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Taylor Yard Park

Project Proposal and Report

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The author of this report makes the following Land and Water Acknowledgment.

We acknowledge that the LA River and its watershed are the traditional lands of the Fernandeño Tataviam, Gabrieleño Tongva, and Ventureño Chumash.

We recognize that Indigenous Peoples, many of whom may still call it home today, have stewarded this land for thousands of years.

We give thanks for the opportunity to live, work and learn in their traditional homeland.

We recognize our responsibility to include these Tribal Nations in what we do for the river.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

1.1 Site History and Context	4
1.2 Key Stakeholders	4
1.3 Nearby Uses	5

Demographic Analysis

2.1 Methodology	6
2.2 Race and Population	7
2.3 Poverty and Income	7
2.4 Educational Attainment	7
2.5 Homeownership	7

Economic Development Analysis

3.1 Development History	8
3.2 Industry Cluster Analysis	9
3.3 Development Goals and Objectives	10
3.4 Economic Development Tools	11

Site Use Proposal

4.1 Site Analysis	12
4.2 Project Description	12
4.2 Site Plan	13
4.3 Project Findings	13
4.4 Alternative Uses	14
4.5 Financial Narrative	14

Precedent Analysis

6.1 Gasworks Park, Seattle, WA	15
6.2 Brooklyn Bridge Park, Brooklyn, NY	15
6.3 High Line Park, New York City, New York	16

Conclusion

References

8.1 Additional Imagery	17
8.2 Endnotes	18
8.3 Works Cited	20

Introduction

1.1 Site History and Context

The Taylor Yard G2 River Park Project is an effort spearheaded by the Los Angeles Bureau of Engineering to revitalize and redevelop the Taylor Yard G2 Parcel. The site location is approximately 42 acres in size and was once an industrial rail yard. In 2017, the City of Los Angeles purchased the project site and has since collaborated with multiple stakeholders and held community engagement meetings to determine how to best develop the site to achieve a number of goals.¹

On the site currently is the remains of the train turnstile and a warehouse. The ground is overgrown with both local fauna and invasive species. Running atop the site are heavy grade electrical line that power Los Angeles city. There is little ingress and egress to the site location except for the service road that comes off N San Fernando Rd. The soil is heavily polluted from the diesel and heavy metals that are a consequence of the sites previous use as a rail yard.

The purpose of this report is to explore one potential vision and how it aligns with economic development goals of the greater Northeast Los Angeles region. This report acknowledges the significant site constraints related to the soil contamination, flood plain risks, and existing easements. It will propose one potential use for the site as a park and green space to activate the site for recreational activity.

1.2 Key Stakeholders

Among the many economic development tools that such a project as this would utilize, none would be as important as the public-private partnership that would be brokered between the different entities within Los Angeles City, the private firms that would assist the improvement of the site, and the community groups that represent the interests of the people that live in the surrounding neighborhoods. An intensive community engagement process is vital to the project's success

The objectives of each stakeholder vary, and they are specific to the mission statement of their organization. Friends of LA River (FOLAR) seeks to ensure that the river is ecologically resilient and publicly accessible.² Mujeres de la Tierra (MDLT) values an equitable community engagement process that allows residents to have a seat at the decision making table. Being the project lead, the LA Bureau of Engineering (BOE) balances many



Figure 1.1 Project Site Identification
Image Source: Google Maps

goals and objectives. Some that they have placed a high priority on is habitat restoration, reducing flood risk, providing a high quality space for recreation, and establishing revenue generation in tandem with the community. The LA BOE has partnered with the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) who share many of the same goals. Some of the the other important stakeholders who have vested interests in this project are listed below.

Non-Governmental Organizations:

- Council for Watershed Health
- Los Angeles Unified School District
- Greater Cypress Park Neighborhood Council

Government Agencies:

- California Department of Parks and Recreation
- Los Angeles Army Corps of Engineers
- Los Angeles City Council District 1 -- Eunisses Hernandez
- Los Angeles Metrolink

Together, these organizations formed a task

force that would routinely host meetings with the public, update local neighborhood councils, and survey focus groups to identify key issues and desires related to this area.

1.3 Nearby Uses

Figure 1.2 maps the nearby uses immediately surrounding the project site. Notable Uses include the commercial corridor alongside the N San Fernando Rd, the Sotomayor Arts and Sciences Magnet school, and the Rio de Los Angeles State Park.

This area is serviced by Metro Route 90 and 94 alongside N San Fernando Rd. Also in this commercial area are 3 grocery supermarkets to service the single-family homes and multi-family apartments nearby. The LA Metrolink line runs in between the G2 Parcel and the Rio de Los Angeles State Park but does not have a station nearby. A Pedestrian footbridge connects the Taylor Yard side to the Elysian Valley side of the Los Angeles River.



Figure 1.2 Abutting Use Map
 Image Source: Google Maps

Demographic Analysis

2.1 Methodology

A demographic analysis of this community was performed by examining data drawn from the American Community Survey Data released by the US Census in 2021. These datasets use 5-year surveys and only contain data pertaining to specific census tracts in the immediate location. These census tracts make up all those that live in the three neighborhoods that abutt the project site, and these neighborhood boundaries were developed by LA Time's Mapping LA project.³ These neighborhoods include: Glassell Park, Mt. Washington, and Cypress Park. Figure 2.1 maps out these neighborhoods in reference to the project site. Comparisons will be frequently drawn to the

Key Statistics:

Population

- 39,528 persons live in this region

Poverty Rate

- 17.8% persons below poverty line

Income

- \$35,575 Per capita income
- \$78,148 Median household income

Homeownership

- 44% of housing units are owner occupied
- 56% of housing units are renter occupied

Educational Attainment

- 78% High school grad or higher
- 36% Bachelor's degree or higher

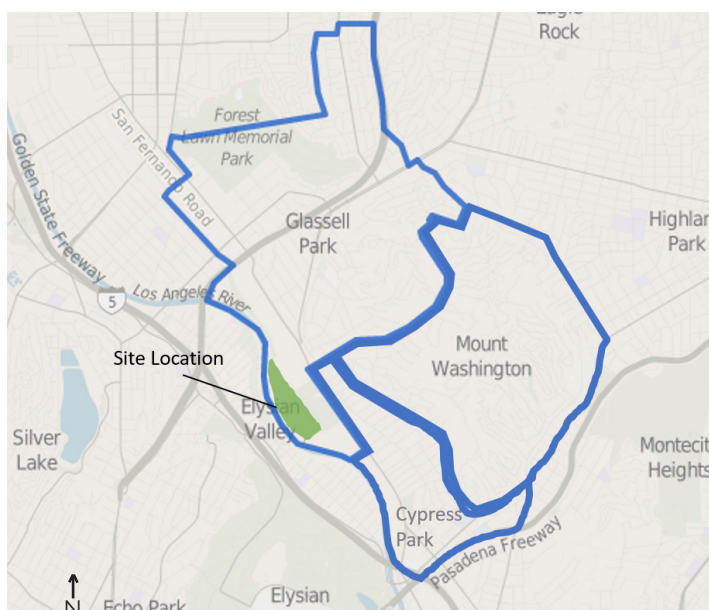


Figure 2.1 Neighborhood Map
Image Source: LA Times, Mapping LA

State of California as a whole or the County of Los Angeles

2.2 Race and Population

The major race groups that live in this region include 56% Latino, 22% White, 14% Asian, and 2% Black and 3% some other race.⁴ Compared to the rest of the State of California, this region of Northeast Los Angeles is a diverse region. For example, only 40% of all California residents identify as Hispanic, and 34% identify as white.⁵

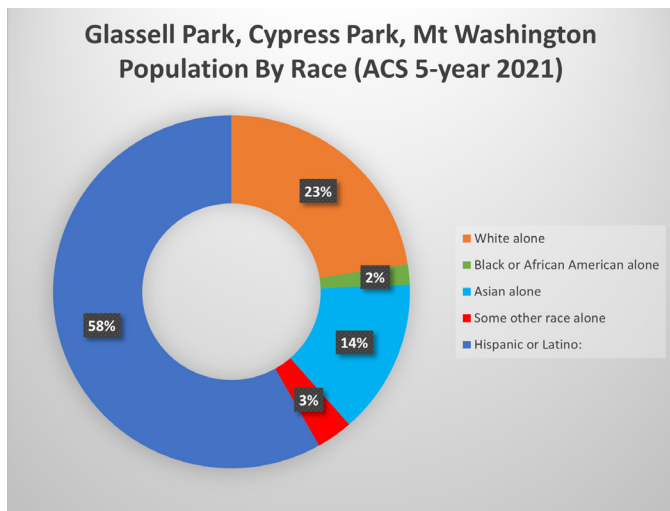


Figure 2.2 Racial Demographic
Source: Census B03002 (2021)

2.3 Poverty and Income

In this region, 17% of residents are considered living below the poverty.⁶ In the State of California, the average poverty rate is only 12%, meaning that the poverty rate is above average.⁷ Additionally, the per capita income is \$35,575 compared to \$42,396 for the state of California.⁸ ⁹ Household income is lower than the state average too - \$78,148 compared to 84,907. In the appendix of this report is a figure detailing rates of poverty by racial demographics. They are similar to the actual percentage of race groups with no one group with significant or disproportionate rates of poverty.

2.4 Educational Attainment

The below figure 2.3 details the specific educational attainment for residents older than 25 years old in the greater Glassell park region. Holistically, 78% of persons has at least a high school diploma, and 36% has a bachelor's degree or higher.¹⁰ Compared to the state of California, 84% of residents in California has a high school diploma, but the percentage of persons with a bachelor's degree is the same at 36%.¹¹

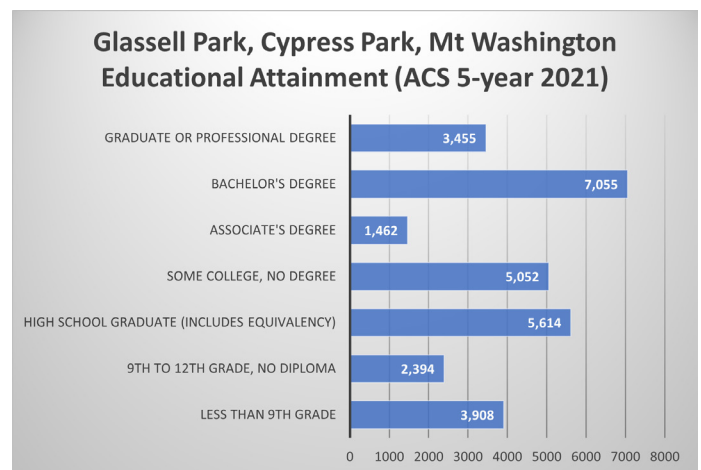


Figure 2.3 Educational Attainment
Source: Census S1501 (2021)

2.5 Homeownership

This area of Northeast Los Angeles is a majority renter community with 56% of residential occupied by renters and 44% of units occupied by home owners.¹² For the state of California, 48 % of units are occupied by renters and 52% are occupied by homeowners.¹³ So, the rate of home ownership is below average in this area. Additionally, the vacancy rate is 5% compared to 7% for the rest of the state. The median home value for this area is \$843,100, which is significantly higher than the median home value for the rest of the state at \$648,100. There are many ways to interpret these statistics that will be explored and to what extent they should influence policy in the following sections of the report.

Economic Development Analysis

3.1 Development History

Glassell park is a neighborhood located in the hills of the San Rafael Hills in Northeast Los Angeles across from the Elysian valley and Atwater Village. It was annexed by the City of Los Angeles in 1912, and is a historically disadvantaged community that has had slow development.¹⁴ Glassell Park suffered from the effects of redlining and racial prejudice when it was labeled as among the least desirable communities by the Home Owners Loan Corporation. This made it difficult for the minorities and Latinos that lived here to obtain home loans and to incentive the development of public resources such as road and sidewalk infrastructure, better schools, and public parks.¹⁵ These practices that reinforced the effects of segregation persisted until 1968 when redlining practices were formally outlawed in the United States.

In 1921, the Taylor Yard used the G2 parcel as an active industrial rail station. Although this meant that it became a center for industrial jobs for the local economy, Taylor Yard brought with it pollutants that have permanently stained the soil such that major environmental remediation is necessary for non-industrial activity.¹⁶ The history of this neighborhood is further intertwined with the development of the modern transportation systems of Los Angeles with the development of the Interstate-5 Freeway and the Glendale-2 Highway built in the 1950s.¹⁷ These highway projects disproportionately affect communities of color in East Los Angeles and Northeast Los Angeles because the new construction often demolished their homes and displaced community

members.¹⁸ These community members were often not allowed to represent themselves in defense of their community from the displacement effects of the construction. Indeed the highway system has become an essential component of long-range travel and trade, and yet it has a contentious history with those who's lives have been impacted. Contemporary planning research acknowledges the public health and environmental impacts of over-used highways and how they effect the residents the live in close proximity.¹⁹

This region also has a history of gang activity and crime. In 2008, a major Los Angeles Police Department had a 500 officer intervention with gang activity to secure the area from a number of wanted individuals.²⁰ The local community and non-governmental organizations have worked to distance themselves from the perception that Glassell Park is a dangerous neighborhood. The crime rate has declined significantly since 2010 and it has made a dramatic difference on the recent development of the area. This interest stems from its convenient access to the highway system in Los Angeles, its unique hillside architecture, and its thriving artist scene. As a result, housing prices in this region have increased dramatically and there have been concerns of gentrification and loss of identity as the community embraces a new demographic population.²¹ Evidence of the effects of gentrification can be witnessed by looking at the growth of property values specific to this region. Similar to other regions like Mt. Washington and Highland Park, Glassell Park has seen above average growth in home value. In a five year period from 2018-2023, the median home value in Glassell park has increased by 12%.²² Los Angeles County only witnessed an increase of home value of 7%. Coupled with a lack of affordable housing and a household median income less than the average, this community is especially prone to displacement as a result

of gentrification. Policymakers should consider other projects to combat this risk such as the development of affordable housing in the region, creating job training programs, and working to create equitable access to public resources. This could be the development of new facilities or can improve transportation options and pedestrian accessibility on streets and sidewalks.

3.2 Industry Cluster Analysis

Figure 3.1 below maps out a detailed industry cluster analysis of the local economy of the Glassell Park, Cypress Park, Mt. Washington region in comparison to Los Angeles County. The purpose of this diagram is to distinguish specific industries that have a larger economic presence to a comparison municipality. These industries are classified by the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)

set forth by the Office of Management and Budget for the purposes of statistical analysis.²³

On the x-axis is a location quotient score for each industry classification. A higher score means that the industry employs a greater percentage of the population than the comparison municipality. A lower score means that the industry employs a lower percentage of the population. The shaded blue y-axis represents a location of 1.0, meaning that the industry percentage matches 1:1 the percentage of the population. On the y-axis is the median income of persons employed by that industry in the target region. The shaded blue x-axis represents the median income for the target region of \$35,575.^{24 25 26 27}

In the target region, the industry with the highest location quotient score and median income is the information sector. These would other-

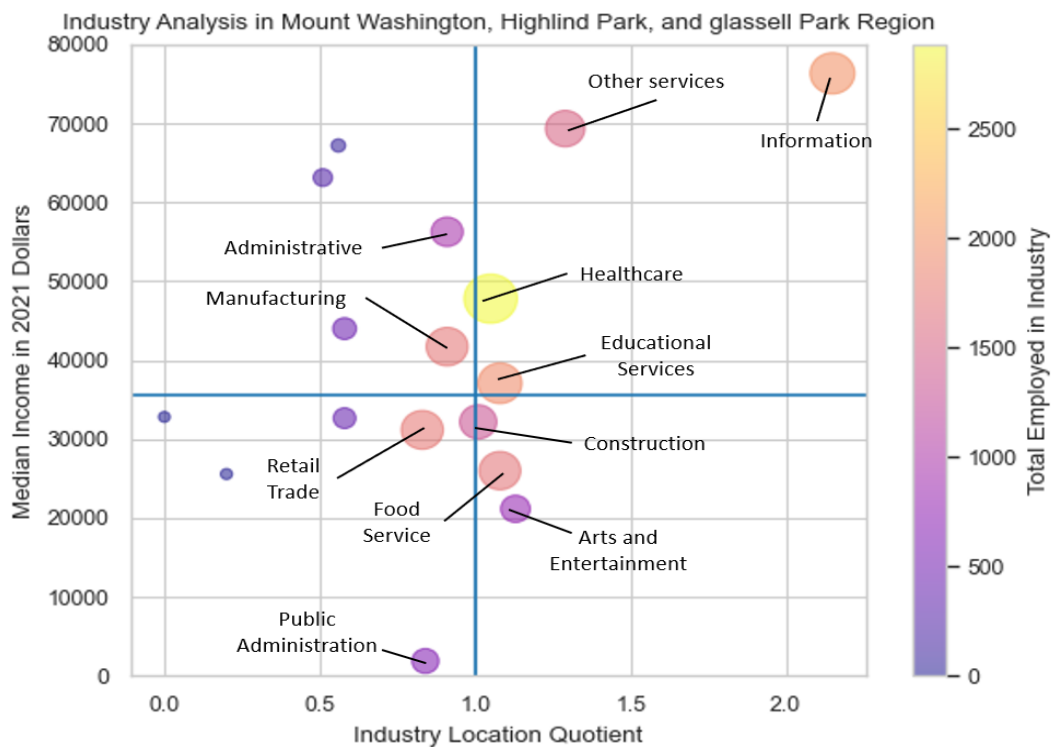


Figure 3.1 Cluster Analysis
Source: Census S2403 (2021)

wise be known as the white collar office-type jobs. The second highest paying industry is “other services.” This industry typically comprises real estate firms or capital firms that don’t necessarily fall under the information sector. These jobs typically require a college education to be employed, but not always.²⁸

The healthcare industry, educational services, and manufacturing industry are paid just above the median income for this region. They also make up sizable portion of the employment percentage. These industries make up a crucial component of the local economy for its labor presence and necessary skill-set that may come from trade school or higher education.

The construction and food service industry are over concentrated in the target region but make less income than the median. The retail trade industry is similarly underpaid, but is less concentrated. This could be a result of the lack of grocery stores and retail stores in the area. In general, these jobs do not typically require a college education and are considered “low-skilled labor.”²⁹

As noted in section 3.1, Development History, this region does indeed have an over concentrated amount of arts and entertainment industry workers. Though not typically paid the most amount of money, it is an important industry to pay particular attention to in regards to the culture and lifestyle of Glassell park.

The major takeaways from this analysis is that education still plays a significant factor in the economic success of the individual. Person’s with a higher educational attainment are likely to make more income and have access to sources of human development such as higher quality foods, more sophisticated lifestyles, and more robust forms of transportation.

3.3 Development Goals and Objectives

The following selection of objective statements are drawn from the Northeast Los Angeles Community Plan and represent important goals that a project at the Taylor Yard G2 Parcel should seek to meet or exceed in some capacity.³⁰ These will be used as the criteria of

Goal 2:

“Strong and competitive commercial areas that suitably serve the needs of the community and attracts customers from outside the plan area by satisfying market demand and maximizing convenience and accessibility while preserving unique historic and cultural identities of each commercial area.”

Goal 4:

“Sufficient open space, in balance with development, to serve the recreational, environmental, and health needs of the community and to protect environmental and aesthetic resources.”

Goal 5:

“Adequate recreation and park facilities to meet the needs of the residents in the plan area.”

Goal 13:

“A system of safe, efficient and attractive pedestrian, bicycle and equestrian facilities.”

Goal 15:

“The revitalization of a physical environment conducive to increasing and improving economic activity.”

Goal 16:

“The coordination of resources generating economic activity in order to maximize their impact”

justification for a project proposal in the findings section of this report.

3.4 Economic Development Tools

Any project proposal at the Taylor Yard G2 parcel should consider how to use the following economic development tools to generate a successful project and promote wealth creation for the greater Glassell Park region. It is these tools that this report recommends to policymakers to strongly value in aiding their preparation for the site development.

Public-Private Partnership:

It is crucial that a project at this scale utilize public-private partnerships to leverage a wide arsenal of resources and expertise that a singular organization cannot feasibly provide. Public agencies, such as the Los Angeles Bureau of Engineering or the Mountains Recreational and Conservation Authority, should partner with consultant groups to aid the feasibility analysis and pro forma analysis who have connections to environmental engineering firms and construction companies. They may also consider working with private firms from the local chamber of commerce to develop an economic development plan specific to the local businesses and companies on the abutting commercial corridors.³¹

Environmental Remediation:

An environmental remediation project is one that reduces the amount of toxins and pollutants in the topsoil to a level safe for recreational activity. These projects are of enormous benefit to the local community because they dramatically increase the land value for the project site and the surrounding community. Additionally, these projects employ skilled workers to perform the remediation in the short run, and in the long run they can spark

interest in potential business development to capitalize on the interest in the local economy. Environmental remediation fulfills an equitable objective of working towards environmental justice for this community in particular who have repeatedly had projects that have created negative externalities.³²

Infrastructure Development:

The fiscal improvement of land can come in a variety of different methods besides building construction. Planting new trees and creating new green space can be equally as valuable to the community as permanent fixtures. Pathways, roads, parking lots, street lighting, and proper signage are all ways to improve upon the land that can increase the effectiveness of a physical structure in terms of economic development. These projects necessitate multiple different groups who have a stake in the planning and development such as architects, consultants, expeditors, land use lawyers, non-profit groups, construction groups, etc.

Community Engagement:

Perhaps the most important of all the economic development tools is the process of community engagement. The community surrounding the Taylor Yard site has not had many opportunities to shape the development of a project this size let alone convince policymakers to oblige their requests. The community knows best what their specific issues are in their day to day lives, and they are the most important stakeholder when they have families and children to take care of who will be the primary users of the project. Ensuring that projects serve the needs of the people and making sure they are kept well-informed about the milestones along the way is crucial to making sure that they receive the benefits to the site development too.³³ There will be times when the goals of the developers or policymakers do not align with the community. However, it is important that there is significant effort to compromise

with the community to explain the potential issues and intake feedback to reach the best solution for all parties involved.

Site Use Proposal

4.1 Site Analysis

Figure 4.1 is a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis that summarizes at a general level what the strengths and weaknesses of this site are for development. Any project developer or stakeholder who has interest in the improvement of the site must consider these factors in their decision to support the project vision. To attract the support of prospective developers or investors, reports such as this must effectively communicate the benefits that come from utilizing the economic development tools described in section 3.4.

4.2 Project Description

The proposed vision for this site is to activate the space as a new park space for the greater Glassell Park Region called Taylor Yard Park. This park would take advantage of the characteristics of the previous use as an industrial rail yard by transforming the preexisting turnstile into a central plaza. A small structure will be developed on the site with public restrooms, closets for maintenance workers, and information panels for guests to learn more about the history of the parcel and the surrounding neighborhoods. Additionally, a covered patio will be constructed with picnic tables and a charcoal grill for families to use and enjoy.

Access to the river itself is crucial, so this project intends to work in conjunction with the Paseo del Rio at Taylor Yard project to enhance the way that the edge of the site interfaces with the river. The project also proposes

Strengths: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Large space for development (42 acres in size) and land improvement• Proximity to commercial corridor and nearby parks and schools for consistent userbase• Access to river for environmental justice and habitat restoration	Weaknesses: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Top soil needs significant environmental remediation to prepare land for recreational usage• Vehicular ingress and egress is difficult without proper road service• Active Metrolink line creates site constraints related to safety, noise, and pedestrian accessibility
Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Potential for new green space development in a historically disadvantaged community• Ability for strong community engagement process to shape the built environment• Public-Private partnership to incentivize development	Threats: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Underdeveloped community is especially prone to displacement effects caused by gentrification• Los Angeles City may not have the financial resources to sustain such a large development with so many other projects occurring throughout the county.

Figure 4.1 SWOT Analysis
Source: User Created

two new pedestrian bridges: one over the active Metrolink line, and another spanning across the river. This will allow residents and guests to be seamlessly connected to the Rio de Los Angeles State Park, the Taylor Yard G2 Parcel, and the neighboring community across the river. Proper safety measures will be put in place to prevent accidents relating to the electrical power lines or the active Metrolink line by a series of aesthetic fences that match the landscape of the park space.

4.2 Site Plan



Figure 4.2 Site Plan
Source: Google Maps

4.3 Project Findings

Goal 2 - Strong and Competitive Commercial Areas:

The Taylor Yard park development will attract the attention of news outlets who will spread new information about the project status throughout the city and perhaps nationally. This interest in the Glassell Park region will attract prospective businesses to the commercial corridor on N San Fernando Blvd who seek to capitalize on the new residents or park attendees who will be in the area. The park space

itself is a potential avenue for small businesses to operate on the site itself or cater events hosted by the local community. These same companies may be invited to serve large community ceremonies such as Día de Muertos or farmer's markets.

Goal 4 - Sufficient Open Space:

The conversion of the Taylor Yard G2 Parcel into a public park will provide access to recreational trails and clean air for residents to improve their physical health. Additionally, Los Angeles native plants and trees will be plant-

ed to provide shade in hot summer days and add to the overall character to the park. The space will be large enough for games and activities for families or pets to play on.

Goal 5 - Adequate Recreation Facilities:

Taylor Yard Park will interface with the existing Rio de Los Angeles State Park via a pedestrian bridge to expand on the existing recreational facilities servicing the Glassell Park region. On the Rio de Los Angeles State Park side are athletic fields for sports and competitions, and on the Taylor Yard Park is open space for gatherings and community wellbeing.

Goal 13 - Safe Bike and Pedestrian Facilities:

The proposed trails will be wide such that there will be room to accommodate foot traffic and wheeled traffic such as bicycles and wheelchairs. They will be paved so as to maintain longevity and decrease upkeep in replacing gravel or dirt. These trails will be well lit with lamps that provide an ambient glow at night. Access to the site will be accessible via the parking lot on the south end of the parcel and via foot traffic from the pedestrian bridges.

Goal 15 - Revitalized Physical Environment:

The revitalization of the physical environment will contribute to the local economy by increasing land value of the site itself and the surrounding landscape. The result of significant investment of the site by public and private agencies will be permanent fixtures that will contribute to the land value and ability to generate revenue for local businesses.

Goal 16 - Generating Economic Activity:

Taylor Yard Park's development will utilize a variety of economic development tools that will increase the health of the local economy in the long-run when new businesses and residents appreciate the benefits of increased land and property values.

4.4 Alternative Uses

The potential for what this site can become is near limitless with a variety of creative approaches having some degree of feasibility. These may include:

- Housing projects and/or affordable housing
- 100% dedicated space for habitat restoration and biodiversity regeneration
- Commercial space for a new grocery store or medical clinic

Many of these other proposed uses for the project site are beneficial to the community in their own way. However, each has their own set of strengths and weaknesses that limits the success of the project in comparison to a new public park. For example, housing projects or commercial projects will be hindered by the limited vehicular access because of the increase of utilization on the service road. Or, a full habitat restoration project will not be able to incentive persons to visit the site and contribute to the local economy.

4.5 Financial Narrative

A project as large as Taylor Yard Park will likely be a multi-million dollar project to complete, and it will need to be completed in phases.

Phase zero will need to accomplish the pre-planning of the site to identify the scope of the project and a general timeline. During this time, the developer will need to secure funding from a variety of different sources for a public project. This may come in the form of government bonds sold to the public or an allocation of funding that comes from taxpayer dollars. Loans will need to be secured from private banks and there may be the potential for private equity investors to contribute to

the site.

Once the project begins, phase one will begin the process of remediating the site and removing the pollutants and toxins to a safe level. There are a variety of strategies to accomplish this, some methods much more expensive than others. The soil can be completely replaced, a new top soil layer can be placed on top otherwise known as capping, or environmental technology will need to chemically or physically remove pollutants.³⁴

Phase two cannot begin until the land is ready for development. This phase will be the construction of the site and its many components. It is likely that the service road will be heavily utilized, so it may be worth expanding to accommodate the heavy construction vehicles and future ingress and egress from the site. The end result will be a beautiful new landscape for residents and guests to enjoy.

Precedent Analysis

6.1 Gasworks Park, Seattle, WA

Gas Works Park is a 19.1-acre public park located in Seattle, Washington, United States. It was built on the site of the former Seattle Gas Light Company gasification plant, which operated from 1906 to 1956. Similar to the project vision for Taylor Yard Park, it is an environmental remediation project turned public park. Rather than completely abandoning the existing structures, they were cleaned to a safe enough level for recreational use around the site. The park officially opened in 1975 and quickly became a popular destination for Seattle residents and visitors. Gas Works Park is known for its panoramic views of Seattle and its unique combination of industrial and

natural elements. The park contributes to the development of the economy when it became a popular location for concerts, picnics, and other outdoor events.³⁵



Figure 6.1 Gasworks Park
Source: Seattle.gov

6.2 Brooklyn Bridge Park, Brooklyn, NY

Brooklyn Bridge Park is a 85-acre waterfront park located in Brooklyn, New York City, United States. The park was built on a formerly industrial waterfront area that had been in decline for many years. This project was a result of the community engagement process when local residents pushed for the site to be converted into a park. The park has multiple sections following a similar structure to the different ports that used to line the Hudson River. The combination of green space, playgrounds, and gathering spaces draw in residents and tourists alike who interact with the local businesses on and off-site.³⁶



Figure 6.2 Brooklyn Bridge Park
Source: www.nycgo.com

6.3 High Line Park, New York City, New York

The High Line is a 1.45-mile-long elevated park located in Manhattan, New York City, United States. It was built on a former elevated railroad track that ran through the West Side of Manhattan. This subway line was underutilized and was eventually abandoned. A local non-profit entered the scene and formed public-private partnerships to redevelop the site into a recreational park. The sought to preserve the character as an elevated rail line while enabling residents and tourists to interact with the site in a meaningful way. The site has become a source of new customers for the businesses nearby.³⁷



Figure 6.3 High Line Park
Source: Wikipedia

Conclusion

The construction of Taylor Yard Park will be conducive to the economic development of the Glassell Park region when it has a history of historical disadvantage. The proposed park would offer a variety of recreational opportunities and be the source of wealth for the families that live in the area for generations to come. There is a reason that former Mayor Eric Garcetti called Taylor Yard the Crown Jewel. The G2 parcel represents a unique opportunity to become a model of what a community engagement project can be.³⁸

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8.1 Additional Imagery

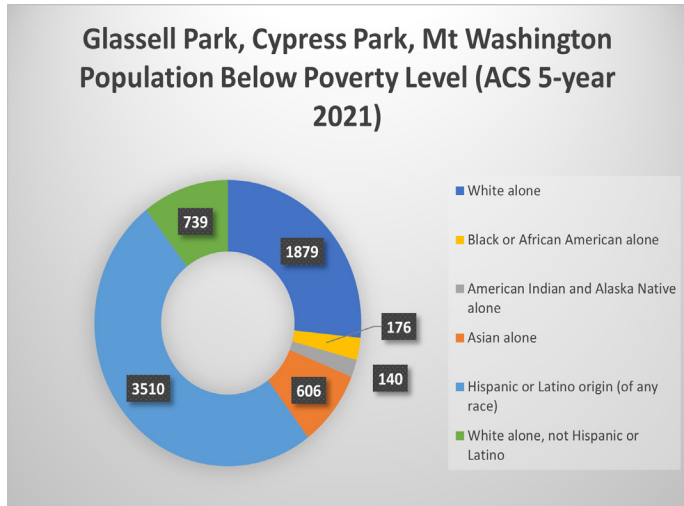


Figure 2.3 Poverty
Source: Census S1701

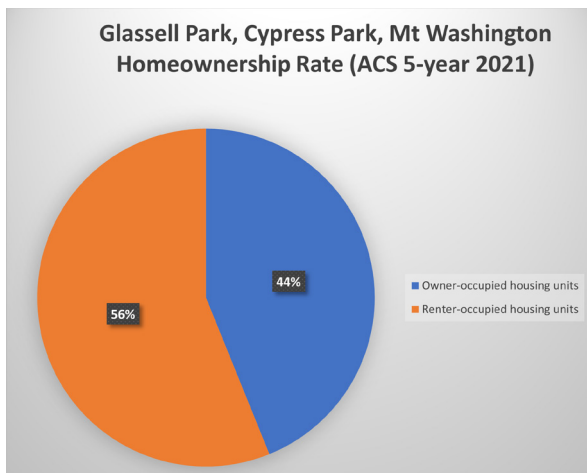


Figure 2.4 Homeownership
Source: Census S2502

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