

RAPID HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT

USC SPECIFIC PLAN

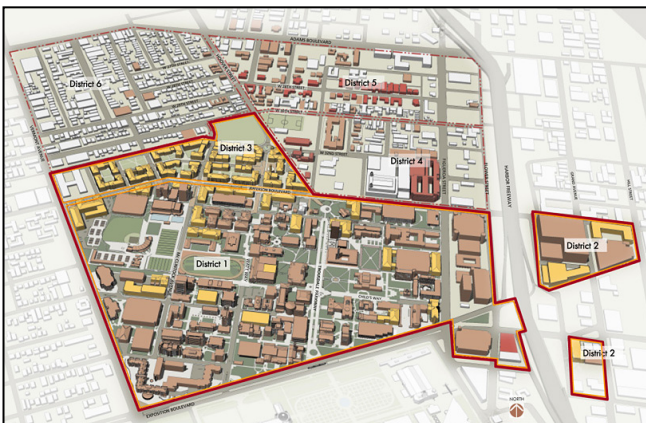
LOS ANGELES, CA



The University of Southern California (USC) has proposed to build 5.2 million square feet of retail space, restaurants, a hotel, and student housing near its University Park campus and the City of Los Angeles is working with USC to develop a Specific Plan for this proposed build-out.

The area surrounding USC is made up of a population that is especially vulnerable to displacement and its associated negative health impacts and local residents are concerned about: affordability and availability of non-student housing in the neighborhoods surrounding the campus; whether the proposed development will result in continued displacement of existing residents; and whether USC will increase communication with residents about proposed development activities and/or implement measures to avoid or mitigate any adverse impacts of the proposed Specific Plan on local residents and their health and well-being.

In Spring 2012, Human Impact Partners, SAJE, and Esperanza Community Housing collaborated with local residents to conduct a Rapid Health Impact Assessment of the proposed USC project.



Rapid HIA Model

To accommodate the short decision-making timeline, the partners developed and used a Rapid HIA model that emphasized community empowerment. A panel of potentially impacted residents from the neighborhood near USC led the HIA. Discussions and deliberations took place using simultaneous translation in Spanish and English. The panel convened for one day to:

- Learn about Rapid HIA;
- Discuss the proposed USC Specific Plan; and
- Identify research questions for the Rapid HIA.



The panel then met a month later for two days to:

- Review existing conditions data collected by HIP;
- Hear from a panel of subject-matter experts about potential impacts of the proposed Plan;
- Reach consensus on the Plan's likely impacts; and
- Identify recommendations to mitigate potential negative health impacts.

Rapid HIA Scope

In response to concerns raised by residents, the HIA focused on assessing the potential impacts of the USC Specific Plan on gentrification, displacement, and housing. To predict impacts, the HIA used the public health literature, subject matter expert presentations, health and demographic statistics, and information contained in USC's plans.

USC Specific Plan Rapid Health Impact Assessment

Existing Conditions – Findings

Overall, the health of residents in communities around USC is worse than the health of others in Los Angeles, and housing issues and displacement contribute to poor health outcomes. For example:

- One in three residents in the USC neighborhood rate their health as fair or poor, compared with one in five in the City and County overall.
- Census and other data indicate that the area around USC has been experiencing gentrification since 2000. Low-income and Latino and Black populations in particular are being displaced.
- The USC Specific Plan, other land use and transportation projects (e.g., the Expo line), and other factors (e.g., population growth) in the area will bring improvements and changes to the neighborhood as well as new jobs. However, these plans do not protect existing affordable housing or build new affordable housing. Furthermore, the plans do not provide an adequate supply of student housing for USC's growing student body, and many of the jobs likely to be created by the USC Plan that are accessible to low-income residents are expected to pay no more than minimum wage.
- Combined, if no mitigations are implemented, these changes create a high risk of further gentrification, low vacancy rates, and associated increased housing costs in the communities that surround the University, all of which will fuel further displacement of current low-income residents.

Indicators of neighborhoods at risk for gentrification (Chappel, 2009)

- Close proximity to transit
- High density of amenities including youth facilities and public space
- High percent of workers taking public transit
- High percent of non-family households
- High percent of buildings with 3+ units
- High number of renter vs. owner occupancy
- High number of households paying a large share of household income for housing

Impact Analysis – Findings

The Impacted Residents Panel came to consensus that the proposed plan will:

- **Increase displacement and poverty;**
- **Decrease housing affordability; and**
- **Continue the existing mismatch between wages and housing costs.**

The greatest impacts will be on Latino and Black populations, low-income people, families, young children and seniors, and residents living near USC. Likely health impacts include decreased quality of mental health, social cohesion, and access to medical care; as well as increased chronic disease.

Recommendations

The HIA made 12 recommendations to address identified impacts, including:

- USC should pay 5% of the total Specific Plan development budget into an Affordable Housing Trust Fund dedicated to the greater USC Specific Plan area. The Trust Fund should have community oversight and community organizations should be involved in its implementation.
- USC should finance the preservation of the 1,300 currently affordable units whose covenants will expire in the next five to twenty years.
- USC should improve the local hiring policies in the USC Specific Plan and Development Agreement for all temporary jobs by targeting at least 10% of these jobs for residents in the nearby communities and at least 50% of these jobs for residents in LA.
- For new jobs being created on campus or on university-owned properties, USC should pay, at a minimum, a living wage, and hire 50% local, non-student residents for these jobs.

Outcomes

The HIA report was submitted by SAJE and other community partners to the Planning Commission and Los Angeles City Council to consider in the USC Specific Plan decision-making process. Ultimately USC agreed to invest \$20 million in affordable housing as part of their expansion.