



## **EAST LA COMMUNITY CORPORATION**

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### **Cultural Preservation Plan – Lucha Reyes**

#### **Introduction: Placekeeping Mariachis in Boyle Heights**

Boyle Heights derives a large part of its identity as the epicenter for Mariachi culture in Los Angeles with roots, dating back to the 1930s and direct ties to the Mexican state of Jalisco. Its most iconic and visible landmark is Mariachi Plaza. The plaza serves as a physical space for mariachi musicians to convene and play and continues to preserve the traditional artifacts of Mariachi culture. As new development arises in culturally significant areas of Boyle Heights, local residents have viewed Mariachi Plaza as the barometer of cultural preservation – often using the plaza as a symbolic and literal platform to amplify voices in the community.

The prioritization of public and community spaces that continue the historical narrative of the neighborhood will become increasingly more important as demographic populations change and grow. Immigrant communities like Boyle Heights value cultural emblems. In our capacity as an affordable housing developer, we strive to add to that rich cultural fabric in the financial tools that we offer, the tenants that we uplift, and our community-driven development projects.

## **Plan Objective and Goals**

The objective of this Cultural Preservation Plan is to identify a strategy to preserve the culture of mariachi musicians who utilize Mariachi Plaza as an employment hub. In partnership with LA Metro, ELACC's goal is to increase opportunities for low-income mariachis in housing, employment, and services through the development and construction of Lucha Reyes Apartments. This goal will be achieved by utilizing ELACC's programmatic services that bridge community wealth resources and uplift access to housing and financial literacy for mariachis, low-income families and income qualifying stakeholders.

As the cost of housing rises, there is a risk of mariachis finding other avenues for employment and housing that could result in Boyle Height's losing its rich cultural value. ELACC previously explored the feasibility of setting aside units for mariachis living in the area or who use the plaza for employment opportunities. While Fair Housing laws restrict this specific set-aside, ELACC is committed to an ongoing outreach strategy that emphasizes the mariachis, low-income families, and other income eligible stakeholders throughout the project's development timeline. Part of our due diligence as the developer is to inform the community on qualifications and the overall application process for this project. Our goal is to increase local residents' capacity to successfully apply for the Lucha Reyes Apartments and/or other affordable housing developments in Boyle Heights/East Los Angeles.

The Cultural Preservation Plan is premised on the understanding that in order for mariachis to remain a significant part of cultural life in Boyle Heights, three critical concerns must be addressed.

- 1) Alleviate housing insecurity so that a) local mariachis are not forced out to move and b) that if they are housed locally, the housing costs represent a small

proportion of their expense.

- 2) Preserve and expand the physical space that may be “owned” by mariachis.
- 3) Support programming that compliments the mariachis.

## **Tenant Outreach and Marketing**

ELACC is committed to the following ongoing activities to achieve housing security for mariachis and income qualifying stakeholders of Lucha Reyes. These activities will occur during the pre-development period through lease-up.

- With the assistance of LA Metro, implement a Tenant Marketing Plan that creates a focused approach to the immediate Boyle Heights area and those that utilize Mariachi Plaza. The marketing plan will use a variety of methods to encourage local individuals and families, especially mariachis, to secure low-cost housing. Marketing and outreach methods will include:
  - Workshops
  - Participation in community events (e.g., booths)
  - Signage and advertising
  - Social media
  - Pop-up events



**Shown above:** Lucha Reyes open space visioning workshop

- Metro will help to provide best practices and appropriate language for the Tenant Marketing Plan. Metro Sign-off would be a component of the overall Ground Lease approval process.
- Work with organizational partners in Boyle Heights to identify available housing programs and housing opportunities available to mariachi families.
- Directly engage mariachis who come to the Plaza for employment to ensure that they are aware of the following services:
  1. affordable housing rentals; and 2. home ownership opportunities. Home ownership candidates will be connected to ELACC's Community Wealth Department for guidance on 1<sup>st</sup> time home ownership. Also, qualifying mariachis who meet ELACC's program criteria will be connected with foreclosure and malicious eviction prevention resources.
- Offer quarterly workshops on how to apply for Affordable Housing in the area during the pre-development and construction phases (Spanish language provided). This would occur early enough in the process to allow mariachis and other workshop attendees to have the required tax returns, financial and related documentation necessary to be a qualified candidate for housing at Lucha Reyes Apartments.
- Connect mariachis with county affordable housing resources (LACDA, HACLA, etc.)





## ELACC EFFORTS TO DATE

*Over the past several years, ELACC has hosted workshops to increase community awareness of affordable housing opportunities and the technical capacity for searching and applying for low-cost housing. Workshops were held In December 2021 (Spanish), March 2022 (Spanish) and additional workshops are scheduled for 2022 in , August and November.*

*These opportunities are promoted via a text listserve managed by ELACC's Community Wealth Services department as well as other social media channels.*

**Shown above:** Mariachi Plaza June 2018 Affordable Housing 101 workshop; Green space visioning workshop; Mariachi Plaza November 2018 Community Benefits Meeting at Hollenbeck Youth Center.

## **Physical Space Dedicated to Benefit Mariachis**

### **Community Room**

ELACC is designating approximately 4,500 square feet in the ground floor of Lucha Reyes Apartments as a community room for mariachis. This space will be available for use via a Memorandum of Understanding with a local mariachi group so that they can use the venue as a rehearsal/meeting space in exchange for free or low-cost music classes to our tenants and community at large. By having this space accessible to mariachis adjacent to the plaza, ELACC also hopes that the space can serve as a resource center that connects the local artistic community with resources/aid/technical support. In addition to having a physical space, ELACC will also create a public bulletin board on the exterior façade of the community room to post important resources and information and highlight a few local “mariachis of the month” so that potential clients can reach out to mariachis for hire.

### **Plaza Safety**

ELACC is a strong advocate for Plaza safety, and in our due diligence as the developer of Lucha Reyes we support place-keeping mariachis at the Plaza. For example, from January – March 2022, ELACC attended several meetings with the Organizacion De Mariachis Independientes De California (OMICAL). During these stakeholder meetings, the mariachis elevated serious safety concerns about Mariachi Plaza and ELACC helped them brainstorm the best strategies to elevate their concerns to appropriate parties. Because of these meetings, OMICAL met with both Kevin de Leon’s office and the LAPD to elevate their safety concerns. Since then, the Senior Lead Officers of the Hollenbeck Division assured the mariachis that their legal status should not be a deterrent to

reporting suspicious activities, explained how policing in the area works, and who to contact for immediate assistance.

### **Programming provided by ELACC**

Following up on our meetings with the OMICAL mariachis this ENA period, ELACC will host additional workshops/meetings with mariachis this fall/winter.

- The first meeting will be an overview of the programming and services offered from our Community Wealth department.
- A second meeting will be scheduled in the fall to poll the local mariachi community on the plaza and other mariachi groups to assess the services and resource referrals that would be beneficial to them.

A third meeting will be scheduled before the end of this ENA period that will be tailored to the survey results gathered from meeting #2 and to assess any further needs identified through this community engagement process.



***Shown above:*** Mariachi Plaza Project Introduction Workshop

ELACC will facilitate community programming that supports the needs of mariachis in partnership with local mariachi groups and the surrounding community. Examples of programming includes but is not limited to:

- Offering free tax preparation services and/or other financial literacy services to Mariachis.
- Assist in providing linkages of social service programming. Connecting mariachis with the appropriate agencies or CBOs.
- Fundraising and/or opportunities of Mariachi Plaza' annual Santa Cecilia festival.
- Small business coaching.
- Financial literacy workshops & counseling, access to credit-building tools and incentivized saving programs (such as matched savings programs).
- Information on small social lending circles ("cundina"), a rotating savings/lending group where participants leverage individual funds to build credit and fulfill short-term saving goals. This program is administered through a partnership with Mission Asset Fund (MAF). Beginning fall 2022, ELACC will kick-off a \$2,500 small business microloan program through our MAF partnership, which will be shared with the mariachi community so they can apply.



## SUMMARY PLAN AND SCHEDULE

			2022		2023			2024			→
Action	Partners	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
General Workshop: How to Apply for Affordable Housing (AH)	General Outreach	8/18	11/22								
Mariachi Meeting	OMICAL/Other Mariachi Groups		11/22								
General Workshop: How to Apply for AH	General Outreach			2/23							
Mariachi Meeting	OMICAL/Other Mariachi Groups			2/23							
General Workshop: How to Apply for AH	General Outreach				5/23						
General Workshop: How to Apply for AH	General Outreach					8/23					
General Workshop: How to Apply for AH	General Outreach						11/23				
Mariachi Meeting: How to Apply for AH	OMICAL/Other Mariachi Groups						11/23				
General Workshop: How to Apply for AH	General Outreach							2/24			
General Workshop: How to Apply for AH	General Outreach								5/24		
General Workshop: How to Apply for AH	General Outreach									8/24	
General Workshop: How to Apply for AH	General Outreach										11/24