



Sacramento

ENVIRONMENTAL EQUITY IN DEL PASO HEIGHTS

A Catalyst Project | Sacramento, California

Technical Assistance Panel | April 10–11, 2025

About

Urban Land Institute

Urban Land Institute is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 48,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission of shaping the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide. ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific regions, with members in 84 countries.

Cover photo: The Greater Sacramento Urban League headquarters building in the Del Paso Heights neighborhood.

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ULI Sacramento

ULI Sacramento is a district council of the Urban Land Institute, a global organization which for more than 80 years has been dedicated to improving the quality of urban areas. ULI is the sum of its members, who themselves deliver the ULI mission through programs and events and positively shape the future of real estate and land use disciplines across the region. Members include real estate developers, builders, finance and equity professionals, architects, engineers, urban planners, elected officials, engaged citizens, and more. ULI shares best practices through practical professional development education programs and ULI's research and publications. The organization sets the standard for high quality information on urban planning, real estate development, growth, and land use.

ULI Sacramento Leadership

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Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) Program

Urban Land Institute harnesses its members' technical expertise to help communities solve complex land use, development, and redevelopment challenges. Technical assistance panels (TAPs) provide expert, multidisciplinary, unbiased advice to local governments, public agencies, and nonprofit organizations facing complex land use and real estate issues in the region. Drawing from its professional membership base, ULI Sacramento offers objective and responsible guidance on various land use and real estate issues ranging from site-specific projects to public policy questions. The sponsoring organization is responsible for gathering the background information necessary to understand the project and present it to the panel. TAP panelists spend two days interviewing stakeholders, evaluating the challenges, and ultimately arriving at a set of recommendations that the sponsoring organization can use to guide development going forward.

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors/panelists and do not necessarily reflect the views of their affiliated organizations.

ULI Randall Lewis Center for Sustainability in Real Estate

The ULI Randall Lewis Center for Sustainability in Real Estate (the Center) leads the real estate industry in creating places and buildings where people and the environment thrive. In collaboration with ULI members and partners, the Lewis Center drives industry transformation, cultivates leaders and champions, and helps foster solutions for sustainable, resilient, healthy and equitable cities and communities. The Center pursues these goals via cutting-edge research, global convenings, community technical assistance, and other strategies. The Center's main programs are Decarbonization, Urban Resilience, and Healthy Places.

The Net Zero Imperative

Thanks to a generous gift from Owen Thomas, ULI has launched the Net Zero Imperative—a multi-year initiative to accelerate decarbonization in the built environment. Additional gifts from Lynn Thurber, Joe Azrack, Franz Colloredo-Mansfeld, and Dan Cashdan further support and bolster the NZI program's scale and impact. Work to advance the initiative includes technical assistance panels in five global cities each year, designed to help developers, building owners, cities, and other relevant constituents reduce carbon emissions associated with buildings, communities, and cities.

The fundamental goal of the effort is to provide concrete ideas and strategies to real estate owners, public sector leaders, and the general public to eliminate carbon emissions from the built environment to reach net zero. Through its work, the initiative will create global resources (research, toolkits, and other tools) to help all ULI members accelerate decarbonization in their real estate operations and in their cities.



ULI Sacramento is a part of ULI's Net Zero Imperative Cohort #4 along with ULI district and national councils in Atlanta, Chicago, Germany (Berlin), Hong Kong, New York, Northwest (Portland), Philadelphia, Spain (Madrid), and Washington D.C.

ULI Sacramento Climate Resilience and Innovation Initiative

ULI Sacramento's newest initiative responds to the impact of climate change on land use development. The Climate Resilience and Innovation Initiative (CR&I) Committee highlights projects that provide insights on innovative design, financing, and planning strategies aimed at achieving greenhouse gas reductions in new and existing buildings and transportation projects.

CR&I tailors programming topics to ULI's broader member base whose projects are ultimately influenced by climate-related policies.

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ULI Sacramento would like to thank the Greater Sacramento Urban League for partnering with ULI in this resilience and development study. In addition, ULI would like to thank Vertical Pacific and Salazar Architects for generously sharing information with the panel leading up to and during the TAP work days. ULI Sacramento also thanks SMUD's Sustainable Communities program for their ongoing support of the district council's climate, resilience, and innovation work. Finally, ULI thanks the numerous stakeholders who generously shared their time and insights with the panel.



The TAP panel and staff from the Greater Sacramento Urban League gathered to tour the study area.



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Executive Summary

Community resilience and environmental equity is a pressing challenge in north Sacramento. Changes in the climate are resulting in higher average daily temperatures, and the lack of tree cover and wide swaths of impervious surfaces in north Sacramento are creating dangerous heat islands in these vulnerable neighborhoods.

Recognizing the challenges communities face during environmental and economic emergencies, the Greater Sacramento Urban League is stepping into the gap to bring resilience and other resources to north Sacramento and to the Del Paso Heights neighborhood specifically.

The Greater Sacramento Urban League (GSUL) is leveraging land it owns to envision a resilience hub at the corner of Marysville Boulevard and Grand Avenue. The hub, called Grand Gathering, is designed to feature both open space and commercial opportunities for community members. Envisioned with community use and gathering in mind, the open space is designed to provide shade and help mitigate stormwater runoff. In the commercial spaces, a commercial kitchen and maker space are planned, with the intention that community members use these spaces and resources to launch, support, and elevate their entrepreneurial pursuits.

The project is bold and is designed to accomplish a great deal in a relatively small space. GSUL is now considering its best path forward, seeking cost-effective construction

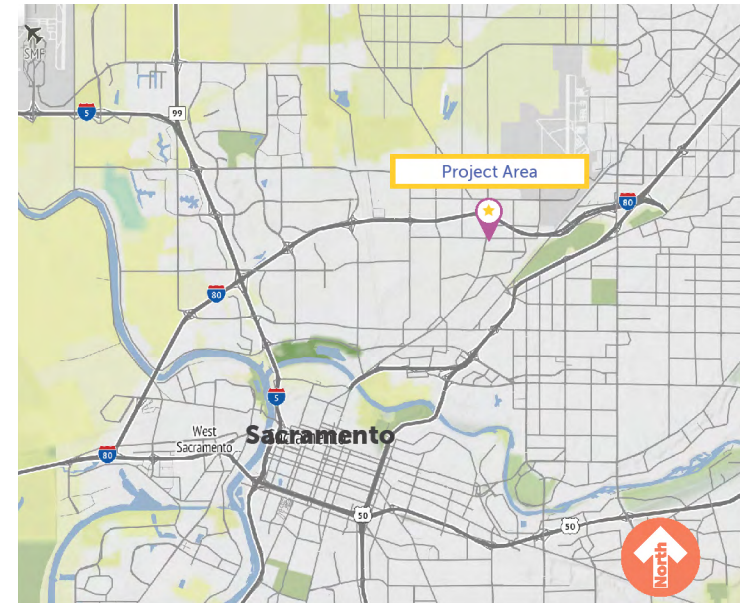
approaches and advice in funding pursuits and resilient infrastructure. Knowing that the Urban Land Institute (ULI) provides technical assistance for nonprofits and communities facing these types of challenges, GSUL turned to the ULI Sacramento District Council and the ULI Net Zero Imperative for additional guidance in bringing Grand Gathering to life. In response, ULI convened a technical assistance panel of real estate professionals to help guide GSUL in the next phase of its development work.

The following summary outlines the panel's recommendations, which are described in greater detail starting on page four.

Development Strategy

Real estate development is facing significant capital challenges and uncertainty at present, and projects pursuing resilience and sustainability are even more challenging as federal support and funding are pulled back. Given these headwinds, the panel began with a development strategy that can begin to bring Grand Gathering and the surrounding improvements to life while allowing GSUL to remain flexible and reduce its risk. The development strategy centers around the following six steps.

1. Activate the plaza at Grand Gathering
2. Minimize capital expenses
3. Phase development
4. Integrate and pursue partnerships
5. Optimize the energy systems
6. Develop new capital streams



GSUL's Empowerment Center and the proposed projects are in the Del Paso Heights neighborhood in north Sacramento.



Grand Gathering includes the commercial building shaded in orange and the vacant parcel directly north and abutting the commercial property, also shaded lightly in orange..

Resilience in Del Paso Heights

Through the course of its study, the panel learned that Grant Union High School, just two blocks west of the TAP study site, will soon become a community resilience center. With this in mind, GSUL can use Grand Gathering to provide complementary resources to those on tap for the high school, further boosting community members' resilience. Grand Gathering can support the resilience of the community in the following four areas:

- **Emergency response.** Resilience through emergency response, including assistance with food, water, and essential supplies.
- **Community planning and programming.** Programming that supports community resilience includes community disaster preparedness training and emergency planning workshops.
- **Community connections.** Year-round community services supporting resilience and social and cultural events to strengthen community connections.
- **Infrastructure improvements.** Resilience through infrastructure modifications such as microgrid installations, water conservation, tree planting, and depaving efforts.

Grand Gathering: Design Considerations

As currently designed, Grand Gathering is anticipated to meet a wide variety of

community needs while also supporting community resilience. Within the scope of these design intentions, the panel identified several early improvements that should be prioritized as each would have an outsized impact in service of the community.

- **Prioritize shade.** By using flexible and more permanent shade structures and tree canopies, the plaza space at Grand Gathering can quickly become a cooling resource for the neighborhood.
- **Remain focused and flexible by reducing structured improvements.** By reducing the hardscaping, reducing the structured plant beds around the trees, and reducing the programmed seating and structured layout, the Grand Gathering plaza becomes more flexible in use, provides greater opportunities for revenue generation, reduces capital costs, and opens the plaza to wider views and greater visual connections.
- **Address access, engagement, and streetscaping.** An entry gate and built-in bus bench along Grand Avenue should be included in the early construction work. Using “peek-a-boo” openings in the perimeter wall allows connection with the plaza, visually inviting the community in while still maintaining the security of the wall. Additionally, by stepping in the perimeter wall from the sidewalk by 12 inches, those walking along the sidewalk will feel less hemmed-in by the proximity of the wall to the street.

Programming and Partnerships

As GSUL seeks to enhance community resilience, it is encouraged to leverage its convening and collaborative strengths, partnering for deeper and broader capacity and impact in the following areas:

- **Green infrastructure and tree planting.** Green infrastructure improvements will enhance natural cooling opportunities and improve air quality.
- **Weatherization and energy efficiency assistance.** Individual community members can improve the resilience of their home environments through key programs already in place through local utility districts.
- **Food access and social enterprise.** Alchemist Community Development Corporation (CDC), another well-known and well-respected organization at work in north Sacramento, has indicated an interest in working with GSUL on its food industry-related improvements and programming.
- **Clean energy workforce pipeline.** GSUL is known as an excellent workforce development resource. It should consider partnering to also provide resources for those interested in working in or building skills for the clean energy industry.
- **Climate science and education.** The area is rich in higher education institutions that can provide additional education in climate science and related fields.

Systems and Funding

As federal funding priorities continue to shift, GSUL will need to find more diverse funding resources and is encouraged to structure its funding pursuits with the following steps:

- **Form an organization to manage grant applications**, ongoing operations, and conduct community engagement.
- **Attract private investment with development-ready, shovel-ready sites.** Through additional proactive work with the City of Sacramento, GSUL can address zoning modifications and infrastructure improvements that can reduce barriers to development and make its sites more attractive to investors interested in supporting the work.
- **Consider a land banking partnership with the City** to lease and use additional parcels around Grand Gathering, expanding the development potential and potentially deepening the resilience and economic resources available to the community.
- **Consider moving Grand Gathering to the parcel south of the Empowerment Center.** This shift places retail uses at the busy corner and moves the more pedestrian community gathering uses to an area that is less exposed to the busy roadways. This site could also be ready for an early, interim activation in as few as six months.

The panel also outlined a range of additional funding sources that GSUL may wish to explore, including Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (CPACE) funding, programs hosted by the State of California, and funding that local banks may be inclined to deploy in the local community through Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) programs.

Strengthening Capacity

GSUL enjoys excellent visibility and deep community trust across Sacramento. Further strengthening the organization's capacity, particularly in areas that are new to staff, can help increase GSUL's positive impacts in the community. The panel noted the following areas for increased capacity building:

- **Lean into GSUL's strengths** and add resilience measures where they align with those known services.
- **Partner for impact** and avoid duplication of efforts already underway in other organizations.
- **Grow relationships** to help elevate resilience efforts, spread the news of resources, and support community pride.
- **Shape a governance structure** that will support resilience efforts and help organize the various entities and partners typically required to make resilience hubs effective.
- **Stay connected to ULI** for training, resources, net-zero support, connections across the development community, and more.

Conclusion

The resilience work that the Greater Sacramento Urban League has set out for itself will meet critical needs within northern Sacramento and the Del Paso Heights community specifically. The work of developing and operating a resilience hub is not for the faint of heart, but GSUL and its staff have demonstrated their dogged determination and commitment to the welfare, economic health, and general well-being of the community. A fully functional resilience hub would be one more step along that path.

With recent changes in federal funding policies, GSUL's development path, funding sources, and timeline have shifted. This shift brings with it an opportunity to re-evaluate several items within the development program that could be adjusted to create a more flexible program, reduce capital expenses, and provide an early catalytic "wins" that might quickly engage and energize the community while also attracting investors who will recognize the dedication of and opportunities presented by GSUL and its partners.

"Resilience" involves the ability to bounce back after one experiences setbacks and stressors. This is GSUL's opportunity to embrace its own resilience and further shape its work into something truly grand for the community.



Introduction and Background

The Greater Sacramento Urban League is a fixture in the Del Paso Heights neighborhood and a critical support organization for Greater Sacramento. With a mission to empower Black and other historically marginalized populations, the Greater Sacramento Urban League (GSUL) is turning its attention to supporting the resilience of its neighbors as a mechanism for further bolstering economic self-reliance, educational fulfillment, social justice, and civil rights of community members. A resilient community is one that supports its residents' ability to live well, be well, and thrive.

GSUL's Empowerment Center is located in the heart of Del Paso Heights at the southwestern corner of Marysville Boulevard and Grand Avenue. The Empowerment Center (the Center) provides a wide range of services and programming directly to the neighborhood and has become a catalyst for bringing other resources, including financial literacy and banking services, to the area.

Today, GSUL is taking further steps to catalyze activity in the corridor and support economic development by taking on two new projects on parcels near the Center. The first project, Grand Gathering, is envisioned as a combination gathering space, resilience hub, and career and business incubator for the community. Grand Gathering would convert the lot directly across Marysville Boulevard from the Center into a resilience hub that would also feature programmed public space. The adjacent retail building would be converted into a community-centered space

TAP Scope and Project Goals

- 1. Identify cost-effective construction methods for implementation in GSUL projects.** Identify cost-effective, climate-friendly design strategies to reduce long-term operational costs while enhancing the projects' role as a climate resilience hub for the neighborhood. Ideally, the TAP report will outline feasible construction and building design methods for Grand Gathering and Hub in the Heights to implement and reduce building operational costs.
- 2. Identify technical barriers to climate resiliency for the neighborhood.** Identify barriers to implementing financially feasible, climate-friendly resilience strategies in the Del Paso Heights neighborhood. The study should address challenges faced by private developers as well as broader infrastructure issues that local municipalities can help address, which may prevent the projects from serving as a Climate Resilience Center. The findings, outlined in the TAP report, will be shared with strategic partners (City, third-party utility companies, etc.) to advance broader climate resiliency goals and ensure that GSUL's projects can serve as a community resource center (CRC) in compliance with State Law.
- 3. Outline area-wide impact of GSUL's projects.** Assess how GSUL's three projects

will contribute to long-term climate resilience in Del Paso Heights and improve the neighborhood's socioeconomic conditions. The assessment should also identify pathways and partnerships for workforce development programs, green job training, and other recommendations to enhance community impact.

The TAP should analyze the impact of the three projects, emphasizing the additional benefits of implementing the recommended climate resilience strategies and educational programs—especially those involving local municipalities and other key partners. The TAP report's findings will be shared with the new district council member and key city stakeholders to help generate support and leverage, securing concessions and additional investment from the City for ongoing implementation efforts in Del Paso Heights.

- 4. Leverage the tap report for additional funding.** The TAP report should provide detailed information on climate implementation methods, community impact, and technical barriers, allowing GSUL to use the report in climate-related grant applications (e.g., EPA grants) and in discussions with key partners (e.g., SMUD) to secure additional funding and resources.

with plans that include a commercial kitchen incubator and maker space. Directly south of the Center, GSUL has plans to turn a vacant parcel into "Hub in the Heights," a multi-story, mixed-use building featuring new affordable housing atop two floors of retail and office space. Both of these projects are deep in the planning stages, with Grand Gathering further along, having received entitlements and approval of its construction drawings.

To best leverage these investments in the community and to help realize GSUL's additional vision of Grand Gathering as a resilience resource for the community, GSUL turned to the Urban Land Institute Sacramento District Council (ULI) and the Net Zero Imperative of the ULI Randall Lewis Center for Sustainability in Real Estate for assistance and guidance in bringing these resilience goals for Grand Gathering to life.



The study area, outlined in red, is in the Del Paso Heights neighborhood in north Sacramento.



The lot south of the Center is slated to transform into a multi-story, mixed-use building.



GSUL's Empowerment Center fronts Marysville Boulevard and houses key community services.



Directly east of the Center, a vacant parcel is due to transform into Grand Gathering.

Conceptual Design for Grand Gathering

Designed by Salazar Architects Inc. and with engineering provided by Vertical Pacific, Grand Gathering is envisioned as a community resilience center delivering a wide range of resources, services, and amenities to the Del Paso Heights community. The overarching goal is to develop a resilience hub that can serve the community in times of

emergency or significant stress. In addition to its resilience features, such as renewable energy and cooling features, the open space will house a gathering space, shaded seating areas, space for food trucks, and public restrooms. Plans for the adjoining commercial building include a community commercial kitchen, community maker

space, and retail stores where community members can sell their products. Roof-mounted photovoltaic panels are envisioned for the commercial building and pavilion and performance space to the north. Movable umbrellas, trees, and other plantings provide cooling assistance and help soften the hardscape found across the plaza.



To assist GSUL, ULI convened a technical assistance panel (TAP) for a two-day study that included a tour of the area, briefing materials from GSUL, interviews with neighborhood and City of Sacramento (the City) stakeholders, and a presentation of the panel's findings to GSUL. The panel was comprised of ULI members representing the fields of real estate and affordable housing development, architecture and urban design, community and economic development, and sustainability, climate change, and resilience consulting. Each panelist, bringing their professional expertise to the task, evaluated the questions posed by GSUL, explored neighborhood challenges and opportunities with the stakeholders, and ultimately arrived at a series of recommendations that GSUL can pursue as it works to bring Grand Gathering and Hub in the Heights to life.

Development Strategy

When GSUL began to pursue a community resilience center (CRC) in earnest, there were federal programs and related funding that would support the efforts in part and serve as a foundation upon which to garner additional public sector, philanthropic, and private sector support and funding. At the time of this study, the shift in federal policies and priorities has made these resources scarce and the development path for a CRC is far more opaque. Working with this understanding, the panel endeavored to answer the questions posed by GSUL by first framing a path forward for Grand Gathering, that could begin to bring the project to life

What the Panel Heard

Interviews with stakeholders—including business leaders, GSUL staff, community members, related nonprofit organizations, and municipal contacts—uncovered the following themes.

- GSUL would like the area to be one where people can live, work, experience, and shop.
- GSUL wants Grand Gathering to be the place where the community comes for assistance in the event of a disaster.
- “This Resilience Hub is super important.”
- Existing infrastructure—particularly Marysville Boulevard—is a barrier to movement between GSUL’s proposed spaces.
- Stakeholders would like keep funding and resources in the community.
- The commercial kitchen presents a design challenge and increases project complexity.
- There is an understanding that three food trucks can operate on a vacant lot without first obtaining a permit from the City.
- GSUL needs to leverage its partners and existing resources for these projects.
- Support for affordable (workforce) housing in Hub in the Heights exists, but it needs to be financially viable without revenue from associated commercial spaces.
- Everyone needs to better leverage the Del Paso’s proximity to the airport, highways, etc. and promote that proximity to potential business owners and investors.
- Housing developers are finding more market interest in smaller, one- and two-bedroom units.
- Start with development of the vacant lot into the plaza and then move on to tackling building renovations.
- Activate the plaza first to catalyze the area around the intersection.
- Make sure the community knows that the maker space is meant for them and help them feel welcome and like they belong.
- Keep the approach and the delivery of information and benefits of a resilience hub simple.
- “It’s hot, I don’t have air conditioning, and there are no trees.”
- Wayfinding for transit in the area is needed.
- A bike lane along Marysville Boulevard has been approved but has not yet received funding.
- Grant Union High School is the pride of the community and helps bring the community together.
- Trees and accessibility can be in conflict—ensure that people can continue to access the sidewalk and transit stop even after trees are planted along sidewalks.
- “Don’t do too many things poorly. It breaks trust with the community, and investors see it as confirmation as to why they should not invest here.”

while still allowing GSUL to retain maximum flexibility in its programming, manage its capital expenses incrementally, and reduce its exposure to risk along the way.

1. Activate the plaza at Grand Gathering.

The community is excited by the prospects of Grand Gathering. Activating the plaza, currently vacant land, will be an early improvement that community members can easily see and begin to experience. This can also create early momentum in the neighborhood, drawing residents and visitors to the space and encouraging everyone to see it as a community resource designed for all.

2. Minimize capital expenses. Funding for real estate projects across the development spectrum has become challenging. Funding for resilience efforts has become even more difficult to find. With this understanding, the

panel identified a development path that can help keep capital expenses low for GSUL while still creating an important community asset.

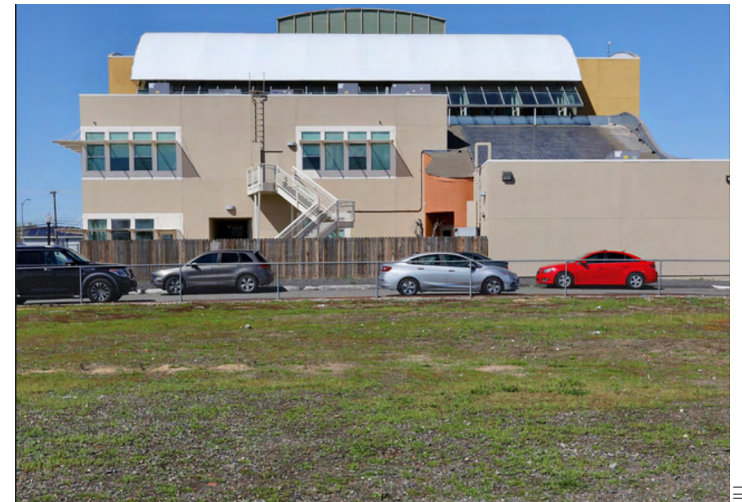
- 3. Phase development.** By phasing the development work and moving incrementally, GSUL can tackle one project at a time, minimizing capital risk and building community and investor interest along the way.
- 4. Integrate and pursue partnerships.** GSUL is very good at delivering a wide range of support and programming across the community. There are also a number of other organizations in Sacramento that can come alongside GSUL in its efforts, expanding GSUL's organizational capacity, reach, and impact.
- 5. Optimize the electrical systems.** In reviewing GSUL's development plans, the panel identified ways to optimize the

electrical systems across the three sites, including the existing GSUL building, Hub in the Heights, and Grand Gathering. In particular, combining the GSUL parcel with the Hub in the Heights parcel may allow for a combined electrical system, which can reduce total expenses and streamline energy usage. The panel also considered how electrical systems at Grand Gathering might be best utilized across the open space and associated buildings.

6. Develop new capital streams. As noted, funding for resilience-focused real estate projects may be difficult to find as the federal government reconfigures its energy priorities. New sources of capital will needed to support GSUL's vision for a Grand Gathering resilience hub. The shift in federal priorities may encourage additional State or philanthropic funding support, and GSUL's development team will need to be creative in their pursuits.



Developing the Grand Gathering plaza, planned for the southeastern corner of this intersection, can create early visibility and momentum for the broader project.



There may be an opportunity to combine the energy systems of the existing Empowerment Center with that of new development on the parcel to the south.



Resilience in Del Paso Heights

GSUL's goals of a resilience hub, gathering space, business incubator, and housing development are impressive, ambitious, thoughtful, and inspiring. The organization is energized by its plans and the community is excited by the opportunities these development projects present. In particular, community members expressed their excitement for Grand Gathering and its role as a community gathering space. Grand Gathering's potential resilience benefits were also of particular interest as stakeholders asked questions of the panel and the panel shared their insights into the benefits of community resilience hubs.

Resilience in Del Paso Heights

Through the course of the TAP, the panel became aware of an exciting development already in process in the Del Paso Heights neighborhood.

With the support of the Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD), Grant Union High School is due to become a school-hosted community resilience center. Just a few blocks west of GSUL's Empowerment Center, this new resilience center has received funding to provide shelter, energy generation, and energy storage in times of emergency.

With this new community resource nearby, GSUL has an opportunity at Grand Gathering to provide complementary resilience resources to further boost community

members' ability to bounce back after extreme events. As one panelist noted, a key factor of resilience is redundancy. As it may no longer be necessary for GSUL to alone provide the full range of resilience resources, it does have excellent potential to provide the type of complementary resources that can further leverage the resources soon to be in place at the high school.

Key Opportunities

Individual and community resilience can take many forms across both physical and economic realms. For this study, the panel focused on how GSUL and Grand Gathering can support the resilience of the community through the following four areas,

complementing the improvements planned for the nearby high school.

Resilience through emergency response.

Supporting community resilience in an emergency would include assistance with food, water, and essential supplies distribution. It would also include backup power for charging devices and medical equipment and providing refrigeration for medicine. First aid and basic medical services would be provided and emergency services and recovery efforts would be coordinated through the resilience hub.

Programming for community resilience.

Programming that supports community resilience includes community disaster preparedness training and emergency

Resilient programming and services	Resilient structure	Resilient power	Resilient communications	Resilient operations
 Offering additional services and programs that build relationships, promote community preparedness, and improve residents' health and well-being	 Strengthening the resilience of the facility to ensure that it meets operational goals in all conditions	 Ensuring reliable backup power to the facility during a hazard event while also improving the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of operations in all three operating modes	 Ensuring the ability to communicate within and outside the service area during disruptions and throughout recovery	 Ensuring personnel and processes are in place to operate the facility in all conditions

A community resilience center typically provides the above five resources to the surrounding community.

planning workshops for residents. It could also include programs that assist with home weatherization, tree stewardship, and energy efficiency assistance and workshops.

Year-round community services supporting resilience. Evergreen programs such as workforce development and job training and youth programs focused on leadership and resilience skills can be provided at any time and throughout the year to support the resilience of community members. Added into the programming mix, social and cultural events help build and strengthen community connections, which creates a more resilient broader community.

Resilience through infrastructure modifications. Creating more resilient energy environments can come through renewable energy and microgrid installations, and a smaller demonstration project can lead the way, providing an early proof of concept to the community and its partners. Water conservation and rainwater harvesting can support community resilience as can making cooling centers available during extreme heat events. Ongoing air quality monitoring and protection is important to community well-being and tree planting efforts can support both community cooling and air quality goals. Finally, resilience can be supported by efforts to depave the environment where possible. Impervious surfaces and associated stormwater runoff can stress water management systems and excess paving increases surface and air temperatures, exacerbating heat-related

stresses experienced by those living, working, and playing in the area.

Grand Gathering as a Resilience Hub

To provide the community with the resilience support noted above, the following characteristics and attributes should be factored into a resilience hub at Grand Gathering. (To explore these matters further, the panel has included a more detailed description of resilience hubs in the Appendix of this report on page 29.)

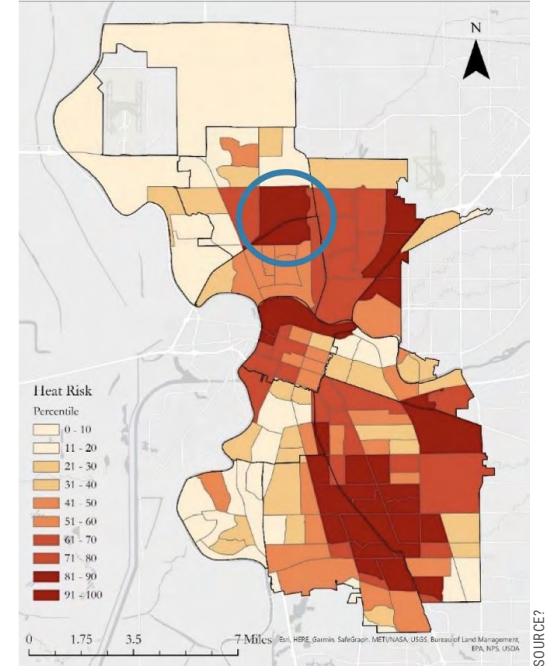
Resilience Hub Characteristics

Key components of a resilience hub typically include:

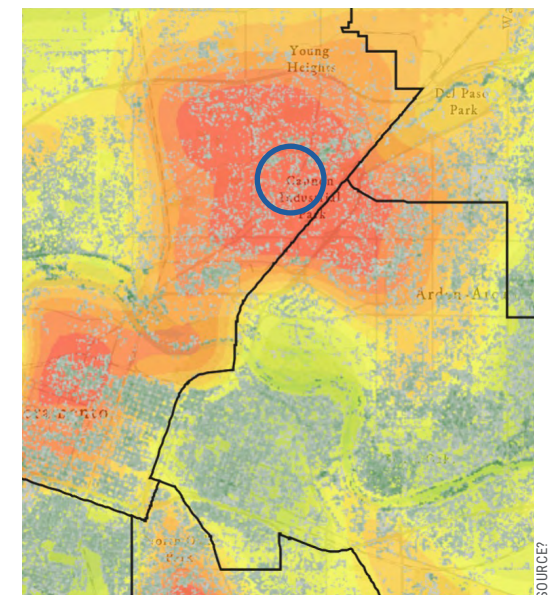
- **Emergency supplies** such as food, water, first aid kits, and backup power sources.
- **Communication systems** that can function during power outages.
- **Community gathering spaces** for coordination and information sharing.
- **Technical assistance** and training for disaster preparedness.
- **Climate adaptation resources** to help communities deal with extreme weather events.

Resilience Hub Development Considerations

The development of a community resilience hub can begin to shape the manner in which the community will interact with the eventual



The map above highlights areas within Sacramento that are particularly susceptible to heat-related stresses, with darker colors noting higher intensities. Del Paso Heights is circled in blue.



Tree canopy is noted in the cooler colors, with red areas marking locations where tree canopy is lacking. Again, Del Paso Heights is circled in blue.

resources. The following considerations can help shape long-term positive impacts and should be factored into any resilience efforts at Grand Gathering.

- **Inclusive planning process:** Ensure community voices, especially those most at risk from climate change, are central to all planning stages.
- **Cultural relevance:** Design programming, communication strategies, and physical spaces that reflect and respect the cultural identities of the communities being served.
- **Leadership development:** Create pathways for local community members to move into leadership positions within the hub's governance structure.
- **Economic opportunities:** Create workforce development and contracting opportunities that benefit local businesses and residents during both construction and ongoing operations.
- **Technology access:** Address the digital divide by providing both high- and low-tech solutions for emergency communications and service access.
- **Health equity focus:** Recognize and address the disproportionate health impacts of disasters through appropriate services and partnerships.



The Sacramento Municipal Utility District recently approved funding to support a new resilience center at Grant Union High School, two blocks west of GSUL's Empowerment Center and campus.

- **Accountability measures:** Establish specific metrics to track whether the hub is effectively serving all community members and addressing disparities in outcomes.

In all of its resilience pursuits, GSUL is encouraged to make resilience easily understandable and relatable to the daily

lives of area residents. Resilience efforts should also be discussed in impactful and actionable ways that can create positive outcomes in the daily lives of community members.



Grand Gathering Design Considerations

GSUL and its professional design and engineering partners have been hard at work creating a plan for Grand Gathering that could meet a wide variety of existing community needs while also providing new resources to support individual and community resilience. The plans are ambitious and thoughtful and the goals are impressive. With so much planned for the plaza, and understanding that funding may quickly become a limiting factor, the panel identified key elements within the planned list that could be implemented early and have an outsized impact for the community in relation to the capital investment required.

Prioritize Shade

Stakeholders consistently noted their concerns about the lack of shade and intense heat experienced across the neighborhood. The lack of tree canopy and the scope of impervious surfaces exacerbate the heat stresses experienced by community members. By prioritizing shade, Grand Gathering can help cool the neighborhood.

- **Use flexible and more permanent shade structures.** The design for the Grand Gathering plaza uses umbrellas to provide shade. While the umbrellas can be moved and are generally considered flexible, the panel recommended installing more permanent shade options instead. By using shade canvases stretched across cables with pulleys, it becomes much easier to adjust the shade across the plaza to both block direct sun into the building and also support the area



of the plaza where people are likely to congregate around the food trucks. The shaded space below is also freed from the posts and stands needed to hold up umbrellas, thereby allowing for maximum use, clearance, and flexibility of the outdoor space.

- **Utilize tree canopies to cool the space.** Trees provide critical shade and cooling capacity to outdoor spaces. When trees reach more mature heights, their shade cast is even broader and the space below the canopy can be maximized and more readily used for relaxation or recreation.

Remain Focused and Flexible

As one panelist noted, the design intention for Grand Gathering should be "long life, loose fit." Using this approach, early investments in



(top left) Much of the shade in the current Grand Gathering design is created through movable umbrellas. (right top and bottom) Shade provided by canvas stretched on cables opens up the space below.

the development of the space and plaza should be focused, flexible, and able to withstand the test of time. The following steps can help simplify early improvements, which will help reduce costs and maximize gathering intention.

- **Reduce hardscaping.** There is already an inordinate amount of impervious surface around the Grand Gathering site, which has created stormwater management issues in addition to increased heat island effects. By reducing the amount of new hardscaping at the plaza, the heat island effect can instead be reduced, lowering thermal mass, heat absorption, and heat retention for the neighborhood.
- **Reduce plant beds around trees.** The plant beds surrounding the trees in the current design provide welcome relief from the pavement. With reduced hardscape however, the need for these beds is reduced and the space can instead be used for additional flexible space for seating, picnics, dining, and entertainment activities.
- **Reduce programmed seating and activity layouts.** The current design has defined spaces carved out for specific uses. By instead reducing the programmed seating and defined spaces, the community can make the space their own, moving furniture, adjusting spacing, and adding temporary amenities to fit programming and event needs throughout the year.

The benefits of these steps include:

- **Increased flexibility of use.** The "loose fit" approach can greatly increase the flexibility of uses for the plaza, whether formally



Grand Gathering can be a community space that flexes and bends based on the community's needs, be that a formal dining space, a play space, a place for recreation, or one for simple relaxation.

during programmed events or informally by community members meeting for conversation or a picnic.

- **Increased opportunities for monetization.** A flexible space that is easy to manipulate also becomes more readily transformable for a variety of uses. Such a space could be rented to organizations for festivals, leased to the community at a nominal rate for events, or shifted to accommodate pop-up retailers and vendors. The ability to generate revenue on the plaza can help support the operations and ongoing maintenance of the space.
- **Increased connections to the surroundings.** A more flexible and open plaza can facilitate greater views and accessibility into the neighboring retail spaces. These connections will help encourage exploration by plaza visitors and further support the viability of those neighboring businesses.

Address Access, Engagement, and Streetscaping

The plaza at Grand Gathering will be an exciting new addition to Del Paso Heights. To facilitate



"Peek-a-boo" fencing provides welcome glimpses inside.

engagement and support community access and use of the plaza, the panel had the following suggestions for increased impact:

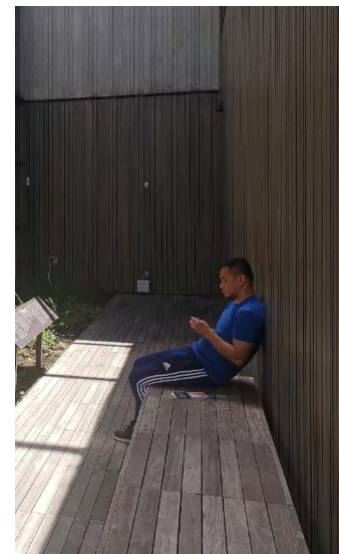
- **Add a formal entry gate and built-in bus bench along Grand Avenue near the existing bus stop.** This modification creates an opportunity to integrate a covered bus shelter and lighting into the design of the wall that will now border the bus stop, and a more welcoming space will support transit riders' comfort while waiting for the bus. A plaza entrance near the bus stop will create a more direct and welcoming connection for guests arriving by bus and provide easier access to the plaza, which is currently designed for access along Marysville Boulevard instead.
- **Construct small "peek-a-boo" openings in the perimeter wall.** Fencing around the plaza will assist with visitor safety



Although walls often create solid barriers along sidewalks, plantings, material changes, and benches can lessen the impact.

and ticketed events. The fence does not have to be an imposing barrier however and can instead become a positive and interactive experience for pedestrians. If the fence must be solid, openings along the wall can provide glimpses into the activity on the plaza and help connect the outside in. These openings also support a more open feel to an area that is otherwise bordered by an eight-foot-high wall and a very busy thoroughfare.

- **Step in the perimeter wall from the sidewalk by 12 inches.** The space between the roadway, the sidewalk, and the plaza wall is narrow. By providing a small space for plantings or a change in materials, the pedestrian experience along the outside of the wall can be greatly enhanced, and it will improve the sense of walkability and spaciousness.





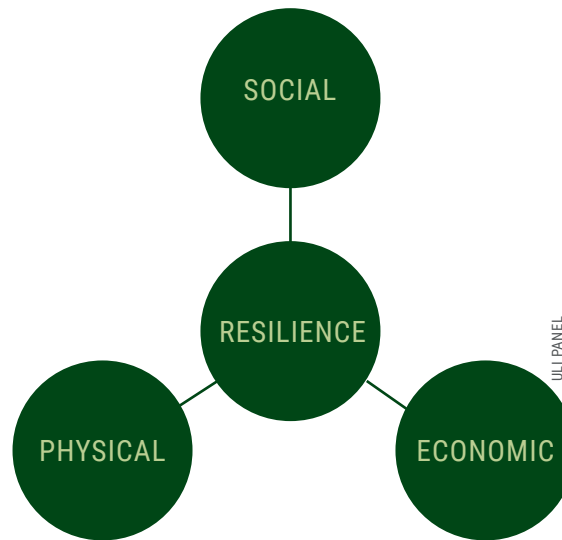
Programming and Partnerships

GSUL is well-known across the community. In Del Paso Heights specifically, the organization and its staff are seen as key conveners of important conversations, community collaborators, and trusted partners. GSUL also works hard to connect the community to resources and its staff are seen as trusted advisors within the community. As GSUL considers how it can use its strengths to support and enhance the resilience of Del Paso Heights residents and beyond, it is encouraged to turn to these strengths and leverage each, in partnership where feasible, across the region to further improve the quality of life of its neighbors.

GSUL's Resilience Support

The resilience of a community is built upon three primary foundations—physical resilience, economic resilience, and social resilience. During the stakeholder interviews, many community members focused on economic resilience, often relating to their ability to find a good-paying job and pay the bills associated with daily living.

In addition to the workforce development and social enterprise of economic resilience, GSUL can play an important role in supporting the community's physical resilience. The current Empowerment Center on Marysville Boulevard is a key community resource. In the future, Grand Gathering and its plaza as well as the housing and commercial spaces at the Hub in the Heights can also help support the physical resilience of community members.



The social resilience of the community is also a key factor in individual and community well-being and a place where GSUL can continue to shine. Partnerships with other organizations to extend, build, or strengthen capacity are important, and GSUL has proven itself a willing and trusted partner. Networks among people and organizations can also strengthen resilience, allowing groups to call upon one another in times of need or support. Finally, education and training conducted today can help position a community and its members to more readily bounce back after periods of stress. GSUL is known for providing these types of resources in the community today, and the continuation of these programs will be foundational to future community health and welfare.

Partnering for Resilience

In addition to the great work that GSUL already has underway that supports the community's resilience, there are tremendous opportunities to partner with other organizations around the region to bring additional resilience resources to Del Paso Heights and the surrounding communities. The panel outlined the following list as a starting point for further exploration.

Green infrastructure and tree planting. The following organizations can help GSUL bring more green infrastructure, natural cooling resources, and air quality supporting efforts to the area.

- [Center for Land-Based Learning \(CLBL\)](#). With a presence at Grant Union High School, CLBL provides a wide range of events, classes, volunteer opportunities, Mobile Farmers Market Truck, and more.
- [Green Tech Education](#). Green Tech offers workforce skills to young people with an emphasis on environmental protection, justice, and economic development and an eye toward careers in construction, manufacturing, utilities, transportation, and environmental management.
- [City of Trees](#). The Sacramento Tree Foundation provides free shade trees to SMUD customers, including homeowners, renters, and businesses.

Weatherization and energy efficiency assistance. There are a host of programs that can help households with improvements

to systems that will improve energy efficiency and support the resilience of individual homes. GSUL can help connect residents to these helpful resources.

- [SMUD offers discounted energy rates](#) for income-qualified residents and has a number of other programs designed to improve the energy efficiency of homes and home appliances.
- The [Community Resource Project](#) provides low- or no-cost weatherization, energy efficiency, panel upgrades, and electrification.
- The [City of Sacramento](#) offers support with building permits and navigating the permitting process.

Food access and social enterprise. Food access and food security are important resources at any time of the year and ones that often become particularly acute in emergencies. Alchemist Community Development Corporation (CDC) is already hard at work in these spaces and may prove to be a valuable resource as GSUL seeks to increase residents' resilience.

- The [Alchemist Kitchen Incubator Program](#) provides regular group and one-on-one coaching for food businesses.
- The [Alchemist Microenterprise Academy](#) is a 12-week course that supports those interested in launching a food enterprise.
- Alchemist's [Public Market](#) is designed to be a self-sustaining, place-based

infill development that brings food entrepreneurs and farmers' markets together in vacant spaces to deliver quality food from local producers to Sacramento's low-income communities.

- Seeking to connect people to local food, Alchemist has created a network of [farmers' markets](#) across the region, some of which the CDC operates directly, and helps connect community members with market resources and helpful tips.

Clean energy workforce pipeline. Workforce resources supporting the clean energy industry are plentiful in California. The following organizations should prove helpful as GSUL seeks to connect residents to this industry's resources and career opportunities.

- [Green Tech Education](#).
- [GRID Alternatives](#) connects job seekers to careers and entrepreneurship opportunities, seeking to ensure the renewable energy industry models a diverse workforce.
- Sacramento's [Capital College & Career Academy](#) offers hands-on learning with college courses and paid internships preparing students for higher learning and viable career paths.
- [Highlands Community Charter and Technical Schools](#) provide access to education, technology, communication, and employment to adults over the age of 22 at no cost to the student.

- The [California Mobility Center](#), soon to be known as CAL EPIC (California Energy Power Innovation Collaborative), serves the clean mobility industry by creating a labor pool of skilled workers to ensure that companies can hire the talent they need to help them grow.
- SMUD [Regional Workforce Development](#) provides development and training, work readiness and technical skills training, and career placement.
- Northern California's [IBEW](#) can provide member electricians with helpful resources to support a growing career.
- [Sacramento Regional Transit](#) can help those interested in a career in public transportation.
- [Sacramento Works](#), a program of Sacramento's Employment and Training Agency, is a full-service career resource center freely available to all Sacramento area residents.

Climate science and education. In addition to the resilience resources found at ULI, the following institutions of higher education can help build GSUL's and the community's climate science capacity.

- [UC Davis](#)
- [Sacramento State](#)
- [Los Rios Community College District](#)
- [Grant Union High School](#)



Systems and Funding

Funding resilience efforts often requires investments from both the public and private sectors. As funding priorities continue to shift at the federal level, more diverse sources will be required and private resources will become even more vital.

Structure Funding Pursuits

GSUL is encouraged to formalize its resilience pursuits by creating a structure to manage its resilience operations.

Form an organization. A new organization, housed within or even separate from GSUL, would be charged with drafting and managing resilience grant applications, managing ongoing operations, and conducting ongoing community engagement, education, and resilience programming. This type of dedicated focus can ensure that the community knows who to turn to for information and assistance and allows staff to dive deeply into resilience resources and funding pursuits with their full focus.

Attract private investment. In an effort to attract and be ready for new and additional private investment, the panel strongly encourages GSUL to become as development-ready ("shovel-ready") as it can be. Much of this process involves early conversations with the City of Sacramento to streamline processes in advance of development work and remove as many barriers to development around the two sites as possible. With a clearer development path and proactive efforts from the City,

investors may be more willing to support the projects GSUL has in the pipeline and invest in the surrounding community. Specifically, the panel called attention to the following process improvements that might streamline development at the sites and ease funding pursuits:

- **Adjust zoning requirements.** This could include eliminating parking minimums and creating certainty around impact fees.
- **Remove administrative barriers.** Removing impediments to development can be highly attractive to investors and providing certainty around approval processes and design reviews is helpful for all involved. Identifying the range of acceptable temporary uses at the site(s) can also help investors and other developers see a clearer and faster path to completion.
- **Address infrastructure improvements.** Working with the City, GSUL can pursue early improvements at the site such as planting and maintaining street trees and improving street lighting. In addition to providing critical shade, additional street trees could assist with water absorption efforts on the Grand Gathering site. Other larger infrastructure investments in the area could include: a road diet that could calm traffic and eventually bring buildings closer; upgrades to the stormwater and sanitary sewer systems; and new technologies, such as low-

flow fixtures. All of these infrastructure improvements would benefit the two GSUL sites as well as a number of other parcels along Marysville Boulevard.

Consider moonshots. While the panel focused on delivering practical steps that could be taken in the near term, they also identified two "moonshots" that might require additional time to explore and consider—and they should be considered.

- **Explore potential land banking and development rights with the City.** The City owns parcels around the GSUL sites that it may consider as part of a larger partnership opportunity with GSUL. These sites are currently vacant and may pose some environmental challenges, but there may be an opportunity, perhaps through a long-term ground lease, for GSUL to gain control over some of those parcels, put them back into productive use, and foster a more catalytic and energetic economic environment around the Grand Avenue and Marysville Boulevard intersection.
- **Consider switching sites.** GSUL has made excellent progress on its plans for both sides of Marysville Boulevard, with Grand Gathering moving into construction documentation and Hub in the Heights envisioned but on hold. While this progress is exciting, the development outlook at present is less so. It is possible that funding for this type of work may remain five or more

years distant. During that time, the panel encourages GSUL to explore the potential of building Grand Gathering on the site directly south of and adjacent to the Empowerment Center and moving the multi-story, mixed-use building to the northeast corner of the intersection where the plaza is currently sited. This shift places retail and commercial uses at the busy corners, and it moves the more pedestrian and active community gathering uses to a site that is less exposed to the busy roadway. People could more easily move between the two public GSUL spaces without having to cross Marysville Boulevard and programmatic and staff support could become seamless. It might also allow Grand Gathering to benefit from the optimization of energy services noted on page eight of this report and jump-start GSUL's site activation goals. Finally, with an early investment in water and sanitation at the site (which will be

needed eventually) and a six-month lead time to obtain development and building permits, the site could be activated with a farmers' market and begin drawing the community to the area, creating positive energy, and potentially earning revenue for GSUL and the market's vendors.

Explore additional specific funding programs and support systems:

- The [Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy](#) (CPACE) funding can provide 30-year, non-recourse funding to recapitalize the project once initial infrastructure improvements are complete.
- California's [Infill Infrastructure Grant Program](#) provides funding for capital improvement projects that are an integral part of, or necessary to facilitate the development of affordable and mixed-income housing.
- Using an [Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District](#), funding for community resilience can be generated through tax increment financing (TIF) from the incremental growth in property tax revenues.
- California's [Strategic Growth Council](#) offers a variety of grant programs, including one that helps fund the development of community resilience centers.
- The [Community Reinvestment Act](#) (CRA) encourages financial institutions to "meet the credit needs" (i.e., make loans) in low- and moderate-income communities.
- Explore brownfield restoration or site cleanup loans and grants such as the [Cleanup Loans and Environmental Assistance to Neighborhoods \(CLEAN\) Program and Investigating Site Contamination Program \(ISCP\)](#).



Marysville Boulevard at Grand Avenue is an active thoroughfare.

Hub in the Heights

Although the panel focused much of its attention on the near-term development and resilience potential of Grand Gathering, the panelists also addressed the future development of the multifamily and mixed-use Hub in the Heights project and shared the following recommendations:

- **Target quick successes** that will catch the attention of investors and lenders who want to replicate that work and benefit from those successes.
- **Focus on creating smaller housing units**—studios, one-bedrooms, and micro units—that a “workforce” demographic

will find appealing. This group might include young people, single residents, and empty-nesters who want to remain in the community and are ready for a smaller home.

- **Include housing for a mix of incomes**, e.g., 30-80 percent of the area median income (AMI) with 30-65 percent AMI being current. Include a mix of uses will bring in tax revenue for the City.
- **Invest in high-quality R-value insulation** and mechanical systems that will reduce operating expenses in the long term.
- **Leverage a street-level community and leasing office space**, if required, within the pedestrian-oriented commercial

space as a means to activate the sidewalk in the early days.

- **Celebrate and highlight the economic opportunities** in this area, including its proximity to the airport, highways, downtown, etc. These messages should go to investors in the near term and future residents as the development unfolds.
- **Partner with others to leverage resources**, gain additional development expertise, and expand networks, and potentially secure additional funding. The Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC) Program could be a good resource as this project will locate affordable housing close to transit resources.

Case Study MacArthur Annex, Oakland, California

Completed in 2016, Macarthur Annex is a sustainably-built, solar-powered adaptive reuse and new construction project that



includes a mix of commercial, community, entertainment, hospitality, office, and retail spaces. Baran Studio Architecture used 33 shipping containers to create a three story mixed-use environment that features maker spaces and a community pizza and beer garden at a busy intersection in Oakland. The complex houses 24 private studios and offices and three street-facing retail spaces. The commercial spaces are offered at affordable rates and the proximity to public transit holds additional appeal to Annex tenants.



<https://www.architectmagazine.com/project-gallery/macarthur-annex>



Strengthening Capacity

For many nonprofits, a great deal of time and effort is directed toward communicating who the nonprofit is and what services it offers. GSUL is already well known across the community and benefits from both high visibility and deep community trust. With this foundation, there are several additional steps the organization can take to further strengthen its organizational and staff capacity to serve the community in deeper and, in the case of resilience, expanded ways.

Lean into existing strengths. GSUL is recognized as a trusted community resource, a steadfast organizational partner, and an organization that is firmly and deeply committed to underserved and particularly Black and Brown communities. As it considers its ability to provide resilience resources, GSUL is encouraged to lean on its existing strengths and add resilience measures where they align with those well-known services. An example of this might include the addition of clean energy workforce development resources and training to the roster of existing GSUL workforce resources.

Partner for impact. There is no lack of need across the community nor lack of work to be done. Understanding the ecosystem of existing services and aligned organizations can help GSUL identify potential partnerships and opportunities for combined efforts. It will also help avoid duplication of existing efforts, which is particularly important for nonprofits operating on tight budgets.

Grow relationships. In addition to partnering for impact and programming, GSUL should consider how it can grow other relationships, be that within the public sector and across City departments, with private sector consultants and developers who may be interested in working with GSUL, or with philanthropic friends who may be interested in supporting the work. Relationships can also be supportive, helping elevate resilience efforts, spreading the news of resources, or supporting community pride.

Shape a governance structure. Resilience hubs are generally operated by a consortium of organizations, each providing a unique resource or service to the hub. With a variety of organizations involved, a formal governance structure will be needed to ensure smooth and effective ongoing operations. GSUL may wish to lead that governance effort or it may find a partner who is willing, able, and equipped to take on the responsibility.

Stay connected to ULI. ULI is well-known for its depth of resources, including an excellent real estate development course, which might be particularly helpful for the GSUL staff who will be leading development efforts. Additional learning opportunities, grant opportunities, and helpful networking and relationships are also available through local and national ULI channels.





Next Steps

As the Greater Sacramento Urban League considers its role in building a community resilience center, gathering space, commercial assets, and housing, the panel outlined the following early steps to support a practical path forward.

Reset for today's reality. When GSUL originally conceived of Grand Gathering, federal support (grants and programming) was available to help bring a project like this to life. Today, those funding streams are on pause or are being eliminated. The circumstances have changed, but part of being resilient is being adaptable. This will likely require GSUL to reconsider the scope of its plans and adjust timing further out into the future, allowing additional time to raise funds elsewhere.

Clarify the vision. Take time to consider the panel's recommendations in light of today's market realities. Resilience resources are needed in Del Paso Heights, and GSUL now has an exciting partner in the effort through SMUD's resilience investments at Grand Union High School. With these developments, GSUL is encouraged to spend time refining its vision to align with and leverage these and other resources to the community's benefit.

Build momentum. There are early steps GSUL can take to build a community asset and gathering spot, even if it is not the fully realized vision initially scoped for Grand Gathering. Take time to think through the various program elements, determine what elements can still be delivered, refine the

vision as needed, and identify those potential early improvements that can catalyze impact and build confidence and support from the community and current and future partners.

Phase the plan. Phasing the project can provide GSUL with the time needed to bring additional partners along. It can also provide the community with early, if smaller, assets while planning and development work continues on other later items.

- Start now with one phase on the unused vacant land. Create a space that invites the community in and provides early resilience resources (and previews the larger resilience hub concept). Temporary uses, in the form of food trucks and farmers' markets, can help create activity on the site while also providing welcome retail in the neighborhood.
- Later, move on to a multi-phased approach that refines the Grand Gathering plaza from Phase One, more fully activating the open space and integrating the renovated and repositioned retail building as a function of Phase Two.

Leverage partnerships and assets. As a trusted Sacramento institution, GSUL has developed an impressive roster of partners and supporters. This vision for Grand Gathering and Hub in the Heights will benefit from an all-hands approach, bringing in partners in every manner possible, to realize the real estate developments, fill the commercial spaces, market the housing

units, and deliver the range of resilience resources that GSUL has identified as being most beneficial to the community. Similarly, the assets at hand—the infill parcels, the proximity to transportation resources, and the City's support of the efforts—are impressive and should be put to work for the good of the vision.

GSUL has set forth an ambitious plan that puts the community's health, safety, and well-being firmly in its sights. The determination that the organization and its staff have demonstrated over the years is commendable and will be critical in the years yet to come. This is challenging work, even in the best of times. It will be even more challenging—and an even greater necessity—in the months and years ahead. Keep going!



Appendix:

Resilience and Resilience Hubs

*Information provided by TAP Panelist Rob Bennett, Senior Advisor,
Partnership for Southern Equity and Just Communities*

What is a Resiliency Hub?

A Resiliency Hub is a designated facility or location designed to help communities prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters or emergencies. These hubs serve as centralized points for resources, services, and support during crises.

Key components of a Resiliency Hub typically include:

1. Emergency supplies such as food, water, first aid kits, and backup power sources
2. Communication systems that can function during power outages
3. Community gathering spaces for coordination and information sharing
4. Technical assistance and training for disaster preparedness
5. Climate adaptation resources to help communities deal with extreme weather events

Resiliency Hubs often operate at the neighborhood level and are frequently housed in existing community centers, schools, libraries, or places of worship. They are designed to be self-sufficient for short periods and provide critical services when normal infrastructure is compromised.

The concept has gained popularity as communities face increasing challenges from climate change, natural disasters, and other emergencies. Resiliency Hubs are particularly valuable in vulnerable or underserved areas where resources might otherwise be limited during crises.

Programming Provided

Resiliency hubs provide a diverse range of programming that serves communities both during emergencies and in everyday life:

During emergencies:

- Emergency shelter and temporary housing
- Distribution of food, water, and essential supplies
- Backup power for charging devices and medical equipment
- First aid and basic medical services
- Communication centers when normal systems are down
- Coordination of evacuation and rescue efforts

During normal operations:

- Community disaster preparedness training
- First aid and CPR certification courses
- Emergency planning workshops for families
- Climate resilience education
- Food storage and preservation classes
- Home weatherization and energy efficiency workshops

Year-round community services:

- Community gardens and food security programs
- Workforce development and job training

- Financial literacy and emergency savings programs
- Tool libraries and repair cafés
- Social and cultural events to build community connections
- Youth programs focused on leadership and resilience skills

Infrastructure support:

- Renewable energy demonstrations
- Water conservation and rainwater harvesting
- Cooling centers during extreme heat events
- Air quality monitoring and protection

Many hubs tailor their programming to address specific local vulnerabilities, whether that is flooding, extreme heat, wildfires, or social challenges. The most effective hubs integrate emergency preparedness with everyday community needs, making them valuable community assets even when no disaster is occurring.

Key Design Considerations

When designing resiliency hubs, several critical factors should be considered:

Physical infrastructure

- Location accessibility: positioned within walking distance for community members, particularly vulnerable populations
- Structural resilience: built to withstand local hazards (floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, etc.)

- Backup power systems: solar + battery storage, generators, or other redundant power sources
- Water systems: potable water storage, rainwater harvesting, and water purification capabilities
- Climate control: passive cooling/heating design with mechanical backup systems
- Communication infrastructure: multiple redundant systems (radio, satellite, mesh networks)
- Flexible spaces: reconfigurable areas that can adapt to different emergency needs

Operational features

- Storage capacity: secure, climate-controlled storage for emergency supplies
- Security measures: to protect resources during both normal times and emergencies
- Multiple entry/exit points: for safety and efficient people flow
- Indoor and outdoor functional spaces: different activities require different environments
- Accessibility features: ADA compliance and accommodations for people with various needs

Community considerations

- Cultural relevance: design that respects and reflects the local community identity
- Dual-purpose functionality: spaces that serve day-to-day community needs and emergency functions

- Scalability: ability to expand services during emergencies
- Visibility and wayfinding: clear signage and community awareness of the hub's location
- Community input: design processes that incorporate local knowledge and preferences

Sustainability aspects

- Energy efficiency: minimizing operational costs and environmental impact
- Renewable energy integration: solar, wind, or other clean energy sources
- Waste management systems: composting, recycling, and waste reduction
- Green infrastructure: rain gardens, permeable surfaces, and natural cooling

Technology integration

- Data collection and management: systems to track resource usage and community needs
- Digital connectivity: public Wi-Fi and computer access
- Smart building systems: energy management and environmental monitoring

Who Runs Resiliency Hubs?

The most effective resiliency hubs balance immediate emergency response capabilities with long-term community benefits, creating spaces that strengthen community resilience every day, not just during disasters.

Resiliency hubs are typically run through various management models, depending on the community and available resources:

1. Community organizations and nonprofits often take the lead in establishing and managing resiliency hubs. These might include:
 - Neighborhood associations
 - Faith-based organizations
 - Community development corporations
 - Environmental justice groups
2. Local governments may establish resiliency hubs through:
 - Emergency management departments
 - City sustainability offices
 - Public health departments
3. Public-private partnerships are common, with:
 - Government providing funding and policy support
 - Nonprofits managing day-to-day operations
 - Businesses contributing resources or expertise
4. Multi-stakeholder coalitions where responsibility is shared between community members, local officials, and institutions

The most effective resiliency hubs typically have strong community involvement in their governance, with local residents participating

in decision-making and operations. This ensures the hub addresses the specific needs of the community it serves.

Some communities have designated hub coordinators or managers who oversee operations, maintain resources, and coordinate volunteers, particularly during emergency events.

Funding for Resiliency Hubs

Resiliency hubs receive funding through several channels:

1. Government funding
 - Federal grants from FEMA, HUD, or EPA
 - State-level disaster preparedness funds
 - Local government budget allocations
 - Special municipal resilience bonds
2. Foundation support
 - Community foundations
 - Climate-focused philanthropic organizations
 - Disaster relief foundations
3. Private sector contributions
 - Corporate social responsibility programs
 - Utility company partnerships
 - Insurance company investments (which can reduce their disaster payouts)

4. Community-based funding
 - Crowdfunding campaigns
 - Membership models
 - Local business sponsorships
 - In-kind donations of supplies or services
5. Multi-source funding models
 - Public-private partnerships
 - Matching grant programs
 - Cost-sharing agreements between multiple stakeholders

Many successful resiliency hubs use a combination of these funding sources to ensure sustainability. Initial setup costs might come from grants or one-time allocations, while ongoing operations are maintained through recurring funding sources. Some hubs also generate revenue through community services or training programs offered during non-emergency periods.

The funding model often depends on the hub's scale, location, and specific community needs.

Community Engagement: Building a Neighborhood Resiliency Hub

Community Needs Assessment

- What specific hazards or disasters has your community experienced in the past?
- What resources were most difficult to access during previous emergencies?

- Which vulnerable populations in your community need special consideration (elderly, disabled, non-English speakers, etc.)?
- What existing community spaces could potentially serve as a resiliency hub?
- What times of year is your community most vulnerable to disruptions?

Resource Prioritization

- What services or resources would be most valuable to have available during emergencies?
- What everyday services would make a resilience hub valuable to the community between emergencies?
- Which local skills and assets already exist that could be leveraged in emergency situations?
- What training programs would be most beneficial to community members?
- What communication methods work best to reach everyone in your community during emergencies?

Operational Questions

- Who are trusted community leaders who could help manage or coordinate the hub?
- What hours of operation would make the hub most accessible to community members?
- What transportation challenges might prevent people from accessing the hub?
- How can we ensure the hub is welcoming and accessible to all community members?

- What languages need to be accommodated in hub communications and signage?

Design and Location

- What existing gathering places already serve as informal community hubs?
- What physical features would make the hub feel welcoming and culturally appropriate?
- Are there specific locations that would be safer during common local hazards?
- What design elements would make the space functional for both emergency and everyday use?
- What aesthetic or cultural elements should be incorporated to reflect community identity?

Sustainability and Governance

- What local organizations could be partners in operating the hub?
- How would community members like to be involved in hub decision-making?
- What funding mechanisms would be sustainable for long-term operations?
- How can we measure the hub's success and impact on community resilience?
- What would make community members feel ownership over the hub?

Historical Context

- What past emergency response efforts worked well or poorly in this community?
- Are there historical issues of trust between the community and institutions that need to be addressed?

- What cultural traditions or practices should be honored in the hub's design and operations?
- How have community members traditionally supported each other during difficult times?

Key Equity Considerations

When developing a resilience hub, several equity considerations are essential to address:

1. Inclusive planning process: ensure diverse voices, particularly from historically marginalized communities, are central to all planning stages. This means not just inviting participation but creating accessible methods for meaningful engagement (varying meeting times, offering childcare, providing language interpretation).
2. Location selection: prioritize neighborhoods with the highest vulnerability and lowest resources, which often correlates with communities of color due to historical disinvestment and environmental racism.
3. Cultural relevance: design programming, communication strategies, and physical spaces that reflect and respect the cultural identities of the communities being served.
4. Leadership development: create pathways for local community members, especially people of color, to move into leadership positions within the hub's governance structure.
5. Trauma-informed approach: recognize that communities may have experienced trauma from previous disasters, government interactions, or systemic racism that affects their engagement with resilience initiatives.
6. Language accessibility: ensure all communications, signage, and services are available in the primary languages spoken in the community.
7. Economic opportunities: create workforce development and contracting opportunities that benefit local minority-owned businesses and residents during both construction and ongoing operations.
8. Technology access: address the digital divide by providing both high and low-tech solutions for emergency communications and service access.
9. Health equity focus: recognize and address the disproportionate health impacts of disasters on communities of color through appropriate services and partnerships.
10. Accountability measures: establish specific metrics to track whether the hub is effectively serving all community members and addressing disparities in outcomes.
11. Recognizing historical context: acknowledge past harms like redlining, urban renewal, and discriminatory emergency response that have created existing vulnerabilities in communities of color.

Key Governance Considerations

When developing resilience hubs, several key governance considerations need to be addressed:

1. Multi-stakeholder collaboration: Establish clear frameworks for coordination between local government, community organizations, businesses, and residents. Define roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes.
2. Sustainable funding mechanisms: Develop diversified funding streams including public budgets, grants, private partnerships, and community contributions to ensure long-term viability.
3. Inclusive leadership structure: Create governance bodies that represent the community's diversity, with special attention to including historically marginalized populations.
4. Transparent decision-making: Implement processes that allow community members to participate meaningfully in planning, operations, and evaluation.
5. Regulatory alignment: Ensure the hub's activities comply with local regulations while identifying policy barriers that may need modification.
6. Accountability frameworks: Establish clear metrics and reporting mechanisms to track performance and community impact.
7. Adaptive management: Design governance structures that can evolve based on changing community needs and lessons learned.
8. Knowledge management: Create systems to document institutional knowledge and facilitate smooth leadership transitions.
9. Emergency authority protocols: Define decision-making authority during crisis situations, balancing the need for rapid response with community input.
10. Cross-jurisdictional coordination: Establish relationships with neighboring communities and regional authorities for mutual aid and resource sharing.

Example Hubs

Several communities have developed resilience hubs that demonstrate best practices in different contexts:

CELO Hub Network, San Francisco, CA The Community Emerging Leadership Opportunity (CELO) network operates five interconnected hubs in vulnerable neighborhoods, featuring solar microgrids with battery storage, community gardens, and multilingual emergency communication systems. Their governance model includes neighborhood councils with dedicated seats for youth, seniors, and historically marginalized groups.

Eastside Community Network, Detroit, MI. This network transformed vacant buildings into resilience centers that operate

year-round for community programming while serving as emergency response centers during crises. They've pioneered a sustainable funding model blending municipal support, foundation grants, and social enterprise revenue streams.

Rockaway Initiative for Sustainability and Equity (RISE), Queens, NY. Developed after Hurricane Sandy, RISE centers provide workforce development, climate education, and emergency services. Their data-driven approach tracks both social and physical resilience metrics, and they've established clear protocols for transitioning from everyday operations to emergency response.

Boulder County Resilience Collaborative, CO. This rural/suburban network connects distributed hubs with varying capacities through a unified governance structure. They excel at coordinating evacuation protocols during wildfires while maintaining community services during periods of extreme weather and power outages.

Blue Lake Rancheria Tribe, CA. This tribal resilience hub demonstrates excellence in energy independence with a sophisticated microgrid system that has maintained critical services during multiple regional power shutoffs. Their governance model successfully integrates traditional tribal decision-making processes with contemporary emergency management frameworks.



About the Panel



Michelle Malanca Frey

Panel Chair

Principal
Michelle Malanca Frey
Consulting



Michelle is strategic advisor to mission-driven organizations and leaders, helping them to connect their mission, strategy, and people. From mission clarification and strategy development to implementation planning, engagement, and consensus building, she collaborates with those creating a better world to fulfill their ambitions. Michelle has two decades of leadership experience in environmental and urban sustainability globally and has directed numerous pioneering initiatives to transform the built environment.

Previously, she was the Executive Director of the Urban Land Institute San Francisco, where she launched and led Housing the Bay, an initiative bringing together public, private, labor, and community organizations to foster equitable solutions to the Bay Area's housing shortage. During her tenure, Michelle served on the Executive Steering Committee of the Mayor of San Francisco's Zero Emission Building Task Force and was a recipient of the Northern California Real Estate Woman of Influence Award from the San Francisco Business Times.

Rob Bennett

Senior Advisor
Partnership for
Southern Equity and
Just Communities

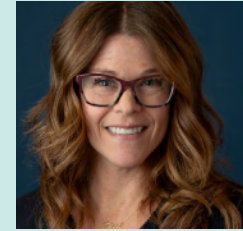


Rob is a senior advisor to the Partnership for Southern Equity and the founder and former CEO of EcoDistricts and Portland Sustainability Institute. With over 30 years of experience, he is a recognized leader in the sustainable and equitable cities movement, specializing in municipal sustainable development projects, standards, and policies at the intersection of green and equitable urban design, planning, and development.

Before founding EcoDistricts, Rob established the Portland Sustainability Institute (PoSI), a mayoral think tank dedicated to accelerating sustainability policy and project innovation in Portland. His career also includes work with the Clinton Foundation, where he supported climate action initiatives across North America, and with the cities of Portland, Oregon and Vancouver, Canada. In these roles, he developed green development market transformation initiatives, including catalytic projects such as Lloyd Crossing (now the Lloyd EcoDistrict in Portland), Brewery Blocks (Portland), South Waterfront (Portland), and the 2010 Olympic Village (Vancouver).

Shiloh L. Costello

Manager, DEIB
& Sustainable
Communities
SMUD



Shiloh Costello serves as SMUD's Manager of DEIB & Sustainable Communities ensuring an inclusive and equity clean energy transition for the Sacramento region. Shiloh joined SMUD in 2019 with over 25 years of nonprofit executive leadership experience. Having worked in the grocery industry, social services, and California's largest system of higher education, she has dedicated her career serving the uniquely diverse communities of Sacramento.

Shiloh serves as the Chair of the board of directors for Habitat for Humanity, Greater Sacramento, a Sacramento-based nonprofit organization dedicated to eliminating substandard housing locally through constructing, rehabilitating, and preserving homes.

Kevin Hydes
Chair and Founder
Integral Group

With over 30 years of experience as an engineer, Kevin Hydes has spent the past 20 years focusing on green design and advancing its cause. He is internationally renowned as a leader in sustainable design, and for his contributions to the green building movement for which he was recognized with a USGBC Leadership Award in 2019. He was also deemed a Freeman of the City of London in 2019, and an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Institute of Canada in 2020.

As Integral Group's founder and first CEO and President, Kevin established a reputation as an innovator, pioneer, and green business leader, growing the firm to more than 800 employees across 21 offices.



Brendan McEneaney
Senior Vice President
JLL

Brendan leads client solutions for JLL's sustainability work with commercial real estate investors. He has more than 20 years of experience in built environment sustainability across public, private, and nonprofit sectors. Prior to joining JLL, Brendan led consulting work at Integral Group, the global leader in Net Zero Energy design engineering. Previously, Brendan held leadership positions with the US Green Building Council and the Urban Land Institute, developing programs on climate adaptation, healthy buildings, and decarbonization. Earlier in his career, Brendan led the Green Building Program at the City of Santa Monica. There he developed one of the first green building codes that became the basis for the statewide green building code that is used today.



Rochelle Mills
President & CEO
Innovative Housing
Opportunities

Rochelle is President and CEO of Innovative Housing Opportunities (IHO) where she is responsible for implementing the nonprofit's vision and expanding its portfolio of high-quality affordable housing. Since joining IHO, she has helped multiply the organization's assets and footprint from a single-asset entity to an award-winning developer with projects throughout Southern California. She has guided the organization to living its values and positioned IHO's small and culturally diverse team to compete, and win, with peers many times their size and balance sheet. Prior to joining IHO, Rochelle and her husband founded mills studio where their high-end designs were featured on FineLiving, Homes Across America, and other national print media. Rochelle also founded architours, a boutique art and architecture tour, and symposia company that was recognized internationally.



Ellen Mitchell AIA,
LEED AP BD+C, WELL AP
Director of
Sustainability + Applied
Research Principal
LPA



Ellen is a recognized leader in the industry's move to create more energy efficient, equitable, and resilient built environment. Ellen guides the LPA Sustainability and Applied Research team, focused on developing actionable research to support the firm's informed design process. She also leads initiatives across the firm to advance sustainability and high-performance design, building a culture of education, accountability, and innovation.

A trained and licensed architect, Ellen has spent the overwhelming majority of her career focused on integrating sustainability and high-performance design, achieving results across a diverse range of project types, budgets and cultures. She has overseen more than \$4 billion worth of construction through LEED and other third-party certifications. On every project, Ellen advocates for a holistic approach to sustainability, focused on performance, experience, wellness, and community.

Jes Stevens
Senior Associate
Economic & Planning
Systems



Jes is an urban economist and planner passionate about fostering economic growth and equitable development. He finds value and is proficient in using quantitative and qualitative data to help both public and private clients make critical decisions about their communities. Jes uses his technical background in demographic and spatial analysis in various EPS practice areas with a special interest in real estate economics, parks and open space economics, and public finance projects. Jes joined EPS in 2022 after working for place-based community development organizations in St. Louis, MO.