



“Equity and Resilience” Workshop Summary

October 26, 2018

Workshop Overview

The “Our County” Stakeholder Engagement Team invited nonprofit organizations throughout Los Angeles County to provide input on the topics of Equity and Resilience for the County’s first Sustainability Plan. The “Equity and Resilience” workshop, held on October 26, 2018 at the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center, attracted dozens of attendees from a diverse set of nonprofit organizations, as well as several public agencies. The 5-hour workshop engaged 70 individuals representing 51 nonprofit organizations who participated in several key sessions to provide input on Equity and Resilience strategies the “Our County” plan should emphasize. Approximately a third of the groups stated that their primary or secondary organizational focus was “environmental justice,” and another 23% listed “public health” as one of their primary concerns. The remaining participants cited parks & open space, climate, jobs, transportation and housing as their primary or secondary organizational interests. There was also strong representation from immigrant rights, criminal justice, and educational justice organizations.

The workshop provided an explanation of how the “Our County” plan will be developed and an overview of equity and resilience issues the County faces. After introductory remarks from Marissa Aho (L.A. Mayor’s Office) and Dr. Martha Matsuoka (Occidental College) on the topics of Resilience and Equity, attendees were broken up into four morning sessions of their choice, with each section led by a discussion facilitator, along with a butcher paper scribe and computer note taker. After lunch, participants split into an additional topic session with a similar configuration. The discussion topics included:

Morning Breakout Sessions

- Cumulative Impacts in Environmental Justice Communities
- Healthy Homes for All
- Eliminating Barriers to Employment
- Community Cohesion and Emergency Preparedness

Afternoon Breakout Sessions

- Food and Food System Justice
- Anti-Displacement & the Right to Thrive in Place
- Defining Just Growth in L.A. County
- L.A. County Governance to Advance Sustainability

As part of the interactive discussions, participants were encouraged to propose alternative or additional priority strategies to those contained in notes captured from previous “Our County” workshops as it relates to the session topic. Throughout the exercise, facilitators were present to help spur discussion while note takers transcribed comments, with priority recommendations written out on butcher paper. After the afternoon session, everyone gathered in the main room for a plenary session where they had the opportunity to vote for their priority recommendations via dot stickers on any of the sessions’ priorities.



The following compilation represents a succinct synthesis of more than 850 comments that the Stakeholder Engagement team was able to capture through butcher paper notetaking, computer laptop transcription, as well as written comment cards received throughout the workshop. While each stakeholder brought their own unique set of recommendations and input for the “Our County” plan, several common themes emerged throughout the workshop that either seek to address missing issues or enhance the goals of Equity and Resilience. The following are the top themes identified:

Key Themes

- Centering historically and currently disenfranchised groups in decision-making through a **responsive and bottom-up governance structure** that invests in grassroots leadership development. There was significant support for improvements in stakeholder engagement processes, namely the need for intentional partnerships with community-based organizations and Native nations that properly funds resident outreach work. From the creation of Neighborhood Councils for unincorporated areas to a Community Advisory Committee, participants also advocated for resident-led mechanisms that hold decision-makers accountable to the goals and strategies laid out in the Our County plan and beyond.
- Targeting **investments and resources to support community-led models** that build neighborhood wealth, eliminate housing instability, and strengthen social infrastructure. Participants repeatedly suggested measures to finance programs and initiatives that advance inclusive economic development in low-income neighborhoods. This included supporting local business ownership, such as the legalization of street vending, as well as advancing cooperative land ownership and expansion of affordable housing, especially very low-income, to combat displacement pressures.
- Accelerating the shift away from exploitative and extractive practices through **enforceable regulatory mechanisms** with a prioritization on vulnerable residents’ health and safety. Whether driven by public agency or private industry actors, attendees advocated for strong accountability measures for adverse impacts caused to communities, workers, and the environment. Several recommended requirements for developers to provide multiple community benefits, including: cleaner, affordable neighborhoods as well as hazardous-free workplaces with family-supporting wages that simultaneously help curb greenhouse gas emissions and safeguard residents from pollution and displacement, where appropriate.
- Advancing **public awareness and literacy** through timely, accessible communication methods, culturally-competent trainings, and diverse data collection approaches. There were numerous recommendations for language-accessible outreach methods that keep residents regularly informed on topics such as: important policy initiatives, neighborhood developments, and available cost-saving programs available to them, to name a few. Additionally, many want to see more comprehensive and accurate data collection that include “ground-truthing” procedures where paid residents identify any missing gaps on their own neighborhood’s data.



Main Takeaways by Breakout Session

Throughout the workshop, representatives from nonprofit organizations throughout the County provided numerous strategies that supported the goals of Equity and Resiliency for communities most at risk from climate change, economic exploitation, pollution, and a host of other issues. When listing communities most impacted, breakout session participants included people of color, neighborhoods that were redlined, low-income populations, children, immigrants, the elderly, and transgender women, to name a few. Regardless of the discussion topic, participants cited inclusive community engagement and changes in governance structures that centered these populations as central to tackle issues of inequality in the County. There was also strong support for a reprioritization of County resources throughout. The following provides a succinct summary of each breakout group discussion.

Cumulative Health Impacts in Environmental Justice Communities

Attendees offered a variety of strategies that emphasized meaningful community engagement, realignment of resources, and stronger accountability in environmental justice communities. Throughout the conversation, participants recommended drawing from current resilient practices used in communities of color and Native nations that advance sustainability. Many emphasized the need to uplift, decriminalize, and shift resources to expand upon these community-driven models, rather than develop new technologies that are inaccessible to low-income individuals. There was also strong support for ensuring adequate resident engagement, particularly when new developments are proposed. This included conducting comprehensive research, both quantitative and qualitative, as well as incentivizing residents through a variety of means to participate in meetings. Looking towards the future, there were many comments that pushed for better education at schools regarding sustainability, banning polluting practices and industries, and establishing health-protective and green development standards that prevent incompatible land uses.

Healthy Homes for All

Throughout the session, participants proposed recommendations that would benefit housing insecure individuals. Many recommendations dealt with accelerating the production of, and establishing protections for, permanently affordable housing. This included supporting alternative housing models, such as community land trusts, restructuring mortgages for low-income families, and expediting the development process for affordable housing developments. Comprehensive renters' rights engagement as well as adequate policies (with funding attached) to combat predatory housing practices rose to the top. Regarding health, participants strongly recommended land use policies and building code amendments that minimize pollution burden and impacts from high heat days, such as buffers between industrial and residential areas.



Eliminating Barriers to Employment

There were numerous strategies offered that focused on workforce development, broader labor standards, and local economic development during this session. With economically vulnerable populations in mind (undocumented immigrants, formerly incarcerated individuals, at-risk youth, etc.), attendees advocated for policies that prepare individuals for well-paying jobs both through training programs as well as local hire and livable wage requirements County-wide. There was also strong support for investments in “informal” businesses, such as street vending, to promote local job creation. Participants expressed concerns over “public charge” and vulnerability of social safety net programs, with many advocating for the County to take more proactive measures at protecting residents that would be most affected.

Community Cohesion and Emergency Preparedness

While there was general support for related strategies captured from previous workshops, participants emphasized the need for greater urgency and action regarding disaster management and risk. Many advocated for a comprehensive emergency preparedness plan that ensures the most vulnerable residents are adequately resourced with vital necessities, including resiliency hubs. In addition to ensuring public awareness on evacuation plans, stakeholders recommended better data collection to assess neighborhood-specific risks, which would include active participation of residents. Further, there was strong support for better intergovernmental coordination and services ranging from hiring more culturally competent staff to bringing all County jurisdictions to the table to conduct real emergency drills.

Food and Food System Justice

From creating small community gardens to redirecting food waste, participants envisioned a food system that prioritizes health, nature, and economic sustainability. Their ideas included transforming food production and land use in a way that provides a dignified workplace and promotes environmental justice. Strategies included offsetting prices of local, organic produce through incentive programs, developing farm-to-school programs that increased agricultural literacy of students, and remediating soil in communities of color to ensure healthy food production. In terms of economic equity, there was strong support for using the County’s procurement powers to support local farmers and feed County facilities, including prisons and hospitals.

Anti-Displacement & the Right to Thrive in Place

The topic of displacement and gentrification generated an in-depth conversation about ongoing racial exclusion and wealth inequality. With this in mind, participants recommended a variety of strategies that would help empower housing-insecure residents and combat unaffordable living costs. This included supporting community-based organizations and tenant rights groups’ efforts to strengthen tenant protections, such as regulating corporations that flip properties and requiring anti-displacement plans in rent-burdened neighborhoods. There was also strong support for a diversity of communal and individual ownership models that would preserve affordable housing stock and help close the racial wealth gap.



Defining Just Growth in L.A. County

Participants offered a broad set of recommendations that encourage inclusive development, open opportunities for excluded residents, and challenge market-oriented practices. From legalizing informal businesses and rent control to abolishing for-profit prisons, there were dozens of strategies that seek to redress practices that have shut certain populations from reaching economic security. Example ideas included funding local business ownership and community land trusts in order to build neighborhood wealth. Stakeholders also advocated for more strategic partnerships with labor organizations that empower workers and create pipelines for youth of color to enter emerging jobs that are unionized. Ultimately, there was strong support for creating a circular economy that did not rely on extraction of environmental resources and exploitation of workers.

L.A. County Governance to Advance Sustainability

Commenting on the need for more inclusive engagement and coordination of activities, participants emphasized L.A. County's importance with establishing an equitable governance structure that is accountable to its most marginalized constituents. Many felt it was necessary for the County to establish Neighborhood Councils that represent unincorporated areas whose voices continue to be unheard. Through leadership development programs and thoughtful engagement processes, participants envisioned more inclusive meetings with residents that included stipends, childcare, and transportation. Regarding sustainability, an individual suggested the creation of a Department of Ecological Transition while others recommended changes to public infrastructure and planning areas to better reflect ecological boundaries.

Detailed Strategies

The following are the top themes with detailed strategies from input received:

<p>CREATE AN INCLUSIVE, BOTTOM-UP GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a Neighborhood Council structure for unincorporated areas that include comprehensive resident outreach plans for maximized participation • Develop appropriate community meeting standards that fund childcare, transportation costs, and community organizations' time • Invest in grassroots leadership through interactive training programs to increase diversity on boards, commissions, and political offices • Continue "Our County" nonprofit workshops during implementation phase of Plan • Require equity and inclusion training for all public agency staff • Provide opportunities for youth to engage • Create a participatory budget process
<p>FINANCE COMMUNITY-LED, WEALTH-GENERATING ACTIVITIES IN DISINVESTED NEIGHBORHOODS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support community-land trusts and other cooperatively-owned housing initiatives • Legalize street vending throughout the County • Expand Accessory Dwelling Unit program countywide, helping low-income individuals bring units up to building code • Establish homeownership programs, such as rent-to-own for first-time homebuyers, with an emphasis on neighborhoods that were previously redlined • Use County's procurement influence to contract with diverse businesses that are local, environmentally responsible, and/or a worker-owned cooperative • Incorporate anti-displacement policies in all publicly-funded projects
<p>STRIVE TOWARDS THE ELIMINATION OF EXPLOITATIVE AND EXTRACITVE PRACTICES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require developers to provide multiple community benefits, including anti-displacement strategies and local hire with family-supporting wages • Establish stronger land use standards to protect health (i.e. toxic buffer zones) • Implement a countywide tax on polluting industries • Offer land reparations to Native nations • Restrict predatory housing policies such as house-flipping and AirBnb • Abolish the for-profit prison industry • Eliminate barriers to employment and affordable housing for formerly incarcerated and undocumented individuals • Implement a universal basic income
<p>INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS AND LITERACY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminate information to residents through a variety of methods, including training and paying neighborhood leaders to be messengers, in a way that is accessible to all • Educate residents on environmental and economic impacts from every day activities (e.g. food, energy use, transportation) with an emphasis on equity and nature • In partnership with long-time residents, conduct "ground-truthing" neighborhood needs assessments that identify current risks and resources available • Develop better curriculum at schools that inform youth about environmental justice • Conduct regular neighborhood emergency drills to prepare residents with evacuation procedures



Other themes, although not as prominent, also emerged, including:

- Drawing upon and **learning from indigenous practices** on sustainable land management and community ownership.
- Implementing **comprehensive emergency preparedness** plans that proactively reduces risk through elimination of hazardous facilities, creation of neighborhood resiliency hubs, and proper multimodal evacuation routes.
- Establishing the County as the regional convening entity for **stronger intergovernmental coordination and efficient use of resources**.
- Advancing **food sovereignty** by remediating contaminated soil and promoting healthy food production throughout the County, where appropriate.
- Strengthening **neighborhood-level social infrastructure** through innovative community development programs, such as *promotoras* program.



Appendix A: “Waste and Resource Management” Workshop Attendee List

- A Community of Friends
- Amigos de Los Rios
- Bike San Gabriel Valley
- California Greenworks
- Chrysalis
- Climate Resolve
- Coalition for a Safe Environment
- Coalition for Clean Air
- Coalition for Economic Survival
- Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of LA
- Communities for a Better Environment*
- Community Assets Re-Defining Education (CADRE)
- Community Health Councils
- Community Intelligence
- Conservation Corps of Long Beach
- Day One*
- Del Amo Action Committee
- East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice*
- Enterprise Community Partners / Building Resilience Network
- Friends of the LA River
- Hunger Action LA
- IDEPSCA - Instituto de Educacion Popular del Sur de California
- LA Black Worker Center
- LA Food Policy Council
- LA Funders' Collaborative
- LA Neighborhood Land Trust
- Labor Community Strategy Center
- Leadership for Urban Renewal Network
- Little Tokyo Service Center
- Long Beach Forward (BHC Long Beach)
- Maravilla Foundation
- Maternal and Child Health Access
- Mujeres de la Tierra
- Nature Conservancy
- Pacific Asian Consortium on Employment
- Pacoima Beautiful*



- People for Mobility Justice
- Physicians for Social Responsibility-LA
- Proyecto Pastoral
- River Project
- Sacred Places Institute for Indigenous Peoples
- SCOPE*
- SEIU
- Social Justice Learning Institute
- Strategic Actions for a Just Economy
- Thai CDC
- The City Project
- The Wilderness Society
- Trust for Public Land
- TRUST South LA
- William C. Velasquez Institute

*Community-based organization anchor