

CICLAVIA

A NEIGHBORHOOD GUIDE TO THE NORTHEAST VALLEY

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Written by Andrea Richards

Designed by Colleen Corcoran and Tiffanie Tran

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THE NORTHEAST VALLEY

The Northeast Valley has everything we've come to associate with the San Fernando Valley (wide streets, tract homes, walk-up food stands) and many aspects that are totally unexpected—if you haven't been here—like a long history of multiculturalism and a concentrated corridor of important murals. If LA is an utterly unique and multiethnic city with a dynamic history of intersections (some civil, some not) between people, then the Northeast Valley is a microcosm of the larger city it calls home. From the planned community of Panorama City to Pacoima's rich legacy as an African American—and now Latino—enclave, the Northeast Valley has its own unique history and vibrant cultures.

It's fitting that today's CicLAvia route follows Van Nuys Blvd., which for more than half a century was the epicenter for car cruising in the Valley. As a Survey LA study describes it, "cars and car culture have long been integral components of San Fernando Valley life...the area developed in conjunction with the proliferation of the automobile." During the post-war era, the local youth would socialize by cruising up and down the boulevard, showing off their cars and participating in an important rite of passage. By the 1980s and 90s, the rite continued, although the cars of the past were replaced with lowriders, and the participants largely Latino. Eventually, cruising was outlawed in the late 1990s as it was in other areas of LA due to an association with gang activity.

Here we are cruising the boulevard again today—this time by bicycle, skateboard, or stroller! That change in vehicular mode corresponds with a similar shift in the

area's development that reflects the unique culture of the Northeast Valley and its needs. Right now the Northeast Valley, especially Pacoima, is a hotbed of community-led revitalization efforts, which range from infrastructure investments and improvements to the fostering of locally owned businesses, public art projects and environmental cleanups. Leading the charge are local nonprofits such as Pacoima Beautiful, whose grassroots efforts include the Pacoima Wash Vision Plan, which will create a greenway along the Pacoima Wash, creating much-needed green space and a bicycle and pedestrian thoroughfare to connect the community. Partnerships between these community-led organizations and city departments are working together to create a "new urbanism" in the Northeast Valley, which seeks to reconnect and revitalize a place where 100-plus years of transportation infrastructure converged to create a community strangled and polluted by freeways, a rail track, and even an airport.

This new Northeast Valley is already visible in the newly opened 4.7-acre Pacoima Wash Natural Park, the San Fernando Bike Path (which is entering Phase 3 in its development and will soon connect to the Burbank Metrolink station), and in many of the sites you will see along today's route. These community efforts celebrate the area's unique history as an integrated, multicultural community while also taking into account the historic and systemic discriminatory laws and tactics that continue to affect residents. In many ways, as you travel today's route you're cruising into LA's future—multimodal, communal, multicultural—rather than participating in a rite of the past.

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NEIGHBORHOOD EXTRAS—LEGEND



CULINARY LA



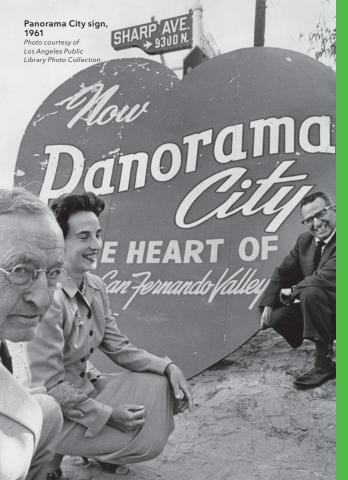
INSTAGRAM SPOTS



SEEN IT: FILM LOCATIONS



LITERARY LA



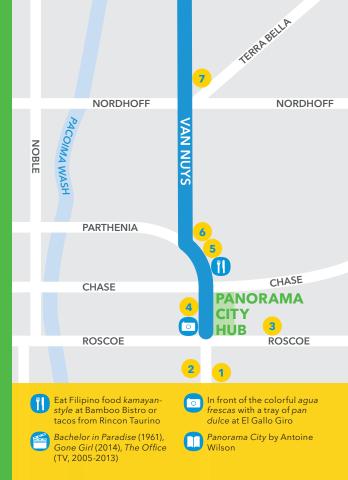
PANORAMA CITY No place might be more famous for its tract homes than the San Fernando Valley. Panorama City is the first planned community of tract housing in the Valley; it might be considered the crown jewel of such developments—it served as a prototype for future real-estate ventures.

Developer Fritz Burns, who had tested out his ideas in Toluca Lake prior to the war, partnered with industrialist Henry J. Kaiser in 1948 to create a massive subdivision on former dairy land (Panorama Ranch) that included 4,000 mass-produced homes, 31 acres of commercial development and 25 acres for parking. With his Kaiser Community Homes, Kaiser, the "father of modern shipbuilding" (and creator of Kaiser Permanente) utilized methods of mass production that he had successfully used in building ships to manufacture prefabricated houses at a factory near LAX. The homes, which were either ranch or traditional in design, were delivered and assembled on site in just a few weeks. This early effort in prefab, however, proved to be more expensive than simply constructing the houses on site and so was abandoned in favor of traditional building.

However the houses went up, they were well received by the house-hungry public that was experiencing a massive housing shortage. In the five years after WWII, the Valley's population more than doubled, and this new, modern community,

complete with supermarkets, churches, schools and playgrounds, proved to be just the sort of affordable paradise people needed. Plus, it was close to jobs: General Motors, Schlitz Brewery, and Carnation all had factories nearby, and there was an influx of smaller business at the Panorama Shopping Center (part of which is today's Panorama Mall). By the early 1950s, the two-year-old development had a population of nearly 20,000 people. By 1955, the Panorama Shopping Center, with its four major department stores and 18 acres of parking, became the preeminent place to shop in the San Fernando Valley.

But Panorama City wasn't for everyone; this new middle-class enclave was for whites only. As author Eric Avila points out, while the developers "intentionally programmed" class and occupational diversity into Panorama City, they didn't feel the same way about racial integration. In fact, Panorama City maintained a policy of Jim Crow segregation even after the Supreme Court's ruling in 1948 to stop racially restrictive housing covenants. According to Avila, Panorama City is an example of a community that "underscored the blurring of class lines along the suburban periphery of the metropolis, ensconcing white workers and their families in the comforts of suburban home ownership." Today, thankfully, the demographics of Panorama City have grown more diverse.



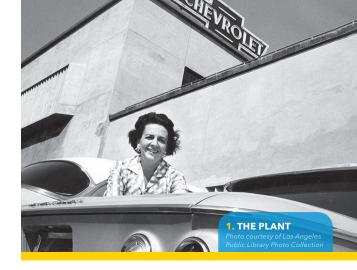
The Plant (former site of General Motors) 7880 Van Nuys Blvd.

Located just south of today's route, this massive retail and commercial complex was once the 101-acre site of the General Motors Van Nuys Assembly Plant, which until its closure in 1992 was the last automobile factory in Southern California. When the facility opened in 1947, it made Chevrolet trucks; in the 1970s and 80s, it added Camaros and Firebirds, among other models. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, the plant was once a symbol of "the region's manufacturing might"—6.3 million cars were made here; when the plant closed, it had 2,600 employees—and "helped foster development in surrounding San Fernando Valley communities."



8015 Van Nuys Blvd.

Before Panorama High School opened in 2006, the Carnation Research Laboratory was located at this site from 1953 until 1994, across the street from the General Motors factory. Though today it's an 18-acre, state-of-the-art LAUSD campus, this site was the birthplace of Coffee-mate. While the non-dairy creamer—a staple of offices and convenience stores—has lost favor in today's artisanal coffee climate, it was a revelation when food engineers working to improve powdered milk invented it.



Panorama City Library

14345 Roscoe Blvd.

Originally a modernist building designed by Glendale architect Graham Latta, the library opened here in 1959 and served the growing community of residents. That building was razed, and today's structure was built in 1999, doubling the size of the library.

Panorama Mall

8401 Van Nuys Blvd.

Part of Burns and Kaiser's original plan for Panorama City was the development of commercial and institutional properties, which included a 100-acre shopping center created adjacent to their residential development. Created between 1955 and 1964. the Panorama City Shopping Center, some of which remains today as the Panorama Mall, was one of the first malls in the San Fernando Valley. At one point, four major department stores operated here: Broadway, the first, which opened in 1955, followed by Robinson's, Montgomery Ward, and Ohrbach's. In 1998, Walmart opened its first LA store in the former Broadway store building. Today, the Panorama Mall remains the retail hub of the community, with 67 stores operating here.

Plaza del Valle

8500-8700 Van Nuys Blvd.

This colorful and charming collection of stores includes a pedestrian walkway and a plaza for community gatherings and celebrations as well as 100 small retail shops and restaurants. Along with murals, sculptures and kiddie rides, there are fabulous cafes serving a variety of Mexican fare, clothing and jewelry stores, and a branch of the locally founded sweet-treat shop, Raspado Xpress.

6 Site of Americana Theatre and Phil Ahn's Moongate

Restaurant 8632-8700 Van Nuys Blvd.

Today, visitors here can expect great banda music and dancing at La Sierra Restaurant & Nightclub, but from 1954 until the 1980s, this building was one of the Valley's most popular Chinese restaurants. Opened by Korean-American film star Philip Ahn, the glamorous Moongate Restaurant featured tropical drinks, Cantonese-American cuisine, and a dose of Hollywood in both its décor and its demeanor. Patrons came for the fabulous food and experience and also to get an autograph from the owner, who had starred in films alongside Gary Cooper, Bing Crosby, Elvis, Mae West, and Anna May Wong. Fittingly, in 1964, the Americana Theatre, part of Robert L. Lippert's chain of movie theaters, opened next door and was advertised as one of the first movie theaters located within a shopping complex.

Panorama Theatre

9110 Van Nuys Blvd.

This 1,000-seat Streamline Moderne movie theater opened in 1949 and was reportedly designed by the prolific architect William L. Pereira. Pereira, who was a professor of architecture at USC at that time, later partnered with Charles Luckman to create some of LA's most iconic buildings, including LACMA and the Theme Building at LAX. Today, the theatre is a church.



ARLETA In many ways, Arleta was created by the construction of the 5 Freeway. This small community—bounded by the Pacoima Wash to the north, Woodman Avenue to the west, Branford Street to the south, and the 5 Freeway to the east—was until 1968 part of Pacoima. But the construction of the freeway deepened a chasm already felt between the two communities, and residents here rallied to break ties to become an independent community.

As LA historian Nathan Masters writes about the construction of freeways in East LA, "...freeways didn't just displace people and businesses. They balkanized the community, making strangers out of neighbors and discouraging urban cohesion. A freeway can be an intimidating thing to cross on foot." So it was for the Northeast Valley when the 5 Freeway came through; suddenly, parts of what had been Pacoima were cut off from the rest, its eastern and western sections physically divided. This division both reflected and encouraged a socioeconomic and racial division that emerged in the area after WWII: the western area (which became Arleta) was middle-class and white. and the eastern largely blue-collar and "ethnic." In the face of depreciating real-estate, shared beginnings were not enough to keep people together; wounds from this separation continue today in an ongoing debate over zip codes. Today, Arleta, like the rest of the Northeast Valley, is mostly Latino; its ethnic and racial composition underwent a change in the 1980s and 90s when immigrants fleeing political unrest and wars in Central America arrived in LA. Though they might have officially split up, Arleta and Pacoima share not only a past, but also a thriving Latino population that has established businesses and cultural institutions throughout the area.

Several prominent persons have made Arleta their home, including cowboy film star Tom Mix, who had a large ranch here in the 1930s and 40s, and the Osmond Family in the 1970s, whose home on Nordhoff Street is still existent. Another family of musicians, rockabilly singer Johnny Burnette and his son, Rocky, lived in Arleta during the 1960s. The area's picturesque suburban landscape served as the location for Marty McFly's house in the *Back to the Future* film series.



- Ay Papa Que Rico
 - Back to the Future (1985)

"al carbon" from

- In front of the concrete-laden Pacoima Wash with hopes that someday this will be a greenway
- A Scary Abundance of Water by Barry Lopez

Arleta High School

14200 Van Nuys Blvd.

Opened in 2006 to relieve overcrowding at other neighboring schools, this impressive glass-and-steel structure is part of LAUSD. In fact, it's one of the highest-performing schools in the district, with a graduation rate around 90 percent (average for LAUSD is 77 percent).

Pacoima Wash Divergence Channel Between Beachy Ave. & Arleta Ave.

Constructed in the 1940s by the Army Corps of Engineers to control flooding in the area, this is part of a concrete control channel that begins at the Pacoima Dam in the San Gabriel Mountains and snakes through the neighboring communities of Sylmar, San Fernando and Pacoima to end at the Pacoima Spreading Grounds. The Pacoima Wash itself (it became a "divergence channel" after being enclosed by concrete) is a major tributary of the Tujunga Wash, which is, of course, a tributary of the Los Angeles River. Similar to the major revitalization efforts working to restore the Los Angeles River, the Pacoima Wash is currently at the epicenter of several collaborative projects (spearheaded by Pacoima Beautiful, see page 27) to transform this eyesore into a valuable community asset by greening the area and transforming it into 10.5 miles of parks and bike and walking paths.

10 Pacoima Spreading Grounds

Pacoima Wash Channel, Arleta Ave. to Woodman Ave.

Owned and operated by the Los Angeles County Flood Control District, this 169-acre facility was constructed in 1932. It is one of the major water-conservation facilities that recharges the San Fernando Groundwater Basin, which makes up about 12 percent of the DWP's water supply. After 82 years of operation, the facility is currently being upgraded to double its storage capacity and water-percolation rate.

11 Ay Papa Que Rico

14035 Van Nuys Blvd.

This Cuban restaurant, known for their pollo al carbon, is a great remaining example of a mid-century walk-up food stand. The building, which dates back to 1959, was originally a burger stand called Shoestring. In tribute to this beloved institution, the owners kept some of Shoestring's items on the menu (burgers, chili cheese fries), creating a cultural mash-up of the most delicious type.

MURAL MILE Today's route showcases perhaps one of the best concentrations of murals available in the City of Los Angeles—there are more than 50 murals within a three-mile radius around Pacoima City Hall. These outdoor works of art (some even incorporate 3-D elements) are an expression of the area's artistic and cultural pride. Many of the murals depict elements of the area's history and were made in collaboration with local youth and nonprofits.

High. Photo © Mural Mile

Second-generation muralist and Pacoima native Levi Ponce painted more than a dozen of these works with a crew of collaborators and has been instrumental in the creation of many more Together, these local artists have dubbed this colorful district along Van Nuys Blvd. Mural Mile and created an organization of the same name to support these landmarks with walking and bicycle tours.



BORN IN EAST VALLEY 13958 Van Nuys Blvd. by Levi Ponce plays with the title of the 1987 film Born in East LA and features actor and Valley native Cheech Marin as well as "Four Stacks," an Impala lowrider and a plane that alludes to the 1957 plane crash at Pacoima Jr.



PACOIMA ART REVOLUTION

13349 Van Nuys Blvd. by Levi Ponce reimagines
the Mona Lisa as a Mexican freedom fighter.
Photo © Aaron Palev



THE STARS OF THE FUTURE 13851-13909

Van Nuys Blvd. by artist Manny Velasquez, working with the MEND Family Club, depicts the area's youth and can be found at the intersection of the 5 Freeway and Van Nuys Blvd. Photo © Mural Mile



LA VIRGEN DE GUADALUPE

13374 Van Nuys Blvd. by Hector Ponce (with later additions by Mute & Seson & Rank & Sloth) is located right across the street from his son Levi Ponce's portrait of actor and East Valley icon **Danny Trejo** at 13403 Van Nuys Blvd. Photo © Aaron Paley



PACOIMA NEIGHBORHOOD CITY HALL

MURAL 13520 Van Nuys Blvd. by Ignacio Gomez, a 60-foot painting, pays tribute to the history and community leaders of the area, including founders of the San Fernando Valley Japanese American Community Center and judo master Seigoro Murakami, who led a training site in Pacoima for the 1984 Olympics. Photo © Mural Mile



MI VIDA, MI CULTURA 13171 Van Nuvs Blvd.

by Kristy Sandoval and R@H was made with local youth and reflects both indigenous and local culture; it's located on the side of **Myke's Café** (see page 28). Photo © Aaron Paley



THE DAY THE MUSIC DIED

13433 Van Nuys Blvd. by Levi Ponce is a tribute to Paccima native Ritchie Valens and the other musicians who died in a 1959 plane crash with him. Photo © Aaron Paley



ASSATA SHAKUR, FREEDOM FIGHTER

13161 Van Nuys Blvd. by Kristy Sandoval, who collaborated with an all-female crew called the HOODSisters to create this work, is dedicated to African American activist Assata Shakur. Fittingly, it's painted on the side of the Styles Ville Barbershop (see page 28). Photo © Mural Mile

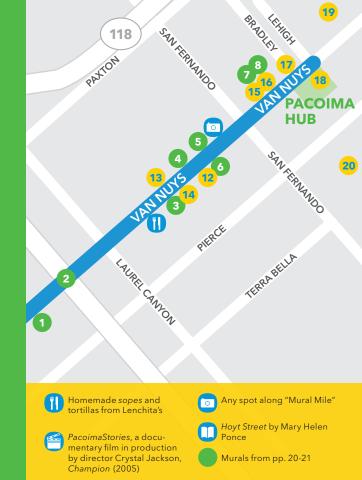


PACOIMA Cultural (mis)perceptions of the Valley often sum up the vast 145,000-acre area as shopping malls, suburban sprawl and teenybopping white girls with their high-rising, slang-laden talk. What gets overlooked is the Valley's long history of multiculturalism and the many contributions of people of color to the development of the area despite horrific instances of interpersonal and institutional racism. Pacoima is the epicenter of the Valley's complex, multiethnic past—where Latinos, African Americans, Japanese Americans and Filipinos created suburbs that were anything but lily white. Call it Pacas, Pac-town, PaCoiMa—welcome to the historic heart of today's dynamic, diverse and utterly unique San Fernando Valley.

Founded in 1887, during the real-estate boom inspired by the competing railroads' fare war, Pacoima was established on 500 acres of former rancho land. The owner of the land, Jouett Allen, sought to create an exclusive community with comfortable amenities—he installed the Valley's first curbs and sidewalks—and named the new town after a Tongva term that means "rushing waters." The name was apt—occasionally the area experienced severe winter floods from the nearby Pacoima Wash, which caused widespread damage, including the destruction of most of Pacoima's original buildings by one such flood in 1891. While sometimes useful for agriculture, such

flooding was terrible for development, and in the 1920s the City of Los Angeles constructed the Pacoima Dam. It wasn't enough: in 1938 severe flooding again swept away residents' houses, and the Hansen Dam and reservoir were built in response, yet another measure to protect the town from seasonal flooding.

Pacoima remained mostly agricultural until WWII, and it was one of the few locations in the Valley that did not have restrictive covenants on realestate. Thus, it became the Valley's "melting pot," the "unofficial minority district" (according to Survey LA) where Japanese Americans, Mexican Americans, African Americans and Jewish Americans lived next door to one another, as they had been prohibited from buying homes in other areas. This convergence of cultures led to a vibrant community, both socially and artisticallyan example of which was the great rock musician Ritchie Valens, a Pacoima native born Richard Valenzuela, whose first band the Silhouettes had African American, Japanese American and Chicano members and went from a garage in Pacoima to the top of the charts.





12 Pacoima Entrepreneur Center

13420 Van Nuys Blvd.

This building, designed by LA-based Quatro Design Group, was opened in 2015 by the Valley Economic Development Center (VEDC), a nonprofit organization that serves as a vital source of capital for small business loans and micro-financing for businesses that are often unable to qualify for traditional bank financing. With the belief that the key to job creation is the establishment of small business, this Center was created to make or place 350 jobs in the next five years by helping to nurture entrepreneurs. It's a catalyst for smart, sustainable, locally owned businesses in Pacoima. Be sure to notice the mural by GERMS on the building's back wall.

13605 Van Nuys Blvd.

Like the Panorama City Library, this site originally featured a 1961 modernist building designed by Glendale architect Graham Latta, which was later leveled to build the current library. Latta specialized in civic buildings such as libraries, schools and fire stations, all designed in mid-century modern style.

18 Pacoima Neighborhood City Hall 13520 Van Nuys Blvd.

Designed by LA-based RoTo Architects, this LEEDcertified building is a hub of Pacoima's civic and municipal services (Councilmember Felipe Fuentes' office is here) and a center of activism and innovative community placemaking initiatives. The building also houses Pacoima Beautiful, a nonprofit that educates and beautifies the community and partners with two businesses they helped develop that integrate community, sustainability, economic development and healthy living. The first, Fruta y Cultura, is a juice and smoothie shop that sources from neighborhood trees and backyard gardens. For a great coffee, there's Cafe o Muerte, which is owned by LA-based coffee roaster Cafecito Organico. Both businesses have partnered with other local nonprofits (MEND Poverty and Youth Policy Institute) to provide workforce training and jobs to local youth.

15 The Blvd & Myke's Café

13173 Van Nuys Blvd. & 13171 Van Nuys Blvd.

Established in 2016, The Blvd Bike & Skate Shop is conveniently located along today's route. If you need a little maintenance along the way, stop here and one of three generations of owner JC Soberanis's family will help you. Next door is Myke's Café, a colorful café known for an incredible breakfast (try the pancakes!) and lunch. Owner/chef Rafael Andrade is a community leader who partners with local nonprofits such as the El Nido Family Centers to help at-risk youth.

16

Styles Ville Beauty Salon

13161 Van Nuys Blvd.

For more than half a century, this barbershop and beauty salon has served the surrounding community and has been a cultural center of African American life in the Valley. The oldest black-owned barbershop in the San Fernando Valley, Styles Ville was opened by Freddie Carter in 1958—the original building was located across the street from the current one—back when black-owned businesses lined Van Nuys Blvd. Jazz great Billy Eckstine was a long-time client who drove in from his home in Encino. Today, Styles Ville is run by Carter's daughter, Nella, and remains an important part of Pacoima's past, present and future.

17 Bradley Avenue People St Plaza

Bradley Ave. between Van Nuys Blvd. & San Fernando Gardens

A collaboration between nonprofit Pacoima Beautiful (see Pacoima Neighborhood City Hall) and the City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation's (LADOT) People St program resulted in the creation of this pedestrian plaza. Closing off this small section of street and creating a plaza allows this space on busy Bradley Avenue to be utilized as a communal space, activated by people, not cars. The plaza is part of the city's People St program, which helps community groups build local plazas, parklets and bike corrals.



San Fernando Gardens

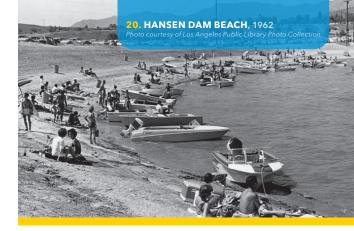
10995 Lehigh Ave.

Constructed in 1955, this 90-building development is the only public housing development in the San Fernando Valley and remains an excellent example of a garden apartment-style complex. Built by the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) to alleviate the post-war housing shortage, San Fernando Gardens was a multiethnic community from its inception. Initially, it had a large population of African American families, many of whom worked at nearby aerospace factories. Over time it, like the rest of the area, became increasingly Latino.

😘 Joe Louis Homes Residential **Planning District**

Paxton St., Weidner St., Glenoaks Blvd. & Herrick Ave.

Though boxer Joe Louis had nothing to do with this subdivision, his name was used as a marketing tool to sell the 93 houses built here in 1950 to African Americans. Pacoima became an enclave for Blacks largely due to the restrictive real-estate covenants practiced elsewhere in the Valley; indeed, by 1960, 90 percent of the Valley's African American residents lived in Pacoima. The area thrived as a nucleus of this community, creating a cultural center for African Americans, but this vibrant community existed in part due to the exclusionary practices in place at the time-and for decades to come.



20 Hansen Dam & Hansen Recreation Area 11770 Foothill Blvd.

Completed in 1940, the Hansen Dam was named for the landowner whose ranch was acquired to construct the 97-foot-high and two-mile-long structure. Built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to help control flooding, the reservoir was partly leased by the City of Los Angeles as a recreation facility, which included a beach, boating, swimming and parklands. Ten years later, it was the area's most popular recreation area, complete with a petting zoo and pony rides, and a 400-space parking lot packed to capacity. Though the beach and the lake were closed in 1982, the city continues to maintain the surrounding park facilities, including a golf course and aquatic center. The park is also home to the Discovery Cube, a science-based educational museum. THE LOS ANGELES TIMES AD





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