



Why Making the Connections?

There have been numerous plans for the Lincoln Heights and Chinatown areas, but there has yet to be a plan that looks specifically at connecting the people who walk and bike in the area to the Gold Line. Connecting pedestrians and bicyclists to transit is important today because of the challenges we face including climate change, traffic congestion, and public health issues. Getting around by walking or biking is good for personal well being and the planet and should therefore be encouraged.

Photo by Ryan Snyder

Walking and biking are not only important, they're fun and provide moments shared with friends and family. People walking and biking interact with each other and help to build community with neighbors. An active street enhances security and improves the quality of life.

Making the Connections (MTC) is an urban planning and design project that proposes ways to encourage walking and biking to and around the Lincoln/Cypress and Chinatown Metro Gold Line stations. The two study areas for the project roughly encompass the ½ mile radius around each of the Gold Line stations. Study Area 1, Lincoln/Cypress Neighborhood, surrounds the Lincoln/Cypress Gold Line Station and is characterized by pockets of single-family homes and old industrial areas that increasingly include multi-family housing. Study Area 2, Ann Street Neighborhood, is to the east of the Chinatown Gold Line and includes William Mead Homes and old industrial areas with small pockets of housing. The vast majority of residents that live in the neighborhood live in William Mead Homes, which includes Ann Street and Ann Street Elementary School.

The goals of this project go beyond improvements for six key connections. Livable Places also worked to shape Making the Connections into a catalytic project that:

- Fosters neighborhood-based project designs that enable more walking and biking for healthier communities;
- Encourages a jobs/housing balance that supports the efficient public transportation in core Los Angeles communities;
- Reducing dependency on single occupant vehicle trips, reduces traffic congestion, minimizes impacts on valuable habitat and improves air quality;
- Facilitates a more livable development model for the City of Los Angeles and the region.

If the Making the Connections proposals are implemented they will produce regional benefits for Los Angeles such as:

- More opportunities for people of diverse economic and ethnic backgrounds to interact and enjoy the same urban experience of taking the Gold Line, visiting the Los Angeles State Historic Park, eating in Chinatown, or seeing a movie in Pasadena
- Establishing the Gold Line as the preferred means of traveling to the new Los Angeles State Historic Park (Cornfields site) for people living outside the neighborhood
- Reduce emissions from automobiles

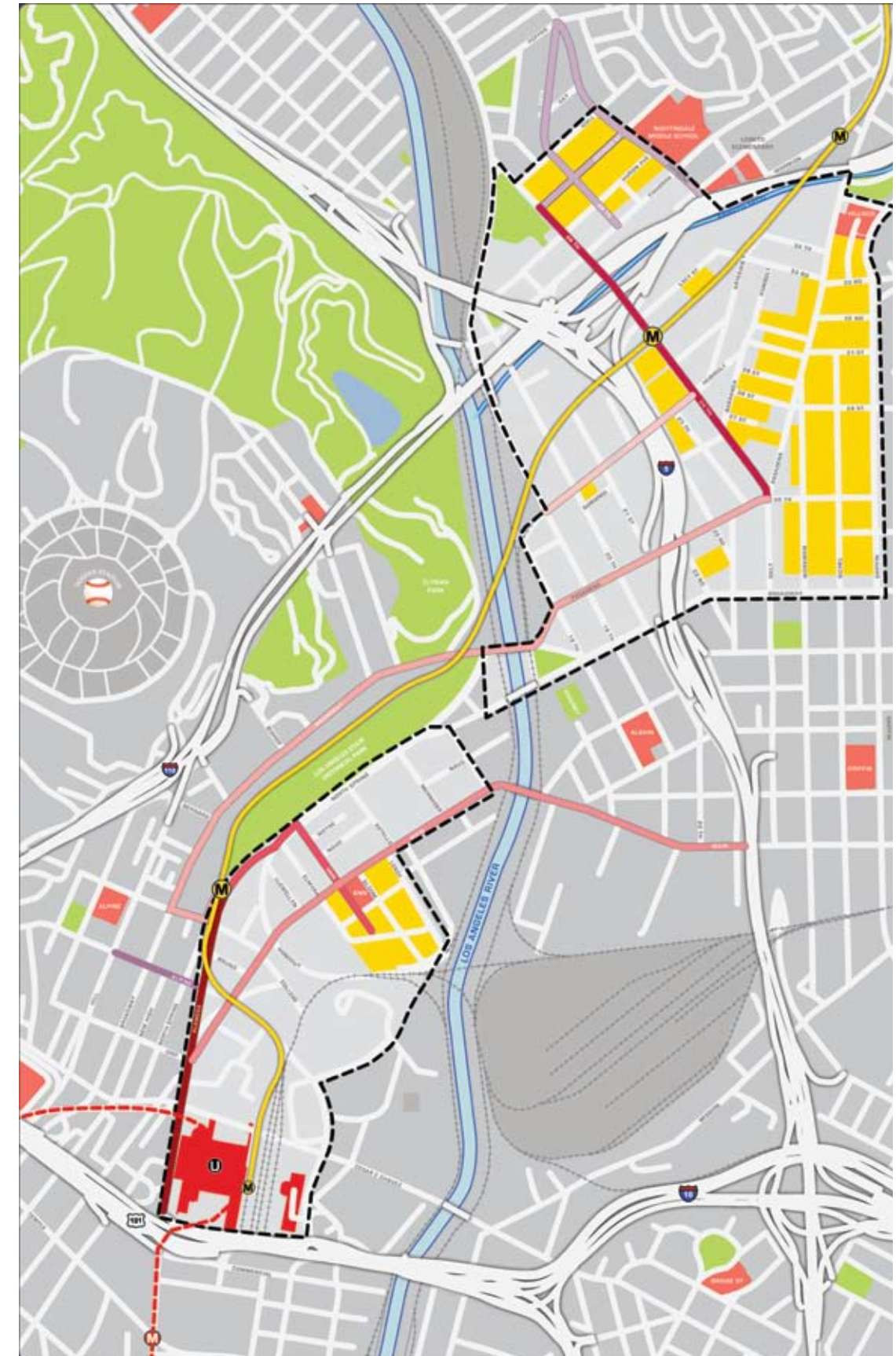
Partners

Making the Connections was funded by a Caltrans Community-Based Transportation Planning Grant that was awarded to Livable Places. Livable Places is a non-profit organization that advances affordable vibrant healthy Southern California communities through advocacy, innovation, and building.

Livable Places completed the Making the Connections project in partnership with Metro and Homeboy Industries. Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) provided Livable Places with important oversight for the project, as well as a great deal of logistical and material support. Homeboy Industries partnered on the project providing two interns who received job training and led community outreach efforts to ensure public participation in the plan's activities.

Project Advisory Committee

MTC was shaped by the guidance of a Project Advisory Committee (PAC). This committee was composed of residents, advocates, representatives of pertinent city departments and Metro staff. The PAC met to review the progress of the project and share their ideas.



The History of Lincoln Heights

Present-day Lincoln Heights, like most areas along the Los Angeles River, was originally inhabited by indigenous peoples for thousands of years. In 1873, Lincoln Heights was subdivided, at which time it was considered to be “out in the county” by downtown residents. Many refer to Lincoln Heights as the first suburb of Los Angeles. It was initially settled as a streetcar suburb. Horse-drawn trolleys crossing the North Broadway Bridge allowed residents to travel to work. In southwest Lincoln Heights, industry displaced housing as wineries, breweries, bakeries, and others took advantage of proximity to rail facilities.

By the 1940s Los Angeles had an extensive network of street cars and trolleys, including the famed red cars which had helped the region expand rapidly outward. As the automobile gained popularity, however, streetcar lines gradually gave way to a more car-dominated transportation mix. This became starkly real for Lincoln Heights when the Pasadena Freeway was built in the 1930s and the Golden State Freeway was built in the 1950s, which have cut through the neighborhoods and isolated sections.

Lincoln Heights residents include people from diverse ethnic backgrounds, including large Latino and Asian populations. The area has a strong sense of civic involvement through the participation of volunteers, community organizations, churches, schools, business groups, and other organizations.

History of Chinatown

Prior to European arrival, present-day Chinatown was inhabited by indigenous peoples for thousands of years. Recent history included waves of immigration from Mexico, Croatia, Italy, and elsewhere. Beginning around 1870, Chinese immigrants were concentrated in neighborhoods south and east of El Pueblo (Olvera Street). This thriving Chinese community was displaced in 1933 to make way for the construction of Union Station. Some displaced residents and businesses were relocated to today’s Chinatown, which was then called “New Chinatown.”

For the past few decades, a great deal of Chinese immigration has moved eastward, primarily into the San Gabriel Valley. However, Chinatown remains a significant population center and an important center of Chinese culture. Beginning in the 1990s, a new wave of artists and art galleries have added new flavors to the historic community.

Located on the outskirts of Chinatown proper are William Mead Homes, which consist of 450 units of public housing on 15 acres. The housing was established in 1942 and named after state legislator and housing advocate William Mead who donated the formerly industrial land for the development. William Mead Homes is owned by the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles and served by the nearby Chinatown Metro Gold Line Station.

Current Trends in Lincoln Heights & Chinatown

Today Lincoln Heights and Chinatown are undergoing a time of transition. With the arrival of the Gold Line in 2003, new housing development has been spurred. Lincoln Heights has seen over 500 housing units built in close proximity to the Gold Line and Chinatown has new housing units slated for the area including the 169 units at Blossom Plaza, a mixed use project that will directly connect to the Gold Line station platform.

One particular effort to guide changes in the Lincoln Heights and Chinatown areas is the Cornfields Arroyo Seco Specific Plan (CASP). Recognizing the areas as places of great transition, the City of Los Angeles is creating a plan to establish a community vision that can guide future development. The CASP plan relates to Making the Connections because of its similar geographic boundaries and shared goals for improving transportation options.

With master planning underway for Los Angeles State Historic Park and ambitious plans approved for the long-term revitalization of the Los Angeles River, interest in fostering great neighborhoods that offer a range of transportation options has been sustained. Students and professional planners alike have looked at ways to improve public space in the area including the creation of great streets that connect people to important destinations.

