

PLANNING & LAND-USE STRATEGIES SUMMIT (PLUS²)

The Resilient City

Overview & Lessons Learned

Friday – June 8th 2018

Los Angeles, CA



Leadership for
Urban Renewal
Network

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OVERVIEW



The Planning and Land-Use Strategies Summit (PLUS²) is an annual event that aims to spark critical thinking and collaboration around issues related to urban areas, community building, and innovation. PLUS² is a space for guests to engage with speakers, and dream up an actionable vision for the communities in which we work and for the residents we care about, together.

This year marked our 6th annual PLUS², where leaders came together to hear from a selection of innovators who are working at the forefront of economic resilience in cities.

To us, cities are resilient because of their residents. As such, we envision an economy that is abundant, inclusive, and filled with opportunity. Communities of color in urban neighborhoods are the definition of resilient, as they have had to withstand tremendous systemic obstacles for decades. This year's PLUS² highlighted incredible and innovative work that emphasizes the resilience of our communities, the systemic issues that are deterring inclusivity, and the opportunities for us to work to expand economic opportunity for all.

This report provides a summary of each presentation that took place at this year's PLUS². We also extracted the key recommendations from each presentation in an effort to share the most valuable takeaways in an easily digestible way.

SPEAKERS



**MICHAELA
MENDELSON**

@michaelaspeaks
@transcanwork

Michaela Mendelsohn is a transgender activist, public speaker, and businesswoman with over forty years of entrepreneurial leadership experience. She is currently the CEO of Pollo West Corp, one of the largest franchise groups for El Pollo Loco restaurants in the Western Region of the United States. She founded the TransCanWork Program whose mission is: Building a nation where transgender people can thrive in the workplace. Her personal mission is to help trans women find employment, social acceptance and encourage them on the path to raise families of their own. She was recently the first transgender contestant in the Ms. Senior California Pageant and worked with Jenji Kohan as a consultant on Orange is the New Black in the development of Laverne Cox's character. As a writer and public speaker, Michaela speaks all over the nation on LGBTQ issues ranging from bullying to homophobia and transphobia. She currently serves as vice chair of the Trevor Project and was the first transgender woman to sit on their board. Michaela was also appointed by Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti to serve on his Workforce Development Board.



**KIMBERLY
BRYANT**

@6gems

@blackgirlscore

Kimberly Bryant is the Founder and CEO of Black Girls CODE, a non-profit organization dedicated to “changing the face of technology” by introducing girls of color (ages 7-17) to the field of technology and computer science with a concentration on entrepreneurial concepts. Prior to starting Black Girls CODE, Kimberly enjoyed a successful 20+ year professional career in the pharmaceutical and biotech industries as an Engineering Manager in a series of technical leadership roles for various Fortune 500 companies. Since 2011, Kimberly has helped Black Girls CODE grow from a local grassroots initiative serving only the Bay Area, to an international organization with fourteen chapters across the U.S. and in Johannesburg, South Africa. Black Girls CODE has currently reached over 7,000 students and continues to grow and thrive. Kimberly has been awarded the prestigious Jefferson Award for Community Service, named by Business Insider on its list of “The 25 Most Influential African-Americans in Technology”, and named on The Root 100 and the Ebony Power 100 lists in 2013. Kimberly was named by the White House as a Champion of Change for her work in tech inclusion and for her focus on bridging the digital divide for girls of color and received an Ingenuity Award in Social Progress from the Smithsonian Institute.



**OSCAR
MENJIVAR**

@menjivar @urbantxt

Oscar Menjivar is a social entrepreneur, leading and developing new programs for low-income young men of color in South Central Los Angeles. In 2009, Oscar founded TXT: Teens Exploring Technology, a nonprofit organization that provides programs to help Black and Latino boys develop leadership, coding, and entrepreneurial skills through technology. The organization began with Oscar and a dozen students meeting at coffee shops for free Wi-Fi. In the nine years since its founding, TXT has grown by leaps and bounds under Oscar’s leadership. This year, as a testament to TXT’s impact on the South Central LA community, Councilman Curren Price partnered with Mayor Eric Garcetti and the city of Los Angeles to provide TXT with a renovated 4,000 square foot facility. In 2016, Oscar presented at the White House’s South by South Lawn event, earning recognition from President Obama. Most recently, he was a recipient of the 2018 James Irvine Foundation Leadership Award, which recognizes and supports individuals who are advancing innovative and effective solutions to significant issues in the state of California. Oscar received his Master’s degree from Pepperdine in Learning Technology and his Bachelor’s in Science in Computer Information Systems.



ANDRES CUERVO

@andres_ucla @uclatech

Andres Cuervo serves as Director of UCLA Tech + Innovation, an initiative to engage the tech sector, foster campus innovation, and communicate the latest scientific breakthroughs from the university to the public in new and compelling ways. Andres was recently the recipient of the UCLA External Affairs Achievement Award. Prior to UCLA Tech + Innovation, Andres managed marketing and communications for UCLA’s Graduate School of Education & Information Studies. Before joining UCLA, Andres coordinated education and workforce development programs for the Riverside Chambers of Commerce. Andres earned his B.A. in Political Science with a minor in Sociology from the University of California, Riverside. Andres currently serves on the board of Out in Tech L.A. and as Vice President of the Neighborhood Council in Palms.



**DR. GEORGE
MCCARTHY**

@gmacmccarthy

@landpolicy

George “Mac” McCarthy is President and CEO of the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. He joined the Lincoln Institute in 2014 from the Ford Foundation where he directed programming in Metropolitan Opportunity. Mac joined Ford in 2000 from the Center for Urban and Regional Studies at the University of North Carolina (UNC). His work experience includes: Professor of Economics (Bard College); Resident Scholar (Levy Economics Institute); Visiting Scholar and Member of the High Table (King’s College, Cambridge University); and Research Associate (Centre for Social Research, St. Petersburg, Russia). He received his Ph.D. in Economics from UNC.



**DR. MANUEL
PASTOR**

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Dr. Manuel Pastor is Professor of Sociology and American Studies & Ethnicity at the University of Southern California. He currently directs the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE) at USC and USC's Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration (CSII). Pastor holds an economics Ph.D. from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and is the inaugural holder of the Turpanjian Chair in Civil Society and Social Change at USC. Pastor's research has generally focused on issues of the economic, environmental and social conditions facing low-income urban communities – and the social movements seeking to change those realities. His current research culminates in the release of his new book, *State of Resistance: What California's Dizzying Descent and Remarkable Resurgence Means for America's Future*.



**EMILIANA
PUYANA**

@epuyanag @lacocinas

Emiliana has always been in love with food and cooking. Early experiences in her family's kitchen in Venezuela taught her that food has the extraordinary ability to bring and keep people together. She landed her first restaurant job at the age of fifteen in Caracas and has continued cooking ever since. After graduating from the Culinary Institute of America in 2002 she decided to make the move from New York to San Francisco. Her time in the Bay Area has seen her hold most positions in the food industry from prep cook to chef de cuisine. In 2011 she joined La Cocina's incubator program and started her own pickling business, Jarred SF Brine. After three years of running her own food business, she made the tough decision to pack it in and move on to the next food adventure. She now finds herself back at La Cocina but at the other side of the table. She could not be more excited about the opportunity to give back to an organization and community that has given so much to her. She loves that a walk through La Cocina is like a mini-UN general assembly where the only language spoken is food.



DILSA LUGO

@loscilantros

Dilsa Lugo is the chef and owner of Los Cilantros in Berkeley. Dilsa brings her vast experience in restaurants and farming to offer a selection of home-style Mexican dishes, all made from scratch, that highlight family recipes and the beauty of responsibly and locally-sourced ingredients.



**AZUSENA
FAVELA**

@azufav @lurnetwork

Azusena is LURN's Director of Programs and Operations. Azusena specializes in effectively aligning systems, and leveraging resources and relationships to better the lives of those in traditionally marginalized communities. Azusena has worked extensively in the areas of asset building and leadership development, specifically in her community of South Los Angeles. Azusena has worked with key organizations and foundations, such as CDTech and Weingart to influence economic development opportunities and investments in South LA. She also serves as President of the South Central Neighborhood Council and holds a leadership position with Border Angels, an immigrants rights organization in San Diego, CA. Azusena holds degrees in History and Community Economic Development.



**ANDREA
UNSWORTH**

@supernovawomen

Andrea Unsworth founded Tulip & Oak Consulting in 2018 to focus on helping the cannabis industry as a whole. As a Co-Founder of Supernova Women, she is a dedicated advocate and entrepreneur who came to the cannabis industry through her researching and publishing numerous pieces about the industry in California. As a former bond analyst for Moody's Investors Service, she started her delivery-only dispensary StashTwist in 2014. In 2015 she led the Bay Area chapter of Women Grow, a national for-profit entity whose mission is to serve as a catalyst for women to influence and succeed in cannabis. Andrea has a B.A. from UCLA in Political Science and Sociology, and an MBA with a focus on Company Finance from USC. A California native, she has lived in the Bay Area for 10 years.



SISSY TRINH

@sissytr1 @seacala

Sissy Trinh is the founder and Executive Director of SEACA based in Los Angeles. A determined advocate for social justice, Sissy realized very few organizations addressed the needs of the Southeast Asian community. She envisioned and created a new program—SEACA, empowering the Southeast Asian community through leadership development, education, advocacy and organizing. Through SEACA's innovative organizing with youth, SEACA used land use policy reform to take on the City of Los Angeles and a new wave of gentrification slated for Chinatown that was proceeding with no meaningful input from residents. SEACA was the organizer connecting the dots, bringing in land use experts and youth members, and moving the policy through City Hall.



ALEX T. TOM

@alexttom @cpasf

Alex is Executive Director of the Chinese Progressive Association (CPA) in San Francisco, California. With nearly 20 years of experience organizing for social and economic justice, Alex has played a leadership role in building CPA's service, organizing, and civic engagement programs. Previously, Alex served as the Campaign coordinator where he built CPA's Tenant and Worker Center, and led campaigns to organize workers, winning millions of dollars in back wages. Alex has also played a key role in local, state, and national movement building. He was a co-founder of San Francisco Rising, a grassroots multiracial electoral alliance and regional anchor of California Calls. Alex also serves as the Co-Chair of AAPIs for Civic Empowerment Education Fund, a new statewide initiative to build grassroots civic engagement infrastructure. Alex is also the Executive Director of the Chinese Progressive Association Action Fund. He serves on the Board of Trustees for the Common Counsel Foundation and Board of Directors of The Praxis Project.



JOAN LING

@uclaurnplanning

Joan Ling is a real estate adviser and policy analyst in urban planning. She has experience in real estate financial analysis, affordable housing and urban mixed use development, and state and local land use and housing policy, legislation and regulation. Ling is Board Director, Housing California and MoveLA and former Treasurer, Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Los Angeles and former Executive Director, Community Corporation of Santa Monica. Her current research focus is on the nexus between land use policy and real estate development as well as analysis of community benefits project and program level feasibility.



DR. MARTHA MATSUOKA

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Martha Matsuoka is Associate Professor of Urban and Environmental Policy and Executive Director of the Urban & Environmental Policy Institute, an applied research center at Occidental College. Her work is driven by questions about how community based organizations' knowledge and engagement influence urban development, planning, and policy making. Her research has focused on communities negatively impacted by port and freight transportation, inspired by the Moving Forward Network, a nationwide network established to improve public health, community and labor conditions to achieve economic and environmental justice. She serves on the Leadership Board of the Los Angeles Food Policy Council and the Board of the Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity and has served on the Board of the Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation (past Chair), Human Impact Partners, and the Asian Pacific Environmental Network. Martha received her Ph.D. in Urban Planning from UCLA, a Masters in City Planning from UC Berkeley, and an A.B. from Occidental College.

LESSONS



LEARNED

Workforce Equity & Inclusion for Transgender Workers

The workforce practices of the past are no longer sufficient. Workers of all types require adequate recognition and representation so that diversity is not an afterthought or a box to be checked on an official form or profile - diversity needs to be thoughtful, respectful and as organic as possible. To address how companies and organizations can and should manage their inclusive practices, PLUS² featured Michaela Ivri Mendelsohn to discuss the specific needs of transgender workers in our economy. Michaela is a transgender entrepreneur who is currently the CEO of Pollo West Corp, one of the largest franchisees for El Pollo Loco restaurant in the Western Region of the United States. She founded *TransCanWork* to help the trans community find employment, social acceptance, and encourage them on the path to raise families.

At PLUS², Mendelsohn discussed the disparities and discrimination that transgender people face in the workplace which prevent the transgender community from accessing economic opportunities that promote upward mobility. A report from the Kapor Center for Social Impact found that people of the LGBT community were more likely to report experiencing harassment than their non-LGBT counterparts.¹ The transgender community also faces a disproportionately high unemployment rate when compared to cisgender people.

Mendelsohn's organization, *TransCanWork*, serves as a consultant to companies that want to make a proactive effort to hire and create a safe working environment for their employees. We know this matters because as employers face a crisis in finding workers, they are overlooking the transgender community as a source of willing and valuable workers simply because of prejudice or because companies may not know how to start the hiring process. She noted that there are significant differences between policy, practice, and culture. *TransCanWork* seeks to demystify the process of working with transgender people in order to make hiring them a more comfortable experience for both parties.

She concluded by saying:

“Trans people can have families, good jobs, thrive personally and not worry about their day-to-day survival.”

Mendelsohn acknowledged that no one will change unless the culture changes. She wants to change the ways that companies think in order to help them hire transgender people.



Recommendations

Focus on culture change for companies

Change should come from leadership by creating job training programs that specifically target hiring transgender individuals. They should build a culture of understanding and accepting differences by modeling best practices and enforcing anti-discrimination policies in the workplace.

Implement trainings to help employees understand how to treat their transgender colleagues with respect and understanding

TransCanWork leads training activities that are meant to prepare employees to understand and work with their transgender colleagues. These trainings are intended as an open space to ask clarifying questions so that when cisgender people interact with transgender people, they have a baseline education about transgender experiences.

Provide companies with certificates of approval

The TransCanWork organizational model provides certificates to workplaces that have had their employees go through a transgender awareness training. This provides a signal to transgender workers that this workplace has made an effort to make itself a welcoming and culturally competent space for them. For workplaces, this is a signal to workers that they are making a proactive effort to hire transgender workers.

Building an Equitable Pipeline of Youth of Color in Tech

This dynamic conversation between Andres Cuervo and Kimberly Bryant focused on developing youth of color in the tech industry but also demonstrating the culture change needed for tech companies to understand their need for diversity. As the tech industry grows and offers high wages that transform the lives of its workers, it is important that it become a more accessible and equitable workspace. Thus, PLUS² devoted this panel toward understanding the inaccessibility of the tech industry for people of color and how youth of color can use the tech industry for economic empowerment.

Bryant is the founder and CEO of Black Girls CODE which focuses on getting women of color into the tech world. The organization primes girls of color to become the next technology leaders in the tech space. As a technical engineer, Bryant fell into this nonprofit work after she realized that her daughter was a techie, and she wanted to encourage her daughter to grow in the industry.

Andres Cuervo is the Director of UCLA Tech + Innovation, an initiative to engage the tech sector, foster campus innovation, increase visibility, and communicate the latest scientific breakthroughs from the university to the public in new and compelling ways.

The tech sector offers a pathway for innovation and upward mobility for its employees. However, access to these economic benefits have not been granted as widely to women, people of color, and members of the LGBT community, as they have for more privileged individuals. Andres Cuervo highlighted the lack of intersectional thinking that tech companies display. He asked whether companies were thinking about Black, Latina, Muslim, or disabled women when they thought about hiring more women. He framed this issue as an emergency. Tech companies are creating tools that shape everyday lives but women and people of color are not part of the process. Given that this industry is also a pathway for upward economic mobility, this lack of diversity is also especially jarring.

Bryant noted that if we look at the number of jobs that the tech industry produces, people of color are simply not being hired to fill these roles. Tech companies blame it on the pipeline but approximately 28% of computer science degrees are earned by African Americans. She clarified, saying,

“I’m not talking about charity. I’m talking about employing black or brown people in place other than driving the bus or in the cafeteria. I’m talking about equity...we need to see these dollars flow to our communities too.”

Bryant and Cuervo commended Salesforce for taking steps to address the gender wage gap in their organization and for attempting to decrease racial disparities in hiring. Overall, Bryant and Cuervo advocated for creating a space for young people of color to thrive.

Recommendations

Build community resilience so that children are better supported in their academic endeavors

Local governments and nonprofits should foster a sense of community resiliency by planning events that build social capital. Students of color should have access to tutoring, computers, and supervision so that learning is accessible and supported by the community.

Require the tech companies to enter into a Community Benefit Agreement when utilizing public assistance

In order for tech companies to enter a community, they should be required to form a Community Benefit Agreement where they fund coding or computer science classes in their communities. Such agreements can help develop the infrastructure necessary to support a pipeline of individuals trained in tech-specific jobs within disadvantaged communities.

Stronger focus on resources in public education

Math curriculums should be tailored to careers in engineering or the tech industries so that children attending public school are afforded the same kind of specialized training as children who can attend private schools. In addition to strengthening curriculums to expand the pipeline of students of color, tech companies must create stronger relationships with public institutions to ensure that this expanded pipeline results in well-prepared students of color actually having access to meaningful jobs in the tech sector.



Land Value Capture as a Means to Regulate Capital for Inclusive Growth

Dr. George McCarthy is President and CEO of the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. The Lincoln Institute seeks to improve quality of life through effective use and stewardship of land as a solution for economic, social, and environmental challenges. At PLUS², Dr. McCarthy gave a riveting talk on land value capture, the process of capturing the value of land and reinvesting the full amount into public uses. Traditionally in the United States, private interests capture and profit off land value, while people and public action create said value. Dr. McCarthy believes there is a way to capitalize on new development for the purpose of benefiting disadvantaged communities. As cities continue to grow, public officials can institute policies and regulations that not only encourage necessary growth, but also use that growth as a tool for supporting social, economic, and environmental needs.

“Cities are expanding faster than their populations, which means more money is needed,” said McCarthy at PLUS², “Without money to add infrastructure and additional housing, unplanned settlements and encampments will form.” According to Dr. McCarthy, the capital necessary to equitably develop cities is in the land. Accurately capturing land value for public interest is essential as urban centers continue

to grow. By selling rights to develop land, based on the city's zoning requirements and General Plan, the land itself will pay for investments needed to improve land use by making it sustainable and habitable for all residents.

Currently, inclusionary housing policies are the primary example of land value capture in the United States, but other countries have become quite good at capturing value and investing it back into public services. Dr. McCarthy used Sao Paulo, Brazil as an example. Sao Paulo instituted a policy which sold additional floor area ratio rights, a means for higher density development, to developers and used the income from selling these additional rights to build social housing, a rail line, and public infrastructure. This transfer of resources and benefits, Dr. McCarthy argues, not only works, but can be implemented in a wide range of communities and environments, including Los Angeles.

Ultimately, Dr. McCarthy called for a change in policy in order to implement land value capture for public use to benefit disadvantaged communities. McCarthy said:

“There’s value under your feet. If you’re able to mobilize that value and use it in the right way we can build cities that are equitable and resilient over the next few decades, but it takes public commitment.”

Recommendations

Development through land value capture is necessary for inclusive growth. Dr. McCarthy recommended policies that generate money for public-serving development.

Enact policies to sell development rights

As Dr. McCarthy suggested in his presentation, selling development rights such as increased floor area ratio or loosening bulk and use zoning requirements can build a sustainable pool of money to be used to benefit the local community. Both of these tools increase developers' abilities to build more densely. Floor area ratio is the permitted ratio of total building floor area to the area of the lot. Bulk and use zoning requirements determine the lot size, open space, lot coverage, and allowed use of the land. These various tools increase the benefits developers receive from the land and therefore, accurately captures the value allowing the funds to be transferred to the public sector to fund inclusive growth.

Enhance opportunities for community land trusts (CLTs) to acquire property

Community-controlled housing is ultimately one possible answer to the housing affordability crisis cities across the nation are facing. Many cities do not have the funds to develop the amount of affordable housing that is necessary for their communities. The CLT model removes

land from the equation to keep housing permanently affordable by allowing a community-controlled organization to retain ownership of the land, while allowing other entities to own what is built on that land. But, the single biggest problem in developing CLTs is buying the required land. Land is expensive and typically community organizations do not have the capital to purchase the amount of land needed. Governmental subsidies, tax-credits or other funding streams are necessary to help organizations acquire parcels of land, but these sources of funding require careful planning to piece together - a process which often moves slower than what is standard timing in the commercial real estate market. Government assistance to increase opportunities, coupled with the capital of land value capture, could greatly improve CLT feasibility, so long as decision makers and administrators figure out how to offer capital with enough flexibility to respond to the dynamics of the commercial real estate market.

Repeal or reform Proposition 13

California Proposition 13, passed in 1978, was designed to limit property taxes. At the time, the goal was to prevent people from being forced to sell their houses due to skyrocketing housing prices and the corresponding property taxes. Proposition 13 is doing exactly what it was designed to do—reducing total amount of property taxes paid—and as a result, hurting communities and infrastructure due to billions of dollars in lost revenue. Property taxes are used to fund local governments, maintain parks and roads, and provide other services. The value being saved by California homeowners is starving the state of funds for public-serving infrastructure. Since Prop 13 passed, California's schools and basic services have become more unequal as poor communities struggle to fund services. Repealing Proposition 13 would allow accurate property value to be captured and made available for public funds necessary for inclusive growth. Though any move to repeal Proposition 13 would likely result in severe pushback, it could be modified by changing the maximum annual increase, developing a progressive property tax system, or eliminating protection for commercial and industrial properties. Current law limits annual increases in property taxes to no more than 2%, which is often significantly less than the market value of the property. A change to the maximum annual increase of 2% would increase public funds. A progressive property tax could also increase public funds available. For example, a progressive tax rate assessed on the value of an owner's total asset portfolio would rise so those with more land and/or more property are taxed higher. This would not only increase publicly-available monies but also possibly encourage divestment of properties by large investors and result in a more equitable spread of home and land ownership. Proposition 13 applies to industrial and commercial properties as well. Eliminating Proposition 13 protection for commercial and industrial real estate by requiring fair market value assessments could mean that businesses pay their fair share of property taxes.



Advocating for a Strong California Economy

California is an ever-evolving landscape of social and political agendas. Once a state dominated by conservative interests in the 1980s, California slowly transformed into a more liberal stronghold in step with its diversifying population. To elaborate on California's many transitions, and to pinpoint how and why such transitions took place, **Dr. Manuel Pastor** addressed PLUS² and discussed his new book: *State of Resistance: What California's Dizzying Descent and Remarkable Resurgence Mean for America's Future*. Dr. Manuel Pastor is Professor of Sociology and American Studies & Ethnicity at the University of Southern California (USC), as well as being the Turpanjian Chair in Civil Society and Social Change at USC. Additionally, he is the director of USC's Program for Environmental and Regional Equity and the Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration. His research is focused not only on the environmental and social conditions that affect low-income urban communities, but also the social movements that attempt to change these conditions for the better.

According to Dr. Pastor, California is currently seen as a champion for progressive ideas and initiatives - but this has not always been the case. Pastor's book depicts California's anti-immigrant, suburb loving, and polarized political past. In 1978, California passed Proposition 13 which allowed property owners to pay taxes on the property's assessed value in 1976, unless it sold — in which case the tax would

apply to newly assessed values. This, though helping elder homeowners, also applied to businesses and commercial property, which then resulted in a large cut in property taxes. The cut diminished social services that relied on these taxes for revenue. In lieu of tax revenue, residents had to pay out of pocket or were charged through other fees to receive the same services. Additionally in 1994, California passed Proposition 187, which established a state-run citizenship screening system and prohibited undocumented residents from using non-emergency health care, public education, and various other services. Though Prop. 187 was ruled unconstitutional by a federal district court in 1999, both it and Prop. 13 are reflective of the concern state residents had about the state's rapidly changing demographics. In fact, by 2000, California had become a "minority majority" state.

Similarly, the United States is currently going through significant demographic shifts and with the election of 2016, as Dr. Pastor put it, "America just had its Prop 187 moment." California is not perfect, but it has shifted from its detrimental policies and is now looking at ways to rectify the fiscal and social damages they caused. Just as California was a bellwether for the rift that demographic changes could bring, it now needs to lead the path in how to best address these issues.

Recommendations

Dr. Pastor laid out a series of recommendations that will help California set agendas on a number of important social, economic and environmental issues:

Address inequality as the first step in addressing other issues like environmental sustainability

Dr. Pastor, in his presentation and his book, uses the environment as an example of how inequality is embedded in almost every issue that is important to California's future. For example, in terms of the environment and sustainability, the Public Policy Institute of California surveyed California residents and asked, "Do you feel you have to do anything for the environment?"² To this question, 43% of Whites said yes, 63% of Latinos said yes, and 55% of Blacks said yes. Yet policies suggested to help sustainability, like adding solar panels, are not accessible to all households. Therefore to tackle environmental sustainability we must also deal with inequalities among these communities.

Support a new economy by growing, connecting, and securing

A new economy is one that can keep up with the changing workforce and that brings forward all communities, while providing security to those who need it. To build a population that can be part of this new workforce, Pastor insists that not only must we invest in innovation, but we must also increase access to affordable higher education, like providing free community college. Furthermore, we must also strengthen portable benefits like universal

healthcare. To make sure no one is left behind, we must connect differing types of communities. The capabilities of smaller regions must be taken into account when addressing larger problems. Additionally, Pastor believes that we must strengthen density with diverse and affordable housing. Still, in order to ensure that this new economy is sustainable we must create a climate friendly infrastructure so that future generations can still build upon it. Most importantly, we need to create social safety nets that will help provide financial security to the most vulnerable.

Do not expect one person to solve issues because we all must stay engaged and community organizing is key

In Pastor's book he notes that "the combination of economic distress and demographic change is part of the explanation for the triumph of Propositions 13 and 187, as well as the success of the Trump campaign in 2016"³, but it was a social movement that successfully used this moment to achieve its agenda. In regards to California, Dr. Pastor emphasizes that California's change did not happen due to one key person being elected. It was a collection of social movements that were able to organize people's support. This is to say that change in the United States will not happen with the election of one person but with grassroots organizing and "new avenues for civic engagement."



Incubating & Cultivating a Community of Food Entrepreneurs

Taking into account the disparity in business ownership, along both economic and racial lines, PLUS² dedicated a panel to entrepreneurship, focusing specifically on immigrant women who are food entrepreneurs. The moderator for this panel was Azusena Favela, Director of Programs & Operations at LURN and President of the South Central Neighborhood Council in Los Angeles, and who over the years has worked extensively in the areas of asset building and leadership development. Azusena facilitated this panel, which included Emiliana Puyana and Dilsa Lugo. Emiliana currently serves as Program Coordinator at La Cocina, an incubator program that aims to help primarily women of color and immigrant communities in their journey of formalizing and growing their business. Emiliana, a past participant of the program herself, now helps guide newer participants in their journey. Dilsa, a past participant of La Cocina, is now the chef and owner of Los Cilantros, a restaurant in Berkeley. Together, they discussed, among other topics, challenges that small business owners, specifically women of color, face.

For Dilsa, and many other participants, there are several barriers in starting a business. For one, “the food industry has a notoriously high cost of entry”, which includes licensing fees, insured commercial kitchen space, and the like. Secondly, it is difficult to secure loans for businesses in the food industry, which makes entry even more difficult. It is important to address these challenges as research shows that owning a business is linked to upward mobility, specifically for those in the “lower half of the wealth distribution.”^{4,5} Yet Blacks and Hispanics are “substantially less likely” to own a business compared to their white counterparts.⁶ For their part, La Cocina helps their entrepreneurs navigate these challenges by offering affordable commercial kitchen space, technical assistance, and access to market opportunities and while La Cocina would love to expand it is currently not in their capacity. Still, as one can surmise, these barriers to entry are experienced across the country and thus more solutions must be found and implemented.

Recommendations

Presenters from La Cocina and LURN provided recommendations on how different communities can support the incubation of local, small businesses:

Establish more incubator programs to help with small business infrastructure

Dilsa spoke about the difficulty she and others faced, such as trying to obtain a loan and finding a location that was both affordable and fit her needs. These issues inform La Cocina’s practices and their services as they offer assistance with business plans and use their network to help their participants find a place. Without their help, their participants would have had a much harder time opening their businesses or may have incurred too great a debt. Access to a commercial kitchen and La Cocina’s network of vendors help them get on the same

footing as more experienced entrepreneurs. Still, La Cocina's program is focused in the Bay area, while these barriers to entry are experienced across the country. As a result, similar incubator programs like La Cocina need to expand to different cities so that underprivileged food entrepreneurs stand a better chance of navigating complicated or extensive licensing regulations and have the resources to meet the requirements set.

Mitigate the effects of large development through community benefit agreements and commercial rent control

Emiliana, from La Cocina, pointed to large development as an issue that negatively impacts small business. Large development projects pose the risk of introducing new businesses to neighborhoods without integrating existing businesses into changing physical landscapes. To help mitigate this risk, local government can help by being intentional about community benefits they expect, which should include measures that alleviate the rent hikes and outpricing that may come with large developments, and to be there to enforce their stipulations. For example, local officials can support small-business' in securing leases, obtaining flexible leases if needed, and even help identify businesses ready for property ownership⁷. By doing so, small-businesses would not be as vulnerable to rent increases and changes in management. Furthermore, any large development should be preceded by direct engagement so that small-businesses are not only aware of upcoming projects, but are able to provide their input. Taking into account their concerns will help smoothen the integration process.

Cannabis in California: Opportunities for Equity & Entrepreneurism

Cannabis in California is a multifaceted topic with major social, economic and political implications for the State of California. This year's PLUS² created space for this timely topic as residents, entrepreneurs and policymakers actively navigate this complex environment. To provide insights on opportunities for equity and entrepreneurism in cannabis, PLUS² featured Andrea Unsworth. Andrea is the owner of Tulip & Oak Consulting and the Co-Founder of SuperNova Women. The latter organization is a space for women of color in the cannabis industry. They provide technical assistance for underserved communities or communities affected by the War on Drugs to open their own dispensaries. Andrea started a delivery service for medical marijuana in 2014 after watching her father transition from vicodin to CBD peacefully. She saw a lack of support for herself as a woman of color.

With the legalization of cannabis, Unsworth now sees a big divide between being able to own a cannabis shop and simply being able to work in one for people of color. With the War on Drugs

started by President Nixon in the 1970s, many black and brown communities were excessively policed and criminalized for the use and sale of cannabis. Now, with California's legalization of cannabis, the industry is a vibrant opportunity for economic mobility. However, the access to this industry is not always so easy, as Andrea Unsworth described. PLUS² sought to examine this industry as a means of empowering the victims of the War on Drugs.

At PLUS², Unsworth noted the barriers to entry into the cannabis industry: a complex permits process controlled by local government; the need for an architect to sign off on everything; and the cannabis industry having the highest tax rate of any other industry in the country. Unsworth said that if there is money left over after those taxes, it is important to be strategic and reinvest the resulting capital.

Unsworth also detailed the equity programs that local governments are rolling out to encourage underserved communities to apply to own dispensaries and noted that SB 1294 will seek to create a statewide equity program. Ultimately, she sees the cannabis industry as a space where women of color can be CEOs, sell a healing substance, be entrepreneurial, and economically empower themselves. She concluded:

“Our mission is to create a more inclusive cannabis industry that reflects what it should.”



Endorse and support statewide cannabis equity bill, Senate Bill 1294

Andrea Unsworth recommends that local advocates for racial equity and economic equality should endorse and advocate for Senate Bill 1294 which would consolidate the licensure and regulation of commercial medicinal and adult-use cannabis activities and promote a statewide equity program.⁷ The bill was introduced by Senator Bradford and is currently awaiting approval by the Committee on Business and Professions. Creating equity programs that specifically target people affected by the War on Drugs is a crucial tool in ensuring that the cannabis industry becomes a tool for economic mobility. The passage of this bill would facilitate the economic mobility process.

Focus on local advocacy for more detailed and effective equity programs at the City level

In order to advocate for these types of programs, communities can (1) create more worker collectives such as SuperNova Women in each large city with a significant cannabis industry presence so that they can advocate for equitable labor practices and access to the industry, and (2) engage city policymakers as allies in order to develop policies and regulations that are defined by community needs and by the needs of cannabis workers.

Gentrification in Chinatown

With growing concerns over gentrification and displacement, especially in low-income communities and areas with large immigrant populations, PLUS² convened a panel on displacement occurring in Chinatowns throughout California. This panel featured Alex Tom, Executive Director of Chinese Progressive Association; Sissy Trinh, Executive Director of Southeast Asian Community Alliance; and Joan Ling, Lecturer in Urban Planning at UCLA. Dr. Martha Matsuoka, Professor of Urban and Environmental Policy at Occidental College, moderated.

Dr. Matsuoka began, and framed the discussion using Ruth Glass' definition of gentrification. Glass, an urban sociologist who coined the term gentrification, defines the process as "working class quarters [being] invaded by the middle class-upper and lower....until all or most of the working class occupiers are displaced and the whole social character of the district is changed."⁹ In California, Chinatowns are witnessing classic evidence of gentrification and displacement.

According to Ling, Los Angeles is witnessing extreme income divergence, where top earners are experiencing more growth in their income than those earning less. Data also show there is divergence between income growth and rent growth. The average median income in Los Angeles has grown by 18 percent while rent has increased by 30 percent. Middle class Angelenos are seeking lower rents that

are available in neighborhoods like Chinatown. For them, Chinatown offers affordable housing but as Ling states, “their individual economic decisions are changing the market in low income areas with higher rents and changing retail shops.”

The panel also discussed how gentrification issues boiled down to inequality and power. In Los Angeles, this struggle depends on who has access to resources and who gets to decide what our city looks like. “We’re clawing our way to stay in the city,” said Tom. Panelists suggested a multi-pronged approach to land use policies to protect (and enhance) tenants rights, increase the supply of affordable housing, and preserve existing affordable housing. Trinh summed it up by saying:

“It takes a village, and a movement, to build resilience and change our development narratives and futures.”

Recommendations

The conditions and structures in place that allow gentrification in Chinatown are similar to those occurring in and near other neighborhoods across Los Angeles and in other cities. Fighting displacement in order to keep people in their communities requires multiple policies as part of a holistic approach to protect existing residents.

Enact mandatory inclusionary housing policies

The development and availability of affordable housing units in Los Angeles are not keeping up with demand. As a way to increase and/or protect the stock of affordable units, our panelists recommend the city enacts mandatory inclusionary housing policies that require all newly constructed apartment buildings and for-sale developments to set aside a number of units for affordable housing. In Los Angeles, inclusionary housing is voluntary and affordable units are not required to be built. As a result, the city has never met its low income housing goals. Contrarily, Santa Monica requires inclusionary housing and regularly meets its low income housing production goals. Mandatory inclusionary housing could increase the number of affordable units in the market while also encouraging development.

Strengthen anti-displacement tools such as just cause eviction and rent control policies

Renter protection policies like just cause evictions and rent control can provide a short-term solution to protect the most vulnerable communities from displacement while land use policies are changed. Rent control provides predictability and stability for those in controlled units. Just cause eviction policies require landlords to have reasons, or a “just

cause,” to evict a tenant and that the tenant must have done something wrong to warrant an eviction. Most cities and unincorporated areas in California have very few, if any, meaningful renter protections, which can have devastating consequences in low income neighborhoods facing gentrification and displacement. Just cause and rent control policies often must be enacted together to provide meaningful protections for tenants. Together they protect renters from massive rent increases in tight housing markets while also preventing evictions from profit-seeking landlords. Similarly, the repeal of laws that prohibit these kinds of protections - such as the Ellis Act and Costa-Hawkins - would be a necessary step to strengthen anti-displacement tools.

Preserve existing affordable housing with no-net-loss and right to return policies

The demand for affordable housing far outweighs the supply. Therefore, preserving existing affordable housing is crucial. Right to return policies require new developments to provide existing tenants a right to return once the development is complete. No-net-loss requires all vacated or demolished affordable housing be replaced and displaced tenants offered their homes back. Strategies like these ensure residents can stay in their communities when new developments are built. No-net-loss and right to return policies are most effective when also combined with rent control so existing tenants are also able to afford the newly developed units in their neighborhood.

CITATIONS

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CONCLUSION

Each presentation at this year's PLUS² discussed obstacles and opportunities to build more economically resilient communities. Based on their recommendations, a few things are clear:

1. We have to support transformative statewide policy efforts. Dr. Manuel Pastor and Andrea Unsworth raise statewide policy opportunities with the potential to push California toward a future that is more inclusive of all residents. And, more importantly, these policies need to be designed with significant input from those they stand to impact. It is no longer acceptable to engage in policy design that is “top-down.”
2. As Dr. McCarthy stated, there are ways to make our current economic systems work for the people who need the most support - we just need to be creative. By tapping into the value of development projects, we can extract tangible benefits for low-income communities. In tandem to innovative strategies, as we learned through our panel on displacement, communities need to push for comprehensive policies that work to protect low-income residents in existing communities.
3. Current and future workers need access to appropriate development spaces and training opportunities. As we learned from our panels on youth in tech, food workers and transgender workers, public and private institutions need to invest more into creating thoughtful spaces and programs that support individuals often left out of economic mainstreams. Whether through formal channels (policies that enforce Community Benefit Agreements), or through partnerships, the goal is clear: we need our workforce not only be more diverse, but to be more representative at every level of experience and leadership.

Over the next few months, LURN is going to explore the themes and lessons generated at PLUS² in more detail. Our plan is to dive into the research behind these lessons and generate new solutions that compliment or expand on the valuable information we gleaned from this year's speakers. Stay tuned for that information and please make sure to join us for the next PLUS² in 2019!

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Leadership for Urban Renewal Network (LURN) is a nonprofit, community development organization based in the neighborhood of Boyle Heights 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 works towards this mission in 3 ways: advocating for thoughtful urban policy, designing and implementing economic development projects that support small businesses, and providing research and program design services to organizations who align with our mission.



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