

CULTURAL TREASURES OF SOUTH LA

A PROMISE ZONE ARTS INITIATIVE

**COMMUNITY-DRIVEN CULTURAL ASSET MAPPING
INITIATIVE IN THE SOUTH LOS ANGELES PROMISE ZONE**



JUNE 2023



PICO UNION
Washington Boulevard

ADAMS NORMANDIE

UNIVERSITY PARK
USC PRICE

HISTORIC SOUTH CENTRAL
THE BIG HOUSE

JEFFERSON PARK

EXPOSITION PARK

University of Southern California

Merced La Paloma

HEIMERT PARK

CENTRAL ALAMEDA

UNION PARK

Gilbert Lindsay Recreation Center

HYDRA

SOUTH PARK

FLORENCE

Measures of South LA:
Community-driven cultural asset mapping
of the South LA Promise Zone

culture.org

Fl Salvador

Hillside Villa Tenant Association

City Hall
Cal Trans

Bike LA

St. Marks

serobin!

Festival of Books

EXPO ROSE GARDEN!

LAFc Station

FESTIVAL OF MIRSIS!

Baldwin Hills Mall (Crenshaw Ave)

Expo Park

Verment Skyline Community Garden

THE 4th & 5th STREETS GREENUP

48th & Hoover Gardens

BBQ

I Love My City

HERE NOW

More Love

The Double

How Many Light Bulbs

12th Street

THE AFIBA CENTER

10th Street

Home

More U.S. Community School

Mountain CA Library

Slouson Avenue

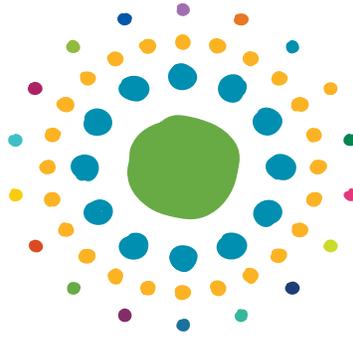
Martinez's Delicatessen & Grocery

Tree Yog!

Tami's

San Pedro Street

79th Street



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CULTURAL TREASURES OF SOUTH LA

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NDSC acknowledges the Gabrielino/Tongva peoples as the traditional land caretakers of Tovaangar (the Los Angeles basin and So. Channel Islands), and we acknowledge our presence on the ancestral and unceded territory of the Chumash, Kizh, and Tataviam nations. We recognize and are committed to lifting up their stories, culture, and community. We pay our respects to the Honuukvetam (Ancestors), 'Ahihirom (Elders), and 'Eyoohiinkem (our relatives/relations) past, present, and emerging.

NDSC acknowledges the labor of Black & African American people—ancestors and descendants. We recognize that the United States' and global economies historically and currently rest on the ingenuity, Cultural Treasures, and stolen labor of African Americans and Black people throughout the diaspora. We honor their brilliance and humanity, and express our heartfelt gratitude for their infinite contributions. We welcome their wisdom and joy here.







CULTURAL TREASURES OF SOUTH LA

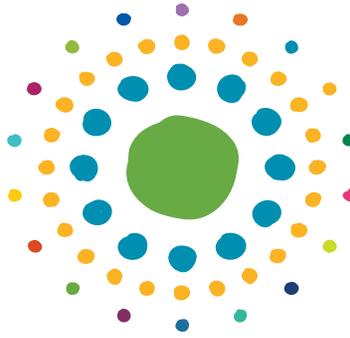
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Promise Zone Arts South LA (PZA:SLA) is a cultural asset mapping and activation initiative of the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA). This project gives South LA community members a participatory platform to spotlight local Cultural Treasures that they deem significant, illuminating the rich cultural tapestry that makes this community thrive.

Cultural Treasures could include **artists, musicians, dance and theater companies, studios, galleries, street art, restaurants, annual events and celebrations, bookstores, social halls, cultural practices, community elders and tradition-bearers, historic sites, and gathering places of all kinds.**

In collaboration with USC's Neighborhood Data for Social Change (NDSC) team, project partners developed a survey to collect information about Cultural Treasures and the broader arts and cultural landscape of the South LA Promise Zone. Survey responses were collected online, at public events, in focus groups, and through door-to-door canvassing efforts coordinated by Community Coalition. Additionally, LA Commons and the Cultural Treasures Coalition, a group of artists and practitioners living or working in the Promise Zone area, organized focus groups. These focus groups were key in collecting surveys and community feedback about Cultural Treasures.



CULTURAL TREASURES OF SOUTH LA

CULTURAL TREASURES IN SOUTH LOS ANGELES

As of April 2023, approximately 375 Cultural Treasures have gone through a process of nomination by community members, cleaning by the USC data team, and vetting by a group of community stakeholders.

Cultural treasures were nominated across a range of over twenty categories but community members most commonly nominated treasures related to **food, visual arts, education, music and heritage**. Respondents were also asked the types of people and households who benefit from or are served by their Cultural Treasure. **The most common selection by far was “all households in my community,” demonstrating how Cultural Treasures bring together households of all backgrounds across this diverse and vibrant community.** Community elders and children were also commonly identified as groups benefiting from South LA’s Cultural Treasures.

In addition to the various types of groups who benefit from their Cultural Treasure, survey respondents were also asked to identify the impact that their Cultural Treasure has had on their life. The most commonly shared sentiments centered around themes of **connectedness with creativity, community and culture**. In addition to the cultural and creative impacts, survey respondents also shared that their Cultural Treasure positively impacts their **health, wellness, and safety**.

PRESERVING CULTURAL TREASURES

Nearly half of respondents shared that their community **had lost a Cultural Treasure, highlighting the importance of cultural preservation in South LA**. Notably, the majority of respondents who felt that a Cultural Treasure had been lost shared that it happened within the last five years.

When asked about what conditions South LA needs to preserve existing Cultural Treasures, responses varied across a range of issues. The most commonly shared answer was **increased funding for local artists/arts in the community**. Other top answers related to **increased access to safe outdoor spaces, living wage jobs, and affordable housing**.



CULTURAL TREASURES OF SOUTH LA



INVESTING IN CULTURE AND BEYOND

The work of PZA:SLA was designed with the intention of giving South LA community members the opportunity to share, remember, and preserve their Cultural Treasures. The community voices shared through the project's survey uplift not only how arts and culture have brought households from this diverse and vibrant community together, but also the interconnectedness of arts and culture with so many other pressing social policy issues. The results of the survey suggest a need for parallel investments in cultural, physical and economic infrastructure to create a thriving community for this generation of culture-bearers and the next.

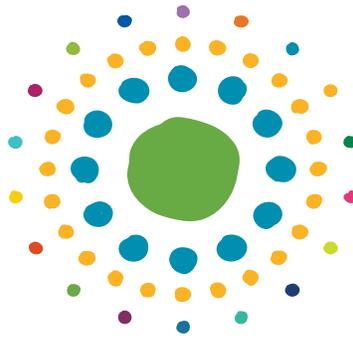
The Cultural Treasures nominated through this project are highlighted in a community-facing online database, featuring interactive maps and a multi-media storybank, serving as both a platform for a community-driven narrative of place and a resource for advocacy.

To learn more, visit SouthLACulture.org.



HOW
DARE
YOU
LOVE
ME

WHY DO YOU MEAN IT?
-v.kali



INTRODUCTION

PROJECT OVERVIEW

SouthLACulture.org is the product of **Promise Zone Arts South Los Angeles (PZA:SLA)**, a cultural asset mapping and activation initiative of the **City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA)**.

Building on the work of DCA's previous Promise Zone Arts initiative in the Central Los Angeles Promise Zone, PZA:SLA is focused on the federally designated South Los Angeles Promise Zone. It has been co-created and implemented in partnership with **LA Commons**, the **South Los Angeles Transit Empowerment Zone (SLATE-Z)**, **Community Coalition**, and the **University of Southern California (USC)'s Neighborhood Data for Social Change (NDSC) project**.

This project gives South LA community members a participatory platform to spotlight local Cultural Treasures that they deem significant, illuminating the rich cultural tapestry that makes this community thrive. Cultural Treasures could include: **artists; musicians; dance and theater companies; studios; galleries; street art; restaurants; annual events and celebrations; bookstores; social halls; cultural practices; community elders and tradition-bearers; historic sites; and gathering places of all kinds.**

The project seeks to counter "top-down" methods which impose cultural definitions and metrics onto community-centered practices, instead aiming to center community definitions of what arts and culture mean to those who live, work, and frequent South LA.

The Cultural Treasures nominated through this project and their impact on the South LA community are discussed further in this report, created by USC's NDSC team for PZA:SLA. The report provides (1) a brief demographic overview of the South LA project geography, (2) a description of communal definitions of Cultural Treasures and the local Cultural Treasures that were nominated, (3) and community-informed strategies for cultural preservation and artist engagement.

COMMUNITY MEMBER

Dorsay Dujon

Founder of Make Music LA



Pride in our communities, the legacy of families, artists, architectural treasures and how the generations have evolved over time is something that we need desperately to show ourselves first and then the rest of the world.

The saddest part of this is that so many children of color have grown up in a world that kept us from knowing the truth about our legacy. No records were kept to properly identify a family's origins.

The good news is mapping cultural and historical assets brings us in contact with the people who have stories to share about the past, present and even future through their eyes.

I believe that in this difficult time of our country's history, it is the perfect opportunity for us to gather our cultural gems to display with pride.

Our children need to know who they are and what proud and dignified stock they really come from. How perfect they are and how creative and resourceful, not to mention how amazingly talented they are and that anything is possible.

We must shine that bright light on ourselves each and every day. You are a part of making that happen. Thank you and thank you to {Promise Zone Arts South LA} for shining that light on our communities each and everyday.”



CULTURAL TREASURES OF SOUTH LA

Additionally, Cultural Treasures will be highlighted in a community-facing online database (SouthLACulture.org). The website is a resource for anyone seeking to learn more about the rich cultural life of South Los Angeles. With a database, interactive map, and multimedia story bank of Cultural Treasures, this website features some of the people, places, organizations, and events from the past and present that make up South Los Angeles' dynamic, vibrant, multicultural community.

ABOUT THE SOUTH LOS ANGELES PROMISE ZONE

This project is centered around the geography of the South Los Angeles Promise Zone, one of two federally designated "Promise Zones" in Los Angeles. Promise Zones are a federal initiative started under President Obama's administration that pairs federal government partners with local leaders to streamline resources across agencies in twenty-two high poverty communities across the nation.

The federally designated South Los Angeles Promise Zone encompasses **Leimert Park, Vermont Square, Baldwin Hills/Crenshaw, and connected neighborhoods** with an eye to increasing opportunity through enhanced opportunities for federal contracts and grants. Historically, the area is the **center of African American culture and heritage in LA and is closely associated with the development of jazz, hip-hop, spoken word, assemblage art, and Black cinema**. In recent decades, the area has seen an influx of Latino/a populations that have imbued the area with their own unique cultural traditions.

The South Los Angeles Transit Empowerment Zone (SLATE-Z), which was officially designated a Promise Zone in 2016, is a historic and unprecedented partnership of over 100 public, private, and community-based organizations dedicated to revitalizing South Los Angeles.

ABOUT THE PROMISE ZONE ARTS INITIATIVE

Promise Zone Arts South Los Angeles, a project of the **City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA)**, builds on the success of DCA's previous Promise Zone Arts initiative in the Central Los Angeles Promise Zone in 2018.

The National Endowment for the Arts' (NEA) "Our Town" program granted project funding for the South Los Angeles iteration of the project in 2019, but the project was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Planning for PZA:SLA resumed in October 2021 with the first all-partner meeting to launch the initiative held in January 2022.



CULTURAL TREASURES OF SOUTH LA

While the project methodology and goals remained the same as the previous iteration, there were a few differences, notably a shorter timeline and increased use of technology. Partner meetings, focus groups, surveying and outreach were conducted mostly online until in-person gathering was deemed safe, but digital outreach continued even after a robust program of in-person gatherings, field work and events commenced in May 2022. Social media played a larger role in outreach, engagement, and awareness in South LA than in the first iteration, out of a desire to increase participation and transparency around the cultural asset mapping process.

SURVEY CREATION & COLLECTION

In collaboration with USC's NDSC team, project partners **developed a survey to collect information about Cultural Treasures and the broader arts and cultural landscape of the South LA Promise Zone.** The survey was available in English and Spanish and open for public response from June through October 2022.

The survey was designed with the intention of giving South LA community members the opportunity to share, remember, and preserve their Cultural Treasures. Survey questions were developed to be inclusive and culturally affirming, with language that embraces every community member's diverse cultures, identities, affiliations, and experiences. Survey respondents were allowed to nominate up to three Cultural Treasures and then asked to complete an optional second portion of the survey. Those who completed the second portion were entered into a raffle to win a gift card.

Survey responses were collected online, at public events, and through door-to-door canvassing efforts coordinated by Community Coalition. Additionally, LA Commons and the Cultural Treasures Coalition, a group of artists and practitioners living or working in the Promise Zone area, organized focus groups. These focus groups were key in collecting surveys and community feedback about Cultural Treasures.

For a full description of the survey methodology, see Appendix A.

CULTURAL TREASURE

Adé Neff

Founder of RideOn! Bike Shop/Co-Op



In 2015 Ride On! Bike Shop/Co-Op founder Adé Neff attended a mobility conference, one of the only attendees from South LA. Frustrated by the lack of awareness of the insufficient bike infrastructure and lack of access to affordable resources for low-income cyclists in his neighborhood, Neff decided to start his own business. Ride On! sells, rents and repairs bikes, but Neff’s vision was for more than just a shop. It is about education, activism and community organizing to advocate for the community’s mobility needs.



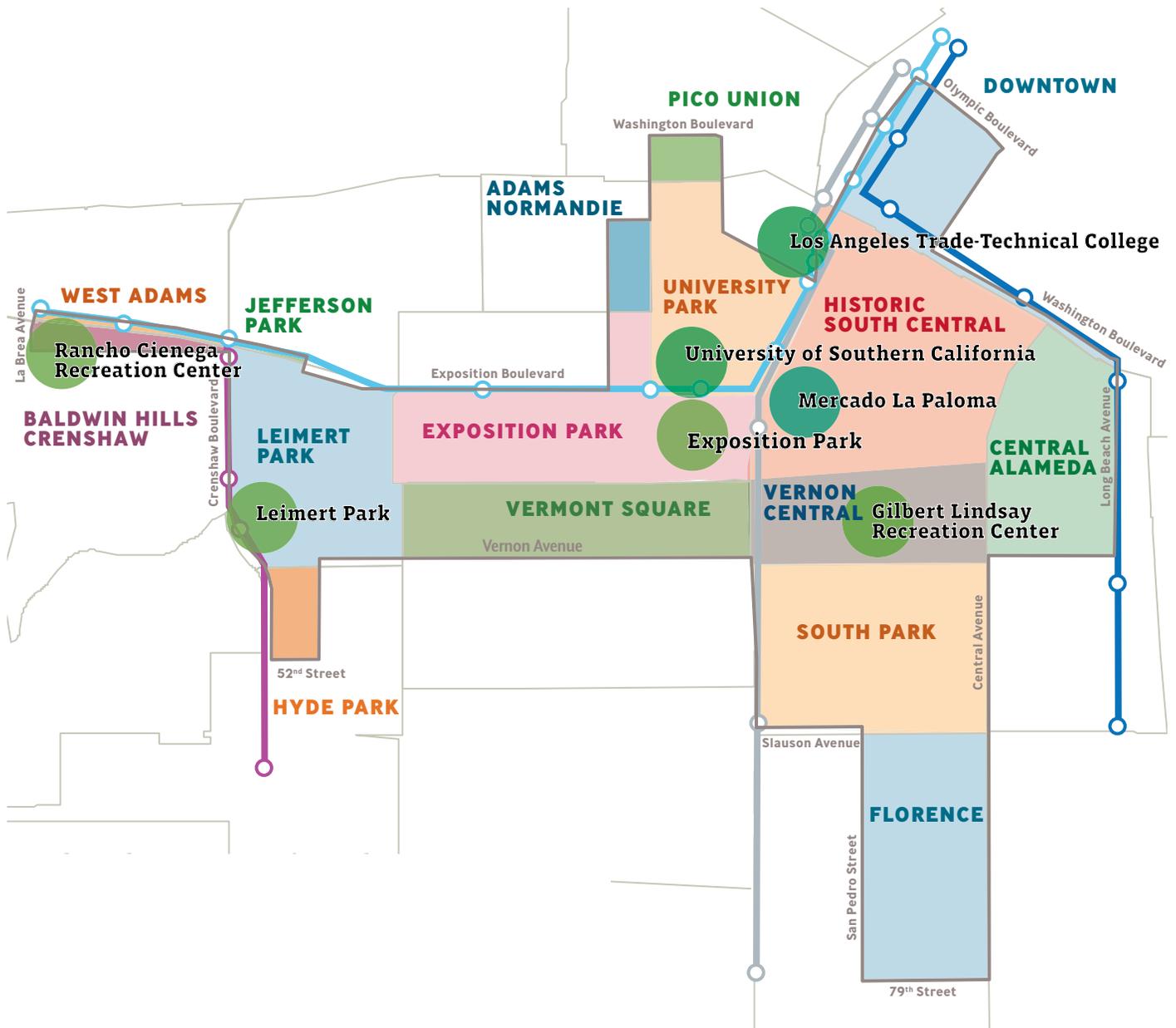
Being Black and cycling is the same thing as being Black and driving, walking, breathing, existing — constantly reacting to racism in all areas of activity [...] For me, biking is about freedom and transportation, being able to go anywhere at any time and also being healthy.”





CULTURAL TREASURES OF SOUTH LA

ABOUT THE SOUTH LOS ANGELES PROMISE ZONE COMMUNITY





CULTURAL TREASURES OF SOUTH LA

This section includes excerpts from a longer brief about the South LA Promise Zone community prepared by USC's NDSC for SLATE-Z. For additional information about the community, view the full brief at SlateZData.org.

The South LA Promise Zone is approximately five miles wide, from Crenshaw Boulevard to Central Avenue, and is roughly framed by LA Metro's Expo (E), Crenshaw (K) and Blue (A) Line light rail systems. The area has a **population of approximately 233,000 residents, which constitutes just under 6% of Los Angeles City's total population** (American Community Survey, 2021).

RACE/ETHNICITY & HERITAGE

The South Los Angeles Promise Zone is home to a diverse and vibrant community recognized for its culture, history, and neighborhood assets. **The South Los Angeles region has a rich history as a social, cultural, and economic hub for Los Angeles' Black community during the 20th century.** Starting with the Central Avenue jazz scene during the 1920s, the area has been at the center of many social and cultural movements of national and international significance over the last century. Today, the South Los Angeles Promise Zone is predominantly comprised of Latino/a residents, with 72% of the area's residents identifying as Hispanic/Latino/a, significantly higher than the City percentage of 49%. The second largest racial/ethnic group in SLATE-Z is Black/African American, with 14% of neighborhood residents identifying as such compared to 8% in the larger City of Los Angeles (American Community Survey, 2021). The full racial/ethnic composition of the South Los Angeles Promise Zone compared to the City of Los Angeles is shown in the chart.

Many diverse communities exist even within the South Los Angeles Promise Zone racial and ethnic groups. For example, of the 169,019 residents who identify as Hispanic/Latino/a, 66% identify as **Mexican**, 15% identify as **Salvadoran**, and 12% identify as **Guatemalan**. Likewise, of the 13,631 residents who identify as Asian, 36% are **Chinese**, 25% are **Korean**, 14% are **Indian**, 7% are **Filipino**, 5% are **Japanese**, and 3% are **Vietnamese** (American Community Survey, 2021).

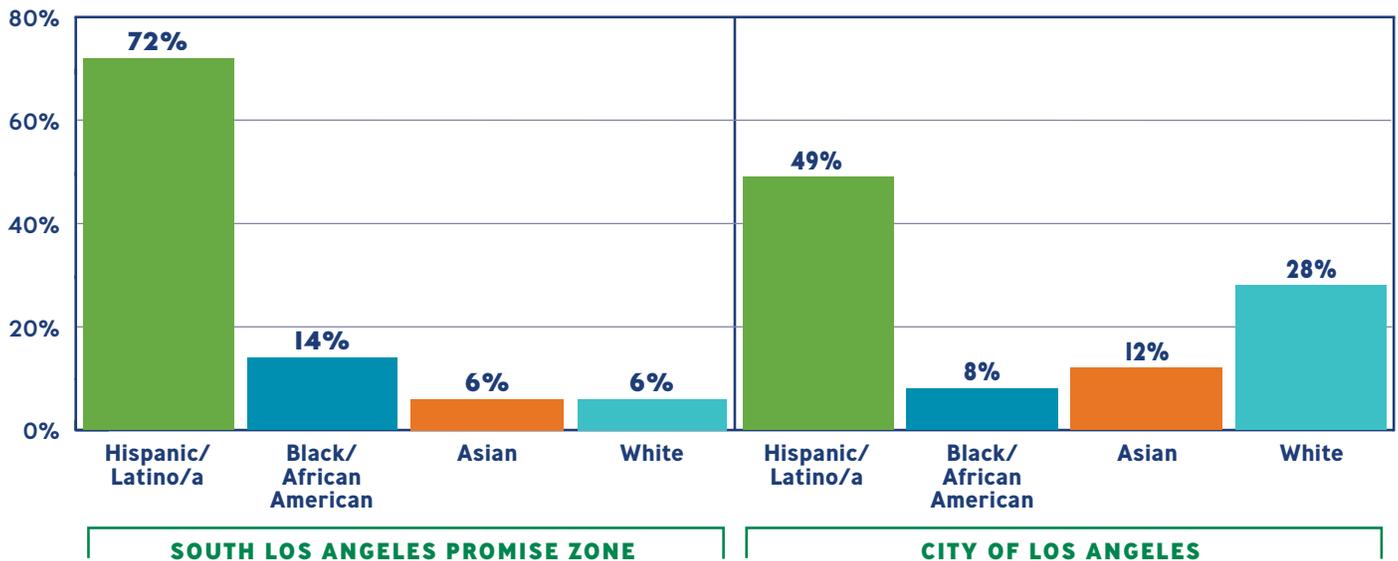
Given that the majority of the residents in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone are of Hispanic/Latino origin, Spanish and English are the most common languages spoken at home. In comparison to the City of Los Angeles where only 41% of the population speaks Spanish at home, **67% of the population in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone speaks Spanish at home** (American Community Survey, 2021).



CULTURAL TREASURES OF SOUTH LA

RACE & ETHNICITY OF RESIDENTS SOUTH LOS ANGELES PROMISE ZONE & CITY OF LOS ANGELES

Population in Each Group by Percentage



Source: 2021 American Community Survey

Over 40% of the residents in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone area are immigrants, which is slightly higher than the City's average of 36%. However, almost 70% of immigrants residing within the SLATE-Z catchment area are not naturalized citizens¹ compared to just 51% of immigrants across the City of Los Angeles (American Community Survey, 2021). U.S. Citizenship offers many privileges including the ability to vote in elections, run for office, receive federal benefits and scholarships, travel overseas for extended periods of time, and sponsor other family members for green card status.

INCOME & EMPLOYMENT

The South Los Angeles Promise Zone and the larger South Los Angeles region has historically experienced economic disinvestment due to institutionalized racism and systemic oppression, including "redlining" during the decades following the New Deal in the 1930s, closures of large job

¹ This includes permanent residents with authorization documents, temporary migrants such as foreign students, humanitarian migrants such as refugees, and migrants without authorization documents.



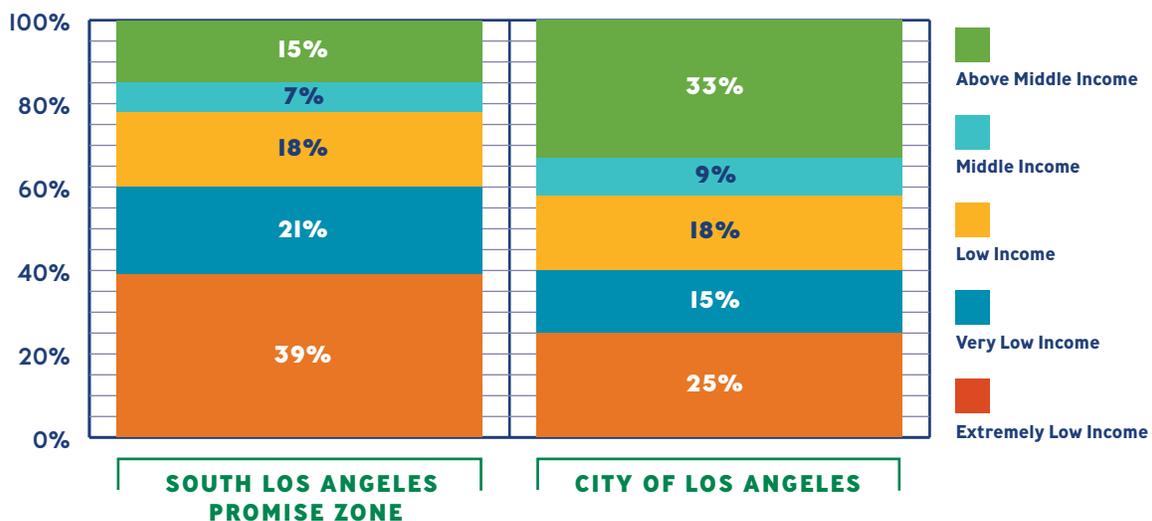
CULTURAL TREASURES OF SOUTH LA

centers including the Goodyear rubber plant in the 1970s, and the rise of mass incarceration at the end of the 20th century. The cumulative effect of these policies have disproportionately impacted Black and Brown communities in South Los Angeles, creating structural barriers to wealth creation that Angelenos in predominantly white neighborhoods have not faced.²

As a result of historic structural disinvestment in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone, the median household income in the area was \$51,820 in 2021, compared to \$76,370 in Los Angeles County (American Community Survey, 2021). In 2019, **60% of the area's population was considered extremely or very low income (making less than half of the area median income)** compared to 40% citywide (U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, 2019). Generally, families making less than half of the area median income are eligible for various affordable housing programs like federal housing choice vouchers. The chart shows how the income of households in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone area and the City of Los Angeles compare to the area median income.

POPULATION BY INCOME LEVEL SOUTH LOS ANGELES PROMISE ZONE & CITY OF LOS ANGELES

Population income level by percentage



Source: 2019 United States Department of Housing & Urban Development

² University of Southern California Sol Price Center for Social Innovation. (2021). *Resilience & Rebuilding*. <https://coalitionrcd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/CRCD-Resilience-and-Rebuilding-South-LA-Post-Pandemic.pdf>

Dunbar Hotel

Serving Up History along with Delicious Dishes



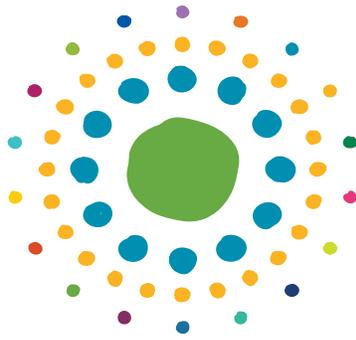
In the 1930s and 1940s the Dunbar Hotel was a 115-room luxury hotel that welcomed the Black luminaries, entertainers, diplomats and businessmen visiting segregated Los Angeles. In the heart of the bustling Central Avenue social scene, the Dunbar was a premiere music venue, a vibrant home to West Coast jazz, and hub of Black cultural life in L.A.



Why did I choose the Dunbar? I just knew this was history right here,” said Brother London Carter - aka the Mayor of the Dunbar Hotel - one of the first residents to move in when it was repurposed as affordable senior housing in the mid 2010s.

The Dunbar is also now home to Delicious at the Dunbar, the first sit-down restaurant on Central Avenue in 30 years, featuring a menu that combines soul food and Mexican food, reflecting the cultural diversity in the neighborhood today.





CULTURAL TREASURES IN SOUTH LOS ANGELES

Despite the historic structural disinvestment that residents in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone have faced, the area is a vibrant cultural hub that reflects the diversity and resilience of its residents. This section describes communal definitions of Cultural Treasures shared during listening sessions as well as the Cultural Treasures documented by the community through the PZA:SLA survey.

COMMUNAL DEFINITIONS OF CULTURAL TREASURES

The Cultural Treasures Coalition hosted eight focus groups throughout the survey collection timeframe with a total of approximately 90 attendees. During the focus groups, participants were asked what a Cultural Treasure means to them. Their responses were recorded and provided to the NDSC team to analyze for shared themes across answers. Words that participants most commonly used to define what Cultural Treasures mean to them included **community, safe space, influence, preservation, landmark, history, and connection**. A full list of the themes shared are shown in the word cloud on the following page, with the largest words indicating most commonly shared themes.

The following sections share information about the Cultural Treasures documented by the community through the PZA:SLA survey. This project and data are iterative, and the list and database of Cultural Treasures is expected to expand through additional community engagements and nominations. The data in this report offers key takeaways and a snapshot as of April 2023.

As of April 2023, approximately 375 Cultural Treasures have gone through a process of nomination by community members, cleaning by the USC data team, and vetting by the Cultural Treasures Coalition and representatives from the Lucas Museum, LA Green Grounds, Esperanza Community Housing, Metro, LA Commons, and members of the Promise Zone Arts South LA team. For a full description of the process used to arrive at this list of Cultural Treasures, see Appendix A.



CULTURAL TREASURES OF SOUTH LA

WHAT DOES A CULTURAL TREASURE MEAN TO YOU?



TYPES OF CULTURAL TREASURES

After naming their Cultural Treasure, survey participants were asked to categorize it in a number of ways. First, the survey asked participants to identify their Cultural Treasure as any of the following (with more than one selection allowed): person, group, event, place, food/food service/restaurant, or other.

Over half of Cultural Treasures nominated (233) were identified as “places,” including shops, museums, parks, beauty salons, health clinics, performing arts centers, and more. 65 treasures were identified as a food/food service/restaurant. Survey respondents also highlighted 67 groups, including many organizations working to promote health, economic opportunity, and access to arts and culture for South Los Angeles residents. Respondents identified 30 different events, Cultural Treasures that aren’t necessarily permanent fixtures, but still bring the community together during special occasions or celebrations, such as Día de los Muertos celebrations, jazz festivals, or farmers’

CULTURAL TREASURE

Tak's Coffee Shop

Preserving the Japanese Presence in the Crenshaw District



Tak's Coffee Shop opened its doors in 1996 when Mary Shizuru, formerly a waitress at the iconic Holiday Bowl restaurant, and her business partner Fujio Hori, decided to start their own business. Named after Mary's son Tak Kikuchi, this family-owned diner has served the community for more than 27 years.

The lively kitchen and bustling dining room are usually filled with regulars and newcomers, attracted by the welcoming atmosphere and eclectic menu serving up a fusion of Japanese, Hawaiian, and American cuisines.

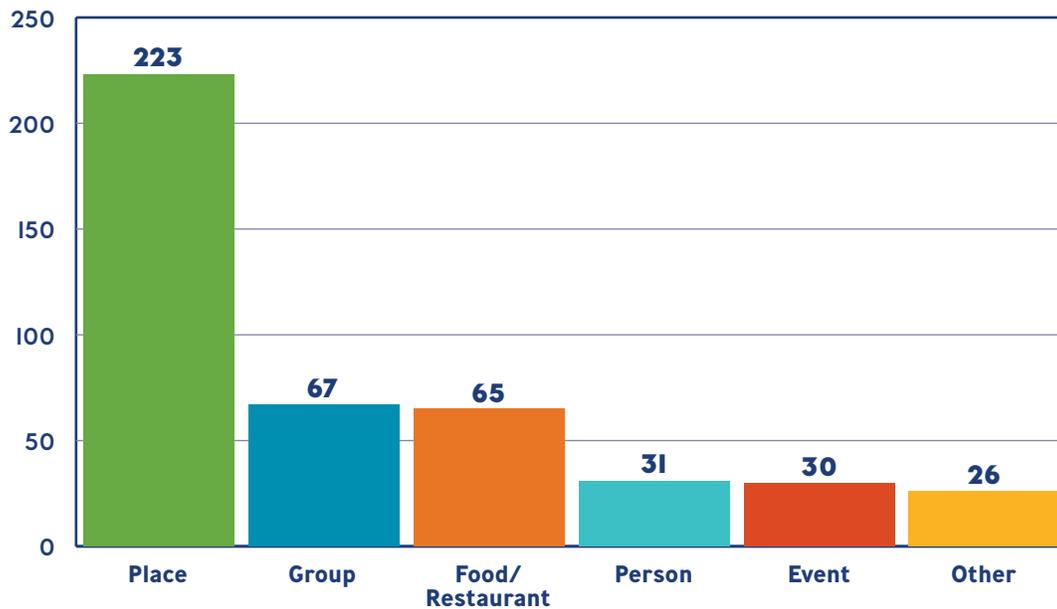
In the mid-2010s, Tak's Coffee was sold in part to Angie and Florentino Bravo, two of Tak's kitchen staff who also formerly worked at the Holiday Bowl. Under the Bravos, Tak's Coffee Shop continues to thrive with its culturally diverse selection of dishes and its incredible history in the greater Crenshaw neighborhood.



CULTURAL TREASURES OF SOUTH LA

TYPES OF CULTURAL TREASURES

Number of South Los Angeles Cultural Treasures



markets. Finally, respondents identified 31 people as artists and culture bearers in the community. The chart shows the number of treasures nominated across each category.

In a separate question, survey respondents were asked to categorize their Cultural Treasure based on the types of activities it engages in, examples included food, education, music, wellness, preservation, etc. The survey listed over 20 categories with the option to select as many as the respondent felt was applicable. **Food was the most frequently selected label, representing the important role that sharing a meal holds for many of Los Angeles' communities as a symbol of cultural celebration, love, and communal support.**

In addition to food, **visual arts, education, music, and heritage** were also popular categories identified by survey respondents. The number of Cultural Treasures identified in each category is shown in the visualization.

All People's Community Center Bridging Cultures Serving Diverse Needs



Sometimes it's hard to find the words to describe what this place actually means," says All Peoples Community Center Executive Director Sandra Bryant, "I think that there is a spirit when you walk in this door [...] that makes us special."

For over 80 years, All Peoples Community Center has been a fundamental resource for low-income children, youth, and families in South Los Angeles. From childcare and after-school programs, to financial literacy and senior engagement, to a community farm and garden, All Peoples strives to help children succeed at each stage of development, strengthen and support individuals and families, and build opportunities for its community members. Bryant began participating in the Center's programs when she was two years old and will be retiring in 2023 after more than 40 years of service.

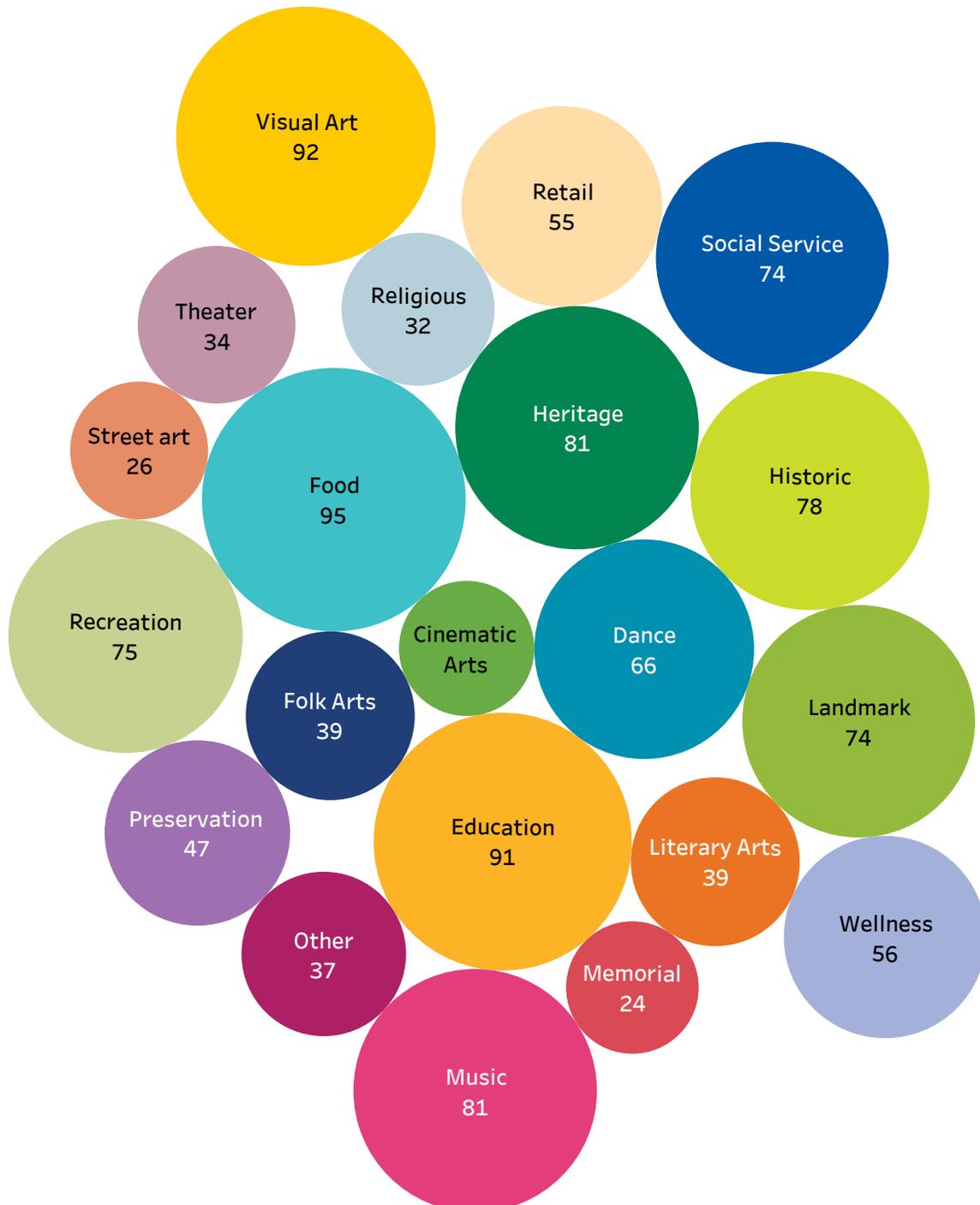


We don't always have all the resources that we need," she says, "but it doesn't deter us from doing the best and feeling the community deserves the best that we have. No matter what."



CULTURAL TREASURES OF SOUTH LA

CATEGORIES OF CULTURAL TREASURES



Mercado La Paloma

Economic Empowerment—and a Range of Culinary Delights



Best known as a foodie destination featuring Ethiopian, Thai, Oaxacan, Yucatec, and Belizean cuisine, including Gilberto Cetina Jr.'s award-winning, Michelin-recognized fresh seafood restaurant Holbox, Mercado La Paloma is a modern day marketplace and social enterprise developed by the non-profit Esperanza Community Housing Corporation.

In addition to its restaurants, Mercado La Paloma offers local entrepreneurs the opportunity to grow their businesses through affordable retail and office space. Its bright and welcoming 35,000 square-foot building, formerly a garment factory, was designed to be reminiscent of the markets in the homelands of South Los Angeles' immigrant communities. Mercado is always bustling with food, retail, events, exhibitions and cultural programming that serves and uplifts the many diverse communities of South Los Angeles.



CULTURAL TREASURES OF SOUTH LA

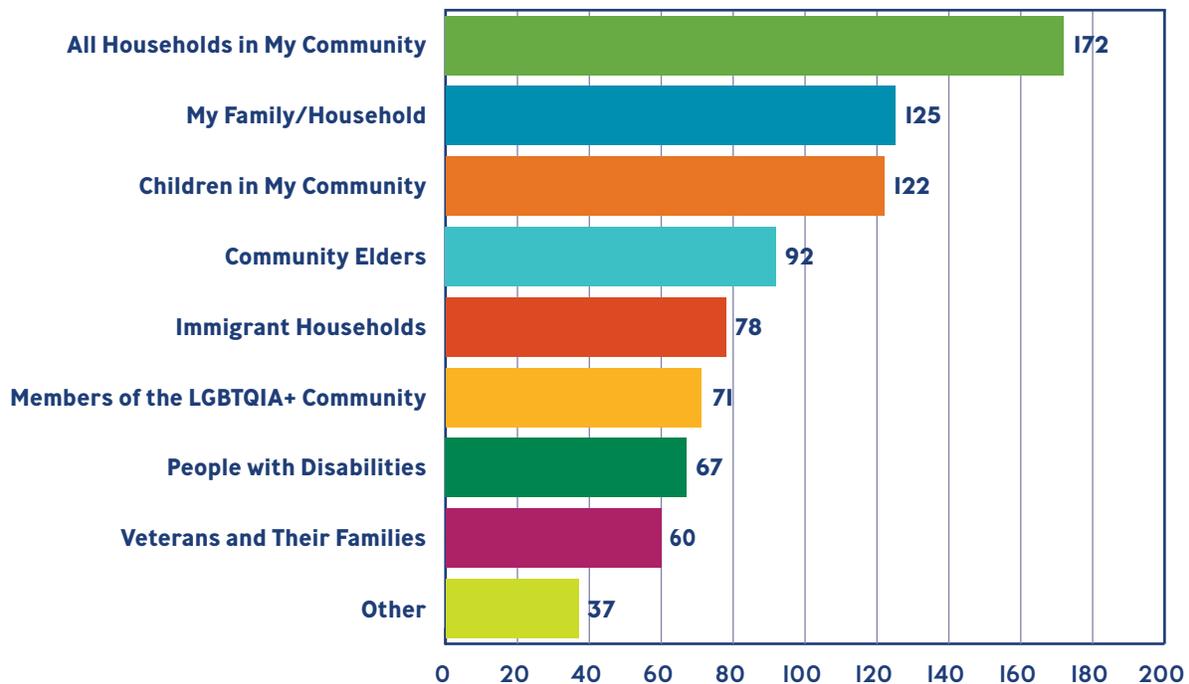
BENEFITS OF CULTURAL TREASURES

Next, respondents were asked the types of people and households who benefit from or are served by their Cultural Treasure. The vast majority of respondents selected more than one group. **The most common selection by far was “all households in my community,” demonstrating how Cultural Treasures bring together households of all backgrounds across this diverse and vibrant community.** Many of these places are built from a rich cultural history that contributes to their integral role in uniting the community today.

Survey respondents also nominated Cultural Treasures that cater to a wide range of age groups, with 122 entries noted as benefiting children in the community and 92 noted as benefiting community elders. The number of Cultural Treasures identified as benefiting each group is shown in the chart.

WHICH COMMUNITIES OR GROUPS DOES THIS CULTURAL TREASURE HIGHLIGHT, BENEFIT OR SERVE?

Number of South Los Angeles Cultural Treasures



CULTURAL TREASURE

Exposition Park

An Urban Oasis for Play, Learning, and Connection



On any given day in Exposition Park a visitor might find a family taking quinceanera photos in the Rose Garden, local teams playing on the soccer fields, kids swimming at the LA84 Foundation/ John C. Argue Swim Stadium, or community members tending to their gardens in the 15,000 square foot Expo Mini Farm.

More than just a tourist attraction, Exposition Park serves as an urban oasis and community hub for residents of the surrounding South LA neighborhoods. Founded as an “Agriculture Park” in 1872, it has changed alongside the neighborhood.

The California African American Museum, the first African American museum of art, history, and culture fully supported by a state, opened in Exposition Park in 1981. The George Lucas Museum of Narrative Art, dedicated to storytelling and its many forms, is set to open in 2025.



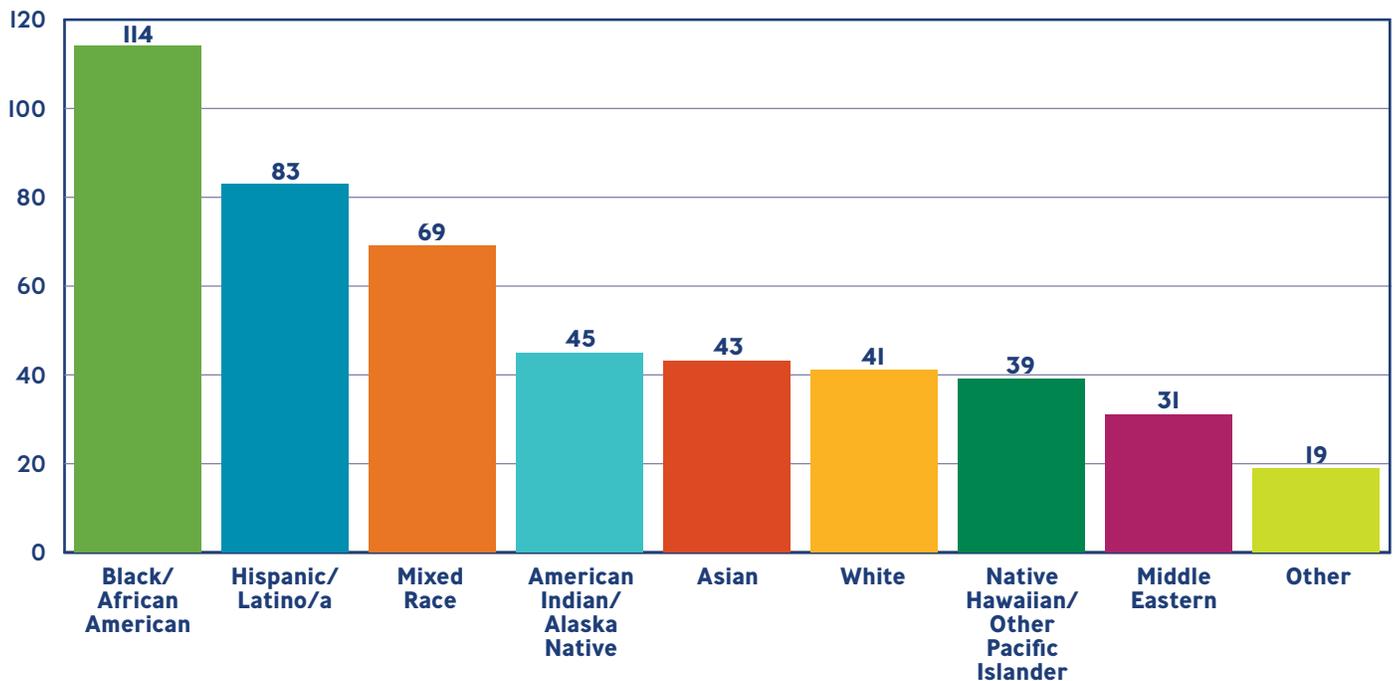
CULTURAL TREASURES OF SOUTH LA

In addition to the groups shown above, respondents also nominated 137 Cultural Treasures that benefit, highlight or serve specific racial/ethnic groups. **One hundred fourteen treasures were noted as serving or benefiting Black/African American households, highlighting the cultural roots of South LA as a historically Black community.**

Eighty-three treasures were uplifted as benefiting Latino/a households, the most represented racial/ethnic group in the community today. Notably, respondents highlighted 69 treasures as serving mixed-race households, again demonstrating how Cultural Treasures serve as bridges for households from a diverse set of backgrounds. The number of Cultural Treasures identified as benefiting each racial/ethnic group are shown in the chart.

WHICH SPECIFIC RACIAL OR ETHNIC GROUP DOES THIS CULTURAL TREASURE HIGHLIGHT?

Number of South Los Angeles Cultural Treasures



CIELO

Advocates for Indigenous Language, Culture, and Empowerment



Odilia Romero who was born in the highlands of Oaxaca and migrated to Los Angeles at age 10 as a mono-lingual Zapotec speaker. She experienced overwhelming ignorance around her identity, and interpreting for other Zapotec speakers led her to become the social justice and language advocate she is today.

She and her daughter Janet Martinez founded Comunidades Indigenas en Liderazgo (CIELO) in 2016 with a mission to deliver tangible resources while raising awareness about the rich tapestry of diverse Indigenous communities residing in Los Angeles. Their work includes: CILP (Center for Indigenous Language and Power) providing LAPD officers with cultural awareness training; the “We Are Here” mapping project that provides essential data to enable policy reform on behalf of L.A.’s Indigenous communities; and the Indigenous Literature Conference that provides a platform for BIPOC writers.



CULTURAL TREASURES OF SOUTH LA

In addition to the various types of groups who benefit from their Cultural Treasure, survey respondents were also asked to identify the impact that their Cultural Treasure has had on their life. The most commonly shared sentiments centered around themes of **connectedness with creativity, community and culture**. 43% of respondents shared that their Cultural Treasure makes them feel more connected to their community, just over a third said it helps them learn about, celebrate or preserve their culture/cultural history, and approximately a quarter of respondents said it helps them to learn about or celebrate other people's culture/cultural history. One resident noted that their local pupusa street vendor has served as a key element for sharing Salvadorian culture in the neighborhood:

“Before the family established themselves in the neighborhood I didn't really feel like there was much exposure and appreciation for Salvadorian cuisine.... I also feel that they inspired other families to pop up pupusa stands in the area.... I have never seen so many people line up to buy from a pupusa street vendor. They are consistent and dedicated to that spot and have become integral in the community.”

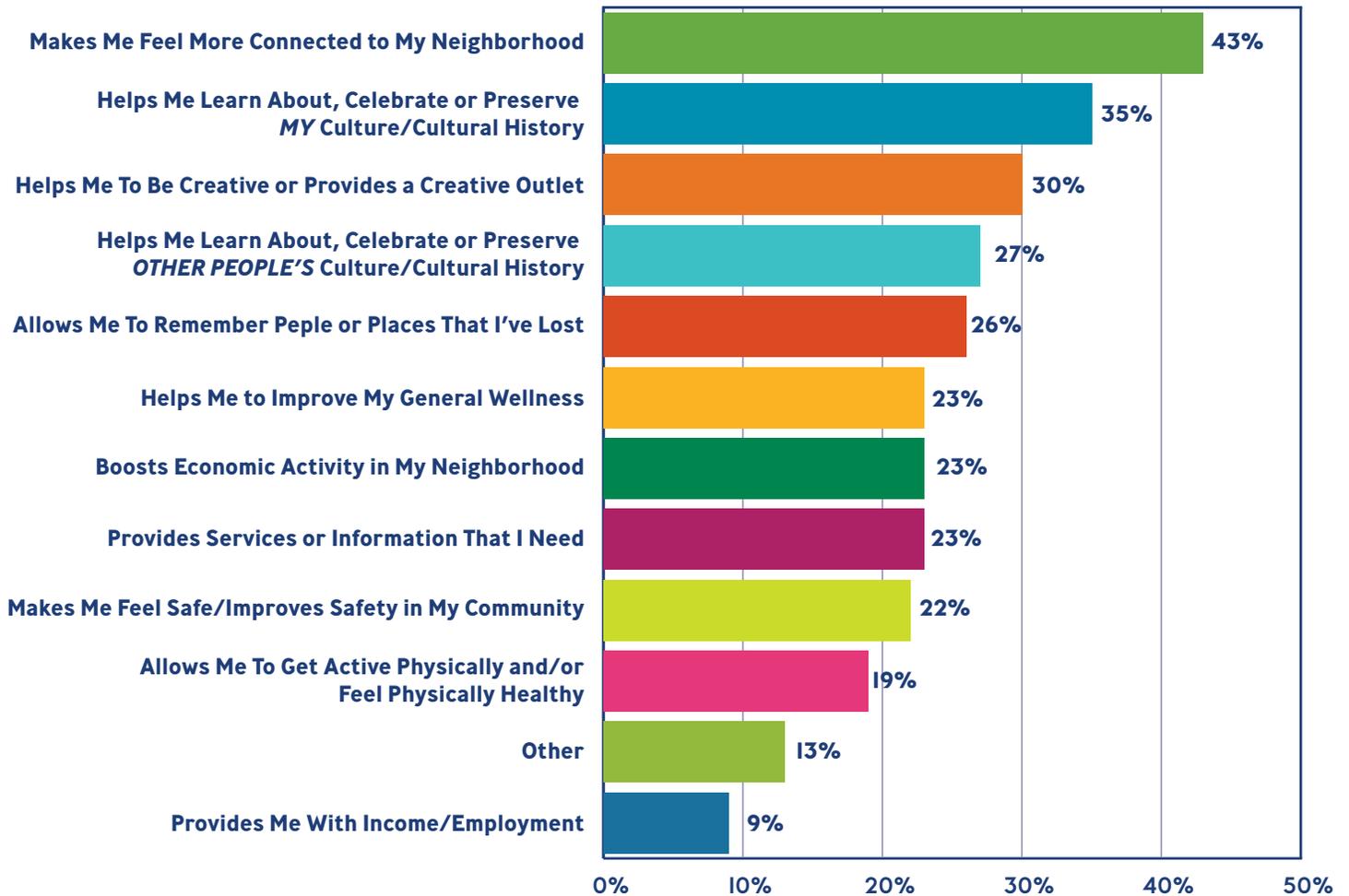
In addition to the cultural and creative impacts, survey respondents also shared that their Cultural Treasure **positively impacts their health, wellness and safety**. Just over a quarter of respondents reported that their treasure helps to improve their general wellness, and 19% said it helps them to get active or feel physically healthy. Other important benefits shared included boosting economic activity and providing services or information to residents. The full impacts of Cultural Treasures shared by respondents are shown in the visualization.



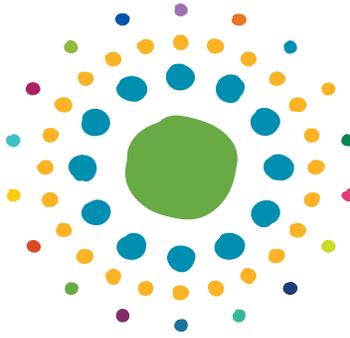
CULTURAL TREASURES OF SOUTH LA

IN WHAT WAYS HAS THIS CULTURAL TREASURE POSITIVELY IMPACTED YOUR LIFE?

Share of South Los Angeles Cultural Treasures







STRATEGIES FOR CULTURAL PRESERVATION AND ARTIST ENGAGEMENT

In addition to identifying Cultural Treasures in South LA, the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) also wanted to better understand community recommendations on preserving Cultural Treasures and how the Department can better engage artists in this community. To achieve this goal, survey respondents were given the option to fill out a supplemental portion of the survey that asked additional questions for the chance to win a gift card. Approximately 300 respondents opted to participate in the supplemental portion of the survey. This section provides an overview of community-informed recommendations for cultural preservation and artist engagement.

PRESERVING CULTURAL TREASURES

In this portion of the survey, respondents were asked several questions about the loss and preservation of Cultural Treasures in their community. **Forty-two percent of respondents shared that their community had lost a Cultural Treasure, highlighting the importance of cultural preservation in South Los Angeles.**

Notably, the majority of respondents who felt that a Cultural Treasure had been lost shared that it happened relatively recently. 58% of respondents shared that the loss happened in the last five years, while a third of respondents said the loss happened in the last two years.

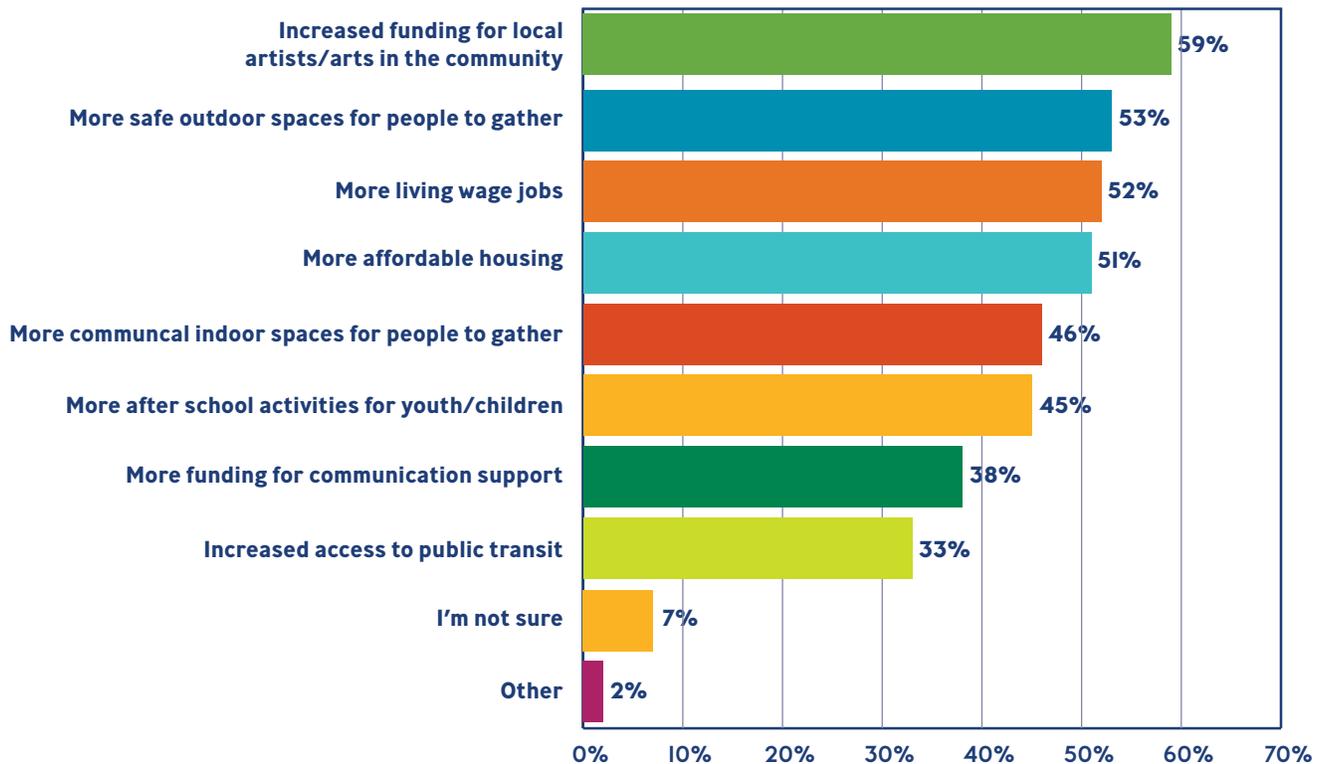
When asked about what conditions South LA needs to preserve existing Cultural Treasures, responses varied across a range of issues. The most commonly shared answer was **increased funding for local artists/arts in the community**, which 59% of respondents felt was needed to preserve existing Cultural Treasures. Other top answers related to **increased access to safe outdoor spaces, living wage jobs, and affordable housing**. The full range of responses is shown in the chart.



CULTURAL TREASURES OF SOUTH LA

WHAT DOES SOUTH LA NEED TO PRESERVE EXISTING AND DISCOVER EMERGING CULTURAL TREASURES?

Share of Respondents



These answers demonstrate the **reciprocal relationship between arts and culture and other social policy issues like housing, employment and public safety**. For example, these survey results show that Cultural Treasures help respondents to feel safe and improve community safety. At the same time, respondents feel that more safe outdoor spaces are needed for Cultural Treasures to exist and thrive in the community. Similarly, existing cultural traditions and institutions will struggle to survive if culture bearers in South LA are displaced due to rising housing costs or a lack of living wage job opportunities within the community.

Lula Washington Dance Theatre

Creating a Home for Black Dance



In 1980, there were few spaces to practice and experience Black contemporary dance in Los Angeles. Lula Washington changed all that when she and her husband Erwin launched what would eventually become the Lula Washington Dance Theatre (LWDT).

Over the past forty years LWDT has become an icon of L.A.'s cultural scene with a contemporary dance company that tours internationally, performing a repertoire of work by both established and emerging Black choreographers. The LWDT school opened in 1987 and has since taught dance to over 45,000 inner-city students, not only giving them excellent dance training and a creative outlet, but building character, self-esteem and a positive attitude.

In recent years Lula and Erwin's daughter, Tamica Washington-Miller, a dancer and choreographer in her own right, joined the family business as the Director of Programs for both the company and the school. LWDT continues to be a powerful force for positive change and community empowerment.



CULTURAL TREASURES OF SOUTH LA



ENGAGING LOCAL ARTISTS

In addition to understanding strategies for cultural preservation in South LA, DCA also sought to understand how the Department can better engage artists in the community around grant and funding opportunities. The second supplemental portion of the survey asked respondents who self-identified as artists a series of questions about their knowledge and engagement with various DCA programs and outreach efforts. A total of 107 artists participated in this portion of the survey, results of which are shared in this section. For more information about the full set of respondents who answered the second portion of the survey, see Appendix B.

First, artist respondents were asked if they were familiar with a series of DCA funding and grant opportunities. Nearly two-thirds (63%) shared that they were not aware of any of the opportunities before the time of the survey. The table below shares information about the share of respondents who were aware of various programs.

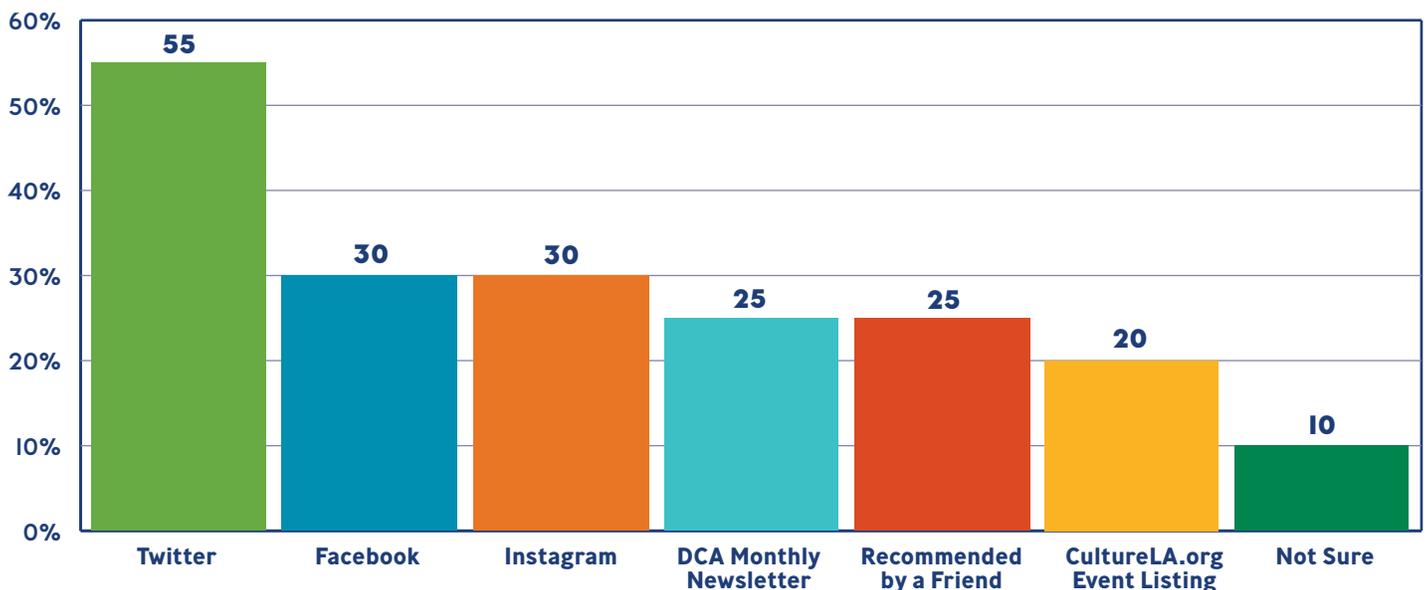


CULTURAL TREASURES OF SOUTH LA

Program	Respondents Who Reported Being Aware of the Program
NEAR - Neighborhood Engagement Artist Residency, \$12,000 to support 10 participant-engagement workshops culminating in 1 public presentation	17%
CO-OP - Creative Opportunities Optimizing Promise - \$15,000 for a social justice nonprofit to engage an artist in 10 participant-engagement workshops culminating in 1 public presentation	21%
Public-Space activation Fund - A trilogy of three thematic opportunities to launch a pop-up event or new festival sited on a city street, sidewalk, or adjacent public space	17%

WHERE DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THESE OPPORTUNITIES?

Share of Respondents





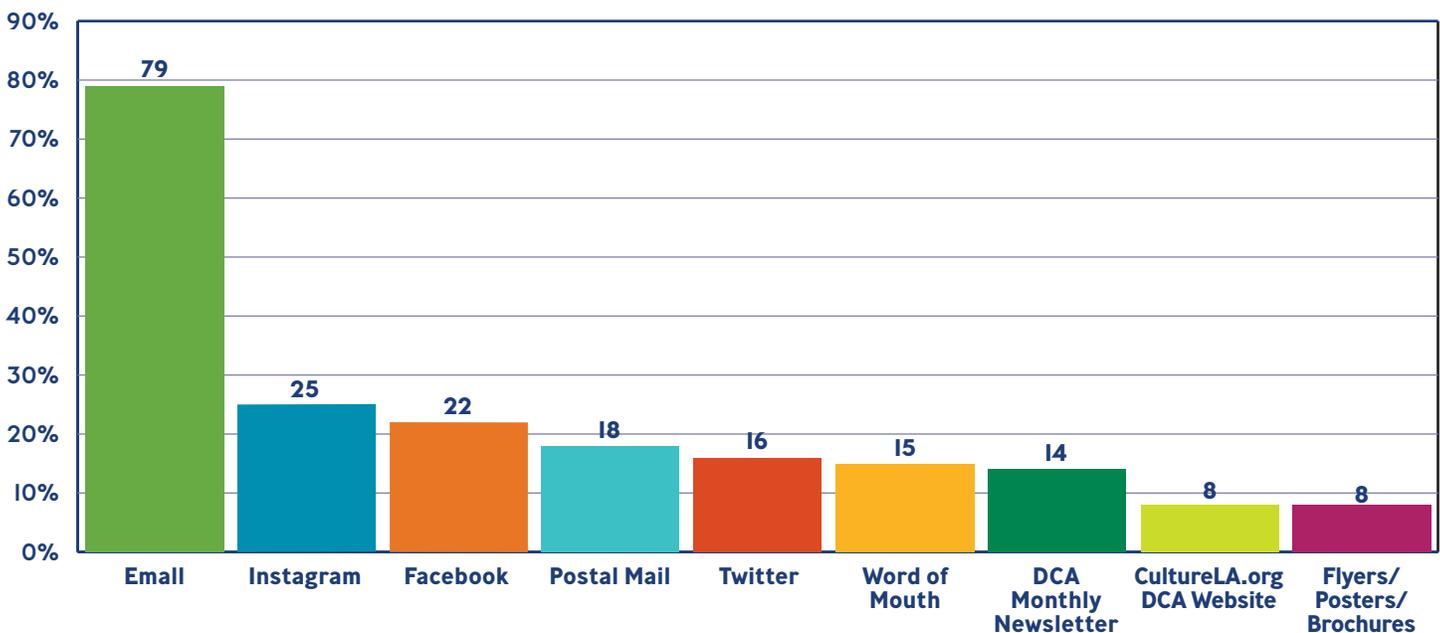
CULTURAL TREASURES OF SOUTH LA

Among artist respondents who were aware of DCA programs, the majority reported hearing through **social media channels** such as Twitter (55%), Facebook (30%) and Instagram (30%). A full breakdown of where respondents reported hearing about these DCA opportunities is shown in the chart on the preceding page.

Finally, the survey asked about the best way to reach artist respondents about future opportunities, shown in the chart below. Responses indicated a **preference for online communication**, with 79% of respondents preferring to be notified by email, followed by Instagram (25%). Most respondents selected more than one option, suggesting that a **multifaceted approach to engaging artists in the community would be most effective**.

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO REACH YOU ABOUT FUTURE FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ARTISTS?

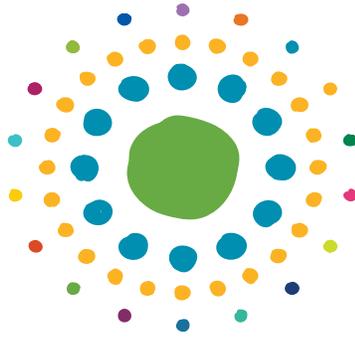
Share of Respondents





THE TREY YOGA
COOPERATIVE
SOCIAL JUSTICE SUSTAINABILITY





A COMMUNITY-DRIVEN VISION FOR SOUTH LA

The work of the Cultural Treasures of South LA has been critically important to identify and support the rich cultural fabric of South LA in order to help the community best capitalize on the opportunities presented through its Promise Zone designation and plethora of new transit infrastructure.

The PZA:SLA project offers a living repository of the cultural activities in the South LA Promise Zone. The community-centered process of cultural asset mapping provided opportunities for stakeholders to come together to reinforce existing relationships and build new ones. The result is an emergent, people-powered “community of practice” that has developed an infrastructure to uplift and preserve intangible cultural assets. The emphasis on process suggests that, while this phase of the project will culminate in a website featuring a database, interactive map, and story bank, this is not an “end product.” Instead, it is the first iteration of an ongoing, dynamic platform for identifying and aggregating Cultural Treasures to support community-driven cultural development and advocacy.

The community voices shared through the project’s survey uplift not only how arts and culture have brought households from this diverse and vibrant community together, but also the interconnectedness of arts and culture with so many other pressing social policy issues. Residents shared how Cultural Treasures positively contribute to community safety, health and wellness, economic activity, and vital service provision and information sharing. Additionally, South LA community members shared concerns about the loss of cultural institutions, particularly in the last five years. To preserve this community’s historic and powerful culture, residents articulated the need for increased funding for local arts and artists. However, the need for affordable housing, living wage jobs, safe outdoor spaces, and afterschool programs for the community’s youth was also shared as vitally important in cultural preservation efforts. **In this community-driven vision for South LA, investments in cultural, physical and economic infrastructure come together to create a thriving community for this generation of culture-bearers and the next.**



APPENDIX A: SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The Cultural Treasures of South LA survey was designed with the intention of giving South Los Angeles community members the opportunity to share, remember, and preserve their Cultural Treasures. Survey questions were developed to be inclusive and culturally affirming, with language that embraces every community member's diverse cultures, identities, affiliations, and experiences. Survey respondents were allowed to nominate up to three Cultural Treasures and then asked to complete an optional second portion of the survey. Those who completed the second portion were entered into a raffle to win a gift card. All survey answers were kept anonymous unless the survey respondent opted to share their contact information.

Once the survey design was complete, it was launched via survey software Qualtrics.

SURVEY COLLECTION

Survey responses were collected online, at public events, in focus groups, and through door-to-door canvassing efforts coordinated by Community Coalition. From July to September 2022, four canvassers and one team lead from Community Coalition administered the survey to South LA Promise Zone residents via door-knocking for twenty hours per week. In addition to this door-to-door outreach, the Community Coalition team tabled at events such as the Leimert Park Jazz Festival, the weekly Wellness Wednesday Hub at Community Coalition, and outside of grocery stores across the Promise Zone. After the three month span of field activities, the Community Coalition team distributed a total of **3,762 fliers or materials promoting the survey, knocked on 970 doors, and collected 690 surveys**, providing consistent, on-the-ground outreach for this important initiative with members of the many communities that make up South Los Angeles.

Additionally, LA Commons and the Cultural Treasures Coalition, a group of artists and practitioners living or working in the Promise Zone area organized focus groups. These focus groups were key in collecting surveys and community feedback about Cultural Treasures. The Cultural Treasures Coalition held eight focus groups throughout the survey collection timeframe with a total of approximately 90 attendees. Additionally, in 2022, the PZA:SLA team **tabled at 13 events in the South LA Promise Zone with a cumulative count of approximately 5,000 attendees**.

Further, SLATE-Z leveraged its Education and Small Business & Entrepreneurship working group members to distribute flyers and emails about the survey to their community networks. SLATE-Z also leveraged its communication platforms such as its bi-weekly newsletter, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn to share PZA-SLA content with its partners and the public.

Finally, the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles distributed the survey to eleven of their properties in the South LA Promise Zone area.

APPENDIX A: SURVEY METHODOLOGY

SURVEY CLEANING & ANALYSIS

A total of 787 Cultural Treasures were nominated through the survey process. The USC team cleaned the list, a process that included de-duplicating entries, verifying addresses and confirming that places of business were open for operation. The list was then shared with the PZA:SLA team, who worked with Atelier RE to further refine the list to entries located in one of the eleven zip codes covered by the South LA Promise Zone geography (90001, 90003, 90007, 90008, 90011, 90015, 90016, 90018, 90037, 90062, 90089).

A list of approximately 375 Cultural Treasures was generated from this cleaning process. In March 2023, the Cultural Treasures Coalition (CTC) and a group of community members (listed below) gathered to identify approximately 20 Cultural Treasures to be highlighted in more detail on the PZA SLA website. Their selection criteria included:

1. Embedded within South Los Angeles (the Cultural Treasure is from these communities and/or partners with those with lived experiences in the community)
2. Contributes to community wellness and connectivity
3. Has a significant economic, social, or political impact in South Los Angeles
4. Unique to, or distinctly represents the character of, South Los Angeles
5. Artistic, creative or cultural merit

PARTICIPANTS IN THE MARCH 2023 VETTING MEETING INCLUDED:

Jennifer Cuevas

PZA:SLA

Juana Calel

Esperanza Community Housing

Tricia Cochee

Bryan Guzman

Lucas Museum

Terese Harris

PZA:SLA

Marcia Harris

Kaitwan Jackson

LA Commons

Zipporah Lax Yamamoto

Metro

Karen Mack

LA Commons

Steven Meeks

LA Green Grounds/West Adams resident

Rhonda Mitchell

Council District 8

Nobuko Miyamoto

CTC

Ade Neff

CTC

Beth Peterson

LA Commons

In addition to the Cultural Treasures list, the USC NDSC team also analyzed the approximately 300 entries in the supplemental portion of the survey, including tabulating respondent demographics (shared in Appendix B), and the data included in the “Preserving Cultural Treasures” and “Engaging Local Artists” sections of this report.

APPENDIX B: SURVEY RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

This Appendix shares information collected from the approximately 300 respondents who took the optional supplemental portion of the survey.

DO YOU LIVE, WORK, OR FREQUENT ANY OF THE FOLLOWING NEIGHBORHOODS?

(Select all that apply)

Answer	Percentage
Leimert Park	67%
Baldwin Hills/Crenshaw	60%
Exposition Park	60%
Vernon-Central	38%
South Park	37%
Florence	34%
Vermont Square	33%
Other	28%

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN CONNECTED TO THESE NEIGHBORHOODS?

Answer	Percentage
Less than a year	4%
1-3 years	9%
4-9 years	24%
10-20 years	18%
More than 20 years	41%

WHAT IS YOUR AGE RANGE?

Answer	Percentage
Under 18	3%
18-24	5%
25-34	27%
35-50	38%
50-65	18%
Over 65	11%

APPENDIX B: SURVEY RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

WHAT GENDER DO YOU IDENTIFY WITH?

(Select all that apply)

Answer	Percentage
Woman/Girl	65%
Man/Boy	29%
Non-Binary/Non-Conforming	5%
Other	1%
Prefer not to answer	1%

DO YOU HAVE LIVED EXPERIENCE AS A TRANS PERSON?

(Meaning your gender identity doesn't align with your sex assigned at birth)

Answer	Percentage
Yes	5%
No	85%
Prefer not to answer	10%

WHAT RACE/ETHNICITIES DO YOU IDENTIFY WITH?

(Select all that apply)

Answer	Percentage
Black/African American	46%
Hispanic/Latino/a/e	22%
White	21%
American Indian/Alaska Native	14%
Asian	9%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	5%
Other	3%
Prefer not to answer	1%





PHOTOGRAPHY CREDITS

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Page 46, (row 1) left: Nobuko Miyamoto, *courtesy of Nobuko Miyamoto*

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Page 46, (row 1) right: Ballet Folklorico Nueva Antequera @ CicLAVia-South LA, *courtesy of CicLAVia*

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Page 46, (row 3) middle left: Cultural Treasures of South LA at CicLAVia, *courtesy of LA Commons*

Page 46, (row 3) middle right: DJ Don Thomas, *courtesy of CicLAVia*

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This report was prepared for the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs' (DCA) Promise Zone Arts South LA (PZA:SLA) initiative by the staff of Neighborhood Data for Social Change (NDSC), a project of the USC Price Center for Social Innovation.



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