

Environmental Justice Working Group Meeting #3 Summary

Date	Wednesday, February 7, 2024
Time	3:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Location	Virtual via Zoom
Topic	Implementation Programs

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For questions about the content of this summary, please contact planning.envjustice@lacity.org.

Overview

On February 7, 2024, Los Angeles City Planning Health and Environmental Justice team hosted the third Environmental Justice Working Group (EJWG) meeting via Zoom.

The third meeting was focused on the topic of implementation programs. The meeting began with a staff presentation with project updates regarding outreach and engagement as well as the Climate Vulnerability Assessment (CVA), followed by an overview of implementation programs in the General Plan. After a brief question and answer session, two breakout room discussions were facilitated by staff, respectively covering the topics of Health and Environmental Justice (including Air Quality), and Open Space.

Background

Last year, as a continued commitment to address environmental justice in Los Angeles, the Department launched the Environmental Justice Policy Work Program. This new work program is tasked with centralizing and elevating environmental justice policies in the General Plan by updating the Health, Air Quality, and Open Space Elements. This targeted effort will include reviewing, strengthening and developing goals, policies and implementations programs related to land use, sustainability, climate equity and environmental justice, with a focus on centering the voices of communities most impacted by environmental injustice.

EJWG participants are community based organizations and advocacy groups that focus on environmental justice issues in Los Angeles. The EJWG provides an essential perspective to uplift policy priorities that center the health and well-being of the people of Los Angeles and will serve to augment outreach efforts to ensure the participation of diverse segments of the community. For a list of EJWG Meeting #3 participating organizations, please see Appendix A.

Summary

The third EJWG meeting consisted of three parts: 1) staff presentation; 2) Q & A session; and 3) two staff-facilitated breakout room session discussions about Health and Environmental Justice, and Open Space programs. The summaries include a condensed version of the staff presentations and comments shared by EJWG participants during the meeting. They represent various comments from different members, and not the overall opinion of the EJWG.

Staff Presentation & Materials

The full slideshow presentation can be found at:

<https://planning.lacity.gov/plans-policies/environmental-justice#engagement>

Q&A

The presentation was followed up by a short Q&A which included some of the following questions and comments:

- Request for visual materials regarding the work program to share out on social media platforms.
- Question in regards to locating Working Group Materials online
- Question about CBO partnership and collaboration between the Citywide Housing Policy and Environmental Justice Policy work programs

Implementation Programs Breakout Sessions

Breakout Room Discussion1: Health and Environmental Justice

The first breakout room session was focused on Health and Environmental Justice. Topics included: prevention, remediation, restoration, reinvestment, community partnership and engagement, and health and wellness. The topic of air quality was included as part of this discussion.

In addition to topic specific questions to promote dialogue, the following general questions were used to guide each topic discussion:

What are existing community efforts/partnerships that are moving these concepts forward?
What are existing funding mechanisms that can help move these concepts forward?
Are there existing programs that need to be reevaluated or modified to move these concepts forward?
Are there any efforts you are involved in that are focused on these concepts?
Are there any other agencies or departments that should be involved in this conversation?
Are there any other organizations or communities that should be involved in this conversation?
What is missing?

Prevention

Prevention encompasses matters related to sensitive uses, development standards and transitional zoning strategies to prevent further exposure to noxious uses that impact public health.

Feedback:

- Support for creating distance requirements from noxious land uses to prevent further pollution.
- Support for advancing development standards to mitigate noise and contamination through buffers that incorporate natural landscaping that enhance biodiversity (bushes, native plants, trees, etc.)
- Comment about incorporating open space requirements for new housing projects
- Concerns for existing zoning that is inconsistent and allows industrial uses in residential zones
- Concerns for hybrid industrial uses that may allow oil wells and other industrial uses in near proximity to residential areas (i.e. large container yards)
- Comments on the Warren E&P Wilmington oil pipe rupture site, located potentially on currently proposed hybrid industrial zoning
- Concerns for existing zoning that may allow polluting facilities (i.e. dry cleaners, gas stations, auto body shops) in commercial zones
- Support for inclusive design that advances equity and social justice (in contrast to hostile architecture)
- Support for expanding open space and tree canopy cover to mitigate urban heat island effect
- Support for creating additional open space requirements/amenities for housing development projects (i.e. playgrounds or other recreational areas for children)
- Support for a just transition for businesses into green businesses (i.e. oil sites and refineries, dry cleaners, auto body shops)
- Recommendation to address the expansion of indoor air filtration systems to improve indoor air quality
- Advance agency collaboration and enforcement to further prevent exposure
- Support for expanding Clean Up Green Up (CUGU) throughout the City:
 - Include neighborhoods with diesel truck routes
 - Amplify enforcement of CUGU

Questions:

- Questions regarding height requirements

- Questions regarding distance requirements near polluting land uses
- Questions regarding yard storage zoning regulations

Remediation and Clean-Up

Remediation and Clean-Up includes concepts covering enforcement and clean up efforts to remediate contaminated sites

Feedback:

- Concern for the lack of community engagement in remediation processes
- Support for holding polluting industries accountable for contamination as part of the remediation process
- Comments about the community engagement process for various agencies (i.e. Department of Toxic Substances and the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board)
- Comments about databases that help identify toxic sites (i.e. Geotracker and EnviroStor)
- Support for developing databases with an accurate assessment of toxic sites in Los Angeles and include regular updates to those databases
- Support for creating a brownfields inventory for the City
- Concerns about CEQA streamlining in emerging housing policy (i.e. ED 1 Ordinance)
- Comments about participatory science methods that involve community members in soil sampling

Questions:

- Questions regarding the use of Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps
- Questions and concerns regarding the feasibility and timeline for developing a toxic site database/inventory

Restoration

Restoration acknowledges the long lasting impacts of past harms imposed on various communities throughout the City.

Feedback:

- Comment regarding the role of environmental justice as a means to equally access systems of power
- Build deeper community partnerships with local organizations, smaller groups, and community members that are not typically part of the decision making process.

- Comments and concerns about the capacity of indigenous groups to engage in city processes, in addition to ongoing distrust of government
- Recommendation to include the most impacted communities in the EJWG
- Support for continuing virtual and hybrid meeting methods
- Concerns about access to in-person meetings by community members with a disability
- Concerns about the lack of translation services provided at City's meetings
- Concerns about the approach of housing strategies among unhoused folks
- Advocate to acknowledge the City's past history of racist zoning practices
- Concerns that existing zoning is not transformative enough
- Support for advancing communication and building trust with communities that have been impacted the most by City policies
- Support to continue and expand outreach and engagement efforts
- Comments about including residents as part of the conversation and learning process of the City's programs
- Advocate to conduct community engagement events at commonly visited community spaces (i.e. swap meets, senior centers, etc.)
- Advocate to disseminate resources and transfer land as a key component of restoration

Questions

- Question about how this work program is engaging with unhoused communities
- Question about how this work program interfaces with Measure ULA

Reinvestment

Reinvestment addresses transition approaches for polluting industries and additional strategies that prioritize just transition in the most environmentally impacted communities

Feedback:

- Comment about the AB 617 South Los Angeles Just Transition Project addressing the conversion of dry cleaning to professional wet cleaning (Physicians for Social Responsibility Los Angeles)
- Concerns regarding the safe assessment of sites for redevelopment
- Suggestions to deepen research about Just Transition strategies
- Comments and concerns regarding Department of Conservation Geologic Energy Management Division's (CalGEM) State Oil and Gas Well Abandonment program
- Concerns about "greenwashing" by industries that continue to impact frontline communities (i.e. use of "green" hydrogen in homes)
- Support for the use of solar energy

- Advocate to phase out dry cleaners
- Recognize that metal facilities and autobody shops as significant pollutants in environmental justice communities
- Support for phasing out oil drilling and continue to learn from the process
- Advocate to expand environmentally safe housing and parks
- Advocate to continue outreach and engagement at every step of the process
- Support for agency collaboration in this process

Community Partnership and Engagement

Community partnership and engagement incorporates meaningful involvement strategies as a core component of General Plan implementation and programming

Feedback:

- Concerns about the pre-existing challenges of community participation and reimbursement
- Recommendations to modify the vendor relationship between the City and community based organizations to allow for increased participation and ability to receive funding/compensation
- Support to continue to work with trusted organizations
- Recognize community organizing as a field of expertise
- Support for a policy framework that reimburses community members for their time and knowledge

Health and Wellness

Health and Wellness encompasses feedback related to food, education, urban design, housing, community care, and how existing inequities have been exacerbated by COVID-19.

Feedback:

- Comments regarding the long lasting health impacts of COVID-19
- Concerns about the impact that COVID-19 had across communities of color, as it exacerbated health, access and service inequities
- Recommendations to acknowledge the role of urban design in advancing equity and access
- Concerns about the lack of accessibility in urban spaces for people with disabilities
- Concerns about the elimination of COVID-19 tenant protections
- Advocate for the development of policies that protect all groups

- Advocate to prioritize resources to environmental justice communities after major disasters

Breakout Room Discussion 2: Open Space

The second breakout room session was focused on Open Space. Topics included: park lands, natural lands, park access, climate resilience, park conditions, and trees.

The following general questions were posed to the group for each topic:

Are there existing programs that need to be reevaluated or modified to move these concepts forward?
Are there any existing community efforts that are already moving these concepts forward?
Are there new partnerships the City should consider to accomplish these concepts more effectively?
Are there any new studies or examples that could inform or identify new programs?
What new or ongoing funding sources should the City pursue to advance these concepts?
Are there programs in other cities that we can replicate or learn from?
Who else needs to be involved in this conversation?
What is missing?

Park Lands

Park Lands address contaminated and degraded land restoration, open space development standards, privately owned public spaces, public facilities, joint use, and parkland acquisition.

Feedback:

- Support for joint partnerships, such as partnering with nearby schools and/or non-profits, to ensure people use and continually activate parks
- Comment identifying the People for Parks model as a partnership example for shared/joint use of school playgrounds
- Advocate for community garden protections
- Support for new development projects to include community gardens and urban farms
- Advocate for housing and open space requirements to be reviewed together
- Recommendation to add open space thresholds in communities that are underserved to

prevent developers from automatically maxing out projects and minimizing open space requirements through the entitlement process.

- Comment highlighting LA ROSAH Collaborative projects
- Recommendation to reference the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Memo
- Support to provide tribes cultural easements
- Comment identifying Bradley Plaza in Pacoima as an example of a stormwater capture system implemented in an alleyway
- Comment mentioning UC Riverside phytoremediation study to address brownfield remediation and restoring degraded land
- Comment highlighting the 100 Acre Partnership at Taylor Yard

Natural Lands

Natural Lands encompass rewilding opportunities, trails, paths, waterway restoration and tribal land stewardship partnership.

Feedback:

- Support for ecosystem restoration that includes native plants used in tribal practices
- Recommendation to reference the Tribal Climate Resilience Plan
- Comment referencing rehabilitation methods to reclaim New York's High Line for natural uses, such as the use of mycelium

Park Access

Park Access addressed inclusive use and safety, co-design and inclusive design, green gentrification and anti-displacement, cultural uses and tribal practices, transportation and pedestrian corridors, social cohesion and resilience, and information and wayfinding.

Feedback:

- Support for a cultural easement process to allow cultural practices, use of fire, and harvesting
- Support partnering with affordable housing groups to advance greening that does not result in green gentrification
- Advocate to input from local community members from the beginning of a park project to ensure the design reflects the desires of the neighborhood it will serve
- Recommendation to create a steering committee of local stakeholders to drive park project design while remaining accountable to constituents along with a parallel City Department Technical Advisory Committee to ensure an ongoing dialogue

- Recommendation to have a requirement to prevent the loss of open space within a community, similar to housing replacement requirements for development projects
- Recommendation to reference the LINK Parks Initiative example
- Comment identifying Paxton Park in Pacoima as an example of inaccessible park
- Comment mentioning Pacoima Beautiful is working to include Tataviam historical imagery for projects along the Pacoima Wash
- Support for equitable investment in operations and management
- Recommendation to consider creating “eco villages” or “tiny home communities” similar to those found in Portland, Oregon
- Comment referencing several examples of the “eco village” model such as Co-Op City in New York, Kailash Ecovillage in Oregon, Norwich Council Houses in the United Kingdom, and Vienna Social Housing in Austria

Climate Resilience

Climate Resilience addresses nature-based solutions, community gardens and agriculture, water management and conservation, native plants and biodiversity, emergency preparedness, and park co-benefits.

Feedback:

- Recommendation to implement the types of planting requirements and methods that help with storm drainage like those in “sponge cities”
- Support for community gardens as a method to alleviate food insecurity
- Support for greening schoolyards to provide climate benefits, mitigation pollution, and improve conditions for children
- Comment mentioning the Los Angeles Living Schoolyards Coalition as an example of how to green schoolyards
- Comment highlighting Watts Rising initiative at Markham Middle School that includes a community garden project that could be replicated at other locations
- Comment regarding the process complexity for partnerships with the City and LAUSD
- Advocate to streamline the approval process for school partnerships to reduce the time and effort required to comply with regulations
- Comment mentioning Council for Watershed Health as an example
- Comment highlighting the partnership between LA Conservation Corps and Pacoima Beautiful for the Transformative Climate Communities (TCC) Program to provide local job training while working to increase tree canopy

Park Conditions

Park Conditions addresses ongoing maintenance, improvements to existing parks, and operations and programming.

Feedback:

- Recommendation to hire locally to help with opening and closing responsibilities, maintenance, upkeep, and stewardship
- Support for easements or a similar process when implementing (small) parks to assist with the ongoing maintenance and access/protection issues
- Recommendation to equip parks with an adequate amount of public restrooms with 24 hour access
- Concern regarding unhoused park users and acknowledgement of the challenge that poses on public facilities
- Comment mentioning how Metro is implementing “self-cleaning” restrooms
- Comment highlighting City of Philadelphia as an example

Trees

Trees include canopy equity, urban heat island, and the development process for tree preservation.

Feedback:

- Support for creating more regulations that prevent loss of trees resulting from new development projects, such as replacement requirements similar to housing replacement requirements
- Support for public access to fruit bearing trees
- Staff shared reference links to:
 - [Upcoming calendar for LA Urban Forest Management Plan \(LA UFMP\) Neighborhood Workshops](#)
 - [Inter-Departmental Memorandum: Tree and Biodiversity Planning and The City's Urban Canopy and Tree Canopy Coverage: CF 15-0499-S2](#)
 - [Los Angeles County Tree Canopy Map Viewer hosted on TreePeople's website](#)

Next Steps

The EJWG will continue to convene bi-monthly (every other month) through Spring 2024 for the first part of this multi-year effort. The final scheduled meeting for the EJWG during this initial outreach phase will take place on April 10, 2024 and the topic will be Refinements. Below is an overview of all scheduled EJWG meetings.

- **Working Group Meeting #1 - October 18, 2023**
Topic: Vision, Policy Concepts and Meaningful Involvement
- **Working Group Meeting #2 - December 6, 2023**
Topic: Goals and Policies
- **Working Group Meeting #3 - February 7, 2024**
Topic: Implementation Programs
- **Working Group Meeting #4 - April 10, 2024**
Topic: Refinements

Appendix A

Environmental Justice Working Group Meeting #2 - Participating Organizations*

[Black Women for Wellness](#)

[Communities for a Better Environment](#)

[Esperanza Community Housing Corporation](#)

[Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative](#)

[Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust](#)

[Pacoima Beautiful](#)

[Physicians for Social Responsibility](#)

[Sierra Club - Los Angeles](#)

[Trust for Public Land](#)

[Watts Labor Community Action Committee / Greater Watts Development Corporation](#)

*While more organizations than listed above were invited to the working group meeting, only organizations who participated are listed.