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August 11, 2025

The Honorable Karen Bass
Mayor, City of Los Angeles
Room 303, City Hall

Honorable Members of the City Council
c/o City Clerk
Room 395, City Hall

**RE: ORGANIZING A WORKING GROUP TO DEVELOP A GUATEMALAN COMMUNITY
AREA IN THE WESTLAKE NEIGHBORHOOD: FACILITATION DESIGN AND WORKING
GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS**

SUMMARY

In response to [Council File 24-0491](#), this report details the Civil, Human Rights and Equity Department's (LA Civil Rights) methodology to organize and facilitate a working group recommending boundaries for culturally significant area within the Westlake neighborhood that can be named in honor of the Guatemalan community; a name for the area defined by the working group; and initial plans for a cultural marker to be placed in the defined area. After a series of six workshops, referred to as the Guatemalan Landmark Naming Project, this report also provides the working group's recommendations on the aforementioned topics, which are outlined in the instructions presented by Councilmember Eunisses Hernandez and approved by the City Council on July 2, 2024. Per the City Council's instructions, LA Civil Rights collaborated with "Maya Indigenous communities from Guatemala, other Guatemalan residents, relevant organizations, businesses advocating for the Guatemalan community, the Consul General of Guatemala, Council District One, the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA), the Economic and Workforce Development Department (EWDD), and the Board of Public Works (BPW)."¹ The staff from DCA, EWDD, and the Department of Public Works (DPW) collaborated with LA Civil Rights and will submit their respective reports on resource options separately.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. REVIEW the reports on resource options from DCA, EWDD, and BPW to determine feasibility of pursuing recommendations from the working group.

¹ Hernandez, Eunisses; Hutt, Heather. "Amending Motion 47A: Guatemalan Community Area in Westlake." *Los Angeles City Council File 24-0491*, 2 July 2024.
https://clkrep.lacity.org/online/docs/2024/24-0491_misc_47A_amd_her_hutt_7-2-24.pdf.

BACKGROUND

The Guatemalan Landmark Naming Project presents a vital opportunity for the City to strengthen trust between Guatemalan community members and the City of Los Angeles with the Guatemalan community. Los Angeles County is home to the largest population of Guatemalans outside of Guatemala, with almost 300,000 community members.² Individuals and families with roots in Guatemala contribute to the culture and economies of regional cities, including Long Beach, Hawthorne, Palmdale, Inglewood, Paramount, Lennox, Val Verde, and the City of Los Angeles. There are more than 150,000 Guatemalan Angelenos,³ with significant populations residing in neighborhoods including Hollywood, Larchmont, Manchester Square, Wilmington, Playa Vista, and Westlake. This vibrant diaspora plays a vital role in both local and international contexts with remittances reaching a record \$15.3 billion in 2021, accounting for 17.8% of Guatemala's economy.⁴

Guatemala's Political History

After three centuries under the rule of the Spanish Empire, Guatemala declared independence in 1847.⁵ Over the course of the 20th century, Guatemalans continued to struggle for reform, stability, and governance without influence from leaders and external stakeholders exercising imperialist practices. A major factor in the struggle was the United Fruit Company (UFC), a U.S.-based corporation that controlled large portions of land and had significant influence and control over national politics. In the 1950s, democratically-elected President Jacobo Árbenz attempted land reform which threatened UFC's interests. As a result, this led to a CIA-backed coup in 1954, sparking decades of military rule and civil unrest.

From 1960 to 1996, Guatemala endured a brutal civil war marked by government violence and genocide, especially against Indigenous communities. More than 200,000 people were killed, and many others fled, with Los Angeles becoming a major destination.

Guatemalan immigrants sought refuge, and as new Angelenos, found limited employment opportunities, and faced exploitation and erasure.⁶ Despite significant sociopolitical challenges, they built strong communities, especially in the Westlake and Pico-Union neighborhoods, and preserved their culture through language, advocacy, and events, such as the Festival Chapín of

² U.S. Census Bureau. "Selected Population Profile in the United States." American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S0201. 2023.

<https://data.census.gov/table/ACSSPP1Y2023.S0201?t=4018:408&g=050XX00US06037>.

³ Brightwell, Eric. "No Enclave — Guatemalan Los Angeles." *Eric Brightwell*, 15 September 2018.

<https://ericbrightwell.com/2018/09/15/no-enclave-guatemalan-los-angeles/>.

⁴ Nugent, Ciara. "They Left Guatemala for Opportunities in the United States. Now They Want to Help Others Stay." *Time*, 13 April 2022.

<https://time.com/6166459/guatemala-migration-economy-remittances/>.

⁵ "History of Guatemala." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/history-of-Guatemala>.

⁶ "History of Guatemala." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/history-of-Guatemala>.

Los Angeles. The festival, held annually in Westlake's Lafayette Park, is a vibrant celebration of Guatemalan culture, showcasing traditional food, arts, crafts, dance, and marimba music. As the largest Guatemalan festival outside of Guatemala, the celebration draws a strong community presence from across Los Angeles County.⁷

History of Activism

Many Guatemalan Angelenos express pride in their culture and heritage, and contemporary activists and advocates look to historical precedents as inspiration for their ongoing calls for increased representation. The community is deeply rooted in activism, exemplified by figures like Luisa Moreno, a pioneering labor organizer and civil rights advocate who championed the rights of Guatemalan migrants across the United States.⁸ Moreno used her voice to fight for workers' rights, gender equality, and racial justice not only in the United States, but as a proud daughter of Guatemala. Her legacy has inspired generations of Guatemalans to see activism and leadership as essential tools for uplifting their communities and challenging injustice across borders. Just like Luisa Moreno, other legendary pioneers have served as examples for many Guatemalan Indigenous communities to follow, such as Nobel Peace Prize recipient, Rigoberta Menchú.

Rigoberta Menchú, born in 1959 into a humble Maya-Quiché family in Guatemala, has forged a powerful legacy of Indigenous activism and human rights. From a young age, she became involved in social reform through the Catholic Church and emerged as a leading voice in the women's rights movement during her teenage years. Her activism intensified in the face of personal tragedy, including the deaths of her parents and brother at the hands of Guatemalan security forces. Forced into exile in 1981, Menchú continued her advocacy abroad, becoming a symbol of resistance and a global spokesperson for Indigenous peoples' rights. Her autobiography, *I, Rigoberta Menchú*, and her participation in international forums brought global attention to the plight of Guatemala's Indigenous communities.⁹

Contemporary activism to uplift Guatemalans continues in Los Angeles, as many, like Morena and Menchú, advocate for recognition and greater representation. Recent efforts to designate a physical space in the City of Los Angeles signifying the presence and contributions of Guatemalans in Westlake is on par with increased global demand for racial equity and justice since the 2020 murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota. In Westlake, Guatemalan residents have sought to amplify the socioeconomic challenges they face and emphasize the importance of being seen and supported. Difficulties related to immigration status, housing instability, poverty, inaccessibility of resources including business development opportunities

⁷ Holly Andres. "Festival Chapín Los Angeles Celebrated Guatemalan Culture." *Los Angeles Daily News*, 25 August 2024.

www.dailynews.com/2024/08/25/festival-chapin-los-angeles-celebrated-guatemalan-culture/.

⁸ "Luisa Moreno." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Luisa-Moreno>

⁹ "Rigoberta Menchú Tum – Biographical." *NobelPrize.org*. Nobel Prize Outreach. 2025.

www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1992/tum/biographical/.

and high-wage jobs, and limited access to essential services have created a sense of urgency among community residents and advocates. As a result, community members have found strength in collective action, and are becoming more involved in efforts to improve conditions locally.

Recent City and County Efforts

Since the 2020 uprisings, community demand has become more visible, and many public agencies have committed to institute equitable policy and programmatic interventions that seek to reduce disparate impact among people of color, women, older adults, and individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (and gender diverse), queer, intersex and asexual (LGBTQIA+).

In July 2020, Los Angeles County established its Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion (ARDI) Initiative to ensure “Los Angeles County is a place where all residents are healthy, experience justice, and thrive.”¹⁰ Through the ARDI Initiative, Los Angeles County recognizes “large disparities in family stability, health and wellbeing, education, employment, economic development, public safety, criminal justice, and housing,” as the results of racism. Nearly half, or 4.8 million, of Los Angeles County residents are Latino¹¹ and in 2024, approved ARDI to commission a study of the status of Latinos.¹² Through the forthcoming study, County Supervisors seek to discover a more “targeted approach” to address persistent disparities.¹³ Through ARDI, the County also investigated the alarming rise in Latino homelessness with the Task Force on Latinx People Experiencing Homelessness.¹⁴ Although these initiatives are broad, recommendations may ultimately impact quality of life for about 292,000 Guatemalan LA County residents.¹⁵

Los Angeles County has also made efforts to celebrate and acknowledge specific communities within the larger, diverse Latino populace. In 2023, Supervisors voted to proclaim December

¹⁰ “About the L.A. County Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion Initiative.” *Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office*. <https://ceo.lacounty.gov/ardi/about/>.

¹¹ Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. “2021 Los Angeles County Population Estimates by Race/Ethnicity,” *Los Angeles County Department of Public Health*. 2021. <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/epi/docs/2021-LAC-Population-8RE.pdf>.

¹² Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. *Motion to Commission a Study of the Status of Latinos in Los Angeles County*. 3 Dec. 2024, <file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/197952.pdf>.

¹³ Solis, Hilda L. *The State of Latinos in Los Angeles County: Recognizing Their Importance and Addressing Disparities*. Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. 3 December 2024. <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/197854.pdf>.

¹⁴ Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. “Introducing The Task Force on Latinx People Experiencing Homelessness.” *LAHSA*. 30 May 2024. www.lahsa.org/news?article=970-introducing-the-latinx-task-force-on-homelessness.

¹⁵ U.S. Census Bureau. “Selected Population Profile in the United States.” American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S0201. 2023. <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSSPP1Y2023.S0201?t=4018:408&g=050XX00US06037>.

2023 as “Indigenous Migrants Month” throughout Los Angeles County¹⁶ which honored the experience of “immigrants living in Los Angeles were born in Mexico, El Salvador, or Guatemala.”¹⁷ Similar to Los Angeles County, the City of Los Angeles supports its diverse population of 4 million residents through cultural markers, resolutions, studies, and equity analyses and programming which have been intentional to acknowledge the experiences of specific constituencies, including Central-American Angelenos.

Changes to the City’s built environment as commemorative measures are often realized after years of advocacy, fundraising, planning, development, and stakeholder collaboration. A clear example was seen in December 2024 when City leaders unveiled the Westlake’s new Maya Corridor. The Corridor, bookended by two gateway monuments, features Maya-inspired art promotes placemaking and public safety in Westlake and memorializes Mayan culture in decorative crosswalks, signage, and other features.¹⁸

Ideation about a designated district honoring the presence of Central American communities residing in Westlake dates back to 2007 with the submission of one community member’s application to the City, proposed as the “Central American Historic District.”¹⁹ In October 2024, Councilmembers for the 1st and 13th Districts, Eunisses Hernandez and Hugo Soto-Martinez respectively, re-introduced the pursuit at the City level through a motion instructing City Departments to explore the development of a Central American Cultural District in Westlake-Pico Union (Council File 24-1270).²⁰ In December 2024, the City Council authorized requisite departments to recommend development and implementation strategies to achieve the project cementing the cultural significance of Central Americans to the area within a four- to five-year timeframe.²¹ At the time of this report, City funding has not been allocated for this project.

While these initiatives represent the City’s acknowledgment and commemoration of its Central-American — and broader Latino — community, LA Civil Rights’ facilitation of the working group assembled for the Guatemalan Landmark Naming Project revealed community calls for more City initiatives centering the Guatemalan experience.

¹⁶ Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. *Statement of Proceedings for the Regular Meeting of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Los Angeles Held in Room 381B of the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration*. 5 December 2023.

https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/sop/1153155_120523.pdf.

¹⁷ Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. “Proclaiming Indigenous Migrants Month in Los Angeles County.” *Motion*, 5 December 2023. file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/186416.pdf.

¹⁸ Los Angeles City Council. “Council File 21-0537.” *City Clerk Connect*. 8 May 2021.

<https://cityclerk.lacity.org/lacityclerkconnect/index.cfm?fa=ccfi.viewrecord&cfnumber=21-0537>.

¹⁹ Los Angeles City Council. “Council File 07-1971.” *City Clerk Connect*.

<https://cityclerk.lacity.org/lacityclerkconnect/index.cfm?fa=ccfi.viewrecord&cfnumber=21-0537>.

²⁰ Los Angeles City Council. “Council File 24-1270.” *City Clerk Connect*. 15 October 2024.

<https://cityclerk.lacity.org/lacityclerkconnect/index.cfm?fa=ccfi.viewrecord&cfnumber=24-1270>.

²¹ Los Angeles City Council. “Council File 24-1270.” *City Clerk Connect*. 15 October 2024.

<https://cityclerk.lacity.org/lacityclerkconnect/index.cfm?fa=ccfi.viewrecord&cfnumber=24-1270>.

Guatemalan-centered City legislation predating the start of the Guatemalan Landmark Naming Project can be found in Council File 23-0002-S133. On June 17, 2024, the City adopted a resolution supporting federal legislative and administrative action that would grant Temporary Protected Status for Guatemalans in the United States. This resolution highlighted the urgent need for protections due to ongoing violence and environmental disasters in Guatemala, and affirmed the City's support for the Guatemalan diaspora in Los Angeles.²²

Additional City efforts to center Guatemalan Angelenos came to fruition following a 2023 community petition for designation of a Guatemalan Square in Westlake. This petition and subsequent City actions are the basis of this report. In July 2024, City Council approved Councilmember Hernandez's (Council District 1) motion instructing LA Civil Rights to convene a working group of individuals to identify how the City may recognize the "work, presence, and culture" of the Guatemalan community through a "culturally significant area and marker" in Westlake (Council File 24-0491).²³ Other departments named in the motion were instructed to collaborate and report on funding and resource options for "developing tailored support" to respond to community needs and develop plans for the proposed cultural marker.

LA Civil Rights' contribution is reflected in the following sections of this report. To ensure the process was inclusive and community-driven, LA Civil Rights adopted a collaborative methodology that centered the voices and experiences of Guatemalan residents, community leaders, cultural experts, and other key stakeholders.

WORKING GROUP METHODOLOGY

Since the establishment of City's Los Angeles Reforms for Equity and Public Acknowledgement of Institutional Racism (L.A. REPAIR) Innovation Fund in 2021, LA Civil Rights has been intentional to connect residents and community-based organizations supporting Westlake — and surrounding neighborhoods — to initiatives addressing longstanding disparities in health outcomes, housing stability, and education. Through its \$8.5M L.A. REPAIR Participatory Budgeting Pilot Program and the \$2M Peace and Healing Center (PHC) Pilot Program, LA Civil Rights has been able to serve the Westlake Community Plan Area,²⁴ which was designated as the "Westlake REPAIR Zone." The zone encompasses Westlake, Historic Filipinotown, Pico-Union, Rampart Village, and other neighborhoods in Council Districts 1 and 13.

Administered by LA Civil Rights' Office of Race and Equity, the pilot programs have sharpened the Department's awareness of the priorities of Westlake residents, students, parents, and workers seeking to improve their neighborhoods through L.A. REPAIR's Idea Collection and Vote phases and proposals for service projects, as well as the healing activities selected for the Westlake PHC site operated by Central City Neighborhood Partners (CCNP). Department staff

²² Los Angeles City Council. "Council File 23-0002-S133." *City Clerk Connect*. 15 May 2024.

https://clkrep.lacity.org/online/docs/2023/23-0002-S133_misc_1_5-15-24.pdf.

²³ Los Angeles City Council. "Council File 24-0491." *City Clerk Connect*. 2 July 2024.

https://clkrep.lacity.org/online/docs/2024/24-0491_misc_47A_and_her_hutt_7-2-24.pdf

²⁴ Los Angeles City Planning. "Westlake Community Plan." *Los Angeles City Planning*. 1997.

<https://planning.lacity.gov/plans-policies/community-plan-area/westlake>.

have also learned from community members while promoting LA Civil Rights' programs at Levitt Pavilion Los Angeles' concert series and at Council District's 1's Movies in the Park and Música y Poemas events.

Through its facilitation of the Guatemalan Landmark Naming Project workshops, LA Civil Rights gained specific insights, aspirations, and points of concern about the Westlake neighborhood.

Following the City Council's instructions, in August 2024 LA Civil Rights began an inclusive approach to assemble a working group complete with "Maya Indigenous communities from Guatemala, other Guatemalan residents, relevant organizations, businesses advocating for the Guatemalan community, representatives from the Consul General of Guatemala," and relevant City departments, DCA, EWDD, and DPW.

LA Civil Rights, informed by the ethos of its award-winning [LA for All](#) campaign²⁵ championing inclusion and belonging, developed a process to identify working group participants and design a series of interactive workshops consistent with the Council's instruction. This five-step process included:

1. **Contacting stakeholder individuals and organizations listed in Council File 24-0491** to schedule one-on-one meetings with individuals and organizations representing the stakeholder categories listed in the motion, proponents and opponents of the project based on public comment recorded in the File, and referrals from prospective working group members.
 - In each meeting with prospective participants, LA Civil Rights aimed to confirm an understanding of mutual priorities, build rapport, and share clear goals and objectives for the work ahead. Not all prospective participants were responsive to LA Civil Rights' correspondence. The Department sent at least three email invitations to stakeholders to ensure each individual and/or organization was aware of the working group invitation.
2. **Developing and issuing Commitment Letters outlining the following participant expectations and responsibilities, including:**
 - Voluntary participation;
 - Attendance, punctuality, and timeliness;
 - Valued contribution of lived-experience expertise and insights;
 - Open and respectful communication;
 - Communicate with facilitators promptly.
3. **Collaborating with Council District 1** to identify an ideal, in-person location and time to ensure maximum participation and the provision of translation services to monolingual

²⁵ Los Angeles Civil + Human Rights and Equity Department. "LA For All Campaign." *City of Los Angeles*. 26 May 2021. <https://civilandhumanrights.lacity.gov/laforall/thecampaign>.

participants staff attending in administrative roles.

4. **Communicating with Comunidades Indigenas en Liderazgo (CIELO)** to better understand the larger context and priorities of Guatemalan, wider Central American, and Indigenous migrant communities in order to further ground the working group's scope.
5. **Coordinating with DCA, EWDD, and DPW to produce the schedule and syllabus** of topics and corresponding facilitation partners for each working group workshop. Based on the motion's instructions, LA Civil Rights led the facilitation and other departments co-facilitated specific working group workshops related to their subject-matter expertise.

LA Civil Rights' efforts and collaboration with departmental partners ultimately resulted in a core working group composition of 11 representatives from Asociación de Migrantes Guatemaltecos De Los Ángeles (AMGLA), American Guatemalan Association (AGUA), Blue Phoenix, Casa de la Cultura Maya, Consejo Fransisquence, Comité Cultural de Desarrollo Maya Guatemalteco L.A., Consulado de Guatemala, Cooperativa de Imigrante, El Rescate, and Maya Vision L.A.

Throughout the workshops, LA Civil Rights presented written information in Spanish and English, and reduced barriers to participation by speaking primarily in Spanish. LA Civil Rights posed several critical questions to guide the working group's discussion and determinations about the cultural marker's design, boundaries, and symbolic representations. The questions were intentionally crafted to spark reflection on cultural identity, historical experiences, and shared values among the Guatemalan community and its allies in attendance. Facilitation included the following prompts:

- What symbols or representations would best convey Guatemalan identity?
- Who are the Guatemalan figures or heroes you admire?
 - Why are these figures important to you and to the Guatemalan community?
 - How do they represent Guatemalan values, history, and struggles?
 - Do they symbolize resilience, independence, culture, or justice?
- What story do you want the landmark to tell?
- Should the landmark be based on the history and Guatemalan heritage, or should it represent a new story as Guatemalan Angelenos?

Participants were encouraged to think deeply about aspects of their heritage that should be highlighted and memorialized, such as Indigenous roots, language, and traditional practices, as well as the impact of migration and the struggles for social justice. The conversations helped facilitators uncover diverse, yet interconnected narratives which revealed both personal and collective memories that shaped the group's understanding of what it means to be Guatemalan. The discussions not only informed the working group's design choices, but also fostered a

sense of unity and purpose which was vital to ensuring that the proposed for the cultural marker was a bold landmark demonstrating cultural pride and Guatemalan resilience.

Community Engagement Prior to Working Group Launch

On October 9, 2025, the LA Civil Rights Department, in partnership with Comunidades Indigenas en Liderazgo (CIELO), hosted a community meeting with more than 60 participants, many of whom were Indigenous migrants from the Westlake area to discuss the Guatemalan Landmark Naming Project. The goal was to introduce the project and gather input on an appropriate landmark to honor Guatemalan Indigenous heritage. Translation services were provided by a representative from CIELO to ensure broad participation from Indigenous monolingual participants.

During the meeting, community members suggested various ideas for project imagery that could represent their culture. Key recommendations included depictions of traditional attire and food, monuments such as a statue of a Guatemalan woman with a marimba, symbols like the Quetzal bird, the Maya calendar, and historic figures such as Atanasio Tzul. Participants expressed a desire for a landmark that bridges generations and preserves cultural knowledge. For a fitting location for the landmark, community members proposed MacArthur Park, particularly the Rampart to Alvarado area.

Members also emphasized the importance of creating a space that is inclusive, culturally specific, and built with longevity in mind. To this point, community members' suggestions included creating a library and cultural center as part of the landmark design for workshops, educational resources on Guatemalan Indigenous culture, and a Quetzal-themed gateway symbolizing national pride. Participants also proposed that a City landmark honoring the Guatemalan community include replicas of the Maya Calendar as well as historic sites such as the Temple of the Grand Jaguar from Tikal.

In addition to the landmark suggestions, attendees voiced concerns about local issues affecting their neighborhood, including matters related to MacArthur Park. Community members' input involved calls for improved street cleanliness, safer sidewalks, and addressing homelessness in the area, especially around Burlington Avenue and Sixth Street. Some participants also highlighted the need for a library in the park where families could connect with their heritage.

The input gathered during the community meeting with CIELO was corroborated by the feedback received from the six workshops attended by organizational leaders. Participants in these workshops, representing the organizations mentioned above, echoed similar suggestions regarding key cultural landmarks and attributes. This alignment with the community's input not only validated the initial findings but also reinforced the overall foundation of the project.

WORKING GROUP WORKSHOPS: IMPLEMENTATION & FINDINGS

Between October 2024 and March 2025, LA Civil Rights facilitated six workshops at CCNP, a nonprofit organization serving the Pico-Union and Westlake areas.

Throughout the course of the workshops, attendance from the participating stakeholders varied. LA Civil Rights presents the following summary and findings based on contributions from regular attendees, which included representatives from AMGLA, AGUA, Blue Phoenix, Casa de la Cultura Maya, Consejo Fransisquence, Comité Cultural de Desarrollo Maya Guatemalteco L.A., Consulado de Guatemala, Cooperativa de Imigrante, El Rescate, Maya Vision L.A.,

These six workshops were designed to engage the working group in solution-oriented conversations and gather input from the Guatemalan community regarding the location, design, and long-term viability of the proposed landmark. Facilitators provided a structured environment for participants to collaborate, share their insights, address community concerns, co-develop solutions, and define the key components of the project. In all, the goal of the workshops was to ensure that the cultural landmark would be meaningful, lasting, and reflective of the Guatemalan community's history, struggles, and cultural contributions.

In convening and facilitating these workshops in coordination with other requisite departments, LA Civil Rights fulfilled the City Council's mandate. The conclusion of these conversations and the working group's consensus lead to a request for City of Los Angeles to erect muraled "gateways" at six intersections within the boundaries of the Westlake Community Plan Area (as referenced in the map on Page 13 of this report) and designate the area as Guatemala Town.

Working Group Workshop Summaries

Workshop No. 1: Introduction and Commitment

The introductory workshop on October 10, 2024 outlined the City's objective in establishing the working group including goals and intended takeaways, and provided a forum for all the organizations' representatives to introduce themselves, their missions, and their work within Westlake.

Participants agreed to open collaboration and recognized the diversity of stakeholders within the working group, aligned in their commitment to honoring the heritage and experiences of Guatemalan Angelenos. Participants also acknowledged LA Civil Rights would formally report their recommendations to City leaders.

Workshop No. 2: Presentation on Cultural Landmarks and the City Requirements

During the second workshop on December 5, 2024, co-facilitated by the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA), working group participants were provided information about historic markers, gateways and monuments, murals, and utility boxes, as well as art placed in bus shelters,

sculptures, and installations in Los Angeles. Using the example of DCA's Promise Zone Arts project, co-facilitators highlighted the potential of community-driven processes to "activate public space, build social capital, encourage economic development, and foster public policy through the identification and promotion of cultural assets."²⁶

The presentation from DCA included key takeaways, such as imparting the City's requirements to officially recognize a landmark, including necessary approvals, public outreach, and community engagement. DCA also outlined the broader significance of cultural markers that have shaped the City's identity, and how advocates and community stakeholders have influenced aesthetic elements of public art. After the presentation, participants had an opportunity to ask questions and deepen their understanding of the City's requirements to install and/or erect a landmark. The dialogue ushered in a productive and comfortable, free-flowing conversation for workshop participants to provide their initial thoughts on the artistic elements that would make a landmark honoring the Guatemalan community both unique and culturally significant. Participants express the importance and sensitivity of having a Guatemalan art curator to address the art components of the landmark.

Importantly, participants also discussed how the landmark will bring more attention and visibility to the Guatemalan community living in the Westlake area. Participants highlighted their hope that this landmark would bring in more tourism and strengthen the community's economy, drawing tourists and fostering financial growth through increased foot traffic and support for local businesses. These remarks are in line with the LA City Department of City Planning's 1997 Westlake Community Plan which reports seeking to "improve the function, design and economic vitality of the commercial corridors." This sentiment is still widely held and was confirmed by participants 28 years later at the time of this LA Civil Rights' report.

Workshop No. 3: Defining Boundaries and Naming Considerations

The third workshop's facilitation and discussion on January 28, 2025 focused on identifying working group members' recommendations of the geographic boundaries of a potential landmark and exploring names for the physical space. Council District 1 provided large-scale maps of the Westlake area which allowed the working group to collaborate, mark the map, and designate a recommended perimeter within Westlake that could contain several landmark sites.

The working group considered several criteria when defining boundaries including community history, visibility, accessibility, and local support. Participants emphasized that the recommended landmark legacy should reflect the identity and story of Guatemalan Angelenos and serve as a place of pride and gathering for future generations. Some participants commented on the importance of having such a landmark in proximity to Westlake's Lafayette Park as it is the location of The Festival Chapín de Los Angeles. As part of the ongoing effort to establish a landmark that symbolizes the Guatemalan-Angeleno community's history, struggles, and

²⁶ Promise Zone Arts. "About." *City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs*. City of Los Angeles. <https://pza.culture.lacity.gov/about>.

resilience, the working group carefully selected several key locations for consideration. These locations listed below (mapped in Figure 1) were identified in close consultation with community stakeholders and reflect areas of deep cultural and historical significance:

- **6th Street and Union Drive**

Centrally located within the Westlake neighborhood, this site is highly visible and accessible to both pedestrians and vehicles. It is surrounded by local businesses and organizations serving the Guatemalan population and has the potential to be a focal point for cultural and social activities.

- **Rampart Boulevard and 6th Street**

A prominent intersection in Westlake, this area is near to cultural institutions and Guatemalan-serving businesses. It benefits from high foot traffic, making it an ideal location for cultural events and gatherings.

- **7th Street and South Hoover Street**

A major, well-trafficked intersection that serves as a main thoroughfare for the surrounding neighborhood, this location was highlighted as important due to its proximity to transportation corridors and Guatemalan businesses.

- **Wilshire Boulevard and South Park View Street**

Located along a major commercial corridor, this site is highly visible and well-connected to public transit. It is near cultural and social spaces frequented by the Guatemalan community.

- **3rd Street and Alvarado Street**

This site is a well-known intersection in this culturally rich, busy neighborhood. It is a hub for social and cultural activities and is frequented by Guatemalan community members. Its proximity to community-serving businesses adds to its importance.

- **7th Street and Alvarado Street**

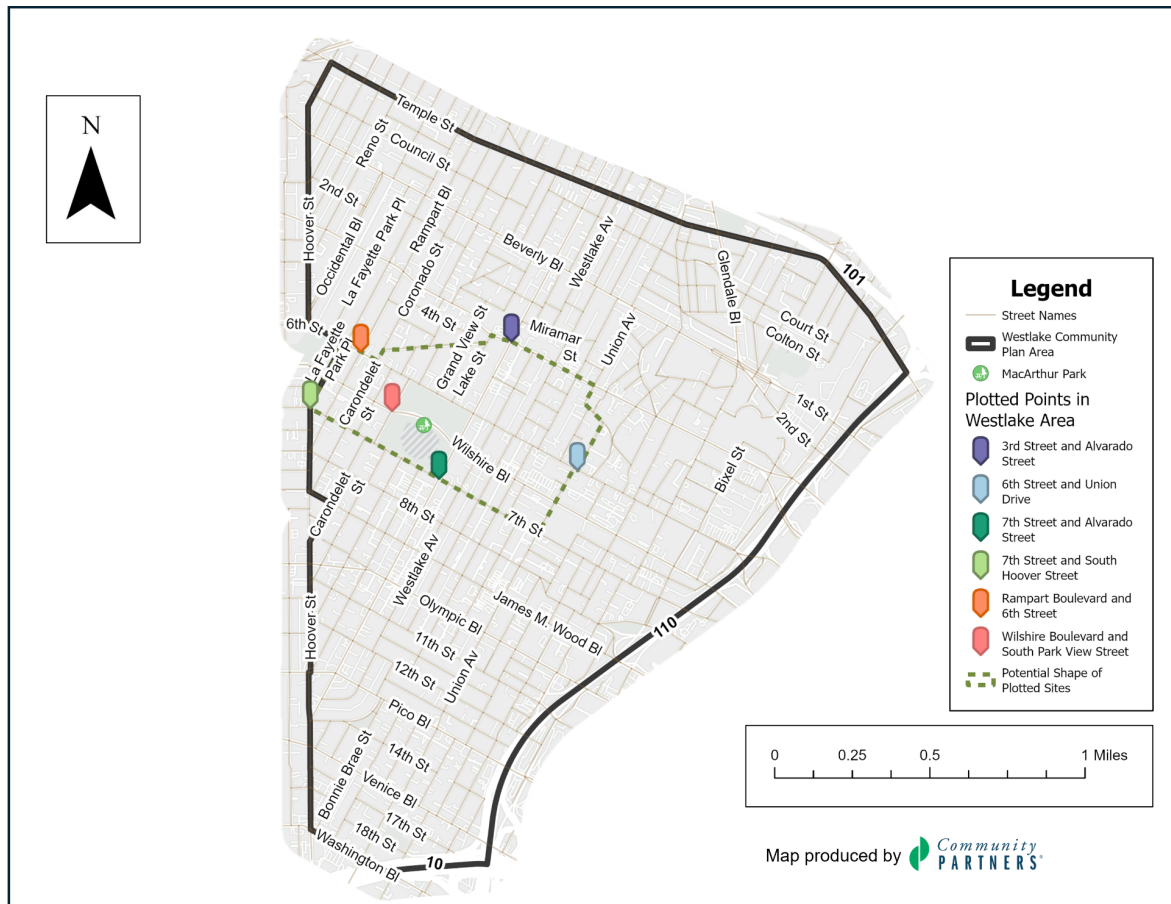
Situated in a vibrant, diverse area, this intersection experiences heavy foot and vehicle traffic. It is close to key community spaces and symbolizes an integral part of daily life for many Guatemalan residents. Placement of a landmark here offers a strong opportunity to enhance cultural identity and pride.

Participants' recommendations emphasized and highlighted that each of the proposed intersections offers a unique opportunity for the City to commemorate Guatemalan-Angelino heritage and to serve as a lasting tribute to the community's presence and contributions in Los Angeles.

The third workshop concluded with the working group's unanimous recommendation that the designated area(s) that may potentially house a landmark should be called "Guatemala Town." This naming was deemed reflective of a collective identity, cultural pride, and the historical

contributions Guatemalan community members have made to the vibrancy of cultures in Los Angeles.

Figure 1. The boundary proposed for Guatemala Town, punctuated by cultural markers at six intersections within the Westlake Community Plan Area (also known as the Westlake REPAIR Zone).



Workshop No. 4: Continued Exploration of Boundaries and Landmark Aesthetics

On February 20, 2025, LA Civil Rights offered participants returning for the fourth workshop an opportunity to further refine their recommendations for the “Guatemala Town.” In this workshop, the working group continued their more robust discussion about possible locations to incorporate the landmark. The group of participants proposed six intersections selected during Workshop No. 3, of which one, depending on the City’s regulations and safety protocols, will be selected as the landmark designation. Participants also discussed the aspects that should characterize a visual and culturally-expressive landmark, then began designing their vision for the structure that would symbolize the unity, history, and cultural richness of the Guatemalan community in Los Angeles.

In the following paragraphs, LA Civil Rights presents the working group's proposed design proposing six underpasses, or gateways, to Guatemala Town:

To support participants' goals of proposing multiple cultural markers that would not only honor the history of Guatemala and its people but also serve as a functional public space that connects and serves the community in Westlake, one working group member created a rendering conceptualizing the gateway design proposed to be installed at the six intersections shown in Figure 1.

As referenced in Figure 2 below, the four columns holding up each gateway are connected by horizontal beams surrounding the intersection. Each adjoining segment of the gateway reads the words "Guatemala Town" to signify the unity, strength, and resilience of Guatemalan Angelenos in Westlake. In the middle of each beam is a steeple with an emblem featuring the official seal of the City of Los Angeles. The rendering reifies the working group's desire to incorporate the Guatemalan flag and displays it prominently atop each steeple of the gateway. The top of the structure is uncovered and is adorned by eight replica quetzal birds. The quetzal is the national bird of Guatemala and represents freedom, beauty, and cultural pride.

Working group members were thoughtful in their approach to monumentalize the history, heroes, and legacy of the Guatemalan community's Indigenous heritage, and included their core values through artistic elements included in their rendering:

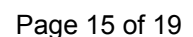
1. **Indigenous Representation:** Guatemala officially recognizes four main Indigenous groups: the Maya, the Xinca, the Garífuna, and the Ladino peoples. The Maya are the largest Indigenous group with more than 20 distinct linguistic communities. The Xinca are an Indigenous group native to southeastern Guatemala. The Garífuna are of Afro-Indigenous descent, primarily living along the Caribbean coast. Finally, the Ladinos are people of mixed Indigenous and European heritage who identify with Hispanic culture.²⁷ The working group proposed the columns as an element representing a connection to the past and the present, symbolizing the ongoing significance of Indigenous culture and contributions. Each column will represent one of the four communities: the Maya, the Xinca, the Garífuna, and the Ladino.
2. **Cultural Symbols:** The columns were conceptualized to depict the history and folklore of the Guatemalan community, including ancestral conflicts, wars, food, arts, contributions, and heroes in Guatemalan struggle for justice and freedom. The working group recommends that artists and/or developers create carvings and murals directly on the columns to chronicle the heritage of the Guatemalan diaspora, both rooted in the ancestral lands and the contemporary experiences

²⁷ Britannica. "People." *Climate of Guatemala*. Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.
<https://www.britannica.com/place/Guatemala/Climate#ref40924>.

3. **The Quetzal:** Quetzals represent both the Guatemalan nation and the indomitable spirit of the community. They symbolize freedom, pride, and the spirit of the Central-American country. The working group recommended utilizing this symbol on the landmark as it is of deep importance to the Guatemalan community in Los Angeles and facilitates a deeper connection amongst community members.
4. **Unity through Architecture:** For working group members, the architectural design connecting the underpasses four columns was of critical importance. Working group members highly valued the themes of unity and collective strength and proposed the horizontal structural element as a symbolic bridge between the past, present, and future of the Guatemalan people.

Guatemala Town:

4-Way Underpass Cultural Landmark



The working group's determination of the concept and design of a proposed landmark in Workshop No. 4 was the principal outcome of the series. Working group members came to a consensus and recommended the City procure local artists, architects, and designers with a deep understanding and cultural competency about Guatemalan heritage and traditions.

Workshop No. 5: Economic Development Resources

Adhering to the instructions from the presiding motion in Council File 24-0491, LA Civil Rights invited the Economic and Workforce Development Department (EWDD) to facilitate a presentation of services for businesses for Workshop No. 5 on March 4, 2025. A representative from EWDD provided a presentation on resources for small businesses in the Westlake community. Prior to Workshop No. 5, EWDD took an inventory of the businesses within the boundaries recommended by the working group in Workshop No. 3 and identified City programs that may support the needs of Westlake's merchants, tradespeople, and business owners based on their assessment. This presentation aligned with the landmark and needs identified by the working group by helping to uplift the community through awareness of available business resources. By equipping local entrepreneurs with knowledge of supportive programs, the presentation contributed to advancing economic opportunity and long-term success for Westlake's business community.

Services promoted included:

- **The Sidewalk Vending Program:** EWDD has collaborated with the County of Los Angeles Department of Economic Opportunity and the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH) to offer eligible sidewalk vendors access to vending carts. Approved applicants may receive a free cart along with a subsidy to help cover a portion of DPH permit fees, depending on availability.
- **Legacy Business Recovery Grant Program:** This program offers grants of up to \$20,000 exclusively to eligible Legacy Businesses in the City of Los Angeles that need financial assistance to aid in their recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The recovery grant is funded through the 2021 American Rescue Plan Act allocation to the City of Los Angeles. Grant amounts include \$10,000 for businesses with one to five employees and \$20,000 for those with six or more employees.

A "Legacy Business" is defined as a business that has been in operation for 20 years or more within the same community and meets three of the following four criteria:

1. It contributes significantly to its community's history or identity.
2. It sustains and cultivates distinctive cultural traditions or practices.
3. The business is not franchised or affiliated with a national corporate chain.

4. It provides vital goods and services in a language and manner that is culturally accessible to the community.
- **Mayor Karen Bass' ProcureLA program:** This program provides free services and resources to help small businesses acquire City contracts. These contracts aim to foster economic growth within the LA region by connecting business owners and entrepreneurs with sports and entertainment partners within our city.²⁸

Additionally, the Department of Public Works' Office of Community Beautification (OCB) attended and provided a brief impromptu address ahead of their scheduled presentation at Workshop No. 6. The staff from OCB informed the working group about initiatives for small businesses, including procurement opportunities for street cleaning and graffiti abatement. The working group were encouraged to share these opportunities with patrons and members of their respective organizations and the general public to be a boon to the Westlake area.

At the end of the meeting, participants raised concerns about street cleanliness, such as illegal dumping and public safety issues related to the homelessness emergency. In response, DPW advised the group of the appropriate City channels to report crime and cleanliness issues. The discussion emphasized the importance of maintaining a consistent relationship with municipal agencies and the value of working together to address these community challenges effectively.

Workshop No. 6: Landmark Maintenance and Long-Term Sustainability Planning

The sixth and final workshop addressed the practical aspects of City maintenance for the proposed landmark. A representative from OCB co-facilitated the discussion on resources and strategies used for long-term sustainability and upkeep of the City's public art and cultural landmarks. Key topics included choosing durable materials, planning for maintenance costs, and ensuring that the landmark remained a permanent and well-maintained symbol representing the Guatemalan community.

Participants were also reminded about the City's opportunities for local businesses to participate in beautification projects, such as street cleaning and graffiti abatement, which could contribute to the integrity, cleanliness, and continued vibrancy of the proposed landmark and its surrounding environment.

KEY INSIGHTS FROM WORKSHOP FACILITATION

LA Civil Rights completed its facilitation of the working group series on March 25, 2025.

²⁸ Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass. "Mayor Bass Announces New Assistance 'ProcureLA' Program for Small Businesses during Inaugural Sports and Entertainment Summit." *Mayor Karen Bass*. City of Los Angeles. 10 Oct. 2024.
<https://mayor.lacity.gov/news/mayor-bass-announces-new-assistance-procurela-program-small-businesses-during-inaugural-sports>.

Through the communications with prospective participants and workshops as well as the insights of the core working group members, the Department found that engagement and co-designing provided a pathway for broader conversation on topics of importance to Guatemalan participants and advocates of the Guatemalan community in Westlake, including civic engagement, community development, and neighborhood economic sustainability.

Continued Need For Transparency and Community Engagement

During the workshop series, participants expressed skepticism about the feasibility of the project and the likelihood to move the project beyond the recommendations of the working group. This concern was compounded as the news of the City's fiscal challenges loomed large over the course of the engagement. Some participants acknowledged that the downward economic trends are impacting many public entities and that City leaders may pursue the working group's recommendations in the future. Others voiced frustration with the City's lengthy project processes and timelines, seeking a commitment from City leaders to realize the working group's vision and complete the project in the near future. LA Civil Rights recommends the City increase regular, accessible communication with community stakeholders about any developments or extensions of the Guatemalan Landmark Naming Project, such as a study identifying accessibility, visibility, or community and environmental impact.

To increase the likelihood of actualization of the project and to ensure the working group participants remain visible advocates of the project, participants proposed the City's institution of a community advisory board. They envisioned the board as a more permanent liaison, providing guidance and promoting engagement and involvement from Guatemalan community members through public workshops and meaningful consultation.

Working group members also emphasized the desire for additional opportunities to more broadly collaborate with City agencies on issues impacting Westlake and the role elected officials can play to increase community participation. The working group posited that barriers to civic engagement and public trust may be reduced with the increase of community-led and culturally grounded programming.

City efforts to facilitate additional civic engagement may clarify information about existing City services and programs. LA Civil Rights learned working group members were not familiar with the MyLA311 resource to create service requests or report the need for repair or services in a particular area by phone, website, or by the mobile phone application. LA Civil Rights recommends regular promotion of multilingual City tutorials or workshops to increase the use of existing tools and services. These efforts may demonstrate the rights and abilities afforded to all Angelenos and strengthen public trust and communication between City officials and Westlake community members.

Balancing Stakeholder Perspectives and Interests

Working group members reported feeling frustrated as they perceived that other forthcoming projects — centered on updating Westlake’s built environment — may reduce the likelihood of realizing a City-funded Guatemalan-specific landmark in the near future. The Maya Corridor streetscape improvement project (Council File 21-0537) and the proposed development of a Central American Cultural District (Council File 24-1270) were brought up as examples of the City’s prioritization of other interests. LA Civil Rights emphasized both projects, as well as other designated cultural areas, such as Chinatown or Thai Town, have come to fruition after many years of planning and fundraising as well as interdepartmental and public-private partnerships. To mitigate, the working group was forward-thinking and proposed a provisional solution that may allow the City to meet the needs and requests of multiple constituencies: request the City construct only one of the proposed six gateways and designate the adjacent area the “Guatemala Town Corridor” similar to the nearby homages to the broader Central-American diaspora.

Although the alternate approach was offered by the working group, there was hesitancy in recommending this approach. LA Civil Rights was careful in facilitating this topic of land use and potential allotments for space, holding respect for how cultural communities in and around Los Angeles may feel underrepresented and/or honored. As anticipated, working group participants expressed feelings of erasure and dismissal, with distrust of government evident throughout the engagement. These sentiments were coupled with requests for a homogenous working group based on heritage. Facilitators listened to participants’ heartfelt demands for Guatemalan self- and community-determination.

During the Guatemalan Landmark Naming Project workshops, LA Civil Rights developed trust and rapport with working group members through its facilitation of some of the deeper, more sensitive conversations while simultaneously upholding the City’s standards for inclusivity and belonging, ensuring that participants were provided a safe space to be respected and heard.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact with the submission of this report.



CAPRI MADDOX, ESQ.
General Manager

CM:DJ:YC:LCV:BH
August 11, 2025