

LOWER LOS ANGELES RIVER REVITALIZATION PLAN (LLARRP) WORKING GROUP MEETING #14

Thursday, June 1, 2017 ♦ 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm
Salt Lake Park Social Hall, 3403 Florence Avenue, Huntington Park

S U M M A R Y R E P O R T

INTRODUCTION

On June 1, 2017, California State Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon of the 63rd Assembly District and the Rivers and Mountain Conservancy (RMC) co-hosted the fourteenth meeting of the Working Group for the Lower Los Angeles River Revitalization Plan (LLARRP). The purpose of the meeting was to review related and connected planning efforts from a partner agency along the Lower Los Angeles River, review outcomes from recent meetings of the Plan Element Committees and River Segment Committees, and discuss potential design elements for the river.

Meeting Format and Agenda

The fourteenth meeting of the Working Group occurred on June 1, 2017, from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Salt Lake Park Social Hall, 3403 Florence Avenue, Huntington Park. Approximately 30 representatives and 20 community members participated in the meeting (Attachment B).

Daniel Iacofano of MIG, Inc., served as meeting facilitator and opened the meeting by welcoming attendees and introducing City Councilmember Graciela Ortiz of the City of Huntington Park. In addition to providing welcoming remarks, she also introduced Councilmember Manuel Avila and Economic Development Manager Manny Acosta, who were in attendance. Mr. Iacofano then provided an overview of the agenda (Attachment A) and meeting format before asking for self-introductions from all participants. Mr. Iacofano then introduced [TITLE, NAME] of the City of Lynwood, who provided a brief overview of projects related to connectivity and improvements with the river. Brad Wardynski of Tetra Tech, part of the project team, provided an overview of the latest developments from the River Segment Committees, followed by Ira Artz of Tetra Tech, who provided an overview of an emerging governance structure for managing and maintaining the river. After each presentation, Mr. Iacofano facilitated discussions with Working Group members and other participants to address questions and comments. Mr. Iacofano then led the Working Group in a review of potential design elements for the river and facilitated their discussions and comments.

During these reports, Andy Pendoley of MIG recorded key points on a wall-sized piece of paper, or “wallgraphic.” A summary of the presentations and discussion points are provided in the following sections, and a photo-reduced copy of wallgraphic is included as Attachment D.

SUMMARY OF PARTNER AGENCY'S PRESENTATIONS: CITY OF LYNWOOD

Participants received a presentation from Bruno Naulls, Community Development Project Manager of the City of Lynwood, who focused on the efforts to connect the City's future Metro Greenline station to and over the river and the I-710 freeway. Most the connector trail will run parallel and adjacent to the I-105 freeway as a joint-use facility between the City and Caltrans. A range of features vary by block including play areas, dog areas, parking, fitness stations, rest areas, open spaces, runoff mitigation, bike lanes, distance markers, wayfinding, solar lighting, security cameras and native landscaping. The proposed "Southwood Riverway Bridge" from MLK Blvd over the river and I-710 freeway to Hollydale Park in South Gate would provide new connectivity and access for both communities. This crossing would also be separated from traffic, provide a shorter connection, and provide an overall safer experience.

Working Group and audience members asked questions of Mr. Naulls, with his responses in *italics*.

- What funding and grant options are under consideration by the City for this project? – *Multiple options are possible including but not limited to Gateway Cities COG, Safe Routes to School, Metro, and I-710 Corridor Project.*
- How with the bike plan be implemented? – *Partner cities' buy-in and investment will be critical, as well as support from Caltrans and Metro.*
- Why not end the path at the western side of the I-710 freeway? – *Currently there is no trail connection on the western side, and access to the river as an open space and recreation amenity is important.*

SUMMARY OF COMMITTEES' PRESENTATION

River Segment Committees

Mr. Wardzynski provided an overview of the recent River Segment Committees' meetings focused on reviewing baseline conditions and building blocks and discussing multi-benefit opportunities and evaluation criteria. The 74 building blocks are organized around a central "theme," such as water, stream restoration, multi-use trails, recreation, access points, and local workforce development. The building blocks will be applied to strategies, which are divided into two categories:

- **Opportunity area strategies** are distributed strategies throughout the lower LA River corridor, and become project templates that can be applied with program and policy guidance.
- **Site-specific strategies** are defined by discrete locations with targeted programs and policies governing them

A four step approach applied to the projects to develop the strategies is as follows:

1. Define and characterize opportunity areas, which are based on defining features and characteristics

2. Assess opportunity areas to create a “menu” of possible project templates and program guidance
3. Evaluate the multi-benefit site specific strategies based on opportunities, constraints and stakeholder input. Specific strategy locations will be identified and scored based on the degree they will “move the needle” for the applicable objectives’ metrics
4. Evaluate the plan progress towards all objectives. Any under-represented objectives could lead to bolstering with more strategies, or reassessing in the final draft

Land use typologies are blocks of landscape that share similar characteristics and objectives. Four distinct typologies for the Lower LA River include:

1. Lower-Density Urban Neighborhood
2. Higher-Density Urban Neighborhood
3. Commercial/Retail District
4. Industrial/Warehouse District

The characteristics of the typologies are as follows:

- Population density
- Open space
- Greenway access
- Presence of homeless shelters
- Existing or potential environmental contamination
- Schools
- Transportation
- Percent imperviousness

Working Group and audience members asked questions of Mr. Wardzynski and the project team, with responses in *italics*.

- Develop maps of the existing land use characteristics and types
- What methodologies will be applied? – *The Plan element objectives will be applied: Public Realm; Community Economics, Health and Equity; and Water and Environment*
- Ensure public input is part of the evaluation process through an explicit and transparent approach

Implementation Committee: Draft Governance Structure

Mr. Artz provided an overview of the recent Implementation Committee’s meeting focused on developing a governance structure, which is necessary for the following reasons:

- Decision making
- Implementation of features/activities that meet the Revitalization Plan’s goals and objectives
- Forum for equitable coordination of stakeholders
- Financial role

The governance structure must be managed by those agencies that have a statutory responsibility for the river and adjacent property. The management organization will be open to input from all stakeholders.

The Executive Board would include the following agencies:

- LA County Flood Control District
- United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- The cities along the corridor

The Executive Board would lead the District, with committees made up of representatives appointed by the Executive Board. Stakeholders and agencies would provide input at Executive Board meetings and/or Committee meetings. Questions to be resolved include the level of management independence of the Board, as well as the authority level of the District.



Many Committee members feel strongly that community members should not be “outside the center.” Community members and stakeholders would have input, and would potentially have representatives in the committees that report to the Board. These committees would in fact be part of the Management District itself, not just not part of the Executive Board.

The Management District functions and value-added features would include:

- Resource acquisition
- Permit assistance
- Property/asset ownership
- Coordinating body with agencies and stakeholders

A number of policies should be addressed that affect implementation, including but not limited to the following:

- Urban reinvestment
- Zoning incl. River Improvement Overlays
- Funding allocations internal and external to the Management District
- Safe use policies: who is responsible for safety-related aspects
- Property/asset ownership
- Affordable housing goals
- Environmental justice considerations
- Citizen participation
- Greenways, parkland, and trails commitments

Similarly, a number of programs should be considered that affect implementation, including but not limited to:

- Trails, greenways, and parks
- Water quality, water supply
- Smart streets
- River rangers / river monitoring
- Housing trusts
- Education
- River clean-up programs
- Brownfields remediation
- Ongoing database of project proposals

Working Group and audience members asked questions of Mr. Artz and the project team and provided comments, with responses in *italics*.

- Why wouldn't there be one or more "public" seats on the Executive Board? – *Such a board typically is focused on those organizations with statutory authority and responsibility for the river and adjacent properties/communities. This approach serves to preserve their authority.*
- Strengthening accountability mechanisms is important to many in the community. Public seats on the Executive Board and/or additional mechanisms could include the following:
 - Voting procedures
 - Implementation tracking
 - Public representatives who are authentic voices
 - Proportional or equal representation of interests and jurisdictions
- What would be the legal entity: the proposed LLAR Park District (Senate Bill 1374), a joint powers authority (JPA), a commission? – *A JPA is the entity in the upper portion of the LA River. However, USACE is in an advisory role, and is self-restricted from being a voting member that applies its authority as part of the governance structure. This constrains the ability to move projects and decision-making more efficiently. Nevertheless, lessons learned from this structure may be informative to the LLAR governance structure.*
- Additional criteria for defining the Management District, Executive Board, governance, and related items could include the following:
 - Direct community participation
 - Maximization of funding opportunities
 - Management responsibilities related to the participating and adjacent jurisdictions
 - Equal representations
 - Full transparency
- Additional models for governance could include the following:
 - San Antonio River Authority, Texas; specifically, related to how USACE is integrated in the governance structure
 - Trinity River, Texas; governance as a water district with multiple partners

Implementation Committee: Funding Opportunities

Mr. Artz also provided an overview of the emerging matrix of potential funding sources, such as: local jurisdictions; state and Federal agencies and departments; and current and potential funding measures (e.g., bonds and taxes). The project team and Committee compared each source to their potential applications including: river modifications; bridges and trails, parks and open spaces; water quality projects; and operations and maintenance.

Working Group and audience members asked questions of Mr. Artz and the project team and provided comments, with responses in *italics*.

- Can an “enhanced infrastructure financing district” cover operations and maintenance costs? – *More research may be necessary.*
- What is the “County Water Resiliency Funding Measure”? – *This is a potential funding measure under development by the County for consideration on the November 2018 ballot.*

SUMMARY OF ADDITIONAL REPORTS AND UPDATES

Working Group and project team members shared brief updates and discussed latest developments regarding the Displacement Workshop, future planning for the Rio Hondo Confluence, and community engagement.

Displacement Workshop

Working Group member Antonio Hicks of Public Council provided a brief report on the Displacement Workshop conducted in May 2017, which was attended by many Working Group members. Considered to be “Part I” of a workshop series, the topics reviewed potential projects, funding opportunities, and models that can inform solutions for displacement from future development related to an improved LLAR. Many Working Group members agreed that public education and participation in the topic is necessary to identify relevant and realistic solutions to this topic.

Rio Hondo Confluence: Conceptual Site Studies

Mr. Iacofano reflected on recent Working Group meetings and discussions focused on potential designs for the Rio Hondo Confluence. On behalf of the project team, he noted that more in-depth conceptual site studies will be conducted to further define the opportunities and feasibilities across a range of planning and engineering-related topics. This effort may amount to 6-12 additional conceptual designs for consideration and detailed analysis. Working Group members expressed support for this approach, and indicated the importance of conducting an integrated approach with community engagement that involves adjacent communities, particularly Thunderbird Villa mobile home park on W. Frontage Road in South Gate.

Community Outreach

Some Working Group members expressed concern about the comprehensiveness of outreach efforts—e.g., a seemingly minimal notification effort for the June 10, 2017 community workshop in Long Beach. Additionally, Working Group members stressed the importance of the cities and other Working Group members supporting the communication and notification efforts. The project team reaffirmed its commitment to continue providing regular reports of outreach activities and outcomes to the Working Group.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION: POTENTIAL DESIGN ELEMENTS

Mr. Iacofano presented a series of potential design elements for Working Group review and discussion that could be part of future improvements that create functional, attractive and appealing visual elements on the LLAR. Mr. Iacofano facilitated an interactive discussion with participants regarding their reactions to the potential elements, asking for input on what elements may be important or suitable to the LLAR. The potential design elements included the following:

- Street Ends, Access Points and Gateways
- Bridges and Crossings
- Low-Water Access
- Paving
- Lighting
- Signage and Wayfinding
- Interpretive and Educational Exhibits
- Active Spaces
- Social Gathering and Rest Areas
- Public Art

Detailed slides and images of the design elements are available in the appendix of this report. Following are concise summaries of participants' reactions and feedback to the elements.

Street Ends, Access Points and Gateways

- Address the need for wide gateway and access points at locations allowing for equestrian access
- Include management of gateways and access points in the governance structure

Bridges and Crossings

- Strive to include cohesive design elements across all bridges and crossings; but also include ways to reflect local character within each facility
- Aim to create multi-use, multi-modal and multi-functional designs to the extent feasible
- Consider social-gathering spaces, but only where effective traffic separation is feasible
- Study model equestrian bridges (e.g., Griffith Park)
- Engage local residents for in considering expanded access to street ends

- Consider the following locations for potential bridges/crossings (including those identified in the I-710 Corridor Bike Study):
 - Clara St/Cudahy/Bell Gardens
 - Randolph/Union Pacific Rail Road bridge
 - Willow St, Long Beach
 - Del Amo—equestrian guard rail

Low-Water Access

- Define what is suitable versus feasible in identifying access points related to the intermixing of humans, built infrastructure, and natural elements
- Develop a unified approach that balances and addresses ecology, human access and seasonal dynamics

Paving

- Emphasize paving that provides access for all
- Study options to create loops for particular modes
- Consider a range of material, including but not limited to: asphalt, rubber, dirt and decomposed granite

Lighting

- Leverage alternative energy with lighting infrastructure, including but not limited to wind and solar
- Provide wifi as an attractor to the river

Signage, Wayfinding and Public Art

- Consider education efforts focused on species, water, local history, and peoples
- Utilize local artists through a community design process to define the local character and identity, and to build community commitment and ownership
- Include the full range of local languages
- Develop designs and use material that mitigate impacts from vandalism
- Consider a range of material, including but not limited to: iron, sculpture, metal, stone and wood

Active Spaces

- Create formal and informal spaces that attract people to the river
- Facilitate and encourage community celebrations

Social Gathering and Rest Areas

- Develop an economic development plan that facilitates small scale, “mom and pop”, local business development in public spaces along the river
- Facilitate gatherings that activate spaces and are publicly welcoming, including but not limited to under freeway structures, and at the edge and within the water
- Create community venues for music, theater and movies

NEXT STEPS

Mr. Iacofano concluded the meeting by thanking Working Group members, reviewing upcoming outreach activities, and reviewing the next Working Group meeting dates and locations, which are listed on the project website.

The next Working Group meetings are scheduled as follows:

- Thursday, July 6, 2017, South Gate
- Thursday, August 3, 2017, Maywood