



Los Angeles County
Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Metro

News

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LA County, Metro and the SEED School of Los Angeles Break Ground on Massive Vermont Manchester Development

Initial Project is an Innovative School that will Prepare At-Risk Youth for College & Transportation Careers. Second Phase of Development includes Affordable Apartments, Retail Stores, and More

Joined by cheering community members and other stakeholders, Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, LA Metro CEO Phillip A. Washington and LA City Councilmember Marqueece Harris-Dawson broke ground on the Vermont Manchester Transit Priority Project, which will dramatically transform a dirt lot the size of two city blocks that has been blighted for almost 30 years.

After acquiring the property through eminent domain in 2018, LA County, Metro and their partners are kicking off the first phase of the development: the SEED School of Los Angeles County (SEED LA), the state's first public boarding high school. The second phase will include building 180 affordable apartments, a Metro Job and Innovation Center and community-serving retail stores.

SEED LA will focus on serving the most at-risk and resilient students from South LA and elsewhere in the County and prepare them for college and beyond. The 147,000-sq. ft. campus will include 170 dorm rooms, 20 staff apartments, 20 classrooms, an art studio, science labs, a maker space lab, administration space, conference rooms, a gymnasium, a dining hall, outdoor recreation space, courtyards and a rooftop garden.

The inaugural class of SEED LA students will arrive in August 2022.

"This community has waited far too long for meaningful change," said Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas. "But real change is finally here, with SEED LA to be followed by new homes, shops, a transit hub and job training opportunities. An empty lot that once represented chronic disinvestment is about to be transformed into a landmark of educational opportunity, economic development, and hope."

SEED LA's five-day-a-week, 120-hour public boarding school model is built on giving students the "Gift of Time" to focus on their education in a stable, safe environment with a host of wrap-around support services. The SEED Foundation's three boarding school campuses on the east coast graduate students

who enroll in college at a rate of 94 percent and go on to complete college at nearly 4 times the national rate for comparable low-income, first-generation students.

Through a unique partnership with LA Metro and LA County, and with the generous support of cornerstone donors, Natasha and Brandon Beck, SEED LA is not only committed to preparing students for college, but also exposing students to a range of professional careers within the broader transportation and infrastructure sectors. This will include interdisciplinary courses in STEM fields, a mentorship program connecting students to industry professionals, internships at Metro and with industry partners, and field trips both locally and globally to give students a deeper understanding and appreciation for the infrastructure we all rely on each day.

“All over this country, infrastructure projects are being designed, built and managed in underserved communities by people who are neither indigenous to these communities nor reflective of these communities’ demographics,” said Metro CEO Phillip A. Washington. “Investing in the education of underserved children of color will bring transformational change to both SEED LA students and the communities they will contribute to in the future.”

“SEED schools change the lives of the students they serve and uplift the communities they call home,” shared Natasha and Brandon Beck, the project’s cornerstone donors. “We are honored to support the visionary team that is bringing this game-changing model to Los Angeles. The seeds we are planting today will bear tremendous fruit not just for our graduates, but for the entire region.”

SEED LA will serve 400 students in grades 9-12 selected through an admissions lottery weighted to prioritize resilient youth such as students experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity, have an incarcerated family member, or have had contact with the foster care, child protection, or juvenile justice system.

“So why a public boarding school rather than college readiness, college access, and college completion?” asked Lesley Poole, CEO of the SEED Foundation. “Because SEED goes further. SEED’s five-day-a-week, 120-hour public boarding school exists to plant, water, and nurture what all humans deeply long to know, that we matter and that we belong. SEED exists to double down on what all parents say to their children, “You are beautiful, you can achieve all things, and you have a place and purpose in this world.”

“SEED LA provides a powerful double bottom line: improved outcomes for at-risk students and the transformation of an abandoned part of the city into a vibrant center of urban redevelopment,” said ExED President and CEO Anita Landecker, who helped bring the SEED Foundation to L.A. “This project will unlock the door of privilege to students who have been locked out – and reinvigorate communities long left behind.”

This monumental development is taking place because the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors took the extraordinary step of acquiring the 4.2-acre property at the corner of Vermont and Manchester Avenues through eminent domain in 2018. The dirt lot had been vacant since the 1992 civil unrest.

Improvements will be completed in two phases. The first phase will commence immediately, with utility upgrade work followed by the construction of the SEED LA campus on the northern side of the property. The second phase, located on the northeast corner of the property, is anticipated to begin in 2021. It will include 180 affordable apartments, 55,000 square feet of community-serving retail, a transit plaza and a

Metro-operated Job and Innovation Center. The mixed-used project is being developed by Primestor, Bridge Housing and the Coalition for Responsible Community Development.

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About Metro

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) is currently providing lifeline service for essential trips and frontline workers. Metro continues building the most ambitious transportation infrastructure program in the United States and is working to greatly improve mobility through its Vision 2028 Plan.

Metro has proudly pledged to the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Health and Safety Commitment Program to help ensure the safe return of transit riders as the U.S. recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.

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About SEED/LA

SEED LA will be the fourth campus established by The SEED Foundation. Follow SEED LA at www.seedschoolla.org, facebook.com/TheSEEDSchoolLA, instagram.com/theseedschoolla, twitter.com/TheSeedSchoolLA