

“Our Voice, Our County” Expo + Environmental Fair Summary Report

Supervisory District 2

Saturday, May 11th, 2019

California African American Museum in Exposition Park, Los Angeles

Partner Organizations: Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education with Liberty Hill Foundation



Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, County CEO Sachi Hamai, County Chief Sustainability Officer Gary Gero, Rita Kampalath (CSO) in center with SCOPE staff and community members



Introduction

OurCounty, the Los Angeles Countywide Sustainability Plan, is an effort to outline a bold, inclusive and truly regional vision for the present and future generations of Los Angeles. To ensure that residents, local groups and youth from across the County had an opportunity to interact with the Draft Plan and provide input, Liberty Hill Foundation and community-based organization anchors organized five “Our Voice, Our County Expos” with support from the LA County Chief Sustainability Office.

Supervisory District 2 Event Description

The fourth of five Expos was held in LA County’s 2nd Supervisorial District at the California African American Museum in Los Angeles, California. Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE) - a nonprofit organization uplifting South L.A. residents to play an active role in policymaking through community organizing, local leadership development, and strategic alliance building - acted as the Expo’s primary partners. Leaders at SCOPE trained 25 of their staff, grassroots leaders and community volunteers to serve as discussion leaders at each of the tables and help with event logistics.

Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas addressed attendees with brief remarks about the significance of environmental justice and the need for responsible sustainability policies to protect our children and future generations. Chief Executive Officer for the County, Sachi Hamai, also attended the Expo and visited with participants at the discussion tables. Gloria Medina, Deputy Director of SCOPE, offered context about sustainability issues faced by residents and the importance of the OurCounty Plan to South L.A. neighborhoods. SCOPE also used the opportunity to highlight two resident activists who recently received the “One100 Award” from The Solutions Project for their efforts to end neighborhood oil drilling, and work for a green economy that would provide a pathway for South LA residents to secure family-supporting jobs and careers. Gary Gero, Chief Sustainability Officer for LA County, offered additional remarks to help set the tone for the morning, including an overview of the Plan and the day’s activities.

Expos Overview

Occurring on Saturdays throughout April and May 2019 in each County Supervisorial district, Expos welcomed participation from all ages and backgrounds. Participants were engaged through educational activities, guided discussions, and auxiliary activities managed by partner organizations. While each Expo was led by different facilitators from respective community-based organizations and incorporated different educational activities, all the Expos centered around a consistent set of feedback activities. All feedback activities focused on aspects of the Discussion Draft of the Plan, which was released on April 5, 2019.

Spanish language interpretation and child care were offered at all the Expos to enable full participation by families, and complimentary refreshments were also offered to create a welcoming atmosphere.

Throughout the course of the event, attendees circulated around 8 “discussion” tables. Each table focused on 6 actions from the Plan, grouped around a central theme that reflected one or two goals from the Plan. The actions were highlighted based on their relevance to a grassroots, non-expert audience. Participants were asked to think about which actions had the greatest relevance and priority for them and their community. Participants were asked to express which actions had the greatest relevance and priority for them and their community through “dot voting” activities, and to provide their own ideas of issues and recommendations the Plan should consider through comment cards and post-it notes. Participants received raffle tickets for each discussion table they completed, and were able to enter prize drawings for gift cards and products from local vendors, as well as a donated Patagonia Backpack Gift Set and Clippers NBA tickets.



Community members offer “Have Your Say” feedback while a SCOPE facilitator takes notes.



In addition to the Plan engagement activities, the Expo offered resource tables provided by County Departments, including the Department of Regional Planning, Department of Public Works, Department of Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS), Department of Beaches and Harbors, as well as the County Fire Department who distributed free native plants and trees to participants. The County Library also provided the “MakMo” interactive van to encourage youth literacy through free books and puzzles. Kiss The Ground and Treepeople, two local nonprofits, also provided resource tables to educate participants on composting and other sustainability practices. The Metropolitan Water District also staffed an outreach table with informational materials. The Expo also featured an Electric Vehicle “Ride and Drive” sponsored by Plug In America to educate participants on the health, cost and environmental benefits of EVs, and explain state and local incentive and rebate programs, while signing up interested applicants. Liberty Hill’s emPOWER program was present, and together with support from SCOPE’s grassroots leaders who are South LA residents, provided participants with information on the variety of incentive and rebate programs available from utilities, the State and other public entities to reduce home energy and water consumption, and decrease carbon footprint.

Key Takeaways

All of the actions presented received some votes from the participants, yet several proposed actions received the strongest levels of support:

- Increasing and preserving affordable housing
- Investing in green infrastructure for clean, local water supply
- Increasing density of affordable housing close to transit

Other top vote-getting actions were:

- Phase out oil drilling next to homes and schools
- Phase out all oil and gas operations, emphasizing Environmental Justice neighborhoods
- Create Green Zones with healthy land use standards
- Install Bus Rapid Transit and Bus Only Lanes
- Offer free transit for students, seniors, disabled & low-income people
- Increase parks, greenways, joint use schoolyards in high need areas
- Require manufacturers to reduce waste & ensure safety



Attendee Demographics

Sixty-five individuals signed in at the registration table, and 47 of them shared information about themselves through entrance and exit surveying. According to those polled upon arrival, just under 20% of attendees were born outside the United States, while the rest were U.S.-born. Nearly half of attendees who completed exit surveys were between ages 18-35, while 38% were between ages 35-64. Less than 10% of attendees polled were 65 or older, and only 5% were under 18. Just over half of attendees identified as Latino/a, making up 53% of polled attendees. Twenty-one percent identified as White, and 18% identified as Black. Only one person identified as Asian in entrance polling, and one person identified as Native in exit surveying.

Sample Comments/Feedback Received

More comments focused on the intersection of land use and transportation/mobility than any other topic. Comments detailed the type of investment and improvement needed, such as:

- Sidewalk repair, better street lighting, pothole repair, speed bumps on streets, raised bus platforms, a larger network of bike lanes and bike share, and more long-distance transportation (like high speed rail)
- Several suggested the need to create public awareness campaigns for bike infrastructure improvements
- Participants offered many reactions regarding Vision Zero and the high injury/fatality network map, as their communities are disproportionately affected
- The County should engage the public on the factors it is analyzing, such as time of day, road conditions, type of mobility
- Permanent rent control and housing affordability are top priorities
- Encourage cooperative housing and co-op businesses
- Contract only with sustainable food vendors at County events
- Connect housing and schools to urban agriculture opportunities
- Regulate and develop stricter environmental standards in industrial communities and implement stronger Green Zone policies



Community members offer “Have Your Say” feedback while a SCOPE facilitator takes notes.

Exit Survey

Through exit surveys, participants were asked a few questions to learn more about their interests and concerns relating to the LA County Sustainability Plan. When asked about their neighborhood’s biggest sustainability challenges, poor air quality received the highest number of responses, followed by transportation/traffic congestion. Very few respondents felt that biodiversity or emergency preparedness were amongst the biggest challenges for their communities.

Overall, people expressed a strong willingness to personally take on sustainability challenges presented in the Plan. The top choice was a willingness to reduce their plastic use and recycling waste/trash, followed by reducing energy use, using more public transit and riding a bicycle and/or walking more. Registering for Community Emergency Response Training received the least number of votes.

Many of the additional comments included the word “community,” demonstrating a clear interest and need for continued grassroots approaches to sustainability planning. Some wanted more specificity on the green economy transition, more investment in public plazas, and new approaches to de-paving and cooler surfaces. A couple of comments specifically requested that the County consider actions to eliminate vehicle use, such as car-free days.



Insights/Lessons Learned

SCOPE, the co-sponsoring local organization, noted that one of the important benefits of the Expo had been the opportunity to provide in-depth training to their staff team, grassroots leaders and community volunteers about the Plan so that they were prepared to lead the Discussion tables and help run the event. They also noted that their door-to-door canvassing in the weeks leading up to the Expo had sparked interest amongst over 420 South LA residents who expressed their intention to attend. For many South LA residents, this was the first time another South LA resident knocked at their door to invite them to a community event focused on sustainability.

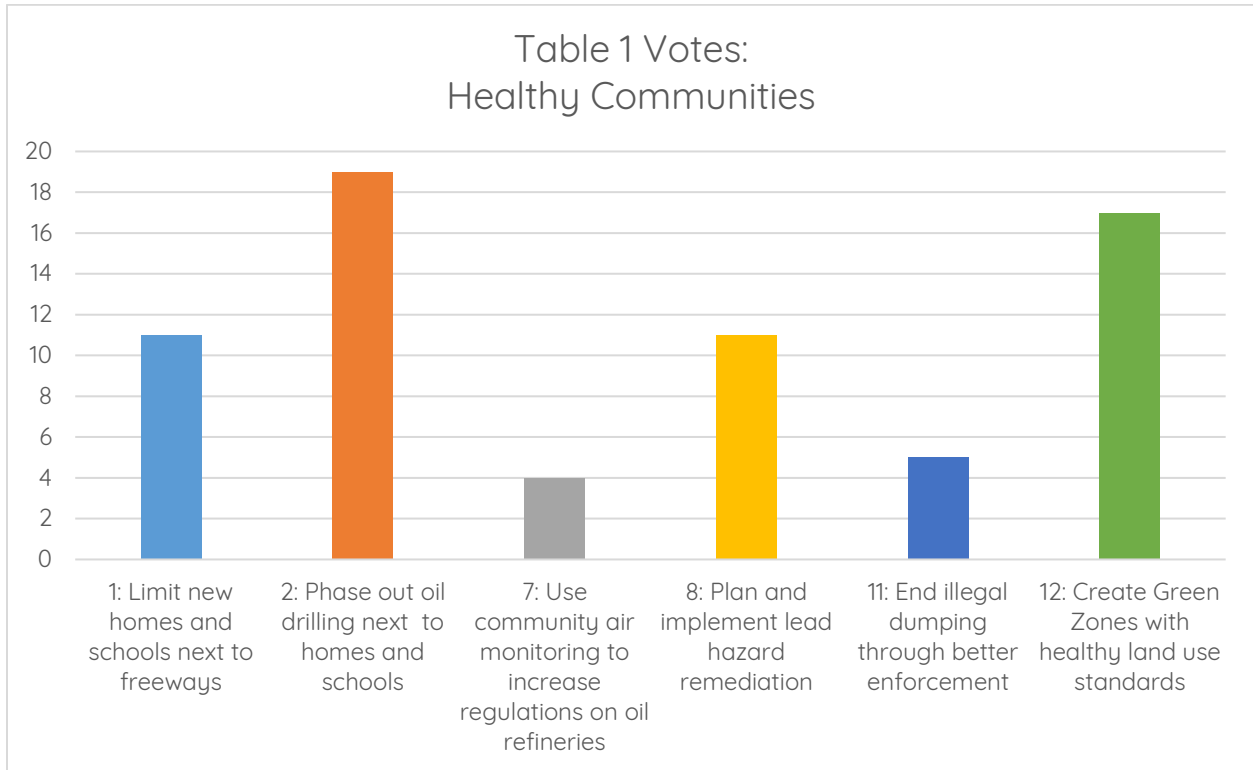
Overall, SCOPE was pleased with the turn out and the leadership demonstrated by their members and volunteers. Table discussions were fruitful, and participants asked many great questions. This opportunity highlighted a need for genuine and sustained community engagement from public agencies and community partners on the issues of environmental justice, sustainability, and economic opportunity.

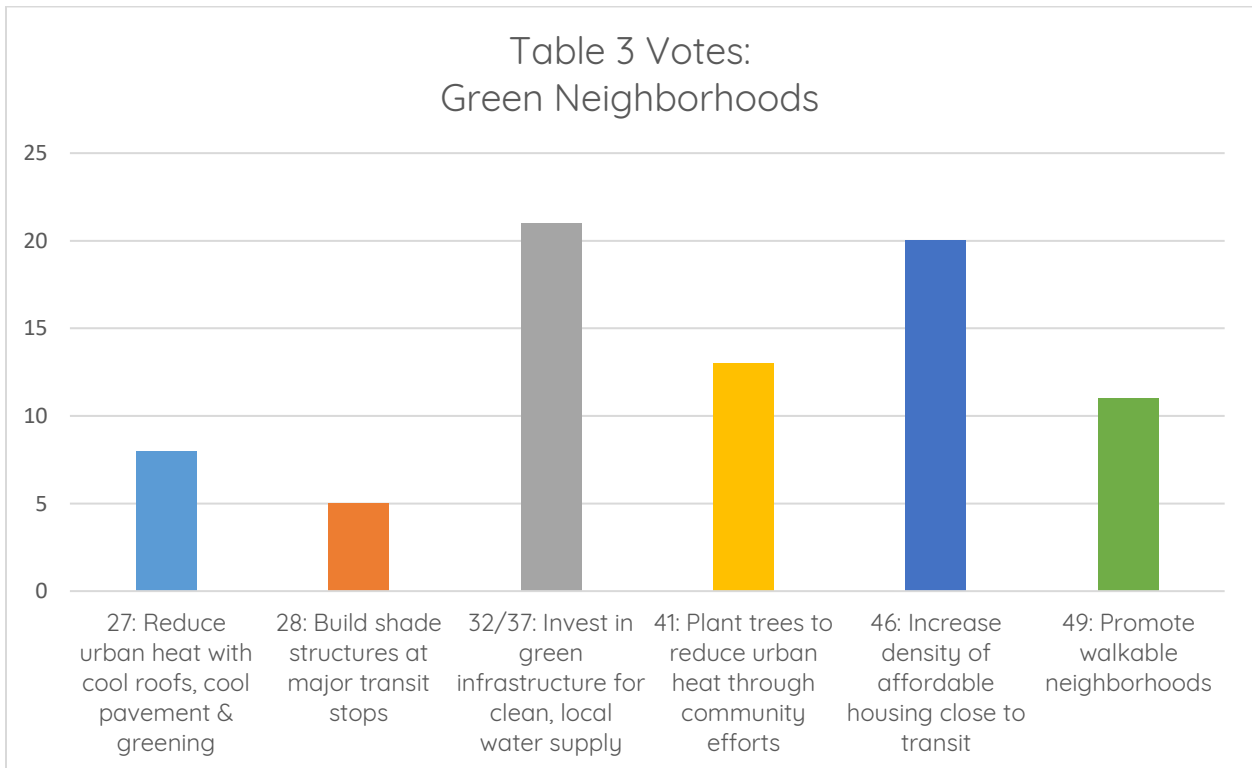
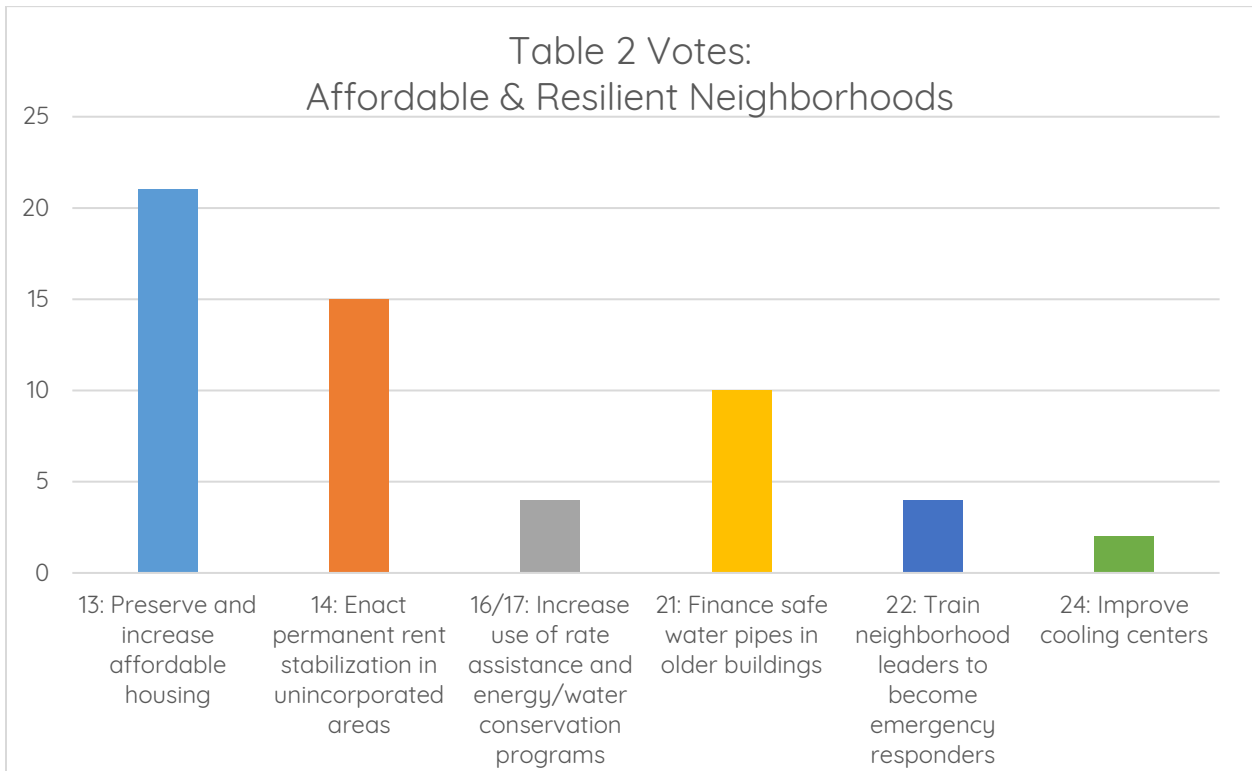
SCOPE felt the Our Voice, Our County Expo in SD 2 was a great step in the right direction. In addition to the outreach, engagement and partnership modeled at this event, SCOPE recommends:

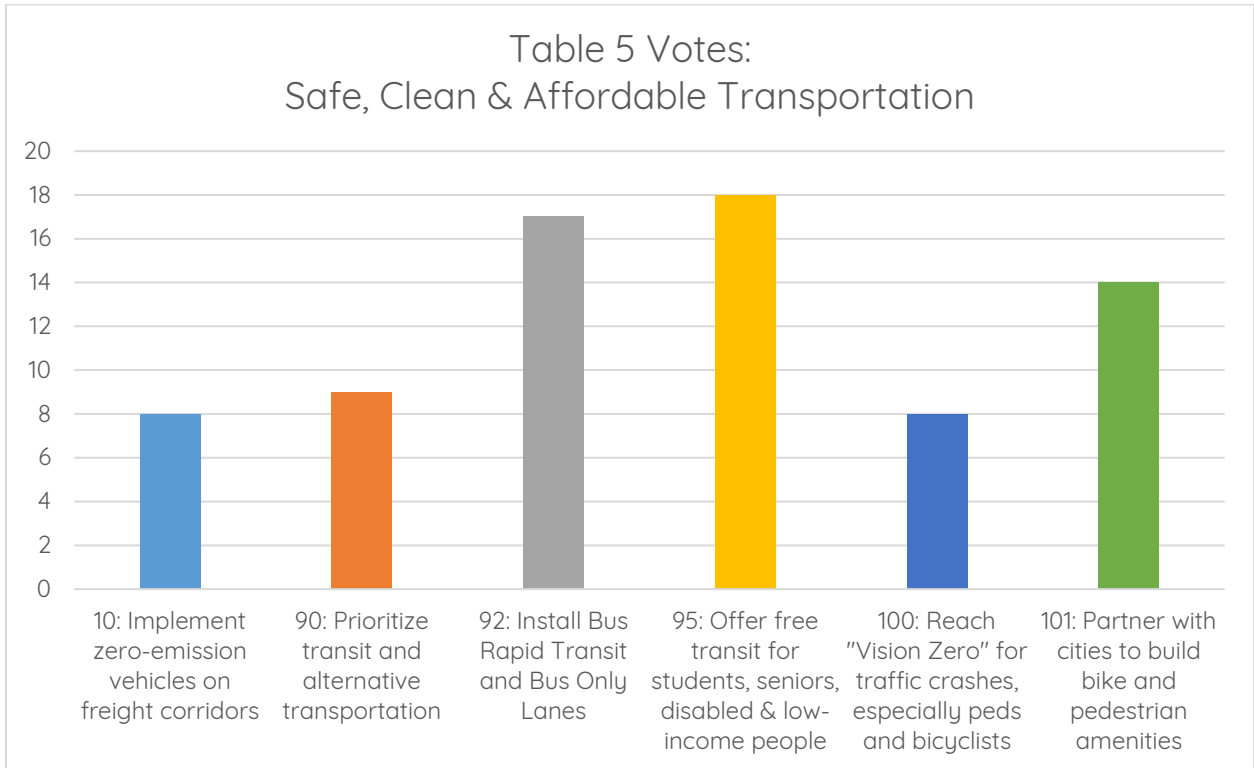
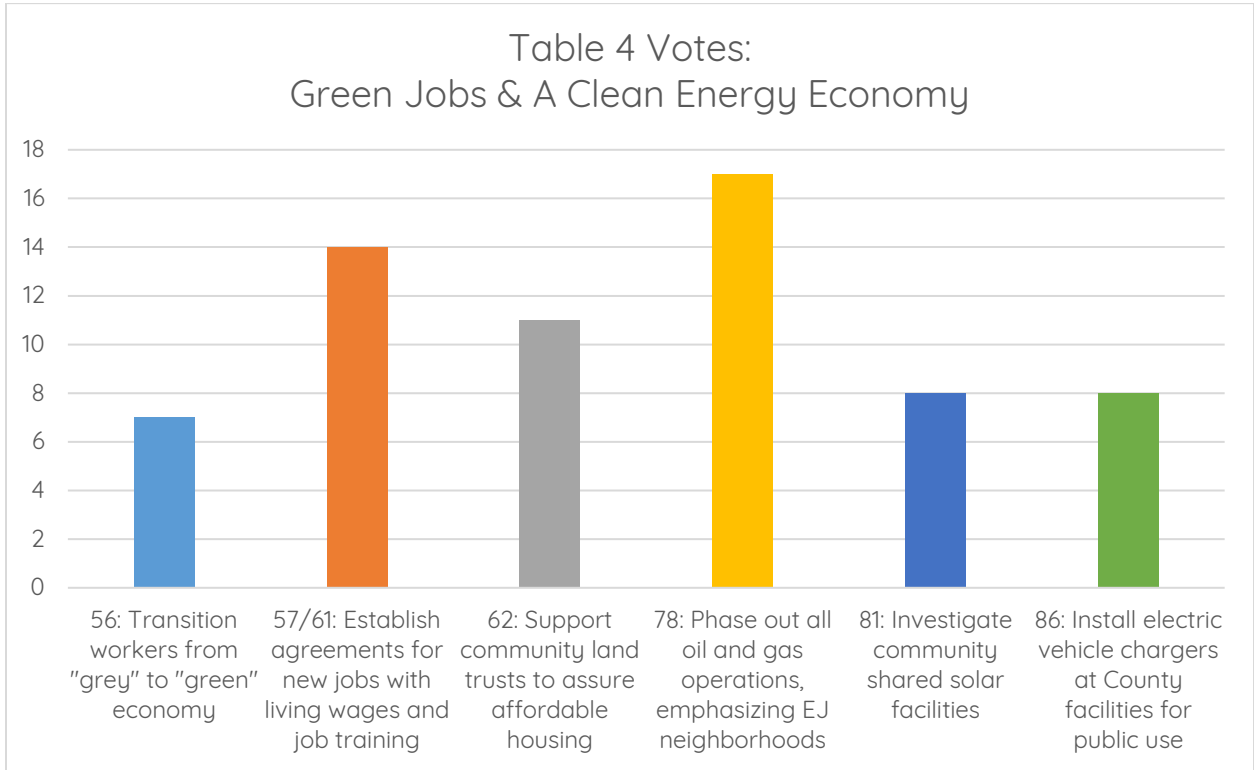
- Translating the Sustainability Plan (and related materials) to Spanish
- The use of additional accessible infographics, one-pagers, or other materials that participants can take away
- Providing a way for residents to stay engaged in tracking the progress of the Plan's goals. SCOPE notes that this last recommendation would significantly increase transparency and accountability and could be achieved through a digital platform or mailed newsletters to participants and residents.

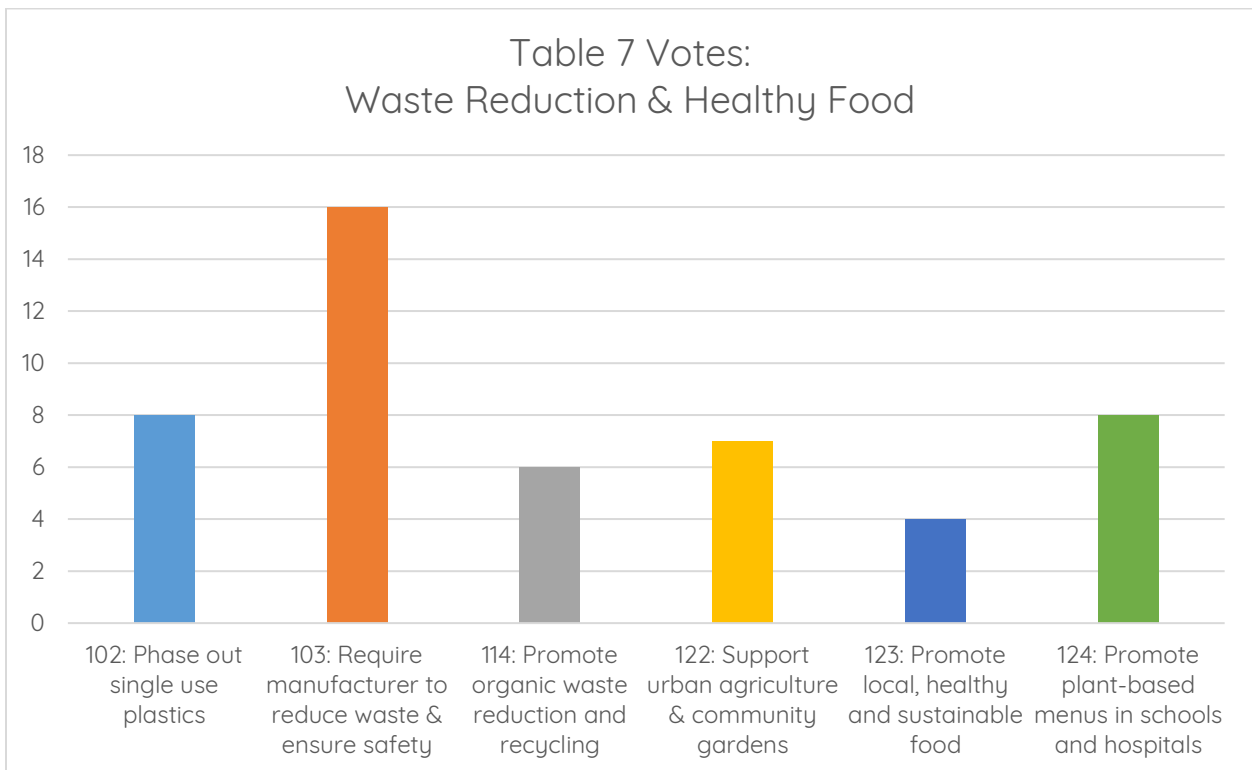
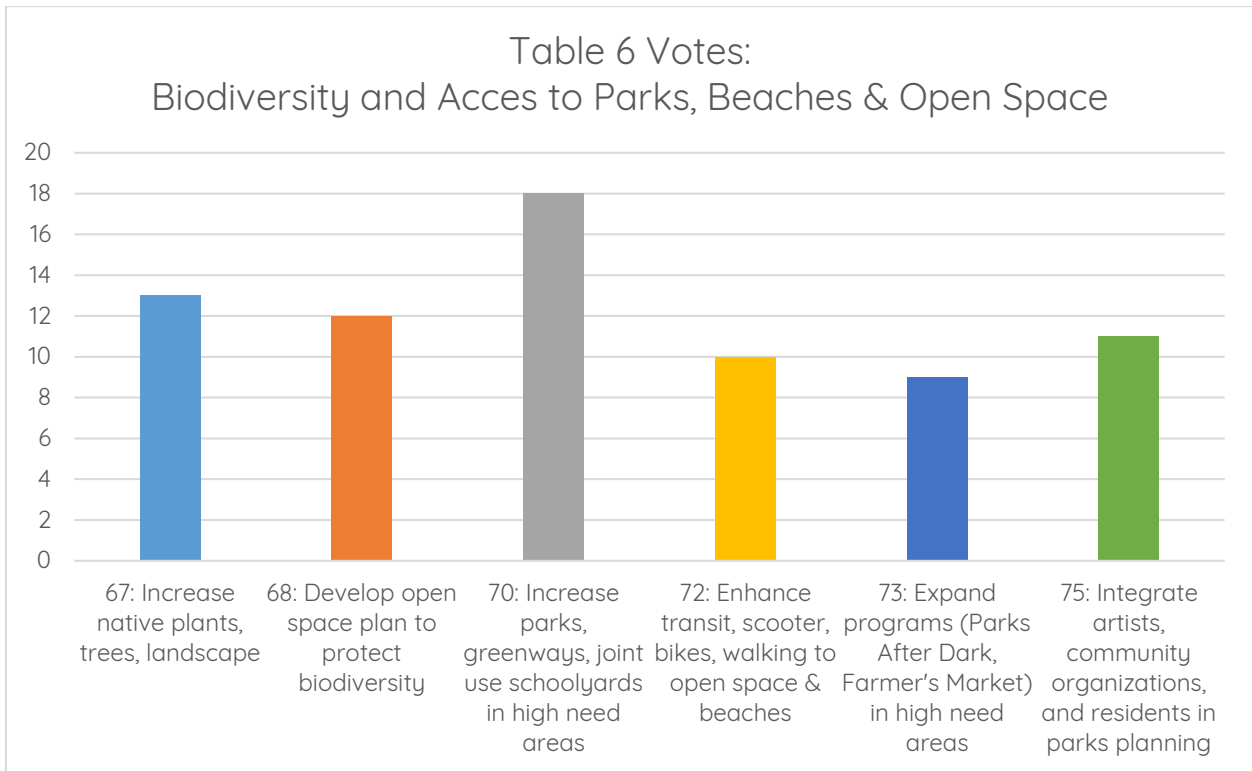
Appendix A: Our Voice Our County Supervisorial District 2

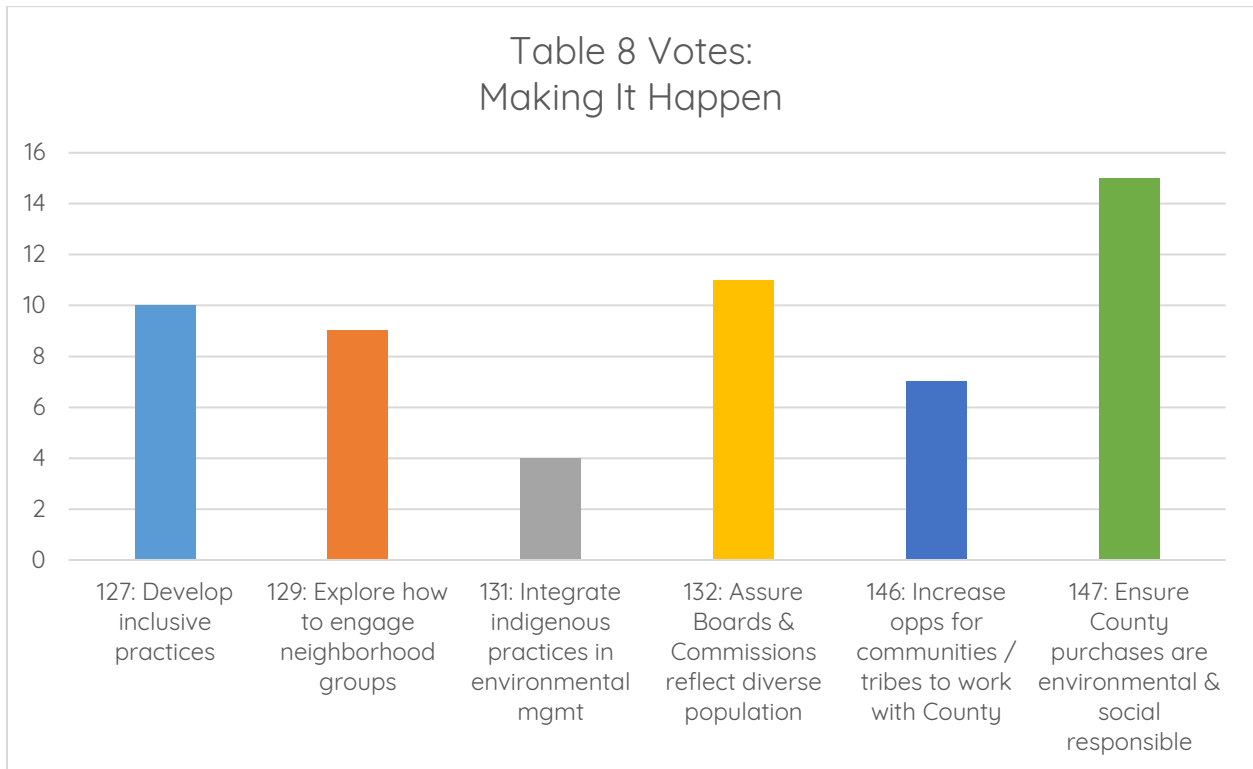
All Table Voting Results











Appendix B: “Have Your Say” Post-it Notes Feedback

SELECTED COMMENTS

Below are just a few samples of “Have Your Say” comments that were offered most commonly by participants:

- Autos in need of smog checks are a primary contributor to air pollution
- Cooperative housing, co-op businesses, educational training for better paying jobs are needed
- Rent control should be applied to all low-income properties in all areas
- Water filters to protect water quality are needed
- Leverage Measure W, A, M to maximize green neighborhoods/infrastructure with anti-displacement
- Help the transition of workers to new technologies
- Speed bumps to slow down cars are needed
- Address the number of potholes on our roads and streets
- Create public awareness campaigns in support of bike lanes
- Incentivize homeowners, specifically low-income, to un-pave their property by incorporating more green space in their homes
- LA County should mandate the use of food vendors who support sustainable food for all their events
- Cleaner water in schools is needed
- Connect housing to growing food, including more community gardens
- Use permitting process to ensure more grocery stores and fewer dollar stores
- Buy local commodities and incorporate better provisions in contracts to assure eco-procurement
- Increase density in housing to free up open space for parks and nature
- Several had questions: Who are the indigenous populations? Where are they located? What is their involvement?
- Involve senior communities and integrate youth in programs for trans-generational impact
- Leave all fossil fuels in the ground!

Many comments also focused on bike/pedestrian deaths and severe injuries, prompted by the LA map. Requests were made to look at multiple conditions and engage the public (e.g., time of day, road condition, type of mobility).



Appendix C: Organizations with Resource Tables at Our Voice, Our County Supervisory District 2 Expo

- County Regional Planning
- County Library
- County Beaches & Harbors
- County Public Works
- County Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services
- County Fire
- Metropolitan Water Department
- Kiss the Ground
- TreePeople
- emPOWER
- SCOPE

Photos by Giovanni Solis