

# Planning & Land-Use Strategies Summit (PLUS<sup>2</sup>)

## Healing the City

Overview and Lessons Learned

Friday, June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017  
Los Angeles, CA





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*“You have the right to be healthy.”*

– Chani Nicholas

*“People of color often times are not being included in the clean energy revolution-- but they have already been doing the work.”*

– Aura Vasquez

*“The biggest challenge in addressing health equity is the absence of authentic pathways to inclusion.”*

– Dr. Beatriz Solis

*“We need to invest in civic engagement because we can’t address our community’s health issues if there is a fear of deportation.”*

– Jennie Carreón

*“How does economic development relate to our health? Having a stable work environment that is dignified can change everything.”*

– Niki Okuk



On June 9th, 2017, LURN organized the Planning and Land-Use Strategies Summit for a 5th time. This year, hosted in Downtown LA, PLUS<sup>2</sup> convened leaders across various industries who are all working in one way or another to shape our city: developing policies, building infrastructure, advocating for rights, organizing community members, and more.

This year's theme was **"Healing the City."**

This theme was informed by our work at the intersection of economic development and health, and by our partners who expressed interest in examining health in a broader context at the previous PLUS<sup>2</sup>. To us, health and healing is an intersectional concept, one that must consider not only the state of our medical institutions to treat illnesses and how they care for patients, but also the types of jobs available in our communities, the development of our housing and its affordability, and even the design of our streets and parks.

A healthy city is one where all of these factors are conspiring to help residents live their greatest potential. (LURN's mission!)

Thus, "Healing the City" was a day that emphasized this expanded definition of health, and also looked at aspects of our communities that are not where they should be, and how we can work towards "healing."

To lead the day, we were joined by a stellar group of scholars, activists, public health leaders, architects, and entrepreneurs. These leaders offered short presentations on how their work related to health (if it wasn't already obvious), and opened their presentations to questions from an amazing audience that swelled to over 300 throughout the summit.

This report serves as a summary of our speakers, the concepts we discussed, and it offers recommendations on how we can work together to continue to "heal" our cities.



## **CHANI NICHOLAS**

Chani Nicholas is an astrologer and writer who shares horoscopes and teaches several online classes through her website, Chaninicholas.com. Chani has been a student of astrology since she was 12 years old and a counseling astrologer for almost 20 years. Many of her ideas, philosophies, and concepts have been and are constantly shaped by LGBTQI2S, POC, feminist writers, artists, thinkers, activists, and community members as well as by colleagues and the folks that she works with, both in individual readings and group settings. Chani aims to make astrology practical, approachable, and useful and hopes that what she offers can stimulate and awaken others' ability to access their own wisdom and healing.

## **BILL ROSCHEN**

Bill Roschen is a principal at Roschen Van Cleve Architects and a past president of the Los Angeles City Planning Commission. Bill's career manifests the new paradigm of "citizen architect" as civic leader who can engage communities in thoughtful conversations required to advance infill and redevelopment projects that make neighborhoods sustainable, affordable, livable and healthy. Bill received his Bachelor of Arts in Architecture from Arizona State University with emphasis on sustainable design and holds a Master's degree in Architecture from Columbia University, with an emphasis on city planning and urban architecture, historic preservation and philosophy aesthetics. He and his partner, Christi Van Cleve, conceived and taught a four-part series of graduate seminars and a certificate and Master's Degree program at Woodbury University School of Architecture, and have initiated the UP (Urban Policy) program and Policy Tanks within the School of Architecture.

## **REGINA FREER**

Regina Freer is a Professor in the Politics department at Occidental College in Los Angeles and a member of the Urban and Environmental Policy Department's Advisory Committee. Her research and teaching interests include race and politics, demographic change, urban politics, and the intersection of all three in Los Angeles in particular. She is a co-author of the University of California Press book, *The Next Los Angeles: The Struggle for a Livable City*, a work that examines connections between historical and contemporary progressive social justice organizing in LA, and "Black, Brown, Young and Together" a chapter in the book *Just Neighbors: Research on African American and Latino Relations*. She also authored "L.A. Race Woman: Charlotta Bass and the Complexities of Black Political Development in Los Angeles" in the journal *American Quarterly* and "Black Korean Conflict," a chapter in the edited volume, *The Los Angeles Riots*.

## **ANTHONY MORETTI**

Anthony (Tony) Moretti joined the White Memorial community in 2015 as part of the team from Loma Linda Children's Hospital. Dr. Moretti leads the Department of Pediatrics, is Medical Director of the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit, and serves as Director of White Memorial's Pediatric Medical Center designation. Prior to joining White Memorial, Dr. Moretti helped expand PICU and CVICU programs at Texas Children's Hospital in Houston and Children's Hospital of Georgia in Augusta. Dr. Moretti serves to transform the Department of Pediatrics from an acute care pediatric hospital into a model for pediatric population healthcare management for the East LA community and beyond. Dr. Moretti was recently featured in a Los Angeles Times article that reveals that children who live close to freeways are among those who most frequently land in the emergency room struggling to breathe and in need of treatment for asthma and other respiratory diseases.

## **SOFIA BORGES**

Sofia Borges is a Los Angeles-based writer, designer, curator, and trend consultant. She is a faculty member at the USC School of Architecture, the Director of MADWORKSHOP, a regular contributor to Mark Magazine, and a contributing curator at victionary. Sofia spent more than half a decade as the architecture editor at Gestalten and founded the design firms Colorblock and Affect Studio. She is the author and editor of nearly two dozen titles on architecture and design. Her latest books *The Tale of Tomorrow*, *Citix60 LA*, *Hide and Seek*, *Liquid Spaces*, *The New Nomads*, *Rock the Shack*, *Oasis*, *The Chamber of Curiosity*, and *Building Better* are available at a bookstore near you. Sofia recently spearheaded the USC School of Architecture's first ever advanced topics design studio on the homeless crisis in Los Angeles. The class resulted in the award-winning prototype, *Homes for Hope*, which is a model for bridge housing that will soon be implemented as a pilot project in Sylmar, California.

## **AURA VASQUEZ**

Aura Vasquez is an organizer, advocate, and activist for environmental and social justice issues with more than 10 years of experience in New York, Washington D.C., and California. Aura currently works as the Climate Justice Director for the Center for Popular Democracy (CPD) where she oversees the 14 organizations that carry out CPD's national climate justice efforts. She also represents CPD on national committees such as the Ready for 100% campaign, the People's Climate March, and the U.S. Climate Action Network. Aura has advocated for state and federal immigrant rights with the PICO Network, helped spearhead the ban of single use plastic bags in Los Angeles, pass SB-350, the Clean Energy and Pollution Reduction Act, and helped establish the Feed & Tariff Initiative – the largest rooftop solar program in the country. In May 2017, Mayor Eric Garcetti appointed Aura to the Board of Commissioners for the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP).

## **JORGE MADRID**

Jorge Madrid is Manager for California Clean Energy at the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF). Jorge builds new and innovative partnerships for EDF, and also manages statewide pilot and demonstration projects. Jorge addresses climate equity issues and works to ensure clean energy policies are inclusive and benefit all communities, particularly low-income communities and people of color. Before joining EDF, Jorge worked in Washington D.C. as an analyst with The Center for American Progress, and as a Graduate Fellow with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC), where he served in the office of Senator Robert Menendez and the CHC taskforce on green jobs. He is a founding board member for Voces Verdes, a national organization that seeks to elevate Latino voices on climate and clean energy policy making, as well as a board member of the Los Angeles Sustainability Collaborative.

## **YESENIA FERNANDEZ**

Yesenia Fernandez is Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership, Cal State Dominguez Hills. She previously served as an urban school district leader in Lynwood where she evaluated principals and developed systems to improve equity and access to higher education. In addition, she spent fifteen years at Bell Gardens High School as an English teacher, administrator, and student advocate. Yesenia studies how systemic racism in the public-school system perpetuates segregation and precludes students of color from higher education. She is dedicated to working with school leaders and policymakers to ensure equity and justice in urban schools and our communities. She has been a member of East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice (EYCEJ) since 2007 after her students, who became involved with EYCEJ, inspired her to learn about the environmental racism communities are forced to live. She is currently a member of the EYCEJ Board of Directors and is also involved with other grassroots organizations focused on protecting and healing communities.

## **MANAL J. ABOELATA**

Manal J. Aboelata is Managing Director at Prevention Institute, a national non-profit dedicated to achieving equitable health and safety outcomes through primary prevention practice. Manal's work emphasizes policy and community-based approaches to achieve equitable health and safety outcomes, with a particular focus on comprehensive strategies that prevent injuries, increase opportunities for safe physical activity and improve access to healthy foods. Manal chairs the statewide Strategic Alliance for Healthy Food and Activity Environments, founded the Joint Use Statewide Taskforce and more recently, established a Healthy, Equitable and Active Land Use Network in Los Angeles. She is principle author of The Built Environment and Health: 11 Profiles of Neighborhood Transformation. Manal is certified as a California Walkability Expert by California Department of Health Services and Caltrans and has led walkable community workshops throughout California.

## **BEATRIZ MARÍA SOLÍS**

Dr. Beatriz M. Solís is leading efforts by the Building Healthy Communities initiative to ensure that California's health policy is inclusive of residents regardless of race, gender, and immigration status. As the director of Healthy Communities, South Region, Solís is transforming health outcomes in underserved communities by emboldening residents to take control of policies that affect them. Recognizing that health disparities are created when communities are absent from the decision-making table, Solís has focused her career on energizing youth, immigrants and women. Solís spearheaded the Endowment's 21st Century Pathways to Health Careers initiative, to expose underserved students to careers in healthcare. Solís also co-leads the Endowment's #Health4All campaign to expand access to health coverage and care to all Californians—regardless of immigration status. Her work has helped undocumented children throughout the state gain access to the care they need.

## **DHYANA QUINTANAR SOLARES**

Jennie Carreón is the Assistant Vice President of Strategic Partnerships and Foundation Management for AltaMed which is the largest independent Federally Qualified Community Health Center in the U.S. delivering more than 930,000 annual patient visits through its 43 sites in Los Angeles and Orange Counties. Her responsibilities encompass advocacy, public policy initiatives, and legislative relationships. She also builds and implements strategies to achieve AltaMed's policy priorities and represents the company in policy hearings to eliminate disparities in healthcare access in underserved communities. She is also the Executive Director of AltaMed's PAC and oversees fundraising and the endorsement process. Jennie studied International Relations in 15 different countries around the world and when she isn't busy with her philanthropic efforts, she enjoys spending time with her 7-year-old daughter, Isabela, on the soccer field.

Dhyana Quintanar Solares is Chief Executive Officer of Nexity ([www.nexity.com.mx](http://www.nexity.com.mx)), a Mexican company that develops and implements sustainable mobility, public space and urban design solutions for cities. Dhyana started Nexity in 2016, building on over 10 years in the public and non-governmental sectors in Mexico in the transportation and urban design fields. She previously was head of the Authority of the Public Space of Mexico City where she implemented various projects and managed the on-street parking program. Before that, she was General Director of Transportation Planning and Roads at the Secretary of Transportation and Roads of Mexico City where she developed Mexico City's 2013-2018 Comprehensive Mobility Plan and led the drafting of Mexico City's Mobility Law and Traffic Regulation. She is co-author of Ciclociudades (Cycle-cities), the comprehensive bicycle mobility manual for Mexican cities and implemented Mexico City's bike-sharing program ECOBICI.

## **MIA LEHRER**

Mia Lehrer, FASLA is the founder of the Los Angeles-based landscape architecture and urban design firm, Mia Lehrer + Associates (ML+A), known for the design and implementation of ambitious public and private-sector projects including complex mixed-use development projects, urban revitalization initiatives, and neighborhood and regional parks. She has applied landscape and urban design innovation and technical expertise on complex Design/Build infrastructure projects, and continues to play a significant leadership role in project stakeholder outreach and consensus building. She has been personally engaged in urban initiatives that include the recalibration of significant works of infrastructure such as channelized rivers, seaports, military air stations and oil fields from single purpose sites to multi-purpose community resources. Her design excellence and environmental leadership enables government agencies, communities, and stakeholders to create an interconnected system of meaningful open space through well-conceived projects.

## **NIKI OKUK**

Niki Okuk founded Rco<sup>2</sup> Material Reuse in 2012. It's since grown into a million-dollar operation with 16 employees, making it one of Southern California's largest sustainability plants. Rco<sup>2</sup> creates alternative uses for trash tires, which are typically burned for fuel or thrown in landfills, like retreading them or turning them into new products. Additionally, because of Niki's progressive hiring and management practices it provides stable jobs for local black and Latino residents who struggle to find employment because of past criminal convictions or legal status. Niki grew up in Los Angeles attending Audobon Middle School in Leimert Park, attended High School in Oakland, CA, community college in San Francisco, and later majored in Economics at Columbia University in New York. After working in development with the office of Joseph Stiglitz, and working in finance in Korea and Singapore, Niki completed her MBA at Nanyang University in Singapore, including a sustainability certificate at Sloan School of Business at MIT.



## **Who Gets to Heal**

Chani Nicholas, Astrologer & Writer

## **The Equity of Fresh Air and Planning**

Bill Roschen, Principal, Roschen Van Cleve Architects, Past President of the Los Angeles Planning Commission

Regina Freer, Professor and Chair of the Politics Department at Occidental College, Former Vice President of the Los Angeles Planning Commission

Dr. Anthony Moretti MD, MBA, Chairman of Dept. of Pediatrics at White Memorial Hospital

## **Homes for Hope: Housing the Homeless in the Face of NIMBYism**

Sofia Borges, Acting Director, MADWORKSHOP and Faculty Member at the USC School of Architecture

## **Local Resistance: How Our Neighborhoods are Setting the National Agenda for Environmental Equity**

Aura Vasquez, Climate Justice Director, Center for Popular Democracy

Jorge Madrid, CA Campaign Manager of Climate & Energy at Environmental Defense Fund

Yesenia Fernandez, Board Member at East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice (EYCEJ), Assistant Professor of Education Leadership at Cal State Dominguez Hills

## **Moving Towards Health Equity: Perspectives from Philanthropic Leaders**

Manal J. Aboelata, MPH, Managing Director, Prevention Institute

Beatriz Maria Solís, MPH, Ph.D., Program Director, Healthy Communities South Region, The California Endowment

Jennie Carreón, Assistant Vice President, Strategic Partnerships & Foundation Management, AltaMed

## **Mobility in Mexico City: Bikes, People, Policy and Politics**

Dhyana Quintanar Solares, CEO of Nexity, Former head of the Authority of Public Space and General Director of Transportation Planning of Mexico City, Mexico

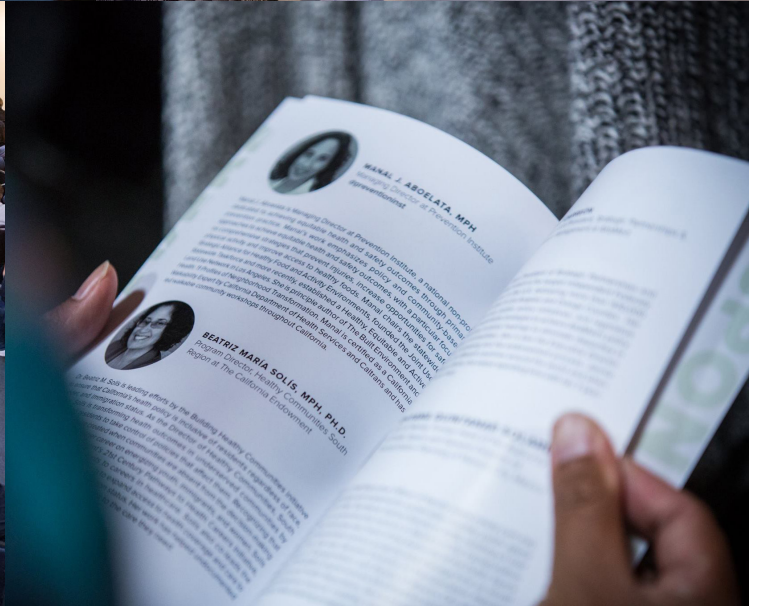
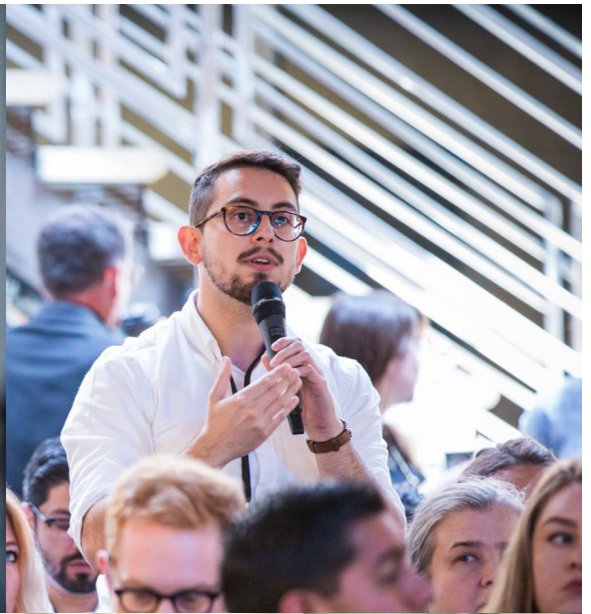
## **Landscape Urbanism as a Vehicle for Engagement and Change in the Public Realm**

Mia Lehrer, President of Mia Lehrer + Associates

## **Capitalism Makes Us Sick**

Niki Okuk, Co-Founder of Rco<sup>2</sup> Material Reuse









**We are all healers** – An important reflection for many of our guests was the notion that each of us, in a unique way, contribute to the healing of our City. Planners, developers, architects, educators, and community organizers all have a role to play in building healthy communities. This “re-framing” of our collective work at the summit also rang true for us as individuals – in our pursuit to help others, we often forget that we also need to invest in our own healing. In this way, we reaffirmed the importance of making sure that we are investing in our own personal growth so we can be better prepared to excel in our professional practices. But arguably, the most important question we considered was “who gets to heal?” Are traditional pathways for healing accessible to all? Is our work for justice considering historic inequities that have left people without an opportunity to heal?



**Zoning policies should take into account health indicators** – For far too long, planning policies and the zoning of our neighborhoods have not considered the health of our communities, often allowing for homes and schools to abut hazardous land-uses that contaminate public spaces. Land-use decisions have been based on the value that can be extracted and who in the community is dispensable. These policies have contributed to negative health outcomes, especially in low-income communities of color. While there have been advances in marrying health with planning, like the City of Los Angeles Health Element in the General Plan, political will is needed to ensure that governing planning documents are enforced and implemented. Planners and policy makers can help to ensure that decision-makers are intentional about guiding the development of our cities in a manner that supports a holistic vision of good health.



**Housing the homeless is possible through innovative design** – Housing the homeless is an increasingly important issue in cities like Los Angeles. One of the major impediments to building more housing is the cost, especially in a high-priced city like Los Angeles. Our leaders should consider “thinking outside the box” to find alternative ways to provide shelter to the thousands of people on the streets every night. Small design projects have demonstrated that modular housing units could be built for only a few thousand dollars. While these temporary structures should not be taken as a permanent solution, they can provide some immediate relief as developers, city leaders, and residents generate long-term solutions.



**Dream big and organize for a better environment** – On the environmental justice front, the organizers at PLUS<sup>2</sup> reiterated the importance of “dreaming big” and organizing to achieve our goals. In our current political climate, establishing ambitious goals and staying focused on them is critical, now more than ever. Along with these goals, organizing our neighbors and friends to engage them on issues that impact us all is important. In many cases, communities of color have demonstrated their ability to respect the environment and remain “climate resilient.” To be successful, we need to follow their lead; some of the most impactful movements started with just a couple of friends and neighbors with limited resources (if any). Each of us has the power to advocate for what we believe in.



**Philanthropy has a role to play in advancing policies and ideas** – At PLUS<sup>2</sup>, we heard about the role that the philanthropic sector can take in advancing agendas that have a policy outcome and are centered around the immediate experiences of people. Breaking the mold from traditional grantmakers, foundations can fund community-driven models that support neighborhoods not only with their immediate health needs, but also with buying property through land trusts and investing in voter education initiatives. Another key area of need is in developing new “narratives”: Foundations can be effective in cultivating new stories about the work that is taking place in communities and the needs of a particular population. These narrative-changing efforts can help mold public perceptions which influence policy and future programmatic investments, especially when led by community-based artists and cultural leaders. Ultimately, foundations have an opportunity to step in when big businesses refuse, or when city leaders are too slow to act.



**The best urban design project are driven by community interests** – Our design-oriented guests described to us the importance of engaging community residents in the design of new projects. New housing developments, new parks, or new streets are best implemented when the impacted community is engaged at the onset, such as in the generation of ideas, the selection of amenities, and the programming of these spaces. We heard stories of unlikely allies making new parks safer and we heard about the creativity of community members who redefined the purpose of built out space to better fit their needs.



**For safer streets, change regulations and experiment** - At PLUS<sup>2</sup>, we explored various mechanisms to improve pedestrian safety on city streets. Leveraging examples from Mexico City's initiatives, we learned that in order to protect pedestrians, new regulations needed to be put in place. These new policies, whether they consisted of reducing speed limits or eliminating driving lanes, were meaningful catalysts to change behaviors. Elected officials and other decision-makers have to be organized by tapping into any "common ground" with their beliefs and interests, and once regulations are adopted, practitioners need to be willing to experiment with various interventions to maximize the effectiveness of the new policy. Successful interventions are those that are reinforced with community support.



**Businesses of all types need capital** – In our closing session, our speaker and guests discussed a variety of issues related to building new forms of businesses that employ people of color, and provide services to disenfranchised communities. A key need of these types of businesses is not only the human capital to design new legal entities and formulate new business models, but also financial capital in the form of loans and equity investments. For worker cooperatives, B corporations, or mission-driven projects, capital is difficult to acquire, stunting the growth of these businesses even though they may have trailblazing ideas. If we care about building sustainable communities, we have to invest in the projects and businesses we care about. The most promising enterprises should get more than recognition or small grant support, they should have access to the capital that other, less mission-driven businesses have.



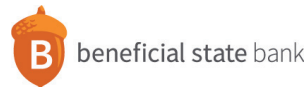
One of the more frequent reflections heard from both speakers and guests was the feeling that they didn't see themselves as "healers." PLUS<sup>2</sup> for many was an opportunity to understand how their work, no matter what sector, contributes to building healthy cities. More so, the topics allowed us to collectively ask if our work is advancing equity, if we are considering the damage done historically by poor planning and misguided policies, and how we can realign our trajectory through our work.

We left feeling inspired by not only the speakers, but also the guests who lent an important perspective through their questions, lunch and happy hour discussions, and even on social media. PLUS<sup>2</sup> "Healing the City" brought a beautifully diverse group that we intend to stay fully engaged with to advance some of the work proposed and the lessons gleaned from the summit.

The LURN team is thankful for each and every person who attended. We are also grateful for our generous donors who contribute to the development of a space that allows us to look at our work through a multidisciplinary lens, one that is supportive of various opinions, new ideas, and a grander vision of the future. We did it together.

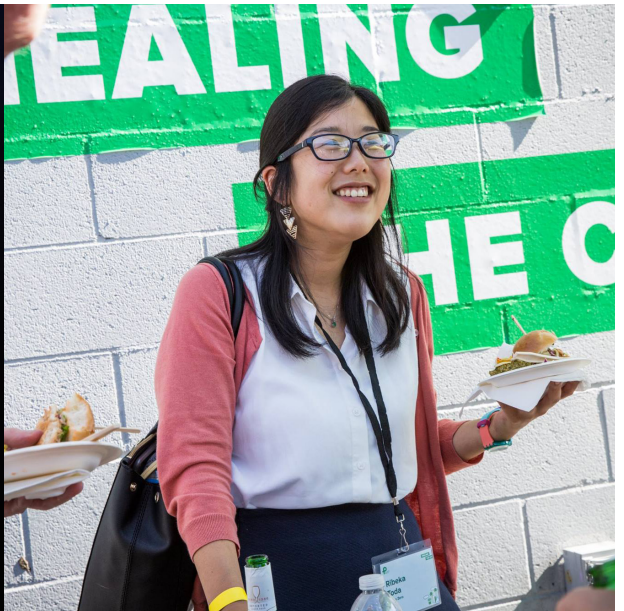
**A very special thank you to all of our sponsors:**

LURN would like to thank our sponsors. For many of us who have organized events, finding resources is difficult. Each of the following organizations not only contributed to the production of PLUS<sup>2</sup>, they were wholeheartedly supportive of the event's vision.





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The Planning and Land-Use Strategies Summit (PLUS<sup>2</sup>) is hosted and curated by Leadership for Urban Renewal Network (LURN).



Leadership for Urban Renewal Network (LURN) is a nonprofit, community development organization based in Los Angeles. Founded in 2008, LURN's mission is to bring people together to design, build, and promote sustainable communities that allow people to live their greatest potential. LURN is an idea lab that combines advocacy with community wealth building initiatives that seek creative, sustainable solutions to uplift low-income neighborhoods.

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