

Lincoln Heights Jail, Los Angeles

401 N. Avenue 19, Los Angeles, CA 90031

Location: The Lincoln Heights Jail is located on a brownfield in Northeast LA and bounded by Ave. 19, active rail tracks and the LA River/Arroyo Seco River confluence. The site has not operated as a jail since 1965 and has sat vacant due to environmental hazards since 2014. It is located in a predominantly low income Latino community.

History: Built in 1927 as an Art Deco style jail to hold 625 people, it quickly became overpopulated and held nearly 2,800 prisoners by 1950. Due to overcrowding and high maintenance costs the City and County voted to decommission the jail in 1965.

From 1979 to 2014 the jail housed the Bilingual Foundation of the Arts. In 2016 the City commissioned an adaptive reuse study, and awarded an RFP to adaptively reuse the site in 2017. In 2022 the developers returned the site to the City due to high amount of environmental hazards and infeasibility. Currently, there are City facilities located in separate buildings on the property.

City Priorities: The City is experiencing a housing crisis amidst a global climate crisis. [LA County contains](#) the nation's largest number of homeless individuals who reside outdoors on our streets. The City is also mostly comprised of renters, half of which pay more than 30% of their income on housing and are thus housing cost burdened. Low cost housing is located far from the City's job centers and boundaries contributing to sprawl in Southern California where some commuters spend up to 3-4 hours daily commuting into the City for work, leading to an increase in GHG emissions and Vehicle Miles Travelled. It is imperative that we construct more infill housing close to DTLA.

Remediation of this site will contribute to positive social, environmental, and economic results. It is part of the overall restoration of a site that is blighted, a safety hazard, environmentally contaminated, underutilized, and incurs significant maintenance with no social or economic benefit.



Figure 1) Exterior of Lincoln Heights Jail

Approx. site area:

The site is 210,800 SF. the jail is 229,120 SF, building 1 is 7,175 SF, building 2 is 13,200 SF.

Key Information

A dense area with a high percentage of Latino and Asian residents, the median household income is among the lowest in the region and ranks in the 100th percentile for [CES 4.0](#) pollution score.

Priority areas & main expectations:

The size and location of the site presents a unique opportunity to become a pilot to model "Social Housing" for the local and regional community. It can become a catalyst for economic development and increasing access to natural resources.

Presentation of the site and development expectations

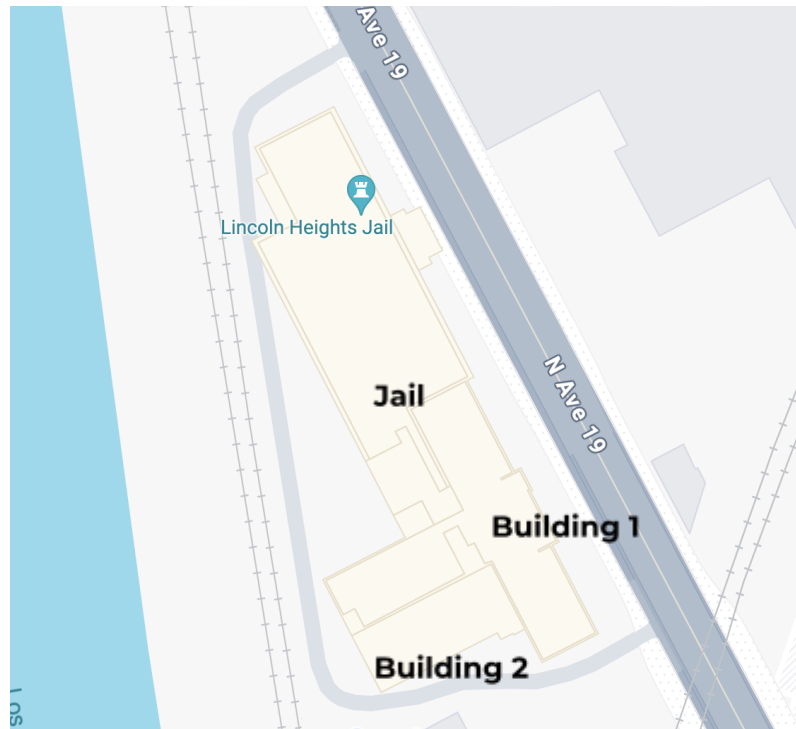


Figure 2) Site Area | Google Maps

The jail has a sordid history. The city has spent considerable time and effort attempting to adaptively reuse the site, however it has not explored the potential for demolishing the site, potentially reusing some of the debris for landscape features, and unblocking the public's viewshed and potential access to the LA River and Elysian Park which are directly behind the site.

The structure itself is environmentally contaminated with lead, asbestos and is prone to flooding in the basement. There are two 10,000 gallon underground storage tanks under the jail filled with flammable sludge that are prone to continued flooding. It also sits atop a brownfield even though it is adjacent to the LA River, Elysian Park, and several new parks such as the Ed P. Reyes Greenway, and the LA State Historic Park.

From a social history perspective, the jail was the site of "Bloody Christmas." In 1951, over 50 officers of the jail attacked seven of those imprisoned, leaving them barely alive. Further, in the 50s and 60s, the police chief at the time cracked down on members of the LGBTQ+ community by relegating a large number of those targeted for arrest to the Lincoln Heights Jail - making it infamous for anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment. In 1993 it was declared as a City Historic-Cultural Monument #537 due to its art deco architectural features. However, these same features create a sort of a fortress along Ave 19 that disconnects the public from nature.

The site is accessible via Avenue 19, which was recently repaved and includes a new Class IV protected bike lane. The Ave 19 Bike lane connects to the Class I Los Angeles River Bike Path further North which creates access to Griffith Park, the Zoo and the Autry Museum. Travelling south of this site will connect you to Chinatown and DTLA. There is a light rail station within a half mile of this site, and accessible via a 5 min bike ride. The Los Angeles River is located directly behind the site, and the confluence where the Arroyo Seco River (Dry River) and the LA River meet is located just north of this site, about a 5 min walk.

AREA DEMOGRAPHICS

According to the [US Environmental Protection Agency Environmental Justice Screening Tool](#), Census Tract 0637199002 is comprised of the following socioeconomic characteristics

- Median Income: 30,453 per capita, which means that 38% of the population is low income
- It is comprised of 83% people of color
- 22% of the population has less than a high school education
- 18% of households have limited English proficiency
- Two thirds of the population also speak Spanish and one third speak Asian and Pacific Island languages.

According to [California's CalEnviroScreen 4.0 tool](#), which shows cumulative impacts in California communities by census tract, the Lincoln Heights Jail census tract is:

- in the 100th percentile for Pollution Burden;
- in the 90s for Particulate Matter 2.5, Diesel Particulate Matter, Traffic; and
- in the 80s for Poverty.

The site is an environmental hazard with lead in the ground, asbestos in the building, and two tanks with petroleum products buried 30 feet below ground level. For purposes of this Challenge, students can assume all environmental remediation has been completed and the site is ready for redevelopment.

DEVELOPMENT EXPECTATIONS

This City owned site is a priority for being redeveloped, especially given the housing and climate crises. LA City Councilmember Eunissess Hernandez came into office within the last year and has made the redevelopment of this site a priority in order to heal past scars regarding the criminal injustice that took place here, to heal the current environmental justice scars, and to address our housing and climate concerns. The Councilmember issued a motion that was passed by City Council in October 2023 that directed City Departments to work together to develop a redevelopment plan and a community engagement plan for this site.

This City owned site will not be sold or given away and will need to be environmentally remediated. It will also need to heal scars from the social harm this building has brought to the City. It may need to be demolished and its replacement innovative yet practical and feasible. Therefore, students are encouraged to consider the following priorities when developing proposals to reimagine the area:

- Repurpose the site to develop a "Social Housing" pilot, that is inclusive and aesthetically pleasing.
- Integrate nature-based solutions to boost climate resilience to risks such as urban heat, drought etc.
- Use clean construction methods to align with City target of all buildings being net zero carbon by 2050
- Integrate art and cultural activities, that honour the site's history, and foster a sense of community identity and optimism for the future.
- Better integrate the building into its surroundings, considering pedestrian accessibility and nearby active mobility links.

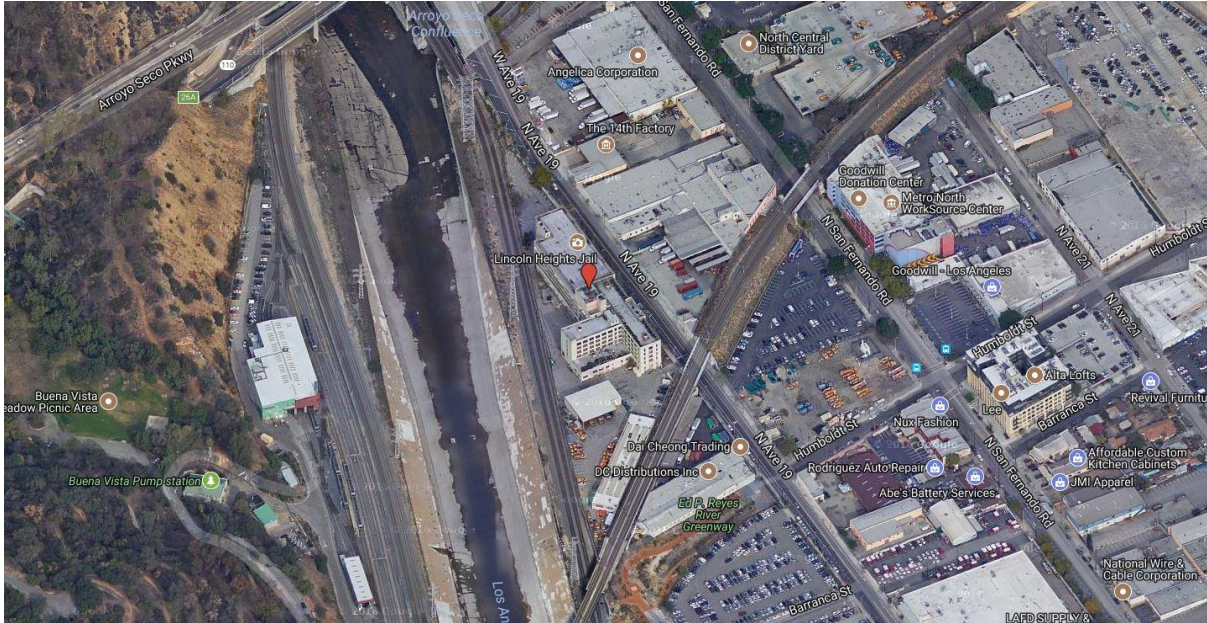


Figure 3) Exterior of the site | Google Earth

City climate priorities and specific environmental challenges

Los Angeles is a global climate leader and in its commitment to the Paris Agreement has charted a course to become a carbon neutral city by 2050. The [2019 Green New Deal](#) includes a series of targets and milestones to achieve this goal. We expect the Project to incorporate relevant targets, including:

- Clean and Healthy Buildings
 - All new buildings will be net zero carbon by 2030; and 100% of buildings will be net zero carbon by 2050
 - Reduce building energy use per sq.ft. for all building types 22% by 2025; 34% by 2035; and 44% by 2050
- Housing & Development
 - End street homelessness by 2028
 - Increase cumulative new housing unit construction to 150,000 by 2025, and 275,000 units by 2035
 - Ensure 57% of new housing units are built within 1,500 feet of transit by 2025, and 75% by 2035
 - Create or preserve 50,000 income-restricted affordable housing units by 2035 and increase stability for renters
- Mobility and Public Transit
 - Increase the percentage of all trips made by walking, biking, micro-mobility / matched rides or transit to at least 35% by 2025; 50% by 2035; and maintain at least 50% by 2050
 - Reduce VMT per capita by at least 13% by 2025, 39% by 2035, and 45% by 2050
- Food Systems
 - Ensure all low-income Angelenos live within ½ mile of fresh food by 2035
 - Increase the number of urban agriculture sites in L.A. by at least 25% by 2025; and 50% by 2035
 - Prepare for natural disasters by increasing the resiliency of our food systems infrastructure
- Urban Ecosystems and Resilience

- Increase tree canopy in areas of greatest need by at least 50% by 2028
- Complete or initiate restoration identified in the 'ARBOR' Plan by 2035
- Create a fully connected LARiverWay public access system that includes 32 miles of bike paths and trails by 2028
- Reduce urban/rural temperature differential by at least 1.7 degrees by 2025; and 3 degrees by 2035
- Ensure proportion of Angelenos living within 1/2 mile of a park or open space is at least 65% by 2025; 75% by 2035; and 100% by 2050
- Achieve 'no-net loss' of native biodiversity by 2050

Specific planning rules and regulations

The City's [ZIMAS](#) website is where all zoning information can be found. The site's General Plan Land Use is Hybrid Industrial and the Zoning is Commercial Manufacturing. The site lies in the [Cornfield Arroyo Seco Specific Plan](#) area which includes among its goals the following:

- Transform an underserved and neglected vehicular-oriented industrial and public facility area into a cluster of mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented and aesthetically pleasing neighborhoods.
- Increase access to open space.
- Provide a range of housing types and price levels that offer a full range of choices, including affordable housing opportunities, for people of diverse ages, ethnicities, household sizes and incomes.
- Provide shops and services for everyday needs, including groceries, day care, cafes and restaurants, banks and drug stores, within an easy walk from home or work.
- Facilitate pedestrian mobility, encourage bicycle use, provide shared and unbundled parking spaces, provide access to a variety of transit options including frequent light rail and bus connections, shared vehicles and bicycles, and taxis.
- Lessen dependence on automobiles, and thereby reduce vehicle emissions, while enhancing the personal health of residents, employees and visitors.
- Reduce the use of energy and potable water, improve the ecology surrounding the Los Angeles River Watershed and Arroyo Seco, create connections from the community to the River and Arroyo Seco, and support the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan (LARRMP).
- Provide places for people to socialize, including parks, sidewalks, courtyards and plazas that are combined with shops and services.
- Provide adequate public recreational open space within walking distance of residents and employees, integrate public art, and contribute to the civic and cultural life of the City.

Language requirements

Proposals must be submitted in English.

City-specific awards

This site's redevelopment is an active priority for the City. The winning project will be reviewed by the City's interdepartment development team and may contribute to the next steps in developing the area.