

# SLAUSON BLUE LINE STATION Transit Oriented Development

Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) Program



Los Angeles

September 2010

## About the ULI Los Angeles Technical Assistance Panel

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

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

### Staff and Panel Members

#### TAP Client

County of Los Angeles  
Department of Regional Planning

#### Panel Chair

Jonathan Watts  
Principal, Cuningham Group

#### Panelists

Ryan Aubry  
Sr. Consultant, Kosmont Companies

Brent Gaulke  
Vice President, Acquisitions/Development,  
Gerding Edlen

Taylor Mammen  
Vice President, RCLCO

Sunil Parab  
Project Architect, HNTB

Paul Silvern  
Partner, HR&A Advisors, Inc.

#### TAP Committee Chair

Jonathan Curtis  
Principal, Trevear Holdings LLC

#### TOD Summit TAP Advisor

Robert Gardner  
Managing Director, RCLCO

#### ULI Project Staff

Katherine Perez  
Executive Director, ULI Los Angeles

Christine Aure  
Project Manager, ULI Los Angeles

Ciara Contreras  
Project Manager, ULI Los Angeles

Stephen Sampson  
Intern, ULI Los Angeles

John Dlugolecki  
Photographer

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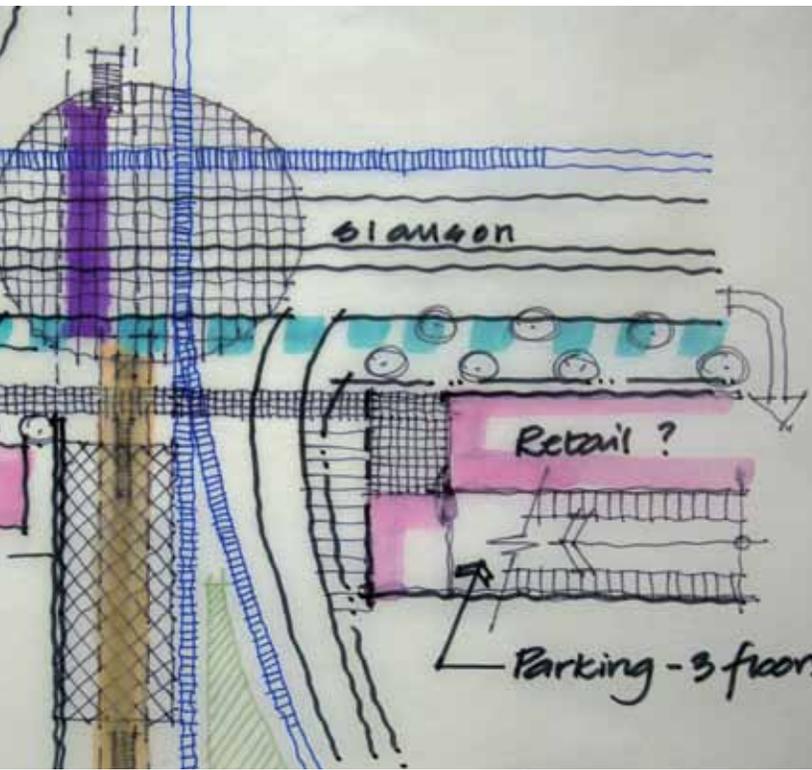


## Executive Summary

The Metro Blue line opened in 1990 and has 22 stations along its 22-mile long route from downtown Los Angeles south to downtown Long Beach. When it first opened, many believed the Blue Line could serve as a potential economic catalyst for many South Los Angeles communities that had suffered years of disinvestment and economic stagnation. Twenty years later, certain stations along the Blue Line have seen little economic redevelopment, and expectations for community revitalization in these areas has not been realized.

The Slauson Station in the unincorporated community of Florence-Firestone is one site that has failed to benefit from economic redevelopment or community revitalization from the Blue Line's presence. The Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning engaged the Urban Land Institute (ULI) Los Angeles District Council in a Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) to study ways to maximize development opportunities for the Slauson Station and surrounding community. The TAP was convened at Lillian Street Elementary School on February 19, 2010, utilizing experts in architecture, planning, development, and market economics to determine the main challenges and opportunities, offer solutions, and develop a roadmap for success for the Slauson Station.

The TAP evaluated the area within a half mile radius around the Slauson Station, encompassing an area the County established through its zoning code in 1999 as a Transit Oriented District (TOD), and found numerous opportunities and challenges. The Blue Line and Slauson Station connects the neighborhood to major job centers and regional destinations such as downtown Los Angeles to the north and downtown Long Beach to the south, and the TAP found



that community stakeholders are engaged and have a vested interest in the area's improvement. However, the Station's above grade boarding platform, the unusual mix of uses in the study area, the barrier of Slauson Avenue itself, the apparent lack of coordination between agencies, and safety issues are tremendous challenges for the Station's success and the community's revitalization around it.

The TAP members believe the Slauson Station can be improved and that the station area can become a revitalizing catalyst for the Florence-Firestone community. The TAP's vision for the enhanced Slauson Station includes:

- A multimodal hub that provides a safe, convenient transit facility to connect from one mode of transportation to another. This hub will encourage transit ridership by making it more attractive to commuters and discretionary users within and surrounding the TOD;
- Improved pedestrian connections to adjacent neighborhoods throughout the TOD will encourage transit ridership by providing safe and convenient walking options;
- Immediate and comprehensive safety measures that will increase ridership and usability of the station and will encourage new development activities in the area;
- Establishment of an industrial business improvement district;
- Development of parking at the station; and,
- A phased plan for targeted development activities.



## Assignment & Process

### Key Issues

In the absence of redevelopment activities that would spark community revitalization efforts, the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning requested that a TAP be convened to study the reasons why the Slauson Station has not stimulated new development and to offer ideas and a plan for future investment and development.

The Department of Regional Planning identified the following objectives the TAP should consider while addressing the future of the Slauson Station and surrounding community:

1. Examine strategies to maximize the full potential of the Slauson Station TOD to establish transit and pedestrian supportive development, improve pedestrian access to transit facilities, improve public safety, retain and enhance its job producing capacity, and reduce congestion, vehicle miles traveled, and greenhouse gas emissions.
2. Consider a strategy to meet the Station's potential through coordinated efforts by the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation, Metro, the County of Los Angeles, the cities of Los Angeles, Vernon, and Huntington Park, private and nonprofit developers, and community residents.

The Department of Regional Planning requested that the TAP consider the following key issues when studying the Blue Line Slauson Station:

- The need to create a vision for the Slauson Station TOD;
- The lack of investment and development in the TOD;
- Improving access to the above-grade, raised train platform;
- How to integrate the current mix of industrial uses in a Station Area Plan;
- Improving public safety around the station and in the TOD;
- The need for job creation and economic investment in the community;
- Improving urban design for aesthetic and safety reasons;
- Improving infrastructure; and,
- Identifying potential funding mechanisms.

## TAP Process

ULI representatives met with representatives from the Department of Regional Planning to determine the scope of the panel assignment. The panel members were selected based upon their ability to address the stated objectives for the program provided by the client. Prior to the day-long program, panel members reviewed background materials prepared by the Department of Regional Planning.

The TAP process is a day-long event. In the morning panel members tour the study area with representatives and later meet with key stakeholders, work through an intensive analysis on the specified issues, and present their findings to the general public.



TAP members examining Slauson Station and surrounding area

## TAP Panel of Experts

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



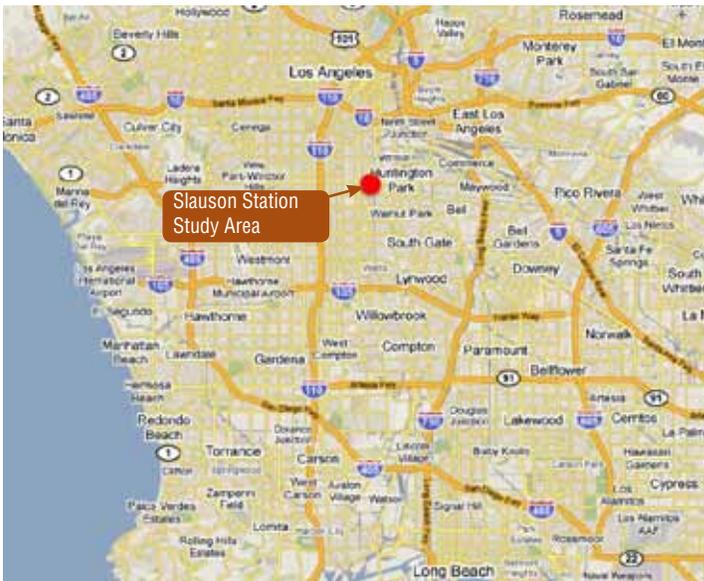
Lillian Street Elementary School—site where the Slauson Blue Line Station TAP was convened



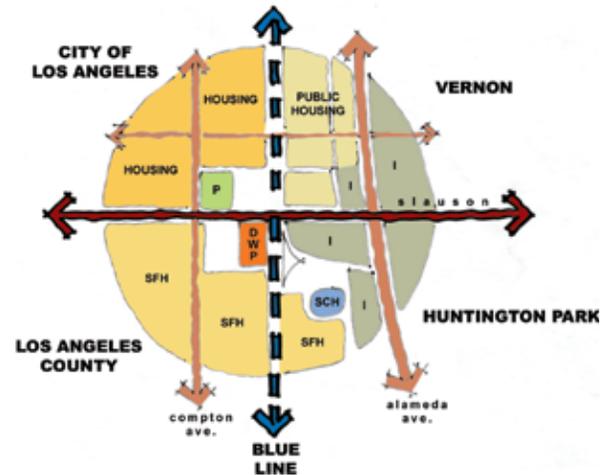
View looking west along Slauson Avenue toward Slauson Blue Line Station

## Background

The Slauson Station TOD has seen little development activity since its inception, signaling a need for more aggressive policy actions. The Department of Regional Planning believes that the work of the ULI Los Angeles District Council TAP will create a successful plan to



Regional location of Slauson Station study area



make the Slauson Station TOD a model for transit oriented development in Los Angeles County. The TAP utilized best practices of transit oriented development and the expertise of its members to evaluate the conditions of the Slauson Station TOD and to formulate the recommendations of this report.

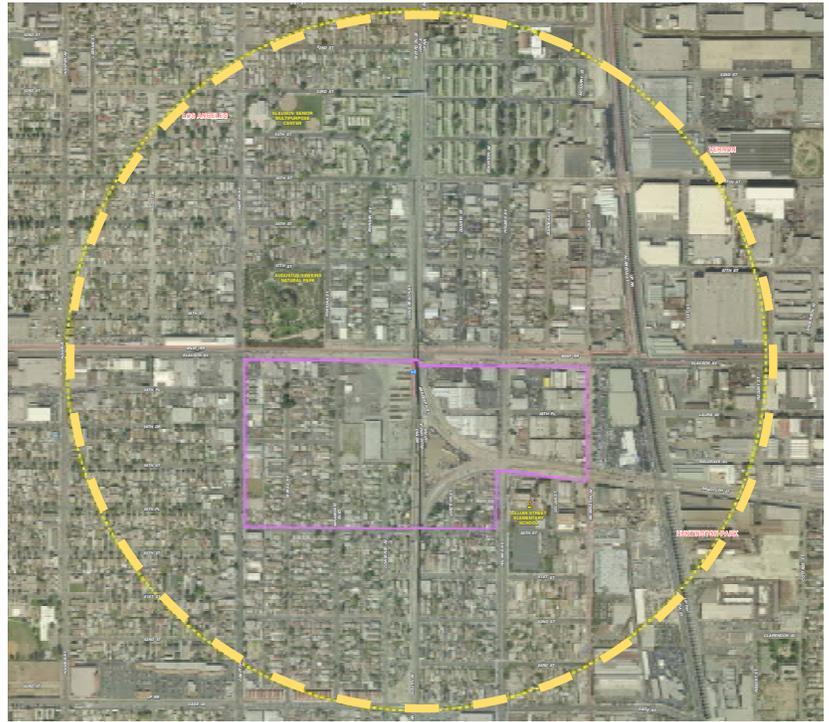
The Slauson Blue Line Station is located in the unincorporated community of Florence-Firestone at the intersection of East Slauson Avenue and Randolph Street. While the existing Slauson Station TOD is wholly within



Industrial use along Slauson Avenue

unincorporated Los Angeles County, the station's half mile radius study area is located at the convergence of several jurisdictional boundaries including the City of Los Angeles to the north and west and the cities of Vernon and Huntington Park to the east. The Slauson Avenue corridor is also a part of the Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Los Angeles (CRA/LA) Council District Nine Corridors Recovery Redevelopment Project Area.

Within the half mile radius of the Slauson Station, the land uses are predominantly light industrial and mixed residential. The 9.2 acre parcel adjacent to the west of the station is owned by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP) and is used as a utility storage yard. The slightly smaller triangular 6.8 acre parcel adjacent to the east of the station is owned by Union Pacific and is used for tractor trailer storage. The parcels directly to the north and east of the station along Slauson Avenue are light industrial uses that continue east into the City of Huntington Park. The majority of the



Half mile radius study area for the Slauson Blue Line Station

remaining parcels to the south and west of the station are zoned for multifamily residential uses, however, these parcels are mostly developed with single-family residences.

The Slauson Station is well served by six Metro Bus Lines that include the 55, 355 (Limited), 108, 110, 358 (Limited), and 611 (Huntington Park Shuttle). However, the Slauson Station lacks bike connections. The nearest classified bike route is along 51st Street in the City of Los Angeles, which is outside the half mile radius study area. Though bike racks are available for use by transit riders at the station platform they get minimal use due to safety and crime issues in the area.

There are two recreational facilities within the study area: the Slauson Senior Multipurpose Center and the Augustus F. Hawkins Natural Park. The Augustus



Bus routes serving the area



Existing Slauson Station TOD and station-adjacent parcels



View along the east side of Slauson Station

F. Hawkins Natural Park was acquired by the City of Los Angeles from the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. It is a well maintained 8.5 acre park with lush green plants and walking paths. The park provides much needed green space for the region and the local community, but it lacks a visible connection to the street and the rail station.

### History of the Metro Blue Line

The Metro Blue Line is a north-south light-rail line in the Los Angeles County Metro Rail System connecting downtown Los Angeles to downtown Long Beach. The Blue Line is the oldest and longest rail line in the Metro Rail system, and is the second busiest light rail line in the United States, averaging around 80,000 weekday boardings. The Blue Line opened in 1990 at a cost of \$877 million. The line runs in the median of city streets in Downtown Los Angeles and in much of Long Beach proper, and for the most part was built along the former Pacific Electric Railway alignment.

### County of Los Angeles Transit Oriented Development Initiative along the Metro Blue Line

The Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning began a program in 1996 to develop and implement transit oriented development at four Metro Blue Line Stations in the unincorporated communities of Florence-Firestone and Willowbrook. Focusing on the geographic areas within one quarter to one half mile radius of the Blue Line Stations, the County prepared the Land Use and Economic Development Strategies Blue Line Transit Oriented District Study (Blue Line Strategy

Report), which provided the overall land use vision, development goals, and objectives for the four Blue Line Stations and surrounding neighborhoods. The Blue Line Strategy Report laid the foundation for the adoption of the Transit Oriented Districts (TOD) Ordinance in 1999 (Part 8, Section 22.44.400) to establish the Slauson Station TOD and three others along the Blue Line. The intent of the TOD Ordinance is to promote transit oriented and pedestrian oriented development, to increase transit use, to manage traffic congestion, and to improve air quality.

### County of Los Angeles Transit Oriented Districts Program

The Department of Regional Planning is completing a comprehensive update to the County's General Plan. The General Plan Update includes the proposed Transit Oriented Districts Program, which is a major component of the County's regional strategy to increase affordable, multifamily housing opportunities. The Program is also intended to meet local and State climate change goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality through land use and transportation strategies that are pedestrian friendly and reduce vehicle miles traveled. The Program further demonstrates the County's commitment to community and economic development through smart growth.



View looking north from Slauson Station

## Demographics and Employment

The demographic and economic conditions surrounding the Slauson Station help describe important real estate development opportunities and constraints for the area. In other words, the population, household, and employment characteristics of the area within one half mile of the station, within the context of broader area and metropolitan trends, are the important drivers of market demand for housing, retail, and employment land uses. Evaluating the housing, retail, and employment land use supply, specifically in terms of identifying any gaps or surpluses between demand and supply further helps identify specific opportunities to successfully encourage private sector participation in developing transit oriented development uses at the Slauson Station.

Demographers estimate that approximately 13,000 people live within one half mile of the Slauson Station, indicating a relatively high population density of 26 persons per gross acre. The population has grown slightly since 2000, when the estimated population was approximately 12,000. At an average of 4.6 persons per household, local households are significantly larger than the city average of 2.9 persons per household. Local households also have lower than average incomes; the median household income for the Slauson Station half-mile radius study area is \$31,000. These demographic conditions therefore describe a relatively congested neighborhood with potentially limited income capacity to support new real estate development.

The Slauson Station area features relatively high job density as well, with an estimated 3,400 jobs. Approximately one-third (1,030) of these jobs are in manufacturing, which is not surprising given the industrial land uses in the eastern portion of the area, but a remarkably high figure given the region's declining industrial base. Retail jobs come second (850 jobs), dominated by auto dealers and gas stations, apparel and accessory stores, and home furniture and equipment. The industrial employers located in the area generally have little connection to local residents and have not been involved in community development and revitalization efforts.

## Analysis



Industrial use in Slauson Station study area

Local residents report that most of their working neighbors commute to jobs located elsewhere in the region, such as downtown Los Angeles, Vernon, Huntington Park, or Long Beach, rather than to jobs in the immediate vicinity. The current recession has been hard on local residents. Based on interviews with stakeholders, the TAP estimates that the unemployment rate for the Florence-Firestone community to be between 17 to 19 percent, with many more households suffering from “underemployment” as well.

### Residential Market Conditions

In addition to industrial uses, residential uses dominate the study area and generally feature single-family units on small lots, often with accessory dwelling units. Between 67% and 73% of residents are renters, and the area features a relatively high occupancy rate of 93%. Demographers estimate the area's median home value to be \$248,280, or eight times the median income. According to actual sales data, however, the median value of homes sold in the area during 2009 was lower, closer to \$160,000 (approximately \$120 to \$130 per square foot). No matter which amount more accurately describes the value of homes in the area, it is likely that most residents who rent could not afford to purchase the homes they live in.

The gap between housing purchase power and housing prices for existing homes, and new units explains why there has been relatively little housing development in recent years. Only 12 new residential units (1 single-family, 4 duplexes and 1 triplex) and one service station have been built in the Slauson Station TOD since its establishment in 1999. Even during the historically high peak of the recent



Housing built since establishment of Slauson Station TOD

real estate cycle, only one residential development took place within the larger study area—32 new market and affordable detached single family units along Gage Avenue between Compton and Converse. Developed on an abandoned railroad right-of-way three years ago, this project benefited from, and was likely only possible, due to the financing provided by the Community Development Commission of the County of Los Angeles (LACDC).

It is likely that residential development as part of a transit oriented development strategy for the Slauson Station TOD will probably occur only over the long term following an established record of primarily public investment in the area, particularly immediately around the station. Even when the residential real estate market stabilizes and begins to grow, public assistance of some form to residential developers will likely be necessary to facilitate development.

### Retail Market Conditions

Relatively few retail stores were observed when visiting the study area. It is possible that many “retail” jobs are potentially located in industrial land uses in which both manufacturing or assembling and sales to the general public take place.



New commercial center at Gage and Compton Avenues

While there is limited retail in the Slauson Station TOD study area, new high quality retail strip centers are located nearby. This includes a new retail center at the northwest corner of Compton Avenue and Gage Avenue, which is about three quarters of a mile from the Slauson Station, as well as the La Alameda Center at the southwest corner of Alameda Boulevard and Florence Avenue, a little more than a mile from the station. Both centers include well known national retailer tenants. Grocery stores are notably absent within one mile of the Slauson Station, and those that do exist one mile beyond the station are primarily discount grocers such as Superior Groceries and Food 4 Less. Even given this limited supply of local retail, local household expenditures likely limit new retail development potential.

Opportunities may exist for new retail to capture consumers along the heavily traveled Slauson Avenue. There may also be opportunities for niche retailers such as Latino grocers or artisans. In the recent economic downturn, retailers have been hit very hard and are likely to be extremely cautious regarding future expansion plans, and new stores are most likely to be built in areas considered to be prime locations. Therefore, the Slauson Station TOD, with its lower incomes and perceived crime, is



Commercial use at Slauson and Compton Avenues



Local retail along Compton Avenue

going to have a difficult time attracting major retailers to open new stores.

In addition to the lack of grocery stores, sit-down restaurants are also sparse in the Slauson Station TOD study area. Given the high population and job density of the neighborhood there are a number of successful food trucks operating on vacant lots and gas station sites along Slauson Avenue. Some of these locations include extensive outdoor bench seating, some covered by tents. These “pop-up” restaurant locations help to improve safety in the areas in which they are located by providing “eyes on the street” of the operators and customers. Their presence may also help to support a given location’s viability for a future brick and mortar restaurant location. With retail development limited for the near- to medium-term, integrating food truck parking or other “pop-up” retail in the immediate vicinity of the Slauson Station may serve to increase pedestrian traffic and improve the perceived safety of the area. It is important to note that local policies and perceptions regarding food trucks are politically sensitive and may change. The panel members see this as a location where there are few local restaurants operating and it would benefit from the presence of food trucks in the short term to activate the street.

### Industrial Market Conditions

The study area’s local industrial market, located near the boundary of the Central Los Angeles and Vernon industrial submarkets, is comprised of smaller, diverse users and is reflective of the industrial patterns in the Florence-Firestone community. This is primarily a result of the irregularly sized industrial parcels in the study area, as well as aging production capacity. Heavy industrial activities are common in the area, including dangerous and noxious uses, as well as small manufacturing, recycling, metal



A recycling center on the north side of Slauson Avenue



Industrial use in Slauson Station study area

fabrication, and low-level garment shops. Current and future users value the local industrial market assets of proximity to downtown Los Angeles and relatively less regulated environment.

Despite the upheaval in the commercial real estate industry locally and nationwide, the Central Los Angeles market maintains a 3.3 percent vacancy rate indicating the structural lack of industrial supply. There is a strong demand for warehouse and distribution space throughout the greater Los Angeles region due to activity from the Los Angeles and Long Beach ports. Despite the current recession in which port activity has declined precipitously, demand for strategically located infill distribution space is still relatively strong.

The small parcels and aging buildings immediately around the Slauson Station do not accommodate users that may require space in excess of 100,000 square feet. The 204-acre Goodyear Tract, located three quarters of a mile west of the Slauson Station, has the potential to be redeveloped for such uses. It is located in the City of Los Angeles and within a CRA/LA redevelopment project area and has been a focus of the City’s and CRA/LA’s initiative to attract cleantech manufacturing to Los Angeles. Whether distribution or cleantech manufacturing jobs end up on the Goodyear Tract, the Slauson Station may benefit as the nearest Metro Blue Line Station.



## Findings

A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis was conducted to evaluate the Slauson Station and surrounding community. Strengths and weaknesses explore internal aspects of the project or elements that can be controlled or changed by new development. Opportunities and threats evaluate external influences that can affect the project. Most opportunities and threats are beyond the control of those associated with the project, such as factors relating to the economy like interest rates or loan availability. From the site visit, stakeholder interviews, and additional site research, the TAP determined the following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the Slauson Station TOD study area.

### Strengths

The Slauson Station connects the community to major job centers and regional destinations in both downtown Los Angeles and Long Beach. There is an established and engaged residential community that is a part of the station area that would like to see improvements in the community. Particular strengths from a market perspective include the station area, a centralized cluster of light industrial jobs, and the proximity to the Alameda Corridor and the 101 Freeway.

### Weaknesses

The Slauson Station TOD half mile radius study area is governed by fractured leadership and is regulated by a multitude of jurisdictions with little or no coordinated planning efforts. The complex jurisdictional environment of the study area presents challenges to holistically plan for and encourage development. The elevated station does not help to create a sense of place. The station area feels constrained and there is limited accessibility for pedestrians due to narrow sidewalks and a lack of nearby crosswalks. Also, while the open space amenity offered by the Augustus F. Hawkins Natural Park is in close proximity to the station, easy pedestrian access is difficult and anecdotally, the TAP members learned that there is limited usage by local residents due to the park's lack of active recreation spaces, such as soccer fields or basketball courts. Weak market conditions are a liability for the area, particularly when combined with low population growth, low household spending, and low overall demand. The juxtaposition of residential and industrial land uses poses a challenge in accommodating transit oriented development.

There is insufficient demographic and economic growth data available for the area. A developer or investor group would not be able to determine the feasibility of investing or locating in the area.



Industrial use in Slauson Station study area

Based on stakeholder interviews and additional research, this TOD area is low on the priority list for the County as well as the other adjacent jurisdictions, in part because of the lack of communication and interagency coordination for the area. Involvement by Union Pacific and the City of Los Angeles DWP is unclear for the parcels directly south and west of the station.



Vibrant street life is a hallmark of good transit oriented development

### Opportunities

The high vehicular traffic and bus stops along Slauson Avenue supports intermodal connectivity to the station. The Metro Blue Line has high ridership numbers, but boarding and exiting numbers at the Slauson Station are comparably lower than at other Blue Line stations. There is an opportunity to increase boarding at the Slauson Station by providing safe parking and a safe, clean station. These simple steps could be the catalyst for new TOD development. From a physical standpoint, the station area has opportunities for improved residential connectivity that would further encourage residents to walk to the station. With the density of people living in the immediate area, increasing connectivity to the station would lead to a potential increase in ridership and create the opportunity for housing redevelopment in specific areas. An increase in transit users at Slauson station would also provide opportunities for new local-serving retail. Based on discussions from stakeholder interviews, there appears to be a strong sense of community pride, which bodes well for future projects that engage the community.



DWP parcel adjacent to Slauson Station



Augustus F. Hawkins Natural Park

Fostering dialogue and coordination between CRA/LA, the surrounding cities and the County would lead to a more comprehensive and integrated approach for the future of the station. Coordination with DWP and Union Pacific to facilitate ground leases on their station-adjacent parcels could result in new revenue sources for those entities. The DWP parcel provides a tremendous opportunity to create much of the necessary parking, ticketing and retail envisioned for the station.



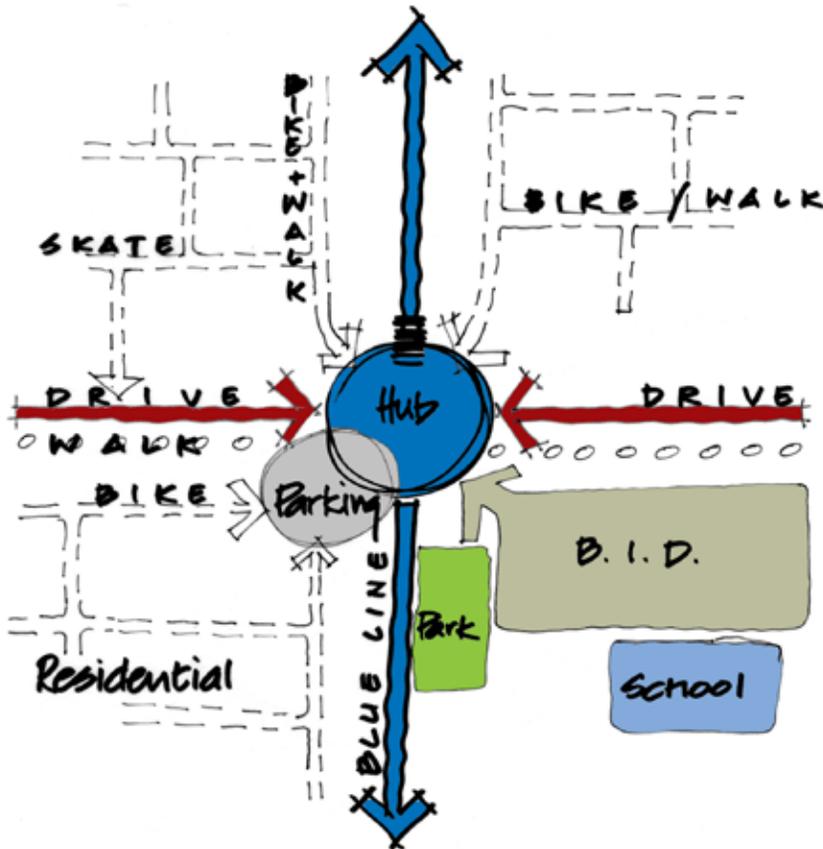
Littered vacant land east of Slauson Station

### Threats

Elements that pose a threat to future development of the Slauson Station TOD study area include the economy and the prolonged after effects of the recession. Coordination among the various jurisdictions in the study area constitutes a major threat to future success. The lack of a coordinated development approach to the TOD area and its infrastructure could lead to a disjointed project that does not meet the needs of the community and its stakeholders.

Clearly, safety is the single greatest threat to its immediate recovery into a vital and thriving station. Negative perceptions of the area from outside investors and developers could slow the development process, along with the uncertainty of the ability to utilize adjacent sites for development. Also, how the community and local businesses would react to proposed change could pose a threat to future development.

# Recommendations



## Vision

The TAP members believe the Slauson Station can be improved to become an essential amenity for the Florence-Firestone community. The TAP members envision a safe, attractive multimodal transportation hub with increased ridership and better pedestrian connections within the TOD. The station would then serve as a catalyst for increased neighborhood retail, security and safety, jobs in clean industry, and the possibility of some mixed use development in the future.

## Vision Strategies

The TAP identified the following six strategies to improve the Slauson Station TOD that will help to bring about the vision for a transit and pedestrian hub that will increase ridership and enhance community character:

1. Create a Multimodal Transit Node.
2. Increase and Improve Pedestrian Connections to Surrounding Residential Neighborhoods.
3. Improve the Safety Conditions in the Station Area.
4. Establish an Industrial Business Improvement District.
5. Develop a Parking Facility in the TOD.
6. Increase Public Investment in the Residential Market.

### **Strategy 1: Create a Multimodal Transit Node**

The envisioned Slauson Station would serve as a multimodal hub, which provides a convenient facility to connect from one mode of transportation to another, and encourages transit ridership by making transit options more attractive to commuters and discretionary users within and surrounding the TOD. Developing Slauson Station as a node of activity, moreover, would help establish it as a magnet for the significant automobile traffic along Slauson Avenue, potentially increasing the need for new retail investment at the station. In addition to supporting multimodal access to the Slauson Station, public investments to improve the street environment along Slauson Avenue and at nearby intersections would serve to benefit locally-oriented retail establishments.

The following list identifies proposed new facilities at the Slauson Station that will help to create a multimodal transit hub:

- Surface parking plaza at the existing triangle parcel owned by Union Pacific.
- Secured bike storage facility.
- Drop off and pick up facility for auto and transit bus users with a secured and sheltered space for people to wait for the bus, a taxi or a car.
- Enhanced lighting and surveillance.
- Extend Slauson Station architectural elements so that they cross Slauson Avenue to provide a clear presence of the station to users along the Slauson corridor. Station architecture can help create a better transition from street level to the raised platform and connect to parking, bike storage and drop off facilities. There is also the opportunity for an additional stair to be located on the north side of Slauson to allow users from the north to safely cross Slauson and gain direct access to the platform.

### **Strategy 2: Increase and Improve Pedestrian Connections**

Improved pedestrian connections to adjacent neighborhoods throughout the TOD will encourage transit ridership by providing a safe and convenient walking option. To create these connections, the panel proposes the following design interventions:

- Add station entrance to the north side of Slauson Avenue.
- Incorporate traffic calming devices within the vicinity of the station to indicate to an approaching motorist the gateway of a pedestrian zone. These devices could be textured surfaces on the road, medians at the crossings with trees, or wider sidewalks with trees that narrow vehicular lanes.
- Identify and develop pedestrian connections to adjacent residential neighborhoods. Pedestrian connections shall have appropriate sidewalk widths with tree canopy and adequate streetlights, intersections with pedestrian friendly crosswalks, particularly to the southwest of the station

### **Strategy 3: Improve the Safety Conditions in the Station Area**

The station design and the pedestrian circulation system around the station are unsafe and leads to decreased usage of the station and transit. The County should collaborate with Metro to ensure the necessary lighting and safety measures are implemented to alleviate these concerns. The waiting areas at street level for bus connections must also be improved and made safer. With improved design and safety measures, the station could become attractive enough to support future retail uses.

### **Strategy 4: Establish an Industrial Business Improvement District**

The County, in collaboration with the CRA/LA and the City of Los Angeles, should seek the establishment of an industrial business improvement district (BID) for the industrial, eastern side of the study area. It should have as a primary objective the integration and involvement of employers and land owners in a transit oriented plan. Public attention to the area therefore should emphasize a gradual transition toward users that would benefit from (and therefore provide benefits to) the Slauson Station nearby.



A bike-share station complements a transit node



### **Strategy 5: Develop a Parking Facility in the TOD**

Developing parking at the Slauson Station would provide the convenience required to increase ridership and create a safe way to access the station. This facility would also include a bus stop and safe bicycle parking to encourage other forms of transport to the station. Connectivity to the station should be increased by improving sidewalks and streetscapes and, where feasible, re-establishing pedestrian connections through existing dead ends caused by the DWP lot and the rail line itself.

### **Strategy 6: Increase Public Investment in the Residential Market**

Investment in residential development by the public sector is important as the real estate cycle improves and demand once again pushes market-supported home prices and rents beyond the costs of construction. Residential development, including rental apartments, condominiums, townhouses, or clustered detached units, is most likely to take place on large vacant parcels west of the station, including, if available, the DWP site. Additional small-scale new residential development could occur on the limited vacant parcels in the area as well, such as adjacent to the commercial uses on Compton Avenue, and would further serve to add vitality to the area.



Panelists discuss a phasing strategy for the study area

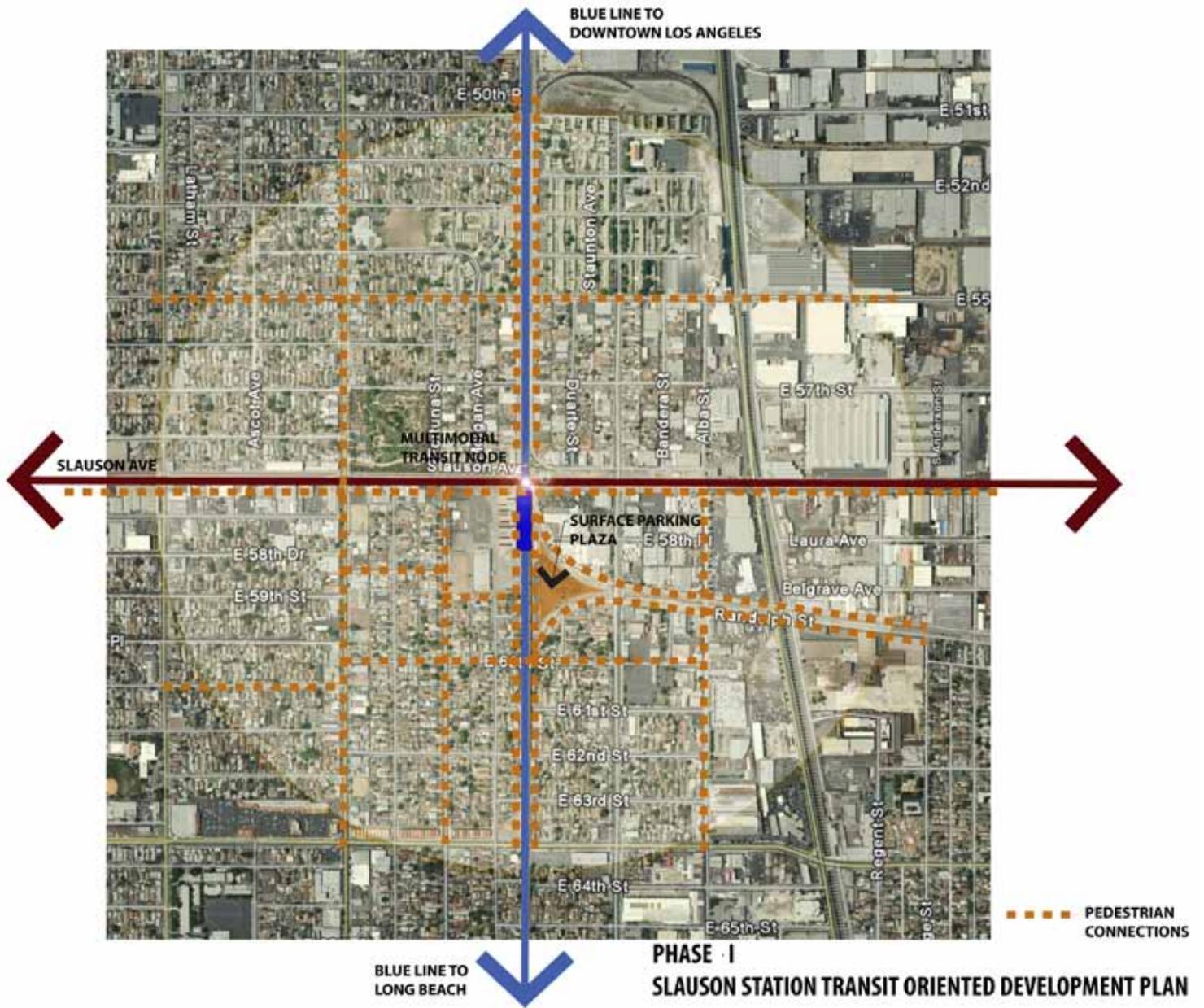
# Implementation A Road Map for Success

## Introduction - Phasing Strategy

The TAP used the strategies developed following its analysis of the Slauson Station study area to guide development of the following implementation steps.

Due to the current development challenges that exist at the Slauson Station TOD and surrounding community, as well as the poor private and public sector economic environment, the TAP recommends a ten year, three-phased approach to implementation of its recommendations.

The TAP envisions a timeline where Phase I can be implemented within the first year, Phase II in years two and three, and that Phase III can be implemented in years four through ten. Phases I and II primarily lay the foundations for the broader development opportunities laid out in Phase III.



## Goal

The first phase of the implementation strategy lays the groundwork for improving the Slauson Station. Phase I is based on the assumption that readily available parking and improved safety will increase ridership and create new development opportunities. Phase I also takes into account the current constraints of the site and allows for a plan to be implemented in a relatively short timeframe with minimal capital expenditure. The panel anticipates that this phase will enliven the Slauson Station and provide the framework necessary for long term development.

The panel strongly suggests completing the following four objectives over the first year of implementation:

1. Create an attractive and safe multimodal transit station;
2. Test development strategy concepts and organizational concepts;
3. Apply any changes to the planning guidelines and zoning policies necessary to allow for future development of the site; and,
4. Institute public agency and community organization efforts.

# Phase I

## Year 1

### Objectives

#### **Objective 1: Create an attractive and safe multimodal transit station.**

As the first step, the County of Los Angeles should provide leadership and develop a budget to implement the following actions:

- Add lighting, security cameras, improve the elevator enclosure, increase police presence, and add other safety measures;
- Enter into a short-term ground lease with Union Pacific for their adjacent property and create 200 surface parking stalls; and,
- Work with informal food vendors to establish retail use on site.

#### **Objective 2: Test development strategy concepts and organizational concepts.**

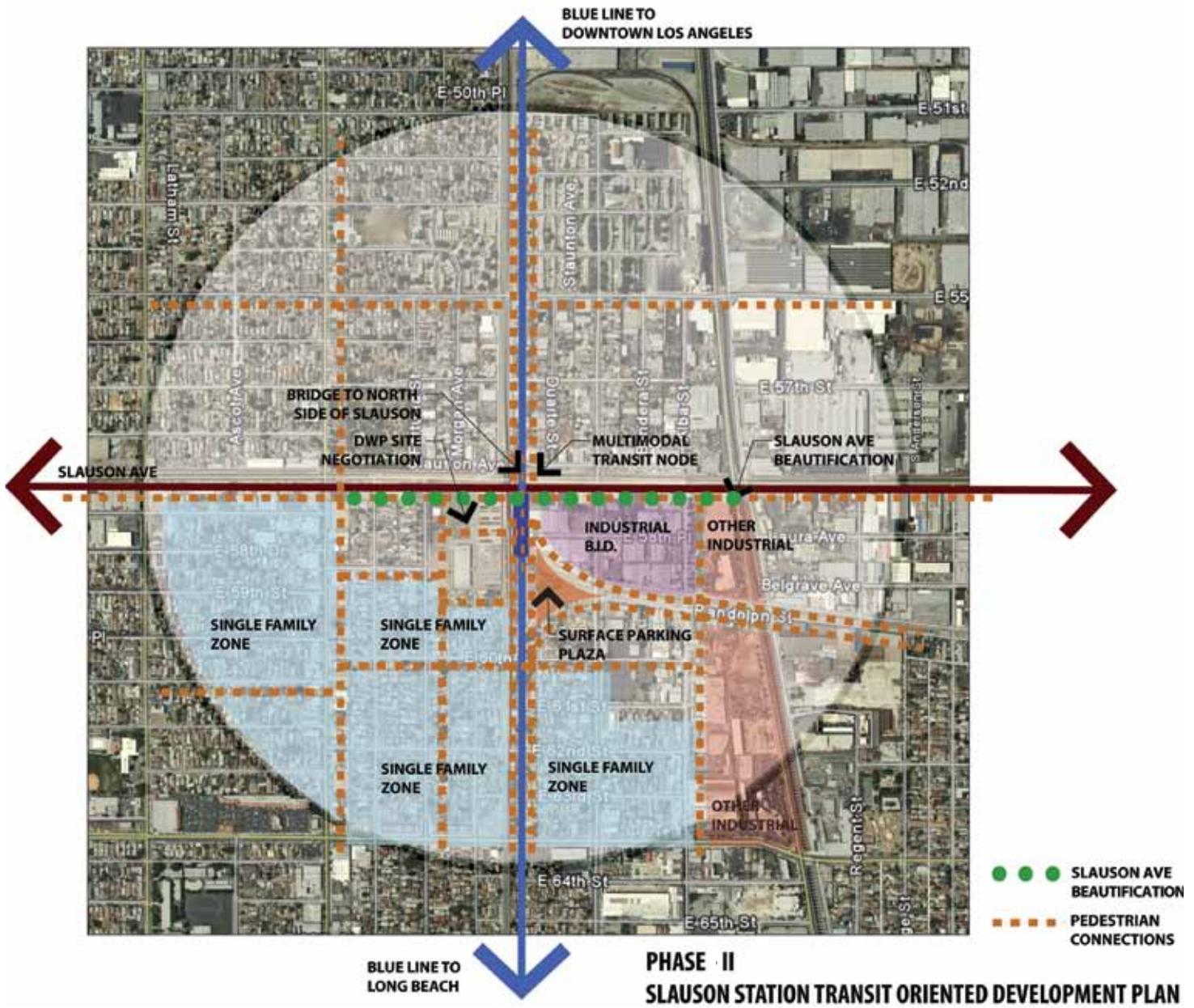
Further market analysis and assessment will determine the feasibility of future higher density development. Research to be conducted will gather data on the Slauson Station ridership characteristics, demand for local industrial businesses to form an industrial BID, and parking conditions and demand. There will also be a need to work with land owners to form community advocacy groups as well as beginning discussions with DWP and Union Pacific on leasing or acquisition of their strategic parcels.

#### **Objective 3: Apply any changes to the planning guidelines and zoning policies to allow for future development of the site.**

The Department of Regional Planning should initiate the creation of a Slauson Station TOD Station Area Plan and Program Environmental Impact Report.

#### **Objective 4: Institute public agency and community coordination efforts.**

The Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning should coordinate a working group of representatives from the various public agencies with direct ties to the Slauson Station TOD study area, including the Los Angeles County Supervisors Offices for the First and Second Districts, the LACDC, and the CRA/LA. The County should also discuss land leasing and relocation potentials with DWP and the operator of the adjacent industrial land uses. The County should also begin to lay the groundwork for a BID and redevelopment area designation for the Slauson Station TOD. During this phase, the County can start the process of talking to property owners and soliciting interest about a BID for the area.



## Goal

Phase II puts the building blocks in place for Phase III. The panel suggests the completion of the Slauson Station TOD Specific Plan and Program EIR will help to lower the entitlement risk associated with private development. Research work would continue through Phase II and would determine the appropriately configured parking garage for the needed capacity of transit users and to support ground-level, target retail tenants.

The panel strongly suggests completing the following four objectives during Phase II of implementation:

1. Continue physical improvements in the Slauson Station Area;
2. Continue to test and begin to implement development strategy concepts and organizational concepts;
3. Finalize changes to the planning guidelines and zoning policies necessary to allow for future development of the site; and,
4. Begin to implement actions based on public agency and community organization efforts.

# Phase II

## Years 2-3

### Objectives

#### **Objective 1: Continue physical improvements in the Slauson Station area.**

Collaborating with Metro, the CRA/LA, the City of Los Angeles, and the County Supervisor's Offices, the Department of Regional Planning should coordinate a plan to implement the following physical improvements at the Slauson Station:

- **Bus Stop:** The north end of the DWP land adjacent to the station could be utilized as a bus stop to encourage connections between the Metro Blue Line and Bus Lines and should include various small transit-serving retail uses such as ticket sales, newsstands, and coffee kiosks.
- **Invest in physical improvements on Slauson:** Incorporate traffic calming devices along the Slauson corridor to indicate a pedestrian zone, using textured surfaces on the road at crossing, medians at the crossings with trees, or wider sidewalks with trees that narrow vehicular lanes.
- **Create walkways and bike paths from residential neighborhoods that connect to the station:** Begin work on creating improved access ways to the transit station from residential areas. To improve the pedestrian experience, the following interventions are encouraged: An inviting street canopy of trees, street lights, and wider sidewalks.

#### **Objective 2: Continue to test and begin to implement development strategy concepts and organizational concepts.**

- Work with DWP and the industrial properties adjacent to the station to gain access to the land to make necessary long term changes.
- Begin looking for retail prospects for ground floor retail space.
- Complete the parking structure construction drawings and financing plans.

#### **Objective 3: Finalize changes to the planning guidelines and zoning policies necessary to allow for future development of the site.**

Complete the Slauson Station TOD Station Area Plan, and eliminate parking requirements around the station.

#### **Objective 4: Begin to implement actions based on public agency and community organization efforts.**

Work on the formation of a BID with property and business owners. Industrial areas can be created in three areas by location – land to the east of the station along Slauson, on the southwest corner of Alameda, and the southern section along Alameda.



## Goal

The goal of Phase III is to improve the existing land uses which will allow for higher density mixed use development near the station, and to promote higher density residential development near the station while enhancing the single family neighborhood south of Lillian Street Elementary School and the DWP facility.

The panel strongly suggests completing the following three objectives over Phase III of implementation:

1. Finalize physical improvements to the station, adjacent parcels, and pedestrian infrastructure.
2. Utilize strategic and innovative planning and zoning policies and incentives to encourage new development in the station area.
3. Transition collaborative development focus toward area on the fringe and adjacent to the station area.

# Phase III

## Years 4-10

### Objectives

#### Objective 1: Finalize physical improvements to the station, adjacent parcels, and pedestrian infrastructure.

Construction of a parking garage at the north end of the DWP site with street-level retail will provide the parking needed to incentivize successful development.

- Construct a three-story parking garage adjacent to the transit station with street-level retail.
- Develop a bus stop with accessory retail to the west of the station.
- After the development of the parking garage, convert the Union Pacific property into a green park and playing field.
- On the DWP site, work to establish a pedestrian pathway to improve access for residents to the station.

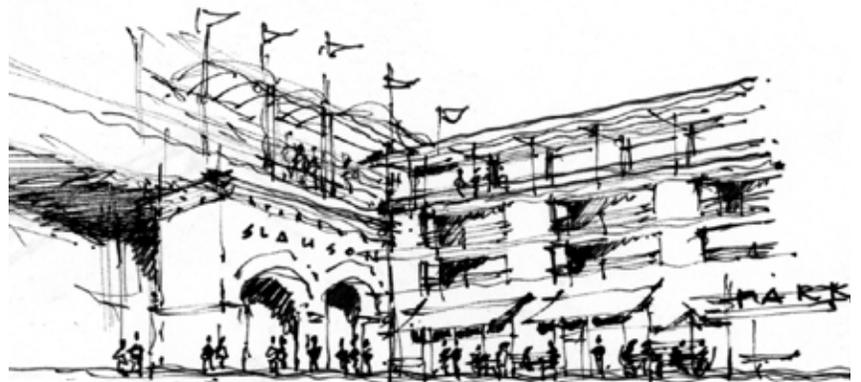
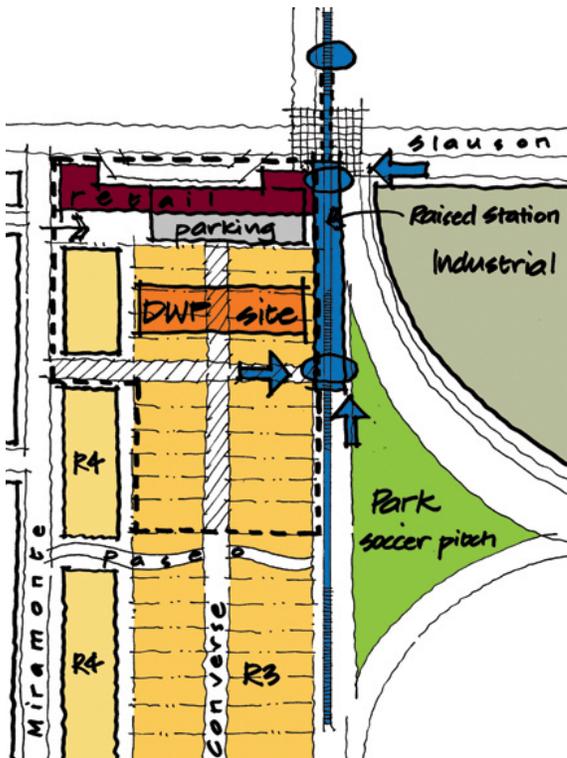
#### Objective 2: Utilize strategic and innovative planning and zoning policies and incentives to encourage new development in the station area.

The Department of Regional Planning should work to encourage high-density, cleaner industrial uses along the Alameda Corridor and set the stage for high density mixed use development near the station.

- Publish an RFP to encourage private development and create further incentives for development.
- Create mixed use projects on the commercially zoned parcels fronting Slauson and west of the DWP site, using the parking structure as an incentive.
- Transition uses in the light manufacturing zones along Wilmington Avenue toward cleaner industrial uses.

#### Objective 3: Transition collaborative development focus toward areas on the fringe and adjacent to the station area.

- In collaboration with the CRA/LA, Los Angeles County should initiate a corridor planning effort on Compton Avenue that creates a denser retail and restaurant setting with more neighborhood services.
- Create a multi-tenant industrial park targeted to small users with higher density employment.



# Funding Sources & Acknowledgements

## Funding Sources

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

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

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

## Acknowledgements

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- Edgar Cisneros, Southeast Deputy, Office of Supervisor Gloria Molina
- Roy Mata, Project Manager, Community Development Commission of the County of Los Angeles
- Paula Delgado-Trejo, Community Leadership – Public Safety
- Matt Mason, CRA/LA
- Alexander Kalamaros, Joint Development Program, Metro
- Nelia Custodio, Metro
- Lupe Valdez, Director of Government Affairs and Community Relations, Union Pacific
- Marie Cobian, City of Los Angeles Department of Planning
- Rob Gilmore, LA PLAN, LAEDC

## Panel Chair

### **Jonathan Watts, AIA, NCARB, LEED AP Principal, Cuningham Group**

Mr. Watts is a Principal at Cuningham Group Architecture, P.A. and is a licensed architect with over 23 years experience working on a variety of project types including entertainment, housing, mixed-use urban infill, hotels, corporate office etc. Cuningham Group is a 180-person firm with offices in LA, Minneapolis, Bakersfield, Las Vegas, Biloxi, Madrid, Spain and Seoul, Korea. Mr. Watts' specialties include: design of complex mixed-use urban infill projects, entertainment design, hospitality design, urban planning and strategic thinking.

## Panel Members

### **Ryan Aubry MRED, LEED Green Associate Sr. Consultant, Kosmont Companies**

Mr. Aubrey is a Senior Consultant with Kosmont Companies. For over 10 years he has advised public agencies and private developers on issues relating to urban infill development including policy analysis, financial underwriting, site acquisition, and construction. He has also served as a project manager for a development firm focused on the creation of workforce housing. At Kosmont, he is involved with structuring public/private transactions, formulating economic development strategies, and conducting return on investment analysis for sustainable retrofit improvements. Mr. Aubrey holds a Master of Real Estate Development degree from the University of Southern California and a Master of Urban Geography degree from the University of California, Santa Barbara.

### **Brent Gaulke**

#### **Vice President, Acquisitions/Development, Gerding Edlen**

Mr. Gaulke is Vice President of Acquisitions/Development for Gerding Edlen and manages the Los Angeles office. Mr. Gaulke's core responsibilities include managing the selection of property acquisitions in California, overseeing the pre-development and pre-acquisition process and managing project budgets throughout the development or re-development stages. Prior to Gerding Edlen, Mr. Gaulke was in charge of property acquisition and development for Kemper Co. in Portland, Oregon. Mr. Gaulke received a Masters of Architecture from the University of Oregon and a Bachelor of Science from the University of California.

### **Taylor Mammen**

#### **Vice President, RCLCO**

Mr. Mammen is Vice President of RCLCO where he directs and manages assignments for a broad array of real estate product types, including market and financial analysis of master-planned communities, resort projects (from RV parks to ski resorts), and urban mixed-use projects. Taylor is particularly involved in RCLCO's advisory services for complex, multi-use, large-scale real estate and/or economic development projects, including master planned communities and "new cities," urban mixed-use developments, and redevelopment/revitalization strategies. He has managed assignments of similar large scope across the Western United States and Hawaii. Mr. Mammen received his Masters in City Planning from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Brigham Young University.

# Panel Members

### **Sunil Parab AIA, LEED AP, Senior Project Architect, HNTB**

Mr. Parab, is a licensed Senior Project Architect at HNTB in Los Angeles with over 18 years of experience working on sports and entertainment, aviation, transportation, and urban design projects. Mr. Parab worked as an urban designer to develop a concept for the proposed pedestrian linkage between Los Angeles Union Station and the Civic Center. He has worked on the design of light rail and commuter lines and also worked on the master plan for transit-oriented development at the Del Mar Station in Pasadena, California. Mr. Parab holds a Masters degree in Architecture and a Masters degree in Community and Regional Planning from Iowa State University.

### **Paul Silvern**

#### **Partner, HR&A Advisors, Inc.**

Mr. Silvern is Vice President at HR&A Advisors, Inc. and is the executive in charge of the firm's Los Angeles area office. In 30 years of experience he has directed the analysis of major international airport expansion plans, military base re-use conversions, television and film studio expansions, hotels, office parks, high-rise office buildings, industrial developments, shopping centers, hospital complexes, university campus expansions, urban infill residential developments, mixed-use developments, and a wide range of planning and urban policy initiatives. He is frequently retained to prepare or critique housing, population, employment, public school facilities, and economic and fiscal impacts studies for environmental documents. He is also skilled at drafting and critiquing development fee systems and fee justification studies. His clients include major development organizations as well as numerous local governments and metropolitan planning organizations. Mr. Silvern holds a B.A. in Architecture from the University of Illinois and an M.A. in Architecture and Urban Planning from UCLA.



TAP Panelists (left to right) - Sunil Parab, Taylor Mammen, Brent Gaulke, Paul Silvern, Ryan Aubry, Jonathan Watts

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601 S. Figueroa, Suite 500  
Los Angeles, CA 90017

213-542-4694  
[www.uli-la.org](http://www.uli-la.org)

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