



South Los Angeles Transit **Empowerment** Zone

South Los Angeles Promise Zone

Community Context Brief

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Demography

- The South Los Angeles Promise Zone has a population of approximately 233,000 residents, 72% of whom identify as Latino/a and 14% of whom identify as Black/African American.
- There are 94,600 immigrants living in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone, 70% of whom are undocumented Angelenos.
- 67% of the resident population in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone speaks primarily Spanish at home.

Income & Affordability

- The median household income in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone is \$51,820, significantly lower than the Los Angeles County median income of \$76,370.
- The median income in the SLATE-Z catchment area was \$51,820 in 2021, compared to \$76,370 in Los Angeles County; it has been steadily increasing over the past decade, up from \$38,210 in 2010. However, only residents in certain areas have seen their incomes rise.
- 60% of residents in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone earn below 50% of the Greater Los Angeles metropolitan area Median Income, making them generally eligible for various affordable housing programs like federal housing choice vouchers.
- Almost two-thirds of renters in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone spend more than 30% of their income on rent and utilities.

Education & Connectedness

- 19% of households in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone lack internet at home (types of internet include broadband, dial-up, or a data plan for a smartphone), a decrease from 35% in 2017.
- 16% of SLATE-Z residents over the age of 25 have a bachelor's degree or higher level of educational attainment, which is less than half the citywide average.

Transportation, Environment & Health

- 13% of the working population in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone commutes to work primarily using public transit as of 2021, approximately an 8 percentage point decrease from 21% in 2010. Despite the decrease, rates of commuting via public transit is still significantly higher than the citywide average of 8% in 2021.
- Compared to Los Angeles County, the South Los Angeles Promise Zone ranks in the 72nd percentile for levels of PM2.5¹ concentration as of 2021, down from the 84th percentile in 2017.
- 12% of land in the South LA Promise Zone is covered by tree canopy, less than half of the citywide average.
- The share of residents in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone without health insurance has dramatically decreased over the last decade, from 35% in 2012 to 14% in 2021.



¹ PM2.5 refers to tiny particles in the air that are 2.5 micrometers or less in diameter, allowing them to penetrate the lungs. Particle matter can include a mixture of organic chemicals, wood, dust, soot, and metals; and can be released into the air from cars and trucks, factories, and wood burning and fires.

About SLATE-Z



The South Los Angeles Transit Empowerment Zone, or “SLATE-Z”, is a historic and unprecedented cross-sector collective impact effort with over 100 public, private, academic, and community partners working to revitalize South Los Angeles by moving residents to economic opportunity.

With the development of the metro Crenshaw “K” line, the South Los Angeles community saw an opportunity to examine and harness the economic impacts the “K” line would bring to the region and decided to work together for the benefit of the historic community. Founded in 2014, SLATE-Z is a place-based, collective impact effort working in a manner that is innovative, scalable, and can serve as a model for other communities.

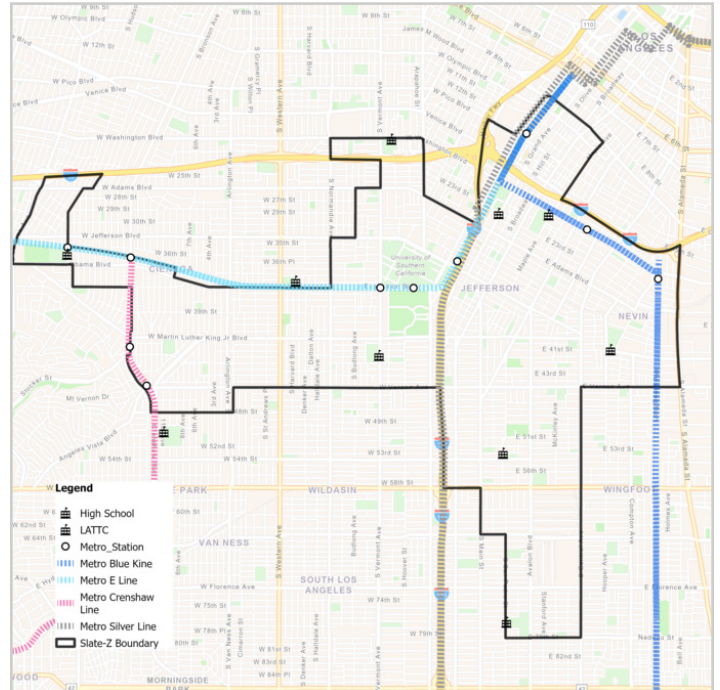
In June 2016, President Barack Obama recognized SLATE-Z’s efforts and federally designated its area of South Los Angeles as a Promise Zone (i.e. the South Los Angeles Promise Zone). SLATE-Z serves as the backbone entity for the South Los Angeles Promise Zone and is 1 of 22 Promise Zones addressing high poverty in select urban, rural, and tribal communities across the nation.

Housed at Los Angeles Trade Technical College (LATTC), the SLATE-Z operations team provides strategic leadership and works to coordinate and convene local partners to address **transit access, small business and entrepreneurship support, educational opportunities, and public safety** in South Los Angeles.



Demography

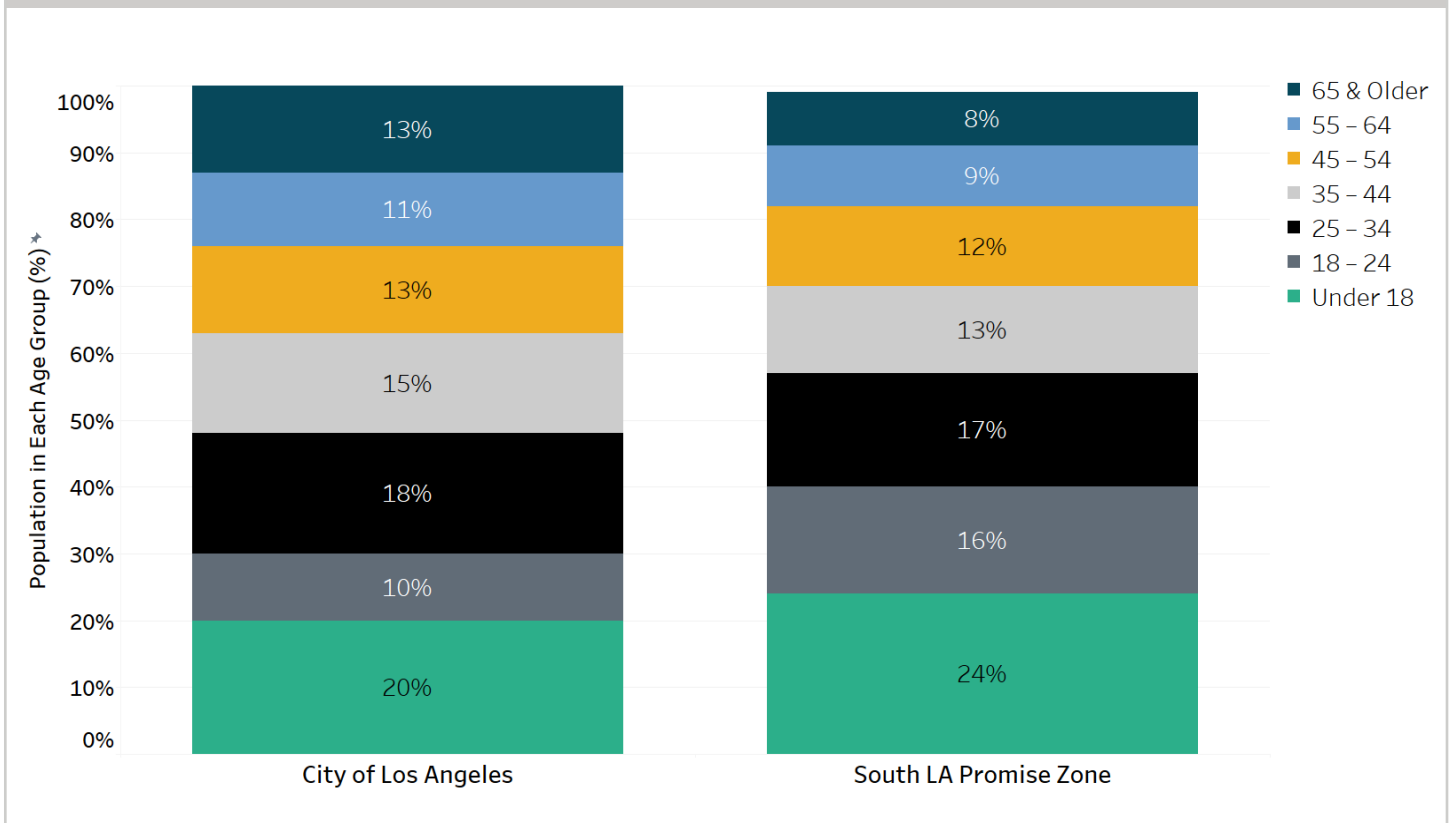
As a place-based initiative, the SLATE-Z catchment area is situated within the larger South Los Angeles region. The map to the right shows the South Los Angeles Promise Zone boundaries. The South Los Angeles Promise Zone has a population of approximately 233,000 people, which constitutes just under 6% of the total population of the City of Los Angeles.



Age

The South Los Angeles Promise Zone is home to a large number of young people, with almost a quarter of the population under 18 years old – four percentage points higher than the City’s average. The graph below shows the age distribution of the South Los Angeles Promise Zone compared to the City of Los Angeles.

Age Distribution, City of Los Angeles & South LA Promise Zone
Source: 2021 American Community Survey



Race/Ethnicity & Heritage

The South Los Angeles Promise Zone is home to a diverse and vibrant community recognized for its culture, history, and neighborhood assets. The South Los Angeles region has a rich history as a social, cultural, and economic hub for Los Angeles' Black community during the 20th century. Starting with the Central Avenue jazz scene during the 1920s, the area has been at the center of many social and cultural movements of national and international significance over the last century. Today, the South Los Angeles Promise Zone is predominantly comprised of Latino/a residents, with 72% of the area's residents identifying as Hispanic/Latino, significantly higher than the City percentage of 49%.

The second largest racial/ethnic group in the SLATE-Z catchment area is Black/African American, with 14% of neighborhood residents identifying as such compared to 8% in the larger City of Los Angeles. The full racial/ethnic composition of the South Los Angeles Promise Zone compared to the City of Los Angeles is shown in the chart above.

Many diverse communities exist even within the South Los Angeles Promise Zone racial and ethnic groups. For example, of the 169,019 residents who identify as Hispanic/Latino, 66% identify as Mexican, 15% identify as Salvadoran, and 12% identify as Guatemalan. Likewise, of the 13,631 residents who identify as Asian, 36% are Chinese, 25% are Korean, 14% are Indian, 7% are Filipino, 5% are Japanese, and 3% are Vietnamese.

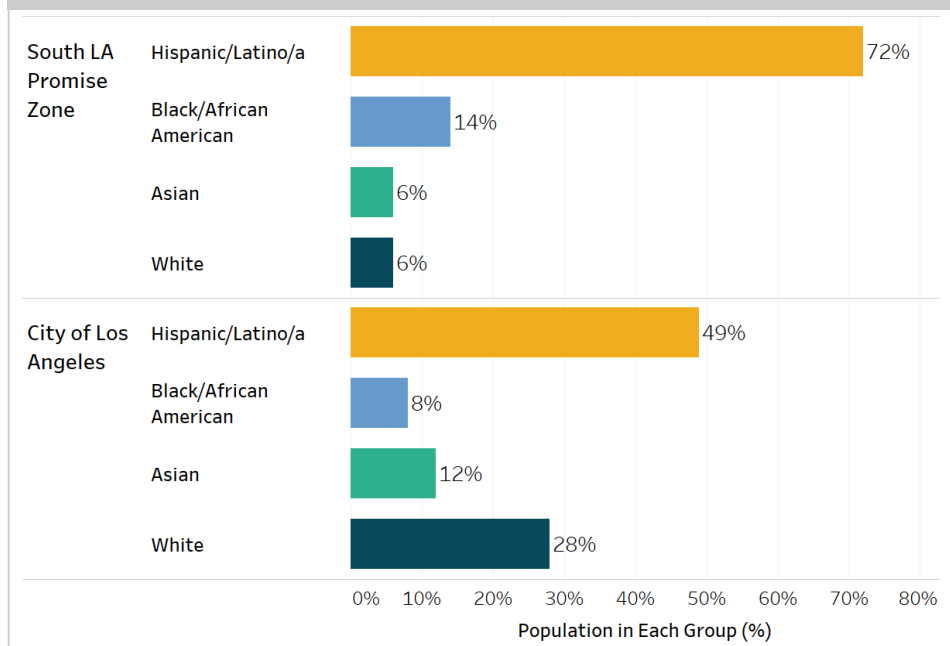
Given that the majority of the residents in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone are of Hispanic/Latino origin, Spanish and English are the most common languages spoken at home. In comparison to the City of Los Angeles where only 41% of the population speaks Spanish at home, 67% of the population in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone speaks Spanish at home.

Immigration

Over 40% of the residents in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone area are immigrants, which is slightly higher than the City's average of 36%. However, almost 70% of immigrants residing within the SLATE-Z catchment area are not naturalized citizens² compared to just 51% of immigrants across the City of Los Angeles. U.S. Citizenship offers many privileges including the ability to vote in elections, run for office, receive federal benefits and scholarships, travel overseas for extended periods of time, and sponsor other family members for green card status. When compared to both US born and naturalized citizens, non-naturalized citizens often face additional challenges across many key issues that SLATE-Z addresses, including access to jobs, educational opportunities, language accessibility, safety, and natural green space.

Race and Ethnicity of Residents, City of Los Angeles & South LA Promise Zone

Source: 2021 American Community Survey



² This includes permanent residents with authorization documents, temporary migrants such as foreign students, humanitarian migrants such as refugees, and migrants without authorization documents.

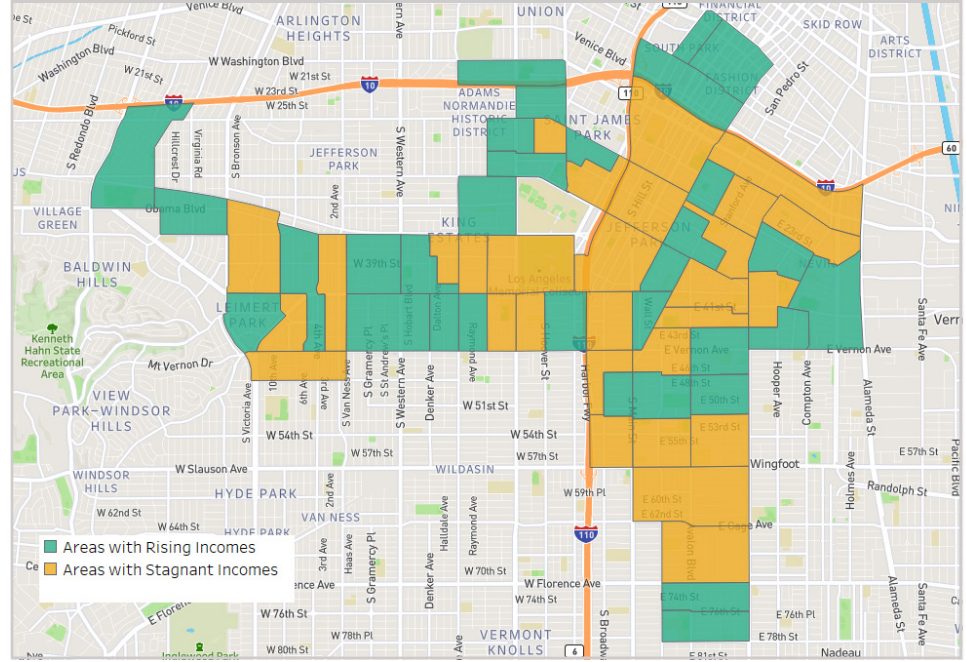
Income & Affordability

Income

The South Los Angeles Promise Zone and the larger South Los Angeles region has historically experienced economic disinvestment due to institutionalized racism and systemic oppression, including “redlining” during the decades following the New Deal in the 1930s, closures of large job centers including the Goodyear rubber plant in the 1970s, and the rise of mass incarceration at the end of the 20th century. The cumulative effect of these policies have disproportionately impacted Black and Brown communities in South Los Angeles, creating structural barriers to wealth creation that Angelenos in predominantly white neighborhoods have not faced.³

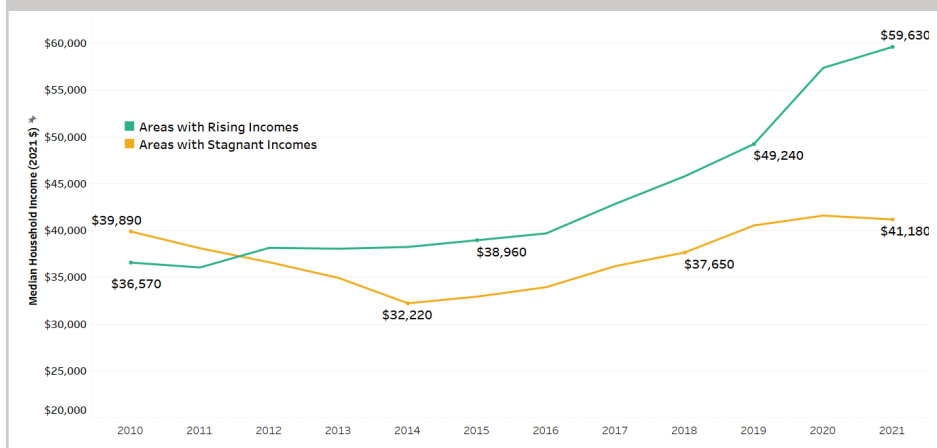
South LA Promise Zone Census Tracts by Income Trajectory, 2010 - 2021

Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates



As a result of historic structural disinvestment in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone, the share of people earning below 100% of the federal poverty threshold was 27% in 2021, a stark decrease from 41% in 2014. Moreover, the share of residents earning below the 200% federal poverty threshold was 54% in 2021, a decline from 72% in 2014. The median income in the SLATE-Z catchment area was \$51,820 in 2021, compared to \$76,370 in Los Angeles County; it has been steadily increasing over the past decade, up from \$38,210 in 2010. However, not all residents in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone have seen their incomes rise. On the map above, the SLATE-Z catchment area can roughly be divided into two categories, areas where incomes have increased over the last decade (shown in green), and areas where incomes have remained relatively stagnant (shown in orange). On average, in

Median Household Income Over Time, 2010 - 2021
South LA Promise Zone Areas with Rising & Stagnant Incomes
Source: American Community Survey 5-year Estimates



the orange areas with stagnant incomes, median incomes fell during the middle half of the last decade and have barely recovered to their 2010 levels in the last few years. By contrast, on average in the areas shown in green, incomes remained level during the middle of the decade and then increased - in some cases exponentially - over the last few years. Income trends over the last decade in these two categories of areas are shown in the graph to the left.

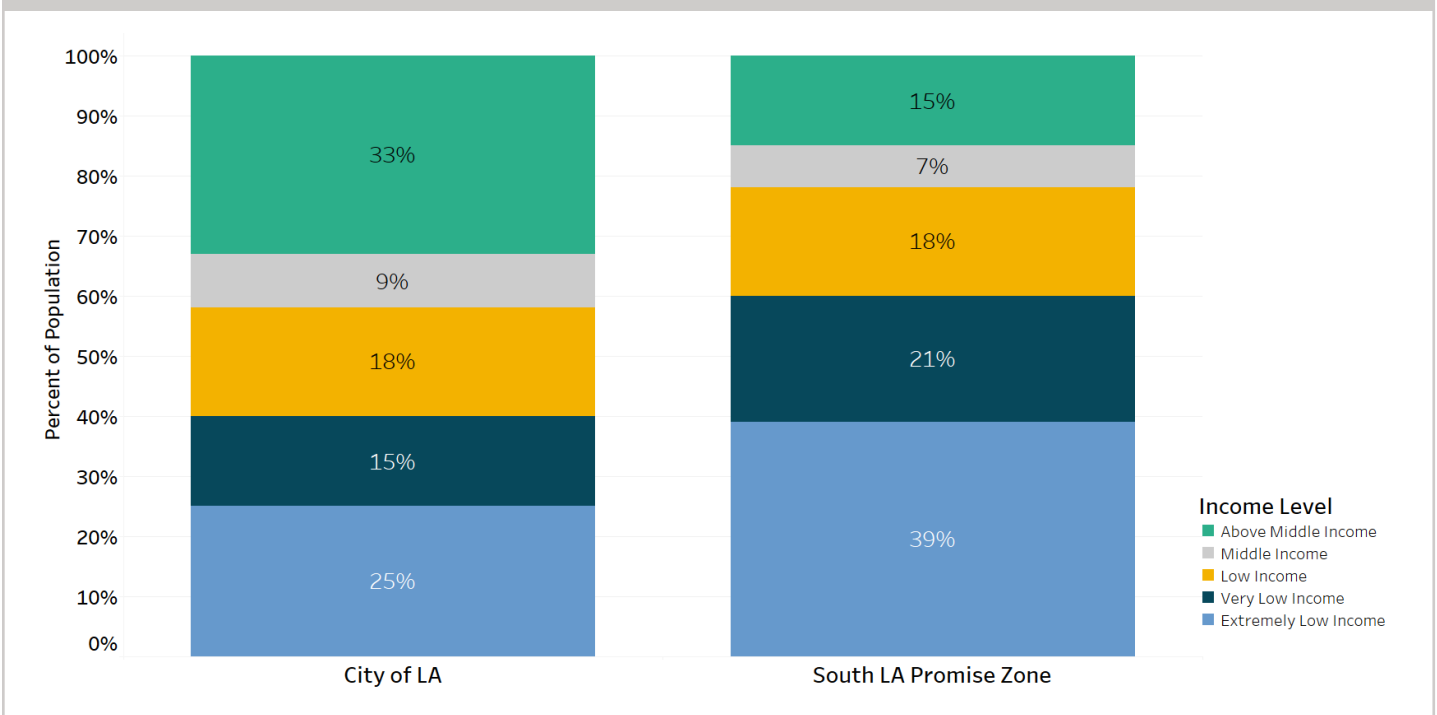


Even within the areas shown in green where incomes have been rising, the trends are not a monolith. In areas within Downtown Los Angeles, for example, median incomes have more than doubled since 2010, and these areas have seen a decrease in households with extremely low incomes and a corresponding increase in those in the highest income category. In these areas, displacement and gentrification are likely the cause of the rapid increase in median household income. However, in other areas, incomes have been rising at a more moderate rate, and data shows households moving out of the lowest income category into adjacent income categories. In these areas, rising wages for existing residents are a more likely explanation for rises in income than an influx of high income residents.

In 2019, 60% of the area’s population was considered extremely or very low income (making less than half of the area median income) compared to 40% citywide. Generally, families making less than half of the area median income are eligible for various affordable housing programs like federal housing choice vouchers. The chart below shows how the income of households in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone area and the City of Los Angeles compare to the Area Median Income.

Population by Income Level, South LA Promise Zone & the City of Los Angeles

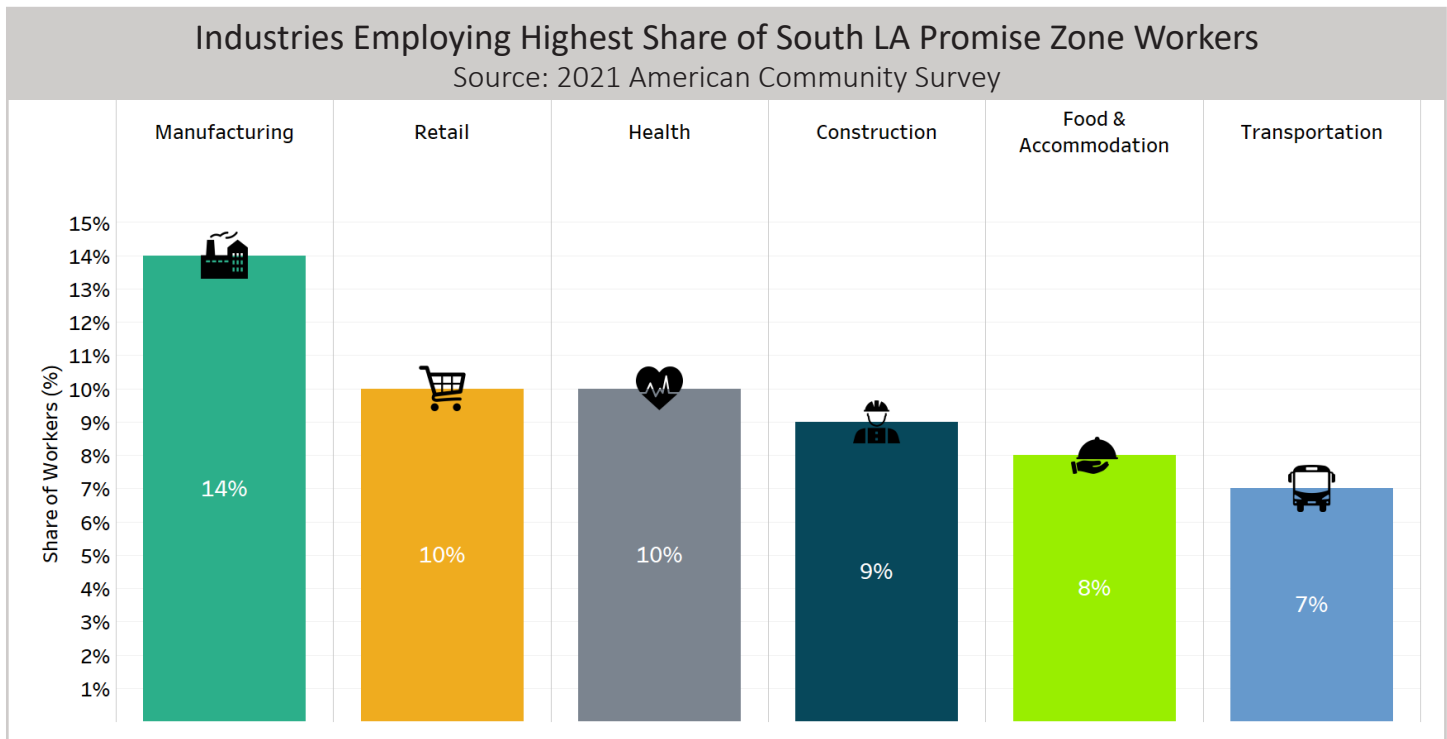
Source: United States Department of Housing and Urban Development



³ University of Southern California Sol Price Center for Social Innovation. (2021). *Resilience & Rebuilding*. <https://coalitionrcd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/CRCO-Resilience-and-Rebuilding-South-LA-Post-Pandemic.pdf>

Employment

Historically, residents in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone have experienced higher rates of unemployment than the City of Los Angeles and LA County average. In 2021, 10% of residents in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone were unemployed compared to the 8% City of Los Angeles unemployment rate. In response to the higher rates of unemployment and poverty in the area, SLATE-Z and its partners are working to move 10,000 residents into living wage jobs by institutionalizing pipelines and workforce development programs. Currently, the manufacturing sector employs the largest share of residents, with 14% of residents working in the industry. The visualization below displays the six sectors employing the highest share of residents in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone.



Rent Burden & Homeownership

Los Angeles has one of the most expensive housing markets in the world, and the cost of housing has been rising exponentially.⁴ Housing affordability is particularly acute in Black and Latino/a communities like South LA. Discriminatory housing policies like redlining, enacted by the Federal Housing Authority during the 20th Century, and predatory lending practices against Black and Latino/a households by large financial institutions in the years leading up to the Great Recession have led to a systemic wealth gap along racial and ethnic lines.⁵ Only 25% of residents in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone are homeowners, compared to the County average of 46%. Almost two-thirds of the over 48,000 renter households in the SLATE-Z catchment area experience rent burden, meaning that they spend over 30% of their incomes on rent and utilities. A recent study by the USC Price Center for Social Innovation investigating the effects of rent burden on residents in the two federally designated Promise Zones (i.e., Los Angeles Promise Zone and South Los Angeles Promise Zone) found that households were making significant cutbacks on critical basic needs including food and clothing in order to pay rent. As a result of these intersecting issues, housing insecurity has become a major challenge for South Los Angeles residents. In the 2020 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count, the Los Angeles Homeless Service Authority (LAHSA) reported 3,113 unhoused individuals in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone.

⁴ Flemmings, J. (2021, Nov. 18). California holds 70% of the country's priciest ZIP Codes for home buyers. *Los Angeles Times*. <https://www.latimes.com/business/story/2021-11-18/california-holds-70-percent-of-the-countrys-priciest-zip-codes-for-home-buyers>

⁵ University of Southern California Sol Price Center for Social Innovation. (2021). *Resilience & Rebuilding*. <https://coalitionrcd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/CRCD-Resilience-and-Rebuilding-South-LA-Post-Pandemic.pdf>

Education & Connectedness

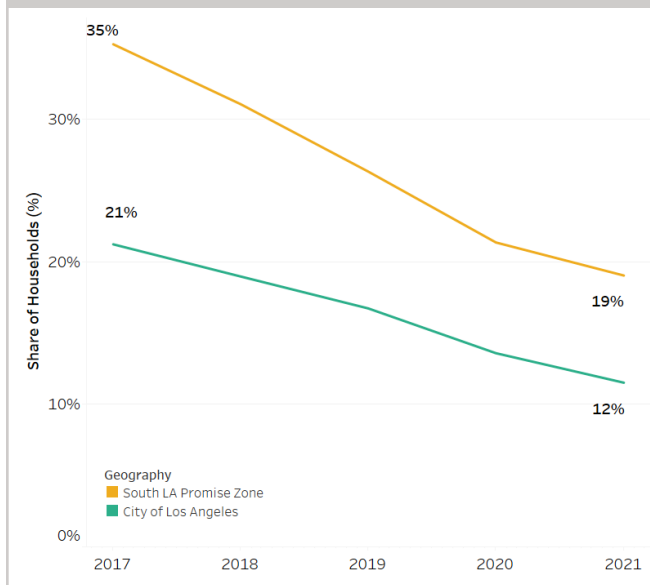
Educational Attainment & Digital Connectedness

The South Los Angeles Promise Zone is home to a large young adult population – 16% of people living in the area are between the ages of 18 and 24, almost double the number in the City of Los Angeles and LA County. Sixty-two percent of these young adults that live in the SLATE-Z catchment area are enrolled in school. This rate is higher than both the City and County averages, which is most likely due to the University of Southern California’s main campus location in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone. Sixteen percent of residents in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone over the age of 25 have a bachelor’s degree or higher level of educational attainment, which is less than half the citywide average.

Over the last five years, the share of residents in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone who do not own a computer or have internet at home has been decreasing. As of 2021, 19% of households in the SLATE-Z catchment area do not have internet at home, a decrease from 35% in 2017. Despite the decrease, rates of no home internet remain higher than the citywide average of 12%. Similarly, the share of households without a computer at home in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone has decreased from 20% in 2017 to 7% in 2021, nearly in line with the citywide average.

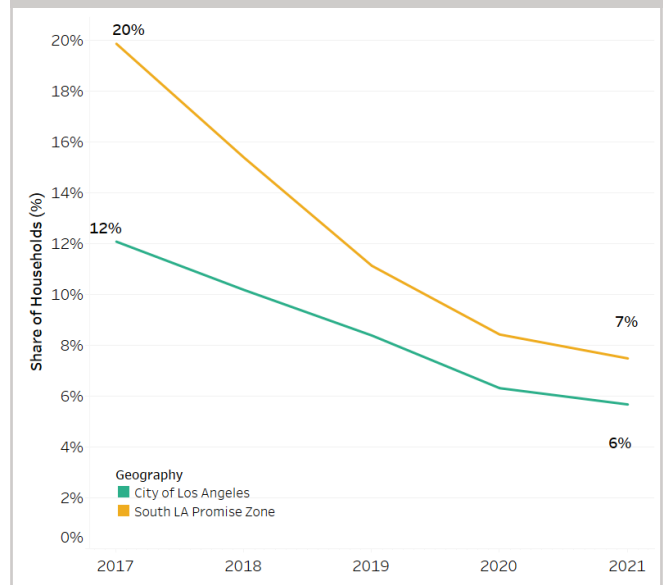
Share of Households without Internet Over Time, South LA Promise Zone & City of LA

Source: American Community Survey, 2017- 2021



Share of Households without a Computer Over Time, South LA Promise Zone & City of LA

Source: American Community Survey, 2017- 2021



In partnership with key institutions such as the Los Angeles Unified School District and Los Angeles Trade Tech College, SLATE-Z is working to increase the attainment of certificates, degrees, and preparation for careers among current high school students in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone.

Transportation, Environment & Health

Transit and Commute

As of 2021, 13% of the working population in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone commutes to work primarily using public transit, down from approximately 21% in 2010. Despite this decrease, rates of commuting via public transit in the SLATE-Z catchment area are still significantly higher than the citywide average of 8% in 2021. Commute modes of residents in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone are shown in the visualization below. Researchers attribute the decline in public transit in Southern California to an increase in car ownership over the last decade.⁶ In the South Los Angeles Promise Zone, 17% of households do not own a vehicle as of 2021, down from 25% in 2014. Despite this decrease, the share of households with no vehicle in the SLATE-Z catchment area is still higher than the citywide average of 12%.

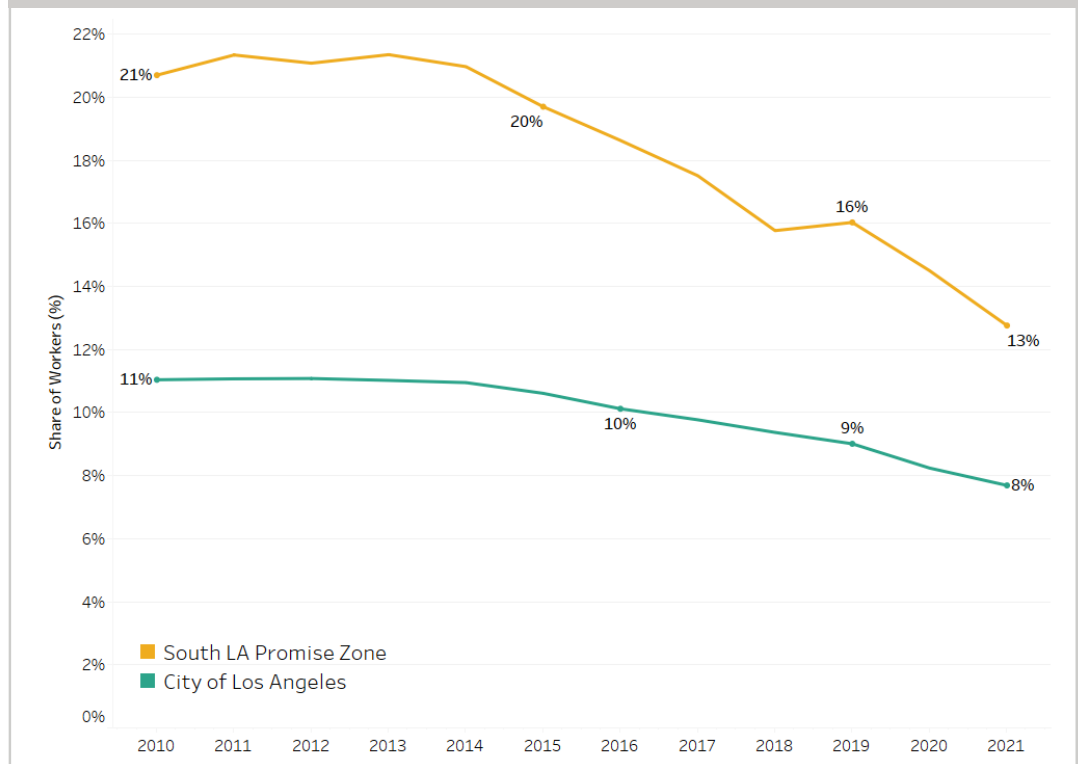
Currently, the South Los Angeles Promise Zone is intersected by the following Metro Lines: A (formerly the Blue line), E (formerly the Expo line), and K (formerly the Crenshaw line). Segment A of LA Metro's Rail to River Active Transportation Corridor Project will connect South Los Angeles residents to additional stations of Metro's A line and the proposed West Santa Ana Branch Transit Corridor.⁷ ⁸ Metro's K line, which opened in the Fall of 2022, passes

through the Crenshaw District, Inglewood, and Westchester, adding eight new Metro stations and further expanding travel opportunities for residents in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone.

Across commute modes, residents in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone tend to have longer commutes than the County average, with 58% of residents commuting longer than 30 minutes, compared to 51% Countywide. Furthermore, 16% of residents in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone are commuting over an hour to work.

Commuting via Public Transit Over Time, South LA Promise Zone & the City of Los Angeles

Source: American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, 2010- 2021



⁶ Manville, M., et al. (2018). *Falling Transit Ridership: California and Southern California*. Southern California Association of Governments. https://scag.ca.gov/sites/main/files/file-attachments/its_scag_transit_ridership.pdf

⁷ Metro. (2022). *Rail to River Active Transportation Corridor Project – Segment B*. Metro. <https://www.metro.net/projects/r2rb/>

⁸ Metro. (2022). *West Santa Ana Branch Transit Corridor*. Metro. <https://www.metro.net/projects/west-santa-ana/>

Air Quality & Tree Canopy

Despite the fact that fewer residents in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone drive to work than those in other parts of the Los Angeles region, the communities in the SLATE-Z catchment area face poorer air quality. One measure of air quality is the concentration of PM2.5, also known as fine particulate matter, in the air. PM2.5 refers to tiny particles in the air that are 2.5 micrometers or less in diameter, allowing them to penetrate the lungs. Particle matter can include a mixture of organic chemicals, wood, dust, soot, and metals; and can be released into the air from cars and trucks, factories, and wood burning and fires. Compared to other areas across Los Angeles County, the South Los Angeles Promise Zone ranks in the 72nd percentile for levels of PM2.5 concentration as of 2021, down from the 84th percentile in 2017. Fine particles in the air are linked to negative health outcomes, such as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases. Children, older adults, and those suffering from heart or lung disease, asthma, or chronic illnesses are more likely to face adverse effects from particulate matter exposure.

Urban tree canopy cover can be a factor in improved environmental and resident health by reducing air pollution and providing shade, which can be critical in the face of climate change and the increasing occurrence of heat waves. Just 12% of land in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone is covered by tree canopy- less than half of the Los Angeles City average. In 2022, SLATE-Z served as the strategic advisor for the South LA Eco-Lab, a \$35 million transformative climate communities implementation grant from the CA Strategic Growth Council, which includes plans to plant 6,000 shade and fruit trees in a 3.9 mile radius in the heart of South Los Angeles from 2023-2028.

Health

Poor air quality can impact health outcomes, including asthma. As of 2020, 11% of adults in the SLATE-Z catchment area reported being diagnosed with asthma by a medical professional compared to 9% of adults across the City of Los Angeles and LA County. The share of residents in the South Los Angeles Promise Zone living without health insurance has dramatically decreased over the last decade, from 35% in 2012 to 14% in 2021. Despite this decrease, the share of residents who remain uninsured in the SLATE-Z catchment area is still slightly higher than the citywide average of 11%.



Photo courtesy of iStock.

⁹ Metro. (2022). *Crenshaw/LAX Transit Project*. Metro. https://www.metro.net/projects/crenshaw_corridor/

¹⁰ California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment. (2022). *Air Quality: PM2.5*. California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment. <https://oehha.ca.gov/calenviroscreen/indicator/air-quality-pm25>

¹¹ Shonkoff, S., et al. (2011). The climate gap: environmental health and equity implications of climate change and mitigation policies in California—a review of the literature. *Climatic Change*, 109 (S1), S485–S503. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-011-0310-7>

Conclusion



SLATE-Z's mission is to revitalize South Los Angeles by moving residents to economic opportunity. After decades of disinvestment, redlining practices, and deindustrialization in South Los Angeles, the entire community has suffered stifled economic mobility. SLATE-Z provides convening power for a historic and unprecedented cross-sector partnership of public, private, and deeply-rooted community-based organizations dedicated to addressing complex issues around poverty and environmental sustainability. Our collective impact is revitalizing and transforming the heart of South Los Angeles into a community that is healthy, safe, inclusive, environmentally sustainable, and vibrant. Looking forward, SLATE-Z will continue to bolster our local economy, improve access to education, reduce crime, improve transit, work with our partners to build green spaces, and connect residents to livable wages and green jobs in the new climate-resilient economy. SLATE-Z's innovative solutions are both responsively designed for our geographic project area as well as a replicable and scalable model for the region, the state, and the nation.

Acknowledgements

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Learn more about NDSC at:

la.myneighborhooddata.org

Learn more about the South Los Angeles Promise Zone at:

slatezdata.org