

## **SOUTH LOS ANGELES AWARDED PROMISE ZONE DESIGNATION**

*Designation provides priority access to federal funding to address the area's 46% poverty rate*

By David Ysias

This morning at Los Angeles Trade Technical College (LATTC), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Deputy Secretary Nani Coloretti announced that South Los Angeles won a federal Promise Zone designation in the third round of the competition. The event was attended by Mayor Eric Garcetti, elected officials who represent the area – including Congresswomen Karen Bass and Lucille Roybal-Allard, community partners working in South Los Angeles, and residents - including students from the Coalition for Responsible Community Development's YouthBuild Charter Academy.

The goal of the Promise Zone initiative, created by President Obama in 2013, is to significantly reduce poverty by creating a federal partnership with communities. South L.A. is now one of thirteen urban Promise Zones in the nation, and Los Angeles is the only city to have two designations within its city boundaries.

The designation awarded today is the culmination of nearly years of work by community partners. During the first round of the competition, South L.A. was not eligible to apply because it had not received a prior urban renewal grant from the Obama Administration. Many were stunned that a community with a persistently high rate of poverty did not qualify as an applicant. In response, a collection of South L.A. leaders came together in Fall 2014 to develop a common vision and set of strategies that builds upon ongoing work in the area but also leverages the strengths and resources of partners across sectors. Though the coalition's South L.A. application did not result in a designation in the second round, the partnership continued to work together over the last year to successfully advocate for changes to HUD requirements and refine its application for the third round.

This effort to obtain a Promise Zone designation for South L.A. has been pushed hard by Congresswomen Karen Bass and Lucille Roybal-Allard, along with Mayor Eric Garcetti and Councilmember Curren Price. Los Angeles Trade Technical College, one of the nine colleges in the Los Angeles Community College District, is the lead agency; the coalition includes 53 formal partners and more than 50 additional allies. Members include (listed alphabetically) Brotherhood Crusade, City of Los Angeles Coalition for Responsible Community Development, Community Coalition, CD Tech, LA Chamber of Commerce, LA Urban League, LA's Promise, Los Angeles Unified School District, Move LA, Cal State Dominguez Hills, UCLA, and University of Southern California – among others. The collaborative work of the partnership was made possible with funding support from (listed alphabetically) the California Endowment, LA n Sync, Roy and Patricia Disney Family Foundation, and Weingart Foundation.

The new South L.A. Promise Zone is home to nearly 198,000 residents in parts of Vernon-Central, South Park, Florence, Exposition Park, Vermont Square, Leimert Park, and the Baldwin Hills/Crenshaw neighborhoods. Coalition partners who developed the vision, goals, and activities laid out in the winning application call it the South Los Angeles Transit Empowerment Zone (SLATE-Z) because they seek to capitalize on compelling opportunities that new light rail lines bring for neighborhood revitalization as well as connecting residents to education and economic opportunities.

This federal designation is a significant day for the South L.A. community: the award provides technical assistance and priority access to certain federal funding opportunities, which will bring greater resources to serve residents - 46% of whom live below the federal poverty line. For example, students at the 11 comprehensive high schools in SLATE-Z will receive increased support to prepare for colleges and careers. More than half (52%) of residents older than 25 have less than a high school education and only 9% have a bachelor's degree or higher. The coalition also plans to tackle the 12% unemployment rate and under-employment to move more residents into living wage jobs and career pathways.

"A phenomenal coalition of community partners worked tirelessly to get us to this day. The Promise Zone designation will help build on the incredible things already happening in South Los Angeles," said Mayor Eric Garcetti. "This will bring new resources, energy, and urgency into our movement to expand opportunity in all of L.A.'s neighborhoods. When you look at all that we're achieving — from our historic minimum wage increase, to our promise of a free year in community college for hardworking LAUSD graduates — it is clear that our city is committed to ensuring that all Angelenos have the tools to reach their full potential. Washington is taking notice, and we're grateful for the support."

Congresswoman Bass (37<sup>th</sup> District) commented, "This isn't just an incredible victory for South Los Angeles, it shows that when our community leadership works together, we can accomplish great things for our neighborhoods. I am thrilled that this coalition, led by Los Angeles Trade Technical College President Larry Frank, organized representatives at all levels of government to push for this important Promise Zone designation and I look forward to continuing to work in Washington with my South LA congressional partner Congresswoman Roybal-Allard."

"This Promise Zone designation will bring substantial and urgently needed economic benefits to South Los Angeles. Businesses, families, workers, and students will be able to find new opportunities and follow their dreams. Representative Bass and I appreciate that HUD heard our concerns that the criteria in previous Promise Zone rounds disadvantaged South LA, and responded by giving SLATE-Z's application the serious consideration it deserves," added Congresswoman Roybal-Allard (40<sup>th</sup> District). "The SLATE-Z coalition represents South LA at its best. This effective collaborative works hard to ensure that our community gets the resources it needs to become the vibrant and prosperous place we all know it can be. As we celebrate this milestone, there is still much to be done. I will keep fighting for additional federal resources for the South Los Angeles area, and look forward to continuing my partnership with the SLATE-Z collaborative to keep making South LA a better place to live and work."

"This is defining moment for South Los Angeles," said Los Angeles City Councilman Curren D. Price, Jr., who represents Council District 9. "Now, we have another tool to rewrite the South L.A. story, create the future we want for our children. The kind where one's zip code or skin color does not determine the benefits or burden we bear."

Larry Frank, president of LA Trade Tech College and convener of the SLATE-Z coalition stated, "We are thrilled about this announcement and honored Deputy Secretary Coloretti personally came to deliver the news. With preference points on most federal grant opportunities and a partnership with HUD staff, the existing LA Promise Zone received more than \$100 million in grants since designation in 2014. It is now South L.A.'s chance to step up. Our coalition is committed to our residents and each other to align our work and collectively pursue funding to advance our goals."

In addition to South Los Angeles, Atlanta, Georgia; Nashville, Tennessee; Evanston, Indiana; San Diego, California; and Southwest Florida Regional Planning Commission were awarded Urban Promise Zone

designations, the rural designation was awarded to Puerto Rico, and tribal designations to Spokane Tribe of Indians, Washington and Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians, Rolette County, North Dakota.