East Cahuenga Alley Revitalization Project
Best Practices for Creating a Pedestrian-Friendly Urban Alley
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The Los Angeles Sustainability Collaborative
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Executive Summary
Executive Summary

The transformation of alleys in commercial areas can lead to more sustainable, pedestrian and business-friendly environments, but the process can seem daunting. In order to demystify the process, this publication presents the story of the East Cahuenga (EaCa) Alley Revitalization Project as a learning opportunity for community members, local businesses and public stakeholders interested in revitalizing and greening under-utilized alleys in other parts of Los Angeles and beyond. It offers a case study and a ‘toolkit’ of innovative solutions to overcoming common barriers that other alley projects experience.

This toolkit begins with a background on alleys, alley revitalization efforts, and their benefit. Chapters 2 and 3 presents details about the EaCa project in Hollywood, Los Angeles, organized by the following topics:

1. History
2. Stakeholder involvement
3. Budget
4. Funding sources
5. Design considerations
6. Land use, entitlement, and zoning
7. Community and economic development issues

Analysis of lessons learned follow the descriptive information about the EaCa project within each of these aforementioned areas. This report concludes with a set of recommendations for future alley revitalization projects and programmatic ideas for promoting alley transformation in Los Angeles.

Why are Alleys Important Assets?

Alleys serve a variety of purposes in the built environment and are an integral component of a city’s infrastructure. They are narrow spaces nestled between buildings and are commonly used for vehicular access to residential garages, storage for public facilities, refuse collection, and parking. Alleys can be private, separate parcels of land from the surrounding property or public land, maintained by the local government.

The City of Los Angeles has an extensive alley network, cumulatively amounting to over 900 linear miles. The Department of
Public Works, specifically the Bureau of Street Services has jurisdiction over the city's alleys and are responsible for alley cleaning, illegal dumping, slurry sealing (i.e., filling potholes and asphalt cracks), street use code enforcement, trash receptacle pickup and debris removal. Throughout the years, code enforcement in LA alleyways has been lax and budgetary priority is reserved for more visible public infrastructure repairs such as potholes. As a result, these poorly maintained alley networks becoming plagued with illegal and other criminal activity.

Within the past decade, however, city governments and organizations around the country have begun undertaking projects that improve, repurpose, ‘green’ and revitalize alleys with objectives to improve the environmental and aesthetic quality of the urban form.

Stakeholders in Los Angeles, with its limited public open spaces but an extensive alley network, have been among the pioneers to invest in alley infrastructure improvements. Examples include South LA community groups along with the Trust for Public Land sponsoring alley cleanups and a master plan for a green alley network in residential areas of South Los Angeles. Using a different model of alley revitalization appropriate for a commercial area is the example of the East Cahuenga Alley Revitalization project.

### Benefits of Commercial Alley Revitalization

#### Financial

Once revitalized and underutilized, alleys can support economic development and increased profits for business owners.

- Alleys can provide easy access to a ‘second’ storefront for buildings. It bridges access between parking and commercial areas, allowing customers to park and walk to multiple locations.

- The alley may serve as a marketing tool that attracts new customers to the business establishments. An increase in sales for adjacent business also equates to an increase in sales tax for the local government.

- Alley improvements also have the potential to increase the values of the properties in the immediate vicinity, and thus increases to property tax revenues for local government.

#### Safety and Crime

Alley revitalization may also be approached as a strategy to
combat blight and public safety issues.

- If the alley renovation project provides greater economic benefits to the business owners, they are less likely to go out of business or vacate their location. With less vacated stores, the commercial district becomes less blighted.

- If the alley is cleaner and designed to be more visible to the public and pedestrian friendly, it is likely to draw an enhanced public presence and activity. Based on the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design theory, livable cities have a higher volume of street activity that naturally deters criminal or unsafe activities.

**Environmental & Health**

Alley renovation projects have the capacity to correct any previous unsustainable practices and create a healthier and greener built environment.

- Many different environmentally unsound activities take place in alleyways because they are not monitored. Toxic liquids are disposed of improperly and flow into storm drains, dumping and even garbage trucks making multiple garbage pick-ups. Renovated alleys have been designed to consolidate dumping and recycling stations.

- An alley renovation project may also allow for the use of sustainable materials that reduce the amount of resources used, such as permeable surfaces that capture excess water or drought-tolerant vegetation.

- Alleys that have been renovated can turn into pedestrian alley networks, such as those popular in downtown Pasadena. This encourages more walking and less driving – which can be a great thing for Angeleanos. There is potential to also create revitalized alley networks near public transit hubs, providing more reasons for people to leave their cars at home or near a commuting spot. Alleys can play an important role in a balanced transportation network that encourages social and economic interactions.
Summary of Project Level Findings

While each individual alley revitalization project will have its unique set of circumstances that affect development and implementation, the EaCa project provides important lessons and best practices relevant to the revitalization of other alley environments. Some of the key, project-level lessons and findings include:

- **1st Finding:** EaCa Alley is provides an example of an ambitious and holistic alley revitalization project in a commercial area. Storm water management, waste disposal, public art, landscaping and other services and amenities were all included in the project. Less ambitious projects can still achieve the aforementioned benefits of alley revitalization for a lower price.

- **2nd Finding:** The total construction cost for the EaCa Alley renovation came out to roughly $785,000. The need to repave and adjust the alley’s connecting arterial roads contributed to this relative high price tag. The cost of other alley projects can be significantly less and less ambitious. At the other end of the spectrum would be simple investments in pedestrian lighting, landscaping or other relatively low-cost, high-value projects.

- **3rd Finding:** The Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles (CRA/LA) utilized tax increment funding to cover the majority of the construction costs. In addition, the business owners that belong to the Hollywood Business Improvement District (BID) paid for lighting and furniture, as well as agreed to assess themselves in order to pay for ongoing operation and maintenance costs.

- **4th Finding:** Even with the elimination of the CRA/LA sometime after (and unconnected to) the EaCa project, today there are a variety of other financing mechanisms that can be used to fund alley revitalization in Los Angeles, including local park funds, community development block grants (CDBG), various applicable Metro funds, and private funds.
learning from best practices. The City of Pasadena successfully revitalized the alleys in its downtown commercial district by tying local revenue from parking meters to fund projects in the same geographic vicinity.

Summary of Program Level Recommendations

• **1st Recommendation:** The City of Los Angeles should establish an official alley renovation program and streamline the permitting, planning, and financing processes.

• **2nd Recommendation:** In order for the alleys to be active and in constant use, there should be a focus on creating activated alley networks rather than renovating single alleys.

• **3rd Recommendation:** The City of Los Angeles should utilize creative funding mechanisms to pay for alley projects,
**Case Study: EaCa Alley Revitalization Project**

**Introduction**

In the Hollywood neighborhood of Los Angeles, California, there once existed an alley nicknamed ‘heroin alley’ behind a commercial strip on Cahuenga Boulevard. This alley is located about seven miles northwest of Downtown Los Angeles and is only about one-third of a mile from the Vine/Hollywood Metro Red line station. The alley is situated at the rear of the business establishments that face Cahuenga Boulevard and Cosmo Street, just south of Hollywood Boulevard and north of Selma Avenue.

This case study will first provide a brief summary of why the alley was revitalized and how the project came to be. Next, there will be an overview of the role each of the project’s leaders and stakeholders played in bringing the revitalization project to life. Additionally, crucial information on construction costs and financing will be outlined. The concluding portion will provide information on the environmental review procedures and sustainability elements applied to this project.

**History**

EaCa Alley was once a decrepit and deteriorating “pathway” filled with trash receptacles and gates at the edges of every property. At one point, the backstreet was so neglected and obscure that it attracted illicit activity, such as drug use and public defecation, which garnered it the name “Heroin Alley.” The alley was designated as a public nuisance in 1990s and adjacent business owners had gated the north and south end of the alley for safety and private uses. Additionally, the alley did not function in its capacity to direct storm water. As a result, the combination of lacking alleyway storm water drainage, long-standing stagnant pools of water, accrual of litter and garbage, and other unsanitary accumulations made the alley an undesirable place, especially when measured by public health and public safety standards.

Today, this alley serves as a pedestrian walkway where patrons can be spotted in outdoor patios and walking along the pathway, admiring the unique landscape architecture and art that dons the alley walls. This transformation was achieved through the efforts of multiple cooperating stakeholders and government. The initial idea for the alley renovation was a result of a Master’s thesis project that

The USC Center for Sustainable cities published a major report in 2008 on the creation of “green alleys” in Los Angeles. This report helped create the political will for alley infrastructure transformation from council district offices. The Hollywood City Council District began to speak with stakeholders about a potential alley revitalization project. Also in 2008, members of the Hollywood BID approved an assessment that would help pay for the alley’s security, maintenance, and marketing costs.

In 2009, the representatives of the Hollywood BID began conversations with the Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Los Angeles (CRA/LA) regarding funding for the project, since a revitalization project of this nature fell within this department’s jurisdiction. As a result, the agency allocated tax-increment financing funds to help construct the alley. In this same year, those who were spearheading the project discovered that the alley was designated as a pedestrian mall as a result of the 1960 Pedestrian Mall Law and on July 28, 2009, the Los Angeles City Council adopted an action to re-designate the alley as pedestrian mall.

Construction broke ground on the alley project in 2011, which was the same year that the EaCa Alley Association was formed. About a year later, on March 9, 2012, EaCa Alley officially opened to the public. The renovation of EaCa Alley focused on transforming the alley and creating a semi-public space that would provide patrons and pedestrians with a cleaner, more aesthetically pleasing environment. In many ways, the goal was to change people’s perception of the alley, and potentially the customers’ opinion of the business establishments in the neighborhood, by altering its use and look.

**Actors**

As mentioned in the previous section, there were a variety of stakeholders involved in the EaCa Alley revitalization project. The main groups were comprised of the Hollywood Business Improvement District, the California Redevelopment Association of Los Angeles, Los
Angeles Council District 13, and alley-adjacent property owners and business owners. This section outlines the role that each actor played in bringing EaCa Alley to fruition.

- **Hollywood BID.** The BID played a financial, as well as organizational, role that was vital to the overall success of the project. As previously mentioned, the Hollywood BID business owners approved an annual assessment of $11 for every linear foot of the alley. The revenue from this assessment helps pay for the Alley’s ongoing operation and maintenance costs. In addition, the BID helped pay for the Alley’s lighting and furniture expenses, ensuring that the alley remains a safe and pleasant place for its patrons. In addition to their monetary role, the BID representatives also performed an important organizational and political role. Sarah McPherson Besley, the Associate Executive Director of the Hollywood BID worked with business owners and the local Councilman’s office to ensure compliance and cooperation.

- **CRA/LA.** EaCa Alley is located in a designated Redevelopment Project Area. As a result, the CRA/LA utilized tax increment funding that was designated for such revitalization projects to cover the Alley’s renovation, design, and construction costs. Kip Rudd, a Senior Planner at CRA/LA, also played an instrumental community outreach role by working alongside the BID representatives to garner the business and property owners’ support.

- **Los Angeles Council District 13.** In Los Angeles, the council districts often take leadership in community and neighborhood level economic development and planning improvements. The EaCa Alley, within the Council District 13 boundaries, offered an opportunity for the council district to pioneer alley revitalization in the City of Los Angeles. The political support and leadership of the council district was an integral component of the alley’s successful revitalization. Council district support can assist in: expedition of the zoning and planning entitlement process, access to and knowledge of sources of city or county level funding and access to community organizations, businesses or leaders that can support the project in multiple forms.

- **Property & Business Owners.** Property owners and business owners adjacent to alleys in commercial districts may have
the most to gain from alley infrastructure improvement and revitalization. Improved infrastructure can have a positive impact on property values and potentially attract more business for the commercial renters. In the case of EaCa Alley, some of the adjacent business owners in the restaurant industry saw an opportunity to utilize an improved alley for amenities such as outdoor seating and rear entrances. Additionally, an open and cleaner alleyway that leads to increased pedestrianism creates an environment where the visibility of the alley allows for more safety and decreased illegal activity such as dumping.

The EaCa project is an example of an ambitious and holistic alley revitalization project in a commercial district. Storm water management, waste disposal, public art, landscaping and other services and amenities were all included in the project. Less ambitious projects can still achieve the aforementioned benefits of alley revitalization for a lower price. The total construction cost for the EaCa Alley renovation came out to roughly $785,000.

This cost does not reflect a typical alley revitalization project. The need to repave and adjust the alley’s connecting arterial roads contributed to the high price tag of the project. Additionally, gas lines interfered with the areas of excavation and the installation of grease interceptors added additional costs to the construction process.

There were also issues specific to the portion of Selma Avenue where it met the alley: the storm drain on Selma Avenue needed to be realigned in order to function with the new EaCa Alley drainage system, and the generally bad condition of the road on Selma Avenue required further reconstruction. Notably, these conditions added significant costs onto the project; in other alley renovation projects, such situations may not necessarily be encountered and

### Construction Costs

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<tr>
<td>Construction/Improvements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Construction Contingency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grease Interceptors Installation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Construction Management</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Construction Cost</strong></td>
<td><strong>$785,600</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 - $53,000 from CRA/LA; additional $15,000 collected from business owners for interceptors
thus, can make for significantly lower construction costs.

In terms of functionality, the EaCa Alley now has a working drainage system comprised of a permeable pavers path that filters and directs storm water to the swale underneath the alley’s pathway. Additionally, garbage functions have been consolidated amongst alley-adjacent business owners to a nearby offsite location, making for an economically beneficial cost-savings arrangement as well as a more environmentally responsible setup for waste disposal.

**Funding Sources:**

**Table 1-2: Cost Categories and Funders**

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<th>Cost Categories</th>
<th>Funders</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tr>
<td>Construction Costs</td>
<td>CRA/LA</td>
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<td>Council District</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capital Costs</td>
<td>Property Owner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Operating Costs</td>
<td>Annual Alley Assessment from All BID Members</td>
<td>$15,240</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 - Through Proposition C funding
2 - Signage, gates, landscaping
3 - David Gajda

The CRA/LA was the main contributor to the EaCa Alley construction costs. The local Council District also contributed to an additional amount of less than $50,000. These funds were from a pool of Proposition C funds. Proposition C, which was approved by Los Angeles County voters in November 1990, stipulate that revenues generated by a half-cent sales tax increase will be allocated towards transportation projects and programs including street improvement projects. Other capital costs for the signage, landscaping and gates for the new EaCa Alley, estimated at roughly $100,000, were paid for by an alley-adjacent property owner.

The Hollywood BID agreed to pay for the marketing, maintenance, and security of alleys through alley assessment dollars paid by property owners in the BID district. At a rate of about $11 per linear foot of alley, the assessment dollars from EaCa Alley-adjacent property owners pays for the maintenance services the EaCa Alley receives. The alley assessment dollars, which go through 2018, amount to $15,240 per year.

The cost of construction, capital improvements and operating costs were approximately $1 million for EaCa Alley. Private entities were responsible for about 25 percent of the total cost of the project. Examples include the alley operating costs through 2018 and the $100,000 for
signage, gates, and landscaping. While private funding was integral, the public sector was responsible for funding the majority of the costs.

**Land Use - Entitlements & Zoning:**

EaCa Alley, along with the adjacent property, has a special zoning designation listed as a ‘Regional Center Commercial’. This zoning designation is commercial in nature however two adjacent properties are residential. This can be attributed to the fact that the properties lie within an Adaptive Reuse Incentive Area, which encourages conversion of underutilized commercial buildings to housing. The properties are also located in a State Enterprise Zone and the Community Redevelopment Agency’s Hollywood Redevelopment Project Area. As a result of the State Enterprise Zone, businesses located in the zone are offered tax credits and deductions. The Redevelopment Project Area designation was particularly important to the EaCa Alley project in regards to obtaining funding.

**Interviews**

A little over a year after EaCa Alley was opened to the public, we contacted the business owners surrounding the alley and interviewed them about their overall opinion of the alley project and whether they felt it was worth their investment. The results of these interviews summarized below reflect the opinions of seven commercial tenants adjacent to EaCa Alley. At the time that the interviews took place, only one tenant had begun to utilize the EaCa Alley space for their own commercial use.

**Q: Has your business seen an increase in customers or revenues?**

One out of the seven businesses had seen an increase in revenue. This business was utilizing the alley space to attract customers.

**Q: Does your business have plans to use the alley to attract customers or more business?**

Two of the seven businesses have future plans to utilize the alley space.
Q: Do you feel that the EaCa Alley renovation was worth the investment?

Four of the seven respondents felt that the EaCa Alley revitalization was worth the investment and cited that the overall effect of redevelopment has a positive impact on the neighborhood merchants.
**What's an alley? And who cares anyway?**

Alleys serve a variety of purposes in the built environment and are an integral component of a city's infrastructure. These narrow spaces, often nestled between buildings, have a variety of uses. Common uses include: vehicular access to residential garages, storage for public facilities, refuse collection, and parking. Alleys can be private, separate parcels of land from the surrounding property, or public land, maintained by the local government. The City of Los Angeles has an extensive alley network that amounts to over 900 linear miles.

The Bureau of Street Services through the Department of Public Works has jurisdiction over the city’s alleys and are responsible for alley cleaning, illegal dumping, slurry sealing (i.e., filling potholes and asphalt cracks), street use code enforcement, trash receptacle pickup and debris removal. Budgetary priority has been reserved for more visible public infrastructure repairs rather than alleyway code enforcement. As a result, alley networks are often poorly maintained.

Within the past decade, city governments and organizations around the country have begun undertaking projects that improve, repurpose, ‘green’ and revitalize alleys with the objective of improving the environmental and aesthetic quality of the urban form. The City of Los Angeles, with its extensive alley network, has been among the pioneering cities to invest in alley infrastructure improvements. Examples include South LA community groups sponsoring alley cleanups and alley art contests, and the work between Council District 13 and the Hollywood BID to revitalize the East Cahuenga alley.
What design elements should we consider in alley revitalization?

There are a variety of creative design ideas that can be used when transforming an alleyway into a public space. The details of design will be dependent on what the final vision for the alley is. Alleys have been converted to pedestrian malls, art installations and designated outdoor space for usage by retail tenants. The following are some best practices and ideas to keep in mind from alley projects around the country.

Safety and visibility are top concerns for alleyways due to their remote location from the main streets. In activating an alleyway, the goal is to attract more pedestrians and patrons in order to increase the level of safety. Providing public amenities can help attract pedestrian traffic and create a sense of safety. Public amenities such as murals, art installations, gardens, green space, and landscape architecture create a unique esthetic and can increase pedestrian traffic. Street furniture, such as public benches and tables, can provide pedestrians with an opportunity to utilize the space. Lighting provides pedestrians with a greater sense of safety and can bring attention to the alley from those walking on nearby sidewalks.

Tool 2: Design Elements

Public Art in Alley #111 in Austin, Texas
Another way the use of alleys could be promoted is to focus on creating alley networks, rather than single, isolated alleys. Excellent examples of revitalized alley networks in commercial districts include Old Town Pasadena and Seattle’s Pioneer Square. Pedestrians use the alley networks in these locations as a public right-of-way because the alleys are highly visible from connecting main streets. These alley networks are mostly indiscernible from the sidewalk activity and seem to be used just as much as the traditional walkways. Walking along the alleys is not an anomaly in these districts. The alleys being in close proximity to one another has created an environment where outdoor restaurant seating and retail entrances from the alleyways are not uncommon.

Limitations and regulations must always be considered. In the case of EaCa Alley, the Bureau of Engineering and Department of Building and Safety examined the soundness, level of compliance, and safety of the renovated alley. Design considerations must be to ensure that emergency access and access for refuse collection are not disrupted.

Network of Alleys around the Old Town Pasadena, California
How does alley revitalization get funded anyway?

There are a variety of financing mechanisms that can be used to fund alley revitalization in Los Angeles. In the most recent alley renovation project, completed in 2012, the CRA/LA covered the initial capital costs of construction. The State of California eliminated the agency in 2012 and in order to cover further costs, the local council district the alley was located in identified two federal funding sources that could be applied to an alley revitalization project i.e. Park Funds and Block Grants. Additionally, the City of Los Angeles and Los Angeles County government had programs through the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) that could be utilized for this type of project. Let’s look at some examples of how these funding sources work.

A. Local Park Funds

The City of Los Angeles requires most residential development projects requesting a zone change to either dedicate land for recreation and park purposes or pay a fee in-lieu as a condition for approval. It also charges a separate park impact fee, the Zone Change Park Fee, applied to the finalization of zone changes for multi-unit residential projects. The revenue collected from these fees is used to acquire new parkland, fund capital improvements at existing recreational, and park facilities within one to two miles of the new development. The fees collected cannot be used to offset staff operation and maintenance costs, to purchase materials and supplies, or to replace equipment – funds can only go towards construction costs.

Market Octavia Living Alley Pedestrian Network Project in San Francisco, California
Cities can use park funds from development projects around alleys for alley revitalization projects. Recall that in the EaCa Alley case study, a once closed off alleyway became a pedestrian mall. A pedestrian mall can be classified as a recreational facility. Check if your project could fit the description for a recreational facility because the City of Los Angeles can frame other alley projects as recreational facilities in order to qualify for park funds. Those business and property owners adjacent to the project could fund ineligible items such as maintenance. Property owners adjacent to 26 alleys in Hollywood already pay a fee for alley maintenance and security as part of the Hollywood Entertainment District BID’s Walkable Alleys Program. This program has a total of about 11,500 feet of alley space and about $135,000 is collected annually for maintenance and security.

B. Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)

Another potential source of federal funding for alley revitalization projects are U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG). This program provides communities with resources to address their unique development needs. The Bay Street Alley Reconstruction Project and the Ford Road Alley Project in the City of Costa Mesa are two examples of alley revitalization projects that were made possible by federal CDBG funds.

C. LA County Metro’s Call for Projects

Every other year, Metro accepts applications from local jurisdictions, transit operators, and other public entities in the County of Los Angeles. The program distributes discretionary capital transportation funds to regionally significant projects. One of the program objectives is to create pedestrian-centered infrastructure improvements and improve pedestrian safety. Many alleys, especially in commercial districts, are public rights-of-way and support walking as a form of transportation; thus, they can compete for this type of funding. Costs such as maintenance, operating costs, security personnel are not eligible for funding. This would be an innovative way to secure funding, as it has not been attempted yet.

D. Private Funds

The last source of funding requires no public money. Alley projects can be funded purely through private funds. Property and
business owners may see the benefits of investing in their alleys and decide to contribute towards alley improvements. An example of this took place at Belden Place Alley, located in the financial district of San Francisco. In 1990, a local restaurant, Café Bastille, opened and began placing tables in their adjacent alley. One by one, more restaurants adjacent to the alley followed suit. The alley life grew organically without government planning and today is utilized by all adjacent businesses and has a narrow pedestrian passageway. Private funds for alley renovation have been contributed by community and neighborhood groups, business improvement districts, associations and individuals.
The transformation of an alley, from an unsafe and uninviting strip of underutilized commercial land to a pedestrian attraction, is a tool for economic development. Benefits can include increased land values, esthetics and business. Yet getting the support from vendors, tenants and property owners can take time.

There were multiple stakeholders involved in LA’s most recent alley revitalization project. The main groups were comprised of alley-adjacent property owners and business owners, the Hollywood Business Improvement District, the California Redevelopment Association and Council District 13.

Organizing to support alley renovation among this group of actors with differing incentives was a process that took time and commitment. Before appealing to your stakeholders, it could be good to review the community and economic development benefits of having alley revitalization take place in your commercial area.

What are the Benefits for Commercial Alley Revitalization

**Financial**

The once underutilized alley space can allow a business owner, primarily those that serve food and beverages, to increase their space and accommodate more patrons. This may lead to an increase in profits for business owners.

- The new attraction of the alley may serve as a marketing tool that attracts new customers to the business establishments.
- Alley improvements are an investment that have the potential to increase the values of the properties in the immediate vicinity. As a result, there are increases to property tax revenues for local government.
- An increase in sales for adjacent business also equates to an increase in sales tax for the local government.
- This provides easy access to a ‘second’ storefront for buildings that are deep. It also bridges access between parking and commercial areas, allowing customers to park and walk to multiple locations.
Safety and Crime

If the alley renovation project provides greater economic benefits to the business owners, they are less likely to go out of business or vacate their location. With less vacated stores, the commercial district becomes less blighted.

• If the alley is cleaner and designed to be more visible to the public and pedestrian friendly, it is likely to draw an enhanced public presence and activity. Based on the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design theory, livable cities have a higher volume of street activity that naturally deters criminal or unsafe activities.

Environmental & Health

Alley renovation projects have the capacity to correct any previous unsustainable practices and create a healthier and greener built environment.

• Many environmentally unsound activities take place in alleyways because they are not monitored. Toxic liquids are disposed of improperly and flow into storm drains and illegal dumping is common. Renovated alleys have been designed to consolidate dumping and recycling stations.

• An alley renovation project may also allow for the use of sustainable materials that reduce the amount of resources used, such as permeable surfaces that capture excess water or drought-tolerant vegetation.

• Alleys that have been renovated can turn into pedestrian alley networks, such as those popular in downtown Pasadena. This encourages more walking and less driving. There is potential here to also create revitalized alley networks near public transit hubs, providing more reasons for people to leave their cars at home or near a commuting spot. Less driving means better air quality and vehicle miles traveled (VMT).
Renovation, revitalization, activation? However you phrase the alley project, stakeholders will immediately want to know:

- Who’s going to pay for this?
- How’s it organized?
- What’s this going to do for me?

Reluctance about an alley project for a variety of reasons should be expected. Project organizers should have realistic assessments of what the costs and benefits are for stakeholders. In organizing the project and gathering support, it’s important to learn from what the EaCa Alley project had to consider.

**Lesson 1: Some stakeholders may focus on immediate losses rather than future gains.** Before EaCa alley was revitalized, business owners had become upset about the illegal activity occurring in alley and placed gates at the alley frontage. Some businesses felt the gates deterred illegal activity. Ironically, gating alleys in Los Angeles is illegal because alleys are public property. Once the EaCa revitalization took place, the gates were removed. With the removal of the gates, businesses were concerned about the nuisance problems returning. However, the new alley was a conduit for increased pedestrian traffic, thus diminishing opportunities for criminal or prohibited activity. While initially the participants focused on their short-term losses, it was not until the project’s completion that they observed the function the project served in enhancing the safety and quality of the space.

**Lesson 2: The alley renovation was not the end-all solution.** Certain business owners have realized that merely improving the aesthetic quality of the alley does not produce economic benefits and greater profits. More programming and marketing needed to be done in order to attract customers to the Alley. Certain dining establishments are now making an effort to entice patrons after work on weekdays and weekends with events and specials.

**Lesson 3: Cooperation allows for cheaper, more sustainable alternatives that benefit everyone.** The process of the alley revitalization started a discussion between business owners about how they could begin to cooperate for a more sustainable refuse collection method. The business owners decided to create a consolidated trash pickup site located in an obscured area behind the alley. By eliminating multiple trash bins and consolidating them...
into a few, the business owners were able to minimize their waste disposal costs and eliminate the need for multiple trash pick-ups to the same location. Waste reduction is the next step in sustainability efforts for these merchants. Food waste compost, robust recycling programs and trash compactors are waste reduction methods that can be implemented.

**Lesson 4: The alley can attract new business and keep the district vital.** A new merchant alongside EaCa Alley, Berlin Currywurst, opened in December 2012. Press releases described the restaurant as featuring an outdoor patio and beer garden facing the newly developed EaCa Alley. The alley is now an amenity of the district that can attract new businesses, which keeps vacant stores from staying empty too long and improves the blighted condition of the area.
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Memorandum to CRA/LA Board of Commissioners—HW3410, HW2991. Subject: East Cahuenga Corridor Pedestrian Alley. December 2, 2010


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