Overview of the Citywide Youth Development

STRATEGIC PLAN

Adopted by the Los Angeles City Council in 2024, the Citywide Youth Development Strategic Plan serves as a bold, shared blueprint for the future of youth programming in Los Angeles. The plan establishes clear goals, objectives, metrics, and outcomes, along with timelines to meet them.

PURPOSE

To create a unified vision and structure for youth development in the City of Los Angeles, shifting from fragmented services to a coordinated, inclusive, and data-driven system.

VISION

All Los Angeles youth should be informed, engaged decision-makers with equitable opportunities to pursue their ambitions and transition successfully into adulthood.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Collectively, these six strategic priorities aim to build a citywide ecosystem that empowers Los Angeles youth to thrive by ensuring access to economic opportunity, mental health support, leadership development, safe spaces, streamlined services, and stable housing within safe communities.

1. Economic Wellbeing
2. Mental Health
3. Youth Leadership
4. Youth Spaces
5. Service Navigation
6. Housing & Public Safety

DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The plan was developed through a year-long collaborative effort involving over 1,500 youth, more than 100 City staff members, community organizations, educators, and other stakeholders.

EQUITY FOCUS

The strategy prioritizes support for vulnerable youth, including low-income, foster, undocumented, LGBTQIA+, and justice-involved populations, ensuring culturally competent and accessible services.

CITYWIDE VISION AND VALUES

for Positive Youth Development

VISION

This vision acts as the guiding principle ("north star") for all youth development efforts in Los Angeles, aiming to ensure all youth have the support and opportunities they need to thrive:

"Los Angeles youth are informed and engaged decision-makers who have equitable opportunities to pursue their ambitions without restraint and successfully transition into adulthood."

VALUES

The plan outlines seven core values to guide the design and delivery of youth programs. These values serve as the ethical and strategic foundation for youth programming and decision-making in L.A.

- **Equitable** – Challenge systems of inequality and injustice affecting youth.
- **Youth-Centered** – Enable youth and families to actively participate in shaping the policies and programs that affect them.
- **Responsive** – Adapt to the diverse and evolving needs of youth with culturally informed services.
- **Innovative** – Encourage new ideas, take informed risks, and seek continuous improvement.
- **Evidence-Based & Results-Oriented** – Use data and research to design, evaluate, and refine programs and ensure accountability.
- **Collaborative** – Foster strong partnerships among city departments, community organizations, and other stakeholders for collective impact.
- **Joyful** – Promote fun, passion, and vibrancy in all youth development activities and spaces.

CITYWIDE PRIORITIES

of the Strategic Plan

The **Citywide Youth Development Priorities** of the Strategic Plan comprise six focus areas that guide Los Angeles' efforts to support youth in achieving well-being, leadership, and success. They address critical needs like economic opportunity, mental health, housing, safety, access to services, and youth leadership. These priorities align city departments and partners around shared goals to ensure equitable outcomes for all young people in Los Angeles.

1. ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

Goal: Youth have the knowledge and means to achieve economic independence.

- Centralize and improve access to City internships, fellowships, and workforce exposure opportunities, and develop uniform processes to ensure quality control and equitable access to these opportunities.
- Create more career pathways for youth to access well-paid employment opportunities within the City and beyond.
- Reconnect disconnected youth to education and employment.
- Expand mentorship across City programs.
- Ensure that youth know how to navigate necessary financial tasks.

2. MENTAL HEALTH

Goal: Youth have access to culturally appropriate mental health services to support their overall well-being.

- Expand access to culturally appropriate mental health services for youth.
- Expand and diversify the clinical and non-clinical workforce of mental health professionals.
- Train City staff in trauma-informed care and appropriate responses to mental health crises.
- Destigmatize mental health support.

3. YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Goal: Angeleno youth understand the political process and have decision-making power.

- Develop and standardize a civic engagement curriculum that can be used consistently across the City.
- Develop a continuum of youth leadership structures across the City that demystify the political process and provide youth with opportunities to directly communicate with policymakers and share input on City efforts.
- Expand the role of the Olivia E. Mitchell Youth Council (OMYC) to increase its opportunities to influence policy and advise the City.
- Pilot a youth-led participatory budgeting initiative.

CITYWIDE PRIORITIES

of the Strategic Plan
(Continued)

YOUTH SPACES

Goal: Youth have access to safe spaces where they can build community and engage in activities they desire.

- Facilitate the creation of a drop-in network of Youth Hubs that complement existing services and resources.
- Increase access to parks and green spaces for youth.

NAVIGATE SERVICES & SYSTEMS

Goal: Youth and their guardians know how to and can easily access youth services.

- Develop a comprehensive, searchable database of youth development programs and services that centralizes all youth development opportunities across the City.
- Develop a streamlined, single-entry portal for City youth services that enables youth to enroll in programs, manage their participation, and upload documents into a single system.
- Hire a team of Community Ambassadors to assist youth in navigating City programs, services, and basic needs.
- Ensure that City staff understand the various youth programs available across the City and know how to effectively connect with youth.
- Strategically market youth programs to ensure equity in outreach and reduce duplication of efforts.

HOUSING & PUBLIC SAFETY

Goal: Youth have access to safe and affordable housing and safe communities.

- Assist youth and their families in navigating housing options and obtaining the support they need.
- Increase and prioritize housing options for Transition-Age Youth (TAY) and their families.
- Improve public infrastructure to make communities safer.
- Establish community trust and build relationships with law enforcement. 5. Strengthen support systems for youth who engage in hazardous substance use.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT CATEGORIES

CATEGORIES

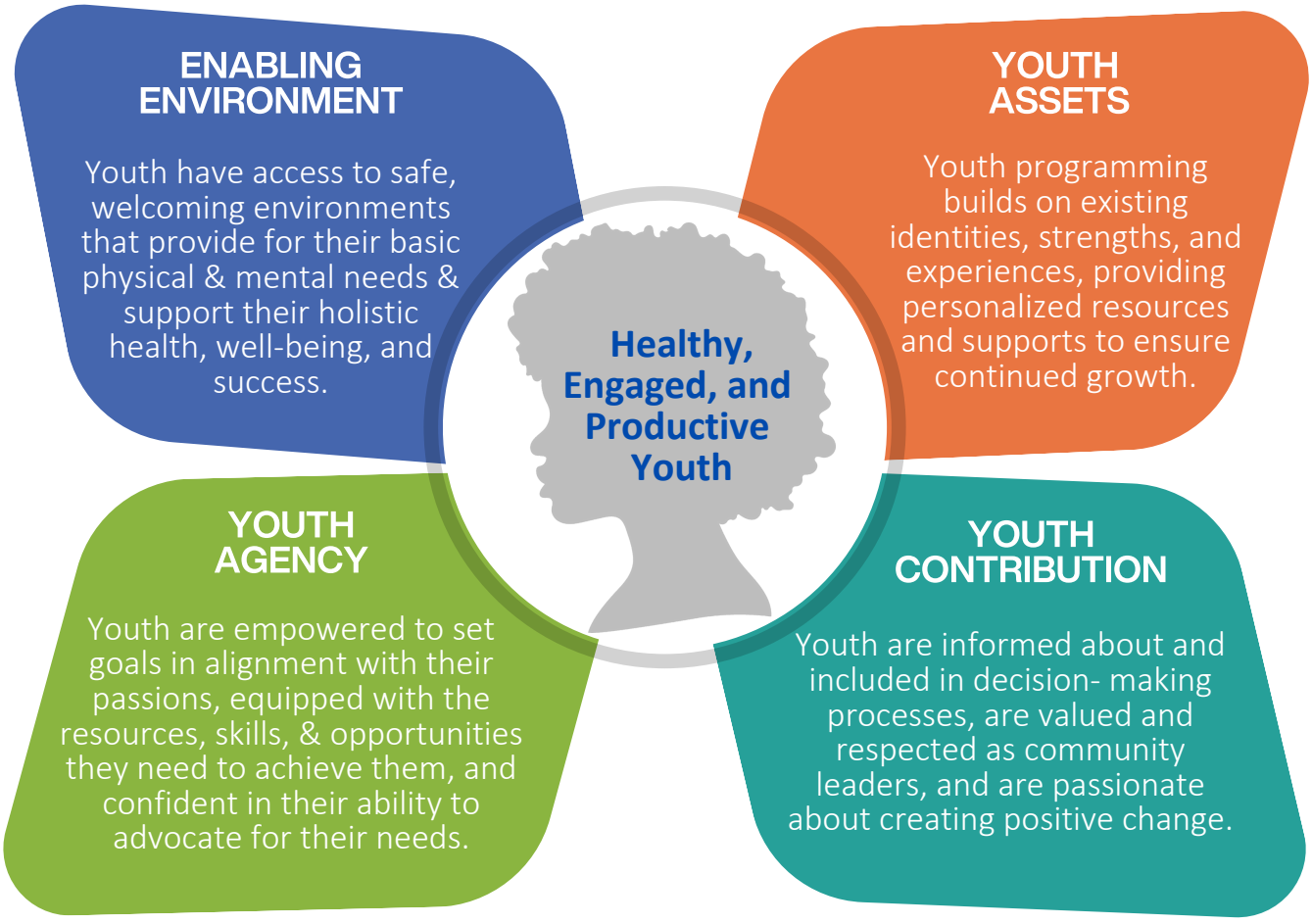
The categories of youth development provide a framework for classifying and aligning youth programs across the City of Los Angeles. These categories help organize services, identify gaps, and foster collaboration. The eight categories are:

- **Basic Needs (and Stability) –** Ensures that youth have access to essentials such as food, shelter, transportation, and economic support.
- **Health and Well-being –** Supports physical, mental, and emotional health through healthcare services and wellness programs.
- **Recreation –** Offers opportunities for creative expression and physical activities outside the classroom, including sports and the arts.
- **Academic Achievement & Educational Enrichment –** Enhances learning through tutoring, STEM education, college readiness, and academic support.
- **Career Readiness & Financial Empowerment –** Prepares youth for the workforce with job training, internships, financial literacy, and career coaching.
- **Leadership Development –** Promotes civic engagement and advocacy through youth councils, volunteerism, and decision-making roles.
- **Mentorship –** Fosters relationships with caring adults and peers to support youth development and goal achievement.
- **Safety and Justice –** Ensures youth safety through services related to violence prevention, legal aid, reentry support, and community protection.

DEFINING YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

in Los Angeles

Los Angeles defines youth development through a holistic **Positive Youth Development (PYD)** approach. PYD is a strengths-based approach that sees youth as essential assets to their communities. Traditional PYD models often overlook environmental challenges and assume youth have their basic needs met. To address this, L.A. adopted and expanded the YouthPower PYD Framework, which emphasizes holistic, strength-based, and equitable support through four domains.



The framework accounts for diverse lived experiences and meaningfully engages youth, families, and communities to empower all young people to thrive and lead.

SERVICE GAPS

in Youth Programming in L.A.

The Citywide Youth Development Strategic Plan highlights key **service gaps** identified through research, provider interviews, and youth feedback:

- **Limited Job and Career Prep** – Youth lack access to well-paying jobs, internships, and personalized workforce programs tailored to their diverse goals and needs.
- **Inadequate Mental Health Support** – There is a shortage of culturally competent mental health professionals in schools and community-based organizations.
- **Scarce Mentorship** – Sustained, high-quality mentorship opportunities that build youth resilience and social networks are lacking.
- **Insufficient Housing for Youth** – Transition Age Youth (TAY) face a persistent housing crisis, with Black youth disproportionately affected.
- **Safety Concerns** – Many youth feel unsafe in their neighborhoods due to poor infrastructure and a lack of secure gathering spaces.
- **Transportation Barriers** – Inadequate transportation prevents youth from accessing school and community programs.
- **Weak Transition Support** – Youth require more guidance to navigate key life stages, such as transitioning from school to work or between educational levels.
- **Lack of Safe, Drop-In Youth Spaces** – Few youth centers offer welcoming, walk-in access; many require burdensome intake processes that deter participation and limit the building of trust.
- **Food Insecurity** – Many youth and families face hunger, but service providers often lack funding to address basic nutritional needs.
- **Limited Out-of-School Enrichment** – Cuts to arts, sports, and after-school programs reduce engagement and access to positive, structured activities.
- **Insufficient Academic Support** – Youth, especially first-generation college aspirants, often lack the necessary academic resources and guidance to succeed.
- **Unaffordable Childcare and Early Education** – Limited access to affordable early learning and care widens educational and economic gaps.
- **Digital Inequity** – Many young people lack reliable internet access and devices, which restricts their ability to participate in digital learning and services.