

PPD 629: Capstone in Urban Planning
Spring 2024, 4 Units | Section 51238D | Thursday, 2 to 5:20 PM

Location: RGL 209

Instructor: Deepak Bahl, MBA, M.Pl., M.Arch.
Program Director
USC Center for Economic Development
Adjunct Associate Professor
Sol Price School of Public Policy

Office Hours: 11 am to 12 pm, Tuesday [Zoom]
Contact Info: bahl@usc.edu [emails shall be returned within 48 hours]

Course Description

In this course, students will produce both individual and group documents related to a specific, real site. The work products will be staged, with the individual project completed and reviewed by concentration faculty members at mid-semester, followed by the inter-disciplinary group plan to be presented to the same concentration faculty members at the end of the semester.

The capstone is designed to test your knowledge of the concepts and skills you have gained in the MUP curriculum, internships, and other experiences obtained during your study at USC. The capstone is not a forum for rote echoing of course materials. It challenges you to synthesize concepts and methods that are appropriate to addressing a current real-world planning problem. You will be able to demonstrate your command of the core course materials, and your expertise in one of the prevalent areas of the planning profession. This is also an opportunity to demonstrate your ability to communicate your analysis of the situation and your ideas.

The goals of the course are to:

- Provide an opportunity to demonstrate creativity and general grasp of planning theories, issues, and constructs in a true “capstone” experience;
- Integrate and synthesize knowledge gained throughout the MUP core and concentration curriculums, and
- Mirror real world planning and development practice by giving a taste of the challenges, tensions, and issues of the profession in an inter-disciplinary context.

The requirements of the course are to produce professional caliber individual and inter-disciplinary group reports that meets all the expectations of current practice.

The capstone course has two parts.

- In Part I, the *Concentration Analysis*, you answer questions individually related to your MUP concentration: Economic Development, Design of the Built Environment, Arts and Culture, Environmental Planning and Analysis, Housing and Real Estate or Transportation. You will also explore a range of alternatives that address the problem as described in the project brief. These ideas will emerge from your understanding and analysis of the problems and potentials of the existing site, and the requirements of the program. You will have to develop concrete and detailed proposals for one of these plans or programs.
 - Deliverable: Individual Project Report & Presentation

- In Part II, the *Recommendations & Strategy* section, you will answer questions as part of an inter-disciplinary group that summarizes the problem, your group solution, and key opportunities and challenges to implementing your solution. This is an opportunity for you to collaborate with fellow planners/professionals to explore ideas and synergies emerging from the partnership amongst various concentrations, and develop and synthesize recommendations and strategies for the client.
 - Deliverable: Group Project Report & Presentation

Learning Objectives & Grading Rubric

Please find attached a separate document with capstone learning objectives and assessment/grading rubric.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

You will be provided a project brief and additional reading materials will be provided on a regular basis.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Please see assignments in the project brief. Additional assignments and presentations will be announced in the class.

Grading Breakdown

Assessment Tool	Points	% of Grade
Individual Project	40	40%
Individual Presentation	10	10%
Group Project	25	25%
Group Project Presentation	10	10%
Class Participation	15	15%
TOTAL	100	100%

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale

A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

Assignment Submission Policy

Assignments are to be submitted per the schedule outlined in the syllabus.

Grading Timeline

Grades will be provided within two weeks of assignment submittal.

Additional Policies

Late assignments will be graded down substantially, and a passing grade will not be assigned unless all assignments are completed.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Week 1: Jan. 11

- Project introduction
- Present students with the rubric for evaluating individual assessments and analyses and inter-disciplinary group plans
- Introduce concentration questions & template for individual assessments and analyses

Week 2: Jan. 18

- Site Visit

Week 3: Jan. 25

- Client Briefing

Weeks 4: Feb. 1

- Faculty visit to discuss capstone expectations
 - 2-3 faculty to visit each section and briefly outline their expectations of the capstone project
 - Brief Q&A session to answer any student questions

Weeks 5-6: Feb. 8 to 15

- Research, writing and formatting of individual assignments

Week 7: Feb. 22

- Faculty prelim review #1 of individual assignment
 - Concentration faculty (split across sections) to review student progress and provide verbal feedback

Week 8: Feb. 29

- **Individual Reports Due**
 - Students hand in their assignments and analyses for grading (capstone instructors)

Week 9: March 7

- **Individual Presentations**
 - Concentration faculty will provide verbal and written feedback to students

Week 10: March 14

- Spring Break

Weeks 11-12: March 21 to March 28

- Form groups
- Research, writing, and formatting of the inter-disciplinary group plan

Week 13: April 4

- Faculty prelim review #2 of group projects
 - Concentration faculty to review student progress and provide verbal feedback

Week 14: April 11

- Groups address faculty comments and finalize reports

Week 15: April 18

- Group Reports Due

Week 16: April 25

- **Final Group Presentations**
- Concentration faculty will provide verbal and written feedback to students
- Student grades finalized by capstone course instructors

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298

equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following *protected characteristics*: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations. The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity |Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710

uscса.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

ARTS & CULTURE CONCENTRATION

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Demonstrate a framework and facility for identifying and explaining the ways that arts and culture are key to the lifeblood of cities and communities and their implications for urban planning.
- Show a nuanced understanding of the possibilities and challenges of cultural placemaking/planning initiatives and approaches for engagement and implementation: economic, social, and political
- Demonstrate inter-disciplinary methods for analyzing the spatiality and economics of arts and culture assets at multiple scales.
- Be able to apply skills and materials from the arts and culture core and concentration classes to the specific issues of a specific site.
- Offer creativity, innovation, and leadership in constructing and communicating an arts and culture proposal for change, continuity, and resilience at the city and community level.

ASSESSMENT:

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	ASSESSMENT	Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement
URBAN PLANNING FRAMEWORK	<i>Clearly define and explain the arts and culture dimensions to the planning problem and opportunities presented.</i>			

<p>COMMAND OF INTERDISCIPLINARY METHODS</p>	<p><i>Demonstrate a facility for utilizing inter-disciplinary methods for analyzing the social justice, spatiality and economics of arts and culture dynamics and assets at play at multiple scales in the project and site. This should include a variety of types of visual evidence and argument.</i></p>			
<p>APPLICATION OF FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS</p>	<p><i>Exhibit an ability to apply skills and materials from the arts and culture core and concentration classes to the specific physical site, peoples, and history of the Capstone project that inform your proposal.</i></p>			
<p>UNDERSTANDING OF THE DYNAMICS OF PLACEMAKING</p>	<p><i>Make a creative proposal that displays an understanding of the possibilities and the limitations of the economic, social, and political, and cultural dynamics of the arts in urban development and equitable placemaking.</i></p>			

DESIGN OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT CONCENTRATION

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Gain familiarity and command of the foundational materials relevant to urban design: important concepts, theories, precedents and best practices.
- Acquire skills in documentation, observation, critical analysis and representation of the built environment.
- Develop an understanding of the scope and nature of urban design: various scales, process orientation, public imperatives, community engagement, various measures of implementation and practice.
- Cultivate creativity, innovation, and leadership in design thinking in making proposals for change, continuity and resilience.

ASSESSMENT:

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	ASSESSMENT	Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement
COMMAND OF FOUNDATIONAL MATERIALS & CONCEPTS	<i>Effectively document, analyze and diagram the physical design issues affecting a specific site and its community context in written and graphic form. Summarize the physical design impact of design guidelines and other planning regulations on the future development of a specific site and its community context in written and graphic form.</i>			
COMMAND OF FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS & METHODS	<i>Effectively and efficiently design and document the project proposal with site plans, site sections and digital massing models, demonstrating an understanding of fundamental design concepts, building typologies and drawing conventions.</i>			

<p>UNDERSTANDING OF THE DESIGN PROCESS</p>	<p><i>Propose an effective community design process that clearly addresses the concerns of both public and private stakeholders and suggest how design outcomes should be evaluated.</i></p>			
<p>CULTIVATION OF CREATIVITY & DESIGN THINKING</p>	<p><i>Demonstrate design thinking, creatively synthesizing the social, political, cultural and physical issues affecting a specific site into a compelling project vision, including goals, values, program and precedents.</i></p>			

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CONCENTRATION

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Context for community economic development. To understand how economic, social, and political forces shape local communities and influence urban policy making regarding local growth and development. To consider how this context shapes such issues as economic stability, community health, social/civic capacity, sense of place, and racial/cultural relations.
- Instruments for economic and community development. To gain facility with the instruments (principles, tools, and techniques) for carrying out local economic and community development, their effectiveness, and their impacts on local communities.
- Functional policy applications. To learn about the issues, principles, and methods/instruments for managing local growth and development in a variety of functional areas, such as land use and transportation, housing, municipal infrastructure, and social policy (jobs, education, and culture), and the barriers (cultural, fiscal, regulatory. policy, etc.) to using them effectively.
- Critical and ethical reasoning. To understand the nuances of normative considerations brought to bear in economic development (e.g., equity, efficiency, sustainability, cultural issues). To come to terms with the difficult tradeoffs--political, economic, and ethical--involved in urban economic development and acknowledging/understanding that there are rarely solutions in which all affected constituencies are "winners".
- Tradecraft. To polish skills required for entrepreneurial community development, including: (1) research and critical reasoning abilities; (2) application of economic development tools; and (3) professional writing and speaking skills. How do you evaluate these potential impacts and what steps can you put forth to ameliorate unequal or inequitable distribution of costs, benefits and impacts?

ASSESSMENT:

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	ASSESSMENT	Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement
CONTEXT	<i>Provide a nuanced understanding of the contextual attributes of a particular place that should inform an appropriate economic development strategy. Explain how a failure to incorporate such contextual factors could lead to ineffectual or misguided policy outcomes.</i>			

<p>INSTRUMENTS</p>	<p><i>Demonstrate a clear analytical basis for assessing alternative policy instruments, in terms of both theoretical and empirical scholarship, and in terms of the specific context under consideration.</i></p>			
<p>FUNCTIONAL (OR SECTORAL) POLICY APPLICATIONS</p>	<p><i>Outline alternative sectoral approaches to addressing the economic challenges of a particular place, and assess the relative merits of these approaches for the case under consideration.</i></p>			
<p>CRITICAL & ETHICAL REASONING</p>	<p><i>Articulate the social justice considerations intrinsic to the economic development strategy being proposed. Explain the critical reasoning and social theory arguments that are relevant to the case at hand.</i></p>			
<p>TRADECRAFT</p>	<p><i>Demonstrate a capacity for: (1) linking theoretical and scholarly arguments to professional practice, (2) professional competence in assessing methods for practical applications, and (3) strong oral, graphical and written communication skills.</i></p>			

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING & ANALYSIS CONCENTRATION

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Understand and reflect upon methodology and a range of assessment and planning methods for environmental planning and analysis
- Understand how the choice and use of theory, methodological approach and methods have implications for the full planning process
- Understand systems analysis and spatial analysis, including assumptions and principles, especially as related to climate change planning
- Understand issues of environmental justice, and how past planning actions and structural factors have contributed to environmental inequities

ASSESSMENT:

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	ASSESSMENT	Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement
<p>KNOWLEDGE & UNDERSTANDING OF METHODS</p>	<p><i>Understand and apply major environmental approaches, concrete methods, and various types of data. Create and present both in written and oral forms a coherent approach for applying several methods for to improve the urban environment and its sustainability, and to assess the implications of various methodological choices.</i></p>			
<p>KNOWLEDGE & UNDERSTANDING OF PROCESS</p>	<p><i>Select and implement appropriate methods for various aspects of the urban environment and its sustainability, discuss data and evaluate results.</i></p>			

<p>KNOWLEDGE & UNDERSTANDING OF SYSTEMS AND SPATIAL ANALYSIS</p>	<p><i>Analyze complex environmental and sustainability issues using various methods and tools (e.g., vulnerability or life-cycle analysis).</i></p>			
<p>KNOWLEDGE & UNDERSTANDING OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE</p>	<p><i>Analyze environmental justice issues and assess available institutional, legal, and planning responses to address inequities in environmental hazards and exposure. Work constructively in a team and communicate effectively with people from other disciplines.</i></p>			

HOUSING & REAL ESTATE CONCENTRATION**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

- Acquire skills assessing proposed planning projects within the context of the interests and perceptions of multiple, competing audiences, including neighbors, organized community groups, planning department or other operating agency, cognizant elected officials, and the proposed users of the planned project.
- Learn to conceptualize the potential end users as part of a general assessment of where, and what, does housing demand come from.
- Develop practice in bringing an equity lens to bear on proposed planning projects.
- Learn to view the proposed project within its general budgetary considerations, including both development costs and future fiscal impacts.

ASSESSMENT:

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	ASSESSMENT	Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement
SKILL AT ASSESSING PROPOSED PLANNING PROJECTS	<i>Assess primary benefits and strengths of the site you would put forward to prospective developers and occupants of the site, as well as to the community to engender their support for your proposed development</i>			

<p>END USER CONCEPTUALIZATION & EQUITY EVALUATION</p>	<p><i>Evaluate the project in the context of surrounding neighborhoods, emphasizing how the proposed project will establish connections between local amenities, institutions, and communities. How will the project generate equitable impacts to the broader community, and how do you plan to generate support across diverse groups of stakeholders?</i></p>			
<p>HOUSING ANALYSIS</p>	<p><i>Analyze key local factors that drive housing supply and demand, and use the results of this analysis to motivate the programming of the housing component of your proposed project. Given the current and anticipated future needs of the local population, as well as the existing and projected supply of housing, what housing segments will your project serve, and how?</i></p>			
<p>FISCAL ANALYSIS</p>	<p><i>Prepare a project development budget, schedule, sources and uses of funds, and operating pro forma for your proposed project. Using a discounted cash flow analysis, calculate the project's net present value and key return metrics.</i></p>			

TRANSPORTATION CONCENTRATION

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Understand the fundamentals of travel behavior and tools of travel behavior analysis (why people travel, how travel choices are made, role of socio-economics, disparities)
- Understand the transportation planning process (who plans, stakeholders, env review, politics and policy, finance)
- Understand the spatial structure of cities and how transportation is related to urban form
- Working knowledge of basic analytical tools, including multivariate statistics, spatial analysis and visualization, travel demand forecasting, and transit analytics
- Understand how mobility and transportation relate to, influence, and are influenced by issues of social justice, equity, and inclusion.

ASSESSMENT:

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	ASSESSMENT	Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement
UNDERSTANDING OF FUNDAMENTALS & TOOLS	<i>Effectively document and analyze the transportation issues associated with a specific site.</i>			
UNDERSTANDING OF PROCESS	<i>Effectively place the site problem in the context of the regional transportation system in conducting the analysis and recommending solutions. Effectively place the site problem in the context of the larger transportation planning and policy literature.</i>			
UNDERSTANDING OF TRANSPORTATION & URBAN FORM	<i>Use appropriate data and analytical tools in the site problem. Demonstrate critical thinking, creative problem solving.</i>			

<p>APPLICATION OF ANALYTICAL TOOLS</p>	<p><i>Present recommendations that are strongly supported by empirical analysis and demonstrate understanding of political and social context.</i></p>			
<p>SOCIAL JUSTICE/EQUITY/STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES</p>	<p><i>Discuss how your plan relates to and enhances mobility and quality of life for marginalized groups. Because tradeoffs are sometimes inherent in planning, highlight how any negative equity ramifications from your plan can be addressed or mitigated. Provide a clear assessment of the impact of your plan on social justice from a broad range of stakeholder perspectives.</i></p>			

2024 Capstone Class Project
Holistic Planning Approach for Legacy Areas: Pico Rivera Downtown District

1.0 Introduction

Secondary and tertiary cities today must reconcile layers of past regional planning, local growth, and private developments as they plan and implement their futures. In most cities, there are concentrated locations of particular complementary land uses that include warehouses, light industry and manufacturing, wholesale suppliers, transportation and maintenance facilities, parking lots, underutilized or vacant buildings, and legacy infrastructure. When concentrated, the areas of these uses are typically characterized by a majority of private land ownership, a range of building conditions and ages, deteriorating infrastructure, a lack of open space and trees, variety of demographic characteristics of area workers, and unknown environmental conditions. While they can provide jobs, services, and income for landowners and cities, and sometimes become a precursor to “Arts” or entrepreneurial districts, they can also provide recognized but unquantified impacts upon local communities from pollution sources to blighted aesthetics, and are more and more out of alignment with the desires of communities and local governments, as well as the opportunities for improving quality of life from economic development, housing, and climate change.

Similarly, these cities must navigate between their current place in a regional context of economic centers and transportation routes that influence everything from regional planning to improve metrics such as environmental justice to private companies looking for development opportunities to lower costs. Due to nearly a century of suburban sprawl, there is a common typology of post-WWII cities in transition, which each have their own unique cultural and development histories. Often started as bedroom communities, their land area is often “built-out” with single-family homes and vehicle-oriented shopping centers; they have limited job opportunities and still rely on other economic centers, are located near or adjacent to thruways, and are figuring out how to adapt to aging populations and infrastructure, changing economics and lifestyle interest of populations, as well as to create a sustainable future. Their current needs range from securing and growing a tax base, using maintenance dollars more effectively, adapting to new climate conditions while expressing the desires of the community. Documenting issues are one step, but policies and implementation rely upon local political forces (elected and community) that may want to strike while the iron is hot or will just say NIMBY. And just like any city, they also can have high aspirations for transforming their cities to become as safe as possible for their residents and models of vision zero policies, seek to combine attracting emerging economic sectors with incubating local

businesses to become economically self-sufficient, or leverage existing assets and opportunities to compete for creation of the next regional destination district. These issues exist within all cities in not just the Los Angeles region or thought out California, but can be found nationally and globally in different forms.

Simply put, how do suburban communities and periphery cities envision and redevelop legacy underutilized areas to marginally productive industrial and commercial centers within the context of current political economy to leverage good regional planning initiatives, improve the quality of life of their population and chart their own path forward?

In 2020, the City of Pico Rivera developed a community and economic recovery framework to proactively address major challenges introduced by COVID-19, the economic downturn, climate change, impacts from the Whittier Narrows Dam Safety Project, and multiple unfunded State and federal mandates. After further refinement, the framework evolved into what is now the **Pico Rivera 2035: Community Revitalization Program (PR 2035)**, a modern-day renaissance designed to stimulate holistic, smart, equitable, and sustained long-term community development and economic growth. The adopted framework acts as the guiding element for planning, which includes multiple Specific Plan processes that provide technical analysis, findings from community outreach, and site planning options throughout the City.

2.0 Client - City of Pico Rivera

Consider the Mayor's Office of the City of Pico Rivera as your client. The City has issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) and is looking for development proposals based on a holistic and visionary analysis of an underutilized industrial area as an opportunity site for a new Downtown District. They want you to develop a vision, alternate options, and recommendations for a Master Plan development to select a firm to enter into a more detailed study. If hired, your ultimate product will need to provide details on the multidisciplinary feasibilities of redevelopment, recommend an implementation strategy that includes public-private partnerships, simply communicates potentially complex issues and opportunities to a range of audiences, and develops a compelling vision that generates interest and can be used by the city to leverage future investments and grant funding.

The City of Pico Rivera is located below the Whittier Narrows in eastern Los Angeles, making it one of the "Gateway Cities". [\[Exhibit 1 - Regional Location\]](#) It was founded in 1958 from the merger of the long-standing unincorporated communities of Pico (named

for Pío Pico, the last Mexican governor of California) and Rivera and today has a population of approximately 65,000 residents. Situated on a rich sandy plain between the Rio Hondo and the San Gabriel River, the area was once predominantly agricultural; but, at the end of WWII, the fast-rising demand for homes lured builders to the attractive terrain, which ultimately led to part of the migration of Hispanic immigrants from East Los Angeles, to Montebello, to Whittier and other cities.

Since the 1950s, it has included both residential as well as industrial uses. It had a Ford Motor Company plant for many years - the Los Angeles assembly plant for the Mercury and other cars - but has since closed. The first Stealth Bomber (B-2 Spirit) was designed in the city of Pico Rivera at the old Northrop Grumman plant, which has also closed and demolished. Since 1978, the Pico Rivera Sports Arena has become a nationally recognized and iconic entertainment venue that is synonymous with Mexican-American culture in Southern California. With a capacity of 6,000 people, the venue hosts upwards of 30 events annually ranging from the largest Mexican style rodeos (charreadas) in the US, concerts including Antonio Aguilar, public food drives, and cultural festivals such as Circus Vargas. [\[Exhibit 2 – City Boundaries and Features\]](#)

The Whittier Narrows Dam was constructed in 1957 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as a flood-risk management project that now provides flood-risk reduction to more than 1.2 million people. Following Hurricane Katrina, the Corps dramatically overhauled its process for prioritizing dam and levee evaluations and modifications to better account for potential impacts to the population protected by the structures. The Whittier Narrows Dam Safety Modification Study was subsequently initiated to evaluate the risk to the population, which extends from Pico Rivera to Long Beach. In May 2016, the Corps placed Whittier Narrows Dam in the agency's highest risk category, "very high urgency," when it became clear that three potential failure modes threatened the downstream population. The Whittier Narrows Dam Safety Modification Study was completed in June 2019 and work has begun to address deficiencies identified. Minor construction started in 2021, and larger construction contracts for the dam modification are anticipated to be awarded in 2025 following completion of design work. Major work is anticipated to take between four and five years to complete. As a result of the Whittier Dam Modification Project, the following impacts are occurring:

- 104-acres of park land to be impacted, which accounts for 57% of all parks in the City; Pico Rivera is already designated as "park-poor" with 0.9-acres of parks per 1,000 people (LACo average = 3.3 acres; national average = 6-acres)
- Closing of the Pico Rivera Sports Arena
- Job losses (75 – 100 at the Sports Arena; 40 – 60 at the Golf Course)

- Value of assessed impacts to be approximately \$125 million

Even before PR 2035, there has been emerging redevelopment in the city: the opening of the “Pico Rivera Towne Center,” after the demolition of Northrop Grumman, a 60-acre open-air shopping complex (i.e., suburban big box retail shopping center) along Washington Boulevard, that has brought in such well-known businesses as L.A. Fitness, Lowe’s, Walmart, Walgreens, TGIF and other businesses into the city.

3.0 Project Site

The project site is currently referenced as the Sports and Entertainment Complex District in PR 2035. It is known as the Sports and Entertainment Complex District because it is the proposed location for a new Pico Rivera Sports Arena, which was rendered inoperable due to the Whittier Narrows Dam Replacement Project. It is located along the western Boundary of the City of Pico Rivera bordered by the Rio Hondo River and spreading grounds to the west, a rail corridor that operates freight, Metrolink, and Amtrak lines and similar land uses to the south, and Paramount Boulevard and modern logistics and big box retail shopping centers to the east, and to the north by Washington Boulevard, spreading grounds and single-family residential uses. [\[Exhibit 3 - Project Site and Parcel Boundaries\]](#)

The entire project site is approximately 140 acres, which includes approximately 70 acres of the Rio Hondo Spreading Grounds and 70 acres of the Sports and Entertainment District that is currently a mix of existing light industrial and complementary developments. The Sports and Entertainment District is one of multiple new districts and transportation improvements identified within PR 2035 that includes approximately 1,080 adjacent acres that make up Downtown Pico Rivera, as well as other areas throughout the City. Other identified elements of PR 2035 include:

- Downtown Pico Rivera
 - Washington Blvd. TOD Specific Plan (Downtown Zocalo) - 200 acres
 - Micro EV Tech Hub - 270 acres
 - Rosemead Boulevard BRT
 - Washington Blvd. Metro L Line Extension
 - Commuter Rail Station
 - Parks, Trails, Open & Recreation District (Rio Hondo Spreading Grounds Master Plan) - 570 acres
 - **Sports and Entertainment Complex - 70 acres**
- Other Planning
 - Historic Whittier Boulevard Specific Plan

- San Gabriel River Master Plan

[\[Exhibit 4 - PR 2035 Downtown Pico Rivera\]](#):

When completed as planned, the Downtown District and project site would be within one-mile of three high quality transit stations at all scales. A metro local light rail train along Washington Boulevard will connect Whittier to DTLA, the Rosemead BRT will connect to East Pasadena and CSU Long Beach, and the Commuter Station would serve Metrolink, Amtrak, and potentially High-speed Rail with new connections throughout the State. [\[Exhibit 5 – Metro Eastside Extension\]](#).

The project site is located within the City of Pico Rivera made up of five at-large council members; Gateway Cities Council of Governments (GCCOG), California Senate District 30, currently represented by Bob Archuleta, and Los Angeles County Supervisor District 4, currently represented by Supervisor Janice Hahn.

Due to the variety of past and current uses that include rail lines, adjacent gas stations, storage facilities, and various industries, the environmental condition of the entire project site is unknown at this time. It is not documented as a brownfield nor under any environmental regulatory authority. The City is willing to explore partnerships for appropriate remediation approaches for potentially impacted sites that could include Soil Removal and Disposal, Engineered Cap, and Soil Treatments.

While no environmental conditions are currently identified, for the purpose of the capstone, assume that the full project site **is not ready for development**. The distinction of being not ready for development is based on two elements:

1. Current zoning does not enable the desired form of development for this District. The zoning for the area needs to be updated to be ready for development.
2. Current land ownership patterns include many landowners that is almost entirely privately owned. Due to this, redevelopment relies on participation of private landowners.

Thus, one of the most significant barriers to development readiness is the current private ownership of land. The City is interested in both developing a master development plan as well as receiving an implementation strategy that focuses on public-private partnerships, particularly bringing current property owners to the table. One key feature of the project is the replacement Pico Rivera Sports Arena. Three sites have been identified for the future arena within your project site [\[Exhibit 6 - Arena Site Options\]](#).

To address the six concentration areas of the MUP capstone, inclusion of the Pico Rivera Sports Arena is the only requirement of your proposal. The City is interested in hearing all recommendations on what the nature of District surrounding the arena should be. All options from a destination district similar to Exposition Park, to LA Live, to a multi-family housing district will be considered by the City. Given the location and size of the site, this district can be a catalytic site that could provide a template for other cities to reimagine river or transit adjacent development districts that integrate with the larger community.

4.0 Project Issues and Opportunities

The following key constraints and opportunities to development have been identified at the project site:

- **Integrate Regional and Local Planning:** The City has adopted a comprehensive citywide economic development framework (PR 2035) that has identified adjacent district; the City has multiple Specific Plans under development (Washington Boulevard TOD Specific Plan, Historic Whittier Boulevard Specific Plan) with land use and density recommendations; planned transportation improvements (Metro L Line Extension) and regional transportation planning projects underway (Rosemead Boulevard Bus Rapid Transit, Metrolink/Amtrak/High-Speed Rail Commuter Rail Station) that will change regional access opportunities. All need to support, and be supported by the Downtown District.
- **Whittier Narrows Dam Modification Project (WNDMP):** The WNDMP will close 57% of the city's park space, which is already designated as "Park Poor." It may also provide opportunities for federal funding based upon the economic impacts.
- **Pico Rivera Sports Arena:** The City has identified three sites for the new Pico Rivera Sports Arena. Only the minimum footprint for the size of the arena and required service clearance has been identified; elements such as parking, outdoor open spaces, vendor stands, etc. are not included in the footprint and can be part of your recommendations
- **River Master Planning:** Pico Rivera is the lead agency in forming a regional parks district along the Rio Hondo and Lower San Gabriel River. Plans are underway to revitalize the rivers and to catalyze riverfront development. The initial request of \$20 million shall be used to develop park master plans, acquire land, and enhance and/or build new parks, trails, open, and recreation spaces.
- **High voltage electrical transmission lines:** Southern California Edison (SCE) has a corridor of high voltage electric transmission lines running along the boundary between the Downtown District and Rio Hondo Spreading Grounds. The city has

previously initiated discussions with SCE about under grounding local electric lines but has not yet engaged SCE with the future for high transmission lines.

- **River hydraulics and flood management:** The project site is located along the Rio Hondo River Spreading Grounds, which has been channelized. The Whittier Dam Modification Project has opened opportunities for redesign of the spreading grounds and potential river channelization. Changes to the configuration of the River or vegetation is likely to impact water surface elevation and the corresponding flood risk. Any new modification must be designed to have no negative impact to existing flood risk.
- **First/Last Mile to Transit:** Three transit stations are expected to be built within one-mile of the Downtown District.
- **Land Ownership and Jurisdiction Agencies:** Most of the land within the Downtown District of the project site is privately-owned, which poses challenges for developing and implementing a Master Plan Vision. Multiple agencies are expected to have jurisdiction or oversight responsibilities for the spreading grounds, as well as any changes to the River channel and water flow near the project site.
- **Aging/Obsolete Infrastructure:** All infrastructure and utilities to the site - road, water, sewer, stormwater, electric, fiber optic - are all anticipated to be in a state of deferred maintenance and/or insufficient to serve the future of the site. Additionally, existing infrastructure approaches such as relying upon grey infrastructure for stormwater or using asphalt roads are not desired as the future design condition by the city.

Exhibit 1 – Regional Location



Exhibit 2 – City Boundaries and Features

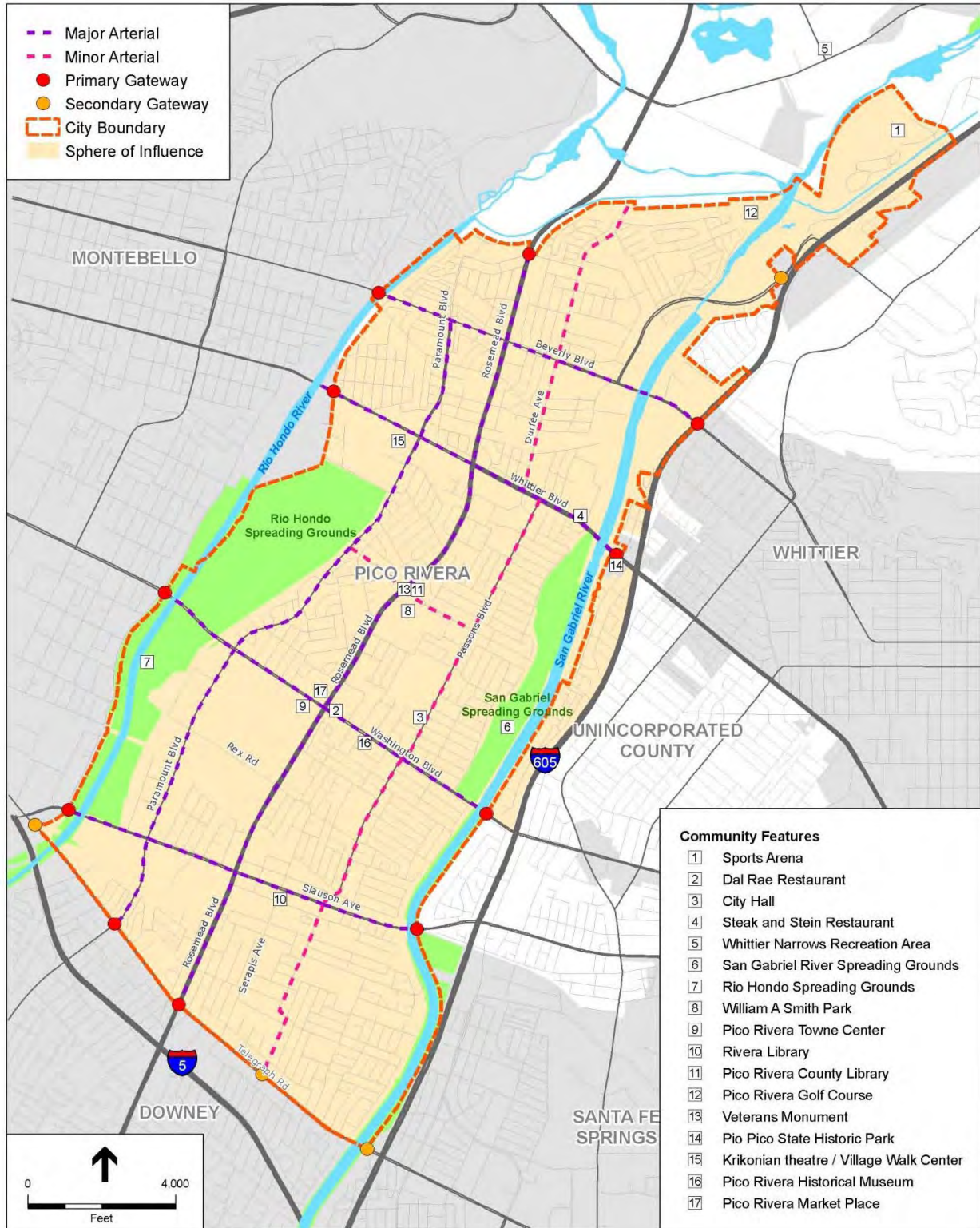


Exhibit 3 – Project Site and Parcel Boundaries



Exhibit 4 – PR 2035 Downtown Pico Rivera

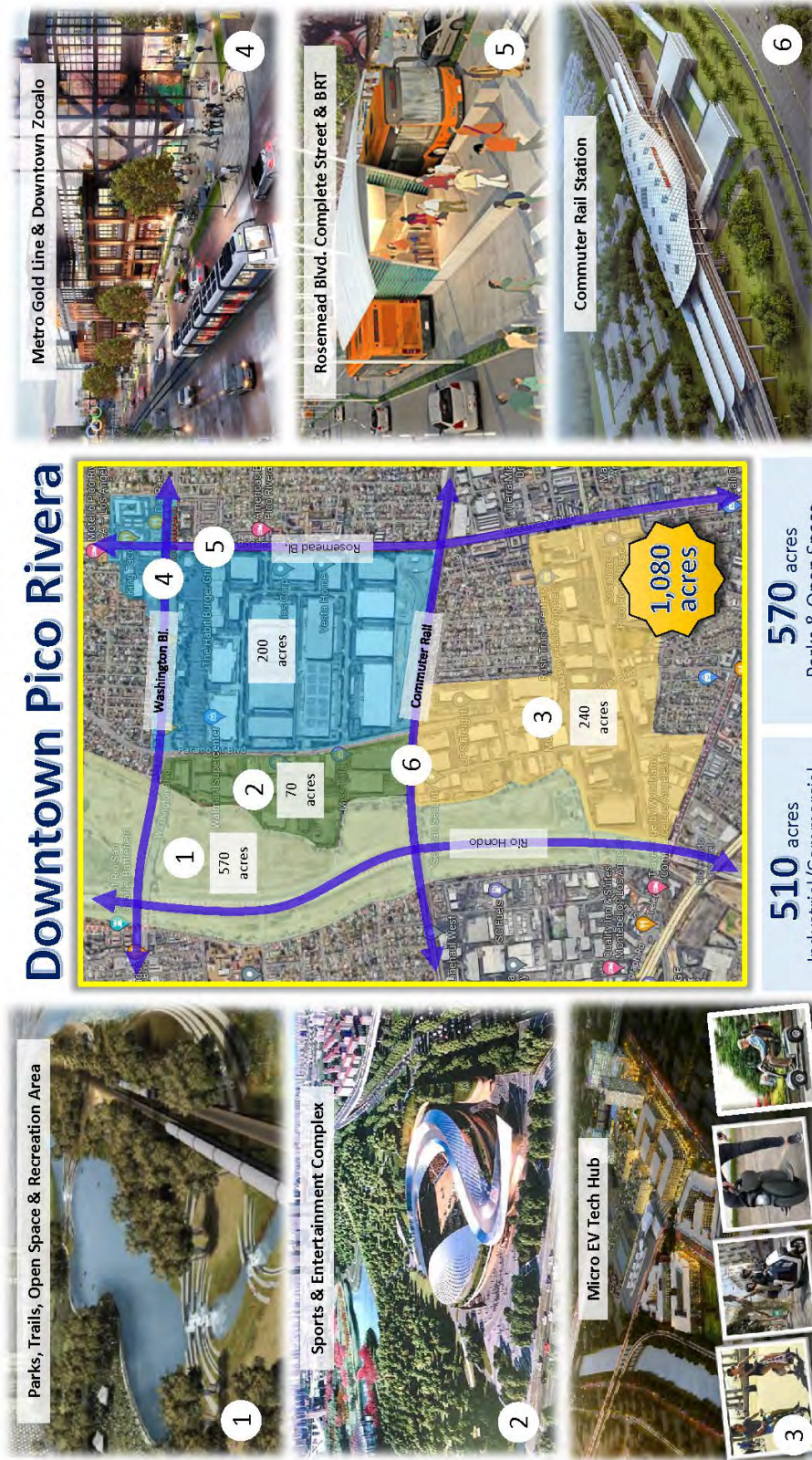
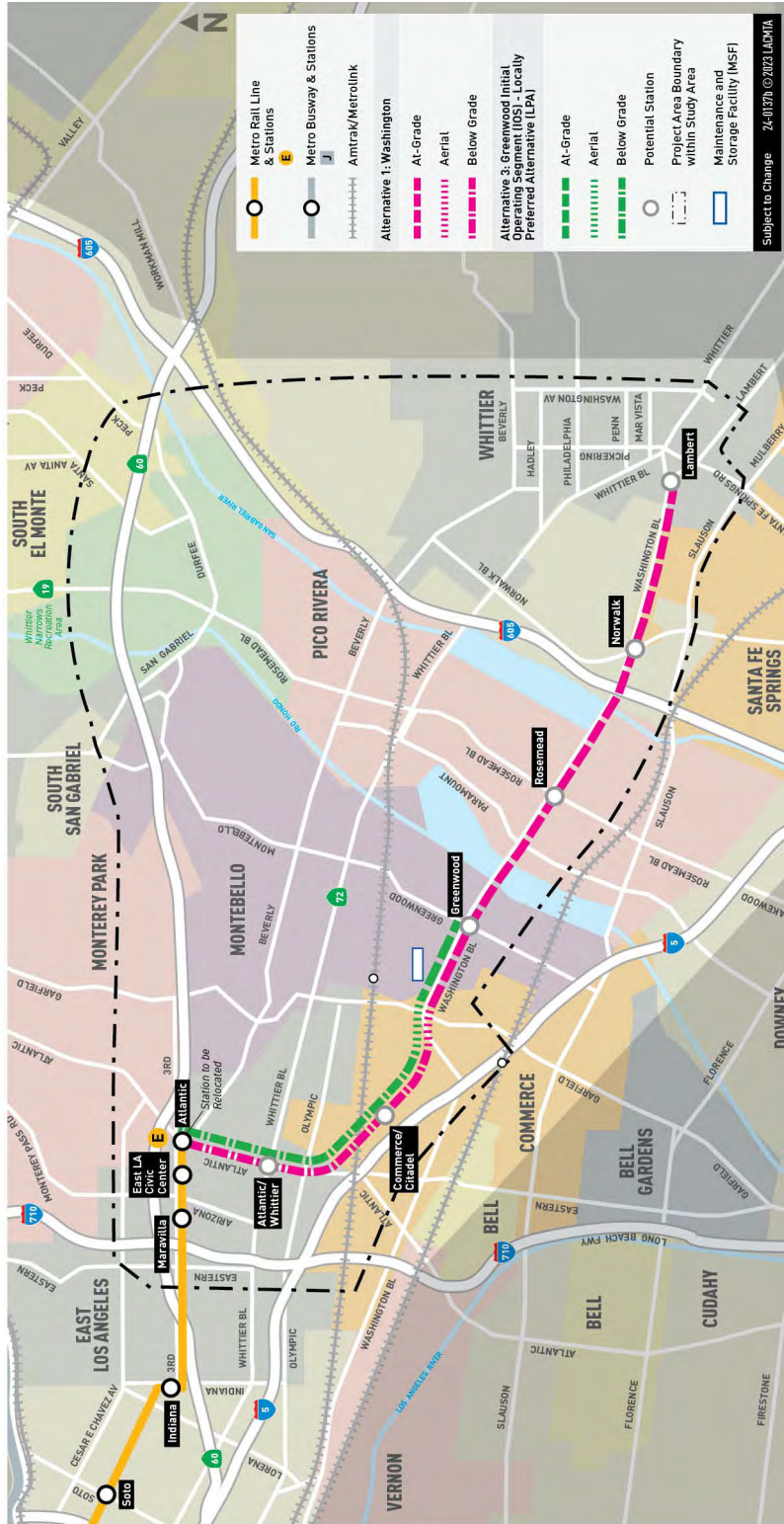


Exhibit 5 – Metro Eastside Extension

Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 Project Map



Alternative 2: Commerce/Citadel (IOS is no longer being considered).



Exhibit 6 – Site Arena Options



Part I: 2024 Capstone Concentration Questions

Economic Development

1. Given your review of the market analysis and the existing conditions analysis, what do you see as the primary economic generators for the study area in the context of the anticipated redevelopment of the adjacent specific plan area? As a corollary to that, how reasonable do you believe the proposed redevelopment program is for the specific plan area? What, if anything, would you propose to do differently?
2. The city sees the arena as a key economic generator. With that in mind, where in the study area do you see the arena being placed to maximize its economic impact? What additional uses do you see appropriately co-located with the arena for maximizing economic development effect?
3. What role if any should residential development play in the redevelopment of the study area, from the perspective of economic impact (such as creating a consumer base) rather than from the perspective of social benefit to the city and its residents?
4. The City has over the years made several attempts to attract development to the site without success.
 - a. What would be the primary benefits and strengths of the site you would put forward to prospective developers and occupants of the site, as well as to the community to engender their support for your proposed development?
 - b. What barriers do you see needing to be addressed to make prospective developers and occupants more willing to consider the site?
 - c. What, if any, incentive package should the city consider as part of a business and investment attraction strategy for the site?
5. How would you leverage the substantial transportation/public works, recreational and habitat projects in the site's environs to economically benefit the surrounding communities (both residential and non-residential), keeping in mind principles of social and environmental equity as well as business, job and consumer retention and attraction?
6. Create a site plan for the study area. As noted in the course instructions, you are free to propose any type or mix of uses, but you must include a location for the arena and its necessary services (delivery access, parking, connections to transit, etc.). Your site plan and development program should take into account:

- a. forecast population and employment growth to 2035,
- b. the stated goals of the city regarding sustainability, both environmental and economic, and
- c. retention, relocation or displacement of existing land uses.

Your site plan should include justification for the proposed activities, their placement, and relationships to one another and to the specific plan area.

- 7. What specific recommendations would you make to decision makers to facilitate development of and surrounding the project site to promote economic development that would be beneficial to the surrounding communities and the city as a whole, while recognizing and addressing potential adverse impacts such as gentrification and responding to community concerns about over-development or intensification?

Arts and Culture

As you can see from the preliminary proposal, the plans are generic. This could be anywhere. And yet East LA has a distinctive and proud identity and a vocal constituency. Help break it down for your classmates and also explain why it matters.

Analysis:

- 1) Geographically determine on a map where you see the relevant communities that will be impacted and care about this project. Then do a spatial analysis of what arts and cultural hubs and access are important to the community. Remember, that we define “arts and culture” as more than museums and public art and “spatial analysis” more broadly to include temporal, spatio-cultural practices. Your analysis might find several kinds of cultures and sub-cultures, reparative justice histories, etc.
 - a) Help define for the project WHO are the peoples here in addition to their commute times, jobs, and incomes. Present data and indicators as well as qualitative evidence of these communities. This will most likely mean that the arts and culture factors intersect with the economic, social, and political factors.
 - b) Identify key institutions and organizations and their agendas and what they have been doing that are related to this project and project site? Has there been any outreach to these?
- 2) Given your analysis above, what are the implications and opportunities?
 - a) Large public investments such as TODs can bring on neighborhood anxiety about displacement and gentrification. Has there been any evidence of such community resistance in the past and/or potential for new resistance today? What could be done differently this time to both meet local concerns as well attain community buy-in?

- b) How might your analysis help inform the work of students from the other concentrations? How would it impact where and how planning is done for transportation, housing, the environment, etc.?
- 3) Create a site plan with programming. Be creative and convincing. Given your detailed analysis above, you won't be suggesting copy-and-paste solutions from other places (we're looking at you Highline, parklets, etc!). That is, you are probably going to be including visual arguments of what already exists, inspires you, and that you are building upon.
 - a. Your proposal can potentially be process-based. But, it ultimately does have to exist in physical space. So, we still need to see a plan.
 - b. In addition to the plan, present cogent narratives of how your plan will produce synergies and benefits. These can include a variety of types of argumentation – quantitative, qualitative.
- 4) Create a community engagement implementation plan.
 - a. Name specific target actors and organizations that you would seek to engage and how.
 - b. Present a sequencing of when and how your proposal integrates community engagement in the different phases of this project.

Mobility and Transportation

1. A rail line traverses the southern border of the study area. How much and what type of traffic does it carry? Have rail volumes increased or decreased over the past decade? What is the expectation for the future? The California High Speed Rail is expected to be routed along these tracks. How might HSR affect the parcel?
2. There is a proposal for a new commuter rail station along this segment of the rail line that would be used by Metrolink, Amtrak, and potentially high speed rail.
 - a. If the station were to be built in the study area, where should it be located? What is the current configuration of the rail right-of-way? Could a station be accommodated within the current configuration, or would there need to be relocation or reconstruction of the rail line? Generate a "ballpark" estimate of the capital costs of the new station.
 - b. Conduct an analysis of the feasibility and potential market for the station. Consider the following:
 - i. There are commuter rail stops to the north (Commerce) and to the south (Norwalk, Buena Park). How far would this station be to those stops? What is the average distance between stops on the LA to Orange County portion of the line for Metrolink and for Amtrak (Pacific Surfliner)? Why are commuter rail stations several miles apart? How does distance between stations affect commuter rail service? Using the current Metrolink weekday schedule as an

example, estimate the impact of an additional stop on total travel time from LA Union Station to San Clemente and discuss your results.

- ii. Who uses commuter rail, and for what purpose? Given the types of trips and demographics for commuter rail, conduct a market analysis for the Pico Rivera area. Define your station catchment area and estimate the number of trips that the new station would generate. Explain your assumptions and methods for generating the estimate. Now assume that the population and economic development targets for 2035 have been met. Generate a second estimate of the potential market.
 - iii. Use the information generated in the previous steps to generate a qualitative evaluation of the proposed station. Given the market potential, impacts on service quality, and capital costs, should the City be encouraged to pursue this station?
3. Create a site plan for the study area. As noted in the course instructions, you are free to propose any type of uses, and you must include a location for the arena. Your site plan should be based on: 1) forecast population and employment growth to 2035, 2) the stated goals of the city regarding sustainability (especially transportation sustainability), and 3) existing land uses. Your site design should include justification for the proposed activities, their placement, and relationships.
 - a. Create a circulation plan for your site. Estimate number of motorized trips based on your land use plan, how they will be managed within the study area, how and where they will enter and exit the study area. Be sure to include all modes in your analysis. Explain any estimates you make for use of public transit or non-motorized modes.
 - b. California law requires that all new passenger vehicles sold in the state must be zero emission. Consider this transition in your site plan. Assume that about half of all passenger vehicles will be battery electric vehicles in 2035. Based on residential units in your site plan, how many ZEVs will be based in the site plan area? How will these vehicles be charged? Based on commercial, retail, or other land uses in your plan, how many ZEVs will be entering the study area? Is there a need for charging facilities for these vehicles?
4. Create a detailed plan for the arena. Justify the selected location.
 - a. Given the 6,000 person capacity and variety of activities to be hosted, provide an estimate of the total area (square feet or acres) required for the arena footprint, including parking and any proposed ancillary activities. Provide a circulation plan for all modes expected to be entering and exiting the arena area.
 - b. Conduct a parking analysis to generate parking demands. You may use any assumptions you wish (e.g. everyone will take public transit), but they must be justified with evidence. Locate the parking.

5. The City seeks to reduce private vehicle use as part of its 2035 vision. It is placing particular emphasis on new rail transit and BRT connections. What does the literature tell us about private vehicle use? To what extent is public transit a viable substitute? What policies or strategies would you recommend to maximize the impact of these new transit investments? How are these policy and strategies reflected in your site plan?

Housing and Real Estate Development

1. The City has over the years made several attempts to attract development to the site without success. What would be the primary benefits and strengths of the site you would put forward to prospective developers and occupants of the site, as well as to the community to engender their support for your proposed development?
2. Describe the market your project will serve and the community need it addresses. Specifically, evaluate the project in the context of surrounding neighborhoods, emphasizing how the proposed project will establish connections between local amenities, institutions, and communities. How will the project generate equitable impacts to the broader community, and how do you plan to generate support across diverse groups of stakeholders?
3. Conduct an analysis of key local factors that drive housing supply and demand, and use the results of this analysis to motivate the programming of the housing component of your proposed project. Given the current and anticipated future needs of the local population, as well as the existing and projected supply of housing, what housing segments will your project serve, and how?
4. Prepare a project development budget, schedule, sources and uses of funds, and operating pro forma for your proposed project. Using a discounted cash flow analysis, calculate the project's net present value and key return metrics. *If proposing a LIHTC-financed affordable housing development, calculate the investor equity and perm loan, and identify relevant sources of public gap financing. For all projects, determine whether or not the project has a feasibility gap, and propose a set of financing tools and/or development incentives that can make the development feasible while meeting the goals of community stakeholders.*
5. How much could this site contribute to the state and SCAG mandated RHNA housing allocation for Pico Rivera? What rationale can local planners offer to city residents for why more housing is needed even if population is stagnant or declining in LA county?

Climate Change and Sustainability

1. Given your review of the existing conditions and past planning and development activities in Pico Rivera (and southeast LA more broadly), conduct an assessment of the environmental issues impacting the site. The assessment should include a summary of the key environmental conditions affecting the site and potential environmental impacts that may be brought about by any proposed new development on the site.
2. Describe the planning approaches, tools, and methods you suggest utilizing to best address these identified environmental issues. Summarize what available data sources and tools you suggest using to allow for the measuring and tracking of environmental conditions. Describe how you would use this available data to encourage appropriate development at the site.
3. Examine the potential environmental justice issues impacting the site. This should include an analysis of the historical, structural, and institutional factors contributing to the environmental conditions at the site, particularly in regards to the potential uneven distribution of impacts on marginalized groups. You should also provide a description of how your proposed plans for the site will work to overcome future structural and institutional barriers that may impact the equitable and sustainable use of the site. Remember to consider both direct effects on the site as well as potential secondary impacts on nearby communities.

Design of the Built Environment

1. The City has envisioned a transformational change for the project area. Discuss the potential and concerns of district-wide revitalization comparing the lenses of urban design with other planning disciplines. How can urban design be used to address macro issues across planning disciplines, specifically, sustainability, equity, economics, community engagement and others? Does the vision for the District in PR2035 represent best practice? Apply the literature, theories and concepts learned in the concentration and gateway courses.
2. The location and vision for the project area touches on a few major place/development typologies: riverfront revitalization, transit-oriented development, and stadium districts. What are the most important design criteria for each typology for overall success (e.g. what are the key design opportunities of riverfront sites, TOD and stadium districts)? What are current best practices regarding design for district revitalization, particularly using stadiums as a redevelopment catalyst? Are there opportunities and/or approaches in urban design that can improve the outcomes compared to other examples of district/riverfront/stadium revitalization projects?

3. The City and current planning projects have identified a wide range of issues. Conduct a graphic and written analysis of the project site and its immediate context. What are the physical constraints, opportunities and linkages with adjacent areas? What are the different types of barriers, edges, districts and sub-districts, landmarks, paths, vistas, views, etc. within and/or surrounding the project area? What are the most logical entry/exit points for the site? How could the proposed development relate to different place typologies surrounding the project area?
4. Develop a clear, specific and compelling vision or “Big Idea” for the project that synthesizes your site and context analysis outcomes and responds to a larger scale cultural, economic and/or political issue being experienced in the community. Discuss how your vision supports and/or deviates from the City’s current vision. Document your “Big Idea” with the following: title, short elevator pitch detailing the project idea’s rationale, project goals and values, program matrix with specific uses, square footages and unit counts, and relevant design precedents.
5. Illustrate your design ideas for the project site by providing the following:
 - a. Develop at least three distinct alternatives that support your “Big Idea,” documenting each with a site plan diagram. Document your analysis of the factors that lead to selection of your preferred alternative.
 - b. An illustrative site plan for you preferred alternative showing the placement of major features of your “Big Idea” that should include buildings; streets, parking areas, and access; pedestrian paths, open spaces and landscaping for the overall site; and other major elements. Graphic elements that are required in your site plan include: surrounding context (including streets, sidewalks, crosswalks, building footprints, significant landscaping, etc.), north arrow, numeric scale and graphic scale, graphic legend, and labels.
 - c. Build a digital massing model showing the project situated in its site context. Include at least four different views (combination of birds-eye aerial and ground-level perspectives) that show overall three-dimensional form and how the form responds to context. Build the model in levels indicating floor-to-floor heights and color by use.