



## “Our County Public Health and Air Quality” Public & Private Sector Workshop Summary

### Workshop Overview

UCLA convened public and private sector leaders across Los Angeles County to provide input on the topics of public health and air quality in L.A. County and their intersections with economy and workforce, housing and land use, climate adaptation, and other cross-cutting sustainability topics. The “Public Health & Air Quality” workshop, held on October 3, 2018 at LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes in Downtown Los Angeles, convened 45 attendees representing 33 public agencies, health entities, healthcare providers, and private companies.

Stakeholders participated throughout the three and a half-hour workshop in various breakout sessions that allowed them to refine, rewrite, and prioritize public health and air quality-related goals and strategies that will drive the Our County plan.

### Workshop Proceedings

The L.A. County Chief Sustainability Office began the workshop by providing an overview of the Our County plan development process. California Air Resources Board (CARB) Board Member and former California State Assembly member Hector de la Torre spoke about CARB’s work in the region to address and regulate air quality. Monica Guerra from Raimi & Associates followed with a presentation covering key background information, data, and regional findings related to public health issues, factors that cause discrepancies of health outcomes, existing programs, and geographically-specific air quality impacts. Stakeholders in the room all received an accompanying briefing document outlining the information in the briefing presentation. The stakeholders received this document ahead of time to review and UCLA also provided copies at the workshop.

After the group presentations, workshop participants met in breakout groups to provide feedback on general Public Health & Air Quality draft goals that were included in the briefing and framed the discussion. Participants selected goals that aligned with their professional and personal experience, using one-on-one conversations to spur the group’s wider discussion and reworking of the goals. Facilitators took notes on butcher paper in addition to recording detailed notes in a typed document.

The second breakout session began with an overview of selected Case Studies from L.A. County departments, each evoking a different cross-cutting sustainability topic. Participants used the Case Studies to develop a list of Public Health and Air Quality-related sustainability strategies that they felt L.A. County should incorporate into the Sustainability Plan. The participants shared these results in a report back to the entire audience of attendees.

The final breakout session had attendees pair off and come up with an idea for a public-private partnership opportunity that aligns public health and air quality. The L.A. County Chief Sustainability Office delivered closing remarks to wrap-up the workshop and stakeholders completed a feedback survey.



This summary report is a compilation and synthesis of nearly 500 comments that the Stakeholder Engagement Team was able to capture through butcher paper notes, typed transcription, and written note cards, as well as written feedback received after the workshop.

## Key Takeaways

- Stakeholders wanted **more ambitious language** in the goals, especially given the aspirational nature of the eventual Plan. They specifically requested language that was simultaneously measurable and ambitious, so that residents could easily determine whether each goal has been met.
- To implement these goals, stakeholders often suggested **data-based monitoring programs** for both businesses and communities, using the data-driven approach of Goal B but expanding it to include communities' own methods of data collection. Stakeholders were interested in creating community monitoring programs that collected data regarding air quality problems, especially in frontline communities. Participants expressed specific interest in requiring expanded permitting requirements for businesses that impact air quality and public health.
- Stakeholders continually suggested **bottom-up approaches to community initiatives** with the County. Participants called into question whether the term “place-based” broadly enough captures different kinds of communities and community leaders that should be involved in initiatives and engagement (such as schools, churches, daycare, etc.) They felt L.A. County should provide more informal community leaders the opportunity to formally engage with government entities regarding aspects in environmental, landscape, and other health issues.
- Throughout this workshop, stakeholders were keen to continually point out how L.A. County's role in **creating better public health and air quality outcomes is directly linked to the County's public realm and to land use decisions**. Participants pushed for implementations like more trees, shade canopy, “cool roofs”, and “cool roads” to reduce heat impacts and sequester carbon. There was a strong emphasis on enacting regulations that focus on not just outdoor air quality, but indoor air quality as well through building codes and housing laws.
- Finally, stakeholders focused on ways in which Plan goals and strategies could **improve technology** used in businesses, community monitoring systems, and transportation throughout the County. They felt that improved technology will allow businesses and transportation to emit less harmful pollutants, while improved community monitoring technology will ensure communities to know the types and amount of pollution surrounding them.



## Draft Goals Feedback

Throughout discussion of all goals, stakeholders discussed three recurring themes. First, stakeholders argued that the goals' current language is not ambitious enough and is at times ambiguous. They felt that this will make it difficult to recognize when L.A. County has achieved them. To remedy this, stakeholders suggested tightening the language and incorporating stronger word choices. Second, stakeholders noted that the goals needed more synergy and could be integrated more fully with one another. They pointed out that four goals were topic-based while the others were more cross-cutting. Finally, stakeholders suggested improving the goals' focus on equity both by incorporating more equity language and by expanding intersectionality beyond racial issues to those of age, gender, socio-economic factors, etc.

Some stakeholders felt that these goals leave out other key aspects about public health and air quality, such as food, air pollution leakage, and air quality issues altogether. There was some skepticism that L.A. County could be responsible for achieving these goals. Others noted that economic incentives for the private sector would be essential to include as ways to make the Plan's goals more viable.

### **Goal A: Eliminate racial disparities in health outcomes by supporting policies that advance equity.**

Stakeholders' comments on this goal were more general than specific. They recommended the language become more aspirational that incorporates attainable metrics. They liked the word "eliminate" because it was a clear, ambitious target. They did not agree with including the word "support," arguing that it softened the goal too much to be useful. Further, some stakeholders suggested incorporating issues regarding safety, environmental justice, and equity in emergent technology.

### **Goal B: Improve collection, accessibility, and evaluation of public health data by adopting a racial equity lens.**

Stakeholders found this goal to be too technical to function as an effective overarching goal. Some suggested reworking this goal as a strategy to support another goal, like Goal A, or another goal aiming to improve collaborations between multiple entities. To rework into an attainable goal, stakeholders suggest adding language that highlights L.A. County's purpose for collecting and disseminating data. Further, stakeholders recommended including equity issues beyond race, such as age and gender. They also emphasized that L.A. County should provide culturally competent data accessibility, especially considering that some communities may not have access to the internet. Finally, participants noted that L.A. County should determine where gaps in data currently exist first, identify who will retain the data, and incorporate the social equity map compiled by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) into their data to analyze pollution with an equity lens. Stakeholders suggested working with public schools to gather this type of data.

Specific changes in language included beginning the phrase with "Lead the nation in health outcomes regardless of...". Some also wanted to add specific language about the health effects of climate change.

**Goal C: Improve community communication by developing a place-based climate change education partnership**

Participants focused more of their attention on this goal than any other. Common feedback included ensuring that this goal focuses on being community-driven, using a bottom-up approach for climate change education that strengthens communities and the County's relationship with these communities. Many stakeholders disagreed or had confusion about using the phrase "place-based". Opponents argued it erased the importance of non-geography-based communities, such as communities in work, school, and church. Proponents argued that geography-based communities make most sense for improving environmental conditions like climate change. Such community-driven approaches would require access to scientific experts to help achieve this goal.

Some stakeholders noted that opportunities in climate change education will have cross-cutting positive impacts for the public health focus of Goal D, and suggested that both Goals C and D become folded into one another. A few stakeholders further argued that Goal C is a strategy in pursuit of more informed communities, so communities themselves can take greater action on climate change issues. They felt the Goal should be rewritten to reflect a more results-based accountability framework. Other stakeholders, however, disagreed, noting that Goals C and D were in fact complementary and better as separate goals, given that improved public literacy also improves health impacts.

Stakeholders suggested adding phrases including: "community-driven," in which communities "foster ownership and accountability," "improve community resilience," and "improve community connectedness."

**Goal D: Build a County that supports inclusion, health and wellbeing for all residents.**

Stakeholders wanted this goal to feature more ambitious language, particularly seeking to replace the word "support" with "drive" or "lead". Many want to see L.A. County build systems that will allow it to achieve these aspirational goals. Further, many stakeholders again reiterated the possibility of combining both Goals C and D, while also emphasizing the importance of climate adaptation.

**Goal E: Enhance health equity by addressing racial equity and environmental pollution.**

Stakeholders argued that this goal is unachievable due to its lack of succinct targets and lack of aspiration. They suggested adding more words about enforcement, such as "exposure" or "regulation". Overall, participants felt that this goal should be scrapped, and the idea behind this goal should be incorporated into all the other goals.

**Goal F: Accelerate the transition to sustainable alternatives to fossil fuel for transportation, manufacturing, and energy production.**

Many stakeholders felt that this was the most important goal. They generally agreed with the goal phrasing, structure, and direction. A few noted that using the word "accelerate" did not provide a specific-enough target. Some suggested achieving this by replacing "accelerate" with "Transition to," or "Just transition to," to incorporate equity language.



### **Goal G: Improve access to educational and employment opportunities**

In addition to Goal F, many stakeholders mentioned that this was among the workshop’s most important goals. This is especially true given that education and employment are baseline problems that people will need to fix before they can think about climate change. As a result, stakeholders suggested that the County should prioritize these types of initiatives. This includes identifying and promoting programs that already exist to implement these goals.

Stakeholders also wanted more ambitious language for this goal, suggesting that “improving” should be replaced with “driving.” Further, the goal’s language should reflect some aspect of building local jobs.



## Recommended Strategies

Stakeholders mostly provided strategies along the following topic areas: economy/workforce development, housing/land use, community engagement, transportation, and landscapes/ecosystems. Economy and workforce development strategies centered around regulating businesses to reduce emissions and pollution. Stakeholders focused on the need for increased monitoring and data collection of air quality in frontline communities. Participants felt that L.A. County should strive to give communities deserve opportunities to create community-driven initiatives and support groundtruthing projects, where information and data are provided by direct observation of communities themselves. Transportation-related strategies focused on the need to reduce fuel emissions and pollution. Stakeholders focused much of their attention on strategies related to landscapes and ecosystems, suggesting that the Plan should help yield more tree and other flora planting in underserved areas while utilizing science-based understanding of the relationship between specific species of flora and the place of planting.

The following strategies, categorized by sector, list relevant new strategies that stakeholders identified as those which the County could help initiate or support. These strategies are generally listed in order of votes received through the dot-voting process.

<p><b>Economy / Workforce Development</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a business licensing process to increase oversight of business activities</li> <li>• Use L.A. County’s spheres of influence to maintain clear lines of communication between the Air Quality Management Districts, local county licensing agencies, and other agencies to ensure increased coordination over all licensed businesses</li> <li>• Develop aspirational, technology-forcing permitting requirements</li> <li>• Demonstrate how new technologies can help achieve pollution standards to regulated businesses</li> <li>• Create jobs from community-driven climate change literacy and education efforts</li> <li>• Ensure people experiencing homelessness and people who are students are prioritized for employment training opportunities, with a focus on green jobs</li> <li>• L.A. County should sponsor a regular job forum that matches unemployed workers’ skills with employers’ needs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Housing/Land Use</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure strategies benefit renters and homeowners alike</li> <li>• Incorporate strategies for indoor air quality into building requirements</li> <li>• Ensure air filters in homes are not only installed, but also properly maintained</li> <li>• Collect data where pertinent and relevant for housing and building design</li> <li>• Funding and monitoring capabilities provided by AB 617 may assist in this for frontline communities</li> <li>• County should work with informal community leaders to act as ambassadors to develop buy-in for public health and air quality initiatives</li> <li>• Collect public knowledge in addition to data (aka “groundtruthing”)</li> <li>• Install “cool roofs”</li> </ul>

<p><b>Community Engagement</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish an environmental stewards’ program or partnership</li> <li>• Promote community-driven collaboration with other communities, integrating ideas with each other rather than having to rely on County for services</li> <li>• Provide funding opportunities around childcare and school credit</li> <li>• Improve legislation and increase legal action needed to provide communities’ ability to bring accountability to businesses</li> <li>• Expand the Department of Public Health’s ability to cite businesses throughout the County, beyond unincorporated County areas</li> <li>• Work alongside state agencies to improve accessibility of tools for communities beyond the internet and government offices, through community centers and churches as well</li> </ul>
<p><b>Transportation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase electric vehicle charging infrastructure for alternative fuel sources to eliminate air pollution</li> <li>• Focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and pollution, rather than just mitigating</li> <li>• Increase bicycle and pedestrian-only zones</li> <li>• Support development of bike infrastructure as first/last mile transit solutions</li> <li>• Install “cool roads”</li> <li>• Develop and support shared transportation technologies</li> <li>• Increase opportunities for L.A. County staff to adopt healthier mobility practices, leading by example</li> <li>• Use L.A. County’s influence to help improve rail safety for workers at Metro and Metrolink</li> <li>• Transition public works agencies to alternative, renewable fuels</li> <li>• Focus on carbon neutrality and create a target date</li> </ul>



<p><b>Landscapes and Ecosystems</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish funding for a program focused on planting trees specifically chosen by geography-appropriate species type, and planted at appropriate times of the year</li> <li>• Reduce paved surfaces to incorporate more flora and reduce the urban heat island effect</li> <li>• Create an urban forestry plan</li> <li>• Create a comprehensive shade assessment, incorporating any available canopy analyses, tree life cycles, and long term landscape plans.</li> <li>• Establish environmental stewards formally, as well as networking and collaborations between stewards</li> <li>• Ensure that flora planted in a landscape are diverse in species, avoiding monoculture</li> <li>• Streamline the process of planting and maintaining trees in neighborhoods, ensuring that tree planting does not conflict with water sustainability goals</li> <li>• Protect existing trees from degradation or destruction</li> <li>• Create stronger development standards that minimize removal of existing trees, shade, and flora</li> <li>• Maximize underutilized vacant lots, while keeping in mind soil fertility issues that could impact how we use them</li> <li>• Increase funding for tree maintenance programs.</li> <li>• Decrease instances of beetle decimation of lumber and trees by creating more regulations on tree disposal</li> <li>• Address tree maintenance safety issues</li> <li>• Promote local jobs in tree maintenance</li> <li>• Improve safety and access to parks by replicating the “Parks after Dark” program</li> </ul>
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**Additional Strategies**

- Improve local access to distribution of services and information, including prevention services
- Improve access to mental health services and education
- Increase the focus on social and emotional wellbeing of residents
- Develop plan for improving food resources quality in underserved areas, addressing food deserts.
  - County could consider initiating public-private partnerships.
- Reduce gender disparities by expanding women initiative groups in low income communities
- Improving resources into healthcare providers around the region



## Opportunities for Cross-Sectoral Collaboration

The following are some ideas for initiatives that public and private sector stakeholders expressed interest in collaborating on:

- Bring together waste hauling companies, Public Works, and research institutions to work on air pollution, mitigation, and management projects. These may include wastage-related emissions, landfills, and garbage collection.
- Force private waste haulers to fully engage the community on strategies they can implement to reduce air quality impacts attributed to the waste industry.
- Have the California Air Resources Board create a carbon filter giveaway program to distribute filters and increase awareness, education, and buy-in. Identify geography and key leaders to tout the program as well.
- Private sector polluters should pay for mitigation and fund non-profit education outreach.
- Collaborate with privately led initiatives and public organizations to create local hiring opportunities.
- Create public-private partnerships that will increase alternative fuel infrastructure.