

INCLUSIVE
ACTION

THE INCLUSIVE CITY

Overview & Recommendations

Planning & Land-Use
Strategies Summit (PLUS²)
Friday, June 28th, 2019



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OVERVIEW

The Planning and Land-Use Strategies Summit (**PLUS²**) is an annual conference curated by **INCLUSIVE ACTION FOR THE CITY**, a community development nonprofit organization based in Los Angeles.

PLUS² is a dynamic convening of top leaders, thinkers, and change makers who will come together to dream up an actionable vision for the communities we work in. **PLUS²** offers a fast and lively presentation format, which will engage the audience and challenge leaders to think differently about how they approach their work.


This year's theme was "**THE INCLUSIVE CITY.**" Our cities are at a crossroads. As they grow and become powerful economic engines, the results of this growth is being concentrated in the hands of a select few. On June 28th, we learned from leaders who are forging an inclusive city by addressing the lack of affordable housing, the acceleration of gentrification and displacement, the increase of income inequality, climate change, and food insecurity.

How do we build a more inclusive city? One that provides affordable housing options for its most vulnerable, living wage jobs for its constituents, and public spaces that support healthy living?

What is the role of urban planners, architects, real estate developers, funders in developing a city that accommodates a diversity of needs and leaves no one behind? At this year's event, speakers and panelists shared their ideas for how an "inclusive city" can meet the needs of all its residents, especially the most marginalized.

At this year's **PLUS²** we also made a big announcement. For 10 years, we were known as Leadership for Urban Renewal Network (LURN), and after over a year of reflections with board and staff, we decided to change our name to **INCLUSIVE ACTION FOR THE CITY.**

We felt this was the place to make the announcement because this convening is close to our hearts and values: bringing like-minded people together, talking about important and hard topics, and exploring ways to change systems. We hope our new name lives up to this charge.



SPEAKERS

PAUL HUDSON

Co-founder, SEED Collaborative

Paul Hudson is a co-founder of SEED collaborative. Paul focuses on nonprofit collaborations, mergers, partnerships and other strategic alliances, and the development and implementation of financial sustainability initiatives and plans. Paul is the former Chairman and CEO of Broadway Federal Bank, a certified Community Development Financial Institution that serves the financial needs of low to moderate income communities of color in South Los Angeles. He has served as Chairman of the Los Angeles City Community Redevelopment Agency, President of the Los Angeles NAACP, and on the board of the California Community Foundation, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the Los Angeles City Housing Authority Board of Commissioners. He earned his B.A. and J.D. degrees from UC Berkeley.

RUDY ESPINOZA

Executive Director, Inclusive Action
for the City (Inclusive Action)

Rudy Espinoza is the Executive Director of Inclusive Action and an urban planner with a passion for neighborhoods, entrepreneurship, and financial empowerment. He specializes in designing and managing place-based initiatives, identifying profitable investment opportunities in low-income communities, building private/nonprofit partnerships, and training the working poor to participate in the socio-economic revitalization of their neighborhoods. Rudy holds a Masters Degree in Urban Planning from UCLA and a B.S. in Business Administration.

TUNUA THRASH-NTUK

Executive Director, Local Initiatives
Support Corporation Los Angeles
(LISC LA)

A native Angeleno, Tunua Thrash-Ntuk is the Executive Director of LISC LA. She is a seasoned community and economic development practitioner of more than 15-years with both non-profit and private sector experiences. Her strengths range from community advocacy to asset and real estate development around neighborhood revitalization. Prior to joining LISC, Tunua served as Executive Director of West Angeles Community Development Corporation, during her tenure she was responsible for the asset management and oversight of the WACDC real estate portfolio valued at \$150 million. Tunua serves as a board member or advisory board member to many entities, including Federal Home Loan Bank San Francisco's Affordable Housing Council, Housing California, City of LA Measure HHH Citizens Oversight Commission, Greenlining Institute, Union Bank's Community Advisory Board, Frontier Communications Community Advisory Board and the Los Angeles Development Fund, which is the City of Los Angeles' New Market Tax Credit implementation group. Tunua is a graduate of Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) where she earned her Master's in City Planning as well as an alumna of UC Berkeley where she received her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Interdisciplinary Studies.

ANDY AGLE

Director of Housing and
Economic Development, City
of Santa Monica

Since 2007, Andy Agle has served as the Director of Housing and Economic Development, where he leads the City's efforts in financing the production and preservation of affordable housing, providing direct rental assistance to approximately 1,400 low-income families, managing the acquisition, disposition and leasing of City real estate, supporting four business improvement districts, operating four weekly farmers' markets and implementing dissolution of the redevelopment agency.

Andy began his tenure with the City in 1998, serving in the roles of Deputy Director, Assistant Director and Interim Director of Planning and Community Development before assuming his current role. Prior to his tenure with the City of Santa Monica, Andy worked for the City of Anaheim, where he served as a project manager for the Anaheim Redevelopment Agency and as the City Manager's management analyst. Andy received his Master of Public Affairs and Urban and Regional Planning from Princeton University in Princeton, NJ and his Bachelor of Arts, magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa, in economics from Pomona College in Claremont, CA.

DR. D'ARTAGNAN SCORZA

Founder & Executive Director,
Social Justice Learning Institute

Dr. D'Artagnan Scorza's work is grounded in efforts to create communities where all people can thrive. His expansive research, education, grassroots organizing, and policy experience has made a significant impact in high need communities throughout California. While at UCLA, he helped pass policies that established veteran's service centers and prioritized \$160 million for student services across UC campuses. He also improved sustainability in Inglewood schools, having served as chair of the Measure GG campaign, where he helped to secure \$90 million to support school construction efforts. He is published in multiple academic journals and is a lecturer in the Fielding School of Public Health at UCLA.

In his role as the Founder and Executive Director of the Social Justice Learning Institute, Dr. Scorza empowers individuals to become leaders who rise up, create change and help their communities flourish.

Dr. Scorza is a US Navy Iraq War Veteran. He received a B.S. in Liberal Studies with a concentration in Business Management from National University, as well as a B.A. in the Study of Religion and Ph.D. in Education from UCLA. He is a UC Regent Emeritus, was a 2010 Education Pioneers Fellow, and was a 2013 Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE) Fellow.

AMIR WHITAKER

Policy Attorney, ACLU
of Southern California

Amir Whitaker is a policy attorney with the ACLU of Southern California. Prior to joining the ACLU, Amir represented students and incarcerated youth throughout Florida and Alabama for the Southern Poverty Law Center. Referred to as a “civil rights and education stalwart” by the Daytona Times, Amir has negotiated settlements and policy changes improving the lives of hundreds of thousands of children. He has worked as a researcher with the UCLA Civil Rights Project, and has written for TIME Magazine and other publications. At the ACLU, Amir is responsible for legislation focused on education equity and funding.

Amir has taught across multiple educational settings for more than a decade, and has held teaching credentials in Florida, California, and New Jersey. He received his doctorate in Educational Psychology from the University of Southern California, juris doctorate from the University of Miami, and his bachelors from Rutgers University. Often referred to as “Dr. KnuckleHead,” Amir was arrested at age 15 and eventually expelled from school. In 2014, Amir started Project KnuckleHead to inspire vulnerable youth and help them reach their potential through education, music, and art programs. Amir is also the board chair of the Arts for Incarcerated Youth Network, a collaborative of a dozen organizations providing art programming to youth throughout LA county.

DOUG SMITH

Staff Attorney, Public Counsel

Doug Smith is a Staff Attorney in the Community Development Project at Public Counsel, where he works with community-based organizations, community organizers, and resident leaders in low-income communities across Los Angeles County to advance a variety of grassroots movements for social justice and equity. Smith joined Public Counsel in 2013 as an Equal Justice Works Fellow.

In addition to his work as a Staff Attorney, Smith was a Lecturer of Law at the UCLA School of Law during the Fall, 2018 semester. Smith has also been appointed to serve as a Commissioner on the Los Angeles County Regional Planning Commission and served as Commission Chair in 2017. Smith’s publications have appeared in The Los Angeles Times, The San Francisco Chronicle, KCET, UCLA Law Review Discourse, and the Journal of Affordable Housing & Community Development, among others.

Smith received his B.A. cum laude in Political Science and History from the University of Oregon. He earned his J.D. at UCLA School of Law, and M.A. in Urban and Regional Planning at UCLA School of Public Affairs. While in law school, Smith was the Emil Joseph Stache Scholar, specialized in public interest law and policy, and was a Managing Editor for the Journal of Environmental Law & Policy.

CARLA DE PAZ

Director of Community Organizing,
East LA Community Corporation
(ELACC)

Carla De Paz is the Director of Community Organizing at ELACC, a non-profit organization that builds community wealth, community housing, and people power in the Eastside of Los Angeles. From 2013–2017, Carla led ELACC’s Equitable Transit Oriented Development Campaign where she organized to secure 100% affordable housing development on 8 Metro-owned lots in Boyle Heights. As Director, she manages ELACC’S work within the Los Angeles Street Vendor Campaign Coalition, which had a huge victory in November 2018 when LA City Council voted to Legalize Street Vending. She also supports community organizing within ELACC’s Community Development team to continuously innovate and implement community-led engagement strategies. Before joining ELACC, Carla was a labor organizer for the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and she received her Bachelor’s degree from UCLA in Political Science and Labor and Workplace studies.

COUNCILMEMBER CURREN D. PRICE

Councilmember, Council District 9
City of Los Angeles

Born and raised in South Los Angeles, Curren D. Price, Jr. is proud of his roots, and his public service experience has consistently stood up for working-class families. In 2013, he was elected to represent the Los Angeles 9th Council District. He was re-elected for another term in March 2017. In his role as City Councilmember, Price is the Chair of the Council’s Economic Development Committee, and serves on the committees of Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM); Budget and Finance; Immigrant Affairs, Civil Rights, and Equity; Arts, Entertainment, Parks, and River; Personnel and Animal Welfare, as well as the Ad-Hoc Committee on the 2028 Olympics and Paralympic Games.

He launched his decades-long career in 1993 as a public servant on the Inglewood City Council. Price then went on to serve in the California State Legislature as an Assemblymember in 2006. In 2009, as a State Senator, he chaired the Business and Professions Committee and was chosen by his colleagues to lead the California Legislative Black Caucus, as Chair, in 2010. In his current post as Los Angeles City Councilman, Price has a personal commitment to bettering the lives of low-income families, children and seniors.

Price holds a Bachelor’s degree in Political Science from Stanford University and a Juris Doctor degree from the University of Santa Clara, School of Law.

CLARE FOX

Executive Director, Los Angeles
Food Policy Council (LAFPC)

A third-generation Angeleno, Clare Fox grew up in the multiethnic neighborhoods of the San Fernando Valley. Clare joined the LAFPC in 2011 because of her passion for food as a force of healing, social justice and ecological wellbeing. Since her 2015 appointment to Executive Director of the LAFPC, the Council and their 400+ organizational and agency partners have achieved numerous legislative victories for more equitable food access, including universal CalFresh/EBT at LA's farmer's markets, the first countywide urban agriculture program, and the city's first food recovery program, which has already rescued over 4 million pounds of fresh produce for food insecure families. Clare co-created LAFPC's Healthy Neighborhood Market Network, which trains small businesses in low-income communities to be successful healthy food retailers.

Clare is honored to be a founding member of the LA Street Vendor Coalition, and accompany street vendor leaders in their decade-long fight for legalization and economic opportunity. With great love for her city, Clare serves on the Leadership Council for Mayor Eric Garcetti's Los Angeles Promise Zone, the Board of Directors for the environmental non-profit LA Compost, and she was a founding board member and dancer for Critical Mass Dance Company. She studied urban planning at UCLA, and Critical Social Thought at Mount Holyoke College.

HANNAH APPEL

Assistant Professor of Anthropology
and Global Studies, UCLA

Hannah Appel is a scholar, activist and mother. She is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Global Studies at UCLA, and a founding member of The Debt Collective. With the Debt Collective, she works to build debtors unions through an emancipatory activation of household debt under finance capitalism. Her intellectual and activist work focus on the daily life of capitalism and the economic imagination. How can we expand the field of economic possibility in an interconnected, deeply unequal world? She has written extensively on oil, infrastructure, debt and finance in the United States and on the African continent. Her first sole-authored book—*The Licit Life of Capitalism: U.S. Oil in Equatorial Guinea*—will be published by Duke University Press this year.

ASIYAHOLA SANKARA

Organizing and Outreach
Program Manager, Alliance for
Community Transit

Asiyahola Sankara is the organizing and outreach program manager for Alliance for Community Transit—Los Angeles (ACT-LA). He focuses on managing and supporting community-based organizing to advance new equitable development and inclusive land use standards in Los Angeles, especially in neighborhoods near transit. Prior to joining ACT-LA, Asiyahola organized with Black Lives Matter LA and the Labor/Community Strategy Center and holds a BA from Pomona College.

CHANCHANIT MARTORELL

Executive Director, Thai
Community Development Center

Born in Thailand and raised in Los Angeles, Chanchanit Martorell studied political science and public law at UCLA where she received her B.A. and her M.A. in Urban Planning with a specialization in Urban Regional Development/Third World Development.

Engaged in social activism for the past 32 years, Martorell is currently the Executive Director of the Thai Community Development Center, a non-profit organization she founded in 1994 in an effort to improve the lives of Thai immigrants through services that promote cultural adjustment and economic self-sufficiency. In the aftermath of the 1992 Civil Unrest, she co-authored the Mid-City Plan for the Coalition of Neighborhood Developers which sought to address the historic lack of economic resources in an inner city area of Los Angeles. In 1999, under her leadership, Thai CDC played a pivotal role in the eight-year long community organizing campaign which raised community consciousness and led to the designation of the first Thai Town in the nation right here in East Hollywood. For Martorell, the designation of Thai Town was the first step of a multi-faceted, economic development strategy to revitalize a depressed section of Hollywood while enriching the City's cultural and social fiber.

JESSICA MEANEY

Founder & Executive Director,
Investing in Place

Jessica Meaney is the Founder and Executive Director of Investing in Place, an organization committed to transportation investments that strengthen communities. Jessica moved to Los Angeles over 20 years ago and chose not to own a car. It was a choice she was privileged to make and continues to inspire her professional commitment to improve Greater Los Angeles County to become more safe, reliable, and accessible for all, especially for those with the least options. This passion pushed her to create Investing in Place in January 2015.

VINCE BERTONI

Planning Director,
City of Los Angeles

Vince Bertoni is the Planning Director for the City of Los Angeles. With nearly 30 years of professional planning experience, Vince leads the largest city planning department in the nation. He is charged with developing policies that shape the future of the City and guide development decisions for a diverse and dynamic metropolis of over 4 million people. Prior to arriving in Los Angeles, Vince was the Director of Planning and Community Development for the City of Pasadena. He has also served as Deputy Director for the City of Los Angeles and held lead planning posts for the cities of Beverly Hills, Santa Clarita, and Malibu.

Vince is a member of the California Planning Roundtable and has held several leadership positions with the California Chapter of the American Planning Association. Vince has been active on statewide legislation, having served on the Housing Element Reform Working Group formed by the State Assembly and Senate and testified before the State Senate on infill real estate development strategies.

Vince has a Bachelor's Degree in Transportation and Urban Geography from San Diego State University and is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners.

THOMAS YEE

Initiative Officer, LA THRIVES

Thomas Yee is currently the Initiative Officer for the LA THRIVES collaborative, focused on supporting equitable transit-oriented development and related cross-sector strategic efforts in Los Angeles County. As Initiative Officer, Thomas coordinates the activities of the collaborative to achieve its strategic goals for reducing the cost of housing+transportation, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and expanding the community investment system. The network brings together the region's affordable housing finance and development, transportation and mobility, environmental, and public health sectors, as well as local and regional public agencies. Thomas was nominated for the 2018 UCLA Pritzker Emerging Environmental Genius Award.

He was previously the Director of Planning at the LTSC Community Development Corporation, where he helped to launch the Sustainable Little Tokyo initiative. He has developed over 200 units of affordable housing for low-income and special needs households utilizing over \$62 million in public and private financing. Thomas completed a Masters in Urban Planning from the University of Southern California.

DEVIKA GOETSCHUIS

Executive Director, Housing
Land Trust of Sonoma County

Dev Goetschius, Executive Director of Housing Land Trust of Sonoma County in Petaluma, CA Housing Land Trust has been in partnership with cities throughout Sonoma County to produce and preserve permanently affordable, owner-occupied homes. She has over 28 years of experience in management, strategic planning, program design and fundraising for nonprofit organizations. Dev is a partner at Burlington Associates in Community Development, the national consulting firm specializing in the development and evaluation of affordable housing policies and community land trust programs. She is Vice President of the CA CLT Network that promotes statewide peer to peer collaboration and addresses policy issues that impact CLTs in CA; and is Co-Founder of the Bay Area Community Land Trust Consortium. She is a founding board member and past president of the National Community Land Trust Network. Dev holds a BA in Psychology and Spanish Literature, is a licensed Teacher of the Handicapped.





LESSONS LEARNED



ALL MONEY IN: BUILDING BLACK WEALTH

The first panel of the day focused on Building Black Wealth in cities and the session proved to be an important discussion about the barriers and opportunities to growing assets. Systemic inequities, often reinforced by broad policies, created the wealth gap that exists today. The panel spoke at length about policies that created and reinforced redlining in cities and how these policies have had a lasting impact on Black families. Indeed, the Black community has endured a variety of political and socio-economic obstacles that stunted its ability to build wealth as compared to white families which prompted the panel to talk about the need, or demand, for policy change to address income inequality. As the income gap becomes greater, Hudson noted that “market forces alone will not protect our communities—government needs to protect our communities.”

Building wealth in the African American community is also important when addressing another important topic in cities: gentrification. New public and private investments into a community can impact property values in such a way that leads to displacement. For residents in a community to have an opportunity to stay and benefit from new amenities, households need opportunities to build wealth and own their homes or place of business. But again, the panel reiterated, income (Universal Basic Income and reparations were mentioned) is not enough to build wealth; in addition, we need intentional policy to change the systems that spark or hinder wealth creation for communities of color. Policies should also create new tools that proactively support Black communities. The current system taxes investments such as dividends and stocks at a lower rate than income; however, Thrash-Ntuk noted, “many folks in the community do not have access to instruments [to invest], which creates a vicious cycle.” Developing a program for taxing investments at a higher rate will help in closing the income gap.

What we heard loud and clear from this panel was that the public sector could be an important driver of equitable prosperity by helping to develop public sector jobs, create accessible and affordable housing, and pursue opportunities to contract with local Black businesses.

PRESERVING OUR DIVERSITY: SANTA MONICA'S EXPERIMENT WITH UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME

The City of Santa Monica, known now as an expensive beach town, was able to maintain its economic and ethnic diversity for many years. Their modest bungalows and apartments had affordable rents for individuals with low-wage jobs. In the 1970s a charter amendment created strict rent control in Santa Monica, capping rent increases each year from then forward. This allowed for the City to maintain its economic and ethnic diversity.

However, in 1999, vacancy decontrol was implemented, changing the residential character of the city. Vacancy decontrol allows for property owners to raise the rent on a newly-vacant rent controlled unit to a market rate thus taking the unit out of the rent controlled housing stock. This important mechanism affects much of the City. Currently, 25% of households make less than \$35,000 per year in Santa Monica.

Andy Agle and his team in the City of Santa Monica decided to take on this issue with a pilot focusing on basic income subsidies - untethered monetary assistance to seniors living in Santa Monica. This program started with \$200,000 in the City's budget in 2017, but has since grown to \$2 Million. Initially, the pilot aided 22 seniors in the City with a couple of hundred dollars each. The cost of food, transportation, and healthcare were calculated to determine the size of the subsidy per participant. But it wasn't just the money that brought major success to the program—participants were also provided important support services such as case management to assist the seniors. Ultimately, they found that a couple hundred dollars can make a huge difference in the life of cash-strapped residents.



UPLIFTING INGLEWOOD: BUILDING CHAMPIONS FOR HOUSING

Dr. D'Artagnan Scorza spoke about the massive changes Inglewood is facing, and the ways community members are fighting back. Following the reopening of The Forum and the news that the Los Angeles Rams and the Chargers would be moving to a new stadium at Hollywood Park, there is renewed interest in Inglewood from private investors and developers. As a result, Inglewood residents have experienced skyrocketing rents (some increases as high as 29% adjacent to The Forum and the site of the new football stadium) and home ownership has decreased, impacting African American and Latinx ownership the most. Scorza also shared that during the Great Recession, corporations bought up much of the single-family housing stock in the City as part of a “buy-and-hold” strategy and then sold them once housing values rose. The gentrification spurred on by these changes has impacted low- and middle- income families the most; and as housing costs continue to rise, people who have lived in Inglewood for decades have the highest risk of being displaced.

The Uplift Inglewood Coalition was created to combat gentrification through education, advocacy and direct community action. The stadium project became a focal point for the Coalition, helping residents strengthen their political power and fight for community-centered development. After plans to build affordable housing as part of the stadium development was abandoned by the City, Uplift Inglewood launched a campaign to bring rent control to the City. Uplift Inglewood organized and educated Inglewood residents on the issues facing their community. Direct action from community members led to resounding success and Scorza's presentation came fresh off a victory: In June of 2019, the City of Inglewood passed a rent stabilization ordinance, bringing stability to those community members at risk of being displaced.

CONFRONTING CULTURAL CRIMINALIZATION & EQUALITIES IN ART ACCESS

Amir Whitaker's presentation described the necessity of creating spaces and legal/accessible avenues for art and creative expression in the lives of young people, especially those who experience "generations-lasting inequalities." Art, in its various forms, plays an important role in communication and self-expression; however, there is a long history of people in power limiting the ability of marginalized communities to express themselves through art. Whitaker described the long history of limiting self expression by banning things such as drums and certain dances as well as targeting youth of color for expressing themselves through art, specifically graffiti.

"Art deserts" are a prime example of this inequality. Public schools have seen their arts education funding slashed while school policing has been prioritized in recent budgets. These budgeting decisions have resulted in an environment where artistic expression is criminalized while creative outlets for students is omitted from curriculums. Adding to this issue are the mandatory "random" searches taking place for every 200 students at LAUSD schools where art supplies, sketchbooks, markers, and personal care items are labeled "contraband" and confiscated. Whitaker posed a pressing question - how does being targeted in this manner impact a student's mental health?

There is a dire need for well-funded, widely-supported arts education programs that are accessible to all students regardless of the community they live in. Amir calls for the public to support #ArtJustice and urged us to question how our work is providing youth avenues for creative expression they may not have elsewhere.

ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE : THE SUCCESS OF THE L.A. STREET VENDOR CAMPAIGN

In November of last year, street vending was legalized after a decade's long advocacy effort led by vendors themselves. Clare Fox, Carla De Paz, Doug Smith, and Councilman Curren D. Price offered a retrospective of the work and the lessons learned. Over the years, it became very clear that street vending cut across various issues: women's rights, economic justice, immigrant rights, and also access to land public space. The panel highlighted the fact that with street vendors at the forefront of the Campaign, vetting policy proposals and informing strategy in the Campaign's steering committee, made the entire effort much more effective and cross-cutting. The partnerships formed between street vendors and other stakeholders—nonprofits, housing developers, lawyers, and even politicians—resulted in street vending finally legalized.

A major turning point in the movement was when SB 946 was passed at the State level. This bill decriminalized street vending across California and created flexible rules and regulations that each jurisdiction could customize to fit the needs of their local constituents. The LA Street Vendor Campaign was able to leverage this statewide success to work with the City of Los Angeles to finalize rules and regulations that served as the first step to a comprehensive policy. Every policy recommendation was grounded in the perspective of the vendors. The entire campaign was an iterative process where actors and allies, would develop strategy by learning and listening to street vendors, and accepting and giving feedback. Over the course of the ten year campaign, the different paths that have emerged are meaningful to recognize as well as necessary to reflect on.

Even though one battle has been won, there is a lot of work left to be done. A policy is only as good as the implementation of it. The voice of the vendors needs to be the center of the implementation process, ensuring that the policy properly works for those being affected by it.

FROM DEBTORS' PRISONS TO DEBTORS' UNIONS: THE POWER OF DEBT IN THE UNEQUAL CITY

Student debt is the largest debt in the US right now—even bigger than mortgages and any credit card debt—coming in at over \$1.5 trillion. At PLUS2, Hannah Appel argued that this enormous debt also equates to a lot of unrealized power. She quoted J. Paul Getty “If you owe the bank \$100 dollars, that’s your problem; if you owe the bank \$100 million, that’s the bank’s problem.” What if we organized as debtors into a union? With over \$1.5 trillion in debt, the government could have a problem on its hands if debtors were to collectivize.

Indebtedness is not distributed equally among households; Black and Latinx families feel the burn of debt far more than their white counterparts. Appel stated that “household debt is a systemic condition, not the individual failure of those who make poor choices in a fair system.” One of the major events that exacerbated this was the crash of 2008, where Black and Brown families experienced foreclosures at a much higher rate—creating a massive loss of wealth and putting families into further debt. Mass indebtedness, Appel explained, is only exacerbating existing income inequality in both racial and gender terms. She shared astounding statistics about student debt—among which was the average loan balances of a Black graduate four years after finishing school is more than twice that of a white graduate. Ultimately, debt is about power as much as it is about profit. How do we leverage that power as a collective to create economic freedom for those who have been systemically disenfranchised? Hannah’s answer is a debtors’ union because “systemic conditions require a collective response.”



ALL ABOARD: HOW TRANSIT-ORIENTED COMMUNITIES CAN UNLOCK AFFORDABLE HOMES & STRONG NEIGHBORHOOD ECONOMIES

Transit Oriented Communities (TOC) is a policy that came to fruition in 2016 when Measure JJJ was passed by Los Angeles voters. TOC's work to build more holistic communities that focus on the interplay among housing, transportation and small businesses—creating walkable and affordable places for people to live. This means different things to different advocates. The panel consisted of the Executive Director of Investing in Place, Jessica Meaney; the Organizing and Outreach Program Manager of ACT-LA, Asiyahola Sankara; Director of Planning for the City of Los Angeles, Vince Bertoni; and the Executive Director of Thai Community Development Corporation, Chanchinit Martorell. The panel was moderated by Thomas Yee of LA Thrives. The panel sought to explore the role of cross-sector partnerships in advancing progressive programs like TOCs.

Jessica began by describing the experiences of the pedestrian and transit user, explaining that public transportation can only work if we also ensure that sidewalks aren't broken, bike lanes exist, and the bus lanes are priority. She noted that for our regional transportation systems to be effective, people need to have quick and easy access to transit that will take them where they need to go. Through the advocacy of groups like ACT-LA, concerns like these were brought to the table in the formation of Measure JJJ and the TOC initiative. Asiyahola explained that equity was always a priority for their work in advancing the policy. The experience of the most marginalized needed to inform the development of any new legislation.

Vince provided an overview of the effectiveness of the TOC initiative to date: over 2,000 units have been built

since it went into effect in 2017. Of the units built, about 40% are for extremely low-income residents. But its success couldn't have happened without community organizing. Similarly, the transit oriented communities wouldn't be complete without a component around businesses within the area. Chanchinit explained how the vitality of local entrepreneurs ensures that the model increases pedestrian use of the space. Thai CDC, who is currently building a transit oriented development at Hollywood & Western, anticipates that the Thai micro-entrepreneurs who will be part of her project will support active public spaces and an increase in small business development because of their proximity to the Metro stop. By creating a hub for social interaction, this system is successfully achieving a walkable, livable and affordable space in the City of Los Angeles.

With the success of building new units, however, comes the responsibility of building out this program outside of the City of LA and utilizing the connection it has to Metro's TOCs. Metro, itself a major land owner, has an important opportunity to utilize its assets to advance transit oriented developments that prioritize extremely low-income households. This work can be most effective if decision-makers heed the wisdom of this panel, prioritizing equity means putting the needs of the most marginalized first.

PROTECTING THE COMMUNITY INVESTMENT: KEEPING HOMES AFFORDABLE IN PERPETUITY

The last presentation at this year's PLUS2 was delivered by Devika Goetschius, the Executive Director of the Housing Land Trust of Sonoma County whose aim was to share her views on Community Land Trusts as a tool to address the housing affordability crisis in California.

This crisis is a direct reflection of the history of land ownership in our country, especially its use as a tool to build wealth. The notion of private property sought to (indirectly or directly) individualize how cities are built and redirect power from communities to individual land owners. These dynamics have fueled debates on urban development for decades, pitting landlords against tenants, and furthering the wealth gap by accelerating the wealth capabilities of households who have had the opportunity to acquire land. Because of racially biased policies, many Black and Brown communities have been kept away from this wealth building opportunity.

Community land trusts (CLT) offer a mechanism to spread wealth and build financial equity for those who participate in it. In this system, the land and physical property are bifurcated, making it much more affordable for an individual to own property and build equity. The land is held within "the Trust," while the building on the land is made available for purchase by a group of tenants. The CLT, then, is a partial solution to many of the issues posed by the market. Goetschius described the CLT tool to the audience, describing the various elements: partnerships, stewardship, and a focus on families served—not units developed. Partnerships, she explains, are at the core of the system. Non-profits, developers and governments need to be on the same page about the CLT and that it's focus is on helping families.

Goetschius highlighted for us that one of the most important aspects of the CLT is the support to its tenants. In her experience, the most successful projects were those that assisted families from the initial application phase all the way through to the re-sale of the property. Answering questions and making information accessible and easy to digest is one of the key components of a successful CLT. Lastly, the focus of the CLT needs to be on the number of families that are being served instead of the units that are built. Although we often resort to measuring the number of units or houses that have been put in a CLT, it is more impactful and truthful to talk about the people that have been served. Goetschius shared stories of people who lived in and participated in the Housing Land Trust of Sonoma County, sold their homes, and then purchased again in the private market with the equity they had gained through the CLT.

This talk adjourned our conference well, reminding us the importance of designing policies and programs that build wealth for the most marginalized.







RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

All eight panels at PLUS² brought in unique information, tying together ideas of stewardship, partnership, and collaboration. Ultimately it was clear that the work we all do, is stronger and more effective when we do it together. See below ten recommendations that came from our eight panels at PLUS².

CREATE NEW MODELS FOR ACCESS TO CAPITAL

Understanding the needs of neighborhoods and their existing residents and small businesses is key to knowing how what economic opportunities exist. One major factor is developing sustainable systems for access to capital. Because communities of color, especially the Black community, are discriminated against when applying for business and home loans, new systems of capital need to be developed. Demanding that government capital and private equity be deployed through an equity lens could be transformative. For programs and institutions that already exist, more government resources need to be dedicated to these systems to change the tide.

ADVOCATE FOR POLICIES THAT ADDRESS HISTORIC INCOME INEQUALITY

Over and over again, our panel discussions reiterated the importance of transformative policies that seek to address income inequality caused by generations of institutional racism. Leaders should consider how they use their platform to educate stakeholders about the roots of income inequality in our communities while advancing policies that support the growth of an inclusive city. Municipalities can advance equity by establishing procurement policies that prioritize local businesses, city departments can support wealth creation by investing in maintaining and growing a healthy public workforce, and they could also use their tremendous buying power to encourage financial institutions and other major corporations to support residents in low-income neighborhoods.

INSTITUTE RENT CONTROL PROGRAMS FOR VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Housing is often the largest cost that households have, especially low-income ones. A drastic change in rent can seriously disrupt the lives of a tenant, especially those with a low wage job or a fixed income. Developing policies that limit rent increases for low-income populations is one of the best ways to offset overall costs. By managing housing costs in this way, we are also keeping more money in the pockets of people who are most affected by the high cost of living in cities like Los Angeles.

EXPERIMENT WITH A PILOT, BUT THEN SEEK TO SCALE

Often, implementing transformative projects or policies requires tremendous effort and resources. Andy Agle suggested that practitioners start small, perhaps with a pilot program. It is usually easier to secure money through government funding this way, instead of developing a full program that may be resource intensive. This way, stories of impact can be gathered that could serve as part of a case study to scale and expand the initiative proposed.

LAUNCH MULTI-PRONGED CAMPAIGNS IN ORDER TO MAKE CHANGES IN SYSTEMS

When organizing people for a cause, having a multi-faceted approach to how the issues should be addressed is key to success. This involves the development of a communication strategy, strategic operations, legal strategy, and a plan for how to organize and mobilize people. This is not a task meant for one person, but instead a group of people with different expertise. The coalition is stronger, as we saw in the Uplift Inglewood Coalition, when there is knowledge on as many fronts as possible. By developing a multi-pronged campaign, more people will be reached, the issues will have more information known about them, and a stronger base of people will be built to help in the fight for systems change.

SUPPORT MOVEMENTS FOR #ARTJUSTICE AND ELEVATE THE BLACK ART MATTERS MOVEMENTS

Because art is often used as a tool for criminalizing Black and Brown people, it is imperative that their art is uplifted - highlighting their experience and providing a broader audience for their work. Understanding that the experience of a person of color is intimately tied to their physical identity makes their art inherently political due to the importance that skin-tone plays in our day to day lives. Supporting movements like these do much more than change a narrative around what art is considered valuable, it also helps to dismantle race-based systems that value one human being over another.

ENSURE THAT THE COMMUNITY MEMBERS IMPACTED BY A POLICY ARE THE PRIMARY INFORMERS OF HOW THAT POLICY IS DEVELOPED

In order for a policy to be truly equitable, it must be informed and centered around the needs of the people that are affected. The LA Street Vendor Campaign demonstrated this in one of its core values: the vendors came first. By having an open line of communication between street vendors and the different ally groups, the needs of the vendors were heard at every level. This communication was facilitated by a structure that organized thousands of vendors throughout Los Angeles in neighborhood-specific groups. Any successful policy must be built on a robust system that engages community members, hears their ideas, and institutionalizes their perspective as a priority.

ORGANIZING PEOPLE AND CAPITAL IS AN IMPORTANT TOOL FOR CHANGE

Hannah gave an in-depth overview of how a debtor's union would work. In the case of Corinthian Colleges, students had signed an arbitration clause saying that they couldn't litigate against the school. Because of this, the students decided to go on a debt strike - not paying their monthly dues to the school because of the neglect that had happened with their education. There is a power in numbers - ultimately, the students won and were able to file for a Borrower's Defense to Repayment. 70,000 students had their loans forgiven after that. The ability to organize people for a common cause, especially when it means collectivizing hundreds of millions of dollars in debt to the U.S. government, is a very powerful and effective tool.

DEVELOP A COUNTYWIDE EQUITY PLATFORM

The history of Los Angeles has been marred by disinvestment and neglect of areas where people of color reside. Although this is not unique to Los Angeles, LA has the opportunity to come to terms with and acknowledge this history in order to responsibly move forward. Through the use of a countywide equity platform—used at agencies at different levels of government—the County could push for development that helps people who live in TOCs. Further, it will provide an avenue for the County to provide technical assistance to smaller cities and work to invest in those communities that had previously been neglected.

RETHINK THE IDEA OF WHAT A HOME IS

The US has a single family zoning problem. The idea of the single family home stems from post World War II notions of private property; it was a direct push back to the fear of communism and communal property. Over the years, these fears have caused unsustainable sprawl and mass inequality for Black and Latinx families. The future requires us to redefine what a “home” and the “American dream” is and embrace denser developments near transit lines. Responsible density is needed in order to address the housing crisis we are facing in California.



CONCLUSION

At this year's **PLUS²** conference, the presentations talked about a number of disparate issues plaguing our communities, but there were many common themes. The economic struggles our collective communities face are intertwined and all have similar root causes. Among all of the speakers, there were three main topics that kept coming up:

1. We are stronger together. By forming coalitions and fostering partnerships like the LA Street Vendor Campaign, and creating allships like the Uplift Inglewood Coalition, will prove to be more fruitful in all arenas—from economic development, to housing, to transportation. Public, private and non-profits need to work together to develop better systems.
2. The systems that have built the environment we live in now were not built for people like us, and therefore it requires innovation to get us out of this moment.
3. The people can, and do, win. In many of the talks, we heard about the power that people have to change things for the better—and in their favor. Often it feels like residents and constituents aren't heard and are overlooked by the people in power—but the people who spoke at **PLUS²** made it clear that through collective work, we are able to make change while also building networks and setting precedents for future generations.

These themes all strongly resonate with the Inclusive Action team. We learned a great deal from the experts and leaders that shared their time with us at **PLUS²**. It gives us great hope that this work is happening, growing, and building.

Thanks again!

THE INCLUSIVE ACTION TEAM

