



LA-MÁS

**2019
Annual Report**

**a condensed but not particularly
concise summary of activities**

Letter from Our Co-Executive Directors



We closed out the decade with a reflection on our values, our impact, and our commitment to lower-income, working class communities. It was a **time of transition** as we experienced changes in our team and geared up for a shift in the direction of our work.

Over the past six years, we've relied on our expertise in policy and design to support projects that demonstrate viable alternatives for community-led growth in our city. After completing our strategic plan this spring, we decided **we needed to be more intentional about long-term, sustainable impact that is grounded in and responsive to a specific community**. This meant we started saying “no” more often to one-off projects and rather invested time in formalizing programs based on our expertise and experience.

We are proud to now have two core programs focused on **building alternative affordable housing and empowering small businesses through design**. Both of these programs reflect our collective values – that community building is the first step towards an equitable future in our city.

We also moved into our new permanent office space in Frogtown and reflected on what it would mean for our work to be grounded in the needs of communities in Northeast Los Angeles, with an ongoing commitment to the people who live, work, and play here. In a time of rapid neighborhood transition, we want to work alongside our most vulnerable neighbors in ensuring they have a stake in shaping the growth of Frogtown and Northeast Los Angeles.

Our peers, partners and community inspired us to embark on this **path of soul-searching and reframing as an organization**. We are grateful to our generous program partners, funders, and friends who supported us in formalizing programs that are unconventional and helped us push the boundaries of what's possible.

Helen Leung & Elizabeth Timme
Co-Executive Directors, LA-Más

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Photos included in the Annual Report are by:
Jessica Pons, Stephen Schauer, Hadley Fruits,
Javier de León, and the LA-Más team.

About Us

Our Mission

LA-Más is a non-profit urban design organization that helps lower-income and underserved communities shape their future through policy and architecture.

We envision a world where city growth is equitable and self-directed — where the best local solutions are brought to a city-wide scale.

Our Board

Shauna Nep (President)
Renee Dake Wilson (Vice President)
Mott Smith (Treasurer)
Mark Soto (Secretary)
Mia Lehrer
Naomi Iwasaki
Vinit Mukhija
Alex Sasayama

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Our Funders

AARP CA	FLL Consulting - In Memory	Pinyon Group
ADU Homes	of Robert H. Timme	Self-Help Federal Credit Union
ARUP	Jim Wong	Standard Vision
A.T. Connections	KoningEizenberg	Studio MLA
Community Development Resource Group	LA City Councilmember David Ryu, 4th District	Thomas Safran & Associates
Dake Wilson Architects	LA City Councilmember Gil Cedillo, 1st District	Tracy A. Stone Architect
Durfee Foundation	LA City Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell, 13th District	TransitCenter
Everyone In	LISC LA	United Dwelling
FSY Architects	Michela Abrams	Vera R. Campbell
Genesis LA	Nico	Walt Disney Television
GTL, LLP	Nous Engineering	Wells Fargo Foundation
Hegardt Foundation	Outfront / JCDecaux	ZGF
Home For Good Funders Collaborative	Parsons Foundation	Zuzana Riemer Landres & Shawn Landres
HMC Design Futures Foundation		Warby Parker
		Wurwand Foundation

Our Programs

This year we focused on our two ongoing programs: the Backyard Homes Project — a “one-stop-shop” incentive program that helps average homeowners become providers of affordable housing — and Storefronts, LA — an initiative that strives to support minority business owners across LA through low-cost, high-impact design. Learn more about these programs in the following pages!

Building Alternative Affordable Housing



In the midst of our affordable housing crisis, we launched a one-stop-shop program that helps average homeowners become providers of affordable housing through Accessory Dwelling Units – also known as second units, in-law units, or ADUs. In partnership with five nonprofits and the Housing Authority, we help homeowners design, permit, finance, construct, and lease ADUs. We're inspired by the fact that nearly 200 homeowners have signed up for the Backyard Homes Project and are saying...

“Yes, build me an ADU... and I’m happy to rent it affordably.”

Backyard Homes Project

Program Snapshot

At the end of 2018, we began accepting applications for the Backyard Homes Project – a **one-stop shop** that enables homeowners to contribute to LA's affordable housing supply. This past year, we started **working directly with homeowners to design, finance, permit, and build affordable ADUs**. By the end of 2019, we had 4 homeowners in the design and construction stage – we're excited for their ADUs to **begin construction in spring 2020**.

In 2019, the LA County Board of Supervisors also approved a motion to **expand the Backyard Homes Project to unincorporated LA County** as a pilot program. We are excited to partner with the LA County Development Authority on this effort that will focus on **housing formerly homeless individuals**. As we continue to expand our program, we are also working on reducing development costs for homeowners, applying the program to our own backyard of Frogtown and Northeast Los Angeles, and **expanding the tent of affordable ADU advocates**. We hope you'll join us!

Partners

Genesis LA Economic Growth Corporation
Self-Help Federal Credit Union
Restore Neighborhoods LA
LA Family Housing
St. Joseph Center
Housing Rights Center
Housing Authority of the City of LA

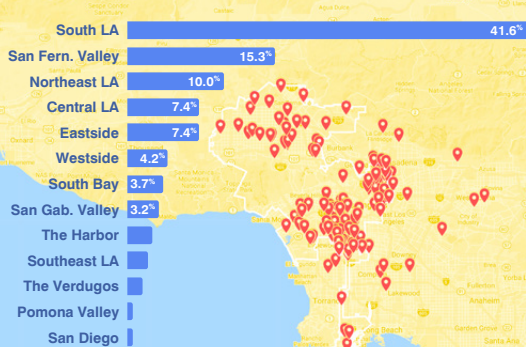


Backyard Homes Project by the Numbers

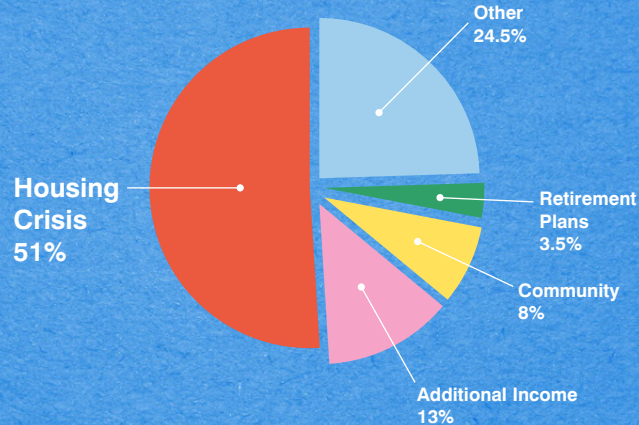
Outreach

- Co-hosted 2 open houses
- Shared info with all 15 council districts
- Spoke at 18 neighb. council meetings
- Presented at 25 organizations
- Engaged ~1000 people in LA

Applicant Map



Top Reason for Participating



Homeowner Applicant Financial Profile

- Median annual salary: \$72,000
- Median household income: \$90,000

8 Floor Plan Options



Current Status

- ~200 applications
- 13 active homeowners
- 4 in design and construction
- 9 in vetting process

Homeowner Spotlights

By the end of 2019, we had 4 Backyard Homes Project homeowners enter the design and construction phase, including 2 homeowners who will be benefiting from our optional loan product. Looking ahead to 2020, we plan to complete our first round of pilot phase ADUs and begin County expansion!

La Juana

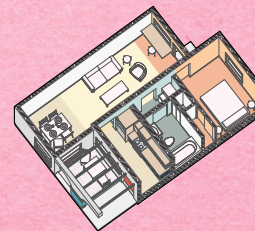
La Juana is our first Backyard Homes Project homeowner to begin construction on an affordable ADU! La Juana's South Los Angeles home has been in her family since the 1960s, when her mother first purchased it. When her mother left the home to her, La Juana knew she didn't want to sell it. She decided to rent the house out to a Section 8 voucher holder, a woman who has been an excellent tenant for the past seven years.

She shared, "There were so many things I was going to have to do on my own. Your program solved the housing problem and my problem of not having to find all of these people. Just having all of that taken care of with one point person to deal with – to me, it's extremely valuable."

When La Juana learned about our Backyard Homes Project, she already had plans to renovate her existing back unit. As a one-stop shop for building ADUs, the Backyard Homes Project saved La Juana time and resources. La Juana's new backyard home is set for completion in 2020. The ADU will be a 500sqft garage conversion and addition, with a Spanish-inspired exterior that complements the front house. She is happy to house another Section 8 tenant and play a critical role in addressing our city's affordable housing shortage!



La Juana



Homeowner Spotlights



Jessica, Ben, and baby Santiago



Jessica + Ben

Jessica and Ben's family has lived in and around El Sereno for three generations. Jessica's grandparents grew up in the neighborhood and later had to move out due to eminent domain when Cal State LA was being expanded. Ben's grandfather built his home just across the train tracks from where Ben and Jessica now live. With deep ties to the community, buying a home in El Sereno was especially meaningful to the couple, who has lived there for almost 3 years.

They always knew they wanted to build an additional unit, but the biggest issue was financing. The Backyard Homes Project not only offered financing support through Self-Help Federal Credit Union, but also a one-stop shop that simplified the ADU construction and rental process. The couple is also passionate about addressing the housing and homelessness crisis in Los Angeles. Jessica works in supportive housing and Ben is a public school teacher – both of them confront these issues regularly and understand how easy it is for an Angeleno to fall into housing instability.

With their new backyard home, Ben and Jessica hope to provide affordable housing to someone who wants to stay in their neighborhood but just needs a little support. Jessica shared, **"That's another thing about this homelessness crisis – it's not only losing your home, but your community."**

Expanding in LA County

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved a motion in August to expand the Backyard Homes Project to unincorporated areas of LA County. This effort, led in partnership with the Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA), will focus on building affordable ADUs for people transitioning out of homelessness. We're excited to work with more homeowners who are interested in contributing to LA County's affordable housing supply!

City of LA ADU Pilot Project

About

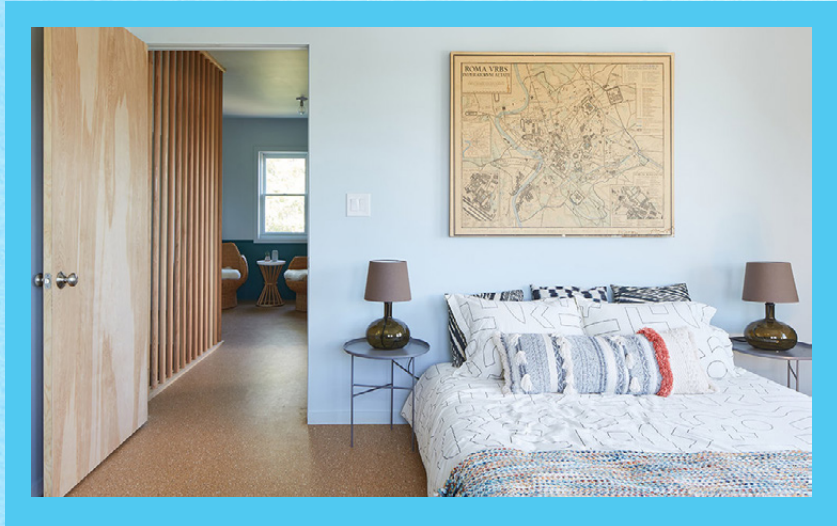
In July 2019, we completed building the City of LA's ADU Pilot Project. With a housing crisis heightened by the supply shortage, LA-Más teamed up with the City and many other partners on an ADU Pilot Project that demonstrates that it is possible for average homeowners to build a thoughtfully designed home in their backyard.

Design

Located in Highland Park, this two-story ADU maximizes space, featuring 2 bedrooms, 1.5 baths, a single car garage, and an open concept kitchen/living room. The Craftsman-inspired exterior is a playful take on contextual design that meets the requirements of the Historic Preservation Overlay Zone while being situated within the larger architectural character of the community. The design approach is a reinterpretation of the Craftsman values of natural materials, simplicity of form, making handcraft visible – all while accommodating the homeowners' desire to blur the lines between "natural" and "man-made."

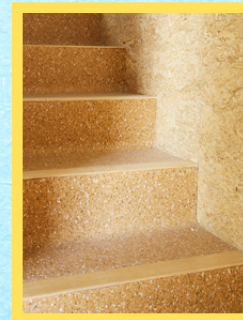






To create ambiguity between the interior and the exterior, the interior is painted with a wash of ‘blue-tral’ colors that blend the walls and ceiling into the background of the sky through framed picture windows. Natural materials like OSB and plywood are mixed with faux-natural composites like Linoleum and Formica.

In reference to the home’s architectural context, the ADU includes cartoonized Craftsman iconic elements like chair rails, picture frame windows, and an elemental balustrade. The home also includes a variety of delightful features including a pink concrete floor, picturesque flower box, fake craftsman columns, and a neon terrazzo kitchen island.



Partners

This project was sponsored by the Mayor’s Innovation Team and Council District 1, designed by LA-Más, and conducted in partnership with Genesis LA, Habitat for Humanity, Breen Engineering, Nous Engineering, and homeowners Trent Wolbe and Grace Lee.

Empowering Small Businesses through Design

Our small business development program is focused on supporting immigrant-owned mom-and-pop businesses by providing technical assistance to improve their business operations and designing storefront make-overs to attract new customers and create a strong sense of place.



Storefronts, LA

Program Snapshot

In August, we launched *Storefronts, LA* – an initiative supported by FOUND/ LA, a project of the Wurwand Foundation – to support minority business owners throughout Los Angeles. With rapid changes taking place across LA, small businesses in low-moderate income communities of color are vulnerable to displacement. Through low-cost, high-impact designs, *Storefronts, LA* will help business owners enhance their visibility, highlight their products and services, increase their revenue, and continue to serve their community — all while reflecting neighborhood history and culture.

We are proud to partner with local business development organizations that are committed to connecting us with eligible and interested business owners and providing ongoing support in conjunction with *Storefronts, LA*.

Program Partners

- Inclusive Action for the City
- Los Angeles Food Policy Council
- Asian Pacific Islander Small Business Program
- Opportunity Fund
- Managed Career Solutions (MCS)
- Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti's Office of Community Business

Storefronts, LA
Program Spotlights

CRFT by Maki

“I feel honored to have a space in Little Tokyo – a few blocks away from where my great-grandmother had her shop. There is a lot of new development in this area, so being able to stay here is about preservation.” – Darin

Our first *Storefronts, LA* partnership was with fashion entrepreneur, former professional basketball player and independent filmmaker, Darin Satoshi Maki! In January 2018, Darin started CRFT by Maki, a clothing line that celebrates Japanese-American culture. Since then, he has showcased his sportswear and accessories through pop-up shops in Little Tokyo. This past summer, our partners at the Asian Pacific Islander Small Business Program referred Darin to LA-Más to support the design of his first brick-and-mortar location, which is coincidentally located on the same block where his great-grandmother once operated a Japanese homestyle restaurant. We plan to complete the permanent design for his space, which he is leasing from the Little Tokyo Service Center, in early 2020.

Business type: Retail store
Business owner: Japanese American
Partners: Little Tokyo Service Center
Business has been operating for 2 years



Storefronts, LA Program Spotlights

Thailand Plaza

This fall, we partnered with **Thai Community Development Center (Thai CDC)** to help them create a new facade for Thailand Plaza as part of Thai Town's 20th Anniversary. Thai CDC was awarded an AARP Community Challenge grant to beautify Thailand Plaza and make it more inviting. There are only three remaining Thai-owned business properties in Thai Town, and this market is one of them.

LA-Más supported Thai CDC and the community's efforts by providing technical advice for the design and implementation process. This design guidance resulted in the Thai CDC team treating the facade as a cohesive design project, rather than independent panels. The final design was created and installed by **local Thai artists, Saravut Yuttawongs and Surachet Jingjit**, who included images that highlight Thai culture and identity. Thai CDC unveiled the plaza's facade improvement at the Thai Town 20th Anniversary Celebration in December, 2019.

Business type: Supermarket
Business owner: Thai
Partners: Thai CDC
Business has been operating for 20+ years



On Avalon: Small Business Design Program

In partnership with Council District 15, we relaunched our *On Avalon Small Business Design Program* in Wilmington! This program expands upon our work in 2017 with nearly a dozen businesses to strengthen the historic heart of Wilmington and promote economic development. This year, we completed designs for two storefronts, and will complete at least three more by spring 2020.



On Avalon Business Owner Profiles

Heidy Cisneros UniAmerica Insurance

Heidy began working in the insurance industry at a travel agency in 1994. Encouraged by her then boss and mentor to open her own business, she got her insurance license and established UniAmerica Insurance in 1998. Since then, the business has grown to provide all types of insurance (car, home, business), as well as tax and notary services. Over the past 21 years, UniAmerica Insurance has come to be known for providing quality customer service, being a community and family-oriented business, and providing services in English and Spanish. Heidy has built trust with her community and believes in empowering her customers with financial knowledge, so that they can plan for the future of their families and businesses.



Elizabeth (Liz) Machuca Synesthesia Boutique

Liz works full-time as a mechanical engineer, but she always dreamed of owning her own business. In summer 2017, she applied for a retail space and, to her surprise, was accepted! Liz named her business "Synesthesia Boutique" after a rare neurological condition she has which causes the brain to process information through multiple senses. For example, Liz sees any letter "S" in a blue tone. Liz enjoys providing clothing options for women of all ages. She also values giving back to her community and lends her space for events that showcase local artists, poetry and music. When she started her business, her friends and family helped crowdsource interior appliances, and her dad helped build her clothing racks and an exterior sign. After her father passed away last year, Liz struggled to update some features due to a lack of time and expertise.



Irma Vasconcelos South Bay Coast Realty

Irma was born and raised in Wilmington, where she began working in the finance sector during high school. Today, she remains an active community member that values Wilmington's commercial vibrancy. At South Bay Coast (SBC) Realty, Irma prides herself in providing great real estate opportunities for her clients and using her local knowledge to find spaces that fit her clients' needs. Irma has strong relationships with the community's many businesses and entrepreneurs. She currently shares her office space with a notary service provider and a lawyer, and shares the conference room area with a local youth organization for them to hold meetings and workshops.

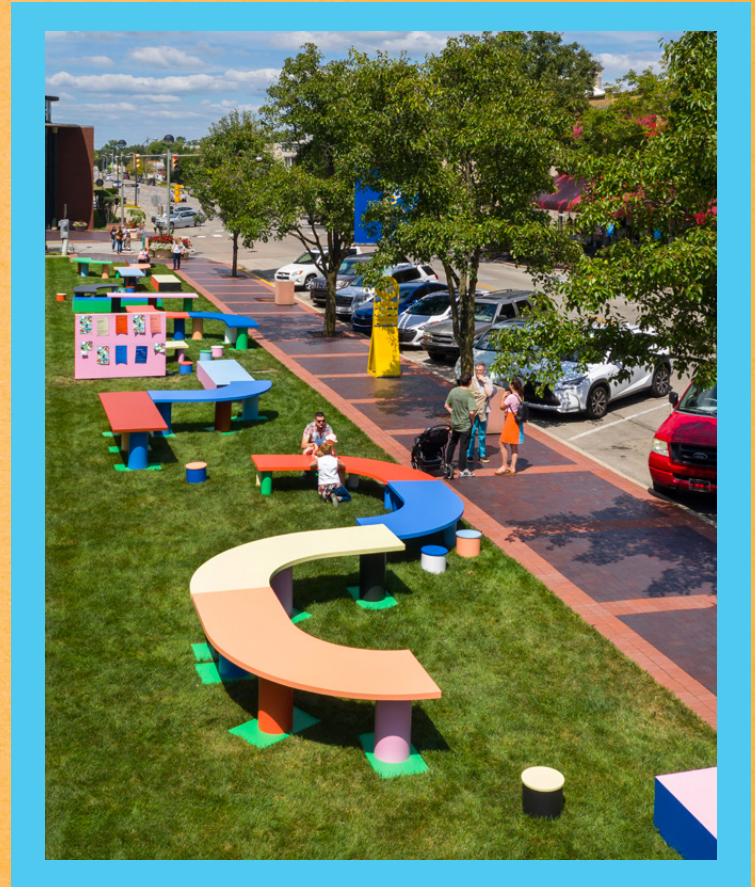


Reimagining Community Spaces

Thank U, Next

We were invited to be one of five Washington Street Civic Project Leaders that activated sites at Exhibit Columbus 2019. Columbus, Indiana is a 'modernist mecca' with an impressive track record for civic engagement. Our team designed a flexible, playful and multi-directional public installation called *Thank U, Next*. It features movable furniture elements that adapts to diverse programming to support all of the city's residents.

An informal meeting space located in a section of Columbus that is often viewed as a hub for the middle class and wealthy, this project was an invitation to redefine Washington Street as a place where all of the city's diverse residents are welcomed and engaged. This project *thanks* civic leaders and past architects for their highly formal contributions, but also looks to create the *next* precedent for an alternative.



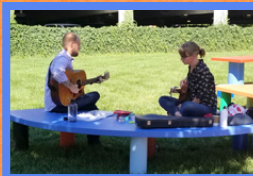


“Thank U, Next suggests a certain ambivalence toward the grand Modernist achievements of yesteryear, or hesitation about how inclusive these projects really are today.” – Kriston Capps, CityLab

From August until November, the installation supported public events and cultural programming to support residents and community organizations. Local community groups organized events including:

- teen music performances
- “pitch-in” picnic for Columbus’ Latino & Caribbean communities
- young children’s story time
- exercise classes
- salsa making for middle schoolers
- a teen game night
- book club meetings
- and many more!

Thank U, Next was also used for unstructured, unplanned, organic activity: a group of seniors created a seating set-up that worked for them; kids moved the stools around to create stepping stones in a master maze; musicians gathered to play acoustic guitar; folks stopped to eat lunch. The list continues!



Reimagining Community Spaces

Armory Center for the Arts

We partnered with Armory Center for the Arts to design and implement a more easily identifiable and **welcoming entrance** for their building in Pasadena. Armory Center for the Arts is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to **build on the power of art to transform lives and communities through creating, teaching, and presenting the arts**. With the support of an Ahmanson Foundation grant, the Armory brought on LA-Más to help them refresh the exterior of their headquarters. The design features will include colorful facade banners and new signage, **allowing the spirit of the amazing art exhibitions and community arts education to spill out onto the sidewalk**. The project is scheduled to be completed in 2020, so stay tuned!

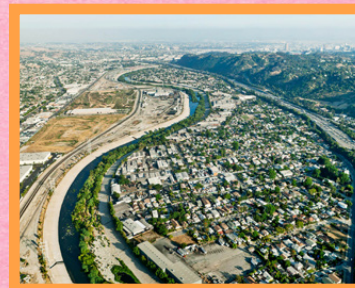


Looking Ahead: Finding Our Footing in Frogtown

A Commitment to Our Community with a Place-Based Focus

LA-Más has called Frogtown home for the past six years. In 2014, we led a community visioning process called Futuro de Frogtown, where we helped local residents shape land use policy in the face of neighborhood change. Over the years, our role as city wide urban design consultants of small-scale projects became our main focus. We are proud of the work we've done across Los Angeles' diverse neighborhoods, and now we want to make sure we are achieving long-term impact that is grounded in our community of Frogtown and Northeast Los Angeles.

With major investments coming in from the LA River Revitalization and longtime residents facing increased displacement pressure, we want to make sure our programs are responding to local need. This past year, our team began reflecting on what it would mean for our work to be truly informed by the people who make Northeast Los Angeles the vibrant community it is today. In 2020, we look forward to shifting our approach and partnering with residents, community organizations and small businesses.



Looking Ahead: Finding Our Footing in Frogtown

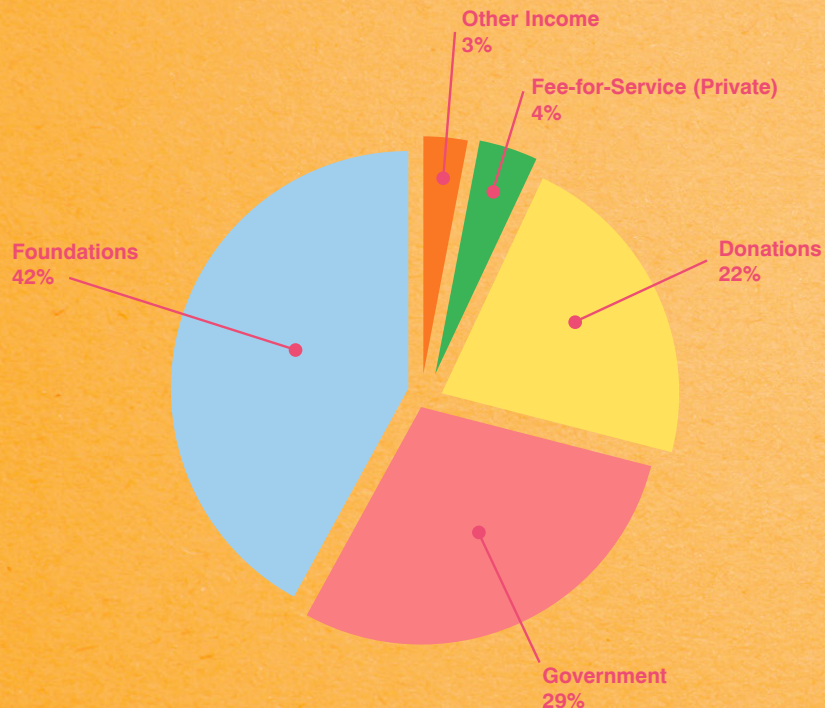
New Office at Elysian

In February, we moved into our new and permanent office space. We are excited to now share offices with Clockshop, a multidisciplinary arts organization in Los Angeles that creates new conversations about arts, politics and urban space. Many thanks to Cafecito Organico and Kruegermann Pickles for hosting us during the transition! If you're passing through, please stop by and visit us.



Our Financials

2019 Revenue Breakdown



2019 Financial Overview

In 2019, our foundation support significantly increased and enabled us to develop and launch our two inaugural in-house programs: Backyard Homes Project & Storefronts, LA. We stepped back from fee-for-service projects in an effort to engage more deeply in the communities we work in.

Nearly a quarter of our income came from private donations – a historic feat for our organization. We are thankful for all of our dependable supporters and partners, who continue to see the value in our work.

We are grateful to have the support from the following organizations:

- Durfee Foundation
- Hegardt Foundation
- Home for Good Collaborative
- LISC LA
- Wells Fargo Foundation

And we are proud to be first time grantees of the following organizations:

- Ralph M. Parsons Foundation
- Wurwand Foundation

Pizza Party Fundraiser

For our fundraiser this year, we wanted to do something that reflects the fun, inclusive, accessible spirit of our work, but also the collaborative nature of the partnerships we've built over the last year. In October, we threw a Pizza Party with our favorite people – change makers, community advocates, and civic leaders in our community.

Thanks to our generous sponsors and attendees, we raised over \$105,000 to support our programs, making this our most successful fundraiser to date. We were thrilled to honor two rockstar female-led teams who have been shaping our city into a brighter and more equitable place. They bring diverse people together to test innovative ideas that are grassroots, inclusive and bold.



I-Team



Honorees

Mayor Eric Garcetti's Innovation Team
Visionary Realists, Red Tape Renegades, Brilliant Bureaucrats

Social Venture Partners LA
Social Acupuncturists, Heart-Centered Philanthropists, Network Builders

SVPLA



Host Committee

Ashlee Gardner (Chair)
 Jason Neville
 Gio Aliano
 Jenna Hornstock
 Michela O'Connor Abrams
 Sarah Brennan
 Antonio Pacheco



LA-Más



Event Partners

TOWN Pizza
 Coolhaus
 Golden Road Brewery
 Cat & Fiddle
 DJ Caroline Calderon

Our Team

Our Team

Elizabeth Timme | Co-Executive Director
 Helen Leung | Co-Executive Director
 Abby Stone | Design + Engagement Lead
 Alex Ramirez | Program Manager
 Chaz Kern | Design + Engagement Associate
 Linda Reyes | Program Manager
 Ronnie Han | Director, Finance + Operations

2019 Staff Alum

Alejandro Dobie-Gonzalez
 Avital Aboody
 Dominic Gonzalez
 Michelle Rolon
 Sophie Chien

Staff Transitions

Our Community and Policy team transitioned onto new and exciting chapters. Avital started her new role as program officer for LISC San Diego, returning to a community she calls home. Alejandro began the Urban Planning masters program at UCLA with the goal of learning more about real estate financing and affordable housing development.

We welcomed two new team members in August: Alex and Linda. Alex serves as the Storefronts, LA and Small Business Design Program Manager, and Linda manages The Backyard Homes Project.



Ronnie, Elizabeth, Alex, Linda, Helen, Chaz, Abby



Avital



Alejandro



Alex



Linda

Awards + Recognition



Awards

Michael Rubinger Community Fellowship

Helen wrapped up her yearlong Michael Rubinger Community Fellowship, sponsored by Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC). Helen was one of 10 fellows from across the country who received support to tackle critical community development challenges – ranging from affordable housing to economic development.

Next City Vanguard Scholar

Elizabeth was one of 40 movers-and-shakers selected to attend the Next City Vanguard Conference, an experiential urban leadership gathering, in Sacramento. Vanguarders were tasked with creating a connection between downtown and the city's waterfront. Elizabeth's team proposed a 'people's auditorium' where community groups could gather and engage politically. Her team presented it to the Mayor and won!

City of Los Angeles ADU Pilot MVP

Our City of LA ADU Pilot Project in Highland Park was a team effort with a host of amazing partners. Within the dedicated project team, some members truly went above and beyond. We're proud that our very own Chaz was anointed as an MVP on the project by the Mayor's Innovation Team.

Recognition

Hem Fest

In June, Swedish furniture brand Hem collaborated with LA Design Festival to host *Hem Fest*. The event included a raffle of reimaged Max Lamb *Last Stools*, designed by LA-Más, Snøhetta, Kelly Wearstler, Rapt Studio, wHY, ETC.etera, The Archers, and Oliver M. Furth. All proceeds from the raffle went to LA-Más!

SVP Fast Pitch

In March, we participated in the 2019 Social Impact Fast Pitch organized by Social Venture Partners Los Angeles. Helen had the opportunity to pitch our Backyard Homes Project to an audience of over 600 people at the Wilshire Ebell Theatre. Our generous audience helped us raise over \$2,000 for our program!

To all of our partners,
supporters, funders, friends
and families, clients, neighbors,
mentors, champions,
collaborators, and everyone
who's made it to the end of this
report.....

Thank you!



LA-MÁS