

South Central X South Central

Development By Us, For Us

30 YEARS
COMMUNITY COALITION
people. power. progress.
OF STEPPING UP FOR SOUTH LA

ISSUE # 1

www.cocosouthla.org

A COMMUNITY COALITION PUBLICATION



Community Coalition's South Central by South Central Community Leaders Alexis Faulknor and Lupita Martinez #StepUp for South LA Cafe's Grand Opening!

By Us, For Us

Development for us, by us. Our neighborhoods, our voices in the decision making. Those guiding principles are at the core of Community Coalition's South Central by South Central's (SCxSC) organizing campaign.

For too long, development in South Los Angeles has been driven by the ethos of maximizing profit for people who do not look like us or live in our community. The built landscape has not been about creating spaces and places that benefit Black and Brown residents. As a result, South LA community members do not have enough grocery stores, broad access to organic produce, thriving small businesses, affordable housing, medical services, and places to eat, drink, shop, and socialize. This disinvestment has led to an overabundance of liquor stores, marijuana dispensaries, smoke shops, and empty lots as well as a disproportionate amount of recycling centers and toxic waste sites.

The story behind this urban blight is one of racism and greed. In the 1980s, corporations moved over 150 manufacturing plants and thousands of jobs out of South LA to other countries for cheaper labor costs. At the same time, the Reagan Administration dismantled the social safety net, severely undercutting services and economic stability in South Los Angeles. This disinvestment led to crippling losses in economic, social, health and educational outcomes for Black and Brown residents.

Making things worse was, and is, the lack of development opportunities in the area. In many cases, greedy property owners and wealthy real estate developers, who do not reside in the community, have sat on vacant parcels for decades receiving tax breaks while waiting for favorable real estate conditions and high-profit margins. Meanwhile, low-income residents become victims of homelessness or are forced to move to outlying areas due to exorbitant rents. That's not right.

The demands being made by the resident leaders and organizers of the South Central by South Central campaign are simple:

- We believe that community members have a right to be at the table and be involved in the decision-



SCxSC organizers and CoCo staffers smile for the camera with Joe and Celia Ward-Wallace.

making process when it comes to land use in our neighborhoods.

- We want the opportunity for local hire on large development projects which produce quality jobs and good wages.
- And, we demand that projects contribute to the overall aesthetic of the area and improve the quality of life such that South LA is transformed into the safe and healthy community we deserve.

If we want to see a different South LA, we have to demand a new path forward--one that is forged by us and for us.

The businesses profiled in this publication are success stories of community-driven development models—by us and for us. These enterprises are Black and Brown owned. They hire locally, like South LA Cafe. They provide healthy food at reasonable prices, like Hank's Mini Market and the Freedom Food Project. They honor our cultural history, like Delicious at the Dunbar. They offer healthy outlets for us to work through stress and trauma, like the yoga studio at The Tree South LA.

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Community Coalition (CoCo) has officially been selected as a Great Streets Awardee. This accomplishment comes with \$500,000 to begin transforming the Vermont/Manchester empty lot into the People's Plaza. It also includes an additional \$12,000 to conduct community outreach for the next four months to finalize the concept and design. The Great Streets Challenge is a program of Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti's Great Streets Initiative. The goal of the program is to envision, collaborate on, and build transformative street infrastructure projects. The Great Streets Challenge aims to:

- Build strong partnerships between communities and the City of Los Angeles.
- Empower communities to develop a vision that transforms neighborhood corridors.
- Design streets with a community's vision of how to improve neighborhoods for all people.
- Implement projects that transform streets into safe, accessible, and vibrant public spaces.

When CoCo accepted the Great Streets Challenge, its focus was on executing a project that will ultimately uplift the leadership of South LA community members to change their communities for the better. The primary goals of the project were to engage Vermont-Manchester community stakeholders and South LA residents to conceptualize and lead a process that results in changing the landscape to reflect those who live there. Just as important as addressing the material conditions of the site was the need to reflect the rich legacy of culture, advancement, and success of Black and Latinx residents in jeopardy of displacement.

"We want to thank everyone who supported the Great Streets process in the last six months. But most importantly, major shoutout to the South Central by South Central community organizers who led us to this win, which demonstrates how it can look when development is community-driven. We are ready to continue ensuring that our South LA residents are the ones deciding how public and private developments should look when built in our community." Oscar Alvarez, Lead Organizer on the South Central by South Central Campaign.

Many of CoCo's core values and objectives align with the City's Great Streets Challenge. CoCo deployed a proactive, resident-led, and highly organized strategy for community outreach when applying for Great Streets. The outreach process, along with the Great Streets Challenge as a whole, provided CoCo the needed vehicle to galvanize disenchanted community residents to participate in an active and meaningful project that will have immediate implications for their community.



**Community Coalition
organizer Jerome Pitts
at the grand opening
of South LA Cafe.**

For 30 years, Community Coalition has known that land use and economic development are inextricably linked processes that expose the layered realities and complexities of political, social and economic decision-making within local economies. In the best-case scenario, the local community has the ability to weigh in on how local economies are constructed close to their homes, schools and within their neighborhoods. However, more often than not, these local economies are guided by business plans that seek to maximize profit, with a mere afterthought to community impact.

Mercado La Paloma

The idea for Mercado La Paloma was born in 1999 in response to suggestions from residents involved with the Esperanza Housing Corporation to create a local version of the bustling markets they left behind in their home countries.

Esperanza Community Housing Corporation is a social justice non-profit in South Central Los Angeles that achieves long-term, comprehensive community development. Mercado La Paloma was an experiment in community revitalization that provides opportunities for residents and showcases local creativity to the broader Los Angeles community. Esperanza found an empty garment factory and converted it into a vibrant market and community gathering space that hosts 14 small businesses and provides 200 jobs for South LA residents. The companies include restaurants, artisan crafts kiosks, alteration and tailoring services, sporting goods, and insurance and income tax preparation services.

Located in the Figueroa Corridor of South LA, the area has historically suffered from disinvestment, including a lack of jobs and business opportunities, safe gathering spaces, organic food, and cultural opportunities. At Mercado La Paloma, the community's spirit, cultural traditions and pride are on full display. This social enterprise co-op showcases a neighborhood that is full of talented musicians, artists, and hard-working entrepreneurs.

As part of its mission, Esperanza works collaboratively to strengthen South Los Angeles and builds hope with the community. Mercado La Paloma is an excellent model of that mission.



**Address: 3655 S. Grand Ave
Los Angeles, CA 90007**

HOURS:

**Monday- Wednesday-Thursday
8 AM-9 PM
Friday
8 AM- 11 PM
Sunday
8 AM - 6 PM**

www.mercadolapaloma.com



Delicious at the Dunbar

The Dunbar Hotel is in the fabric of South LA, going back almost a century. It was built and financed by Black entrepreneurs to host the first West Coast convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1928. That convention was a sign of what was to come as the Dunbar became a gathering place for intellectuals, artists, and community leaders.

In the Jazz Era of the 1920s and 1930s, Black jazz artists were not allowed to stay in the Beverly Hills and Hollywood hotels at which they performed. The Dunbar filled that need and hosted some of the very best including Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, and Count Basie. The revered Langston Hughes and W.E.B. Du Bois were just two of the many intellectuals and writers that spent time at the Dunbar.

Its significance can be felt to this day, especially in the context of the changing demographics of South Los Angeles and Black displacement—highlighting the dire need for Black and Brown unity. The Dunbar valiantly showcases that history in a variety of ways. There are ongoing jazz nights and murals of the famous Black jazz artists who have performed and stayed there. Additionally, Delicious at the Dunbar's food is a fusion of Soul Food and Mexican cuisine, a clear nod to Black and Brown unity.

Vidal Cortes, the executive chef, started his career in LA at the historic Boulevard Café where Jesse Jackson and Rodney King would meet to discuss current events. He says that is where he learned a meal was more than just putting food on the table. That learned lesson adds a special flavor to the “delicious” menu at the Dunbar.

**Address: 4229 Central Ave
Los Angeles, CA 90011**

HOURS:

Monday- Wednesday-Thursday

8 AM-9 PM

Closed Tuesday

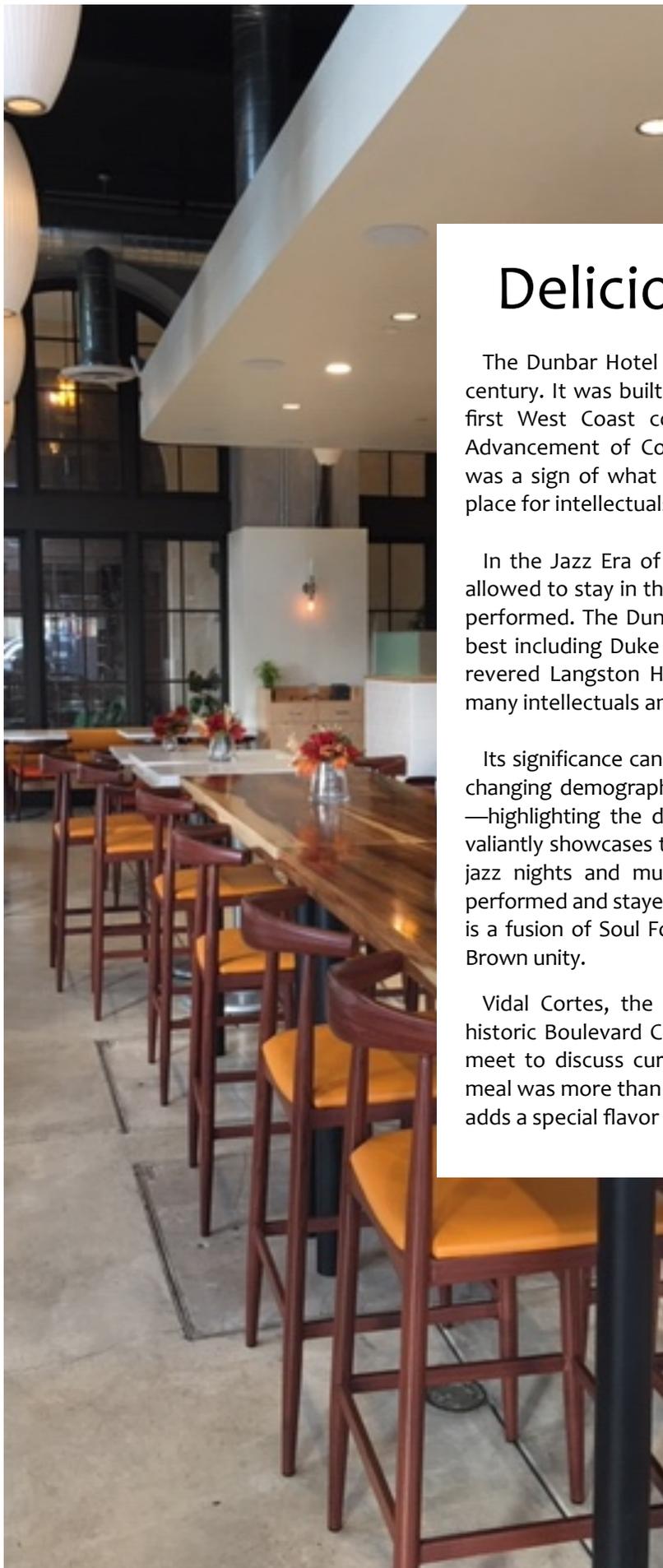
Friday

8 AM- 11 PM

Sunday

8 AM - 6 PM

www.deliciousatthedunbar.com





Sonya Blake, from the Mayor's Office, presents South LA Cafe's owners with an award of recognition from Mayor Eric Garcetti.



SCxSC Community Resident Leaders Jairi Sanchez and Zuriel Espinosa celebrate the South LA Cafe grand opening.



Joe and Celia Ward-Wallace are recognized by 8th District Councilmember Marqueece Harris-Dawson at their grand opening.



SCxSC Community Leader Kadmiel Mc Adoo capturing the excitement of the day during the South LA Cafe grand opening festivities.

South LA Cafe

A community gives its residents a sense of belonging. It makes them feel like they are part of something greater than themselves. Community provides meaning to everyday life as we travel in and out of our neighborhoods. Most importantly, community should be sustainable.

As long-term residents of South Central Los Angeles, Celia and Joe Ward-Wallace were very frustrated with the lack of economic and social investment in their community. Witnessing creeping gentrification in the Crenshaw District, this dynamic couple was concerned that the legacy of South Central as a vibrant and historically Black and Brown community would be erased. They decided to open South LA Cafe to prove that communities of color do not need corporations or outside interests to build aesthetically pleasing and affirming businesses.

“The culture, the food, and the people are being displaced and replaced by people and developers from outside the neighborhood—which only exacerbates the fact that large areas in South Los Angeles are food deserts. Residents have to go outside of our neighborhoods for healthy food options and nice places gather,” said Celia recently.

“We wanted to invest locally, five blocks from our home, and become stakeholders and culture keepers for the legacy and future of our Black and Brown community,” Joe explained.

South LA Cafe ... Continued from Page 6

The fact that the Ward-Wallaces live in and have invested in South Central LA is significant. The impact of South L.A. Cafe was immediately felt throughout the city as friends and neighbors spread the word about the new, coffee house. Press outlets took notice too, and there was widespread buzz across social media platforms during South LA Cafe's soft opening that began in late November of 2019. Located at 3991 S. Western Avenue, South LA Cafe's business model changes the development narrative in South Central in several ways.

Many business owners profit from South Los Angeles, but do not reside in the areas in which they do business. The Ward-Wallaces are proud to break that mold.

"This is a minority-owned, family business, and we believe that the local community will support us. We exist for them, and because of them. We are not opportunists from outside of the neighborhood who are here to capitalize on the community. We serve the community and want to fill a much-needed void," Celia continued.

Another intentional nuance of this community coffee klatch is that it is also investing in the people who make up this culturally significant community.

"We hire locally and make it a point to employ previously incarcerated folks. We are committed to economic investment within South LA and desire to reinvest the revenue into the people who live here. We

also are committed to hiring people based on the content of their character and their commitment to the community, not based on their work experience or professional achievements," said Joe.

Deeply committed to its social justice mission, which is the base of their business model, Joe and Celia desire to highlight the work that existing leaders and community members are already doing.

Witnessing creeping gentrification in the Crenshaw District, this dynamic couple was concerned that the legacy of South Central as a vibrant and historically black and brown community would be erased.

"We wanted to create a safe space, for the people, by the people. We want our customers to feel welcome and know that this is a space for them, by them. We want them to feel seen, heard, valued, and loved. We want them to see themselves in every inch of this space, and know that it was created with them in mind," Celia Ward-Wallace.

Expanding on their very successful grand opening on December 8, 2019, the future looks bright for the new business enterprise. South LA Cafe looks forward to serving up excellent coffee, food, and a variety of events that promote artistic expression, health, and wellness. To learn more about South LA Cafe and its activities, visit www.southlacafe.com or follow them @southlacafe on Instagram.

By Us, For Us ... Continued from page 2

This kind of intentional community development stands for more than just making a profit. These business owners have a deep commitment to the community and its residents. They also provide community-gathering spaces, pop-up libraries, art installations, and workshops that nourish the spiritual needs of their patrons.

You can support the South Central by South Central campaign in several ways:

- Join our organizing meetings at Community Coalition to be part of the change you would like to see. The SC by SC campaign meets on the third Wednesday of every month at Community Coalition.
- Shop at the businesses featured in this magazine as well as other Black and Brown-owned businesses in South LA.
- Contact CoCo about businesses you want to see in our neighborhoods by emailing us at info@cocosouthla.org.
- Lastly, be an ambassador for SC by SC by talking with your family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers about the importance of supporting community-owned businesses.

By doing these things, we keep our dollars in our community and lay the foundation to replicate this development model. If we want to see a different South LA, we have to demand a new path forward—one that is forged by us and for us.

HANK'S MINI MARKET

Hank's Mini-Market

Healthy food options. A pop up library with Black and Brown literature. Free nutritional workshops. A community space for community members to work. And art installations, including a mural featuring the late and great Nipsey Hussle. That's what Hank's Mini Market brings to South LA. A family owned business for the past 22 years, the management torch has now been passed from father, Hank Jackson, to daughter, Kelli Jackson.

Hank Jackson became well known in the community for how he actually got to know his customers—their names, stories, and lives. It helped Hank's become a staple in South LA. That person-to-person relationship building is still intact, but now Kelli, who comes from a public art background, has placed her stamp on the community market and transformed it from being just a liquor and convenience store into a much-needed community asset.

"I wasn't seeing businesses invest in the area. We see a lot of fast-food chains and 7-Elevens, but no safe spaces for the kids, no access to healthy food," Jackson says. "I wanted to continue my dad's legacy, but incorporate more of who I am by using art and food to inspire and uplift the community. I realized, to make my own impact, I needed to create a bright spot to bridge the lack of safe spaces, art, and healthy food options."

Hank's Mini Market is a trend setter. It provides a warm, inviting space for residents to connect and explore literature and art in an area lacking libraries, parks, or museums. Its profitability serves as an example for liquor store owners who are skeptical of making the switch from stocking and selling liquor to being part of the healthy alternatives business movement.



**Address: 3301 W Florence Ave
Los Angeles, CA 90043**

**HOURS:
Monday- Saturday
10AM-10PM
Sunday
10AM-9PM**

@hanksminimarket

The Village Market Place

The Village Market Place (VMP) was created as a social enterprise by Community Services Unlimited (CSU) in 2007. Their goal was to meet the growing demand for affordable, organic, culturally appropriate, and exploitation-free food in South LA. It is a produce-driven business that taps into local farmers at community farms, offering low-income folks the healthy options that are readily found in other neighborhoods. The Village Market Place Food Hub consists of South LA's first "Beyond Organic" produce market, The Village Market Place Store, the SoulFul Café, a commercial kitchen, and a developing urban farm. Each week, you can find community residents pulling up to buy fresh produce.

The Soulful Café offers delicious coffee, tea, herbal and fruit-based drinks, smoothies, juices and kombucha along with healthy sandwiches, salads, rice bowls and more. Located on the ground floor of the Paul Robeson Community Wellness Center, VMP goes above and beyond just selling food. It hires locally and offers a community space that community members can use and rent out for programming.

Additionally, shoppers can enroll in the VMP Produce Bag Program. Each week subscribers receive a bag filled with seasonal fruits, vegetables and herbs sourced from CSU's urban mini-farm and local farmers. Community Services Unlimited also offers free gardening and cooking classes, teen internships, yoga and capoeira classes, and assistance with CalFresh enrollment. You can get info on all their programs when visiting the market or by going to any of their social media platforms.

VMP accepts food stamps and all EBT shoppers receive a 50% discount on fresh produce.



**Address: 6569 S Vermont Ave
Los Angeles, CA 90044**

(213) 746-1216

HOURS:

**Tuesday - Friday
9:00am - 7:00pm**

**Saturday - Sunday
10:00am - 6:00pm**

www.csuinc.org

IG @csuinc & @vm pcsu Fb @csuinc.

The Tree South L.A Yoga & Meditation Foundation

The Tree South LA has been open since 2013, providing community members the opportunity to develop better health by practicing yoga, mindfulness, and restorative justice. Studies show that yoga can reduce stress, relieve anxiety and lessen inflammation.

Educating and training more than 100 yoga instructors of color, The Tree LA has planted seeds of wellness among residents in South Los Angeles which have taken root. By partnering with schools, health centers, libraries, housing and community centers that address homelessness, mental health, and rehabilitation, is able to offer community gardening education on horticulture and healthy eating. Donation based Yoga + Mindfulness classes are offered 7 days a week with diverse talented teachers that have definitely had a positive impact on community members.

“Love this place! Only one of its kind in the area ... no ridiculous monthly fees, just pay what you can. Suggested donation is \$5 to \$10, and it's been well worth my \$10 every time. All the instructors have that super-chill-yogi vibe—happy and vibrant. Great atmosphere all around,” said community member Johnny Ramos in an on-line review.

“I love this place,” Terri Miles also raved. “The vibe is nice and I always feel comfortable.”

**Address: 8227 S Western Ave,
Los Angeles, CA 90047**

HOURS:

Monday

9AM–8PM

Tuesday

11AM–9PM

Wednesday

12–9PM

Thursday

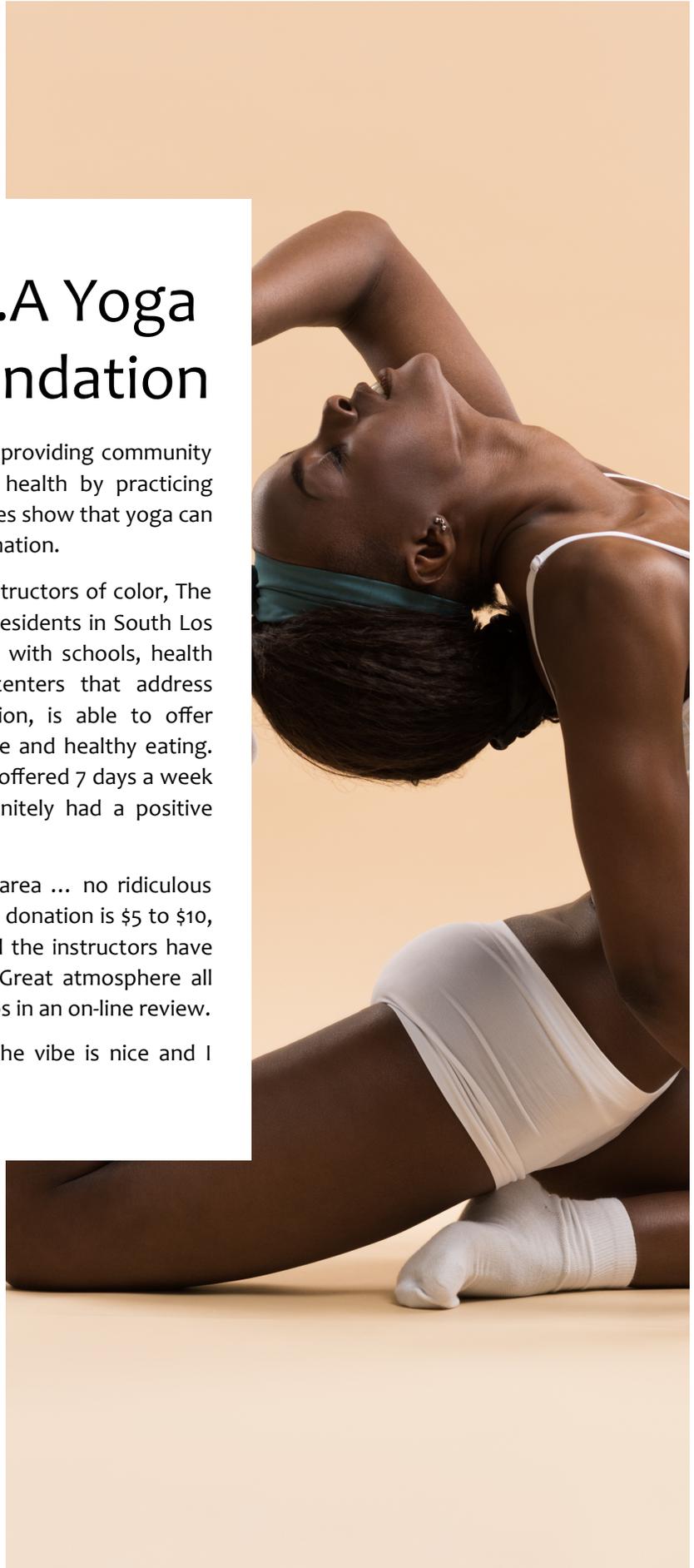
1–9PM

Friday and Saturday

8AM–2PM

Sunday

9AM–7PM





The Freedom Food Project

The Freedom Food Project (FFP) is a plant-based food justice organization founded by Paige Butler (pictured left) in 2017. What is food justice? Food justice helps communities exercise their right to grow, sell, and eat healthy food. Healthy food is fresh, nutritious, affordable, culturally-appropriate, and grown locally with care for the well-being of the land, workers, and animals. Practicing food justice leads to a strong local food system, self-reliant communities, and a healthier environment.

The goal of Freedom Food Project is to not only bring attention to the scarcity of healthy foods in South Los Angeles, but it is also to reverse the food inequities that plague communities of color by empowering people through educational programs and workshops that teach access to healthy food is a human right. The organization seeks to increase awareness and action around access to healthy affordable plant-based foods. The project also works to create thriving food systems in low-income communities that encourage food choices that reflect a more holistic society.

“Our organization’s mission is to find new strategies for improving the health of those living in low-income communities. Our Store Tours program does just that. Families are taken on guided grocery store tours with certified plant-based nutritionists that teach them how to shop plant-based on a budget as well how to navigate their local Ralphs, Kroger and Food4Less grocery store in order to make healthier more compassionate food choices for them and their families,” Butler explains.

FFP recently launched the Freedom Farmers' Market which facilitates food advocates and community members coming together collectively to empower and lead positive change in the health outcomes of South LA.

**Address: 5509 S Mullen Ave
Los Angeles CA 90043**

323-207-8506

info@freedomfoodproject.org

Step Up With Community Coalition As We Lead Reinvestment Efforts in South Los Angeles

For 30 years, Community Coalition has known that land use and economic development are inextricably linked processes that expose the layered realities and complexities of political, social and economic decision-making within local economies.

These processes are guided by multiple stakeholders with varying interests in owning, leasing, regulating, and ultimately profiting off of land use within a local economy. In the best-case scenario, the local community has the ability to weigh in on how local economies are constructed close to their homes, schools and within their neighborhoods. However, more often than not, these local economies are guided by business plans that seek to maximize profit, with a mere afterthought to community impact.

In communities of color, this is more likely to lead to the commercialization and development of land that does not take into account the unique and distinctive needs of the residents during any phase of the development process. Undergirding the dense legal, business, political and social activities related to local land use and economic development, is a racial current that exposes why communities of color are more susceptible to sustained disinvestment that limits access to healthy food, green spaces, restaurants, professional services, and other amenities. While disinvestment attacks equity, racial parity, and compromises the ability for communities to thrive, displacement threatens community longevity and cohesion.

There is a current narrative surrounding investment that suggests thriving, low-income communities of color do not have the authority to decide for themselves the type of community they would like to live in. There's also the thought that investors will not commit to our communities without "gentrification," more "affluent" and "good" businesses being in the area first. Community Coalition's South Central by South Central organizing campaign proves that this is a false narrative. The businesses featured in this issue are just a few of the "good" businesses that are contributing to the vibrant aesthetic of South Los Angeles and transforming the area from a food desert into an organic oasis of opportunity.

As we celebrate our 30th anniversary as a community member-led, change-making organization, we invite and challenge you to "step up" for South Los Angeles. Join us at our SCxSC community meetings held the third Wednesday of each month at 8101 S. Vermont Ave, LA 90044. For more info on how you can get involved, contact Oscar Alvarez at 323.750.9087 Ext. 219 or Oscar@cocosouthla.org.



South Central X South Central

Community Coalition
8101 S. Vermont Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90044

