

“Our Voice, Our County” Environmental Community Fair Summary Report

Supervisory District 4

Saturday, May 18th, 2019

Los Angeles Harbor College in Wilmington

Partner Organizations: Communities for a Better Environment with Liberty Hill Foundation



Communities for a Better Environment Organizer discusses OurCounty Sustainability Plan goals with residents.



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 4 Event Description

The fifth of five Expos was held in LA County’s 4th Supervisory District at the local community college, the Los Angeles Harbor College in Wilmington, California. Communities for a Better Environment (CBE) - a statewide nonprofit organization addressing environmental and climate justice with strong local organizing in Wilmington and Southeast LA - acted as the Expo’s primary partner. Leaders at CBE trained 14 of their staff and interns, and another 10 community volunteers to serve as discussion leaders at each of the tables and assist with event logistics. Nearly 50 high school youth and residents from Huntington Park arrived on a 100% electric bus provided on a complimentary basis by BYD.

Laura Gracia, Climate Adaptation Resiliency Enhancement Coordinator, and Isabel Alvarenga, District 4 community leader for CBE, opened the event and welcomed all the staff, volunteers and community residents. They also provided an overview of CBE’s mission and its relationship to the theme of sustainability. They provided instructions on how participants could engage at the different discussion tables. At the mid-point of the event, Gary Gero, Chief Sustainability Officer for LA County, offered additional remarks to help set the context for the Expo and its importance to the development of the Countywide Sustainability Plan.

Expos Overview

Occurring on Saturdays throughout April and May 2019 in each County Supervisory 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 engaged in a number of creative and interactive exercises developed by CBE staff—including bean bag toss, puzzles, and building blocks—to help understand the policies and actions proposed in the Plan.

Participants were asked to think about which actions had the greatest 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 a backpack with solar power charger, an electric scooter, gift cards from local vendors, as well as a donated Patagonia Backpack Gift Set and Clippers NBA tickets.



Young participants prepare their nametags before participating in the Expo's child care activities.

In addition to the Plan engagement activities, the Expo offered resource tables provided by County Departments, including the Department of Regional Planning, the Department of Public Works, Department of Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS), Department of Beaches and Harbors, County Department of Public Social Services, 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. Metro Bike Share and the Metropolitan Water District also staffed information tables.



A number of local nonprofit organizations, 14 in total, also provided resource tables to educate participants on sustainability topics, including South Bay 350.org, Breathe LA, the U.S. Green Building Council, and the LA Waterkeeper (see Appendix C for full list). CBE also invited local vendors who specialized in books and products related to the sustainability theme. A “Live Art” canvass was set up with participants encouraged to paint a section of a large visual image, providing a fun exercise in collaboration and collective action.

A photo exhibition, “PhotoVoice,” showcased photographs by local high school students and youth from Wilmington who worked with a UCLA Urban Planning graduate student to document images of blight, pollution and sustainability in their neighborhoods through photos and short essays.

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 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:

- Increase parks, greenways, joint use schoolyards in high need areas
- Increase native plants, trees, landscape
- Offer free transit for students, seniors, disabled & low-income people
- Phase out all oil and gas operations, emphasizing environmental justice neighborhoods

Other top vote-getting actions were:

- Implement zero-emission vehicles on freight corridors
- Explore how to engage neighborhood groups in unincorporated areas
- Train neighborhood leaders to become emergency responders
- Use community air monitoring to increase regulations on oil refineries
- Reduce urban heat with cool roofs, cool pavement & greening

Attendee Demographics

One-hundred and thirteen attendees signed in and shared information about themselves through entrance polling. According to those polled, 22% of attendees were born outside the United States, while the rest were U.S.-born. Nearly 40% of attendees who completed exit surveys were ages 18 and younger, the largest proportion of youth participants at any Expo event. Thirty-six percent of attendees were between ages 18-35, while 19% of those responding were between ages 35-64. Seven percent of attendees polled were 65 or older. Of those that signed in, the majority identified as Latino/a, making up nearly 70%. Fourteen percent identified as White, and 7% identified as Black. Only 4% identified as Asian in entrance polling, while 6 attendees identified their race/ethnicity as Other.

Sample Comments/Feedback Received

Several comments focused on community gardens, native plants, green spaces, and access to food. All comments in these areas pointed to the belief that individuals should be better supported in cultivating these in/with their own communities. They suggested the County should play a supportive role by incentivizing land owners and local residents to preserve green space and allocate resources to take on this work. They also offered a range of other comments, such as:

- Creating transit-oriented development policies that benefit low-income residents and alleviate pollution is a top priority
- Participants want a ban on fossil fuels, and recognize removing refineries and fossil fuel facilities as a way to reduce the threat of emergencies and toxic exposure

Many comments addressed the need for continued inclusive engagement. Feedback shared on this topic included:

- Providing free transportation or bus vouchers for people to attend public meetings
- Incorporating more youth-oriented components to meetings and making youth recruitment a priority
- Investing in more advertisement of meetings
- Continuing to leverage community-based organizations and partners to gather people together as communities to work on implementation steps



CBE Community Leader explains dot voting activity to Wilmington and Huntington Park youth.

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 affordability/high cost of living and climate change. Unlike most other Expos, transportation/traffic congestion was the least selected variable. Few respondents felt that biodiversity or emergency preparedness were amongst the biggest challenges for their communities.

Similar to other Expos, participants most frequently selected their willingness to reduce their plastic use and recycle waste/trash, followed by reducing energy use and riding a bicycle and/or walking more. Registering for Community Emergency Response Training received the least number of votes.

Several additional comments focused on wanting to see more details around plans for improving bicycle infrastructure, transportation services, tree-planting, and community gardens. Some constructive feedback included wanting to see more focus on marine life and beaches in the Plan, understanding how the County's homelessness plans interact with the *OurCounty* Plan, and specifying enforcement strategies for recycling. A few comments touched on accountability: holding the County's elected officials responsible for implementation, and wanting the County to be transparent to the public by showcasing markers of progress.

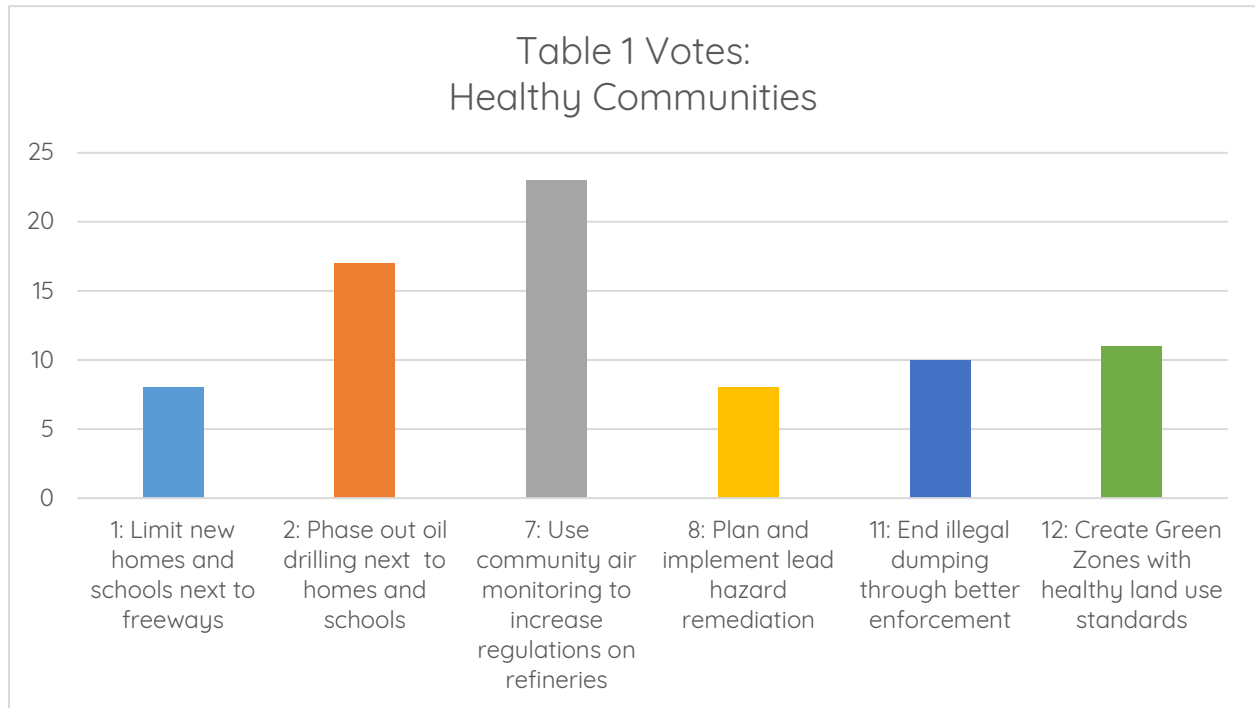


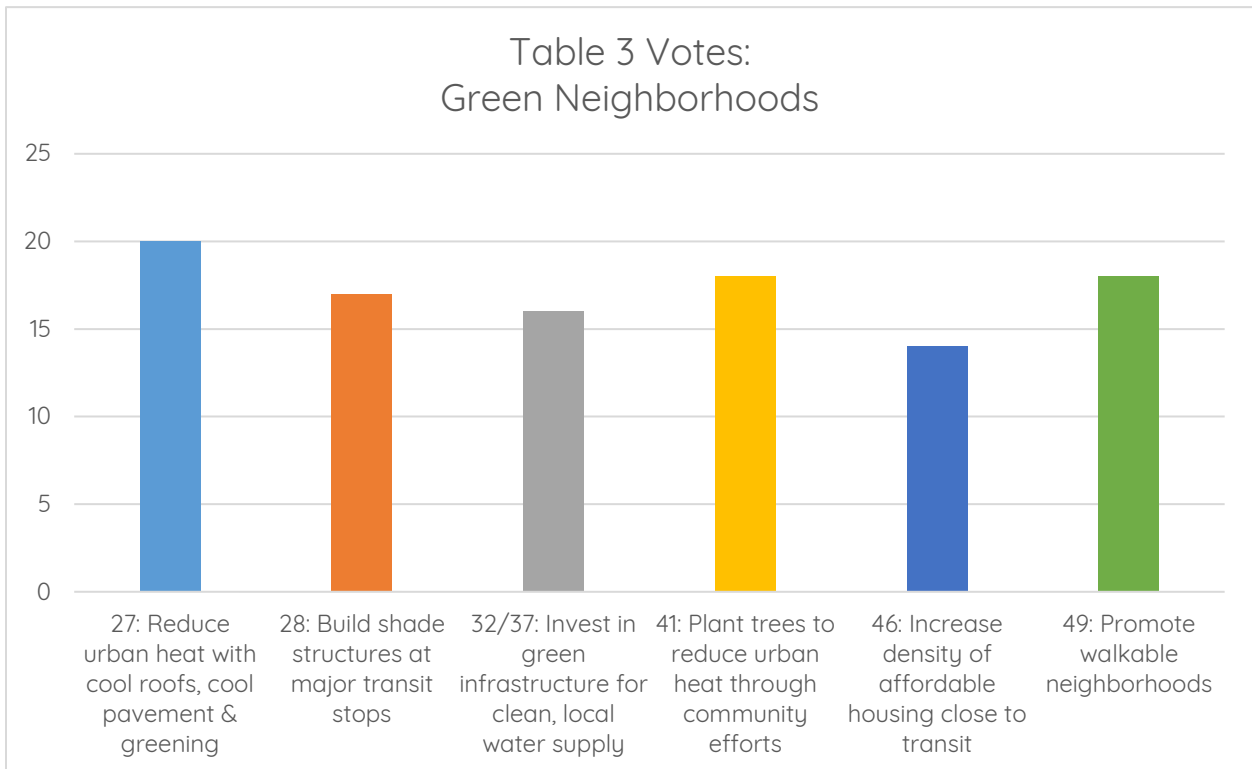
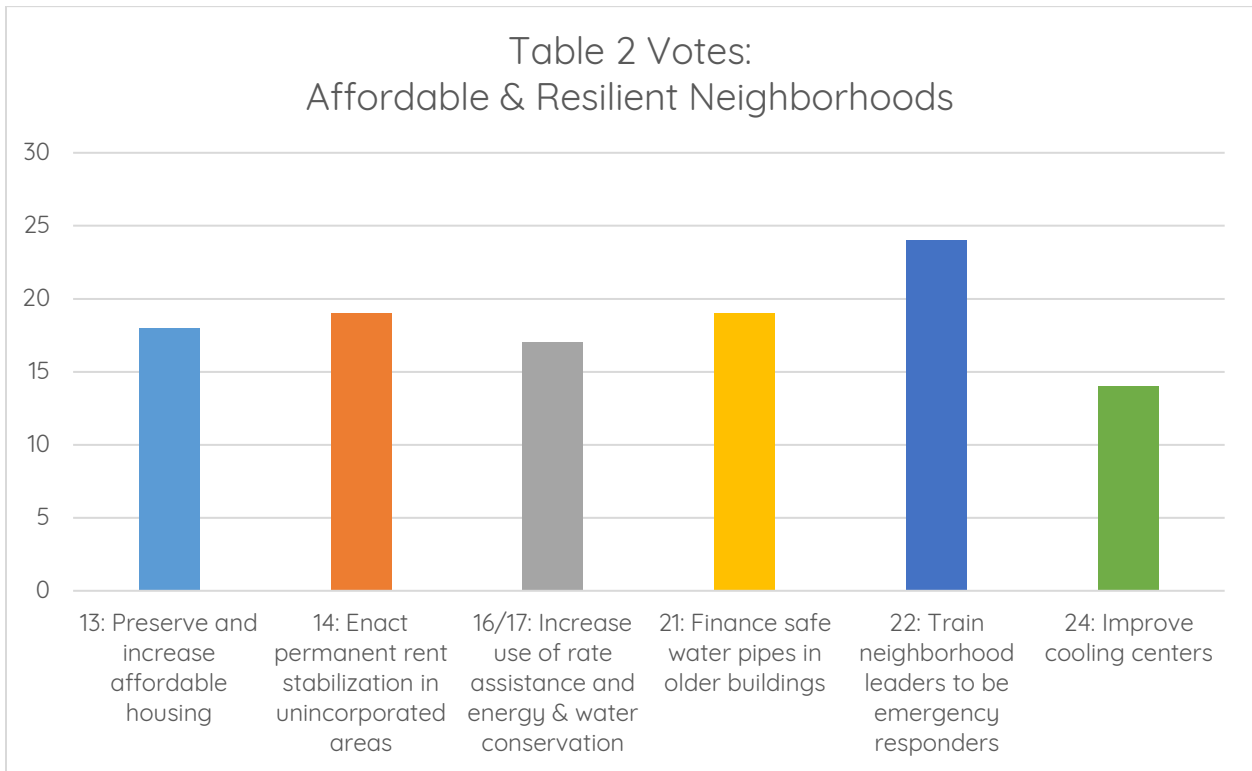
Insights/Lessons Learned

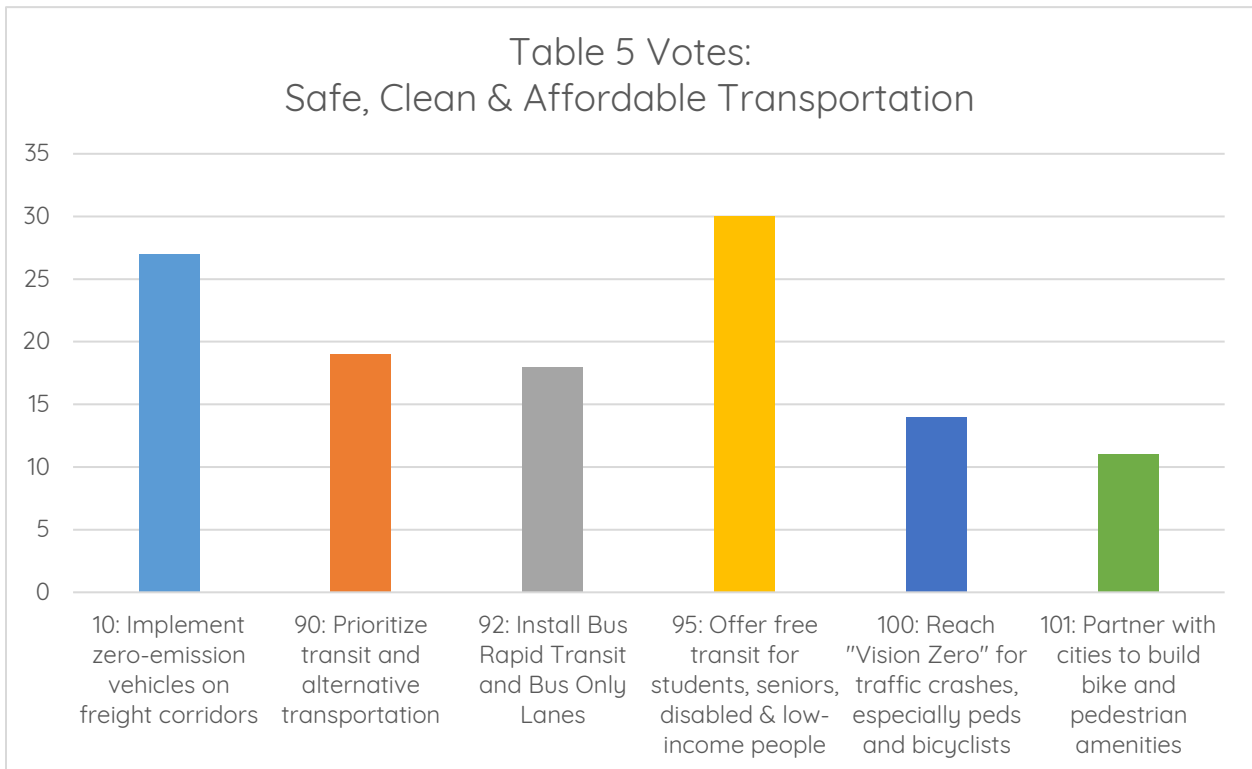
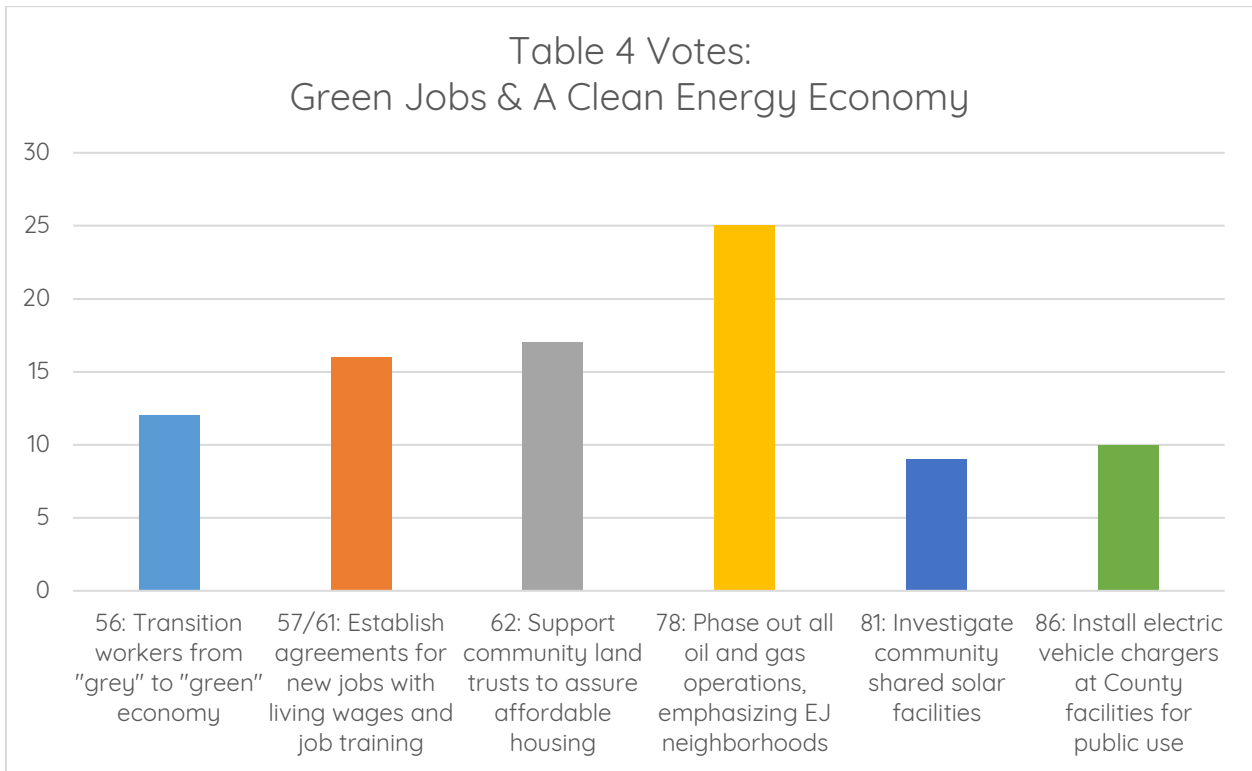
CBE, the co-sponsoring local organization, noted that one of the important benefits of the Expo had been the opportunity to provide in-depth training to their staff team and community volunteers about the Plan in order to lead the discussion tables and help run the event. Training staff and community volunteers led to highly creative and interactive discussion tables. CBE also noted that having community representatives as the emcees and as the table discussion facilitators helped participants provide feedback.

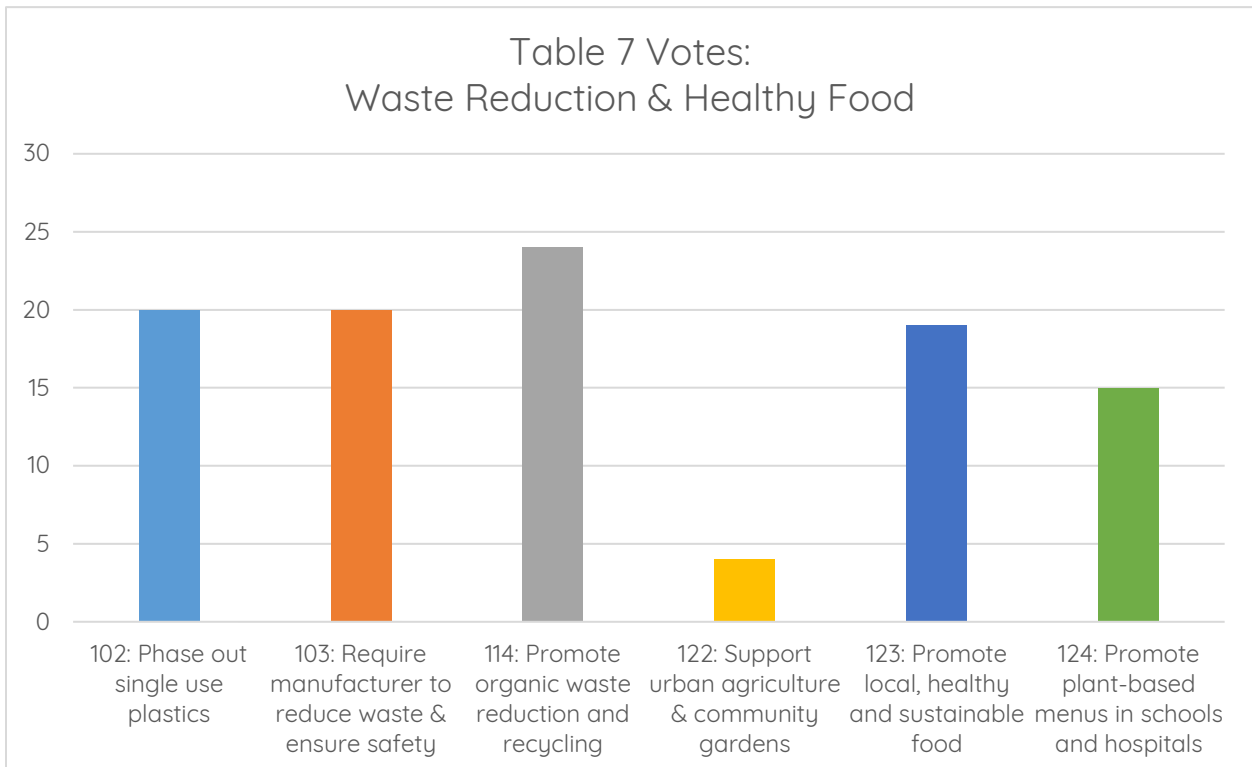
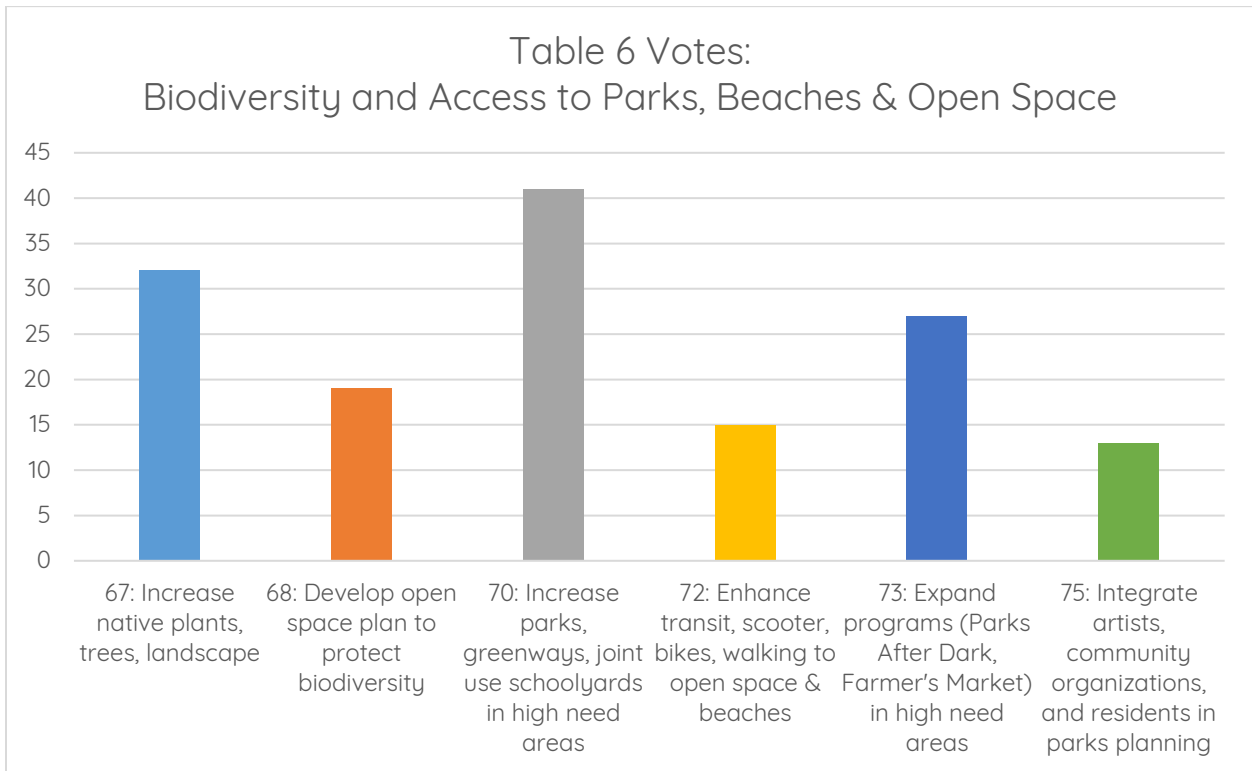
Appendix A: Our Voice Our County Supervisorial District 4

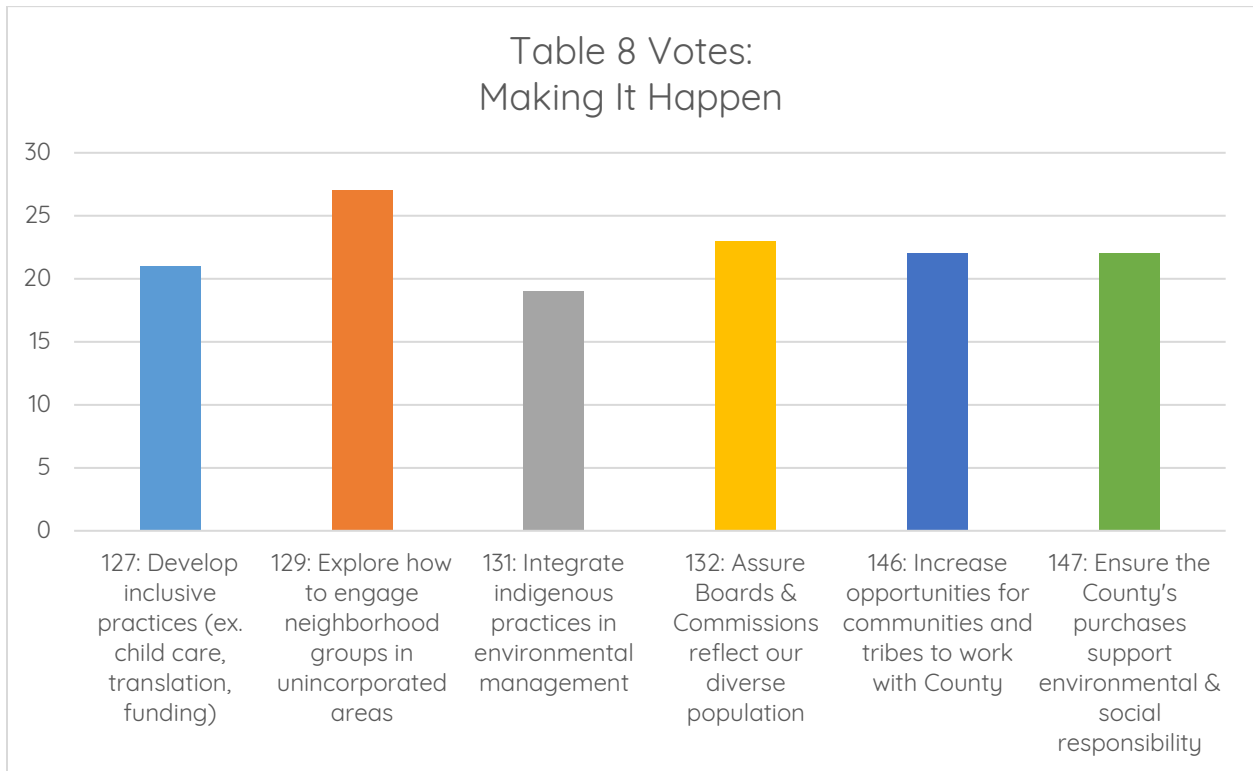
All Table Voting Results













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:

- Create tax incentives for property owners of empty lots to create gardens
- Community doctors and medical expertise, where are they? We need their data input
- Safe drinking water in public spaces (including colleges, parks, etc)
- Remove refineries and industries to reduce threat of community emergencies
- Ban fossil fuels and oil extraction
- More green spaces
- Give power to biodiversity
- More local natural areas; and emphasis on planting native plants, not ornamental plants from elsewhere
- Make organic foods more affordable
- Hold government accountable to promote policy to reduce waste
- Increase advertising around meetings
- Transit-oriented developments for lower-income neighborhoods that is affordable; eliminate density; alleviate pollution
- Charging stations at bus stops
- Transportation or bus tokens to meetings
- More youth involvement



Appendix C: Organizations with Resource Tables at Our Voice, Our County Supervisory District 4 Expo

County and Agency Resource Tables

- County Public Works
- County DPSS
- County Workforce Development, Aging & Community Services
- County Beaches & Harbors
- County Regional Planning
- Metro BikeShare
- Metropolitan Water District
- County Library (“MakMo”—size of Fed Ex Van; needs table)
- County Fire Department (Tree/Plant Giveaway; needs table)

Nonprofit Resource Tables

- CBE Information Table
- Voter Registration Table (CBE)
- SBCC
- Wilmington Neighborhood Council
- Wilmington Family YMCA
- SouthBay 350
- Breathe LA
- LA Alliance for a New Economy
- LA Waterkeeper
- Khmer Girls in Action
- U.S. Green Building Council
- Long Beach Alliance of Children with Asthma
- Sierra Club
- Climate Resolve
- Live Art Canvass
- emPOWER Table
- EV Ride & Drive



Vendors:

- Handmade Flowers
- Rockadeadly
- Lucinas
- Your Beauty for Ashes
- Lil Libros

Photos by Giovanni Solis