

Jordan Downs 103rd Street Blue Line Station Transit Oriented Development

Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) Program



October 2010

A ULI Advisory Services Technical Assistance Panel Report



About the ULI Los Angeles Technical Assistance Panel

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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Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA)

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Executive Summary

The Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) has embarked on an impressive journey to redevelop the Jordan Downs Public Housing site in Watts to create a vibrant urban village to transform the lives of its residents. A critical component of a thriving urban community is strong transportation connections. To enhance public transportation linkages, especially to the nearby Kenneth Hahn/103rd Street Metro Blue Line Station (103rd Street Station), the Housing Authority engaged the Urban Land Institute Los Angeles District Council (ULI Los Angeles) to provide strategic directions and recommendations.

ULI Los Angeles assembled industry experts in a Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) beginning on April 22, 2010, utilizing experts in architecture, planning, development, and market economics to determine the main challenges and opportunities, offer solutions, and develop a roadmap for success for Jordan Downs and the 103rd Street Blue Line Station.

The TAP evaluated the area within a half mile radius around the 103rd Street Station, encompassing the Jordan Downs community and found numerous opportunities and challenges. The station connects the neighborhood to major job centers, academic institutions, and regional destinations such as downtown Los Angeles to the north



and downtown Long Beach to the south, and the TAP found that HACLA's planning process has engaged community stakeholders to have a vested interest in the area's improvement. However, the perceived lack of safety to the station, lack of financial resources, and leadership turnover are tremendous challenges for the Station's success and the community's revitalization around it.

The TAP members believe improving the transit station and the pedestrian connections, in addition to key opportunities on Century Boulevard and Alameda Corridor will contribute to the Jordan Downs community's vision for a vibrant and sustainable urban village.

The TAP's vision for the enhanced Jordan Downs Station includes the following concepts:

- The Century begins in Jordan Downs
- Once in a Century Opportunity
- Re-envisioning 103rd Street/Station: Applying 21st Century principles of transit-oriented development



The Housing Authority has plans for a redevelopment of Jordan Downs and the panelists were tasked to look at this plan's relationship to the 103rd Street Blue Line

Assignment & Process

Key Issues

ULI Los Angeles assembled industry experts in a Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) to advise HACLA and the City of Los Angeles on the following key areas:

- What are the appropriate commercial development (retail/office) opportunities for the Century Boulevard right-of-way extension? Given the desired commercial development for the Century Boulevard right-of-way extension, what steps should the HACLA take to create interior-circulation for the redeveloped site based on the HACLA Master Plan?
- What specific urban design and infrastructure improvements concerning the 103rd Street Station itself should be considered to improve access and safety, thus leading to the creation of a more highly-valued community asset?
- What public and private sector improvements can be made along 103rd Street, the key street linking Jordan Downs to the 103rd Street Station? The goal here would be a seamless connection that enhances Jordan Downs' transit orientation.

- What employment opportunities exist and can be created on the property contiguous to Jordan Downs and along the Alameda Corridor? Assuming that this land comes with a low cost basis, what unique opportunities, e.g., incubators, etc., should be considered?
- Recommend next steps the HACLA should take to meet its goals for a transit oriented community and offer strategies to secure additional funding.

Considerations

An enhanced transit station and access will further HACLA's goals to create interconnectivity between the Jordan Downs site and the 103rd Street blue line metro rail, the green line, MLK Hospital, Charles Drew University, downtown, the airport, and LA Port.



The first afternoon begins with a detailed tour through Jordan Downs

TAP Process

ULI representatives met with representatives from the Department of Regional Planning 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 Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles.



Panelists embark on a site tour to familiarize themselves with the area

The TAP process is a day and a half long event. The first afternoon included a site tour of the Jordan Downs Community with HACLA representatives and interviews with key stakeholders. The second day began with continued stakeholder interviews and then proceeded with an intensive analysis on the specified issues, and present their findings to the general public.



The southwest corner of the study area is home to community garden



A primary focus of the panel was looking at pedestrian friendly linkages between Jordan Downs and the 103rd street station

TAP Panel of Experts

ULI Los Angeles representatives met with representatives from HACLA to determine the scope of the panel assignment. Members were selected with the intent of convening a robust array of professional expertise relevant to HACLA's objectives for the study and who had local working knowledge of the sub-region where the study site was located. Together their expertise represented a variety of disciplines connected with land use and real estate development, including architecture, planning, development, redevelopment and market economics. All panel members were volunteers and were not compensated for their time.



Panelists listen as HACLA Development Department Director, Larry Goins, explains the history of the site



About the Jordan Downs Community

The Jordan Downs community is centrally located in Los Angeles, sits next to the Alameda corridor, is approximately one-quarter of a mile away from the Metro Green Line station at 103rd Street, and will be reconnected to Century Boulevard leading to Los Angeles International Airport to the West and the City of South Gate to the East.

The Jordan Downs public housing development is bounded by Grape Street to the west, 97th Street to the north, Alameda to the east and 103rd Street to the south.



A map of the bus lines serving the area, including 6 Metro Bus Lines 55, 108, 110, 358, 611, and 117.



Diagram Illustrating the walk times from Jordan Downs. The 103rd Street Blue Line Station is about a 10 minute walk from Jordan Downs



The Cultural Crescent is a strength within the study area for its value as a community asset

Findings

A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis was conducted to evaluate the Jordan Downs and the 103rd Street Blue Line Station. 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. From the site visit, stakeholder interviews, and additional site research, the TAP determined the following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the Jordan Downs Station TOD study area.

Strengths

- Strong entrepreneurial spirit
- Nearby Colleges and employment centers
- Community eagerness to promote change
- Strong cultural pride & tradition
- HACLA has a strong relationship with the community
- Existing cultural assets – “Cultural Crescent”

Weaknesses

- Negative stigma associated with “Watts”
- Need for additional Latino representation
- Lack of financial resources
- Leadership turnover in regulatory entities
- Perceived lack of safety
- DWP park plaza station use is by appointment only



A weakness is that the DWP Plaza is open by appointment only



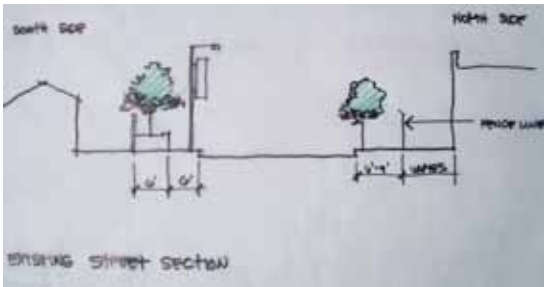
The quantity and location of available land provide opportunity

Opportunities

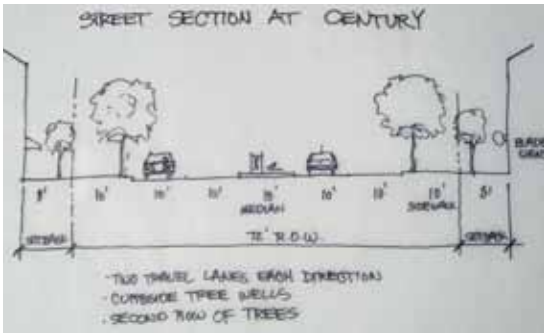
- Land availability
- Connection with transit (dash, community college, workforce centers, etc)
- Community support of the development master plan
- Educational Opportunities- broaden educational career options
- Proximity to transit
- Specific plan provides opportunity to define land use

Threats

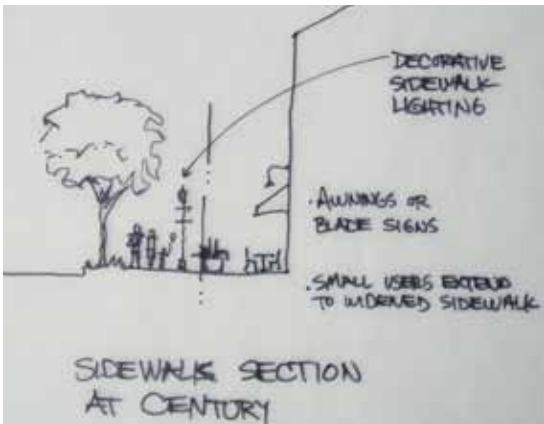
- Bureaucratic inertia
- Possibility of momentum loss
- Lack of funding and inter-agency coordination
- Leadership turnover (LAPD, CRA/LA, Planning Department, etc.)
- “Fear changes the thought process and therefore actions”



The Existing Street Section Along Century Boulevard



The panel's proposed street section at Century Boulevard



Section enlargement of the sidewalk condition along Century Boulevard

Recommendations

Vision

The TAP members believe improving the transit station and the pedestrian connections, in addition to key opportunities on Century Boulevard and Alameda Corridor will contribute to the Jordan Downs community's vision for a vibrant and sustainable urban village.

Vision Strategies

The TAP's vision for the enhanced Jordan Downs Station includes:

- I – The Century begins in Jordan Downs
- II – Once in a Century Opportunity
- III – Re-envisioning 103rd Street/Station: Applying 21st Century principles of transit-oriented development

Vision Strategy I: The Century Begins in Jordan Downs

The extension of Century Boulevard to Alameda Corridor has the potential to serve as the beginning of Century Boulevard with a main street character. The panel recommends attracting pedestrian-oriented uses including an ATM, social services, dry-cleaner, outdoor dining, and a fitness component. These neighborhood elements would allow for more eyes on the community to improve the perception of safety.

The design of Century Boulevard should provide for a strong neighborhood identity with a widened sidewalk, decorative sidewalk lighting, two rows of trees and storefront awnings.



The panel recommends highlighting Century Boulevard through the Jordan Downs redevelopment

Vision Strategy I: Implementation Steps

YEAR 1

- Establish a Streetscape Plan
- Develop a supplemental use district.

YEAR 3

- Conduct assessment and market study
- Identify neighborhood retail/community based entities
- Hire Landscape Architect and Civil Engineer;
- Gain consensus with community for design of project.

YEAR 5

- Recruit tenants for social service and retail
- Develop maintenance plan for park, median and other open spaces;
- Develop community programs for open spaces, such as farmers market, festivals and other celebrations.

Vision Strategy II: Once in a Century Opportunity

The land along the Alameda corridor is a unique opportunity to generate high-quality jobs for residents. The panel suggests light industrial along the corridor with some space for job training and employment centers.

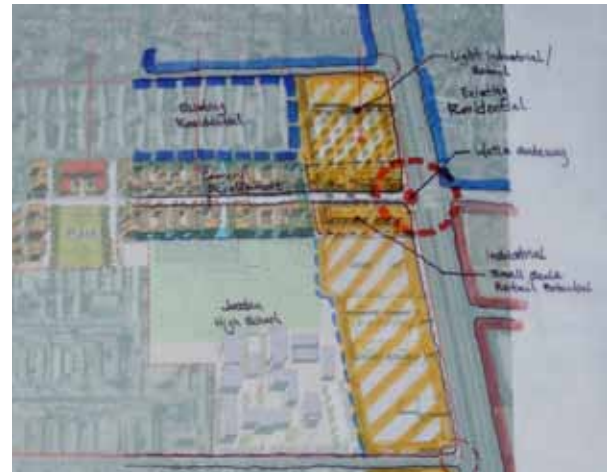
Vision Strategy II: Implementation Steps

YEAR 1

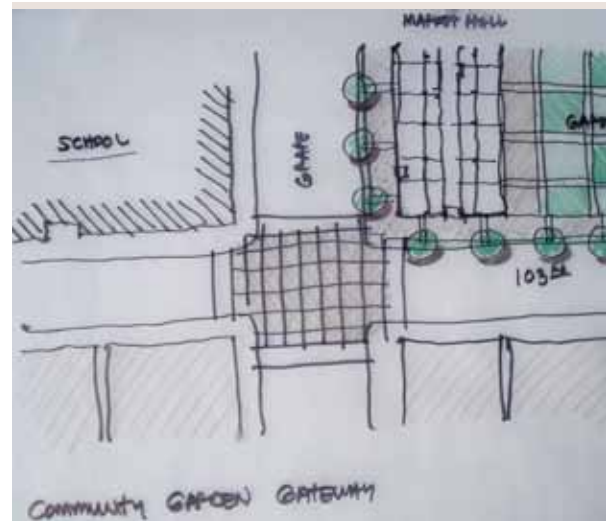
- Focus on job generation, not just numbers but quality and skill level
- Remain flexible with land use to respond to market conditions
- Coordinate land use with nearby employment training centers
- Utilize light industrial as a catalyst for incubators, job training and skill paths
- The ultimate land uses should be thought of as a career path not just a wage

YEARS 3-5

- Implement site development.



The panel suggests a gateway element at the intersection of Alameda & Century



At the western end a community garden gateway is proposed

Vision Strategy III: Re-envisioning 103rd Street/ Station - Applying 21st Century principles of transit-oriented development

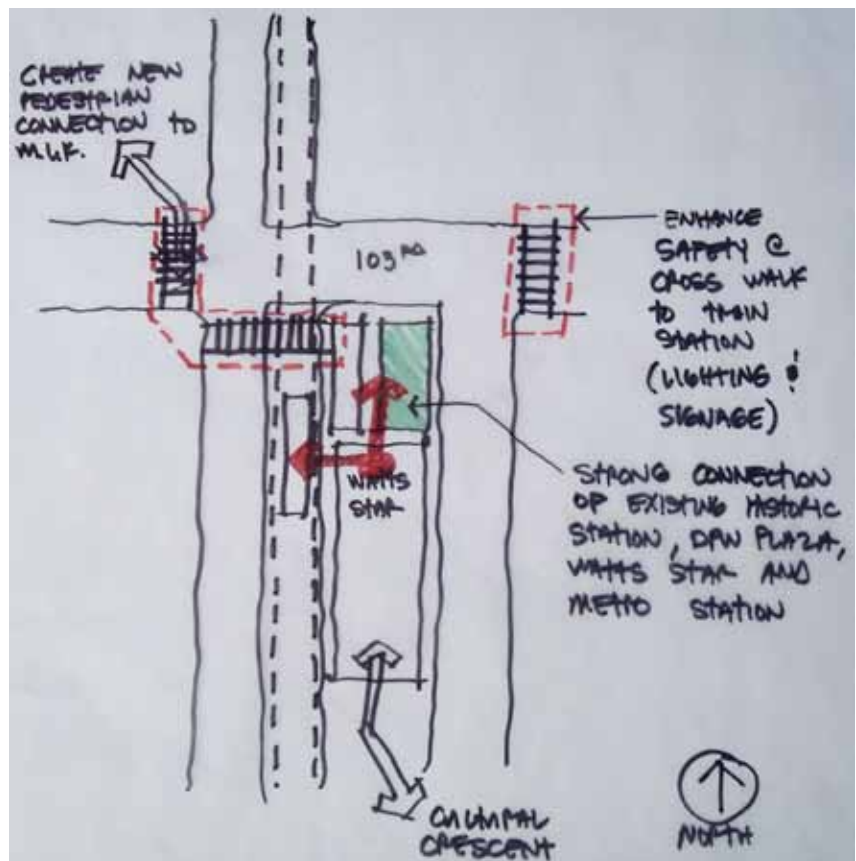
The panel proposes HACLA work with Metro and partners at the CRA/LA and the City to enhance the 103rd Street/Kenneth Hahn Station and 103rd Street as a connection between Jordan Downs and the rail station.

At the station, the panel recommends the following interventions:

- Implement physical interventions to enhance safety including surveillance in the short-term for the parking lot and pedestrian connections on 103rd Street.
- Allow for access to the CRA/LA DPW Plaza
- Aesthetic enhancements to the station platform
- Implement wayfinding signage
- Incorporate public art
- Create "sharrows" for bike lanes to the station and create a bike station at the historic train station and café

For 103rd Street, the panel recommends:

- Aesthetic enhancements
- Façade programs/signage program
- Create a gateway for Jordan Downs at the community garden at the intersection of 103rd Street and Grape.
- Banners
- Streetlights
- Bus shelters
- Wayfinding
- Enhanced crosswalks with decorative paving and flashing crossings.



Vision Strategy III: Implementation Steps

YEAR 1 - immediately

- Seek MTA Call for Projects for Bike Station; Way-finding
- MTA Capital Improvement Projects funding for station improvements and safety improvements.

YEAR 1 – near term

- Take down fence at DWP plaza
- License kiosks for coffee, muffins, etc.
- Kiosk for train tickets, etc.
- Encourage MTA to assess and implement safety protocols
- Encourage MTA to landscape areas adjacent to station

YEAR 5 – long term

- Aesthetic Enhancements (façade program/signage program, banners, streetlights (LED), bus shelters, Wayfinding, enhanced crosswalks with decorative paving and flashing pedestrian crossings)

Funding Sources



The Watts Towers are a cultural icon that the community identifies with

Funding Sources

There are numerous funding sources available to the Housing Authority and other agencies for enhancements to the transit station and the surrounding areas. Due to time constraints of the one day panel format, greater detail and focus on the funding sources was not included in the scope of the assignment. Strategies to attain and utilize these revenue streams will be highlighted in a forthcoming report from ULI Los Angeles.

Below is a short list of sources that the Housing Authority should explore:

- Metro Call for Projects
- County General Fund Capital Projects
- County CDBG Funds
- Revenue Bonds
- Certificates of Participation
- Assessment District
- New Market Tax Credits
- Other Federal Funds
- Other State Funds
- Foundation Funding
- Private Bank Financing
- County Loan Programs
- County Business Loan Program
- County Development Loan Program
- County Business Expansion Loan Program
- County Float Loan Program
- County Technology Loan Program
- County Section 108 Loan Program

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- Chris R. Jordan, Executive Director, Grant Housing & Economic Development Corporation
- Steven Chen, Senior Engineer, Bureau of Engineering
- Aaron Anderson, CBRE
- Seth Polen, Keller Williams and 915 Mateo
- Irv Taylor, Metro
- John P. Creer, Director, Facilities Services Division, Los Angeles Unified School District
- Betty Day, Watts Gang Task Force
- Jacqueline Ellis-Trice, Jordan Downs Community Member
- Keyon Johnson, Community Representative
- Barbara Stanton, Watts Star Theater
- Bill Price
- Daniel Fausto, CAC Youth Representative

Acknowledgements



TAP members appreciate insights shared by HACLA staff & community members to better understanding the issues

Panel Members

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Ms. Thrash is the Director of Green Door Advisors

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Panel Members



TAP Panelists (left to right) - Sandra Kulli, Gerard McCallum, Amy Bodek, Rob Zirkle, Daniel Gehman, Amelia Doyle, David Hitchcock, Tunua Thrash, Vanessa Delgado, Ayalushim Hammond

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.



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ULI Los Angeles, a district council of the Urban Land Institute, carries forth that mission as the preeminent real estate forum in Southern California, facilitating the open exchange of ideas, information and experiences among local, national and international industry leaders and policy makers.

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.