

Community Improvement Initiative: Los Angeles

A Sustainable Redevelopment Project

A Future of Sustainability

Imagine a redevelopment project that lets every resident remain in his or her home. Imagine a redevelopment project that turns a cul-de-sac into a corner and rebuilds the street network. Imagine a redevelopment project that turns paved land adjacent to a freeway into a thicket of native trees, shrubs, grasses, and wildlife. Imagine a redevelopment project that turns fenced-in surface parking lots into a cooperative urban farm where the current residents and entrepreneurs could invest and profit in their community's future. Imagine a healthy and sustainable community... with this redevelopment project.

Our Site

The Community Improvement Initiative: Los Angeles (CII or CII LA) is an approximately 14 acre area in the southern section of University Park along the Figueroa corridor bounded roughly by Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard on the south, Figueroa Boulevard on the west, 38th Street on the north, and Flower Drive on the east. Once home to a medium-density multi-family residential neighborhood, the community was sheared off from the rest of its context by Interstate 110 and has been distressed since the late 1950s when the freeway was built.

Our Approach

We feel that those historically impacted by regional development should have particular attention to their neighborhood and economic development. To that end, we use the concept of **Reclamation** as inspiration for the redevelopment of this community. Our design principles are borne of an attempt to minimize displacement and negative impacts on the current residents and businesses of the community, in contrast to the historic pattern of redevelopment in South LA. Simultaneously we look to use the opportunities that blight has created (i.e. undeveloped surface parking lots) and the inherent qualities of the area (i.e. the extant Pre-World War II housing multi-family stock) to **reclaim** the blighted land for productive use.

Our Vision

CII Los Angeles is a redevelopment project that uses **green space** to **reclaim** automobile dedicated space for community development. It does so in three phases:

- I. Greening the Community
- II. Building New Community
- III. Growing the Community



1948 - A Healthy, Multi-Family Community with a Verdant Park
Source: Historicaerials.com

Reclamation

The Community Improvement Initiative: Los Angeles (CII: LA) is a development vision that looks to redevelop a formerly residential neighborhood next to a large civic park that over time has devolved into an area dominated by surface parking, separated from the adjacent park, nonetheless some of the original residential homes persist on a strip facing the freeway. Using the guiding tenets of community, sustainability, and health; and the theme of **Reclamation** our development program looks create a 'cooperative' non-profit organization composed of community stakeholders that will act as a master developer for the project area. That entity will first and foremost retain the current residential population on Flower Dr while re-purposing and redeveloping the surface parking and automobile focused commercial space into more community-oriented uses, agricultural spaces, and revenue generating enterprises that can help underwrite the cooperative's activities. Ultimately, the cooperative will have the mission to "use **green** space to reclaim automobile dedicated space for community development."

A New Breed of Redevelopment

Ideally, CII:LA would be a pilot project for a new style of redevelopment projects. Given the current uncertain future of redevelopment in California and more focused and precise redevelopment project areas in the future; this project looks to provide a precedent for how a community-development non-profit (the Cooperative), the government (CRA/LA and Recreation and Parks) and private interests (real estate developers) can partner to develop a project that can benefit existing residents and accommodate new users. The project attempts to be more 'grassroots', community-improving focused rather than the typical redevelopment project that focuses on increasing population or assessed land values. There are many underdeveloped areas of South Los Angeles where this model of increased green space, dense redevelopment with agricultural elements can be applied.

A History of Sacrifice

More than other parts of the city, the neighborhoods of South Los Angeles have long suffered disintegration and dissolution in the name of progress for the Greater Los Angeles area. These areas were devastated by enormous public works projects like Interstate 110, Interstate 105, and Interstate 710 that destroyed entire vibrant neighborhoods and displaced communities in order to improve the mobility of the region. South Los Angeles is also home to more public housing projects than other parts of the city and some of the nation's worst performing schools. Perceptions of danger have scared away investment exacerbating the decay and abandonment of these formerly healthy communities. Nonetheless these neighborhoods persist, sometimes only partially, despite the challenges they face.



2010 - A Disintegrated Neighborhood with a Concrete Park
Source: Google Earth

Community in Three Easy Steps...

The project will proceed in three phases concentrated on developing different aspects of the community. In the first phase titled 'Greening the Community' Flower Drive on the east end of the site will be vacated and turned into a linear public park likely to be 'claimed' by the adjacent residents. The existing residential would be served by a new 'green alley' with shared garage parking for the housing located across the alley and randomly assigned. In addition, this phase will re-purpose surface parking south of 39th St into an urban farm, community center, and parking structure. The second phase titled 'Building New Community' involves redeveloping Figueroa Blvd north of 39th street with new mixed-use construction consisting of ground floor retail with housing above. This phase also includes demolishing and redeveloping the southwest corner of MLK and Figueroa with higher density retail and/or mixed-use development and the development of a boutique grocery store (ideally operated by the CII cooperative) at the corner of 39th and Figueroa. The final phase 'Growing the Community' involves expanding the urban farm into Exposition Park where vacant surface

parking will be reclaimed as productive green space.

The three phases each have identified goals/visions. The first phase is intended to improve the built environment for existing users and to make the site more appealing to potential speculative development. Part of the CII LA strategy is to attempt self-sufficiency, i.e. covering operating expenses and the cost of running the cooperative market, community center and urban farm from operating profit those enterprises generate and participatory ground leases for developing the rest of the site. The second phase is envisioned to create space and reasons for new users and residents to come to the site. Residential development and the anchor retail on MLK and Fig look to provide CII LA an income stream to mitigate likely operating deficits from their other community development programs (coop market, community center, urban farm, possible park maintenance). The third phase looks to expand the project and its principles into its environs. CII LA would like to become '**community cancer**' metastasizing green space and urban agriculture down the Fig Corridor and throughout South Los Angeles.

Planning Program

We look to use the opportunities that blight has created (i.e. undeveloped surface parking lots) and build on the inherent qualities of the area (i.e. the extant Pre-World War II housing multi-family stock) to reclaim the blighted land for productive use. Using CRA/LA to help fund land acquisition, CII would develop the community-development aspects of the site and partner with private developers to develop the other elements. These community aspects would be centered around green space, including a feature 1-2 acre **Urban Farm** that the cooperative will manage and attempt to run at a profit. Another cornerstone green space element is the **linear park** to run along I-110 in the roadway of vacated Flower Dr. To finance operations of the cooperative and pay for CRA/LA initial financing, CII will **redevelop parcels around the project** while other parcels will be dedicated for community-development uses. For example at Figueroa Blvd and 39th St we envision **two Mid-rise towers** one programmed as a Community Center/Headquarters for CII and will have their offices as well as **community rooms** and **classroom space**, including an **outdoor learning experience** that can also serve as farmer's market space. The other tower will be programmed with a **boutique grocery** at ground level with higher, more profitable uses (likely market-rate residential) above. Ideally this grocery will be a typical cooperative store managed by CII with membership available outside the CII stakeholders (i.e. like a club store like Costco). A **Parking Structure** with south-facing solar panels will be constructed to compensate for the removed surface parking.

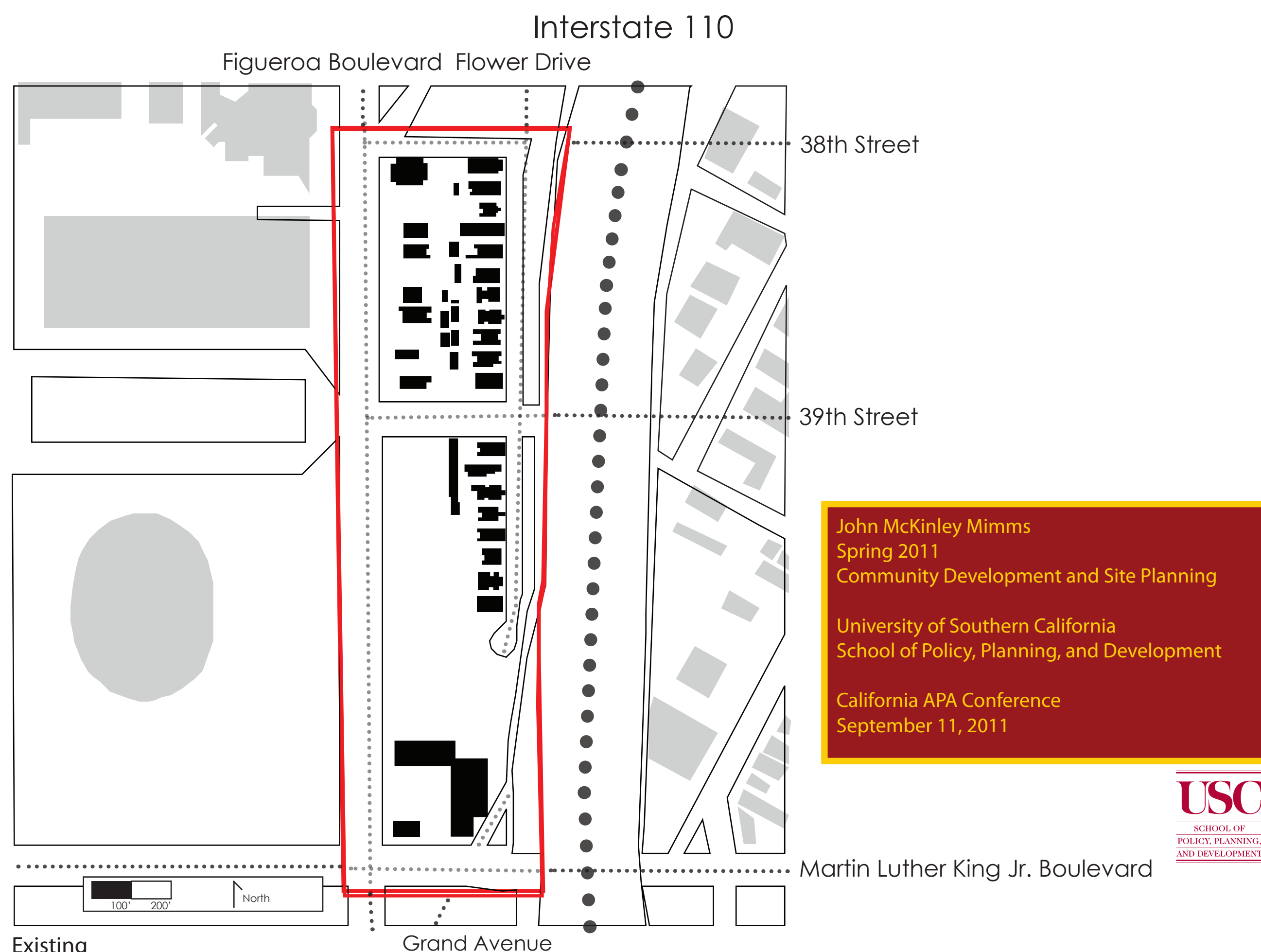


Schematic Land Use

Urban Design Principles - Study Area #2	
Principle	Practice
1. Displacement is kept to a minimum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No destruction of housing Existing businesses need to have first chance of leasing space in a newly constructed or renovated facility or building that displaced the business from their original location
2. Replace surface parking with higher uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must preserve a great deal of the current total number of parking spaces due to need during events and for overflow Consolidate surface parking into mixed-use parking structure(s) with ground floor retail or office uses
3. Use plants and landscaping as buffers and/or community space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convert a surface parking lot, or part of a lot to an urban farm OR create a collection of pocket community gardens throughout the site Densely landscape east of Flower Drive to create psychological barrier and encourage bioremediation of I-110 Where possible include community and/or shared private green space
4. Connect the street network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-route the dead-end terminus of Flower Drive so that it reconnects to Figueroa Boulevard or extends to Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard
5. Increase density of the site, within reason and where appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scale must be consistent with the character of University Park and the Figueroa Corridor Redevelop drive-thru and strip mall commercial space Integrate the open space of Exposition Park into the design plan for the site; increase connectivity between Exposition Park and the site

Constraint	Limitation
Interstate 110	Creates a physical and psychological barrier east of site; also an environmental hazard for residents
Existing Housing	Limits developable area if one intends to minimize displacement
Superblock Structure	Discourages pedestrian activity in the area
Lack of Crossings across Figueroa	Diminishes the connection neighborhood has with the adjacent Expo Park
Lack of Amenities	Discourages development of housing on surface parking lots; lack of marketable characteristics of the site

Opportunity	Benefit
Surface Parking Lots	Readily developable land that does not generate displacement
Proximity to Expo Park	Opportunities for recreational activity, provides nice view corridors
Flower Drive	Public land available for community development activities
CRA/LA Redevelopment Area	Lots fronting Figueroa Blvd are in a CRA/LA redevelopment zone, opening up more opportunities to leverage investment financing and resources for community development
Proximity to USC	Existing potential resident population as well as potential clients for retail development in the area



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