ULI Los Angeles

VALLEY LARIVERWAY PROJECT

Accelerating Delivery of a Contiguous, Multi-Modal Corridor

Los Angeles, California

Technical Assistance Panel | February 2026

About

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The Urban Land Institute (ULI) 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.

ULI Los Angeles

ULI Los Angeles is a district council of the Urban Land Institute, serving a diverse membership of more than 2,000 professionals across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. The district council supports ULI's mission by convening local leaders, advancing thought leadership, and addressing critical issues shaping the region's built environment. Through programs, panels, and initiatives, ULI Los Angeles fosters collaboration and knowledge exchange to promote equitable, sustainable, and resilient development throughout Southern California.

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ULI's Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) program provides expert, multidisciplinary guidance to communities and organizations facing complex land use and development challenges. TAPs convene volunteer professionals with diverse expertise to analyze issues, engage stakeholders, and develop actionable recommendations over a short, intensive timeframe. Drawing on ULI's broad network and commitment to objective, nonpartisan advice, the TAP program delivers practical strategies that help sponsors advance projects, policies, and plans that support vibrant and sustainable communities.

About

Valley LARiverWay TAP

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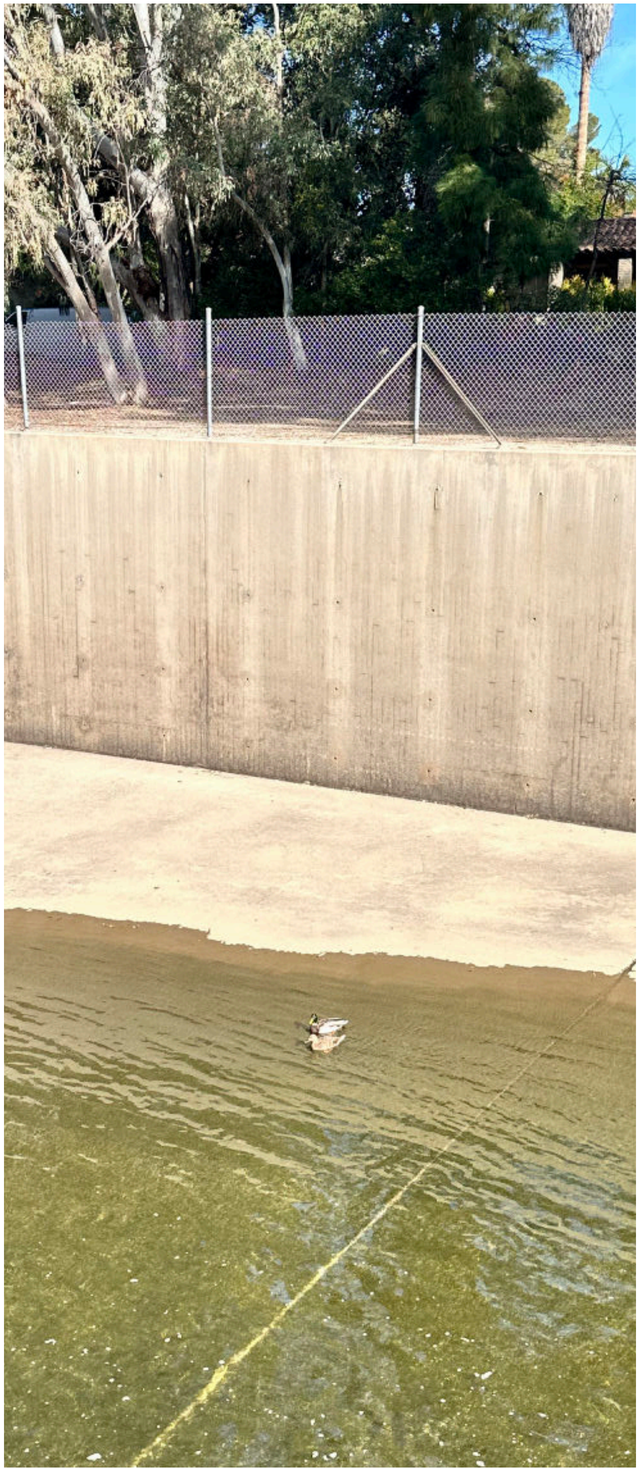

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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

The Opportunity

In recent decades, the vision of the Los Angeles River revitalization effort has been the development of a continuous, multi-use corridor spanning the river's full length, about half of which flows through the San Fernando Valley. Together, the unbuilt portions of the Valley riverfront—nine segments totaling approximately 12.4 miles—represent one of the largest and most feasible opportunities to deliver that vision at meaningful scale in the near term.

Completing this stretch of riverfront, known as the Valley LARiverWay in this report, would not only close a critical gap in the Valley, but also serve as a proof of concept for corridor-scale implementation across the river system. The LARiverWay, envisioned as a connected network of bicycle and pedestrian paths, has the potential to transform fragmented segments into a cohesive public asset that supports mobility, recreation, community identity, and adjacent reinvestment.

This Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) was convened to help identify a practical path forward for the LARiverWay to accelerate implementation, strengthen governance, and align delivery, funding, and value creation.

The Core Challenge

Up until now, the LARiverWay has been delivered through a grant-dependent, segment-by-segment model. While this approach has enabled important early investments, it has also resulted in fragmented delivery, persistent funding gaps, and significant exposure to construction cost escalation.

The limitations of this model are evident in Segments 1 and 2—a three-mile expanse between Vanalden Avenue and Balboa Boulevard—where secured grant funding is now insufficient to cover current construction bids. This nearly $39 million shortfall creates immediate risk to near-term delivery and highlights the broader challenge of relying on intermittent funding sources in a rapidly escalating cost environment.

More broadly, the panel heard consistent concerns about fragmented governance, layered approvals, and limited coordination across jurisdictions. Responsibility for planning, funding, construction, and maintenance is distributed across multiple agencies, making it difficult to advance corridor-scale infrastructure efficiently or consistently.

Under the current approach, the project is likely to remain incomplete for many years, with rising costs and continued fragmentation undermining its full potential. The panel concluded that a fundamentally different delivery and funding strategy is required to move from planning to implementation.

What the Panel Heard

Through review of background materials, stakeholder interviews, and a site tour, the panel heard strong and consistent support for the LARiverWay vision. City and County officials, property owners, land use professionals, and community stakeholders all recognized the project as a valuable public investment with the potential to improve mobility, enhance quality of life, and support economic development.

At the same time, stakeholders identified a common set of challenges:

- Governance is fragmented, with multiple agencies involved but no single point of accountability.
- Project delivery is slow and dependent on competitive grants, making it difficult to maintain momentum.
- Maintenance and operations are not consistently funded or coordinated, raising concerns about long-term sustainability.
- While the revitalization work is widely understood to generate significant public and private value, that value is not currently being captured or reinvested in a way that supports delivery.

Property owners and adjacent stakeholders expressed particular interest in a more continuous, reliable corridor, emphasizing that the value of the LARiverWay increases significantly when it functions as a complete system rather than a series of disconnected segments. Public-sector stakeholders similarly noted that existing structures are not well suited to delivering large, multi-jurisdictional infrastructure projects.

The panel also found that the policy and planning context is favorable. Ongoing community plan updates and anticipated zoning changes provide sufficient development capacity along the corridor, and prior environmental review work offers opportunities to streamline project approvals if implementation proceeds in a timely and coordinated manner.

Multiple Community Plan Updates are currently underway along the corridor (including Sherman Oaks-Studio City-TolucaLake-Cahuenga Pass; Van Nuys-North Sherman Oaks; Encino-Tarzana; Reseda-West Van Nuys-Lake Balboa), creating a timely opportunity to align corridor delivery with zoning updates, public engagement, and implementation tools.

Investments in continuous trail and greenway systems have consistently demonstrated strong returns in peer cities, both in terms of real estate value and broader economic activity. Projects such as New York City’s High Line, Atlanta’s BeltLine, and Dallas’s trail network have shown that proximity to high-quality, accessible linear parks deliver significant returns on public investment.

Panelists took a two-hour tour of a section of the LARiverWay that runs alongside Ventura Boulevard.

Panel Recommendations

To move the Valley portion of the LARiverWay from concept to completion, the panel recommends a strategic shift toward corridor-scale delivery, integrated project management, and value-based funding.

1. Shift from segmentation to a holistic approach.
The panel recommends treating the remaining Valley LARiverWay as a single corridor-scale project rather than a series of independent segments. This approach will enable economies of scale, improve financing potential, strengthen public visibility, and accelerate delivery.

2. Complete Segments 1 and 2 immediately.
The City should take all necessary steps to close the current funding gap and move Segments 1 and 2 forward. Successfully delivering these segments is critical to maintaining momentum and demonstrating the feasibility of the broader corridor.

3. Prioritize core connectivity first.
The initial focus should be on delivering a continuous bike and pedestrian spine across the full 12.4-mile corridor, including lighting, safety features, and essential crossings. Additional amenities and enhancements can be phased in over time through grants, partnerships, and adjacent development.

4. Shift to an integrated delivery model.
The panel recommends adopting a design-build-finance-operate/maintain (DBFOM) or similar integrated delivery model. This approach can reduce fragmentation and schedule uncertainty, accelerate return on investment, and incorporate long-term maintenance into the project structure.

5. Establish a formal City–County partnership.
The LARiverWay cannot be delivered at scale without coordinated participation from both the City and the County. A project-specific partnership, whether through an Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD) or an alternative agreement, should align funding, responsibilities, and decision-making.

6. Leverage existing planning and policy frameworks to accelerate delivery.
The City should move directly into implementation by aligning the LARiverWay with adopted plans, active community plan updates, and existing environmental review. By maintaining a clear project scope and using established policy tools, the City can streamline approvals, reduce timelines, and avoid duplicative planning processes.

7. Align funding with value creation.
The LARiverWay is expected to generate substantial economic value over time. The panel recommends structuring project funding around this value, using tools such as EIFDs or alternative revenue-sharing mechanisms to capture and reinvest a portion of the uplift.

8. Build sustained political and stakeholder support.
Successful implementation will require strong public leadership and a broad coalition of stakeholders, including property owners, business groups, and community organizations. A clear project vision and coordinated advocacy effort will be essential to sustaining momentum over time.

Immediate Next Steps

The panel recommends that project sponsors focus on a near-term set of actions to initiate this shift in approach:

- Secure a path forward for Segments 1 and 2.
- Define the scope of a core connectivity project.
- Initiate discussions with the County to establish a joint delivery and funding framework.
- Evaluate procurement strategies for a bundled corridor project.

Equally important is the need to organize a durable coalition of public and private stakeholders and to identify project champions who can carry the LARiverWay project forward across election cycles and institutional boundaries.

Conclusion

The panel believes that the LARiverWay has reached a pivotal moment. With planning largely complete and strong alignment among public and private stakeholders, the project is ready to advance into implementation. By acting decisively and embracing a coordinated, corridor-scale approach, the City and County have the opportunity to deliver a transformative public asset that will shape mobility, community identity, and investment along the river for decades to come.

The Los Angeles River flows 51 miles from its headwaters in the San Fernando Valley to its mouth at Long Beach.

Introduction and Panel Charge

Background and Vision

The Los Angeles River stretches 51 miles from its headwaters in the San Fernando Valley to its mouth at Long Beach. It was heavily channelized in concrete in the mid-20th century to save lives and property from severe flooding, which achieved its engineering purpose but severed the river from surrounding communities and degraded its natural ecosystem.

By the late 1990s and early 2000s, momentum grew around treating the river not just as infrastructure, but as a civic and environmental asset. In 2007, the City adopted the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan as the core policy framework for its vision of rehabilitation and a roadmap to guide future projects along the corridor, while continuing to manage flood risk. Separately, Los Angeles County in 2022 adopted an updated LA River Master Plan, which now guides countywide river priorities and actions across jurisdictions.

The revitalization effort ultimately aims to connect the full length of the river corridor with Class I bike paths, pedestrian paths, bridges, grade separations, greenway landscapes, and park amenities. More broadly, it aims to stitch together communities that have been separated by infrastructure and contribute to public health and quality of life by promoting active transportation, increasing access to green space, and creating opportunities for recreation and community gathering.

In addition to these public benefits, comparable urban river and trail systems in other cities, including New York City and Atlanta, demonstrate that such investments can generate substantial economic value in adjacent communities—an opportunity that remains largely untapped under the current delivery model.

The Current Approach

Of the total system, 27.7 miles are already complete and in service and 16.2 miles are in various stages of development. The completed portions are well utilized and well regarded but progress has been incremental, shaped by funding, right-of-way constraints, and coordination across City, County, and regional agencies.

In 2017, following extensive engineering investigation and community engagement, the Bureau of Engineering (BOE) issued the Los Angeles River Valley Bikeway and Greenway Design Completion Project Feasibility Study Report (FSR). The FSR remains the guiding public plan for the Valley section of the LARiverWay and defines nine undeveloped segments totaling 12.4 miles, five of which are almost entirely unfunded for construction and two of which are facing an immediate funding shortfall.

Segments 1 and 2, stretching three miles from Vanalden to Balboa, are the most advanced; construction bids were received in early 2026 but bids came in approximately $39 million above secured funding, a patchwork of transportation grants and regional sales tax allocations, creating an immediate gap that must be resolved before a contract can be awarded. Delays risk loss of grant funds. (See funding shortfall table on next page.)

#	Limits	Distance	Current Status
1	Vanalden Ave. to White Oak Ave.	1.9 mi	Bid & Award Phase
2	White Oak Ave. to Balboa Blvd.	1.1 mi	Bid & Award Phase
3	Balboa Blvd. to Burbank Blvd.	1.6 mi	Funding Assembly
4	Burbank Blvd. to Sepulveda Blvd.	0.9 mi	Funding Assembly
5	Kester Ave. to Hazeltine Ave.	1.1 mi	Alignment Planned
6	Hazeltine Ave. to Woodman Ave.	0.5 mi	Alignment Planned
7	Woodman Ave. to Coldwater Canyon Ave.	1.1 mi	Funding Assembly
8	Whitsett Ave. to Lankershim Blvd.	2.3 mi	Design Phase
9	Barham Blvd. to Forest Lawn/Zoo Dr.	1.9 mi	Alignment Planned
	TOTAL	**12.4 mi**	

The Challenge at Hand

The City's immediate concerns are to fund and complete Segments 1 and 2 and identify funding and delivery mechanisms to accelerate completion of Segments 3-7 and 9.

Acceleration is the key word. The traditional Design-Bid-Build (DBB) model combined with a competitive grant funding strategy virtually guarantees a timeline that, even under highly optimistic assumptions, doesn't reach completion until 2044. Under an alternative accelerated financed approach (like Design-Build-Finance, or DBF), the full system could be operational by 2034, ten years sooner.

Under current conditions, delay is not neutral: each year of incremental delivery increases costs, complicates coordination, and risks eroding both funding commitments and public confidence in the endeavor.

BOE's 2017 feasibility study quantified significant annual benefits (an estimated $74 million) from full Valley LARiverWay completion:

- $17 million annually in public health savings from reduced pollution and increased physical activity.
- $50 million annually in economic output from outdoor recreation activity.
- ~$830,000 in annual value from reduced vehicle miles traveled (1.66 million VMT reduction).
- ~$6.1 million in annual value from reduced greenhouse gas emissions (120,000 metric tons).

Under the sequential approach, these benefits accumulate gradually as segments are completed between 2032 and 2044. Under the financed approach, full annual benefits of $74 million commence in 2034; by 2053, the cumulative benefit advantage of the financed approach over the sequential approach is $281 million.

Item	Amount
Expected Construction Cost (Contractor bid)	$92.5M
Construction Contingency (10%)	$9.2M
Construction Administration (3.55%)	$3.3M
Total Construction Budget Required	$105M
Total Funding Available	$66.3M
Funding Shortfall	$38.8M

The Panel's Charge

Council District 4 has highlighted the following areas for panel discussion:

Optimal delivery method: Should the City pursue a bundled, financed approach to deliver the remaining segments as a unified project, and how should such an approach be structured?

Regulatory and permitting optimization: What strategies or process improvements could streamline environmental review, interagency coordination, and approvals to significantly reduce delivery timelines?

Innovative financing strategy: How can the City deploy and coordinate available funding tools—including public, private, and hybrid mechanisms—to support accelerated delivery?

Land value capture: How can increases in adjacent property value be leveraged to support project financing, and what mechanisms are most viable in the Los Angeles context?

Equity and anti-displacement: How can the LARiverWay be implemented in a way that minimizes displacement risk while ensuring that surrounding communities share in the project's benefits?

What the Panel Heard

Stakeholder Interviews

Across conversations with public agency staff, property owners, and industry professionals, a consistent message emerged: the vision for the LARiverWay is strong and widely supported, but its implementation is constrained by fragmentation in governance, delivery, and funding.

Key Takeaways

- There is broad alignment around the vision
- Implementation—not planning—is the primary challenge
- Fragmentation is a core constraint
- The current delivery model is inefficient
- Cost escalation is an ongoing concern
- Interest from adjacent stakeholders is strong
- Maintenance and long-term stewardship remain unresolved
- Regulatory processes add complexity and uncertainty
- A corridor-scale approach is critical

CITY AND COUNTY STAFF
emphasized the complexity of delivering the project within existing institutional structures. Multiple agencies share responsibility for planning, funding, and implementation, making coordination time-intensive and decision-making diffuse. The current delivery model—largely dependent on competitive grants and sequential construction—was described as difficult to sustain in the face of rising costs. While there is openness to alternative delivery approaches, stakeholders noted that institutional constraints and risk considerations can make large-scale changes challenging to implement.

LOCAL PROPERTY OWNERS
expressed strong enthusiasm for the LARiverWay and its potential to enhance surrounding neighborhoods. Many indicated a willingness to contribute to or align with the project, particularly where it could support investment, activation, and long-term value. However, uncertainty around timing, scope, and delivery has limited their ability to engage in a coordinated way. Stakeholders also emphasized the importance of consistent maintenance and programming to ensure that completed segments remain safe, active, and well integrated into the community.

LAND USE PROFESSIONALS
pointed to the complexity of entitlement, permitting, and environmental review processes as a key source of delay and uncertainty. At the same time, they noted that the underlying policy framework—including zoning capacity, community plan updates, and prior environmental review—largely supports the project's implementation. In this context, stakeholders emphasized the importance of maintaining discipline around project scope and focusing on deliverable components, rather than continuing to expand program elements in ways that can slow progress.

COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES
highlighted the regional significance of the LARiverWay and the importance of City–County partnership in delivering it. While coordination between agencies does occur, stakeholders noted that collaboration is most effective when tied to clearly defined, actionable projects. There is an opportunity to strengthen this partnership through more formalized and sustained coordination mechanisms that align funding, priorities, and implementation efforts across jurisdictions.

Demonstrated Return on Investment

A broad base of research shows that investments in parks and open space generate a wide range of measurable public and economic benefits, from health and safety to job creation.

Successful projects in peer cities demonstrate that investment in linear parks and urban greenway systems, in particular, have substantially and consistently increased surrounding real estate values, stimulated economic development, and attracted residents and businesses. These outcomes not only reinforce the case for initial investment but also help unlock additional private reinvestment and long-term growth.

Compared to traditional park typologies, these systems typically require lower per-mile construction and maintenance expenditures while creating value across a broad geography due to the number of adjacent properties and connections to surrounding neighborhoods. This combination of relatively modest cost and extensive frontage results in high overall economic return.

The potential for return on investment in the Valley LARiverWay is real: A 2016 HR&A study estimated that assessed property values within a one-mile buffer of river could increase by approximately $150 billion over a 30-year period, with the Valley claiming more than half of that growth. This growth would also generate increases in sales tax, transient occupancy tax, utility user tax, and other economic activity tied to reinvestment along the corridor.

Peer City Outcomes

NEW YORK CITY: High Line

The West Chelsea neighborhood, adjacent to the High Line along the Hudson River, has seen a 15% premium on commercial assessed values and a 9% premium on residential sales prices compared with East Chelsea.

ATLANTA: BeltLine

Housing growth in areas adjacent to the trail outpaced the citywide average by approximately 20% between 2010 and 2019, with property value premiums of 40-60% observed on blocks near the corridor.

INDIANAPOLIS: Monon Trail

Census tracts adjacent to the trail experienced more than double the rate of housing growth compared to the citywide average (2009–2019), with property premiums estimated at 30-40%.

BOSTON: Rose Kennedy Greenway

Development activity in areas surrounding the Greenway grew significantly faster than in Boston's central business district, with nearby properties commanding premiums of up to 90% within a quarter-mile radius.

Core Findings

Based on a briefing from LA City Council District 4 and the Bureau of Engineering, stakeholder interviews, prior study of extensive briefing materials, and a tour of a one-mile swath of the LARiverWay along Ventura Boulevard, the panel made the following observations.

1. The vision Is clear and compelling, but delivery has lagged.

The LARiverWay reflects a widely shared vision for transforming the Los Angeles River into a continuous, accessible corridor that supports mobility, recreation, environmental restoration, and community identity. Across stakeholder groups, there is strong alignment around this vision, and completed segments demonstrate high usage and value.

But implementation has not kept pace with ambition. Progress has been incremental and uneven, shaped by funding constraints and segmented delivery. As a result, the project has yet to achieve the scale or continuity necessary to fully realize its intended impact as a regional asset.

2. The existing delivery model is constraining progress.

The City's current approach—reliant on competitive grant funding, sequential segment delivery, and a traditional Design-Bid-Build procurement model—has introduced significant inefficiencies and delays. It's cycle in which projects are designed, partially funded, rebid, and delayed as costs escalate over time.

This model may be effective for discrete capital projects, but it is not well suited to delivering a large-scale, continuous corridor. Under current conditions, full buildout of the LARiverWay could take decades, as costs will continue to rise and funding gaps may widen.

3. Fragmented governance limits alignment and accountability.

Responsibility for planning, funding, delivery, and maintenance of the LARiverWay is distributed across multiple City and County departments, as well as regional and state partners. While coordination mechanisms exist, they are often informal or project-specific and do not provide a consistent framework for corridor-wide decision-making.

This fragmentation has contributed to delays, inconsistent prioritization, and a lack of clear accountability. There needs to be a more unified approach to governance and delivery, one that can align agencies around shared objectives and streamline implementation.

4. Stakeholder support is strong but the engagement structure is limited.

Stakeholders along the corridor—including major property owners, institutions, advocacy organizations, and community groups—expressed strong interest in the success of the LARiverWay and a willingness to participate in its development and activation.

However, in the absence of a clearly defined project structure, timeline, and delivery strategy, this support remains largely untapped. Without a cohesive framework for engagement, stakeholders lack a clear understanding of how to contribute, coordinate, or invest in the project over time.

The completed portions of the LARiverWay are well utilized and well regarded for supporting mobility and recreation.

Stakeholders consistently emphasized the importance of accounting for ongoing operations and maintenance costs.

5. Planning and policy foundations are largely in place.

The LARiverWay is supported by an extensive body of prior planning and policy work, including the Feasibility Study Report, the City and County master plans, and ongoing community plan updates along the corridor. These efforts have already established alignment around land use, development capacity, and long-term vision, reducing the need for additional entitlement or rezoning to advance the project.

Existing environmental review, particularly the County's LA River Master Plan Program EIR, also creates a near-term opportunity to streamline implementation through mechanisms such as tiering or addenda. However, this opportunity is time-sensitive and dependent on maintaining a clear and consistent project scope.

Parallel community planning processes and citywide policies, including tenant protections and displacement mitigation frameworks, provide a foundation for addressing equity concerns without delaying project delivery.

6. Continuous connectivity is the most critical near-term priority.

The success of the LARiverWay depends on its function as a continuous corridor. While existing segments are well designed and heavily used, their impact is limited by fragmentation and lack of connectivity.

Establishing a complete, functional spine—focused on essential bike and pedestrian infrastructure and accessibility—would unlock the full value of the corridor. Additional amenities can be layered over time, but connectivity is the prerequisite for success.

7. Value creation is real, and must be captured.

Despite the clear potential for value creation, the current approach does not capture or reinvest these benefits in a way that supports delivery, resulting in uncertain timelines, escalating costs, and missed opportunities to leverage economic returns and build credibility. Establishing a mechanism to align investment with value creation is essential, whether through an Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD) or alternative cost- and revenue-sharing agreement.

8. Urgency Is required to avoid escalating costs and lost momentum.

The LARiverWay is at a critical inflection point. Construction costs continue to escalate, and near-term funding—particularly for Segments 1 and 2—is at risk if not deployed promptly. Failure to deliver these initial segments could undermine future funding opportunities and erode stakeholder confidence.

Conversely, timely execution of early phases would demonstrate feasibility, build momentum, and catalyze additional investment. Accelerating delivery is not simply a matter of efficiency, but of preserving the viability of the project as a whole.

Panel Recommendations

1. Shift from segmentation to a holistic approach.

The panel recommends treating the remaining Valley LARiverWay as a single, unified project rather than a series of independent segments. While segmentation has supported planning and engineering efforts, it has also fragmented funding, slowed delivery, and limited the project's overall impact.

A corridor-scale approach would enable the City to:

- Pursue economies of scale in design and construction
- Package the project in a way that is more attractive for financing and partnership
- Establish a clear and compelling public identity and brand

Most importantly, this shift reframes the LARiverWay from a collection of projects into a single, regionally significant investment.

2. Complete Segments 1 and 2 immediately.

Segments 1 and 2 represent both a near-term risk and a critical opportunity. With construction bids exceeding available funding, the City faces a gap that must be resolved to move forward.

The panel strongly recommends that the City take all necessary steps to close this gap and initiate construction. This may include scope adjustments, supplemental funding, or alternative delivery strategies.

Timely delivery is essential to:

- Preserve existing grant funding
- Demonstrate the City's ability to execute complex infrastructure projects
- Build confidence among stakeholders and funding partners
- Establish early momentum for the broader corridor

Failure to advance these segments would risk undermining the credibility of the project and limiting future funding opportunities.

3. Prioritize core connectivity first.

The Board of Engineering's 2017 Feasibility Study Report describes two primary implementation scenarios: "essential connectivity," a baseline active transportation network, and "full feature build," a more ambitious build-out with additional grade separations, river parks, and nature-based infrastructure, at more than twice the cost.

The panel recommends that the initial focus should be on delivering a continuous bike and pedestrian spine across the full 12.4-mile corridor, which will maximize its functional value, enable earlier public use and visibility, and create a platform for future enhancements and investment (including increased grant eligibility).

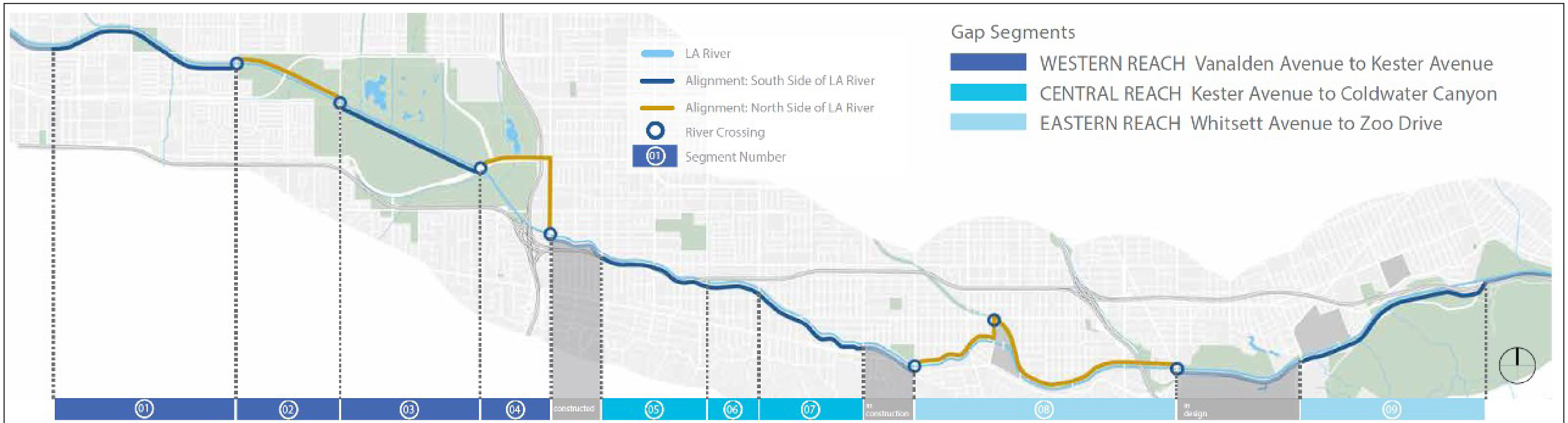


Figure ES.2 LA River Valley Bikeway and Greenway TOS Alignment by Project Segments

This “essential connectivity” approach emphasizes:

- Continuous bike and pedestrian paths
- Safe crossings and grade separations where needed
- Lighting, visibility, and basic safety infrastructure

While the broader vision includes parks and amenities, these elements should be phased in over time through grants, partnerships, and vadjacent development.

4. Shift to an integrated delivery model.

To support accelerated delivery, the panel strongly recommends adopting an integrated delivery model—such as Design-Build-Finance-Operate/Maintain (DBFOM)—for the remaining corridor.

Unlike the traditional Design-Bid-Build approach, an integrated model:

- Combines design, construction, financing, and maintenance into a single contract
- Provides cost and schedule certainty earlier in the process
- Establishes a single point of accountability
- Incorporates long-term maintenance performance standards
- Transfers cost and schedule risk to the private partner under performance criteria

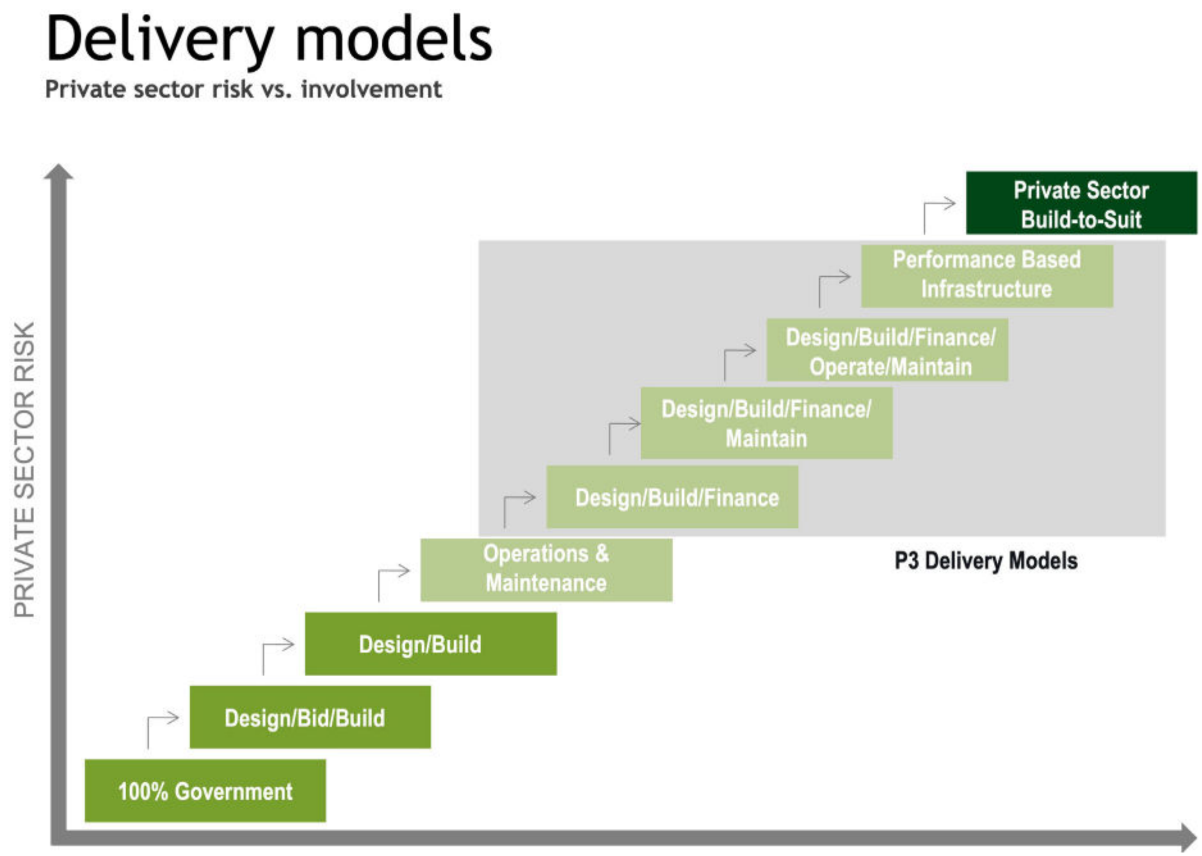
By bundling these elements, the City can reduce fragmentation, streamline delivery, and ensure that lifecycle considerations are built into the project from the outset.

While this approach requires careful structuring and introduces long-term financial commitments, it offers a viable path to delivering the corridor at scale within a significantly shorter timeframe.

The panel cited a number of case studies where the DBFOM model was successful: the Sea to Sky highway in British Columbia, the Pennsylvania Rapid Bridge Development Project, the Duekmajian Courthouse in Long Beach, and the Long Beach Civic Center.

5. Establish a formal City–County partnership.

The LARiverWay spans multiple jurisdictions, with both the City and County playing essential roles in funding, permitting, and long-term stewardship. However, existing coordination structures are not sufficient to support delivery at the scale and speed envisioned.



The panel recommends establishing a formalized partnership that aligns responsibilities, resources, and decision-making authority across agencies.

This partnership should:

- Define clear roles and financial commitments for both City and County
- Streamline governance and decision-making processes
- Support coordinated funding strategies, including value capture mechanisms
- Provide a unified platform for engaging stakeholders and delivery partners

6. Leverage existing planning and policy frameworks to accelerate delivery.

The LARiverWay does not require additional long-range planning to advance. The City and County have already established the core land use framework, environmental analysis, and community engagement processes needed to support implementation. The panel recommends that the City explicitly shift from planning to execution by aligning the project with these existing efforts and taking advantage of a limited window for streamlining.

To operationalize this approach, the panel recommends that the City:

- Align project delivery with active Community Plan Updates to ensure consistency between corridor improvements and adjacent land use, while leveraging ongoing community engagement to inform project design.
- Pursue CEQA streamlining strategies (including tiering or addenda under the County's LA River Master Plan PEIR and related documents), maintaining scope to avoid triggering additional review.
- Integrate LARiverWay improvements into development approvals by requiring or incentivizing adjacent projects to deliver frontage improvements, access points, and complementary enhancements.
- Rely on existing tenant protections and displacement mitigation policies as a baseline, while monitoring conditions along the corridor and deploying additional tools only where needed.
- Engage community-based organizations during implementation to provide real-time feedback, build trust, and refine strategies as the project moves forward.
- Draw on established toolkits rather than developing new frameworks from scratch.

By treating planning and policy as enabling infrastructure, not barriers, the City can significantly reduce delivery timelines and focus its efforts on execution, coordination, and funding.

7. Align funding with value creation.

The panel recommends structuring funding strategies around the principle of value capture, ensuring that a portion of the benefits generated by the project contributes to its delivery.

While an Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD) remains a potential tool with precedent in California, there are concerns in Los Angeles about long-term General Fund revenue loss. Alternative structures, such as negotiated cost-sharing agreements, may offer a more immediately feasible path forward.

By linking investment to outcomes, the City and its partners can create a more sustainable and scalable funding model, one that reflects true return on investment.

8. Build sustained political and stakeholder support.

Successful implementation will require strong public leadership and a broad coalition of stakeholders, including property owners, business groups, and community organizations. A clear project vision and coordinated advocacy effort will be essential to sustaining momentum over time.

The panel recommends building both visible leadership and a broad-based coalition to support implementation. This effort should focus on:

- Identifying and empowering a project champion or leadership coalition
- Coordinating advocacy across public, private, and community stakeholders
- Strengthening and promoting the LARiverWay brand
- Maintaining momentum through consistent communication and engagement

The project already benefits from strong underlying interest among property owners, advocacy organizations, and public agencies. The next step is to align that energy around a clear vision and sustained leadership structure capable of advancing the project over time.

Comparable local efforts underscore the importance of sustained leadership and coordinated advocacy: The Ballona Creek bike path project in Culver City (right) advanced through a combination of political leadership and external advocacy that maintained momentum across election cycles. Similarly, the campaign to advance the K Line extension of LA Metro (below) demonstrated how a broad coalition, clear messaging, and sustained engagement across jurisdictions can secure funding and elevate a project within a competitive regional landscape.

Implementation Roadmap

What Comes Next

The LARiverWay can move from concept to implementation within a significantly compressed timeframe if the City and its partners act decisively and in coordination. The following roadmap outlines a phased approach to advancing the project, beginning with immediate actions to preserve momentum and culminating in full corridor delivery.

A Window of Opportunity

The conditions that enable accelerated delivery—available grant funding, active community planning processes, existing environmental clearances, and strong stakeholder interest—are all time-sensitive. Delay risks increasing costs, triggering additional regulatory requirements, and eroding momentum.

With coordinated action, the LARiverWay can move from a long-term vision to a delivered corridor within the next decade—or sooner.

Near-Term (0–12 Months): Establish Momentum and Structure Delivery

The immediate priority is to stabilize the project's most advanced segments while laying the institutional and financial groundwork for corridor-scale delivery.

- Close the funding gap and initiate construction for Segments 1 and 2, preserving grant funding and demonstrating early progress.
- Define and lock a corridor-wide project scope centered on essential connectivity to enable streamlined environmental review.
- Formally establish a City–County partnership, including defined roles, cost-sharing principles, and governance structure.
- Advance procurement strategy for a bundled delivery model, including feasibility analysis and initial market sounding for DBFOM or similar approaches.
- Launch a coordinated project identity and communications strategy to build visibility and stakeholder alignment.

Mid-Term (1–3 Years): Procure, Finance, and Initiate Corridor Delivery

With foundational elements in place, the City can move into procurement and early construction for the remaining corridor.

- Issue a procurement for corridor-wide delivery, structured to integrate design, construction, financing, and maintenance.
- Finalize funding strategy, including City–County contributions and value capture or revenue-sharing mechanisms.
- Leverage existing environmental clearances through CEQA streamlining strategies tied to a consistent project scope.
- Coordinate with Community Plan Updates to align adjacent development and secure complementary improvements.
- Begin phased construction of the corridor spine, prioritizing continuity and early usability.

Long-Term (3–5+ Years): Complete the Corridor and Layer in Enhancements

As the core corridor is delivered, the focus shifts to completing the system and enhancing its functionality, identity, and community impact.

- Deliver full corridor connectivity across the 12.4-mile Valley riverfront.
- Implement long-term operations and maintenance under performance-based standards.
- Phase in additional amenities and enhancements, including parks, access points, and programming, through grants, partnerships, and development contributions.
- Continue stakeholder engagement and community-based partnerships to ensure the corridor reflects local needs and priorities.
- Strengthen the LARiverWay brand and activation strategy, reinforcing its role as a regional asset.

Conclusion

The LARiverWay represents a rare and consequential opportunity: to transform underutilized infrastructure into a continuous public asset that connects communities, supports mobility, and shapes the future of the built environment in Los Angeles.

The vision is not new; decades of planning, policy development, and community engagement have already established what the river can become. What has been missing is not alignment or ambition, but the ability to deliver at the scale and speed required to realize that vision.

The recommendations outlined in this report reflect a fundamental shift from incremental progress to coordinated action. By prioritizing early delivery, embracing a corridor-scale approach, aligning funding with value creation, and establishing clear leadership, the City and County can move beyond fragmentation and toward implementation.

The path forward is both practical and time-sensitive. Existing funding, environmental clearances, and planning efforts create a window of opportunity that will not remain open indefinitely. Acting within that window can significantly accelerate delivery, reduce long-term costs, and build the confidence needed to sustain the project over time.

At its core, the LARiverWay is more than an infrastructure project. It's a chance to reestablish the river as a shared civic space, stitch together neighborhoods, expand access to mobility and open space, and create a lasting public resource for generations to come.

The time to act is now.

About the Panel

Cecilia Estolano

Panel Chair

Urban Planning

Estolano is CEO and founder of Estolano Advisors and CEO of Better World Group, with deep expertise in urban planning, economic development, land use, and environmental equity. She has led and advised on complex mixed-use and urban infill projects nationwide and has shaped inclusive economic development strategies for major philanthropic organizations. She previously served as CEO of the Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Los Angeles and held senior roles with the Office of LA Mayor Tom Bradley and the US Environmental Protection Agency during the Clinton Administration. Estolano has also served as chair of the University of California Board of Regents and president of the California Community Colleges Board of Governors, and she serves on multiple civic and cultural boards. She holds bachelor's from Harvard-Radcliffe Colleges, a master's in urban planning from UCLA, and a JD from the UC Berkeley School of Law.

Amitabh Barthakur

Funding

Barthakur is a leader in public-private partnerships (P3), value capture, and transit-oriented development, with more than 20 years of experience advising on complex infrastructure and economic development initiatives in the US and globally. He specializes in structuring real estate-driven P3s and funding strategies that align public goals with private investment, with work including the Downtown West development agreement in San Jose, value capture strategies for the Los Angeles River, and transit-oriented development planning with LA Metro and other agencies. His portfolio spans major infrastructure, mobility, and planning efforts across more than 15 countries, including advisory roles with the World Bank and other international institutions. He holds graduate degrees in urban planning and building science from the University of Southern California.

Clare De Briere

Development

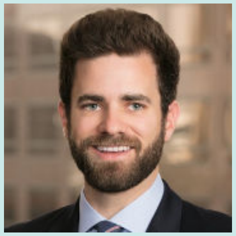
De Briere is a senior real estate executive and strategic advisor with extensive experience in development, investment, and organizational leadership. She previously served as chief operating officer and executive vice president of the Ratkovich Company, which she helped grow into a nationally recognized development and management firm, and later led Los Angeles expansion efforts as executive vice president at Skanska USA Commercial Development. She is vice chair and treasurer of the Urban Land Institute's Global Board and board chair of the Central City Association of Los Angeles and remains active in numerous academic and civic leadership roles. De Briere holds a bachelor's from UCLA and a master's in real estate development from the University of Southern California.

Jeffrey Fullerton

Financing + Delivery

Fullerton is principal of Fullerton Consulting Partners, where he advises on complex real estate development and P3 strategies. With more than 20 years of experience, he has delivered over 8.5 million square feet of development valued at more than $6 billion, specializing in large-scale, technically complex projects in challenging regulatory environments. Prior to founding his firm, he held senior roles at Plenary Americas, Edgemoor Infrastructure, Hackman Capital, and Fieldstone Homes. Fullerton is a former CPA with an MBA from Stanford University and a bachelor's from the University of Montana.

Derek Galey



Legal

Galey is a land use and environmental attorney with more than a decade of experience advising developers, institutions, and public agencies on major development and infrastructure projects. His work focuses on environmental review, entitlement strategy, and regulatory compliance, including leading CEQA processes for large-scale housing, mixed-use, and institutional developments. He previously practiced at Latham & Watkins and served as land use deputy to Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda L. Solis. Galey currently serves on the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation advisory group and local planning bodies, and holds law and urban planning degrees from Harvard University.

Jeremy Klop

Transportation

Klop is director of strategy and a principal at Fehr & Peers, with more than 20 years of experience in multimodal transportation planning and policy. His work focuses on aligning transportation systems with community goals related to equity, sustainability, and economic vitality. He has advised major agencies including LA Metro, the City of Los Angeles, and Caltrans on initiatives such as Mobility Plan 2035, the LA Union Station Master Plan, and regional active transportation strategies. Klop also contributes to statewide training and national guidance, including co-authoring the ITE Transportation Planning Handbook chapter on bicycle and pedestrian planning. Originally trained as a biologist focused on stream ecology, he holds a master's in city and regional planning from UNC Chapel Hill.

Murray McQueen

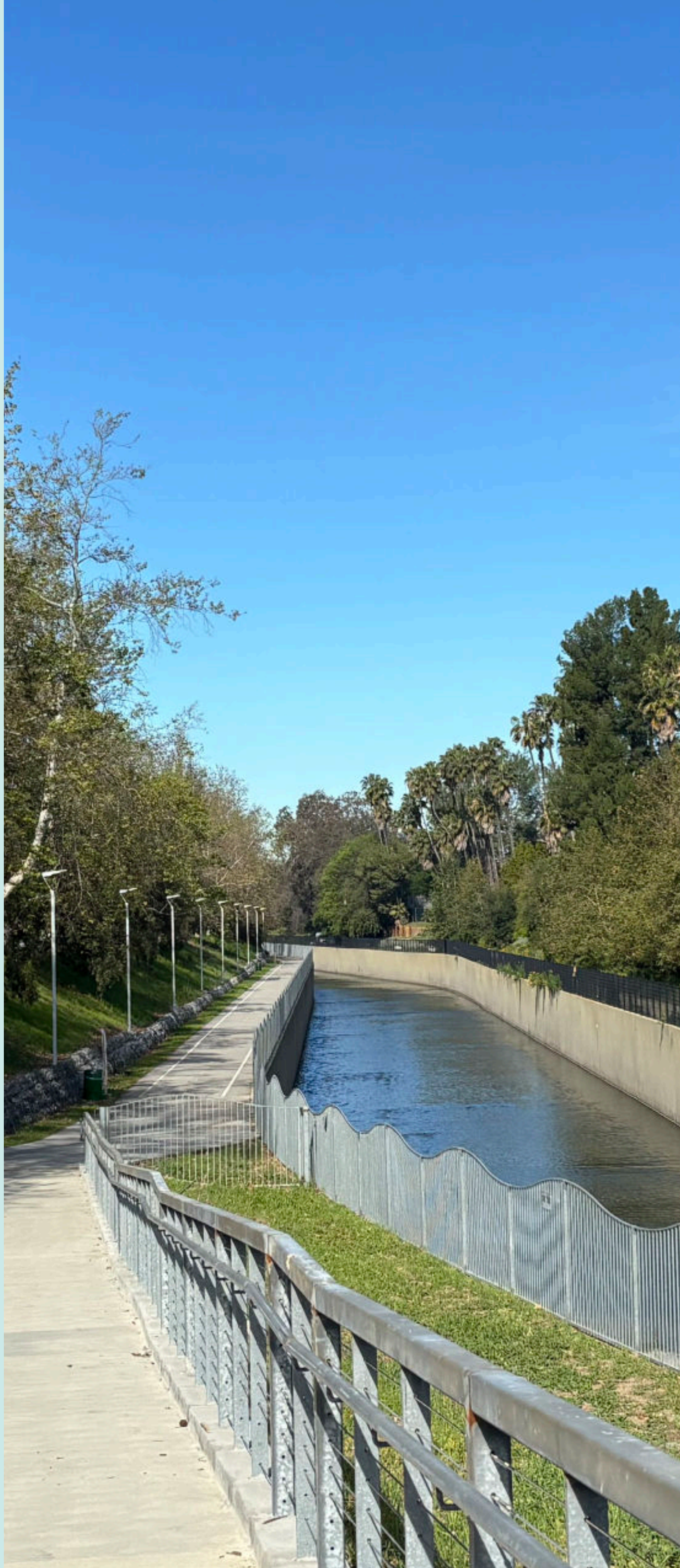
Development

McQueen is managing director at Northmarq Fund Management, where he oversees real estate investment strategy and operations. He previously served as president of Tribune Real Estate Holdings, managing a portfolio of more than 8 million square feet of urban infill properties and leading entitlement, redevelopment, and joint venture efforts across major US markets. His earlier career includes roles at Cerberus Capital Management, DLJ Real Estate Capital Partners, and Citibank Real Estate. He holds a bachelor's from Santa Clara University and an MBA from UCLA, and is active with the Urban Land Institute and several nonprofit and academic boards.

Thomas Small

Government

Small is president and CEO of Culver City Forward, a nonprofit public-private partnership focused on advancing sustainable economic growth, mobility, and community development. He previously served on the Culver City Council from 2016 to 2020, including a term as mayor, where he led initiatives related to transit-oriented development, mobility innovation, and public engagement. Small continues to play a regional leadership role in transportation and sustainability, including serving as chair of the LA Metro Sustainability Council and on the Southern California Association of Governments Transportation Policy Committee. He is also an architectural writer and consultant and co-author of Music and Architecture in Harmony, to be published in September.



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