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Multi-Racial, Cross-Neighborhood Coalition Celebrates Big Wins as City Council Approves Updated Downtown Community Plan

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LOS ANGELES - On May 3, 2023, Los Angeles City Council officially adopted the Downtown Community Plan update (DTLA 2040), which will serve as the land use plan and guiding policy document for Downtown LA until 2040, and as a model for future community plans. This landmark achievement marks a significant win for the years-long, cross-neighborhood collaborative efforts of Central City United (CCU), which represents low-income community members from Skid Row, Chinatown, and Little Tokyo.

CCU is led by the Los Angeles Community Action Network, the Southeast Asian Community Alliance, and Little Tokyo Service Center, with legal support from Public Counsel. Since 2017, CCU has been advocating for a truly inclusive and equitable Community Plan for Downtown LA, lifting up the voices and concerns of its poorest and most vulnerable residents - immigrants, seniors, youth, low-wage workers, and the unhoused - in the process.

The history of land use planning in the City of Los Angeles - like cities all across this country - has been exclusionary, led to patterns of segregation, and enforced systemic racism. DTLA 2040 represents a step toward a more inclusive and equitable downtown. Because of CCU's efforts, DTLA 2040 includes strong affordability provisions, anti-displacement and tenant protection policies, protections for community serving-small businesses, and a commitment to racial equity that includes a new program and ongoing analysis of the plan.

"Skid Row, Little Tokyo, and Chinatown have historically been pitted against each other - by race, language, and even a freeway. Central City United worked to undo those barriers and built a powerful coalition where we were able to become neighbors and allies to create change that benefited all of our communities," said Sissy Trinh, Executive Director of the Southeast Asian Community Alliance (SEACA).

Together, CCU developed the People's Plan for DTLA with specific policy and program recommendations focused on their shared priorities: affordable housing and homelessness prevention, displacement avoidance, cultural preservation, economic development, community benefits, and racial justice.

“The final version of the DTLA 2040 community plan is the result of thousands of hours of engagement by hundreds of community members – many of whom are low-income, small business owners, or unhoused. Those who have been historically marginalized by planning processes. We are thankful for their input, grateful to all of our allies, and appreciative of the Planning Department for their partnership in this process. There is much work to come as we implement the plan, but this is certainly an important milestone.” Said Grant Sunoo, Director of Community Building & Engagement at the Little Tokyo Service Center.

The Final DTLA 2040 adopted by City Council on May 3, 2023 includes a number of community-responsive policies and programs originally proposed in CCU’s People’s Plan:

- Promoting development of new affordable housing through a graduated inclusionary housing program that adjusts to changing market conditions.
- Prioritizing affordability for residents at highest risk of homelessness.
- Creating a new category of Acutely Low-Income for affordable units that targets the lowest income community members.
- Requiring 1:1 replacement of any demolished affordable housing units and tenant protections to prevent displacement as a result of lost units.
- Creating a new zone in part of Skid Row, also known as the IX1, which will ensure that a minimum of 80% of new housing units will be restricted affordable units.
- Requiring that new affordable units are actually affordable to low-income communities by utilizing the lower HCD Schedule 6 rent schedules.
- Replacing the Transfer of Floor Area Rights (TFAR) program with a more equitable and transparent Community Benefits Fund to incentivize important community needs including additional affordable housing, economic development, small business protections, and other community-identified benefits.
- Creating tools to support mom-and-pop, community-serving small businesses and street vendors.
- Ensuring that new open spaces are publicly accessible and inclusive of amenities for all users - including low-income families, seniors, and the unhoused.
- Creating a new Racial Justice and Equity Program that provides a harm analysis and reduction framework (similar to environmental review) to identify and mitigate potential racialized impacts.

“DTLA 2040 allows for the maintaining of jobs, building of housing and the preservation of historic communities like Skid Row, Little Tokyo and Chinatown. We are excited to be able to tell the story of a bright future for our community with the passage of DTLA 2040. We now need to move on to the implementation, and monitoring of the plan,” said Steve Diaz, Deputy Director of the Los Angeles Community Action Network

To read more about the CCU People’s Plan, visit: <https://www.centralcityunited.org/>

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