

WILMINGTON, LOS ANGELES, CA

L STREET UNDERPASS DESIGN PROPOSAL

PREPARED FOR LA WALKS AND WILMINGTON
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PROJECT BACKGROUND

This document outlines design proposals for improving pedestrian accessibility and safety in the Wilmington neighborhood. According to a 2019 Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) study, the number of pedestrian fatalities in 2019 was the highest since 1988, and attributes this increase in fatalities to alcohol use, speeding, unsafe infrastructure, the prevalence of larger vehicles, and distracted driver. Paired with the implementation of multi-modal transportation, pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists have to compete for limited space. In 2014, Mayor Garcetti and the Los Angeles Department of Transportation released the Vision Zero plan to eliminate traffic fatalities by 2025. We can reduce traffic deaths and improve the pedestrian experience through physical interventions at the local level.

Site

One such opportunity is located at the intersection of South Figueroa Street and West L Street. The junction straddles a single-family residential community to the east and Los Angeles Harbor College to the west. Figueroa Street runs parallel to the 110 Interstate that divides the two spaces. The L Street junction is the community's direct connection to the college's child development program and the adjacent Ken Malloy Regional Park, making the junction important to adults, children, and families.

Design Proposal

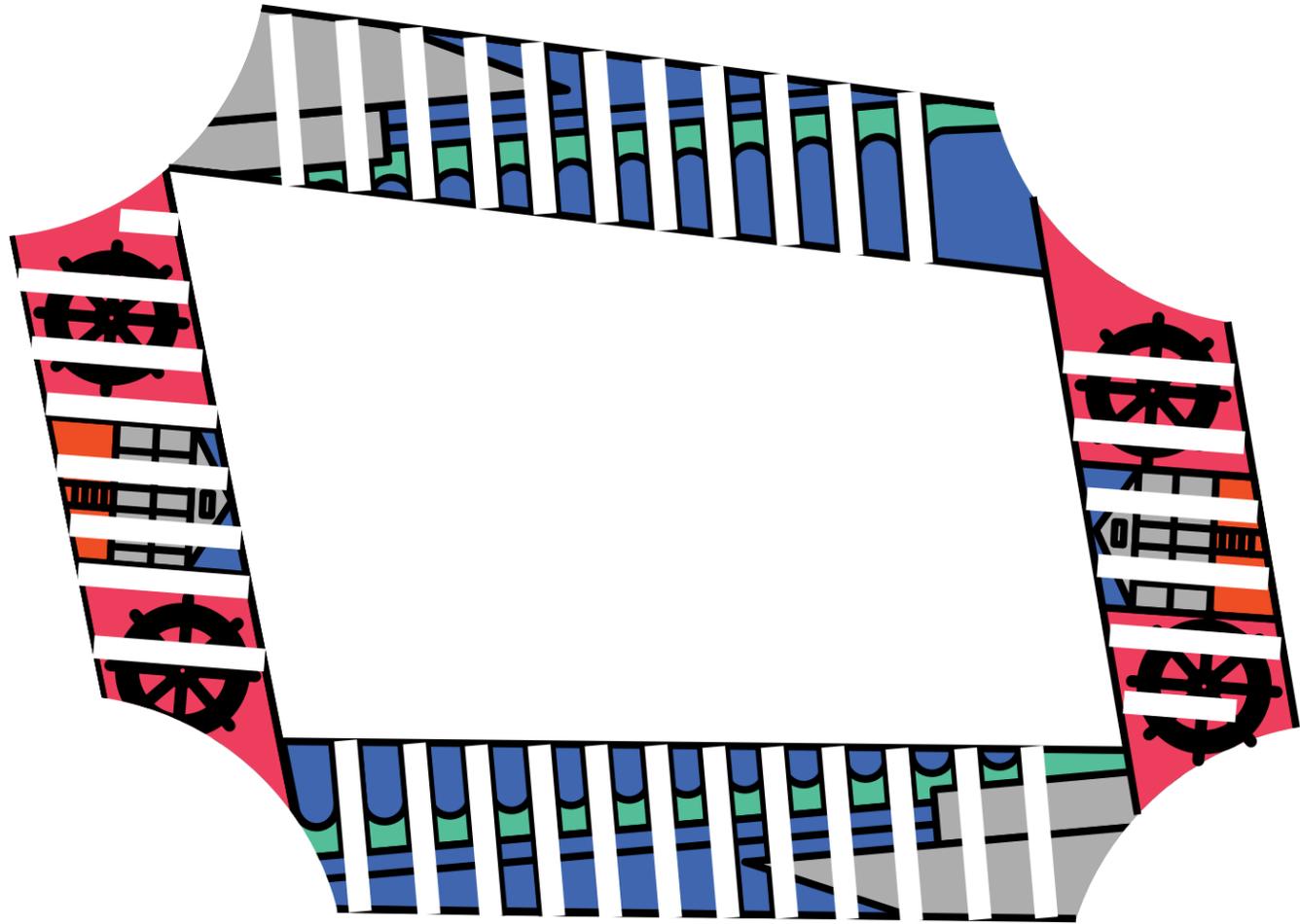
This document outlines a two-phase process that will reduce pedestrian fatalities, improve an individual's perception of safety, and engage with the local community through collaborative art.

In the last decade, communities throughout the United States have tried to incorporate public participation in the planning process and make it more transparent and accessible to residents. Public and community art has been one way of engaging residents in the process and allowing them to design spaces that reflect local cultural values.

For our first phase, we will update the existing crosswalk to improve the crossing's visibility, and additional lighting to the L Street underpass to improve pedestrian's sense of safety can be added in the second phase. The third phase involves potential changes to the facade of the highway, experienced by pedestrians as they walk along the streets adjacent to the highway.



PHASE 01: CROSSWALK ART



Aerial view of crosswalk art. (Base Image Source: Google Maps)

In the early 2000s, urban and suburban communities throughout the country have implemented crosswalk art to improve safety for people walking in urban and suburban areas. Crosswalk art also offers an opportunity to showcase local artists and acknowledge cultural and civic events like the Black Lives Matter Movement. Much of our built environment is shaped by guidelines that are aimed at consistency and efficiency. As per the 2009 edition of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, Section 3B.18 recommends white crossing stripes to increase visibility for motorists since the paint and retro-reflective beads would sharply contrast the black asphalt. While the Federal Highway Administration may argue that crosswalk art diminishes the contrast between the lines and the pavement, thereby decreasing the effectiveness of the crosswalk markings, there is little to no research or data showing an increase in pedestrian fatalities painted crosswalks. However, some case studies show a reduction in pedestrian collisions at crossings with art than nearby traditional crosswalks.

Dongho Chang, a transportation engineer at Seattle's Department of Transportation, cited an internal study showing a reduction in pedestrian collisions "to the point that they're not really happening" associated with crosswalk art. In 2015, the city painted a dozen crosswalk near Capital Hill to shades of the rainbow for the local LGBTQ Pride event. The newly colorful crosswalks were more visible and statistically far safer than those mandated by the federal government. Since then, the city has established a program to make it easier for neighborhoods to implement community crosswalks, and 40 artistic crosswalks, including rainbow stripes and geometric designs created by local artists, have been implemented throughout the city.

Other cities have also noted the effectiveness of crosswalk art in reducing pedestrian fatalities and improving public space quality. Residents of Rochester, New York, for example, noted that rainbow designs calmed traffic on streets that were previously less non-pedestrian-friendly. On public radio station WXXI,

long-time resident Joseph Hutching mentioned that cars have slowed down and "nobody [is] speeding up right here no more. People feel safer."

Wilmington Crosswalk Design

Our first main intervention would replace the existing white striped crossing with a more colorful community crosswalk. Beyond increasing the visibility of crossings to motorists and beautifying an area, the crosswalk art will increase the residents' sense of safety, making them more comfortable utilizing the crossing rather than driving around to reach the child development center and park. On the left is the proposed design that will replace the current crosswalk.



Mock-up of L-Street underpass with additional lighting and locally inspired art. (Base Image Source: Google Maps)



One of many murals at the Gulf Avenue STEAM Elementary School and Magnet Center. (Source: LAUSD)

PHASE 02: UNDERPASS EXPERIENCE

The second intervention deals with the 110 Interstate underpass, aiming to make it more safe for residents and improve the overall experience of traversing this otherwise dark space. We propose adding additional lighting to increase visibility at night and paint the facades to improve space and experience.

To address accessibility and usage, we need to remedy existing safety concerns. According to the National Recreation and Park Association, public space "can quickly become a liability when they become unsafe and as a result, lose their value and benefit to the community." By increasing lighting, we can enhance safety perception since people can see what is ahead, and people on either end can see what's happening inside. The main element limiting visibility is the lack of functioning lighting in the

interior. Repairing the existing lighting and adding more LED lighting systems along the sidewalks enhances the perception of safety and increases nighttime usefulness.

As mentioned earlier, public art helps beautify an area and make it more inviting for its citizens, but it also adds value to all the surrounding community. Incorporating art into our lives can help individuals appreciate their community. The City of Los Angeles and its many communities are known for their street art and murals that showcase its people's beauty and cultural assets. A common theme in Wilmington and the Long Beach region is the Pacific Ocean and the area's connection to the sea. Public schools throughout the neighborhood already incorporate art associated with their mascot and the ocean. We propose borrowing from these similar

themes to tie the community art project to the nearby schools for the purposes of this document, but the final image will be the result of a collaborative public effort that engages community members.

*Left: mock-up of the underpass with the LED lighting and mural.
Above: example of school and community art.*



Mock-up of facade design at the intersection.

PHASE 03: PLACEMAKING

The second phase will focus on vegetation clean-up and improving the area's sense of place. Based on our assessment, the highway's façade is covered in overgrown vegetation and graffiti patches all along the highways. We propose removing the overgrown vegetation and remediating the burm's soil so that the existing trees will thrive and provide natural amenities to the community.

According to the Project for Public Spaces, placemaking strengthens the connection between people and the places they share, allowing for communities to reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community. As such, we want to create a sense of place for the community and identity since the junction sits at the border between Wilmington and Harbor City. Adding murals to the façade helps tie the commu-

nity to the larger neighborhood and provides an opportunity to showcase local pride.

The mock-up designs shown here are based on existing murals and serve only as a reference for the type of art that can be generated. The murals can be used to tie the crosswalk and underpass art, creating a unified experience for residents.