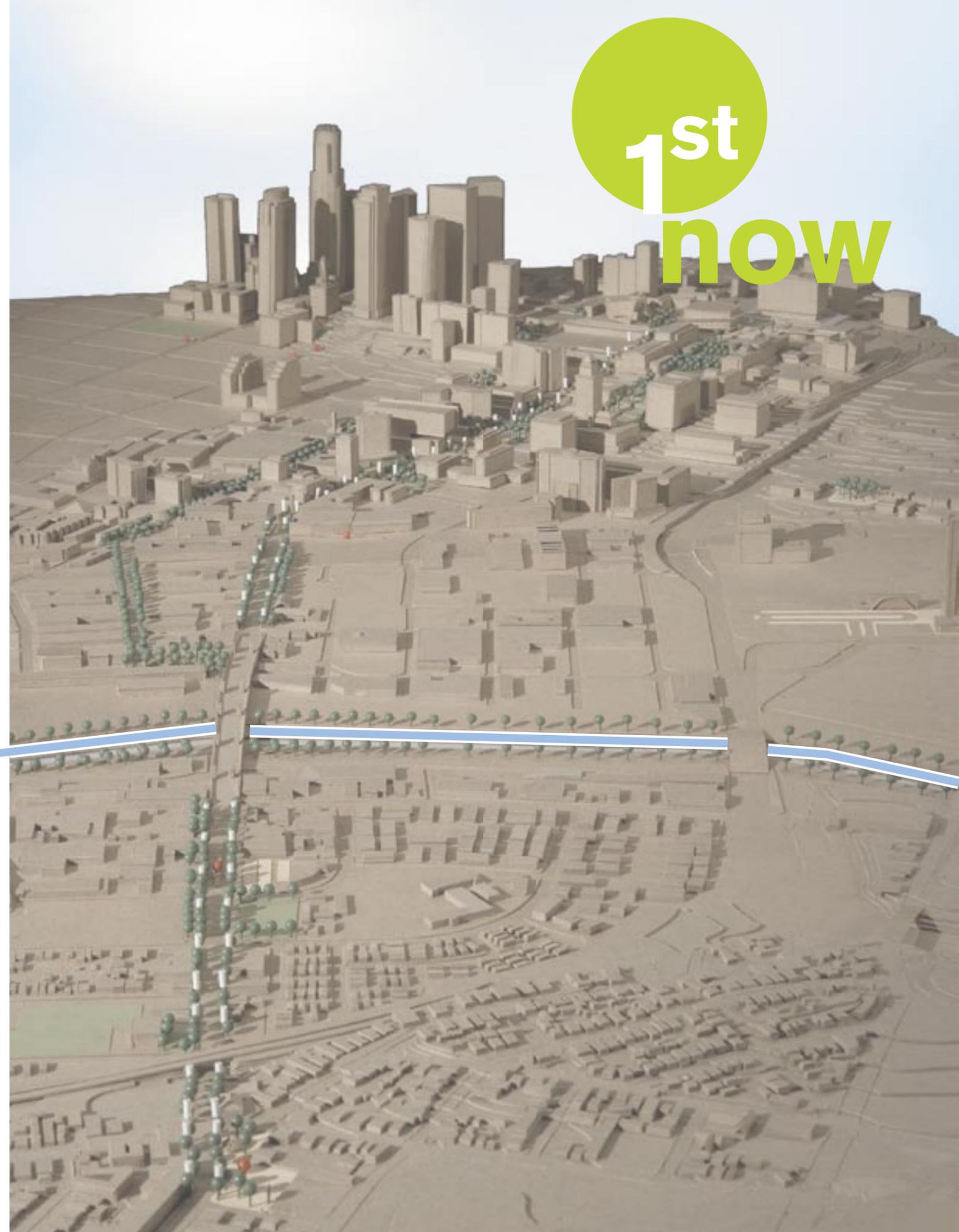




First Street / Calle Primera

july 2005
prepared for Project Restore



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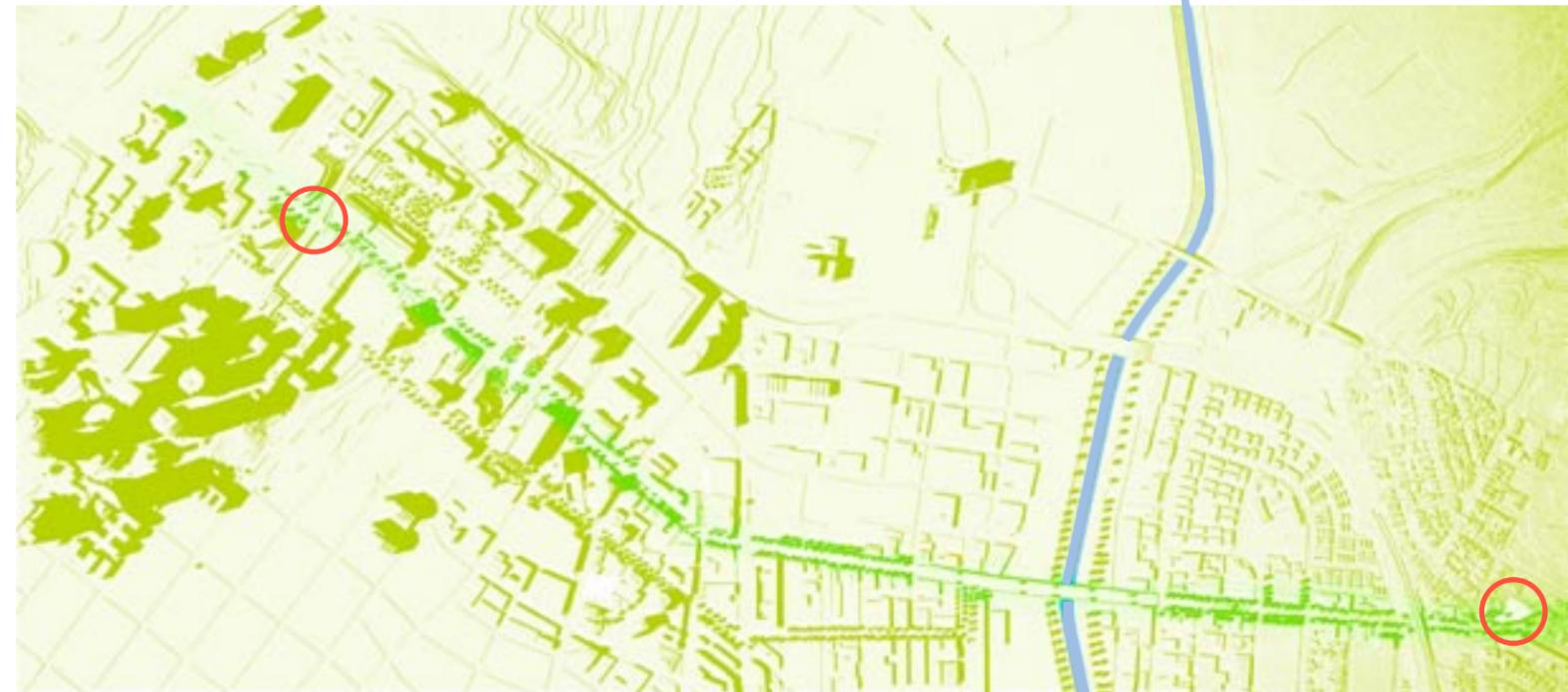
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Boyle Heights Neighborhood Council
Historic Cultural Neighborhood Council
Little Tokyo Community Council
Boyle Heights Neighborhood Development Cabinet
Los Angeles River Artists and Business Association
Friends of the Los Angeles River
Grand Avenue Committee
Los Angeles Grand Avenue Authority
Central City Association



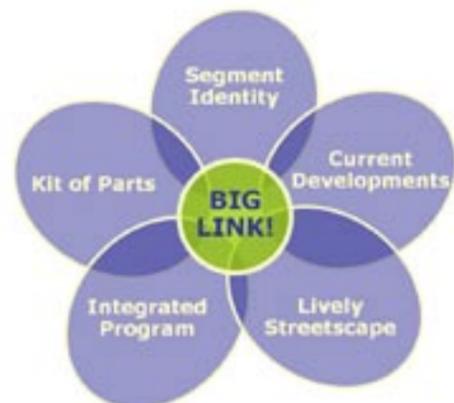
Executive Summary

The First Street Project for Los Angeles envisions a walkable urban corridor filled with pedestrian activity benefitting current and future developments along the two-mile stretch from Grand Avenue to Boyle Heights. From the day to day lunch hour to special cultural and sporting events, First Street promises a sustainable vibrancy that will draw people to visit and remind people to return.

Once connected by surface rail, downtown Los Angeles and Boyle Heights in the late 1880s showed promise for a region that would be tied together as one cohesive yet dynamic community. Today, the MTA is in the process of rebuilding and reconnecting neighborhoods with transit that have become divided by the freeway. Also today are new developments and new opportunities for critical land uses such as housing and schools with over four million square feet of development happening on or near First Street. As the new heart of downtown, the downtown renaissance with Grand Avenue's developments will trickle down First Street through the heart of the Civic Center and Little Tokyo, over the L.A. River and to Mariachi Plaza.

Another reminder of First Street's promise is the current revitalization of the Los Angeles River. New access points and connections are being master planned by a team of experts. With its proximity to the Civic Center, tapping into the vitality of the L. A. River will help facilitate an East-West connection. One of First Street's potential treasures can become a recreational jogging path, a retail promenade and community park – all connected to this sinuous sapphire strand.

The First Street Project calls for a new colorful language of design elements: blossom and shade trees, a Civic Square, rhythmic lanterns, patterned crosswalks, sidewalk furnishings, special signage and wayfinding markers. All will become the glue that ties the distinctive segments of First Street together into a memorable place dedicated to the pedestrian.



Project Goals & Vision

1) Highlight First Street's distinctive **neighborhood segment identities**

- Civic Center
- Little Tokyo/Arts District
- Bridge Park
- Boyle Heights

2) Build on the **current developments** happening on First Street

- Grand Avenue Project
- Federal Courthouse
- Police Headquarters Facility
- Mangrove Site
- L.A. River Revitalization Master Plan
- LAUSD East Side High School #1
- CRA First Street South Project
- Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension
- Mariachi Plaza Expansion

3) Develop a **lively streetscape** that will draw people to First Street

- Establish a street lighting program
- Widen sidewalks where possible
- Designate extra space at bus stops
- Generate graphic information banners
- Create green spaces where possible
- Implement a patterned crosswalk design
- Utilize sustainable materials and methods for planting, lighting and paving

4) Enhance the **connection to the L.A. River**

- Develop a string of green spaces through the entire corridor
- Develop an active "Bridge Park"
- Utilize widened sidewalks on the bridge for a jogging path
- Provide retail, coffee kiosks and a greenway connection under the bridge

5) Develop a **kit of parts** that ties First Street's segments together

- Special street trees to make each segment read uniquely
- Palm clusters and double rows of trees for dense skyscape
- Green parkways in the sidewalk
- Lanterns that echo the Bridge Piers, installed at transit stops
- Benches and signage integrated with lanterns
- Patterned crosswalks symbolic of First Street's relationship to the River

Overview / Historical Context

An unprecedented constellation of public and private developments including the advent of the Metro Gold Line, the restoration and reconstruction of the First Street Bridge, the Grand Avenue Project, and the construction of over 6,000 residential units are creating a resurgent center of vitality in downtown Los Angeles. The locus of this development is the First Street Corridor, reestablishing itself as an important transportation link, as well as a symbolic link from Bunker Hill to Boyle Heights.

The vicinity of the First Street Corridor and the L.A. River has been associated with the origins of Los Angeles since the City's earliest beginnings.

Los Angeles is among the youngest of the great World Cities, founded as an outpost of the Spanish Empire in 1781, but its origins as a place of habitation extend to the distant past.

The First Peoples found sustenance along the Riverbanks for generations. Near here, the river's meandering seaward course between the hills and bluffs narrowed to a crossing place. Here the City was founded as a colonial outpost of Alta California. The settlement was first established on these banks, and moved westerly to higher ground after the repeated winter flooding revealed the unpredictable power of the river.

Traces of all periods of the city's rich history are abundant on First Street. An enduring presence of the pueblo is its diagonal "Spanish Grid" of streets with its old world city planning practice inherited from antiquity. Oriented north-west and south-east afforded protection from the north wind and optimum solar orientation.

Remnants of the city's 19th and early 20th Century architectural fabric eradicated from the Civic Center and Bunker Hill remain as a valuable heritage of the brick masonry commercial blocks of Little Tokyo and Boyle Heights, the monumental First Street Bridge and the industrial and transportation infrastructure surrounding the river.

The First Street Bridge reconstruction focuses attention to the River and to the connection of downtown Los Angeles with the region-offering vantage points for a fuller appreciation of the sweep and scale of the landscape and a new powerful, inclusive defining image for the City.



historic aerial view looking due southeast



section / plan of First Street at the L.A. River

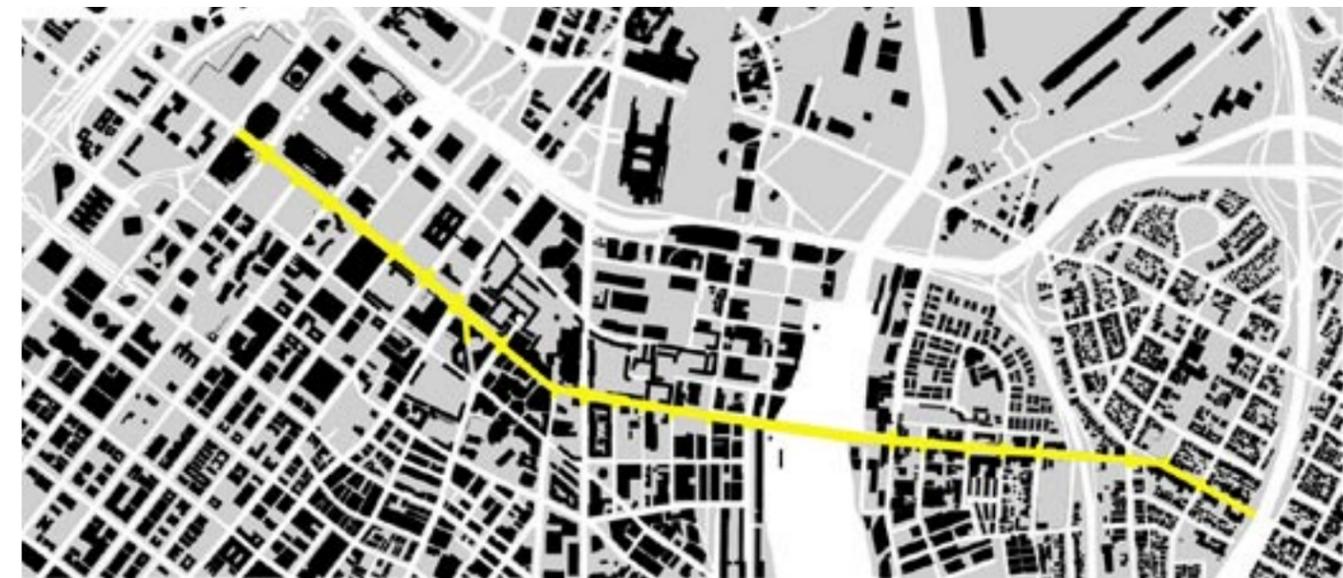


figure ground plan of First Street and its surroundings

Iconography of First Street (1920-2005)

One can explore First Street and notice the many informal murals lining its edges, telling personal stories of today and the past. First Street's historical significance could be described in its own colorful mural, telling an historically rooted story of First Street as the First Valley of Los Angeles. A mixed collage of plans and illustrations would include the development sketches by many players including J.S. Ranking, Cook and Hall and Lloyd Wright whose plans were not chosen over one another but rather combined like ingredients to an experimental recipe in 1927.

This is what has become today's Bunker Hill which, since 2001, has morphed from a somewhat isolated center to the new and rejuvenated heart of downtown with several new projects including Frank Gehry's Walt Disney Concert Hall, Raphael Moneo's cathedral and the Grand Avenue Project. Also finding their spot on the mural would be the headshots of famous downtown developers such as William Muholland and Myron Hunt and iconographic structures like City Hall's 1928 art deco tower, the recently completed Caltrans building, Little Tokyo's retail and cultural center mostly developed in the 1970s, the First Street Viaduct Bridge built in 1928 and of course Mariachi Plaza with the beloved string and brass tune players in the foreground of this great center of Mexican culture.



Painted murals of First Street

The First Street Corridor, touches the cultural, civic and historic heart of the City, and embodies its future in the resurgent vitality of Boyle Heights and the Eastside, Little Tokyo, and a rapidly growing downtown residential district. First Street also threads itself through a growing number of significant City landmarks.

The Los Angeles City Hall, and the Walt Disney Concert Hall, are globally recognized LA icons, as are the signature fan palms of the skyline. The context of these icons will be enriched and changed by an extraordinary array of new and recent development: New residential towers and gardens on Bunker Hill; civic structures including the proposed Federal Courts, Police Headquarters and the recently completed building for Caltrans; Metro Gold Line transit stations and adjacent residential and mixed use development in Little Tokyo, Bridge Park, and Boyle Heights.

The reconstructed First Street Bridge and downtown River corridor can become a landmark for Los Angeles - symbolic on many levels - linking and joining diverse and sometimes disparate communities, and providing a unique vantage point for a new appreciation of the scale setting of a great City.



Painted buildings tell a personal story of First Street and its community



Images of First Street from yesterday to today

Regional Setting / L.A. River Connection

Located in the valley between the Santa Monica Mountains and Long Beach, First Street cuts through a diverse cross-section of Los Angeles. From the Downtown Civic Center it runs adjacent to the Historic Core, the Old Bank District, the Arts District and is the main artery of Little Tokyo. First Street bridges across the L.A. River following east into the Pico Aliso Village of Boyle Heights.

One of the most notable features of First Street is its proximity to the Los Angeles River. With a revitalization master plan underway, First Street will become a major feeder to this long deserved public recreational open space that will serve the greater region.

First Street's critical influences

- the City's Link to its History and Origin
- the Civic Center's New Front Door
- Downtown's "Gateway" to the L.A. River
- a Connection to Diverse Communities in the Region



regional site diagram

Focus Points

Highlight The Bridge as the Link between the City and the River

The First Street Bridge is the closest and most important link between downtown Los Angeles and the Los Angeles River. The Bridge helps conjoin planning on a district scale (downtown) with planning on a regional scale (the river) and provides strategic opportunities for addressing alternative access points for the river channel and surrounding district.

Use the Bridge to Engage the Regional Landscape

The Bridge connects two visual landscapes at two different scales – the cluster of towers which identify downtown and the regional landscape of the river and the San Gabriel mountains, visible from the bridge.

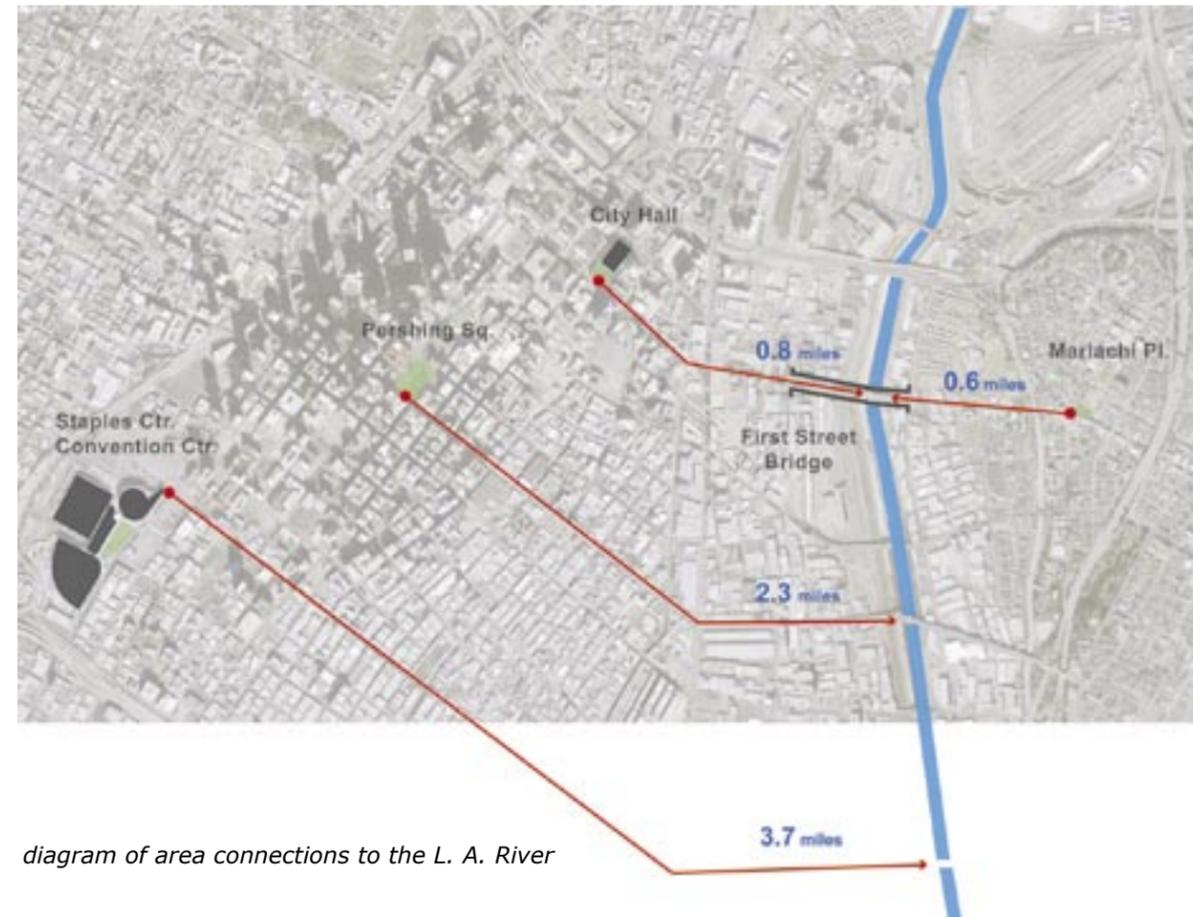


diagram of area connections to the L. A. River

Transit Connections - In the Works

Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension Light Rail Project

The Eastside Corridor Light Rail Transit Project originates at Union Station in Downtown Los Angeles and will be a continuation of the Pasadena Gold Line. The two projects will share a common station at Union Station. Union Station is the historic grand central passenger train station of Los Angeles and is today the largest multi-modal transit hub of Los Angeles County (Amtrak, commuter rail, subway, light rail and buses all converge here). Union Station is the site of two new local government office buildings. Union Station is directly adjacent to the popular destinations of El Pueblo Historic Park, Civic Center and Chinatown. The existing Metro Red Line subway provides distribution from Union Station throughout the Downtown, Mid-Wilshire area, Hollywood and into the San Fernando Valley.

Little Tokyo/Arts District Station

The second station on the Eastside line will be located at First Street and Alameda Street near the heart of the Little Tokyo and the Artists Loft District. On the western side of the proposed station is the new Japanese American National Museum, the Geffen Contemporary Art Museum, the site of the new Children's Museum, a proposed Art Park and the historic core of Little Tokyo. Immediately to the north and south of the station are major sites proposed for new high-density mixed-use developments containing both office and residential space, including the 12-acre "Mangrove" parcel.



Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension [www.metro.net]

Pico/Aliso Station

East of the Los Angeles River a third station will be located at First Street and Utah Street where two of the largest public housing projects are located. The housing projects are presently undergoing an \$80 million reconstruction program funded by the federal government (HUD) and local housing authority. The first phase has been completed and the new units have already been occupied. The development includes modern community facilities and senior citizen housing located near the proposed light rail station.

The Housing Authority is also working on a public-private commercial development next to the station. The MTA staff has met extensively with Los Angeles Housing Authority Staff to insure coordination of the housing and light rail projects. This station has enormous potential in terms of ridership and the ability to serve a major public housing investment.

Mariachi Plaza Station

This station is adjacent to the regionally significant White Memorial Hospital, which is now in the construction of a multi-million dollar expansion of its existing facility. First Street and Boyle Avenue is the historic site of Mariachi Plaza, the place where Mariachi bands gather to seek work (playing at parties, weddings, restaurants etc.). The governor of the state of Jalisco, Mexico arranged the donation of a beautiful traditional Mariachi Kiosk. This attractive structure was carved of canterra stone in Mexico and assembled on site by a team of Mexican artisans under the direction of the designer, the noted sculptor Juan Pablo Salas. This project was a collaboration between the City of Los Angeles and the MTA. The surrounding neighborhood has many small businesses, locally-owned restaurants and a housing stock that includes many Queen Anne and Victorian homes. MTA owns property at this site which will be available for community-oriented joint development once project construction is complete. MTA has already conducted extensive meetings and gained concurrence from the community on the scale and type of new development suitable for these sites.



light rail under construction on First Street [www.metro.net]

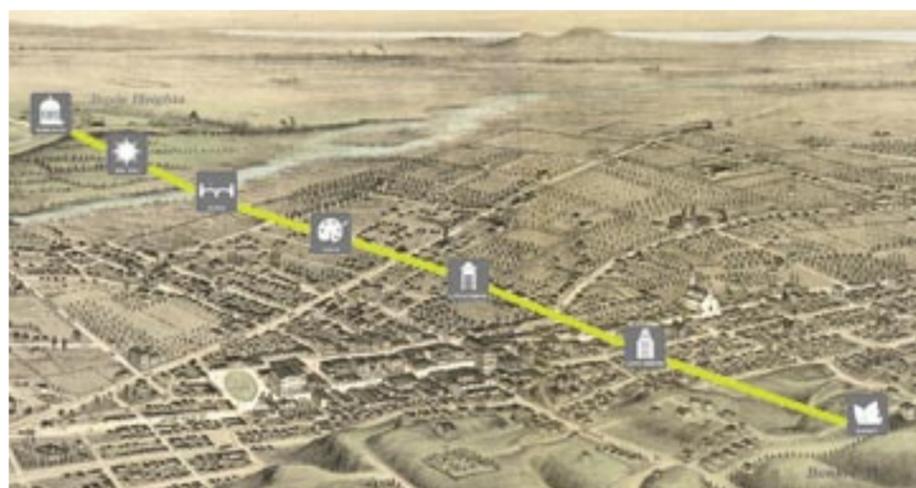
Transit Connections - Proposed

Proposed First Street Transit Line from Civic Center to Mariachi Plaza

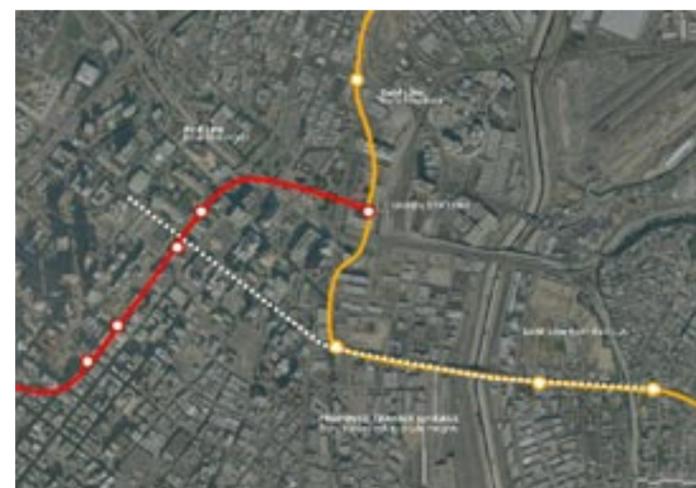
Transit service along the corridor from Mariachi Plaza to Disney Hall and beyond needs to be strengthened. The current demand will only grow as new projects are built. A new transit line should be a high quality, highly visible service and a partner in strengthening the identity of the corridor along its length. The Gold Line which turns north at Alameda covers only half of the design corridor's length. The westward extension of travel from the Little Tokyo/Arts District Station is probably the most critical transit issue to be addressed. In the short term, DASH, shuttle, streetcar or trolley service should be considered. In the longer term, the long-planned downtown connector linking the Blue Line light rail at 7th and Flower to the Gold Line should be carefully considered with respect to the First (and Second) Street corridor.



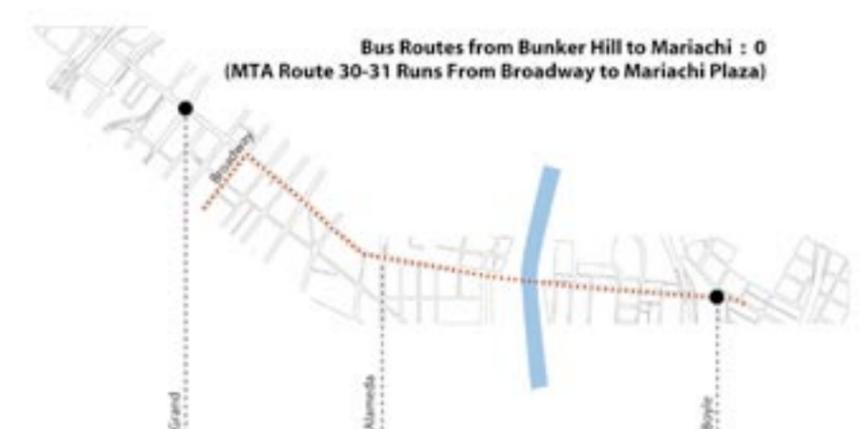
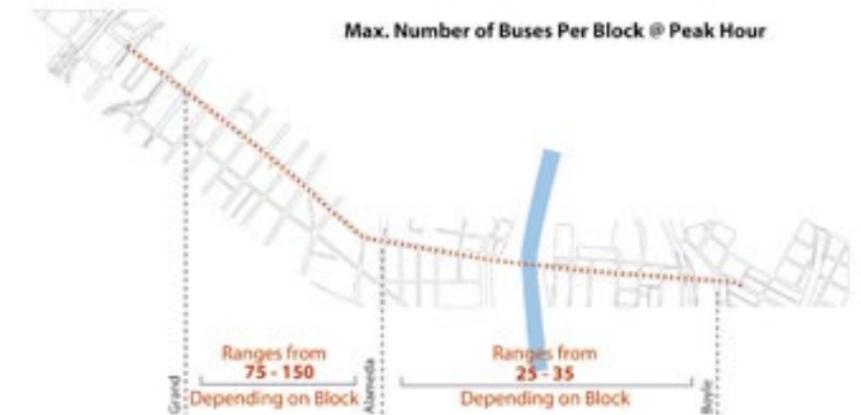
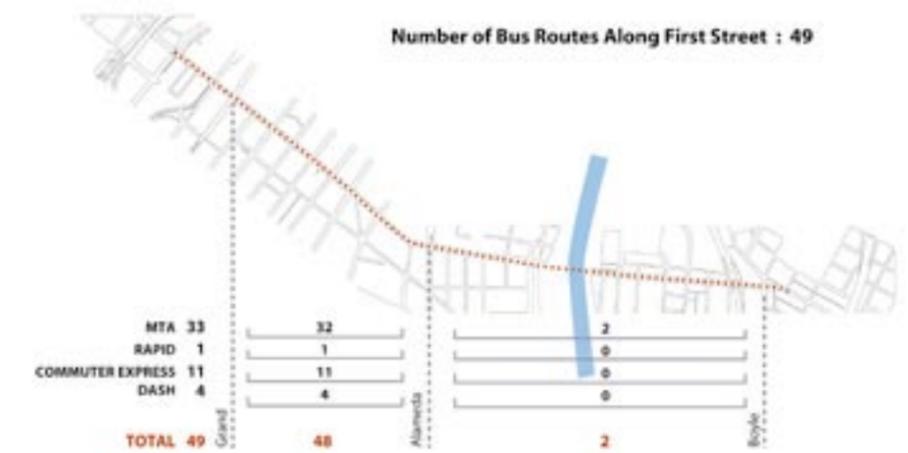
former trolley line running on First Street



historic aerial with overlay showing First Street's significant segment features



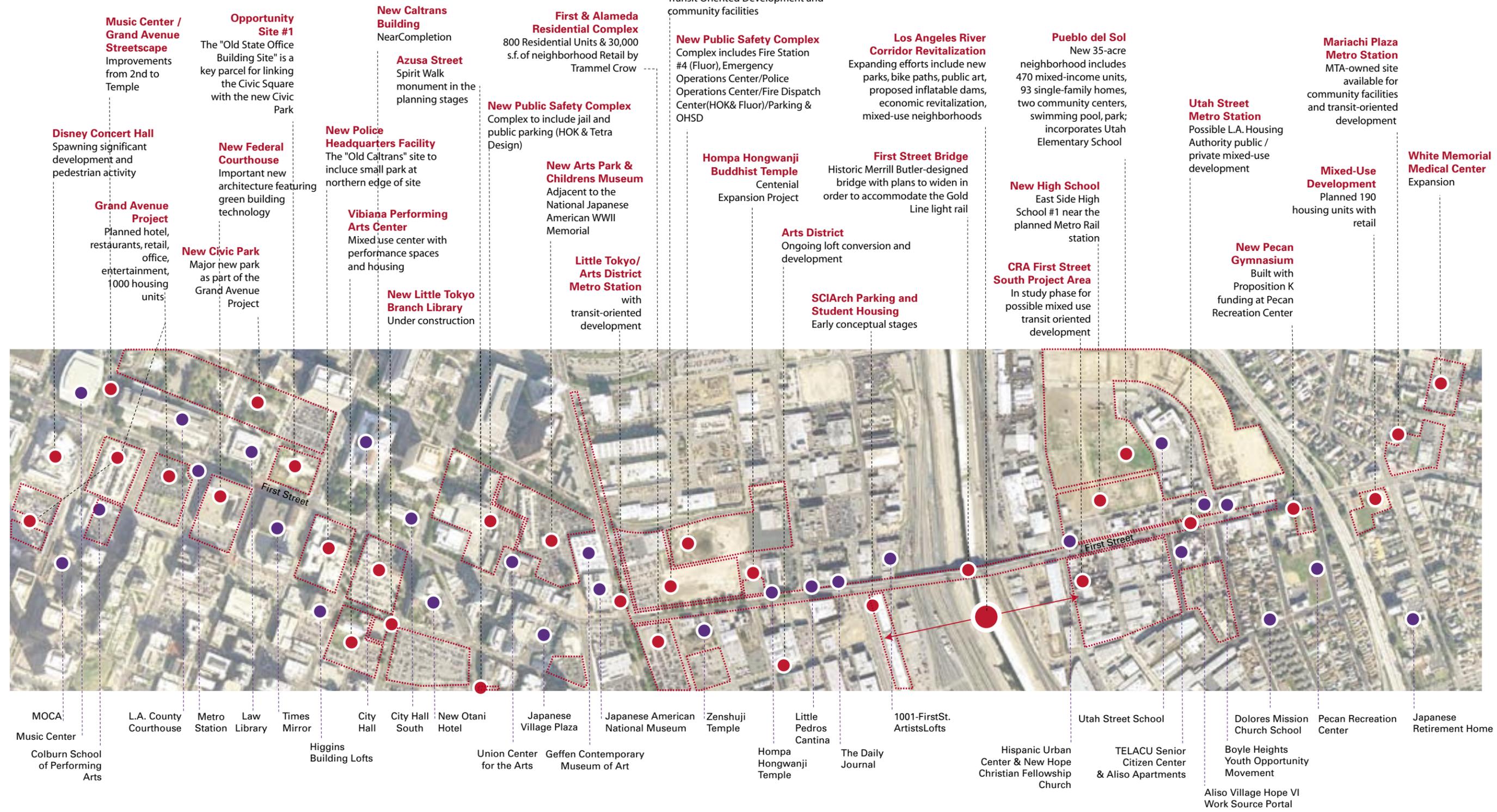
existing Metro rail system dotted with proposed transit line



Current and Future Development

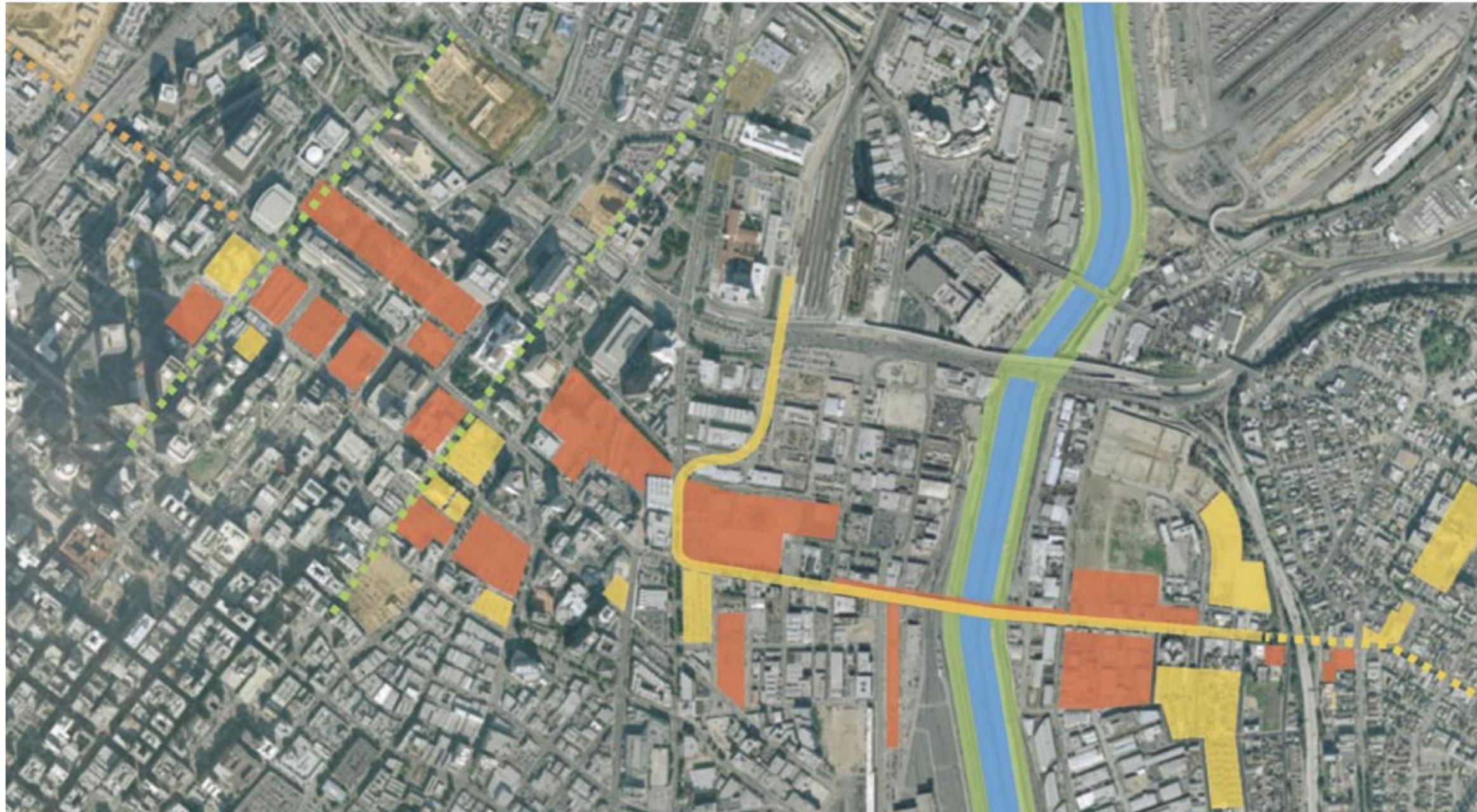
LEGEND

- Active Projects
- Important Sites



Current and Future Development

...more than 4 million square feet under development



-  Under Construction
-  Planning & Development

Pedestrian Network

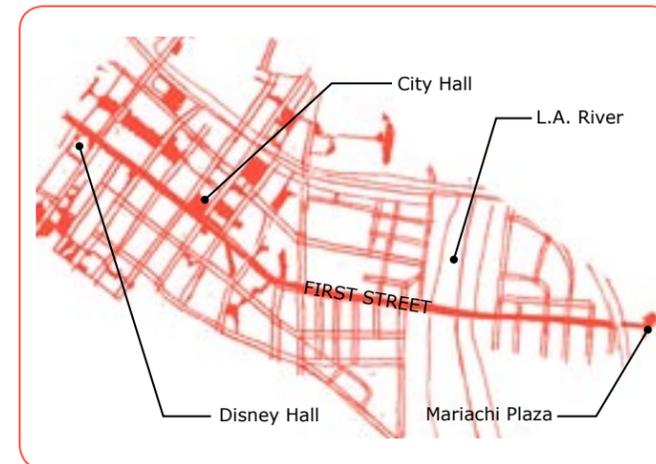
Focus Points

Transit and Walking Should Dominate

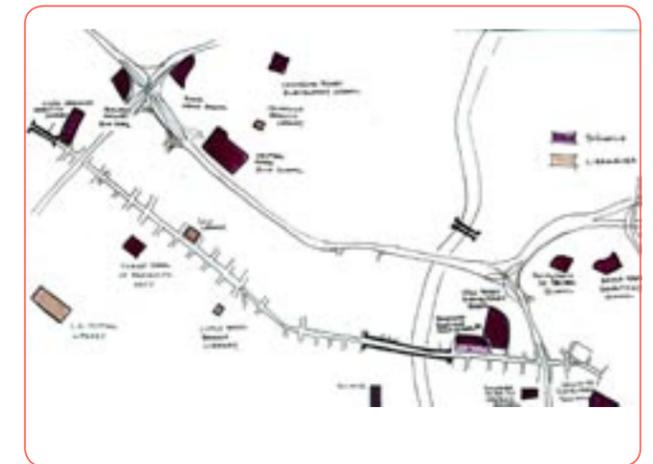
First Street already has exceptional transit service and access but much of it runs perpendicular to the corridor rather than running along it. Pedestrian activity is low compared to the amount of transit service available resulting in a weak pedestrian environment. The design of many streetscape features from roadway, parking access, curb cuts, signage, and land uses – are oriented towards the convenience of drivers and private automobiles, most with single occupancy which is an obsolete approach. Where conflicts occur between quality and driver convenience on the other, the former should prevail.

Identify and Strategically Connect to First Street's "Tributaries"

Like a river, major city streets have "catchment areas" with respect to pedestrian and vehicular access, economic activity, and civic identity. First Street should be planned as a wide corridor defined by five and ten minute walking distances on either side, and by the main streets and public spaces which provide access. Economic activity and use within that wider zone should be incorporated in the strategic plan.



pedestrian flow diagram



School & Library Inventory



diagram showing First Street's 5 and 10 minute walking distances

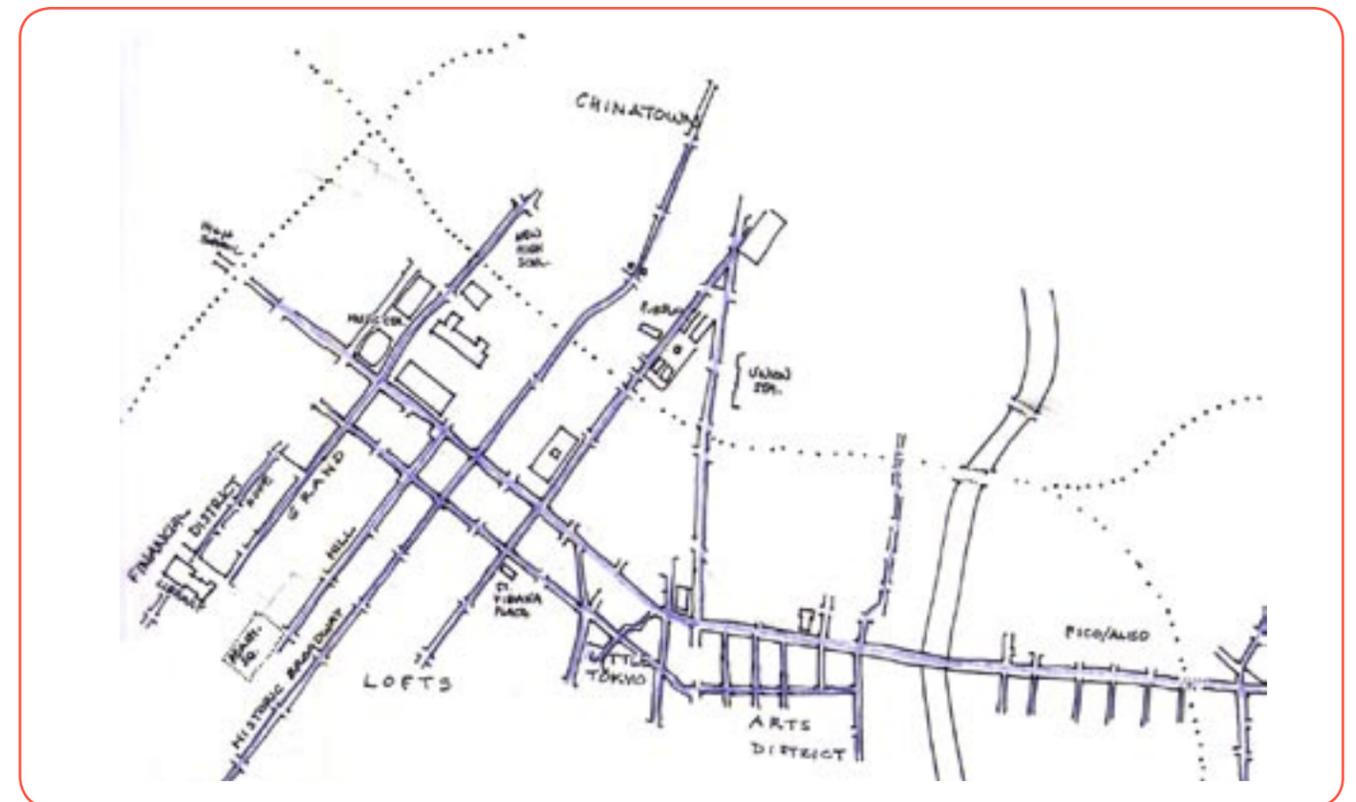
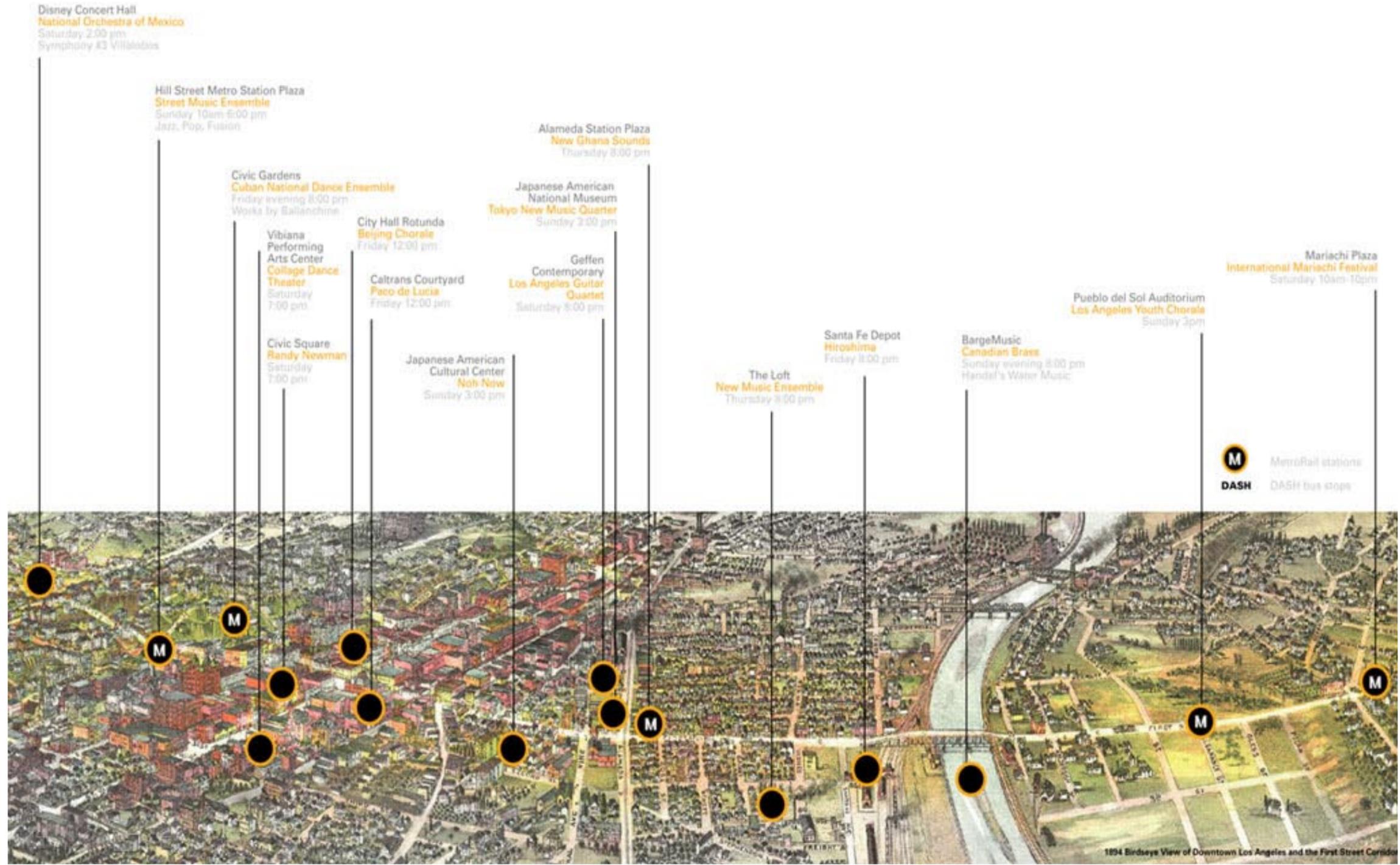


diagram of First Street's "tributaries"

First Street "Festival"



Organize a festival using the many performance venues along First Street

First Street as a Center

Recognize First Street as the common thread of the many diverse arts and culture festivals, sporting events and outdoor education programs. These include the Grand Avenue Festival, Chinatown New Year's Parade, Fiesta Broadway, the L.A. Marathon, Mariachi Festival, L.A. Arts and Music Festival and Saint Patrick's Day Parade. Community bike rides, footraces and even the annual Los Angeles River Cleanup and educational River Walks thread the First Street link.

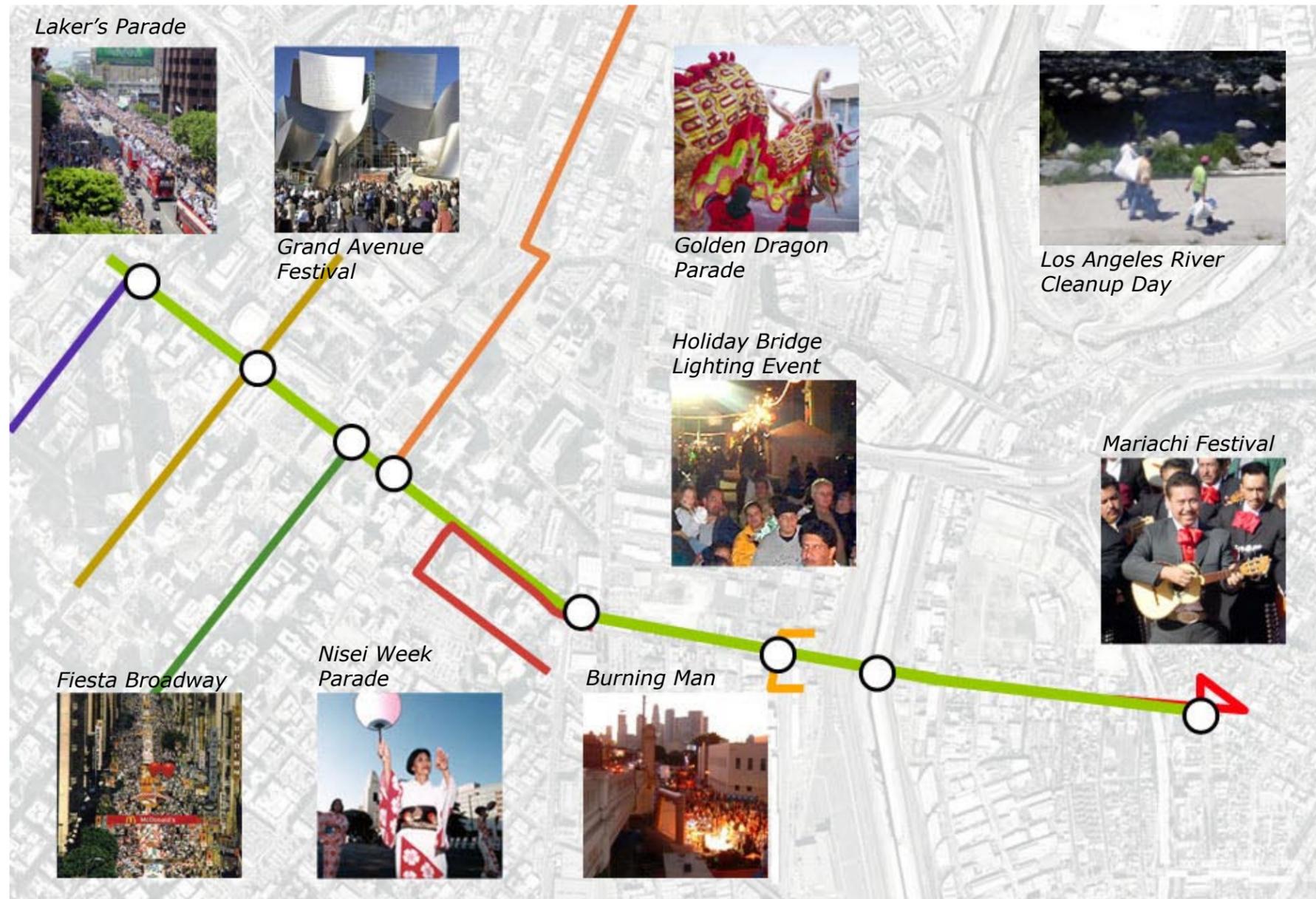


diagram of the many events already touching on First Street

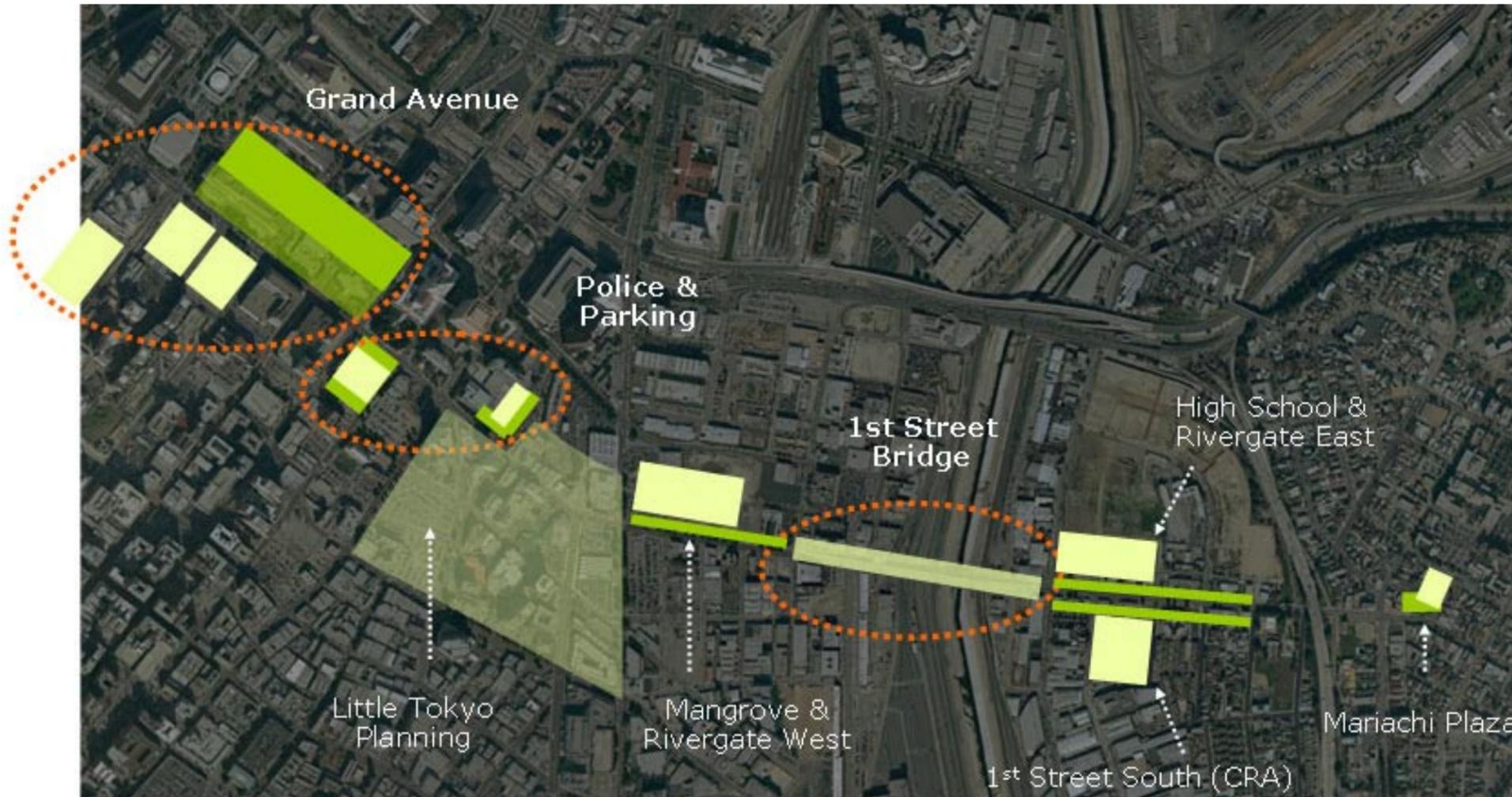


Angel's Bike Ride



an example of a marathon route that runs partially along a bridge while allowing some lanes to remain open to traffic

Strategic Opportunities



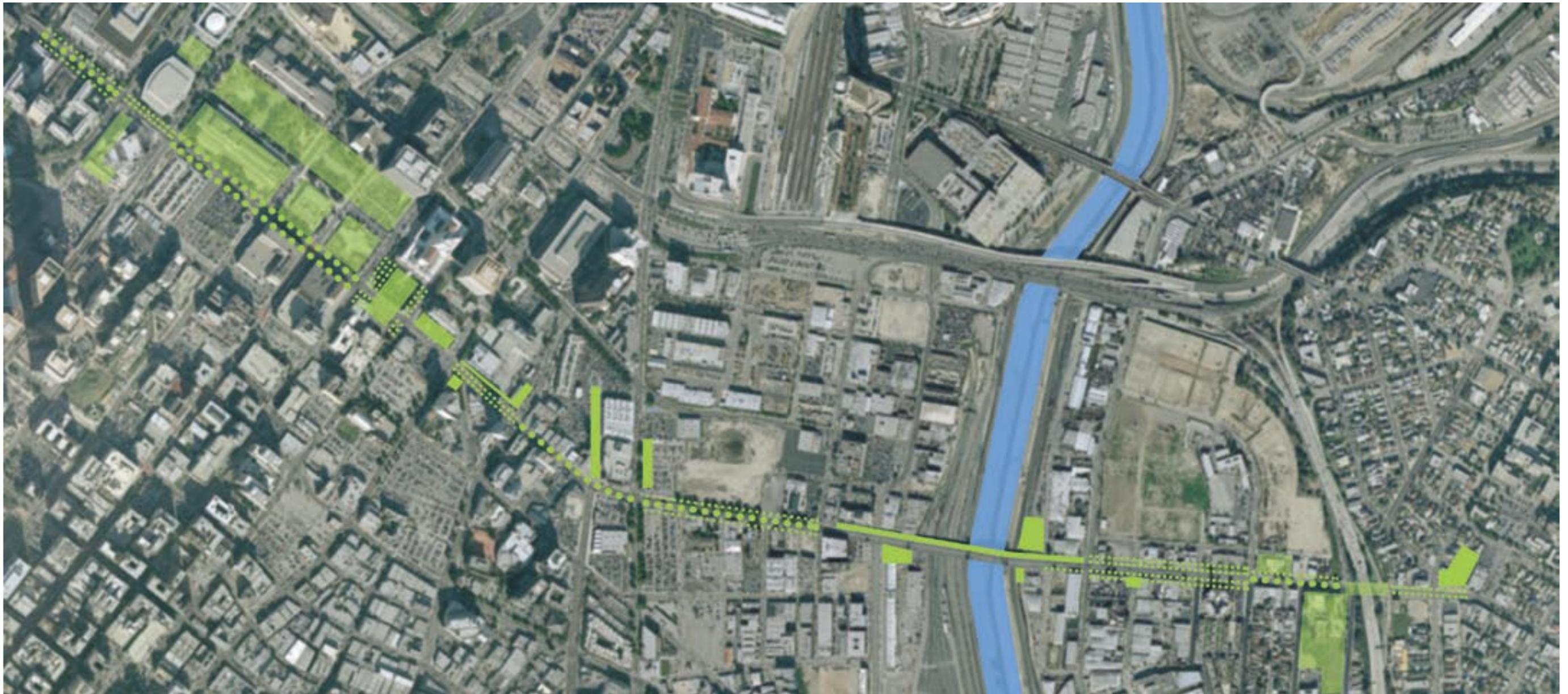
GUIDING THE IN-BETWEEN PARCELS Disney Concert Hall on the western boundary and Mariachi Plaza on the eastern boundary are the two endpoints of the First Street/Calle Primera project scope. Connecting the bridge and the two end-points are the numerous development projects in between including the Federal Courthouse, the Police Headquarters, the Little Tokyo/Arts District Station, the Pico/Alison Station and the new LAUSD high school. By adopting an action plan and further developing guidelines for building on First Street now, the new developments and their stakeholders will plug into the overall picture of First Street as a vital urban corridor and furthermore ensure that the Project benefits from multiple funding sources.

This study has identified seven major “opportunity parcels” on the corridor. They include:

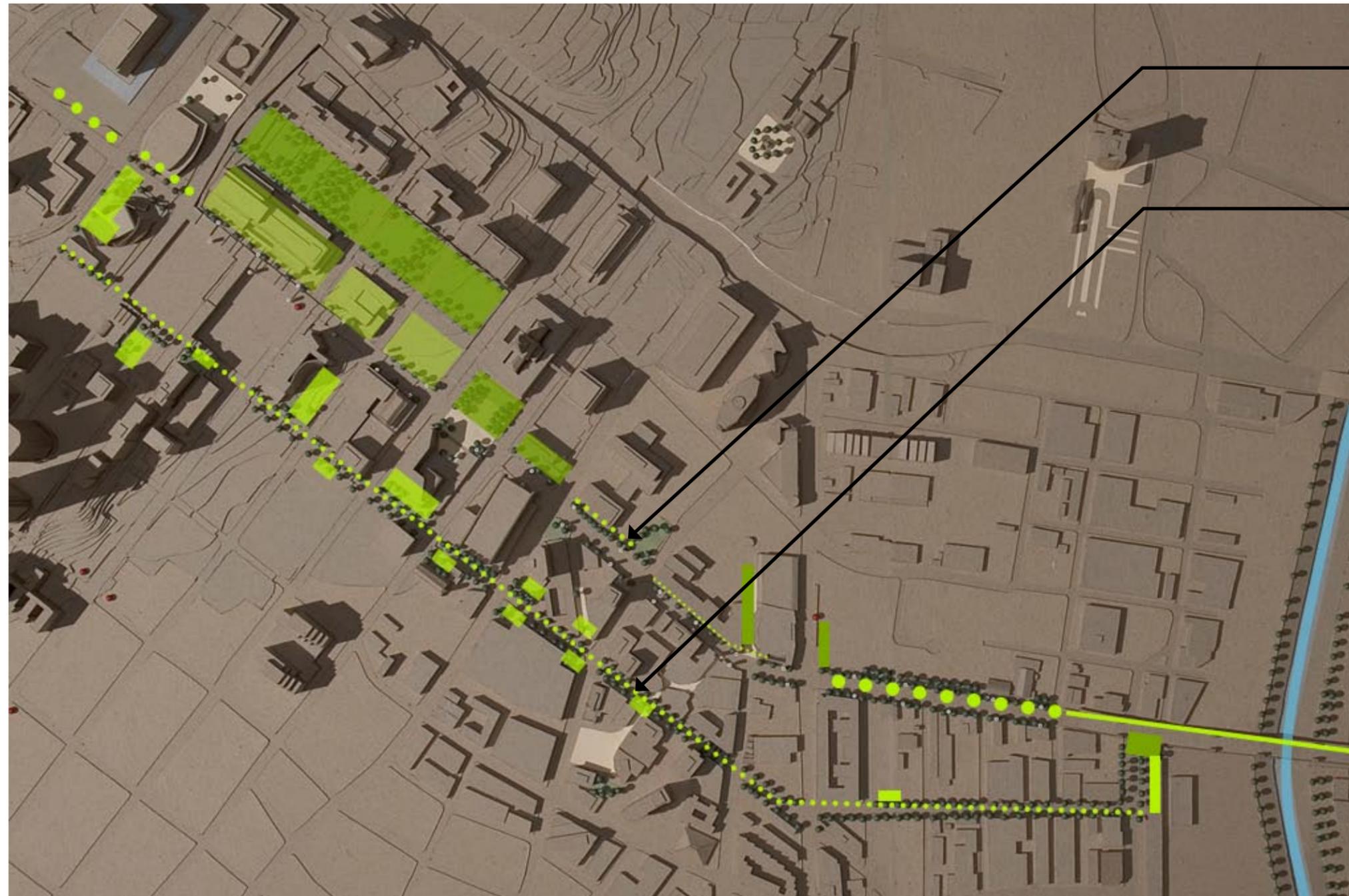
- Parcels associated with the proposed Grand Avenue Project and new Federal Courts on Bunker Hill
- The City and State owned parcel at First + Spring Streets
- The block proposed for the Police Headquarters between Spring and Main streets, which together with the First Street frontage and South Lawn of City Hall is proposed as a “Civic Square”
- The Aiso Street parking facility in Little Tokyo
- The “Mangrove” parcel, (also City owned) and new Metro Gold Line station at the intersection of First and Alameda
- The First Street Bridge
- The “Adelante” parcels, LAUSD High School #1 and the Pico/Aliso Station east of the River

Design Concept: Continuous Green Promenade

Identifying greenscapes along First Street between Mariachi Plaza and Disney Concert Hall reveals opportunities to connect this rich inventory of existing spaces with a new continuous green promenade. This proposed canopy of shade and greenery can serve not only as a pedestrian connection from neighborhood to neighborhood - east and west of the Los Angeles River - but it can also serve as the City's connection to the river itself.



Design Concepts: 1st and 2nd Streets as a Parallel Pair



FIRST STREET
Civic, Cultural, Large-Scale,
Parks and Plazas, Transit

SECOND STREET
Residential, Shopping, Intimate,
Walking, Biking, Small Gardens

Focus Points

These two streets benefit by their proximity to each other, separated by the shortest blocks in downtown Los Angeles.

First Street is bigger, wider, faster and transit-oriented with large-scale civic, governmental and cultural institution building types. It has large public open spaces, including the major park downtown - the Civic Mall. First Street is central to the city as a whole.

Second Street is shorter, narrower, quieter, more intimate. It is a neighborhood street and a pedestrian-oriented street with many residential buildings and connections to loft housing in the Arts District and small shops in Little Tokyo. Second Street has numerous small public parks and open spaces, to which playgrounds could be added.

Urban Design Principles

The First Street/Calle Primera Project recommendations are based on the following underlying values and principles:

- Collaboration
- Environmental responsibility
- Contextual response
- Flexibility
- Encouragement of civic life

Collaboration

The creative collaboration amongst the members of the consultant team has extended not only to our clients at Project Restore, but to the representatives of the elected officials, public agencies, community groups, private sector business organizations and development entities and the public at large.

Environmental Responsibility

The Team seeks to make every effort from broad strategic approaches (such as encouragement of public transit) to specific infrastructure design recommendations (including sustainable and regenerative planning principles). The design elements intend to allow for the best possible public understanding and appreciation of concepts.

Contextual Response

Recognizing practical, technical and fiscal considerations related to work in the public environment, and understanding that the vitality and richness of the City is found in the existing context of the “urban fabric”; the proposals do not depend on a radically new pervasive design imagery, but rather the encouragement, orchestration and the amplification of existing themes along the Corridor.

Flexibility

This project encourages creative responses to the articulation of the design concepts as outlined in the First Street/Calle Primera report. This report outlines the overarching segment identity and streetscape concepts and further establishes specific proposals for a new Civic Square, bridge widening and a distinctive bus shelter/lantern; however, these recommendations are open to further detail and development through a flexible set of guidelines. The flexibility of these guidelines could help ensure adjacent property owners take action and become responsible for their stake in the First Street/Calle Primera Project.



aerial view of First Street looking west from Boyle Heights to Downtown Los Angeles

Encouragement of Civic Life

One goal of this project is to advance the ethic of “civic life” for Los Angeles through the creation of inviting, safe places for all people to interact on all scales whether on publicly or privately owned spaces. Comfort, safety and delight will be the measure of success for all proposed investments in the public environment of the Corridor.

Environmentally Sustainable Design Solutions

Integrating principles of green building and smart growth should be a priority for the First Street/Calle Primera Project. First Street's project goals and vision should be implemented through the Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design or LEED for Neighborhood Developments framework -- obvious and easy to accomplish as the vision for First Street already addresses many of the values of sustainable urban development.

The following principles outlined by the Smart Growth Network should be emphasized:

- Create Walkable Neighborhoods
- Encourage Community and Stakeholder Collaboration
- Foster Distinctive, Attractive Communities with a Strong Sense of Place
- Make Development Decisions Predictable, Fair and Cost Effective
- Mix Land Uses
- Provide a Variety of Transportation Choices
- Strengthen and Direct Development Towards Existing Communities

Following these principles can have a positive effect on the improvement of air quality, the decrease of vehicle miles traveled and the revitalization of an existing urban area.

At a finer scale, the use of sustainable materials and methods for landscape, hardscape and sidewalk furnishing elements should be followed:

- Specify porous groundcover materials and re-direct ground water runoff
- Encourage greywater irrigation systems where possible
- Utilize energy efficient street lighting fixtures
- Reuse formwork for special paving and crosswalk patterns
- Choose low-waste furnishings made of local materials



conceptual sketch of First Street from Metro transit portal in Boyle Heights.