



**ANGELS WALK® LA**  
SELF-GUIDED HISTORIC TRAILS

**HOTEL**

**D**

**U**

**N**

**B**

**A**

**R**

**Central Ave**



**Metro**

THE TRANSIT & WALKING DISTRICTS OF HISTORIC LOS ANGELES



FROM LOS ANGELES MAYOR

**ERIC GARCETTI**

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the City of Los Angeles, it is my pleasure to welcome you to Angels Walk Central Avenue.

One of the best ways to explore L.A.'s diverse neighborhoods is by foot. Through the years, thousands of Angelenos and visitors alike have hit Angels Walk's urban trails across the city to witness our vibrant art, architecture, and music scenes—now, it's time to celebrate the incredible legacy of Central Avenue.

I hope you will use this guidebook to learn more about Central Avenue's unique treasures, from the Dunbar Hotel to the Lincoln Theatre and the annual Central Avenue Jazz Festival. These historic locations and celebrations are essential threads in L.A.'s rich cultural tapestry.

Enjoy your walk, and thank you for celebrating the spirit of Los Angeles!

Sincerely,

Eric Garcetti  
Mayor of Los Angeles



**Welcome .....2-3**

**Getting There.....4**

**Walk Info.....5**

**ANGELS WALK CENTRAL AVENUE**

**Introduction to Central Avenue .....6-7**

**SECTION 1**

**24th Street » Jefferson Boulevard ..... 8-22**

**SECTION 2**

**Jefferson Boulevard » Vernon Avenue .....23-41**

**FARTHER AFIELD .....42-45**

**Restaurants + More .....46-47**

**Walk Map + Sites ..... Inside Back Cover**





## WELCOME

## FROM COUNCILMEMBER CURREN D. PRICE, JR.



Welcome to Central Avenue—a historic, multi-cultural, and vibrant community in South Los Angeles, which I’m honored to represent as Councilman of the 9th District. It brings me great pleasure to have Angels Walk LA highlight some of The NEW 9th’s cultural and historic roots. The tour is dedicated to telling the story of the City of Los Angeles by taking you back in time to visit and commemorate significant events, pivotal locations, and legacies of people that have played an important role in our community. For many decades, Central Avenue was the heart and soul of the Black community in Los Angeles. The corridor was home to a variety of Black-owned small businesses including shops, restaurants, financial institutions, insurance services, and entertainment venues that were available to a growing community.

Central Avenue is widely known to be the epicenter of the West Coast jazz music scene and is celebrated annually in District 9 with a community festival that attracts thousands of families, friends, and neighbors from all across Los Angeles. Throughout the walk, you will come across historic landmarks like the famous Dunbar Hotel, which served as a gathering place for many African American jazz musicians and community leaders in the 1920s. The walking trail will also shed light on the Lincoln Theatre, opened in 1927 to accommodate the African American community with musical performances by legendary artists like Billie Holiday and Duke Ellington. You will also learn the history of the 28th Street YMCA, designed by African American architect Paul R. Williams in hopes of creating a safe space for people of color to access a public swimming pool, a gymnasium, and dozens of dormitories. Today, this recreational center continues to fulfill its mission to assist thousands of youth in our South L.A. community.

I hope this neighborhood walk will allow you to discover and understand the rich diversity that is continuously shaping our wonderful City of Los Angeles.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Curren D. Price, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Curren D. Price, Jr.

*Councilmember, 9th Council District*



## WELCOME TO ANGELS WALK CENTRAL AVENUE

We're excited to present Angels Walk Central Avenue, the 13th installment of Angels Walk LA's historical walking trails! With this milestone in our 20-year commitment to celebrating Los Angeles' history and culture, we can think of no better area to highlight than one of the most historically and culturally rich neighborhoods in the city.

In the first half of the 20th century, Central Avenue was notable as a dynamic destination for world-class music and entertainment, as a principal neighborhood in the civil rights movement, and as the focal point of African American banking and enterprise. It was a neighborhood that largely developed out of the trials that came from housing restrictions and other injustices, but nevertheless thrived culturally and economically.

Today, the Central Avenue corridor still contains memories of the great history behind it, while new legacies and culture continue to develop. Latinx communities currently compose much of the district's demographic makeup and are weaving their own story into Central Avenue.

Central Avenue holds a unique and important identity in the history of our city, and it continues to uphold a long-standing mission for diversity, progress, and historical preservation to this day. Residents and visitors alike can benefit from all the area has to offer, and Angels Walk is proud and privileged to have the opportunity to partake in the celebration of this historic community.

Sincerely,



Deanna Spector Molloy  
*Founder, Angels Walk LA*



## GETTING THERE



## GETTING TO CENTRAL AVENUE

The Central Avenue corridor is located directly south of downtown Los Angeles. The historic section covered on the walk is along S. Central Avenue, between E. 24th Street to the north, and Vernon Avenue to the south.



## Metro

Visit [www.metro.net](http://www.metro.net) to help plan your trip and for detailed transit information, including maps and timetables. Metro also has a mobile app available for Android and iOS devices.

## BY RAIL

There are no Metro rail stations directly on S. Central Avenue. The closest station is the San Pedro Blue Line station. A substantial walk is required from this station to the beginning of the walk. For more direct access we recommend taking a DASH or Metro bus.

## BY BUS

**DASH** (Southeast) and **Metro Line 53** buses run along S. Central Avenue throughout the day. Check websites for maps, connecting lines, additional routes, and fare information.

**DASH**

Website: <https://ladotbus.com>

For real-time information: call **213-785-3858** or text any LADOT stop number to 41411.

**Metro**

For bus line info call: **323-GO-METRO** (323-466-3876) M-F from 6:30 a.m. – 7 p.m. and weekends from 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. For the hearing-impaired, use the California Relay Service, 711, then dial the number you need.

## BY CAR

There are metered and free parking spots along S. Central Avenue, as well as on adjacent and parallel streets. Please take note of posted hours and restrictions.

## ACCESS



All public sidewalks on the walk are accessible to wheelchair-bound individuals.

## ANGELS WALK CENTRAL AVENUE

**WALK LENGTH: 1.6 MILES / 2-3 HOURS**

**15 ON-SIDEWALK STANCHIONS**

**61 GUIDEBOOK SITES + 9 FARTHER AFIELD SITES**

**STARTS: S. CENTRAL AVENUE AND E. 24TH STREET**

Angels Walk Central Avenue is designed as a continuous self-guided walking trail that can be joined anywhere along the route; however, it is recommended that you begin at Stanchion #1: Lincoln Theatre, which is near the intersection of E. 24th Street and S. Central Avenue (see map on inside back cover).

*There are many eateries and small markets along the walk; however, there are no public restrooms, so plan accordingly.*

### WALK SMART!

Check local weather (90011) before heading to the walk and be sure to bring drinking water. Also, please use common sense and be aware of your surroundings.

### IN CASE OF EMERGENCY CALL

Emergency Fire, Paramedic, Police (24-hour dispatch): **911**

Non-Emergency Police (24-hour dispatch): **877-ASK-LAPD**

## USING THE GUIDEBOOK

This guidebook takes you through important historical highlights of the Central Avenue corridor. Our hope is that it brings a deeper appreciation and understanding of the community, its distinctiveness, and how it has contributed to the development of Los Angeles as a whole. Please keep in mind that this guidebook is not intended to be a comprehensive directory of area businesses.

### WALK MAP

The foldout map in the back of the guidebook will help direct you along the walk route. Note that it is designed to take you past all 15 of the on-sidewalk stanchions; however, there are many additional sites on the opposite side of the street.

### 1 SITES

These numbered circles indicate all the points of interest along the walk route. “Farther Afield” sites are points of interest beyond the walk that require travel by car.

### ➔ DIRECTIONS

The light green boxes with arrows found throughout the guidebook offer directional guidance along the walk.



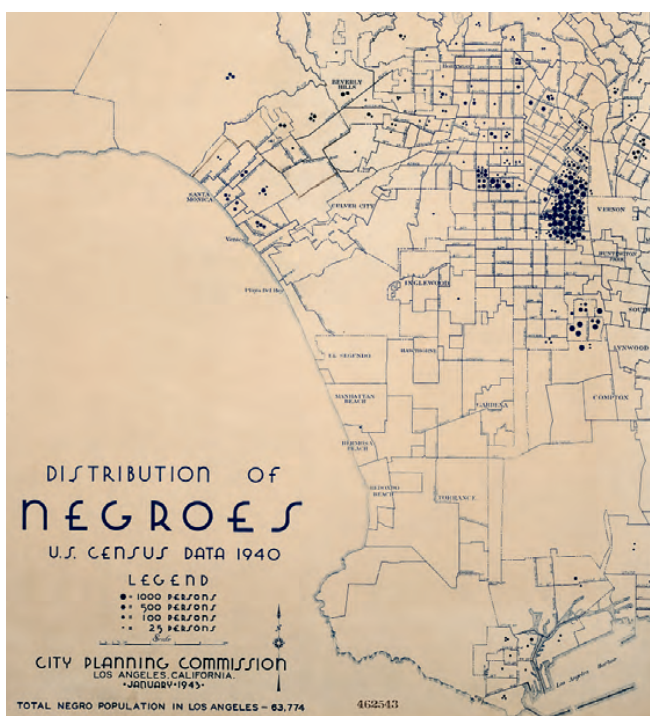
### STANCHIONS

15 on-sidewalk stanchions along the walk route provide additional historic perspective. Look for the QR code on the side of each stanchion. Scanning it with your smart phone's camera or using a QR code reader app will take you to the Central Avenue page on our website ([www.angelswalkla.org](http://www.angelswalkla.org)), where you can download this guidebook, as well as access our other walks.



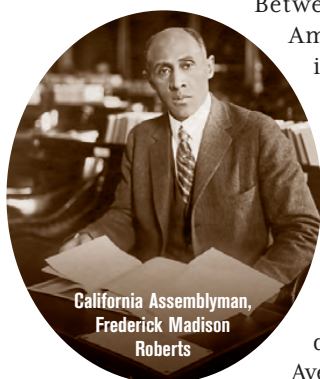


## INTRODUCTION



## CENTRAL AVENUE'S LEGACY

People of African ancestry were among the founding citizens of Los Angeles (*Los Pobladores*) in 1781. Beginning in the 1850s, successive waves of African Americans migrated west, forming an influential community that helped to shape the character of the growing metropolis. For many of the newcomers, Southern California's temperate climate, striking natural surroundings, economic opportunities, and social freedoms provided a better quality of life than did the places they left behind. That said, African American pioneers and other people of color constantly battled deeply rooted bigotry and shifting racial and class structures to negotiate their rights as citizens. Despite the challenges, African Americans actively participated in the city's development.



Between 1900 and 1930, the African American population in Los Angeles increased more than eighteenfold, from 2,131 to 38,894. Meanwhile, the city's general population exploded from 102,479 to nearly 1.2 million. During those years, whites made up the majority, and the numbers of ethnic Mexicans and Japanese equaled those of African Americans. The south-of-downtown district for which Central Avenue served as the spine flourished well into the 1950s. Residents bought

homes, raised families, launched businesses, created social and faith institutions, and nurtured a rich cultural milieu that included lively theaters, nightclubs, and the emergence of an influential jazz scene. In a show of that progress, Frederick Madison Roberts, a Republican, was elected as the first African American to serve in the California State Assembly. He represented the multiethnic Central Avenue district from 1918 to 1934.



Club Alabam, located next door to the Dunbar Hotel, was packed nightly.

The area also emerged as an important force in the nation's civil rights struggles. African Americans effected change on many fronts—social, political, economic, religious, and cultural. As court cases and new public policies chipped away at discrimination in housing and employment, African Americans began to seek new opportunities in Los Angeles communities farther west and south, and the Central Avenue district's importance ebbed. Additionally, other communities of color, along with many whites, moved to other neighborhoods and suburbs in the 1950s and 1960s. Generations of Mexican Americans and, later, people from Central and South America moved in. By 2009, these groups made up 75 percent of the community that occupied the historic Central Avenue district from downtown to Slauson Avenue. Along this walk, many of the contributions that these residents, past and present, have made to the legacies of Central Avenue and greater Los Angeles are highlighted.



Jazz Gateway sculptures near the intersection of Central and Vernon avenues.





### START THE WALK:

Begin the route at Stanchion #1: Lincoln Theatre, located near the intersection of Central Avenue and E. 24th Street. Then, cross to the west side of Central Avenue to continue the walk. Use the map in the back of the guidebook to help direct you.

## 1 Lincoln Theatre

2300 S. CENTRAL AVENUE

When the \$500,000 Lincoln Theatre opened on Central Avenue at 23rd Street in 1927—resplendent with Moorish Revival architecture, a 25-foot-wide marquee, a big stage, an orchestra pit, and seating for 2,100—it garnered the nickname “West Coast Apollo” because the Lincoln presented many of the same stellar acts that graced New York’s famed Apollo Theater. Throughout its 35-year run, the Lincoln offered motion pictures, stage shows, talent shows, and vaudeville acts. It was among the West Coast’s first theaters for African Americans, who were barred from downtown Los Angeles venues or relegated to “colored only” seating. Nearly every performer of note appeared there: Count Basie, Lionel Hampton, Duke Ellington, Bill “Bojangles” Robinson, Nat King Cole, Billie Holiday, Fats Domino, Sammy Davis Jr., and B.B. King. In 1962, the First Jurisdiction Church of God in Christ bought the theater. Bishop Samuel M. Crouch operated it as Crouch Temple, a Pentecostal church, in the 1970s. The Nation of Islam then used it as a mosque. A succession of churches have occupied the site since the early 1980s, the most recent being the Iglesia de Jesucristo Judá, which holds Spanish-language services featuring live bands and praise music.

## 2 Jungle Room (former site)

2407 S. CENTRAL AVENUE

Across from the Lincoln Theatre, in a building, now gone, that had housed the Gaiety Theatre, was the Jungle Room. In the 1940s, returning GIs could listen to live radio broadcasts of jazz shows, often played by local talent, from the club. In her reminiscence about the jazz era in the book *Central Avenue Sounds*—a roundup of musicians’ memories about the street’s musical history—trumpeter Clora Bryant recalled the Jungle Room as “kind of jungly, you know, dark and mysterious.”





### WHERE TO GO FROM HERE:

Read Stanchion #2: Second Baptist Church. At this point you may either continue the walk by heading south on Central Avenue (skip to site 5), or take a one block Side Stroll west on E. 24th Street.

## SIDE STROLL (.14 MILES) ➔

### 3 Second Baptist Church

2412 GRIFFITH AVENUE



Second Baptist Church is among the most influential and oldest of the city's African American faith institutions. The church's history has been steeped in both spirituality and activism, particularly with regard to civil rights. Established in 1885 in a room over a stable in downtown Los Angeles, the congregation grew as migration in the early 20th century packed the pews with African Americans from Louisiana, Texas, and Arkansas. Paul R. Williams, an African American architect, and Norman Foote Marsh designed the building, the church's third home. The gold-toned brick, Romanesque Revival structure, which opened in January 1926, featured seating for more than 2,000 congregants. It was Williams' first major public commission and one of the few from the black community.

### 4 The Children's Center Preschool

2419 GRIFFITH AVENUE

In 1965, Second Baptist Church established a state-subsidized preschool on Griffith Avenue at 25th Street, with a bilingual



staff and services for parents. The facility, across the street from the church, was funded with a first-of-its-kind federal grant under the Head Start program. Mary Clay, an accomplished African American educator,

who started a successful private school for children of color in the West Adams neighborhood, helped establish the preschool.



### WHERE TO GO FROM HERE:

Return to Central Avenue and continue south toward Adams Boulevard. Stop to read Stanchion #3: Liberty Savings and Loan.

## 5 Liberty Savings and Loan Association (former site)

2504–2512 S. CENTRAL AVENUE



The Liberty Savings and Loan building, c. 1954.

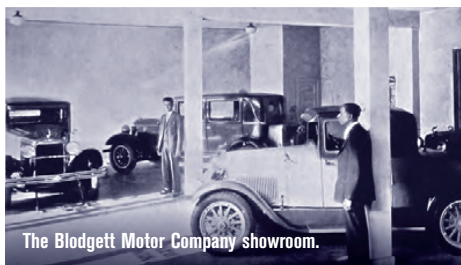
Organized in 1924, Liberty Savings and Loan Association was the first African American-owned business of its type west of the Rocky Mountains. The institution offered economical home mortgages at a time when white lenders refused to finance housing for African Americans and other marginalized groups in most parts of Los Angeles. Liberty's founders established offices at 2504–2512 S. Central Avenue to encourage African Americans to save money and to invest in Liberty and other sound

black-owned businesses. The founding directors combined professional success with community service. Wilbur C. Gordon, who led several business and land development ventures while practicing medicine, was its first president. As part of the push for civil rights, Gordon reveled in helping African Americans create wealth and start businesses. As its second president, Louis M. Blodgett shepherded Liberty through the challenging years of the Great Depression in the 1930s and saw its accreditation as an entity with all savings accounts insured by the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation. In 1961, the owners sold Liberty to a white firm, which moved the company out of the Central Avenue neighborhood.

## 6 Blodgett Motor Company (former site)

2514 S. CENTRAL AVENUE

“See California by Motor” was the closing tagline of a Blodgett Motor Company advertisement featured in the 1928 issue of *Western Progress*, an illustrated booklet about the economic and social advancement of black Angelenos. The ad showcased the latest Hudson and Essex automobiles, igniting the imagination with visions of driving on the open road through California's picturesque landscapes.



The Blodgett Motor Company showroom.

Brothers Charles S. and Louis M. Blodgett, who had moved to Los Angeles from Georgia about 1904, operated the dealership. Moreover, they were successful construction and real estate entrepreneurs who prospered as the city's African American population grew. The Blodgetts also owned the Liberty Savings and Loan Association building as well as all the storefronts on that block.

## 7 Bowers & Sons Cleaners | Bowers Retail Complex

2501–2509 S. CENTRAL AVENUE

The sign on the business reads “Bowers & Sons Cleaners,” but women have always played a vital role in shaping the enterprise’s destiny. Although Horace and Alice named the cleaners after their two sons, Horace Clent and Eric, both of whom have had their turn at the helm, since 1994 their daughter Vivian, also a third-generation family member, has run the business with the same dedication that made her parents and grandparents successful. Adhering to her mother’s motto, “We care enough to add a personal touch,” Vivian incorporated, “Heads above the rest,” when she invested in cutting-edge green technology for the operation. Since 1950, the Bowers and Smith families, joined by marriage, have provided high-quality dry-cleaning and laundry services to the community. Their original store was in Westlake, a district west of downtown Los Angeles. In a 1963 expansion, Bowers & Sons purchased a small dry-cleaning plant at 2507 S. Central Avenue, across the street from the former Liberty Savings and Loan Association building.



Eric, Vivian, Clent (standing, L-R), Alice, and Horace Bowers.

The business thrived and after surviving the 1965 Watts Rebellion, they expanded their dry-cleaning facility again by moving to the larger space next door at 2509 S. Central Avenue—its current location. Alice and Horace continue as owners of the Bowers Retail Complex, which now encompasses the entire building, and includes the dry-cleaning and laun-

dry services plant, as well as several other businesses. A dentist, a sporting goods store, and a computer repair shop have occupied their spaces for more than 10 years. A tattoo supply store and Amigo Discount Store have longer tenures. At the corner of the building, Alice maintains a test kitchen (built by Horace Sr.) for her world-famous baked goods, formally her breakfast restaurant, A Taste of Chi Bas. The kitchen also rents to local chefs. In 2019, Councilman Curren D. Price, Jr. designated the intersection of E. 25th Street and Central Avenue as “Bowers Retail Square” to honor the family’s legacy. “The marker...will serve as inspiration for future generations to have the courage to stand tall and set out for what they want in life,” he affirmed.

## 8 Perry Winkle Cosmetics (former site)

2515 S. CENTRAL AVENUE

The 1928 issue of *Western Progress* featured Perry Winkle Cosmetics, a beauty products shop and salon, as an example of African Americans’ economic and social achievements in the Central Avenue corridor. The site has subsequently seen many different business and residential uses and was eventually demolished. In 2010, a mixed-use project with affordable multifamily apartments opened at the corner of Adams Boulevard. John Cotton Architects (now Y&M Architects) designed the building. Jan Perry, the district’s councilwoman at the time, and other local officials helped to spearhead the effort—one of many investments by the city and developers to revitalize the Central Avenue corridor and South Los Angeles.





## 9 La Guadalupana Bakery

2520 S. CENTRAL AVENUE

Alfredo Hernandez arrived in Los Angeles from the Mexican state of Baja California and established this small bakery in 1989. He returned to Mexico, leaving the business in the capable hands of his son, Francisco. When Francisco's daughter Kenia is not attending chemical engineering classes at the University of

California, Riverside, she sometimes helps out at the counter, selling traditional

pan dulces from the glass-fronted display cases. Offerings include orejas (puff pastry cookies), conchas (buns topped with grooves to resemble seashells, their namesake), galletas (decorated butter cookies), and tres leches cake (sponge cake soaked in three types of milk). Everything is freshly baked and prepared on the premises.



## 10 Unity Finance Company (former site)

2600 S. CENTRAL AVENUE

A Church's Chicken now stands where Unity Finance Company was founded in 1924. Unity was an African American-owned institution that offered loans "to salaried people," according to *Western Progress*. Eugene Curry Nelson, a physician, was Unity's president. In addition to maintaining his medical practice and managing Unity, he was a founding director of Liberty Savings and Loan Association, as well as an investor in oil and real estate. In the late 1920s, Nelson, with partners Journee W. White and Clarence R. Bailey, boldly acquired, from white owners, the Parkridge Country Club in the Riverside County community of Corona. They intended to operate it as an integrated club and to subdivide portions of the property as residential parcels. Nelson and his associates were among many ambitious African American men and women who sought to create business opportunities by serving their community's needs, expanding progress toward racial equality, and envisioning possibilities.

## 11 27th Street Bakery

2700 S. CENTRAL AVENUE

For decades, this corner bakery has made mouths water with its tasty Southern delicacy: sweet potato pies, freshly baked on the premises. On holidays—particularly the day before Thanksgiving—customers from throughout the Los Angeles region descend on the white-painted-brick storefront to secure one of the creamy treats, made with sweet potatoes (from Louisiana), sugar, eggs, and milk—and a secret ingredient. The bakery's sweet potato pies, red velvet cakes, pecan pies, and other goodies are available at the counter, by mail order, and in some grocery stores and restaurants. Jeanette Bolden-Pickens, whose grandfather Harry Patterson founded the business in the 1930s, is the current owner. Patterson was originally a restaurateur, who switched to specialty baking in 1956. In 1980, Bolden's mother, Alberta Cravin, and brother,



Gregory Spann, took over the business. As a student athlete at UCLA from 1981 to 1983, Bolden-Pickens was a five-time All-American track star. She won a gold medal as a member of the U.S. 400-meter relay team in the 1984 Olympics held at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum.

## 12 Las Palmas Carnicería

2712 S. CENTRAL AVENUE

A whimsical mural featuring a scarecrow, sunflowers, and a comical pig greets customers at Las Palmas Carnicería, a three-decade-old business. Inside, another mural of a bounty of foods spilling from a cornucopia adorns the wall above the produce



shelves. The shop's main attraction is the meat case, which offers pescado (fish), pollo (chicken), jamón de pavo (turkey ham), adobada de puerco (marinated pork), patas de puerco (pig's feet), hígado (liver), and many other options popular in Central America and Mexico.

Shoppers rave about the freshly made chorizo de puerco (pork sausage) and chicharrones (pork cracklings). Las Palmas' shelves and refrigerated cases display a wide range of fresh and packaged foods, household products, and beverages. Maria Palmas, the owner, and her relatives immigrated to Los Angeles from Jalisco, Mexico.

### 13 Harris Drug Store (former site)

2801 S. CENTRAL AVENUE



Ellington D. Harris, a pharmacist, and his family moved to Los Angeles in 1921 from Athens, Georgia. Ellington and his brother, Fredrick D. Harris, bought two drugstores: the first at 2801 S. Central Avenue, where Tam's Burgers now stands; and the second at 1950 S. Central Avenue. Both featured soda fountain service. In 1925, Peter Price Cobbs, an internist, and his wife, Rosa, drove their new Dodge to Los Angeles from Montgomery, Alabama, seeking to escape the racial discrimination of the South. He established his medical office above the Harris Drug Store and practiced there until about 1960. Cobbs was among the first black doctors, dentists, and pharmacists to provide service in Los Angeles and at the African American-owned Dunbar Hospital, founded in 1923 at 1393 E. 15th Street. For a time, he also operated a sanatorium on N. Hazard Street in Boyle Heights.



#### WHERE TO GO FROM HERE:

When you reach E. 28th Street head one block west on the south side of E. 28th (take note of the historic homes) to see the 28th Street YMCA. At the end of the block stop to read Stanchion #4: 28th Street YMCA.

### 14 27th & 28th Street Historic District

E. 27TH ST. AND E. 28TH ST. – BETWEEN S. CENTRAL AND GRIFFITH AVENUES

Stroll along E. 27th and E. 28th streets, for a few blocks west of Central Avenue, and you will see a dense residential district of homes built between 1893 and 1912. These properties reflect Los Angeles' transition from a town into a city, after its first major population boom in the late 1800s and the accelerated migration that continued into the early decades of the 1900s. The streets feature excellent examples of late 19th-century architectural styles, including Victorian, Queen Anne, Transitional Arts and Crafts,





Craftsman, Colonial Revival, Foursquare, and Spanish Colonial Revival. Note the exceptional width of E. 28th Street, where houses with elegant detailing were originally built for upper-middle-class white residents. By the mid-1920s, it had evolved into a showcase residential street for middle-class African American families. The handsome cottages on E. 27th Street first belonged to lower-middle-class whites who probably worked as messengers, painters, lumber foremen, and such. Black, Mexican, and Asian Angelenos of various economic strata resided in these houses for most of the 20th century. The 28th Street YMCA as well as many other residences and commercial buildings on these streets are listed in local, state, and national historic registers.



## **15 28th Street YMCA**

1006 E. 28TH STREET AT PALOMA AVENUE



In November 1926, the 28th Street YMCA, also known as the “Colored Branch” of the Los Angeles Young Men’s Christian Association, opened its new building a block west of Central Avenue. The “Colored Y,” part of the international nonprofit YMCA membership community, provided wholesome recreational and educational facilities for African American men and boys. It was also a venue for political meetings and social gatherings for both sexes and was for many years the leading service provider to the city’s African American youth. The Y held public meetings and offered educational programs that helped propel the fight against racism and improve conditions for black Angelenos. Paul R. Williams, an African American Angeleno and a member of the YMCA branch since childhood, became the project architect at the beginning of his long career.



The first-class clubhouse featured an indoor pool that provided unfettered access to swimming at a time when black Angelenos were often excluded from local public pools. Fifty-two dormitory rooms offered inexpensive, clean, and safe accommodations that were a godsend to male African American travelers during the Jim Crow era, when segregation laws and practices posed challenges around the nation.

## 16 28th Street Apartments

BEHIND THE 28TH STREET YMCA ON PALOMA STREET

Thomas A. Greene arrived in California from the Southern United States in 1902. Four years later, he became the executive director of the first West Coast YMCA branch for

African Americans. Its original location, from 1906 to 1916, was at 821 S. San

Pedro Street, until it moved to larger quarters at E. Olympic Boulevard

(now 1400 E. 9th Street). Greene's vision of a new facility and his

sustained fundraising campaign resulted in the building of the state-of-the-art 28th Street

YMCA. Its 1926 opening marked a significant milestone for a community

in need of recreational and social facilities for young men of color. Clifford

Beers Housing and the Coalition for Responsible Community Development infused new life into the landmark building in

2012 when it rehabilitated the property and expanded it with 49 units of housing for adults with special needs and young people

transitioning out of the foster care system. Koning Eizenberg Architecture, Historic Resources Group, and Alpha Construction

Company provided expertise in design, adaptive reuse, and construction. The project

added 38,000 square feet of new construction with a five-story rear wing. A rooftop green space was included

and the original gym was refurbished, as were other ground-floor rooms, which

provide community meeting space and supportive services. The project won many

architecture and historic preservation awards, as well as earned a LEED (Leadership

in Energy and Environmental Design) gold rating.



Thomas A. Greene

### WHERE TO GO FROM HERE:

At this point you may either return to Central Avenue and continue the walk or take a Side Stroll north on Paloma Street.



## SIDE STROLL (.09 MILES) ➔

### 17 Salem Congregational Church

1001 E. 28TH STREET

In 1906, this vernacular English Gothic Revival church was built for the Salem Congregational Church, which served the white community that first settled in the neighborhood. In 1917, the Armenian Gethsemane Congregational Church took over the site, across the street from what would become the 28th Street YMCA. The congregation remained at this location until the early 1940s. In 1944, an African American congregation established the E. 28th Street Christian Church at the site. Since 2003, the Nueva Iglesia Bautista en Cristo, a Spanish-language church, has occupied the space.



### 18 Haven Methodist Episcopal Church

1001 E. 27TH STREET

When this neighborhood was new, two Haven Methodist Episcopal churches were built—one at the northeast corner of E. 27th and Paloma in 1895, and one at the northwest corner in 1905 where a house now stands. When the white congregation outgrew the first building and moved into its second, the 1895 structure became the Norwegian-Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church. In 1923, the Haven congregation constructed a new sanctuary on S. Normandie Avenue to be closer to members who had moved west. The Beth Eden Baptist Temple, a black congregation, then purchased the building. From the 1940s through the 1960s, the Azusa Pentecostal Temple owned the 1895 structure. The Crouch Memorial Church now owns it. The Romanesque Revival structure is a rare example of a wood-clad church from the late 19th century. The exterior was remarkably intact until a fire in 2013. Efforts continue to raise money to rebuild.



### 19 St. Philip's Episcopal Church

2800 STANFORD AVENUE

**NOTE: ST. PHILIP'S IS LOCATED ON THE CORNER OF STANFORD AVE. AND E. 28TH ST. (AN ADDITIONAL .25 MILES AWAY). IT IS BEST VISITED BY CAR.**

Founded in 1907, St. Philip's Episcopal Church was the first African American Episcopal church west of the Mississippi River. Reverend E.L. Chew was its rector—and Los Angeles County's first African American civil service employee (deputy assessor and tax collector). Reverend W.T. Cleghorn was its rector when this structure was built in the late 1920s to early 1930s. At the beginning of his career, James H. Garrott, an African American architect, designed the church in the Romanesque Revival style. Paul R. Williams, another noted African American architect and a St. Philip's member, designed and oversaw construction of the parish hall.



**WHERE TO GO FROM HERE:**

Return to Central Avenue and continue south.

**20 A Place Called Home**

2830 S. CENTRAL AVENUE

A Place Called Home, a nonprofit community service center for youth and families, opened in 1993 in response to widespread despair after decades of decline in South Los Angeles.



The neighborhood had long suffered from dysfunctional schools, aggressive policing, the dual epidemics of drugs and violence, as well as a lack of investment in housing and the local economy. Two episodes, in particular, galvanized this organization's creation of programs and oppor-

tunities for children and youth. In March 1991, four Los Angeles police officers were caught on videotape brutally beating an unarmed African American motorist named Rodney King. Days later, a Korean shop owner shot and killed Latasha Harlins after accusing the 15-year-old African American girl of trying to steal orange juice. The shop owner was convicted of voluntary manslaughter but served no prison time. The four officers in the King case were acquitted of criminal charges. Those inciting incidents set off massive civil unrest throughout the city, resulting in 55 deaths and \$1 billion in property damage. A Place Called Home has been an oasis of safety and love, offering free college and vocational preparation, tutoring, scholarships, nutrition and well-being services, athletics, and arts programs. Young people tend three community gardens. The organization provides daily meals from its kitchen and distributes groceries to needy families. In 2016, A Place Called Home helped launch the Central Avenue Historic Business Improvement District with the aim of celebrating the neighborhood's history and improving the quality of life for all residents and visitors.

**21 Central Avenue Streetscape**

ALONG S. CENTRAL AVENUE

As you stroll Central Avenue, keep an eye out for the "Historic Central Avenue Jazz Corridor" signs on many of the lampposts. They highlight significant events, businesses, and people associated with the street's once vibrant music and cultural scene. This guidebook details a few of these sign locations, including squares named for famous musicians (Gerald Wilson), religious and political leaders (Malcolm X), social activists (Ezekiel C. Mobley, Jr.), and more.



Also, note the low-slung brick buildings, many dating from the early 20th century, and look for the variety of colorful murals and signs. Artists, neighbors, and business owners collaborated to produce some of them through a community process; others were commissioned as public artworks; and some were simply created by property and business owners to enliven and advertise their storefronts.

### WHERE TO GO FROM HERE:



Continue south on Central Avenue. Stop to read Stanchion #5: Jack's Basket Room.

## 22 Jack's Basket Room (former site)

3217–19 S. CENTRAL AVENUE



Jack's Basket Room was one of Central Avenue's most famous after-hours jazz clubs in the 1940s and 1950s. The down-home joint served fried chicken with shoestring potatoes in rattan baskets—but no booze (patrons knew to bring their own flasks). Ads in the *Los Angeles Sentinel* pegged Jack's as “the place where everyone comes to play.” Tradition holds that legendary heavyweight boxing champ Jack Johnson owned the Basket Room; however, city records and club listings from the time name Sam “Jack” Jackson as the proprietor. Almost every night musicians would show up after their paying gigs and jam with one another to a full house until dawn. One momentous night in February 1947, saxophonist Charlie “Bird” Parker played to a packed room after emerging from a six-month stay for heroin addiction at Camarillo State Mental Hospital. Jack's held regular fundraising dinners and served holiday meals to local children. An in-house radio booth broadcast weekly sessions so that anyone could tune in to the jumpin' sounds of the Avenue. The original 1923 brick building suffered a fire in 2018 and was demolished shortly after.

Remnants of the hand-painted signage float above the doorways of the Jack's Basket Room building, c. 2017.







### WHERE TO GO FROM HERE:

Continue south on Central Avenue. Stop to read Stanchion #6: African American Firefighters.



### 23 Fire Station No. 14

3401 S. CENTRAL AVENUE

In 1936, Fire Station No. 14 became the city's second all-African American fire station. The first was No. 30, at 1401 S. Central—a renovated Prairie School-style building that now houses the African American Firefighter Museum.



A new station No. 14 was built in 1949 next to the old one, which was demolished. It was designed in the International Style by architect Earl T. Heitschmidt, also known for the iconic LA Mart.

### 24 Newton Community Police Station

3400 S. CENTRAL AVENUE

Although the Los Angeles Police Department hired its first African American officer in the 1880s, the force lacked significant diversity well into the 20th century. Starting in the 1920s, racial covenants gave rise to discrimination in housing and spurred the formation of African American neighborhoods. In 1925, the LAPD established a station staffed by African American officers and detectives on Newton Street, 20 blocks north of its current location. Employment discrimination lawsuits filed in the 1970s on behalf of women and minorities finally led to



progress in hiring. By 1996, when the old Newton facility closed and officers moved to the new stone-clad quarters across from Fire Station No. 14, the station was fully integrated. The makeup of the LAPD now closely mirrors the city's multicultural demographics. Officers in the Newton area, part of the department's Central Bureau, serve nine square

miles with a population of about 150,000. The 2012 film *End of Watch*, starring Jake Gyllenhaal and Michael Peña, was based on the experiences of a captain who served in the Newton Division in the 1990s. Ricardo Lizarraga Square, at E. 35th Street and Central Avenue, honors the memory of a 31-year-old Newton Division officer who was slain in the line of duty in 2004.



## 25 St. Patrick's Catholic Church

3427 S. CENTRAL AVENUE

Established in 1903, this church has served a variety of immigrant communities over its long history, starting with Irish and Germans in the early 20th century, African Americans in the 1920s and 1930s, Mexicans in the 1950s, and now Central Americans. In 1933, an earthquake toppled the church's towers; another tremor destroyed the entire structure in 1971. Parishioners worshiped for several years in the converted parish hall, where space limitations forced many to stand outside for Mass. Thanks to donations from the region's 77 Catholic parishes, individuals, and foundations, construction on a new church building began in April 2005 and was completed in March 2007. One thousand members may now worship under one roof.



### WHERE TO GO FROM HERE:

When you reach Jefferson Boulevard, cross to the south side of the street and head west. Then, use the crosswalk at E. 35th Street to reach the triangular block. Stop to read Stanchion #7: Angelus Funeral Home and see sites 26 and 27. Return to Central Avenue to continue the walk.

## 26 Angelus Funeral Home

1010–30 E. JEFFERSON BOULEVARD

The founders of Angelus Funeral Home were prominent men, well established in the African American community, who chose architect Paul R. Williams to design their new mortuary. Williams was the first African American member of the American Institute of Architects in Southern California. Louis George “L.G.” Robinson, Lorenzo Bowdoin, and John L. Hill Sr. urged Williams to create a funeral home that would serve the needs of the neighborhood's African American middle class. In *A Man in Our Community*, a 1937 biography of Robinson, author Baxter S. Scruggs wrote of the visionary executives: “These men pledged themselves to the task of erecting the most beautifully appointed mortuary in the city, irrespective of racial classification.”

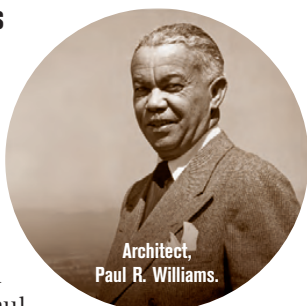


Indeed, they became known as “morticians of distinction.” The 1934 two-story landmark blends Spanish Colonial, Art Deco, and Georgian Revival elements. In the 1960s, Angelus moved to another Paul R. Williams-designed building on Crenshaw Boulevard, where it still operates as a family business today.

## 27 Paul R. Williams Apartments

1010–30 E. JEFFERSON BOULEVARD

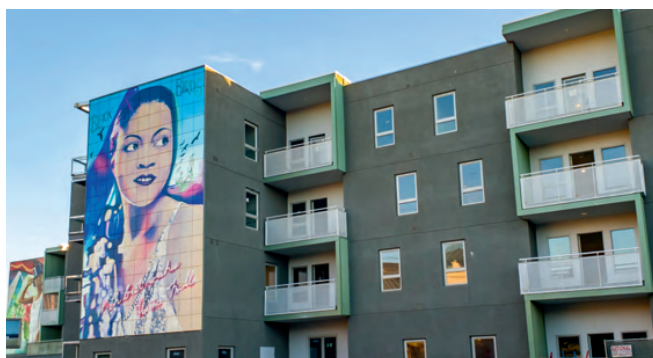
In 2017, the Hollywood Community Housing Corporation renovated the long-vacant Angelus Funeral Home and broke ground to add a new building at the rear of the site for 41 affordable housing units. Completed in 2019, the development included the adaptive reuse of the historic Paul R. Williams-designed property as well as a new four-story residential structure designed by M2A architects. The project showcases environmentally conscious design that prioritizes sustainability and energy efficiency.



Architect,  
Paul R. Williams.

## 28 Florence Mills Apartments

3501–3509 S. CENTRAL AVENUE



At the corner of Central and Jefferson stands one of the neighborhood’s newest additions, the Florence Mills Apartments. Developed by the Hollywood Community Housing Corporation and designed by Killefer Flammang Architects, it is a mixed-use complex with approximately 5,000 square feet of commercial space and 74 housing units for low-income families—with 19 apartments reserved for homeless veterans. The residences are located where the Florence Mills Theatre once stood (previously The Globe, 1912; and the Amusu Theatre, 1923). Named in honor of the gifted entertainer Florence Mills (1896–1927),

the theater featured live acts and movies. Mills, the

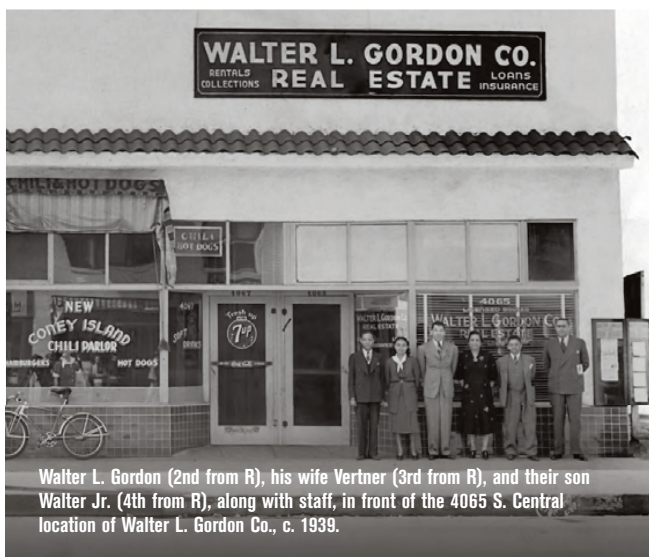
“Queen of Happiness,” was beloved around the world for her singing and dancing performances—and was a major figure of the Harlem Renaissance. She used her music and influence to speak out about equal rights for African Americans, and broke many racial barriers during her life. The “Flo-Mills,” along with other local theaters like the Bill Robinson, the Savoy, and the Rosebud, offered variety and entertainment alternatives to the bounty of jazz clubs along the Avenue.



Florence Mills  
c. 1923.

**29 Walter L. Gordon Company (former site)**

3617 S. CENTRAL AVENUE



Walter L. Gordon (2nd from R), his wife Vertner (3rd from R), and their son Walter Jr. (4th from R), along with staff, in front of the 4065 S. Central location of Walter L. Gordon Co., c. 1939.

*The Los Angeles Negro Directory and Who's Who 1930–31* described Walter Lear Gordon as one of the community's "most conscientious and public-spirited citizens." Gordon (1883–1949) established his real estate company on Central Avenue in 1923, after having launched other successful ventures in Los Angeles and Santa Monica. His real estate brokerage was considered one of the African American community's most prestigious firms. Gordon was the first African American to own and build stores on the "Gordon Block," which was just a few blocks from the Somerville Hotel (later called the Dunbar Hotel) in what was called the "Progressive Row of Central Avenue." Gordon also partnered with his son, Walter Jr., to distribute African American publications—the *Crisis*, *New York Age*, *Amsterdam News*, *Brown Book*—to newsstands in Los Angeles. The younger Gordon would become a pioneering attorney, opening his first practice in the same building that housed the *California Eagle*, the oldest African American newspaper in Los Angeles at the time.

**30 Associated Loan Company (former site)**

3718 S. CENTRAL AVENUE

Sidney Preston Dones, a real estate broker, was the charismatic, hard-working owner of Associated Loan Company, which sold real estate and insurance, and financed personal loans. He first established his business in 1916 at the Booker T. Washington Building on 10th Street and Central Avenue. By 1928, Dones had moved his office across the street and just north of the "Gordon Block," joining in the southward migration down Central Avenue to the new hub of social and business life. An effective self-promoter and showman, in 1924 Dones was the founding visionary of Eureka Villa (later known as Val Verde), an African American resort community in the Santa Clarita Valley's San Martinez Chiquito Canyon in northwest Los Angeles County.



Associated Loan, c. 1928.





### WHERE TO GO FROM HERE:

At Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, cross to the east side of Central Avenue, then continue the walk heading south.

## 31 Malcolm X Way

S. CENTRAL AVENUE AND MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. BOULEVARD

The Los Angeles City Council unanimously voted in 2004 to name this intersection after Malcolm X, the religious and civil rights leader. His daughter Ilyasah Shabazz unveiled the street sign bearing her father's name at the dedication. Jan Perry, the councilwoman who had authored the proposal, said: "Malcolm X worked for the idea of a world of brotherhood. It is this peaceful message that we honor in this special designation to a man who continues to inspire people throughout our city and our nation." As a minister in the Nation of Islam, a political and religious movement, Malcolm X electrified audiences with his bold attacks on racism and calls for black unity and self-reliance to achieve equity. Born Malcolm Little (1925–1965) in Omaha, Nebraska, he later changed his name to El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz. On February 21, 1965, he was assassinated at the Audubon Ballroom in New York City.



## 32 Elks Hall | Masjid Bilal Islamic Center

4016 S. CENTRAL AVENUE



Elks Hall, c. 1925.

Throughout the early 1900s, the intersection of 12th Street and Central Avenue was the hub of black Angeleno life, but by the mid-1920s homeowners, businesses, and faith communities had begun moving south. Elks Hall made the move to 4016 Central Avenue and was a popular music venue, dance hall, and community center. The first-floor ballroom could accommodate more than 2,000 revelers and featured the likes of Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Cab Calloway, and Andy Blakeney. The location is now home to the Masjid Bilal Islamic Center, the city's oldest Muslim congregation, established in the 1950s as Muhammad's Temple of Islam #27. The faith community bought the historic building in 1973 and remodeled it.



Masjid Bilal became the first large mainstream Islamic community in the city and established other centers in South Los Angeles. In the 1980s, earthquake damage forced demolition of the original Elks structure, and the community spent years fundraising and rebuilding. The Bilal Learning Center, a 16-classroom, two-story facility, is now home to the Center for Advanced Learning, a charter school teaching more than 300 students from kindergarten through fifth grade. In 2007, Councilwoman Jan Perry designated the block as Imam Abdul Karim Hasan Square, in honor of the center's longtime spiritual leader.



#### WHERE TO GO FROM HERE:

Continue on Central Avenue until you cross E. 40th Place. Stop to read Stanchion #8: Ralph J. Bunche. At this point you may either continue the walk on Central Avenue (skip to site 34) or take a Side Stroll east on E. 40th Place.

### SIDE STROLL (.15 MILES) ➔

#### 33 Ralph J. Bunche House

1221 E. 40TH PLACE

Ralph Johnson Bunche (1904–1971) was an esteemed African American scholar and human rights activist, who also had a brilliant career as a United Nations diplomat. Bunche is best remembered for winning a Nobel Peace Prize in 1950 for negotiating a cease-fire agreement to end the Arab-Israeli conflict of 1948–49. This clapboard house was his home during his youth.

At the time, the Central Avenue neighborhood was predominantly white. Despite facing racial discrimination, Bunche's family ensured that he, his sister, and cousins received a good



education so that they might have the most productive lives possible. Bunche excelled academically and was the valedictorian of his graduating class at Thomas Jefferson High School (located two blocks east of his home). At UCLA, he

continued to stand out in academics and sports graduating summa cum laude in 1927. He then went on to earn a doctorate in political science and international relations from Harvard University. His studies resulted in the book *A World View of Race*, which focused on colonialism in Africa and international race relations, setting the foundation for his life's work.



#### WHERE TO GO FROM HERE:

Return to Central Avenue and continue south.

### 34 El Montoso Mini Market Mural

4050 S. CENTRAL AVENUE



Inspired by the community, past and present, artist BREK (with help from GZER) created the eye-catching mural that wraps around the building at the southeast corner of E. 40th Place and Central Avenue. The artwork evokes an ongoing dialogue about migration, heritage, and aspirations. It incorporates themes of labor and the struggle to survive in the urban landscape. Houses and high-rise office buildings are depicted as stacks of paper money. Look closely to find camouflaged elements. A pad on a prickly pear cactus, for example, is a skateboard. A trumpet illustrates the crossover between African Americans and people of Latinx heritage. The mural features an inset showing a volcano that spans the border between the Mexican states of Jalisco and Colima, a reference to the heritage of the store owners and the artists. El Montoso is the name of a tiny village in Jalisco.

### 35 Isabel's Beauty Salon | Central Barber Shop

4060 S. CENTRAL AVENUE

Originally from Guadalajara, Mexico, Isabel Cabrera and her husband, Javier Alvarado, have been partners in love and business for more than 20 years.

In side-by-side shops, they provide personal care services to their predominantly Spanish-speaking clientele. Passersby can view the indoor activities through large windows and get whiffs of fragrant hair-care products through the doorways. At Isabel's, the

gregarious owner and other stylists provide *tinte y rayos* (dyeing and highlights); *trenzas*, *extensiones y cosidas en keratina* (braids, extensions, and keratin hair straightening);

and *cortes y peinados* (haircuts and hair-

styles). Manicures, pedicures, facials,

and makeup application are also

available. Photographs of women

with fashionable hairstyles hang

on peach-colored walls. Next door,

images of Mexican Revolution

heroes dot the red and gray walls

of the Central Barber Shop, run by

Javier and their son, Erick.





### WHERE TO GO FROM HERE:

Continue on Central Avenue until you reach E. 41st Street. Then, cross to the west side of Central Avenue. Stop to read Stanchion #9: California Eagle.

## 36 *California Eagle* Newspaper (former site)

4071–4075 S. CENTRAL AVENUE



Charlotta Bass and local businessmen, c. late 1930s.

Starting in 1827, African American-owned newspapers began opening throughout the United States, giving a voice to people who had been largely voiceless. From the late 1800s until 1964, the *California Eagle* offered a radical vision of what an African American newspaper could accom-

plish. The publication began life as *The Owl*, founded in 1879 by John James Neimore, a transplant from Texas. On his deathbed, Neimore asked his protégé, Charlotta Spears, a South Carolinian who had moved to Los Angeles for her health, to keep the paper alive. Spears, who became the first African American woman to own and operate a newspaper, renamed it the *California Eagle* and married Joseph Blackburn Bass, the paper's editor. For many years, the Bases crusaded against housing and job discrimination, as well as police brutality. They also fought fervently for the rights of women and trade unions.

## 37 B & B Appliances' Murals

4075 S. CENTRAL AVENUE

On the Central Avenue side of this corner building, where the *California Eagle* once operated, is a jewel-toned mural by artists Clover (@TheCloverSigns) and Micheline Sarti (@sart95). The bold hand-painted lettering lets passersby know that this is an appliance shop. In contrast, on the E. 41st Street side, a second mural promotes La Cultura Cura for community betterment. A pair of clasped hands conveys a message of respect for the interconnectedness of African American and Latinx people who struggle for social justice and economic empowerment. The collective P.A.I.N.T.–Los Angeles (Providing Artistic Input for Needed Transformation—Los Angeles), led by Nery Cividanis, produced the mural through its youth and young adults program. The program aims to improve life and work skills, reinforce positive cultural identity, and spur constructive contributions to the community through the creation of public art.



### WHERE TO GO FROM HERE:

Continue the walk south along the west side of Central Avenue. Stop to read Stanchion #10: Black Panthers in L.A.



**38 Black Panther Party, L.A. Chapter (former site)**

4115 S. CENTRAL AVENUE



The 1969 raid on Panther headquarters.

In January 1968, an intelligent and charismatic young activist named Alprentice “Bunchy” Carter organized the Los Angeles chapter of the Black Panther Party. The chapter, the first outside Oakland, soon rented a two-story building at 4115 S. Central Avenue that became its headquarters, where it held political education classes, meetings, and other official party activities. Founded in Oakland in 1966, the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense advocated for black nationalism to challenge the status quo and for multiracial coalitions to wage a global struggle to end social and economic inequality. In late 1968, the FBI’s counter-intelligence program, in collaboration with police departments across the country, began a campaign of brutal repression against the Panthers. On December 8, 1969, law enforcement simultaneously raided the local chapter headquarters and two other buildings. Hundreds of heavily armed police officers, including the city’s first Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team, exchanged fire with the Panthers. After the Panthers surrendered, police arrested 18 members—all but four were teenagers. Years later, the chapter’s headquarters building was torn down and a driveway between 4111 and 4117 S. Central Avenue now occupies the space.

**39 Las Alondras Bakery**

4118 S. CENTRAL AVENUE



While growing up in Zacatecas, Mexico, Manuel Felix often worked for a baker, and this experience started him on a lifelong path. Since 2005, Manuel has owned Las Alondras Bakery—named for one of his daughters. Alondra and her siblings—Briandy, Jessica, and Manuel Jr.—all work in the shop.

Cases are filled daily with a variety of Mexican and Central American baked goods—all made using traditional methods and quality ingredients. Las Alondras also bakes and decorates elaborate celebration cakes and cupcakes. Above the bakery’s front door, a friend painted a portrait of Antonia Ortega, the children’s late grandmother, along with other whimsical illustrations. The family also operates a pizzeria on site.



## 40 Azteca Taekwondo Center

4165 S. CENTRAL AVENUE

Above the doorway of this low-slung commercial building is a sign describing how to find the Azteca Taekwondo Center via an open-air corridor. Covering the corridor's walls are colorful murals of children, teenagers, and adults that illustrate the martial arts training offered in the back. Flags of the United States, South Korea, and Mexico are painted over the pathway leading into the well-equipped studio. A sign reads: "Welcome! House of Discipline." Mastering the self-defense art of taekwondo requires speed and agility to accomplish the necessary kicks, blocks, stances, and strikes. Students are taught discipline, etiquette, respect, and self-confidence. Since the early 1990s, Azteca Taekwondo's international masters, Arnulfo Barroso and German Lopez, have offered instruction in taekwondo, along with kick-boxing, karate, and hapkido.

## 41 Hudson-Liddell Building (former site)

4166 S. CENTRAL AVENUE

H. Claude Hudson and E.B. Liddell, both dentists, commissioned Paul R. Williams to design their office building. Built in 1929, the Spanish Colonial Revival structure featured large-pane windows, a balcony, stucco walls, and a tile roof. The building also housed other businesses and ground-floor retailers. It was built as part of the burst of development prompted in 1928 by the opening of the Somerville Hotel (later the Dunbar Hotel), which became an anchor of the African American business district. The Hudson-Liddell Building was located on the site of what is now Westland Car Wash, near E. 42nd Street. It was demolished after being severely damaged in the 1994 Northridge earthquake. Hudson was an influential leader who guided many successful campaigns to improve the lives of African Americans in the city and the nation. In 1947, he and Williams were among the founders of Broadway Federal Savings and Loan.



The Hudson-Liddell Building, c. 1989.



## 42 Central Avenue Jazz Clubs (former sites)

ALONG S. CENTRAL AVENUE

From the 1920s through the mid-1950s, musically minded members of the black bourgeoisie—and white celebrities in the know—could stroll Central Avenue and hear lively sounds reverberating from nightclubs and after-hours joints. Jazz and R&B greats who claimed Avenue territory were Benny Carter, Buddy

Carter, Buddy Collette, and Lionel Hampton—who composed and performed the swinging tune, “Central Avenue Breakdown.”

Trumpeter Clora Bryant recalled that Central Avenue “became more than a street. It was a spirit. It was your goal.” Each Labor Day, musicians participated in a Central Avenue parade. So many jazz clubs opened along the Avenue during this time that the *California Eagle* newspaper dubbed the area “Brown Broadway.”

The black-owned Club Alabam (originally the Apex Club) was located next door to the luxurious Dunbar Hotel and attracted A-list Hollywood stars. Club Congo, the Downbeat Club, the Last Word, Club Memo, and Ivie’s Chicken Shack also opened nearby.

The map at right was compiled with help from *Central Avenue—Its Rise and Fall* by Bette Yarbrough Cox and other sources. All locations are approximate.





# CENTRAL AVENUE JAZZ CLUBS & THEATERS



LOCAL 767  
MUSICIANS  
UNION

—ROSEBUD THEATRE  
—STREETS OF HARLEM

CABIN INN  
KENTUCKY CLUB  
LINCOLN THEATRE  
JUNGLE ROOM

JACK'S BASKET ROOM

FLORENCE MILLS THEATRE

ELKS HALL  
PIG 'N PIT  
THE DOWNBEAT  
THE LAST WORD  
CLUB CONGO  
CLUB ALABAM (APEX CLUB)  
BROTHERS  
TURBAN ROOM  
DUNBAR HOTEL COCKTAIL LOUNGE  
CLUB MEMO  
SWING H  
BEN & PETE'S  
TIVOLI / BILL ROBINSON THEATRE

RITZ CLUB  
IVIE'S CHICKEN SHACK  
DOLPHIN'S OF HOLLYWOOD

PRINCE HALL

BABE & RICKY'S  
SAVOY THEATRE  
CAFE ZOMBIE  
FURNACE CLUB  
DYNAMITE JACKSON'S  
PARADISE CLUB





### WHERE TO GO FROM HERE:

Continue south on the west side of Central Avenue. Stop to read Stanchion #11: The Dunbar Hotel.

## 43 Dunbar Hotel (formerly the Somerville Hotel)

4225 S. CENTRAL AVENUE



The luxurious Somerville Hotel opened in the summer of 1928, just in time to serve as host to delegates of the first West Coast convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Jamaica-born John Somerville and his wife, Vada, built the hotel. The couple were the first black graduates of the University of Southern California (USC) School of Dentistry and involved community members and activists. Vada was also the first licensed black female dentist in the state. After the 1929 stock market crash, the Somervilles sold the property to local businessman and lawyer Lucius Lomax Sr., who renamed the hotel after Paul Laurence Dunbar: an African American poet, playwright, and novelist. The Dunbar proved a hospitable haven for African Americans, including boxing champ

Joe Louis, poet Langston Hughes, countless Pullman porters, and Thurgood Marshall—an attorney for the NAACP and later an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. It catered to stars like Ella Fitzgerald, Lena Horne, Count Basie, Fats Waller, Sarah Vaughan, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, Billie Holiday, Bill Robinson, and other guests who could afford its comforts at a time when most fine hotels and restaurants declined to serve them. Lomax sold the hotel in 1934 to Father Divine, founder of the International Peace Mission Movement. In 1936, former Chicago businessman James “Jimmy” Nelson, and his wife, took ownership and steered the Dunbar through influential decades.



## 44 Dunbar Village

4225 S. CENTRAL AVENUE

In 1988, the Dunbar Economic Development Corporation launched a rehabilitation of the historic Dunbar Hotel to create new affordable housing. By 2013, the building needed another upgrade, and Thomas Safran & Associates and the Coalition for Responsible Community Development won the contract to complete a \$30 million renovation. Dubbed Dunbar Village, the complex now houses low-income seniors. The project includes federally subsidized units in two neighboring buildings, called the Somerville Apartments.

## 45 Somerville South Mural

1068 E. 42ND PLACE



The north wall of Somerville South displays an untitled 1984 mural by Elliott Pinkney featuring prominent local sites and public figures. Among those portrayed are John and Vada Somerville; Tom Bradley, Los Angeles mayor from 1973 to 1993; baseball star Jackie Robinson; Loren Miller, attorney, journalist, civil rights activist, and judge; Ralph J. Bunche, United Nations diplomat and Nobel Peace Prize winner; and Augustus F. “Gus” Hawkins, California State Assembly member from 1934 to 1962 and Democratic member of the U.S. Congress from 1963 to 1991. The mural was relocated and underwent a much-needed restoration in 2015, just in time for the 20th anniversary of the Central Avenue Jazz Festival. Born in Georgia in 1934, Pinkney is a poet, sculptor, and muralist who has been a longtime resident of Compton. Funded by a grant from the California Arts Council, he completed eight murals in the area. Their underlying themes are African American pride, social and political change, as well as the importance of appreciating diversity.

## 46 Central Avenue Jazz Park and Mural

S. CENTRAL AVENUE AND E. 42ND PLACE

Across from the Dunbar Hotel, the Central Avenue Jazz Park honors the corridor’s tuneful history. The municipal pocket park’s ceramic tile mural depicts performers including Charles Mingus, Lionel Hampton, Billie Holiday, Ray Charles, Clora Bryant, and Dizzy Gillespie. Many hands took part in the creation of the mural, with the support of the Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, the Dunbar Economic Development Corporation, the Esperanza Community Housing Corporation, Billy Strayhorn Songs Incorporated, and others.



## 47 Gerald Wilson Square

S. CENTRAL AVENUE AND E. 42ND PLACE



Jazz musician Gerald Wilson's long career as a trumpeter, band leader, composer, arranger, and educator spanned eras—from the swing of the 1930s to the diverse styles of the 21st century. Born in Mississippi in 1918, Wilson began playing piano at six and took up the trumpet at 11. After traveling to the Chicago World's Fair with his mother in 1933, he moved in with family friends in Detroit, Michigan. In 1939, Wilson joined the Jimmie Lunceford Orchestra, a swing band, then moved to Los Angeles and formed his own big band in 1944. Wilson crafted more than 60 orchestrations for singer/songwriter Ray Charles. He arranged and wrote for Duke Ellington, Dinah Washington, Billie Holiday, Dizzy Gillespie, Sarah Vaughan, Ella Fitzgerald, Bobby Darin, Harry Belafonte, and B.B. King. Wilson also taught jazz courses at UCLA. He died at 96. Councilman Curren D. Price, Jr. designated this intersection in his honor.

## 48 Central Avenue Jazz Festival

ANNUALLY IN JULY | BETWEEN MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. BLVD. AND VERNON AVE.

From the late 1920s through the 1950s, jazz thrummed on “The Avenue,” and passionate devotees boosted the careers of Los Angeles-bred musicians, including Eric Dolphy, Foreststorn “Chico” Hamilton, Charles Mingus, and Dexter Gordon. Each July, the Central Avenue Jazz Festival reminds fans that Central Avenue was once the epicenter of jazz in Los Angeles. The Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, Council District 9, the Community Redevelopment Agency, and the Dunbar Economic Development Corporation produced the first festival in 1996. The two-day event, featuring jazz, blues, and Latin sounds, runs between Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Vernon Avenue, with some of the activity taking place inside and in front of the historic Dunbar Hotel. Among the outstanding musicians who have performed and spoken at the festival are Clora Bryant, Gerald Wilson, and Ernie Andrews. Dozens of vendors set up booths along the avenue to sell art, clothing, and a variety of foods. In recent years, an informational pavilion focusing on community health, business, youth, and the arts augments the draw of world-class musical performances.





## 49 Agape Funeral Home

4250 S. CENTRAL AVENUE

For about two decades, the Agape Funeral Home has offered services to its mostly Spanish-speaking clientele. The mortuary is one of five in a consortium, with other locations in East Los Angeles, Anaheim, Sacramento, and San Francisco. The family

that owns the business has been in the funeral business for three generations. The mortuaries' goal has been "to help lighten the burden" of losing a loved one. The Central Avenue location was previously occupied by the People's Funeral Home, an African American-owned business that opened in the 1940s.



### WHERE TO GO FROM HERE:

Continue the walk south along the west side of Central Avenue. Stop to read Stanchion #12: Golden State Mutual.



## 50 Golden State Mutual Life Building

4261 S. CENTRAL AVENUE

Founded in 1925, Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company made history as one of the first African American-owned insurance companies established in the American West and was central in the development of black-owned businesses throughout the U.S. In 1928, to accommodate its growing workforce and clientele, the firm secured a lot and commissioned the building that still stands at 4261 Central Avenue. Its architect was James

Homer Garrott, an African American, then in the early years of what would be a long, successful career. Garrott was the second African American to be admitted to the American Institute of Architects in Southern California, after Paul R. Williams. He mentored many younger African American architects, including Clyde Henry Grimes, who designed Central Avenue's Col. Leon H. Washington Jr. Post Office. By 1945, Golden State was the largest black-owned business of any type west of the Mississippi River and the nation's seventh-largest African American-owned insurance company. In 1949, the firm moved its headquarters to a Paul R. Williams-designed building at the corner of Adams Boulevard and Western Avenue, which still stands.



Golden State agents in front of the Central Avenue headquarters, c. 1948.



**WHERE TO GO FROM HERE:**

When you reach E. 43rd Street you may either continue the walk heading south along Central Avenue (skip to site 52) or take a one block Side Stroll west on E. 43rd Street.

**SIDE STROLL (.09 MILES) ➔****51 Phillips Temple CME Church**

973 E. 43RD STREET

Phillips Temple CME Church has served the South L.A. community since 1907. Reverend R.W. Underwood oversaw a fundraising campaign in 1924 to buy and convert the Seventh Day Adventist



Church at the current location for his congregation. During the mid-20th century, Phillips Temple was the largest of the Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) churches west of the Rocky Mountains to feature recognized youth programs. The church was also a strong proponent of gospel music in the 1920s

and 1930s, thanks to the work of influential musicians: female vaudeville performer, choral director, and arranger A.C. Harris Bilbrew and composer and choral director William Smallwood. To honor her accomplishments in popular and praise music, the county public library system named its Willowbrook branch after Bilbrew. In 1866, African Americans branched off from the Southern Methodist Episcopal Church since, despite the emancipation blacks obtained at the end of the Civil War, the church continued to accept and advocate for the practice of slavery. Originally called the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, the denomination changed its name in 1954 to Christian Methodist Episcopal. In a neighborhood that has become predominantly Latinx, the congregation upholds its African American legacy while striving to serve the community's ever-shifting needs.

**WHERE TO GO FROM HERE:**

Return to Central Avenue and head south. Stop to read Stanchion #13: The Avenue.

**52 Central Avenue Constituent Services Center**

4301 S. CENTRAL AVENUE – THE NEW 9TH DISTRICT OFFICE

The award-winning Central Avenue Constituent Services Center opened in 2010. The one-acre complex, the result of Councilwoman Jan Perry's vision, brings people together for civic services and neighborhood events, while educating residents about environmental innovations. Designed by Paul Murdoch Architects, the complex features a community center, an adjoining facility for city services, and the first roof garden on



a Los Angeles municipal building. Other sustainable elements include sun-tracking solar panels, a stormwater cistern, and vine-covered metal screens for fencing. Artists created for the center three vibrant murals that celebrate the shared histories of black and brown communities, interpret the Los Angeles cityscape, and honor Charlotta Spears Bass, the *California Eagle* newspaper's activist publisher. One of the murals, visible from the street in the courtyard, is *History in Our Hands* by Noni Olabisi and Alma López. Inside the council district office for The NEW 9th, the other two murals—*Trumpet for the People* (Olabisi) and *2012 Butterfly Place* (López)—wrap around the conference room. With its park-like ambience, shared open space, and weekly farmers' market, the trailblazing constituent center gestures to the neighborhood's past, present, and future.



## 53 Central Avenue Farmers' Market

4301 S. CENTRAL AVENUE | THURSDAYS, 10 A.M. – 3 P.M.

Every Thursday, rain or shine, residents can find fresh fruits, vegetables, nuts, and other products on the sidewalk in front of the Central Avenue Constituent Services Center. SEE-LA (Sustainable Economic Enterprises of Los Angeles), a nonprofit community development corporation, has operated this and other markets



around Southern California since 2003. Farmers drive from as far as Bakersfield, Nipomo, Riverside, and San Diego to sell their produce. The market holds events for children and adults, including healthy cooking demonstrations, tastings, raffles, live music, arts and crafts workshops, and seasonal activities.

## 54 Henrietta's Beauty School (former site)

4309½ S. CENTRAL AVENUE

In 1930, Hazel D. Williams and Gertie R. Lee purchased Henrietta's Beauty School, then located on Central at 43rd Street. Founded in 1916 by Henrietta Kent, it was the first African American cosmetology school in Los Angeles. The idea of training people to work specifically with "black hair" was just taking hold. By the time Williams retired in the 1960s, Henrietta's had relocated to 4309 Broadway, near the African American-owned Broadway Federal Savings and Loan (founded in 1948). Her son, John C. Williams II, took over the school and obtained one of the first loans from the Small Business Administration to expand the enterprise.

**HENRIETTA BEAUTY SCHOOL**

MRS. GERTIE R. LEE, Prop.

Enroll now in a school where you will receive careful training under the direct supervision of the most competent and fully qualified teachers. Time required for a complete course is 1600 hours or nine consecutive months. Students in evening classes are required to spend a longer period of time. Tuition fee for complete course and kit may be paid in monthly installments.

Students are welcome from everywhere and are thoroughly qualified for the most rigid examination of any state. Special courses are offered in all phases of the work; also brush-up courses for qualified registered operators at a reasonable fee.

**WE SERVE THE PUBLIC FOR A NOMINAL FEE**

For further information concerning school write or call.

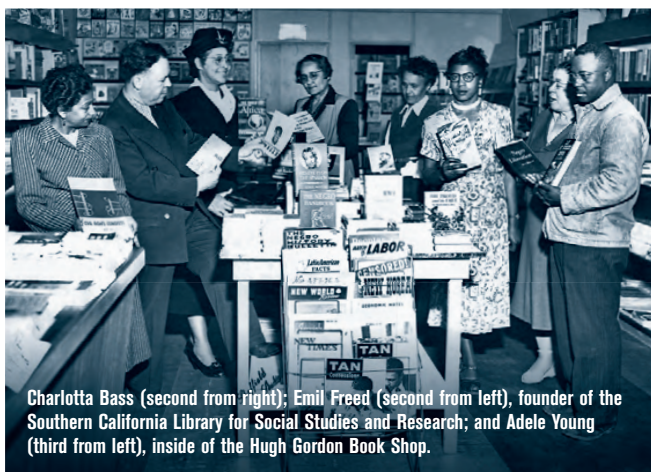
**4309½ SOUTH CENTRAL AVENUE****ADams 9119**

In 2005, when the beauty school celebrated its 75th anniversary, Williams told the *Los Angeles Sentinel* that the family's four schools had graduated more than 30,000 students. The Central Avenue location closed long ago on the site of what is now the Central Avenue Constituent Services Center. Nevertheless, its legacy continues with a third generation of family members and countless licensed cosmetologists and makeup artists.

**55 Hugh Gordon Book Shop (former site)**

4310 S. CENTRAL AVENUE

The Hugh Gordon Book Shop, one of the first African American-owned bookstores in Los Angeles, opened in the late 1940s and over time was located in three different locations along the Central Avenue corridor. The store specialized in books about Africa and African Americans and became an intellectual hub for black Angelenos. The shop was named for Hugh H. Gordon (1887–1946), an orator, writer, and community activist who directed that upon his death his estate be used to establish a bookstore, to be managed by fellow activist Adele Young. In her unpublished



Charlotta Bass (second from right); Emil Freed (second from left), founder of the Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research; and Adele Young (third from left), inside of the Hugh Gordon Book Shop.

1960 memoir, Charlotta Spears Bass, the owner of the *California Eagle* newspaper, recalled Gordon as “a tall handsome man of striking personality.” At every opportunity, she wrote, Gordon spoke to others about the American Negro’s African heritage and “urged reading and study and self-improvement.” Young, the bookshop’s proprietor, was the aunt of modern dancers Carmen de Lavallade and Janet Collins, the latter being the first African American prima ballerina with New York’s Metropolitan Opera. In her 2011 biography, Collins talked of her admiration for Young, whom she described as a “freethinker [who] loved books [and] knowledge...” and had the courage of her convictions—qualities that helped Young build a vibrant and intellectually stimulating environment for her customers.

## 56 Tivoli | Bill Robinson Theatre (former site)

4319 S. CENTRAL AVENUE

In the 1920s and 1930s, the Tivoli screened silent movies and, later, talkies. The owners also brought in live performers, including drummer Alton Redd and his six-piece band, the Pods of Pepper. Even after sound came to films, the theater, located at the site of what is now the Central Avenue Constituent Services Center, employed musicians to play live stage shows between films and “midnight frolics,” late-night jazz and dance concerts on weekends. In 1939 the venue was renamed for Bill “Bojangles” Robinson, a tap dancer who was one of the first minstrel and vaudeville performers to appear without blackface makeup. He headlined Broadway shows and, in 1935, was the first African American to star in a Hollywood film as part of an interracial dance team with Shirley Temple in *The Little Colonel*. Robinson portrayed Walker, Colonel Lloyd’s butler.



Entertainer Bill Robinson.

## 57 Ezekiel C. Mobley, Jr. Square

E. 43RD PLACE AND S. CENTRAL AVENUE

Ezekiel C. Mobley, Jr. was a champion of unity between communities of color. He spent important years in Los Angeles, where he was executive director of United Neighborhoods Neighborhood Council, a nonprofit empowerment group representing the West Adams, Jefferson Park, and Arlington Heights communities. In 2009, in recognition of his efforts to unify communities, the Los Angeles City Council designated the intersection of E. 43rd Place and Central Avenue as Ezekiel C. Mobley, Jr. Square.

## 58 Col. Leon H. Washington Jr. Post Office

4352 S. CENTRAL AVENUE

Opened in 1972, this modern concrete-block U.S. post office has deep connections to two important African American men. The branch was named for Leon Washington, the one-time advertising manager of the *California Eagle* newspaper, who went on to found the influential *Los Angeles Sentinel* (still in publication). Its architect was Clyde Henry Grimes, who



Leon Washington Jr.,  
c. 1941.

also designed many public and private buildings in Los Angeles and the Bay Area. He became the first architect in California to hold the position of deputy state architect. Grimes was born in Los Angeles and earned his bachelor’s degree in architecture at the University of California, Berkeley. He enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Force during World War II and served as a member of the legendary Tuskegee Airmen in the 477th Bombardment Group. In 2007, President George W. Bush presented Grimes and hundreds of other Tuskegee Airmen with Congressional Gold Medals. After his wartime service, Grimes returned to civilian life and began his career as an architect under the tutelage of Paul R. Williams and James H. Garrott, African American architects well known in Los Angeles.



## 59 Central Avenue Jazz Gateway Sculptures

NEAR THE INTERSECTION OF S. CENTRAL AVENUE AND E. VERNON AVENUE



To commemorate the rich musical legacy of Central Avenue, the Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative (LANI)—a nonprofit group formed in 1994 by Joyce Perkins, a community advocate, and Richard J. Riordan, then Los Angeles mayor—conceived of a public art project. Using federal funds earmarked for transit corridor enhancements, design drawings were created for two metal sculptures: a saxophone and a guitar. E.C.

Construction fabricated and installed them on Central at Vernon Avenue, the jazz corridor's southern gateway.



### WHERE TO GO FROM HERE:

When you reach Vernon Avenue, stop to read Stanchion #14: Dolphin's of Hollywood.

## 60 Dolphin's of Hollywood (former site)

1065 E. VERNON AVENUE

Music impresario John Grayton “Lovin’ John” Dolphin opened his celebrated record store, Dolphin’s of Hollywood, in 1948. At the time, he and others in the music industry were promoting a new genre called rhythm and blues (R&B). Dolphin’s filled a void at a time when large white-owned record stores in downtown, Hollywood, and other areas declined to stock many records by black artists. When white landlords rebuffed Dolphin’s efforts to lease a retail location in Hollywood, he brought “Hollywood” to South Los Angeles in the name he chose for his store. From 1945 through the early 1950s, Los Angeles was home to the largest number of independent R&B labels in the country, and Dolphin’s stocked them all. Popular disc jockeys broadcast live on radio stations from inside the store’s front window, spotlighting the hot songs of the moment. In 2018, Los Angeles Councilman Curren D. Price, Jr. named the intersection of Vernon and Central avenues Dolphin’s of Hollywood Square.

The packed-out sales floor at Dolphin's, c. 1962.





### WHERE TO GO FROM HERE:

Cross to the east side of Central Avenue, then continue south on Central Avenue until you cross E. 45th Street and reach the Vernon Branch Library. Stop to read Stanchion #15: Vernon Branch Library.



## 61 Vernon Branch Library

4504 S. CENTRAL AVENUE

The Vernon Branch Library has been serving patrons in the neighborhood since 1901. The library provided not only books but also meeting rooms that community members used daily. In 1915, a new \$35,000 library



was completed, paid for by a grant from the Carnegie Foundation of New York City. When the stately Classical Revival building opened, a bakery was the only commercial establishment in the area. In its early years, so many European Jewish immigrants used the library that informational signs were written in Yiddish. As branch librarian

from 1934 to 1944, Miriam Matthews responded to her patrons' and her own interests by creating a vast collection (now held at UCLA), chronicling the Afro-Mexican and African American experience in California. Matthews was California's first professionally trained African American librarian. From 1927 to 1960, she served the Los Angeles Public Library as branch librarian in four locations and as the supervising librarian of the South Central Region. The 1915 building was so severely damaged in the 1971 San Fernando-Sylmar earthquake, it required demolition. The current, modern-style library, designed by Mathew Lapota & Associates, opened in 1975 and continues to enrich, empower, and inform residents in this ever-evolving community.



Miriam Matthews

### WHERE TO GO FROM HERE:

Congratulations! You have completed Angels Walk Central Avenue. We hope you have enjoyed learning about this historically rich and vibrant community.

There are a number of additional sites to explore in the area. These are listed in the following "Farther Afield" section. Note that most sites require transportation by car.

# FARTHER AFIELD

## A Piñata District

NEAR OLYMPIC BOULEVARD AND  
S. CENTRAL AVENUE

Informally known as the Piñata District, this lively half-mile stretch of downtown Los Angeles features dozens of wholesale and retail stores offering party supplies and piñatas. Since the 1990s, shoppers have been able to find every shape and size piñata, from traditional multipronged stars and burros, to beer bottles, soccer balls, and popular cartoon characters. Many local piñateros design and craft the colorful creations by hand. Along the sidewalks, vendors sell pupusas, tacos, aguas frescas, fresh fruit, and other foods. Patrons may also buy fragrant dried chilies and spices, nuts, Mexican candies, as well as small pets, including turtles, rabbits, and parakeets.



## B Coca-Cola Bottling Company

1414 S. CENTRAL AVENUE



It looks like a luxury liner, complete with hatches, portholes, and a bridge, but this stellar example of Streamline Moderne architecture has been a Coca-Cola bottling plant for decades. Robert V. Derrah, a Salt Lake City-born architect who relocated to Los Angeles in 1924 after receiving architecture degrees from MIT and Harvard University, designed the building in 1936, uniting five industrial facilities, including the original 1927 bottling plant. About the same time, Derrah designed the iconic Crossroads of the World on Sunset Boulevard. The Coca-Cola building, a late-Art Deco triumph, became a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument in 1975.

## C African American Firefighter Museum

1401 S. CENTRAL AVENUE – HISTORIC STATION NO. 30



The groundbreaking African American Firefighter Museum honors the rich legacy of the many black men and women who endured systemic racism to answer a high calling that regularly put their own lives at risk. The first thing a visitor sees inside the museum, housed in the renovated Prairie School-style Fire Station No. 30, is a beautifully restored horse-drawn fire wagon. For decades, African Americans had limited opportunities for advancement



and placement in the Los Angeles Fire Department. Starting in the 1920s, they were relegated to the segregated stations No. 30 and No. 14 (at 3401 S. Central Avenue). It took decades, but eventually the department became integrated. The museum, which was the first of its kind in the nation when it opened in 1997, features photos of pioneering firefighters, paintings, artifacts, memorabilia, and examples of vintage equipment.

## **D Local 767, Musicians Union (former site)**

1710 S. CENTRAL AVENUE

In 1920, eight musicians representing an array of genres, motivated by the discrimination they faced, formed the all-black Local 767 union. With about 1,000 members, it was the second-largest black union in the American Federation of Musicians (AFM). The group purchased a house at 1710 Central Avenue (where the 10 Freeway now runs), which functioned as its office, clubhouse, and rehearsal space. During the Jim Crow era, when white clubs shunned African American performers, the union helped find work for and bolster the careers of many budding artists. Los Angeles musicians belonged to either the all-white Local 47 or Local 767 until the early 1950s, when Marl Young and others started pushing for the two unions to desegregate and unite. The entities merged in 1953.

## **E Thomas Jefferson High School**

1319 E. 41ST STREET



Thomas Jefferson High School opened in 1916 on the site of the former “Stadium East Grounds” where rodeos and bicycle races were once popular. Architect Norman F. Marsh designed the original high school complex in the Classical style, but a massive earthquake centered in Long Beach destroyed its buildings in 1933. Architect Stiles O. Clements was hired to design the new school buildings, and the Streamline Moderne campus reopened in 1935. Ross Dickinson received Federal Art Project funding to paint four large murals in the school library titled “History of the Recorded Word,” which were completed in 1937. Jefferson High has produced many notable alumni, including Augustus Freeman “Gus” Hawkins, elected to both the California State Assembly and the U.S. House of Representatives; Dorothy Dandridge, actress and singer; David W. Williams and Thelton E. Henderson, U.S. District Court judges; Ralph J. Bunche, United Nations diplomat and Nobel Peace Prize winner; Samuel R. Browne, musician and educator; Dexter Gordon, jazz saxophonist; Johnny “Guitar” Watson, guitarist and singer; Barry White, singer, songwriter, and record producer; Alvin Ailey and Carmen de Lavallade, dancers and choreographers; Stanley Crouch, journalist; Iwao Takamoto, animator; and John Meehan, three-time Oscar-winning art director for movies and television.



The first school building, c. 1916.



## FARTHER AFIELD

**F Prince Hall Masonic Temple**

1050 E. 50TH STREET

In 1926, the black Freemasons of Los Angeles built the Prince Hall Masonic Temple. At that time, the city's African American community was moving southward from downtown. The masons had previously gathered at 1209 S. Central Avenue, a building shared with many other societies and fraternal groups. One of two club buildings commissioned by and for African Americans in Los Angeles, the 50th Street site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Clubs and organizations,

such as the Freemasons, played a significant role in the community life of black Angelenos. While some were organized for purely social purposes, others worked to improve the lives of African Americans through charitable and political activities. Founded in 1775 by Prince Hall, an abolitionist and leader of the free black community in Boston, and 14 other African Americans in Massachusetts, Prince Hall Freemasonry is the oldest and largest group of masons of African origin in the world.

**G Benjamin J. Bowie American Legion Post 228**

5115 S. CENTRAL AVENUE



In 1922, African American veterans in Los Angeles founded the Benjamin J. Bowie American Legion Post 228. This first post established by black Angelenos was named to honor Cpl. Benjamin J. Bowie, who in 1918 became the first African American from Los Angeles to be killed in World War I. In 2016, Councilman Curren D. Price, Jr. designated the intersection of E. 51st Street and S. Central Avenue as Benjamin J. Bowie Post 228 Square. The designation coincided with the unveiling of the Patrick Henry Johnson mural *Penta-Loom: Ode to Our Soldiers*, which features bold hued images of personnel from various military branches and pays homage to the Bowie post.



## **H** New Hope Baptist Church

5200 S. CENTRAL AVENUE

At the dawn of the 20th century, Second Baptist Church was the oldest and most affluent African American church in Los Angeles. Eventually, a number of congregants would branch off and start their own churches, reflecting their own particular core values. One of these was New Hope Baptist, which held its first service on January 1906 with 100 members in attendance. In the mid-1940s, during a period of rapid growth, church leaders selected architect Paul R. Williams to design a new building—one that would meet the needs of the growing congregation and fulfill New Hope's vision of being an important pillar in the African American community. Williams' design, completed in 1954, diverged from the traditional historic revival styles favored by many houses of worship built during this time. The building, with its distinctive star-topped-cross, still stands and is in active use by New Hope Baptist Church and a Spanish-speaking congregation.

## **I** Bethlehem Baptist Church

4901 COMPTON AVENUE

In 1944, architect Rudolph M. Schindler designed Bethlehem Baptist Church for a black congregation led by Reverend C.J. Hall. An Austrian émigré, Schindler was among the most revolutionary of the avant-garde architects practicing in Southern California at the time. Bethlehem was Schindler's only church commission, and its innovative design, with an abstract three-dimensional cross atop, makes the most of the small lot by situating at the site's edge a uniquely articulated, two-story, L-shaped structure with a roof terrace. Several congregations have occupied the church through the years, and it is currently home to Optima Funeral Home. The building was designated a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument in 2009.



## CENTRAL AVENUE EATERIES

(listed in the order they are encountered along the walk)

**New Donuts** 2319 S. Central Ave. *Donuts / Pastries*

**La Guadalupana Bakery** 2520 S. Central Ave. *Pastries / Cakes*

**Tacos, Tortas & Burritos** 2528 S. Central Ave. *Mexican*

**Church's Chicken** 2604 S. Central Ave. *Fried Chicken*

**27th Street Bakery** 2700 S. Central Ave. *Pies / Cakes*

**Tam's Burgers** 2801 S. Central Ave. *Burgers*

**Milagro Restaurante** 3007 S. Central Ave. *Salvadoran / Mexican / American*

**Fernando's Bar & Restaurant**

3230 S. Central Ave. *Mexican*

**Subway** 3300 S. Central Ave. *Sandwiches*

**Los Amigos Restaurant Salvadoreño**

3330 S. Central Ave. *Salvadoran*

**McDonald's** 4011 S. Central Ave.

*Fast Food*

**Playas El Salvador** 4052 S. Central Ave.

*Salvadoran*

**Las Alondras Bakery & Pizzeria** 4118 S. Central Ave. *Bakery / Pizza*

**Delicious at the Dunbar** 4229 S. Central Ave.

*"Southern with an Angeleno-Mexican Twist"*

**KFC / Taco Bell** 4270 S. Central Ave. *Fast Food*

**Panda King** 4310 S. Central Ave. *Chinese*

**Cascada Refrescante** 4312 S. Central Ave. *Frozen Treats / Smoothies*

**Pizza Hut** 4351 S. Central Ave. *Fast Food*

**Grandy's Goody Donuts** 4365 S. Central Ave. *Donuts / Ice Cream*

**Tacos Los Carnales** 4370 S. Central Ave. *Mexican*

**Louisiana Famous Fried Chicken** 4400 S. Central Ave. *Chicken / Chinese*

**Jack in the Box** 4407 S. Central Ave. *Fast Food*



Delicious at the Dunbar







Central Avenue Jazz Festival

## LOCAL EVENTS

**Central Avenue Farmers' Market** *Thursdays 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.*

**Central Avenue Jazz Festival** *Annually in July*

## MORE

**The NEW 9th – Council District 9 Field Office**

4301 S. Central Ave. • (323) 846-2651

[www.the-new-ninth.com](http://www.the-new-ninth.com)

**African American Firefighter Museum**

[www.aaffmuseum.org](http://www.aaffmuseum.org)

**California African American Museum (CAAM)**

[www.caamuseum.org](http://www.caamuseum.org)

**Black Cultural Events**

[www.blackculturalevents.com](http://www.blackculturalevents.com)

## THE HISTORIC CENTRAL AVENUE BID

Established in 2016, the Historic Central Avenue Business Improvement District is comprised of 130 property owners and 188 parcels of land totaling 1.56 miles on Central Avenue between Vernon Avenue and Washington Boulevard. Through collaboration, forward thinking, and timely action, the stakeholders of the BID are committed to investing in ongoing improvements and development of the neighborhood; and initiatives that promote and sustain cleanliness, safety, cultural richness and diversity, environmental health, and historic preservation.

The BID is currently led by longtime resident Clent Bowers (of the Bowers family and Bowers Retail Complex), Jhonny Vera (All Famous Barber Shop), Yolande Bankston (Second Baptist Homes), Erica Castillo (Dunbar Village), Akeemi Croom (Carl and Jetaun Croom Senior Vets Housing), Jerrel Abdul Salaam (Masjid Bilal Islamic Center), Mark Wilson (CRCD), Noreen McClendon (Concerned Citizens of South Central Los Angeles), and Monica Mbeguere (A&W Liquor and Alfred Smith Property).

For more information please visit:

[www.centralavenuehistoricdistrict.org](http://www.centralavenuehistoricdistrict.org)



# ADVISORS + FRIENDS

Edgar Aceituno, *Express Sign & Neon*

Priscilla Al Uqdah, *Historic Central Avenue BID*

Ryan Bean, *University of Minnesota Libraries*

Robin Blair, *Senior Director of Operations Support, Metro*

Clent Bowers, *Historic Central Avenue BID*

Oscar Castillo, *Photographer*

Ferdy Chan, *(formerly) Bureau of Street Services*

Tracie Chang, *Bureau of Street Services*

Sam Comen, *Photographer*

Robert Cruthirds, *Memphis Public Library*

Agnieszka Czeblakow, *Tulane University Special Collections*

Jamelle Dolphin, *Dolphin Family Estate*

Michael Dolphin, *Dolphin Family Estate*

Rev. Dr. William S. Epps, *Second Baptist Church*

Gregory Everett, *Ultra Wave Media, Black Panther Consultant*

Sherri Franklin, *Urban Design Center*

Terri Garst, *Los Angeles Public Library*

Tina Gharai, *Tom & Ethel Bradley Center, CSUN*

Spencer Green, *Research Assistant*

Andrea Greene, *Director of Arts & Social Initiatives, Council District 9*

Adel H. Hagekhalil, *Executive Director, Bureau of Street Services*

Molly Haigh, *UCLA Special Collections*

Jacquelyn M. Horton, *(formerly) Council District 9*

Courtney Lam, *Metro*

Diane Lara, *Harry Adams Archive*

Jackie Martinez, *Council District 9*

Valerie McDonald, *Second Baptist Church*

Kevin Minne, *Bureau of Street Services*

Jaime Muñoz, *Design Build Group, Bureau of Street Services*

A. Fay Osborne, *Second Baptist Church*

Christina Rice, *Los Angeles Public Library*

Keith Rice, *Tom & Ethel Bradley Center, CSUN*

Lori Schexnayder, *Tulane University Special Collections*

Dani Shaker, *Historic Central Avenue BID*

Maria Sosyan, *A Place Called Home*

Donald Spivack, *Urban Consultant*

Helen Starks, *Second Baptist Church*

Peter Vacher, *Author, Swingin' on Central Avenue*

Leslie Wall, *(formerly) Council District 9*

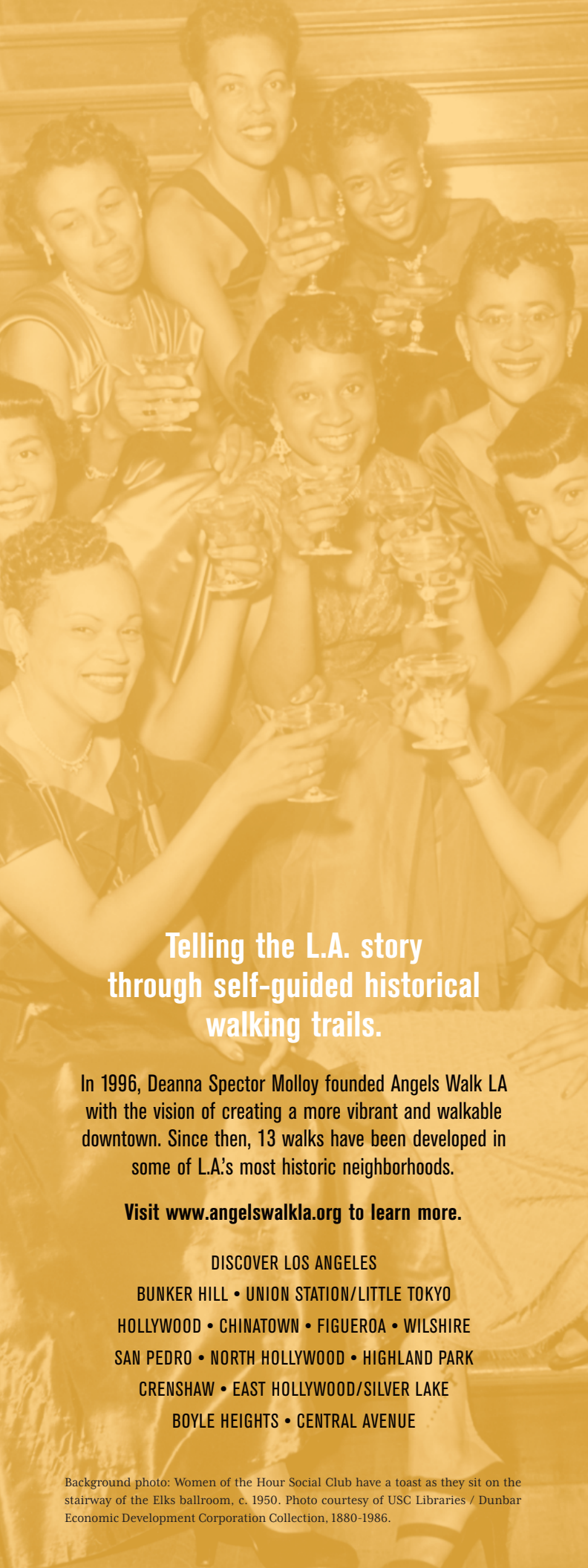
Michele Wesling, *SoCalLib California Eagle Collection*

James Westbrook, *District Director, Council District 9*

Ira Yellin, *Urban Partners (1940-2002)*

Natalie Yost, *Thomas Safran & Associates*

Jonathan Zeichner, *A Place Called Home*



## Telling the L.A. story through self-guided historical walking trails.

In 1996, Deanna Spector Molloy founded Angels Walk LA with the vision of creating a more vibrant and walkable downtown. Since then, 13 walks have been developed in some of L.A.'s most historic neighborhoods.

**Visit [www.angelswalkla.org](http://www.angelswalkla.org) to learn more.**

DISCOVER LOS ANGELES

BUNKER HILL • UNION STATION/LITTLE TOKYO

HOLLYWOOD • CHINATOWN • FIGUEROA • WILSHIRE

SAN PEDRO • NORTH HOLLYWOOD • HIGHLAND PARK

CRENSHAW • EAST HOLLYWOOD/SILVER LAKE

BOYLE HEIGHTS • CENTRAL AVENUE

Background photo: Women of the Hour Social Club have a toast as they sit on the stairway of the Elks ballroom, c. 1950. Photo courtesy of USC Libraries / Dunbar Economic Development Corporation Collection, 1880-1986.

# SPECIAL THANKS

MAYOR ERIC GARCETTI, CITY OF LOS ANGELES  
COUNCILMEMBER CURREN D. PRICE, JR. – THE NEW 9TH  
LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCIL  
BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS  
ADEL H. HAGEKHALIL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
BUREAU OF STREET SERVICES (STREETSLA)  
HISTORIC CENTRAL AVENUE BUSINESS  
IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

# SUPPORTERS

METRO (LOS ANGELES COUNTY METROPOLITAN  
TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY)  
BUREAU OF STREET SERVICES (STREETSLA),  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, CITY OF LOS ANGELES  
LOS ANGELES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

# WALK CONTRIBUTORS

ALISON ROSE JEFFERSON, M.H.C., PH.D., *Historian & Writer*  
MARTHA L. GROVES, *Contributing Writer*  
ROSIBEL GUZMÁN, *Copy Editor & Translator*  
IAN GREEN, *Writer & Researcher*  
RYAN BELL, *Translator*  
WALTER URIE, *Photographer*  
JUERGEN NOGAI, *Photographer (cover photo)*  
RCDF STUDIO, *Stanchion Design*



**ANGELS WALK® LA**  
SELF-GUIDED HISTORIC TRAILS

CALL (213)744-0016 EMAIL [hello@angelswalkla.org](mailto:hello@angelswalkla.org)  
For more information about Angels Walk LA and our  
other historical walks, visit: [www.angelswalkla.org](http://www.angelswalkla.org)

**CURREN D.  
PRICE, JR.**  
Los Angeles City Councilmember



**Metro**



© ANGELS WALK LA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.  
ANGELS WALK IS A REGISTERED TRADEMARK.

All efforts have been made to ensure accurate content  
in this guidebook as of December 2020.

The White House Millennium  
Council designates as a Millennium  
Trail, Angels Walk Urban Trails.  
“Honor the Past – Imagine the Future.”



All content provided in this guidebook is for informational purposes only and does not constitute a legal contract between Angels Walk LA and any person or entity unless otherwise specified. Every reasonable effort has been made to present current and accurate information, Angels Walk LA makes no guarantees of any kind.