

**SELA**  
COLLABORATIVE



**2021**  
**THE SELA**  
**AGENDA**



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## PURPOSE OF THE SELA AGENDA

The SELA Agenda is a collectively and inclusively drafted report that addresses the impact of COVID-19 in the Southeast Los Angeles (SELA) region by highlighting investment opportunities in eight policy areas: education, environmental justice, economic recovery, healthcare, housing, nonprofit safety net, civic engagement and regional advocacy. The goal is to lay out a COVID-19 recovery plan that prioritizes the SELA region and ensures the region’s recovery and future prosperity by bringing SELA’s needs to the attention of elected officials, philanthropy, business sector, and community stakeholders.

### DRAFTING PROCESS

**3** months  
**2** virtual convenings  
**80** SELA leaders convened

Convenings led to: **Ad Hoc Writing Committee**  
 Resulting in: **SELA Agenda Report**

### REPORT STRUCTURE

#### **8** Policy Issue Areas, structured as:

- 1.** Issue Context
- 2.** Immediate & Long-Term Investment Opportunities
- 3.** SELA stakeholders engaged in each area

## COVID-19 IN SELA

The COVID-19 pandemic reveals that low-income individuals of color are at a higher risk of contracting and spreading the virus because they are the ones on the front lines working in restaurants, grocery stores, hospitals, and public transit. From higher rates of infection, hospitalizations, and deaths; to the region’s crowded multi-family living arrangements; and an already challenging community health profile of chronic illnesses – SELA became the epicenter of the Coronavirus pandemic in LA County, which is now the county with the highest COVID-19 cases in California.

City / Unincorporated Area	COVID CASES (AS OF 4.16.20)	COVID CASES (AS OF 1.18.21)
City of Bell	71	5,691
City of Bell Gardens	41	7,126
City of Cudahy	25	4,087
City of Huntington Park	46	9,784
City of Lynwood	89	11,400
City of Maywood	32	4,471
City of South Gate	116	16,001
City of Vernon	0	108
UA: Florence-Firestone	71	11,749
UA: Walnut Park	24	2,613
<b>Total Cases</b>	<b>515</b>	<b>73,030</b>

Source: LA County Public Health COVID-19 – LA County Case Summary

## SOUTHEAST LOS ANGELES (SELA)

Southeast Los Angeles (SELA) consists of a series of independent cities and unincorporated areas with a demonstrated history of resilience and self-reliance. The following cities make up the SELA region: Bell, Bell Gardens, Cudahy, Huntington Park, Lynwood, Maywood, South Gate, Vernon, and the unincorporated areas Florence-Firestone and Walnut Park.

## HISTORY OF SELA

The story of SELA is one of a community-at promise. Community organizations, both formal and informal, play a crucial role in supporting SELA's needs, and they continue to step up in new and creative ways. However, with limited resources to meet the high demand, the challenges in SELA continue to be magnified. Resource allocation must be at the forefront of investment - both inclusive and equity-focused - to address the immediate impact of COVID-19 and the region's future economic prosperity.

## SELA UNDERINVESTMENT CHALLENGES

SELA has faced decades of underinvestment. This history has led to challenges with environmental pollutants, housing, jobs, education, health, and wellbeing.

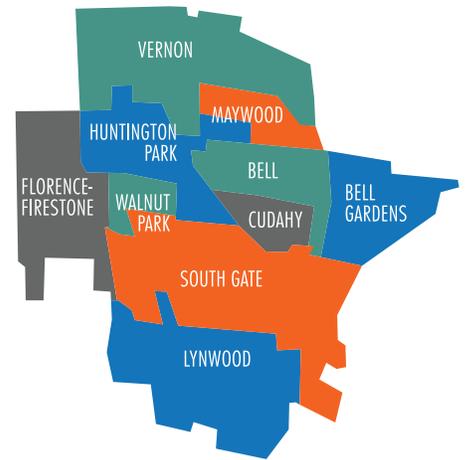
### Social Determinants of Health (SDoH):

- Proven to have a direct correlation with a communities' overall health and mental health wellness
- Account for approximately 50% of a person's health when considering the environment in which that person lives
- Examples of these include red-lining, gerrymandering, the war on drugs, restrictive voting laws, community policing, and secure communities, among others
- Working-class communities of color have the least acres of open space per capita; the most under-resourced schools; the least medical services and the highest proportions of uninsured residents; the least owner-occupied homes and the highest population densities, and the least economic opportunity, among other persistent social vulnerabilities.

The Social Determinants of Health highlights the complexity and interdependence of the challenges facing communities of color, none of which can be addressed in silos or without a community voice. To drive regional lasting change, our communities must focus on driving systemic change centered on equity and prioritize communities most impacted by these challenges.

## ROLE OF THE SELA COLLABORATIVE

The SELA Collaborative's mission is grounded in the recognition that no single organization can address large scale social and community challenges on their own. To create systemic change, a cross sector model is necessary to foster collaboration, coordination, and collective impact that improves the quality of life in SELA. By building on the assets already existing within the community, this change is possible. Thus, the SELA Collaborative serves as a *regional convener and connector* whose work specifically prioritizes: 1) Elevating SELA's regional identity, 2) Strengthening the SELA Nonprofit Sector, 3) Increasing civic engagement and 4) Grounding all strategies, action and work in authentic, community informed data and research to drive learning and ground decision making.



### SELA BY THE NUMBERS

**440,000**

residents

**90%**

identify as Latinx

**58%**

of residents are under 34

**43%**

are first-generation immigrants

**28.7%**

are non-citizen immigrants

**11.01%**

unemployment rate in SELA

**\$40,500**

median household income

## WHAT ARE THE INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES BY POLICY AREA?

# 1 POLICY AREA: EDUCATION

**Need:** Prioritize SELA students and families to address the learning loss and student educational achievement gaps magnified by the COVID-19 pandemic.



### IMMEDIATE INVESTMENTS

- Leverage SELA community organizations, key stakeholders, and SELA families to inform a COVID-19 response framework that outlines needs and resources required to close education academic gaps.
- Create and invest in responsive services to meet the demands of distance learning and address learning loss.



### LONG TERM INVESTMENTS

- Ensure that local school districts engage organizations to elevate the importance of student-centered models, including equity in funding.



### SELA STAKEHOLDERS CURRENTLY ACTIVELY ENGAGED:

- Alliance for a Better Community
- Innovate Public Schools
- Southeast Community Development Corporation
- KIPP SoCal
- Human Services Association
- East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice
- Southeast Community Foundation
- The Wall Las Memorias Project
- Families In Schools
- Parent Engagement Academy
- Richard N. Slawson Southeast Occupational Center
- SELA Arts Festival
- Latino Equality Alliance
- YMCA of Metropolitan Los Angeles
- First 5 LA
- Healthy Kids Happy Faces
- South Central Los Angeles Regional Center
- Dept. of Children & Family Services
- CA Latino Leadership Institute Southeast Fellows

# 2 POLICY AREA: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

**Need:** Prioritize SELA's community wellness by addressing environmental challenges to increase the quality of life for SELA residents.



### IMMEDIATE INVESTMENTS

- Prioritize SELA residents' quality of life by addressing challenges around air, soil, and water contamination.
- Increase green spaces and the tree canopy in SELA cities; promote urban gardens and affordable, healthy food.



### LONG TERM INVESTMENTS

- Invest in creating green job opportunities and implement workforce development pipeline programs to prepare community for employment.
- Provide resident training and resources on climate change preparedness ranging from cooling centers, earthquake preparation, flooding, etc.



### SELA STAKEHOLDERS CURRENTLY ACTIVELY ENGAGED:

- Communities for a Better Environment
- East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice
- Dr. Lucy Jones Center
- American Red Cross
- TreePeople
- Breathe Southern California
- From Lot to Spot
- The Trust for Public Land
- The Council on American-Islamic Relations
- Florence & Firestone Community Leaders
- SELA Arts Festival
- Sierra Club

# 3 POLICY AREA: ECONOMIC RECOVERY: GENERATIONAL WEALTH & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

**Need:** Economic recovery in SELA requires investments and resources that create opportunities to overcome the longstanding impacts of regional divestment and the development of wealth generation for all.



## IMMEDIATE INVESTMENTS

- Diversify opportunities to generate wealth through knowledge and asset accumulation.
- Identify opportunities to ensure economic recovery of all SELA residents, regardless of status.



## LONG TERM INVESTMENTS

- Increase the quality of educational systems in SELA focusing on the K-12, Higher Education, and workforce development pipelines through funding and partnerships.
- Increase investments in the region by encouraging partnerships and innovation.



## SELA STAKEHOLDERS CURRENTLY ACTIVELY ENGAGED:

- Local School Districts: LAUSD, Lynwood, Montebello
- YMCA's Achieve LA: Partnership with Cal State LA, East Los Angeles College and South Gate Campus
- Hub Cities
- UCLA Dream Center
- Huntington Park Chamber of Commerce
- Sierra Club Immigration
- Communities for a Better Environment
- Council of Mexican Federations
- Whittier College
- AltaMed Health Services

# 4 POLICY AREA: HEALTH CARE: FAMILY AND COMMUNITY WELLNESS

**Need:** Prioritize the SELA region in COVID-response and address the underlying factors that promote health disparities.



## IMMEDIATE INVESTMENTS

- **COVID-19 Response & Recovery:** The SELA Community must be priority #1 in the dissemination of resources and services, including the COVID-19 vaccine.
- Promoting appropriate access to COVID-19 testing and ongoing COVID-19 related medical and social services for all SELA residents.



## LONG TERM INVESTMENTS

- Promote systems and environmental change to improve social determinants of health in SELA.
- Create a comprehensive power-building strategy that sustains community engagement over the long-term to address social determinants of health through policy, systems, and environmental change.



## SELA STAKEHOLDERS CURRENTLY ACTIVELY ENGAGED:

- AltaMed Health Services
- Human Services Association
- Strong Women
- The Walls Las Memorias
- Latino Equality Alliance
- East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice

# 5 POLICY AREA: HOUSING

**Need:** Ensure that community residents are housed; Prioritize housing affordability and stability.



## IMMEDIATE INVESTMENTS

- Invest and increase rental assistance for economically impacted families inclusive of housing-related bills (water, electricity, etc.) to ensure they remain housed and increase the capacity of organization to serve more residents with legal support and advice.
- Create an equity-informed protocol to minimize displacement and prioritize current SELA residents for housing units. This should include establishing clear partnerships between CBOs, cities, and Developers.



## LONG TERM INVESTMENTS

- Ensure that incoming transit-oriented development and affordable housing developers prioritize SELA community needs and integrate hiring requirements, and prioritize who is eligible for units.
- Conduct a study on homeownership in Southeast Los Angeles with the goal of establishing funds, programs, policies, and opportunities to encourage renters to become homeowners.



## SELA STAKEHOLDERS CURRENTLY ACTIVELY ENGAGED:

- Community Legal Aid SoCal
- KIPP SoCal
- East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice
- New Start Housing Corporation, Inc.
- Communities for a Better Environment

# 6 POLICY AREA: NONPROFIT SECTOR: SELA'S SOCIAL SAFETY NET

**Need:** Increase investment to SELA's social safety net to serve SELA residents.



## IMMEDIATE INVESTMENTS

- Strengthen, prioritize, and support the existing nonprofits in SELA because they are a major source of civic and community engagement.
- Increase Elected Office Partnerships with the Nonprofit Sector that bring power to the SELA region.



## LONG TERM INVESTMENTS

- Invest in collaboration and partnerships. Fund multiple organizations to tackle diverse issues.
- Support restructuring grants and funds and advocate removing funding restrictions and ensuring full cost compensation for nonprofits.



## SELA STAKEHOLDERS CURRENTLY ACTIVELY ENGAGED:

- SELA Collaborative
- First 5 LA
- Best Start Communities

# 7 POLICY AREA: SELA CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

**Need:** Strengthen the understanding and increase opportunities for the community to participate in civic engagement activities.



## IMMEDIATE INVESTMENTS

- Develop a strategy to invite the most marginalized community members such as youth, undocumented residents, and the LGBTQ community to participate in leadership development sessions, thus creating a pipeline into civic involvement.



## LONG TERM INVESTMENTS

- Provide civic education to encourage civic engagement and deepen community agency to serve, protect, and take care of their neighborhoods.



## SELA STAKEHOLDERS CURRENTLY ACTIVELY ENGAGED:

- SELA Collaborative
- Alliance for a Better Community
- Florence & Firestone Community Leaders
- Communities for a Better Environment
- NALEO Education Fund
- The Pat Brown Institute at Cal State LA
- SELA Arts Festival
- Walnut Park Civic Engagement Project
- AltaMed Health Services
- Council of Mexican Federations
- Huntington Park Chamber of Commerce
- CA Latino Leadership Institute Southeast Fellows

# 8 POLICY AREA: SELA REGIONAL ADVOCACY

**Need:** Increase opportunities and capacity for SELA organizations to advocate on behalf of the SELA region at every level of government.



## IMMEDIATE INVESTMENTS

- Strengthen existing infrastructure to build the technical capacity to expand the network of SELA Leaders to build out towards integrating SELA champions state and nationwide.
- Promote state and national visibility of Southeast Los Angeles to uplift the region.



## LONG TERM INVESTMENTS

- Invest in deepening advocacy and civic engagement capacity for SELA nonprofits.
- Adopt and launch policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) change campaigns.



## SELA STAKEHOLDERS CURRENTLY ACTIVELY ENGAGED:

- SELA Collaborative
- Alliance for A Better Community
- Gateway Cities COG
- AltaMed Health Services
- Department of Children & Family Services
- First 5 LA
- Innovate Public Schools
- The Pat Brown Institute at Cal State LA
- YWCA Greater Los Angeles

## REFLECTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has confirmed and elevated what communities of color and those working on the frontlines as social safety net providers already knew: the current system does not prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable community members in SELA. The pandemic has illuminated and further exasperated social and economic barriers created by decades of underinvestment and disinvestment in the Southeast Region. The recovery of the SELA region will be of critical importance not only for Southeast LA but for the economic prosperity of Los Angeles County. Thus, *The SELA Agenda* calls for immediate investments to provide the SELA community with long-term, sustainable resources to meet community needs, ensure the sustainability of nonprofits, and secure the region's economic well being.





# INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic reveals that low-income individuals of color are at a higher risk of contracting and spreading the virus because they are on the front lines working in diverse industries such as restaurants, grocery stores, hospitals, and public transit. Various sources document that specific communities - low-income, Black, Latino, Pacific Islander, and essential workers – have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. From higher rates of infection, hospitalizations, and deaths; to the composition and complexity of a region often comprised of dense, crowded multi-generational living arrangements; and an already challenging community health profile including high rates of co-morbidities; SELA became the epicenter of the Coronavirus pandemic in Los Angeles County.



City / Unincorporated Area	COVID CASES (AS OF 4.16.20)	COVID CASES (AS OF 1.18.21)
City of Bell	71	5,691
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Source: LA County Public Health COVID-19 – LA County Case Summary

Despite these grim statistics, the story of SELA is one of a community-at promise. Community organizations, both formal and informal, play a crucial role in supporting the community’s needs, and they continue to step up in new and creative ways. However, with limited resources to meet the high demand, the challenges in SELA continue to be magnified. Resource allocation must be at the forefront of investment - both inclusive and equity-focused – to address the immediate impact of COVID-19 in SELA and the region’s future economic prosperity.



Photo Credit: County of Los Angeles

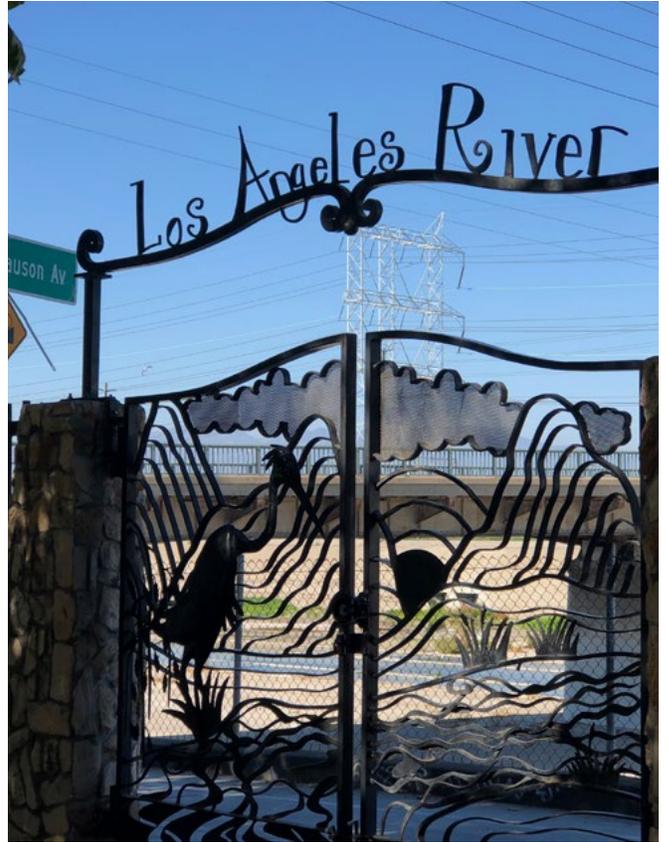


Photo Credit: County of Los Angeles



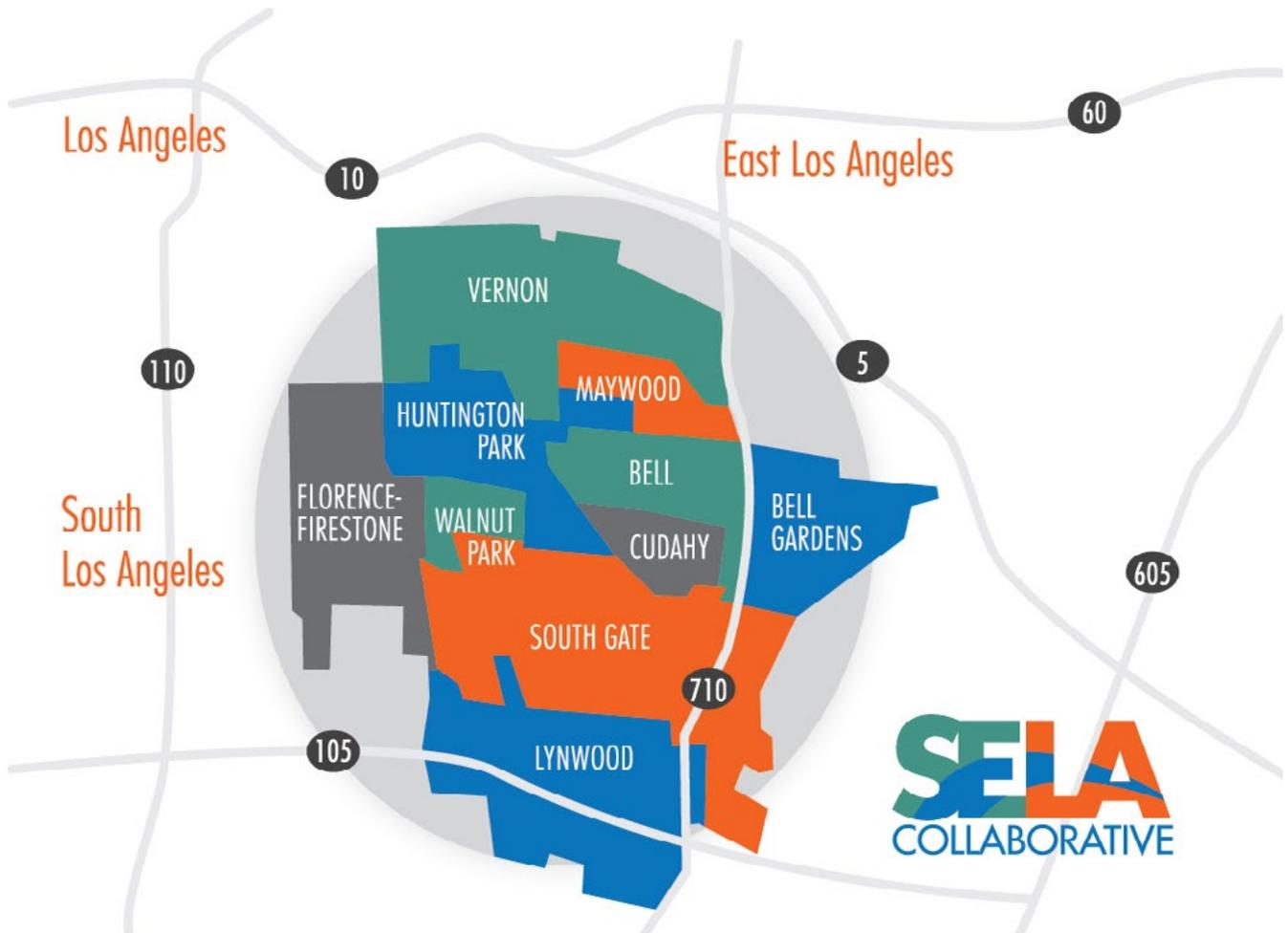
# THE SELA AGENDA



**Having experienced decades of underinvestment and disinvestment, the recovery of this region will be of critical importance not only for the SELA community but for the economic prosperity of Los Angeles County.**

*The SELA Agenda* seeks to develop a collectively and inclusively drafted platform for the SELA region to address the impact of COVID-19 and create a shared understanding of the investment opportunities that exist in SELA to ensure the recovery and future prosperity of the region. Our collective goal is to bring to the attention of elected officials, philanthropy, the business sector, and stakeholders that a COVID-19 recovery plan must prioritize the SELA region to ensure the region's future economic prosperity. Each policy is broken down in the following order: Issue context, Immediate and Long-Term Investment opportunities, and a section highlighting SELA stakeholders that are engaging in each area. It is also important to note that the list of stakeholders in SELA is not set-in-stone and may not include every stakeholder. The list highlights SELA stakeholders who have self-identified these issue areas in ongoing conversations with the SELA Collaborative.

*The SELA Agenda* was drafted through a collaborative process in partnership with a network of leaders working and committed to serving the SELA region engaged through the Collaborative's SELA Leaders Network. During a three-month process, the SELA Collaborative convened over 80 SELA leaders, representing 55 organizations, through two virtual meetings to identify issue areas and investment opportunities. They discussed ways to support the immediate response to the COVID-19 pandemic and address the region's long-term well-being. Following the first convening, an Ad Hoc Writing Committee was created to support the drafting of *The SELA Agenda* report. The SELA Collaborative leveraged its members' expertise and tapped other leaders in the region to support this process.



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF SELA

Southeast Los Angeles (SELA) consists of a series of independent cities and unincorporated areas with a demonstrated history of resilience and self-reliance. The following cities make up the SELA region, as defined by the SELA Collaborative: eight cities, and two unincorporated areas, representing Los Angeles County Districts 1 and 2. These cities include Bell, Bell Gardens, Cudahy, Huntington Park, Lynwood, Maywood, South Gate, Vernon, Florence-Firestone, and Walnut Park.

### SELA STATS \*

**440,000**

approximate number of SELA residents

**90%**

of the population identify as Latinx

**58%**

of residents are under the age of 34

**43%**

of SELA residents are first-generation immigrants

**28.7%**

are non-citizen immigrants

**11.01%**

unemployment rate in SELA, higher than the LA County average of **8.9%**

**\$40,500**

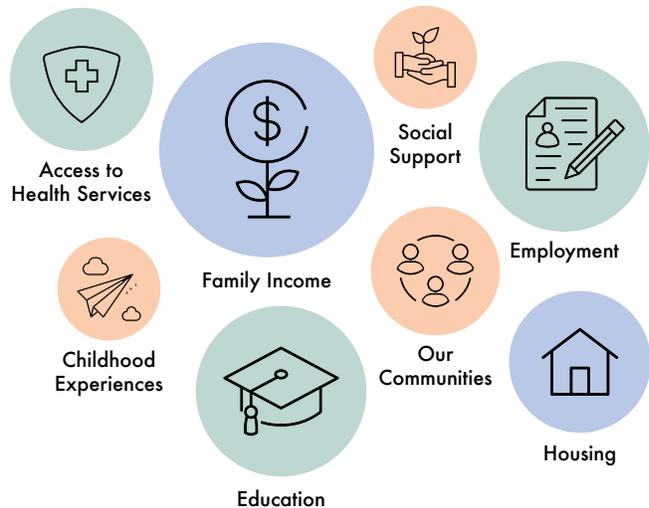
SELA's median household income, lower than LA county median of almost **\$58,000**

\* According to tabulated 2010 Census data for SELA cities

In 2017, SELA Collaborative’s member The Pat Brown Institute for Public Affairs at Cal State LA provided an analysis of the Human, Housing, Business, and Transportation assets of the Central 710 Freeway Corridor (Pat Brown Institute et al., 2017). According to the report, younger SELA residents attend post-secondary institutions at higher rates than their parents, boding well for the region’s future stability. The region is home to large immigrant populations with a high percentage of Latino residents. Diverse industries and business activities create job opportunities. Despite these promising assets, significant structural barriers exist that limit the maximization of the region’s potential and progress. As the region’s population continues to grow, and economic, health, education, and social indicators reflect the suboptimal child and family well-being, the importance of harnessing the region’s collective power and voice is critical to ensure the region’s long-term prosperity. However, to truly understand the current conditions and challenges facing the SELA region, it is essential to contextualize its history.

The SELA geographic area evolved into a hub of industrialization due to its proximity to major rail routes that served the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles. In the early 1900’s SELA was initially an industrial area that created middle-class union jobs with thriving companies like Ford Motor Company and Firestone Tires Co. The homeownership rate was high among people living and working in the southeast communities. The region continued to maintain a strong manufacturing profile as industries transitioned over time. However, in the 1980’s the SELA region began to experience a demographic and economic shift coupled with the loss of jobs as major companies closed. By 1993, the industry submitted to apparel and textiles. This trend has continued with the most recent economic expansion in the leisure, hospitality, and retail trade (Thornberg et al., 2017).

Historically, the significance of the Southeast LA region to LA County and the nation has been downplayed or little understood. **Originally designed to be a manufacturing center for Los Angeles County, it is now a region where residents lives blend into high traffic, environmental pollutants, and institutional underinvestment.** In recent decades the population has continued to increase, and there is a need for resources and continued community development (SELA Nonprofit Needs Assessment, 2019). SELA’s industrialized beginnings have created several challenges for the people now residing in the region. SELA’s environmental injustices often stem from its industries, such as the Exide Plant and the massive movement of goods across the region via the 710 Freeway. This translates to a region that faces numerous health challenges including having some of the highest asthma and diabetes rates, due to SELA communities’ exposure to toxins. Thus, it is essential to understand how the Social Determinants of Health have a direct correlation with a communities’ overall health and mental health wellness.



## SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

The Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) account for approximately 50% of a person’s health when considering the environment in which people live. Poor SDoH have been created and perpetuated over decades of disinvestment in working-class communities of color like SELA and codified into law through structural discrimination and racist or nativist policies. Examples of these include redlining, gerrymandering, the war on drugs, voter suppression, community policing, and secure communities, among others. These policies have created imbalances in resources, opportunity, and power. As a result, working-class communities of color have the least acres of open space per capita; the most under-resourced schools; the least medical services and the highest proportions of uninsured residents; the least owner-occupied homes and the highest population densities, and the least economic opportunity, among other persistent social vulnerabilities.

The City of Los Angeles Health Atlas reports that adults in Southeast Los Angeles have the highest levels of fair or poor health (29%) in all county health districts and has one of the highest rates of adult obesity, exceeding the county’s 30%. SELA is historically known for its lack of service infrastructure, high community needs, and low civic engagement, with persistently low voter participation — as only one measure of the latter. Despite these seemingly grim statistics, the story of SELA is one of a community-at promise. The SELA Collaborative’s 2019 *SELA Nonprofit Needs Assessment: Landscape Analysis* identified 494 active nonprofit entities in the region, although only 75 of those organizations work as service providers. Nonprofit organizations serve a critical role in bridging resources and opportunities for communities and reaching communities as trusted messengers. Thus, creating a network of partners to strengthen and encourage collaboration, coordination, and partnership building to holistically support the community and drive systemic change is vital.

## ROLE OF SELA COLLABORATIVE

Despite having over 400 active nonprofits in the SELA region, many local leaders characterize SELA as an area with few nonprofits when considering that 250 of those 400 are churches, and only 75 organizations identify as service providers. Many SELA organizations are facing financial challenges and limited capacity to secure funding, in addition to an overall lack of financial investment from both the public and philanthropic sectors (SELA Nonprofit Needs Assessment, 2019). The Pat Brown Institute’s analysis depicts a growing community with ample opportunity for continued development and residents’ positive outcomes. However, the report also highlighted that “political disunity has remained an obstacle to developing a regional voice, which is particularly disabling in a county with so many stakeholders vying for resources” (Thornberg, Kleinheinz, Meux, & Paik, 2017; SELA Nonprofit Needs Assessment, 2019). Therefore, concentrated and continuous investment in nonprofits in the SELA region would directly impact the well-being of its residents and bolster the capacity of current institutions.

A lack of intentional investment without adequately engaging SELA communities in actively shaping the health of their neighborhoods has resulted in historic disinvestment and systemic social determinants of health. The SELA Collaborative is committed to building and sustaining healthy, thriving communities, which includes ensuring that residents are civically engaged and have opportunities to improve their quality of life in the region.

**A lack of intentional investment without adequately engaging SELA communities in actively shaping the health of their neighborhoods has resulted in historic disinvestment and systemic social determinants of health.**

The SELA Collaborative is a network of organizations gathered to lead Southeast Los Angeles into an era of increased vitality by strengthening the SELA community, building collective power, and encouraging innovation to drive regional systemic change. The SELA Collaborative mission is grounded in the recognition that no single organization can address large scale social and community challenges on its own. A cross sector model is necessary to create systemic change in the SELA region and foster collaboration that improves the quality of life in the Southeast region. By building on the assets already existing within the community, change is possible. Thus, the SELA Collaborative serves as a Regional Convener and Connector for the SELA region whose work specifically prioritizes:



1.  **Elevating SELA’s regional identity**

2.  **Strengthening the SELA Nonprofit Sector**

3.  **Increasing civic engagement**

4.  **Grounding all strategies, activities, and work in authentic, community informed data and research to drive learning and ground decision making.**

# POLICY AREAS

Through the engagement and feedback of over 80 SELA Leaders the following eight policy areas were identified. Each policy area includes the following structure: Issue context, Immediate and Long-Term Investment opportunities, and a section highlighting SELA stakeholders actively engaged in each policy area.

**1** EDUCATION ▶

**5** HOUSING ▶

**2** ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ▶

**6** NONPROFIT SECTOR ▶

**3** ECONOMIC RECOVERY ▶

**7** CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ▶

**4** HEALTH CARE ▶

**8** REGIONAL ADVOCACY ▶



**SELA**  
SOCIETY OF ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS ASSOCIATION

**OUR MISSION**  
To empower the 500,000+ members, both  
individuals and organizations, to  
the highest quality of life.

**MEMBER BENEFITS INCLUDE:**  
- LIVE WEBINARS

**Roadmap to Success**

**At your Service**

- Personalized Coaching
- Business Development
- Marketing Support
- Financial Planning
- Legal & Insurance Services
- HR & Payroll Solutions
- Technology Integration
- Industry Connections
- Networking Opportunities
- Access to Exclusive Resources
- Ongoing Education & Training
- 24/7 Member Support



Photo Credit: Families In Schools (FIS)



Photo Credit: Families In Schools (FIS)

## EDUCATION

Written by: *Carla Lopez & Sandy Mendoza*

### CONTEXT

Since March 2020, SELA families have had to transition to distance learning while also being forced to afford the unanticipated costs and challenges related to schooling at home. With the closures of in-person instruction in public schools due to the coronavirus pandemic, families in the SELA region have been under siege attempting to manage their children’s education and safeguarding their employment. Schooling from home and navigating the digital divide, literacy, and distance learning are compounded by the stress associated with the pandemic’s uncertainty. Families are navigating a tremendous number of stressors ranging from childcare and caregiving to the loss of income. Additionally, families are managing the socio-mental impacts of ongoing isolation at home, and the acute awareness of how their legal status impacts their ability to access governmental resources connected to healthcare, food, cash relief, housing stability, and utility bills [1].

representing approximately 250,000 families. The gap is even wider for families in SELA; Less than half of all families have the technological resources for distance learning. The impact on learning loss could put students behind by as much as a year, exacerbating current achievement gaps by 15 to 20%. This unwelcome outcome may be worse for Students with Disabilities and English Learners. The longer schools remain closed, the greater disproportionate effect it will have in widening the learning loss and compounding the achievement gaps present before the arrival of COVID-19 for several years. If these gaps continue to widen, it will affect a whole generation of students and have long-term economic consequences for the region and the county.

Funding for K-12 schools represents about 40% of the State’s General Fund expenditures and relies heavily on State revenue generated through personal income tax (70%), sales and use taxes (20%), and corporate taxes (10%). Therefore, in anticipation of K-12 schools’ potential budgetary challenges, advocacy for resources must integrate both schools’ and families’ escalating costs related to distance learning, an equitable plan for safe school re-opening, and targeted services for unique populations. Strategies to mitigate the educational impacts on SELA students and families must be prioritized and identified in the long term.



1  
IN  
4

**school-age children lack the technological resources to access distance learning**

According to a Connected Communities and Inclusive Growth 2020 report, 1 in 4 school-age children lack the technological resources to access distance learning,



## IMMEDIATE INVESTMENTS

**Leverage SELA community organizations, key stakeholders, and SELA families to inform a COVID-19 response framework that outlines the needs and resources required to close education gaps.**

### How to get it done:

- Strengthen partnerships across sectors; government agencies, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and the business community to integrate a strategy to play an active role in distance learning.
- Engage diverse decision-makers (city managers, city council members, county officials), service providers, and community organizations in a series of roundtable discussions to create alignment and buy-in for an equitable framework.
- Listen to and uplift all the resident voices concerned about education equity and the digital divide. Open dialogue and engagement with families, community members, and organizations to gather feedback on schools' next steps for re-opening must be prioritized. Building community leadership is critical to inform a responsive education plan. Families across SELA have lived experiences that showcase the assets and challenges essential to integrate into best practices and implementation.
- Incorporate a communication strategy to increase dialogue opportunities between SELA school districts — Los Angeles, Montebello, and Lynwood Unified school districts - and SELA families. The communication strategy should include a goal to raise awareness across the SELA region.

**Create responsive services to meet the demands of distance learning and address learning loss.**

### How to get it done:

- *Distance learning needs:* Uplift the technology, connectivity, software, and teacher training professional development needs to provide students the best quality education possible. Administrators must administer culturally appropriate and relevant surveys to parents and families across the districts to review how students need support.
- Address and remove structural barriers in accessing resources to carry out remote learning: Partners advocating for responsive, free to low-cost internet service for all families. For example, families have shared that internet providers ask families for a credit card, social security number, or recent paycheck stubs, thus creating additional obstacles.
- Address learning loss for SELA families. Focus on equitable funding from federal and state for summer learning and supplemental programs. The impact of learning loss will be felt for years to come — and will impact job creation, higher education, and resource programs.

- Build capacity of families to better support their children in distance learning. Provide parents with technology training; access to childcare for working-poor families.
- Create learning hubs — families often rely on each other for support during crisis times, such as neighbors watching children while parents work. Support opportunities for low-income children to learn together through “learning hubs” to reduce attendance and learning loss.
- Basic needs — food insecurity continues to be an issue as job loss rises. Ongoing access to food may include increasing the maximum benefit of SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program).
- *Broadband for All* — Establish a coordinated body to address the digital divide and advocate of internet services for families. Engage local organizations and volunteer groups who can support in identifying gaps in distance learning. Having electronic access should be a baseline standard for all Californians. Beyond education closing the digital divide also impacts families' ability to access resources such as healthcare, jobs, economic and social well-being.



## LONG TERM INVESTMENTS

**Ensure that the local school districts engage organizations to elevate importance of student-centered models, including equity in funding.**

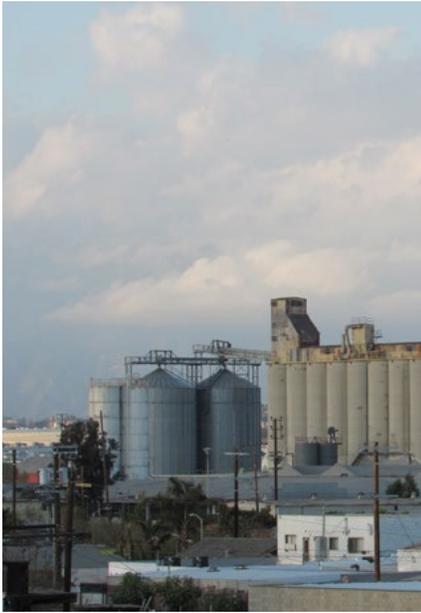
### How to get it done:

- Stakeholders must be engaged in conversations on transparency and accountability on Measure RR to ensure equity in the spending. Recently passed, Measure RR is the \$7 billion School Upgrades and Safety Measure. Proceeds allocation to upgrade, modernize, and replace aging and deteriorating school facilities, update technology, and address facilities inequities.



## SELA STAKEHOLDERS ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN EDUCATION

- Alliance for a Better Community
- Innovate Public Schools
- Southeast Community Development Corporation
- KIPP SoCal
- Human Services Association
- East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice
- Southeast Community Foundation
- The Wall Las Memorias Project
- Families In Schools
- Parent Engagement Academy
- Richard N. Slawson Southeast Occupational Center
- SELA Arts Festival
- Latino Equality Alliance
- YMCA of Metropolitan Los Angeles
- First 5 LA
- Healthy Kids Happy Faces
- South Central Los Angeles Regional Center
- Dept. of Children & Family Services
- CA Latino Leadership Institute Southeast Fellows



## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: COMMUNITY WELLNESS

Written by: *Marlene Esquivel & SELA Collaborative*

### CONTEXT

The Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach are a major hub of the global goods movement into the United States and **“the health impact of the I-710 on the surrounding communities has not gone unnoticed, but it remains one of the major unsolved equity issues in LA”** (A Portrait of Los Angeles County, 2017). From air quality, congestion, soil contamination, mitigating heat, low tree canopy, and low access to green space, many different regional actors play a pivotal role in addressing these environmental concerns. Looking at the roles that cities, public offices, and agencies may play in developing the infrastructure is necessary to proactively address climate change. Policies should consider how to shift from gas powered trucks and vehicles to alternatives such as hybrid or fully electric vehicles. Additionally, policies should focus on justice and community-centered reparations in addressing industry-connected events such as the Exide lead contamination charges in 2015 and the Delta Airlines fuel dumping in 2020. These policies should also support healthcare services to respond to physical and mental distress that are due to the current built environment in the SELA region. At large, to address the healthcare realities such as the SELA region having the worst air quality indicators in LA county and asthma rates, environmental justice must be prioritized.

The environmental wellness of the region must be approached through a lens that recognizes the impacts of structural racism and the disproportionate burden SELA communities have carried in a global economy where a substantial amount of goods are consumed outside of SELA. Given these realities, the SELA region needs to ensure that businesses address their impact through corporate social responsibility programs and include the triple bottom line into their calculations. It is crucial that cities, CBOs, and residents receive access to resources to prepare and protect the community from climate change impacts, gain worker protections in working with hazardous pollutants, and hold industries accountable in a way that mitigates their impact on the environment. Los Angeles County recently adopted the LA County Sustainability Plan that also addresses some of the overarching issues around environmental justice and prioritizing the SELA Region will be a critical step in equitably addressing these challenges that have influenced why the SELA region has been ravaged by the COVID-19 Pandemic.



## IMMEDIATE INVESTMENTS

**Prioritize SELA residents' quality of life by addressing challenges around air, soil, and water contamination.**

**How to get it done:**

- Invest in soil contamination clean up where contributing parties are responsible in this effort as well. For example, working with East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice on the Exide clean-up efforts in SELA.
- Prioritize community engagement and feedback to ensure community wellness is at the center of all strategies. Include engagement of legislators, elected officials, and agencies, such as the water board.
- Strengthen environmental regulation policies for manufacturing companies and transit companies in the region to reduce air pollutants.

**Increase green spaces and tree canopy in the cities; walkable, urban housing next to transportation hubs, and promote urban gardens and affordable, healthy food.**

**How to get it done:**

- Increase access to parks for recreation and health is vital to ensuring community wellness and mental health. Develop partnerships with organizations leading the efforts in increasing green space in SELA that prioritizes the needs of community.
- Promote urban gardens as an opportunity to support community. Ensure residents have access to healthy food choices is essential. Advocate for greater alignment between community development and creating healthy community environments for all residents.
- Prioritize SELA Community engagement and communication to ensure that community voices are heard. Working with local elected officials on land use reform to focus on building more housing near mass transit and reducing the carbon emissions of newer developments by incorporating green energy alternatives into its building plan (i.e. solar panels, utilizing eco-friendly materials).
- Increase access to housing development plans, and SELA city general plans in order to address quality of life issues.
- Ensure housing is not impacted by high industrial usage and highway pollution.



## LONG TERM INVESTMENTS

**Invest in creating green job opportunities and implement workforce development pipeline programs to prepare community for employment.**

**How to get it done:**

- Prioritize job creation and pipeline programs. SELA is experiencing several investment projects such as Metro's West Santa Ana Branch, LA River Revitalization projects, SELA Cultural Center, and housing development.
- Partner with local organizations to identify ways to engage community to develop programs that are accessible to all residents.
- Coordinate with unions on a blue green alliance (i.e. environmental groups and unions joining forces).

**Educating community on environmental issues affecting SELA community by training community members to speak at local governmental agencies to enforce said regulations.**

**How to get it done:**

- Create an op-ed program to teach community members to communicate on community issues in local media outlets to raise awareness.
- Develop partnership and funding opportunities for community organizations to engage community on crisis management and climate change awareness and preparedness.



## SELA STAKEHOLDERS ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

- Communities for a Better Environment
- East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice
- Dr. Lucy Jones Center
- American Red Cross
- TreePeople
- Breathe Southern California
- From Lot to Spot
- The Trust for Public Land
- The Council on American-Islamic Relations
- Communities for a Better Environment
- Florence & Firestone Community Leaders
- SELA Arts Festival
- Sierra Club



Photo Credit: COFEM



Photo Credit: COFEM



Photo Credit: COFEM

## ECONOMIC RECOVERY:

Written by: *Juan De La Cruz & Diego Sepulveda*

# WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND GENERATIONAL WEALTH

### CONTEXT

The coronavirus has reverted the gains in wealth captured in the “Living and Working in SELA” survey. As noted by the Pat Brown Institute and SELA Collaborative survey, most of the cities in SELA have a high rate of tenant occupied and not owner occupied; 46% are renters, 35% own, 16% live with family, and 2% don’t have stable housing. In addition, homeownership is 3% lower than Los Angeles county and 50% of residents live in a household with three or more people. Finally, the SELA region continues to have one of the highest unemployment rates in Los Angeles county. Presently, the lack of middle-class union jobs, the divestment of education, and the lack of homeownership has hindered the ability of SELA residents to create generational wealth for their families.

As families rely more and more on resource distributions led by government, schools, nonprofits, and the private sector, the economic recovery in SELA will require a multipronged approach to address the following challenges: loss of wealth and income, loss in educational achievement, addressing the historical distrust of financial institutions, lack of localized wealth generating activities, and a need to learn how to manage financial resources beyond learning how to save. An economic recovery plan in SELA requires investments and resources to overcome longstanding impacts of divestment to support the development of wealth for all residents: young, immigrant, first-generation, undocumented, predominately Latino, and those with modest educational backgrounds.

**An economic recovery plan in SELA requires investments and resources to overcome longstanding impacts of divestment to support the development of wealth for all residents.**

The lack of investment in the SELA region has contributed to a lack of generational wealth such as financial disempowerment for youth, families and immigrant residents (i.e. credit worthiness, savings, checking accounts, homeownership), lack of workforce development for today’s 21st century jobs (i.e. clean jobs, tech-job, engineering, health care sector) and the ability to support the immigrant populations in SELA to become Lawful Permanent Residents and/or US citizens. Additionally, there are more predatory lending businesses than there are bank branches in SELA. Considering these facts, combined with a high immigrant population relying on a substantial cash-based economy vs. one dependent on traditional banking tools; wealth generating tools in SELA must be tailored to immigrant needs, safety-connected behaviors, and priorities.

If financial sectors and higher education aim to function as wealth generating opportunities, it’s critical that the financial

sector, education institutions and CBO's work together to break this cycle of debt for families. Lastly, it is estimated that SELA has more than 70,000 lawful permanent residents that can become US Citizens. A robust plan working with school districts, community colleges and universities working with the LA County of Immigrant Affairs should be developed to help lawful permanent residents become US Citizens.

**As a multitude of SELA residents are living paycheck to paycheck, traditional ways of thinking about "savings" will not be enough to generate wealth.**

Considerations on both building literacy, access to income and wealth, and creating the infrastructure to grant community members access to local well-paying jobs are necessary. It is also essential to meet basic needs first to 1) avoid a downward spiral into debt and 2) build the capacity necessity to create a financially healthy region as stability in housing is correlated with positive educational outcomes.



## IMMEDIATE INVESTMENTS

**Diversify opportunities to generate wealth through knowledge and asset accumulation.**

**How to get it done:**

- Secure funds from the state's Financial Empowerment Fund to establish multi-sector partnerships to deliver financial empowerment programs throughout Southeast LA. On October 2, 2019, Governor Gavin Newsome signed Senate Bill 455 to create the California Financial Empowerment Fund, a \$4 million fund to invest in financial education and financial empowerment programs for unbanked and underbanked populations in California. If awarded funds, this provides an opportunity for SELA nonprofits engaged in economic empowerment and financial literacy to increase reach, partnerships, and impact across the region. The Financial Empowerment Fund will remain in effect until January 1, 2025. There will be a need for continued funding; thus, there might be an opportunity to engage in advocacy efforts to establish this as a permanent fund within the state of California.
- Financial sectors play a big part in supporting financial empowerment for youth and families in SELA. Banking institutions such as Wells Fargo, Bank of America, Chase bank and other financial institutions can support these efforts by funding CBO's and school districts through their Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) Credits. An example of a public private partnership can be to create financial empowerment and workforce development hubs in high schools in partnership with the financial sectors, community colleges, and universities. These hubs should serve a holistic approach and create pipelines with well-developed and culturally responsive wealth management and financial

empowerment classes during school, as a requirement and not as an elective, to help students understand the need to be financially responsible, understanding how investments works and how credit worthiness creates opportunities for loans for schools, investments, and homeownership.

- Increase funding for CBO's to support local efforts such as understanding credit worthiness and opening savings and checking accounts, but do not teach credit worthiness to create financial wealth.
- Financial institutions should work with SELA cities to incentivize homeownership using incentives such as living in a city for a long period of time to qualify for loan forgiveness.

**Identify opportunities to ensure economic recovery of everyone in SELA, regardless of status.**

**How to get it done:**

- Permanently fund the LA Justice Fund and Strengthen the Office of Immigrant Affairs within the County of Los Angeles. If permanently funded, the LA Justice Fund would continue to provide legal representation and counsel to Angelenos dealing with deportation and removal proceedings in Los Angeles County.
- According to the State of Immigrants in LA County report by the USC Dornsife Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration, immigrants make up 36% of LA County's population and 1 in 3 Angelenos are foreign-born, 60% of children have at least one immigrant parent, and 1 in 5 Angelenos are either undocumented themselves or live with someone who is. Nearly 70% of undocumented immigrants have lived in L.A. for at least decade. Immigrants are deeply embedded in the social, economic, and cultural vibrancy of Los Angeles; therefore, it is important for immigrants to feel invested in, safe, and welcomed.
- Identify statewide and local funds — emergency, temporary, permanent — that can be opened up to all Californians regardless of status. Across Southeast Los Angeles, countless residents, families, communities, and businesses have faced the impacts of COVID-19, and this couldn't be any truer for people of color in the region. Many immigrant community members in Southeast LA were excluded from relief due to their immigration status in the Cares Act bills. In California, many immigrants were also denied benefits, such as unemployment insurance. In order to address the exclusion to benefits for immigrants — those without legal status — it is important to identify, create, and/or strengthen funds where all Californians can access relief regardless of status.



## LONG TERM INVESTMENTS

### **Increase the quality of educational systems in SELA focusing on the K-12, Higher Education, workforce connection pipelines through funding and partnerships.**

#### How to get it done:

- Strengthen and expand the ELAC Office of Workforce Education (OWE) at the South Gate satellite campus to have a robust program that serves the Southeast Los Angeles Area. The South Gate satellite provides some workforce development services, but it is not as robust as the main campus. Due to high unemployment rates in SELA, it seems that the OWE presents a natural opportunity since the South Gate satellite campus predominantly serves the SELA community. Strengthening and expanding the OWE that works simultaneously with CBO's and school districts is crucial to generational wealth and creating 21st century high paying jobs.
- Integrate financial knowledge and wealth generation strategies at all levels of education (K-12 through the university level) to help students understand financial empowerment focusing on how generational wealth is formed and how to create it for their families. A final example of a public private partnership is also utilizing LAUSD parent centers to create courses and classes that are culturally responsive regarding financial empowerment for parents and caregivers. In addition, provide workforce development training at the parent centers that can create well-paying jobs for families. Although there are many organizations that provide workforce development opportunities within SELA like Hub Cities in Huntington Park and the Slauson Occupational transportation in Bell, we know that transportation is an impediment to most SELA residents, especially low income and immigrant populations. We know that families feel that their local schools are a trusted source, and we should capitalize on that opportunity to bring the resources to SELA residents and remove any obstacles that hinder progress.
- Provide greater grant funding and scholarship opportunities for Pell-eligible families and undocumented students (AB540)

### **Increase investments in the region by encouraging partnerships and innovation.**

#### How to get it done:

- Prioritize CBO and city/financial sector partnerships. Cities have not prioritized CBOs as the social safety net the way they are during the pandemic — historically, CBOs have not been “activated” because it's been believed that it's a desert of nonprofits.

- Increase partnerships between higher education institutions and employers to create paid internships, fellowships, or other job training experiences.
- Increase the creation of middle-class jobs/high paying jobs in SELA:
  - Support a collective vision of SELA cities on how to attract “right fit” industries into the region
  - Work with companies and employers to Integrate student debt-relief as part of jobs benefit packages to SELA residents
- Develop opportunities to support small businesses in SELA. 90% of businesses in SELA are small businesses. Partnering with local SBDC offices to support small businesses in SELA such as investing to help small businesses establish Point of Sale to ensure that they do not close indefinitely as often they are supporting multiple families.
- Release a study on homeownership in Southeast Los Angeles with the goal of establishing funds, programs, policies, opportunities to make renters into homeowners. Across Southeast LA, most residents do not own their own home or apartment, reflecting a working-class community where 46% of residents rent, 16% of residents live with family, and 47% of residents live with three or more adults. Knowing that home ownership is a driving force for economic mobility, the report could focus on home ownership opportunities and barriers at the local level, the housing supply and finance challenges, and elevate strategies to keep families in their home on the road to recovery from COVID19.



### **SELA STAKEHOLDERS ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN GENERATIONAL WEALTH/RECOVERY (WORKFORCE)**

- Local School Districts: LAUSD, Lynwood, Montebello
- YMCA's Achieve LA - Partnership with Cal State LA, East Los Angeles College and South Gate Campus
- Hub Cities
- UCLA Dream Center
- Huntington Park Chamber of Commerce
- Sierra Club Immigration
- Communities for a Better Environment
- Council of Mexican Federations
- Whittier College
- AltaMed Health Services



Photo Credit: AltaMed Health Services



Photo Credit: First 5 LA



Photo Credit: Pat Brown Institute at CSULA



Photo Credit: East Yard



Photo Credit: SCDC



Photo Credit: SCDC



Photo Credit: Hub Cities



Photo Credit: YMCA



Photo Credit: Families In Schools (FIS)



Photo Credit: COFEM





Photo Credit: AltaMed Health Services



Photo Credit: AltaMed Health Services

## HEALTH CARE:

## COMMUNITY AND FAMILY WELLNESS

Written by: Berenice Nunez-Constant

### CONTEXT

Surrounded by large industrial campuses and the 710-corridor, the communities of Southeast Los Angeles, particularly in the cities of Bell Gardens, Huntington Park, South Gate, Lynwood, Maywood, Cudahy, and Bell, are among the most health challenged and disadvantaged in Los Angeles. For example, SELA experiences some of the highest levels of environmental pollution in the state, exacerbated by a lack of green space and canopy cover throughout the region. According to the California Healthy Places Index, these factors along with poor economic conditions and low educational attainment have identified this region as among the “most disadvantaged” in the state. Thus, if the pandemic has ravaged the region, the connection between the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and these environmental factors cannot be overlooked as they contribute to and perpetuate chronic health conditions such as diabetes, cancer, asthma, and childhood obesity prevalent throughout the region. The region’s capacity to respond to this unique context has worsened with the lack of healthcare services and infrastructure available in SELA including COVID-19 testing, access to emergency hospital services, and the general absence of local resources and strategies for the containment of COVID-19 at the onset of the pandemic. To achieve health equity, the underlying factors that create health disparities must be addressed.

**SELA experiences some of the highest levels of environmental pollution in the state...these factors along with poor economic conditions and low educational attainment have identified this region as among the “most disadvantaged” in the state.**



Photo Credit: AltaMed Health Services



## IMMEDIATE INVESTMENTS

**COVID-19 RESPONSE & RECOVERY: The SELA community must be priority #1 in the dissemination of resources and services including the COVID-19 vaccine. Promoting appropriate access to COVID-19 testing and ongoing COVID-19 related medical and social services for all SELA residents.**

### How to get it done:

- Resource allocation should be guided by case rates, hospitalizations, and deaths, with prioritized contact tracing. Improve the collection of race and ethnicity data associated with testing and cases. Ensure accessibility for regardless of their ability to pay (insured & uninsured) or their status (documented or undocumented). Culturally appropriate public awareness and education campaign paired with targeted outreach by trusted messengers in SELA to combat the fear and misinformation related to the vaccine.



## LONG TERM INVESTMENTS

**Promote Systems and Environmental Change to Improve Social Determinants of Health.**

### How to get it done:

- Provide health, wellness, and social services SELA residents need to address the social determinants of health by maximizing reach through culturally responsive approaches, targeted support in Spanish language and specific resources for uninsured/undocumented/mixed status families and residents.
- Healthcare Access: Capacity building resources for providers to reach, engage, and enroll residents in primary care healthcare coverage program and social services and supports. Dedicated resources will be required for CBO partners to build healthcare knowledge and capacity and carry out deep community outreach and engagement. Centralized source and inventory of available services will also identify where needs and gaps persist for: healthcare, wellness, and social services resources available in SELA.

**Power Building: Create a comprehensive power-building strategy that sustains community engagement over the long-term to address social determinants of health through policy, systems, and environmental change.**

### How to get it done:

- Base and network-building: year-round engagement of patients, community members, and youth through one-on-one outreach, popular education events related to key community issues, place-making projects to build and sustain trusting relationships with and among community residents, increase social capital, and activate new residents around priority issues for the community.
- Leadership development: a structured leadership development session aimed at building power literacy and political efficacy while engaging residents in guided practice to exercise newly acquired leadership skills through advocacy campaigns.
- Community based participatory research: ongoing engagement of community residents in identifying and prioritizing key issues, creating and testing community-led solutions, and producing knowledge that honors community methodologies for data collection, analysis, and dissemination. Research will guide selection of policy campaigns, design of programming, and outreach strategies.



## SELA STAKEHOLDERS ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN HEALTH CARE

- AltaMed Health Services
- Human Services Association
- Strong Women
- The Walls Las Memorias
- Latino Equality Alliance
- East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice



## HOUSING:

### AFFORDABILITY AND STABILITY

Written by: SELA Collaborative

#### CONTEXT

It has been well documented that in LA County, residents are housing and rent burdened, and affordable housing is low and diminishing. Moreover, long-standing zoning laws heavily influence the pacing and affordability of housing development, and the intersection of these factors has exacerbated the homelessness crisis. In SELA, certain historical factors influence why and how residents experience housing instability. Across all SELA Cities, residents are spending more than 30% of income on rent – all SELA cities are above 60% (EYCEJ Report). Additionally, SELA is a housing dense region, with multiple families living in single plots of lands. Data from a USC Immigrant Report 2020 highlights that undocumented Latinos experience a higher percentage of being housing burdened. Recognizing that “59% of newly homeless cite economic hardship” (LAHSA), the homeless hotspots observed near the LA River and in few available green spaces reveal homelessness issues are also connected to environmental justice.

It is critical to contextualize how the region’s historical urban planning situated it as a manufacturing-heavy zone, lacking infrastructure for green spaces, pedestrian and bicyclist friendly built environments, and environmental conditions safe for residential living. Thus, to address housing affordability and stability is intricately connected to city zoning policies, rent control ordinances, addressing resource capacity to maintain its housing stock, expansion, and do so in an affordable way.

Community-based organizations in SELA have traditionally played a role in connecting residents with resources to remain housed, addressing how housing instability intersects with mental wellness/tenant’s health and safety for women and children (Human Services Association Annual Report, 2020), and distributing emergency funding (GCIR) to help families pay for their rent and mortgages. School districts also advocate for housing stability as students facing housing insecurity are eight times more likely to be asked to repeat a grade (LAHSA, 2020). Grassroot groups are advocating for cities to pass renter tenant protections, making information accessible to all residents and supporting residents applying for resources.

However, data does not currently exist that highlights how different housing indicators present themselves in the SELA cities – typically they are folded into supervisorial districts or varied definitions of “southeast Los Angeles.” **COVID-19 has shown that given these on-the-ground realities, housing is also a healthcare issue where families cannot easily quarantine if they are living in dense, multi-generational family units.**



## IMMEDIATE INVESTMENTS

**Invest and increase rental assistance for economically impacted families inclusive of housing-related bills (water, electricity, etc.) to ensure they remain housed and increase the capacity of organization to serve more residents with legal support and advice.**

### How to get it done:

- Engage with community organizations, elected officials, philanthropy, businesses, and agencies to create innovative strategies to support renters in SELA. We are reaching the 12-month mark since the Pandemic first began and this means that families who are struggling to pay rent may also need support with housing related bills. While rent moratoriums and a halt to service cancellations have been implemented by agencies like the Gas Company, the reality remains that the community will need support in paying back not only 12 months of rent but also 12 months of utilities.
- Nonprofits may have their primary issue area, but more and more are intersecting with housing – to serve residents they will need resources for staff, bilingual materials, expertise, Housing policies such as the Los Angeles Housing Leadership Academy, and to connect and be civically engaged with cities, county, districts, etc.

**Create an equity-informed protocol to minimize displacement and prioritize current SELA residents for housing units. This includes establishing clear partnerships between CBOs, cities, and Developers.**

### How to get it done:

- Invest in engaging community residents to understand community voice around housing issues impacted the region.
- Support a region wide assessment of zoning policies in SELA cities to identify opportunities to align cities and promote more regional unity in residential and land use policies
- Organizations, both formal and informal, play an important role as trusted messengers in the community and working in partnership with SELA stakeholders to develop an equity protocol to be used in assessing investment opportunities in SELA.



## LONG TERM INVESTMENTS

**Ensure that incoming transit-oriented development and affordable housing developers prioritize SELA community needs and integrate hiring requirements, prioritization of who is eligible for units.**

### How to get it done:

- Work in partnership with CBOs and engage stakeholders to identify and align development opportunities to ensure SELA region is prioritized in employment and housing opportunities.
- Actively engage in raising awareness and increasing communication with residents around development projects impacting the SELA region and ensure community voices are prioritized in the development of these projects.

**Conduct a study on homeownership in Southeast Los Angeles with the goal of establishing funds, programs, policies, opportunities to turn renters into homeowners.**

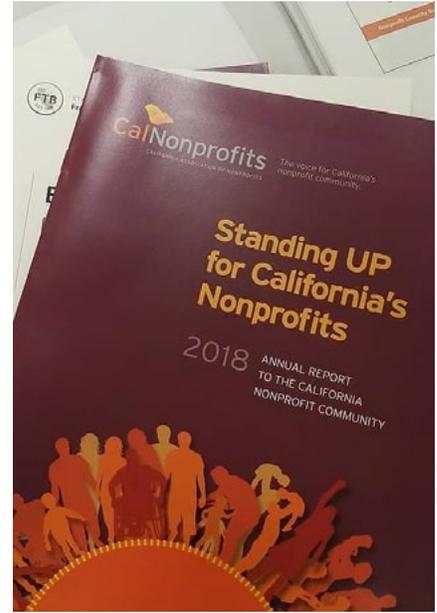
### How to get it done:

- Across Southeast LA, most residents do not own their own home or apartment, reflecting a working-class community where 46% of residents rent, 16% of residents live with family, and 47% of residents live with three or more adults. Knowing that home ownership is a driving force for economic mobility, the report could focus on home ownership opportunities and barriers at the local level, the housing supply and finance challenges, and elevate strategies to keep families in their home on the road to recovery from COVID-19.



## SELA STAKEHOLDERS ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN HOUSING

- Community Legal Aid SoCal
- New Start Housing Corporation, Inc.
- KIPP SoCal
- Communities for a Better Environment
- East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice



## NONPROFIT SECTOR: SELA'S SOCIAL SAFETY NET

Written by: SELA Collaborative

### CONTEXT

The nonprofit sector in the SELA region has continuously served as a critical safety net to thousands of SELA residents. Nonprofits understand the undeniable relationship between public resources and regional wellbeing. **During COVID-19, SELA nonprofits demonstrated how quickly they balanced responding to direct community needs such as food, healthcare, income, and necessities with the compassion and understanding needed to support the community.** In SELA most organizations had to adapt to the changes brought on by the pandemic while finding ways to also encourage 2020 Census participation. This was no easy feat as nonprofits, along with other regional stakeholders, learned to engage with the community remotely swiftly and creatively. Nonprofits need support to acquire the resources necessary to serve the community at the scale needed. It is predicted that 25% of nonprofits may close their doors because of the pandemic – and the SELA region cannot afford that.

The 2016 Pat Brown Institute report Central 710 FWY Corridor: An Asset Based Analysis concluded that nonprofits are less present in SELA than in the rest of LA County. The SELA Collaborative's Nonprofit Landscape Analysis, 2019, illuminated our collective understanding of this region as a nonprofit desert – approximately 75 organizations provide direct services to the region, with an additional 19 organizations housed outside of SELA serving the SELA region. In the process of this analysis, it became evident that

SELA was composed of formal organizations, but also had several informal organizations and volunteer groups whose engagement and active role in SELA is critical to understand and illuminate.

**Nonprofits understand the undeniable relationship between public resources and regional wellbeing.**

Diverse needs of community residents are being met by the nonprofit sector, whether it's the distribution of laptops for low-income families to carry out remote learning at home, distribution of food to address food insecurity in the pandemic, or distribution of cash assistance to families to support with rent and basic needs. For example, SELA Collaborative's partnership with Hub Cities, Alliance for a Better Community, and East Yard for Environmental Justice's distributed close to \$2 million in cash assistance across SELA and was funded by the California Immigrant Resiliency Fund. Regardless of the need, well-resourced and diverse nonprofits are essential in SELA.

Community organizations, both formal and informal, continue to step up to support the community in creative

ways and play a critical role in meeting community needs and uplifting how best to reach the community. However, with limited resources to meet demands, the SELA region will continue to face challenges that will negatively impact community well-being. Intentional investment in the region's community-based organizations is critical to address the inequities that have been exacerbated by the pandemic. Continued resource allocation must be at the forefront of investment — both inclusive and equity-focused. Furthermore, given the sheer scale of individuals who need support in the eight SELA cities and two unincorporated areas, supporting the nonprofit sector means supporting nonprofit ability to reach the maximum number of people they can while also strengthening their operational capacities to yield impact. This means building confidence that **investing in the nonprofit sector also means investing in the quality of life for all SELA residents.**



## IMMEDIATE INVESTMENTS

**Strengthen, prioritize, and support the existing nonprofits in SELA because they are a major source of civic and community engagement.**

**How to get it done:**

- Increase general operating support to nonprofit organizations who are the first line of response for community in a time where flexibility, innovation, and creativity is required to reach community and meet increased need.
- Local elected and appointed officials in the cities and at the county level can support nonprofits by streamlining their processes to encourage local nonprofits to apply for contracts to support community. This includes strengthening communication and relationships with SELA partners. As trusted messengers, SELA organizations know how valuable providing hands on support to the community is in ensuring they can access resources.
- Get involved in conversations taking place with the LA County Recovery Taskforce to form opportunities for nonprofits to create resiliency hubs and streamline LA County processes to ensure nonprofits are not negatively impacted by ineffective processes. Ensure SELA is prioritized in these conversations as a limited number of organizations currently have county grants to serve the community.
- Encourage partnership to increase best practices to SELA nonprofits and provide nonprofit capacity building support to ensure sustainability (such as connecting with organizations that bring specialized knowledge to the community).

**Elected Office Partnerships with the Nonprofit Sector bring power to the SELA region.**

**How to get it done:**

- Nonprofits play a critical role in our community's social safety net and need support at both the state and federal levels to advocate for resources and uplift the needs of the SELA region.
- Ensure that local, county, and state officials are aware of the nonprofit organizations working in SELA to encourage partnerships and compensation of nonprofit leaders for their expertise and value as trusted messengers.



## LONG TERM INVESTMENTS

**Invest in collaboration and partnerships and consider funding multiple organizations to tackle diverse issues that yield common outcomes (such as health care and environmental justice or the digital divide and tutoring services)**

**How to get it done:**

- Funnel resources to help small to mid-size nonprofits build out their core capacity to ensure sustainability and impact.
- Invest in direct operational support, capacity building, and/or program service expansion to ensure all members in the southeast receive support they need.

**Support how grants/funds are structured such as removing funding restrictions and ensuring full cost compensation for nonprofits.**

**How to get it done:**

- Advocate for LA County, cities, and philanthropists to continue to prioritize the restructuring of systems and grant funding frameworks that aim to ensure full cost compensation for nonprofits and provide flexibility to meet community needs.



## SELA STAKEHOLDERS ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN NONPROFIT CAPACITY BUILDING

- SELA Collaborative
- First 5 LA
- Best Start Communities



## SELA CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Written by: Dr. Raphael Sonenshein, Eddie Martinez, and Monserrat Ramirez-Mendoza

### CONTEXT

Communities with a history of civic engagement generally experience better health and social cohesion than communities with low civic engagement. Actively engaging in issues impacting one's community allows people to advocate for policies that promote healthier environments and lifestyles and promote access to essential services. In SELA, civic engagement can result in improved availability of parks, sustainable transportation options, and a network of trusted neighbors to reduce the negative impact of isolation for vulnerable populations, among other direct benefits.

**As the region's population continues to grow and economic, health, education, and social disparities continue to exist, the importance of harnessing the region's collective power and voice to advance civic issues are readily apparent.** Historically, past corruption plagued several local city governments which has resulted in escalating resident distrust in their elected officials and city governments. Consequentially, it has also discouraged civic participation at a time when it's most needed. Local government officials typically do not have the bandwidth to fully engage the community, even when they desire to do so and in SELA many elected officials also hold full time jobs. In recent years, new people have come into office and hopefully will bring a new energy, accessibility, and transparency to local government and create new opportunities for engagement. Additionally, in 2018 the SELA

Collaborative conducted a community conversation around government accountability and it found that while community may not trust government, there is a desire to build a bridge and engage government officials to ensure SELA receives its fair share of resources.

Despite these obstacles, there is an increasing civic pride in SELA that will encourage collaboration among local municipalities, nonprofit, civic, and faith-based organizations. Recent surveys by PBI at Cal State LA and the SELA Collaborative indicate that on many measures of civic engagement (i.e., communicating with elected officials) that the levels in SELA fall short of what is needed. There is a lack of knowledge of the roles and duties of the various levels of government including the city councils, commissions, offices, structures, how it works, who is representing their community, how to get involved, who to contact for certain issues, how to open relationships with these representatives, and what policy areas are tackled through public institutions. All these questions from residents about their local government, greatly intensified the frustrating and feeling of hopelessness for communities amid a pandemic. To tackle these issues and obstacles, the following investments are highlighted in these multi-layered approaches: 1) inclusion and participation of its most marginalized communities in leadership development, 2) providing robust civic education classes to deepen community social cohesion.

**Actively engaging in issues impacting one's community allows people to advocate for policies that promote healthier environments and lifestyles and promote access to essential services.**



## IMMEDIATE INVESTMENTS

**Develop a strategy to invite the most marginalized community members such as youth, undocumented residents, and the LGBTQ community to participate in leadership development sessions, thus, creating a pipeline into civic involvement.**

**How to get it done:**

- Inclusion and diverse participation in commissions and other government institutions. This includes conducting a survey on who serves on city commissions (i.e. youth, LGBTQ) and ensuring diverse representation in positions of power including key decision-making positions - state, county, local elected officials who can make appointments to boards and commissions. Additionally, encourage SELA Community participation in school districts' redistricting process.
- All opportunities for participation must be inclusive of everyone in the community regardless of age, citizenship status, voter registration eligibility, sexual orientation, gender identity, educational levels etc. Including active outreach and support to communities in unincorporated areas of Florence-Firestone and Walnut Park.
- Leverage nonprofits as trusted messengers to partner with local municipalities to assist with the education and distribution of resources (i.e. COVID-19, stimulus funds), in the process allowing for the development of strong partnerships with cities, LA County and other public agencies.
- Since much of SELA is included in the LAUSD, there is a need to create an Ad Hoc LAUSD Redistricting Commission to organize the members of community working on this effort. The facilitators clarified that the final decision on the school district's redistricting is made by the Los Angeles City Council. It is important to get involved in the commission and then follow up with the LA City Council.



## LONG TERM INVESTMENTS

**Provide civic education to encourage civic engagement and deepen community agency to serve, protect, and take care of their neighborhoods.**

**How to get it done:**

- Offer civic education courses to inform the community about ways of becoming civically engaged and how to advocate for positive change through volunteering, organizing and policy making. Residents know what the community needs are that will ensure their ability to thrive. Programming can be provided for youth as well, for example, Civic U by Pat Brown Institute at Cal State LA and summer LGBTQ youth leadership academy by LEA provide opportunities for youth to learn about civic education. Additionally, linking residents to nonprofit organizations leading efforts in the region based on their issue preferences is crucial. Nonprofits play a critical role in increasing civic engagement and involvement in the SELA region through diverse programming such as promotoras (HSA), parent leaders (schools), volunteers (COFEM) and the AltaMed Leadership & Advocacy Academy, thus creating a pipeline of residents engaging in existing partners work in SELA. Additionally, there are opportunities for partnerships to be created between nonprofits and government to deliver civic education and bridge theory to practice by leveraging trusted messengers to bridge city relationship with residents. Lastly, philanthropy will continue to be an important source of ongoing funding to advance this work.



## SELA STAKEHOLDERS ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

- SELA Collaborative
- Alliance for a Better Community
- Florence & Firestone Community Leaders
- Communities for a Better Environment
- NALEO Education Fund
- The Pat Brown Institute at Cal State LA
- SELA Arts Festival
- Walnut Park Civic Engagement Project
- AltaMed Health Services
- Council of Mexican Federations
- Huntington Park Chamber of Commerce
- CA Latino Leadership Institute Southeast Fellows



## SELA REGIONAL ADVOCACY

Written by: SELA Collaborative

### CONTEXT

In alignment with the SELA Collaborative's focus on regional connectivity, two major initiatives were recently undertaken to advance the infrastructure necessary to carry out collective work: The Census 2020 campaign and the SELA Leaders Campaign. Through these two campaigns, the SELA Collaborative has uplifted the urgent need to connect advocacy with how people who work in the nonprofit sector see its role in advancing their mission and services. At large, if we seek to honor nonprofits role as the social sector's safety net, we must advocate for them at both the governmental and philanthropic levels to ensure they can reach the people that need services, can operate in the long term, and build the capacity necessary to close disparities on major issue areas impacting the SELA region.

Historically, there has been reservations from organizations around advocacy due to several obstacles 1) limited capacity and 2) lack of knowledge or familiarity with the rules and regulations around advocacy and lobbying. In response to the high immigrant population in SELA, civic engagement must broaden to understand key actions residents can play to influence city, school, and government practices and policies. While some organizations have strength in direct resident engagement and others have strengths in attracting decision makers attention to SELA, it is essential to shift the mindset to "advocating for my clients/recipients of services" as a key service nonprofit leader must integrate into their work.

**...if we seek to honor nonprofits role as the social sector's safety net, we must advocate for them at both the governmental and philanthropic levels to ensure they can reach the people that need services, can operate in the long term, and build the capacity necessary to close disparities on major issue areas impacting the SELA region.**



Photo Credit: County of Los Angeles



## IMMEDIATE INVESTMENTS

**Strengthen existing infrastructure to build the technical capacity to expand the network of SELA Leaders to build out towards integrating SELA champions state and nationwide.**

### How to get it done:

- Support the SELA Collaborative’s role in strengthening coordination, network building, and collective contributions through a cross-sectional lens. The organizing agency leads others by sharing information, explaining the campaigns’ progress, growing the community, and explaining what work is being done. Build the technical capacity to expand the network of SELA Leaders to build out towards integrating SELA champions state and nationwide.
- Support the development of data and research for SELA to understand how to best fund nonprofits to implement services in this unique region.

**Promote state and national visibility of Southeast Los Angeles to uplift the region.**

### How to get it done:

- Leverage partnerships to bring visibility to the needs and assets to the SELA region: transforming the narrative that SELA is a nonprofit poor region and countering the infamous reputation of having “corrupt” cities is critical in bringing in resources and partnerships that uplift SELA and the assets of the region. Leverage positions of influence with decision makers, including senators, congress members, school board members and local city council members to ensure that advocacy efforts are in full effect.



## LONG TERM INVESTMENTS

**Invest in deepening advocacy and civic engagement capacity for SELA nonprofits.**

### How to get it done:

- Cultivate collective understanding amongst staff, leadership, and board members on how to successfully advocate for their service users and recipients.

**Adopting and launching policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) change campaigns.**

### How to get it done:

- Select, design, and implement campaigns around key issues through multidimensional campaigns that include short-term community projects as well as long-term PSE advocacy, implementation, and monitoring.



## SELA STAKEHOLDERS ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN REGIONAL ADVOCACY

- SELA Collaborative
- Alliance for A Better Community
- Gateway Cities COG
- AltaMed Health Services
- Department of Children & Family Services
- First 5 LA
- Innovate Public Schools
- The Pat Brown Institute at Cal State LA
- YWCA Greater Los Angeles

# FINAL REFLECTION

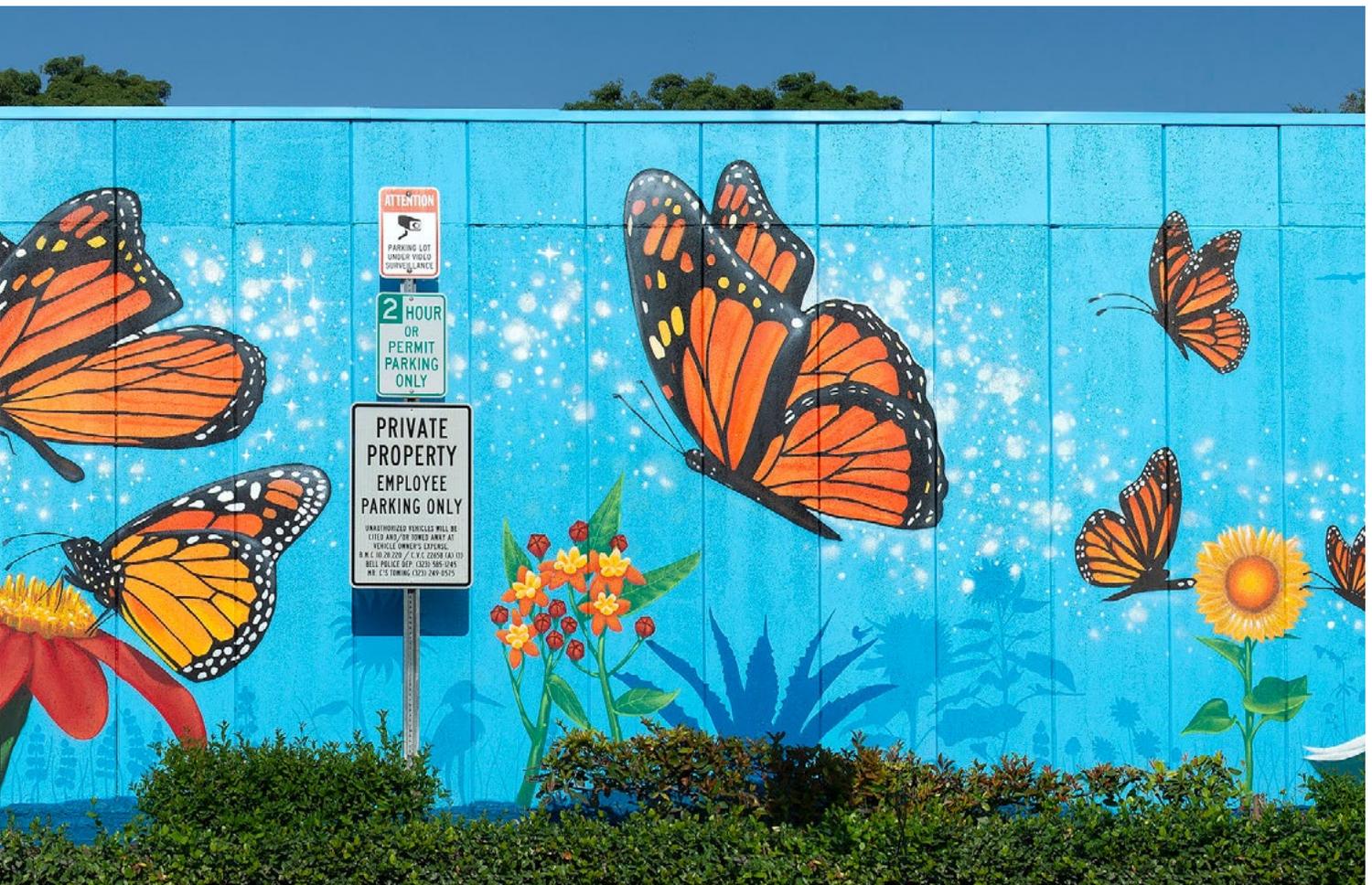
COVID-19 has fundamentally shifted the way we live, learn, work, and play, and has uplifted the deep systemic inequities across the SELA region. The pandemic has confirmed and elevated what communities of color and those working on the frontlines as social safety net providers already experienced: the current system does not prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable community members in SELA. The pandemic has illuminated and further exasperated social and economic barriers that have existed long before the COVID-19 pandemic. This requires immediate investments to provide the SELA community with urgent resources and a call for longer-term, sustainable investments and resources to build the capacity of organizations that serve the community. These multi-pronged approaches will also encourage innovation and collaboration with a targeted and intentional call to action.



Photo Credit: County of Los Angeles

**Having experienced decades of underinvestment and disinvestment, the recovery of the region will be of critical importance not only for the SELA community but for the economic prosperity of Los Angeles County.**

However, real change does not happen in a vacuum and the challenges outlined in this report speak to the need for a systems-change approach to address the root causes of the social and economic challenges outlined throughout these policy issue areas — an approach that is grounded on a framework of equity, accountability, collaboration, and transparency with the goal of increasing the quality of life for all SELA residents.



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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Alliance for a Better Community</li><li>• AltaMed Health Services</li><li>• Breathe Southern California</li><li>• Champion City</li><li>• Community for Better Environment</li><li>• Community Legal Aid SoCal</li><li>• Council of Mexican Federations (COFEM)</li><li>• D.E.S.I.</li><li>• East Los Angeles College</li><li>• Families In Schools</li><li>• First 5 LA</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Florence &amp; Firestone Community.Org</li><li>• From Lot to Spot</li><li>• Hub Cities Career Center</li><li>• Human Services Association</li><li>• Innovate Public Schools</li><li>• KIPP SoCal Public Schools</li><li>• Latino Equality Alliance</li><li>• Newstart Housing Corporation</li><li>• One Stone Multimedia</li><li>• Para Los Niños</li><li>• Parent Engagement Academy</li><li>• Pat Brown Institute at Cal State LA</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• SEE-LA (Social Eco Education-LA)</li><li>• South Central Los Angeles Regional Center</li><li>• Southeast Community Development Corporation</li><li>• Southeast Community Foundation</li><li>• The Trust for Public Land</li><li>• Walnut Park Elementary School</li><li>• World Financial Group</li><li>• Walnut Park Civic Engagement Project</li><li>• YMCA of Metropolitan Los Angeles</li></ul> |
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The Southeast Los Angeles (SELA) Collaborative is a network of organizations gathered to lead the area of Southeast Los Angeles into an era of increased vitality by bringing resources to build a robust infrastructure of local nonprofits; to inform and engage residents for increased civic participation; and, to provide data and research specifically designed to explore the possibilities of this region.



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