

A GUIDE TO

COMMUNITY-DRIVEN
TRANSIT
ORIENTED
DEVELOPMENT
PLANNING



T.R.U.S.T.
SOUTH LA
TENEMOS QUE RECLAMAR Y UNIDOS SALVAR LA TIERRA

In Collaboration With
abode
COMMUNITIES

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ABOUT US

About T.R.U.S.T. South LA

T.R.U.S.T. South LA is a non-profit organization that functions as a community-based initiative to stabilize the neighborhoods south of downtown Los Angeles and to create a vehicle for the current residents of South Los Angeles to stay in their neighborhoods as they participate in creating more vibrancy, resources, and opportunities for themselves, their children and grandchildren, and the broader community. With grant and loan funds raised from public and private sources, T.R.U.S.T. South LA acquires land to be held in perpetuity by the community-controlled Land Trust. Permanent control over T.R.U.S.T. South LA's assets is ensured through its legal structure as a membership-based organization. As such, membership is restricted to low-income people that live or work within the Land Trust's boundaries.

About Abode Communities

Abode Communities is a Los Angeles-based nonprofit organization dedicated to opening doors in people's lives through creative and responsible design, development and operation of service-enhanced affordable housing. Established in 1968, the organization fulfills its mission through a multidisciplinary approach focused on four distinct core services: real estate development, architecture, property management and resident services. Abode Communities' specific strength is to design and develop environmentally sustainable homes that address the need of Southern California's large workforce, low-income families, seniors and individuals with special needs. The organization is the longest established affordable housing provider in Southern California, leads the State of California in the number of LEED® units developed, and owns and operates 36 housing developments with 2,232 affordable homes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

California Community Foundation
St. Mark's Lutheran Church
T.R.U.S.T. South LA Leadership Committee
T.R.U.S.T. South LA Outreach Team
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Introduction

INTRODUCTION

In December of 2012, T.R.U.S.T. South LA, in collaboration with Abode Communities, initiated a participatory planning campaign for the design of the redevelopment of Rolland Curtis Gardens, a substandard 48-unit affordable housing development located in a transit-rich South Los Angeles neighborhood. Our collective goal was to implement temporary rehabilitation measures while developing a community-based plan to redevelop Rolland Curtis Gardens. Upon completion, the development will include new affordable housing units and community-serving commercial uses located near transit hubs.

This guide, developed utilizing funds granted to T.R.U.S.T. South LA by California Community Foundation, reflects our planning procedure: from outreach and organizing to developing a final site plan. In this guide we present our dynamic process, outcomes, and recommendations for adaptation. We hope this guide will be helpful for community development corporations, non-profit housing developers, community-based organizations, and socially responsible for-profit developers who want to build neighborhood-serving affordable housing and commercial developments in conjunction with local residents. All of the materials presented in this guide are available online at www.TRUSTsouthla.org/TODguide

Our reasoning behind using a participatory planning methodology for the redevelopment of Rolland Curtis Gardens is grounded in and reflective of our organizational principles. T.R.U.S.T. South LA is dedicated to collective decision-making, community ownership of land, and community-driven process. Our principles, developed by members of the organization, are summarized here:

- » Educate and develop the consciousness, skills, and experiences of members;
- » Develop leadership of youth and young adults through sharing tools and knowledge;
- » Create a local economy collectively that is controlled by the community;
- » Take responsibility to take care of the earth;
- » Delegate work in an ethical and responsible manner through sharing knowledge and skills;
- » Keep our minds and heart open and have flexibility to adapt to change;
- » Maintain transparency of communication and access to information;
- » Include all people, regardless of gender, race, class, sexual orientation, nation of origin, immigration status, physical ability, religious and spiritual beliefs, etc.
- » Create a structure in which we can make collective decisions.



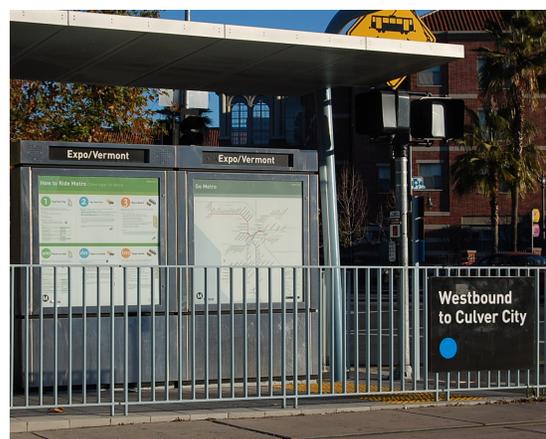
CONTEXT

The redevelopment process of Rolland Curtis Gardens exists within a context of high-cost housing, unparalleled investment in transit infrastructure, and concentrating new development near transit corridors throughout Los Angeles. This context demonstrates the importance of the redevelopment of Rolland Curtis Gardens as a means to preserve affordable housing with convenient access to public transportation. Preserving transportation access for Rolland Curtis Garden residents or low-income residents and renters to job centers, local amenities, and cultural activities enhances the economic vitality of low and moderate-income communities.

In terms of affordability, two unique dynamics are at play: rent burden and loss of rent restricted affordable units. Families in Los Angeles spend more of their income on housing than families in most other large cities in the U.S. Using the rent burden standard, which names housing as affordable if the rent or mortgage requires less than 30% of a household's income, three fourths of low-income homeowners and 90% of all low-income renters are rent burdened.¹ With low-income families spending a significant amount of their income on rent, these families struggle to meet their spending needs on other essential household expenses like healthy food, education, and healthcare.

Working families are also impacted by the affordability crisis: 40% of working households are extremely rent-burdened, spending more than 50% of their income on housing costs.² The disproportionately high number of rent burdened low and moderate-income households demonstrates the extreme deficit of and need for new affordable homes in Los Angeles.

A second crisis looms with the great number of expiring affordability covenants throughout the City.³ Nearly 15,000 income-restricted units (out of 831,000 total renter occupied units in the City of Los Angeles) have affordability covenants, rental assistance contracts, mortgages, or other time-limited affordability requirements that will expire or are at risk of being terminated between 2012 and 2017.^{4,5}



¹ California Budget Project. (2008). Locked Out 2008: A Profile of California Counties. Sacramento, CA. Retrieved from: http://www.cbpp.org/pdfs/2008/080213_CountyProfiles.pdf

² Wardrip, K. (2012). An Annual Look at the Housing Affordability Challenges of America's Working Households. Housing Landscape 2012. Center for Housing Policy, Washington, D.C. Retrieved from: <http://www.nhc.org/media/files/Landscape2012.pdf>

³ A covenant obligates an owner to designate a specified number and type of dwelling units for occupancy by low income households, usually for a term of 30 years and runs with the land, binding all current and future owners of the site. Source: Los Angeles Housing and Community Investment Department: Affordable Housing Land Use Covenants (October 2011)

⁴ US Census. 2011 ACS 1-year estimates.

⁵ <http://www.reconnectingamerica.org/assets/PDFs/20120524LAHTODPreservationFinal.pdf>

Given that landlords throughout Los Angeles will and have chosen to increase rents near or at market rate as the rent restrictions on their buildings expire, the loss of these units could potentially force over 15,000 families out of their homes. Additionally, about 40% of the City's 15,000 units with expiring rental restrictions are within half mile of light rail or bus rapid transit (BRT) stations, further jeopardizing low- and moderate-income families' access to transit and jobs.

With regard to transportation infrastructure expansion, Metro (the Los Angeles Countywide transit agency) is undertaking an unprecedented investment in transit infrastructure with the hope of transforming Los Angeles into a transit-oriented city. Through Measure R, a countywide voter approved sales-tax increase, Metro will invest \$40 billion dollars to add 42 new rail stations by 2039. Los Angeles is ready to make the most of this investment by focusing high-density rezoning around new transit stops with a goal to increase population density and stimulate commercial uses as well. Due to the increased demand for housing near transit in Los Angeles, rents are high and incentives for developers to construct affordable housing near transit are limited. The lack of affordability contradicts the multitude of studies and reports that show the importance of preserving and building new affordable housing near transit to guarantee transit use and ensure job accessibility for transit-dependent populations.⁶

As a property threatened by an expiring affordability covenant, in a neighborhood with fierce real estate speculation, located adjacent to a new light-rail station, the history of Rolland Curtis Gardens directly reflects the building tensions in Los Angeles around Transit Oriented Development (TOD). Rolland Curtis is also a compelling illustration of what should and needs to occur in order to preserve and produce quality housing in Los Angeles at key TOD locations through tenant involvement. The members of T.R.U.S.T. South LA with the expertise of Abode Communities, successfully organized a campaign to preserve the apartment building and configured the private financing solutions necessary to save the land despite the startling absence of public policy to accomplish the same. Through a participatory process to plan for its rebuild, tenants and neighbors of Rolland Curtis defined a vision for permanently affordable housing. From the purchase of the site to planning the new Rolland Curtis, we have collectively surpassed all expectations for transit-oriented development in Los Angeles.

Through our Expo/Vermont Neighbors Organizing Committee, composed of local residents and T.R.U.S.T. South LA members, we will continue to build the capacity of community members to be involved in TOD policy work – both in the ongoing process of the Rolland Curtis Gardens development, and as it relates to South Los Angeles' public and active transportation infrastructure resources and needs.

An early forerunner to what will become the new "Transit Oriented Los Angeles," T.R.U.S.T. South LA, along with our partner Abode Communities, have an opportunity to demonstrate the implementation of a cutting edge TOD model. We aim to craft programs that other affordable housing developers (as well as mixed-income and even market-rate developers) can adopt or tailor as our City seeks to efficiently increase density in transit-rich areas. Transit Oriented Development in Los Angeles poses specific physical and cultural challenges that San Francisco and New York – which are already dense and pedestrian-focused – do not face. We anticipate that our story will prove useful to many cities and towns across the country: if car-centric LA succeeds in not only creating TOD policy and infrastructure, but also building tools and community educational processes to get residents out of their cars and on to buses, trains, bikes and their feet, think of the possibilities for other cities and neighborhoods.

⁶ Two HUD Studies here: http://www.huduser.org/publications/pdf/better_coordination.pdf, http://www.newportpartnersllc.com/PDFs/NewportPublications/Paper3_PromotingAffordableHousingNearPublicTransit.pdf
Report detailing the effects of gentrification at TOD on Ridership: http://www.thestrategycenter.org/sites/www.thestrategycenter.org/files/Dominie_Is_Just_Growth_Smarter_Growth_6-2-2012.pdf

HISTORY

Rolland Curtis Gardens was built in 1981 with funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). With the purpose of providing affordable housing to low-income individuals and families in South Los Angeles. In 2003, ownership of the property was transferred from Wisconsin Gardens Development Co. to the Union Rescue Mission- a private, Christian homeless shelter- which subsequently sold it to billionaire absentee landlord, Jeffrey Greene, in 2004. Upon purchase, Mr. Greene opted out of the HUD Project Based Section 8 program, despite having indicated otherwise during the sales negotiations. However, until January of 2011, Rolland Curtis Gardens was protected from conversion to market rents thanks to an enforceable affordable covenant signed in 1981 between the Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Los Angeles (“CRA/LA”) and Wisconsin Gardens Development Co. As the January 2011 date for expiration of the final covenants approached, Mr. Greene informed tenants through his property managers that he no longer wished to have this property as affordable housing, and instead intended to rent to the student population of the adjacent University of Southern California (USC).

Campaign Victories

Starting in the spring of 2011, T.R.U.S.T. South LA worked in conjunction with the tenants of Rolland Curtis Gardens to ensure that the property remain affordable to current and future families. When Mr. Greene attempted to displace all families from the building with the stated aim of moving in USC students, T.R.U.S.T. South LA responded by organizing with the tenants in a tenant-led campaign to preserve their affordable housing.



The campaign's first success occurred in August 2011, with the support of the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles (LAFLA) when Mr. Greene was forced to rescind the 90-day notices to vacate, which he had issued to all families living at Rolland Curtis Gardens. Mr. Greene was required to provide proper notice of the owner's intentions to convert the complex to market rent. This effort secured the right of all tenants to remain in the property until September 2012, and for a group of a dozen low-income tenant families to remain in the property for as long as Rolland Curtis Gardens continues to operate as rental housing. In October and November of 2011, the campaign accomplished a second victory when the Los Angeles Housing Department ordered over 300 repairs to the property. Campaign efforts then focused on long-term preservation of Rolland Curtis Gardens housing as affordable.

In the winter of 2012, T.R.U.S.T. South LA's development partner, Abode Communities, offered to purchase Rolland Curtis Gardens from Mr. Greene. After the preceding year of tenacious organizing work by T.R.U.S.T. South LA and the Rolland Curtis tenants, the owner agreed to sell. After several months of being in and out of escrow, Abode Communities and T.R.U.S.T. South LA secured over \$7 million in loans and on July 27th, 2012 became the joint owners of Rolland Curtis Gardens. The acquisition financing, in place for a maximum of five years, provides for some rehabilitation of the existing 48 units, so that the families are no longer living in sub-standard conditions.

Directly after the acquisition, the new development team came to the conclusion that the complex would need to be demolished and rebuilt with the help of government subsidies, adding more affordable rental units, open space, and commercial space to create a higher density development. Preparations for our four-month long participatory planning process included:

- » Setting internal goals and priorities for the planning process
- » Researching best practices for curriculum for participatory planning and design as well as general Transit Oriented Development (TOD) industry standards and innovations
- » Defining and engaging stakeholders

The following chapter will help you set up your own participatory planning process by sharing our experience preparing for and running workshops with neighbors, tenants, and local stakeholders.



2

Setting Up a Participatory Planning Process

PARTICIPATORY PLANNING

This guide offers documentation of our experiences and methodology for adaptation by your organization to facilitate a participatory planning process in any community.

Internal Goal Setting:

It is important to set internal goals for your participatory planning process. The goals should not determine the final product, but should reflect the parameters for participation. Our goals for planning the rebuild of Rolland Curtis Gardens were:

1. Use the planning process to develop community empowerment and participation.
2. Produce a viable affordable housing development, but push the boundaries of viability by encouraging participants to think outside the box in the community visioning process and by finding creative solutions to traditional feasibility constraints like zoning, height restrictions, parking, etc..
3. Set a good standard for design.
4. Ensure broad engagement, including community members, neighborhood institutions, power brokers, by:
 - » Prioritizing residents within ½ mile radius,
 - » Defining additional roles for “outside” stakeholders.
5. Use forward-thinking methods for conceiving ideas, sharing information, analyzing options, and making decisions.
6. Pursue a multidisciplinary approach to create cross-dialogue and education by:
 - » Including different expertise/points of view, such as an architect/developer, community organizer, and urban planner.
 - » Addressing cultural clashes by introducing analysis of the dynamics with the support of organizers and facilitators.
7. Evaluate at every stage.
8. Produce a toolkit for future community driven TOD projects.

Sharing Organizational Principles with Participants

As part of our four-month planning workshop series, several of T.R.U.S.T. South LA's members explained how the organization's driving principles shaped and influenced the methodology used throughout the planning process. Through the incorporation of our organizational principles into the workshops, participants identified our intentions for the process and product, thus increasing our transparency. Presenting our organizational principles further aligned the values of new and longtime members with the principles that guide our organization. Creating a shared vision improves the cohesion of the organization and achieves multiple overarching goals of the participatory planning process.

Research on Best Practices (see 15: Annotated Bibliography in the Appendix)

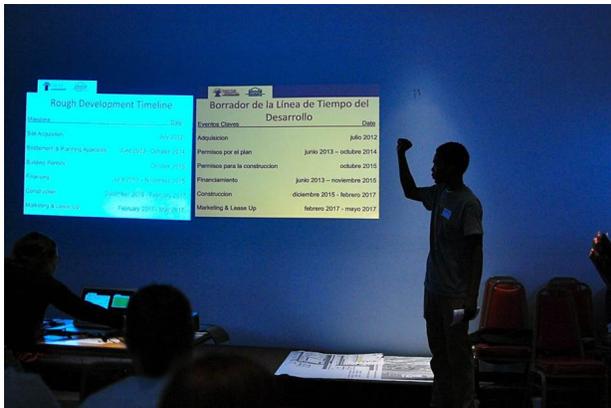
Preparations included research on best practices for participation in planning and for Transit Oriented Developments that included affordable housing. The TOD best practices centered less on design elements, focusing instead on innovative development standards in transit corridors. For instance, due to our dedication to a multi-modal approach to development, the team knew that a request for the reduced parking would be made, allowing us to focus on creating increased open space, additional dwelling units, and other amenities that would otherwise not be possible. As a result, our best practices survey focused partially on how other developers addressed parking demands and feasibility in creative ways. We have built an annotated bibliography in the appendix of this guide that addresses parking, car sharing, community programming, and some site plan best practices in the field of transit oriented developments.

STAFFING AND ROLES

Our team identified several key roles for your consideration as you begin. In the process, we had the following:

- » A project manager in charge of logistics and curriculum content;
- » An organizer and outreach worker, to engage community members in the process;
- » Architects and a development team working on translating workshop outcomes into a design and assessing feasibility;
- » Stakeholders - both community members and community/institutional powerbrokers- at each workshop;
- » A community organizer and community outreach team;
- » An interpreter at all workshops in addition to bi-lingual staff. All activities should be held in the language people are most comfortable speaking in and language translation should be provided whenever possible;
- » Note takers at each session to capture both outcomes and process;
- » Food, prepared by a member and leader who is a wonderful chef.

These roles can be merged or customized depending on your staff capacity. Most roles can be merged or customized depending on your staff capacity. 'Stakeholders' should remain independent from the 'facilitation' team to ensure that the final plan is derived from a community vision.



3

Activities

GUIDE FORMAT

The guide is broken out into chapters (Stakeholder Engagement, Visioning, Feasibility, Site Planning, and Action Planning), which are then divided into distinct activities. Each activity includes a brief description to give a sense of what the activity covers; the goals for the activity; the expected outcomes for the activity; and an explanation of how the activity played out for us. All of the suggestions in the 'In Action' section are reflected in the final presentations, materials, and facilitator guides in the appendix of the guide. All users are encouraged to use individual activities or presentations for their own planning process

Icons

There are three distinct types of activities, denoted with icons:



Workshop activity: Curriculum for a workshop with residents, tenants, and local stakeholders.



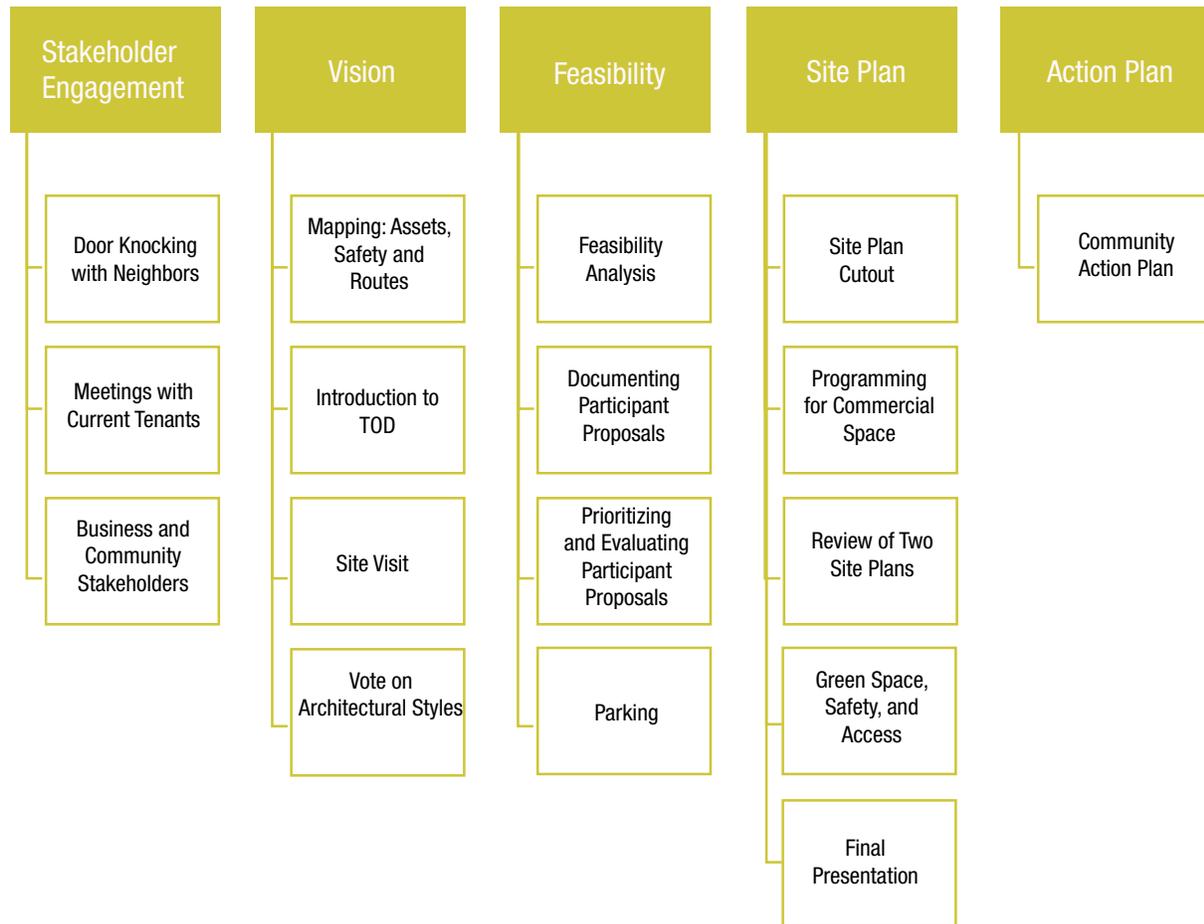
Preparation: Preparation activities for facilitators in between workshops.



Presentation: Educational slides to inform participants during a workshop.

Roadmap to the Participatory Planning Guide

Several activities may be combined to form one workshop. In our experience, we usually had two activities 🧑🏫 and a presentation 🗣️ for each half-day workshop. Generally, workshops at the top of the graphic were completed first and those at the bottom of the map came later in the process, it is recommended that you choose the activities that make sense for your project and organization.



3.1

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Effective and extensive community outreach and organizing drives successful community participation. Most importantly, having strong outreach and organizing capacity will ensure a deep and rich process whether through your organization’s own expertise or by partnering with experienced organizations to create an outreach plan. Whether or not you have a strong membership base, door knocking in the immediate vicinity can bring additional voices into the planning process and make the entire neighborhood feel included. Face-to-face contact is an important way to engage residents in discussions of why your project is important and to start to develop a community-driven analysis of your current work around TOD issues. The stakeholder engagement process can take weeks to months of organizational time, so it is important to plan ahead for this phase of the project. We customized our stakeholder engagement approach to better engage both community members, institutional stakeholders, and local businesses.



ENGAGEMENT

Door Knocking

Depending on the scope and size of your project, assemble a team of residents and members to knock on doors within a quarter-mile or half-mile of your site. To prepare the door knocking team, host a training session to familiarize everyone with the history of the project and any other background information (see 'OA Door Knocking Training Facilitator Guide' in the Appendix). Decide how you want to engage neighbors; designing and administering a survey can be an effective way to introduce them to the types of issues your organization works to address and to invite them to your planning process (see "OC Survey Tool" in the Appendix). Through door knocking, gather each interested neighbor's contact information so that you can reach out to them in the future, bring flyers for your event, and provide information about your organization. If residents are not home, leave information about your workshop and organization at the door. You should keep track of people you did not have to face-to-face contact with, and return to speak to them.

Follow up

Once you have made initial contact with neighbors, follow up by phone to remind them of upcoming workshops and to connect with them regarding their experiences in and their vision for the neighborhood. An additional strategy to further engage residents is to schedule home visits with neighbors who have been active in the planning process.

Individual Meetings:

If the property has current tenants, it is crucial that you engage as many as possible in the planning process. Developing strong relationships and gaining the trust of current tenants is especially important if you plan to redevelop the property, in which case residents may experience temporary or permanent relocation. One-on-one meetings with tenants outside of formal workshops are essential. Host meetings in the subject building so that residents can express their concerns and desires for the redevelopment of the property. Tenants can also be persuasive advocates for the plan and will have unique insight into the neighborhood.

Materials

- 1A:** Door Knocking Log Sheet
- 1B:** Door knocking Materials
- 1C:** Survey Tool
- 1D:** Sample Flyer

Meeting with Institutional stakeholders and Local Businesses:

Engage with political and institutional stakeholders in the neighborhood; their support for your development is crucial to achieve success during any political and permitting hurdles you may face. Potential stakeholders include:

- » Local representatives from your City or County Council District (e.g. the planning deputy);
- » The Department of City Planning representative for your planning area;
- » The Housing Department;
- » Local Neighborhood Council;
- » Major institutions such as universities, other government institutions, hospitals, etc.;
- » Local faith institutions, community based organizations and business and property owners

Develop materials that explain the need for the project and adapt those materials as your plans advance. Invite stakeholder input early in the process. Prepare a letter of support so that stakeholders can edit and submit to zoning administration and public decision makers.

3.2 VISION

In preparing for the first sessions of the planning process, be sure to include members of the community in this initial process to help shape the goals and outcomes of the future development. Visioning can integrate many different learning styles, various levels of participation and ages, and multiple activity types. Most importantly, participants should be able to develop an initial vision with relatively few restrictions imposed by the facilitation team. For the visioning component for the redevelopment of Rolland Curtis Gardens (held over several sessions) we brainstormed what the neighborhood needs in the context of TOD, visited other sites to give participants ideas about the range of possibilities for our own development, and explored different types of architectural styles. The following workshops, planning exercises, and presentations are reflected in the pages that follow:



Asset, Safety, & Route Mapping



Site Visits



Introduction to Transit Oriented Development



Voting on Architectural Styles



Asset, Safety, & Route Mapping

Workshop



Mapping is a critical tool to understand the neighborhood context of a future development. Questions arise, such as: where do participants travel to in the neighborhood? How do they get there (looking both at routes and modes of transportation)? What obstacles do participants face? For this mapping activity, break out into small groups and, on large maps showing a 1-mile radius of the site, ask participants to mark the assets in the community (schools, grocery store, shopping districts, churches, parks, etc.). Based on where they go in their neighborhood. Then, participants will discuss and mark on the map what routes and what mode of transportation they take to get to these places. Finally, participants will identify places on the map that are unsafe and describe why: cars drive too quickly, danger from violence or assault, trash, broken sidewalks, no shoulder for cyclists, etc.

Goals

- » Develop a framework for assessing mobility around the site. Do participants take the bus, the train, walk, bike, or drive?
- » Determine the best ways to get to and from the site.
- » Develop an increased awareness and vocabulary about mobility issues.

Materials

2A Mapping: Assets, Safety, and Routes Facilitators Guide

Outcome

- » The maps and notes developed in the small groups help determine physical access to the site.
- » If you have an opportunity to impact street improvements or bike and pedestrian infrastructure around the development, use the mapping exercise to identify and prioritize these improvements.



IN ACTION...

We used the Safety, Mapping, & Route Planning activity in our very first workshop as a way to have a broad conversation about the neighborhood. The results were instructive. We intentionally defined mobility broadly as ‘how we get around.’ This definition propelled us into a discussion of how to decrease dependence on automobiles and how the substandard infrastructure in our neighborhood does not support people who use alternative modes of transportation. The segue from the definition of mobility to the more complex conversation about the lack of pedestrian and cycle infrastructure could have been more useful if we spent more time with residents explaining our definition of mobility.

Introduction to Transit Oriented Development



Transit Oriented Development is a complex and relatively new theme in planning and development. It is important to explore the definition of TOD with participants, especially as it relates to them as residents and transit-users. Through a presentation, define Transit Oriented Development as housing and commercial uses located near a rail station or bus corridors, near services and retail, and near jobs. Adapt and use slide from '3A Introduction to TOD' in the Appendix.

Goals

- » Develop a shared vocabulary and definition of Transit Oriented Development.
- » Understand the political landscape in terms of Los Angeles' recent focus on transit.

Materials

3A: Introduction to TOD Presentation

Outcome

- » Lays a foundation for TOD conversations for the entire planning process.
- » Initiates a conversation about increased density and the types of commercial activities on-site.



IN ACTION...

We presented the Introduction to TOD slides in our first workshop to introduce the concept of Transit Oriented Development and its relevance in our neighborhood. It was important to present this definition early on and to repeat the language throughout the sessions to give participants an opportunity to ground the definition in the neighborhood. In an effort to make our definition of TOD more clear, we developed activities that the larger group would act out, making the meaning more relevant and applicable for participants as we moved along in the planning process.

Site Visits

Workshop



Without context and examples, creating a site plan can be challenging and overwhelming for participants and facilitators. To resolve this, take participants on a site tour of other TOD mixed-use developments. Set goals and plan in advance for the transportation needs as conducting site visits is an integral part of this visioning process that people use as a point of reference in other stages of the process. Visit up to three different comparable sites. At each site, ask a representative from the architecture or development team to lead participants around on a tour of the facility. Center most of the tour on questions from participants at each site and in transit, and debrief together after the tour.

Goals

- » Visits to other developments will show us possibilities for site amenities and design features we could include in our development.
- » Become familiar with development and architectural terminology.

Outcome

- » Participants from this workshop develop ownership over the entire planning process.
- » Gives participants ideas for site planning and layout for the development.
- » Serves as a reference point throughout the site planning process.

Materials

4A: Site Visit Facilitator Guide

4B: TOD Cards



IN ACTION...

The site tour was an effective activity to increase participant commitment to the process and to enhance discussions about architectural design and programming. Though participation was limited by the number of vans we had access to, the depth and complexity of the conversations and shared experience of the tour positively impacted the entire planning process. Participants presented their site tour experiences in the sessions that followed, which helped everybody (even those not on the tour) develop reference points for architectural and site design moving forward. For example, when we had conversations about the open space at Rolland Curtis Gardens, participants who were on the tour shared open-space elements from the buildings we visited. Participating in the tours gave everyone a sense of ownership over the process.

Voting on Architectural Styles



Architectural drawings (called ‘Massing’) in their early stages can be non-descript and unappealing since they depict the shape of the structure and not the architectural features. Present printed images of architecturally diverse developments and ask participants to vote for their favorite. This short and effective activity gives workshop participants an opportunity to visually explore the range of possible architectural styles.

Goals

- » Learn new vocabulary around architectural styles.
- » Choose a general architectural style to use for the development.

Outcome

- » Come to a consensus on the general type of architectural style participants wanted for the development.

Materials

5A: Voting on Architectural Styles Facilitator Guide

5B: Architectural Styles Presentation



Traditional Massing Photo



IN ACTION...

We felt that just showing massing studies represented by big blocks made the development look more like a square fortress and less like a beautiful mixed-use housing development. Without a defined architectural style, the could turn participants off to the entire process. We wanted participants to identify an appropriate architectural style for the building. This was possible because the site tour gave us reference points for different types of styles as well as understanding general layout, uses, and interaction with the street and transit. The architects presented several building styles and participants voted for their favorite. This was a relatively low-intensity activity, from which the architects received significant direction.

Our architectural style photos showcased zoomed-out photos of several different developments, but having close-up photos of the actual elements (like roof type, windows, entrances, trim, shape, finishes, etc.) would have led to a stronger discussion of style. In our experience, participants focused attention on the layout of the development’s open space in particular, which should be addressed in site planning activities, instead of the architectural style.

Feasibility analysis should be both an internal planning tool as well as an activity with participants. Our internal feasibility analysis began before the workshops in order to define the budget, legal, zoning and construction constraints on the property such as density, height, and parking restrictions, which will limit the ultimate design of the development. In order to determine the initial feasibility, we met with an external feasibility consultant but you can also consult with the Department of City Planning through the planning counter, a surveyor, or you may have the capacity to do the feasibility analysis internally. We were highly conscientious to refrain from defining any more than the most essential and unavoidable constraints before the process started so that participant-driven discoveries and decision-making could be maximized. In between community planning sessions, additional feasibility analysis occurred throughout the planning process sessions. We also incorporated feasibility analysis into an activity that both demonstrated the progress that participants had made in developing the site plan and gave participants an opportunity to prioritize their own proposals for the development.



Documenting Participant Proposals



Prioritizing & Evaluating Participants



Parking



Documenting Participant Proposals



Throughout the workshops, participants will develop a significant number of proposals and suggestions for the site. After several sessions, develop a matrix that begins to track all of the participant's ideas that were generated through the workshop and group activities. Categorize the ideas into groups, e.g. service, commercial, design quality, community areas, building features, and commercial space. Note the workshop from which the idea was generated.

Goals

- » Track ideas generated through workshops
- » Increase transparency of planning process, holding facilitators accountable to a truly participatory process.

Outcome

- » Begin to determine feasibility of all of the items for use in the 'Prioritizing Matrix Activity.'
- » Once charted and categorized, participants can prioritize all information generated in the workshops in a following session.

Materials

6A: Documenting Participant Proposals

See Below: Prioritizing Matrix Facilitator Guide, below

WHAT WE HEARD YOU SAY: DESIGN ELEMENTS				
Item	Possible	Challenging	Impossible	Notes
BUILDING FEATURES				
Laundry in building	x			All floors will include their own laundry
Landscaping that fits with the building	x			Landscaping will be specially designed for Rolland Curtis.
Air Conditioning	x			Air conditioning will be provided to all the units.
Quiet, peaceful Interior Spaces	x			Walls will be built with insulation to help mitigate outside noise.
Benches	x			Common areas will provide seating.
Terraced style levels	x			We are considering terraces on units.
Porch/balconies	x			Balconies will be provided and will be safe for children
Bike parking	x			Bike parking will be provided
Hard surface flooring	x			Will be provided inside for each apartment.
Public Bathrooms	x			Public areas where services are provided are required to have bathrooms.
Rainwater Harvesting	x			It will require knowing as early as possible to include this system into the design of the building.
Solar Water Heating		x		
Water Fountain		x		Fountains can be an expensive feature.
Barbecue Areas		x		Requires enough open space to not affect nearby homes.
Larger bedrooms		x		Bedrooms will be adequate but not too large. This is necessary to provide more housing.
Underground parking			x	Underground parking is expensive. The budget of the project cannot afford underground parking.
Reduced parking		x		We are required to provide a minimum amount of parking. Reduced parking will be discussed with the City.
Offices			x	More than two stories are required.
Pool			x	Pools are expensive to build and to maintain.
Privacy for residents	x			We realize this is a top concern and are building it into design.

WHAT WE HEARD YOU SAY: DESIGN ELEMENTS				
Item	Possible	Challenging	Notes	
DESIGN QUALITY				
Green building beneficial to the environment and health of residents.	x			The building will meet all of the criteria and will be certified as a "Green" building.
Natural Lighting	x			The design will maximize natural light in common areas and for each apartment.
Artificial Lighting	x			Outdoor lighting will be provided. All areas will be well lit.
Color variation	x			Building colors palette will be selected and presented to the community for approval.
Views of the City		x		Some units will have better views than others.
COMMUNITY AREAS				
Multi-cultural community kitchen		x		A community kitchen can be provided in the building.
Community Garden		x		A community garden is feasible. Exact location to be determined.
Park		x		The common areas will serve as a mini-park for the community of Rolland Curtis.
Community Center, Social Space		x		Will be included.
Public Exercise Areas		x		Public exercise equipment might be available.
Child Play Areas		x		Child play are typical in all Abode developments.
Security Systems		x		A security system will be provided for the entire development.
BUILDING FEATURES				
Laundry in building	x			All floors will include their own laundry.
Landscaping that fits with the building	x			Landscaping will be specially designed for Rolland Curtis.
Air Conditioning	x			Air conditioning will be provided to all the units.
Quiet, peaceful Interior Spaces	x			Walls will be built with insulation to help mitigate outside noise.
Benches	x			Common areas will provide seating.
Terraced style levels	x			We are considering terracing of units.
Porch/balconies	x			Balconies will be provided.
Bike parking	x			Bike parking will be provided
Hard surface flooring	x			Will be provided inside for each apartment.
Public Bathrooms	x			Public areas where services are provided are required to have bathrooms.

See Appendix 6A for larger images

IN ACTION...

After our first workshop, we designed a matrix to identify and chart every proposal and suggestion that was made throughout the planning process. This internal matrix helped us in our feasibility analysis and also served as documentation of the outcomes from each small-group activity. We turned this internal document into a group prioritization activity where participants were able to rank the ideas that had been generated along the process. (See 'Prioritizing and Evaluating Participant Proposals' activity, below).

Prioritizing & Evaluating Participant Proposals



Once you have developed the matrix of every proposal and suggestion, you will need to prioritize each suggestion with the participants. This prioritization activity will democratize the feasibility conversation that will follow. For the activity, break out into groups of six to ten participants. Each group will receive items from a single category in the matrix developed by facilitators in between sessions (see ‘Documenting Participant Proposals: Planning Activity,’ above). Participants will prioritize the items by voting with stickers. Items from each category will be split into three levels of feasibility: Possible, Challenging, and Impossible. If a Challenging or Impossible ‘item’ is prioritized over other ‘items’ discuss why the items were not possible and their tradeoffs.

Goals

- » Review all of the suggestions and input that have been added thus far.
- » Prioritize different elements of the site plan based on feasibility.

Outcome

- » Together, prioritize all feedback from previous workshops and activities.
- » Since participants will generate a lot of feedback and ideas through the planning process—some of which are not feasible, some of which are not complementary—this activity will eliminate some suggestions and prioritize others.

Materials
7A: Prioritizing and Evaluating Participant Proposals Facilitator Guide
7B: Example of Matrix Items Printed on Half-Sheets



IN ACTION...

We received a lot of positive participant feedback for this workshop activity. We all enjoyed seeing our progress and how participation in previous sessions had driven the design of the final development plans. Participants led the conversation about feasibility, tradeoffs, and prioritization, which happened naturally during the exercise and with relatively little conflict between attendees. This activity provided us with the opportunity to discuss and eliminate some suggestions such as the tradeoffs of developing a swimming pool or having open play space. Other elements were more complex, like childcare. Due to zoning and open space restrictions, we could not house a childcare facility in the commercial component of the development. The process of the small group activity was highly democratic and led to an outcome that all participants were happy with and proud of.

Parking

Presentation



Workshop



Parking is often a contentious issue (especially in Los Angeles), but it is important for participants to understand how parking and driving negatively effects the health of our communities, degrades the environment through pollution, and drains our financial resources due to the expense of owning and maintaining a car. Through a conversation with participants, present and discuss the tradeoffs of parking. Participants and stakeholders may push back if the proposed development has reduced parking.

Goals

- » Learn the true cost of owning a car - How much does it cost to own a car? How much it costs to build a parking space? and the environmental, health, and community impacts of car ownership.
- » Review alternative forms of transportation in the context of our development.
- » Explore and challenge the value that our society places on car ownership.

Materials

- 8A:** Parking Workshop and Presentation Facilitator Guide
- 8B:** Presentation

Outcome

- » Learn about the impacts of car ownership on our community, the challenges of a parking space for each residential unit.
- » Participants will become advocates for reduced parking based on the impacts of car ownership on the community and environment as well as the cost of developing parking spaces.

IN ACTION...

T.R.U.S.T. South LA's primary motivation in seeking reduced parking for Rolland Curtis Gardens is driven by our guiding principles of protecting and minimizing our impact on the environment and improving the health of our community. As a secondary motivation, we faced spatial and monetary restrictions on building out the full number of parking spaces required.

Many cities across the country are moving toward decreased parking requirements, especially near transit corridors. Los Angeles has fairly strict parking requirements (at least 1:1 in affordable housing developments, but higher for non-income restricted housing) throughout the City, but is exploring reducing parking minimums near transit. Since parking is a highly contentious issue, we decided to host an additional workshop/working group, composed of participants from the planning process, to delve further into why we are seeking parking reductions, the impact of parking on development costs and actual square footage, and how providing parking influences transportation behavior.

IN ACTION (continued)

We expected to have a lot of pushback at this meeting, but instead participants were supportive of and invested in decreasing the number of parking spaces available to residents. Additionally, participants committed to using alternative forms of transit (which we had not planned). The workshop served as an introduction to terms like “car share” and “bike share”, and participants became strong advocates for parking reductions at subsequent workshops.



SITE PLANNING & SPACE PROGRAMMING

Developing a comprehensive and visionary site design with participants demanded creative design activities. Architecture and development are not traditionally fields that are highly accessible to those not working in the field since it has specific industry jargon and requires a strong understanding of geometry. The following activities and presentations help to break down barriers to site planning. By starting from scratch, participants and facilitators can rely on their respective expertise to design a development that reflects the desires of neighborhood residents and that suits the neighborhood context. We typically had at least one site-planning activity in each of our workshops.



Site Plan Cutout



Green Space, Safety, & Access



Programming for Commercial Space



Final Presentation



Review of Two Site Plans



Site Plan Cutout

Workshop



In this activity, participants will break out into small groups to plan their ideal development. Each group will have a birds-eye view map of the neighborhood with the site or the development in white, a blank slate to plan. Cutouts in different colors represent various uses: parking, residential, open space, and commercial. Each cutout and shapes corresponded to a certain square footage, which is to scale for the site. Participants will cut up the shapes and will have to use all of the pieces. They may layer different uses on top of each other.

Goals

- » Make preliminary designs for the future development. Our designs will show where people will live, where we will have open space, where people will park, where the commercial space will be, etc.

Outcome

- » This puzzle-like activity will create the initial design for the development.
- » Creativity and imagination of participants drives the design of the development.

Materials

9A: Site Plan Cutout
Facilitator Guide

9B: Sample Product for
Cutout activity



IN ACTION...

We used this activity in our very first workshop to fuel a creative and hands-on planning process. We broke out into groups of six to eight participants, each group had one set of materials to cut out and paste onto the blank sheet. This was a constructive activity to introduce the site for the development (especially after we had contextualized the neighborhood through the asset, safety, and route mapping activity). Every group worked together to come up with a development plan and each participant had something important to add. Some findings include:

- » Not placing the housing directly over the retail for noise and safety reasons
- » Having the open space in the center of the development
- » The living space and the parking area should be separated by a wall or placed on separate floors

IN ACTION (continued)

Participants were very creative in their placement and description of development elements. Final products from this activity guided the initial designs for the new development and began the discussion on how to prioritize and incorporate the list of features and site plan elements for the development, which were identified in the Matrix.

Through this activity we were successful in conveying that we had a blank slate to work with and that this was going to be a development generated through community participation. The facilitators came to the table knowing the total allowable height, buildable ground floor area, maximum number of units, and parking requirements. Through our internal evaluation of this activity every member of the facilitation team stated that the outcome from this activity (and therefore the final product) resulted differently than we had initially expected and different from the norm of mixed-use affordable housing development (which would have apartments located directly above retail uses instead of set back). Additionally, as a result of this activity we collectively decided that the commercial parking lot (situated between the residential and commercial buildings) should also serve as a programmable space for farmers markets, health fairs, and event and play space for youth in the hours when the commercial tenants are closed for business.



Programming for Commercial Space

Workshop



Participants know what types of commercial uses- both retail and services- are missing from the neighborhood. Ask participants to brainstorm different commercial uses for the development: What types of commercial activity would they want to see in their neighborhood?

Goals

- » Discuss and consider different types of commercial and retail that we would want in our development. Specifically, what kind of businesses and services do we want in this neighborhood?

Outcome

- » Come to understand what kind of commercial services the neighborhood is missing.
- » A community approved list of potential uses for the commercial space of the development.

Materials

10A: Commercial Space Facilitator Guide

IN ACTION...

Through this brief activity, participants listed all of the types of commercial tenants that they would like to see in the neighborhood. Participants suggested youth services, bike repair, coffee shop, barbershop, healthy food store, health clinic, pharmacy, childcare, and many more. This low-intensity activity yielded quality suggestions for filling the retail, service, and general commercial gap in the community. We used the information gathered through this activity to begin outreach to potential commercial tenants for the finished development and to determine the final square footage of the retail spaces.

For the facilitators, commercial meant both retail and services but to some participants commercial meant only retail. Expanding participants' understanding of the term 'commercial' would lead to a stronger discussion of the needs of the broader community.



Review of Site Plan Options



From the results of the cutout activity, produce two different site plans. In small groups, ask participants to review the plans based on their own experiences and also through the Transit Oriented Development framework. Break out into groups of five to eight participants and present the different elements of the plans as well as the TOD framework. Contrast and compare the two printed site plans; draw what you like and dislike directly onto the printed plans.

Goals

- » Edit the different types of designs made in the cutout activity.
- » Determine likes and dislikes of the distinct site plans.

Outcome

- » Participants are able to pick up on similarities and differences between the two designs, combine elements from the two plans, and narrow in on a rough draft of the final site design.
- » Prioritize what features are critical versus those that may be less urgent/necessary.

Materials

11A: Review of Two Site Plans
Facilitator Guide

11B: Preparing for Review of
Two Site Plans

11C: Sample Product: Site Plan
Markups

11E: Review of Two Site Plans:
Presentation

IN ACTION...

During a brief presentation, the initial designs - one “U” shaped building and another with two “L” shaped buildings - were presented which helped explain how information from previous workshops influenced the site planning process. In small groups, we broke down how the two site plans differed based on the dynamics of the group. We should have made the presentation of the two in the small groups, but each community should make this decision for themselves. In the small groups, facilitators ‘walked’ participants through the specifics of the plan (repeating the presentation) showing where they would enter the building, where people will park, where kids would be able to play, where the laundry will be, etc.

The presentation of two options gave participants the ability to pull out and compare elements that they liked. Together, we decided that we liked the idea of having two L-shaped buildings, but that the shape of and access to the open space of the U-shaped building was preferable.

To improve the activity we would develop more inquisitive questions since initially our questions did not elicit strong comments. Instead of asking what participants liked and disliked, ask participants to compare the two plans; or to describe how the plans allow for different kinds of uses, like how kids might play, how older residents might get around or how this plan is safe or unsafe.

Green Space, Safety & Access



Green space, safety, and access for people, bicycles, and vehicles are usually top concerns of participants throughout the planning process. Present a single site plan for the development and in small groups assess the green space, safety concerns, and physical access to the building. In small groups, ask critical questions about the development, giving participants an opportunity to analyze and further refine the site plan.

Goals

- » Improve the development based on the type, size, and access to green space; safety concerns, and how residents, cyclists, and vehicles will enter the building.
- » Make recommendations to further edit the site plan.

Outcome

- » Discover how residents want to interact with green space in the development; how the site plan can mitigate and improve residents' perception of safety; and the best location for entrances for pedestrians and vehicles.



Materials
12A: Green Space, Safety, and Access Facilitator Guide
12B: Preparing Preliminary Site Plans
12C: Green Space, Safety & Access Sample Markups
12D: Final Presentation & Discussion: Green Space, Safety, and Access (English and Spanish)

IN ACTION...

The presentation and small group discussions focused heavily on the experience of future tenants: physical safety on the streets directly adjacent to the site; whether it was better for residents to access the site from the busier commercial street or from the quieter residential street; security interventions in the building; how to ensure that the public is well-lit; different types of activities that might take place in the green space, etc. Residents invested a substantial amount of time expressing their desire for increased safety through a community watch model rather than by installing security measures like cameras and gates.

Final Site Plan Presentation and Discussion

Workshop



For this presentation, prepare the final site plan based on participant input through the entire community-driven planning process. It is a way to show the final designs and to celebrate your accomplishments. In small groups, review the final site plan, asking participants to present all of the different elements. Host a conversation about how participant ownership of the process leads to a final development produced by the community. This small group activity leads directly into the 'Final Action-Plan' activity, below.

Goals

- » Celebrate the long hours spent developing the plan;
- » Plan for how to voice your support for this project if it needs defending;
- » Voice your support and any remaining concerns for the plan.

Materials

- 13A:** Final Concept Plan Presentation and Discussion Facilitator Guide
- 13B:** Preparing Final Concept Design

Outcome

- » Give participants space to talk about the process and take ownership of and champion the final development.
- » Participants practice supporting and defending the development through their presentations of site plan elements.
- » Engage potential tenants, who will be supporters for the project through the entitlement (seeking of a zone change, etc.) and permitting process.

IN ACTION...

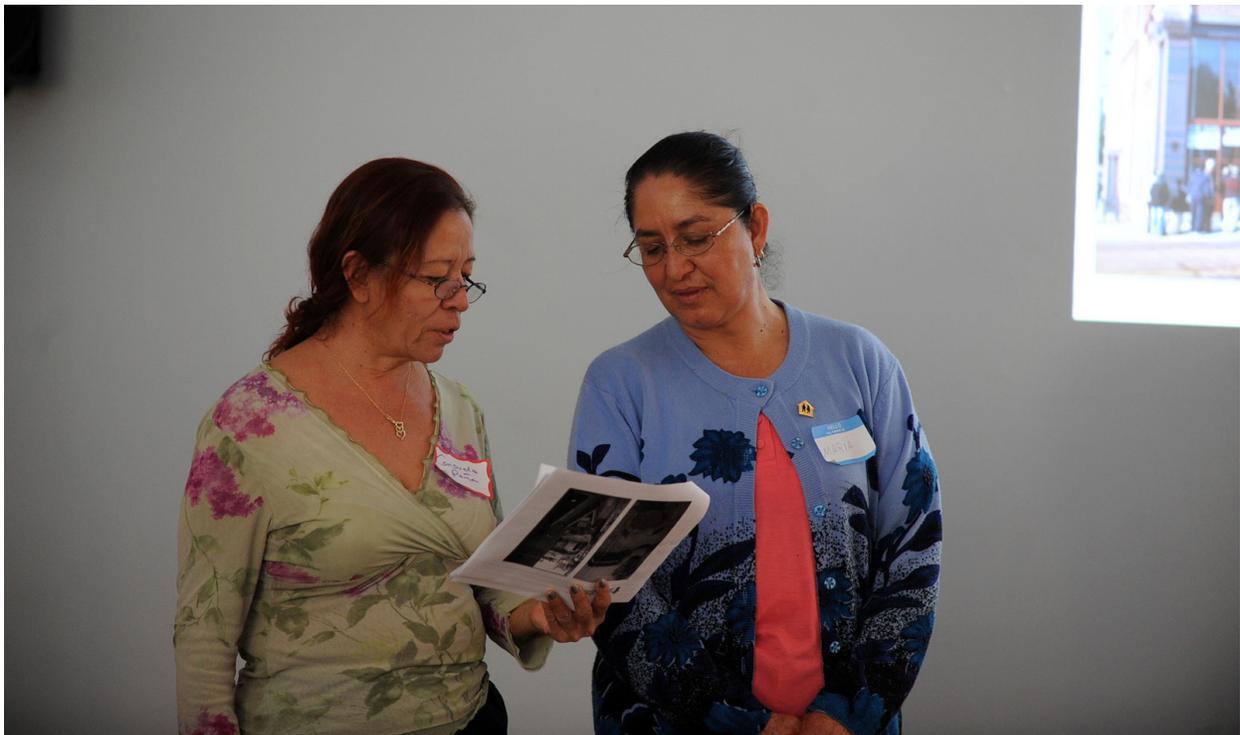
As part of our final workshop and celebration, this small group discussion was a way for us to wrap up our site planning process and turn the conversation toward the development timeline. Since this project will require the approval of several different boards and commissions, we wanted to make sure that a) participants were satisfied and excited about our process and the final development and b) that we were prepared as a group to defend the project through the entire development process. Unexpectedly, this small group activity turned into training for presenting/defending the project. It was successful in wrapping up the planning process. This small group discussion led directly into the 'Action Planning' activity, seen in the pages that follow.

COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

Over the course of the planning process, participants will develop ownership over both the process and the final development program. Developing an action plan can strengthen participant ownership beyond the term of the planning process, which builds a strong sense of community between participants and also prepares participants to advocate in support of projects during the permitting process and time construction.



Community Action Plan



Community Action Plan

Workshop



Once the final site plan has been presented, prepare participants to support the project and take ownership of the development process. Set up a piece of butcher paper so that participants can ‘sign-on’ to the project with their signature. This is especially important when you face potential opposition from city officials and other stakeholders who did not participate in the process. Additionally, this activity serves as a means to begin an organizing committee with tenants and as a way to continue to build a base for your organization.

Goals

- » Learn about the next steps in the development process and how to work together to ensure that redevelopment occurs
- » Receive written support from participants for the development.

Outcome

- » Advance an action plan to support the final site plan through the development timeline and any political or neighborhood hurdles you may encounter.

IN ACTION...

Directly following the discussion of the ‘Final Site Plan’ review activity, we had participants sign-on in support of our site plan for Rolland Curtis Gardens. As participants signed-on, they made a spoken pledge to the development, which was unplanned but highly emotional and powerful. Many of the participants who signed-on to the development plan agreed to meet before the end of the month to create the Neighborhood Organizing Committee that will shepherd the development plans through the City’s permitting and planning process. Our Neighborhood Organizing Committee has already testified in support of the development at several meetings since the completion of the plan.

Materials
14A: Community Action Plan Facilitator Guide



Through the development of our initial goals for participatory planning, we identified evaluation as one of the most important components of our process. We had two different evaluation processes: first, participants evaluated each workshop session that we hosted (see '15A: Workshop Evaluation Materials' in Appendix). Participant evaluation helped us improve the subsequent workshops. Second, directly after the final workshop in March 2013, the facilitation team reconvened to evaluate the entire process: from goal setting to action planning (see '15 B: Internal Evaluation Materials' in the Appendix). In our internal evaluation, we reviewed whether we had achieved our initial goals for the process (see 'Goals and Priorities' section, above) and whether the process helped us reach a final product: an innovative and viable site plan. By conducting internal evaluations throughout the process, we were able to reflect on what worked and what could have been changed for a more effective outcome. Evaluations of our work can be found in the "In Action" sections at the end of each workshop description.



Materials

15A: Workshop Evaluation Materials

15B: Internal Evaluation Materials

4

Final Site Plan and Elevations

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

After participants and stakeholders sign on to the vision for the development, prepare a presentation of visuals—architectural drawings, photos, and diagrams—and a written description of your proposed development to present in meetings with local officials, decision making bodies, conferences, and to community members. The following presentation is an example of the materials we compiled following the community-driven process that defined the rebuild of Rolland Curtis Gardens.

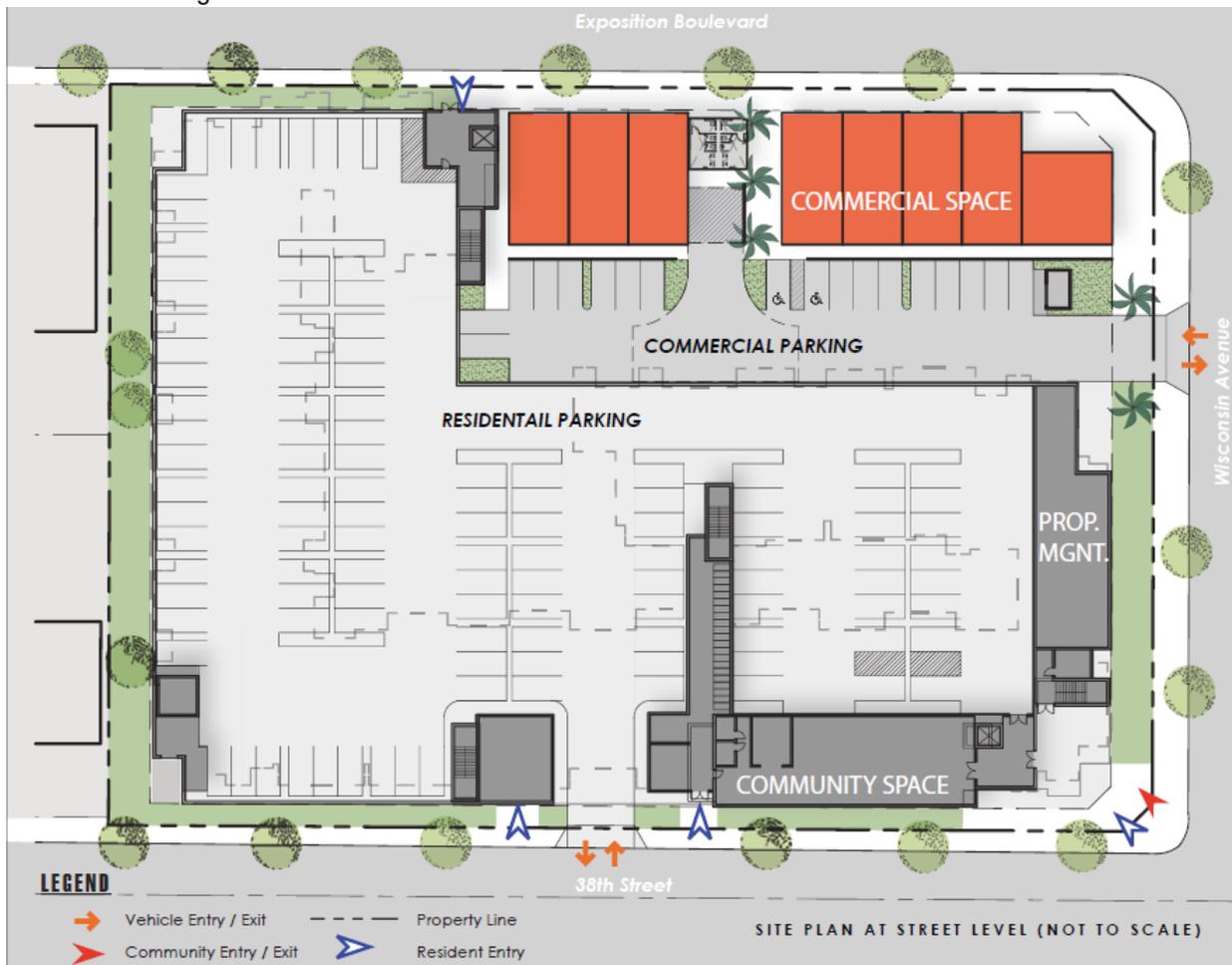
Residential Component (East & West Wing)

- » 140 affordable family 1-, 2-, & 3-bedroom units including 2 Managers Units,
- » \$24,840 - \$49,600/year/family of 4 (30-60% Area Median Income)
- » 114 vehicle parking spaces
- » 154 bicycle parking spaces
- » On-site property management office, community rooms, tot lot, laundry rooms, walking path, and bbq area

Commercial Component (East Wing)

- » 8,000 square feet
- » Proposed tenants: health clinic, nonprofit office space, and potential small business retail
- » 18 vehicle parking spaces, including 2 dedicated for car share
- » 10 bicycle parking spaces

Site Plan: Parking



Site Plan: Residential



4. FINAL SITE PLANS
AND ELEVATIONS

Corner of 38th Street and Wisconsin Street looking northwest



Corner of Wisconsin Street and Exposition Boulevard looking southwest



Corner of 38th Street and Wisconsin Street looking west



38th Street looking northeast



Resident Courtyard



5

**Future of the
Plan**

Following the conclusion of the participatory planning process for the redesign of Rolland Curtis Gardens, T.R.U.S.T. South LA and Abode Communities, with the support and leadership of the Expo/Vermont Neighbors Organizing Committee, engaged in the City’s land use and permitting approval. In order to accomplish the community vision for Rolland Curtis we sought several land-use and zoning changes, called entitlements from the City of Los Angeles, including but not limited to:

- » A General Plan amendment and zone change to change the current use from multi-family residential to community commercial allowing for increased density and commercial uses on the property.
- » Through the General Plan amendment and zone change we have also asked for street modifications to make the surrounding sidewalks more pedestrian friendly.
- » Additionally, by taking advantage of “off-menu” density bonus incentives, we have asked the Department of City Planning to allow for a 20% reduction in residential parking from 1:1 to .8:1 and to increase the allowable height.

Depending on the scale and degree of a particular request, different types of entitlements require varying levels of review. Some entitlements in Los Angeles require documentation and rationale for any requested land-use changes, to be reviewed by a hearing officer, the City Planning Commission, the Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) Committee of the City Council, to the Mayor’s office for a recommendation, put to a full City Council vote, and then to the Mayor’s Office for a final signature.

A successful entitlement application is assisted by support from local stakeholders and decision makers. The Expo/Vermont Neighbors Organizing Committee comprised of current Rolland Curtis Gardens Tenants, participants, and neighbors continue to advocate for the development by presenting to stakeholders, like the North Area Neighborhood Development Council (local neighborhood council), whose support throughout the entitlement and permitting period is critical to the success of Rolland Curtis Gardens. Furthermore, the Expo/Vermont Neighbors Organizing Committee meets regularly to discuss and promote their vision for the greater neighborhood.

The entitlement and permitting period will take up to 12 months to execute (June 2014) followed by the acquisition of Low-Income Housing Tax Credits from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to finance of the rebuild of Rolland Curtis Gardens. By March of 2017, we expect every unit of affordable housing and the commercial space at the new Rolland Curtis Gardens will be developed and leased.

Timeline

Submit Entitlements	September 2013
Submit to HCIDLA Managed Timeline	January 2014
Secure Entitlement	August 2014
Apply for Tax Credits	March 2015
Award for Tax Credits	July 2015
Begin Construction	December 2015
Complete Construction	August 2017
100% Occupancy	November 2017

POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The preservation and redevelopment of Rolland Curtis Gardens has strong political implications for the City of Los Angeles, the surrounding community, and even for the county and state. The genuine absence of political support, land-use mechanisms, and lack of government funding for the acquisition of land severely limits the preservation of affordable housing near transit. As one of the first large-scale affordable TODs in the neighborhoods South of downtown Los Angeles, communities throughout L.A., municipalities in other parts of the state, local organizations, and those out of state can learn from our experience and work to advance policies that encourage the preservation and development of new affordable housing near transit.

At the community level:

- » Our far-reaching community engagement process and documentation provides other developers and community based organizations with the tools to host their own planning processes in the hope that an ever increasing number of developments are designed in a participatory manner.
- » We built a popular education definition of Transit Oriented Development for neighborhood residents, based on definitions from partner organizations involved in equitable TOD campaigns as well as widely accepted industry definition of equitable TOD. Our definition combined architecture, urban planning, and community definitions of co-locating housing, commercial uses, jobs, and transit.

At the City-Wide level:

- » The redevelopment of Rolland Curtis Gardens will be the first large-scale affordable TOD on the Metro Expo Line, and will set precedent for developments nearby and transit communities throughout the city and country.
- » As the Los Angeles Department of City Planning rolls out its newest Community Plans with the first ever Community Plan Implementation Overlays (CPIO), newly developed zoning guidelines near transit will permit significantly higher density within a half-mile of new train stations. Rolland Curtis Gardens is poised to be the first development closely aligned with the CPIO for the South LA Community Plan, with both high density and protected affordable housing.
- » The community land trust ownership model at Rolland Curtis Gardens will ensure permanent community control of the land and therefore the affordability of rental housing in a transit rich neighborhood. Recent trends have shown that new developments near transit rent predominately at market rate or even luxury prices. Rolland Curtis Gardens aims to reverse this inequitable development pattern through the alternative land stewardship model of a partnership between Abode Communities (the developer and ‘owner’ of the building or improvements) and T.R.U.S.T. South LA, a community land trust which will own the land in perpetuity.
- » To support developments like Rolland Curtis Gardens, cities across the country need to adopt ‘No-net loss’ zones around transit. These zones would create requirements to maintain the same number of low-cost housing units for the same income levels through preservation or construction strategies. A ‘no net loss’ policy would limit the number of conversions from affordable to market rate housing near transit, ensuring that low-income families have access to reasonably priced homes, transportation, and jobs.

- » The rising cost of land near transit and therefore the increased challenge of acquiring property nearby, demands the implementation of ‘value capture’ strategies such as tax increment financing to generate crucial funding for affordable housing preservation and development in transit rich neighborhoods. For example, the City of Atlanta initiated “a tax allocation district (TAD)—which is expected to generate \$1.3 to \$1.7 billion over 25 years by capturing rising property tax revenues from selected properties along the new BeltLine corridor” (a current initiative which would build a light-rail system, parks and trails, and nodes of mixed-income, mixed use TOD along a 22-mile stretch of abandoned freight rail that encircles the city’s core). The Atlanta Land Trust Collaborative (ALTC), amplifies this funding through its unique structure as both an independent, citywide CLT and a central hub for neighborhood-based CLTs along the BeltLine, handling strategic planning and certain administrative functions.
- » Additional value is also added to property through land use/zoning changes, i.e. upzoning, which can be leveraged to provide benefits for the community, including the provision of affordable housing, open space, other community benefits. In Los Angeles, a newly passed specific plan called the Cornfield Arroyo Seco Specific Plan uses this form of value capture by keeping density low but encouraging developers to take advantage of the Affordable Housing Density Bonus program in California.

At the County level:

- » An additional impact of the statewide dissolution of redevelopment in 2012 has been the transfer of funding from the State to the County Level, called ‘boomerang funding’, part of which has been allocated to fund affordable housing in L.A. County. Rolland Curtis Gardens exemplifies the type of development that the newly acquired ‘boomerang funding’ should support, due to its alignment with Countywide and local transit orientation policy.

At the State level:

- » In California, the dissolution of redevelopment agencies eliminated the application of Tax Increment Financing for cities throughout the state. The current piecemeal approach to affordable housing development near transit is challenging both financially and in terms of its scale. New state policy could institute local administration of ‘value capture’ strategies, which would facilitate the development affordable housing near transit at a much larger scale than the current piecemeal approach.
- » The challenges we faced in the acquisition of funding for Rolland Curtis Gardens presents an opportunity to advocate for a permanent source of affordable housing financing in the wake of the dissolution of the CRA and with the exhaustion of previously approved statewide bond money. For instance, Prop 1C, passed in 2006, provided funding for affordable and market rate housing near TOD and Urban Infill until 2010. California needs to make a commitment to alternative forms of land tenure that decrease speculation and equitable transit oriented development.