



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 26, 2018

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LA County Wins Court Approval To Develop Land Left Vacant Since 1992 Unrest

Los Angeles County took a giant step toward developing one of the last tracts of vacant land in south LA after a judge approved the immediate use of eminent domain to acquire four acres at the corner of Vermont and Manchester.

In December, the County sued to condemn the property on the east side of the 8400 and 8500 blocks of South Vermont Avenue from owner Eli Sasson, who had left the property largely undeveloped since 1992. The two blocks have been subject to more than 35 notices of building code violations over that period.

With today's ruling by LA Superior Court Judge Daniel Murphy, the County can begin to develop a project that will include affordable housing, retail, a Metro transit plaza, and an innovative boarding academy and training center on a piece of land that has been an eyesore for the community for 26 years.

LA County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas hailed the ruling, saying it paves the way for the proposed project to enter the development and implementation stages.

"Local governments have an absolute obligation to think imaginatively about our most pressing issues – job creation, quality education, transportation, and the development of affordable housing and community centers," Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said. "With this project, we are taking an out-of-the-box approach to getting all of that done at the corner of Vermont and Manchester."

"South LA has waited for a fresh start on Vermont Manchester for 26 years," added LA City Council Member Marqueece Harris-Dawson. "Over the course of almost three decades, residents endured crime, blight, violence, and neglect – all

while waiting for empty promises and false starts to produce something real. Today, a longstanding injustice has been resolved!"

With the court upholding the County's right to take immediate possession of the property, the Supervisor will begin working with community residents on the various elements of the project. Its most innovative aspect is the proposed preparatory boarding academy, to be developed and operated in partnership with the LA County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro).

It is expected to be a state-of-the-art vocational and college preparatory boarding academy that will allow students from the County's child welfare and juvenile justice systems, as well as youth from surrounding communities, to graduate with the skills needed for careers in the transportation industry.

It is an industry sorely in need of well-trained workers. Almost 40 percent of Metro employees will be eligible for retirement over the next two and a half years, and Measure M has generated funds to support 778,000 new jobs over the next 40 years.

"We have projects, we have jobs and we have funding — but not nearly enough skilled workers," said Metro CEO Phillip Washington. "This new workforce education model represents a shift in how Metro plans to prepare the next generation of workers. I am thrilled with today's decision."

Community members also celebrated the news. "This neighborhood has been held hostage to lip service and empty promises," said Robert Rubin of the Vermont Village Economic Development Corporation. "We have literally waited decades for this site to receive the investment, improvements and development it deserves."

"We are grateful that the County has taken steps to end the dilapidation of this prominent location in our community, so that we can have much needed and long overdue public amenities," added Pastor Anthony L. Williams of the 88th Street Temple Church.

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