

Jefferson Park Historic Neighborhood Profile

Sheltered from the busy streets that border it, Jefferson Park is a sunny, homey community that has gained increasing attention for its remarkable collection of Craftsman style bungalows. With tall, breezy palms lining several of its streets and uniform lawns gracing most of its homes, the neighborhood seems more relaxed and less hurried than other parts of Los Angeles. The community is also graced with a retail street running down its middle, Jefferson Boulevard, that holds great promise for neighborhood and pedestrian friendly businesses.



28th Street, circa 1910

Collection of the Seaver Center for Western History Research, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County

Jefferson Park was developed mainly from agricultural land owned by Frederick Rindge, president of the Artesian Water Company. The company was responsible for subdividing most of the property, parlaying its water franchise into a lucrative amenity in the sale of its real estate. The community is bordered by Adams on the north, Western on the east, Exposition on the south and Crenshaw on the west. Development of the neighborhood took place in 2 phases. The eastern part of the neighborhood, from Western to about 7th Avenue, was developed between 1905 and 1912. The western part, from 8th to Crenshaw, was developed later in the period from 1925-30. Jefferson Park was officially established and recognized by the City of Los Angeles in 1989.

The first inhabitants of Jefferson Park were of primarily Western European descent. Racial covenants prohibited conveyances to “any person of African, Chinese or Japanese descent”, but these covenants were effectively broken during the Depression and later declared illegal by the U.S. Supreme Court. In the years leading up to WWII, Japanese-Americans and African-Americans joined the existing Anglo population in the neighborhood. After WWII, the neighborhood became predominantly African-American. In the last decade, a growing number of Latinos and persons of Western European descent have moved to the neighborhood.

Jefferson Park is a treasure trove of 1-story Craftsman style bungalows that are approximately 1,500 square feet in size. The architecture of the neighborhood has remained very intact and the beauty and modest scale of the houses have spared the area from inappropriate conversions or demolitions. The bungalows feature traditional characteristics of the Craftsman period including low-pitched roofs, wood shingle sidings and roomy porches supported by heavy piers, usually of masonry construction. Deeply

overhanging eaves provide shade from the region's hot summers. Several bungalows also possess Polynesian-influenced exteriors.

When Jefferson Park was first developed, deeds to properties required that residences on the property "shall cost and be fairly worth not less than \$1,500.00." When constructed, the neighborhood was considered a modestly-priced area because of its bungalow designs and relatively inexpensive



2nd Avenue today

construction. The neighborhood was also one of the early "streetcar suburbs" that played an important role in the development of Los Angeles. Today, bungalow homes in the neighborhood are priced in the range of \$250,000 - \$275,000. Many residents have lived in the neighborhood for 30+ years, giving the area a nice mix of "old timers" who provide continuity and "newcomers" who provide energy and enthusiasm.

Jefferson Park has a committed and growing network of neighborhood groups that is charting the neighborhood's course. The neighborhood is part of the larger West Adams area and falls within the "sphere of influence" of the West Adams Heritage Association. The neighborhood also holds four seats on the local Neighborhood Council. In addition, there are many well-established block clubs with more on the way. Neighbors are also forming a comprehensive neighborhood-wide homeowners group that has evolved from an informal but active group of homeowners who are restoring homes.

Neighbors are also focusing efforts on revitalizing the Jefferson Avenue commercial strip that runs through the neighborhood. With its lovely, if neglected, 1920s storefronts, the corridor holds great potential for luring neighborhood-serving businesses that residents can walk to. Services are currently thin in the immediate neighborhood with the nearest supermarkets and drug stores one or two miles away. Neighbors hope to attract service businesses and historically appropriate economic development for the corridor. For larger shopping forays, neighbors often patronize the Baldwin Hills mall with its department stores, specialty stores and movie theaters.