

EQUITABLE ENGAGEMENT IN THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

*Best Practices and Lessons
Learned for Engaging
Communities of Concern*

REPORT DEVELOPED FOR:



REPORT DEVELOPED BY:



WITH FUNDING PROVIDED:



Acknowledgements

The Institute for Local Government (ILG) is committed to empowering local governments and helping them navigate complex issues, increase their capacity and build trust with their communities. We were honored to provide the services and support that enabled the City of San Diego to work with the Greenlining Institute and five San Diego-based community organizations to ensure that equity was centered in their climate action and resilience planning efforts.

We acknowledge that the conditions for this effort were not ideal due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions and time constraints. We want to thank our partners at Casa Familiar, Climate Action Campaign, Environmental Health Coalition, Mid-City CAN and the San Diego Urban Sustainability Coalition for their flexibility and commitment to this important project. With your continued trust and understanding, we are working together to help the City of San Diego achieve its vision of a more just, sustainable and climate resilient city.



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Executive Summary

Embedding equity in climate planning means learning from the past to make the future better for all, especially for those who have been traditionally left out. By dedicating a substantial financial investment and partnering with statewide nonprofits and local community-based organizations, the City of San Diego expanded its capacity and tapped into the expertise of San Diego's community leaders to uplift the voices of **more than 700 residents** who traditionally would not have participated in the city's planning efforts. Though messy at times, this effort resulted in new partnerships and engagements, which illuminated the experiences of vulnerable populations living in San Diego's Communities of Concern. The outreach and engagement plans, uniquely developed and led by various community-based organizations, included a set of meaningful activities to meet traditionally under-engaged residents "where they are" and provided a safe environment where education and learning could take place. The process not only resulted in valuable information and community input that will help ensure the City's Climate Action Plan update is centered around equity, it helped increase trust and understanding between the City of San Diego and some of the community-based organizations that work within the City's Communities of Concern.

It must be noted that this engagement effort was not flawless. Timelines and COVID restrictions played a critical role in the outcomes. At the onset of the opportunity, the community-based organizations expressed the desire for more time to understand and strategize about the objectives of this effort. They also needed additional capacity to navigate complex contracting and payment processes. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, many of the community-based organizations were already committed to other community support activities and were searching for new ways to connect with their communities since in person gatherings were no longer an option.

In an effort help the community-based organizations navigate these challenges, the Institute for Local Government (ILG) and the Greenlining Institute developed four virtual roundtable discussions. Though not a part of the original scope of work, these small group discussions provided a venue for the community-based organizations to discuss techniques and approaches to the work, strategize and problem-solve in real time and share honest views about past engagements and investments in San Diego's Communities of Concern. The conversations that took place during these discussions not only supported the engagement work of the community-based organizations, it supported trust-building between the City and community partners.

While this ambitious effort resulted in increased engagement to support a more equitable climate action planning process, it revealed that there is more work to be done. Establishing trust and authentically engaging Communities of Concern will require continued dedication and investment from all parties involved. Committing ongoing resources to capacity building and technical assistance to help strengthen local coordination, leadership, knowledge, skills and expertise will increase the ability of communities to work with the City of San Diego in a more authentic and sustained way. Embedding equity from the beginning and incorporating community input into policies and plans will help create more resilient communities for future generations.

Background

Building on the ILG's work leading the BOOST Program, the City of San Diego (the City) contracted with ILG to help increase public engagement around planning efforts for both its Climate Action Plan update and its first-ever Climate Resilience Plan, called Climate Resilient SD. These were separate efforts, managed by two different departments within the City of San Diego. The Climate Action Plan update is managed by the Sustainability Department and the Climate Resilience Plan is managed by the Planning Department.

While separate efforts with different budgets, both sought to address social equity and environmental justice – more commonly referred to as *climate equity*. To ensure that climate equity was at the forefront of both plans, the City wanted to ensure that traditionally under-engaged San Diegans were empowered to participate throughout the climate action planning process.

In 2019, the City developed the Climate Equity Index to identify the relative level of access to opportunity in each San Diego census tract. The updated index revealed that 88 census tracts in the City have moderate to very low access to opportunity. These areas are referred to as Communities of Concern. The City identified four Communities of Concern to target in its engagement efforts: 1) City Heights, 2) Barrio Logan, Southeastern San Diego 3) Encanto, Skyline, Paradise Hills and 4) San Ysidro, Nestor, Otay Mesa.

The City invested \$200,000 (\$150,000 from the Sustainability Department and \$50,000 from the Planning Department) to ensure that inclusive engagement of those Communities of Concern was achieved in a focused and targeted manner. An additional in-kind contribution of approximately \$25,000 was provided by ILG, thanks to generous funding provided by the California Endowment. Approximately \$150,000 of the total funding for this effort was allocated to community-based organizations (CBOs) that have built trust with residents living within the Communities of Concern. ILG worked with five community-based organizations to develop unique engagement and outreach plans aimed at educating and engaging the identified neighborhoods in the City's climate action planning efforts. The goal of these activities was to empower the CBOs and support them, while gaining a better understanding about how climate change affects residents' lives and what strategies and topics were most important to the residents they serve. The Greenling Institute (Greenlining) served as the equity advisor for the work to ensure that equity best practices were embedded in the discussions and to provide guidance on how to co-plan with community partners.

This report is developed for the Sustainability Department and includes a summary of the activities and outcomes of the three-month engagement efforts which focused on Communities of Concern, as well as best practices, lessons-learned and recommendations aimed at building trust, capacity and resources in neighborhoods that need it most.

The Participating Partners

Casa Familiar was founded in 1973 and is a 501(c)(3), community-based organization dedicated to serving residents in South San Diego County. Originally established in 1968 under the name Trabajadores de la Raza, Casa has grown and expanded its efforts from solely serving Spanish-speaking clients in San Ysidro to providing services and programs to all South San Diego County residents. Casa Familiar is the leading service and community development organization in the community of San Ysidro, providing over 40 bilingual programs and services at six different sites in the community. Casa's approach allows the agency to adapt to community needs through a multi-faceted program and funding strategy.



Climate Action Campaign (CAC) is a nationally recognized leader on climate action in Southern California, advocating for policies, plans and programs that advance climate justice and create safe and livable communities for all. CAC educates, organizes and mobilizes, elected officials, community advocates, organizers, businesses and environmental allies around five key fights including; 100% clean energy, bikeable, walkable neighborhoods, world-class transit; all-electric homes and shade trees. With the understanding that past and present racially-discriminatory policies and practices have left communities of color to bear the brunt of the climate crisis, CAC advocates for all five fights through the lens of equity and justice.



Environmental Health Coalition (EHC) is a San Diego/Tijuana nonprofit social and environmental justice organization dedicated to empowering people, organizing communities and achieving justice for low-income communities of color. EHC is an effective, results oriented organization with a passion for social change. EHC has been making a difference in the lives of the individuals, families and communities for over 40 years. Social Change for Justice Model is a framework integrating EHC's ideology and strategies to increase their ability to achieve social and environmental justice goals. The model incorporates all aspects of the EHC structure and method of work recognizing the critical importance and integration of three core strategies: community organizing, policy advocacy and leader empowerment.



Mid-City CAN is comprised of residents of the Mid-City neighborhood who care about making a lasting impact in their community. The organization gathers around the top issues residents care about, forming teams of volunteers. Mid-City CAN helps organize these teams to accomplish their goals. Their mission is to create a safe, productive and healthy community through collaboration, advocacy and organizing. Mid-City CAN takes a unique approach to accomplish that mission—they work with residents and partners to drive positive change across many systems and issues. Rather than coming in as an outside force, Mid-City CAN extensively collaborates with the people of City Heights to see what they need the most in their neighborhood. The most pressing issues raised by the people themselves are then addressed through Momentum Teams, which are councils made up of residents from City Heights.



San Diego Urban Sustainability Coalition (SDUSC) was created to address systemic inequity after it became increasingly clear across various channels that Southeast San Diego's community lacked representation in important discussions about sustainability as well as opportunities to enter the green job economy. Today, it exists to bring together Communities of Concern, stakeholders and like-minded organizations through grassroots organizing to inform processes and policy, to improve the quality of life and to increase opportunities for residents of Southeast San Diego and other resilient communities.



The Greenlining Institute is a policy, research, organizing and leadership institute working for racial and economic justice. Founded in 1993, Greenlining works on a variety of major policy issues, from the economy to environmental policy, health care and many others, because economic opportunity has many parts, and they all connect. Greenlining's approach connects community leaders with policymakers, researchers and private sector leaders to design and support policies designed to open doors to opportunity, recognizing that America's racial wealth gap was created by deliberate policy choices and it will take deliberate, race-conscious choices to end it.



The Institute for Local Government is a statewide nonprofit organization with a long history of educating and building the capacity of cities, counties and special districts to work with their communities to achieve a variety of goals and objectives. With a 65-year history of serving the needs of local governments in California, ILG supports local agency leaders with tackling the state's most pressing and evolving issues including sustainability and climate resilience, housing, public engagement, workforce development and leadership and governance. ILG is closely aligned with three affiliate organizations: the League of California Cities, the California State Association of Counties and the California Special Districts Association. Together with these local government partners, ILG maintains a solid foundation for continued engagement with local leaders making it uniquely positioned to empower and educate them while providing conscious counsel and expertise.



Planning for More **Equitable Engagement**

In 2020, the City of San Diego hosted Climate Action Plan update virtual forums where approximately 400 attendees discussed which climate actions they wanted to prioritize, what climate equity means to them and how climate change has already impacted them. An online survey, available from April through November 2020, asked San Diegans how they prioritized various actions the City might take and what barriers they face to implementing sustainable practices and habits in their own lives. More than 1,700 people responded to the survey. While these activities may have included responses from residents living within Communities of Concern, the City wanted to ensure greater participation rates from specific neighborhoods including City Heights, Barrio Logan, Southeastern San Diego, Linda Vista, Midway and San Ysidro. Five community-based organizations were chosen to participate in this project because of their connections and expertise with outreach and education to those living within these communities.

To honor the CBO's expertise, the City did not dictate a structured approach to the community engagement work. The goal of this effort was to empower these community-based organizations to design and implement engagement activities to ensure San Diegans facing the greatest climate impacts are robustly represented in the Climate Action Plan update. In addition to identifying an engagement strategy that was responsive to the communities they serve, the CBOs were encouraged to anticipate resource needs and ensure that equity was centered throughout the process. Each CBO developed a unique public engagement plan that would ensure representative and meaningful participation from the communities they serve. The outcome of the planning process was a list of diverse engagement events, suggestions for expanding language access and innovative approaches to collect data and feedback through a variety of events and promotional activities.



Executing Community-Based Engagement Plans

While the CBOs are experts at educating and communicating with the communities they serve, many found it difficult to adapt the City-provided climate planning materials to be more accessible and understandable to residents living within Communities of Concern. The specific information the City provided, including technical information to help inform the strategies to include in its Climate Action Plan update, required additional training, education and translation that was not possible due to the condensed timeframe for the outreach effort. As a result, the group decided to focus on gathering answers to three key questions:

- How has the change in climate affected you and/or impacted your quality of life?
- What concerns you most about the changing climate?
- What changes do you want to see the Climate Action Plan support in your neighborhood?

The CBOs adapted those questions for their audience and tailored the messaging to align with their engagement activities. A high importance was placed on making the questions conversational and culturally competent. Some CBOs were able to expand the questions to gain a better understanding of specific concerns and better prioritize specific strategies. The community-based organizations each implemented their own strategy in the timeframe provided.



The Environmental Health Coalition's

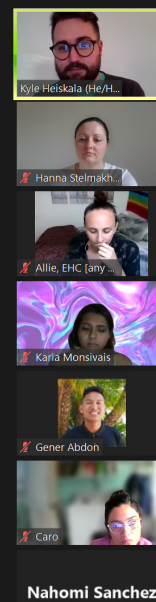
strategy consisted of three activities to encourage engagement from the Barrio Logan community. The staff hosted a virtual presentation at its Community Action Team meeting, presented a virtual workshop with Spanish interpretation and rounded off the activities with a phone banking survey in both English and Spanish. Both virtual events included breakout groups with guided discussion, note-taking and Zoom polling. For the phone banking effort, three canvassers contacted more than 750 households, which resulted in 84 connections to residents that either filled out a seven-question survey on the phone or after the call. With this engagement approach, EHC successfully reached the traditionally under represented and provided tailored education that connected the City's Climate Action Plan update to their communities' concerns about air pollution, health impacts, climate change and greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction strategies.



Clean Air is a Win-Win for Climate and Public Health

Climate solutions that clean the air maximize near-term health benefits and long-term climate impacts.

They offer the biggest impact using limited resources.



San Diego Urban Sustainability Coalition (SDUSC)

hosted two virtual community conversation workshops for residents in the South East and one Climate Ambassadors' focus group with a total of 56 participants. Simultaneous Spanish translation was provided at all events. The workshop design focused on small group dialogue and encouraged engagement via the chat function. The events provided an opportunity for participants to develop a baseline definition of equity, internalize and express how climate change impacts their daily lives and hear from their neighbors about their experiences and priorities related to a changing climate.

Let's have a conversation about it!



**SAN DIEGO URBAN
SUSTAINABILITY
COALITION**

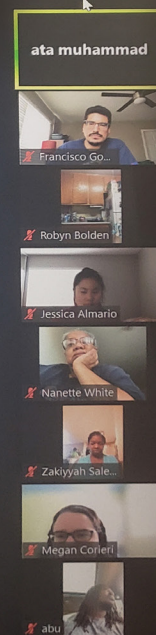
Learn how the City's Climate Action Plan affects YOU and YOUR COMMUNITY!

May 8th at 11 AM PDT

May 15th at 11 AM PDT

Follow the Link:

bit.ly/Convo4CAP



Mid-City CAN conducted phone banking and hosted two workshops, one in Spanish and one in English, to reach more than 250 residents. The phone banking included three short open-ended questions:

- How has the change in climate affected you?
- What are the most concerning aspects of this change?
- How does the change in climate impact your quality of life?

The phone banking proved to be especially effective and reached a greater number of residents without requiring a substantial time commitment. This outreach tactic provided an opportunity for the residents to talk about what is important to them with a trusted CBO partner from the comfort of their home.



Climate Action Campaign conducted 12 one-on-one phone interviews with community leaders and nine virtual presentations with community organizations and planning groups that included links to a follow-up survey. The stakeholder interviews allowed for deep dialogue about the community's concerns as well as their wants and needs, and allowed for the opportunity to discuss issues that were important to them. The presentations raised awareness about City's Climate Action Plan update and provided background education about the CAP and offered an prize drawing to encourage discussion and participation in the survey.


SHAPE SAN DIEGO'S CLIMATE PLAN

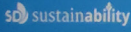
MIDWAY
—
EASTERN
AREA
—
LINDA
VISTA
—

The City of San Diego is updating their landmark 2015 Climate Action Plan.

Join Climate Action Campaign virtually to learn more about what this means for your community and how you can help shape it.

Or give feedback via phone/email:
info@climateactioncampaign.org
(619)419-1222







Opportunity Drawing


Two people will win a \$25 gift card to XX!

Take our survey within 3 days and be entered to win.

 From Bertha Rodriguez
she/her to Everyone

Survey link:





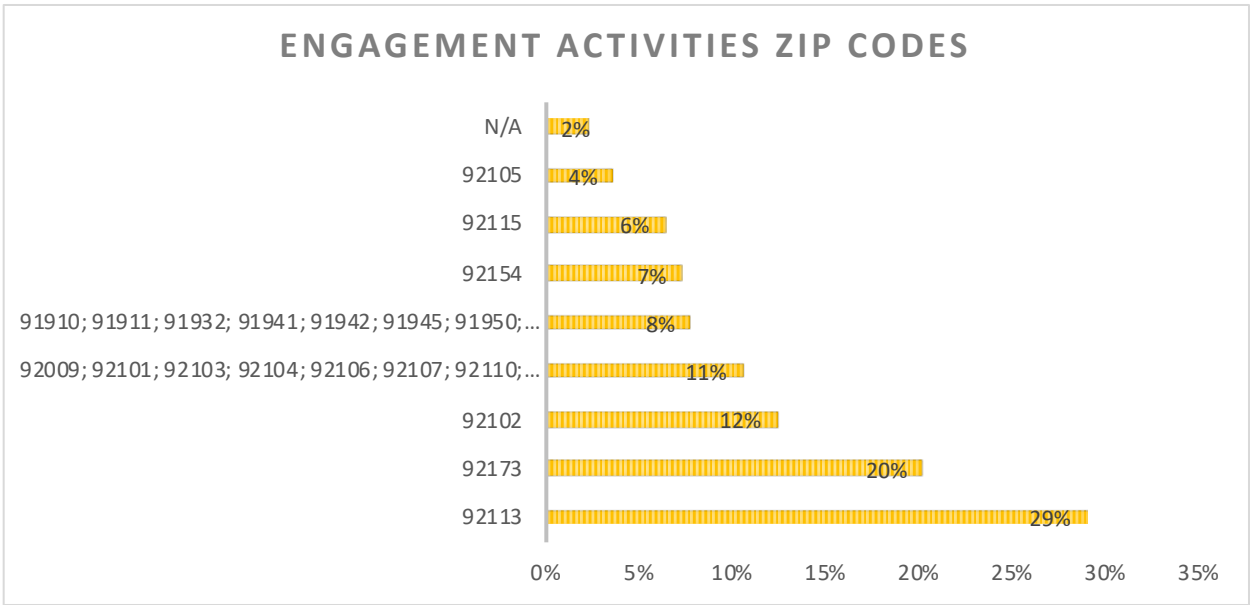
Casa Familiar surveyed residents in the San Ysidro community at several in-person food distribution events, hosted three virtual community group presentations, engaged families at the San Ysidro School District Parent Resource meeting and surveyed its Resident Leadership Academy. With the intent of meeting the community “where they are,” Casa Familiar staff experimented with two different approaches at food distribution lines: the first, verbally asking each resident the questions; the second, providing a paper survey with the questions. While the first approach took longer and netted fewer overall responses, it provided the opportunity for anecdotal discussions to collect informed feedback while providing participation opportunities to traditionally under-engaged residents. Staff was able to educate and have productive conversations with residents, without asking for an additional time commitment beyond the time they were already spending standing in line.

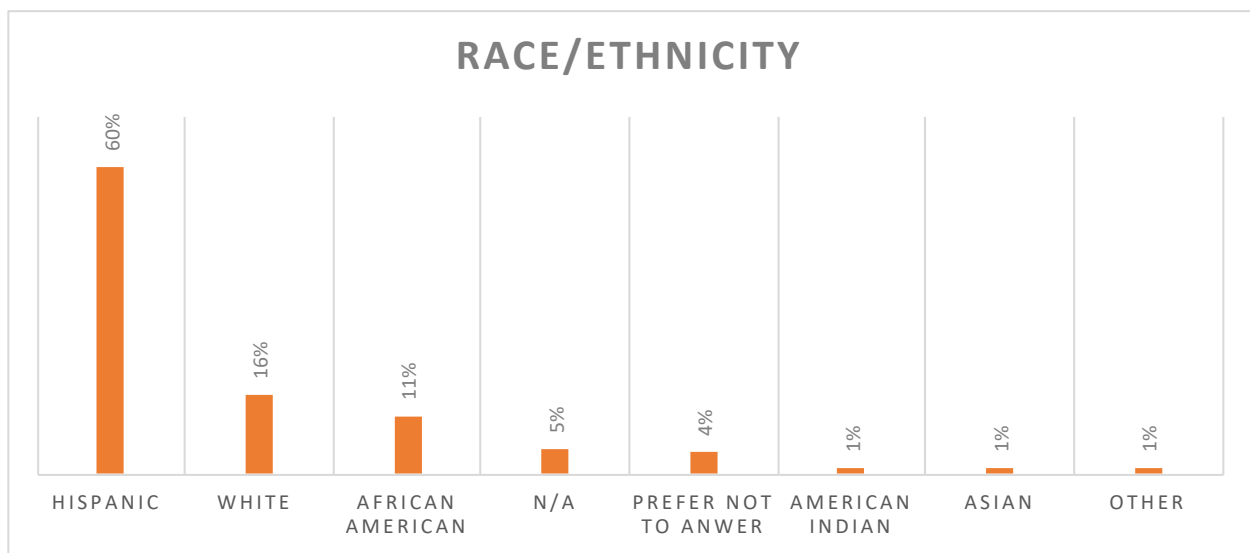
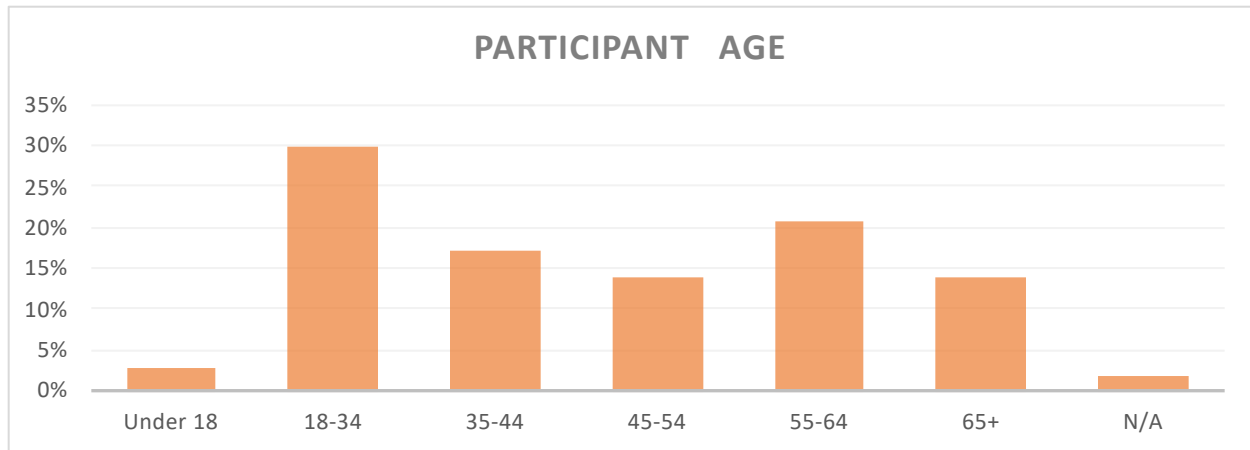


Engagement Data and Outcomes

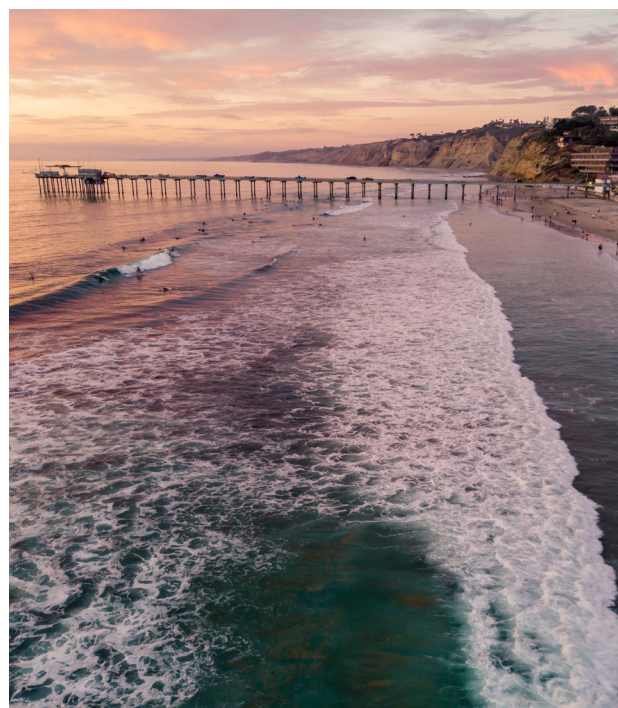
Through this effort, the community-based organizations reached **762 people by initiating 26 unique engagement activities over a three-month period.** Each of the community-based organizations focused their outreach and engagement efforts on their designated Communities of Concern. The collection of demographic information, such as zip codes, was optional via surveys at workshops and other events, resulting in 30% of participants sharing this information.

Based on the demographic data collected, most participants come from six zip codes (92102, 92113, 92115, 92154, 92173 and 92105), many of which contain Communities of Concern. In addition, the community-based organizations were also able to engage a younger demographic of residents aged 18-34. Approximately 60% of those engaged identified as Hispanic. In addition, 43% indicated their annual income was less than \$58,000, while 40% chose not to answer that question or left the income field blank. The available data shows that the CBOs reached diverse and traditionally under-engaged populations of the Communities of Concerns including those that identify as Hispanic, African American, youth and young adults and low- and extremely low-income residents.





INCOME	
<\$35,000	30%
\$35,000 - \$58,000	13.0%
\$58,001 - \$93,000	9.2%
\$93,000+	7.3%
N/A	22.1%
Prefer not to answer	18.4%



Community Feedback

Communities of Concern Lack Green Spaces: This concern surfaced in almost all engagement events. Community members indicated they would like to see more community gardens, parks and other natural spaces to provide relief from extreme heat. They also noted that this could increase access to recreational opportunities and create community gathering spaces. Proposed solutions include:

- Increase tree canopies for shade, improved air quality and neighborhood beautification
- Create more accessible and safe public green spaces, parks and green recreational areas within the communities
- Improve San Diego's Free Trees SD Program by subsidizing the cost of maintenance to incentivize more people to participate in the program
- Fund existing and new urban gardens. Provide educational opportunities for the community to learn how to create a garden and grow fresh produce

The Current Streets are Unsafe and Inadequate for Walking and Biking:

Residents in community conversations spoke of the "auto-centric" make-up of San Diego. One noted that "the current vehicular-transit culture in San Diego does not promote more active transportation and collective modes of transport." Several residents from the San Ysidro community discussed "years of disinvestment" while residents in Midway and Linda Vista shared that "there are sidewalks and bike lanes that suddenly end," which makes them feel unsafe to walk and bike. Solutions offered include:

- Better define and promote pedestrian and cycling pathways to promote active transportation
- Make streets friendly for pedestrians, including implementing sidewalks and protected bike lanes
- Improve quality and increase frequency of bus and trolley options
- Create more comprehensive transportation infrastructure that connects Communities of Concern to job centers and amenities
- Reduce public transit cost burdens on Communities of Concern through reduced fares and low to no-cost transit passes

Climate Change and Air Pollution are Impacting Community Health: Many of the residents contacted through this engagement effort experience high levels of air pollution that is reportedly affecting their health and well-being. They attribute this condition to the high occurrence and concentration of air pollution from transportation sources like heavy-duty trucks, buses, older vehicles and nearby shipyards. In phone conversations conducted in Spanish, residents reported anxiety, depression, fear and mood changes due to the changing climate and concerns about the unknown future. Extreme heat, wildfire

and smoke resulting from wildfire were among the most mentioned concerns. In addition to the health impacts that stem from climate impacts, residents also noted financial concerns about the potential for increased cost of gas, water and electricity during heat events. Some residents noted that they do not have air conditioning available. Some proposed solutions include:

- Plant more trees to clean the air and mitigate the heat island effect
- Provide access to amenities within the community to decrease vehicle miles traveled. Amenities may include high-quality food markets, job-centers, recreation areas and high-quality parks
- Focus on projects that improve the quality of life for communities most impacted by pollution and climate change
- Offer grants for homeowners to invest in air filtration systems to keep pollution out of homes
- Create community resiliency hubs – places to escape the extreme heat and toxic air
- Promote programs to replace gas stoves with electric

“I just think if everyone in my neighborhood was more informed about how they could help, it would unify everyone and encourage everyone to work together.”

- A Southeast San Diego Resident

Communities of Concern Lack the Infrastructure to be More Sustainable:

Residents say what is often characterized as blight, is really a lack of infrastructure to address more sustainable solutions in their community. Residents say lack of proper waste management infrastructure and increased disposal fees have led to litter and trash in their neighborhoods. They also say that a lack of adequate storm drains and drought tolerant landscaping increases pollution and decreases water conservation activities. Additionally, high fees for community gardens create a lack of opportunity for green spaces and the ability to address food insecurities. Residents also noted that additional charging stations and incentives for electric cars would increase community sustainability. Solutions offered include:

- Designate more commercial and recreation spaces in neighborhoods
- Provide access to healthy food options, such as promoting supermarkets like Whole Foods or Trader Joes
- Provide education and bins for composting programs
- Implement measures to reduce plastic use and promote recycling

- Make public transit more comparable to driving to encourage residents to use public transit
- Improve public transit options including faster and more frequent bus and trolley service, and more stops
- Provide more zero emission public transportation options
- Electrify city-owned trucks, buses and cars
- Create more centralized electric vehicle charging stations in residential communities
- Make transit efficient and affordable, including no-cost or lower-cost transit passes, youth bus passes, etc.

Residents Want More Access to Climate Education and Climate Solutions:

Residents noted a lack of environmental education for high school students and adults. Communities would like to learn how to be better participants and navigate decision-making systems. Solutions offered include:

- Increase reliable environmental and climate education, focusing on equity-centered engagement and solutions
- Have additional conversations about climate topics to break down barriers to accessing knowledge and participating in community dialogues
- Support residents in protecting their homes from wildfires, including brush reduction, healthy forest management and education on safety plans for wildfire prevention
- Conduct better outreach to increase residents' awareness about renewable energy such as solar installations and EV charging options
- Pilot new energy technologies (e.g., expanding the use of landfill gas or installing microgrids)
- Develop subsidized programs for rooftop solar to reduce air pollution from fossil fuels
- Promote programs that help reduce water and energy bills
- Increase job opportunities and workforce development for low-income, black, indigenous and other people of color (BIPOC) communities in the green jobs economy
- Support a green jobs training and employment program to train and employ low-income residents and youth in urban forestry, disaster preparedness, transit operations, renewable energy, etc.

“Our community needs to learn how to participate in the spaces where decisions are made.”

- A Southeast San Diego Resident

Supporting Community-Based Organizations

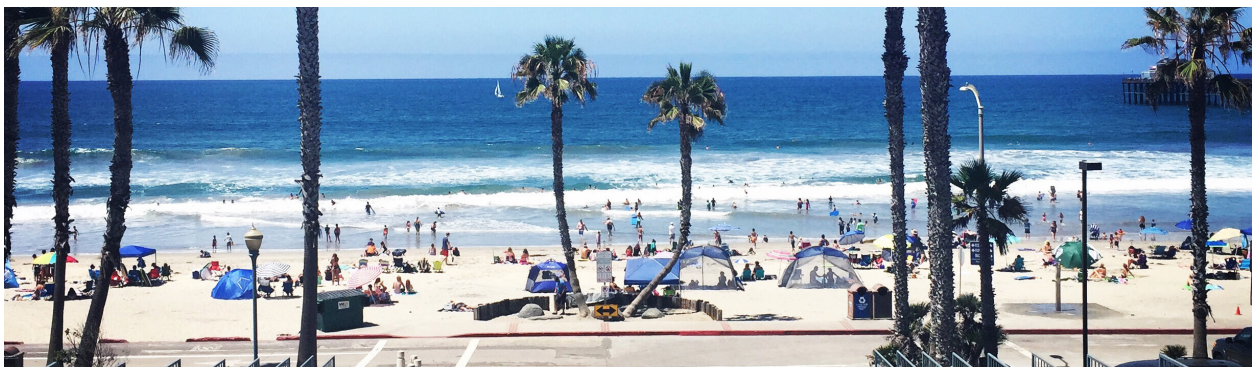
While not part of the original scope of work, ILG and the Greenlining Institute hosted a series of virtual roundtables that convened all five community-based organizations to enhance connections and deepen peer learning. The roundtable discussion format provided a space for the community partners to compare and adapt engagement approaches, share their concerns and discuss solutions for adapting engagement activities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

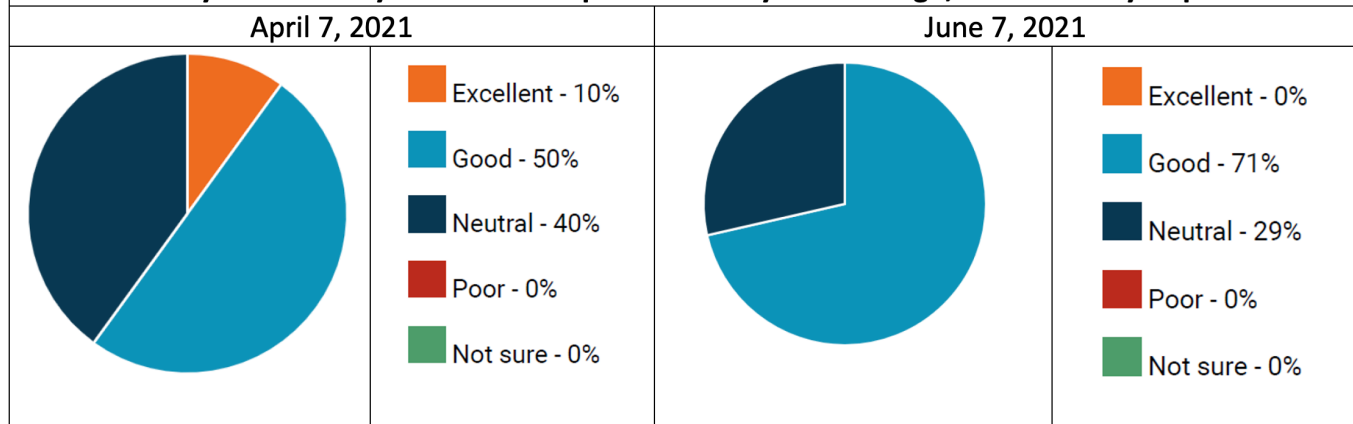
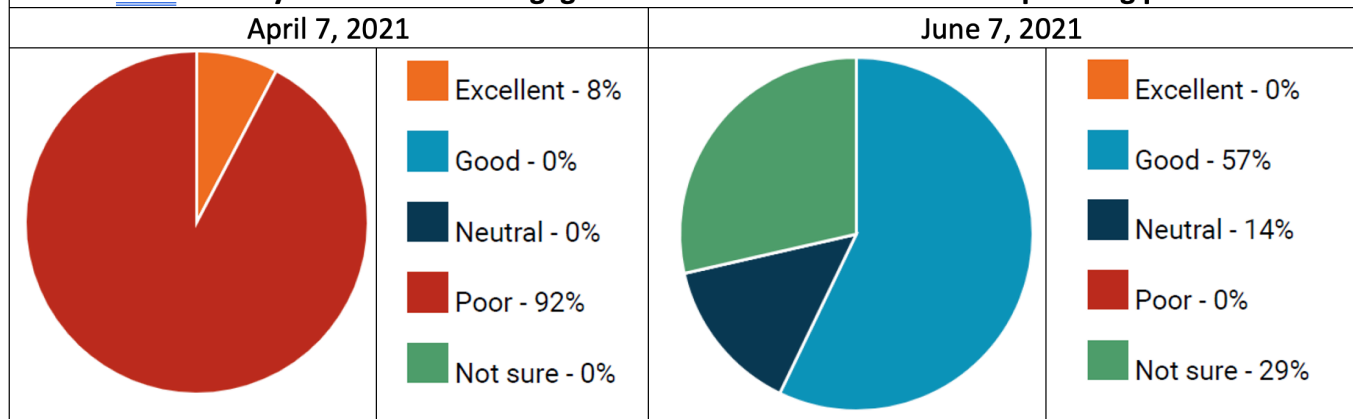
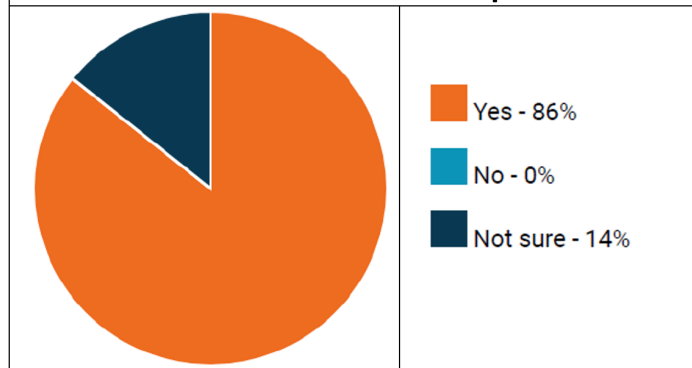
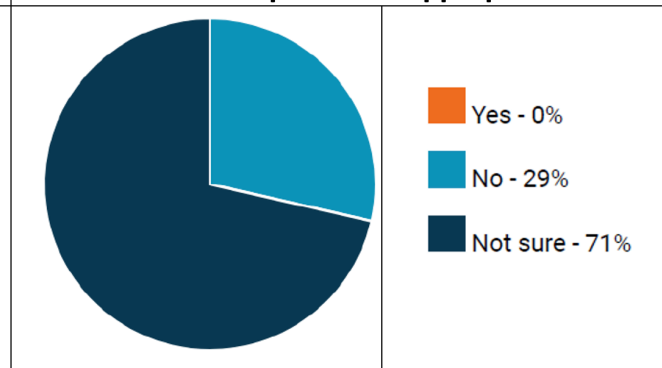
In the initial roundtable discussion, the community partners expressed concerns about the rushed timeline, difficulty reaching people during COVID-19 and the possibility that feedback from engaging the Communities of Concern would not be accurately reflected in the draft Climate Action Plan update.

In total, ILG and Greenlining hosted four community roundtables, implementing instant online polling throughout. This allowed organizers to ask probing questions that were answered through anonymous response.

Building Trust and Relationships and Learning Together

In the spirit of transparency, roundtable participants were encouraged to share honest feedback about their relationships, needs and process improvement. The roundtable discussions fostered a stronger partnership between the City's Sustainability Department and participating CBOs by creating a space for honest feedback that was welcomed and used to improve the engagement approach and process. In the three-month span of time, about 10% of the participants moved from having a "neutral" description of their relationship with the City to describing it as "good." More dramatic, was the reaction to the question of how participants would describe the engagement of community-based organizations in this particular climate action planning process. At the beginning 92% of participants categorized the engagement of CBOs as "poor," however after the three-month experience, 57% characterized it as "good" and 43% remained "neutral" or "unsure." ILG also inquired if the roundtables were helpful and if the compensation was appropriate. More than 86% found the roundtables useful, while there was more of a mixed opinion about the compensation level with no one saying it was at and appropriate level, 29% saying that is was not appropriate and 71% indicating that they were unsure.



How would you describe your relationship with the City of San Diego, Sustainability Department?

How would you describe the engagement of the CBOs in this climate planning process?

Were the roundtables helpful?

Was the compensation appropriate?


At the last roundtable, the CBOs were asked to reflect on their overall experience of participating in the first such effort of its kind for the City. While the process was at times “messy” and “stressful,” CBO staff acknowledged the value of the educational and learning opportunities that allowed them to experiment with various engagement approaches to reach under-engaged and underserved populations during unprecedented COVID-19 times. Even though community-based partners described the process as “experimental” and “stressful,” when asked whether the City should consider this type of engagement approach again, 100% of the CBO polling participants gave an affirmative response.

Educational

Stressful Messy Experimental
Learning opportunity

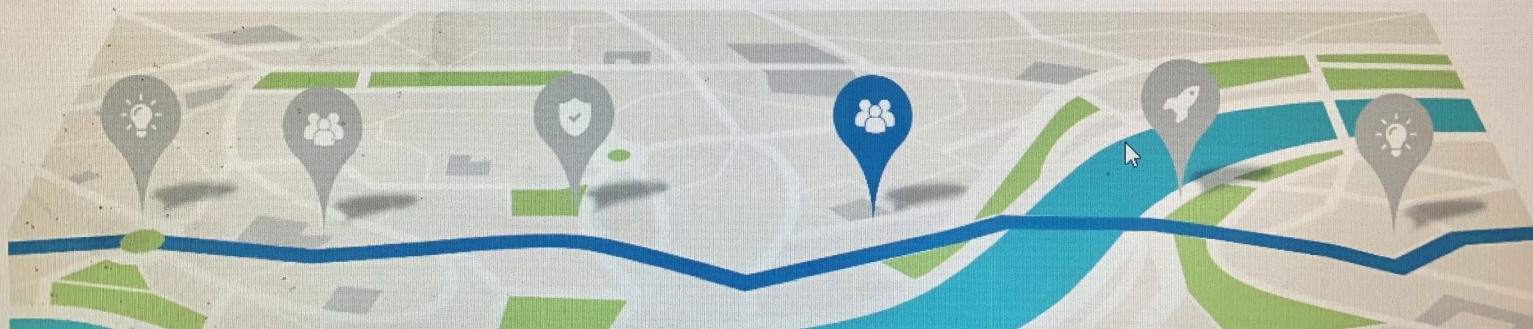
zoom

CAP CBO Roundtable - Reflections and Lessons ...

Download (3 files)

San Diego Climate Planning and Engagement CBO's Roundtable #4

Monday, June 7, 2021



Best Practices, Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Out of a desire to constantly learn and improve processes and share lessons learned, the City of San Diego's Sustainability Department asked ILG and the Greenlining Institute to summarize the promising practices and key learnings from this effort. As a result of these findings, ILG has provided additional recommendations for the City of San Diego to consider future engagement efforts with its Communities of Concern.

Best Practices

Provide Time and Opportunities to Build Partnerships and Refine Engagement Efforts

Engagement efforts involving Communities of Concern must start in tandem with traditional City-wide outreach efforts and continue for a longer duration of time. Local governments should think about how they can engage with the community, share power during the engagement process and develop individual activities that empower community members and organizations to co-lead.

A substantial investment of time and resources is needed to build this foundation. It is incumbent on the local government agency to show the commitment, dedicate the resources and "make the case" for why CBOs should partner with them and why the CBOs should invest their time and energy in this effort. Furthermore, local agencies must demonstrate how they will be accountable for the agreed upon outcomes.

The roundtable discussions implemented in this process allowed the partners to explore the opportunity, further define their commitment to the process and pivot approaches in response to the outcomes of their efforts and the dynamic responses from the communities they serve.

Constantly evaluating the outcomes and being flexible to pivot the approach is key to further learning and building relationships. Accountability and transparency are necessary to encourage continued partnerships and trust-building.

Build Outreach Efforts With the Community, Not For the Community

In Communities of Concern, engagement is often viewed as a means of gathering consent for initiatives supported by those with wealth and power, rather than a vehicle for shared decision-making power with the community. For residents to exercise their voice equitably, local governments must fundamentally change the way they think about engagement and make transformative changes in long-standing customs, assumptions and institutions. This means moving conversations away from those that foster polarization and towards those that build relationships and trust, foster mutual accountability and strive for understanding within the community.

While there is no simple strategy for centering equity in local government planning or projects, community-based organizations can be helpful in developing a process that makes sense for the community. The key to ensuring that this process is based in equity is to “operationalize it,” which means making sure equity considerations are present and consistent from the beginning, and throughout the process. This means equity must be evident in the goals, vision, values, process design, implementation and evaluation. Community partners must be present and in consult throughout the process as well.

Community-based organizations are experts in understanding the communities they serve, but even with proper compensation, they may not have the capacity or resources to activate an elaborate engagement campaign by themselves. Understanding the needs and capacity issues of your partners will be important for a successful process.

Meet People Where They Are

Technologies like video conferences and online surveys are great tools, but simply moving planned content to an online platform is not going to be effective for engaging residents who are already left out of traditional approaches. Many segments of communities do not have access to the internet or do not feel comfortable using social media or online forums. Furthermore, climate action strategies may not be top of mind for many residents trying to navigate the complications of COVID-19 or just trying to get through the day of work, school and getting kids to extracurricular activities.

To authentically engage Communities of Concern, local governments must truly understand their values and priorities so that they are sensitive and thoughtful in the way they present information, ask questions and implement engagement activities. Ensuring that the engagement is not only in the preferred language of the community, but is presented in a culturally competent manner and by a trusted partner is key. It's also important to understand how competing priorities and day-to-day responsibilities may impact engagement. Many community-based organizations in this process experienced great success in engaging residents through word-of-mouth marketing campaigns, visually pleasing and easy to understand flyers and old-fashioned telephone calls.

Show Respect and Provide Compensation for Lived Experience

In many cases, “disadvantaged” communities are considered so because institutions have spent decades taking away their advantages. Asking these communities who are already experiencing the burdens from decades of exclusionary planning to come up with solutions to address the issues is not only unfair, it is, at times, offensive. Local governments and community-based organizations should focus on eliciting feedback and compensating residents for information regarding their lived experiences. Throughout the process, organizers should emphasize and help community members understand the value of their experiences as important data for planning and decision-making efforts. Their stories and experiences are qualitative data that should carry weight in how plans are developed and projects are implemented.

Climate action planning relies heavily on quantitative data and strategies, which is anything that can be counted or measured. However, if local governments are to plan for more equitable communities, an emphasis should also be placed on qualitative data and strategies that can acknowledge and uplift the lived experience of the most vulnerable communities.

Be Vulnerable, Authentic and Accountable

The willingness to elicit honest feedback, acknowledge past mistakes and dedicate oneself to mutual accountability is key to making sure that the process and outcomes can withstand political and social changes of a community. Acknowledging that no one person or institution has all of the answers and developing an honest commitment to partner will go a long way. Moreover, sharing power and responsibility builds trust among stakeholders because it makes real the promise that all stakeholders are seen as valuable and equitable partners in creating the community.

Lessons Learned

Timing is Everything

Local governments have a lot on their plates and are often going from one planning effort to another in order to meet state mandates and local objectives. While this seems normal for City staff, it can often be a major barrier when trying to engage the community or other partners who often have less capacity or other commitments of their own. A timeline needs to be developed in partnership with community-based stakeholders to ensure that it is reasonable and practical. As with all planning, the timeline should account for all aspects of the project from contracting, strategizing, creating educational resources, promotion, implementation and reporting. Timelines should allow generous opportunities to test and refine tactics and for CBOs to connect with their own networks to broaden their reach. Furthermore, timelines should take into account other factors such as holidays, vacation and school schedules as well as other planning efforts or events occurring in the area and how this effort will take away time from other activities in which the CBO is engaged. If there are too many other things occurring at the same time, your engagement event will not receive the proper attention or interest from the residents you are hoping to reach.

An Easier Contracting Process is Important

Community-based organizations are often staffed with a small group of hard-working people who have multiple responsibilities and obligations. Because of this, contracting is often cumbersome and time consuming. Furthermore, the contract requirements from most local governments are often extremely demanding. Local governments should consider implementing a special process for forming partnership agreements with community-based organizations with less complicated legal and insurance requirements.

A One Time Investment Is Not Enough

Engagement activities help create and maintain a community that is educated, aware, motivated and fulfilled. Engagement processes should be designed to provide opportunities for residents to take part in the conversation, to learn and to work with others, not just provide input. In communities with a long history of environmental and other injustices, it will take time to rebuild relationships and trust. While planning efforts provide a great opportunity for more intense engagement, engagement itself should be consistent and ongoing to truly be effective.

Many of the community members involved in this experience shared the desire for continuous education and engagement on climate and resilience topics. Community-based organizations can be great partners in this effort, but it is incumbent on the local government to invest in the partnership in a sustained manner. Local governments should not only seek to implement community engagement efforts when they need feedback, but rather develop a collaborative approach that continues to engage the community on an ongoing basis and in a way that helps build knowledge and understanding.

Compensation is Important Not Only for Community-Based Organizations, but for the Residents They Serve

While providing compensation to community-based organizations is necessary to account for their time and efforts, it is equally important to compensate community members for their time and efforts. Many of the CBO partners in this effort used funding to award raffle prizes or compensate community members for the time they spent sharing their experiences and answering the questions. Fairly compensating community members for their time and lived experience can help support equitable inclusion and participation by easing the financial constraints to engage. Working with community-based organizations to develop fair and consistent compensation that fits within the local government's budget will help set expectations for ongoing engagement possibilities.



Recommendations for the City of San Diego

Focus on Building the Capacity of Community Based Organizations for More Sustainable Outcomes

Community-based organizations are partners, not consultants. They should be compensated and engaged as a trusted community partner, not paid to provide specific services for specific planning efforts or project implementation. While ILG recognizes the tight budgets and ongoing demands of local governments, we recommend that the City of San Diego prioritize ongoing investments in their local community-based organizations. This will help the City build capacity to continually develop community networks and accessible educational materials that foster a more sustainable and mutually beneficial partnership throughout the implementation of the Climate Action and Climate Resilience Plans.

Build Trust Through Ongoing Communications and Sustained Engagement

The initial investment of time and financial resources to engage Communities of Concerns increased the favorability and trust between the community-based organizations, the City and its residents. For this to continue to grow, it will be important for community members to see their feedback represented in the Climate Action Plan update. The City must make a concerted effort to communicate engagement outcomes to the communities, specifically, how the City has incorporated feedback and proposed solutions from the Communities of Concerns into the Climate Action Plan update.

It is also important for the community to understand the timelines, short-term and long-term impacts and accountability measures in place to ensure that the implementation of the plan is centered around equity while benefiting historically excluded Communities of Concern. To realize the benefits of involving the community in the climate planning process, trust and long-term relationships must be developed and maintained over time. ILG recommends that the City of San Diego develop a communications plan to report back on progress, maintain relationships with residents and other stakeholders and explore additional engagement and collaboration opportunities around the implementation of plans. Specifically, the City may also consider developing a Community Advisory Committee to oversee and monitor the implementation of the Climate Action Plan Update and Climate Resilience Plan.

Coordinate Communications about Climate, Resilience and Sustainability Efforts

While fundamentally different, the Climate Action Plan update and the Climate Resilience Plan have similar implications to those living in Communities of Concern. To avoid confusion, streamline engagement opportunities and avoid engagement fatigue, ILG recommends that the City departments work diligently to develop a more coordinated budget, process and staffing to support climate and planning efforts, specifically those with which the City hopes to center in equity. This will be important as the City develops its Environmental Justice Element and implements other planning efforts such as the Parks for All Plan. Coordinating the outreach, implementation and communications about the outcomes of these plans will help the City find efficiencies in budgets and staffing. Moreover, it will help the City build more meaningful relationships with the community and increase trust and transparency in the process.

Final Reports from the Community-Based Organizations



Engagement in Communities of Concern Report

June 30, 2021

Resident Engagement and Feedback

What were the common concerns or themes throughout all of your engagement events?

Bikeable-Walkable Neighborhoods and Safe Streets

- Residents are concerned their communities are too autocentric and unsafe for walking and biking. This is especially true at night, due to speeding cars and inadequate infrastructure.
- Residents in Midway and Linda Vista shared that there are sidewalks and bike lanes that suddenly end, which makes them feel unsafe to walk and bike.

Shade Trees and Neighborhood Nature

- Residents are concerned with the lack of green space and parks to enjoy.
- Residents in Eastern Area identified a lack of shade trees as a major concern, and want the City to explore more equitable ways to plant and maintain neighborhood trees.

Community Blight and Pollution

- Residents are concerned about the lack of resources allocated to waste management and fighting community blight.
- Residents have concerns about the lack of storm drains to fend off flooding and pollution, and drought tolerant landscaping for water conservation.

Social Equity

- Residents want the City to further center social equity, and address a lack of environmental education for highschool students in their communities.

What were common suggestions from the community throughout all of your engagement events?

Bikeable-Walkable Neighborhoods and Safe Streets

- Build safer sidewalks and protected bike lanes that are well lit and connect to transit lines when street repairs are completed.

Shade Trees and Neighborhood Nature

- Create tree canopies for shade, pollution filtration and enhance their neighborhood's quality of life.
- Create more public green space and parks where the community can congregate.
- Alleviate the cost burdens associated with watering the trees they receive from the City's "Free Tree SD" program, which keep residents from participating in the program.
- Allocate more resources to developing urban gardens, and educating the community on agriculture/growing food.



Community Blight and Pollution

- Develop infrastructure in centralized, local areas of neighborhoods to the clean community's air and water.
- Develop subsidized programs for rooftop solar to reduce air pollution from fossil fuels.

World Class Transit and Transportation Justice

- Make public transit more comparable to driving and encourage residents to use public transit, the community suggest that the City improve public transit options including faster and more frequent service, and more stops.
- Create more centralized Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations in communities.

Process Feedback

Please provide your feedback on the engagement contract, process and/or support from the City of San Diego's Sustainability Department, the Institute for Local Government, the Greenlining Institute:

- Were expectations clearly stated (verbally and in your contract)?
 - Yes, expectations were clearly communicated.
- Were the roles of ILG/City/Greenlining clear in this process? If not, please explain.
 - Initially, ILG/City/Greenlining roles were unclear. However, after the first CBO roundtable and the project progressed, roles became more clear.
- Were you clear on your role? If not, please explain.
 - Yes, we were clear on our role.
- Please provide any additional feedback on the process and support that will help with future efforts?
 - We recommend the City create accessible and relevant presentation materials and other collateral for community members to receive authentic feedback and engagement.
 - We recommend the City give community-based and place-based organizations more time to prepare and execute outreach efforts, as it takes a lot of time to conduct meaningful and inclusive outreach.
 - We suggest that the City provide more funding/compensation for the lived experiences of community members to share feedback; paid community focus groups that reflect a neighborhood's demographics would be ideal.
- Was there enough support and resources provided? Please explain.
 - Yes there was enough support and resources provided. Specifically, we really appreciated ILG's post-event summary and reporting templates, the City's CAP materials, and Greenlining's insights on accessible and inclusive outreach strategies.
- Do you believe that your communities are being fairly represented through this process? If not, why and what is needed to improve the engagement?
 - We received a majority of our community feedback through presenting at Community Planning Groups and Community Councils. However, the majority of



these groups tend to be made up of specific demographics that may not represent the concerns and ideas of the entire community.

- More time, resources, and in person outreach can provide more in-depth community knowledge and feedback on City projects, programs and initiatives.
- Were there any hurdles that were difficult to overcome in the process?
 - Covid-19 restrictions played a significant role in limiting our ability to conduct outreach. Although we were able to drop off flyers and conduct phone interviews, some communities clearly need more direct and in person outreach to provide the City with meaningful feedback.

Final Reflections

- Do you have any advice for CBOs doing climate outreach in communities of concern?
 - CBOs must always take into account barriers these communities face. Communities of Concern are predominately made up of working class folks, elderly residents, non-English speakers, and Black, indigenous and people of color who may not have access to a computer or laptop, reliable internet, or have the time to attend an online workshop. We did a lot of outreach through social media and email, met with community leaders and organizations, held community meetings at different times, and distributed flyers in targeted areas, but were unsuccessful in connecting with some community members this way. We suggest CBOs attend and engage with residents in-person at their homes, businesses and neighborhood events, and meet community members where they are at instead of inviting them to where CBOs are.
- What is needed to have CBOs participate in the similar process in the future?
 - If feasible, we suggest the City offer CBOs budget for community stipends, opportunity drawings, or other financial incentives for people who are sharing their lived experiences. We decided to give an opportunity drawing late in the process to boost attendance for our presentations and give back to the community. We think we could have reached a wider audience had we offered this incentive from the beginning.
- Anything else you want to share that was not captured in these questions?
 - The one on one interviews we conducted with community and organization leaders provided us with really great, in depth feedback. For feedback and outreach strategies, we suggest the City and CBOs include community leaders that are well connected to their neighborhoods and experts on the issues pertaining to their communities.

Engagement in Communities of Concern Report

Resident Engagement and Feedback

- What were the common concerns or themes throughout all of your engagement events?
 - The lack of green spaces throughout the community
 - Wildfire smoke during wildfire season
 - Safety/usability of pedestrian and cycling pathways
 - Accessibility to current EV & renewable energy alternatives
 - The current vehicular-transit culture in San Diego should does not promote more active transportation and collective modes of transport
- What were common suggestions from the community throughout all of your engagement events?
 - For EV and solar power incentive programs – better outreach so the residents interested are aware of these opportunities
 - Safer and cleaner streets (more lighting, walkable sidewalks, greenery) will promote more active transportation
 - More trees within the community will result in cleaner air and less heat island effect
 - Access to opportunities within the community will lead to less need for miles traveled – this includes anything from jobs to high quality food markets to recreation areas & centers

Process Feedback

Please provide your feedback on the engagement contract, process and/or support from the City of San Diego's Sustainability Department, the Institute for Local Government, the Greenlining Institute:

- Where expectations clearly stated (verbally and in your contract)?
 - Were the roles of ILG/City/Greenlining clear in this process? If not, please explain.
 - Yes, in the discussions it might have not been as clear that the city/ILG/Greenlining would only provide a loose structure on the surveying/feedback collection. This is not necessarily a negative thing since it allows for the material to be adapted for each community, but due to the short timeline and this being the first time this approach was used by our organizations it was also challenging.
 - Were you clear on your role? If not, please explain.
 - By the most part, yes. It wasn't completely clear from the start that Casa Familiar would have to create the educational & outreach materials (infographics, flyers, surveys, etc.)
 - Please provide any additional feedback on the process and support that will help with future efforts?
 - A longer timeline would've allowed the creation of better material and to reach a higher number of community stakeholders.
 - A more centralized effort to make the material more relatable for the community members. As mentioned before, it is important to adapt surveys and materials for the needs of each particular community, but since there was a

rushed timeline, it would have been helpful if there was a survey that had already targeted communities of concern as the primary audience. The survey that we were using as template seemed focused on capturing a broader San Diego audience. For any future feedback collection in communities of concern, it could be helpful to first create a survey that takes into consideration that in these communities there is usually a blind/barrier that makes residents first think of urgent/immediate needs regarding food/shelter security, safety, and road conditions before thinking of the long term effects of climate change.

- The roundtables were a great way to offer different perspectives and approaches to the work. This was especially useful to learn about the best practices and lessons learned from other organizations to take into consideration when carrying out our own outreach.
- Was there enough support and resources provided? Please explain.
 - The support from ILG/City/Greenlining was adequate but due to the crammed timeline, there was not enough time to take advantage of all of it
- Do you believe that your communities are being fairly represented through this process? If not, why and what is needed to improve the engagement?
 - It was a good approach that needs to become citywide practice in order for the community and our organizations to offer meaningful feedback
- Where there any hurdles that were difficult to overcome in the process?
 - Covid-19 obviously added a clear barrier in order to do our usual canvassing and broad community workshops outreach, but we managed to use the food distributions caused by Covid-19 to our advantage.

Final Reflections

- Do you have any advice for CBOs doing climate outreach in communities of concern?
 - The best way to receive community feedback is to provide some education on the topic while making it relatable to the community member on how it impacts them directly and indirectly before asking them to fill out a survey. Focused small group discussions can also lead to better understanding concerns that community residents might originally not connect directly to climate change on their own.
- What is needed to have CBOs participate in the similar process in the future?
 - Funding and an appropriate timeframe are critical for CBO's to offer adequate feedback that is very representative of the community.
- Anything else they want to share that was not captured in these questions?

Engagement in Communities of Concern



EHC Report – June 25, 2021

Resident Engagement and Feedback

- What were the common concerns or themes throughout all of your engagement events?
 - **Air pollution that causes respiratory issues and contributes to global warming**
 - **Bad air quality from diesel trucks and polluting industries next to homes and schools**
- What were common suggestions from the community throughout all of your engagement events?
 - **The community wants accountability for their feedback incorporated into the final documents and plans, mainly that air pollution contributes to climate change and the City should address it in the Climate Action Plan via a strategy.**
 - **Focus on projects that improve the quality of life for communities most impacted by pollution and climate change like more parks and trees in the short-term and planning for electric vehicle infrastructure for trucks and buses in the medium-term.**

Process Feedback

Please provide your feedback on the engagement contract, process and/or support from the City of San Diego's Sustainability Department, the Institute for Local Government, the Greenlining Institute:

- Where expectations clearly stated (verbally and in your contract)? **Yes**
 - Were the roles of ILG/City/Greenlining clear in this process? If not, please explain.
 - **The roles of ILG/City/Greenlining were not completely clear at the beginning of the process, but became more clear over time.**
 - Were you clear on your role? If not, please explain.
 - **Yes, EHC was clear on our role in this process**
 - Please provide any additional feedback on the process and support that will help with future efforts?

- The timing was extremely rushed and there was barely enough time to pull the project together. In the future, more time is needed before outreach activities begin or CBOs like EHC will not be able to participate.
 - The contract process was too cumbersome and a less intense agreement process in the future should be used, like an MOU instead of a contract.
 - At the beginning of the process, a substantial amount of time was spent explaining our engagement process. In the future, it is important for the City to support how CBOs do engagement rather than trying to define how it should be done.
- Was there enough support and resources provided? Please explain.
 - **There was sufficient support provided. The main limiting factor was timeline being rushed which prevented more outreach being done.**
- Do you believe that your communities are being fairly represented through this process?
 - **The answer to this question will depend on the final draft document and whether the feedback from community is clearly shown in the draft CAP**
- If not, why and what is needed to improve the engagement?
 - **A clear process for how to incorporate the feedback from the engagement is needed at the beginning.**
- Where there any hurdles that were difficult to overcome in the process?
 - **The short turn around was unreasonable for developing the materials for the engagement.**
 - **The CAP timeline was compounded with all of the many other government documents that are going through the process for community feedback by both the city and other government agencies like the County and Port of San Diego. There are too many things requested community feedback, which is confusing to community members.**
 - **The language used by the City and other government agencies when conducting surveys or workshops is not accessible language. It uses too much jargon and needs to be reworked by community members to make the language accessible to everyone.**

Final Reflections

- Do you have any advice for CBOs doing climate outreach in communities of concern?
 - **Trust community voices, compensate for lived experience from community members who are experts. Bring community voices into the**

process at the start and include their priorities through-out the entire process

- What is needed to have CBOs participate in the similar process in the future?
 - **More time and more resources to conduct adequate engagement activities. Community members reviewing the language for materials, surveys, etc and having enough time to make changes.**
- Anything else they want to share that was not captured in these questions?
 - **Successful public engagement in Environmental Justice communities is dependent on long-standing relationships built between an organization and the community members which result in the community trusting the CBO. The City needs to invest in building the capacity of CBOs as trusted partners conducting public engagement efforts to have meaningful representation from all communities in the City's plans and projects.**

Mid-City CAN Engagement in Communities of Concern Report

Resident Engagement and Feedback

- What were common concerns for *all* event
- What were common suggestions from the community for *all* event

Due to a very abrupt staff transition, Mid-City CAN (MCC) was not able to execute workshops as envisioned. Workshops were plagued by poor community member attendance and poor recordkeeping by the exiting staff.

By contrast, phone-banking was very successful. MCC dialed 7,424 homes in City Heights and ultimately spoke with 311 community members recording detailed insights regarding climate change. Community members provided input regarding the impact climate change has on health, household expenses, and housing. Community members listed concerns regarding respiratory, severe skin issues, and other health issues. They reported increased costs for heating, water, transportation, and cooling, associate with more intense weather.

Community members suggested that climate change also created the potential for increased job opportunities in climate industries such as solar, continued community behavior change, and opportunity for increased community education and awareness, as well as opportunities for increasing recycling, biking to work, and purchasing more sustainable products.

Detailed data may be found here:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1UXOGI6o4SIOLods9jDCapcUVbG3d45ZiJPH4Qau9zhs/edit#gid=1839269008>

Process Feedback

Provide any feedback on the engagement contract, process, or support from the City of San Diego's Sustainability Department, the Institute for Local Government, the Greenlining Institute

- Where expectations clearly stated (verbally and in your contract)?
 - Were the roles of ILG/City/Greenlining clear in this process? If not, please explain.
 - *ILG/City/Greenling have been very supportive and provided good resources. There was some confusion about whether we were also expected to send community to the ILG/City/Greenling or other nonprofit workshops too. This seemed duplicitous.*
 - *Confusion about reports and contract dates. Some parts of the reports seemed repetitious. However, the templates were extremely helpful and MCC recommends this practice continue.*

- *What was also helpful was the very sincere willingness to adapt the questions and data collection to make it more accessible to community members. Discussing climate and the CAP with community members was challenging because of climate jargon and because many community members do not know what a CAP is or completely understand the City Government's role in this.*
- *Were you clear on your role? If not, please explain.*
- *Task 5 was confusing because there were so many different workshops going on and for the reason stated under process feedback. This was exacerbated for MCC by our internal staff change and the unexpected impact on staff of positive COVID-19 cases.*
- *The contract end date in December is a little confusing since it appears all reports and tasks are complete six months prior to the end date. We are curious about this?*
- *Report dates were clearly written in the contract, but it was unclear how they connected to internal City dates for information.*
- *What happens with the information, what will the City do with it next?*
- *Anything we missed?*
- **Was there enough support and resources provided? If not, please explain.**
 - *Yes, you were all great. Thank you so very much for everything.*
- **Do you believe that your communities are fairly represented through this process? If not, why not and what is needed to improve the engagement?**
 - *MCC believes that City Heights could have been more equitably represented through a knock-on-every-door approach. The MCC databases do not contain every door, they contain a decent slice of the population, and they tend to skew toward community members who are already more engaged and a little more resourced (they have home phones, internet, etc.). However, due the up-tick in COVID-19 at the time of the project, and strict health orders, MCC limited our outreach to phone calls. The full demographic analysis is still pending due to MCC database issues as well as staff changes. MCC will forward analysis as soon as is feasible.*
- **Were there any hurdles that were difficult to overcome in the process?**
 - *Community members didn't know what or why they were being asked, so this required more explaining on the phone before questions could be answered. This slowed the response rate a little because more time on the phone over set period means less dials. The impact wasn't very large and it was the right things to do so people could participate more fully.*

- *COVID-19 was a massive hurdle that limited our outreach to phone and impacted our manpower due to staff COVID infections.*
- *Sudden staff transitions impacted the workshops and recordkeeping.*
- *Old and clunky database technology.*
- *The timeline was insanely fast and very difficult to execute. In the future it would make sense for the City to start early and have an on-going strategy.*

Final Reflections

- Do you have any advice for other CBOs doing climate outreach in communities of concern?
 - *Door-to-door and in-person is more potent.*
 - *Do not sacrifice safety protocols for increased outcomes because people can get sick. MCC enforced very strict protocols and safety measures and still had staff get sick.*
 - *Most importantly, climate education and engagement cannot be periodic with large time-lapses or a one-off. Community members need to be engaged on a regular and recurring basis to develop a deep understanding of issues, build trust in government, and to participate in partnering more fully for solutions.*
- What is needed to have them participate in the similar process in the future?
 - *More on-going public education to predispose people and so people can participate more knowledgeably and fully in the process.*
 - *A door-to-door or face-to-face strategy (obviously not feasible at the time of this project for safety reasons).*
- Anything else they want to share that was not captured in these questions?
 - *MCC would like to again appreciate the ILG/City/Greenling team for everything. Thank for all your support and understanding in a very unique year. Please reach out if there are any questions anything that requires further insights.*



Engagement in Communities of Concern Final Report July 28, 2021

Resident Engagement and Feedback

What were the common concerns or themes throughout all of your engagement events?

Clean Energy Infrastructure

- Community members identified a lack of opportunities to benefit from climate and environmental justice - including homeownership, participation in rooftop solar, and being historically kept out of sustainability spaces and the green jobs economy.
- Renters and tenants are concerned they will not have access to energy efficiency programs.
- Community members are concerned about barriers to accessing clean energy programs, such as solar rooftop: lack of information, lack of affordability due to high startup and maintenance costs, unable to make those decisions as renters.

Shade Trees and Recreation

- Community members identified a lack of shade trees in their communities; too many palm trees.
- Community members lack safe parks and recreational areas.
- The community identified a disparity within the City of San Diego's "Free Trees" program - the requirement to water trees is a financial burden to community members interested in getting a free tree.
- Lack of maintenance for existing parks and green spaces.

Land Use

- Lack of access to basic amenities, goods and services within neighborhoods.
- Lack of affordable or low-income housing.
- Lack of comprehensive mobility infrastructure for biking, walking, and taking transit.

Waste, Food Justice, Health Disparities

- Little to no access or information around composting, recycling, and other methods of safe and sustainable waste reduction.
- Communities concerned with lack of access to healthy foods and grocers due to historic underinvestment leading to health disparities.
- Higher rates of asthma and airborne illnesses due to fossil fuel infrastructure (cars, trucks, natural gas in homes and businesses, industrial pollution, etc.).

Equitable Access to Knowledge and Resources

- Community concern over the lack of relatable environmental and climate justice education that is community-centered and culturally competent. Our communities do not care for political jargon.



- Community members identified a lack of supportive resources for our homeless community members.
- Erasure of traditional ecological, ancestral and indigenous knowledge in “modern concepts of sustainability.”

Transportation Justice

- Lack of basic infrastructure including sidewalks, bike lanes, and safe mobility opportunities.
- Public transit infrastructure is not comprehensive and wait times are too lengthy.
- Public transit is another expense for families and individuals that burdens and is a barrier to using clean transportation options.

Good Governance

- Community members show hesitance that this process is merely to gain feedback from communities of concern, while not being intentional in incorporating communities’ concerns into the Climate Action Plan update.
- Lack of accessibility or knowledge in the decision-making processes make it difficult to engage.

What were common suggestions from the community throughout all of your engagement events?

Clean Energy Infrastructure

- Increase and maintain the basic infrastructure in our communities including sidewalks and transit spaces.
- Increase job opportunities and workforce development to train and employ low-income residents and youth in the green jobs economy.
- Equitable share of benefits of energy efficiency program for renters and tenants.
- Increase in programs to allow for affordable or low-income solar installations to ensure all interested residents - homeowners and renters - can participate.
- Rooftop greenery - utilize roof space for community gardens and green spaces.

Shade Trees and Recreation

- Increase tree canopies for shade and to improve clean air and quality of living.
- Fund current and new urban gardens, and educate the community on community gardens and growing fresh produce.
- Create more accessible and safe public green spaces, parks, and green recreational areas within the communities.
- Improve San Diego’s “Free Trees’ Program through subsidizing the cost of maintenance, to incentivize more people to participate in the program.

Land Use

- Develop complete neighbourhoods - complete with access to everyday goods and services in local businesses within the community (i.e. healthy foods, home products, etc.) - Residents



expressed a need to commute outside of their community for access to healthy foods and amenities.

- Increase affordable housing near job centers, transit, and transit-oriented development.
- Protect existing affordable housing and strengthen tenants' rights.

Transportation Justice

- Make streets friendly for pedestrians, including implementing sidewalks and protected bike lanes.
- Improve and increase frequency of bus and trolley options.
- Create more comprehensive transportation infrastructure that connects communities of concern to job centers and opportunities.
- Reduce public transit cost burdens on communities of concern through reduced fares, and low to no-cost transit passes.

Waste, Food Justice, Health Disparities

- Easier access to composting.
- More knowledge and accessibility to improve their ability to recycle and dispose waste in a safe and efficient manner.
- Increase access to healthy and affordable grocery options located within their communities – healthy market options are typically placed in affluent areas, leading to health disparity.
- Invest in local community gardens.
- Reduce air pollution from local industrial facilities that are concentrated in communities of concern near residential neighborhoods and schools.

Equitable Access to Knowledge

- Provide relatable environmental and climate education, focusing on equity-centered engagement and solutions.
- Decolonize politically charged jargon to make the information easier to follow. If using jargon, be ready to define them effectively.
- BIPOC communities tend to have grown up on habits of sustainable practices; allow people to share their lived experiences during these discussions and demonstrate a willingness to respect and institutionalize that knowledge.

Good Governance

- Communities of concerns need to be incorporated into the decision-making and update process of the CAP. Historic lack of action for communities of concern have made residents skeptical of this process.
- Our residents desire to be included into decision-making processes, alongside accessible opportunities for civic engagement. Make those processes and opportunities more accessible by bringing them to the communities of concerns (meet the community where they are at, not where you want them to be).



- Ensure communities of concern are at the forefront of this CAP update, who are the most vulnerable and contribute the least to the climate crisis.

Process Feedback

Please provide your feedback on the engagement contract, process and/or support from the City of San Diego's Sustainability Department, the Institute for Local Government, the Greenlining Institute:

- Were expectations clearly stated (verbally and in your contract)?
 - Yes, expectations were clearly communicated.
- Were the roles of ILG/City/Greenlining clear in this process? If not, please explain.
 - Initially, ILG/City/Greenlining roles were unclear. However, with the help of the CBO roundtables and more regular communication with partners, our roles became clearer.
- Were you clear on your role? If not, please explain.
 - Yes, we were clear on our role.
- Please provide any additional feedback on the process and support that will help with future efforts?
 - In order to receive honest feedback from community members, the City and partners should create culturally competent and accessible presentation materials. Ideally, these materials would include real situations or examples that have manifested in communities of concern.
 - Future presentations and materials should include examples relevant to the community of concern, and should remove unnecessary political jargon.
 - Any and all jargon that cannot be removed must be defined in a non-jargon manner. Provide an easy-to-use glossary or dictionary for reference could be included in outreach efforts.
 - In future outreach, CBOs will need more time to prepare and execute outreach efforts, in order to be effective and inclusive.
 - The City should provide more funding and compensation for the lived experiences of community members to share feedback.
- Was there enough support and resources provided? Please explain.
 - We found ILG's templates to be incredibly helpful.
 - The City's CAP presentation materials served as a good starting point for edits (presentations should always be adjusted to be audience-oriented).
 - We appreciated Greenlining's insights on accessible and inclusive outreach strategies.
- Do you believe that your communities are being fairly represented through this process? If not, why and what is needed to improve the engagement?



- Communities have historically been skeptical of inclusivity practices during outreach for community feedback and decision making.
- More time, resources, and in person outreach can increase engagement and accessibility to this process, leading to more collective community knowledge.
- Were there any hurdles that were difficult to overcome in the process?
 - Covid-19 restrictions limited our ability to conduct outreach. Though we did our best with Zoom-hosted presentations and small group discussions, ultimately, community members without internet access or lacking technological savvy were largely excluded from this process.
 - Future outreach must meet the community where they are at through boots on the ground outreach and presentations within community spaces.

Final Reflections

- Do you have any advice for CBOs doing climate outreach in communities of concern?
 - CBOs must always take into account barriers communities of concern face. Communities of Concern are predominately made up of BIPOC working class folks, non-English speakers, elderly, and have been historically underinvested.
 - Community members may not have access to a computer or laptop, or reliable internet, or may not have time to attend an online workshop.
 - CBOs should engage with residents in-person in the community - canvassing homes, at businesses and community events, and meet community members where they physically are, instead of relying on them to come to you.
- What is needed to have CBOs participate in the similar process in the future?
 - If feasible, we suggest the City offer CBOs budget for community stipends or other financial incentives for people who are sharing their lived experiences.
 - Further allocation for community stipends should not (or should minimally) negatively impact the budget/resources for CBOs to effectively conduct their outreach.
- Anything else you want to share that was not captured in these questions?
 - Future outreach should include community leaders that are well connected to their neighborhoods and community-based experts on the issues pertaining to their communities.
 - Community members firmly believe in community responsibility and collective impact in generating solutions. The City should ensure community members are included in conversations that have to do with uplifting their communities.
 - Transportation and child care should also be taken into consideration when thinking about engaging with communities of concern.



ILG is humbled to be a part of this innovative and experimental process. We appreciate the City of San Diego and the California Endowment for providing the foresight and funding to support this work and this report. We hope this effort encourages other local governments to invest and engage all of their residents to ensure more equitable, sustainable and resilient communities.

