

AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORIC PLACES
LOS ANGELES
FOOTPRINTS IN BLACK

Come Celebrate
Oakwood's Black Heritage
with us at our first
Oakwood community
workshop!

Storytelling. Joy.
Music. Food.

June 27th | 2:30-5:30
Oakwood Recreation Center
767 California Ave,
Venice

See back for more information

Every step to preserve important places leaves a mark.

New Bethel has persevered as a vital pillar in the Venice community of Oakwood for over 65 years. Historic-Cultural Monument #1290. Designated under AAHPLA in 2024

Walk with us to honor Oakwood's "Footprints in Black."

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Photo: LA City Planning

~Photo Credits: Getty Conservation Institute

Preserving Oakwood's Story: African American Historic Places, Los Angeles

Historic preservation isn't only about saving old buildings. It is also about preserving the people, places, stories, and cultural traditions that give communities their identity.

That is the idea behind African American Historic Places, Los Angeles (AAHPLA), a collaboration between Los Angeles City Planning's Office of Historic Resources and the Getty Conservation Institute. The citywide initiative seeks to identify, protect, conserve, and celebrate places significant to Los Angeles' African American heritage while examining how historic preservation can better advance equity and social justice.

That mission has special significance in Oakwood, one of Los Angeles' last remaining historic Black coastal communities.

Oakwood and the Birth of Venice

Oakwood is a historically residential, working-class neighborhood located just east of Abbot Kinney Boulevard, and its history is intertwined with the creation of Venice itself.

In the early 20th century, developer Abbot Kinney hired Black laborers to help build his "Venice of America" resort and its famous canals. Yet the racial discrimination of the era severely restricted where those workers and their families could live and own property. Oakwood emerged as one of the few areas in Venice where Black families could establish homes and build a community despite discriminatory housing practices and racial covenants.

Over generations, Oakwood developed into an important center of African American life on Los Angeles' Westside. Families built homes, businesses, churches, organizations, and community institutions, creating a cultural legacy that remains an essential part of the history of Venice.

The history also presents an important contrast: Black workers helped build the Venice that Abbot Kinney envisioned, while discriminatory housing practices restricted where they could make their own homes within it.

Why Preservation Matters

Today, African American history remains dramatically underrepresented in traditional historic preservation. According to AAHPLA project materials, only about 4% of locally designated Los Angeles landmarks represent African American heritage.

AAHPLA seeks to help change that, not simply by deciding from outside a community which buildings deserve recognition, but by listening to the people who know these neighborhoods and their histories.

That approach is especially important in Oakwood, where development pressures and dramatic demographic changes have transformed the neighborhood. Preserving Oakwood's history means recognizing not only individual buildings, but also the people, gathering places, businesses, institutions, and everyday spaces that tell the story of its Black community.

Putting the Community on the Map

That is why the Oakwood workshops have focused on community knowledge.

Residents, former residents, families, and stakeholders are being asked to identify the places that matter to them and share the stories that explain why they matter. A location doesn't have to be a grand architectural landmark to be historically important. A home, gathering place, business, street corner, community institution, or even a place that no longer exists, can carry an important piece of Oakwood's story.

The goal is to bring those memories and experiences together and use them to help develop preservation strategies rooted in Oakwood's past, present, and future.



~Photo credits: VNC Outreach Chair

One Final Workshop

Following two earlier community workshops, the third and final Oakwood workshop will be held:

Saturday, August 22nd, 2026

11 AM–3 PM

Oakwood Recreation Center – 767 California Avenue in Venice

Lunch and good company provided

[RSVP FOR THE AUGUST 22 WORKSHOP](#)

The final gathering will include storytelling, mapping, music, food, and an interactive conversation about strategies for preserving Oakwood's Black heritage. This is the last workshop in this project, making community participation especially important. The stories, memories, and knowledge contributed by the people who know Oakwood are an essential part of determining what should be recognized and how its history should be protected.