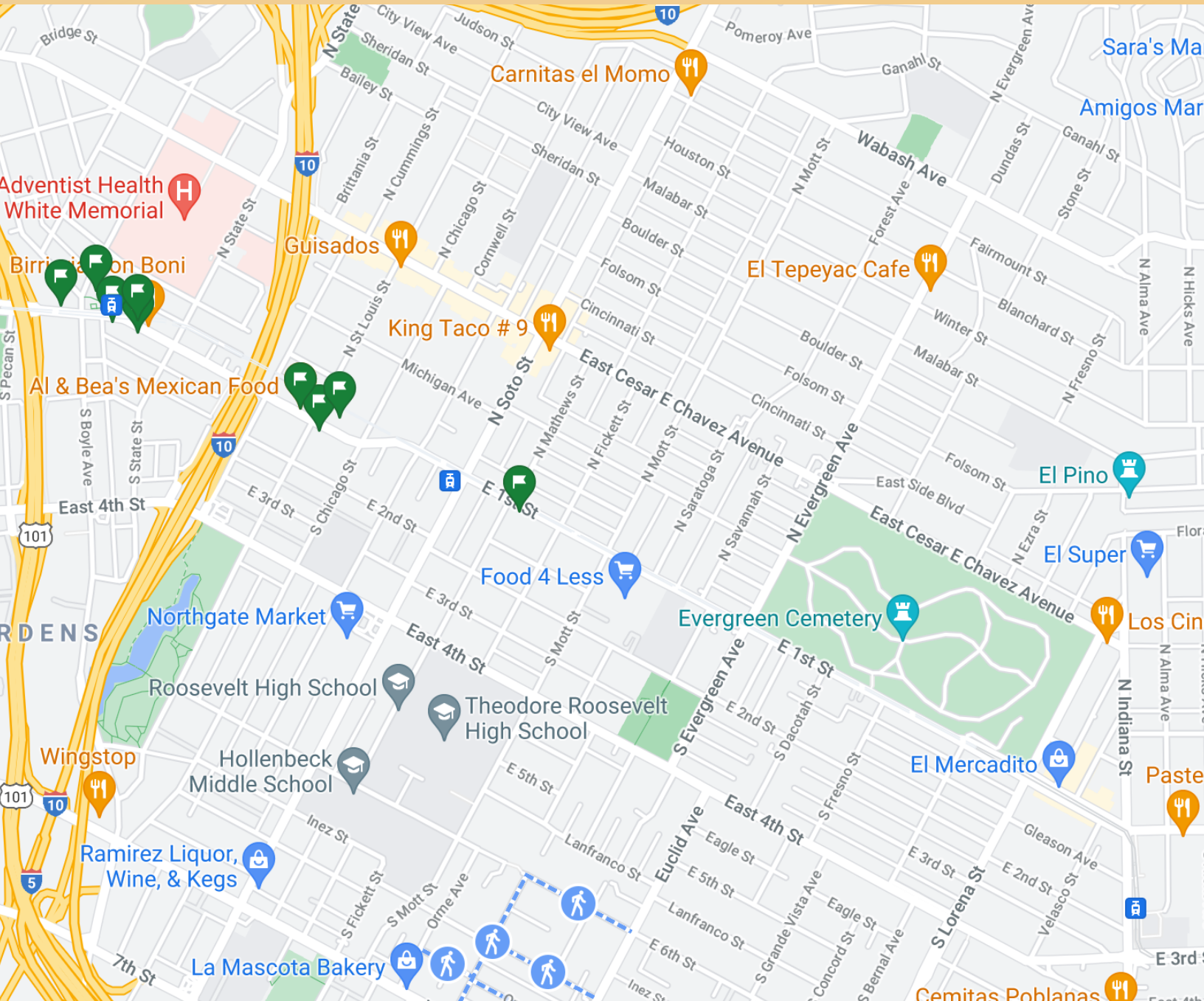


# A WALK DOWN FIRST STREET



A walking tour created by the Boyle Heights Museum

# MAP



Since the 1930s, Mariachi Plaza has been the home of many mariachis. These mariachis live in the apartments nearby. More recently, developers created plans for new commercial and living space which led to the implementation of the Metro Gold Line in 2009. The rent increases that followed (about 60-80%) made it extremely difficult for local mariachis to afford living near the plaza.



With the help of the LA Tenants Union, mariachis entered an agreement with their landlord that limited rent increases. The COVID-19 pandemic also created economic uncertainty by limiting jobs. Despite these challenges, the community is committed to helping mariachis by donating food and creating an emergency relief fund. Organizing around tenant's rights and COVID relief showcases how integral mariachis and Mariachi Plaza are to the community.



# 1. MARIACHI PLAZA

## 2. MARIACHI HOTEL



Located on the corner of First Street and Boyle Avenue, the Boyle Hotel is one of the oldest remaining commercial structures in Boyle Heights. The building was designed in 1889 by W.R. Norton for George Cummings and his wife Maria del Sacramento Lopez. In the twentieth century, the hotel became associated with mariachis, who rented rooms in the hotel and found work in the plaza below.


This association led to the nickname "Mariachi Hotel." After a period of deterioration, the hotel was reopened in 2012 with 51 units of affordable housing and ground-floor commercial space. It is also a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument and has been recognized by the Los Angeles Conservancy as a prime example of affordable housing in historic spaces.

### 3. SANTA CECILIA

The restaurant, Santa Cecilia is one of the first visible businesses as you approach Boyle Heights Avenue. Armando Salazar opened Restaurant Santa Cecilia more than 25 years ago. The restaurant specializes in mouth-watering traditional Mexican dishes like barbacoa, caldo de res, carne con nopales, tortas, tacos, and burritos. A long-time client, Sonia Rodriguez shares, “Memories of Armando’s food are associated with many of my family’s significant moments.” By enriching the personal, public, and academic events with his food, Salazar’s restaurant has truly become a social and economic pillar for Boyle Heights. Over the years, the cultural and economic value of Restaurant Santa Cecilia has been recognized by local and state politicians like Antonio Villaraigosa and Lucille Roybal-Allard.



## 4. HOUSE OF TROPHIES AND AWARDS

The background image shows the storefront of 'House of Trophies and Awards'. A large blue sign with white lettering reads 'HOUSE OF TROPHIES' and 'AND AWARDS INC'. Above this, a smaller sign displays the website 'www.houseoftrophies.net'. To the right of the main sign, there is a red sign that says 'Laser Engraving' with three stars. The storefront has large glass windows displaying various trophies and awards. A person is standing in front of the entrance, which is partially visible. The overall scene is set in an urban environment, likely Boyle Heights as mentioned in the text.

House of Trophies and Awards has been the supplier of appreciation and recognition in Boyle Heights for over 35 years. It's a small business that focuses on adjusting to change while honoring its employees. This community-centered approach allows House of Trophies to continue alongside the online retailers with lower prices. Customers appreciate that House of Trophies has been in the community and can help people develop their vision and create the materials that honor the recipient. Additionally, they have done work for celebrities like Jerry Garcia. They even created a plaque to honor the regional Mexican singer Jenni Rivera, who passed away in 2012. Even with these high-profile commissions, The House of Trophies relies on the community as much as the community relies on them.



Espacio 1839 is all of the following: a retail store, a bookstore, a gallery space, a radio station, an art workshop, and an inclusive community space for the Boyle Heights community. This multi-purpose enterprise opened in 2011 at its current location on First Street. Yet, Espacio 1839 is built on the legacy of earlier stores and galleries started by co-owners Myra Teocintli (Vasquez) and Nico Avina. What began as a silk-screening business inside a closet of a record store has now grown into what might seem as a storefront at first with the offering of books, culturally-relevant and politically conscious merchandise. It is also a community space for gathering and activism that acknowledges the history and legacy of Boyle Heights while also looking forward to a self-determined entrepreneurial future.



## 6. CASA FINA

---

Casa Fina Restaurant and Cantina opened on Cinco de Mayo in 2017. Casa Fina is the creation of Josefina López, the author of *Real Women Have Curves* and founder of CASA 0101, and Emmanuel Deleage, the Executive Director of CASA 0101. The pair purchased the property when a longstanding Mexican restaurant shut down. Wanting to maintain investment in the community and prevent increasing gentrification, López and Deleage started Casa Fina to create a space that continued to serve Boyle Heights. The restaurant features local Mexican food, new Chicanx cuisine, and wines from Mexico. Additionally, it houses a collection of locally produced art and regularly hosts community events.

## 7. East LA Interchange

The East Los Angeles Interchange was constructed in the 1960s and was celebrated by business leaders, developers, and local politicians as a modern marvel. By the 1980s, it earned the title of the busiest freeway interchange in the world. This came at a cost to Boyle

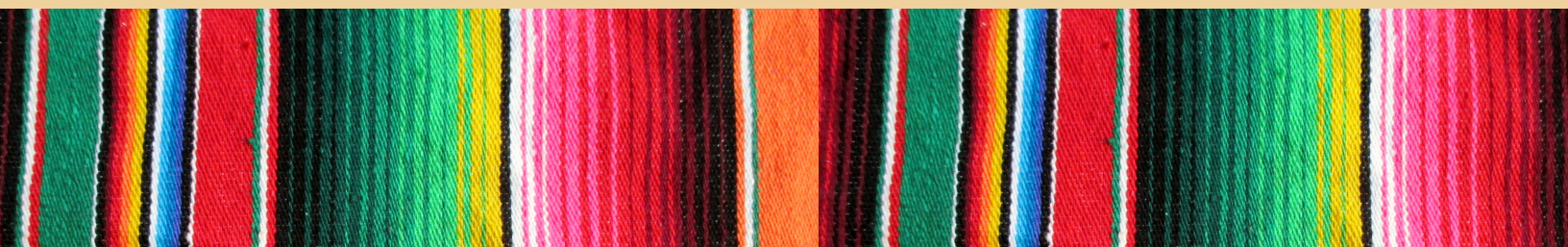
Heights. As early as 1944, East LA residents were displaced from their homes and businesses to make room for the interchange. Local institutions, like the Saint Isabella Catholic Church, were destroyed. The interchange also bisected Hollenbeck Park, turning a large portion of the grassy lawn, play areas, and lake into a ten-lane freeway. Additionally, the East Los Angeles Interchange was constructed in the 1960s and was celebrated by business leaders, developers, and local politicians as a modern marvel. By the 1980s, it earned the title of the busiest freeway interchange in the world. This came at a cost to Boyle Heights.

As early as 1944, East LA residents were displaced from their homes and businesses to make room for the interchange. Local institutions, like the Saint Isabella Catholic Church, were destroyed. The interchange also bisected Hollenbeck Park, turning a large portion of the grassy lawn, play areas, and lake into a ten-lane freeway. Additionally, the East LA Interchange created one of the most concentrated pockets of air pollution, putting Boyle Heights residents at higher risk of illnesses like asthma. Although developers and politicians saw the interchange as beneficial to the city, they neglected the needs and safety of Boyle Heights residents. Interchange created one of the most concentrated pockets of air pollution, putting Boyle Heights residents at higher risk of illnesses like asthma. Although developers and politicians saw the interchange as beneficial to the city, they neglected the needs and safety of Boyle Heights residents.



## 8. CASA 0101

CASA 0101 was started in 2000 and is one of the leading arts organizations on LA's Eastside. It was founded by Josefina López, the author of *Real Women Have Curves*. While she was a student at Roosevelt High School, López witnessed the lack of opportunities for Boyle Heights youth to engage in the arts, humanities, and performance. She started CASA so students could explore those interests and engage the community in the performing arts. The organization's current home has a 99-seat theater, art gallery, and dedicated classroom. CASA's central location on First Street also represents how integral it is to developing the arts in Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles.



## 9. AL AND BEA'S

Albert and Beatrice Carreon opened Al and Bea's in 1966 with nothing but high hopes and authentic Mexican recipes. It is now a Boyle Heights staple with generations of loyal customers. Customers today can taste the same quality and flavor that their parents and grandparents did decades ago. This Boyle Heights institution has even caught the attention of broader Los Angeles. In 2015, Jonathan Gold, the chief food critic for the LA Times, listed Al and Bea's burritos as one of his top five picks in Los Angeles.

Despite this larger success, Al and Bea's is still committed to serving their friends and family in the community like they have for over fifty years.



# **10. HOLLENBECK COMMUNITY POLICE STATION**

Hollenbeck Community Police Station, named after Los Angeles developer John Hollenbeck, serves East Los Angeles. Officers at the Hollenbeck Station have historically had a tense relationship with Boyle Heights residents, who are primarily Latinx. One example of this tension is that the Hollenbeck Division commander initiated heavy surveillance of activists in the Chicano Moratorium in the 1970s. Activists fought back on January 21, 1971, resulting in police violence that killed one activist and wounded thirty-five. This tension continues today as local residents fight for their community. As recently as March 2021, residents protested in front of the Hollenbeck station in response to six LAPD shootings. While the station is a symbol for the LAPD, it also represents Boyle Heights' history of activism and advocacy.

# 11. OTOMISAN

Otomisan represents the legacy of multicultural entrepreneurship in Boyle Heights. The neighborhood once had bustling Jewish delicatessens and bakeries, Japanese noodle shops, and a variety of Mexican food to cater to the local population. With changing demographics and increasing gentrification, the diversity of food options is decreasing, catering to the primarily Latinx population.

Otomisan is the last Japanese restaurant in Boyle Heights. It has served customers on East First Street for over 60 years. Visitors are greeted with diner style seating and classic Japanese comfort dishes like tempura, upon, and soba noodles.



# 12. EL MERCADITO

El Mercado, also known as El Mercadito, was founded in 1968 at the site of the former Boyle Heights Lumber Company. It houses a variety of shops that offer an array of Mexican goods and foods. Although today vendors cater to the Latinx population, it initially served Mexican, Japanese, and Italian communities for its first decade. As the market grew in size, owner Pedro Rosado found himself in the middle of a heated debate over zoning issues and vendor rights. Although the issue was resolved in 1999 with the implementation of noise and trash restrictions, the debate is still continuing regarding the rights of street vendors. Today, El Mercado stands as a symbol of local entrepreneurship.



# About the Boyle Heights Museum

The Boyle Heights Museum is a research, exhibition, and educational project that preserves and celebrates the multi-ethnic history of Los Angeles' Boyle Heights neighborhood. Our online museum is an interactive platform dedicated to sharing the rich history of the Boyle Heights community. Information on each historical and cultural exhibit is available on our online website. Learn about the history of Boyle Heights and share your own story by visiting our website at [www.boyleheightsmuseum.org/](http://www.boyleheightsmuseum.org/)

