

City of Baldwin Park Civic Center Site Transit-Oriented Development

Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) Program

June 2011

ULI Los Angeles Mission Statement

At the Urban Land Institute, our mission is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. ULI Los Angeles, a district council of the Urban Land Institute, carries forth that mission as the preeminent regional real estate organization providing inclusive and trusted leadership influencing public policy and practice.

About the ULI Los Angeles Technical Assistance Panels

In keeping with the Urban Land Institute mission, Technical Assistance Panels are convened to provide pro-bono planning and development assistance to public officials and local stakeholders of communities and nonprofit organizations who have requested assistance in addressing their land use challenges.

A group of diverse professionals representing the full spectrum of land use and real estate disciplines typically spend one day visiting and analyzing the built environments, identifying specific planning and development issues, and formulating realistic and actionable recommendations to move initiatives forward in a fashion consistent with the applicant's goals and objectives.

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Executive Summary

Baldwin Park is located in the eastern portion of Los Angeles County approximately 15 miles east of downtown Los Angeles and bounded by Irwindale on the north, West Covina on the east, El Monte on the west and Industry, West Covina and unincorporated County areas on the south. The Civic Center is located within the Central Business District. It is an 11-acre site adjacent to the Cruz Baca Transit Center Metrolink Station and serviced by both Foothill Transit and MTA. The site, bounded by Pacific Avenue, Ramona Boulevard and Bogart Avenue, includes the Verizon building, a 2-story commercial office building and a single story retail commercial building.

Given the unique make-up of City residents as well as the location of existing cluster of uses, the downtown Baldwin Park area is well positioned to become a mixed-use destination with active local-serving commercial uses for Baldwin Park residents and residents of other nearby cities. Baldwin Park's Central Business District has the potential to be an attractive and popular destination. The project site can be used to better connect the Metrolink station to downtown, and at the same time bring additional commercial and residential opportunities to the area. As such, the Panel focused on creating a pedestrian-friendly core that will provide a pleasant environment for residents and visitors to shop and engage in entertainment activities.

The Panel's vision is to revitalize Baldwin Park's Civic Center area by creating a main street environment through enhanced pedestrian linkages between the community's primary assets and activity nodes. Strategies recommended to achieve this vision include: 1) leveraging existing assets and improving linkages, 2) site improvements and development opportunities and 3) development of future housing.



The Baldwin Park Transit Center is surrounded by a variety of community assets that can be leveraged to promote pedestrian traffic and downtown development. Specific programming and improvement ideas that are both feasible and encourage utilization of the area include plantings, pots, outdoor furnishings, public art and a farmer's market.

The Panel supports a two phase process to implement its vision for Baldwin Park's Central Business District and Civic Center area. The first phase is centered on creating a framework for improvement through zoning, an environmental impact report and the site's specific plan. These actions will expedite the development process and create incentives for developers to carry out the City's vision. The second phase is related to the actual development and implementation of the TAP panel's vision for the Civic Center and the Central Business District.

The goal of future developments should include the desire to create a stronger downtown presence and better environment for users arriving by car, train or foot. Additionally, the introduction of housing directly adjacent to the Metrolink station will provide immediate and easy access to trains serving employment centers throughout the Los Angeles and San Bernardino county areas. Housing will also increase pedestrian activity in the area, particularly at night and on weekends, as local residents utilize shops, restaurants, and other retail centers.



A Metrolink train arrives at the Cruz Baca TransCenter in Baldwin Park.

Assignment & Process

Key Issues

Revitalize Baldwin Park's Downtown Central Business District and Civic Center into a pedestrian-friendly urban center with quality retail, dining, shopping, entertainment and other amenities. The City of Baldwin Park's vision for the area is to:

- Create a pedestrian-friendly and vibrant urban center with quality retail, dining, shopping, and entertainment uses and other amenities, which offer exciting opportunities for the community and visitors.
- Establish a pedestrian district through development regulations, public improvements, and street design that establishes a pedestrian link between the Civic Center, Metrolink Station and the Downtown Central Business District.
- Encourage development, both public and private sector, which stimulate pedestrian activity and connection, economic development and the creation of a highly-valued community asset.

Key Questions/Considerations

The City of Baldwin Park requested that the ULI panel review the City's existing planning efforts and provide feedback and further direction to achieve the City's goal of creating a pedestrian-friendly urban center. The issues that were addressed during this effort include the following:

1. Given the City's vision, what urban design and infrastructure improvements can be implemented to the remainder of the Civic Center site to maximize land use and the transit-oriented development experience?
2. What are some private development options and appropriate land uses (long term vs. short term, and regional-serving versus local-serving) that should be encouraged at the Civic Center site?
3. What specific improvements concerning the Metrolink Station platform can be implemented to address safety concerns and improve pedestrian access to the Civic Center site and Downtown Central Business District?
4. Considering the above, what changes should be made to existing plans and what are the potential delivery methods for implementation to achieve the City's goals?

Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) Process

ULI representatives met with representatives from the City of Baldwin Park to determine the scope of the panel assignment. The panel members were selected based upon their ability to address the stated objectives for the program provided by the client. Prior to the day-long program, panel members reviewed background materials prepared by the City of Baldwin Park. The TAP process is a day-long event. In the morning panel members tour the study area with representatives and later meet with key stakeholders, work through an intensive analysis on the specified issues, and present their findings to the general public.



The panel begins the day with a detailed tour of the study area.



Panelists interview Lorraine O'Brien, Vice President of the Baldwin Park Historical Society.



John Adams shares his understanding of the study area with the panel.

TAP Panel of Experts

ULI convened a panel of professionals who represented a variety of disciplines connected with land use and real estate development, such as architecture and design, real estate development, economic analysis, real estate law, and development financing methods. Members were selected with the intent of convening a robust array of professional expertise relevant to the City's objectives for the study and who had local working knowledge of the sub-region where the study area was located. All panel members were volunteers and were not compensated for their time.



TAP panelists have a broad range of backgrounds and bring a unique skill set to address the key questions posed.



The Baldwin Park Civic Center study area and surrounding context.



Metrolink staff brief panelists on the future plans for the station.

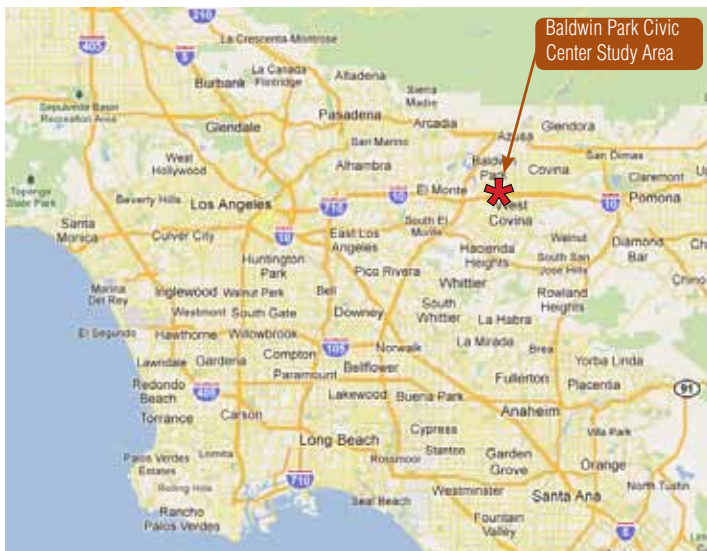


View looking east from the Cruz Baca Transit Station.

Background

Overview

Baldwin Park is located in the eastern portion of Los Angeles County approximately 15 miles east of downtown Los Angeles. Baldwin Park is bounded by Irwindale on the north, West Covina on the east, El Monte on the west and Industry, West Covina, and unincorporated Los Angeles County areas on the south. According to the most recent California Department of Finance estimates, the City's 2010 population was estimated to be 81,604 persons. Baldwin Park is predominantly a residential bedroom



Regional location of the Baldwin Park Civic Center Station study area.

community though there are a number of well-defined commercial districts found within the City including the Central Business District.

Central Business District & Civic Center

The Central Business District encompasses approximately 130 acres in the City's downtown core, including commercial development along Maine Avenue and Ramona Boulevard, residential development generally west of Maine Avenue and north of Ramona Boulevard and industrial development in the eastern portion of the district area.

The Civic Center Site is located within the Central Business District. It is an 11-acre site adjacent to the Cruz Baca Transit Center Metrolink Station and serviced by both Foothill Transit and MTA. The site, bounded by Pacific Avenue, Ramona Boulevard and Bogart Avenue, includes the Verizon building, a 2-story commercial office building and a single story retail commercial building.

Transportation

Baldwin Park is well served by two freeways: I-605 (the San Gabriel River Freeway), which provides north-south regional circulation along the western boundary of the City, and I-10 (the San Bernardino Freeway), which accommodates high daily volumes of east-west travel along the southern portion of the City. Together, these

interstates provide connections to essentially every other freeway in the region.

The Baldwin Park train station just southeast of City Hall provides an important stop for the Metrolink San Bernardino line. Weekday train service between San Bernardino and Los Angeles Union Station allows commuters to disembark for places of employment in Baldwin Park and adjacent cities, and for Baldwin Park residents to travel easily to jobs in other communities along the line. The San Bernardino line also provides connections to Ventura County trains and the Burbank Airport/Glendale area. Thus, City residents can use the train to travel some distance from home for recreation or business.

Development Activities over the Last Five Years

Over the past five years, the Community Development Commission (CDC) has initiated several projects to address conditions of blight in the Central Business District. During this time, the CDC has focused on increasing housing opportunities for all segments of the community and improving the overall economic health of the community by attracting new businesses and assisting existing business to expand. Significant CDC accomplishments in non-housing and mixed-use activities in the Central Business District include:

Arts and Recreation Center: The former Central School Auditorium, built in 1936 and located adjacent to City Hall, was completely renovated by the City and opened in 2007 as the Arts and Recreation Center (ARC). The ARC includes: a dance studio; arts and crafts studio; exhibit gallery; small indoor amphitheater; and outdoor nature and picnic area. The ARC is also the new home for the Baldwin Park Historical Society Museum.

Julia McNeill Senior Center: Expansion of senior center located at the Baldwin Park Community Center at



Metro buses connect Baldwin Park to the greater Los Angeles region.

Baldwin Park Boulevard and Ramona Boulevard was completed in 2007. Improvements include: additional office and storage space; two large recreation rooms; a lounge area; and a reception area with fireplace.

Baldwin Park Transit Center: The proposed project includes the construction of a new transit center that will serve patrons using public bus transit and the nearby Metrolink Station. Project-related improvements include: a 5-story parking structure, information kiosk; rest rooms; pedestrian amenities; bus parking and layover areas; and a pedestrian bridge that will connect the proposed parking structure with the existing Cruz Baca Transit Center Metrolink Station. The existing Cruz Baca Transit Center is located to the south of the proposed project site, on the south side of Bogart Avenue.



Metrolink boarding platform for the Cruz Baca Transit station.

In addition to these accomplishments, the CDC entered into an Exclusive Negotiating Agreement (ENA) with a Bisno Development, LLC to analyze the feasibility of the potential revitalization of the City's downtown core and Central Business District. The ambitious project included 8,000 residential units, 750,000 square-feet of retail and entertainment space; 3.0 million square-feet of commercial space; a 300-room full service hotel; and 1,000-student charter school. However, due to the economic market condition, the project analysis and the ENA were terminated in November 2008.

After the collapse of the proposed Bisno Development project, Baldwin Park has refocused its attention on the new transit center and its impact on the Central Business District. The City recognizes the train station as one key component of its program to enhance the downtown and create a mixed-use, vibrant community center. Creating a convenient pedestrian link from the station to City Hall and downtown will make it easier for commuters to linger and patronize local shops, restaurants and businesses. The transit center's location is also expected to encourage people to live downtown in new residences. Thus, enhancing the train station and its relationship to downtown will help meet local and regional transportation goals, as well as work toward fulfilling the City's vision for an urban village downtown.



TAP panelists (left to right) Mark Herwick, Loren Bloch, Melani Smith & Claudia Gutierrez conduct a series of stakeholder interviews.



Existing retail conditions within the study area.

Analysis

Overview

Given the unique make-up of City residents as well as the location of existing cluster of uses, the downtown Baldwin Park area is well positioned to become a mixed-use destination with active local-serving commercial uses for Baldwin Park residents and residents of other nearby cities. The project site can be used to better connect the Metrolink station to downtown, and at the same time bring additional commercial and residential opportunities to the area.

Current Market Conditions

Baldwin Park is a family-oriented middle-class community with strong market metrics. The housing stock of Baldwin Park is primarily owner-occupied, as about 60.0% of its residents own their own homes, while about 34% of households rent. Almost 80% of homes within Baldwin Park are single-family, with an average value of approximately \$307,000. Multi-family units make up about 20% of the housing stock and apartment rents average approximately \$1,144. Baldwin Park residents have average household incomes of almost \$60,000, but much of their spending occurs in the adjacent communities.

The existing commercial uses are dominated by small local-serving medical office and professional services in older office buildings and quick service eateries. There is a lack of neighborhood-serving retail uses, such as grocery, apparel, and sit-down restaurants within the 1-mile area of the project site. The downtown area has had high vacancies, particularly in its newer larger retail parcels, for several years and vacancies in all uses have been exacerbated by the recent recession. However, it is important to note that the small-format storefronts that make up the “heart” of the downtown area are doing fairly well and the City anticipates the opening of a full service grocery store summer 2011. Proposed development at the project site should create better connections to these areas and leverage and compliment their success.



Potential pedestrian access points exist to connect to the transit station.

Project Site's Market Potential

A broad survey performed by the TAP Panel reveals that residents within 3 miles of the project site could support almost 530,000 square feet of additional general merchandise, 92,000 square feet of clothing, 375,000 square feet of electronics stores, and over 100,000 square feet in full-service and limited service eating places. The project site would be well positioned to capture one or more full-service restaurants and other amenities desired by the community, such as coffee, yogurt and juice shops.

As noted above, the current office market is primarily local-serving office uses. It is possible that the site could capture a larger general employment-oriented office user, such as a bank branch or an institutional use, as a medical training facility or private university (or perhaps a Cal State LA) branch.

Despite the current housing crisis, residential demand is likely to improve in the next two years due to Southern California's traditional growth patterns (more people moving in than out). The Southern California Association of Governments estimates that there will be 2,400 new households added to cities within 3 miles of the project site over the next 15 years. The project site is well positioned to capture a fair share of this growth for reasonably priced, attractive market-rate for-sale, \$300,000 to \$500,000¹. Also, the City may want to consider partnerships with other institutions such as faculty or student housing for Cal State LA or workforce housing.

1- It should be noted that to keep the construction cost and eventual home price affordable it is advised to build product of four stories, or under and to limit the need for subterranean parking.



Some existing buildings are a challenge to permeability between Ramona and the Metrolink Station.



The Baldwin Park Civic Center is the heart of the City.



The wide sidewalks along the retail corridor is pedestrian friendly.



Across Ramona Boulevard is Park Plaza, a primary retail center for the area

Findings

During the course of the TAP project, the panelists had the opportunity to tour the site and surrounding community, as well as interview elected officials, City staff, business owners, property developers and local residents of the City of Baldwin Park. After gathering information, the panel conducted a SWOT analysis to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of Baldwin Park's Civic Center and surrounding community. Strengths and weaknesses explore internal aspects of the project or elements that can be controlled or changed by new development. Opportunities and threats evaluate external influences that can affect the project, but most are beyond the control of those associated with the project, such as factors relating to the economy like interest rates or credit market conditions.

From the site visit, stakeholder interviews and additional site research, the TAP panel determined the following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the Baldwin Park Civic Center and downtown area:

Strengths

The Baldwin Park Civic Center is the heart of the City—the core of the communities revitalizing downtown. A place for shopping, recreation and leisure, City government, and local and regional transit connectivity, the Civic Center provides a unifying identity for residents who feel a strong sense of pride and affinity for the friendly, small town atmosphere of the area. The adjacency of the City Hall complex to the Cruz Baca Transit Center Metrolink Station immediately south of Bogart Avenue and to the resurgent Park Plaza on Maine shopping center directly north of Ramona Boulevard make the Civic Center a cornerstone for walkable and vibrant community and retail experiences throughout the downtown. The active Metrolink Station will be even more integrated with the Civic Center when the soon-to-be built five-story parking structure and connecting pedestrian bridge next to City Hall is completed. Additionally, the new parking structure will provide more opportunities for residents throughout Baldwin Park to make the Civic Center and downtown a destination for the variety services and features that they offer.



Morgan Park and Community Center is both a community and regional asset.

The strong community life in the immediate vicinity of the Civic Center is evident in the very active use of Morgan Park with its collection of recreation and community service buildings, active and passive recreation opportunities, and spaces for events and gatherings. The public improvements along Ramona Boulevard and Maine Avenue, including intersection pavers, modernized signal structures, and bike lane striping create an environment focused on more than just automobile use—an expression of “complete streets” that acknowledges the importance of pedestrians and bicyclists. The mature street trees provide a green lushness along Ramona Boulevard and complement the scenic vistas of the snow capped San Gabriel Mountains on the northern horizon.

The nearly 38,000 residents within the one mile radius of the Baldwin Park Civic Center are primarily young Latino families with a robust median household income of more than \$52,000. This serves the revitalizing downtown well, providing the density and purchasing power necessary for retail success and office development. The stable single and multi-family residences in the vicinity of the Civic Center provide the scale of ridership that makes the Metrolink Station a success as well as generate the demand for retail and government services that the improvements in the Civic Center provide. The City of Baldwin Park is a leader in the movement to revitalize downtown and is well positioned to facilitate development in the Civic Center through its ownership of key parcels.

Weaknesses

The City of Baldwin Park adopted its General Plan in 2002 with an express goal of revitalizing the downtown and improving the pedestrian environment. To reach this goal the land use map includes a mixed use category to facilitate complementary higher density housing and local serving retail in the immediate area surrounding the Civic Center. However, to meet this goal, the Zoning Code must be brought into consistency with the General Plan—a mixed use zone must be prepared to fully implement the mixed use plan category.

While the new parking structure in the Civic Center will provide new parking opportunities, its location sandwiched between City Hall and behind the buildings facing Ramona Boulevard, make it somewhat inaccessible due to lack of easy recognizable ingress and egress points by the automobile-using public. Also, the



Existing community assets surrounding the study area.



Vanessa Delgado, Christine Aure & Judith Taylor review market data in developing SWOT analysis.

multiuser intent of the parking structure as well as the ambiguity of how much the parking structure will serve the ridership of the regionally connecting Metrolink service versus the local connecting bus transit service along Ramona may cause use conflicts that will not ultimately support increased transit use and pedestrian activity.

The existing parking standards of the Zoning Code are very heavily weighted towards automobile dependency. The existing parking standards are not conducive to shaping an environment that draws people out of their cars and encourages walking. The intent of the General Plan is transit-oriented development in the vicinity of the Civic Center and relaxing parking requirements in mixed use areas will allow for creative and dynamic housing and retail development that places more emphasis on walking and biking for personal mobility.

Central to creating a pedestrian-friendly Civic Center is ensuring safety and accessibility for the walking public—these are particularly difficult issues that Ramona Boulevard presents. Ramona Boulevard is a very wide thoroughfare geared towards swift and steady east-west automobile movement without any options for pedestrian crossing aside from major intersections such as at Maine Avenue—even there pedestrians are pressured to cross the street quickly with “Don’t Walk” signals flashing almost as soon as someone sets foot off the curb. The lack of direct, safe pedestrian accessibility from the Metrolink Station north through the Civic Center across Ramona Boulevard to the Park Plaza on Maine shopping center severely limits the potential for activating a robust walkable link between amenities on either side of the boulevard.

The City of Baldwin Park is in a fortuitous position to have ownership of a number of parcels in the Civic Center; however, a significantly large parcel adjacent to the new parking structure is in private ownership by the telecommunications company Verizon, which is not in position to relinquish ownership. The large building that Verizon owns is nondescript without any interesting visual features for passersby. It is effectively an oversized telecommunications switching and operations facility that is out of character with the intent of the General Plan vision for the Civic Center. This building limits the continuity of the pedestrian experience and the retail expectations along the perimeter of the Civic Center facing Ramona Boulevard.

Opportunities

The parking spaces that front the buildings of the Civic Center along Ramona Boulevard are ripe for creative repurposing. The parking spaces are a remnant of an earlier time in the history of Baldwin Park when rail transit was also a viable, relied upon transportation mode. The spaces were once the alignment for the Pacific Electric Red Car system, which connected communities throughout southern California prior to World War II via a private rail system. As times changed, so did the City and the alignment was reconfigured as parking spaces. The 21st century recognition that reliance on personal transportation modes other than automobiles opens up new ideas for using space once committed only to uses of the four wheel kind.

By rethinking the off street parking in front of the Civic Center along Ramona Boulevard, the available land could be recaptured for retail development and pedestrian amenities. The Civic Center could in effect be moved closer to Ramona Boulevard, making it more visible and connecting it more closely with the Park Plaza on Maine shopping center. Any lost parking opportunities would be captured in the new parking structure, which in turn would function to centralize and guide pedestrians through the Civic Center linkage between the Metrolink Station and the Park Plaza on Maine shopping center.

Development of the pedestrian linkage through the Civic Center would complement the emergence of a lifestyle oriented center in Baldwin Park. It would encompass established and newly developed “mom and pop” retail establishments catering to personal services such as exercise and yoga and local cultural amenities as well as regionally recognized gourmet coffee purveyors and sit down restaurants.

The pedestrian linkage from the Metrolink Station through the Civic Center could be scalable (i.e. ready for improvements as funds and work plans come on line). Food carts and pop up coffee shops or other retail kiosks could be strategically placed at the entrance of the Civic Center parking structure. The linkage could be



Parking spaces that front along Ramona Boulevard are ripe for creative repurposing.

landscaped as necessary to improve its visual appeal as well as contribute to shade and cooling strategies for pedestrians. The linkage could also be configured to embrace the intersection of Ramona Boulevard and Maine Avenue to provide a wayfinding connection to the neighborhood serving retail in the vicinity of the intersection and further west to Morgan Park.

The existing park and ride lot between Bogart Avenue and Downing Avenue that serves the Metrolink Station is expansive and will be made accessible to the Civic Center with the new pedestrian bridge. It provides a sound opportunity to be reconfigured with housing, while still retaining the existing parking spaces. The park and ride lot is owned by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and a joint development agreement could be initiated with the City of Baldwin Park to facilitate suitable housing development that could include workforce housing. Housing in the park and ride lot could be configured to take advantage of the impressive views of the San Gabriel Mountains. Development in the park and ride lot would be a catalyst for further transit-oriented style residential or mixed use development in the Civic Center area. Furthermore, development of higher density housing in the park and ride lot would serve as a transition from the mixed use identified in the General Plan south of Downing Avenue and facilitate pedestrian movement toward the Civic Center through wayfinding to the pedestrian bridge.

Threats

Successful retail is crucial to a walkable, revitalized downtown. As the heart of the revitalizing downtown Baldwin Park, development of the Civic Center must consider and nurture those businesses which are already thriving while simultaneously planning for and encouraging those businesses that will contribute to a lifestyle oriented environment. This delicate balance, if not carefully implemented, may not be achieved.

The City of Baldwin Park is business friendly, but must assure that established and well performing businesses are not squeezed out by a land use and development program keyed towards transit-oriented development and lifestyle amenities. Careful attention must be paid to coordinating the services and products of new retail and commercial businesses with those of existing successful businesses to ensure that they complement each other and establish a varied and robust business environment and dynamic streetscape and shopping experience.



The edges diagram highlights the continuity around the study area with solid lines and impediments to connectivity with the zigzag lines

Pedestrian safety is the bedrock requirement for vibrant transit-oriented development and a fully accessible Civic Center. The City has taken steps to improve the pedestrian environment at the intersection of Ramona Boulevard and Maine Avenue, however, the focus on automobile movement, albeit necessary, is still privileged as evidenced by the short duration walk signal that does not have a countdown timer. With no mid block controlled pedestrian crossings along Ramona Boulevard, those choosing—though unwisely—to cross the wide thoroughfare for direct access to services are in imminent danger.

Pedestrian safety is of particular concern at both entrances to the Metrolink park and ride lot. The pedestrian entrance at the east end of the park and ride lot at the intersection of Ramona Boulevard and Downing Avenue is very confusing and quite dangerous. The rail alignment is perpendicular to Ramona Boulevard and offers no clear wayfinding for safe pedestrian passage across Ramona Boulevard. The entrance at the west end of the park and ride lot which fronts Pacific Avenue is not as confusing, however there is not a true sense of pedestrian safety when walking across the track. While there is pedestrian crosswalk striping at both entrances of the park and ride lot, there are few significant sidewalk improvements, particularly at the east end, or the latest pedestrian signage and gate technology advocated by Metrolink in its current design guidelines.

A pedestrian-friendly Civic Center requires a policy commitment to shift towards a multimodal approach that incentivizes walkability and the concentration of services and amenities around a distinctive node. The current parking standard of the Zoning Code requires too much parking (if fully built-out), limiting the cities goal to create a pedestrian friendly core. Within the Civic Center and immediately surrounding community reduction of parking requirements could open up additional square footage for the type of housing and retail development conducive to a pedestrian-friendly environment. Additionally, a strategy must be developed to lure reluctant commercial enterprises to sell property or repurpose buildings to fit the vision of the Civic Center.

Recommendations

Vision

Revitalize Baldwin Park's Civic Center District by creating a main street environment through enhanced pedestrian linkages between the community's primary assets and activity nodes.

Vision Strategies

To realize the vision, the panel suggests:

- I. Leveraging existing assets and improving linkages
- II. Site improvements and development opportunities
- III. Future housing

Vision Strategy I: Leveraging Existing Assets & Improving Linkages

Leveraging Existing Assets: The Baldwin Park Transit Center is surrounded by a variety of community assets that can be leveraged to promote pedestrian traffic and downtown development. These include the Civic Center and Arts and Recreation Center sites directly to the north, as well as the underutilized retail space adjacent to the centers on the south side of Ramona Boulevard, both east and west of Pacific Avenue. Slightly further away, to the northwest lies the Morgan Park and Community Center, an active community destination, visited by about 1,000 community members per day. Storefront retail wraps the park and community center around the northwest corner of Ramona and Maine Ave. The Park Plaza retail center sits at the northeast corner of Ramona and Maine. The center is conventionally designed and automobile oriented, with an abundance of surface parking as its main visual feature. Residential neighborhoods are located south of the Metrolink alignment, and north of the park and community center.



After an extensive data gathering phase panelists begin to deliberate over their final recommendations to the City.

Improving Linkages: The City's policy guidance for the Central Business District seeks a walkable pedestrian friendly environment. However, traveling by foot is difficult because of poor linkages between the City's downtown core assets. The area is comprised of narrow sidewalks and rough conditions, making it uncomfortable to navigate the area on foot. The Metrolink tracks are also difficult to cross. Bogart Avenue itself is devoid of character, with few on street plantings or furnishing. There is convenient parking directly adjacent to the Metrolink station, but it is provided on a fee basis. North of Ramona, there is a free park and ride lot, but due to the poor linkages and difficulties associated with crossing the track on Ramona, the lot is widely underutilized.

The width of Ramona Boulevard itself, an arterial highway with a 100' right of way, coupled with at least a 50' setback to the storefront retail spaces north and south of it; create a significant, long crossing distance for pedestrians. Furthermore, pedestrian appeal is limited by parking areas running parallel to Ramona Boulevard. This lot isolates the buildings from Ramona's street edge, while also creating an auto oriented environment for pedestrians to negotiate.

As a result of these factors, the City must focus on improving linkages within the area; improving the areas walkability and curb appeal will ensure that pedestrians are drawn off the transit center's pedestrian bridge over Bogart Avenue into the Civic Center and Central Business District. In order to breakdown the physical barriers and impediments to pedestrian circulation in the transit center's area, the following design ideas should be considered:

- a. **Ramona Boulevard/Maine Ave/Pacific Ave:** Provide highly visible crosswalk paving, add countdown pedestrian signals and extend the pedestrian crossing or "green" time on Ramona Boulevard.
- b. **Ramona Boulevard Frontage Roads (both north and south):** Consider removing a lane of angled parking adjacent to the buildings and replacing it with a wider pedestrian promenade with furniture, special paving, planting and lighting. Should it be desirable to test this concept prior to implementing it permanently, temporary planting in pots could be used as barriers to auto access, furnishings could be placed, and the asphalt surface painted, in order to extend the public realm and provide gathering areas and outdoor dining potential. (See San

Francisco's Pavement to Parks program as a model for this concept: <http://sfpavementtoparks.sfplanning.org/>)

- c. Rail crossings:** Work with Metrolink to implement state of the art pedestrian safety features, such as modern crossing signals and timers. In addition, the City should improve the sidewalks and track surface in those crossing areas.
- d. Civic Center Long – Term Recommendations:** Ensure that any redevelopment on the site, including implementation of the new parking garage creates a mid block pedestrian paseo through the site. Paseos add to the pedestrian interest and overall architectural quality of the area by providing outdoor space for restaurants and cafes. Paseos are particularly beneficial for narrow parcels, such as the proposed walkthrough linking to the Metrolink station to Ramona Boulevard, as it is difficult to arrange this area into a fully functional retail space or park.
- e. Civic Center – Interim Solutions:** In order to improve the pedestrian friendliness of the site in the interim, consider periodically programming the frontage roads with Farmer's Markets and other community festivals. Also existing fencing around City owned parcels on the site (e.g. the unused area behind the building at the

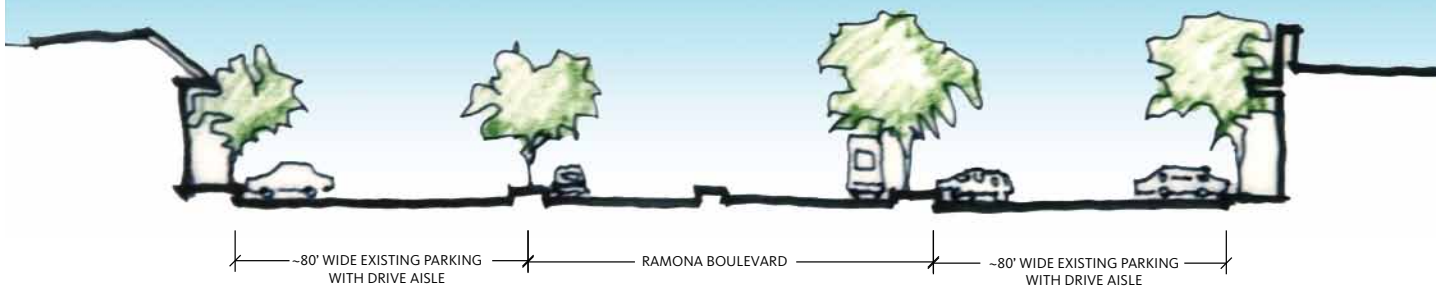
southeast corner of Ramona and Pacific) could be improved or the fencing set back and landscaping installed behind the sidewalk. Finally, though there appears to be a citywide wayfinding signage program, which is evident on Ramona Boulevard itself, an additional layer of signage could be provided on and near the Civic Center site itself. It is unclear to drivers where to access the site and its parking. Finally, taking advantage of the bicycle facility provided on Ramona Boulevard, bicycle racks should be installed both on the Civic Center site and adjacent to the Metrolink station if they are missing.

Vision Strategy 2: Site Improvements & Development Opportunities

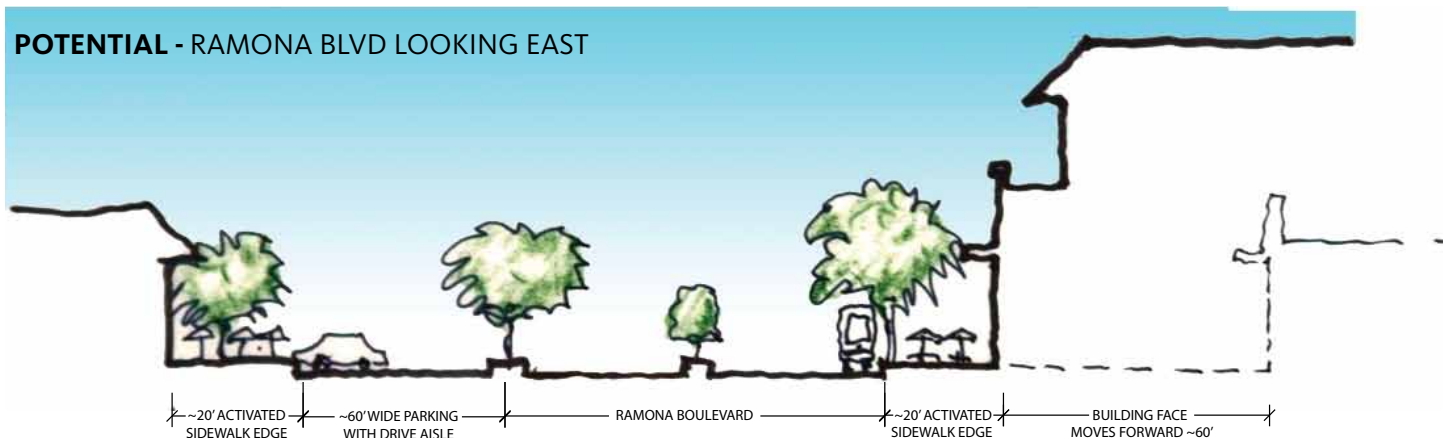
Site Improvements: As noted in Vision Strategy 1, the Civic Center and Central Business District offer ample opportunities for the City to make immediate improvements. Many of the solutions are cost effective and encourage utilization of the area. Temporary programming and improvement ideas include plantings, pots, furnishing, art and a farmer's market.

Development Opportunities: In addition to immediate site improvements, there are tremendous opportunities to create a pedestrian friendly core through future developments. The goal of future developments should include the desire to create a stronger downtown presence and better environment for users, arriving by car, train or foot. Development ideas should also focus on creating a strong connection between the Metrolink station and the surrounding area, as the station is expected to bring a lot of pedestrian traffic to the area. To achieve these goals, the City should focus on a few simple, but important principles, including:

EXISTING - RAMONA BLVD LOOKING EAST



POTENTIAL - RAMONA BLVD LOOKING EAST



Existing and proposed sections for Ramona Boulevard looking east.

- a. Mark the corner and activate the corner of Ramona and Pacific. Develop a mixed use project on the corner of Ramona and Pacific Avenue. The project would create a strong public corner, activated by a vibrant retail use like a coffee house and a family sit-down restaurant. The restaurant/retail base would occupy some of the existing parking lot and create a more appropriate plaza/sidewalk outdoor dining space along Ramona. Housing or commercial space would be created on the upper 2-3 floors of this development, while the rear of the site would accommodate parking and access to the housing/office above.
- b. The mixed use development along Ramona would occupy much of the underutilized space of the existing parking lot. The height of the project should be about three-to-four stories, creating a strong “marker” at this key corner that would announce to visitors that they are entering Baldwin Park’s downtown core.
- c. Develop a strip of retail north of the Verizon switch station. Develop the underutilized parking lot along Ramona and create a more active environment. Infill the parking lot and leave a wide sidewalk zone, adequate for outdoor dining (approx. 20 feet). Work with Verizon to build-out the existing building façade with appropriate commercial space which is currently dead space as there is no retail access, windows or store frontage.
- d. Connect the corner of Ramona and Pacific to the Metrolink Station. Create a strong and activated pedestrian Paseo that runs along the new parking structure, with strong visual orientation devices and some small retail to activate the space in the interior of the block. Significant lighting, wayfinding and landscape will make the paseo feel like an urban streetscape.

- e. Expand the parking structure. Remove City Hall’s storage area, and utilize the space to expand the proposed parking structure. This will offset any loss of parking spaces on the narrow lots running alongside Ramona Boulevard.

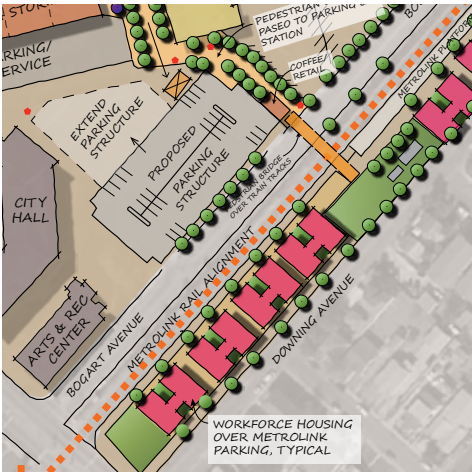
Vision Strategy 3: Housing Opportunity

Housing communities located adjacent or over public rail stations are common throughout the nation. The introduction of housing directly adjacent to the Metrolink station will provide immediate and easy access to trains serving employment centers throughout the Los Angeles and San Bernardino county areas. Housing will also increase pedestrian activity in the area, particularly at night and on weekends, as local residents utilize shops, restaurants and other retail centers.

The concept architectural study in this report envisions a community of two-story townhomes located over two levels of parking, with elevated parking reserved for the townhome residents and surface level parking reserved for general ridership on Metrolink. This profile transforms the otherwise underutilized surface parking lot into an engaging residential massing that complements the urban architectural rhythm throughout the City’s Civic Center site.

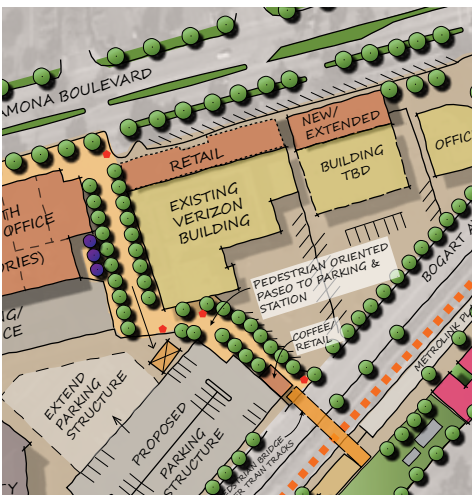


BALDWIN PARK TOD CONCEPT PLAN



The proposed development envisions a community of two-story townhomes located over two levels of parking.

The housing project over the Metrolink station would maintain existing parking, as the site would be decked-over, creating one level of residential parking, and 2-levels of housing. Residential parking could be secured, and amenities such as pools and fitness could exist above the parking deck, creating a safe, inviting place in this downtown setting in the heart of the community. The total height of the new project would be about 3-to-4 stories total (see section) which blend in well with the adjacent single family community and will take advantage of the complementary uses in the area as well as the stunning views of the nearby mountains. Prospective tenants for the development include locale residents or families. The site could also be developed in conjunction with Cal State Los Angeles, creating a workforce and student housing development.



The proposed design focuses on creating a strong connection between the Metrolink station and the surrounding area.

Implementation A Road Map for Success

Introduction - Phasing Strategy

Introduction

The TAP panel has created a two phase process to implement its vision for Baldwin Park's Central Business District and Civic Center area. The first phase is centered on creating a framework for improvement through zoning, an environmental impact report and the site's specific plan. These actions will expedite the development process and create incentives for developers to carry out the City's vision. The second phase is related to the actual development and implementation of the TAP panel's vision for the Civic Center and the Central Business District.

Phase I

Years 0 - 3

Update zoning ordinance to include a mixed used zone: A key step toward facilitating new development in the district is the update of the zoning ordinance. State law requires consistency between the zoning ordinance and the general plan. Currently, the City is out of compliance with this requirement. Having this inconsistency creates an impediment in development as applicants have to go through a more complicated process in order to obtain necessary entitlements. By updating the zoning ordinance the City will create a clear path toward its desired use of properties within the district.

Create a specific plan overlay for the district: Similarly, creation of a specific plan for the district is a mechanism that would give the City the ability to set forth in greater detail land uses and design guidelines. The specific plan would allow the City to be more thoughtful about the unique nature of the district and create regulations that make sense for this district. Another advantage of creating a specific plan is that the City can build in flexibility for future goals as the plan can contain design guidelines that give potential developers a feel for what the spirit of the district is but also provide flexibility to create a project that is financially feasible. Flexibility components could include the ability to shift density within a site, to average out floor area and implement creative parking solutions given the proximity to public transit.

Complete EIR: In order to expedite development within the district, the City should consider commencing the process for completing an environmental impact report (EIR) now. The EIR would likely be required in connection with the updating of the zoning ordinance and it is a lengthy process. The advantage of having a recent EIR in place is that potential developers could rely on that EIR for completion of their projects. This would result in a significant time saving that is very valuable in the industry.

Create incentives for developers: As discussed earlier, the City should, prior to the issuance of a Request for Proposals (RFP), prepare a fully approved and adopted:

- Mixed Use District Master Plan featuring development standards consistent with the City's transit-oriented vision for the site
- Zoning ordinance which conforms with the General Plan
- EIR which carefully considers all impacts of the master plan and zoning ordinance

A comprehensive Mixed Use District Master Plan with explicit development standards and an approved EIR will assist in promoting the future development of new projects. Under this plan, developers benefit from clear design guidelines and avoid costly entitlement risk related to specific project approvals.

In addition to conducting an EIR, the City should look to expedite the preliminary design review process and create a process to fast track a developer's formal entitlement application. This approach will maximize the efficiency of the entitlement process, minimize the developer's perceived risks, and enhance the value which the developer assigns to the property they will purchase from the City.



Melani Smith presents the panel's recommendations to City officials.

Create a Business Improvement District: A business improvement district (BID) is a powerful public-private partnership tool that allows for a tax or fee assessment on property within a defined area. The Baldwin Park Civic Center would benefit immensely from establishing a BID. Revenues from the property assessment would be directed back to the Civic Center to finance a wide range of services such as construction and maintenance of streetscapes and pedestrian linkages; providing security; economic development; marketing the area; and special events.

Through the services provided by the Civic Center BID, community and stakeholder support for the area will build. The Civic Center identity will be heightened through a BID developed program of activities such as posting banners identifying the area; wayfinding strategies to ease access through pedestrian linkages to retail establishments, the parking structure and pedestrian bridge, and the Metrolink Station; and a Farmers Market. Each of these activities and similar ones that may be developed will help to build the identity of the Civic Center by stimulating cultural and community activity in the area and further contribute to its economic development.

Phase II

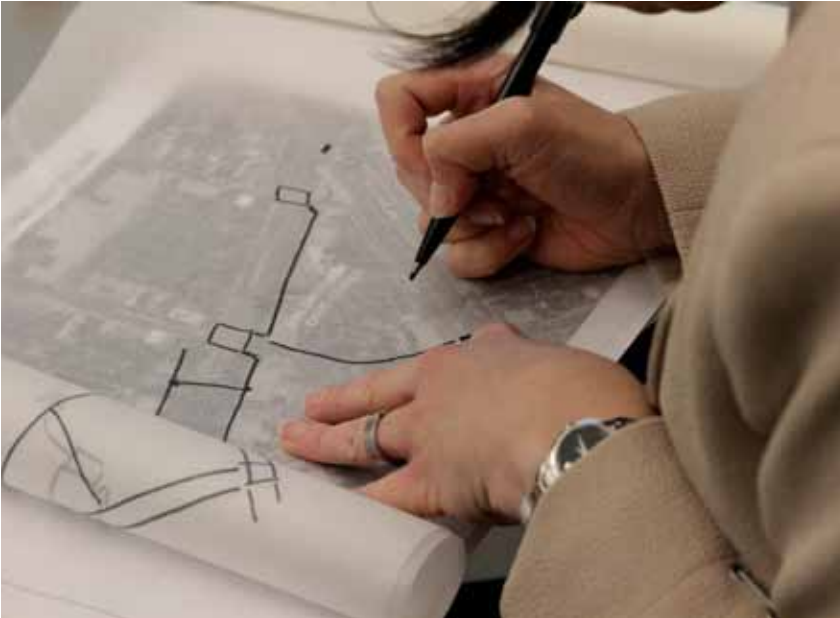
Years 3+

- Creation of mixed use project at the corner of Maine and Ramona
- Development of the Metrolink Station parking lot with housing
- Expansion of commercial uses in front of the Verizon building
- Expansion of the parking structure and demolition of storage facility



The panel's preliminary sketch of the recommendations for the Baldwin Park Civic Center Station.

Funding Sources



Funding Sources

There are numerous funding sources available to carry out the redevelopment of Baldwin Park's Central Business District and Civic Center. While current economic and political dynamics have put local, state and federal funding sources at risk, options remain, including:

- Develop Mixed Use District Master Plan and a zoning ordinance that is consistent with the General Plan Fee
- Sell City owned parcels located in the subject development site to private builder developers for fair market value in order to offset the costs of assembling privately owned parcels within the subject property.
- Utilize conventional debt and equity
- Utilize annual CDBG allocations to help fund public improvements, and utilize HUD's Section 108 Program to borrow against future allocations of CDBG funding
- Establish assessment districts to fund the cost of infrastructure development
- Apply to the Metro Call for Projects to fund transportation related improvements
- Create affordable housing within some of the mixed-use developments, and utilize public-private applications to third-party sources of funding such as the State of California's Multifamily Housing Program, State and Federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits, Los Angeles County's Housing Innovation Fund and City of Industry Program Funds
- Leverage income streams generated from onsite parking facilities, including a possible surcharge fee
- Establish a business improvement district to support the ongoing vitality of the development and surrounding area

Taken together, a blend of a carefully selected array of these and other sources promise financial viability for future redevelopment activities.

Acknowledgements

The TAP wishes to thank the City of Baldwin Park including Vijay Singhal, Chief Executive Officer; Marc Castagnola, Community Development Manager; Amy Harbin, City Planner; Melecio Picazo, Senior Redevelopment Projects Coordinator; and William Galvez, Public Works Director, for their commitment and support for the preparation of this report. The TAP is also thankful for the participation of the following stakeholders and community members:

- Maryam Mojabi, P.E., Rail Crossings Engineer, Metrolink
- Thurman Hodges, Manager, LACMTA
- Brad Pearl, Vice President, NewMark Merrill
- Brian Dickinson, General Manager, Valley County Water District
- Bryan Urias, Vice President, Upper SGV Municipal Water District
- Lorraine O'Brien, Vice President, BP Historical Society

Acknowledgements



Brian Dickinson of the Valley County Water District shares his insights regarding the site context with the panel.

Panel Members

Panel Chair

Vanessa Delgado

Director of Development, Primestor

Ms. Delgado is responsible for managing Primestor West Coast projects through the development cycle, community and government relations and marketing. Prior to joining Primestor, Ms. Delgado consulted for a number of public and private clients, including the Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Los Angeles. She also worked in redevelopment for the cities of Anaheim, Downey and Pico Rivera. Ms. Delgado received her undergraduate education at Stanford University and completed a masters of Public Administration at the University of Southern California (USC). She received additional training in Real Estate Finance and Development at UCLA and through the Ross Program at the Lusk Center at USC. Ms. Delgado currently serves as a Commissioner for the Small Craft Harbor (Marina del Rey) representing Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Member Gloria Molina and is a Board Member for Mercy Housing, California.

Panel Members

John Adams

Project Principal, Gensler

Mr. Adams is a principal and leader of Gensler's Los Angeles design practice, where he has spent the last 17 years as an architect, real estate strategist and planner. This experience has instilled in him a comprehensive understanding of large-scale urban mixed-use, redevelopment, corporate campus and entertainment projects. His passion is leading large teams on complex projects that transform urban environments John leverages his knowledge of urban design, construction and real estate development to help clients and communities. John's recent project experience includes his role as design manager for the 54-story, 2,000,000-square-foot Hotel & Residences Tower at L.A. LIVE, and the 800,000-square-foot 2000 Avenue of the Stars office building, both in Los Angeles.



Vanessa Delgado presents the panel's recommendations to city and elected officials.

Loren Bloch

President, Community Dynamics

Mr. Bloch oversees the company's strategic planning and operations. Having earned his Bachelor of Arts degree from Stanford University in 1976, Loren entered the building industry as a laborer and carpenter's apprentice. He worked his way up through the ranks of construction management at Watt Industries for three years where he helped manage building and sales for a major housing tract in Antelope Valley. Loren subsequently directed the construction of infill apartment buildings and low rise commercial centers for a Los Angeles based developer until 1986, when he founded Community Dynamics. As the Company's President, Loren has presided over the development, build-out and sale of homes valued at nearly \$500 million. And in public-private partnerships with progressive cities, financial institutions and inspired design teams, he has pioneered some of the most innovative and uplifting affordable homeownership communities in the United States. A native of Los Angeles, Loren resides in Santa Monica with his wife Ping, who runs a non-profit organization focused on the interplay of healing and the arts. Their daughter Lian is a graduate student at UC Berkeley. And their son Jake is a freshman at USC's Thornton School of Music. Loren currently serves as a member of the Board of Directors for the Boys & Girls Club of Santa Monica.

Claudia Gutierrez

Associate, Sheppard Mullin Richter and Hampton, LLP

Ms. Gutierrez is an associate in the Real Estate, Land Use and Natural Resources practice group in the firm's Los Angeles office. Ms. Gutierrez's legal practice spans over multiple areas of real estate including purchase and sale, land use and development. Claudia has extensive experience advising clients on complex, cutting-edge real estate transactions. Within real estate, Claudia has extensive experience in negotiating complex Purchase and Sale Agreements, Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions Agreements and Reciprocal Easement Agreements for commercial, mixed use and affordable housing projects. Claudia's development practice focuses on public/private partnerships, multi-use projects, redevelopment, relocation, prevailing wage, transit-oriented projects and public financing. In connection with such projects, Claudia has successfully negotiated multiple Disposition and Development Agreements and Owner Participation Agreements with redevelopment agencies in multiple jurisdictions. In addition, Claudia has substantial experience advising clients on the California Community Redevelopment Law, Subdivision Map Act, the California Environmental Quality Act and the Polanco Redevelopment Act. Claudia also has significant experience in obtaining and negotiating land use entitlements for complex projects throughout California. She works closely with clients and consultants on all aspects of land use due diligence and entitlement, which includes analysis of local zoning ordinances, general plans, redevelopment agency plans and related land use restrictions. In addition, Claudia participated in the Southern California Leadership Network's Leadership L.A. Class of 2009 Fellows program, in partnership with the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce.

Mark Herwick**Supervising Regional Planner, County of Los Angeles
Department of Regional Planning**

Mr. Herwick managed the development and preparation of the 2008 County of Los Angeles Draft General Plan and is now revising the County's Transit-Oriented Districts Ordinance. In 2010 he coordinated with ULI Los Angeles as it launched its inaugural TOD TAP Program, which yielded TAP Reports for two County Transit-Oriented Districts—the Slauson Blue Line Station and the Vermont Green Line Station. Mr. Herwick manages diverse advance planning projects that range from oversight of a community prepared countywide oak woodlands management plan to the comprehensive revision of the County's Significant Ecological Areas Program and the preparation of ordinances to implement General Plan policy.

Mr. Herwick is a Board Member of the Los Angeles Region Planning History Group at the Huntington Library. He completed his doctoral work in the School of Urban Studies and Planning at Portland State University and during that time was Book Review Manager for the Journal of the American Planning Association.

Melani Smith**President, Principal - Planning and Urban Design, Melendrez**

Ms. Smith brings to her work at Meléndrez communication, management, leadership, and facilitation skills born out of a diverse background in urban planning, marketing and public relations. As Principal and Director of Meléndrez's planning practice, Smith works at regional, community and site-specific scales, from engaging project stakeholders, visioning, and creating conceptual and master plans and design guidelines, through to grant writing for funding and implementation. Sensitivity to long term livability and sustainability of the urban environment is a cornerstone of Meléndrez philosophy. Key issues, including walkability and bicycle friendliness, placemaking, and resource and energy conservation are addressed as a core part of each planning assignment the firm undertakes. Melani is President of the Downtown Breakfast Club in Los Angeles, was recently appointed to Mayor Villaraigosa's Design Advisory Panel in the City of Los Angeles, and in 2007 she was appointed to the City of Long Beach's Planning commission.

Panel Members



TAP Panelists (left to right) - Judith Taylor, ProForma Advisors; Claudia Gutierrez; Sheppard Mullin Richter and Hampton, LLP; Panel Chair Vanessa Delgado, Primestor; Mark Herwick, AICP, County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning; Robert Andrews, TAP Report Analyst; Loren Bloch, Community Dynamics; Melani Smith, Melendrez; John Adams, Gensler.

Judith Taylor**Principal, Pro Forma Advisors LLC**

With 10 years in the fields of land use consulting, redevelopment and community development, Judith Taylor has broad experience providing land use economic analysis to inform community plans, specific plans, revitalization strategies and the entitle process. Formerly with Economics Research Associates and the Economics practice at AECOM, Ms. Taylor's specialties include fiscal impact analysis; economic impact analysis; market analysis of retail office, residential and industrial uses; and economic strategy and funding strategy development. Ms. Taylor has a breadth of experience providing customized analysis for her clients and has worked with public agencies such as the City of San Diego, the City of Los Angeles Redevelopment Agency and the City of Corona. Additionally, she has worked with private developers, such as Sudberry Properties, Pardee Homes and Hines. Judith is also an industry expert in economic impact analysis and led the evaluation and guidance on several high profile sports and entertainment venues and events, such as the proposed City of Industry Stadium, Cirque du Soleil and Disney theme parks. Judith Taylor received a Master in Public Policy and Urban Planning from Harvard University's School of Government in 2002 and received her B.A. in Economics from Stanford University. Judith is a member of ULI and APA.

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Established in 1936, ULI is a nonprofit education and research institute with over 40,000 members across the globe —1,500 here in the Greater Los Angeles area. As a nonpartisan organization, the Institute has long been recognized as one of America's most respected and widely quoted sources of objective information on urban planning, growth, and development.

The membership of ULI Los Angeles represents the entire spectrum of land use and real estate development disciplines. They include developers, builders, investors, architects, public officials, planners, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, lenders, academics and students. Members of the Urban Land Institute in the counties of Los Angeles, Ventura, Kern, San Luis Obispo, and Santa Barbara are automatically members of ULI Los Angeles.