



Strategic Plan

2016 - 2018

**Vision, Mission,
Work, Approach, Beliefs**

MISSION & VISION

MISSION:

LA-Más is an urban design non-profit that helps lower-income & underserved communities shape their future through policy and architecture.

VISION:

We envision a world where city growth is equitable and self-directed – where the best local solutions are brought to a city-wide scale

Our projects focus on communities in transition that are often underserved or overlooked by traditional service providers. Local city departments want to support and improve these areas, but are left with little budget and capacity to do so. Our unique non-profit fee-for-service model enables us to serve communities that need the most support, and do so in a way that preserves their local identity. These communities don't need new strategies or ideas labeled "innovative" by outsiders. They need an advocate, a translator, an intermediary to raise up what is already working locally and grow by their own rules. Through our process we elevate what works, and collaborate with city departments and developers to create much needed, local, contextual change. We believe everyone deserves an inclusive process for the growth of their community.

Read more about our project work.

In addition to localized project work, we strive to impact change at a larger scale across many zip codes. By working on different projects of different scales with different city departments, we uncover challenges with existing policies and connect the dots between project solutions. We keep a birds' eye view on how the urban realm is transforming Los Angeles, and use this vantage point to make informed recommendations and push policy forward. By lifting up latent models from individual communities, we offer recommendations that can positively impact hundreds of communities across the city.

Read more about our policy work.

Why LA-Más Exists:

Across Los Angeles, large-scale civic issues of displacement, gentrification, and developer-driven urban renewal are impacting thousands of local communities in transition. LA-Más pushes beyond the current norms of urban development by directly demonstrating how to create vibrant, dynamic communities that unify the vision, values, and voices of all stakeholders involved.

In an increasingly privatized world, public space is sparse and undervalued, yet it is essential for modern urban life. Public space provides the opportunity for social interaction and connections that are the building blocks of community.

Furthermore, private investment has great potential to prioritize meaningful community investment. Our unique approach and list of successful case studies proves to city agencies and developers alike that intentionally collaborating to expand the rights of individuals to affect, alter, and access public space and private investment is crucial for long-term success.

Our Location | Elysian Valley, better known as Frogtown

Since early 2014, we are proud to call Frogtown our home. Our office is located at 3051 North Coolidge Avenue along the Los Angeles River in a two story home that was once a halfway home, weed shop, and rumors indicate - James Brown's recording studio. We have an open second floor that is often made available for salon gatherings and co-working.

Though we work across the region, we see this community as a place we can engage critically in conversations surrounding inclusive change as our city develops. As the restoration of the LA River continues, we believe that existing stakeholders have a voice. Our Futuro de Frogtown effort highlights community values and strategies to ensure community driven change. Our Knowledge Hub initiative created a system of neighborhood leaders who are informed about renter rights, landlord responsibilities, and financial basics. We also donate our time each year to create wayfinding signage for the Frogtown Artwalk. We constantly partner with other community organizations from local job fairs to community murals. If you have any idea for us, please reach out.

MISSION, DIAGRAM

LOCALIZED

- + Individual communities
- + Local, project impact
- + Local voices
- + Community values
- + Translate policy + decisions
- + Short time frame



SYSTEMIC

- + Systemic change
- + Project models scaled, nationally
- + City agendas
- + City/developer values
- + Improve policy + decisions
- + Long time frame

Local Communities

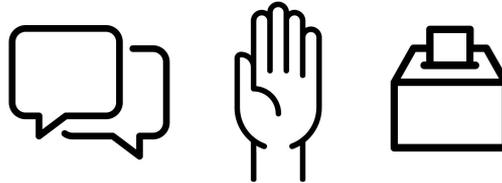
*Streets, Neighborhoods, Small Businesses,
Community Groups*

- **Community Engagement Workshops** elevate local voices and meaningfully connect different stakeholders.
- **Needs Assessment** analyze the range of local investment that is needed as it relates to housing, transportation, and the local economy.
- **Capacity Building** supports neighborhood leader to sustain and implement long term goals.



TRANSLATE & ENGAGE

Community Engagement



Public Sector & Private Market

Government Entities, Private Developers,

- **Asset Mapping** documents the landscape of a community, from human capital to hard infrastructure.
- **Community Vision Planning** outlines both values and implementable strategies.
- **Partnership Building** ensures a diverse coalition across sectors to ensure collaboration towards shared goals.

Local Communities

*Streets, Neighborhoods, Small Businesses,
Community Groups*

- **Storefront Remodels** support local economic development opportunities.
- **Alternative Models of Housing** include secondary units, cooperative development, and community-driven real estate projects.
- **Neighborhood Places** include buildings that provide services and programming.



DESIGN & BUILD

Architectural & Urban Planning &
Fabrication Services



Public Sector & Private Market

Government Entities, Private Developers,

- **Streetscapes Improvements** elevate the pedestrian realm with custom built furniture to unique greening strategies.
- **Corridor Strategies** create a identity that is connected by physical interventions and business participation.
- **Placemaking Services** create a vision of what is possible with physical installations and cultural programming.

Local Communities

*Streets, Neighborhoods, Small Businesses,
Community Groups*

- **Small Business Concierge Services** provides holistic and customized support from technical assistance to facade improvements.
- **Strategic Planning** outlines a roadmap for action based on existing resources, potential partnerships, and community goals.
- **Marketing & Branding** creates a clear identity through compelling graphics and outreach strategies.



STRATEGY & SUPPORT

Strategy, Business, and Marketing Consulting



Public Sector & Private Market

Government Entities, Private Developers,

- **Strategic Consulting** on how to engage communities and setting up projects for success can be offered on an ongoing or hourly basis.
- **Policy Salons** engage the broader community in discussing challenges and uncovering solutions.
- **Local Economic Development Strategies** ensure that the retention and attract of small businesses serves the community and builds the local economy.

UNIQUE APPROACH

We use interdisciplinary expertise. To support our cross-disciplinary approach, we have gathered a team with cross-disciplinary expertise in architecture, fabrication, urban planning, policy, and community engagement. Addressing these complex challenges requires a deep commitment to working across sectors and issues. There is no one field of expertise required to navigate the complexity and bureaucracy embedded in transforming our communities, so we rely heavily on our cross-disciplinary expertise and strong partnerships with fellow community-based organizations. In all our work, we try to connect the issues in each communities with a city-wide lens.

We engage thoughtfully. We start every project without any preconceived notions of what the answer is, and look to local communities to help uncover the best solution. Through our community engagement approach, we work directly with neighbors, leaders, business owners, and organizations in the local community to ensure our plans and designs custom fit their unique values and culture. We have strong relationships with community-based organizations who have existing relationships on the ground. This approach pushes design solutions further, and ensures each final built project has ongoing community support and buy-in to create lasting impact.

We catalyze where others can't. Changing any system is exceedingly difficult, and sometimes all it takes is a little push. We strive to push and ask questions where others can't, dream bigger than others can, and keep a birds' eye view on how the urban realm is transforming in Los Angeles.

We actually build things. It is easy to talk and make plans, but we believe in the importance of fabricating real things to directly impact streets, businesses, and communities.. Our design process is intentional, iterative, and implementable. To involve the community in this agile approach, we use tactical, tangible, engagement methods to gather feedback and push the boundaries of what the design solution can achieve. Often times this means we physically transform places with built objects and design interventions.

We lift up what works. Pilots, small scale solutions, and out-of-the-box experiments enable LA-Más to rapidly prove how something can work, and the value it can provide for a community. From there, we zoom out and turn these latent models and challenges with existing policies into something that can make change at a systemic level and be able to impact thousands of lives.

VALUES & BELIEFS

We aren't afraid of a big challenge. We tackle issues no one else will, and aren't afraid of risk. We believe that unique, creative solutions exist for every outdated policy or backwards rule that inhibits the growth, development, and value exchange for communities in need. We constantly push in new directions to find unearthen these ideas, and are relentless in our pursuit of bringing them to life.

We invest in people. Policy and city-wide agendas can be complicated, jargon-y beasts, and community meetings often just “check off a box” for developers. We know how powerful it is when every voice counts, but right now many voices aren't even at the table. LA-Más exists to translate, inspire, and work directly with communities to ensure that end-user projects and policies reflect the needs and values of these communities, not the needs of developers, architects, city officials, and policy-makers. Policy should be a tool, not an edict.

We are pragmatic idealists. We know we aren't the only ones who want to see change happen, and happen fast. Our deep roots and connections to LA city and local offices means we know first hand how to work within existing policies and systems, and in partnership with our impact-driven allies across city government, developers, and community leaders. We are often intermediaries between community and bureaucracy, and are able to catalyze change inside the system to cut red tape and create new solutions – for local community and city governments alike.

We do not accept the current norms of growth.

Displacement, gentrification, urban renewal, housing crisis; we work in the midst of these enormous challenges that impact thousands of communities in transition. We don't accept the current norms of how urban growth and development happens, and seek to push the boundaries and question assumptions around why things have to be done the way they are currently done.

We must create change faster. Our approach and belief system is not new. We are returning to the roots of radical architecture in the late 70's where architects and urban planners grappled with these issue and sought to use the design profession for good. But with the enormity of the challenges still facing communities today, we believe more than ever in the importance of our vision and approach and the need to work quickly on these big issues.

VISION FORECAST

Overall: Over the next ten years, LA-Más will become a well-known firm solving big, systemic challenges and impacting local communities through a bold, collaborative approach that is design-oriented and policy-driven. We will have a unique, defined approach to the work, strong roster of clients, outstanding team culture, and distinct perspectives and methods on how to create both local and systemic change. We will prove that women-led organizations can not only succeed, but thrive and achieve impact and success.

Model: We will build on our successful launch, and continue to grow our list of case studies, direct impact outcomes, and be known for upholding our values. Our strong business model (with a mix of fee-for-service, foundation grants, and individual donors) will propel our work forward, enabling us to have a thriving team, and strong project success.

Projects & Clients: LA-Más will become much more than a small group of people committing to each other and working on one-off projects. We will have built up a strong set of relationships and deep roster of clients who share our values and vision for change. We are just as happy working with city offices as we are with developers or local community organizations. We will work on emergent issues facing our city, and create tangible, out-of-the-box solutions that push policy to better serve local communities. Key thought leader projects, like ADUs, will enable our model and approach to spread to other cities.

Team: We will have a staff of 10-15+, and continue to embody a cross-disciplinary set of skills. As a larger team, we will have clear systems and processes that support autonomy, mastery, and collaboration. Our leadership will provide strong mentorship, and invests heavily in the team to create a pipeline of talent and leadership within LA-Más. We will get to a place where LA-Más could even live on without the founding team, as we will have proven our model and approach.

Geographic Focus: We know that the insights and solutions we are creating for Los Angeles have the potential to reach far beyond this city or even county. In the short-term we will hone in on our approach and business model, proving that LA-Más can scale. 5 of 10 years from now, LA-Más will be taking on projects in key cities across the country.

Impact & Communities: We will work with lower-income and shrinking middle-class communities – but above any specific community focus, we will choose projects that have the potential for scale. We will inspire competitors to tackle these same challenges, put forth a new model of collaboration and community engagement, and fundamentally change how the system currently works.

Strategic Priorities, Goals & Tactics

3 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR 2016 - 2018

1

Solidify the Business Model
to Enable Future Phases of
Growth

2

Increase Project Success & Impact to Create
Systems-Level Change

3

Improve Internal Ops
to Make LA-Más a Great,
Effective Place to Work

GOALS WITHIN STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1

Solidify the Business Model to Enable Future Phases of Growth

Refine Business Model & Practices

Deepen Relationships with Key Stakeholders

Increase Board Fundraising & Support

Grow Project Portfolio Strategically

Clarify + Increase External Comms & Marketing

2

Increase Project Success & Impact to Create Systems-Level Change

Solidify approach / project processes

Begin Impact Measurement

Pilot Policy Agenda

Increase Thought Leadership

3

Improve Internal Ops to Make LA-Más a Great, Effective Place to Work

Round Out & Grow Staffing

Solidify Internal/ Operational Systems

Create Strong Culture Driven by Feedback, and Mentorship

Improve + Better Utilize Office

[Full Tracking Spreadsheet Link Here](#)



1

**Solidify the Business Model to
Enable Future Phases of Growth**

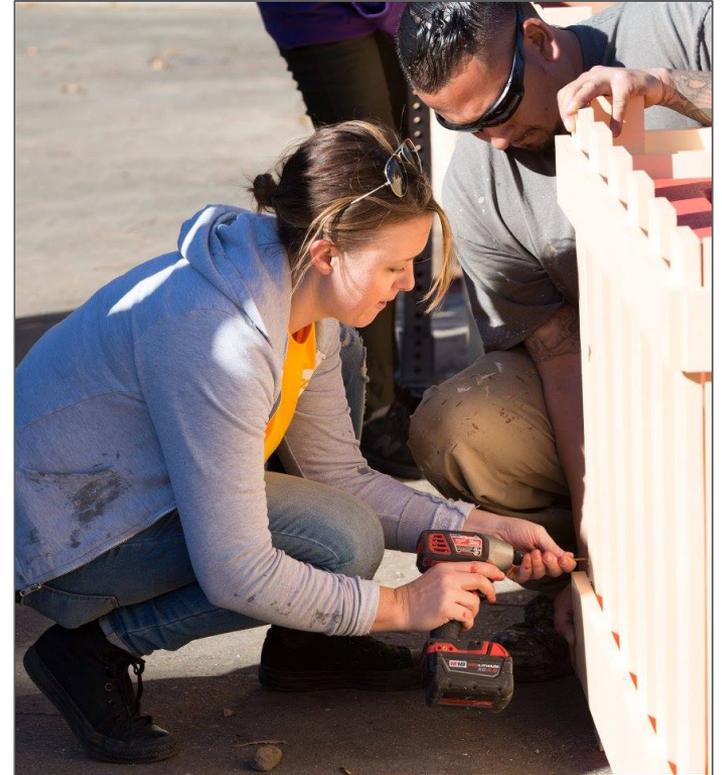
1. Solidify the Business Model to Enable Future Phases of Growth

GOAL A:

Refine Business Model & Practices

CORE STRATEGIES:

- + **Increase sustainable Fee-For-Service projects**, by raising project minimums, solidifying scoping and processes, and focusing on recurring revenue opportunities.
- + **Increase foundation grants**, focusing on smaller, family foundations in the near term and larger foundations over the next several years.
- + **Cover construction/fabrication costs**, through partnerships with home improvements businesses.
- + **Pilot consulting services**, to sustain relationships with existing clients



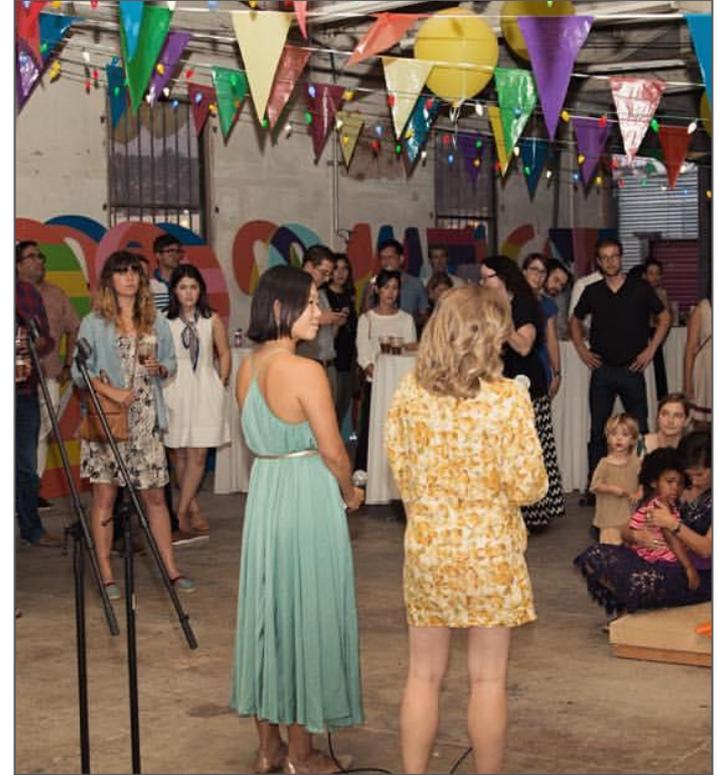
1. Solidify the Business Model to Enable Future Phases of Growth

GOAL B:

Deepen Relationships with Key Stakeholders

CORE STRATEGIES:

- + **Conduct targeted outreach for key contacts**, across customers/clients, foundations, and individual donors
 - **Customers/Clients** | Curated salons for political, academic, architectural audience
 - **Foundations** | private funder event, direct networking
 - **Individual donors** | Annual fundraiser, smaller fundraising events, and private salons



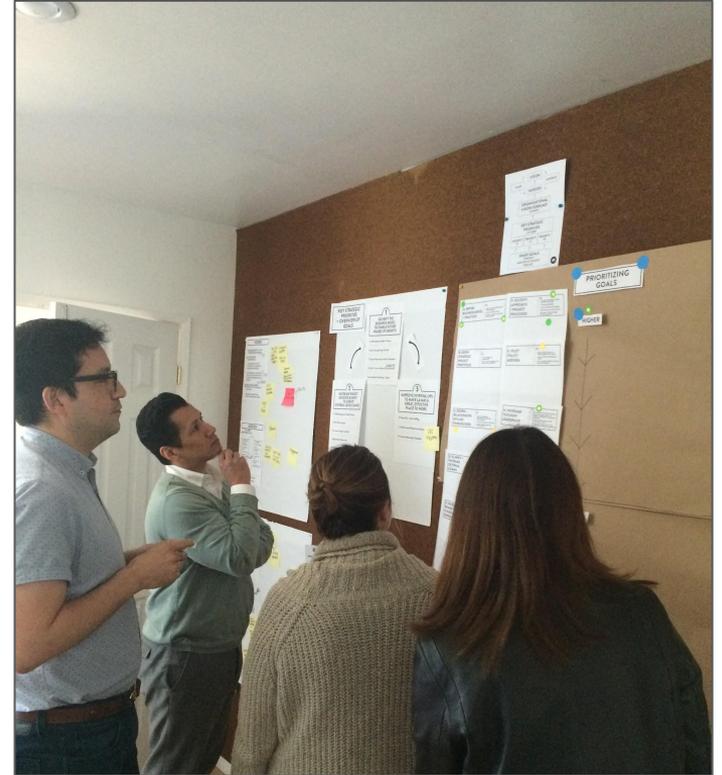
1. Solidify the Business Model to Enable Future Phases of Growth

GOAL C:

Increase Board Fundraising & Strategic Support

CORE STRATEGIES:

- + **Create board fundraising committee**
- + **Achieve full board giving** (give OR get of \$2,000)
- + **Engage each board member on one strategic priority** (fundraising, relationship development, marketing, etc.)



1. Solidify the Business Model to Enable Future Phases of Growth

GOAL D: Grow Project Portfolio Strategically

CORE STRATEGIES:

- + **Define stretch growth goals** for projects, grants, and individual giving, and proactively reach those goals
- + **Work on key issue-based project each year.** ADU is current one, focused on a habitable project. This supports our focus on impact, and is a business development driver.



GREAT STREETS INITIATIVE:
RESEDA BLVD.



WATTS COMMUNITY STUDIO



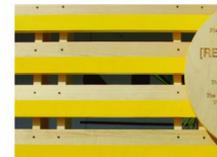
ON AVALON



A+D SHELTER EXHIBIT



PICO STREET ENDS



RE[VISIT] RE[SEDA]
TRANSFORMATIVE STAGE



PACOIMA URBAN GREENING



ÉCOLE BEATRICE



ELYSIAN VALLEY
KNOWLEDGE HUBS

1. Solidify the Business Model to Enable Future Phases of Growth

GOAL E:

Clarify + Increase External Communications & Marketing

CORE STRATEGIES:

- + **Create a message and photography bank** so all language used for proposals, grants, etc. is strong, and strategically on point, and photography elevates our image.
- + **Adjust website & marketing materials** to reflect updated vision, mission, approach, capabilities, and case studies. (Full website overhaul to come in next few years.)
- + **Ensure a shared narrative on all marketing & communications**, specifically for Helen + Elizabeth in their stories and collective viewpoint.
- + **Increase marketing efforts** across newsletters, social media, and direct outreach





2

**Increase Project Success & Impact
to Create Systems-Level Change**

2. Increase Project Success & Impact to Create Systems-Level Change

GOAL F:

Solidify Approach & Project Processes

CORE STRATEGIES:

- + **Rigorously define process, SOPs, internal accountability, touchpoints, tracking systems, working styles, etc.** so that all projects can run more smoothly, with greater outputs, and more delegation.
- + **Re-introduce Time Tracking** (Harvest) to have visibility into utilization, billability, project scope, revenue, etc.

Active Projects (11) ▾

	Budget	Spent	Remaining	Costs	
ADU NELA					
Design	\$25,000.00	\$0.00	\$25,000.00	100%	\$0.00 Actions ▾
FEM! TA MILLION SIUM					
Design	\$13,500.00	\$0.00	\$13,500.00	100%	\$0.00 Actions ▾
Fabrication	\$4,000.00	\$0.00	\$4,000.00	100%	\$0.00 Actions ▾
Project Management	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00	100%	\$0.00 Actions ▾
ON AVALON PHASE II					
Community Engagement	\$40,000.00	\$0.00	\$40,000.00	100%	\$0.00 Actions ▾
Design	\$25,000.00	\$0.00	\$25,000.00	100%	\$0.00 Actions ▾
Fabrication	\$55,000.00	\$0.00	\$55,000.00	100%	\$0.00 Actions ▾
Project Management	\$5,000.00	\$0.00	\$5,000.00	100%	\$0.00 Actions ▾
RIO VISTAS MURALS					
Design	\$13,000.00	\$0.00	\$13,000.00	100%	\$370.64 Actions ▾
Fabrication	\$2,000.00	\$0.00	\$2,000.00	100%	\$0.00 Actions ▾
Project Management	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00	100%	\$0.00 Actions ▾

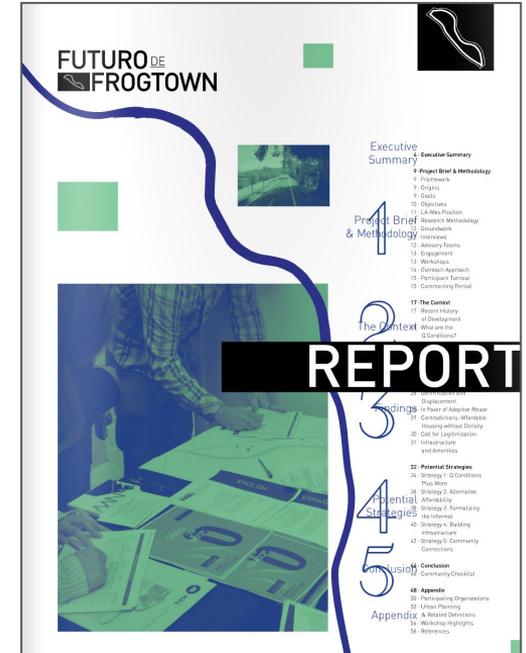
2. Increase Project Success & Impact to Create Systems-Level Change

GOAL G:

Begin Impact Measurement

CORE STRATEGIES:

- + **Define & communicate softer impact outcomes**, and integrate into project approach immediately. Create impact language/policy outcome thoughts for top projects to communicate with funders and donors. Define impact story for local Frogtown community.
- + **Complete full scale impact measurement**, through a grant, and complete a longitudinal impact study.



2. Increase Project Success & Impact to Create Systems-Level Change

GOAL H:

Pilot Policy Agenda

CORE STRATEGIES:

- + **Define policy goals on top two projects**, and write posts about lessons learning, policy implications, etc.
- + *[Additional policy agenda strategies to come in future years once team is built up]*

2. Increase Project Success & Impact to Create Systems-Level Change

GOAL I:

Increase Thought Leadership

CORE STRATEGIES:

- + **Integrate thought leadership more intentionally into digital** – newsletters, social media, website, etc.
- + **Advance thought leadership viewpoint with key stakeholders** through regular in-person salons and other events.
- + **Increase participation in conferences, events, speaking opportunities** as speakers, moderators, and panelists.





3

**Improve Internal Ops to
Make LA-Más a Great, Effective Place to Work**

3. Improve Internal Operations to Make LA-Más a Great, Effective Place to Work

GOAL J: Round Out & Grow Staffing

CORE STRATEGIES:

- + **Hire policy/community engagement support** (Rosalinda Meza - 6mo)
- + **Hire admin/ marketing/ grant writing/ social media** (2017)
- + **Hire mid-level designer** (2017)

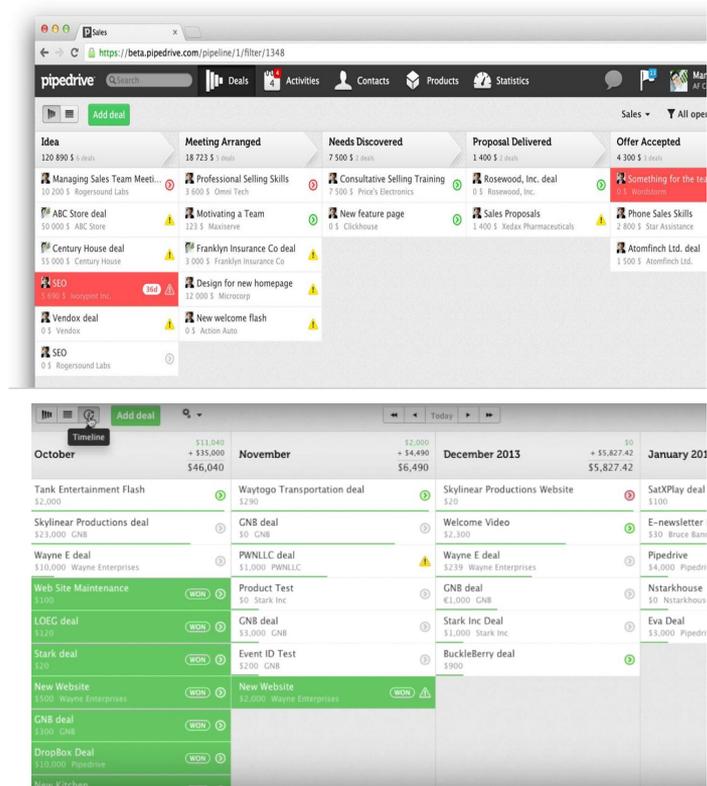


3. Improve Internal Operations to Make LA-Más a Great, Effective Place to Work

GOAL K: Solidify Internal Operational Systems

CORE STRATEGIES:

- + **Define key operational systems**, including an org chart (current and future), job descriptions, internal roles & responsibilities
- + **Roll out proposal/relationship tracking system (CRM)** – Pipedrive.
- + **Create scoping tool / project pricing calculator** to create consistency on how projects are scoped, and a deeper level of understanding around project profitability.
- + **Create and utilize business performance tracking systems** to more nimbly monitor revenue, expense, staff forecasting, etc.



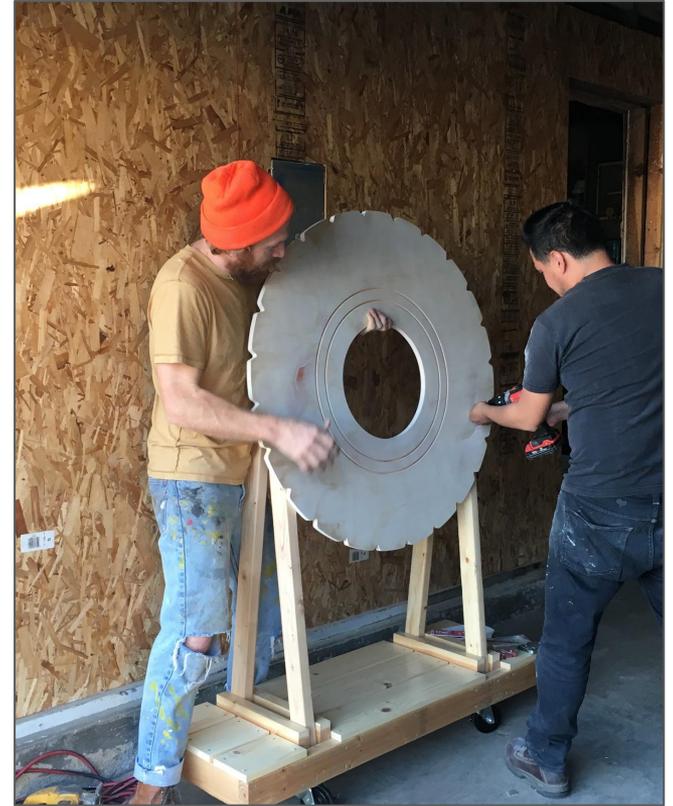
3. Improve Internal Operations to Make LA-Más a Great, Effective Place to Work

GOAL 1:

Create Strong Culture Driven by Feedback & Mentorship

CORE STRATEGIES:

- + **Create strong individual and co-leadership model for Helen + Elizabeth**, across processes and communication internally with staff. Regular meetings with Durfee mentor.
- + **Regular reviews/feedback sessions with all staff**, including an annual in-depth performance review, and lighter quarterly team lunch check-ins
- + **Provide professional development/mentorship opportunities for all staff**



3. Improve Internal Operations to Make LA-Más a Great, Effective Place to Work

GOAL M:

Improve & Better Utilize Office

CORE STRATEGIES:

- + **Undertake immediate office improvements & purchase capital equipment** (painting, plotter, truck, etc.)
- + **Move into space with an multi-year lease** (and decide whether to purposefully stay in Frogtown)



Onward!