

SCC/ASLA 2014 Design Awards

Planning and Analysis Category

Project Title: The Martin Luther King Jr. Medical Center Campus Master Plan

Project Location: Los Angeles County, California

Using the Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Medical Center Campus as a catalyst to create a “*Community of Health and Wellness*”, the project’s Planning Team developed a master plan that proposes a broad-based wellness approach with a 20-year implementation plan. The master plan features a series of practical and incremental improvements that foster strong community connections, establishes a new area identity and creatively addresses the social, economic, and environmental quality issues within this community.

The Study Area focuses on two areas: the existing 42-acre Martin Luther King, Jr. Medical Campus and 82 acres of the immediately adjacent neighborhood, which is located within the unincorporated community of Willowbrook and adjacent to Watts and Compton, in South Los Angeles. The current identified areas provide little service to its residents. Access to the Medical Center via public transit is difficult to navigate, the sidewalks (where they exist) are in disrepair and poorly lit, healthy food options are non-existent, and vacant or blighted parcels dominate the landscape. Additionally, the adjacent schools have little to no outdoor recreational spaces.

The master plan proposes the following main goals:

- Reinvigorate the MLK Medical Center Campus to create a healthy community and economic stability.
- Provide flexibility for future programs and long-term needs
- Identify an urban design direction that links the campus with the adjacent community by enhancing connectivity and taking advantage of existing transit opportunities
- Utilize sustainable principles and practices in all aspects of the planning and design processes
- Provide a mix of compatible uses in the study areas

The Master Plan process fell under 5 phases, all of which included outreach and participation from the community and other key stakeholders. The initial Start Up phase included confirmation of the project process and methodology, and the establishment of high-level goals through a visioning session with County stakeholders. The next phase, Data Collection, allowed relevant existing critical data to be obtained through stakeholder interviews and four community meetings. During the Analysis next phase, the team established planning principles/objectives and identified the over-arching opportunities and constraints for the project. A second series of community meetings gave the design team the opportunity to comment on the progress and gain additional feedback on the critical issues.

Reinvigorating the community requires integration of a complex set of systems. These systems were identified as Wellness, Education and Research, Economic Development, Public Safety, Community, Access and Mobility, Environmental Quality, and Land Use. Developing the final plan considered a broad range of interconnected solutions that enabled a holistic and sustainable approach to the development of the Master Plan. The resulting MLK Medical Center Campus Master Plan is wide ranging in concept, long-term in its focus, and well-grounded in the details. The plan uniquely reflects an understanding of current approaches to improving health and wellness as well as contemporary land use planning principles.

A key landscape design feature in the plan is the Wellness Spine, which is the primary organizing element and identifying feature for the campus. Enhancing connectivity to the community beyond, the Wellness Spine establishes active lifestyles through the promotion of walking, biking and socializing. A new health park and a series of connected gardens and open spaces are designed throughout the rest of campus. This strategy maximizes usability and flexibility of the open space resources.

The County Board of Supervisors approved the plan on January 15th, 2013 (Martin Luther King, Jr.’s birthday). Projects envisioned within the plan including a wellness park, a remodel of an existing Metro station, and other healthcare facilities currently being implemented.