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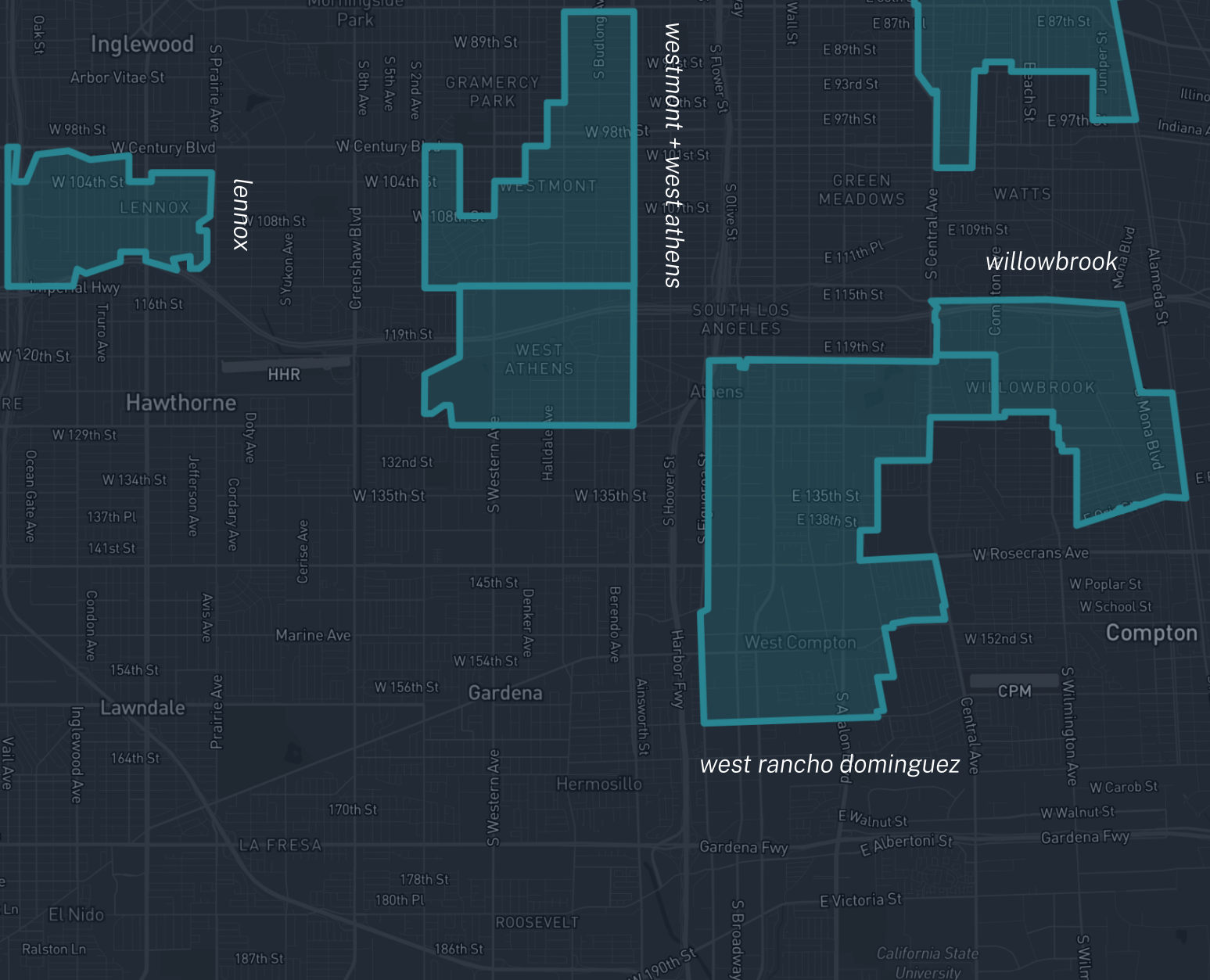
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### Publication Date

2023-06-16

# Unincorporated Los Angeles:

## Leveling Inequities in Supervisory District 2



Jaime Cervantes de Reinstein, Ty Pearson, Sebastián Perez,  
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# **Unincorporated Los Angeles: Leveling Inequities in Supervisorial District 2**

**Client:** Los Angeles County Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell

**Authors:** Jaime Cervantes de Reinstein, Ty Pearson, Sebastián Perez, Aditi Peyush, Tyler Webb, Elliot Woods

# Acknowledgements

We are grateful to everyone who contributed their time, effort, and insight toward this report: our advisor, Dr. Kenya Covington, our peer reviewers, faculty across campus, Los Angeles County public officials, and community-based organizations – yielding tangible policy solutions to a structural problem. To the UCLA Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies, thank you for funding this project and providing invaluable guidance and resources. We're appreciative of our student designer, Ella Chen, for designing this report. Finally, the UCLA Luskin Public Policy Department staff and department chair for their ongoing support during this process.

Lastly, we are grateful for the ability to work with the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisor's Office, Holly J. Mitchell representing District 2, and these unincorporated communities of South Central Los Angeles to help shape the region's future.

## Disclaimer

This report was prepared in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master in Public Policy degree in the Department of Public Policy at the University of California, Los Angeles. The views expressed herein are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Department, the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, UCLA, or the client.

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# Executive Summary

The Second Supervisorial District of Los Angeles County is one of Southern California's most diverse and culture-rich places. Barriers to accessing affordable housing, quality education, employment, and services exacerbate inequities in SD2's unincorporated areas. Without city representation, residents of unincorporated communities rely on the county for public services — which are often stretched thin. Throughout the 20th century, unincorporated communities attempted to form their own cities but were quelled due to financial and political insufficiency. Thus, we set out to answer the question: **Which policy interventions will improve the quality of life and increase equitable outcomes for residents of unincorporated communities in Supervisorial District 2?**

To answer this question, we utilized a mixed-methods approach consisting of qualitative interviews and historical, spatial, and statistical analyses. We compared the unincorporated areas of Florence-Firestone, Lennox, West Rancho Dominguez, Westmont/West Athens, and Willowbrook to neighboring cities with similar characteristics to determine if an improved quality of life can be attributed to cityhood. Key findings include:

- Historic racial and economic bias played a role in annexation and incorporation decisions. Low property values and a lack of commercial development continue to sway city governments from annexing areas of high need.
- Compared to cities, unincorporated areas have significantly worse physical and mental health, face food insecurity, and higher unemployment rates.
- Residents of unincorporated areas are primarily concerned about housing, service quality, displacement, and increasing local representation.

We consider the following policy options to address inequities discovered in our findings:

- Enhanced infrastructure financing districts (EIFDs)
- Opportunity zones
- Expanding the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
- Town councils

Each of these policies was evaluated for their political feasibility, efficiency, equity, and robustness. We used a criteria alternative matrix to score and rank alternatives to determine the best fit for our communities of study. Of the four policies, EIFDs and town councils scored the highest. To improve infrastructure in unincorporated communities, we propose the implementation of EIFDs. We also recommend the formation of town councils as an avenue to voice political needs and relay County initiatives and policies. Supervisor Mitchell's implementation of the policy options can improve the disparities in our areas of study; however, community input should be prioritized throughout the implementation process.

# Introduction

With nearly ten million residents of rich cultural and ethnic backgrounds, Los Angeles (LA) County is the most populous region in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Notably, the LA metropolitan area itself boasts the world's third-largest metropolitan economy — presenting compelling opportunities to live, work, and thrive.<sup>2,3</sup> Despite this, disparities in access to housing, education, employment, and disinvestment in public health services have drastically divided the metropolitan area. The issue is pressing, as these disparities are estimated to cost LA's economy over \$300 billion a year in lost regional GDP.<sup>4</sup>

UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs professor Michael Storper proposed that the solution may be closer to home than we think. During the 1970s, the Bay Area and Los Angeles were highly similar in their wealth and development levels.<sup>5</sup> Within 20 years, however, the Bay Area exceeded LA. Storper pointed to the striking difference in the networks of governance, noting that “In the Bay Area, it's highly networked. [...] because they are all on each other's boards of directors.”<sup>6</sup> He described LA as “a bunch of separate communities.”<sup>7</sup>

LA County's complex bureaucratic system impacts unincorporated communities the most. Surprisingly, 65% of the land in LA County is unincorporated and home to over one million residents — the largest population of unincorporated residents in any other county in the nation. Residents of these communities have insufficient avenues in which they can voice their needs.<sup>8</sup> To illustrate the disparities, the Southern California Association of Governments found that 9.2 percent of unincorporated LA County households are experiencing poverty, compared to 7.9 percent in the SCAG region.<sup>9</sup>

This report underscores the issue of equity in unincorporated LA by diving into the present circumstances that residents of unincorporated communities face and identifying key

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<sup>1</sup> “About,” Los Angeles County, 2023, <https://lacounty.gov/government/about-la-county/about/>.

<sup>2</sup> “Why Los Angeles - Economic & Workforce Development Department, City of Los Angeles,” 2023, <https://ewddlacity.com/index.php/opportunity-zones-in-la/why-los-angeles>, <https://ewddlacity.com/index.php/opportunity-zones-in-la/why-los-angeles>

<sup>3</sup> PolicyLink and USC Program for Environmental & Regional Equity. “An Equity Profile of the Los Angeles Region.” *Weingart Foundation*, n.d. [https://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/EquityProfile\\_LA\\_Region\\_2017\\_Summary\\_Final.pdf](https://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/EquityProfile_LA_Region_2017_Summary_Final.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Chery Glaser, “Los Angeles Is a Leader in Poverty and Inequity, and It's Dragging the Rest of the State down,” KCRW, March 25, 2021, <https://www.kcrw.com/news/shows/zocalos-connecting-california/pandemic-inequity-poverty-los-angeles>.

<sup>5</sup> Stan Paul, “The Reasons behind L.A.'s Economic Slide and the Bay Area's Resilience,” UCLA Newsroom, February 22, 2017, <https://newsroom.ucla.edu/stories/the-reasons-behind-l-a-s-economic-slide-and-s-f-s-rise>.

<sup>6</sup> Paul, “The Reasons behind L.A.'s Economic Slide and the Bay Area's Resilience.”

<sup>7</sup> Paul, “The Reasons behind L.A.'s Economic Slide and the Bay Area's Resilience.”

<sup>8</sup> Jon REGARDIE, “Who'll Be next to Land a Coveted Spot on the L.A. County Board of Supervisors: Herb Wesson or Holly Mitchell?,” Los Angeles Magazine, October 19, 2020, <https://www.lamag.com/citythinkblog/board-of-supervisors-second-district/>.

<sup>9</sup> Southern California Association of Governments, “Pre-Certified Local Housing Data for the Unincorporated Los Angeles County,” SCAG, April 2021, <https://scag.ca.gov/sites/main/files/file-attachments/unincorporated-los-angeles-county-he-0421.pdf?1620756769>.



takeaways. We offer insights and opportunities to alleviate the structural barriers blocking access, with the ultimate goal of improving quality of life outcomes for residents.

## The Client

The Office of Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell represents the Second Supervisorial District (SD2) in LA County — comprising 176.96 square miles, from the South Bay northward to the neighborhood of Koreatown.<sup>10</sup> This area includes 11 cities, LA’s historic South Central neighborhood, 19 unincorporated communities, and approximately two million residents of various racial, economic, and cultural backgrounds.<sup>11</sup>

Since assuming office in 2020, Supervisor Mitchell has led racial and economic justice initiatives throughout historic neighborhoods and vibrant communities across LA. These initiatives include the creation of a Fair Chance Hiring Ordinance, expanding LA County’s guaranteed income program, and the return of Bruce’s Beach to its original owners, to name a few.<sup>12,13,14</sup> However, the rich histories and unique needs of these communities, coupled with LA County’s complex political structure, present Supervisor Mitchell with the challenge of creating opportunities that yield equitable outcomes for her constituents. To create a more just and equitable county, Supervisor Mitchell’s office seeks multifaceted policy approaches that will improve the quality of life and increase representation for her constituents who have historically been left behind.

For the under-resourced unincorporated communities in South LA, several historic social movements and legislation have shaped their geographic boundaries and explained the residents’ barriers to opportunity. Our client’s objective is to identify solutions to enduring inequities that residents are experiencing — particularly through the lens of political representation. Specifically, her office wants to understand the impacts of unincorporation and whether those outcomes can be linked to unincorporated or other factors.

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<sup>10</sup> Board of Supervisors, “Holly J. Mitchell,” (County of Los Angeles), <https://lacounty.gov/government/board-of-supervisors/holly-j-mitchell/>.

<sup>11</sup> Board of Supervisors, “Holly J. Mitchell.”

<sup>12</sup> Jon Healey, “It’s Hard to Find a Job If You’ve Been in Jail. A New Program Is Trying to Fix That,” Los Angeles Times, March 2, 2023, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-03-02/how-to-connect-formerly-incarcerated-people-with-jobs-in-l-a-county>.

<sup>13</sup> “Expanding Breathe: LA County’s Guaranteed Income Program,” LA County Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell, April 4, 2023, <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/179247.pdf>. (motion by Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell)

<sup>14</sup> “Los Angeles County Completes Landmark Return of Bruce’s Beach to the Rightful Heirs of Charles and Willa Bruce,” LA County Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell, June 28, 2022, <https://mitchell.lacounty.gov/los-angeles-county-completes-landmark-return-of-bruces-beach-to-the-rightful-heirs-of-charles-and-willa-bruce/>.



## Policy Problem

One of the challenges of living in an unincorporated community is the reduced political representation and that services are stretched more thinly as opposed to more tailored local municipal services and programs available in incorporated communities. Residents of unincorporated communities rely on the county for public services, such as fire safety, law enforcement, zoning enforcement, sanitation, recreational programs, and street maintenance.<sup>15</sup> These communities fall outside the jurisdiction of incorporated municipalities and lack mayors or city council members to advocate for their needs and interests. Therefore, residents must rely solely on Supervisor Mitchell for local representation. This structural organization of the unincorporated district and incorporated cities creates differences in how residents experience political representation, impacting their quality of life.

Many unincorporated communities in South LA have some of California's worst economic and health outcomes, disproportionately affecting communities of color. According to the California Healthy Places Index, all of the selected communities except for one rank no higher than the 25th percentile in overall health score.<sup>16</sup> Unincorporated communities in LA County also vary in economic vitality — or the strength and long-term viability of factors that enable economic activity — such as workforce training, access to capital, and quality of life amenities. The lack of detailed information on the specific challenges these communities face is important since all unincorporated communities in LA County are often grouped and governed as a single entity for data collection and high-level planning purposes.

This research focuses on five unincorporated communities identified by the client based on their density, geographic proximity, and poor economic outcomes. The selected unincorporated communities are [Florence-Firestone](#), [Lennox](#), [West Rancho Dominguez](#), [Westmont/West Athens](#), and [Willowbrook](#). In this report, Westmont and West Athens have been grouped here based on the client's guidance, but the U.S. Census Bureau recognizes them as separate entities. Consequently, data on the areas are separate, but LA County recognizes Westmont/West Athens as one entity because they are contiguous.

Three of these unincorporated communities — Lennox, Florence-Firestone, and Westmont/West Athens — are recognized as disadvantaged unincorporated communities (DUCs).<sup>17,18</sup> DUCs are California's designation for unincorporated areas where the average

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<sup>15</sup> "Master Planning & Unincorporated Area Services," Los Angeles County, November 20, 2017, <https://ceo.lacounty.gov/master-planning-unincorporated-area-services/>.

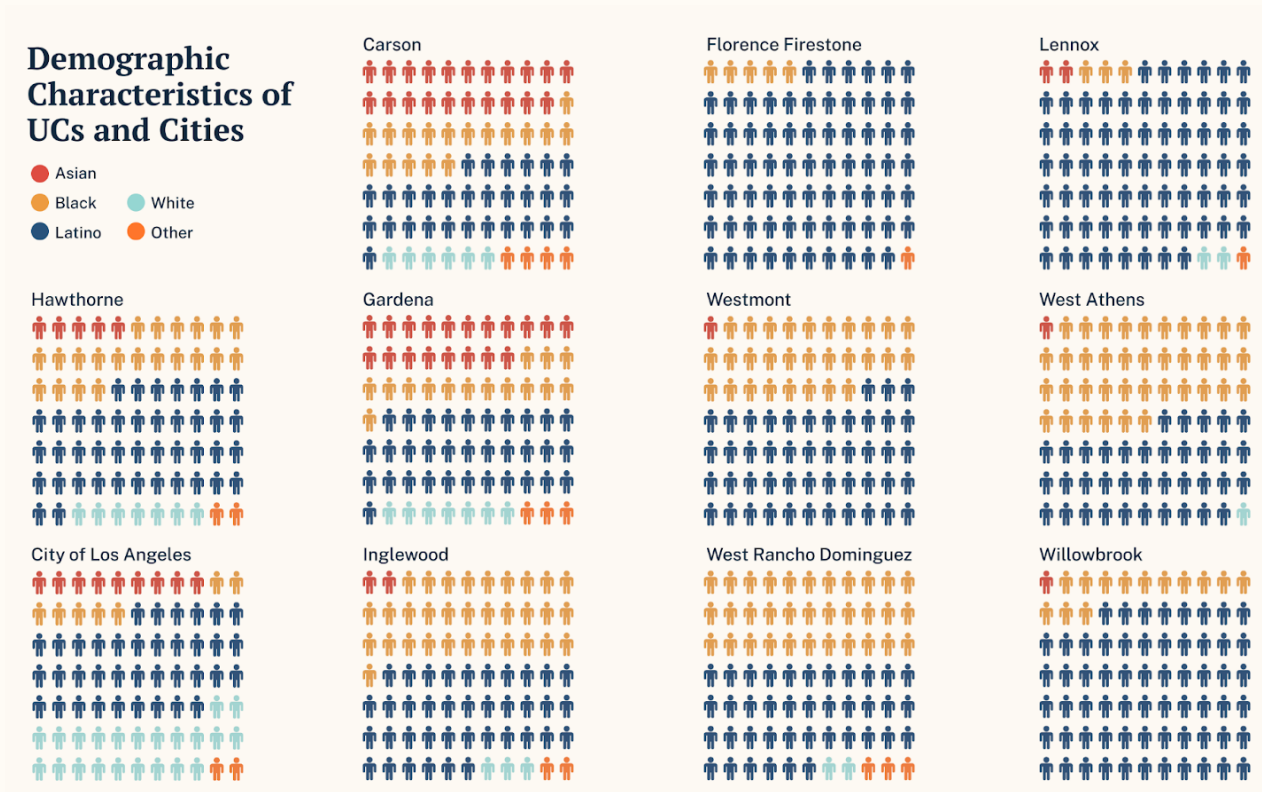
<sup>16</sup> Public Health Alliance of Southern California, "California Healthy Places Index," California Health Places Index Map, accessed April 15, 2023, <https://map.healthyplacesindex.org/?redirect=false>.

<sup>17</sup> "DUCs," LA LAFCo, accessed March 6, 2023, <https://laLAFCo.org/en/ducs/>.

<sup>18</sup> Nelia Sperka, "Senate Bill 244: Land Use, General Plans, and Disadvantaged Communities," Pub. L. No. SB 244, 2013.

annual household income is less than 80 percent of the statewide median household income.<sup>19</sup>

These communities were grouped and compared to neighboring cities in SD2 with similar demographics to understand whether any significant differences can be attributed to cityhood. These cities are Carson, Compton, Gardena, Hawthorne, and Inglewood. The adjacent municipalities serve as comparable communities due to their proximity and interwoven community identities, which have been combined to reflect local spheres of influence. (See Appendix B for detailed information on each of these cities).



Housing restrictions, employment limitations, racialized policing, and educational inequities, among other practices, have perpetuated a cycle of intergenerational disadvantage for people of color.<sup>20</sup> This is evident across the five communities:

**Florence-Firestone**, located in southeast LA County, six miles south of Downtown Los Angeles (DTLA), has “below average” school quality, high segregation rates, and

<sup>19</sup> LAFCo for San Bernardino County, “Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities Maps,” 2023, <https://sbcLAFCo.org/duc-maps/>.

<sup>20</sup> Julian Castro, “Fair Housing in America’s Largest County: The Los Angeles Experience,” Legal Defense Fund, December 16, 2022, <https://www.naacpldf.org/fair-housing-inclusive-communities/>.

poverty zones, and extreme housing burden — according to the LA County Equity Indicators Tool.<sup>21,22</sup>

In **Lennox**, thousands of residents have lived in the flight path of Los Angeles International Airport for decades, one of the busiest airports in the country. Waves of Lennox community activism protesting the noise pollution have cycled through the decades. Still, disruption to recreation, school, and families remains one of the most pressing issues in the area.

Nestled between the cities of Gardena and Carson, the rate of residents in **West Rancho Dominguez** living below the poverty line is 17.1 percent — much higher than the county average of 13.4 percent.<sup>23</sup>

The unincorporated areas of **Westmont and West Athens** have been shaped by race, class, and urban development. The areas were historically predominantly Black neighborhoods redlined by the federal government and excluded from many government benefits and services. This led to a lack of infrastructure, substandard housing, and limited economic opportunities, perpetuating poverty and limiting residents' social mobility.<sup>24</sup>

**Willowbrook** is a small unincorporated community bordered by Watts and the cities of Compton and Lynwood. During the 1940s, Willowbrook became a center for aerospace manufacturing, with companies such as Douglas Aircraft and Lockheed Martin setting up facilities in the area. However, in 1965, frustrations in the neighboring Black community in Watts led to a six-day uprising that spread into Willowbrook. The movement had detrimental effects on property values, local businesses, and public trust in effective policy decision-making in Willowbrook — which have persisted today.

Each of these communities has a unique history of failed attempts at annexation, or the merger between unincorporated land and a city.<sup>25</sup> Thus, Supervisor Mitchell's office has a vested interest in improving economic outcomes for these communities, whether or not they acquire municipal representation in the future.

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<sup>21</sup> Los Angeles Times, "Florence-Firestone," Mapping L.A., 2023, <http://maps.latimes.com/neighborhoods/neighborhood/florence-firestone/>.

<sup>22</sup> Dana Cuff, Rayne Laborde, and Roya Chagnon, "Building Justice: Racial Equity in Planning for Unincorporated Los Angeles County" (cityLAB-UCLA, 2020), <https://citylab.ucla.edu/la-county-equity>.

<sup>23</sup> Los Angeles County Department of Public Health and LA Walks, "Willowbrook /West Rancho Dominguez Community Pedestrian Plan," StoryMaps (Esri, October 26, 2022), <https://storymaps.com/stories/def8d1488c3c4938bfc39b370d69ad41>.

<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth L. Tung et al., "Spatial Context and Health Inequity: Reconfiguring Race, Place, and Poverty," *Journal of Urban Health: Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine* 94, no. 6 (December 2017): 757–63, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-017-0210-x>.

<sup>25</sup> Mary M. Edwards, "Understanding the Complexities of Annexation," *Journal of Planning Literature* 23, no. 2 (November 2008): 119–35.

## Policy Question

We sought to understand these communities' racial and economic legacy to develop efficient and culturally-appropriate solutions to drive investment into unincorporated communities. This project aims to answer the question:

**Which policy interventions will improve the quality of life and increase equitable outcomes for residents of unincorporated communities in Supervisorial District 2?**

We define an improved quality of life as the ability of residents to flourish mentally and physically healthy, lead productive lives — measured by high economic opportunity and achievement — and feel a sense of belonging in their community. Increased access allows for a channel for residents to voice their political needs — boosting civic engagement and building community resilience.

We begin by studying the historical context that shaped the contemporary landscape, followed by a qualitative and quantitative analysis of literature, interviews, and data. We conclude by proposing, analyzing, and recommending policy solutions that improve the local quality of life and reallocate economic activity within the community.

## Racial and Economic History of SD2

American historian Becky Nicolaides noted that local politics in suburban LA sustain long-term inequities at the county, state, and federal levels.<sup>26</sup> Thus, it is imperative to understand the origin of racial and economic inequities within unincorporated communities. This contemporary climate is best understood by the communities' unique histories of neighborhood formation.

At the start of the 20th century, the City of Los Angeles annexed several small towns, including San Pedro, the San Fernando Valley, and the independent town of Watts. Several cities in present-day SD2 also incorporated, like Hawthorne, Inglewood, Torrance, and Gardena. LA's historic South Central (now South LA) then became the historic core of SD2. Much like Watts in the 1920s and '30s, South Central had no racially restrictive housing covenants and thus was a racially-mixed neighborhood of working-class Italian, Jewish, Japanese, Mexican, and Black families.<sup>27</sup>

Amid World War II, the federal government invested millions of dollars in defense contracts in Los Angeles, stimulating the local economy by attracting business and labor nationwide. These investments in defense and other manufacturing companies incentivized new migrations, which transformed the racial composition of the city and county. While racial segregation was still practiced in the workplace, manufacturing companies hired Black workers to fill the large supply of jobs.<sup>28</sup> As a result, Black migrants settled in predominantly Black communities like Watts and South Central, east of the Alameda corridor.

Homeownership became the central wealth-building asset of the working class, but restrictive housing covenants, redlining, and neighborhood blockbusting divided Black and white families into separate neighborhoods and excluded Black buyers from homeownership.<sup>29</sup> In addition, the factory closures during the 1970s gutted local economies and moved jobs overseas — effectively cutting the Black workforce.<sup>30</sup>

Since 1970, SD2 has encompassed South LA, parts of the South Bay, Inglewood, and the unincorporated communities surrounding these cities. In 2011, the beach cities in the county's westernmost part were included in SD2. The place-making of Black, Latino, and

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<sup>26</sup> Becky Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1965* (The University of Chicago Press, 2002).

<sup>27</sup> Kelly Lyttle Hernandez, *City of Inmates: Conquest, Rebellion, and the Rise of Human Caging in Los Angeles, 1771-1965*, 2017.

<sup>28</sup> Chester Himes, *If He Hollers, Let Him Go: A Novel* (Thunder's Mouth Press, 1986).

<sup>29</sup> Keangha-Yamahtta Taylor, *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership*. (The University of North Carolina Press, 2019).

<sup>30</sup> Bob Baker, "L.A.'s Booming Auto Industry Now a Memory," *Los Angeles Times*, July 20, 1991, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-07-20-mn-2136-story.html>.

foreign-born neighbors in SD2 has been marked by conflict and collaboration.<sup>31</sup> Employment discrimination, reduced revenues, low educational attainment, and other racial inequities persist in the present precarity for residents of unincorporated communities.

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<sup>31</sup> Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Manuel Pastor, *South Central Dreams: Finding Home and Building Community in South L.A.* (New York University Press, 2021).

## Analysis and Key Findings

To identify ways to address the inequality constituents face in SD2, the research team utilized a mixed methods approach. We began with a qualitative analysis of existing literature and historical media, conducted interviews, and executed quantitative analyses comprising spatial analysis and statistical hypothesis testing. The mixed-methods research enables a comprehensive understanding of the historical, political, and socioeconomic challenges and opportunities that shape unincorporated communities. Our findings point to the urgency for reinvestment and increased political power.

The methods mentioned above uncover evidence that offers a multidimensional perspective on the political incentives, economic gains, and missed opportunities that inform the feasibility of our policy options. We considered these historical and contemporary pieces of evidence through the extensive history of shifting demographics and social narratives from the postwar period to the present.

## Qualitative Analysis

The team conducted two kinds of qualitative analysis: document and news analysis and expert interviews. The methods and findings for each method are described below.

### Historical Document and News Analysis

The team conducted a historical news analysis by searching for articles in the *Los Angeles Times* that mentioned the selected unincorporated communities and the search terms “annexation” and “cityhood.” While we recognize the potential political bias of the *Los Angeles Times*, it is one of the few local publications that has played a significant role in shaping public attitude.

Newspaper articles from the *Los Angeles Times* illuminate considerable turning points in annexation history, the formation of community interest groups, and resident sentiment. These articles feature Lennox, Willowbrook, and Westmont/West Athens residents who expressed contentment in avoiding municipal taxes, while others lamented poor sanitation and policing services compared to adjacent cities. Interviewees unfamiliar with unincorporated communities often expressed confusion about whom to consult for public services.

The team also conducted document analysis of annexation documents between the 1950s and 1960s. This decade was chosen due to events that caused significant societal changes: the national Civil Rights movement and the local Watts Uprising of 1965.<sup>32</sup> These

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<sup>32</sup> Elizabeth Hinton, *America on Fire: The Untold History of Police Violence and Black Rebellion Since the 1960s* (Liveright, 2021).; Becky Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1965*, *Historical Studies of Urban America* (University of Chicago Press, 2002).; Michan Andrew



movements led to white flight out of LA suburbs and the Lakewood Plan, an agreement between cities and the county government that allows cities to contract reduced government services from the county.<sup>33</sup> In this agreement, county taxpayers subsidize these services but reap little benefits. The Lakewood Plan off an incorporation movement throughout LA County that was motivated by a desire for greater autonomy in planning decisions and a desire to segregate Black people from white suburbs.<sup>34</sup>

## Key Findings

- The 1950s and 1960s saw active annexation attempts in Lennox, Westmont/West Athens, West Rancho Dominguez, and Willowbrook, whereas attempts in Florence-Firestone began as early as the 1940s.
- The 1906 Shoestring Annexation, which connected DTLA to San Pedro to connect the Port Harbor to the city, formed Florence-Firestone’s western boundary.
- The formation of West Rancho Dominguez is tied with the City of Carson’s incorporation, which began in 1964. While approving Carson’s incorporation, the state rejected the inclusion land that would eventually become West Rancho Dominguez.
  - The argument was that the land would not generate enough revenue for the City’s solvency, but these tracts were over 80% Black, indicating a racist motivation for the City’s incorporation.<sup>35</sup>

## Interviews

From February to March, the research team conducted qualitative interviews with community-based organizations (CBOs) and other local stakeholders within the five communities. These interviews were conducted to collect data about lived experiences and generational knowledge from engaged community members. Local government employees were also interviewed to understand the historical political context that led to current conditions.

In addition, the research team consulted with academic experts and practitioners in urban planning, history, and economics, to broaden the theoretical constructs guiding the research. The interviews were structured into a content analysis to identify and quantify the patterns and themes that emerged from the interviews.

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Connor, “Public Benefits from Public Choice: Producing Decentralization in Metropolitan Los Angeles, 1954–1973,” *Journal of Urban History* 39, no. 1 (January 1, 2013): 79–100, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144212463544>.

<sup>33</sup> Ryan Reft, “The Lakewood Plan: Homeownership, Taxes, and Diversity in Postwar Suburbia,” KCET, January 16, 2015, <https://www.kcet.org/history-society/the-lakewood-plan-homeownership-taxes-and-diversity-in-postwar-suburbia>.

<sup>34</sup>R. Robert Huckfeldt, “Cities by Contract: The Politics of Municipal Incorporation. By Gary J. Miller. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1981. Pp. 242. \$22.50.),” *American Political Science Review* 76, no. 1 (March 1982): 147–48, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1960477>.

<sup>35</sup>US Department of Commerce, Social and Economic Statistics Administration, Bureau of the Census, “Low-Income Neighborhoods in Large Cities: 1970,” Supplementary Report (Los Angeles and Long Beach, CA, May 1974), <https://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/31679801no73-88ch09.pdf>.

To gain a comprehensive insight into the annexation process from the perspective of the government entities empowered to annex, our team reached out to the cities of Carson, Compton, Hawthorne, and Inglewood, the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), and several community-based organizations. Of the cities we contacted, Carson and Compton declined to respond to our inquiries.

## Key Findings

The team conducted 31 interviews with 25 individuals. Discussions followed a semi-structured interview guide for public officials and leaders of CBOs. Themes are identified and elaborated upon in Appendix C. Main takeaways from the interviews are categorized into **insights**, or facts for the client to contemplate, and **opportunities**, or areas in which the client can take direct action for immediate impact.

## Displacement & Gentrification

More affordable housing is desirable, with Yanel Saenz stating that she desired “100% housing affordability.” However, the design choices of new housing developments in Florence-Firestone stir fears of gentrification and displacement, notably the senior living facilities that replaced the Florence-Firestone library. Jonathan Pacheco Bell mentioned the abundance of informal housing arrangements – such as unpermitted garage conversions – that respond to the complex realities of need and risk of housing people in precarity.

### Insights

- Dr. Jasmine Hill noted that homeownership is still the primary means of wealth-building and creating equity
- Zev Yaroslavsky mentioned that LA County residents have a negative view of County planning decisions, noting a history of disregarding resident will that goes back at least since the post-War boom.
- Drs. Paavo Monkonnen and Paul Ong similarly stated that housing was one of the core indicators of inequities in segregated communities.
- Saenz has mixed feelings about the Florence Apartments—while she appreciates that the housing was built for older adults, the building’s design has no connection to Florence-Firestone.
- Drs. Marques Vestal and Jose Loya mentioned that housing insecurity disproportionately plagued communities of color, prompting discussion of itinerant residents and tenant organizing as consequences.

### Opportunities

- Dr. Mark Peterson affirmed that community land trusts could be a viable alternative to market-rate housing.

- Patricia Hichaya and Anish Saraiya alluded to county efforts to produce more housing stock, focusing on affordability and transit-oriented developments in unincorporated communities.

## Public Services

Respondents consistently called for more significant investment in unincorporated communities. Regarding policing in Florence-Firestone, Steve Quinonez, FFCO board president, shared that relationships were strong with the local county sheriff. However, Myrella Gonzalez reported that Lennox parents were frustrated with local police responsiveness: “Many parents complain about speeding in Lennox, and they have asked for speed bumps or police patrolling to keep drivers from racing on the roads. Sometimes [the police] do not show up when they say they will, or they will show up just for a bit and leave. There is no sense that the police are accountable to the parents.”

### Insights

- Ramsey Nicholson and Myrella Gonzalez spoke about the poor quality of urban infrastructure and street design in unincorporated communities.
- Academics and public officials mentioned the combination of low tax revenue and the high cost of service provision as an ongoing obstacle to unincorporated communities, including a deterrent to annexation.
- Pacheco Bell pointed to informal street vending as a viable and essential component of the local economy, an indicator of resilience in the absence of equitable revenue redistribution.
- Yanel Saenz co-founded Juntos Florence-Firestone, a grassroots organization that organizes community members to comment publicly on planning sessions that affect Florence-Firestone.

### Opportunities

- FFCO, Juntos Florence-Firestone, and the Willowbrook Inclusion Network described regular mutual aid activities, including food pantries and mask distribution during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, Quinonez shared that **most of the mutual aid was paid out of pocket**, which WIN president Reginald Johnson echoed.

## Civic Engagement

Civic engagement includes various activities and target populations, including voter turnout, youth engagement, and involvement in local decision-making.

### Insights

- FFCO board members mentioned that Florence-Firestone has low voter turnout, but organizing power is vested in local churches
- Dr. Chris Tilly spoke about the power of local churches in organizing community members toward diverse political ends.

- Saenz believes that constituent complaints “easily fall to the side” when County Supervisors have so many people to serve.

#### Opportunities

- FFCO board members unanimously requested better communication from the County.
- Quinonez said **transparency about government processes and follow-through about funding requests**, even when denied, **is crucial for building trust** in the Supervisor’s office.

## Quantitative Analysis

### Spatial Analysis

Spatial analysis was conducted using ArcGIS web-based mapping software to measure demographic and material disparities between the communities of interest. 2020 Census estimates were used to compare community outcomes, including area median household income, property values, tenant vulnerability, and racial, ethnic, and foreign-born demographic data. Area median income represents the midpoint of the income distribution within a community, so half of households make less and the other half make more. (See *subappendices D.1-D.3 for maps*).

### Key Findings

#### Income

- Much of Florence-Firestone is very low income, while some portions are moderately low income.
- Lennox is mostly very low income.
- Most of West Rancho Dominguez is low income, except for a tract that borders the City of LA, which is very low income.
- Much of Westmont/West Athens is very low and extremely low income, some parts are low income.
- Most of Willowbrook is very low and extremely low income

#### Single-Family Home Values

- Homes in Florence-Firestone, and the bordering City of LA are typically worth \$406,200-481,277.
- A few parts of Willowbrook have significantly low single family home values
- Home prices in Lennox and Westmont are highest of the communities; typically between \$481,277-602,072.

#### Tenant Vulnerability

- Tenants in Florence-Firestone have the highest displacement vulnerability of all the communities.

## Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed in R statistical software to better understand the key differences between unincorporated communities and their neighboring municipalities. The USC Neighborhood Data for Social Change Map was the primary source of data for both unincorporated communities and cities.<sup>36</sup> Despite efforts to keep the year of data collection consistent, discrepancies in reporting based on the source led to a time range of 2018-2022. Data were reported in percentages and transformed into rates. (See Appendix G for descriptions of the variables used in the analysis).

We took a two-step approach to examine the effect of cityhood (treatment) against unincorporated areas (control) across the quality of life indicators. First, we found the difference in means between treatment and control for an outcome variable. Second, we found the difference in means between treatment and control for the pre-treatment covariates.

### Difference-in-Means: Outcome Variable

We created a data frame with the above information about cities and unincorporated communities. We were initially going to use the below 200% poverty threshold as the outcome variable of interest, but a preliminary boxplot demonstrated heterogeneity of variances. Thus, below 100% poverty threshold was used as the outcome variable because the variances did not differ greatly. Initial analysis revealed that the poverty level below the 100% threshold in unincorporated communities was around 20% of a standard deviation higher than that of cities.

### Difference-in-Means: Pre-treatment Covariates

Before determining which covariates to use from the list of 26 variables, the research team conducted t-tests to evaluate which means were statistically relevant. T-tests are used to check whether the means of a continuous variable — in this case, the covariates — differ across two groups (city and unincorporated area).<sup>37</sup> The default test used in R is a Welch two-sample t-test with a 95% confidence interval.

Of the 26 tests run, six statistically significant results emerged: total AAPI population, poor physical health, poor mental health, SNAP acceptance, unemployment rate, and free and reduced lunch. See Appendix H for a detailed report of the statistical results.

The statistical significance of poor physical and mental health incited further probing into whether this effect could be attributed to the COVID pandemic or cityhood. We conducted additional tests using 2018 data for the two variables and found identical results.

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<sup>36</sup> USC Sol Price Center for Social Innovation, “Neighborhood Data for Social Change Platform,” accessed April 16, 2023, <https://map.myneighborhooddata.org/>. [Online database].

<sup>37</sup> Evan Berman and Xiaohu Wang, *Essential Statistics for Public Managers and Policy Analysts* (Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press, 2018), 288.

The high significance of the number of stores that accept SNAP benefits motivated the research team to analyze whether there was a difference in CalFresh cases between cities and unincorporated communities. SNAP data is generally available at the federal level. Therefore CalFresh was the best avenue to circumvent this challenge. See Appendix I for the data on CalFresh cases.

## Key Findings

- Of all demographic groups, the difference in concentration of AAPI populations was statistically significant. The total AAPI population is higher in cities than in unincorporated areas. This means there is **no significant difference in the Black, white, Latino, and Native American populations** between our selected cities and unincorporated communities.
- Residents of unincorporated communities have **poorer mental and physical health outcomes** than cities. There is no COVID effect, which indicates that this might be due to the access to services that come with cityhood.
- The **unemployment rate is higher in unincorporated communities** than in neighboring cities. There may be a structural barrier to economic opportunity that Supervisor Mitchell's office should examine — potentially in collaboration with County Commissions.
- **Fewer stores accept SNAP benefits in unincorporated areas** than in cities. This result was the most statistically significant.
- Further investigation into the issue of nutrition benefits uncovered a higher rate of CalFresh cases in cities. This may be due to a direct line for municipal governments to communicate benefits to their constituents.
- The rate of **students eligible for free and reduced lunch is higher in unincorporated communities** than in cities. These findings demonstrate the importance of food security in unincorporated areas.

## Limitations

### Data

Data on the unincorporated communities are scattered across various California state databases, local and regional publications, private organizations' statistical reports, and universities nationwide. This leads to incomplete datasets and mismatched data inputs that ultimately limit the value of our findings.

## **Undocumented Residents**

LA County is home to many undocumented families who are not reflected in the U.S. Census data. This obstructs the formulation of targeted policy recommendations for all unincorporated community residents. The Decennial Census collects data about the foreign-born but does not mention immigration status.



# Policy Options

This chapter covers policy options that could improve political representation and structural outcomes in disadvantaged unincorporated communities in SD2: enhanced infrastructure financing districts (EIFDs), opportunity zones, expanding the Board of Supervisors, and establishing town councils. Each policy option is described in detail and finished with its advantages and disadvantages.

## Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts

Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts (EIFDs) are tax increment financing (TIF) projects that cities and counties use to fund economic development projects.<sup>38</sup>

They are often seen as a sustainable and equitable solution to community infrastructure and economic development challenges.

### Overview

A TIF freezes property tax revenues that flow from a designated project area to the city, county, and other taxing entities at the base level in the current year.<sup>39</sup> Additional tax revenue in future years is diverted to a separate pool of funds, which local jurisdictions can use to directly pay for improvements within the designated project area or pay back bonds issued against the anticipated TIF revenue.<sup>40</sup> EIFDs allow for property tax revenue generated from communities within counties to stay within those communities so they may be spent on infrastructure improvements.

Under the status quo, property taxes paid in California are allocated towards local governments' general funds. Revenue remains within the county it is collected, and it is used exclusively by local governments.<sup>41</sup> However, once allocated to the general fund, taxpayers in underinvested communities may never see their tax dollars contribute to any resources specific to their community. The Lakewood Plan also subsidizes public services for municipalities with County tax revenue – so residents of unincorporated communities fund city services without the benefits of targeted municipal services.<sup>42</sup> EIFDs would be a high-impact resolution for this situation by constructing the necessary infrastructure for communities to thrive.

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<sup>38</sup>“Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD),” Southern California Association of Governments, January 11, 2021, <https://scag.ca.gov/post/enhanced-infrastructure-financing-district-eifd>.

<sup>39</sup> Southern California Association of Governments, Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD)

<sup>40</sup> Southern California Association of Governments, Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD)

<sup>41</sup>“Understanding California’s Property Taxes,” November 29, 2012, <https://lao.ca.gov/reports/2012/tax/property-tax-primer-112912.aspx>.

<sup>42</sup> Michan Andrew Connor, “‘Public Benefits from Public Choice’: Producing Decentralization in Metropolitan Los Angeles, 1954–1973,” *Journal of Urban History* 39, no. 1 (January 1, 2013): 79–100, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144212463544>.

## Advantages

Numerous EIFDs have successfully been implemented throughout California, such as climate-smart infrastructure projects and the first County-initiated EIFD to transform West Carson into a transit-oriented development.<sup>43,44</sup>

In 2020, the Board of Supervisors voted to establish a West Carson EIFD Public Financing Authority to oversee the creation of the EIFD and consider the infrastructure financing plan.<sup>45</sup> Since then, EIFD funds have been used for infrastructure projects in West Carson at an estimated \$136 million.<sup>46</sup> Projects included utility upgrades, street improvements, pedestrian connectivity, housing, and urban design improvements.<sup>47</sup>

In 2023, the Board approved a motion authored by Supervisor Mitchell to expand EIFDs throughout unincorporated areas in SD2 in hopes of serving as a model to other unincorporated areas throughout the county.<sup>48</sup> The motion instructs the Department of Economic Opportunity to conduct a feasibility study of EIFD implementation with a focus on high-need unincorporated areas such as West Rancho Dominguez, Florence-Firestone, Lennox, West Athens, Westmont, and Willowbrook.<sup>49</sup>

## Disadvantages

A 2020 report by the Governor's Office of Planning and Research outlines the different kinds of TIFs available in California, as well as key findings and recommendations. Among the recommendations were suggestions to revise or clarify EIFD legislation to help facilitate their implementation.<sup>50</sup>

Although they have statutory authority to issue debt, **EIFDs do not have the constitutional authority to issue debt.** The weaker language of the EIFD law, which lacks language in the California Constitution, creates legal uncertainties that have disincentivized some jurisdictions from pursuing EIFD. However, EIFDs would benefit from a legislative change or

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<sup>43</sup> "Resilient and Sustainable Infrastructure - Southern California Association of Governments," Southern California Association of Governments, January 11, 2021, <https://scag.ca.gov/funding-and-financing-tools-and-strategy/resilient-and-sustainable-infrastructure>.

<sup>44</sup> "County of Los Angeles West Carson Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD) - Southern California Association of Governments," Southern California Association of Governments, January 11, 2021, <https://scag.ca.gov/funding-and-financing-tools-and-strategy/county-los-angeles-west-carson-enhanced-infrasturcture>.

<sup>45</sup> Los Angeles County Public Works, West Carson EIFD

<sup>46</sup> "West Carson EIFD - Los Angeles County, Public Works," accessed March 16, 2023, <https://pw.lacounty.gov/pdd/proj/westcarson-eifd/>.

<sup>47</sup> Los Angeles County Public Works, West Carson EIFD

<sup>48</sup> Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell, "Establishing An Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District in Unincorporated County Areas to Enable Community-Driven Improvements"

<sup>49</sup> Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell, "Establishing An Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District in Unincorporated County Areas to Enable Community-Driven Improvements"

<sup>50</sup> Strategic Economics, "Report on the Use of Tax Increment Financing," Housing Financing Tools and Equitable, Location-Efficient Development in California (California: Governor's Office of Planning and Research, December 29, 2020), [https://opr.ca.gov/docs/20210203-TIF\\_Tools\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](https://opr.ca.gov/docs/20210203-TIF_Tools_Final_Report.pdf).

additional guidance to clarify their environmental review requirements. In order to establish a district, practitioners are unclear about whether California Environmental Quality Act review is required only for the projects named in the infrastructure financing plan or whether all the private development envisioned for the district is to be included as well.

There also appears to be an inconsistency in the language of Assembly Bill 116. One part of the law mentions that the IFP is approved by resolution, and another mentions approval by ordinance. AB 116 removed the voter requirement for issuing bonds for an EIFD, replacing the requirement with a public hearing and protest process. Two interviewees, Reginald Jones and Jennifer Criselle Williams, mentioned EIFDs as solutions for more significant investments and agreed that the legislative modification made implementing the EIFDs less burdensome overall. However, they noted that the new rules create uncertainty for some EIFD projects that broke ground before the change. To avoid a legal challenge, some public financing authorities that already followed the former implementation rules also follow the new ones.

## Opportunity Zones

Opportunity zones (OZs) are community revitalization projects in unincorporated communities that advance economic mobility, health, and stability by connecting county supervisors with CBOs and private investors to develop projects.

### Overview

OZs develop comprehensive community investment projects that reduce displacement and economic exploitation, which worsen inequities. Unlike gentrification, OZs enhance neighborhoods without displacement by involving residents in community planning to improve infrastructure and economic and social outcomes, including living wages, healthcare, affordable housing, public services, and more.<sup>51, 52</sup> Revitalization projects mean that existing residents reap the benefits of community upgrades without having to vacate their properties due to rising costs.<sup>53</sup> With this in mind, centering community participation in the policymaking, design, and implementation of government programs would increase

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<sup>51</sup> Illinois Housing Authority, "Community Revitalization," Internet, Community Revitalization, 2023, <https://www.ihda.org/developers/market-research/community-revitalization/#:~:text=Community%20Revitalization%20is%20the%20implementation,quality%2C%20and%20affordable%20housing%20stock>.

<sup>52</sup> April, Steven, "A Review Of Issues & Contexts Of Gentrification in Transit Oriented Developments," July 2013, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/273003102\\_A\\_Review\\_Of\\_Issues\\_Contexts\\_Of\\_Gentrification\\_in\\_Transit\\_Oriented\\_Developments](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/273003102_A_Review_Of_Issues_Contexts_Of_Gentrification_in_Transit_Oriented_Developments).

<sup>53</sup> Van Horn, Elizabeth, "POLICIES FOR COMMUNITY INVESTMENT WITHOUT DISPLACEMENT," Policy Report, December 8, 2019, <https://ulidigitalmarketing.blob.core.windows.net/ulidcnc/sites/39/2020/11/E-Van-Horn-Thesis-Policies-for-Investment-without-Displacement.pdf>.

input from families most impacted by historical injustices and inequitable economic policies, benefitting residents and investors alike.<sup>54</sup>

LA has 193 approved OZs across 13 of 15 council districts.<sup>55</sup> At the same time, SD2 includes 14 OZs.<sup>56</sup> As of today, the National Opportunity Zone Fund is an estimated \$49.18 billion.<sup>57</sup> This number of anticipated investments underscores the urgency to establish robust, equitable frameworks that can help prevent unintended consequences of financing large, upscale real estate projects — like the Ritz Carlton hotel in downtown Portland, Oregon — that unfulfilled the program’s intended benefits for residents of unincorporated communities in addition to rural and tribal communities.<sup>58,59,60</sup>

## Advantages

In addition to governing the county, the Board of Supervisors administers federal programs in addition to exercising discretion in optimizing federal funds for local revitalization efforts.<sup>61</sup> Supervisor Mitchell’s office is uniquely positioned to steward innovative change countywide and uplift unincorporated communities by raising political awareness concerning the potential of the OZ program to exploit low-income communities rendering them ineffective.<sup>62,63</sup>

OZs may promote local economic empowerment and generational wealth-building through community-involved revitalization projects. Working collaboratively with local CBOs and OZ

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<sup>54</sup>Hadden Jennifer Tracy Vey, and Elwood, Hopkins, “A New Place-Based Federal Initiative for Empowering Local Real Estate Ownership,” Brookings Institute, 2020), <https://www.brookings.edu/research/a-new-place-based-federal-initiative-for-empowering-local-real-estate-ownership/>.

<sup>55</sup>City of Los Angeles, “Los Angeles Opportunity Zones,” *Opportunity Zones* (blog), n.d., <https://ewddlacity.com/index.php/opportunity-zones-in-la>.

<sup>56</sup> Los Angeles County, “What Are Opportunity Zones,” Opportunity Zones, 2023, <https://economicdevelopment.lacounty.gov/opportunity-zones/>.

<sup>57</sup> National Council of State Housing Agencies, “Opportunity Zones Fund Directory,” Opportunity Zones, 2023, <https://www.ncsha.org/resource/opportunity-zone-fund-directory/>.

<sup>58</sup> “Reducing Poverty without Community Displacement: Indicators of Inclusive Prosperity in U.S. Neighborhoods,” Policy Report (Brooking Institute, November 2022), [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Indicators-of-inclusive-prosperity\\_final2.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Indicators-of-inclusive-prosperity_final2.pdf).

<sup>59</sup> Theodos, Brett, “OPPORTUNITY ZONES: CURRENT STATUS AND OPTIONS FOR REFORM,” Policy Report (Urban Institute, November 16, 2021), <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/105094/opportunity-zones-current-status-and-options-for-reform.pdf>.

<sup>60</sup> Zipper, David, “How Opportunity Zones Launched a ‘Gold Rush’ for Wealthy Investors,” November 11, 2021, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-11-11/why-opportunity-zones-failed-to-help-low-income-areas>.

<sup>61</sup> “Board Approves LA County’s Spending Plan for Phase One of American Rescue Plan Act Funding | LA County Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell,” July 27, 2021, <https://mitchell.lacounty.gov/board-approves-la-countys-spending-plan/>.

<sup>62</sup>Jean Ross, “New Research Adds to Evidence That Opportunity Zone Tax Breaks Are Costly and Ineffective,” *Center for American Progress* (blog), June 16, 2022, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/new-research-adds-to-evidence-that-opportunity-zone-tax-breaks-are-costly-and-ineffective/>.

<sup>63</sup>Erika Smith, “Column: ‘We May Lose This.’ Despair over Gentrification Reaches New Depths in South L.A.,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 24, 2021, sec. California, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-09-24/post-covid-gentrification-fears-hit-new-high-south-la>.

funds to create community benefits in unincorporated communities can yield positive outcomes and serve as a partnership model nationwide. County supervisors can also ensure that designated OZs within their jurisdiction align with the county’s policies and principles. For example, developers can use the Community Benefits Policy to engage with the community stakeholders and identify their needs before developing.<sup>64</sup> Additionally, the Equitable Development Motion and General Plan/Housing Element both guide the development of OZs.<sup>65</sup> The Anti-Racist, Diversity, and Inclusion (ARDI) initiative can promote diversity and inclusion by implementing a mandate to hire local workers, utilizing local businesses, promoting entrepreneurship opportunities, and prioritizing affordable housing for low-income residents.<sup>66</sup> The Rent Stabilization Ordinance can protect renters from rent gouging and unjust evictions with tenant rights and anti-displacement clauses.<sup>67,68</sup> By utilizing these policies and principles in the development process, developers and residents can mutually benefit from the investment while ensuring that the exchange is mutually equitable and responsive.<sup>69,70</sup> Lastly, community-based agreements are agreements between a community or group of residents and a developer, or government agency, that cover a range of issues and aim to align development projects with community needs and priorities.<sup>71</sup> While not legally enforceable, they promote collaboration, communication, and sustainability in development projects to build resilient communities.<sup>72,73</sup>

Furthermore, OZs have the potential to transform disinvested communities with poor quality of life outcomes into self-sufficient communities that can thrive across generations. These transformations are much more feasible when partnering with local stakeholders, such as

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<sup>64</sup>Sachi A. Hamai, Chief Executive Officer, “COMMUNITY BENEFITS POLICY FOR COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS,” June 11, 2019, <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/137106.pdf>.

<sup>65</sup>Los Angeles City Planning, “Housing Element Update | Los Angeles City Planning,” accessed April 15, 2023, <https://planning.lacity.org/plans-policies/housing-element-update>.

<sup>66</sup>Chief Executive Office, “About the L.A. County Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion Initiative,” Los Angeles County, May 18, 2022, <https://ceo.lacounty.gov/ardi-about/>.

<sup>67</sup>“Rent Stabilization Program – Consumer & Business,” Los Angeles County Department of Consumer & Business Affairs, <https://dcba.lacounty.gov/rentstabilizationprogram/>.

<sup>68</sup>Nathan Solis, “L.A. County Supervisors Propose Adopting Permanent Rental Protections,” Los Angeles Times, September 28, 2022, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-09-28/eviction-rental-protections-los-angeles-county>.

<sup>69</sup>Vicki Shu, “EBALDC, The Unity Council Welcome Housing and Urban Development Secretary to Bay Area,” East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation, October 14, 2021, <https://ebaldc.org/ebaldc-the-unity-council-welcome-hud-secretary-to-bay-area/>.

<sup>70</sup>Christopher Gil, “With 2205 Mission St. Purchase, MEDA Announces Innovative and Collaborative Approach to Land Use in the Historic Mission District,” *MEDA* (blog), January 4, 2018, <https://medasf.org/2205-mission-st-purchase-meda-announces-innovative-collaborative-approach-land-use-historic-mission-district/>.

<sup>71</sup>Catherine Fraser, “Community Benefits Agreements Offer Meaningful Opportunities to Include Voters’ Voices in Development,” *Data For Progress*, July 6, 2022, <https://www.dataforprogress.org/blog/2022/7/5/community-benefits-agreements-offer-meaningful-opportunities-to-include-voters-voices-in-development>.

<sup>72</sup>Hanna Love and Teresa Garcia, “Centering Neighborhood Priorities for Economic Inclusion: Early Outcomes from Five Cities,” *Brookings Institute* (blog), April 4, 2022, <https://www.brookings.edu/essay/centering-neighborhood-priorities-for-economic-inclusion-early-outcomes-from-five-cities/>.

<sup>73</sup>Christopher Gil, “With 2205 Mission St. Purchase, MEDA Announces Innovative and Collaborative Approach to Land Use in the Historic Mission District,”

residents, CBOs, and faith-based groups to identify community needs. OZs can reduce unemployment through job creation and strengthen local partnerships that spur revitalization projects when planned cohesively.<sup>74</sup> To do so, we recommend LA County Supervisors work with members of Congress to advocate for regulatory changes to the *Opportunity Zones Transparency, Extension and Improvement Act* (2017). These changes should require businesses that utilize OZ funds to hire a significant portion of residents (at least 50%) from the respective community or Census tract where the OZ is located.<sup>75</sup> Additionally, county supervisors can incentivize OZ investors to create opportunities for the most disadvantaged instead of allowing investors to disregard community input.<sup>76</sup>

## Disadvantages

Added to the IRS tax code by the 2017 *Tax Cuts and Jobs Act* by the Trump administration with Congressional approval, OZs were "designed to spur job economic development and job creation in distressed communities throughout the country."<sup>77</sup> OZs are Census tracts selected by the state treasury executive of each state, where "businesses, equipment, and real estate property are eligible to receive investment through special funding" called Opportunity Funds.<sup>78</sup> This format encourages private investment through tax incentives.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, President Biden has criticized the program's structure for its favoring of wealthy investors and billionaires who exploit OZs for tax breaks without actually investing in distressed communities.<sup>80</sup> As a result, the President has called for greater transparency, reporting, and accountability of investments made to ensure "clear economic, social, and environmental" benefits to a community were made.<sup>81</sup> A recent report published by American Progress revealed that OZs "favor high returns, not community benefits and social impact," ultimately recommending that policymakers reform the program through

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<sup>74</sup>Ruta Trivedi, "Opportunity Zones Providing Opportunity for Whom?: How the Current Regulations Are Failing and a Solution to Uplift Communities" *Washington and Lee Journal of Civil Rights and Social Justice* 27, no. 2 (April 1, 2021): 745.

<sup>75</sup>Ruta Trivedi, "Opportunity Zones Providing Opportunity for Whom?: How the Current Regulations Are Failing and a Solution to Uplift Communities"

<sup>76</sup>Eric Garcetti and Michael Froman, "Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti and Mastercard Executive on Maximizing Benefits of Opportunity Zones," *US News*, June 28, 2019, <https://www.usnews.com/news/cities/articles/2019-06-28/los-angeles-mayor-eric-garcetti-and-mastercard-executive-on-maximizing-benefits-of-opportunity-zones>.

<sup>77</sup>Los Angeles County Economic Development Program, "Opportunity Zones," Los Angeles County Economic Development Program, September 18, 2019, <https://economicdevelopment.lacounty.gov/opportunity-zones/>.

<sup>78</sup>"Opportunity Zones | Internal Revenue Service," <https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/businesses/opportunity-zones>.

<sup>79</sup>Economic & Workforce Development Department, City of Los Angeles, "Frequently Asked Questions - Economic & Workforce Development Department, City of Los Angeles," <https://ewddlacity.com/index.php/opportunity-zones-in-la/frequently-asked-questions>.

<sup>80</sup>Jim Tankersley, "Biden Administration Debating How to Overhaul a Trump-Era Tax Break," *The New York Times*, April 21, 2021, sec. Business, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/21/business/biden-trump-opportunity-zones.html>.

<sup>81</sup>"The Biden Plan to Build Back Better by Advancing Racial Equity Across the American Economy," Joe Biden for President: Official Campaign Website, <https://joebiden.com/racial-economic-equity/>.



transparency and accountability mechanisms that require tax breaks to be invested exclusively within specific zones.<sup>82</sup>

## Expanding the County Board of Supervisors

Expanding the LA County Board of Supervisors to more than five would fundamentally alter the electoral process, civic engagement, and political accountability to residents of unincorporated communities.

### Overview

Several general law and charter cities have one mayor and five city council members that govern the city, but their populations are much smaller than ten million. The City of LA has 15 council members to represent a population of around four million people. Supervisors Holly J. Mitchell and Lindsey Horvath co-authored a motion to hire an independent counsel to assess mechanisms for improving the board's governance structure, which includes an RFP and a report that would go into effect.<sup>83</sup> Although the initial motion was voted down on January 24, 2023, a second motion that was introduced about a month later was approved by the LA County Board of Supervisors.

### Advantages

Increasing the number of County Supervisors would increase the political representation of residents of unincorporated communities by reducing the number of constituents per Supervisor. Increasing the number of County Supervisors would amplify the political voice of residents of unincorporated communities, who are directly governed by their County supervisors. This would decrease the ratio of residents to local leadership, which is currently about two million to one. If Supervisors are better able to communicate with a smaller number of constituents, constituents could benefit from a clearer understanding of who can resolve their constituent inquiries, show up to community events, and develop policies that affect the County, broadly, while respecting the place-specific dynamics of LA County's diverse communities.

### Disadvantages

Increasing the number of elected officials means less political power for each representative. This would require more compromises from elected officials to pass countywide ordinances. This would also increase financial costs to pay for political

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<sup>82</sup>Jean Ross, "New Research Adds to Evidence That Opportunity Zone Tax Breaks Are Costly and Ineffective," *Center for American Progress* (blog), June 16, 2022, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/new-research-adds-to-evidence-that-opportunity-zone-tax-breaks-are-costly-and-ineffective/>.

<sup>83</sup>"Board of Supervisors Set Forth Historic Independent Review of Governance Structure to Explore Expanding Board and Increasing Public Engagement | LA County Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell," February 28, 2023, <https://mitchell.lacounty.gov/independent-review-governance-structure/>.



leadership, including staff salaries and additional costs for overhead, and for elections that the county would have to pay for. Finally, expanding the Board would require redistricting, altering the relationships that community members have built with their County Supervisors. This redistribution of attention would be felt strongest by residents of unincorporated communities.

## Establishing Town Councils

### Overview

Town councils would be a County-level adaptation of the neighborhood council model pioneered in the City of LA. Overseen by the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, neighborhood councils are “grassroots elected offices” that connect the city’s governance to the 99 neighborhoods it represents. Established in 1999 through a city charter amendment, neighborhood councils represent the interests of an expansive collection of stakeholders who provide input on several City services, including land use, zoning, and the quality of City services. Board member eligibility is significantly inclusive: “Board members — and candidates, [sic] and voters — need not be U.S. citizens or legal residents to qualify. Participation is also open to the formerly incarcerated.”<sup>84</sup>

### Advantages

Leaders of community-based organizations in Florence-Firestone, Westmont/West Athens, and Willowbrook each mentioned their desire for town councils, much like the neighborhood council model in the City of LA. Saenz, Johnson, and Criselle Williams each mentioned that town councils would allow a greater degree of resident-based civic engagement currently lacking in unincorporated communities. Saenz was particularly excited about town councils for two reasons: funding for community-led projects — such as community gardens — and increased and structured political representation that creates more autonomy in policy and planning decisions.

A grassroots governing structure improves communication between community stakeholders and elected representatives. Anish Sariaya, the Planning and Public Works Deputy of SD5 shared that the use of town councils helped connect unincorporated residents to the diverse topography and vast geography of SD5. Although SD2 is geographically smaller than SD, organizing community voices into hubs of local grassroots representation could provide a step in the right direction for increasing equitable civic participation. Additionally, FFCO board members said that the organizational structure of a town council would help decrease misinformation about the County’s plans for Florence-Firestone.

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<sup>84</sup> “About Neighborhood Councils.” Department of Neighborhood Empowerment. <https://empowerla.org/about-neighborhood-councils/>. Accessed April 12, 2023.

## Disadvantages

In allocating funds for community projects, town councils would increase fiscal costs for the County. However, elections also increase fiscal costs to the County – considering the number of unincorporated communities and Census-designated places that comprise the County. Town councils also do not substitute for administrative decision-making power and may have limited influence in checking negative spillover from other unincorporated communities and municipalities.

## Additional Considerations

### Annexation

Annexation is the direct way to grant residents of unincorporated communities the same service quality and access to opportunities that city residents enjoy. However, our research did not indicate that annexation would make these particular communities better off. Based on our statistical findings, we could not point to any conclusive evidence that the inequities are *primarily* driven by race. Annexing a community like Willowbrook, which is majoritively made up of Latinos, into the City of Carson, which is about one-third Latino, could exacerbate racial tensions and community relations.

Nevertheless, our client requested information on annexation, therefore we included our research in this section.

### Overview

In the early 1900s, the City of LA began expanding its boundaries by annexing neighboring towns and communities. Many of these annexations were successful, but a significant number of them faced opposition from residents who did not want to lose their autonomy or be subjected to the policies of a larger municipality. From its inception in 1963 to 1985, LAFCO, the local regulatory agency for municipal boundaries, administered a complicated series of statutory laws and three enabling acts, *Knox-Nisbet*, *Municipal Organization*, and *District Reorganization*.<sup>85</sup> Confusion over the application of these laws led to a reform movement that produced the first consolidated LAFCO act, the *Cortese-Knox Local Government Reorganization Act of 1985*.<sup>86</sup> However, this act limits LAFCO's effectiveness in addressing inequities in disadvantaged communities by granting cities the power to veto any annexation.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Assembly Committee on Local Government, "Guide to the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000," CA LAFCO, December 2022, <https://caLAFCO.org/resources/cortese-knox-hertzberg-act/ckh-reorganization-act-guide>.

<sup>86</sup> Assembly Committee on Local Government, "Guide to the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000"

<sup>87</sup> "50 Years of LAFCOs: A Guide to LAFCOs, California's Local Agency Formation Commissions: Third Edition" (California State Legislature, December 2013),

Today, the annexation process is fraught with challenges. LAFCO continues to regulate and oversee annexations to ensure they are equitable and in the best interest of both the annexing and the annexed areas. While annexations may still be viewed as a tool of power and politics, LAFCO's oversight helps ensure they are carried out transparently and fairly.

## Advantages

One of the primary benefits of annexation is improved access to public services. Unincorporated communities are often underserved regarding access to essential water, sanitation, and emergency services.<sup>88</sup> Annexation can provide access to these services and other amenities like parks and recreational facilities, improving residents' quality of life. Additionally, when unincorporated communities are incorporated into larger municipalities, they gain access to a broader range of political opportunities and can increase their representation in local government. This directly addresses the political disenfranchisement that unincorporated residents face.

Annexation also leads to increased economic opportunities for unincorporated residents. Larger municipalities often have a more diverse range of businesses and employment opportunities than smaller unincorporated communities. This results in increased economic development and job growth, which is a significant way to improve residents' quality of life.<sup>89</sup>

## Disadvantages

Annexation could result in the loss of community identities, increased tax burdens, and potential conflict between the community and the larger municipality over land use and zoning. The primary threat to the loss of community identity is gentrification because it can compromise the accessibility of affordable housing. SD2's unincorporated areas have higher rental occupancy rates than the surrounding areas; therefore, gentrification would negatively impact renters and can displace the existing community.

The FFCO Board, Yanel Saenz of Juntos Florence-Firestone, and Reginald Jones of the Willowbrook Inclusion Network rejected annexing neighboring cities. From Saenz's perspective, Florence-Firestone would be worse off by being annexed — based on the City of LA's rocky relationship with Watts on racial and economic grounds. The FCCO Board, Saenz, and Jones also expressed pride in their communities, and they feared that annexation would dilute the identity of their communities.

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<https://caLAFCo.org/sites/default/files/resources/50%20Years%20of%20LAFCo%20-%20A%20Guide%20to%20LAFCos.pdf>.

<sup>88</sup>Michelle Wilde Anderson, "Cities Inside Out: Race, Poverty, and Exclusion at the Urban Fringe," *UCLA Law Review*, June 23, 2008,

<https://www.uclalawreview.org/cities-inside-out-race-poverty-and-exclusion-at-the-urban-fringe/>.

<sup>89</sup>Brachman Mallach, Allen Lavea, "Regenerating America's Legacy Cities," *Lincoln Institute of Land Policy*, 2013, <https://ti.org/pdfs/LegacyCities.pdf>.

There is no significant difference in overall taxes that a residential property owner would pay if a city annexes the unincorporated area. However, there is the potential for an increase in utility taxes which will significantly impact low-income renters. Each community has a unique set of political circumstances and policy preferences that local governments, residents, and businesses try to satisfy.

## Community Development Microgrants

Microgrants serve as an accessible policy alternative that has the potential to provide local entrepreneurs with economic opportunities to support financial needs and engage in new business ventures.

### Overview

Microgrants, or microloans, are business loans geared toward local entrepreneurs and small businesses with considerable financial needs. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, microloans do not exceed \$50,000.<sup>90</sup> Many microgrants or microfinancing programs take a distributive approach to community development and require no collateral or feature reduced interest rates to make lending more accessible.<sup>91</sup>

In the past, microgrants were established to support international development and fight poverty. The microfinancing model was quickly adopted by banks across the U.S. due to the allure of its redistributive and market-based framework for community development.<sup>92</sup> While various reports maintain the positive effect of microloans to improve the outcomes of individuals and marginalized communities, other studies show that they have little impact on macro-level socioeconomic inequities and should be implemented with these trade-offs in mind.<sup>93</sup>

Supervisor Mitchell has paved the path in LA County for a form of microgrants, Breathe LA, which addresses income inequality.<sup>94</sup> Additionally, LA County has a variety of resources for entrepreneurs: the Department of Economic Opportunity offers the Economic Opportunity Grant Program, APEX Accelerators connects small businesses to opportunities and offers support, and the County Treasurer and Tax Collector provides guidance to small businesses

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<sup>90</sup> US Small Business Administration, "Microloans," Microloans, <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/microloans>.

<sup>91</sup> "What Are Micro Loans and How They Work | Business Blueprint Resource Center," American Express Business Blueprint Resource Center, <https://www.americanexpress.com/en-us/business/blueprint/resource-center/finance/what-are-micro-loans/>.

<sup>92</sup> Scott Hipsher, "Wealth Creation Through Microfinancing, Remittances, Immigration, and Investment," in *Wealth Creation Approach to Reducing Global Poverty*, ed. Scott Hipsher (Singapore: Springer, 2020), 193–217, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-4116-2\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-4116-2_7).

<sup>93</sup> Scott Hipsher, "Wealth Creation Through Microfinancing, Remittances, Immigration, and Investment"

<sup>94</sup> LA County Chief Executive Office, "Breathe: LA County's Guaranteed Income Program," Los Angeles County (Los Angeles County, October 19, 2021), <https://ceo.lacounty.gov/pai/breathe/>.

in unincorporated communities.<sup>95</sup> However, residents of unincorporated communities may not be aware of these services.

## Information Campaign

A common theme in our research was a lack of political understanding on the constituents' part. Many residents of unincorporated communities do not always know that they live in unincorporated areas. One solution we identified is **providing information — ideally in the form of a magnet — of local public service providers and other essential county information.**

This magnet would be mailed to residents and is less likely to be discarded because of a magnet's multipurpose use. In addition, this campaign repairs the relations and establishes a direct line of communication between Supervisor Mitchell's office and her constituents.

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<sup>95</sup> LA Small Business Development Center Network, "Economic Opportunity Grants," Department of Economic Opportunity (LA County, 2023), <https://eog.smallbizla.org/>.

# Criteria and Policy Evaluation

The research team scored and evaluated the policy options on several criteria. Scores were weighted to rank the viability of each policy option based on political feasibility, efficiency, equity, and ease of implementation. Justifications for criteria selection, ranking, and scoring are detailed below.

## Criteria

Policy options were evaluated across four themes, political feasibility, efficiency, equity, and robustness. Political feasibility is further broken down into administrative support, public support, and political admissibility; equity is conceptualized as political decision-making and improved structural outcomes. The criteria scheme is outlined in Table 1 below. Each criterion will receive a rating of low (1), medium (2), and high (3) rating for each policy option. Scores are determined by multiplying the rating by the criteria weight. The sum of all scores provides a comparable metric that allows the research team to select the most favorable policy options.

**Table 1: Criteria Scheme**

Themes	Criteria	Weight
Political Feasibility	Administrative Support	15%
	Public Support	15%
	Political Admissibility	10%
Efficiency	Achievability	20%
Equity	Political Decision Making	10%
	Improved Structural Outcomes	15%
Robustness	Implementation	15%
	<i>Total</i>	100%

## Political Feasibility

LA County Supervisors represent around two million residents and must work across departments and agencies to ensure policy implementation: Bureaucratic support is imperative.<sup>96</sup>

Equitable social change within the political sphere requires an in-depth understanding of the political environment and historical context.<sup>97</sup> Therefore, a political feasibility analysis examines the actors and events involved in each stage of the policymaking process, as well as anticipates real-world outcomes of policy alternatives.<sup>98</sup> A political actor is not limited to a political bureaucrat or officeholder and will be defined in the context of specific policy research.<sup>99</sup>

Reasonable policies must factor in the probabilities of implementation within a defined period.<sup>100</sup> However, to avoid overvaluing feasibility, we consider the following factors when evaluating the political feasibility of our proposed policies.<sup>101</sup>

## Administrative Support

Bureaucratic and administrative support is essential to political feasibility because bureaucrats control the implementation of policies. In the case of a County Supervisor, most motions require a simple majority of votes from the other four supervisors.<sup>102</sup> Thus, it is best to know who holds similar values among counterparts on the board. Additionally, most motion directives instruct a department head or department to conduct some kind of analysis for implementation and mandate a timeline for reporting back, so having department buy-in is beneficial.

## Public Support

Broad public support is essential for elected officials to consider because voters ultimately hold them accountable, especially during an election cycle. County Supervisors may be

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<sup>96</sup> Stoltze, Franke. "LA County Supes Vote To Consider Expanding 5-Member Board Representing Nearly 10M Residents," *LAist*, February 27, 2023.

<https://laist.com/news/politics/more-city-hall-scandal-fallout-la-county-supes-consider-expanding-board>.

<sup>97</sup> *Political Feasibility Analysis: Winning Strategies in Public Policy* | *The University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy*. (n.d.).

<https://harris.uchicago.edu/academics/programs-degrees/courses/political-feasibility-analysis-winning-strategies-public-policy>

<sup>98</sup> Webber, D. J. (1986). Analyzing Political Feasibility: Political Scientists' Unique Contribution to Policy Analysis. *Policy Studies Journal*, 14(4), 545–553. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0072.1986.tb00360.x>

<sup>99</sup> Meltsner, A. J. (1972). Political Feasibility and Policy Analysis. *Public Administration Review*, 32(6), 859–867. <https://doi.org/10.2307/974646>

<sup>100</sup> Dror, Y. (1969). *The Prediction of Political Feasibility*. RAND Corporation. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/papers/P4044.html>

<sup>101</sup> Dror, Y. (1969). *The Prediction of Political Feasibility*. RAND Corporation. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/papers/P4044.html>

<sup>102</sup> *Board of Supervisors*. (2015, May 26). California State Association of Counties. <https://www.counties.org/post/board-supervisors>



elected to a maximum of three four-year terms.<sup>103</sup> Since Supervisor Mitchell is in the third year of her term, she must consider the short-term effects of policies for her upcoming election and the long-term effects as she seeks to fill three terms. If elected officials were to pass policies that aren't so popular in communities, they run the risk of eroding public trust.

## Political Admissibility

Political admissibility refers to the more explicit barriers preventing our policy options' immediate implementation. For example, constitutional changes required by several of our policy alternatives necessitate approval via a public vote. Options that require no other resolutions are more admissible and easily implemented.

### Scoring

	High	Medium	Low
<b>Administrative Support</b>	Public officials have expressed strong support for policy changes	Administrators are mixed in their support	Administrators have denied these policies and consistently oppose these changes
<b>Public Support</b>	Adamant support for this policy	Stakeholder input has been mixed	Majority of stakeholders have expressed concern for this policy.
<b>Political Admissibility</b>	There is sufficient precedent for the policy and requires no additional approval.	Requires a public vote or amendments to city or county constitution.	Exists outside of current legal policy options.

## Efficiency

Efficiency measures how quickly a policy can be implemented within a reasonable timeframe. Efficient policies also have low risk regarding political viability and resource expenditures, such as financial investments, human capital, or restructuring of the built environment. While a Supervisor's influence is limited to their tenure, policy options with more extensive timelines will present more uncertainty and be less plausible. For a policy to pass, especially a controversial one, an elected official and their staff must consider timeliness and achievability.

<sup>103</sup> LA BOS. (n.d.). LA BOS. Retrieved from <https://bos.lacounty.gov/executive-office/about-us/board-of-supervisors/>

In order for a policy to pass, especially a controversial one, an elected official and their staff must consider timeliness. A motion has a much better chance of passing if there is a “policy window”<sup>104</sup> or a window of opportunity in which there is mutual desire between the community, policymakers, or bureaucrats to create change. A groundbreaking research study, a popular news event, or new people in communities or government can galvanize policy change.

## Scoring

	High	Medium	Low
Achievability	0-4 years	5-6 years	7-10 years

## Equity

Multidisciplinary research suggests that addressing equity requires a multifaceted approach that includes policy changes, social programs, and community-based interventions.<sup>105</sup> Moreover, research has demonstrated that people who experience greater levels of equity, such as equal access to healthcare, education, and economic opportunities, tend to have better health outcomes than those who don’t.<sup>106</sup>

For this report, equity is the local government’s capacity to reduce the pronounced social and economic costs that under-resourced communities have had to bear, particularly concerning the history of structural inequalities. Thus, the research team has delineated two subcriteria for equity scoring.

While both conditions of equity are interrelated and dependent upon each other, several proposed policy options carry varying degrees of influence on community representation and quality resource allocations. Reflecting on these differences among proposed options helps define equitable outcomes.

## Political Decision-Making

Unincorporated communities without municipal representation face a range of inequities, from lack of access to basic infrastructure to safe roads and public safety.<sup>107</sup> Additionally, residents experience higher levels of poverty, reduced access to healthcare, and low-quality

<sup>104</sup> Webber, D. J. (1986). Analyzing Political Feasibility: Political Scientists’ Unique Contribution to Policy Analysis. *Policy Studies Journal*, 14(4), 545–553. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0072.1986.tb00360.x>

<sup>105</sup> Braveman, P., & Gruskin, S. (2003). Defining equity in health. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 57(4), 254–258. <https://doi.org/10.1136/jech.57.4.254>

<sup>106</sup> Williams, D. R., & Mohammed, S. A. (2013). Racism and health I: Pathways and scientific evidence. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57(8), 1152–1173. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764213487340>

<sup>107</sup> [Invisible and unequal: Unincorporated community status as a structural determinant of health - ScienceDirect](#)

education.<sup>108</sup> Without adequate representation in decision-making processes, these communities may struggle to address these challenges, exacerbating existing inequities.<sup>109</sup> Equitable community engagement increases resident satisfaction with public services and infrastructure while improving quality of life on one or more measures of inequity. The statistical analysis provides the basis of inequity measures as economic factors, food insecurity, health, and education. Furthermore, effectiveness is measured by community desire, or the extent that each policy option reflects the desires of unincorporated communities.

Community desire is the stated will of people who live, work, or play in our selected unincorporated communities. Furthermore, Pacheco Bell's "embedded planning" framework – planning rooted in the fabric of the community – creates a more participatory and collaborative approach to planning.<sup>110</sup> Embedded planning also underscores the idea that planning should be integrated into the day-to-day activities of a community rather than being a separate and disconnected process.<sup>111</sup> Residents and stakeholders are more likely to accept a proposed policy change if they believe it aligns with their values and objectives. In contrast, if a policy option threatens community values, it will likely be met with opposition.

## Improving Structural Outcomes

To address these inequities, government policies, programs, and services should be designed to promote fairness and inclusivity, particularly for communities that have been historically marginalized or excluded, by utilizing an equity lens.<sup>112</sup> Focusing on equity allows for identifying, acknowledging, and repairing harm resulting from discriminatory, systemic, and unjust practices perpetuating disparities and limiting opportunities for non-white racial-ethnic groups.

The client's affirmation of equity in policymaking motivates the equity criterion – emphasizing the importance of promoting fairness and inclusivity in policy design and implementation.<sup>113,114</sup> Equitable policies prioritize reducing and ultimately

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<sup>108</sup>Cristina Gomez-Vidal and Anu Manchikanti Gomez, "Invisible and Unequal: Unincorporated Community Status as a Structural Determinant of Health," *Social Science & Medicine* 285 (September 2021): 114292, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.114292>.

<sup>109</sup>Sarah Ihn, "The Long Road to Self-Determination: A Critique of Municipal Incorporation through the East Los Angeles Cityhood Movement," *Harvard Latino Law Review* 13 (2010): 67, <https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/hllr13&div=6&id=&page=>.

<sup>110</sup>Jonathan Pacheco Bell, "Embedded Planning," @c1typlann3r.blog, accessed April 17, 2023, <https://c1typlann3r.blog/category/embedded-planning/>.

<sup>111</sup> Jonathan Pacheco Bell, "Building Meaningful Community Partnerships through Embedded Planning: Three Takeaways for Practice," Medium, September 17, 2022, <https://c1typlann3r.medium.com/building-meaningful-community-partnerships-through-embedded-planning-three-takeaways-for-practice-cdf0b42f948d>.

<sup>112</sup>"Governing for Equity: Implementing an Equity Lens in Local Government," icma.org, accessed April 17, 2023, <https://icma.org/page/governing-equity-implementing-equity-lens-local-government>.

<sup>113</sup>"The L.A. County Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion Initiative," Los Angeles County, April 20, 2022, <https://ceo.lacounty.gov/ardi/>.

<sup>114</sup>David L. Weimer and Aidan R. Vining, *Policy Analysis* (6 Edition. | New York : Routledge, 2017. | Revised edition of Policy analysis, 2011.: Routledge, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315442129>.

eliminating disparities and inequalities within communities.<sup>115</sup> This involves considering the unique needs and circumstances of different communities and populations and developing policies and programs that address those needs to promote fairness and equal opportunity regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, or other characteristics. Furthermore, research on equity suggests that it is a crucial component of creating a fair and just society – not just a moral imperative to uplift society – bringing economic benefits.<sup>116,117</sup> When residents have access to resources and opportunities, they increase productivity – contributing to contribute to economic growth and development.<sup>118</sup>

Equity measures the potential beneficial and harmful effects on unincorporated communities. One central concern of the research team is the minimization of negative externalities. Community investment, and other changes in municipal organization, sometimes lead to gentrification, a process of raising living costs in neighborhoods that push low-income individuals out of neighborhoods. While the equity criterion centers on resident sentiments of living in unincorporated communities, it is impossible to predict the outcomes of our recommendations. Nevertheless, we support these decisions with several historical and spatial analyses.

### Scoring

	High	Medium	Low
<b>Political Decision Making</b>	Enhances community engagement and facilitates resident self-governance.	Ambiguous effect on resident self-determination.	Introduces no change to decision-makers and removes governing power from residents.
<b>Improved Structural Outcomes</b>	Include generous social benefits and direct reinvestment	Social benefits are indirectly achieved or moderately realized.	Social benefits are insignificant or redirected unfavorably.

### Robustness

Robustness speaks to a policy option’s readiness for implementation. A sufficiently robust policy option would require little to no revisions to achieve the desired equitable policy outcomes.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>115</sup> [Equity vs. Equality: What’s the Difference? | Online Public Health](#)

<sup>116</sup> Stiglitz, J. E. (2013). Inequality is not inevitable. *Scientific American*, 309(5), 22–27. <https://doi.org/10.1038/scientificamerican1113-22>

<sup>117</sup> [Advancing Equity and Racial Justice Through the Federal Government | The White House](#)

<sup>118</sup> Wilkinson, R. G., & Pickett, K. (2010). *The spirit level: Why more equal societies almost always do better*. Bloomsbury Press.

<sup>119</sup> Doumpos, M., Zopounidis, C., Grigoroudis, E. (eds) *Robustness Analysis in Decision Aiding, Optimization, and Analytics*. International Series in Operations Research & Management Science, vol 241. Springer

This criterion also considers the status quo: Policy options such as microgrants, which have been utilized in the past with little effect on outcomes today, require extensive refashioning to provide beneficial outcomes. Policies that require more planning and revisions present greater administrative and research costs to the communities, and will be least prioritized in our analysis.

## Scoring

	High	Medium	Low
<b>Robustness</b>	Little to no revisions required to have marked effects.	Requires few revisions to help effects.	Requires a complete overhaul of current policy structure.

## Weights

Each criterion in the analysis was weighed to reflect client and research team priorities.

- 40% – political feasibility
- 25% – equity
- 20% – efficiency
- 15% – robustness

The client expressed a strong emphasis on equity as a central theme of this study. The research team decided to designate a more robust weight based on research highlighting equity benefits on social well-being. Improving structural outcomes is given a slightly higher weight because stakeholders communicated that material conditions were more pressing and determinant of quality of life. Thus, political decision-making is 10%, and improving structural outcomes is 15%.

While the Supervisor’s office is a governmental body, much of the community implementations will depend on politically feasible actions. Political activity is shaped by administrative support, public support, and admissibility. Administrative and public support were given equal weight, while admissibility received a lower share. This scheme is justified by the overlap in the political will of both administration and community members that dictates what is politically possible. This outlines Administrative support at 15%, public support at 15%, and admissibility at 10%.

Our policy options are a mix of implementations that depend on the joint coordination of county offices. Efficiency and robustness share the remaining weight. Achievability holds slightly more weight at 20% since robust policies will be more quickly rolled out.

Implementation carries the remaining 15% weight. This rating allows for equitable emphasis on policies that do not require extensive revisions.

## Evaluation

Criteria alternative matrices compare policy options with each other to methodically rank them based on their performance across criteria. Given the intersectoral nature of our policy inquiry, the researchers recognize the importance of adopting holistic measures that can provide reliable metrics for ranking policy options. By embracing these broad themes, the team can adopt a multidimensional approach that informs the evaluation and enables policy design that is both inclusive and sustainable for unincorporated communities.

Additionally, the criteria alternative matrix enables a strong assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of each policy option. This, in turn, allows the team to develop a robust implementation process that follows the proposed policy alternatives section. Ultimately, this evaluation process aims to ensure that the policy recommendations are grounded in a rigorous analytical framework that accounts for the complex realities of the selected communities.

## Ranking

### Policy Option 1: Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts

Ranking	Rationale
<b>Administrative Support: High</b>	County officials favor EIFDs significantly.
<b>Public Support: High</b>	Community members are highly supportive of tax dollars returning to their communities.
<b>Admissibility: High</b>	Motions have already been introduced to utilize this policy in extant communities.
<b>Achievability: High</b>	This policy has already been implemented and should not take more than a few years to reinstate.
<b>Political Decision Making: Med</b>	This form of participatory budgeting allows community members to have greater transparency with public spending. However, Board-appointed committees have the primary say in community decision-making processes, not residents who are chosen by community members.
<b>Improving Structural Outcomes: High</b>	This policy should provide marked infrastructural improvements to economically disenfranchised communities.

<b>Implementation: <i>High</i></b>	These proposals provide consistent funding for redevelopment, beautification, and other social benefits at many levels.
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## Policy Option 2: Opportunity Zones

Ranking	Rationale
<b>Administrative Support: <i>Med</i></b>	Support for this policy option varies greatly within city and County administration.
<b>Public Support: <i>Low</i></b>	OZs have a negative connotation with interviewees due to the past nature of outside business influence and investment. External investment is linked to fears of displacement from gentrification.
<b>Political Admissibility: <i>High</i></b>	This policy already exists.
<b>Achievability: <i>High</i></b>	Currently in effect and could be established within a few years
<b>Political Decision-Making: <i>Low</i></b>	One of the main critiques of this policy is that outside investors hold outsized sway over businesses and planning.
<b>Improving Structural Outcomes: <i>Low</i></b>	As they stand, OZs do not necessarily guarantee sustainable and quality jobs or improvements to structural outcomes in unincorporated communities.
<b>Implementation: <i>Low</i></b>	Extensive revisions must be made to implement OZs in a more equitable way.

## Policy Option 3: Expanding the Board of Supervisors

Ranking	Rationale
<b>Admin Support: <i>Low</i></b>	Not all Supervisors are on-board. The initial motion was denied by the remaining members; County administrators introduced a follow-up motion to implement a feasibility study.
<b>Public Support: <i>High</i></b>	Interview participants are highly supportive of this motion and state they would support expansion.



<b>Admissibility: <i>Med</i></b>	This policy will require administrative changes before enactment is possible, including amendments to the county constitution.
<b>Achievability: <i>Med</i></b>	This policy change may require 5-6 years before implementation.
<b>Political Decision Making: <i>High</i></b>	Expansion would amplify community voice and increase representation for residents.
<b>Improving Structural Outcomes: <i>Med</i></b>	Representation will help center the needs of residents, but representatives must be held accountable to their constituents. More elected officials or smaller constituencies does not automatically equate to improved outcomes.
<b>Implementation: <i>Low</i></b>	There are many unknown factors to assess from the forthcoming feasibility studies. There are many considerations that new staff and new boundaries will introduce.

**Policy Option 4: Town Councils**

<b>Ranking</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
<b>Administrative Support: <i>Low</i></b>	According to constituent interviews, SD2 has expressed reluctance in implementing town councils in the past.
<b>Public Support: <i>High</i></b>	Interview participants communicated high demand for self-determination through town councils.
<b>Admissibility: <i>Med</i></b>	Town councils are active throughout the City of Los Angeles. However, they are not recommended for UICs and are not supported by admin. Official recognition is not guaranteed.
<b>Timeliness: <i>High</i></b>	Community outreach and elections should take fewer than 3 years to implement a town council.
<b>Political Decision Making: <i>High</i></b>	This would introduce direct representation. The elected decision makers of town councils would have direct control of what projects are funded and agenda setting.
<b>Improving Structural Outcomes: <i>Low</i></b>	Representation will help, however, financial benefits are not guaranteed with this policy measure. If

	funding allocations are reproduced at the County level, allocations might be minimal.
<b>Implementation: High</b>	Town councils are inherently flexible and easily reproduced to fit community needs.

### Criteria Analysis Matrix

			EIFDs	Opportunity Zones	Expanding BOS	Town Councils
Criteria	Weight	Rating + Score	Rating + Score	Rating + Score	Rating + Score	Rating + Score
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	<i>Admin Support</i>	15%	0.45	0.3	0.15	0.15
	<i>Public Support</i>	15%	0.45	0.15	0.45	0.45
	<i>Admissibility</i>	10%	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2
<b>Efficiency</b>	<i>Achievability</i>	20%	0.6	0.6	0.4	0.6
<b>Equity</b>	<i>Political Decision Making</i>	10%	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.3
	<i>Improved Structural Outcomes</i>	15%	0.45	0.15	0.3	0.15
<b>Robustness</b>	<i>Implementation</i>	15%	0.45	0.15	0.15	0.45
<b>TOTAL</b>		100%	<b>2.9</b>	<b>1.75</b>	<b>1.95</b>	<b>2.3</b>

## Recommendations

Considering these findings and evaluation criteria, we advise that the Office of Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell pilot Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD) programs in Florence-Firestone, Lennox, West Rancho Dominguez, Westmont/West Athens, and Willowbrook.<sup>120</sup> EIFDs equitably fund the development of infrastructure projects and public services in historically underserved communities where poverty, unemployment, and crime often overshadow community-informed policies and planning. More importantly, EIFDs allow generated revenue from property taxes to remain within those communities instead of transferring to the County's general fund. Furthermore, EIFDs facilitate greater political representation and meet the County's goal of responsiveness and accountability to residents living in under-resourced unincorporated communities.

Lastly, our findings reveal a general community desire for transparent and accountable relationships between constituents and their elected representatives. To address these concerns and amplify resident voices, we recommend the establishment of town councils in SD2, taking inspiration from neighborhood councils in the City of LA. This approach will increase community input from diverse stakeholders to collaborate on public safety, zoning, and service quality revitalization projects while increasing civic participation. This secondary policy recommendation can be implemented as a standalone initiative or in conjunction with EIFDs to optimize the County's responsiveness and potential to develop self-sufficient unincorporated communities that yield productive life outcomes for all residents.

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<sup>120</sup> Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell, "Establishing An Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District in Unincorporated County Areas to Enable Community-Driven Improvements" (2023), <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/178243.pdf>.

## Conclusion

Residents of unincorporated areas have long been neglected. To understand which policies will enhance residents' quality of life increase political access, we compared the unincorporated areas of Florence-Firestone, Lennox, West Rancho Dominguez, Westmont/West Athens, and Willowbrook to neighboring cities.

Through literature reviews, interviews, and quantitative analyses, we discovered the significance of historic racial and economic bias in annexation and incorporation decisions. Spatial analyses revealed that low property values and lack of commercial development continue to influence municipalities against annexing unincorporated areas. Additionally, unincorporated areas have significantly worse physical and mental health, face food insecurity, and higher unemployment rates than cities. The most important finding came from residents who voiced concerns about affordable housing, quality of services, and County communication.

In considering enhanced infrastructure financing districts, opportunity zones, expanding the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, and town councils, our policy evaluation suggested EIFDs as the best solution to addressing inequities in SD2.

Our research aimed to uncover persisting inequalities that have exacerbated the quality of life for residents of unincorporated communities. While we are confident that we identified feasible solutions to build self-sufficient communities, we only scratched the surface of a deep issue that divides LA County. Implementing EIFDs and town councils, in addition to the information campaigns, can help build relationships between Supervisor Mitchell's office and her constituents, who ultimately desire a voice.

# Appendix

## Appendix A: Unincorporated Community Profiles

### A.1 Florence-Firestone

Florence-Firestone is an unincorporated community located in southeast Los Angeles County, California, six miles south of Downtown Los Angeles (DTLA).<sup>121</sup> It encompasses an area of 3.6 square miles bordering the City of Los Angeles to the north, south, and west, and the communities of Huntington Park and South Gate, as well as the unincorporated area of Walnut Park to the east.<sup>122</sup> The neighborhood is near DTLA, the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles, and southeast LA's industrial sector.<sup>123</sup>

Florence-Firestone is a thriving, resilient unincorporated community with a diverse history as one of the first settlement communities in California, evident by its zip code 90001.<sup>124</sup> The community's transformation from unceded indigenous land, ranches, and farmland in the 1800s to an industrial hub in the early 1900s, followed by significant demographic shifts since then, has resulted in its status as one of the most populous unincorporated communities in LA County.<sup>125</sup> The community comprises residential, commercial, and industrial zones.<sup>126</sup> Churches with storefronts sit close to single-family homes, mom-and-pop shops, and historic factories on streets like Compton Avenue.<sup>127</sup>

Within Florence-Firestone, there are a variety of dwellings, including bungalows, duplexes, triplexes, ranch homes, and Victorians.<sup>128</sup> These residences were historically constructed to accommodate the influx of European immigrants and southern white migrants.<sup>129</sup> Population growth in the early 20th century was influenced by the adjacent opening of a Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company factory on Central Street between Gage and Florence.<sup>130</sup> The plant was a significant contributor to the local economy at one point,

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<sup>121</sup> Los Angeles Times, "Florence-Firestone."

<sup>122</sup> Los Angeles Times, "Florence-Firestone."

<sup>123</sup> Los Angeles Times, "Florence-Firestone."

<sup>124</sup> Mike Sonksen, "Everyday Heroes of Florence-Firestone," KCET, July 2, 2015, <https://www.kcet.org/history-society/everyday-heroes-of-florence-firestone>.

<sup>125</sup> LA County Department of Regional Planning, "Hearing on the Florence-Firestone Community Plan, Zone Change, and Community Standards District Update Project." (2018), <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/121023.pdf>.

<sup>126</sup> LA County Department of Regional Planning, Hearing on the Florence-Firestone Community Plan, Zone Change, and Community Standards District Update Project.

<sup>127</sup> County of LA Department of Regional Planning, "Stauson Station TOC Specific Plan, Aka Florence-Firestone TOD Specific Plan," Public Review Draft, September 2021.

<sup>128</sup> Sonksen, "Everyday Heroes of Florence-Firestone."

<sup>129</sup> Sonksen, "Everyday Heroes of Florence-Firestone."

<sup>130</sup> Railfan Rod, "The Old Goodyear Plant in Los Angeles," TNC Network News, March 14, 2017, <https://tnc.network/old-goodyear-plant-los-angeles/>.

employing more than 2,500 residents, operated on a 24-hour schedule,<sup>131</sup> and reportedly assisted in the construction of adjacent homes for its employees.<sup>132</sup> The area was known as the Wingfoot Industrial District after the Goodyear logo,<sup>133</sup> although the United States Postal Service has since occupied the industrial site.<sup>134</sup>

Eventually, demographic shifts following both world wars saw Black families moving in, paving the way for white flight and disinvestment to ensue, mostly in the 1960s and 1970s and were further compounded by disinvestment following both the 1965 Watts Uprisings and the 1992 Rodney King Uprisings.<sup>135</sup>

The deindustrialization of the 1970s and 1980s resulted in significant unemployment in the region after the Goodyear and Firestone facilities closed in 1982.<sup>136</sup> Due to its historical role as an entry point for newcomers and immigrants to southern California, the community witnessed significant population shifts in the 1980s and 1990s, primarily as a result of immigration from Mexico and South and Central America.<sup>137</sup> The population of Latino origin increased from 61% in 1980 to 91% in 2016, whereas the population of African descent decreased from 60% in the 1960s to 9% in 2016.<sup>138</sup>

Over the span of the past centuries, the residents of Florence-Firestone have been extraordinarily diverse. In the year 2020, Florence-Firestone had a total population of 61,983 people with a median age of 29.8, a median household income of \$53,478 and a median per capita income of \$16,181; approximately 22.6% of the population lived in poverty.<sup>139</sup> Furthermore, between 2010 and 2020, the population of Florence-Firestone decreased by 1.41 percent, from 63,387 to 61,983.<sup>140</sup> In 2020, the population was composed of 93% Latinos, 35.6% Whites, 6.5% Blacks, 9.9% individuals of two or more ethnicities, 1.6% American Indians and Alaska Natives, and 4% Asians.<sup>141</sup> 72.4% of residents in Florence-Firestone are citizens, and an estimated 379 veterans with current or prior active-duty military service reside in the community.<sup>142</sup> The average household size was

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<sup>131</sup> LA County Department of Regional Planning, Hearing on the Florence-Firestone Community Plan, Zone Change, and Community Standards District Update Project.

<sup>132</sup> LA County Department of Regional Planning, Hearing on the Florence-Firestone Community Plan, Zone Change, and Community Standards District Update Project.

<sup>133</sup> LA County Department of Regional Planning, Hearing on the Florence-Firestone Community Plan, Zone Change, and Community Standards District Update Project.

<sup>134</sup> Sonksen, "Everyday Heroes of Florence-Firestone."

<sup>135</sup> Sonksen, "Everyday Heroes of Florence-Firestone."

<sup>136</sup> LA County Department of Regional Planning, Hearing on the Florence-Firestone Community Plan, Zone Change, and Community Standards District Update Project.

<sup>137</sup> LA County Department of Regional Planning, Hearing on the Florence-Firestone Community Plan, Zone Change, and Community Standards District Update Project.

<sup>138</sup> LA County Department of Regional Planning, Hearing on the Florence-Firestone Community Plan, Zone Change, and Community Standards District Update Project.

<sup>139</sup> United States Census, "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Florence-Graham CDP," 2020, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/florencegrahamcdpcalifornia/PST120222>.

<sup>140</sup> United States Census, "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Florence-Graham CDP."

<sup>141</sup> United States Census, "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Florence-Graham CDP."

<sup>142</sup> United States Census, "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Florence-Graham CDP."

4.43 people, and 85.2% of households spoke a language other than English, indicating a high concentration of multilingual households in the community.<sup>143</sup>

Students living in the unincorporated area of Florence-Firestone can attend public, private, and charter K-12 schools in LAUSD Board District 7 led by Tanya Ortiz Franklin<sup>144</sup> or District 5 led by Jackie Goldberg.<sup>145</sup> District 7 covers areas of South Central, Watts, Gardena, Carson, Lomita, Harbor City, Wilmington, and San Pedro,<sup>146</sup> while District 5 covers Northeast L.A. from East Hollywood to Eagle Rock, Koreatown, Pico-Union, and Southeast L.A. from Vernon to South Gate.<sup>147</sup>

In terms of educational attainment, around 51.33% of people aged 25 and older do not have a high school diploma, 6.18% of residents have achieved a bachelor's degree or higher, and 3.65% have earned an associate's degree.<sup>148</sup>

The unincorporated community is home to a total of five parks comprising a combined area of seventy acres of parkland: Ted Watkins Memorial Park, El Parque Nuestro, Franklin D. Roosevelt Park, Colonel Leon H. Washington Park, and Mary MacLeod Bethune Park.<sup>149</sup> However, this is a significant decrease compared to the aim of "four acres of parkland for every one thousand persons" that was established by the LA County General Plan.<sup>150</sup>

The high poverty rate in the area is a strong indicator of poor nutrition and health implications. According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the poverty rate in the area is higher than the general rate for Los Angeles County. This means that many people in the area struggle to meet their basic needs, such as food, housing, and health care.<sup>151</sup> Food insecurity, which means insufficient food for an active, healthy life, is still a problem in the area. This is because the cost of living is high, and the unemployment rate goes up and down, making it hard for many people to put healthy food on the table for themselves and their families.<sup>152</sup> Inevitably, the lack of income means residents are unable to afford the healthy, fresh food they need and instead rely on less nutritious and less expensive options,

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<sup>143</sup> United States Census, "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Florence-Graham CDP."

<sup>144</sup> "BD7 Map / District Map," Board District 7, accessed April 15, 2023, <https://achieve.lausd.net/domain/http%3A%2F%2Fachievetest.lausd.net%2Fsite%2Fdefault.aspx%3FDomainID%3D1274>.

<sup>145</sup> "School Directory," Jackie Goldberg, LAUSD Board Member, District 5 (blog), accessed April 15, 2023, <https://www.jackielausd.com/our-district/school-directory/>.

<sup>146</sup> Board District 7

<sup>147</sup> District 5

<sup>148</sup> "Neighborhood Data for Social Change Platform," accessed April 15, 2023, <https://map.myneighborhooddata.org/>.

<sup>149</sup> "Florence-Firestone Community Plan" (LA County Department of Regional Planning, September 2019), [https://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/ffcp\\_final\\_20190903.pdf](https://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/ffcp_final_20190903.pdf).

<sup>150</sup> LA County Department of Regional Planning

<sup>151</sup> "Trauma Prevention Initiative" (County of Los Angeles - Public Health, n.d.), [http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ovp/docs/TPI%20Documents/2022%20TPI%20Community%20Profiles/TPI%20Community%20Profiles%202021\\_Florence-Firestone.pdf](http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ovp/docs/TPI%20Documents/2022%20TPI%20Community%20Profiles/TPI%20Community%20Profiles%202021_Florence-Firestone.pdf).

<sup>152</sup> Los Angeles County, "Equity Explorer," 2023, [https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/9d7a43397ea84ab98a534be5b5376fba/page/Home/?data\\_id=data\\_Source\\_1-CalFresh\\_Analysis\\_9912%3A2094&views=Core-COVID-Filters](https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/9d7a43397ea84ab98a534be5b5376fba/page/Home/?data_id=data_Source_1-CalFresh_Analysis_9912%3A2094&views=Core-COVID-Filters).



contributing to poor health outcomes and a higher risk of chronic health and diet-related diseases, such as obesity and type 2 diabetes.<sup>153</sup> Access to healthcare is hard in the neighborhood because about 19.3% remain uninsured.<sup>154</sup>

In the past, many communities of color, like African Americans and Latinos, have faced systemic and institutional barriers to economic success, such as discrimination at work, limited access to education and job training, and unfair lending and housing practices.<sup>155</sup> Even though these problems have somewhat improved over the past few decades, they still affect many people in the Florence-Firestone area and make it hard for some residents to be financially stable and successful.<sup>156</sup> Also, language barriers and not being a citizen can impede or make it hard for undocumented immigrants to move up in the economy.<sup>157</sup> This is one reason there are still significant differences in income, wealth, and job chances between different racial and ethnic groups. Despite these challenges, it is essential to note that many hardworking and dedicated residents in the unincorporated community of Florence-Firestone are steadfast in building better, healthier lives for themselves and their families and improving the community's health and well-being.

## A.2 Lennox

Lennox is bounded by the 105 and 405 highway intersection to the south and west. This suburban area extends north to Century Boulevard and east to Prairie Avenue, outlining the 1.1 square mile community. Local businesses line the busier boulevards, including supermarkets, car dealerships, convenience stores, salons, and other contentious businesses like clubs, pawn shops, and smoke shops.

The Los Angeles International Airport is directly across the 405 highway, and for decades, thousands of Lennox residents have lived in the flight path of one of the busiest airports in the country. Waves of Lennox community activism protesting the noise pollution have cycled through the decades, but disruption to recreation, school, and families remains as one of the most pressing issues in the area.

Lennox Park serves as the community's cultural nexus. This 5.6 acres of green space host a children's play area, community center, outdoor pool, basketball court, and baseball diamond. This county park is often a venue for after-school programming, senior activities, cultural events, toy drives, art classes, and many other recreational programs.

The majority of Lennox residents were white through the '60s and '70s. Over time, white residents slowly fled the area and the ethnic composition of the community increased.

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<sup>153</sup> Los Angeles County, "Equity Explorer."

<sup>154</sup> United States Census, "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Florence-Graham CDP."

<sup>155</sup> Danyelle Solomon, Connor Maxwell, and Abril Castro, "Systemic Inequality: Displacement, Exclusion, and Segregation" (The Center for American Progress, August 7, 2019), <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/systemic-inequality-displacement-exclusion-segregation/>.

<sup>156</sup> United States Census, "U.S. Census Quickfacts Lennox."

<sup>157</sup> United States Census, "U.S. Census Quickfacts Lennox."

Today, nearly 22,500 people live in Lennox and the majority of residents, 90% of individuals, identify as Hispanic or Latino.

The first interest groups that began considering Lennox incorporation was the local Chamber of Commerce headed by Charles Quintard in 1955. Business owners became interested in the prospect of cityhood after proposed increases to tax rates in LA County. Cityhood would also give these entrepreneurs liberty in the kinds of businesses they wished to keep. This initial incorporation attempt finally materialized in 1958 but was unsuccessful as Lennox residents filed an overwhelming number of petitions against this motion. Community members were surprised that incorporation was considered at such a low margin of support from current residents. After this surprising attempt at incorporation, several factions broke out to determine what course of action would be best for the future of Lennox. Considerations between cityhood and annexation were now on the table.

Inglewood was the first city to establish ties with Lennox residents who were interested in annexation and strategically annexed what used to be East Lennox, almost extending to Crenshaw Boulevard. Residents that were highly opposed to incorporation and wanted to be part of Inglewood made a pact with city officials to take them in at the earliest possible opportunity.

Incorporation factions filed petitions to initiate cityhood for both East and West Lennox and protected these areas from annexation for a period of 90 days. After this immunity period ended, the Inglewood City Council met to ratify annexation for the majority of East Lennox. Residents of East Lennox approved this motion with a sizable majority and would be brought into Inglewood's jurisdiction, effectively cutting the size of Lennox in half.

After East Lennox was annexed in 1960, independent groups sought to incorporate west Lennox once again. These groups stated that their main concern was to avoid taxation and property reassessment from municipalities and they believed that incorporation was the answer. After this third incorporation failed, many of Lennox (originally West Lennox) residents became dissatisfied by being pulled around by surprise elections that seemed to go nowhere. Many supported annexation and wanted to be included in a proper city to finally have representation and proper leverage to mitigate issues of noise pollution, sanitation services, and other community needs. Without proper incorporation or annexation, leadership in Lennox was nonexistent and residents felt like they were being jerked around. Dissatisfaction in community development followed.

Piece by piece, small blocks of Lennox would vote to be annexed into Inglewood and Hawthorne. Through the '70s, annexation from an economic standpoint looked less and less plausible for either Inglewood or Hawthorne. For both, this area would come at a loss on investment unless extensive development and rezoning to commercial use.

In 1990, the conversation for annexation opened up again as excess crime from Lennox “spilled over” into Inglewood. The county holds jurisdiction for policing in Lennox, but through annexation, Inglewood police advocated for this expansion as a tough-on-crime approach. This ended in another failed attempt at annexation and serves as a concerning case study for the justification of annexation that may have contributed to mistrust in Inglewood.

Finally, the airport causes a lot of problems for Lennox residents. There is excessive noise that can not be addressed unless residents choose to annex. These large infrastructural needs would come at a high cost to the city that decides to take them on. Additionally, LAX is unwilling to do anything about its excessive noise and has historically been highly opposed to Lennox annexation because they believe new development so close to the airport would harm airport efficiency. They consistently urge Inglewood to leave Lennox alone.

Lennox’s close proximity to highways is also significant to their story of annexation. The 105 freeway extension was finalized in 1993 and runs straight through Lennox and Hawthorne. This physical divide further supports the community belonging to Inglewood. Lennox is heavily impacted by the surrounding municipalities, Inglewood and Hawthorne. According to the most recent Census data, the median annual income is nearly \$50,000 and the owner-occupied housing rate is 28.1%.<sup>158</sup> The median home value is \$560,100. Cost of living poses another concerning issue to residents of Lennox. The cost of living index is higher than the US average.<sup>159</sup>

Lennox is minimally served by public transportation. The Metro C Line runs along the 105 at the periphery of the area and only two bus lines run through Lennox, the 40 and 212.<sup>160</sup> A large majority of Lennox residents require a car to commute to work, as 67% of residents use single-family cars in their commute.<sup>161</sup> Census data uncovered disparities in transportation. While cars are the main mode of transportation in Lennox, 7.5% of individuals do not have access to a car.<sup>162</sup>

The Lennox school district has a 22 to 1 student-to-teacher ratio, which aligns with the state average.<sup>163</sup> The K-12 students do well as graduation rates are higher than the state average

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<sup>158</sup> United States Census, “U.S. Census Quickfacts Lennox,” Lennox, 2020, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/lennoxcdpcalifornia>.

<sup>159</sup> Best.net, “Cost of Living , Lennox California,” Cost of Living, 2023, [https://www.bestplaces.net/cost\\_of\\_living/city/california/lennox](https://www.bestplaces.net/cost_of_living/city/california/lennox).

<sup>160</sup> Google, Alphabet, “Google Maps, Lennox, California,” Website, Lennox, 2023.

<sup>161</sup> United States Census, “U.S. Census Quickfacts Lennox,” Lennox, 2020, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/lennoxcdpcalifornia>.

<sup>162</sup> United States Census, “U.S. Census Quickfacts Lennox,” Lennox, 2020, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/lennoxcdpcalifornia>.

<sup>163</sup> Public School Review, “Lennox School District,” Lennox School District, 2023, <https://www.publicschoolreview.com/california/lennox-school-district/621420-school-district>.

at more than 95%.<sup>164</sup> Also, a reported 93.1% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.<sup>165</sup>

### **A.3 West Rancho Dominguez**

West Rancho Dominguez was formerly known as West Compton in 1980,<sup>166</sup> the year that the U.S. Census Bureau introduced census-designated places.<sup>167</sup> This official recognition by the federal government came 12 years after the City of Carson's incorporation.

The formation of West Rancho Dominguez is tied with the City of Carson's incorporation. The first campaign to incorporate Carson started in 1964, but incorporation did not happen until 1968 because the state had not received sufficient evidence that it would generate enough revenue to sustain itself.<sup>168</sup> Notably, incorporation advocates stated the city would not collect property taxes. When the state approved Carson's incorporation, it rejected the inclusion of four census tracts that would eventually comprise West Rancho Dominguez. The argument was that the land would not generate enough revenue for the city's solvency. The populations of these four census tracts were each over 80% Black, according to the 1970 Decennial Census.

Since then, most of the land has been zoned for single-family homes, but the eastern portion has also been zoned for commercial use; the community has become profitable. In 2004, Mayor Jim Dean of Carson and Mayor Isadore Hall of Compton both attempted to annex West Rancho Dominguez to benefit from commercial tax revenue, however the city could not afford the annexation.<sup>169,170</sup>

### **A.4 Westmont/West Athens**

The unincorporated areas of Westmont and West Athens in Los Angeles have a complex history shaped by race, class, and urban development. The Westmont and West Athens areas were historically predominantly Black neighborhoods redlined by the federal government and excluded from many government benefits and services. This led to a lack

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<sup>164</sup> Public School Review (2023)

<sup>165</sup> Niche, "Lennox School District, California," Lennox School District, 2023, <https://www.niche.com/k12/d/lennox-school-district-ca/>.

<sup>166</sup> Chapman, Bruce and C.L. Kincannon, "1980 Census of Population and Housing. Geographic Identification Code Scheme." (U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Division, 1983), [https://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1980/1980censusofpopu805unse\\_bw.pdf](https://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1980/1980censusofpopu805unse_bw.pdf).

<sup>167</sup> US Census Bureau, "Census Designated Places," Census.gov, accessed April 15, 2023, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/bas/information/cdp.html>.

<sup>168</sup> Lee Bastajian "Dominguez-Carson Will Vote on Incorporation: Approval Would Create City Without Tax on Property; Name Also an Issue Tuesday CITYHOOD BALLOT," Los Angeles Times (1923-1995), February 4, 1968, sec. Centinela-South Bay.

<sup>169</sup> Yussuf J. Simmonds Sentinel Asst Managing Editor, "Compton Defends Citizens in 'Land Grab': Carson Wants to Usurp Land for Economic and Political Gain," Los Angeles Sentinel (1934-), January 26, 2006.

<sup>170</sup> Yussuf J. Simmonds

of infrastructure, substandard housing, and limited economic opportunities, perpetuating poverty and limiting residents' social mobility.<sup>171</sup>

During the 1960s and 1970s, these areas experienced significant social unrest and civil rights activism, including the Watts riots of 1965 and the broader Black Power movement.<sup>172</sup> Residents organized to demand better living conditions, political representation, and social justice but faced resistance from local authorities and business interests.

In the following decades, the Westmont and West Athens areas saw some improvements in infrastructure and services, such as the Martin Luther King Jr. Community Hospital opening in 1972, but still struggled with poverty, crime, and unemployment. These challenges were exacerbated by the crack cocaine epidemic of the 1980s, which disproportionately affected communities of color and contributed to the rise of gang violence in the area.<sup>173</sup>

The Westmont/West Athens area has a median household income of \$48,420, which is lower than the median household income for Los Angeles County (\$71,000) and the state of California (\$80,000).<sup>174</sup> The poverty rate in this area is 29.7%, which is higher than the county and state averages.<sup>175</sup> The most common industries in the area are healthcare and social assistance, retail trade, and accommodation and food services.

The Westmont/West Athens area has a lower level of educational attainment compared to the county and state averages. 62.4% of residents have a high school diploma or equivalent, and only 7.4% have a bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>176</sup> The area is served by the Los Angeles Unified School District, which includes several elementary, middle, and high schools in the area.

The majority of housing units in the Westmont/West Athens area are renter-occupied, with a homeownership rate of only 28.9%.<sup>177</sup> The median home value in the area is \$371,800, which is significantly lower than the median home value for Los Angeles County (\$729,000). However, the median rent in the area is \$1,413, which is slightly higher than the county average. The area has a high population density, with an average of 8,117 people per square mile.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Jones, C. P. (2019). History, Race, and Place: The Spatial Context of Health Disparities. *American Journal of Public Health*, 109(S1), S24-S33.

<sup>172</sup> Gladney, D. C. (2017). The Watts Riots, the Neighborhood Movement, and the Rise of Black Power in Los Angeles. *Pacific Historical Review*, 86(1), 60-87.

<sup>173</sup> LaBonte, M. L., & Rosenfeld, R. (2016). Gangs and the Social Context of Violence in Los Angeles. In K. D. Williams & C. R. Martinez (Eds.), *Gangs in America's Communities* (pp. 83-109), Springer.

<sup>174</sup> US Census Bureau, "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Westmont-West Athens CDP," 2020, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/westmontwestathenscdpcalifornia/PST045221>.

<sup>175</sup> US Census Bureau, "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Westmont-West Athens CDP"

<sup>176</sup> US Census Bureau, "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Westmont-West Athens CDP"

<sup>177</sup> US Census Bureau, "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Westmont-West Athens CDP"

<sup>178</sup> US Census Bureau, "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Westmont-West Athens CDP"

## A.5 Willowbrook

Willowbrook is a small unincorporated community in the South Central region of LA County, located about 13 miles south of DTLA<sup>179</sup> It is bordered by the Watts neighborhood and the cities of Compton and Lynwood to the north, south, and east, respectively. Willowbrook has a rich and complex history of racial tension and a legacy of comprising marginalized populations.

Before gaining its name, Willowbrook's land was used agriculturally. It wasn't until 1903 when the "Willowbrook Tract" was registered with the county archivist, likely due to the sole willow that stood along a small brook.<sup>180</sup> The community's fertile land and charming landscape attracted a mix of European settlers and Mexican natives — sparking the development of subdivisions.<sup>181</sup>

Urban construction began during the first decade of the 20th century, when Los Angeles Railway developer Henry Huntington developed the Pacific Electric Road line through Willowbrook. This marked the beginning of Willowbrook's thriving transportation and manufacturing industries.

By the 1940s, Willowbrook became a center for aerospace manufacturing, with companies such as Douglas Aircraft and Lockheed Martin setting up facilities in the area. New economic opportunities drew more residents in and the suburban neighborhood development boomed. Black families moved from the south into Watts, Willowbrook, and Compton to work in the defense industry and factories. Willowbrook was particularly known its landscaping due to its agricultural history.

As public housing gained popularity, white residents began resisting housing projects in their neighborhoods. In Willowbrook, white residents "threatened to burn the structures and attack any black residents who moved into the planned projects."<sup>182</sup> Records show that a resident was even quoted saying, "Willowbrook would 'either stay lily white or run red with blood.'"<sup>183</sup> The racial tension led to violent conflicts and white flight out of Willowbrook and the surrounding areas such as Compton.<sup>184</sup>

By the 1960s, predominantly Black and Latino communities were frustrated with discrimination and its economic consequences. The 60s became a defining decade for

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<sup>179</sup>Los Angeles Times, "Willowbrook Profile," Mapping L.A., 2000, <http://maps.latimes.com/neighborhoods/neighborhood/willowbrook/>.

<sup>180</sup>LA County Library, "Willowbrook Local History," LA County Library, accessed April 15, 2023, <https://lacountylibrary.org/willowbrook-local-history/>.

<sup>181</sup>LA County Library, "Willowbrook Local History"

<sup>182</sup>Marques Agusta Vestal, "Black Housing Politics in 1940s South Los Angeles" (UCLA, 2014), [https://escholarship.org/content/qt1ns4f6z6/qt1ns4f6z6\\_noSplash\\_4f334160f70a9138a0db208ee1b4aa2c.pdf?t=nlk3x9](https://escholarship.org/content/qt1ns4f6z6/qt1ns4f6z6_noSplash_4f334160f70a9138a0db208ee1b4aa2c.pdf?t=nlk3x9).

<sup>183</sup>Marques Agusta Vestal, "Black Housing Politics in 1940s South Los Angeles"

<sup>184</sup>Josh Sides, "Straight into Compton: American Dreams, Urban Nightmares, and the Metamorphosis of a Black Suburb," *American Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (2004): 583–605.



Willowbrook’s racial history. In 1965, the Black community in Watts — Willowbrook’s northern neighbor — was frustrated with their treatment by local law enforcement, inadequate social services, and increasing income inequality.<sup>185</sup> This frustration built up to the Watts Uprising: a large series of riots that occurred after Marquette Frye, a 21-year-old black man, was detained for drunk driving near the outskirts of Watts on August 11, 1965. Following the struggle that ensued during his arrest, there were 6 days of rioting that resulted in 34 fatalities, over 1,000 injuries, almost 4,000 arrests, and the destruction of \$40 million worth of property.<sup>186</sup> The movement had detrimental effects on property values, local businesses, and public trust in effective policy decision-making.

By the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Willowbrook’s residential makeup shifted from predominantly Black (44.3%) to predominantly Latino (53%).<sup>187</sup> New developments, like the LA Metro Blue Line between Long Beach and the City of Los Angeles, strengthened the community’s mobility and recognition as a transportation hub. However, these developments weren’t without consequences. Particularly, the U.S. Department of Transportation approved the construction of the Century Freeway through Willowbrook. Despite praise from the Watts Labor Community Action Committee, who argued that the project would provide more local job opportunities for Black workers, the project ultimately resulted in the displacement of many Black families from Willowbrook and the surrounding areas.<sup>188</sup>

## Appendix B: Neighboring City Profiles

### B.1 Carson

Carson successfully incorporated in 1968 after several attempts beginning in 1964. The incorporation campaign demonstrated to the State legislature that it could generate the revenue to sustain itself. The campaign declined to annex the four census tracts to the east of Carson, the region that would eventually be recognized as West Compton/West Rancho Dominguez, stating that the annexation would result in a sunk cost to the City.<sup>189</sup> Like Lakewood and other suburbs that incorporated in the 50s and 60s, the City of Carson contracts minimum services from the County, such as the LA County Sheriff.

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<sup>185</sup>“Watts Rebellion (Los Angeles),” The Martin Luther King, Jr., Research and Education Institute at Stanford University, June 12, 2017, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/watts-rebellion-los-angeles>.

<sup>186</sup>The Martin Luther King, Jr., Research and Education Institute at Stanford University

<sup>187</sup>Trauma Prevention Initiative, “Community Profile: Willowbrook,” LA County Department of Public Health, 2020, [http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ovp/docs/TPI%20Documents/2022%20TPI%20Community%20Profiles/TPI%20Community%20Profiles%202021\\_Willowbrook.pdf](http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ovp/docs/TPI%20Documents/2022%20TPI%20Community%20Profiles/TPI%20Community%20Profiles%202021_Willowbrook.pdf).

<sup>188</sup>Watts Labor Community Action Committee, “WLCAC/Caltrans Officials Tour New Century Freeway Route,” *CSU Dominguez Hills Department of Archives and Special Collections*, March 1979, <https://digitalcollections.archives.csudh.edu/digital/collection/p16855coll7/id/973/>.

<sup>189</sup>Yussuf J. Simmonds, Compton Defends Citizens in ‘Land Grab’: Carson wants to usurp land for economic and political gain



Carson and Compton entered into a turf war over unincorporated Rancho Dominguez (not to be confused with WRD), where CSU Dominguez Hills is located. In 2006, both cities submitted a bid to annex the unincorporated community to LAFCo. Neither city annexed Rancho Dominguez because neither city's budget would have had the revenue to sustain the infrastructure and service expenditures to provide for additional residents.<sup>190</sup>

## B.2 Compton

Willowbrook's neighboring city, the City of Compton, is estimated to have a population of 95,958 — comprising 68% Latino, 27% Black, and 22% white residents.<sup>191</sup> It is known for its rich history, cultural diversity, and contributions to music, sports, and entertainment. Compton was founded in 1867 by Griffith Dickenson Compton, a farmer, and real estate developer. He purchased a large tract of land in the area and established the townsite, which was originally called Comptonville. The town grew slowly during its early years, with agriculture being the primary industry. However, in the early 1900s, the city began to attract a growing number of residents, and by the 1920s, it had become a thriving community with a population of more than 10,000 people. During the 1940s and 1950s, Compton experienced significant growth due to the influx of African American residents who migrated from the southern United States. In the 1980s, Compton gained national attention due to its high crime rates and gang activity. The city was often portrayed in the media as a violent and dangerous place, which led to a decline in property values and economic growth. However, in recent years, Compton has undergone significant revitalization efforts, with community leaders and city officials working to improve public safety, increase economic opportunities, and promote cultural diversity.

Today, Compton is a vibrant and diverse city that continues to make significant contributions to the arts, sports, and entertainment industries. Despite its tumultuous history, the city has emerged as a symbol of resilience, community, and perseverance. Notable, Willowbrook's similarity to Compton is due to its close graphical area. Events that occurred often correlated to one another such as the growth of both areas in the 1940s and 1950s, the migration of Blacks, the racial tension, and the over-policing of the two communities.

## B.3 Gardena

Gardena is located in the South Bay region of Los Angeles County, California, adjacent to Westmont/West Athens. Originally part of Rancho San Pedro, a vast land grant given to the Dominguez family by the Spanish government, Gardena was incorporated as a city in 1930.<sup>192</sup> Its early economy was based on agriculture and horticulture, with Japanese immigrants playing a significant role in the local farming industry.

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<sup>190</sup> Blankstein, Andrew and Stephen Clark, "Cities Wrangle Over Right to Serve Rancho Dominguez," Los Angeles Times, February 22, 2006.

<sup>191</sup> US Census Bureau, "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Compton City, California," <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/comptoncitycalifornia>.

<sup>192</sup> Alex Pinto, "Gardena History," City of Gardena, April 21, 2016, <https://cityofgardena.org/gardena-history/>.

During World War II, the Japanese American residents of Gardena were forcibly removed and incarcerated in internment camps, and the government seized their property and businesses.<sup>193</sup> After the war, Gardena underwent significant demographic changes, with many African American and Latino residents moving in. The city also shifted towards manufacturing and light industry, with companies such as Nissan and Hitachi setting up factories there.<sup>194</sup>

Regarding race and ethnicity, Gardena is more diverse than Westmont/West Athens. According to the 2020 Census, the total population of Gardena is 59,511.<sup>195</sup> The largest racial group is Asians, who comprise 42.4% of the population.<sup>196</sup> The largest groups are Hispanic or Latino (25.4%) and Black or African American (19.7%).<sup>197</sup> The remaining residents are predominantly White (9.6%) and Two or More Races (2.5%).<sup>198</sup>

The median age in Gardena is 41.3 years old, which is higher than the median age of Westmont/West Athens.<sup>199</sup> Additionally, 15.8% of the population is under the age of 18, while 17.8% of the population is 65 years old or older.<sup>200</sup> Regarding education, 84.1% of Gardena residents have a high school diploma or equivalent, and 27.5% have a bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>201</sup> The median household income is \$57,212, and the per capita income is \$26,692.<sup>202</sup>

It is worth noting that while Gardena is more diverse and has higher educational attainment and income levels than Westmont/West Athens, it still faces equity-related challenges. For example, there are disparities in health outcomes and access to healthcare, with a higher prevalence of chronic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension among certain racial and ethnic groups. Additionally, there are disparities in housing and economic opportunity, with specific neighborhoods and populations experiencing disinvestment and limited access to resources. Despite these disparities, Westmont/West Athens remains a resilient community.

## B.4 Hawthorne and Inglewood

Inglewood has experienced an economic boom in the last century. Most notably, the new SoFi Stadium has garnered the attention of FIFA and will host the 2026 World Cup in Los

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<sup>193</sup>Jeffrey Burton et al., *Confinement and Ethnicity: An Overview of World War II Japanese American Relocation Sites*, The Scott and Laurie Oki Series in Asian American Studies (University of Washington Press, 2002).

<sup>194</sup>G Holland, "Toyota Plant in Torrance among the Last of Its Kind in US," LA Daily News, February 27, 2014, <https://www.dailynews.com/2014/02/27/toyota-plant-in-torrance-among-last-of-its>.

<sup>195</sup>US Census Bureau, "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Gardena City, California," 2020, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/gardenacitycalifornia>.

<sup>196</sup>US Census Bureau, "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Gardena City, California"

<sup>197</sup>US Census Bureau, "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Gardena City, California"

<sup>198</sup>US Census Bureau, "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Gardena City, California"

<sup>199</sup>US Census Bureau, "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Gardena City, California"

<sup>200</sup>US Census Bureau, "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Gardena City, California"

<sup>201</sup>US Census Bureau, "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Gardena City, California"

<sup>202</sup>US Census Bureau, "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Gardena City, California"

Angeles.<sup>203</sup> Over the last few decades, property values have risen, crime has decreased, and quality of life, in general, has been improving for the residents of Inglewood.

Hawthorne was originally established in 1905 by B.L. Harding and H.D. Lombard in 1906 as the Hawthorne Improvement Company. Through industrial necessity through 1920s, Hawthorne became a major producer of airplanes.<sup>204</sup> It would later be incorporated in 1922.<sup>205</sup>

Both cities made a substantial profit from the airplane manufacturing industry with proximity to Mines Field, which would eventually become LAX. Profits were made building new factories and gaining employment in the piloting workforce. Proximity to LAX and newly built freeways in the later half of the 20th century attracted businesses. Construction of office buildings and subsequent urbanization have played into the outline of these cities today.

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<sup>203</sup> "The Inglewood Renaissance - A Brief History of Inglewood," *Los Angeles Times*, February 3, 2022, <https://www.latimes.com/inglewoodrenaissance/story/2022-02-03/a-brief-history-of-inglewood>.

<sup>204</sup> Walt Dixon and Jerry Roberts, *Images of America, Hawthorne* (Arcadia Publishing, 2005), <https://books.google.com/books?id=qaCZmC905agC&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

<sup>205</sup> Hadley Meares, "Hawthorne's Deceptively Sunny History," *Curbed LA*, January 30, 2018, <https://la.curbed.com/2018/1/30/16933546/hawthorne-history-south-bay-racism>.

## Appendix C: Interview Themes

Interviews			
Community-Based Organization	Stakeholder	Description	Themes
Florence-Firestone Community Organization (FFCO)	Steve Quinonez Jonathan Pacheco-Bell Alexandra Nicholson Art Jones Ramsey Nicholson	Site visit and walking tour	Annexation; civic engagement; community planning; mutual aid; gentrification & displacement; historical land recognition.
Uthink	Samuel Marin	Interview	Civic and youth engagement; community planning; substance abuse.
Juntos Florence-Firestone Together	Yanel Saenz	Interview	Annexation; education; civic engagement; economic development; political representation; mutual aid; gentrification & displacement; town councils.
Willowbrook Inclusion Network	Reginald Johnson	Interview	Arts and culture; civic engagement; community planning; political representation; disinvestment; food access & mutual aid; health; parks; public transit; small businesses; workforce development.
Westmont/West Athens resident	Jennifer Crisselle Williams	Interview	Annexation; civic engagement; community recognition; education; food access & mutual aid; health; service quality.
Lennox Middle School; Dolores Huerta Elementary School	Myrella Gonzalez	Interview	Education; police accountability; public safety.
West Rancho Dominguez Community Action Network	Daria Brooks	Interview	Civic engagement, service quality; community planning; political representation.
<b>UCLA</b>	<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Themes</b>

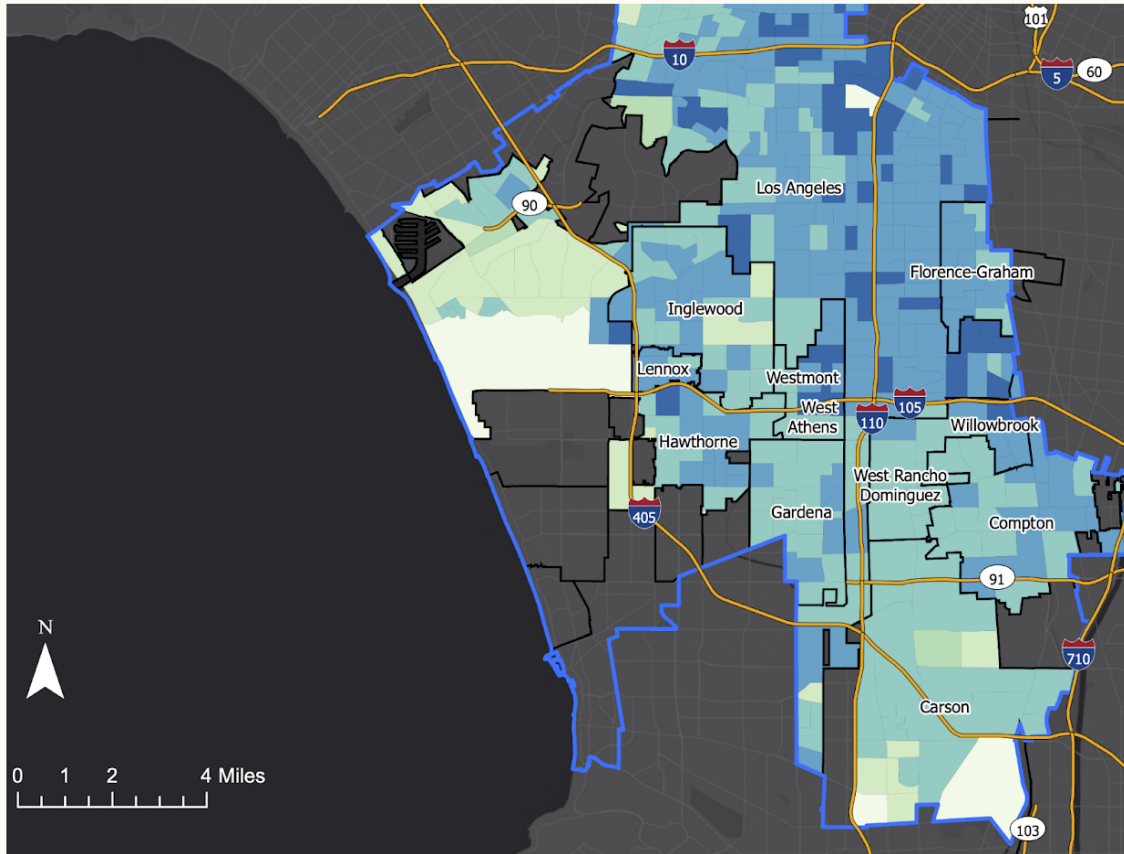
Director, Los Angeles Initiative	Zev Yaroslavsky	Interview	Community planning; East LA; Lakewood Plan; police accountability; service quality; suburbanization; unincorporated areas.
Professor and Director, Center for Neighborhood Knowledge	Paul Ong	Interview	Civic engagement; East LA; education; police accountability; political representation; gentrification & displacement; health; housing; revenue; service quality.
Interim Chair and Professor, Department of Public Policy Senior Fellow, UCLA Center for Health Policy Research	Mark A. Peterson	Interview	Community land trusts; displacement & gentrification; revenue.
Professor and Chair, Department of Urban Planning	Chris Tilly	Interview	Civic engagement; community institutions; political representation; segregation.
Assistant Professor, Public Policy and Sociology	Jasmine D. Hill	Interview	Housing; segregation; wealth creation.
Assistant Professor, Urban Planning	Marques Vestal	Interview	Redlining; revenue; housing; service quality; political representation; infrastructure.
Assistant Professor, Urban Planning	Jose Loya	Interview	Housing; segregation.
Professor, Urban Planning	Vinit Mukhija	Interview	Informality; service quality.
Professor, Urban Planning and Public Policy	Paavo Monkkonen	Interview	Civic engagement; education; housing; policing; revenue; service quality; suburbanism.
<b>Public Officials</b>	<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Themes</b>
Interim Planning Director, City of Hawthorne	Gregg McClain	Email	Annexation; community planning; housing; revenue; service quality; political representation; household income; police accountability; unincorporated areas.
Local Agency Formation	Paul Novak	Interview	Annexation; civic engagement; political representation;

Commission (LAFCO)			revenue; service quality; sphere of influence; unincorporated areas.
Supervising Regional Planner, LA County Department of Regional Planning	Patricia Hachiya	Interview	Gentrification & displacement; housing; intergovernmental collaboration; public transit; revenue.
City of Inglewood	Artie Fields	Interview	Annexation; Lennox; police accountability; revenue; unincorporated areas
Planning and Public Works Deputy, Office of Supervisor Kathryn Barger	Anish Saraiya	Interview	Housing; unincorporated areas.

# Appendix D: Spatial Visualizations

## D.1 Area Median Income in SD2

### Area Median Income in the Second District 2020



#### Legend

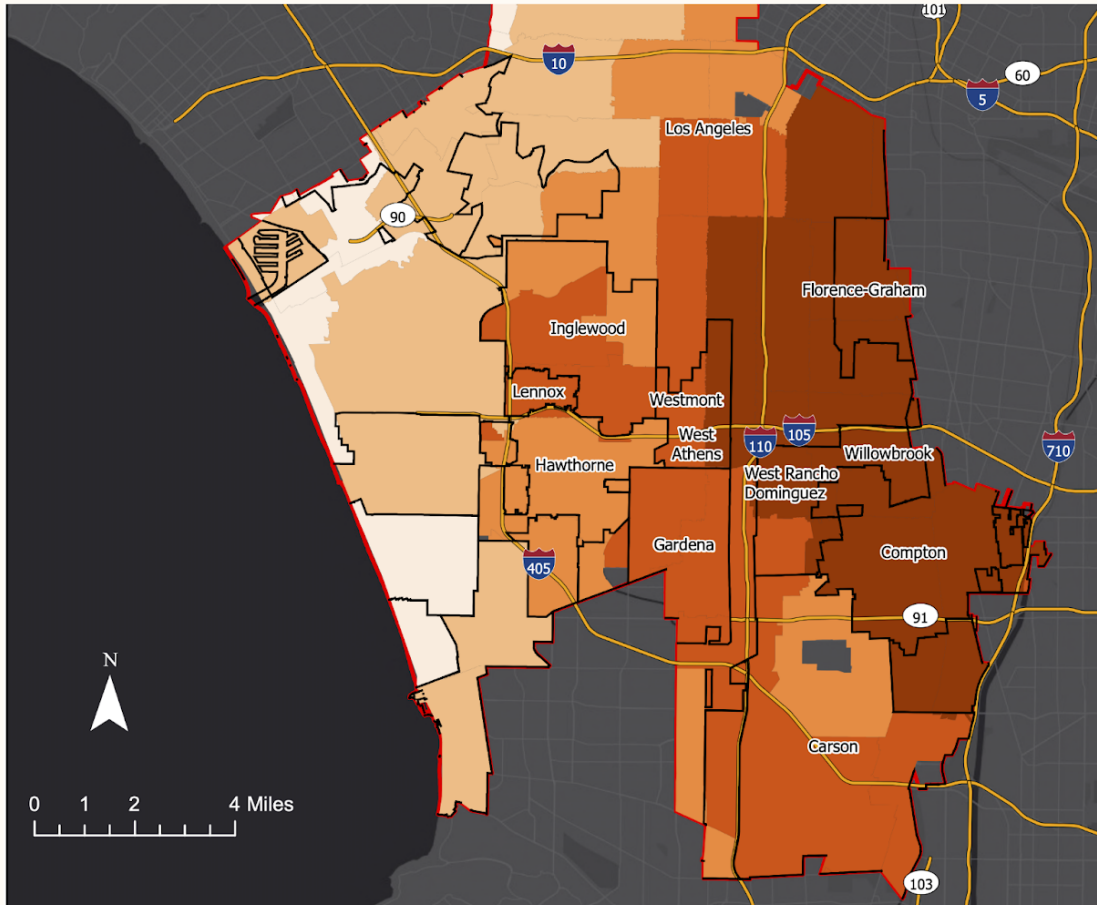
- High income
- Above moderate income
- Moderate income
- Low income
- Very low income
- Extremely low income
- District boundary
- Community boundary
- Freeway

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2020. Categorized by Housing and Urban Development income thresholds.



## D.2 Typical Single Family Home Values in SD2

### Typical Single-Family Home Values in the Second District 2020



#### Legend

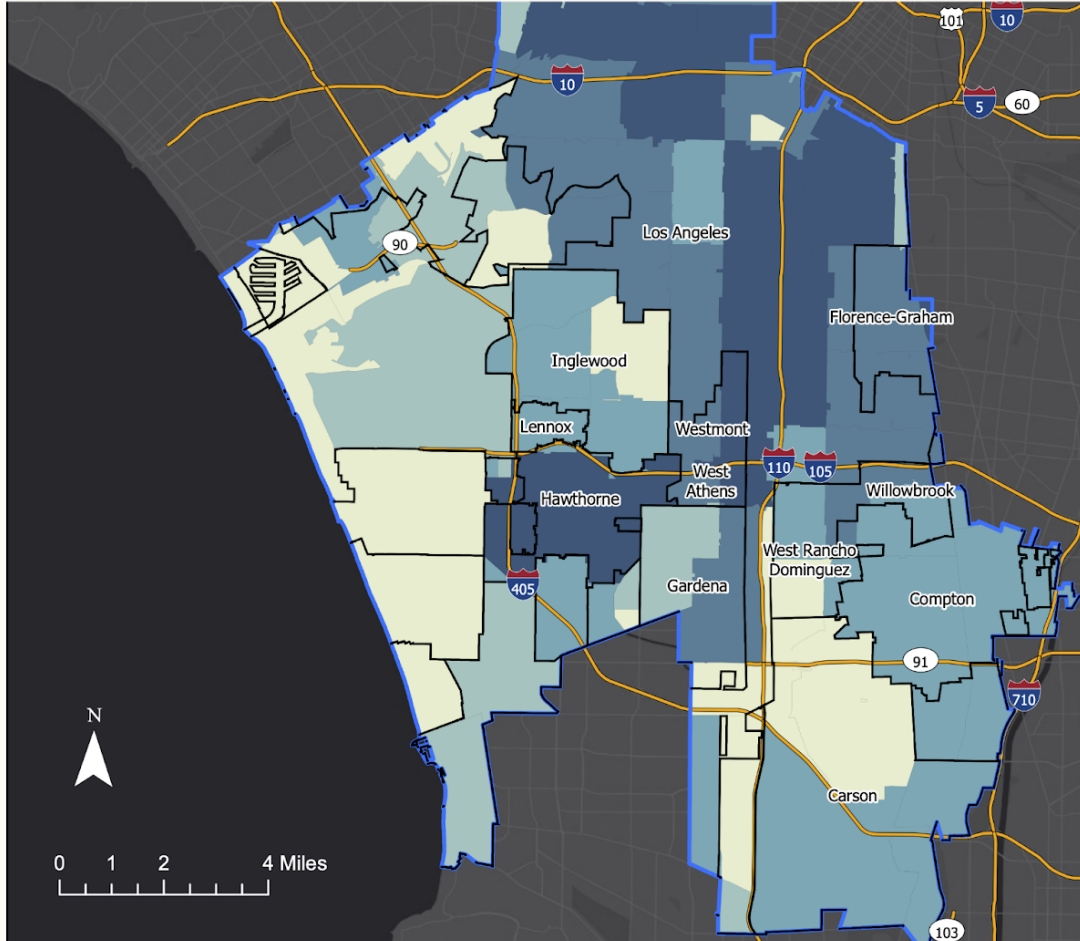
	\$1,425,749 - 3,223,580		Community boundary
	\$835,708 - 1,425,749		Freeway
	\$602,072 - 835,708		
	\$481,277 - 602,072		
	\$406,200 - 481,277		

Source: Zillow typical home value data classified by quantiles. Data organized by ZIP code.

## D.3 Tenant Vulnerability Index in SD2

### Tenant Vulnerability in the Second District

2020



#### Legend

- Lowest vulnerability
- Low
- Moderate
- High
- Highest vulnerability

- District boundary
- Community boundary
- Freeway

Source: LA County GeoHub. Data organized by ZIP code index factors comprising: total renter population, median income, rent burdened tenants, race/ethnicity of renters, elderly renters, single mother renters, and immigrant renters.

## Appendix G: Spatial Analysis Results

The historically Black core of South LA is no longer hypersegregated for Black people, but is now hypersegregated for Latino residents.

Latinos are the hypersegregated majority in Florence-Firestone and Lennox. Latinos comprise a 60-80% majority in Willowbrook and West Rancho Dominguez.

Black people are the majority population in Westmont/West Athens, with Black populations ranging between 60-80% of each Census tract.

Area Median Income	
<b>Florence-Firestone</b>	<p>Much of Florence-Firestone is very low income, while some portions that border Huntington and Walnut Park are moderately low income.</p> <p>The neighboring City of LA tracts are either very low or extremely low income.</p>
<b>Lennox</b>	<p>Lennox is mostly very low income, one section is low income.</p> <p>Inglewood is mostly low and very low income, with the area that borders Westmont being low, moderate, and above moderate income.</p> <p>Hawthorne is mostly very low and low income, with one portion being extremely low income.</p>
<b>West Rancho Dominguez</b>	<p>Most of West Rancho Dominguez is low income, except for a northern tract that borders the City of LA, which is very low income.</p> <p>Most of Carson is also low income, however some parts are moderate and above moderate income, and one high income tract.</p>
<b>Westmont/West Athens</b>	<p>Much of Westmont/West Athens is very low and extremely low income, other parts are low income.</p> <p>Most of Gardena is low income, with some parts being very low income.</p>
<b>Willowbrook</b>	<p>Most of Willowbrook is very low and extremely low income, small parts are low income.</p> <p>Compton is mostly low and very low income.</p>
Single Family Home Values	
<b>Florence-Firestone</b>	Homes in Florence-Firestone, and the bordering City of LA are typically worth \$406,200-481,277.

<b>Lennox</b>	<p>Home prices in Lennox are typically between \$481,277-602,072.</p> <p>Inglewood is split between \$481,277-602,072; increase to \$602,072-835-708 towards Ladera/View Park.</p> <p>Hawthorne homes typically range between \$602,072-835-708.</p>
<b>West Rancho Dominguez</b>	<p>Most ZIP codes in West Rancho Dominguez have an average SFH value between \$406,200-481,277.</p> <p>The southwest corner that borders Carson and Gardena is valued on average \$640,000-800,000, the southwest corner that borders Gardena and Carson averages \$481,278-602,072.</p> <p>Most of Carson is valued between \$481,278-602-072; the area surrounding CSU Dominguez Hills is typically between \$602,072-835,708.</p>
<b>Westmont/West Athens</b>	<p>Westmont homes are typically valued between \$406,200-481,277 and \$481,277-602,072.</p> <p>Gardena is mostly \$481,277-602,072.</p>
<b>Willowbrook</b>	<p>Most of Willowbrook very low and extremely low income, small parts are low income.</p> <p>Compton is mostly low and very low income.</p>
<b>Tenant Vulnerability Index</b>	
<b>Florence-Firestone</b>	Tenants in Florence-Firestone and the bordering City of LA have high vulnerability of displacement.
<b>Lennox</b>	<p>Tenants in Lennox and Inglewood are both moderately vulnerable, part of Inglewood that borders the City of LA are at lowest vulnerability.</p> <p>Hawthorne tenants are at highest vulnerability.</p>
<b>West Rancho Dominguez</b>	<p>Most of West Rancho Dominguez and Carson are moderately vulnerable.</p> <p>A part of West Rancho Dominguez is highly vulnerable, another part that intersects with Carson has the lowest vulnerability.</p>
<b>Westmont/West Athens</b>	<p>Westmont tenants are moderate and highly vulnerable.</p> <p>Western residents — bordering Hawthorne, Alondra Park, Torrance — have low vulnerability.</p> <p>Eastern residents — bordering West Rancho Dominguez and Carson — have high vulnerability.</p>
<b>Willowbrook</b>	Part of Willowbrook that borders compton has moderate vulnerability, compared to high vulnerability on the side that

	<p>borders West Rancho Dominguez and the City of LA.</p> <p>Compton has moderate vulnerability.</p>
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## Appendix H: Hypothesis Testing Variables

Measure	Description
Total Population, 2021	The total number of residents; further subcategorized by race: Black, Latino, Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI), Native, white, and other.
Below 100% Poverty Threshold, 2021	The rate of the population living in a family earning below 100% of the federal poverty threshold
Uninsured Rate, 2021	The rate of individuals who are not covered under health insurance or a health coverage plan
All Students Childhood Obesity, 2018	The rate of all 5th, 7th and 9th grade students not within the “Healthy Fitness Zone” of the Body Mass Index portion of the FitnessGram test
Food Pantries, 2020	The number of food pantry locations in a given area
Low Income & Low Access Population, 2019	The rate of low income individuals who do not live within 1/2 mile of a grocery store
SNAP Acceptance, 2022	The number of stores and food providers that accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits in an area
Poor Mental Health: 2018, 2020	The rate of adults who report 14 or more days during the past 30 days during which their mental health was not good
Poor Physical Health, 2018, 2020	The rate of adults who report 14 or more days during the past 30 days during which their physical health was not good
No Computer Access, 2021	The rate of households in which no one in the household owns a computer, including a desktop, laptop, tablet or smartphone
No Internet Access, 2021	The rate of households that do not have access to the internet (types of internet include broadband, dial-up, or a data plan for a smart phone)
Public Transit, 2021	The rate of the working population that primarily uses public transportation to get to and from work
Collisions Involving Pedestrians, 2020	The rate of the population over the age of 16 that is in the civilian labor force, meaning they are either employed or unemployed and looking for work
Cash Public Assistance, 2021	The rate of households receiving General Assistance or Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) in the past 12 months

Opportunity Youth, 2020	The rate of youth ages 16 to 24 who are neither working nor in school
Free & Reduced Price Lunch, 2022	The percentage of students who are eligible to receive aid from the National School Lunch Program (NSLP)



## Appendix H: Welch Two Sample t-test Results

$H_0$ : The true difference in means between cities and unincorporated areas  $\neq 0$

$H_A$ : The true difference in means between cities and unincorporated areas is 0

Dependent variable	<i>mean (city)</i>	<i>mean (unincorporated)</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>	95% CI
Black	0.247	0.280	-0.38	6.54	.713	-0.22	[-1.35, 0.92]
Latino	0.472	0.671	-1.91	9.00	.088	-1.11	[-2.31, 0.15]
AAPI	0.146	0.012	2.63	5.08	.046*	1.52	[0.18, 2.80]
Native	0.002	0.001	1.44	9.23	.182	0.83	[-0.37, 2.00]
White	0.095	0.014	2.30	5.06	.069	1.33	[0.03, 2.57]
Uninsured	0.104	0.123	-1.05	6.97	.329	-0.61	[-1.75, 0.57]
Below 100% poverty	0.166	0.183	-0.45	8.91	.664	-0.26	[-1.39, 0.88]
Below 200% poverty	0.358	0.461	-2.14	9.44	.059	-1.24	[-2.46, 0.04]
Cash assistance	0.053	0.066	-0.93	7.54	.381	-0.54	[-1.68, 0.63]
Labor participation	0.665	0.645	0.92	9.99	.382	0.53	[-0.64, 1.67]
No computer access	0.066	0.063	0.28	9.47	.785	0.16	[-0.98, 1.29]
No internet access	0.140	0.162	-0.77	7.61	.463	-0.45	[-1.58, 0.71]
Poor physical health (2020)	0.109	0.132	-2.91	10.00	.016*	-1.68	[-2.99, -0.30]
Poor mental health (2020)	0.160	0.184	-2.65	8.78	.027*	-1.53	[-2.81, -0.19]
Median property value	461,686	430,417	0.34	5.60	.745	0.20	[-196,826.3 259,364.6]
Median household income	69,822	58,515	1.74	10.00	.112	1.01	[-3,145.141 25,759.821]

SNAP acceptance	0.705	0.257	3.33	9.68	.008**	1.92	[0.49, 3.30]
Public transit	0.050	0.054	-0.25	7.83	.806	-0.15	[-1.28, 0.99]
Opportunity youth	0.129	0.160	-1.61	9.96	.139	-0.93	[-2.11, 0.29]
Unemployment rate	0.077	0.103	-2.33	9.33	.044*	-1.35	[-2.59, -0.05]
Poor physical health (2018)	0.141	0.168	-3.03	9.98	.013*	-1.75	[-3.08, -0.36]
Poor mental health (2018)	0.143	0.171	-2.68	9.60	.024*	-1.55	[-2.83, -0.20]
Free/reduced lunch	0.802	0.913	-2.43	8.56	.039*	-1.41	[-2.66, -0.09]

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*Note:* The  $t$  is the  $t$ -value,  $df$  is degrees of freedom,  $p$  is the  $p$ -value,  $d$  is Cohen's  $d$ , and the 95% CI is the confidence interval of the effect size (Cohen's  $d$ ).

## Appendix I: CalFresh Cases

Neighborhood	Population	CalFresh Cases	Population with CalFresh
Lennox	18,228	1,266	6.95%
Florence-Firestone	65,015	7,368	11.33%
West Rancho Dominguez	6,790	592	8.72%
Westmont/West Athens	46,129	16,336	35.41%
Willowbrook	36,668	3,628	9.89%
Carson	29,591	6,022	20.35%
Compton	69,164	14,999	21.69%
Gardena	22,438	4,552	20.29%
Hawthorne	51,918	6,958	13.40%
Inglewood	48,337	10,143	20.98%

Note: CalFresh cases and the percent of cases in population were manually calculated using data from the Equity Explorer<sup>206</sup> and LA County Department of Public Social Services.<sup>207</sup>

<sup>206</sup> LA County Chief Executive Office, "Equity Explorer Mapping Tool," 2023, [https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/9d7a43397ea84ab98a534be5b5376fba/page/Home/?data\\_id=data\\_Source\\_1-CalFresh\\_Analysis\\_9912%3A2094&views=Core-COVID-Filters](https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/9d7a43397ea84ab98a534be5b5376fba/page/Home/?data_id=data_Source_1-CalFresh_Analysis_9912%3A2094&views=Core-COVID-Filters). [Online database].

<sup>207</sup> LA County Department of Public Social Services, "City by Program," *Los Angeles County*, 2023, <https://myapps.dpss.lacounty.gov/pls/apexprod/f?p=20200123002:10:103506334094870>. [Online database].

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