

LA ROSAH:

**Los Angeles Regional Open
Space and Affordable Housing**

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Abstract

LAROSAH is a collaborative of non-profit organizations and public agencies working on the impact of parks on low-income neighborhoods and strategies to prevent green gentrification. LA ROSAH was started in the spring of 2016 through the Southeast Asian Community Alliance (SEACA), which works on organizing in Chinatown and Northeast Los Angeles, as a concerned response to significant investment in the Los Angeles River. Rather than a call for halting the investment, LA ROSAH believes that greening projects paired with smart policy work, particular requirements, and intentional funding structures can leverage these investments to create healthy communities, economic opportunity, and affordable homes.

Keywords: green infrastructure, green gentrification, affordable housing, anti-displacement strategies, joint development, policy work

Vision

“The LA ROSAH vision is for multi-benefit investments that support healthy, sustainable, and equitable development for all residents in the Los Angeles region. The goal of LA ROSAH is to explore new strategies to combat the issue of green gentrification, create a new model of development that would expand low-income communities’ access to nature while also mitigating their risk for gentrification and displacement and promote awareness of these opportunities through education and public programming.”

VISION STATEMENT:

THE ICONIC

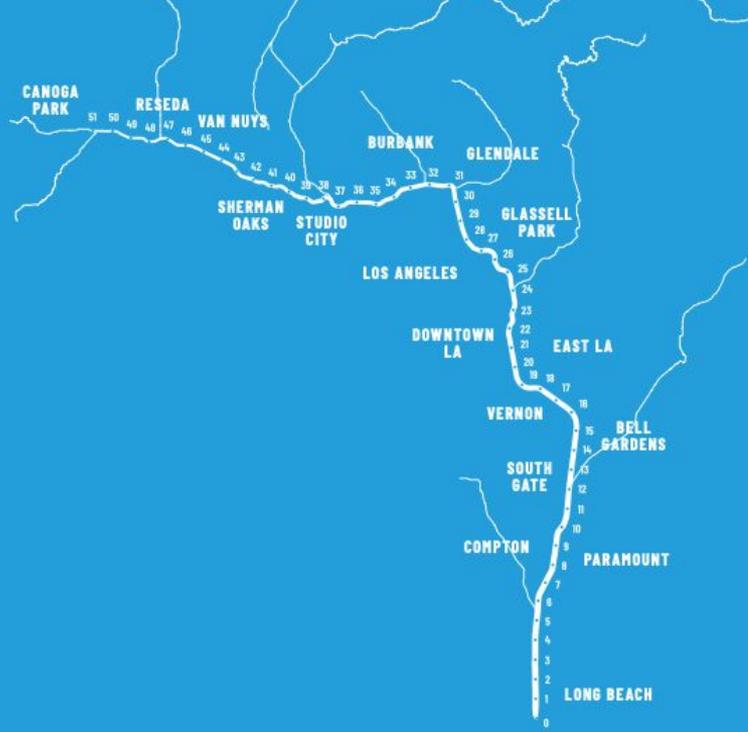
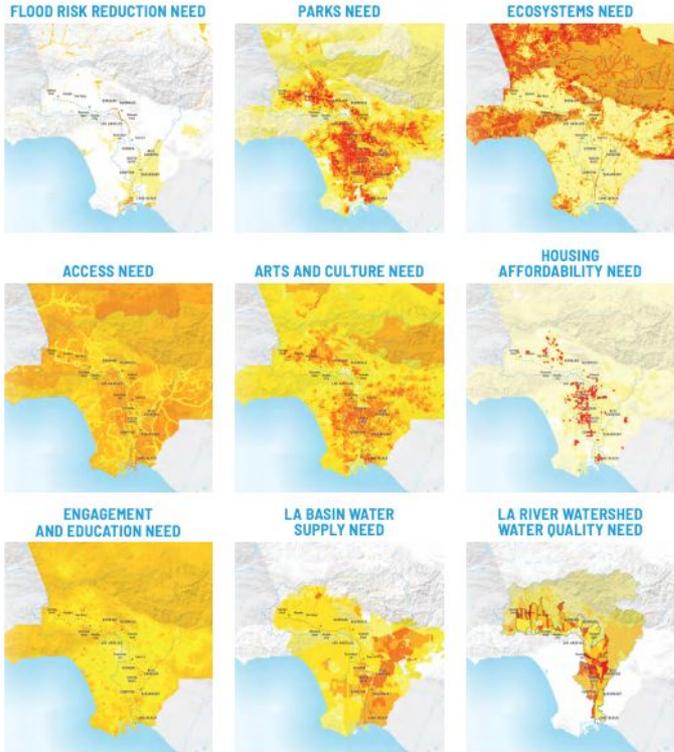


Figure 59. Combined Flood Hazards. Source: L.A. County GIS Data Portal. Flood Zones: The Flood Insurance Study (FIS) for L.A. County was issued by FEMA in 2008 and revised in 2018 & USACE. Floodplain Management Services Special Study, L.A. River Floodplain Analysis, October 2018. Mapping limited to area from Sherman Boulevard to First Street, & State of California, 2009. Tsunami Inundation Map for Emergency Planning, produced by California Emergency Management Agency, California Geological Survey, and University of Southern California - Tsunami Research Center Cal-adapt. Sea Level Rise Tool, 1.41 meters Sea Level Rise Scenario, 2018. <http://keystone.gis.cerkeslab.edu/bac-study/layer/South-coast>.

DRAFT

LA County Public Works, OLIN, Gehry Partners, Geosyntec. "LA River Master Plan, Public Draft." January 2021.

<https://pw.lacounty.gov/wmd/watershed/lar/docs/LARMP-MainVolumeEnglish-PUBLICDRAFT.pdf>, pp. 12, 91.



RIVER MILE 51: CANOGA PARK



RIVER MILE 43: SEPULVEDA BASIN



RIVER MILE 39: STUDIO CITY



RIVER MILE 29: ATWATER VILLAGE



RIVER MILE 24: ELYSIAN PARK



RIVER MILE 22: DOWNTOWN LA



RIVER MILE 12: SOUTH GATE



RIVER MILE 2: LONG BEACH



RIVER MILE 0: RIVER MOUTH

Figure 53. Images of the LA River from river mile 51 in Canoga Park (top left) to river mile 0 in Long Beach (bottom right). Source: OLIN, 2016.

Size of Community

The images on the previous two pages are taken from a public draft of the LA River Master Plan that was released in January of 2021. It helps explain the scope of the project and the range of neighborhood needs that extend beyond the implementation of parks. The project, and consequently LA ROSAH's efforts are centered on Los Angeles County, which has 88 cities in it. Over one million people live within one mile of the 51-mile long river.¹ LA ROSAH's efforts are more specifically focused on low-income communities at risk of displacement in the region.

¹ "Integrating Infrastructure and Community to Revitalize the LA River." Accessed April 19, 2021. <https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/integrating-infrastructure-and-3310805/>.

LA ROSAH:



Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority



Organization and Operation / Financing and Resources

This collaborative is made up of over a dozen organizations, which is both a strength and a challenge. Based on a meeting video from the summer of 2019, they had just finished a strategic planning process and were in the process of adapting governance, meeting structures, and leadership roles.² During that meeting they described themselves an unfunded collaborative operating informally with monthly meetings and smaller group ad hoc meetings. They were in the process of looking for funds to hire staff to help support participation between all the different partners.

² Tori Kjer, Sissy Trinh, and Natalie Zapella. "Virtual Learning Conversation: How Parks Can Be a Catalyst for Positive Change in Communities." Accessed April 19, 2021.
<https://www.sparcchub.org/2019/08/13/virtual-learning-conversation-how-parks-can-be-a-catalyst-for-positive-change-in-communities/>.

Timeline

May 2014:
federal
government
backs one
billion for the LA
river project

November 2016:
Los Angeles
County Measure
A passes

2018: Proposition
68 secures more
statewide funds

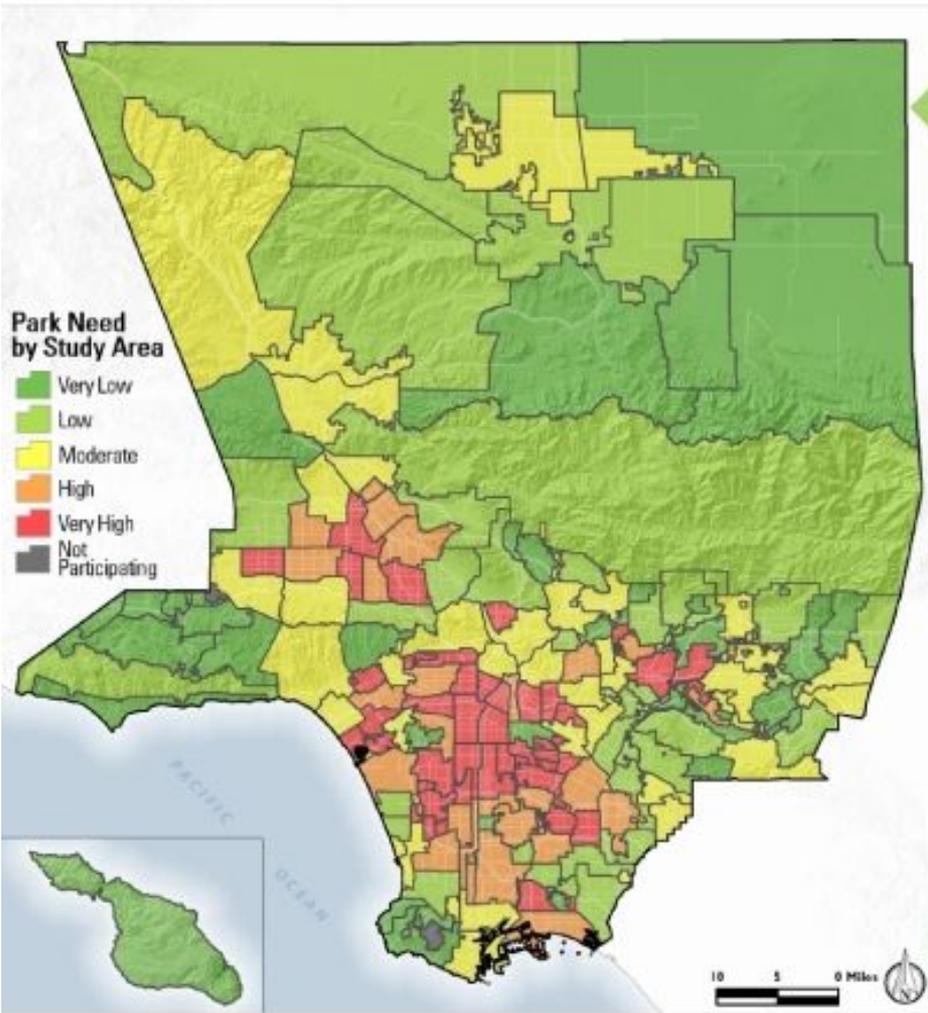
March 2019:
Measure A Grant
Administrative
Manual

Spring 2016: LA
ROSAH is
formed

October 2017:
Building Equitable
Communities: A
Housing & Parks
Summit

2018: *Pathway
to Parks &
Affordable
Housing Joint
Development*
is published

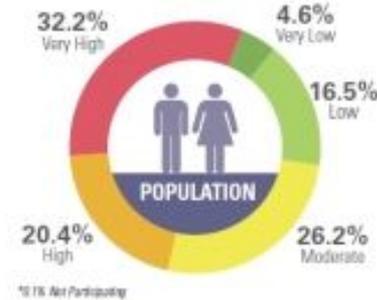
January 2021:
Public Draft of
LA River
Master Plan
published



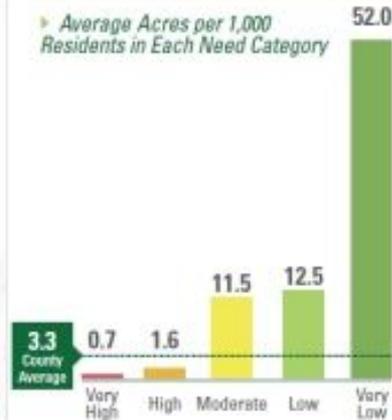
PARK NEED

The results of the analysis of the park metrics were combined to determine an overall park need level for each Study Area. This approach creates a framework for assessing park need from a Countywide perspective.

Population in Each Need Category*



Average Acres per 1,000 Residents in Each Need Category



This map measures “Park Pressure,” defined as Density of Population/Park Acres. This shows us that a significant area of the city, is classified under very high or high park need, which often correlates with race and income. This is a significant study because it can help direct funding.

Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation. “Executive Summary of the Los Angeles Countywide Comprehensive Parks & Recreation Needs Assessment.” May 9, 2016. https://lacountyparkneeds.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/ParksNeedsAssessmentSummary_English.pdf



Grants Administration Manual for Measure A



MEASURE
A

March 2019

Get Involved with Your Local Park Funding!

MEASURE
A

Learn about Measure A - the Local Park Funding Measure, the upcoming grant programs, and how to get involved!



ATTEND THIS MEETING NEAR YOU!

Monday, June 25, 2018

6:30 pm - 8:30 pm

Normandale Recreation Center
22400 S. Halldale Ave.
Torrance, CA 9050

We will provide language interpretation, childcare, refreshments, and a raffle. The same information will be presented at all the meetings.



RPOSD.LAcounty.gov | osdinfo@parks.lacounty.gov | 626.588.5060

Measure A

The Los Angeles Countywide Comprehensive Parks & Recreation Needs Assessment informed the implementation of Measure A, which is an annual parcel tax for park development.³ LA ROSAH was heavily involved with this measure. They helped strategize how to use the money collected from this measure to promote affordable housing, when it cannot legally be used directly for housing. The answer to this obstacle was in the scoring of the grants—by establishing criteria that gives more points to projects located in cities with tenant protections, like rent control for example.

- Minimum of 30% of competitive grant funds go to high park need areas.
- Technical assistance program and community engagement elements.
- Displacement Avoidance Policy: requires collaboration among park agencies, nonprofit park developers, and affordable housing developers; data collection to track the impact of parks overtime; establishment of a Displacement Avoidance Task Force; and the allowance of funds for relocation costs if the project results in displacement.

³ “Pathway to Parks & Affordable Housing Joint Development,” p. 8.

Building Equitable Communities: A Housing & Parks Summit

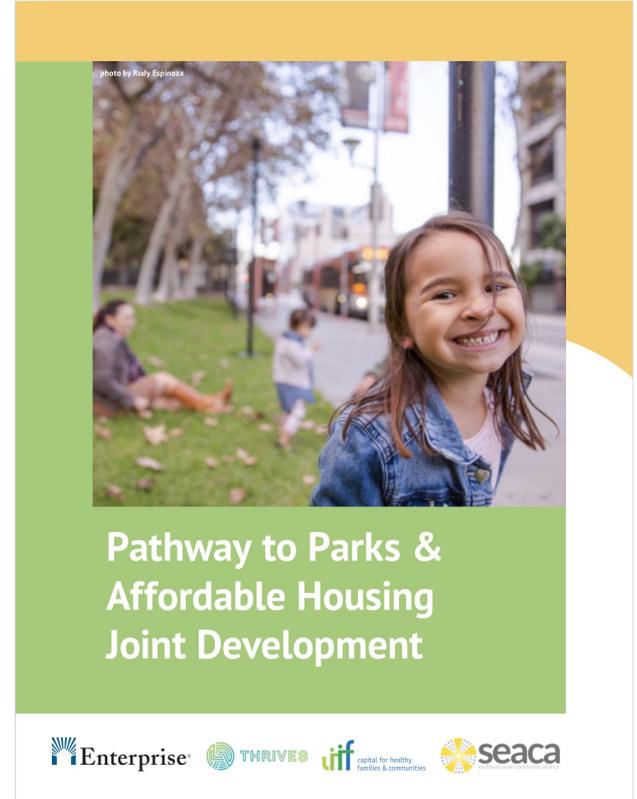
The Building Equitable Communities event had over 130 participants to help inform LA ROSAH's work. During this event, the 11th Street Bridge project was shared as a significant case study.⁴



⁴ "Pathway to Parks & Affordable Housing Joint Development," pp. 1, 12.

“Pathway to Parks & Affordable Housing Joint Development”

The Building Equitable Communities event also helped develop the “Pathway to Parks & Affordable Housing Joint Development” paper, which considers 5 typological approaches at different scales that combine affordable housing and green open space and 3 preliminary recommendations for Conservation Authorities and/or Park Agencies that overview joint development and funding strategies. By looking at urban greening, infrastructure investment, affordable housing, and transportation as intersecting systems and not independent categories, this paper conceives of multifaceted and integrated proposals and ideas. It demonstrates how LA ROSAH’s work focuses on policy and funding structures in hopes of creating strategies that are repeatable and broadly applicable.



“Pathway to Parks & Affordable Housing Joint Development,” pp. 12-16.



INFILL HOUSING +
ON-SITE OPEN
SPACE / GREENING



INFILL HOUSING +
OFF-SITE OPEN
SPACE / GREENING



NEIGHBORHOOD
TRANSFORMATION
THROUGH
SCATTERED SITES



LARGE
MASTER-PLANNED
DEVELOPMENT



TRANSFORMATIVE
INFRASTRUCTURE
WITH ANTI-
DISPLACEMENT
STRATEGY



Infill Development with Housing and Open Space On-Site



“Many urban infill sites available for development are less than 1 acre. While these developments often include landscaped areas for the residents, they do not typically have sufficient land area to include publicly accessible open space.”

Infill development, with Housing and Open Space on different sites within Neighborhood



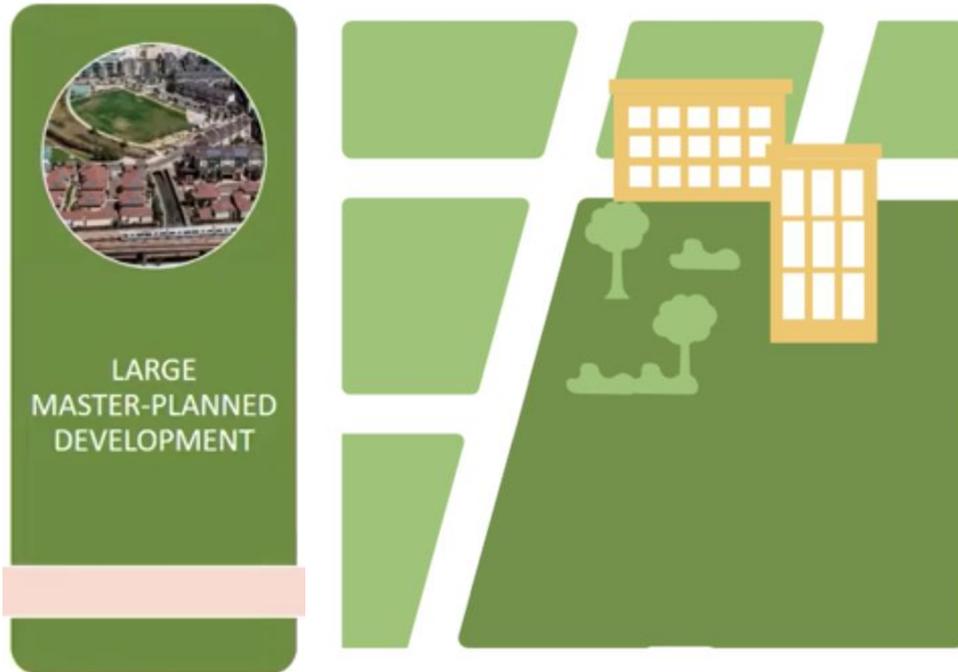
“A joint development approach could combine a housing development with open space or green infrastructure on adjacent public right-of-ways or smaller infill sites such as alleys, streets or utility corridors, city storage or maintenance yards, or hard to develop properties.”

Neighborhood Transformation Scattered Site Approach



“Scattered Site Approach identifies multiple parcels throughout a district, and implements shared infrastructure, thematic or programmatic consistency, and coordinated funding strategies.”

Large Master Planned Infill Development



“Development sites 7 acres or more that are under single ownership are able to accommodate both homes and publicly accessible open space and/or green infrastructure... Development could include other community amenities and may include adaptive reuse of existing buildings.”

Transformative Infrastructure with Housing Sites + Anti-Displacement Strategy



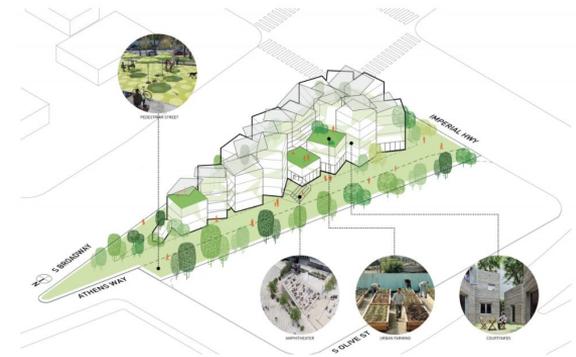
“Responsible, equitable planning should include identification of affordable housing sites that are integrated with the upgraded infrastructure, mechanisms for value capture and financing these developments, tenant protections, and affordable housing preservation strategies.”

PILOT PROJECT: ISLA INTERSECTIONS

Isla Intersections will provide 54 permanent apartments for formerly homeless households.

The Annenberg Paseo will be surrounded by a wall of lush greenery called a *living lung*, which serves as a filter for pollution and noise from the surrounding freeways. This shared street will function as a transit-oriented nexus, creating open pedestrian space for the community and Isla residents alike.

- Developer: Clifford Beers Housing
- Architect: Lorcan O’Herlihy Architects
- Landscape Consultant: Superjacent
- Planting Specialist: Studio-MLA
- Funding Sources: The Annenberg Foundation, Enterprise Community Partners



Left: “Virtual Learning Conversation: How Parks Can Be a Catalyst for Positive Change in Communities.”

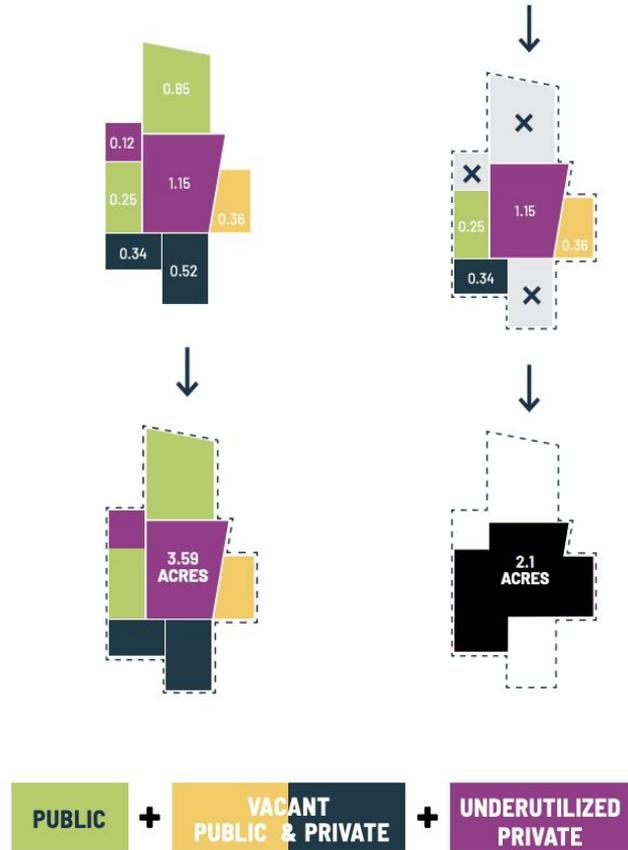
Right: Architects, Lorcan O’Herlihy. “Lorcan O’Herlihy Architects.” LOHA. Accessed April 19, 2021.

<http://loharchitects.com/work/isla-intersections>.

Affordable and Permanent Supportive Housing Land Banking

“The LA River Master Plan calls for the creation of a land bank or similar entity to purchase land along the river while it is still inexpensive and hold it for eventual sale or lease to developers of affordable housing.”⁵

While the master plan does not credit this idea to LA ROSAH, the 2019 “Virtual Learning Conversation” video reveals that LA ROSAH convinced the LA Department of Public Works to push for the LA River Affordable Housing Land Bank. Some aspects of LA ROSAH’s work are hard to track and appreciate because they are often credited to the partner agencies that implement the ideas formed through LA ROSAH’s interdisciplinary collaborations.



⁵“LA River Master Plan, Public Draft,” 316.

Diagrams taken from: “LA River Master Plan, Public Draft,” 319.

Assessment

The main challenge of LA ROSAH, which is paradoxically its strength, is its membership size. In 2019, they mentioned they were trying to raise funds to hire staff, but I'm not sure if that was accomplished. Without a formal structure, the risk is that if key members move locations or pause their individual work for whatever reason then it will affect the organization as a whole. Even so, LA ROSAH has succeeded in many ways, such as adding more affordable housing goals into the LA River Master Plan, making the implementation of policy work more equitable, publishing research on joint development frameworks, participating in a pilot project, and numerous other contributions.

The biggest takeaway is the importance of collaboration and coordination of different groups in order to come up with multifaceted strategies. Even if an agencies or organization's money can only be used in a narrow and specific way, that does not mean they do not have a role to play. They can still contribute to and advocate for policy work and financial structures that promote equitable development. This scenario was best illustrated by the creative implementation of LA County's Measure A. LA ROSAH also rethinks the definition and possibilities of park development. By thinking of parks as equally urban greening, infrastructure investment, affordable housing, and transportation entities, LA ROSAH's ethos and positioning has far-reaching transformative potential.

Lessons for West Philadelphia

While LA County is obviously a much larger scope and a very different context, some of LA ROSAH's work can be thought of in any context. Their multiscalar approach and emphasis on policy and financial structures allow their work to transcend its specific Los Angeles context.

A land bank or similar structure that can purchase and hold land for affordable housing is a strategy that could be considered in the context of West Philadelphia. This could prevent or at least mitigate harmful speculative development that is already occurring in the area. Many of LA ROSAH's joint development strategies involved building affordable housing on the same site as the park. These aren't possible in the context of the West Mill Creek RFP because of its precarious ground conditions. However, they still could have a role to play in the larger neighborhood. The scattered site approach seemed especially relevant. Also, similar criteria implemented through Measure A could potentially influence Philadelphia Water Department's (PWD) Stormwater Grants.

The importance of collaboration is perhaps the biggest lesson. How can public and private organizations in Philadelphia align goals and strategies to come up with comprehensive responses to the complex and growing issue of green gentrification? How can policy and financial structures ensure access to parks **and** prevent displacement. What happened to the [Mill Creek Coalition](#), which brought together neighborhood organizations, community members, religious leaders, businesses, and PWD, and how can it be revived?

Sources

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