LOS ANGELES PROMISE ZONE: 2015 ANNUAL REPORT
The Los Angeles Promise Zone evolved from a plan hatched far away, in the Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative of the Obama White House.

It took form when a group of advocates, philanthropists and local officials resolved to develop a competitive, cross-sector partnership to secure needed federal support.

It was born in January of 2014, when Mayor Garcetti traveled to the White House to take part in the announcement of the first five Promise Zones.

And in 2015, it took off. This was the year that the Promise Zone transformed from an intriguing plan, an impressive group, and a promising announcement into a partnership—a partnership that could reach out and change lives in Los Angeles.

This report offers a look at how 2015 found us out in the streets of the Promise Zone, introducing programs that would catalyze economic opportunities, prioritize public safety, jump-start educational adventures, and improve quality of life by making communities more livable.

This report is issued by the Promise Zone team in Mayor Garcetti’s Office of Economic Development, but the pages within bear witness to the astonishing work of our leadership team and our partners, who have wisdom and experience cultivated with years of impassioned advocacy and assistance inside the Zone and across Los Angeles. And it testifies to the efforts of our amazing team of Americorps VISTA members — which continues to grow.

We’re proud to share our work with you. And we’re grateful for the opportunity to carry this work forward into 2016—work that refuses to accept poverty as a life sentence, and that insists that our community’s most valuable resources can be found within.

Alison Becker, AICP
Director, LA Promise Zone
THE LOS ANGELES PROMISE ZONE: SUPPORTING PEOPLE IN PLACE

The Los Angeles Promise Zone is located just west of downtown Los Angeles, and includes parts of Hollywood, East Hollywood, Westlake, Pico-Union, and Wilshire Center, diverse neighborhoods that hum with the energy of over 165,000 residents, and home to many of LA’s cultural and historic treasures.

But the area faces significant challenges. A full 35 percent of Promise Zone residents live below the poverty line. Nearly 25 percent of Promise Zone households survive on less than $15,000 a year. Many families, recently arrived from Latin America, Asia, and Eastern Europe, face struggles common to new immigrants. Unemployment and limited affordable housing compound their challenges. Across the Promise Zone, over 35 percent of the population over age 25 have less than a high school diploma.

Tackling these challenges requires a powerful effort to bring people together to improve the city we share. The Promise Zone prioritizes four related goals: advancing economic opportunity, improving education, making neighborhoods safe, and building sustainable, livable places.

DIVERSE NEIGHBORHOODS THAT HUM WITH ENERGY
The LA Promise Zone is a collective impact project to fight urban poverty. It provides resources and leadership to the organizations – public, nonprofit, and community-based – that are making Central Los Angeles a better place to live, work and play.

President Obama has said that the zip code of a child’s birth should not determine her destiny. Overseen by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Promise Zone Initiative addresses poverty hotspots across the country. In January 2014, after Mayor Garcetti and a coalition of partner organizations submitted a standout application, President Obama designated Los Angeles as one of the first five urban Promise Zones in the nation.

That year, the City of Los Angeles established a Promise Zone office in City Hall and hired the program director. In the fall of 2014, AmeriCorps VISTA members joined the effort, and a liaison from HUD was assigned to help the LA Partnership navigate federal programs.

The LA Promise Zone is only as strong as its network of partners, who combat poverty at ground level. Throughout 2014 and 2015, the LA Promise Zone focused on building that network alongside lead implementation partner Youth Policy Institute (YPI). As of December 2015, over 50 local organizations have partnered with the LA Promise Zone, with 40 more expressing support for its goals.

Through the Promise Zone Initiative, partner organizations have successfully attracted over $100 million in federal grants to the LA area over the past two years. Under the guidance of a Leadership Council, made up of 17 key partners, the network invests these resources directly into communities in need.

During the year 2015, the LA Promise Zone evolved into a cohesive, effective coalition. We are leveraging large-scale investment in our neighborhood programs to unite the public, private and social sectors. We plan to make the most of this momentum in 2016.
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

To create economic opportunity on the ground, we provide access to job training, support small business and entrepreneurship, and help build family assets. Our network of nonprofits collaborates to provide targeted services to the local economy.

Promise Zone Priorities

Create a foundation for community opportunity
Bringing together the city, county, and social sectors, we ensure that neighborhood assets, like anchor institutions, transit infrastructure, and growing entertainment and hospitality sectors, offer equal opportunity to low-income residents.

Provide good jobs and skills
Through our job training programs, we provide high-demand, high-wage sectors with a skilled workforce. WorkSource Centers serve adult Promise Zone residents, while our YouthSource and Summer Youth Employment programs provide many students their first job.

Encourage small business and entrepreneurship
Helping small businesses and entrepreneurs become sustainable makes it easier for Promise Zone neighborhoods to compete. In addition to conventional businesses and start-ups, we assist the street vendors and other micro-entrepreneurs that make LA such a vibrant marketplace.

Build family assets
Our partners provide vital financial education and tools to help families save money, build good credit, and integrate into the U.S. financial system if they are newcomers.

Program Spotlight: VITA Clinics

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program offers free tax help to low-income individuals and families who may not know how much they can save through means such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). In 2015, our Promise Zone partner Koreatown Youth and Community Center (KYCC) received a $90,000 federal grant to provide VITA services in Koreatown and Central Los Angeles.

Since 2006, KYCC has provided over 12,000 families in the area with VITA services, successfully returning more than $9 million to the communities it serves since 2006. KYCC is a part of a city-wide network of VITA providers, including the Chinatown Service Center, East LA Community Corporation, Mexican American Opportunity Foundation, the Children's Institute and 19 City of Los Angeles FamilySource Centers. This year, Promise Zone's lead implementation partner Youth Policy Institute also received grant money to extend the VITA program.

“Low income families of Koreatown shouldn’t have to pay to get their taxes prepared, when there are free Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) services available at no cost.”

Audrey Casillas, Koreatown Youth and Community Center
Youth in the LA Promise Zone face serious challenges, resulting in a high dropout rate and a lack of readiness for college and career. Our partner organizations support students every step of the way, from early childhood through successful high school graduation and beyond. We are building upon our experience with the federal Promise Neighborhoods program, a cradle-to-college-and-career support model that served thousands of Promise Zone youth.

**Promise Zone Priorities**

**Improve school readiness**

Programs such as home visitation and early childhood education ensure preschool-age children enter the educational system ready to learn.

**Boost student success and raise graduation rates**

Transforming K-12 schools into Full Service Community Schools and offering enrichment programs, resource fairs, parent workshops, and referrals to a range of services can make all the difference for at-risk youth.

**Improve student preparedness for college and career**

Instead of penalizing students for truancy, we address the structural problems keeping them out of school. Promise Zone programs offer counseling and mental health services, and boost parental engagement to get students back on track.

**Increase college readiness, enrollment and graduation**

Community responsibility doesn't end at graduation. Whether they go to college or join the workforce, students need practical advice as they take next steps. We reach students in high school and show them paths toward college or a GED and job training.

**Program Spotlight: LA-Philadelphia Partnership**

In 2015, LA Promise Zone expanded its collaboration with AmeriCorps as part of the nation’s first Promise Zones partnership. Out of a group of 50 AmeriCorps members, 25 joined the West Philadelphia Promise Zone and 25 came to LA. With YPI as their lead agency, these AmeriCorps members provide after-school support to decrease dropout rates and boost college enrollment.

The two cities share a federal grant of nearly $2 million, and will exchange best practices on motivating at-risk students. The partnership is an exciting test case for multi-state efforts among the Promise Zones. At the end of the first program year, AmeriCorps members in LA expect at least 75% of their students to advance to the next grade level or graduate into postsecondary options. An additional 208 AmeriCorps members support Promise Zone programs.
NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY

Crime holds neighborhoods back. The LA Promise Zone develops community partnerships based on mutual trust between public officials and the communities they serve. It can be easier for residents to get around, for students to get to school and stay out of gangs, and for the homeless to find a way back inside. Programs under the federal Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Program mediate youth conflicts and coordinate safe passage to school.

**Promise Zone Priorities**

**Address public safety and quality of life concerns**
Community partnerships with anchor institutions can prevent crime. The Promise Zone supports the LA City Attorney Neighborhood Prosecutor Program, which works with community organizations to identify trouble spots.

**Keep youth out of gangs**
Our goal is to expand gang prevention programs to 19 schools in the Promise Zone. Building on success in our Rampart Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD) Zone in Westlake, we are planning another GRYD zone to be located in Hollywood.

**Get students to school safely**
Through mentoring and after-school programs, we increase positive interactions between youth and the LAPD. To get students to school safely, we aim to expand the safe passages program and calm traffic around school sites.

**Spotlight: Reentry**
When at-risk youth and young adults return from probation camps and jails, recidivism often lands them back in the justice system. LA Promise Zone partners work to guide these vulnerable young people toward a productive role in society. Transformative mentoring helps them develop job skills, advance their educations, and find sustainable employment.

**Spotlight: Performance Partnership Pilots for Disconnected Youth**
Whether wrestling with the instability of the foster system, a dysfunctional family background, or homelessness, many young people between ages 14 and 24 find themselves out of school and out of work. The Performance Partnership Pilots for Disconnected Youth Initiative coordinates between LA City, LA County, LAUSD, LACCD, and smaller organizations to identify and support these disconnected youth through public and nonprofit partner programs supported by a $700,000 federal grant.

“There are few things more meaningful or impactful than giving young people new opportunities to achieve and second chances to succeed. The Performance Partnership Pilot will enable L.A. to show the nation how we can strengthen service delivery to our most vulnerable youth — through stronger partnerships, and by breaking down jurisdictional boundaries.”

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti
The LA Promise Zone initiative is dedicated to making the Promise Zone a better place to live and work. Our partnership implements planning solutions to problems involving homelessness, mobility, housing, public space, diversity, and health.

**Promise Zone Priorities**

Reduce and End Local Homelessness
Specific efforts targeting at-risk youth include drug abuse interventions, mental health support services, ticket clinics, and education opportunities designed for young people on the streets.

Preserve, Maintain & Expand Supply of Affordable Housing
Expand housing options
Residents often make do with dilapidated housing stock. Affordable options are few. And Los Angeles’s dire housing situation leaves far too many on the streets. Our partnership works to prevent displacement, preserve at-risk affordable housing units, and ensure existing units are up to code. The federal Choice Neighborhoods program is developing targeted strategies to improve distressed housing, access to services, and neighborhood mobility.

Focus Resources on Sustainable Neighborhood Infrastructure
Provide equitable transportation solutions
We promote high-quality transit and transit-oriented development accessible to low-income communities. We support bike-share, Car Share, and the extension of bike lanes in the Promise Zone.

Develop effective public spaces.
We focus resources on neighborhood commercial districts, parks, and public spaces. We prioritize green infrastructure and strategies to make spaces safe and family-oriented.

Celebrate and capitalize on diversity.
Our partners use a variety of events and place-making strategies to attract visitors and develop awareness around the Promise Zone’s unique cultural treasures.

**Spotlight:**

**Mapping Cultural Treasures**

The LA Promise Zone is an arts hotspot, hosting a vibrant contemporary scene and diverse cultural landmarks. In 2015, the City of LA Department of Cultural Affairs received a federal grant (NEA Our Town) to fund Promise Zone Arts (PZA), a cultural asset mapping program designed to further the Promise Zone’s four program areas – especially community livability. PZA partners include the Alliance for California Traditional Arts and LA Commons.

PZA will identify local artists and cultural events, compiling a Cultural Treasures Directory and holding community events to boost awareness of artistic innovation in overlooked places.

“L.A.’s greatest strength is its human capital. Our artists fuel creativity in L.A., and with this project, we want to invest in the creative output of people that reflect the cultural diversity of our Promise Zone neighborhoods.”

—Danielle Brazell, Department of Cultural Affairs’ General Manager
2015 GRANTS IN THE PROMISE ZONE

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

- KYCC: Low Income Taxpayer Clinic - $85,000. Awarded 10/1/2015.


SUSTAINABLE & LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

- LACOE: HHS Partnership to Improve Community Health - $3,600,000. Awarded 11/9/2015.
- The City of Los Angeles-Department of Cultural Affairs: NEA Our Town - $200,000. Awarded 7/15/2015.

PARTNERSHIP OPERATIONS


EDUCATION


THE PROMISE ZONE COALITION

LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Central City Neighborhood Partners
Veronica Olmos-McDonnell
Central American Resource Center
Eric Mendoza
Children’s Institute
Zully Chan
First 5 LA
Leanne Negron
Heart of Los Angeles
Tony Brown
Hollywood Beautification Team
Sharyn Romano
Hollywood WorkSource Center
Philip Starr
LA Food Policy Council
Clare Fox
Local Initiative Support Corporation
Tunua Thrash-Ntuk
Los Angeles Community College
Thelma Day
Los Angeles Unified School District
Angela Hewlett-Bloch
Public Counsel
Will Watts
Salvadoran American Leadership and Educational Fund
Carlos Vaquerano
Thai Community Development Corporation
Chancee Martorell
USC Sol Price Center for Social Innovation
Gary Painter
Youth Policy Institute
Dixon Slingerland, Leadership Council Chair

PARTNERS

826LA
Alma Community Outreach
Archdiocesan Youth Employment Services
ArtSpace
ArtworxLA
Aviva Family and Children's Services
Boys and Girls Club of Hollywood
Central American Resource Center
Central City Neighborhood Partners
Central Hollywood Neighborhood Council
Children’s Hospital Los Angeles
Children’s Institute Inc.
City Year Communities in Schools
Create Now
DreamFutures Institute
Earth Echo International
East Hollywood Neighborhood Council
First 5 LA
Friends of the Hollywood Central Park
GEAR UP 4 LA
GO! Goldman Organization
Heart of Los Angeles
Hollywood Beautification Team
Hollywood Community Housing Corporation
Korean Churches for Community Development
Koreatown Youth and Community Center
L.A.C.E.R Afterschool Programs
Levitt Pavilion Los Angeles
Local Initiatives Support Corporation

“We’ve really enjoyed seeing the impact of our veterans’ service in the Promise Zone community. Our volunteers really enjoyed their tree planting project with the Los Angeles Beautification Team, and I personally loved the mosaic we made. We are excited for many future projects together!”

—Regan Turner, The Mission Continues
“MY FAVORITE MEMORY OF THE PROMISE ZONE IN 2015 IS CUTTING THE RIBBON ON CARLTON WAY PARK WITH COUNCILMEMBER MITCH O’FARRELL AND DOZENS OF HOLLYWOOD COMMUNITY MEMBERS!”

—Robin Mark
The Trust for Public Land

“CARECEN WAS PROUD TO HOST THE CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS, JANE CHU, ALONG WITH OTHER DIGNITARIES AND LEADERS OF ARTS ORGANIZATIONS IN CALIFORNIA AND PROMISE ZONE PARTNERS, AND TO SHARE THE HISTORY OF THE JUDY BACA MURAL IN OUR CENTER THAT REFLECTS THE STRUGGLE OF THE CENTRAL AMERICAN COMMUNITY.”

—Eric Mendoza, CARECEN
It takes a village to move a collective impact project forward. The following individuals have helped to advance the work this year:

**PZ OPERATIONS TEAM**

2014-15
- Sahira Barajas
- Vanessa de La Rosa
- Alyx Goodwin
- Louie Leiva
- Melody Ng
- Jackie Guerrero

2015-2016
- Stephanie Mkhlian
- Rudy Rodriguez
- Shepperson Wilbun
- Keegan McChesney

**PZ IMPLEMENTATION TEAM**

- Alison Becker
- Martha Nemecek
- Angelica Solis
- Erich Yost

**CONSULTANTS**

- Emily Riesner, Chris Kennon, Mike Murphy at BrandIQ
- Ron Milam, Ron Milam Associates
- Josh Kamensky, Leighton Woodhouse and Philip Rojc at Smogtown Strategies

**SUPPORTERS**

- Citi Community Development - Partners in Progress Program
- Office of Mayor Eric Garcetti
- Goldhirsh Foundation - LA2050 Challenge
- Mayor’s Fund for Los Angeles
- Youth Policy Institute

“I’ve learned how elaborate the collaborative map of agencies needs to be, and how important it is that we all work together.”

—Aviva Family and Children’s Services

“I’ve learned the great benefit of working together; organizing each other’s efforts towards the common goal of making our neighborhoods the most livable places.”

—Peru Village LA

“The importance of follow-through with partnerships.”

—Heart of Los Angeles