

Equitable Community Development Strategies to Ensure Neighborhoods at Risk of Green Gentrification Can Thrive in Place

Taylor Yard: A Case Study

July 2024

UCLA Institute of the Environment and Sustainability



This report was a collaborative effort led by the UCLA Institute of the Environment and Sustainability (IOES) in partnership with the Community TYES team with support from the Trust for Public Land's Park Equity Accelerator. IOES team members include Jon Christensen, Olivia Arena, Emma Ramirez, Zeltzin Angon, Zoe Frumin, Dominique Ong, and Mel Liu.

Community TYES recognizes Northeast LA as the ancestral lands of the Gabrielino/Tongva people, acknowledging displacement of Indigenous and former residents. We aim to honor Indigenous sovereignty and collaborate with present and emerging Indigenous and local residents for concrete action supporting community history, sovereignty, and culture. Racial, environmental, economic, and housing justice are pursued under Indigenous and community leadership.

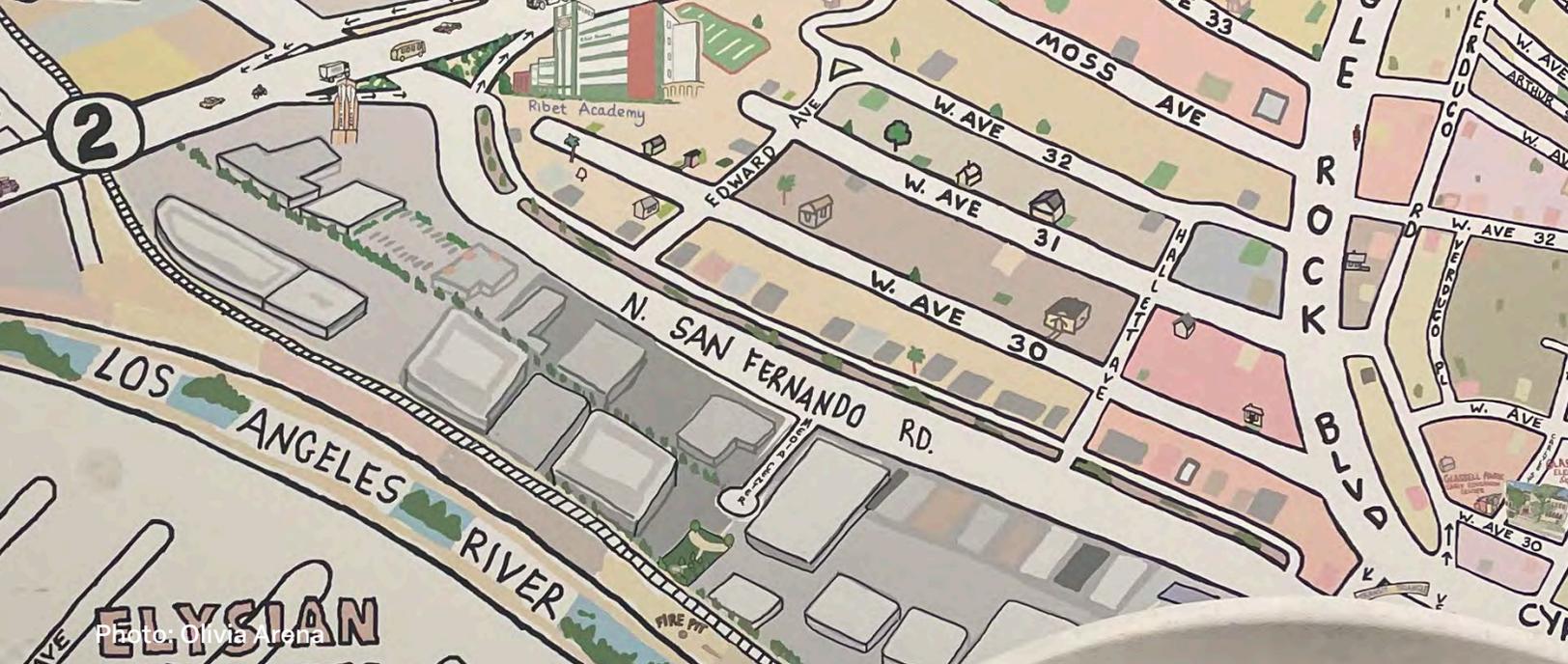


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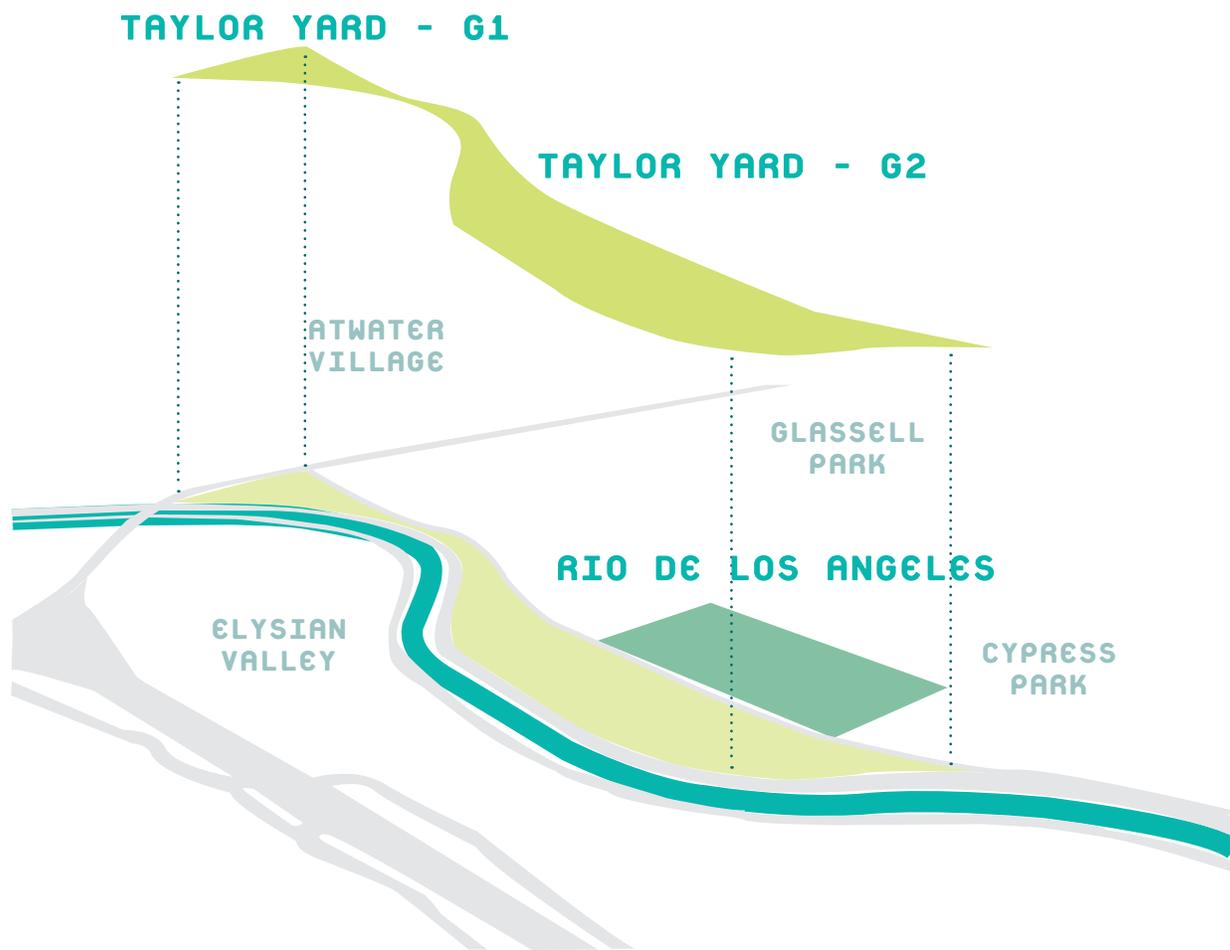
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Taylor Yard is a former railyard on the Los Angeles River near downtown and the site of an ambitious project to build a 100-acre park. The surrounding communities include some of the most economically disadvantaged, socially vulnerable, and most pollution burdened neighborhoods in California. Many of these Northeast Los Angeles or NELA neighborhoods are majority Latino, with a diverse mix of immigrants. Most of the households are low-income renters, many of them rent-burdened, spending more than 30% of their household income on rent. Some of these neighborhoods are already seeing the effects of green gentrification around Taylor Yard: rising property values and rents and a demographic shift to a higher percentage of affluent, white households.

The 100-Acre Partnership, which consists of the landowners of current and future park space at Taylor Yard, has observed these trends and heard concerns from community members about the risk of residential displacement. The fear is that they will not be able to afford to live in their neighborhoods and enjoy the park, which has been called the “crown jewel of river revitalization.” And they will be replaced by a new, wealthier community.

The partnership — the City of Los Angeles, California State Parks, and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, a local joint powers authority — issued a request for interest to create equitable community development strategies to ensure that residents can thrive in place as investments

100 ACRE PARTNERSHIP AT TAYLOR YARD



are made in open space and river revitalization at Taylor Yard. The Los Angeles Regional Open Space and Affordable Housing (LA ROSAH) Collaborative was chosen to lead the development of a “Community Taylor Yard Equity Strategy” in conjunction with the Institute of the Environment and Sustainability at UCLA and the 100-Acre Partnership. The initial community engagement and planning effort — Phase 1 of “TYES,” as the initiative came to be called — was supported by the City of Los Angeles, Resources Legacy Fund, the Trust for Public Land, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and the Strong, Prosperous, And Resilient Communities Challenge (SPARCC).

The Trust for Public Land commissioned this report as part of the Park Equity Accelerator initiative within its 10-Minute Walk program, in which the City of Los Angeles participates. This case study of TYES was produced by the Institute of the Environment and Sustainability at UCLA. This report describes TYES and potential equitable community development policies and programs identified in Phase 1. It also includes some brief cases studies of illustrative policies and programs in other locations.

We hope that this report can serve as a resource for people working to ensure communities can thrive in place around other major investments in green infrastructure. We recommend treating this report as a menu of options and examples. We believe each project is different, with a distinct set of agencies, nonprofits and community-based organizations, and a unique social, political, and economic context. Still, there is a similar set of tools, policies, and programs that are potentially available in most places. Which ones are used and how they are used will vary. We hope that this report helps people figure out the most effective tools for the communities they care about.



Photo: Dominique Ong



Photo: Courtney Cecale

HISTORY AND CONTEXT

The native people of the land known today as Northeast Los Angeles (NELA) call themselves Tongva and Kiche. They are stewards of this land and water to this day.

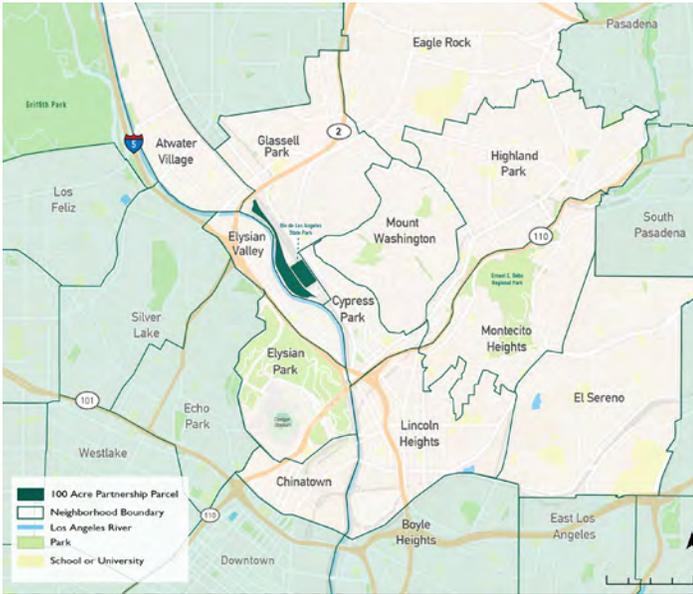
Over many years, NELA has been settled by immigrants from around the world. Some neighborhoods, such as Chinatown, have been shaped by racist land use and housing policies and practices that excluded people from some areas and pushed them into others. Redlining also shaped NELA, making it difficult or impossible for people of colors to get mortgages or loans to improve their homes. These legacies have shaped economic development, housing, public space, and infrastructure to this day.

The Los Angeles River flows through the Elysian Valley, where the water table is perched so high concrete could not be set. As a result, this soft bottom stretch of the river is one of the few places where riparian habitat can still be found along the river, which was largely encased in concrete for flood control in the 20th century. Taylor Yard is a former Southern Pacific Railroad terminal

where locomotives were cleaned and repaired, and boxcars were sorted and staged for transporting goods regionally and around the Los Angeles area until the 1980s. At its peak Taylor Yard employed 5,000 people with 50 trains a day rolling through the site, but Taylor Yard lacked the modernization of other regional railyards. Ultimately, competition and changing rail infrastructure made it obsolete.¹

The former railyard runs 2.5 miles between San Fernando Road and the Los Angeles River. It is surrounded by the NELA neighborhoods of Atwater Village, Cypress Park, Eagle Rock, Elysian Valley or Frogtown, Glassell Park, Highland Park, Montecito Heights, and Mount Washington. Taylor Yard and the surrounding neighborhoods are wedged between three major highways, Dodger Stadium, and a range of industrial infrastructure.

After the decline and closure of Taylor Yard as a functional railyard, community groups sought to identify the best use of this valuable river-adjacent real estate. In 1988, the Los Angeles City Council created Community Plan Advisory Committees to ensure resident participation in

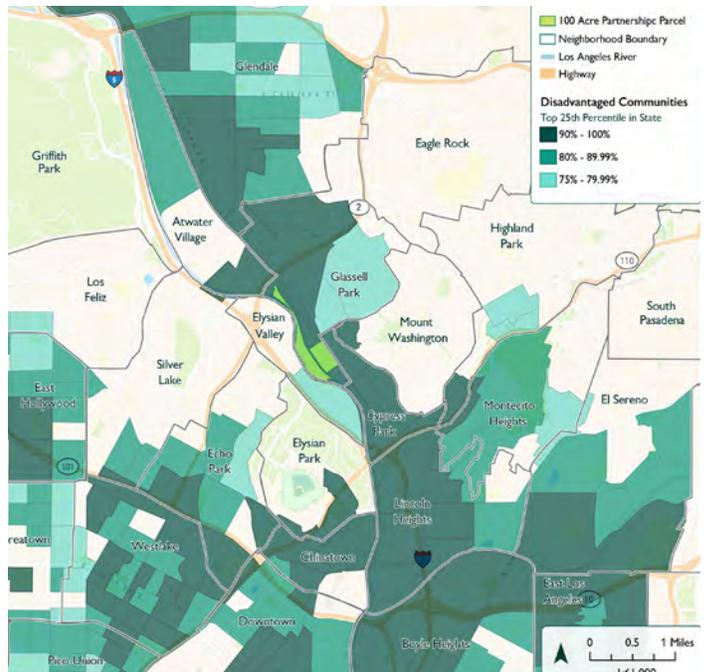


Map produced by Emma Ramirez, UCLA

Committees to ensure resident participation in the planning process and identify community-desired changes.² In the early 1990s, the Northeast Los Angeles Community Plan Advisory Committee articulated community desires related to the then-vacant Taylor Yard. Community members expressed a desire for the site to contain new commercial centers, affordable housing, and recreational parks, boosting economic revitalization in the community after the closure of the railyard.³

In some important ways, this vision has come to fruition over time. The former railyard was sold off in various parcels, some of which now contain commercial businesses, a school campus, affordable housing, and park space, including the 40-acre Río de Los Angeles State Park, which opened in 2007 and is jointly managed by the City of Los Angeles and California State Parks, which also owns an 18-acre site known as the Bowtie Parcel, which is now beginning to be developed as a park. In 2017, the City of Los Angeles purchased a 42-acre parcel known as the G2 parcel, which is being cleaned up and partially developed as a public open space. Together, these form the future 100-acre park.

Within three miles of Taylor Yard 40% percent of the population lives in a disadvantaged community based on the CalEnviroScreen 4.0 Index which utilizes indicators in both environmental burden, like air quality, and vulnerable populations characteristics, including race and ethnicity, income, and employment status.⁴ To better identify the needs for vulnerable communities within the surrounding NELA region, this report extends statistical and qualitative analysis to include the neighborhoods of Lincoln Heights, Chinatown, El Sereno, Elysian Valley, and Elysian Park.



Map produced by Emma Ramirez, UCLA



Photo: Natalie Donlin-Zappella

THE TAYLOR YARD EQUITY STRATEGY

Communities in NELA face increased financial and social pressures which threaten to displace communities of color and longtime residents with limited economic resources. The development of Taylor Yard as a 100-acre green space threatens to exacerbate economic pressures contributing to displacement. “Green gentrification” occurs when the development or investment in green space serves as a catalyst for economic displacement.⁵ Essentially, the “greenspace paradox” describes the challenge of creating more equitable access to green space in historically deprived communities, which can ultimately contribute to financial pressures that force communities out of neighborhoods, unable to enjoy the benefits of new greenspace.⁶ A notable example of this is the High Line in New York, a former rail line transformed into an elevated park running through the Chelsea neighborhood. The economic impacts of the High Line have served as a cautionary tale for other cities turning to underutilized infrastructure for reinvestment.⁷

For many years, the City of LA and its partners in the 100-acre park project, the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority and California State Parks, have heard residents’ concerns about the potential for gentrification and displacement of residents around the park. In 2022, in response to a request for interest, the 100 Acre Partnership, selected the Los Angeles Regional Open Space and Affordable Housing (LA ROSAH) Collaborative to lead development of a Community Taylor Yard Equity Strategy (TYES), funded by the City, Resources Legacy Fund, the Trust for Public Land, and the Natural Resources Defense Council. A TYES coordinating committee outlined an initial strategy to identify pressing community concerns and draft potential responsive policy solutions. Much like other equitable development projects around the United States, the goal of TYES is to identify specific, effective, and community-driven strategies to ensure that current residents can benefit from new park-based investments, including anti-displacement policies that allow legacy businesses and longtime residents and families to thrive in place.

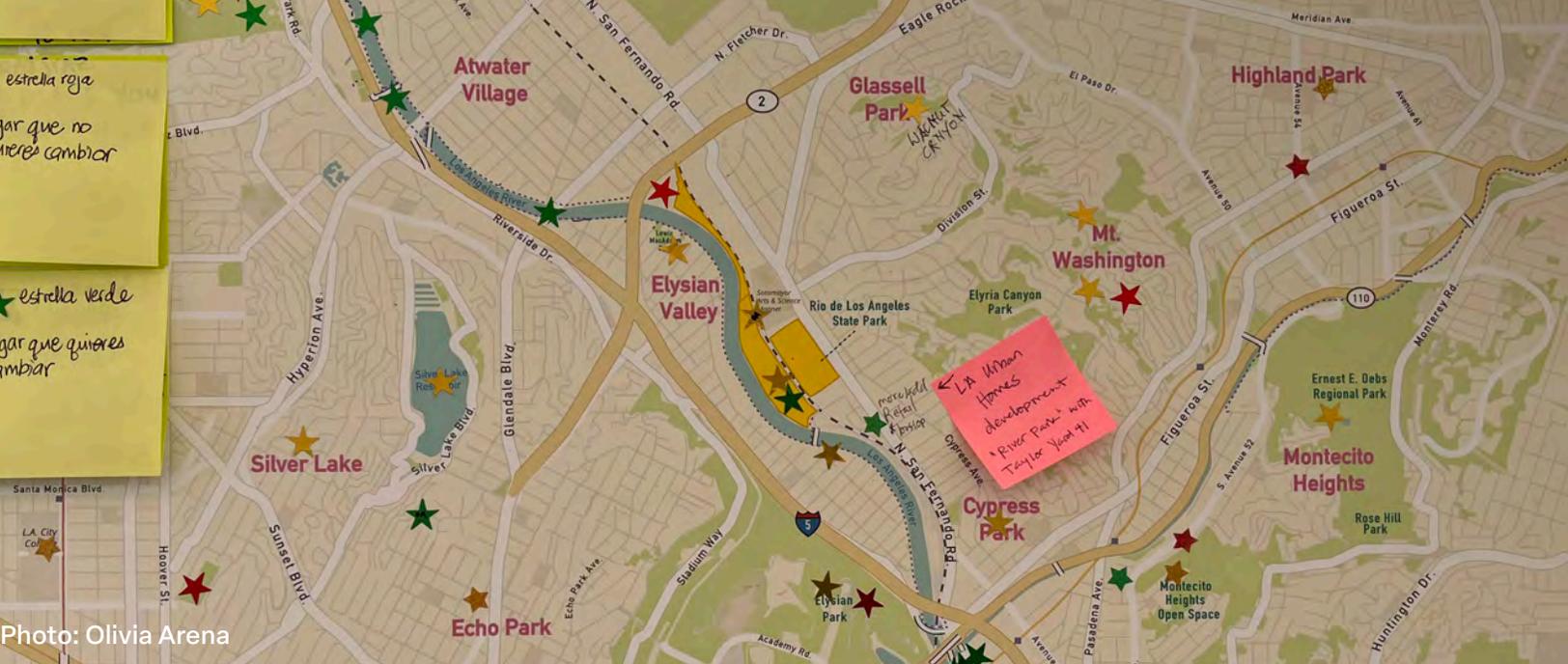


Photo: Olivia Arena

METHODS AND APPROACH

As a best practice recommended by the High Line Network, the coordinating committee included researchers from the UCLA Institute of the Environment and Sustainability (IOES) to gather, document, and analyze the administrative of planning and policy decisions, demographic data from the U.S. Census and other sources, and input gathered through community engagement. Our research also pulls from UC Berkeley’s Urban Displacement Project methodology for understanding gentrification by taking into consideration how historical conditions, and concurrent disinvestment and investment patterns have and still do affect the NELA community fabric, driving residential displacement.⁸ To provide a comprehensive neighborhood analysis and case-study comparison, a mixed methods approach of quantitative and qualitative research was used at different stages of the project. Quantitative methods, including statistical and spatial analyses, were used to identify high-level neighborhood trends. Qualitative methods, including community interviews, primary, and secondary source analysis, provided granular and contextualized information that other quantitative methods could not capture effectively.

Stages of Approach

Research for this project was conducted in stages to better understand the nuances of gentrification and displacement pressures affecting residents within NELA. In the first stage, we analyzed neighborhoods within a five-mile radius around Taylor Yard to identify potential drivers and socio-economic symptoms of gentrification. Because the NELA community has been engaged in several prior planning processes, the second stage of research consisted of a comprehensive review of previous planning and policy documents to identify past community concerns, priorities, and solutions. This compilation of priorities from past plans was then used to help facilitate community interviews and outreach in order to ground-truth current community priorities. This process revealed that housing and workforce development are the highest priorities of concern for NELA residents. Based on these priorities, we conducted an analysis of housing and workforce development policies and programs as our final stage of research for Phase 1 of the Community TYES.

This report is one of the deliverables of the first phase of TYES. The City of LA and LA ROSAH have also produced a report with a range of strategic opportunities identified through this research and community engagement in Phase 1. In Phase 2 of TYES, additional conversations with community members and organizations will be used to identify priority strategies and partners and develop an equitable community development plan and implementation strategies with partners.

Neighborhood Analysis

For our analysis of neighborhoods surrounding Taylor Yard, we created a series of maps and charts to better understand the nuances of potential displacement pressures. Data for this analysis was pulled from the 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, the Urban Displacement Project Gentrification and Displacement map, the LA County Parks and Recreations 2022 Park Needs Assessment, and CalEnviroScreen 4.0 Dataset. CalEnviroScreen is a unique state-level dataset that compiles demographic and environmental variables into environmental justice indices. These indices quantify the interconnection between the environment and people, illustrating that human systems often responsible for environmental harms must also be addressed as solutions to injustices. Each variable was selected based on its association as a key contributor to population vulnerability and gentrification.

Variables

- Population
- Race and Ethnicity
- Sex
- Age
- Educational Attainment
- Median Household Income
- Median Gross Rent
- Poverty
- Rent Burden
- Unemployment
- Citizenship Status
- Language Isolation
- Housing Tenure Status
- Homelessness
- Household Size
- CalEnviroScreen Disadvantaged Communities
- Park Needs Index Score

The geographic units used for this initial analysis included census block groups, census tracts, and Los Angeles neighborhoods. We found that an analysis based on neighborhoods was most intuitive for all of us, including residents, to understand and analyze. The area known as NELA extends across twelve neighborhoods northeast of downtown Los Angeles along three miles of the LA River. NELA is home to more than 276,400 residents. Within an area of 21 square miles, the population density is about 13,000 people per square mile, making this region far denser than the city of Los Angeles on average.

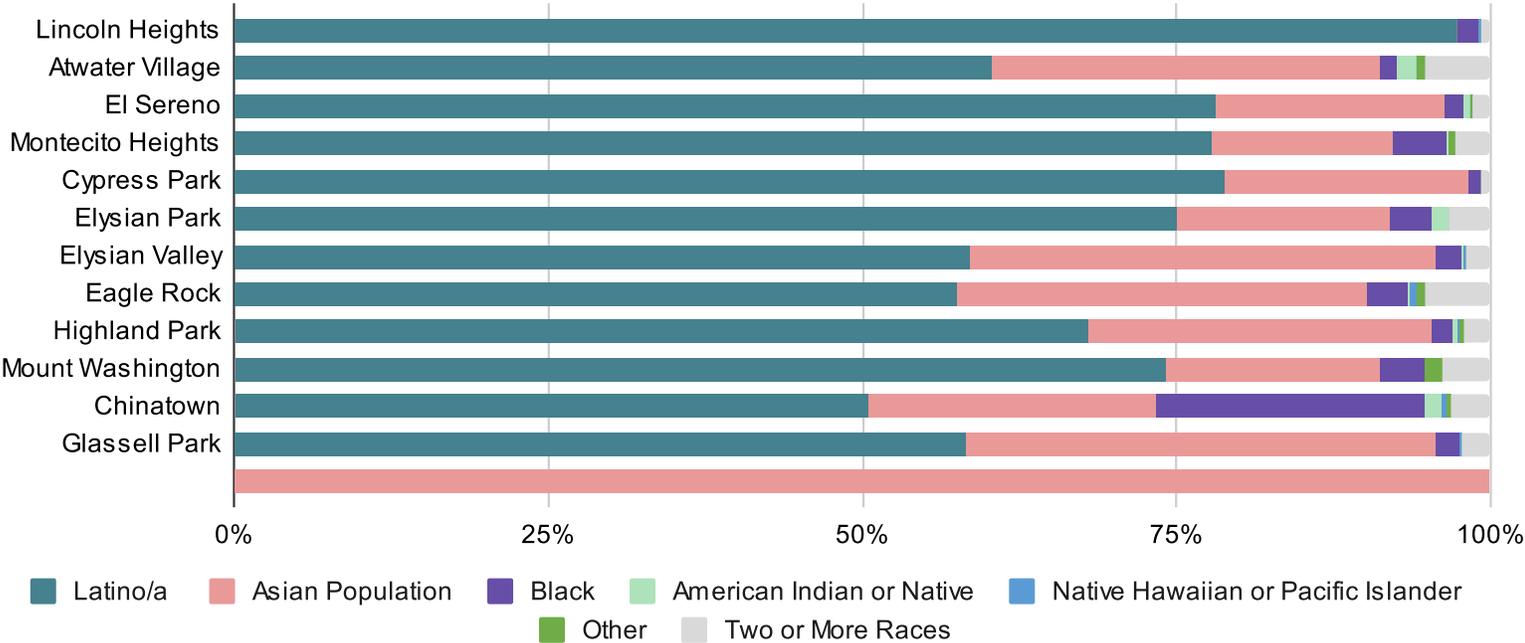
Latinos make-up at least 50% of almost every neighborhood in NELA, which overall has a population close to 60% Latino, 18% Asian, and 17% White. Many residents speak a language other than English at home, with Spanish being the most common language at 48%. The immigrant population within NELA is 12% higher than the city of Los Angeles on average.

In terms of infrastructure, NELA is a predominantly residential region consisting of homes, parks, places of worship, and schools with the notable exceptions of industrial and commercial corridors that run parallel to Interstate 5 and along the LA River on San Fernando Road, continuing toward downtown LA through the southern portion of Lincoln Heights and Chinatown. Because of its position between three major highways, industrial spaces, and the Taylor Yard brownfields, the pollution burdens this community has faced over the years largely contributes 40% of NELA residents living in disadvantaged communities, as defined by the Clean Energy and Pollution Reduction Act of 2015 (SB350) as areas in California which most suffer from

a combination of economic, health, and environmental burdens.⁹ According to the CalEnviroScreen 4.0 Index, the neighborhoods in NELA considered the most “disadvantaged,” or burdened, are Cypress Park, Lincoln Heights, and Glassell Park.

When considering current access to green space, the Northeast region of Los Angeles generally ranks high in a park needs assessment conducted by the Los Angeles County Regional Open Space District.¹⁰ While the county averages 3.3 acres of park per 1,000 residents, NELA averages 2.2 acres. This is not necessarily due to lack of parks; 86% of the NELA residents live within a half mile of a park. However, only 34% of residents live within a half mile of adequate park or public green space considered to be in “good condition” by the county park needs assessment. Most notably, residents with the lowest percentage of access to adequate park space reside in the neighborhoods of El Sereno (13%), Glassell Park (16%), and Eagle Rock (17%).

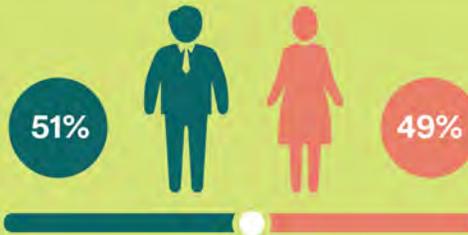
NELA Neighborhoods by Race and Ethnicity



NELA AT A GLANCE



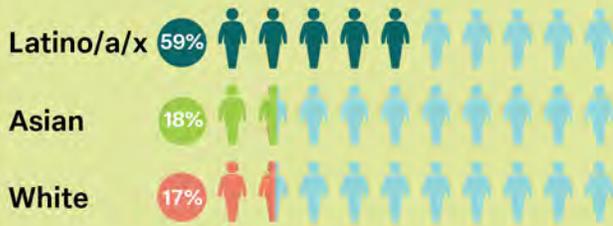
276,442 : Total Population



Median Household Size

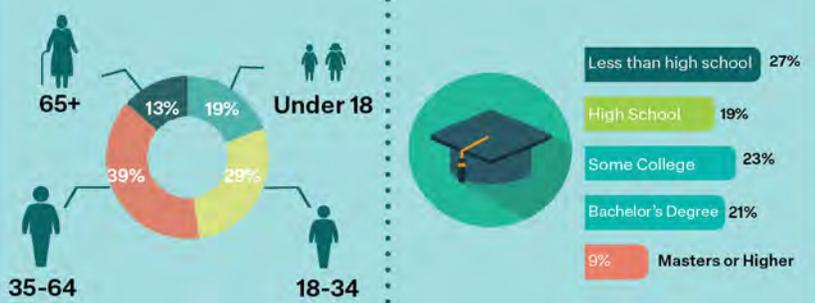


Racial & Ethnic Distribution

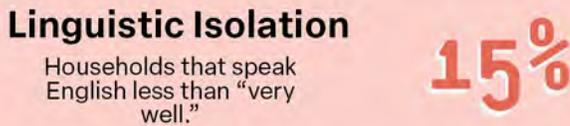


Three Largest Populations

Age & Education



Language Distribution



Housing

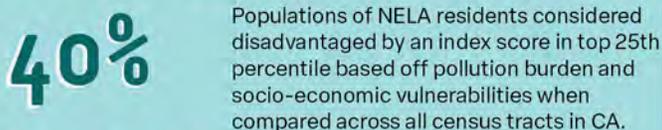


Total Households: 88,883



Total Housing Units: 83,282

Disadvantaged Communities



CalEnviroScreen 4.0 - Disadvantaged Community Index



Data Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Survey

Reviewing Past Plans

NELA residents have expressed their concerns, priorities, visions, and solutions through many planning processes over the years. Some community members feel exhausted from repeated engagement with no discernible beneficial outcomes or impact. This is widely known as planning fatigue.¹¹ To understand and honor past community engagement efforts, we analyzed several relevant plans and an ongoing plan update in NELA to pull out articulated community priorities and bring them back to engagement efforts to validate their current relevance. The plans we analyzed included:

- The Northeast LA Vision Plan (2013)
- Los Angeles River Master Plan (2022)
- Cornfield Arroyo Seco Plan Update (2022)
- Northeast Los Angeles Community Plan (1999).

As part of the ground-truthing effort, a TYES community organizer conducted interviews with more than 20 NELA residents who were volunteers and organizers in their communities to revisit, discuss, and validate these identified priorities. In addition to interviews, the community organizer participated in and documented concerns voiced in NELA community meetings. While housing and workforce development were identified as key areas of concern, community members also expressed desire for youth programming and leadership development and recreational activities, among other community investments. Across conversations and topic areas, interviewees described both challenges and narratives of creativity, resilience, and self-determination, as well as robust recommendations. We found that NELA community members have long envisioned a future that centers health and equity, and they continue to seek that future.

Policy Scans

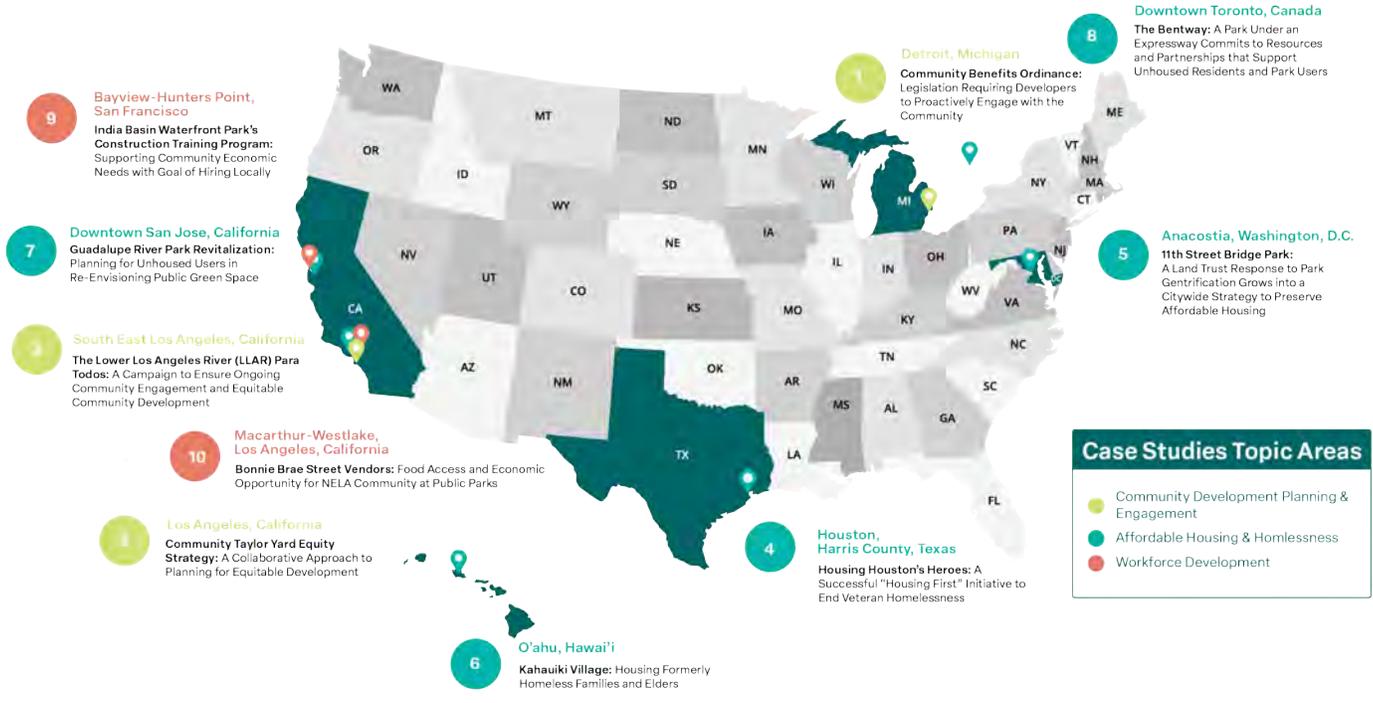
Two main priority areas emerged from our Phase 1 research: housing stability and workforce development. Our research took an expansive view of anti-displacement housing stability and workforce development policies. Specifically, our analysis of housing policy included strategies for dealing with the homelessness crisis, and our analysis of workforce development strategies included neighborhood-level economic development efforts. We took this holistic approach to capture creative approaches and avoid siloing policies and programs which can often be interconnected.

To identify concrete, tangible steps that could be implemented, measured, and responsive to community priorities, we conducted two policy landscape scans at the local, regional, state and federal levels to identify relevant policy solutions and best practices. Each scan documented key planning efforts, policies, and programs, as well as funding streams at the state, local, and community-levels then presented the major themes and potential policies and programs to the TYES coordinating committee and a broader network of stakeholders to elicit feedback and identify potential recommendations. UCLA graduate students researched relevant California and Los Angeles housing policies and workforce development programs operated by the City of Los Angeles.

Comparative Case Studies

Throughout this process, we also compiled case studies that highlight models that could inspire and inform TYES. These case studies include projects in Los Angeles, Toronto, Houston, Detroit, Washington D.C., Oahu, and San Francisco. These case studies highlight context, necessary conditions and components, scale, key partners, and recommendations for practitioners to consider when evaluating potential anti-displacement strategies.¹²

EQUITY STRATEGIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY



CULTIVATING
EQUITY: 100 ACRE
PARK @ TAYLOR
YARD
HOW DO
YOU PREVENT
GREEN GENTRIFICATION

Photo: Divya Arena
Make
Use
Best
Capping
Profits
at

EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT PRIORITY AREAS

Based on similar park projects, demographic analysis, stakeholder conversations, community meetings, and outreach to community members, we identified two equitable development priority areas to analyze in depth: 1) housing and homelessness, and 2) workforce development. While this report focuses on these two areas of policy, no social or economic policy exists in a vacuum nor disconnected from other community priorities. Combating climate change, food insecurity, robust transportation networks, community-serving retail, and culturally representative art were some of the other community priorities identified in our research, which can be linked with housing stability and economic well-being.

Housing Stability (Housing and Homelessness)

Housing affordability is by a significant factor the biggest current priority in NELA. This concern was raised in earlier planning efforts, but it has become even more

prominent in recent years as California's housing affordability and homelessness crises have worsened dramatically. Like many Californians, NELA residents are concerned about displacement and housing instability given the renter-majority neighborhoods, rising cost of housing, and limited supply of new and affordable units. With accelerating gentrification and development of Taylor Yard as park space and other river revitalization efforts unfolding over the past two decades, many NELA residents now view housing unaffordability, gentrification, and displacement as linked to park and green space development. Within Northeast Los Angeles, resident's primary concerns over displacement and housing instability can be understood through four main factors.

Predominantly Tenant Neighborhoods

First, the majority of residents in the Northeast Los Angeles region rent the units in which they live. Nearly 60% of NELA residents are renters. This share of renters is even higher for

many neighborhoods within NELA, especially Chinatown, Cypress Park, Elysian Park, and Lincoln Heights, which have renter-occupied housing rates well above 60%. Almost all residents in Chinatown are renters (95%). Among NELA renters, over half identify as Latino. The only neighborhoods that have a home-ownership rate above 50% are Mount Washington (62%), Eagle Rock, and Montecito Heights (both at 52%).

Rising Housing Costs

Second, although NELA's median household income (HHI) of \$60,000 is \$2,000 less than the City of LA's overall median, there is a noteworthy disproportionate difference in median household income when broken down by race and ethnicity. In 2019, white households earned the highest median HHI of \$93,000, almost double the earnings for the two lowest median household earners, Latinos with \$54,000, and American Indian households with \$57,000. This unequal distribution of income greatly affects renters within NELA as 52% of all renters are rent burdened, spending 30% or more of their income on rent, while half of these renters are considered severely rent burdened spending 50% or more on rent.

Limited Supply of New and Affordable Units

Third, the lack of affordable housing availability has increasingly put displacement pressures on long-time residents. Within NELA, the median gross rent is \$1,450 while the median house value is \$623,600. Since 2010, median gross rent has increased 11%, and housing prices in the area have jumped 15%. There are 87,000 occupied housing units which make up 95% of the total NELA housing stock. However, the average year an available housing structure was built in the area is 1954. It is important to note that the Low Income Tax Credit (LIHTC) has helped contribute to a 53% increase in affordable housing units in various

52%

**OF RENTERS ARE
RENT BURDENED**

**SPEND OVER 30% OF
INCOME ON RENT**

neighborhoods in NELA within the past 10 years. As of 2019, 2,360 affordable housing units in NELA are supported with funds from the LIHTC program, with Lincoln Heights and Chinatown providing the largest quantity of affordable units. Furthermore, since 2010, the neighborhoods of Chinatown, Cypress Park, and Lincoln Heights have increased their number of affordable housing units by more than 50%. Unfortunately, this is not enough to support the density of low-income households residing in NELA who benefit from the proximity and volume of community assets that support low-income tenants. Lack of more affordable housing investments coupled with the fact that the number of vacant housing units for rent or sale has decreased by 48% since 2010, has dramatically limited the availability of housing for both renters and homeowners.

Homelessness

As a result, the total number of people experiencing homelessness who were documented during the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA)'s Homeless Count in 2019 was 1,448. The highest concentration of unhoused people was in Chinatown and the northern part of Lincoln Heights at the border of Cypress Park.

Guide: ● 2010 ● 2019

Total Units: 92,221



Tenure



Median Year

1954

Housing Structure was Built

Housing Type



Median Household Income

\$55,554 (2010) \$60,048 (2019)

Median Home Price

\$542,539 (2010) \$623,600 (2019)

Median Cost of Rent

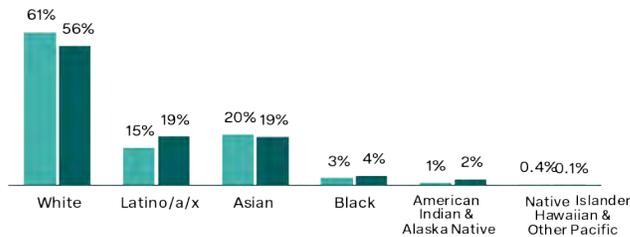
\$1,175 (2010) \$1,430 (2019)

Homeless Population

1,444

RENTERS AT A GLANCE:

Racial and Ethnic Distribution



Total Renters By Neighborhood

Neighborhood	Total Renters (%)
Chinatown	94%
Elysian Park	86%
Lincoln Heights	74%
Cypress Park	65%
Atwater Village	60%
Highland Park	59%
Glassell Park	56%
Elysian Valley	54%
El Sereno	50%
Montecito Heights	47%
Eagle Rock	47%
Mount Washington	38%

2,360

Total number of Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program service housing units.



Housing Stability Policy Analysis

Housing stability includes a broad range of policies that address various aspects and pressure points of the housing crisis. The limited supply of housing units, growing unaffordability of stock, expiring tenant protections, and lack of pathways to homeownership have reinforcing but distinct policy solutions. The rising incidence of homelessness is one result of a hot housing market and limited public funding for housing options for the most economically disadvantaged. Potential solutions that combat housing displacement can also increase the number of people in stable housing, specifically those that prioritize the construction of covenanted affordable housing units and strengthen tenant protections to prevent vulnerable renters from falling into housing precarity.

There is a body of research and advocacy that supports a supply-side solution, that is to say, build more housing of any kind and, given the economics of supply and demand, lower housing prices will eventually result. Given the acute and related housing and homelessness crises in Los Angeles and California more broadly, we focus on targeted policies and programs that directly result in covenanted affordable housing units, which are essential to ensure that people do not experience housing instability and unsheltered homelessness. We also include descriptions of policies that protect currently affordable housing units and enact stronger tenant protections to combat potential displacement. The throughline of these policies is their goal to rebalance tenant power and provide public resources to renters with the least economic resources.

The question of the comparative efficacy of these various policies and programs is an

important one, often debated at the theoretical level, the policy level, and at ground level implementation in particular places through particular organizations. Here we present these various policies and programs as options without that evaluation of efficacy. In Phase 2 of TYES, the question of comparative efficacy as well as the capacities and competencies of implementers undoubtedly will be factors in prioritizing strategies.

Producing Long-Term Affordable Housing (Supply)

Low-income renters in the United States face a severe shortage of affordable housing. Nationwide, only 33 affordable rental units exist for every 100 extremely low-income households.¹³ The scarcity of deeply affordable units is more pronounced in California, where there are 24 affordable rental units for every 100 extremely low-income households. Most cities in California, including Los Angeles, fail to meet their allocated regional production goals for housing affordable at the lowest income groups.¹⁴ Given the shortage of housing affordable to renters with the lowest incomes, California has recently enacted policies focused on increasing the supply of affordable housing. To boost housing production, state policies have facilitated the use of publicly owned land for affordable housing, established incentives for affordable housing, and generated revenue dedicated for affordable housing (see Table 1 below).

Municipalities have also enacted inclusionary zoning policies to increase the production of unsubsidized and subsidized affordable housing. Inclusionary zoning ordinances require developers to make a specific percentage of units affordable and available to low-income tenants. In exchange, developers receive incentives to offset lower rental revenue, such as density bonuses. In Montgomery County, Maryland, an inclusionary

zoning ordinance also requires up to 40% of required affordable units to be made available for purchase by the county public housing agency or non-profits.¹⁵ In most cases, units used to comply with inclusionary zoning requirements are subject to affordability covenants for a specific period of time.

NELA residents have expressed a desire for medium density that preserves neighborhood character but creates more affordable housing units. Cities across the United States are reforming existing zoning and dimensional regulations to encourage more “middle housing” (three to five units). Changing code to facilitate the additional construction of units allows housing to be built on a scale that feels comfortable to neighbors. Examples of this include encouraging the adoption of accessory or additional dwelling units (ADUs), which can provide needed housing for multigenerational households. By relaxing other dimensional standards, infill development, like duplexes, quadplexes, and bungalow courts can be more easily developed. State bills such as SB9 and SB10 enable density on existing units with additional space, allowing neighborhood-scale housing density on lots zoned for single-family homes.

Preservation of Existing Affordable Housing

Aside from increasing unit counts, housing policies must incorporate more expansive housing goals, like permanent affordability, community ownership, or connection to service-dense areas. While the construction of housing units may relieve some market pressure, community leaders and policymakers should also preserve existing affordable units in communities where residents have deep histories and social connections. One aspect of housing policy that can be further explored is how to maintain existing affordable housing that is at risk of either becoming market-rate when covenants expire or demands repair

to ensure habitability through the extension of affordability covenants or transferring individual ownership of units into collective trusts. Expiring affordability covenants pose challenges to existing and future publicly subsidized affordable housing. According to LA’s Housing Element 2021-2029, 6,356 units have affordability restrictions expiring between 2021 and 2026, and an additional 3,056 units have restrictions expiring between 2026 and 2031.

There are several publicly funded affordable multifamily developments in the immediate vicinity of Taylor Yard, including the Rio Vista Apartments, Taylor Yard Apartments, Flores Del Valle, and Casa Griffin, that utilize federal funding programs, including LIHTC. In California, the standard affordability covenant required for LIHTC and other state subsidies is 55 years of restricted affordability. This term is longer than the federal minimum term, but expiration can lead to market-rate conversion. Already, more localized plans, such as the proposed Downtown LA Community Plan update, expand the affordability covenant to 99 years for privately-funded affordable housing units.¹⁶ In a nationwide survey done by the Lincoln Institute of Land Use Policy, 36% of jurisdictions have 99-year or perpetual covenants. California could extend affordability covenants to terms beyond 55 years and across different public subsidy programs to ensure consistency throughout the state.

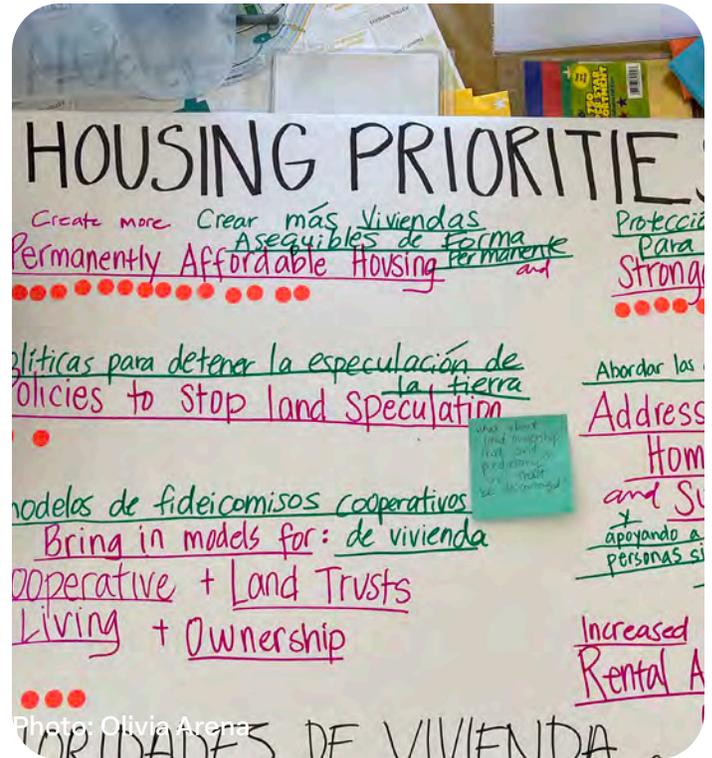
Alternative Housing Models

Frustrated with the state’s reliance on private entities to develop and manage most affordable housing, some affordable housing advocates in LA are seeking alternative models of housing. Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are one model for preserving affordable housing, where the land is owned by the trust, which leases units to residents at affordable prices. Social housing is another model for housing

that can remain affordable in perpetuity and be collectively owned and managed by residents. In some social housing buildings, tenants have the opportunity to acquire their units by making affordable payments.¹⁷¹⁸ LA City Councilmembers recently introduced a motion to use new housing funds generated from Measure ULA (United to House LA) to explore social housing as a viable strategy for housing investment.¹⁹ Some cities are identifying underutilized public properties for potential social housing. The Atlanta Urban Development Corporation, a nonprofit under the city's low-income housing agency, is building social housing on publicly owned surplus lands, using contributions from a local Affordable Housing Trust Fund.²⁰²¹

Tenant Protections and Assistance

NELA residents expressed the desire for increased rent stabilization and tenant protections. Currently the Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act leaves many renters unprotected.²² It only allows rent control on units built before 1995. It also does not apply to single-family homes or condominiums. Rents stabilized under the act also turnover when a unit goes vacant. Passed in 2019, a California-wide restriction on rent increases, AB 1482, limits increases to 10% annually in buildings built before 2007 but not otherwise rent-stabilized. More recently, measures in other Southern California cities, such as Bell Gardens and Cudahy, have enacted more stringent rent caps amidst increasing housing costs and inflation. Through Ordinance 925, Bell Gardens has blocked landlords from being able to raise rent by more than 50% of the consumer price index (CPI) or 4% annually, whichever is lower. Ordinance 925 pairs this rent cap with tenant protections, prohibiting lease terminations after a tenant has been in a unit legally for 12 months unless there is just cause for eviction. Similarly, landlords in Cudahy are unable to raise rent by more than the change in CPI or



3%, whichever is lower.

In addition to limitations on rent increases, policies must attempt to rebalance power between tenants and landlords. Currently, tenants facing evictions in court do not have guaranteed legal representation. The Right to Counsel movement, including a campaign in Los Angeles County, attempts to codify the legal right for an attorney for tenants facing an eviction.²³ One step further is allocating funding to cover or subsidize attorneys who represent tenants with limited economic means. Measure ULA could be a dedicated funding source.²⁴

Rental assistance support during periods of transition or instability can prevent people from falling through housing gaps, as was seen during the pandemic with the administration of Emergency Rental Assistance funds through California's Housing is Key program.²⁵ However, rental assistance is often a short-term stopgap that fails to stem the tide of rising property values and expiring affordability covenants. Long term affordability should be a priority.

Housing Policies to Address Homelessness

Housing unaffordability, limited supply, and a lack of protections have placed tenants in a tenuous position facing instability and potentially eviction. This precarity has led to a need for covenanted affordable housing at deep levels of affordability, specifically for seniors, and preference given to housing local community members in new affordable units. Housing should be located in areas with social services, relevant cultural programming, and existing community networks. Investments in housing and protection for tenants address some of the root causes for housing instability and, potentially, homelessness. These policies need to be bolstered to ensure that unsheltered homelessness does not grow.

People currently living unhoused must be included in policy and program solutions as other housing solutions are developed. There are an estimated 45,252 people currently experiencing homelessness in the City of Los Angeles according to the 2024 Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA)'s Homeless Count. LA County is split into eight Service Planning Areas (SPAs) that provide outreach and services to people experiencing homelessness; NELA falls into SPA 4 for Metro LA. In 2024, the total number of people counted as experiencing homelessness in SPA 4 was 18,389. Of these individuals, 66% were unsheltered, living outside of a shelter.²⁶ One strategy to address homelessness is to utilize funds for supportive housing, such as Project Homekey, a state-level pandemic-era program with funds for turning hotels into housing units. According to LA County data, there are currently no Project Homekey sites in NELA.²⁷ Cities such as Houston have made specific housing investments to provide interim and permanent units to people experiencing homelessness using a housing-first model of investment and service-delivery.

Similar to rental assistance, universal basic income and cash assistance pilots can provide direct financial assistance to people experiencing homelessness to bridge the financial gap needed to secure stable housing and meet basic needs. In 2022, Miracle Money (M\$), a University of Southern California project in partnership with a nonprofit, Miracle Messages, distributed \$750 per month for a year to 103 people experiencing homelessness in LA and San Francisco. Though research is ongoing, an interim report found that people with the basic income were less likely to be unsheltered than at the beginning of the project and in comparison to a group of people not participating. Participants reported spending the money on basic necessities and services to help them bridge financial gaps.²⁸

Housing Policies to Address Homelessness

People experiencing homelessness are often pushed to the edges of society but forced to exist in public spaces, overpoliced, and antagonized. A strategy aiming for equity must plan for a future of housing for all, but it must also address current inequities and the realities of unhoused users finding safety, connection, and crucial infrastructure in public parks. Unhoused visitors must be considered in the design and programming of the future park. Site features such as restrooms, open spaces, food and drink provision must be designed to consider the needs and desires of unhoused people who will use the park.

While many residents are concerned about community safety in general and the homelessness crisis on the streets of Los Angeles, some NELA residents said that rather than increasing policing and displacement of unhoused neighbors, unhoused people should be welcomed and accommodated in the spaces they are already using and in potential community resource centers. Los Angeles

employs several similar regressive anti-loitering as anti-homeless policies, including Section 41.18 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code, which prohibits sitting, lying, sleeping, or placing personal property on the ground within 500 feet of public amenities including parks.²⁹

In the city of Austin, a “Homes Not Handcuffs” campaign challenges preemptive criminalization policies at the state level. The campaign frames the issue of homelessness through a lens of “shared humanity” advocating for resources rather than policing unavoidable actions for people living unhoused.³⁰

In Los Angeles, people camp along the LA River. The development and programming of Taylor Yard’s public spaces could include counsel from people living unhoused and community organizers providing mutual aid to understand their visions for solutions. Examples could include allocating funds to support deliberate partnerships with shelters and other service-providing organizations to bring unsheltered neighbors into the planning and programming of parks. A result of these efforts could be physical design elements that can support unhoused community members, like wifi, restrooms (open 24 hours), plugs for people to charge devices, warming or cooling areas, and lockers are among the features that can provide needed support. Physical design components, such as restrooms and bicycle resource hubs, should intentionally support existing community mutual aid efforts. For example, the Bentway in Toronto allocated a portion of its annual budget to support mutual aid including items like bike tubes.³¹ Park administrators should consider how to fund community support or services at any functional amenities throughout the park.

NELA FEEDBACK

NELA residents we interviewed had some specific ideas about tangible steps to take to preserve housing and prevent displacement.

- **Pathways to Build Equity** for both renters and homeowners that create affordability in perpetuity. Community members also expressed a desire for shared ownership models such as cooperatives and community land trusts.
- **Offsetting Rising Housing Costs** through financial support such as rental assistance and utility rebates.
- **Permanently Affordable Housing** preserve, construct, and maintain housing that is affordable to the community at lower price points than federal housing programs require and in higher quantities than current LA development policies stipulate.
- **Stronger Tenants Rights** that address the current power imbalance between tenants, landlords, and developers, including recognizing housing as a human right, enacting policies that protect the right to return for tenants or preference for long-term community members, caps on rent increases, policies to hold landlords accountable for repairs and maintenance, and policies to protect tenants from landlord harassment. Training for residents on their rights as well as housing policies that can inform community advocacy efforts.

Workforce Development

Park development can benefit community members by providing quality full-time employment opportunities, creating economic opportunities, and supporting community-serving and culturally relevant businesses that can provide living wage jobs. While traditionally “workforce development” focuses on individualized worker training, it can encompass support for existing businesses and business development. It can also include policies and programs aimed at helping residents become financially secure through policies and programs such as increased minimum wages and universal basic income. When combined, these policies can increase the economic resiliency of residents.

NELA’s workforce is made up of 148,041 people, with the largest groups of workers being Latino (57%), followed by White (21%), and Asian (18%). Although male workers make up more than half of the total labor force, the number of female workers has increased by 13% since 2010. The median household income for this region is \$70, 851 with the highest income households residing in Eagle Rock and Mount

Washington. Meanwhile, the neighborhoods with the lowest median household income are located in Chinatown and Lincoln Heights. The top industries by occupation for workers in NELA are Educational, Health Care, and Social Assistance services (22%); services associated with Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation and Food (14%); and Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative and Waste Management services (12%).

Our analysis included variables such as education, employment rates, and transportation, which influence workforce dynamics in NELA. While the unemployment rate in NELA has decreased between 2010 to 2019, from 9% to 7.21%, it still remains higher than the City’s unemployment rate of 6.47%. Prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, NELA had its lowest rates of unemployment (7%) since the 2008 Great Recession. etween 2010 and 2020, all but one NELA neighborhood experienced a decrease in unemployment rates. Cypress Park experienced a 35% increase in unemployment since 2010. Cypress Park’s unemployment rate climbed from being the neighborhood with

Highest and Lowest Levels of Education by Neighborhood and Unemployment			
Neighborhood	< High School (%)	Bachelor's Degree or > (%)	Unemployment Rate (%)
City of Los Angeles	2%	24%	6%
Lincoln Heights	41%	18%	9%
Atwater Village	16%	43%	5%
El Sereno	33%	21%	9%
Montecito Heights	26%	37%	7%
Cypress Park	40%	20%	9%
Elysian Park	40%	28%	6%
Elysian Valley	26%	29%	4%
Eagle Rock	12%	46%	6%
Highland Park	25%	29%	7%
Mount Washington	17%	45%	7%
Chinatown	37%	22%	6%
Glassell Park	22%	34%	7%

NELA WORKFORCE

Guide: ● Female ● Male ● 2010 ● 2019 ● % Change

2019 Workforce by the Numbers

Total Civilian Labor Force

148,041

Workforce by Sex



Top Three Industries by Occupation in 2019

- 21% Educational Services, Health Care & Social Assistance
- 14% Arts, Entertainment & Recreation, and Accommodation & Food Services
- 12% Professional, Scientific & Management, and Administrative & Waste Management Services

Median Household Income

Lowest
\$43,594
Chinatown

Highest
\$96,712
Eagle Rock

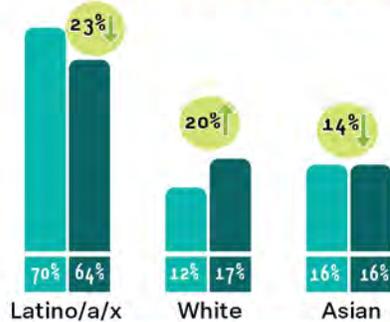
by neighborhood

Unemployment

Total in NELA



Ethnic Distribution

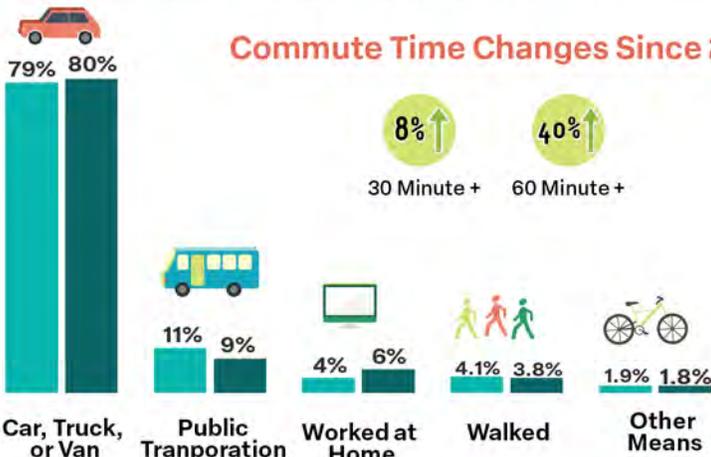


Education

Educational Attainment



Worker's Mode of Transportation



Commute Time Changes Since 2010



Poverty

Population Living in Poverty



Neighborhoods with Highest Poverty Rate



the lowest unemployment rate to the highest in less than 10 years. When comparing overall levels of education across NELA, the highest levels of educational attainment (25 years of age and older) were distributed fairly evenly with two very notable exceptions — residents with a bachelor’s degree and those with limited high school education. The number of residents with a bachelor’s degree or higher was 5% greater in NELA compared to the city of Los Angeles average. However, the percentage of residents in NELA with less than a high school education was 25% greater than the citywide’s overall percentage in the same educational category. The rate of residents with less than a high school education level is nearly fourteen times higher in NELA than in the city of Los Angeles overall.

With increased emphasis on economic stability, policies and programs that expand educational and trade program opportunities will be relevant, especially in neighborhoods with a high percentage of youth ages 16 to 24 who are neither working nor in school, a group designated as “Opportunity Youth” by the American Community Survey. The average percentage of opportunity youth within NELA is 12% overall with higher than average percentages in Chinatown (19%), Lincoln Heights (17%), and Cypress Park (15%). In Chinatown, the region with the highest rate, the percentage of Opportunity Youth has increased by almost 60% since 2010. Unfortunately, the percentage of youth falling into this category has increased in almost all neighborhoods in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

NELA Opportunity Youth			
Neighborhood	2010 (%)	2019 (%)	Percent Change
Aggregated Total	12.70%	11.70%	-7.90%
Chinatown	12.10%	19.20%	59.30%
Lincoln Heights	15.00%	17.30%	15.50%
Cypress Park	14.10%	14.50%	2.70%
Highland Park	15.90%	13.20%	-17.10%
Mount Washington	15.70%	11.90%	-24.40%
Glassell Park	15.70%	11.20%	-28.80%
Elysian Park	16.10%	9.70%	-39.40%
Elysian Valley	16.10%	9.70%	-39.90%
El Sereno	9.50%	9.40%	-1.50%
Montecito Heights	10.20%	9.40%	-8.50%
Atwater Village	10.70%	8.90%	-16.90%
Eagle Rock	7.90%	6.70%	-15.80%

Workforce Development Policy Analysis

Individual Training and Job Placement

Workforce development at the individual level can be supported through accessible training programs, career development workshops, reliable access to the tools and skills needed to navigate online job recruitment processes, and job placement services. With 15% of the population solely speaking a language other than English, multilingual opportunities for training are critical. Individual job training can be achieved through partnerships with local organizations, increasing access to career development skills, job finding tools, and direct coaching from service providers.

Workforce development centers can be a core community resource for job training and workshops. The Los Angeles Economic Workforce and Development Department (LAEWDD) operates 16 WorkSource centers that provide multilingual support for both individuals and employers. One of these centers, the Northeast Los Angeles WorkSource Center - Goodwill Industries of Southern California, is located in NELA, and in addition to providing workshops on financial management and interviews, people can access computers, textbooks, bus passes, and one-on-one career counseling. Access to different training workshops and programs, especially for sectors in high demand allow for increased job opportunities and a greater number of choices for residents.

With Chinatown, Cypress Park, and Lincoln Heights seeing an increase in the percent of “Opportunity Youth,” it is important to prioritize residents who might be disconnected from traditional resource centers or information sources. The Los Angeles Conservation Corps supports at-risk young adults by providing

job opportunities, case management, and educational support. Participants can build skills through tree planting, trail refurbishment, and community beautification. In 2022 the LA River Rangers program, managed by Los Angeles Conservation Corps and funded in part by Californians for All Youth Job Corps, launched to provide maintenance and operation services for the LA River. Rangers participate in a 12-month program which creates a pathway to employment in the city of LA. Not only do participants receive personal and professional development, but they are able to become competitive employees in the environmental sector.

Job placement is key. Union job training programs have direct knowledge of and ties to job placements. LA River revitalization efforts along the 11 mile stretch of the river from Griffith Park to Downtown LA are projected to generate around 14,200 construction jobs, but only 2,670 permanent jobs.³² Workforce development training must also plan for subsequent job placements and career paths.

Small Businesses Support and Economic Development

Small businesses are a vital part of communities, providing multiple benefits in addition to job creation and fulfilling consumer needs. Small businesses were heavily impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic with the Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation (LAEDC) estimating that in April 2021 nearly half of all small businesses were closed and there is still a 28.6% decline in the number of small businesses open in Los Angeles. According to a survey conducted by UCLA’s Asian American Studies Center and Center for Neighborhood Knowledge in partnership with the Asian Business Association of Los Angeles, Asian-owned businesses were hit disproportionately hard by the economic ramifications of the pandemic. Of the roughly

400 businesses included in the survey, “Three out of four businesses are immigrant-owned and nearly half are owned by women.”³³ Businesses experienced deeper and longer closures and barriers to learning about and receiving government assistance. Black and Latino businesses face similar challenges in recovery post-pandemic.³⁴ According to analysis conducted by Next Street and Common Future, businesses owned by people of color were most likely in the industries hardest hit by COVID.³⁵ Even in recovery, “twice as many Asian- (49%), Black- (52%), and Latino-owned (53%) businesses reported experiencing a “large negative effect” from the COVID-19 pandemic than white-owned businesses (23%).”³⁶

Additionally, there was a disparity in which businesses were able to access the emergency funds with designated “small” companies of up to 500 employees being able to access funds at a greater rate than micro-enterprises, which employ five or fewer workers.³⁷ The closures had a ripple effect on many workers as 392,000 living wage jobs were lost in LA County by the end of 2020 and are not expected to return until 2024. Most of the federal and state programs that were implemented to directly address the financial impact on small businesses caused by the pandemic, such as the Restaurant Revitalization Fund, have been phased out. Currently the city of Los Angeles’

Microenterprise Recovery Grant, funded by the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), is in its second phase and provides small businesses a maximum of \$5,000 for COVID-19 recovery expenses.³⁸ Providing financial support has provided temporary relief for owners, but in order to ensure that businesses can thrive long term, businesses need accessible, easy to navigate information on current programs and grants for which they might be able to qualify.

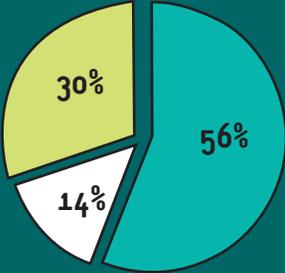
Community-based partnerships between local enterprises and city governments can also bolster existing businesses through programmatic or financial support to ensure that they have the necessary tools to fight displacement. This support can include physical renovations or façade improvements. The City of Carson’s Commercial Façade Improvement Program provides businesses grants to renovate commercial buildings in priority areas, which allows long standing businesses to remain competitive and continue bringing in new clientele.³⁹ Targeted support for priority areas can be implemented through place-based economic incentives, such as the city of LA’s Good Food Zone designation, which aims to channel funding into neighborhoods that lack affordable, healthy food and support healthy food business owners.⁴⁰

There are additional models of economic

1 MILE FROM TAYLOR YARD

SEVERELY DISADVANTAGED
MAKE LESS THAN \$41,088

DISADVANTAGED
MAKE BETWEEN \$41,088 AND \$54,784



NOT DISADVANTAGED
MAKE OVER THAN \$54,784

development that center community input and collective needs. For example, NELA community-based organization, LA Más is working to cultivate a regenerative economy based in community ownership and support that allows vendors greater agency and power. In 2018, a partnership between Inclusive Action for the City, Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC), and East LA Community Corporation (ELACC), launched Community-Owned Real Estate (CORE) in areas of Los Angeles facing increasing gentrification and displacement pressures. CORE is a community ownership collaborative that provides discounted rent for small businesses with the ultimate goal of expanding opportunities for tenants to own part of CORE real estate portfolios. In addition to lower rents, the CORE partners provide technical assistance to build up and support the small businesses in their portfolio. Through co-op creation, collective decision making, and participatory budgeting, residents take an active role and are included in processes that shape and guide their local economies.⁴¹

Making the process of starting a business accessible and easy to navigate can also promote local entrepreneurship and provide income for owners and employees. Accessible information in multiple languages or community workshops can inform residents of initial steps in business foundation. Sector-specific programs or incubators can provide guidance and support to entrepreneurs at different scales. Through a CDBG grant, SEE-LA's Seasoned Accelerator program helps small food businesses navigate the process of business development through a combination of one-on-one mentorship and training.⁴² In a similar manner, through their Founders Business Accelerator the Los Angeles Cleantech Incubator (LACI) provides training and strategic guidance for microenterprises and small businesses to continue their growth.⁴³

COMMUNITY TENDING

VIVIENDA COMUNITARIA

COMMUNITY HOUSING

VIVIENDA COMUNITARIA

Keeping working class neighbors rooted



Community Building Activities

We host social, cultural, and outdoor gatherings with our neighbors — such as hikes, bike rides, and nature walks.

At these events, we invite you to learn about LA Más programs, reclaim familiar and new places throughout Northeast LA, and reflect on our relationship to each other and the natural world.

Manteniendo a nuestros vecinos de clase trabajadora arraigados fomentando un sentido de pertenecer.



Actividades que Construyen Comunidad

Organizamos reuniones sociales, culturales y al aire libre con nuestros vecinos, como caminatas, paseos en bicicleta y paseos por la naturaleza.

En estos eventos, lo invitamos a conocer los programas de LA Más, reformar lugares nuevos y conocidos en todo el noreste de los Ángeles y reflexionar sobre nuestra relación entre nosotros y el mundo natural.

Prácticas diarias

Nuestro objetivo es hacer que uno se sienta bienvenido, que nuestros espacios sean inclusivos y que celebre a nuestros vecinos al.

- Organizar reuniones en lugares locales
- practicando la justicia lingüística
- ser intergeneracional y familiar
- proporcionando comida casera
- abordar las necesidades de la comunidad

Keeping working class neighbors

Northeast LA Community Housing Alliance (NELACHA)

NELACHA is a group of neighbors creating community housing in Northeast LA. Community housing is affordable, stable, and cared for by working class neighbors and allies.

- **Members** include working class renters, housing experts and property owners.
- **Community Housing Promoters** lead outreach and messaging to grow our movement.

Get involved

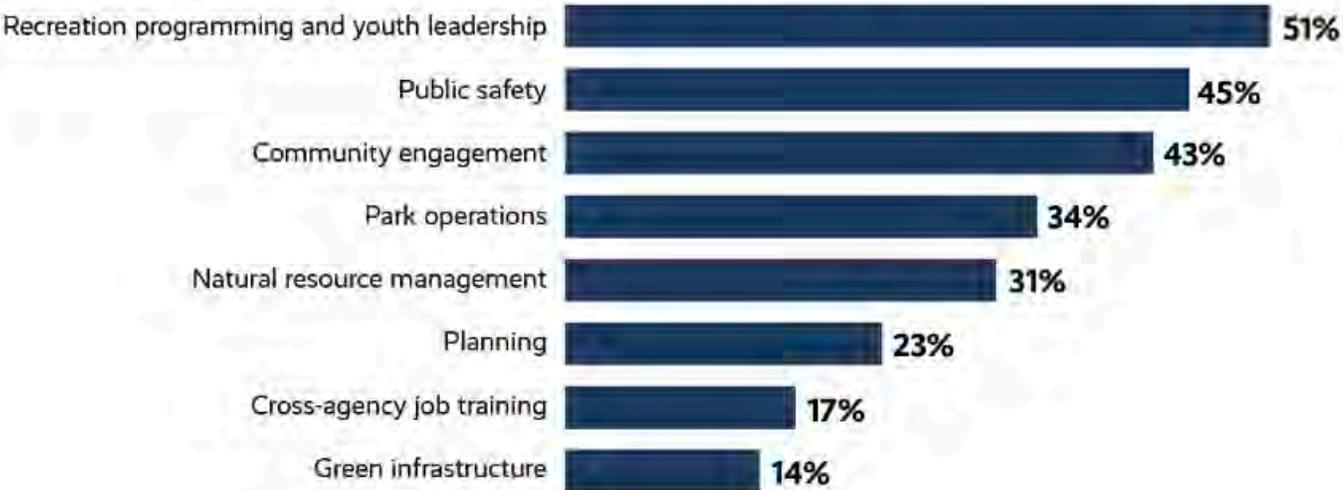
- Attend bi-monthly NELACHA meetings.
- Share your talents and skills.
- Identify property owners willing to partner.
- Become a **community housing promoter** (open to working class neighbors).

Park Development

Parks can also be engines of economic development and create career opportunities within their operations in management of parks, programming, maintenance, and environmental stewardship. These jobs should provide compensation commensurate with the cost of living in neighborhoods adjacent to parks and include opportunities for career growth. A survey of park leaders conducted by the National Recreation and Parks Association on “Workforce Development and Career Exploration in Parks and Recreation” found that one-third of parks offered some type of workforce development programming.⁴⁴ More than 50% of urban parks had workforce development programs compared with 24% of rural parks, and 90% of park leaders said they partnered with outside organizations or collaborators to implement their programs. Some of the key types of skills-based training include first aid, horticulture, and green infrastructure. Some of the explicit goals include providing youth with first jobs and professional development skills, cultivating diverse park staff, expanding programming, and creating economic opportunity for community-members.⁴⁵

The emphasis on youth-centered environmental workforce development is mirrored in national priorities. In September 2023, the Biden Administration announced the launch of the American Climate Corps, an initiative to train youth people in jobs addressing clean energy, conservation, and climate resilience. In its first year, the program aims to train and employ 20,000 young people with a focus on providing environmental services, including equity and environmental justice priorities, in communities “traditionally left behind.”^{46,47} While the launch of a national effort focuses considerable resources on workforce development in environmental and park lands, California is one of five states that already has a statewide California Conservation Corps (CCC).⁴⁸ At a park-level, Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy hosts a youth internship program at Crissy Field that brings diverse interns to learn about park programming and natural systems. One step beyond the implementation of the program is data-driven monitoring and evaluation to ensure that interns represent communities historically underserved by public spaces.⁴⁹

Park and Recreation Agencies Expose Youth and Young Adults to a Wide Range of Jobs
 (Percent of Agencies That Currently Offer a Workforce Development/Career Exploration Program)



Taking a more expansive view of parks as drivers of economic development, another avenue to support workers is to provide infrastructure for park vending. Supporting park vending includes both designing physical infrastructure to support vendors and encouraging festivals, markets, or food service within park spaces. The level of formality may vary, but many parks across the country are integrating vending and commerce into operations. Designers and programmers can also create park policies that foster economic opportunities within parks. For example, the U.S. Department of Agriculture provides grants and technical assistance to increase capacity for farmers markets in parks. The city of Madison, Wisconsin, recently piloted a “Carts in Parks” program to increase small business/ vendor access and income from parks. Within the park space, encouraging and providing infrastructure for vendors means providing outlets, safe scrap disposal areas, and policies that do not police selling.

Parks can also be locations for other kinds of economic opportunities and job creation. During the pandemic, parks served as trusted locations for testing and vaccinations. It may be possible to imagine parks as incubators for other kinds of opportunities, job training, and jobs placement. Thriving parks clearly also help drive business development adjacent to parks from visitors. This kind of economic growth is a good thing if we also have policies and programs that ensure that residents benefit from new jobs and new opportunities.

LA’s Green New Deal

In L.A.’s Green New Deal pLAN 2019, one of the sustainability goals explicitly calls out the need to create green jobs, specifically 300,000 green jobs by 2035 and 400,000 by 2050. The plan articulates, “A duty to ensure that every Angeleno has the ability to join the green economy, creating pipelines to good paying, green jobs and a just transition in a changing work environment.”⁵⁰





OTHER ISSUES OF COMMUNITY CONCERN

While housing, homelessness, and workforce development were articulated as three main priorities in community engagement efforts, equitable community development encompasses many intersecting and reinforcing areas of work. For example, one potential intersection of workforce and the environment is investment in youth conservation efforts and naturalist work within green spaces. In interviews, community members described other potential priority areas, including environmental resilience, climate change, transportation, arts and culture, recreation, community safety, and water. Residents described the need for investments in:

Climate and the Environment

As formerly contaminated sites are cleaned up, community members want transparency, education, and youth engagement in the ongoing and planned environmental remediation of Taylor Yard. Additionally, because of its proximity to the LA River, community members want to ensure that park visitors can access, recreate on, engage with,

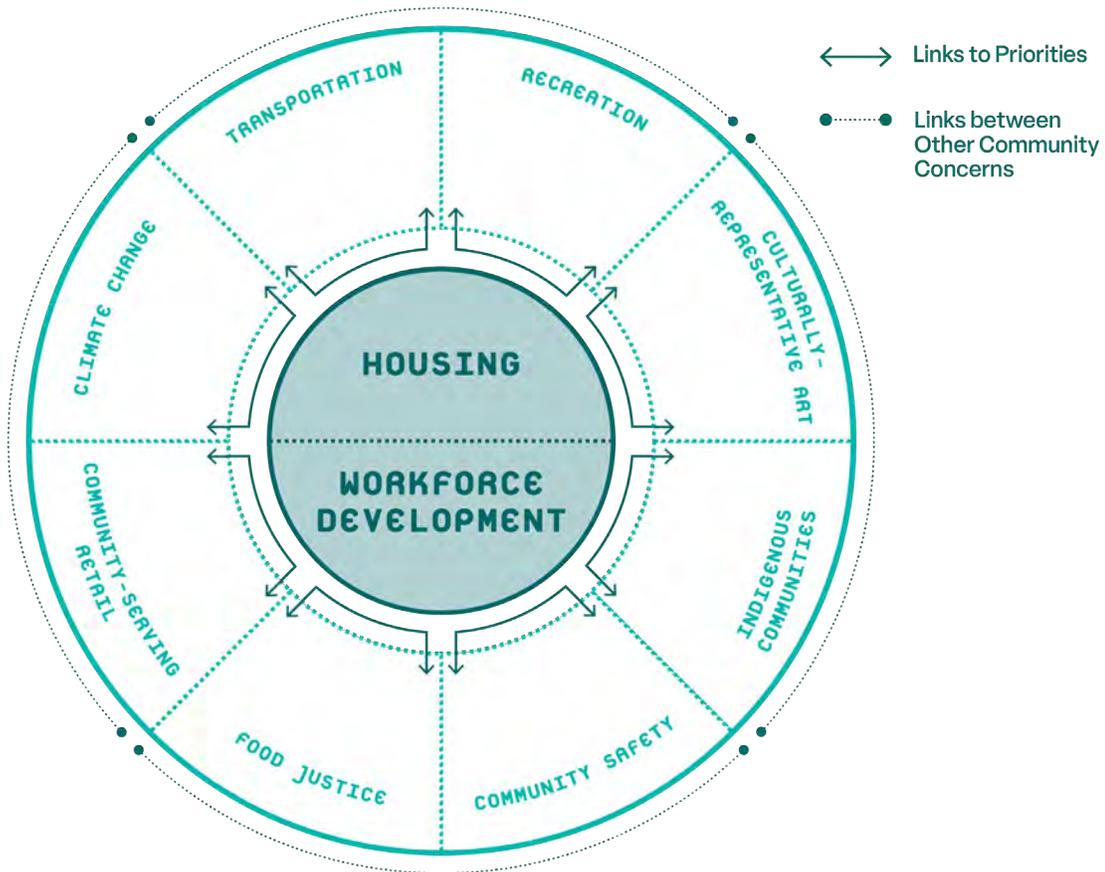
and learn about the river. Physical interventions should include native landscaping and habitat, minimal concrete, and increased access points to the river.

Transportation

Current NELA residents need more robust and connected transportation options to meet their basic needs. Infrastructural improvements and expansion of public transportation should prioritize pedestrian routes, and street and sidewalk conditions should be more conducive to pedestrian and cyclist safety. Community members stressed that parking should still be a concern even with infrastructural investments and despite proposed and bolstered multi-modal transportation to a park along the river.

Art, Culture, and Recreation

Residents would like to see dedicated gathering spaces for art, culture, and active recreation that is culturally relevant to adjacent communities, financially affordable or free, integrates cultural practices, and brings more enrichment activities for youth of color and working-class youth. Physical considerations



and amenities should accommodate the diversity of park users, including shade, benches, culturally representative art and educational signage, opportunities for community food-growing, and a multi-purpose community center. Community members would like to be involved in and even lead in design processes.

Community Safety

Residents interviewed described a desire to divert resources from punitive enforcement (fines, fees, policing) and instead invest in community-building, centering the needs and concerns of undocumented residents, unhoused community members, vendors, people with diverse accessibility needs, youth, and elders within NELA. Some told us that part of creating a culture of community safety means eliminating usage fees, limiting policing, and including resources for unhoused neighbors.

Indigenous Communities

Community members also told us that as ancestral inhabitants of this area, the tribal community is critical, especially in design and programming of spaces for gathering adjacent to the river. Though not explicitly articulated by community members, one potential path to Indigenous leadership are conversations about the “land back movement,” which seeks to return lands to tribal communities.⁵¹ In Los Angeles, the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy works to return ancestral lands to Tongva people and the landscape to California native vegetation.⁵²

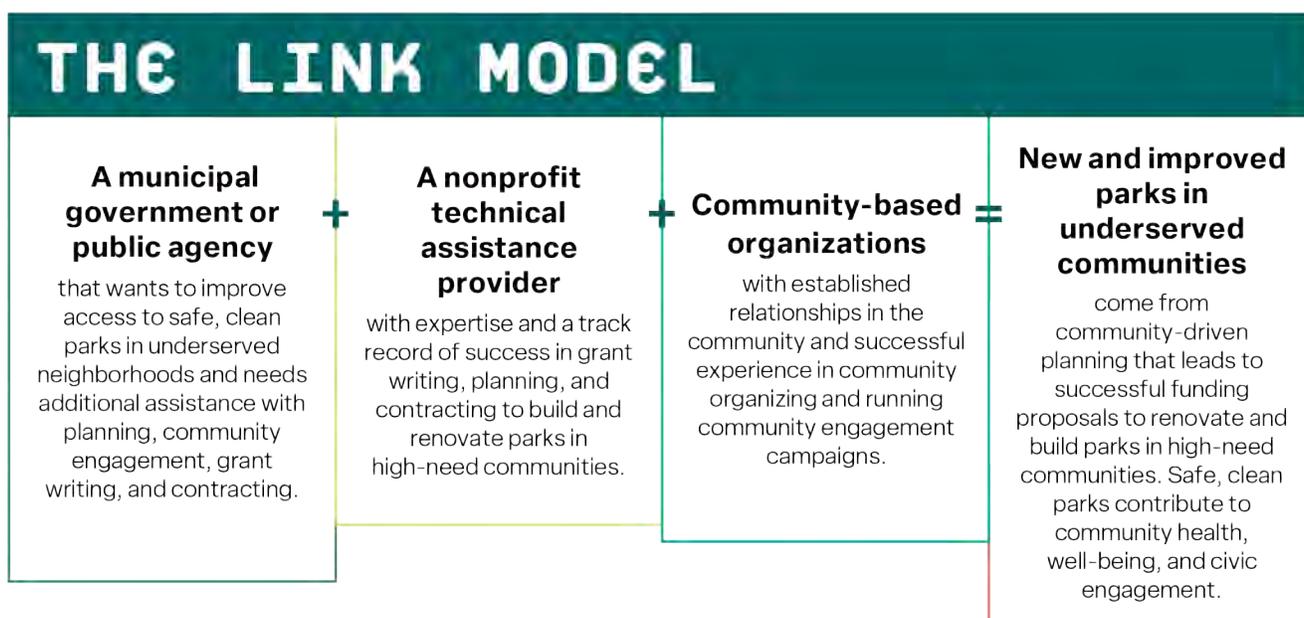
EMERGING APPROACHES TO EQUITABLE PARK AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

As more public space, park development, and infrastructure reuse efforts seek opportunities to advance equity and stem displacement pressures, networks for knowledge-sharing and models for collaboration have emerged.

The LINK Model is one approach to structuring a local partnership for park development in communities such as Northeast LA. Much like TYES, it has brought together municipal agencies, nonprofits, and community-based organizations to collaborate on community-driven park development and rehabilitation projects in communities across Los Angeles.⁵³

Other infrastructure reuse projects may shape their engagement and advisory networks differently to fit their distinct needs. The organization behind the High Line in New York convenes a network of similar organizations that share equitable park engagement, design, management, and programming practices.

In 2020, the High Line Network launched a cohort-based model of park projects across the country to receive technical assistance coaching from a group of researchers, architects, and urban planners around equitable best practices. The culminating product of two years of coaching, the High Line Network Community First Toolkit, outlines guiding questions and a suite of best practices for similar organizations to institute in park development. The toolkit includes recommendations for internal policies of park management operations (community engagement, decision making, programming) and external policies of how park organizations advocate for and implement policies that impact surrounding communities (ex. affordable housing, transportation connectivity, workforce development, small business support).⁵⁴



Four Areas of Equitable Impact

We recommend organizing the work of building more equitable public spaces—setting goals and strategies, prioritizing actions, establishing and tracking metrics—into these four categories. The process of aligning goals, strategies, and metrics should be revisited throughout the life of a project. This chart is aimed at practitioners who will use these categories for the *Community First Toolkit*, but the structure also offers a way for park organizations, partners, and community members to talk about metrics in a digestible way.

Thriving Civic and Cultural Life

1

Public spaces are hubs for community engagement. Tracking the different kinds of social interaction will help you understand who visits and who might feel left out and why. It may also increase your awareness of possible physical and symbolic barriers.

Common goals:

- Determine who visits and why.
- Activate the space.
- Support retention of the neighborhood's history and culture.
- Improve accessibility and connectivity to the rest of the city.

Affordability and Equitable Economic Development

2

Infrastructure reuse projects have had unintended consequences. A popular new public space might lead to a rise in nearby rents, threatening to displace neighbors. But equitable economic opportunities and a commitment to community development can be baked into projects from the start.

Common goals:

- Prevent small business and residential displacement.
- Employ local or legacy residents.
- Enact policies to ensure that the value created by public space investment/improvement financially benefits the community.

Health, Wellness, and Resilience

3

As spaces for play and physical activity, infrastructure reuse projects can help to improve health and wellness in communities. In places with inequities such as poor access to healthcare, high pollution levels, and climate change-driven heat waves, public spaces must be part of the solution.

Common goals:

- Offer programming focused on health, well-being, and climate resilience.
- Improve air, water, or soil quality with more trees and vegetation.

Equitable Organizational Growth

4

Every organization that manages public space has a chance to model equitable labor policies. In addition to external impacts, consider your internal culture too.

Common goals:

- Share decision-making power with community members.
- Create equitable hiring and pay practices within your organization.
- Diversify staff and board demographics.

These policies and programs are broken down into four areas of equitable impact covering culture, economic development, health, and organizational growth.

The Trust for Public Land's Park Equity Accelerator program, which supported TYES and the development of this report, is another project that has supported the development of a cohort of practitioners in cities around the country working to accelerate equity across all aspects of park building, management and programming, and equitable community development.

While we see all of these practices can be interrelated, we think it can help conceptually to think about them from two perspectives: one facing inward toward the park, and the other facing outward toward the communities surrounding the park.

Implementing Equitable Policies Within Park Development

To effectively craft and implement equitable parks, developers must ground policies in the cultural, racial, immigration, gender, accessibility, and housing status intersections and identify potential instances of discrimination or further marginalization. There are multiple, sometimes divergent, perspectives and interests factoring into a park's physical design and associated policies, and within potential conflicts, park decisionmakers should identify and lift up community concerns and ensure outcomes reflect desires from the community and the process is not extractive or tokenizing.

Community leadership and ownership is critical for designing and implementing an equity strategy, and there are many vehicles and structures for community leadership. Parks across the country are piloting approaches and structures that prioritize community voice. One example of a potential structure is Detroit Riverfront Conservancy's Community Advisory Team (CAT), made up of publicly nominated community advisors who identified desirable elements from other cities' parks, gave input on the design, and facilitated connections to other community leaders. Two unique but potentially replicable activities include visits to other parks as a group and stipends to CAT members to host "kitchen conversations" with other organizations.⁵⁵

Community advisory committees have to be well designed to work well. Unfortunately, many do not. They too often can raise false expectations or be used to provide cover for decisions made elsewhere. To work well, community advisory committees should have clear purpose, goals, responsibilities, and authority, as well as limits. Equitable development should heed community voices

but be transparent when difficult decisions and trade-offs have to be made. To be effective, priorities have to be set based on realistic strategies and capacity.

NELA FEEDBACK

In conversations with NELA residents we heard that TYES is an opportunity to:

- **Weave Engagement and Outreach** into the Fabric of the Park rather than only seeking input at planning junctions.
- **Address Barriers to Engagement**, like simultaneous multilingual translation, paper flyering, home canvassing, and relying on existing community organizations and networks to disseminate information.
- **Strengthen Community Capacity** through skill and topic-based workshops on areas including housing rights, leadership development, conflict resolution and communication, organizational finance (fiscal sponsorship, grant applications), and technology.
- **Seek to Understand** the history and sources of community distrust, resistance, and past harms and integrate opportunities for transformative justice and healing.

Looking Beyond Park Boundaries: Tools and Policies for Equitable Community Development

Park projects and their networks increasingly recognize that equitable practices must extend beyond physical park boundaries. The influx of development may cause unintended but harmful economic and social pressures, which need to be explicitly addressed. Therefore, urban parks, especially those located in park-poor communities, must proactively strategize with organizations across sectors. Practitioners often refer to the 11th Street Bridge Park's Equitable Development Plan (EDP) as one of the most notable examples of documented cross-sectoral policy and programmatic strategies. The EDP identifies four interconnected and reinforcing pillars of equitable development – housing, small business, arts and culture, and workforce development.⁵⁶

In this report we have identified many such strategies. Programs must find dedicated sources of funding and be codified in policy to ensure longevity and sustainability across administration change given the length of time of development. Equitable development strategies must include actionable implementation, funding, and reporting plans, which can help community members hold decision makers accountable. Recognizing that speculative investment will likely accompany park development, long-time residents should benefit through mechanisms that attempt to capture and divert revenue to the community. Value capture can be implemented at the project-level through a CBA or through policy at a broader-level, such as Tax Increment Financing, which dedicates an increment of increased property taxes from development for community priorities.



Investments must also be coupled with protections for both individuals and legacy institutions. Across strategy areas, policies should protect and preserve community assets. For example, robust tenant protections and rent-stabilization efforts should be put in place and enforced for both residential and commercial tenants, helping renters and community-serving small businesses thrive in place and benefit from investments in green spaces.



Photo: Olivia Arena

LESSONS LEARNED IN TYES

In this section of this report we address some of the other important issues that we have learned observing Phase 1 of the development of the Community TYES.

Ownership

The fact of who owns or controls the land is an important factor. In many cases around the country, the entity that controls the land and is building the park, whether a government agency or nonprofit, is also leading the equitable community development strategies. There are some benefits to this model. Having a single lead organization for both the inward-looking equitable park development efforts and the outward looking equitable community development efforts can simplify and clarify a lot. It is also sometimes a requirement of significant grant opportunities for this kind of work that the applicant control the ground as a landowner or government agency. There can be synergies in having the capital project and equitable community development strategies closely tied together. There will still be a lot of collaborative work to be done with other partners in this model. When different organizations are leading the equitable park development efforts

and the equitable community development strategies, that collaborative work is even more central. That is the case with TYES, where the government agencies in the 100-Acre Partnership control the ground, and a community-based collaborative is leading the equitable community development strategies. Forging and maintaining that collaboration can be challenging sometimes and require a lot of intentional work much of the time. But it can also be worth it. And it may be the only way to get this work done in many places.

Funding

In the best of all possible worlds, you would start with enough funding to support several years of planning, organizing, and implementing early wins to start up equitable community development strategies through partnerships. We estimate the startup costs to be about \$750,000 a year for a project director, community organizer, fundraiser, and costs of convening, compensating community members, communications, and seeding partnerships. TYES got kick started with about \$500,000 and the faith that more money could be raised. That made the first year feel sometimes a little touch and go. And some

initial grant applications were unsuccessful. It was not easy. But a state appropriation, secured by Assembly member Wendy Carrillo, a strong supporter of equity strategies at the 100-acre park at Taylor Yard, has brought \$1.5 million for Phase 2 of TYES. So that faith was validated and the work continues.

Thinking Regionally

Many park efforts cross jurisdictional boundaries, which makes their funding, management, and programming more challenging. However, these conditions can also be an impetus for advancing supportive and progressive policies. Cities may want to mirror the policies enacted by neighboring jurisdictions, like the stricter rent control ordinances passed in Southeast LA.⁵⁷ Projects may also be able to leverage more funding channels, though this piecemeal approach can be hard to sustain. Revitalization projects along the LA River require the coordination of multiple city departments with sometimes overlapping jurisdictions, competing interests, and diverging views of site usage. In the initial planning efforts around the future of Taylor Yard, LA County, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, the LA Police Department, and California Department of Public Health all expressed interest in site development. The LA River covers multiple jurisdictions and has more than 140 plans associated with it. Ongoing regional coordination is key to ensure community-driven design, management, funding, and access.

Cross-sector Partnerships

An important part of this effort is understanding bandwidth and capacity for all those involved. With limited resources and time, community-based organizations may be limited in their capacity to program, organize, research, advocate, and deliver services. To supplement and strengthen community-based efforts, park development projects

should include academic or professional researchers, community-based organizations, local government actors, organizers, and advocacy organizations. This finding mirrors an evaluation of the Link model done by the UCLA Center for Innovation, which stressed that collaborations are the model for community-driven planning. The stronger collective can then draw on these relationships for research, funding, project management, and strategic support.

The collective approach to strategy design and governance may encounter challenges in project management because of the varying sizes, politics, constituencies, and needs of diverse community-based organizations. Collaborations should establish guiding principles, operating norms, modes of communication, and responsibilities to support individual members and achieve a shared vision of success. The TYES coordinating committee created a project charter to articulate a shared commitment to collaboration and drew on local connections to convene a small group of organizational leaders with deep roots in NELA neighborhoods to guide the initial scoping of a strategic plan. However, engagement cannot solely draw on institutions. Community members must also be directly involved in planning.

Community Engagement

Park projects must recognize the presence and validity of community distrust, likely the result of histories of racial and cultural discrimination, exclusion, disinvestment and displacement, as well as planning fatigue. Equitable community development work should be grounded in robust research, learning, and respect for the history and past of the community, including past harms as a result of previous development and planning processes.

TYES wanted to honor past engagement efforts, such as the NELA Vision Plan, which conducted robust and creative visioning with community members. We also wanted to acknowledge current planning realities to ensure we could ask specific and relevant policy questions. As described above, TYES went through multiple current and past planning efforts to pull out and synthesize past community priorities and validate their current relevancy. This strategy of “ground-truthing” is meant to alleviate some of the planning and engagement fatigue community members may feel. It also aims to signal a level of listening and hearing on behalf of the research team.

Engagement with community leaders can also reveal existing networks of care outside of institutions and organizations. Rather than initiate new processes or build new programs, practitioners should learn about ongoing efforts that can be strengthened. In Phase I of TYES, residents described infrastructure for community mutual aid that already exists and could be bolstered rather than replicated. The next step in engagement could include e capacity-building and support for ongoing community organizing efforts.

Outreach and engagement must be ongoing and not be treated as a discrete task to be completed. A potential channel for community leadership could be formation of a coordinating group of community members with the power to shape decisions. Potential members may include tribal members, mutual aid groups, tenant unions, community-based organizations, service providers, neighborhood councils, and small businesses owners. A community advisory group could present and interpret community feedback, advise on actionable next steps, and build community leadership and relationships in NELA.



Photo: Natalie Donlin-Zappella

Communications

A key to distinguishing a new effort and clear objectives was the creation of a separate brand for TYES to distinguish the project from existing organizations and to start fresh with the new effort and avoid baggage from previous planning and development projects. Often communications may fall to the side in policy conversation, but the TYES team recognized that community members and decision makers could more effectively respond to clearly designed communications. The TYES branding was created pro bono from a NELA-based firm that created a color palette, font style, and imagery. TYES members used the brand consistently across social media, printed collateral, and digital materials. They also provided regular updates to advising groups, funders, and the community informed about ongoing efforts. Finally, materials must be translated into relevant languages, and coordinators must ensure that project staff can communicate with monolingual or limited English speaking community members. Clear and accessible communication is a pillar of language justice.



CONCLUSION

In recent years, it has become clear that creating great new park spaces in disadvantaged urban communities such as Northeast LA comes with the risk of green gentrification and displacement of the very residents such projects are designed to benefit. In the case of Taylor Yard, residents of the surrounding community fought long and hard for park space on the Los Angeles River, Park land was purchased with funding that prioritized disadvantaged park-poor communities. Funding for developing, maintaining, and renovating park amenities and habitat came with similar priorities.

At the local, state, and federal level, we are increasingly prioritizing funding for green infrastructure for communities that have historically not benefited from such investments and have too often been harmed by infrastructure investments, whether we call these underserved communities, disadvantaged communities, frontline communities, or Justice 40 communities. If those investments result in the displacement of those communities, that would be both a policy failure and a moral failure.

That is reason enough for those who believe in park equity to also commit to equitable community development around parks that could increase the risk of green gentrification and displacement.

But there is another reason to commit to both parks and equitable community development. This combination can be a catalyst for redressing and repairing deep-seated, historical inequities and helping to build a better future where children, families, residents, and businesses can thrive in place.

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Table 1: Comparing Housing and Homelessness Policies

Category	Policy/ Program	Description	Implementation Considerations	Examples + Applicability
Producing Long-Term Affordable Housing (Supply)	Incentive Housing Development on Publicly Owned Land	State policies target publicly owned property for affordable housing. Public agencies are directed to identify and prioritize affordable housing development on underutilized publicly owned land. Public agencies issue Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for individual parcels and accept proposals from affordable housing developers interested in entering into low-cost, long-term ground leases.	Resources: technical and funding resources to conduct inventory of excess, underutilized property suitable for affordable housing.	<p>Executive Order N-06-19 authorizes affordable housing to be built on state-owned excess land in California. The Governor of California ordered the Department of General Services (DGS) to collaborate with the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) and the California Housing Finance Agency (CalHFA) to identify underutilized, state-owned properties suitable for development and prioritize sites from the inventory based on housing need. DGS released Request for Proposals (RFPs) for prioritized sites.</p> <p>The California Surplus Land Act (SLA) requires all public agencies (e.g., cities, counties, special districts, school districts, etc.), with certain exceptions, to offer publicly owned properties for sale or lease to affordable housing developers before selling or leasing to any other individual or entity. Sales and leases through the SLA must include an affordability covenant recorded against the land.</p>
	Lengthen Affordability Covenants	Extend the term of affordability covenants required under state and local incentive or funding programs to durations longer than federal minimums.	Political Barriers: complexity of regulations for 100% affordable LIHTC projects require significant intergovernmental coordination across public entities.	Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC): Under federal law, projects that receive LIHTCs must remain affordable for at least 30 years. Federal regulations also authorize each state to impose additional requirements over and above the federal standards to better address local housing needs, including extension of the affordability period. Several states require longer affordability terms. California requires a 55-year extended use period for 9% tax credit projects. The proposed Downtown LA Community Plan update, expand the affordability covenant to 99 years for privately-funded affordable housing units. Nevada gives preference to LIHTC projects that extend the periods of affordability above the required federal and state minimums by awarding points from each additional 5-year period of affordability.
	Increase Housing Development Funds	Dedicate revenue sources, such as the proceeds from taxes or fees, for affordable housing.	Political Barriers: varies if repurpose or expand existing revenue source or if establish a new tax or fee. In California, any new local tax must be approved by voters in an election. Flexibility: vary eligibility	Measure ULA established the ULA Tax to fund affordable housing projects and provide resources to tenants at risk of homelessness. The ULA Tax is imposed on all documents that convey real property within the City of Los Angeles when the consideration or value of the real property interest conveyed exceeds a threshold of

			criteria for funding disbursements, including types of activities funded, form of funding (low-interest loan, grant, etc.), associated affordability requirements.	five million dollars, or is ten million dollars or greater, respectively. Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC) Program Statutory Funding Set-Asides: 50% of the available funds are set aside for Affordable Housing Developments, and 50% of the available funds are set aside for projects benefiting Disadvantaged Communities. Funding for the AHSC Program is provided from Cap-and-Trade auction proceeds.
	Inclusionary Housing Ordinance	Requires or incentivizes developers of new housing constructed within a certain area to include a certain percentage for development as affordable housing. Some municipalities allow developers to opt to pay a fee based on the number of units in the proposed development instead of incorporating a certain percentage of affordable units. Revenues from in-lieu fees are used to develop affordable units elsewhere.	Resources: administrative costs related to enforcement and oversight to ensure residents of required units comply with income and other eligibility requirements. Political Barriers: opposition by market-rate developers. Flexibility in Design: vary voluntary or mandatory nature or particular program terms, including required share of the affordable units (usually 10-15% of total units produced) and term of affordability.	Los Angeles County's Inclusionary Housing Ordinance requires new residential projects to set aside a percentage of units for affordable housing. The inclusionary housing requirement varies based on housing type, project size, project location, and affordability level. Projects may also satisfy the requirement through off-site new construction. Applicability: hot market
	Community Land Trusts	Nonprofit organization that develops and stewards permanently affordable housing, commercial spaces and other community assets on behalf of a community. Retains the right to the land, regardless of the type of legal ownership of the buildings and use ground lease arrangement. Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are opportunities for nonprofit community-based organizations to separate land from units and hold the land permanently affordable. CLTs are an opportunity to remove housing from the speculative market and hold it affordable for tenants. CLTs are one increasingly popular model of Social Housing.	Resources: capital or financial resources for land acquisition, especially for land in high-cost central areas; technical resources to secure federal, state, or local subsidies; partnerships for land donation.	Los Angeles Community Land Trust Coalition (LA CLTC) is composed of five Community Land Trusts (CLTs) from across LA County. These include: Beverly-Vermont CLT (BVCLT), El Sereno CLT (ESCLT), T.R.U.S.T. South LA, Fideicomiso Comunitario Tierra Libre (FCTL) and Liberty Community Land Trust. T.R.U.S.T. South LA, in conjunction with development partner Abode Communities, raised \$8.33 million from private and public sources to acquire Rolland Curtis Gardens from the former multi-billionaire slumlord owner, removing the property from Los Angeles' competitive real estate market. T.R.U.S.T. South LA renovated the property, expanding from 48 units to 138 affordable housing units.

Alternative Housing Models	Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)	An ADU is a secondary residential unit on a property with a primary existing or proposed home.	Resources: financial and technical resources to bridge gaps in capital, information, and professional services for low- and moderate- income homeowners, administrative costs of oversight if affordability restrictions on ADUs receiving public funds.	Affordable ADU Programs offer technical assistance or low-interest, forgivable loans to homeowners for financing, designing, permitting, and constructing a new ADU if the ADU is rented to low-income households or Section 8 voucher holders. The City of San Diego provides construction loans and technical assistance to moderate-income homeowners to build an ADU and rent to low-income tenants. Through its Permit-Ready ADU Program, the City of San Diego also offers pre-approved ADU building plans that include customizable options to allow for variations that align with community character while reducing pre-construction fees. In California, changes to the state's ADU laws removed many barriers to the development of ADUs. Applicability: low-density, single-family zoned areas.
	Social Housing	Housing that is publicly funded and collectively owned by community-based organizations or residents. Social Housing is meant to remain permanently affordable, while community organizations support residents' capacity-building to manage and build equity.	Resources: financial resources through complementary policies, including real estate transfer taxes.	Measure United to House Los Angeles (ULA) levies a one-time real estate transfer tax on sales of properties in Los Angeles over \$5 million. 22.5% of the proceeds from Measure ULA will be set aside for social housing and other alternative models for permanently affordable housing. Applicability: hot market.
Accountability	Community Development Review	Require certain development applications that receive policy, infrastructure or monetary assistance to demonstrate how the proposed development will advance housing and economic opportunity in communities of color. Review by resident committee or self-assessment supported by data.	Political Barriers: limited legal powers to enforce consideration in decisions.	Applicability: Projects that receive direct public subsidies, concessions, or zoning amendments. For example, New York City requires certain land use applications affecting a minimum number of adjacent blocks or floor area to demonstrate how the proposed project relates to the goals and strategies to affirmatively further fair housing and promote equitable access to opportunity. Proposed residential projects must state expected rents for market rate and affordable units and the incomes needed to afford them without incurring housing cost burden.
	Vacancy Tax	Impose tax on owners of vacant residential units in multi-family buildings if those owners have kept those units vacant for an extended period. Tax revenue is generally used to provide rental subsidies and fund the acquisition, rehabilitation, and operation of affordable housing.	Political Barriers: in California, any new local tax must be approved by voters in an election.	The City and County of San Francisco enacted the Empty Homes Tax on owners of certain residential units kept vacant for more than 182 days in a calendar year. The Empty Homes Tax is levied per vacant unit and serves as a dedicated funding source for rent subsidies and the acquisition, rehabilitation, and operation of affordable housing. The City of Oakland imposes a flat annual tax per vacant residential, nonresidential, or undeveloped parcel. Tax revenue funds

				services for unhoused people, affordable housing development, and tenant assistance. Applicability: hot market
Preservation of Existing Affordable Housing	No Net Loss Housing Policies	In California, “no net loss” provisions of the State Housing Element Law require that a development not result in either a net loss of overall residential unit capacity or a net loss of capacity by income level.	Political Barriers: Long-term strategy because it responds to lengthier planning timelines	To be compliant with California’s State Housing Element Law, if a city approves a development with units affordable to a different income category than the site was assumed to accommodate in the Housing Element, the city must show it still has enough sites to meet its required remaining unmet RHNA for lower-income and moderate-income households. Under “no net loss” provisions, municipalities are required to assess whether sites designated for low-income units are actually built for low-income households.
	Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act/Community Opportunity to Purchase	A TOPA (Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act) would give tenants the first opportunity to buy their building if it comes up for sale. COPA (Community Opportunity to Purchase Act) would enable nonprofits to purchase buildings ahead of the general private market.	Political Barriers: Given the hot real estate market, there is pushback against community efforts to purchase. Resources: Deals would still require considerable resources and technical support for tenants to amass the financing for purchase.	In Washington, DC , TOPA allows tenants the first opportunity to purchase their building if it goes up for sale. If not purchased, the district gets the second opportunity to purchase the building (DOPA) before the private market. TOPA and DOPA work together to give community members opportunities to purchase their affordable units. There is an active coalition pushing for TOPA4LA to be adopted in the city.
Tenant Protections and Assistance	Rent Regulation	Rent regulation includes stabilization and control efforts. Rent stabilization is meant to protect renters from excessive rent increases and arbitrary evictions. These provisions are usually less stringent than rent control, which sets hard limits on allocable increases in rent. Stabilization may allow specific increases as a percentage of expected landlord costs.	Political Barriers: Given the hot real estate market, there is pushback against efforts to control pricing. Opponents also argue that rent stabilization interferes with the market, imposing inefficiencies. Enforcement: Enforcement relies on complaints from tenants and a willingness to challenge unfair rent increases.	In the City of Los Angeles , units stabilized under the Rent Stabilization Ordinance (RSO), must be built before October 1, 1978 (and replacement units) and have limitations on allowable rent increases and evictions. Established in 1995, the Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act limits rent control on new units built after 1995 and single-family units/condos and allows for rent increases when tenants leave a unit.
	Just Cause Eviction Protection Ordinance	Just Cause Eviction protections limit the allowable reasons for a landlord to evict a tenant. If evicted, landlords may be responsible for relocation assistance. However, the list of justifiable “just causes” is fairly extensive.	Political Barriers: Real estate and landlord lobbies push back against limitations on ability to control property Resources: Administrative costs related to enforcement and oversight Enforcement: Enforcement relies on complaints from tenants and a willingness to challenge unfair evictions	In Los Angeles, Just Cause Eviction Protection Ordinance 187737 applies to non-RSO units (650,000 additional tenants) and requires specific provisions to be met to evict a tenant. In units covered, landlords have to provide copies of all notices terminating a tenancy to the LA Housing Department and landlords may be responsible for paying relocation costs.

Homelessness	Designing for Unhoused Communities	While there are many specific policies for designing for unhoused communities, the most critical aspect is the inclusion of self-determination principles, allowing impacted communities to plan for their own needs. Unhoused neighbors should be brought into the planning and design process and spaces should reflect their needs.	<p>Political Barriers: Planners must commit to bridging political divides and existing preconceptions about unhoused communities</p> <p>Resources: Park leaders will need to invest time and energy into meeting unhoused residents where they are and providing support to meaningfully participate in the design process.</p>	Park developers of the Bentway in Toronto recognized that park development may result in the displacement of people living outside. It might also lead to the creation of exclusive or unsafe areas. Instead, the Bentway engaged unhoused community members into the design and development process and identified funds that could be diverted and used to provide small-scale aid in partnership with local shelters.
	Housing First Policies	“Housing First” approach, which focuses on first getting people into permanent housing – different from relocation into shelters or interim/temporary housing – before providing wraparound services toward ongoing stabilization.	<p>Political Barriers: Though supported by research, Housing First has come under fire in previous political administrations because of the framing for housing free of behavioral conditions.</p> <p>Resources: Housing First relies on the availability of housing units, which can be limited in hot real estate markets where supply is constrained.</p>	Houston has committed to ending veteran's homelessness by coordinating services and providing housing. The city housed over 25,000 previously unhoused residents in the past 10 years using the Housing First Model . This model is successful because of the amount of housing stock, investment of COVID-19 federal funds, and partnership between County agencies. Houston's committed leadership ensured that data and services were coordinated amongst partners.

Table 2: Comparing Workforce Development Policies and Programs

Category	Policy/ Program	Description	Implementation Considerations	Examples + Applicability
High-Quality, Employment Opportunities	Community Benefits Agreements	<u>Community Benefits Agreements</u> (CBAs) are contracts outlined and enacted between developers and enacted between developers and community groups to ensure community priorities are represented in potential economic development. Community groups articulate specific requests that must be met in exchange for allowance of a development in their neighborhood.	Political Barriers: It can be difficult to secure the political will to bring a private developer to the table and negotiate with community groups Enforcement: CBAs can be difficult to measure and enforce if not meeting expressed community needs. Scale of Impact: Because CBAs operate at the project-level, the physical scale of impact may be geographically limited.	The Community Benefits Ordinance in Detroit, Michigan legally mandates developers proactively engage with the community to identify specific benefits ahead of development projects. Neighborhood Advisory Councils made up of impacted community members help shape the proposed benefits. In Los Angeles, in 2001, a group of South Central community groups organized to receive affordable housing, open space, and local hiring as a benefit to the development of the Staples Center . Most recently, the newly adopted Downtown Community Plan (DTLA 2040) in LA has a Community Benefits Program which provides additional development allowances when projects include affordable housing, public space, or community-serving spaces at varying levels.
	Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) or Project Stabilization Agreements (PSAs)	In a <u>PLA or PSA</u> , the owner/manager of a construction project and relevant trade unions negotiate one labor agreement to support all entities. The goal of the single agreement is to streamline negotiations and ensure that goals are met through coordinated efforts. Sometimes these agreements include local-hire requirements, demographic hiring goals, or requirements for diversity subcontractors	Political Barriers: UCLA Labor Center analysis of the LAUSD PLA found that leadership buy-in was critical Enforcement: Projects may need to expend additional resources to ensure they are meeting the explicit goals of PLAs, like the hiring of third party monitors. Scale of Impact: Because PLAs operate at the project-level, the physical scale of impact may be geographically limited.	The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) entered into a PSA and created employment goals for underrepresented businesses and contractors. The negotiated deal required 50% local hires, 30% needed to be apprentices with 40% of those first-year apprentices, and 25% small businesses.
	First-Source Hiring	First Source Hiring Programs require that preference be given to local residents to support local workers and workforce development. Some governments require that contracts be awarded to disadvantaged residents as a first choice.	Resources: Administrative costs of program operations and oversight	Since 1998, San Francisco Planning requires that “employers utilize good faith efforts toward employing economically disadvantaged San Franciscan residents in new entry-level positions on applicable projects.”
	Youth Job Training or Career Exploration Programs	Youth Job Training and Career Programs invest in young adults and support skill-building in trades or specific sectors. These programs may focus on underrepresented	Political Opportunities: Could be politically compelling because of the emphasis on youth or communities that face historic barriers to employment	The Los Angeles Conservation Corps provides job opportunities, case management, and educational support to young adults to develop skills in conservation through building parks and community gardens, planting trees, refurbishing hiking trails, removing

		communities or burgeoning fields of employment, like green jobs.	Scale of Impact: Training programs equip potential workers with relevant skills to challenge workforce inequities, but the impact happens at the individual job-seeker level. Resources: Training programs require time and focus to provide individualized support and training for workers.	graffiti, and cleaning alleyways. The Corps has programs including the Young Adult Corps which provide service-learning opportunities on environmental projects and the Clean & Green neighborhood beautification program.
Street Vendor Support	Physical Infrastructure for Vendors	Vendors are a critical component of vibrant public space, and parks can create physical improvements that support vending opportunities.	Political Opportunities: Could be challenging given competing claims over public space. Resources: Amenities will require both initial purchases and ongoing maintenance. Services will need to be regularly provided to ensure that equipment and space are maintained and kept clean and accessible.	UCLA research in partnership with KDI identifies several strategies that could be implemented in LA to support the street vending community, including: a loan program for safe equipment, allocate dedicated space, ensure access to trash, power sources, restrooms, water, shade, seating, and accessible pathways.
	Legalization, Policies that Do Not Police Vending	Fully legalized vending permit system for street vendors.	Resources: administrative costs of program operations and oversight	SB 972 decriminalizes sidewalk vending across California and prevents local governments from issuing misdemeanors for unpermitted vending. However, in Los Angeles, street vendors, most of whom are Black and Latino, are still denied access to formalizing their businesses through complicated permitting procedures, high costs, and punitive enforcement. Vendor-led organizations formed a citywide coalition (Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign) to advocate for policies that dismantle these barriers.
Livable Wage	Guaranteed Income or Universal Basic Income	Unconditional cash payment granted to all members of a community on a regular basis, regardless of employment status or income level.	Resources: funding and technical resources for enrollment and provision of cash payments.	THRIVE East of the River provided direct unconditional cash payments and other assistance to people living in Ward 8 neighborhoods of Washington, DC. This initiative was a partnership between four community-based organizations, including 11th Street Bridge Park, a project of the Ward 8 nonprofit Building Bridges Across the River.
	Minimum Wage Requirements	Require employers to pay wages that cover the costs of essential goods and services where workers live.	Political Barriers: opposition by large employers.	The Los Angeles Living Wage Ordinance ensures that employees working on City of Los Angeles contracts are paid the City's Living Wage, which consists of a cash wage rate and an employer's health benefits contribution), and are provided with paid time off for sick leave, vacation, or personal necessity.

Small and Legacy Business Support	Commercial Tenant Protections Ordinance	Commercial tenant protections provide small or legacy business owners with legal recourse against landlords who engage in harassment, such as controlling the use of water or electricity or neglecting to make timely repairs.	Resources: funding resources for legal services. Political Barriers: opposition by commercial landlords.	Los Angeles County's Commercial Tenant Protections Ordinance provides permanent harassment and retaliation protections for commercial tenants who have nine or fewer employees in the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County.
	Commercial Community Land Trust	Nonprofit organization that develops and stewards permanently affordable housing, commercial spaces and other community assets on behalf of a community. Commercial community land trust structures can include lease models, ownership models, or cooperative models.	Resources: staff capacity, technical real estate knowledge, financing resources, and partnerships with potential funders for commercial property acquisition.	As part of its countywide Anti-Displacement Commercial Property Acquisition Program , Los Angeles County is launching a pilot project in Leimert Park, which provides a \$2 million forgivable loan to support Black business owners in buying their properties through a nonprofit, the Black Owned and Operated Community Land Trust.
	Marketing, Business, and Funding Assistance Programs	Support businesses that contribute to a neighborhood's history and identity through grants, loans, technical assistance, and marketing and branding services. Often established by local jurisdictions, business associations, or community-based organizations. Guidelines and eligibility vary by jurisdiction.	Resources: financial resources to fund grants or loans; staff capacity to directly provide technical, marketing, and promotional assistance in appropriate languages; partnerships with technical assistance providers. Flexibility in Design: vary program guidelines, eligibility criteria, and selection process (application, nomination, etc.)	San Francisco's Legacy Business Program offers marketing, business, and financial assistance to long-standing small businesses that have contributed to their neighborhood's history or identity. Legacy Businesses on the city's registry receive grants of \$500 per full-time employee per year. Landlords of San Francisco Legacy Businesses are also eligible for financial incentives if they offer rent-stabilized long-term leases to Legacy Businesses.

APPENDIX C: CASE STUDIES FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

Equitable Community Development Planning and Community Engagement

Southeast Los Angeles, California

The Lower Los Angeles River (LLAR) Para Todos: A Campaign to Ensure Ongoing Community Engagement

Detroit, Michigan

Community Benefits Ordinance: Legislation Requiring Developers to Proactively Engage with the Community

Housing Policy: Affordable Housing Preservation and Creation, and Homelessness Prevention

Houston, Harris County, Texas

Housing Houston's Heroes: A Successful "Housing First" Initiative to End Veteran Homelessness

Anacostia, Washington, D.C.

11th Street Bridge Park: A Land Trust Response to Park Gentrification Grows into a Citywide Strategy to Preserve Affordable Housing

Downtown San Jose, California

Guadalupe River Park Revitalization: Planning for Unhoused Users in Re-Envisioning Public Green Space

Downtown Toronto, Canada

The Bentway: A Park Under an Expressway Commits to Resources and Partnerships that Support Unhoused Residents and Park Users

O'ahu, Hawai'i

Kahauiki Village: Housing Formerly Homeless Families and Elders

Workforce Development Policies and Programs

Bayview-Hunters Point, San Francisco, California

India Basin Waterfront Park's Construction Training Program: Supporting Community Economic Needs with Goal of Hiring Locally

Los Angeles, California

Planning and Supporting Vendors: Food Access and Economic Opportunity

THE LOWER LOS ANGELES RIVER PARA TODOS

A Campaign to Ensure Ongoing Community Engagement and Equitable Community Development

The Lower LA River (LLAR) Revitalization Plan was developed over a three-year period from 2018-2021 with significant community input to guide equitable development of the Los Angeles river corridor in Southeast Los Angeles (SELA), which stretches 19 miles north through 15 cities and unincorporated areas of LA County from Vernon to Long Beach. The LLAR Revitalization Plan aims to connect SELA residents to river adjacent projects to improve environmental resilience and quality of life where they live. The plan includes a map of 155 project opportunity sites as well as a community stabilization toolkit which highlights policies and programs that can be used to protect river adjacent communities from displacement. Some of the policies and programs included in the toolkit include; community benefit agreements, inclusionary housing policies, and workforce development programs.

**Southeast Los Angeles,
California**

Launched in 2023

Partners

Rivers and Mountains
Conservancy (RMC)

County of Los Angeles

California State Assembly

SELA Collaborative

SGA

MIG



The partners behind this project launched the LLAR Para Todos campaign to actively engage and partner with diverse communities in order to safeguard their priorities and vision of a river as development kicks off from the river revitalization plan. Through research interviews with community organizations, cities, and agencies during the first year, LLAR Para Todos not only informs community members about revitalization efforts, but encourages partners and community members to come together to better leverage partnerships and funding opportunities. These connections create feedback loops for community input to inform progress as projects continue to develop.

WHAT MAKES IT WORK

The Lower LA River Para Todos campaign is supported by the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC), with funding from a state budget appropriation by Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon. The campaign has received consistent involvement and support from the conservancy's leadership. The project team consists of the SELA Collaborative, SGA Marketing, MIG, and the UCLA Institute of the Environment and Sustainability, as well as RMC staff.

TAKEAWAYS

The complexity of a project that spans 15 cities, 19 miles of river, and is being implemented by five organizations can be challenging. However, the diversity of the cities offers opportunities for them to learn from each other about what works best. The coupling of a plan with an education campaign is also a model for community engagement and equitable community development that is not led by an organization that owns or controls parks or other land, like many such efforts. LLAR Para Todos is an ongoing and evolving collaboration that will be useful to watch as a potential model for the field.

Key Words

Community engagement
Regional collaboration

COMMUNITY BENEFITS ORDINANCE

Legislation Requiring Developers to Proactively Engage with the Community

Approved by Detroit voters in 2016 and amended by City Council in 2021, the Community Benefits Ordinance (CBO) legally mandates developers to proactively engage with the community to identify project benefits for residents who stand to be the most affected by new development. When a project obtains a defined amount of public investment, usually in the form of resources, subsidies, or land, The CBO applies when a development project:”

- Is \$75 million or more in value
- Receives \$1 million or more in property tax abatements OR
- Receives \$1 million or more in value of city land sale or transfer”¹

The impact area boundaries are set by census tract but can be expanded to include additional impacted residents to ensure all residents in the impacted area have an equal voice in the process. The CBO process begins with the City’s Planning Department (PDD). PDD reviews the project scope and defines the project’s impact area and establishes a Neighborhood

Detroit, Michigan

Approved by Detroit voters in 2016, amended by City Council in 2021

Partners

City of Detroit City Council
City’s Planning Department (PDD)
Civil Rights and Inclusion Office
Detroit People’s Platform
Equitable Detroit



Advisory Council made up of nine representatives from the project's impact area. The aim of the Neighborhood Advisory Council is to represent the concerns of the impacted residents to the developer and city, while negotiating a Community Benefits Agreement that details how the developer will improve and contribute to the neighborhood.² These representatives work directly with the developer to outline and agree upon policies and programs that create tangible benefits for community members. These agreed upon concessions are codified in the final development agreement approved by the Detroit City Council. The process takes several months and includes multiple community meetings depending on the project and community.

WHAT MAKES IT WORK

The ordinance provides a set structure for projects who receive public benefits to engage with communities to address the areas of investment that are most relevant. This flexibility allows residents to voice their preferences for benefits that would make the most impact, instead of having a limited number of options that might not apply. There is increased transparency on the public investment a project is receiving through the clear outlining of the financial threshold the CBO applies to. Additionally, the idea of communities receiving benefits tied to new developments that obtain public investment becomes normalized and encourages developers to invest more than the minimum requirements. There are financial and physical benefits secured through the CBO progress, including:

- Pistons Practice Facility: \$2.5 million to build 60 outdoor basketball courts in city parks
- Herman Kiefer Mixed Use Development: Restoration of an abandoned school field for sports and recreation use, including a skate park and free programming for Detroit youth³
- Wigle: Midtown West Mixed-Use Development: Affordable rental units for low-income residents⁴

TAKEAWAYS

While CBO's promise for community members to be heard in the process, they are ultimately subject to decision making of city elected officials. Despite some oversight from the city of Detroit's Civil Rights and Inclusion Office, whose role is to mediate the CBO process, particularly regarding the community benefits agreements between the community and developer, advocates say this hasn't prevented neighborhoods throughout the city from being negatively impacted by projects without seeing community benefits. These instances often include environmental burden from the development.

Without a clear enforcement or monitoring structure in place, negotiating with developers can often be frustrating or lead to a lack of follow through years down the line. Being able to adapt is necessary when developing and implementing a CBO as multiple roadblocks can arise in all stages of the process. Ultimately each city will need to tailor CBOs to the needs of differing constituencies.

CBOs hold a lot of potential to hold developers accountable for addressing the effects that new development could have on a community. An effective process would include engaging with residents to identify their most pressing concerns and ensure that the community will also benefit from the new developments. However, the processes to implement can be tenuous, stalled, and take a lot of resources both from residents and organizations. There are several different actors, each with a different number of resources, all trying to get their message to residents. Using existing movements to leverage and tie relevant circumstances to the benefits that would arise from CBOs, as well as collaborating with existing coalitions that are already working on adjacent projects can be a first step in creating a unified approach to achieve more bargaining power.

Key Words

Community benefits agreements

Community development ordinance

Neighborhood advisory committee/council

¹ detroitmi.gov/departments/planning-and-development-department/design-and-development-innovation/community-benefits-ordinance

² detroitmi.gov/departments/planning-and-development-department/design-and-development-innovation/community-benefits-ordinance

³ detroitmi.gov/departments/planning-and-development-department/design-and-development-innovation/community-benefits-ordinance/past-cbo-engagement/herman-kiefer

⁴ detroitmi.gov/departments/planning-and-development-department/design-and-development-innovation/community-benefits-ordinance/past-cbo-engagement/wigle-midtown-west

Detroit's Community Benefits Ordinance promised residents a voice in redevelopment projects. Many say their concerns remain unheard. – Planet Detroit

HOUSING HOUSTON'S HEROES

A Successful “Housing First” Initiative to End Veteran Homelessness

In 2015, the City of Houston Housing Authority declared a goal to end veterans homelessness by housing chronically homeless veterans. Their initial success with housing 148 homeless veterans in 100 days led to the Housing Houston's Heroes initiative, which brought together local and county cross-sector and cross-jurisdictional organizations to collaborate to “prevent homelessness among its veteran population, shorten the duration of homelessness when it does occur, and establish sustained housing security for those who were once homeless.”¹ In the next 100-day period, they were able to house 357 homeless veterans.

Houston's leadership across elections has been committed to ending homelessness across elections, allowing for continuity of success.^{2 3} This commitment from city leadership has been coupled with a \$200 million investment largely from COVID-19 relief funds.⁴ The increase in federal funding was invested in alleviating homelessness through a collaborative strategy, the Community COVID Housing Program (CCHP), which includes attempts to provide permanent supportive housing, rapid rehousing, and supportive services.⁵ The coalition and funding has resulted in 14,339 people being housed.

Harris County, Texas
2012-2015

Partners

City of Houston and Houston
Housing Authority

Harris County Community
Services and Housing
Authority

MHMRA of Harris County
U.S. HUD

Department of Veterans
Affairs

Non-profit partners and
service providers, including
U.S. Vets and Houston
Coalition for the Homeless



Source: Photo: Amy Kincheloe, Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs

WHAT MAKES IT WORK

Houston has been employing the “Housing First” approach, which focuses on first getting people into permanent housing—different from relocation into shelters or interim/temporary housing—before providing wraparound services. HUD notes several other key elements of success: regional collaboration, use of fundraising to close gaps, collective goal-setting and measurement, and creating a single stop for various services for unhoused veterans. Nearly 70 agencies and organizations participated in the initiative, which minimized gaps in service delivery and established consistent metrics for measuring success across providers. In 2022, Vox reported that Houston had housed over 25,000 previously unhoused residents in the past 10 years using the Housing First model.¹

One of the strengths of Houston’s continued and committed approach to permanently housing its veterans is as more people are housed, more resources can be shifted toward this model because homelessness and its cost decreases significantly. However, providing housing units as an immediate first step means housing units must be available, which has been a challenge in supply-constrained housing markets. Houston was able to leverage funds to develop affordable housing units to accommodate veterans quickly. Funding investments, like the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC), financed housing development for nearly 3,900 homeless veterans between 2012 and 2015 before the impact of skyrocketing costs of housing and economic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders acknowledged that preventing and addressing homelessness will require ongoing and sustained resources and investments from both the public and private sector.

Currently, the collaborative focuses on braiding funding sources that different groups or jurisdictions might have accessible. For example, different agencies and jurisdictions can draw on and pool local, state, and federal sources – including Emergency Solutions Grants, Community Development Block Grants, and HOME Investment Partnerships Program Grants– to ensure a comprehensive approach. Local leaders estimate that, after the federal pandemic funding ends at the end of 2024, they will need to identify a sustainable source of \$30-50 million annually to maintain programs at current levels.



Source: Department of Veteran Affairs

TAKEAWAYS

To ensure an element of stability and address root causes of homelessness, housing must be coupled with wraparound services and maintain existing social networks. The Housing First model creates a foundation for people to build from a place of stability. Additionally, once someone has housing providers can better coordinate services, support progress, and work toward shared goals. Practitioners should look at coupling immediate emergency services with more permanent investments in housing to achieve equitable housing goals.

The Houston model also emphasizes the importance of working collaboratively across different levels of government to ensure continuity across leadership changes. Housing security will not be immediately solved under a single mayoral administration, so it is crucial that practitioners bring together multiple leaders and create a structure of accountability for progress to continue. Finally, cross-sector collaborations allow partners to tap into additional funds and more effectively use money.

Key Words

Housing First model

Continuum of Care

Regional cross-sector,
cross-jurisdictional
collaboration

¹ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Policy Development and Research. "Houston Ends Veteran Homelessness." PD&R Edge In Practice (blog), December 14, 2015. <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/pdredge/pdr-edge-inpractice-121415.html>.

² Juan Pablo Garnham. "Why Homelessness Is Going down in Houston but up in Dallas." The Texas Tribune, July 2, 2019. <https://www.texastribune.org/2019/07/02/why-homelessness-going-down-houston-dallas/>.

³ Juan Pablo Garnham. "Why Homelessness Is Going down in Houston but up in Dallas." The Texas Tribune, July 2, 2019. <https://www.texastribune.org/2019/07/02/why-homelessness-going-down-houston-dallas/>.

⁴ Catherine Troisi. "The Way Home Continuum of Care 2023 Homeless Count and Survey Analysis," March 2023. https://irp.cdn-website.com/2d521d2c/files/uploaded/Homeless%20Count%202023_full.pdf.

⁵ "Community COVID Housing Program." 2024. Coalition for the Homeless. April 2024. <https://www.homelesshouston.org/CCHP>.

11TH STREET BRIDGE PARK

A Land Trust Response to Park Gentrification Grows into a Citywide Strategy to Preserve Affordable Housing

The 11th Street Bridge Park across the Anacostia River in Washington, DC will create a new greenspace atop old piers, bridging both the River and a main line of segregation between rapidly gentrifying DC west of the River and historically-Black communities east of the River. Ahead of the construction of the park, Building Bridges Across the River (Building Bridges), a nonprofit east of the river, led creation and coordination of an Equitable Development Plan. The Plan is a compilation of strategies, goals, and partnerships aimed at preventing displacement ahead of park construction.¹ Building Bridges convened hundreds of local residents, faith leaders, nonprofits and city officials to provide feedback that informed this equitable development plan, with many longtime residents from Anacostia near the park concerned about being displaced as a result of increased property values from the park project. Vaughn Perry, Building Bridges Director of Equity, notes there is “a significant gap in wealth among the communities on the east and west sides of the Anacostia River, with home values on the east side an estimated \$450,000 less.”² With the park’s construction set to end in 2026, the plan emphasizes an almost decade-long strategy to preserve and increase affordable housing for local low-income residents, such as through a community land trust.

Washington, District of Columbia

2015-Present

Partners

11th Street Bridge Park

Building Bridges Across the River (BBAR)

Douglass Community Land Trust

City First Homes (CFH)

MANNA DC

Philanthropic funders

DC’s Department of Housing and Community Development’s Development and Finance Division (DFD) through their Housing Production Trust Fund (HPTF)



A key strategy requested by the community was the formation of a Community Land Trust. In 2017, Building Bridges partnered with another local non-profit City First Homes (CFH) to engage concerned residents from east of the River to form an advisory committee that became the Douglass Community Land Trust (CLT), named after Frederick Douglass who was a resident of Anacostia.³ The 11th Street Bridge Park team, along with CFH, helped the advisory committee secure \$3 million in seed funding to launch as an operational land trust organization.⁴ The Douglass CLT now has properties in six of the eight wards in Washington, D.C, totaling 262 units so far.⁵ Today, the Douglass CLT operates citywide to further racial and economic equity beyond its origins east of the Anacostia River to ensure DC's low-income Black and Brown residents are not displaced from their longtime homes. Now, there is a chapter model and tripartite board structure as a way to allow members to maintain neighborhood level community control while providing the land trust (now a stand alone nonprofit) with operational and financial sustainability. As members come from different financial and housing ownership or tenant situations, the land trust's bylaws will ensure that power is balanced among all members and not just those who are higher income and property owners.⁶



Source: "03.GardenOfEden.BBAR.WDC.17July2021" by Elvert Barnes is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

WHAT MAKES IT WORK

The creation and expansion of the Douglass CLT demonstrates how a park project can serve as a catalyst for affordable housing efforts. Beyond its initial inception, the land trust shows the importance of a formalized structure with shared equitable community development goals, commitment to resident engagement, and monitoring through agreed upon metrics. Additionally, the Equitable Development Plan explicitly stated affordable housing goals, and partner organizations, in collaboration with public agencies and funders, created a sustainable entity to carry out the work. "Public and private sector relationships, a strong and activated resident membership, and hitting a goal of 750 units in its portfolio" has been critical to the CLT progressing toward organizational revenue that will ensure long term sustainability and a decreased need for philanthropic support.⁷

This cross-sector partnership encourages leveraging philanthropic and public resources, such as Mayor Muriel Browser's annual commitment of \$100 million in the Housing

Production Trust Fund, toward building new affordable housing nearby.⁸ The Bridge Park’s work with housing non-profits such as the DC-based MANNA, which leads a monthly Ward 8 Home Buyers Club, expands the collaborative’s impact in the housing industry in order to increase philanthropic funding that can go toward alternative affordable housing options.

Key to the success of Douglass CLT is also being able to partner on projects that have aspects of community control embedded from supporting residents pursuing DC’s Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA) to mission-aligned developers committed to thorough community engagement throughout.⁹ For example in 2019, the CLT supported residents of 65-unit Savannah Apartments in the Congress Heights neighborhood in using TOPA to purchase their apartment complex.

TAKEAWAYS

The park’s Equitable Development Plan names specific, actionable items to further a commitment to both preserving and creating more affordable housing, including home ownership. Building on existing partnerships, the park project intends to leverage philanthropic funding for low-income residents to remain in Ward 8 by the park through programs such as MANNA’s “Homebuyers Club” which prepares low and moderate income households to become homeowners in D.C. and provides grants used as down payment assistance and to cover closing costs.¹⁰ The deliberate strategy of the park’s Equitable Development Plan to work with “government agencies, non-profits, grassroots organizations, affordable housing developers and affordable housing advocates” to preserve existing and expand affordable housing, points to how park projects can contribute toward holistic action that counteracts displacement by furthering responsive support to the housing needs of its nearby residents.

Key Words

Land Trusts

Preventing displacement

Affordable housing preservation

Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing

Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act

Community Control of Housing

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² Green, Jared. “Washington, D.C.’s 11th Street Bridge Park Nears Final Design.” The Dirt: Uniting the Built and Natural Environments (blog), October 26, 2021. <https://dirt.asla.org/2021/10/26/washington-d-c-s-11th-street-bridge-park-nears-final-design/>.

³ “About Us - Douglass Community Land Trust.” n.d. Douglass Community Land Trust. Accessed June 21, 2024. <https://douglassclt.org/aboutus/#origins>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ “219 Homes with Non-Stop Affordability - Douglass Community Land Trust.” n.d. <https://Douglassclt.org/>. Accessed June 21, 2024. <https://douglassclt.org/portfolio-items/219-homes-with-non-stop-affordability/>.

⁶ “Our Board of Directors - Douglass Community Land Trust.” n.d. Douglass Community Land Trust. Accessed June 21, 2024. <https://douglassclt.org/#Directors>.

⁷ Childers, Linda. “First A Park, Then A Citywide Land Trust In D.C.” Shelterforce, July 13, 2021. <https://shelterforce.org/2021/07/13/first-a-park-then-a-citywide-land-trust-in-d-c/>.

⁸ McAnaney, Patrick. “Understanding the District’s Housing Production Trust Fund.” GGWash, February 28, 2024. <https://ggwash.org/view/92711/understanding-the-districts-housing-production-trust-fund>.

⁹ Julie Gilgoff. “Giving Tenants The First Opportunity To Purchase Their Homes.” Shelterforce, July 24, 2020. <https://shelterforce.org/2020/07/24/giving-tenants-the-first-opportunity-to-purchase-their-homes/>.

¹⁰ Mary Bogle, Mychal Cohen, and Sonia Torres Rodríguez. “Equitable Development and Urban Park Space: Year 4 Progress Report on Implementation of the Equitable Development Plan of the 11th Street Bridge Park.” Urban Institute, June 21, 2021. <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/equitable-development-and-urban-park-space-year-4-progress-report-implementation-equitable-development-plan-11th-street-bridge-park>.

GUADALUPE RIVER PARK REVITALIZATION

Planning for and with Unhoused Users in Re-Envisioning Public Green Space

When Guadalupe River Park opened in 2005, it was hailed as “groundbreaking in flood protection infrastructure and public space design” for its time.¹ Today, it is next to some of the largest planned developments San José has seen in more than a decade, including Google’s proposed mixed-use campus. Given its size and location, the park is a significant investment, which calls for holistic planning, policy, and management initiatives “that ensure that all communities can access the revitalized park.” Amid ongoing development, rising costs-of-living, and a shortage of affordable housing, more than 4,000 residents are now homeless in San Jose. As a result, there has been a growing population of unhoused residents living along the banks of the Guadalupe River.

In 2019, SPUR, a nonprofit public policy organization, received funding from the Knight Foundation to launch a long-term research and planning initiative to help guide enhancement of Guadalupe River Park through comprehensive assessment and community engagement.² As recognized by SPUR’s preliminary research, homelessness in public spaces is a symptom of systemic issues that require intentional and collaborative approaches that center those who are most affected by barriers to permanent housing. As local leaders in the area around the park attempt to help homeless residents get housed, they have been trying new ways to clean up the city’s waterways that are cognizant of ongoing challenges faced by encampment

San José, California
2019

Partners

San Francisco Bay Area
Planning and Urban Research
Association (SPUR)

Sherwood Design Engineers
Gehl

James Lima Planning +
Development

Knight Foundation

Guadalupe River Park
Conservancy

City of San José
Parks, Recreation and
Neighborhood Services
Department



residents in securing permanent housing. The equitable planning approach supported by SPUR aims to be grounded in community engagement with narrative shifts from fear-based to value-based approaches, which are also reflected in some of Santa Clara Valley Water District's recent approaches that involve encampment residents in efforts to keep river parks and ecological areas clean. SPUR partnered with the Guadalupe River Park Conservancy, the City's nonprofit partner responsible for operations and programs.

As the park steward, the Guadalupe River Park Conservancy played a pivotal role in convening and coordinating conversations with a variety of park users. The public along with local government agencies, social service organizations, environmental and homeless advocacy groups, and volunteers, including local unhoused residents, have engaged with each other through the county's river clean-up efforts, reflecting on ecological coexistence, while considering the ongoing challenges of housing and social inequities that perpetuate homelessness.

WHAT MAKES IT WORK

From research and preliminary engagement around Guadalupe River Park, SPUR in partnership with urban design firm Gehl created the Coexistence Toolkit, public engagement exercises that city agencies, nonprofit organizations and other park stewards can use to inform public space projects and master planning efforts. This work aims to provide a foundation for "a new way of thinking about park equity to facilitate new types of conversations about access, safety and design within shared public space. One goal of this effort is to shift a narrative from "the park will only be great if there are no homeless people in it" to "the park will only be great if we design for coexistence."³ Similar to other equitable development projects, SPUR identifies catalyzing cultural and economic vitality and providing an inclusive gathering place for all as priority goals.⁴ Across these elements, there must be sustained and ongoing conversations and dialogue about the park.⁵ A key focus of their re-envisioning research "was to identify new possibilities for how the park could better serve and connect San José residents, bridging socioeconomic and racial divides through a shared public space."⁶



Source: Guadalupe River Park Conservancy

TAKEAWAYS

In exploring how to best facilitate community dialogue about the key challenges of homelessness and safety that housed park users experience when visiting Guadalupe River Park, SPUR and Gehl identified the following as priority areas to consider to equitable development around a park project, which needs to be “co-designed to lead to true coexistence”:

- **Spatial Design & Environment:** Beyond one or two community meetings, designers need to hold space and work closely with current and future users of the space to reflect back on their past experiences and history with that particular place through deep, meaningful engagement.
- **Operations & Maintenance:** Sufficient operations and maintenance funding is critical, as are effective partner agencies and nonprofit organizations to support these ongoing efforts while centering all park users including the unhoused and those who experience housing and employment precarity.
- **Program & Activation, and Rights:** This is identified as one of the most important elements of public space. Parks can take a similar approach to libraries to reimagine how to better serve the community and create invitations for many types of users, including the unhoused, with the appropriate stakeholders to manage programs and activities.
- **Rules & Accountability:** Co-designing rules allows for those co-existing in a park to have a safe, functional public space, which requires that rules are established and rights are communicated. From this co-creation, “communities can begin to form systems for both passive accountability... and active accountability.” Throughout the process, it is important to “come to a collective understanding of the behaviors and conditions that make people feel uncomfortable in public space” and “examine the rules that need to be in place and the staffing necessary to ensure that they are being met,” while avoiding stereotyping by separating people from the behaviors that violate agreed upon rules and rights toward more equitable co-existence.

A key question considered throughout is: “How might we design and program spaces to not only accommodate a variety of users, but also provide necessary resources and services to support those living in public spaces?”⁷

Key Words

Unhoused/Homelessness
Community Engagement
Planning Research

THE BENTWAY

A Park Under an Expressway Commits to Resources and Partnerships that Support Unhoused Residents and Park Users

The Frederick G. Gardiner Expressway (referred to as the Gardiner), an elevated six-lane highway, stood in the mostly industrial Downtown Toronto area until a residential boom in the 2000s. Now, more than 77,000 people live within walking distance, mostly in high-rise condominiums in the neighborhoods of CityPlace, Liberty Village, King West, and Harbourfront. With an increased need for public space access, a section of the Gardiner was reinvisioned into the “Bentway,” which would turn what has been a barrier to the nearby waterfront into walkable and usable public space. Named for the gigantic concrete columns referred to with the engineering term “bents,” which divide space underneath the five-story-high expressway into 26 sections, the Bentway’s Phase 1 site is a hybrid space that has been envisioned into a multi-use trail, outdoor performance space, and ice skating rink. Programming from skating lessons to music performances from its development have been integral to capturing people’s imaginations about the Bentway’s transformed use under expressway infrastructure.

Spanning a half-mile, The Bentway’s Phase 1 site opened in January 2018. Future expansion sites for The Bentway are being planned now, alongside a public realm plan to guide a long-term transformation of the entire four-mile stretch of land at street-level, including long sections of the Expressway where an arterial road runs directly under it.

According to University of Toronto researchers, “the Bentway’s significance is as part of a larger trend in creating new spaces that are appealing to the cultural preferences and urban lifestyles that come along with this process in Toronto and elsewhere.”¹ As such, these projects must “acknowledge and debate how they are increasingly claiming and transforming spaces that may be used by marginalized people who may be forced to find even more peripheral spaces.” Seeing a public space as vacant, lost, underutilized, can “allow for the erasure

Toronto, Canada
2018

Partners

The Bentway Conservancy
City of Toronto
SKETCH (local youth arts non-profit organization)
Homes First
Fred Victor Centre
Parkdale Safe Injection site

of its association with homelessness to occur,” which obscures “the impacts of the larger processes of urban transformation of which infrastructural reuse projects are a part.”² This tension became very apparent shortly after the opening of the Phase 1 site when the City of Toronto removed an encampment of unhoused people, roughly a mile from The Bentway. Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP)’s public action during a third-party event rental at The Bentway called attention to the ongoing displacement of unhoused residents along the Gardiner Expressway.

WHAT MAKES IT WORK

In response to OCAP’s concerns about displacement of the unhoused from the Gardiner, the conservancy’s team reevaluated and scaled up its relationships with unhoused communities by instituting “de-escalation and harm reduction and naloxone administration training for public-facing staff and working with consulting organizations working on anti-poverty strategies such as Homes First, Fred Victor Centre, the Parkdale Safe Injection site, and SKETCH, a community arts enterprise who engages young people who experience homelessness or on the margins and navigate poverty.”³ Funds have been designated through The Bentway’s annual operating budget to develop programs, purchase and distribute small scale support items, and train personnel to support groups such as downtown Toronto’s homeless population. “Staff have personal relationships with park users, including users who are unhoused, and observed that daily use patterns at The Bentway closely align with the cleaning schedules at local respite centers.”⁴ Bentway also launched the Safe in Public Space initiative which “aims to broaden the definition of public safety to address new public health challenges presented by COVID as well as systemic inequities and ensure that there is a shared social contract governing public spaces access and use.”⁵



Source: Jason Zhang, unaltered,
[commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/
File:The_Bentway_during_Nuit_
Blanche_Toronto_2019.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Bentway_during_Nuit_Blanche_Toronto_2019.jpg)

TAKEAWAYS

The Bentway's developers recognized that future expansions of the park could further the displacement of people living outside and lead to the creation of exclusive or unsafe areas. They brought unhoused community members into the design and development process and identified funds that could be diverted and used to provide small-scale aid in partnership with local shelters.⁶ The Bentway has initiated partnerships with local social service providers to collectively support at-risk neighbors in alignment with its vision of being an “inclusive and accessible public space that is responsive to and reflective of the diverse communities it serves.”⁷

Different steps to support unhoused residents taken by infrastructure and park redevelopment projects, such as The Bentway, are incremental efforts in progressing toward equitable outcomes around park projects. From these smaller actions, there is potential to collectively contribute to bigger efforts, such as addressing local housing market dynamics, which are covered by other case studies of affordable housing and workforce development focused policy and strategies. It is important to see homelessness as a symptom of one of many systemic issues connected to the lack of affordable housing, health and mental services, and economic opportunities.

Key Words

Homeless support and social services

Homeless resident advocacy

Park staff capacity to support vulnerable populations



Source: The Bentway

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3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

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KAHAUIKI VILLAGE

Housing Formerly Homeless Families and Elders

Hawai'i has one of the highest rates of homelessness in the nation with Kānaka Maoli or Native Hawaiians comprising a disproportionate share of the unhoused population. The majority of unhoused people reside on O'ahu, the most populated of the Hawaiian Islands and home to the state capital, Honolulu. In 2023, nearly a third (28%) of the homeless population in O'ahu self-identified as Native Hawaiian, disproportionately higher than their share in the island's total population.¹ Families with children also made up about a quarter (24%) of the island's unhoused population. The most frequently reported causes of homelessness included inability to pay rent and loss of employment.²

Since the 1900s, Sand Island in the Honolulu Harbor has served as a refuge for unhoused individuals. Located between Sand Island and Ke'ehi Lagoon Park, Kahauiki Village provides 140 units of permanent supportive housing for formerly unhoused families and kupuna (elders).³ As of April 2023, 129 households lived in Kahauiki Village, including 295 children.⁴ At Kahauiki Village, rents are fixed at less than half of market rates. Although there is an income eligibility threshold, residents without a means of employment are connected with supportive services that can assist with job placement with local business and pre-vocational training programs. Residents also have access to wrap-around services designed to remove common employment barriers for families: childcare and transportation. Kahauiki Village is located along a bus route that connects to urban Honolulu and Waikīkī and near a major transit center for West-bound routes.⁵

O'ahu, Hawai'i

2016-present

Partners

aio Foundation

The Institute for Human Services (IHS)

City and County of Honolulu

State of Hawai'i



Source: The Institute for Human Services

WHAT MAKES IT WORK

Kahauiki Village was created as a public-private partnership between local business owner Duane Kurisu, the City and County of Honolulu, and the State of Hawai'i, which leveraged incentives under a statewide emergency declaration.⁶ In 2015, the Governor of Hawai'i issued a proclamation declaring a state of emergency on homelessness, which authorized modifications or waivers of permit requirements specifically for housing developments co-sponsored by city or county government entities. Through his non-profit aio Foundation, Kurisu, the main champion and funder for Kahauiki Village, approached the county mayor and secured their support as a partner in the project.⁷ The aio Foundation, with the City and County of Honolulu as its primary governmental partner, became eligible for the emergency proclamation's incentives and received expedited approvals for construction.⁸ In October 2016, the Governor signed Executive Order No. 4513 to transfer a 11-acre property

from the State of Hawai'i to the City and County of Honolulu, which then leased the land to the aio Foundation at a nominal fee of \$1 per year.⁹ The City and County also completed \$4 million of water and sewer infrastructure upgrades. Construction of the site was completed by in-kind donations of materials and time. The units of Kahauiki Village are repurposed prefabricated buildings previously used in Japan following the 2011 tsunami.

In 2018, the first tenants of Kahauiki Village moved in with The Institute for Human Services (IHS) contracted to provide on-site supportive services, such as employment assistance, case management, and afterschool childcare. Parents and Children Together, another local non-profit, offers daycare services on-property for children residing at Kahauiki Village at a subsidized rate. In 2022, aio Foundation gave IHS full control and management of Kahauiki Village.¹⁰

TAKEAWAYS

Kahauiki Village highlights the growing use of public lands for sustainable, innovative, cost-effective affordable housing. High land costs can make development of permanent supportive housing less financially feasible, especially if the proposed site is located in amenity-rich places near job centers and targets those with the lowest incomes and who face the most severe housing cost burdens. Minimizing development costs is crucial for serving extremely-low income households as the lower rents affordable to these households may not cover ongoing operational costs and loan payments for construction. In this example, cross-sector collaboration significantly lowered development costs, as land was provided by the local government and businesses donated and shared resources to construct housing units.

Kahauiki Village underscores the importance of removing barriers to accessing shelter and support. Without coordinated connections to stable, secure, dignified housing, projects risk further marginalization of unhoused people through forced displacement. While Kahauiki Village housed a large share of the homeless population, its development also displaced many others in the process. Prior to construction, an encampment of approximately one hundred unhoused individuals resided where Kahauiki Village would eventually stand.

None of the unhoused individuals who currently live on the site were eligible for the new housing units as Kahauiki Village exists to house formerly homeless families and elderly individuals. Additionally, IHS required any prospective tenants of the permanent supportive development to complete its transitional housing program to be eligible for permanent housing. As a result, participation requirements acted as a barrier to entry, functionally excluding unhoused residents already residing on the property. However, IHS did offer shelter and services at their other sites to those being displaced. To prevent displacement, practitioners should recognize the rights of existing unhoused residents in the immediate vicinity of the site, and explore viable pathways for their return through the provision of permanent housing without preconditions in the communities in which they already live.

Key Words

Permanent supportive housing

Lease of public land

Family housing

Remembering his upbringing in a sugar plantation town, Kurisu envisioned Kahauiki Village as a similar “plantation-style community” grounded in “community culture” in the plantation.¹¹ The site is divided into sections, identified by the color of trim, with each unit designed to recall this romanticized past through homage to wood trusses and pitched, corrugated roofs. The units weave into one another via walking paths and a path along the perimeter lined with community gardens. The center of the Kahauiki Village is a large recreational pavilion that hosts community events and activities, parking for residents, a playground, laundry facilities, mailboxes, a small convenient store, and management office.

The use of plantation nostalgia architecture does provoke mention of the Hawai'i Kingdom's history of dispossession. For many Kānaka Maoli or Native Hawaiians, sugar plantations were part of the legacy of colonization. Along with land dispossession, sugar plantations “compromised the ecosystem Kānaka Maoli saw as familial and inseparable from themselves and which they depended upon for sustenance.”¹² Streams were dewatered for diversion to supply plantations, and in the process drained dry the traditional kalo (taro) ponds that Kānaka Maoli farmers relied upon. Like all other developments in Hawai'i, Kahauiki Village points to the need for meaningful engagement with Indigenous leadership in the design process to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are effectively addressed.



Source: The Institute for Human Services

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¹¹ Kurisu, Duane. “The Honolulu Homeless Project That Could Only Have Worked In Hawaii.” Honolulu Civil Beat, June 12, 2018. <https://www.civilbeat.org/2018/06/the-honolulu-homeless-project-that-could-only-have-worked-in-hawaii/>.

¹² lpeproject.org/blog/plantation-capitalisms-legacy-produced-the-maui-wildfires/

INDIA BASIN WATERFRONT PARK'S CONSTRUCTION TRAINING PROGRAM

Supporting Community Economic Needs with Goal of Hiring Locally

The future India Basin Waterfront Park will connect 64 acres of open space in Bayview-Hunters Point (BVHP), which is home to a historically Black community and remains one of the most diverse neighborhoods in San Francisco. Within a mile of India Basin, 40 percent of residents are Black, 30 percent Hispanic, 18 percent Asian, 7 percent White and 3 percent Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander. To prevent the displacement of diverse residents living and working in BVHP, the India Basin Waterfront Park Project is guided by San Francisco's first ever Equitable Development Plan (EDP). The EDP is intended to improve economic opportunity and environmental health for residents, offer educational and leadership development opportunities for youth, ensure access and connectivity of the neighborhood to the park, prevent displacement, and preserve the arts, culture and identity of this historically underserved and environmentally burdened neighborhood. As a result of the EDP, the Community Innovation Lab launched in October 2023 as an expansion of the park's Tech Hub (since 2021), continuing to provide free Wi-Fi access, laptop and tablet lending and technical support, while also making sports, cultural, and recreational programming accessible to residents through free equipment rentals and space for local organizations. An adjoining property to the park at 700 Innes will add 1,575 units of housing, with 25 percent priced below market rate.¹ The community member-led executive leadership team has also been planning "financial literacy training to inform people about resources to get a loan to purchase a new home, or to help them keep their current home, as part of the plan to make the development's benefits more equitable."²

San Francisco, California
2018-Ongoing

Partners

San Francisco Recreation
and Parks
Trust for Public Land
San Francisco Parks Alliance
A. Philip Randolph Institute

Throughout the equitable development plan’s engagement and input process, local residents have expressed wanting job and economic opportunities. The India Basin Specialty Construction Training program developed from the waterfront park’s equitable development plan’s goals to build and sustain local job creation with an emphasis on the Black community. Its purpose is to provide training and professional development opportunities through the construction and operations of the park.

San Francisco Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD) and its CityBuild Academy partner on this program to deliver training by union professionals with other benefits such as tool and union initiation assistance, employment sponsorship as a union apprentice, and more.³ As of 2023, 18 have graduated from these specialty construction cohort training programs.⁴



Source: San Francisco Recreation and Parks

WHAT MAKES IT WORK

Renovation of nearby Hilltop Park, a few blocks from India Basin, is a small success story of how a workforce development strategy in an park equitable community development plan can benefit employment for local residents. With nearby Hilltop Park, “10 to 12 people went through a jobs training program with the contractor, and two to three people were hired on to build the park.”⁵ This success is grounded in long-term, meaningful engagement of the community, which actively participated in more than 150 community meetings over the course of several years. Such engagement underscores deep commitments both within the community and by the city to follow through on the plan’s promises. General Manager Phil Ginsburg, San Francisco Recreation and Parks (source) said, “We’re actually hiring people from this community to be part of the planning of this park project at an executive level...We’re not just asking them to show up at a community meeting. The idea is to do something special for this neighborhood, and have it be a space where the community that lives there now feels welcome—like this was built by and for them.”⁶



Source: India Basin Waterfront Park

TAKEAWAYS

What started with the Hilltop Park has scaled up to the larger India Basin Waterfront Park project’s potential to employ more community members in its construction. Alejandra Chiesa, from project partner Trust for Public Land, noted that key to the success of this project meeting its equitable community development’s goals is “[Phil] Ginsburg’s commitment to working through other departments within the city can get things done in a way that supports the community.”⁷ Implementation of an equitable development plan requires a commitment to sustained interdepartmental collaboration. Breaking down silos between multiple city agencies may involve changes to internal processes that hinder collaboration, such as improving communication channels or restructuring roles and responsibilities. Leaders play a crucial role in championing collaboration from the top.⁸

Key Words

Workforce Development
Specialty Trade Training
Equitable Development Plan (EDP)

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⁸ Ibid.

PLANNING AND SUPPORTING VENDORS

Food Access and Economic Opportunity

Understanding the connection of local policy players for street vendors is crucial to creating inclusive public spaces for diverse communities to gather. Los Angeles has an established culture of street vending; across the City, there are numerous vending communities where vendors sell affordable and culturally significant food, household items, and beverages. These vending communities bring life, activity, and social infrastructure to the streets and open spaces, and, for many residents who have recently arrived in the United States, vending is the sole way to make a livelihood. The size, structure, and formality of vending varies depending on location and neighborhood within Los Angeles, ranging from hundreds of vendors around MacArthur Park to twenty, more formalized stalls in historic Olvera Street.

However, while vendors are a significant thread in the social fabric of neighborhoods and part of the city identity, street vending has been historically illegal and heavily criminalized in the state of California as recently as 2018. Those who did business in the public right of way were subject to crushing fines, harassment from law enforcement, and violence in many cases. Today, after thirteen years of grassroots vendor advocacy and hardship, the tide is changing, and laws are slowly shifting to better support and protect vendors across California and the rest of the country.¹

Los Angeles, California

2018- Ongoing

Partners

East Los Angeles Community Corporation

Inclusive Action for the City

Community Power Collective

WHAT MAKES IT WORK

Community organizations formed a coalition and together launched the Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign to support and protect vendors through direct services and policy advocacy. Each organization in the coalition contributed to different areas of the campaign. Community Power Collective (CPC) directly organizes vendors in nearly thirty neighborhoods by building organizational structures and mobilizing vendor leaders to drive campaign priorities. Inclusive Action for the City conducts policy research and advocates for changes to the citywide and statewide legal framework to protect vendor rights.² East Los Angeles Community Corporation provides a number of direct technical services to vendors, including help with filing taxes, educational programs to navigate the permitting system in Los Angeles County, and support in acquiring code-complaint equipment. After a decade of the coalition's organizing and advocacy, Los Angeles decriminalized street vending on city sidewalks.

Despite this win, vendors still face obstacles in navigating legal vending regulations. The Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign continues to advocate for equitable implementation of legal vending programs, with particular attention to food and park vending. Ongoing work seeks to ease the permitting and enforcement processes to ensure more vendors can safely sell without fear of citations or fines. For projects looking to expand public access and amenities in park spaces, vendor decriminalization and formalized infrastructure are key investments.³ Infrastructure for formalization can take multiple forms from building physical amenities for shelter or sanitation to building negotiating power through political organization. CPC's ongoing efforts with Echo Park vendors offers a potential model to reshape parks to be more inclusive of vending communities. In Los Angeles, vending rules in parks are more prohibitive than those governing sidewalks. In response, CPC organized Echo Park vendors to advocate for less restrictive park vending rules. Through the process of creating community agreements on vending locations, CPC created a structure to negotiate as a united front for a permanent vending community in the park.

Formalization should also involve context-specific practices and consider the variety of vendors and different pathways to vendor formalization. Food vendors, in particular, face additional challenges related to public health requirements. Depending on the neighborhood, food vending looks different across Los Angeles. Some vendors are more mobile with carts or stands while others operate at fixed stalls. In areas such as MacArthur Park and Westlake, vendors fill streets with stands and colorful umbrellas. In the Figueroa Corridor of South Los Angeles, an area that historically suffered from disinvestment with the lack of quality jobs and business opportunities, quality gathering spaces, quality food, and art and cultural opportunities, Mercado La Paloma is a designated, indoor space for food vendors. Esperanza Community Housing Corporation (Esperanza), in collaboration with longtime residents, acquired a former garment factory and then converted the building to a multi-use space for vendors, community leaders, and community events. Established in 1999, Mercado La Paloma responded to suggestions from residents in Esperanza's housing developments for a local version of the bustling markets that they had left behind in their home countries. Mercado La Paloma allows people who otherwise might not have had the opportunity to invest in a retail space to have a business.

Key Words

Workforce development

Street vending policy

Public space access



Source: Mercado La Paloma

TAKEAWAYS

There are many ways in which park design, programming, and operations can better support vendors. Physical design and amenities such as access to power, running water, storage, trash, recycling, lighting, flat surfaces for rolling, portable restrooms, and shade are a few of the characteristics that can be added to public space to make vending easier. These assets should be co-located in high-foot traffic areas rather than pushing vendors to parts of the neighborhood or park that do not see much business. Small-scale programs such as coordinated power washing and increased trash pick-up in vendor heavy areas can help make vending easier and safer for all, especially in public spaces such as parks. Efforts to remove infrastructural barriers should be paired with complementary efforts to lower regulatory, functional, and financial barriers faced by vendors. Formalization should be treated as an ongoing process where rules are revisited and adapted. Education and outreach programs are critical to support vendors in understanding their rights and navigating local vending rules.

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