors, including the competing costs of medication, medical care and housing, limited mobility, and reliance on limited social security income. Low-income seniors especially may find themselves having to make the critical choice of medication or paying rent over buying food. Add to the mix an additional barrier for many low-income seniors: their own neighborhood.

Terms like "food deserts," "food swamps," and "food apartheid" are all different ways to describe how racial and economic redlining by banks and

developers over many decades fostered neighborhood environments with inadequate community services, including quality grocery stores and restaurants. Often, an excess of unhealthy retail options such as liquor stores and fast food options proliferated in "redlined" low-income communities of color, leaving residents with a dearth of options for a healthy diet.

## A market may seem close on a map but may require a burdensome haul of grocery bags by bus.

Seniors who live in neighborhoods with limited healthy food options have an added challenge, especially if they are unable to drive or walk long distances. The USDA's definition of a "food desert" is a census tract without a grocery store within a mile radius. Unfortunately, even a grocery store a mile away could be completely out of reach for a senior with limited mobility. In our work at the Los Angeles Food Policy Council, we argue that geographic proximity to food retail is an insufficient measure for "access" to healthy food. Just because something seems accessible and readily available, does not mean that access is easily realized. We must consider how people *actually move around their neighborhoods*, as well as issues of affordability, perceptions of safety, and cultural relevance. A market may seem close on a map but may require a burdensome haul of grocery bags by bus, or in reality one may have to walk a farther distance due to cul de sacs, broken sidewalks, or lack of lighting on the street, to name a few ways that geographic proximity may, in fact, not be so "close."

One way we've sought to improve health and food security for seniors in Los Angeles is by going to where seniors gather. The City of Los Angeles is home to over 100 dining centers for senior citizens,

which offer approximately 4,550 meals per day. With the large baby boomer generation joining the ranks of senior citizens within the next 10 years, and many with few retirement safety nets, we argue that senior service centers and meals will be in even greater demand. In 2012, the City passed a groundbreaking procurement policy called the Good Food Purchasing Policy (GFPP), which directs public food contacts to meet baseline standards that improve nutritional quality, as well as invest in local economies, environmental sustainability, animal welfare and fair working conditions in the food chain.

Unfortunately, due to the structure of senior meal contracts, GFPP has been difficult to implement at the Department of Aging. Though nutrition standards for senior meals are regulated by the Older Americans Act, we at the Los Angeles Food Policy Council are eager to see greater improvements in the quality of nutrition and sourcing that our seniors deserve, especially as need for these services increases.

Another place where seniors love to shop for good food in LA is at farmers markets! A wonderful program called Market Match provides a dollar-for-dollar match for participants in CalFresh, WIC, Social Security, or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) (a need-based entitlement program for low-income seniors and disabled individuals), who shop at farmers markets. But... did you know that some senior citizens do not qualify for food stamps in California? If they receive SSI, they cannot also receive CalFresh.

However, not all Market Match programs provide a match for SSI recipients—this means that Market Match dollars are limited for, though very popular among, seniors shopping at farmers markets. Our friends at Hunger Action LA, the principal administrators of Market Match in LA County, hope that investments in the program will consider the demand and unmet need among low-income seniors at farmers markets.

Other strategies to promote good food access for seniors include shuttle services to supermarkets and "Grocery Guides" for seniors, such as the program offered by LA Kitchen, in partnership with AARP Foundation, which offers supermarket tours focused on budget-friendly, healthy food shopping.

The challenges and opportunities to get good food to older Angelenos point to the need for food, pedestrian, and transit advocates to work together. Working together, we can maximize use and impact of good food public programs at senior centers, parks, grocery stores, and farmers markets that also enhance the vibrancy of neighborhoods overall.

Prioritizing the needs of our elders, especially low-income seniors, will result in neighborhoods that offer quality transit and walkable, safe and vibrant routes to good food, which is good for people of all ages.

## SENIORS WALK FOR HEALTH AND ENJOYMENT

**Marilyn Fried** is an avid walker, who represents Council District 3 on the City of Los Angeles Pedestrian Advisory Committee.

If you are older and wondering what you should do to stay healthy, the most important answer is staying active. Physical activity is more powerful than any medication a senior can take says Dr. Cheryl Phillips, Past President of the American Geriatric Society. Health experts advise adults to get about 30 minutes of exercise a day, five days a week. Most Americans do not; they are sedentary, especially seniors. And yet, time and time again it has been demonstrated that daily physical activity is the most important way to prolong life and promote physical and cognitive health.

Walking is both an easy and accessible way of exercising. It can be strenuous or a less challenging activity. It can be paced to the needs and interests of its participants; thus most seniors can modify their activity level to suit their particular limitations. And if walking alone is not motivating or insufficiently enjoyable, then walking with a group of friends makes a lot of sense.

The Griffith Park Adult Community Center (GPACC) offers two walking/hiking programs per week for those

seniors who want to walk/hike and find it more enjoyable and motivating to do it with a group. Our walking/hiking participants also really like learning about the many walks and trails within our community.

For those farther southwest in the city, AARP Los Angeles organizes the LA Soul Steppers walking club, which meets every second Tuesday of the month at 6:00am at the Baldwin Hills Crenshaw Plaza. AARP even offers water, snacks, and free t-shirts for members who show their AARP card. For more details, visit [meetup.com/AARPinLosAngeles/events/224599386/](http://meetup.com/AARPinLosAngeles/events/224599386/).

And if you want to beat the heat, many Los Angeles shopping malls welcome senior walkers. Indoor walking misses some of the community-building elements of a neighborhood stroll, but if hot weather would otherwise keep you inside, it's a good back-up plan. Find more information at [local.aarp.org/los-angeles-ca/mall-walking/](http://local.aarp.org/los-angeles-ca/mall-walking/).

*For further information on the GPACC walking/hiking programs, please call GPACC at 323 644-5579. Newcomers are always welcome.*



Walking on Olympic Boulevard in Koreatown.  
Photo: Los Angeles Public Library Photo Archive

# Increasing the Quality of Life for Older Adults

**Stephanie Vendig** is a founding member of the Griffith Park Adult Community Center, current editor of the center's newsletter, and a former school teacher.

Moving into my eighties this year, I have increasingly become more sensitive to needs not present when I was younger. The older population is growing fast all across America, and LA is no different. Between 2010 and 2030, the older adult population in the LA region is expected to double to more than 2.1 million individuals. And as with most people, I want to "age in place" meaning stay in my community throughout my life as a choice.

But to do so, as I encounter limitations of aging, I want to access resources easily, and not be confined to my house because of unsafe conditions. For the older person, reliance on driving cannot be sustained over a long time. So for many of us, still independent, we need to become pedestrians and/or public transit users.

The car in LA has defined our culture for a very long time. It has been the central focus of LA roadway designs, especially to keep traffic flowing as fast as possible. The unintended consequences have been that LA has one of the highest rates of traffic deaths among large US cities, and people walking and bicycling are over-represented among the traffic deaths.

**More than 50% of older Americans who do not drive stay home on a given day because they lack transportation options.**

This information came from the Los Angeles Department of Transportation and the City Planning Department who have produced a "Vision Zero" Plan in 2015 to reduce LA traffic deaths to zero by 2025. Vision Zero, a road safety policy, promotes smart behaviors and roadway design that anticipates mistakes so that collisions do not result in severe injury or death.

The plan, incorporated into the LA Mobility Plan 2035, was approved by the City Council in August of 2015. Mayor Eric Garcetti also issued a directive that all departments work together with the community to reduce LA traffic deaths to zero, including having an interim goal of a 20% reduction by 2017.

A 2014 report by George Washington University School of Business evaluated 558 places or regionally significant, walkable urban places (WalkUPs) in the 30 largest metropolitan areas in the United States. Los Angeles was

ranked as: Tentative Walkable Urbanism Metro (level 3), meaning that LA is trending toward WalkUP development—along with a few examples in suburbs—especially since Los Angeles is undertaking the largest rail transit expansion in the country, despite being dominated by drivable suburban patterns.

The measures to be implemented are varied and diverse, in order to make it easy for everyone to use the streets, including drivers.

It also includes the concept of "Complete Streets," where streets are designed so that pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities have easy and safe access. Incomplete streets limit safe mobility and can breed isolation. As people age, some will stop or limit their driving. More than 50% of older Americans who do not drive stay home on a given day because they lack transportation options.

But we are not starting from scratch. Thanks to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), public accommodations, employers, and communities have been obligated to provide accessibility features so that there is no discrimination based on disability. We are accustomed to seeing curb ramps, ramps to the entrance of buildings, elevators, bathrooms to accommodate a wheelchair, and other features that make it possible for people with disabilities to take advantage of their community. Specific standards and dimensions are spelled out to assure consistency and to make sure that people can safely accomplish their goals, even though they may be in a wheelchair, using a walker, visually impaired, or deaf.

Newer design ideas are coming into Los Angeles and other cities as there is more impetus for balancing pedestrian and biking needs with the cars, and therefore more safety for all. For example, AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities, an affiliate of the World Health Organization's Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Program, launched in 2006 an international effort to help cities prepare for rapid population aging and the parallel trend of urbanization.

Los Angeles joined the effort on May 18, 2016. As members of the Network of Age-Friendly Communities, the County and City will launch a 2-year, inclusive planning process that will involve robust engagement from all of us.

Thus, LA, at this point in time, is on the verge of becoming a city for people to walk, bike, or easily access public transportation safely, as well as one not totally dependent on the car. We can really be called a walkable city someday.



Walking in Boyle Heights. Photo: CicLAvia

What kind of tools are available to make walking safer, more accessible, and more comfortable for seniors and people of all ages? The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), which represents large cities on transportation issues, offers these suggestions:

- A traffic signal that gives the pedestrians a 3-10 seconds head start when entering an intersection with corresponding green signal for cars in the same direction, reinforcing the pedestrian's right-of-way
- Coordinated signal timing synchronizing traffic movements for pedestrianfriendly areas
- Curb extensions which increase visibility of pedestrians by aligning with parking lanes
- Curb extensions (Pinchpoints) at midblock for traffic calming on low volume streets
- Curb extensions (Gateway) at intersections to mark transition to slower speed streets
- Curb extensions (Chicanes) that provide slight bends in the road
- Aligning bus stops with parking lanes without the buses leaving travel lanes, equipped with transit shelters and wheelchair accessibility (Bus Bulbs)
- Road diets and the conversion from 4 to 3 (or 6 to 5) lanes of travel with bike lanes and a center turning lane or median in order to reduce speeds
- Raised Intersections similar to speed bumps to encourage motorist to yield to pedestrians
- Mini neighborhood traffic circles for uncontrollable intersections
- Converting a lane of traffic into outdoor seating space
- Installing sidewalks that are wide enough to handle foot traffic and features such as cafe seating, benches, and other spots for socializing
- Obstacle-free and maintained sidewalks, plus detectable warnings about leaving sidewalks or right of way to step into traffic

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