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FRONTLINE VOICES

**A Qualitative Assessment of the State of Environmental Justice Issues Across the City of
Los Angeles and the Role of Planning and Policy**

by
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DISCLAIMER

This report was prepared in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master in Urban and Regional Planning degree in the Department of Urban Planning at the University of California, Los Angeles. It was prepared at the direction of the Department and of Los Angeles Department of City Planning as a planning client. The views expressed herein are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Department, the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, UCLA as a whole, or the client.

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Executive Summary

The goal of this research is to support the development of environmental justice policies in the City of Los Angeles General Plan. This work is specifically aimed to inform the Department of City Planning's Environmental Justice Policy Program team, which has been leading a community outreach initiative to inform policy updates to the Health, Open Space and Air Quality Elements and ensure that the city is compliant with Senate Bill 1000 (SB 1000). Using qualitative research methods, I conducted interviews with residents across various Los Angeles communities that have been designated as disadvantaged according to CalEnviroScreen4.0 metrics and the Los Angeles Health Atlas Maps, both tools that have been utilized to layer data about environmental, social and economic burdens faced by communities. The findings from the interviews conducted presented in this report inform a set of recommendations for policies that can address environmental justice issues in specific areas of the city as well as policies applicable city-wide.

Introduction

The Los Angeles Department of City Planning has embarked on a multi-year effort to strengthen environmental justice policies within the City's General Plan, specifically within the Health Element, the Open Space Element, and the Air Quality Element. In 2021, when the department updated the city's Housing Element and Safety Element, a review of the General Plan was prompted to determine compliance with SB 1000, the state law requiring that cities in California incorporate environmental justice goals, objectives, policies, and programs into their general plans. Los Angeles City's general plan was found to be compliant, however, upon review, updates were recommended under a number of categories.

One major recommendation, of particular relevance to this project, is “to document the mechanism that is used to monitor and report progress on environmental justice policies and implementation programs” (Planning for a Healthy Los Angeles, 2021). Environmental Justice issues are varied, entrenched and persist in Los Angeles, and policy must continue to evolve to address pressing needs of communities facing the cumulative impacts of environmental burdens

and poor land use decisions. This Applied Planning and Research project will contribute to the City's goal to include in-depth accounts from residents across Los Angeles, in areas that have seen the highest concentration of environmental burdens, in the policy updates to the General Plan. This effort, led by the Environmental Justice Policy Program team of the Department of City Planning, aims to incorporate the voices of frontline communities into the General Plan, illustrating the story of environmental justice in Los Angeles and informing policies to directly address the issues raised.

The research goal for this capstone project is to gain a contemporary, nuanced and geographically specific understanding of environmental justice issues in Los Angeles and what residents believe should be the role of city planning policy in addressing those issues. Core to this goal is investigating how community-engaged research can contribute to catalyzing the demands of community members and deepening an understanding of how frontline communities want to be represented and involved in the planning process and the policies that impact their communities. The aim of this project is encompassed by the following four questions: 1) Which issues (past, present and on-going) are considered environmental justice issues according to the community members interviewed? 2) How have environmental injustices affected interviewees personally? 3) What is their vision for their neighborhood and the city? and 4) What role should city planning play in manifesting their vision? The interview instrument was structured into four sections that address these themes, each with a set of questions that probed respondents to offer an account of their connection to their neighborhood, the unique struggles they face within their community, as well as their aspirations for its future.

This report is the culmination of the research conducted over the last 6 months and is organized into the following sections:

- A policy and literature review of environmental justice policy on the city and state level (Los Angeles and California), the history of the environmental justice movement, and theoretical framework in which this research is grounded
- Research design and methods applied
- The findings from the interviews

- An analysis of the interview data
- A summary of findings and research limitations
- A series of policy recommendations to the City Planning Department based on aforementioned findings

This project is hopefully the start of many ongoing community engagement research projects that will ensure that the implementation and monitoring of SB1000 is rooted in various means of data collection and analysis, with in-depth community input at the forefront given the ever-changing nature of the environmental justice movement and evolving landscape of city planning.

Policy Review

In this section, I evaluate where environmental justice is framed in policy on the city and state level, specifically offering context and detailing the goals and recommendations of SB 1000 as the driving legislation that initiated this project.

Environmental Justice Policies in the City of Los Angeles

Engagement with communities is set forth as a primary priority of the Environmental Justice Policy team of the Los Angeles Department of City Planning. The establishment of this program within the department came in response to SB 1000, which requires local jurisdictions to include environmental justice policies in their general plans. The Department of City Planning had already instituted and implemented environmental justice studies and policies under different elements of the general plan, including the health, open space, and air quality elements.

The health element, titled “The Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles,” contains the vast majority of policies related to environmental justice issues in the general plan. The plan applies the framework of equity and environmental justice to topics such as food access, park space, economic and job opportunities, public safety, and resilience in the face of climate change. The Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles was formally adopted in 2015, updated in 2021, and includes a series of maps called “The Health Atlas LA” which present data snapshots of the overall health conditions of the City of LA. The goal of the atlas is to display that “the spatial characteristics of physical and social determinants of health have roots in structural racism and historic and

ongoing discrimination. Historic policies such as redlining have had lasting effects in Los Angeles” (Health Atlas, 2021). The research conducted to produce the Health Atlas “quantifies and communicates several different metrics of community vulnerability to shape appropriate policy interventions” (Department of City Planning).

SB 1000 requires that city planning departments “adopt or review the environmental justice element or the environmental justice goals, policies, and objectives in other elements, upon adoption or next revision of two or more elements concurrently on or after January 1, 2018” (SB 1000, 2016). As such, when the Los Angeles Department of City Planning updated their safety and housing elements in 2021, they contracted with AECOM to review and evaluate if the General Plan was compliant. AECOM concluded that the General Plan was compliant in all nine categories required to be considered by SB 1000 (Air Quality and Pollution Exposure, Public Facilities, Food Access, Safe and Sanitary Homes, Physical Activity, Other Health Risks, Civic Engagement, Prioritize Disadvantaged Communities).

However, AECOM drafted considerations under three of the categories. Under “Other Health Risks” AECOM recommended that the City more thoroughly consider developing policies and programs that address the specific and compounding negative effects that climate change will have on disadvantaged communities. Under “Civic Engagement ” AECOM recommended that the City create more clear implementation objectives and policies around civic engagement strategies in disadvantaged communities. Under “Prioritize Disadvantaged Communities” AECOM recommended that the City should clarify how they will monitor and report progress on achieving environmental justice policy goals, make policies that pertain to environmental justice highly obvious so the public understands the policies are embedded in the elements (assuming the City does not create a standalone Environmental Justice Element), and make clear how the General Plan complies with SB 1000. These considerations were taken into consideration in my analysis of the interviews and informed my recommendations.

Policies on climate adaptation and mitigation are directly connected to environmental justice. However, unlike the state mandate of SB1000 to develop and implement environmental justice policies in the General Plan, there is no legal requirement to develop a Climate Action

Adaptation Plan (CAAP). In the prior administration under Mayor Eric Garcetti, Los Angeles introduced the Green New Deal. Though the plan was never officially adopted, many of the goals and policies set forth in the plan have been integrated into the Safety Element of the General Plan as well as in some of the other elements. The Climate Emergency Mobilization Office (CEMO) was established in 2021 within the Board of Public Works to oversee the coordination of the commitments set forth by the Green New Deal. Even without formal adoption of the Green New Deal Plan, CEMO has continued to work in advising City leaders to integrate community informed climate-smart policies (Bertoni, 2023). The current city council has recently adopted Motion 23 presented by Council Member Katy Yaroslavsky, requiring the City Administrative Officer (CAO) to identify funding, approximately \$1.5 million, for the creation of a CAAP that relies primarily on outside consultant expertise to affirm that the plan will achieve the Green New Deal goal of carbon neutrality by no later than 2045.

With the Department of City Planning currently undergoing a Climate Vulnerability Assessment, the culminating report will offer recommendations that could possibly include considerations for the General Plan or that can inform future climate planning and adaptation efforts. Beyond climate policies in the General Plan, there have been other standalone plans like the Los Angeles River Master Plan and the One Water LA Plan that contribute to a patchwork of policy documents that aim to address an aspect of the climate crisis as it will impact LA communities. Meanwhile, the Department of City Planning has made very specific policy choices related to climate and environmental justice concerns, such as the most recent Oil and Gas Drilling Ordinance which bans new oil and gas drilling operations city-wide (Ordinance No. 187,709, 2022).

Senate Bill 1000

SB 1000 is a California law that passed in 2016, requiring local governments of both cities and counties to incorporate environmental justice policies, goals and objectives in their General Plans if they have one or more disadvantaged communities within their planning jurisdiction. Cities are allowed to either incorporate distinct environmental justice policies throughout existing elements of their general plan or establish a standalone environmental justice element. The order was created through the recognition that discriminatory land use practices in the past have resulted in

landscapes of drastic inequity within cities, where certain communities, often low-income communities of color, bear the brunt of environmental burdens. The bill covers eight broad topics under environmental justice: pollution exposure, public facilities, food access, safe and sanitary homes, physical activity, any other unique or compounded health risk of a community, civic engagement, and prioritized improvements and programs that address the needs of disadvantaged communities (Gov. Code, § 65302, subd. (h)(1)(A).).

Community engagement is among the leading directives from SB 1000, recognizing that even though there is data identifying areas of disadvantaged communities, there are limits to the granularity, quality and type of data. “For instance CalEnviroScreen does not directly consider climate impacts and so may not capture unique health risks that communities face due to climate change, such as increased urban heat island effects. It also does not consider residents’ proximity to oil and gas facilities or the availability of public parks and open space in a community” (Department of Justice, 2023). The Department of Justice in California has created best practices for community engagement for local jurisdictions, which include establishing an Environmental Justice advisory committee, partnering with local community organizations, tribal consultation, creating accessible modes of engagement through convenient meeting times, locations and logistics for residents, ensuring language access, and utilizing metrics to understand progress towards stated environmental justice goals. Further, the DoJ emphasizes the need to consider cumulative impacts and climate change as part of the environmental justice lens.

The policy outcomes of SB 1000 are meant to be highly specific so as to directly address environmental burdens on different disadvantaged communities. In other words, there should be general system-wide policies but the local government is also required to increase its granularity and create policies that are concrete and geographically specific based on the in-depth community engagement conducted. The bill requires accountability of local jurisdictions by making the policy language binding. This can be through the inclusion of a timeline and tracking system with metrics, identifying the entity responsible for implementing the policy, and, if applicable, the funding source that will be required to implement the policy.

Further Environmental Justice Policies in California

On the State level, California has some of the most evolved policies on environmental justice in the United States. California is the first state in the U.S. to codify and define environmental justice in state policy. In 1999, under Governor Davis, Senate Bill 115 established that the Office of Planning and Research would be the coordinating agency for all state environmental justice initiatives (Environmental Justice in California State Government, 2003). In 2018, Attorney General Becerra established the Bureau of Environmental Justice, which was then expanded in 2021. The purpose of the Bureau is to ensure compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and land use planning laws, as well as monitoring and preventing sources of pollution from being concentrated in areas that will disproportionately affect low-income communities; soil and water remediation; and generally being a watchdog of actions taken by local or federal governments that do not adequately protect public health and the environment (Bureau of Environmental Justice, 2023).

Another key player on the state level is the CalEPA which has a specific program focused on environmental justice in which the sub agencies work in various capacities towards the goal of “fairness, regardless of race, color, national origin or income, and the meaningful involvement of community in the development of laws and regulations that affect every community’s natural surroundings, and the places people live, work, play and learn” (CalEPA, 2023). According to CalEPA’s stated objectives for their environmental justice policies and programs, they focus on racial equity, citizen science, ground truthing with frontline communities through outreach and designated environmental liaisons, distributing small grants, and updating the disadvantaged communities designation in their CalEnviroScreen tool.

Diving deeper into environmental justice policies on the statewide level in California, in 2006, Assembly Bill 32 (AB 32), the California Global Warming Solutions Act proposed by Senator Fran Pavley and Assembly Speaker Fabian Nuñez, was passed. This bill was created to direct funding from the California Cap and Trade program towards the highest-need communities. This bill started the path toward more equitable distribution of resources based on level of community disadvantage relative to other areas in California. Senate Bill 535 (Kevin De León) further established the requirements for minimum funding levels to “Disadvantaged Communities”

(DACs), and gave the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) the responsibility to create the criteria to identify these communities, which were to be based on public health, socioeconomic status, geography and siting of environmental hazards. Assembly Bill 1550, proposed by Jimmy Gomez in 2016, built upon the two aforementioned bills by establishing the minimum funding levels required to be directed toward disadvantaged communities.

Additionally, Assembly Bill 617 (C. Garcia) under the California Air and Resources Board (CARB) established the Community Air Protection Program (CAPP), which works to reduce exposure in communities most impacted by air pollution. The program includes improving air pollution monitoring, creating incentives for retrofitting emitting industries to become cleaner, increasing penalties, and, overall, increasing transparency and availability of emissions and air quality data. In addition to this legislation, a key environmental justice law is California's Fair Employment & Housing Act, which "prohibits policies or practices that result in polluting land uses disproportionately impacting a protected class's use and enjoyment of their residence." (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 2, § 12161, subd. (b)(10).)

Literature Review

Evolution of the Environmental Justice Movement and Scholarship

Many policy making bodies and scholars consider the start of the U.S. environmental justice movement to be the 1980s protests in Warren County, North Carolina, where polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) was dumped in a predominantly black neighborhood (Taylor 2011). Attributing this event as the beginning of the movement reflects the substance of the first wave of environmental justice scholarship, which focused on how environmental burdens and hazards have disproportionately been sited near communities of color due to systemic racism (Walker 2010). This historical starting point has been challenged, given that the long history of environmental activism by people of color has largely been excluded from the canon of scholarship (Taylor, 2011). Dorceta Taylor demonstrates in her review that contestation over, and evolution of, the term "environmental justice" is a reflection of the diverse political struggles it has represented.

Environmental justice scholarship has since broadened in its theoretical and substantive scope, resulting in new definitions and inclusions in the term. For one, the environmental justice movement has come to encompass not just the unequal distribution and siting of environmental hazards and burdens, but also the distribution of environmental benefits such as healthy food options, prevalence of parks, or public facilities for community and health care (Walker 2010). Scholars have suggested that, rather than attempting to find universal, agreed-upon definitions of environmental justice, greater focus should be placed on understanding environmental justice in different contexts: “Grassroots activists and government agencies use the term to apply to a wide variety of distributive and procedural concerns, and academics must not impose artificial limits on the term’s scope” (Holifield, 2001). Scholars like Laura Pulido have also posited that spatial studies that try to illuminate the correlation between environmental hazards and community demographics are too narrow in how they frame environmental racism, as it risks excluding the historical process and spatial formations, and other varied forms of racism, that result in environmental injustice.

Pulido’s scholarship calls for broadening the theoretical debates of the environmental justice movement by situating the movement in racial capitalistic formations which perpetuate white privilege systematically, rather than attending only to intentional, singular acts of racial violence (Pudillo 2000). Scholarship on disasters has added another dimension to this discourse, bringing to light how climate or public health crises glaringly reveal the social inequalities and layered vulnerabilities that result in risks being much higher for communities of color in the U.S. Studies on disasters have posited that catastrophic events serve to reveal the ways chronic inequalities can lead to acute risks. Natural disasters expose the entrenched power structures that perpetuate classism and racism, ultimately resulting in certain populations bearing the greatest costs in peak crises (Pastor et. al, 2006). Scholarship on the environmental justice movement is evolving, as it is a living, breathing on-going struggle with new forces and iterations of resistance strategies and theoretical framings.

Environmental Justice Formalized in Planning and Policy: The Role of the State

The formalization of environmental justice in city and state policy resulted from a long history of grassroots movements pushing for state recognition and demanding solutions. The strategies of

the environmental justice movement of putting pressure on the State have shifted over time, and scholars have observed that some organizers doubt the ability of planning agencies to adequately address environmental justice issues, given their founding and structure created and perpetuates the policies and land use decisions that maintain a status quo of land use practices that prioritize capital accumulation over public health (Pulido et al 2016). One issue that Pulido et al. highlight is that even though EJ policies have become more commonplace, the regulatory framework does not effectively safeguard and protect communities because of the need to prove intent of discrimination or harm, and there is potential discrepancy in regulation and enforcement in different communities. In California, the state formalized the definition of environmental justice in the law in 1999 as “the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.” (Gov. Code, § 65040.12, subd. (e)). SB 1000 advanced this definition to also include objectives and policies to promote civic engagement in the public decision making process, and therefore in the creation of environmental justice policies and plans.

There is a well developed body of environmental law in California and on the national level, which has allowed environmental justice movements to make progress through legal battles. Scholars have observed, however, that environmental justice movements have taken a shift in political strategy both due to the immense costs required to see through legal fights and alternate forms of planning that decentralize the state’s and other planning authorities’ role in being the arbiters of environmental justice solutions (Carter 2016). “Decades of direct state investment and management of urban infrastructure like parks has largely ended. We witness instead a move toward neoliberal, political-economic policies embraced by government, corporations, and various sectors of the public” (Perkins, 2010). The notion of “governance beyond the state” has been problematized because it is neither fully accountable to civil society nor are the procedures or actors adhering to codified procedure as a governing agency would (Swyngedouw, 2005). This space of a patchwork of partnerships has enabled the environmental justice movement to diversify its tactics and move faster on certain goals, but poses challenges and questions how to maintain pluralistic democratic processes through this distribution of processes and power outside of government.

Since the passage of SB 1000, there have been studies aimed at evaluating the extent to which cities in California have meaningfully incorporated environmental justice policies in their general plans and the challenges that have arisen. According to an annual survey conducted of planning staff by the Office of Planning and Research (OPR) in 2019, of 142 cities and counties that participated, only about half had started to incorporate environmental justice in their General Plans and only a fifth of the respondents shared that they felt adequately supported by elected officials and department leaders to move environmental justice policy work forward. In a qualitative research study in which local government officials in cities containing the highest concentration of disadvantaged communities were interviewed, the progress of SB 1000 was varied, reflecting the broad interpretations and applications of environmental justice in policy (Zuñiga et al., 2023). Zuñiga cites instances of community engagement attempts cut short for lack of resources or support from elected officials and tensions and struggles of values between city staff, officials and communities over working towards compliance versus real transformation of procedures. In other words, the SB 1000 directive has shed light on internal struggles over resources and theories of change, raising the question of whether governing bodies will just maintain a ‘status quo’ business as usual approach or shift their approach to the creation of environmental justice policy more profoundly. Though a preliminary look at the impacts of SB 1000, this study sheds important light on the reactions of localities to the bill and the challenges that ought to be addressed to make it more effective.

Community Engagement Approaches

Given that this research project is a component of a larger effort of the Department of City Planning’s community engagement structure to inform their policy development of the General Plan, the following section presents a review of scholarship on the role of public participation in governance, and community engaged planning as it relates to the development of policy. It has been noted that the last few decades have seen new attempts and experiments with public participation to meet the demand to legitimize democratic governance through civic engagement. However, quantification of more diverse participatory planning approaches have not been well documented.

Scholars of democracy recognize that public participation is key to upholding key values of legitimacy (trust in government to represent public interest), effectiveness (government is actually solving problems versus perpetuating them), and justice (seeking greater and equitable participation and outcomes) in democratic governance. However, those with the authority and power to alter governing processes that would allow for justice to be more holistically realized through policy are more motivated by maintaining legitimacy and effectiveness of government rather than advocating for a complete procedural and political shift that would address injustice head on (Fung 2015). While these values are not mutually exclusive, and have the potential to prove synergistic, upholding the value of effective governance does not necessarily guarantee justice in governance is achieved as well. Fung has noted that social justice is a matter of political will first, creating the leadership that has the desire and then maintaining those interests through institutional structural shifts that create continuous and better participatory frameworks.

There are many scholars who have cast doubt on the attempts of governing bodies to meaningfully institute community engagement so far as to truly create lasting systems change. Such scholars have critiqued the dominant approaches to participatory planning and engagement, pointing to failures in the democratic process to truly instill meaningful involvement and procedural justice in how policies and plans are devised and implemented, with planning used instead as a mechanism to manage conflict (Inch 2012). In particular, there has been criticism of governments creating symbolic participatory processes as tools to legitimize or achieve political gain for pre-determine planning decisions, rather than true investment in participation that could invite antagonism or dissent (Pursell 2009). “We see the crisis of participatory planning manifesting from a perverse interest in consensus-oriented and outcomes-oriented planning that serves a narrow economic growth logic over more challenging questions relating to the equitable distribution and access to critical social and public infrastructure” (Legacy, 2016).

An example of this can be seen within processes of neighborhood improvements such as adding green infrastructure, which leads to what has been termed ecological or green gentrification. Green gentrification, Anguelovski (2015) explains, occurs when “[t]he implementation of an environmental planning agenda related to public green spaces...leads to the displacement or exclusion of the most economically vulnerable human population while espousing an

environmental ethic.” The argument is that sustainability agendas, under the auspices of delivering infrastructure services and climate resilience, still uphold the ideals of competitive markets driving urban development. This gives more weight to developers and private interests than to existing communities. There are many examples of this form of procedural and distributive injustice in which lower socioeconomic and ethnic minority populations are not able or are actively excluded from land use decisions and then pressures of market dynamics lead to displacement.

Community engagement practices for issues as complex and multifaceted as environmental justice could benefit from looking to frameworks of collective impact that have led to systems change. Scholars of organizational structures and systems change have distilled that there are key conditions necessary for community-led interventions. These include having a common agenda, shared metrics and measurement, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and infrastructure that offers the structure to maintain an agenda in perpetuity (Christens et. al 2015). A critical component of achieving justice in governance entails creating the leadership and continuity of procedural justice to prevent communities from being further burdened, discriminated against by engagement processes, and therefore doubtful of government legitimacy and effectiveness. Sampson and colleagues (2014) call for procedural justice in which public participation is facilitated with intention and effective structure by planners and political leaders who have the will to build alternative modes of decision making, ones that center the experiential wisdom of communities, challenge state-imposed hierarchical structures, and demand accountability.

As Sampson et al. (2014) elaborate, “public participation generally entails intensive community organizing efforts and can become a source of chronic stress for active residents of frontline communities – many whom have been historically and repeatedly marginalized during land use planning and by its outcomes.” Environmental and land use planning in the United States has historically followed the theoretical model of “rational planning” in which “expert technical knowledge was required to make the most efficient, cost-effective decisions through stepwise criteria and assessment” (Sampson 2014). Though this model is still applied, it has since been contested with more communicative and constructivist theories of planning, which recognize the

power differential between “expert” planners and communities, and make attempts to invert that differential, giving greater agency and power to communities.

Environmental justice has been an evolving movement in its definition and in the debates on how its broad objectives will be reached. The universality of environmental justice and its interconnectedness to various civil right struggles assures that the movement will remain diverse and will require multifaceted and diverse localized approaches to find solutions. Though community engaged planning is one of the key tools to progressing to a more sustainable future for all, the above arguments and critiques of state-led initiatives must be taken into account and push scholars, planners and activists to consider alternative modes of governance, economic systems, and community structures.

Research Design & Methods

The goal of this project is to highlight the stories of community members on the frontlines of the environmental justice struggle in the City of Los Angeles. To gather these accounts, I employed qualitative methods that aimed to capture the breadth of the unique experiences of the respondents in their particular context in Los Angeles, and the environmental injustices they face. The aim was to collect strong descriptions through specificity of place, experience, and time, as environmental justice is a topic that encompasses embodied experience, health, place, and relationships.

Sampling

In this qualitative research study, nineteen in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with residents who live in areas considered high priority for environmental justice issues. The areas that were chosen were selected based on data from the Health Atlas in the Plan for a Healthy LA (the city’s health element), which identifies the zipcodes of disadvantaged communities that have disproportionately suffered from the greatest disinvestment and exposure to environmental hazards or pollutants. Respondents were selected for this research through a variety of sampling approaches, including snowball and purposive sampling. Together with our client, the Department of City Planning, we compiled a list of community based organizations

and a handful of residents that represented the target geographies we wished to represent in our sample.

Our list of interview subjects was derived from two streams of contact. The first was a list of community based organizations and individuals that had been compiled by the Department of City Planning through their independent outreach. Many of these contacts were included in monthly working group meetings. The second source of contacts was my personal network from the Liberty Hill Foundation Environmental Justice Circle and friends who work in environmental justice organizing. The organizations that were included in the study were largely well-established, long-standing environmental justice organizing groups and coalitions. The individuals that were included had participated in planning processes or interfaced with City officials through their direct advocacy. They were recommended as good candidates for the study either through personal contacts or due to their demonstrated interest in environmental justice issues in their community.

Of the contacted organizations, we were able to interview individuals from the Los Angeles County Chapter of the Youth Climate Strike, Community Coalition, Vision y Compromiso, Communities for a Better Environment, TRUST South LA, Slanguage, Best Start Wilmington, and Black Women for Wellness. Individuals interviewed, who were not reached through an organization, were varied in that they had either interfaced with city planning at some point through their neighborhood councils, were students who had worked in or studied urban planning, or were long-time residents in target areas but not necessarily involved in formalized environmental justice organizing spaces. The intention in this approach was to achieve a sample that represented a broad geographical range to reflect the variation of environmental justice issues and perspectives across the many communities in Los Angeles. We also aimed to have a mix of individuals who were involved in environmental justice organizing as well as residents who live in frontline communities but do not formally work in organizing spaces.

We attempted to have some level of demographic diversity represented in our sample by age, race/ethnicity, gender and primary language. However, prioritizing certain geographies took precedence given time constraints to find willing participants. The geographical representation of

the sample of respondents included the Harbor Area (Wilmington), South Los Angeles (South Central), East Los Angeles (Boyle Heights), Central Los Angeles (MacArthur Park, Koreatown), and North Valley (Sun Valley, Pacoima). In order to collect some data on the sample of individuals we interviewed, almost all our respondents filled out a Pre-Interview Survey as a screening tool to determine if they fit the profile and perspective we were hoping to capture in this study. The zipcode where they live was the most important data point we wanted to collect as we wanted to be very specific in the geographies represented, but we also considered if respondents identified as tenants, homeowners, or experiencing homelessness and whether they primarily spoke a language other than English. There were only a few instances in which we decided to screen out individuals that did not live in the zipcodes that we wanted to target. Age, gender, and whether they participated in some form of environmental justice organizing figured less in our decision to target interviewees, however we still collected this data from individuals who completed the pre-interview survey.

IRB Approval and Consent Form Procedure

All researchers in this project obtained CITI Human Subjects Research Certifications and UCLA Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. As the City intends to use our results in future planning documents, we ensured that all participants were informed and had options for their personally identifiable information. We created a system to allow participants to select what information they did or did not wish to share, including name, general area of residence, area of occupation, recorded voice, none, or all. Through our informed consent process, participants understood potential risks and benefits, incentives, confidentiality processes, right to withdraw, and who to contact with concerns. In addition to standard consent forms for adult participants we also received approval from IRB to include youth in our study as we believed it should be a priority to include and represent youth voices as among the most important stakeholders, especially as it relates to impacts of climate change and their future visions around environmental justice.

Funding

The Department of City Planning solicited the help of a graduate student for this project, but there was no funding specifically allocated to support the effort. As such, we applied for funding through the Luskin School at UCLA in order to compensate respondents for their time. The UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation awarded this project \$3200. Each interviewee received \$150 and we compensated a translator \$250 (\$50/interview) to transcribe and translate the interviews conducted in Spanish. The remainder of the funds will be directed towards a final gathering in which interviewees were able to meet each other and hear about the results of the study, as well as from City Planners about how their feedback and accounts will be utilized to update the General Plan. Further, the Department of City Planning will be adding the participants in the study to their stakeholders list, which will ensure they will receive follow up information about the work of the Environmental Justice Policy Program. It was vital to pay respondents, given the length of time and detail requested of them. We also acknowledged that investment in soliciting community feedback in planning on topics such as environmental justice should entail an adherence to procedural justice in which any steps that lower barriers to making engagement and communication more feasible for members of frontline communities should be taken, not least in the form of monetary compensation

Interviews

We opened each interview by explaining the purpose of the study, why the Department of City Planning initiated this project, the disclaimers and reason for the consent form, and offering respondents the opportunity to ask questions before we started the formal interview. We developed an interview instrument that was composed of four sections: 1) history of and to connection neighborhood, 2) environment and health, 3) organizing and future vision, and the 4) role of planning. The aim of this structure was to open the interview by first getting to know the respondent's connection to and experience of their neighborhood, how long they have lived there, and what brought them there. We wished to capture the emotional and personal connection and unique histories that respondents have in relation to their communities and their neighborhoods. Opening up with these questions allowed respondents to ease into the conversation as it situated the environmental themes that we progressed into within their life experience and geographical context.

We then moved into topics of environmental injustice and the health impacts they have witnessed or experienced themselves. This included both broad questions, like how they define environmental justice, and more specific questions about their personal struggles with health as related to their built environment. The third section of the interview asked respondents about their hopes and vision for their neighborhood, and how they situate themselves in relation to environmental justice struggles. In other words, we wished to explore if they organize around these issues, what sort of adaptation measures they take according to the environmental harms they previously identified, and, broadly, what is their theory of change. The fourth and final section focused on the role of planning and whether the respondent feels that they are represented in plans or the planning process. At the end of the four sections, we invited interviewees to raise other questions or topics that we may not have asked them but they wished to bring up as part of the interview.

As the interviews were semi-structured, depending on the respondent sections of the interviews were augmented to allow respondents to elaborate more on a particular theme or anecdote they raised, or in the interest of ensuring the interview flowed and allowed respondents to feel at ease in sharing their stories. The interviews were split in how they were conducted, with some being in person and others online via Zoom based on respondent preference. For the in-person interviews, I arranged to meet respondents in their neighborhoods in order to make the process as accessible and convenient for them, and also to document the neighborhood environment in which they lived. Several of the respondents only spoke Spanish and required translation. Our approach in these interviews involved our client, city planner Fabiola Inzunza, a native Spanish speaker. In these cases, she led the interviews, listened to the responses, and offered brief interpretations throughout the interview when needed.

Data Collection and Analysis

Each interview was recorded and transcribed, in some cases with the assistance of AI service, Otter.ai. Interviews that were with mono-lingual Spanish speakers were recorded and conducted with a City Planner present to interpret (not verbatim), then transcribed and fully translated

following the interview. The analysis involved re-listening to every interview while reading the transcriptions and editing them to accurately reflect what was said. As I corrected the transcripts, I also began to develop a list of codes representing the recurrent themes. I used these to derive common experiences as well as unique narratives. I utilized a free online coding software called Taguette (app.taguette.org) through which I was able to upload all the interview transcripts and manually code each interview.

The combination of close reading, rooting the themes in the context of the unique accounts of each respondent, and drawing connections between the respondents' experiences and stories produced the findings of this research, and informed the policy recommendations in this report. My analysis took an abductive approach. The literature review of environmental justice issues and histories in Los Angeles offered a baseline theoretical framework, and I sought to build new frameworks to better understand the issue of environmental justice in frontline communities based on the interview data collected. Through the manual coding processes, about 368 codes were produced. Following the tagging process, the codes were organized according to a broader thematic schema that followed the structure of the interview. The results presented in the following section are the overarching themes under which I will explain some of the most common codes and intersperse quotes to illustrate and root the logic of the narratives we derived through the interviews and the close listening and re-reading of the transcripts in the analysis process.

Results

Frequency of Themes

The chart below provides a list of the top most frequently used codes that emerged through my analysis of the interview transcripts and recordings. Many of these codes are broader and therefore were attributed to more instances throughout the interviews, however there were many other more specific sub themes that emerged that were related to these overarching subjects. The remainder of the codes used in my analysis are listed along with their frequency in [Appendix B](#).

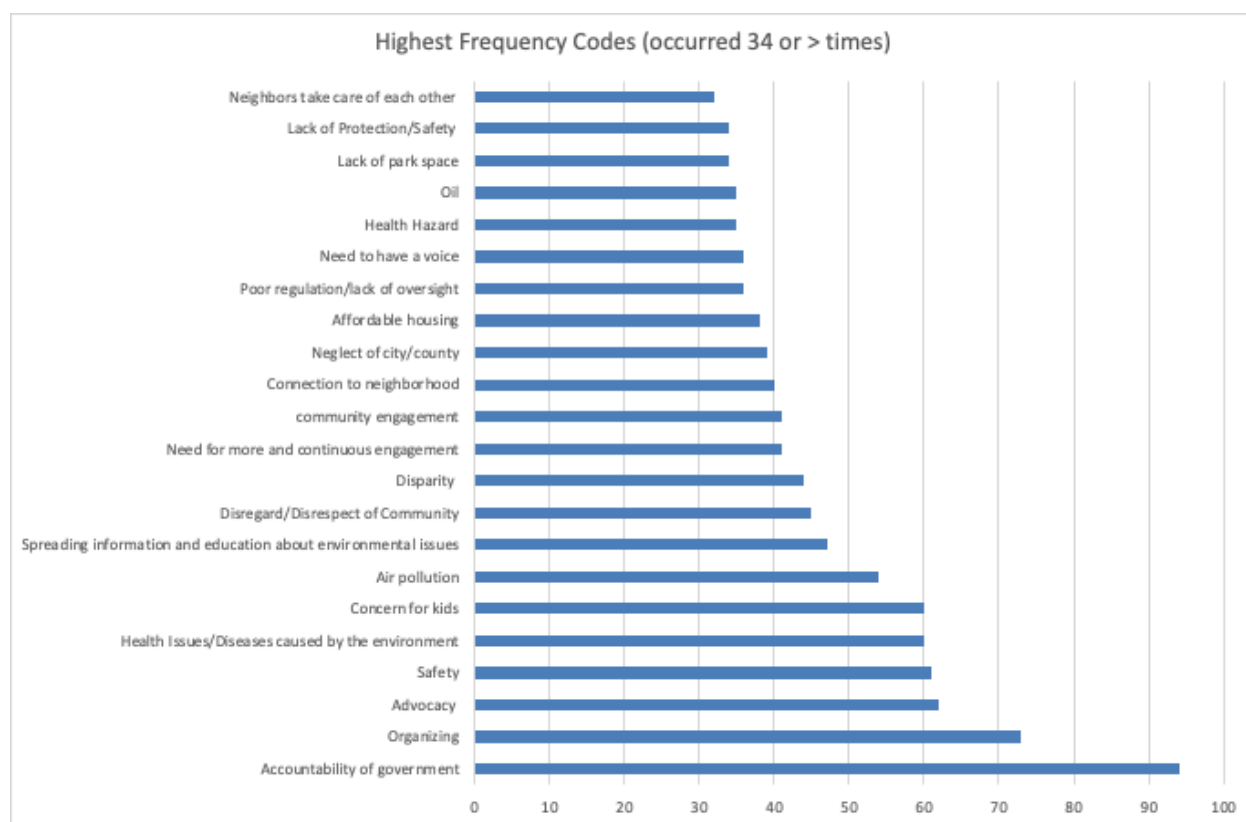


Figure 1. Highest Frequency Codes/Themes

Neighborhood and Community Connections, Histories and Identities

The first section of the interview opened by asking respondents to share how they came to live in their present neighborhood, how they would describe their community, what aspects they like/dislike about their neighborhood, what they identify as the strengths and the challenges of their community, and any moment/s when they felt especially connected. Respondents had many different origin stories to share about how they came to be living in their neighborhoods. The largest and most common driver of their choice in where they lived was usually affordability of housing, but often respondents elaborated they felt connected and a sense of identity in their neighborhood relating to their shared immigrant, linguistic, racial or other cultural identities that have defined their collective experience.

“But as for the positives, I definitely love the sense of community in my community, and I definitely love seeing people that look like me and be able to feel like a sense of comfort in my community.”

- Chandi Gordon, Resident of South Los Angeles (Crenshaw area)

All respondents identified as living in working class, low-income communities, and many cited struggles with lack of resources and the common reality of living paycheck-to-paycheck. Mutual aid and internal community support, volunteering, and networks were commonly cited as the strengths of communities. Shared experience of struggles leading to the facilitation of networks of support were particularly prominent during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Mexican immigrants and people that live there always call it WilMás...that’s been like the colloquial like Mexican nickname for Wilmington, even till today...So there’s like this kind of official history that lives on plaques on historical bronze statues and then there’s like the Wilmas history that is carved into the concrete sidewalks...My neighborhood and Wilmington. It has a lot of strengths. It has a lot of hardworking, you know, salt of the earth folks that are just very committed to one another and have a strong sense of camaraderie with one another. It was kind of exemplified during COVID time where like, food banks got right into action and people were helping each other and all that kind of stuff and it has a real sense of community that way.”

- Mario Ybarra Jr., Resident of Wilmington

This ethic of neighbors caring for each other extended to spreading information about organizational or government resources, distribution of basic necessities, building coalitions, creating spaces for community gathering and events, spreading awareness and information about health issues and tools to care for oneself, one’s family, and community.

“It is a small place full of refineries, but like I told you, I try. We are united. [The community] likes to participate and they like to fight and advocate for the environment. And we empower each other. Between each other we empower ourselves, we talk to each other, we pass information to each other, the information expands and that’s beautiful.”

- Dulce Altamirano, Resident of Wilmington

Many respondents also described the social challenges they experienced in their neighborhoods, such as gang activity, violence, crimes, racial divides, struggles with drugs and alcohol, poverty and, for some respondents, a struggle to garner community involvement in organizing or advocacy for lack of time and resources.

I think the built environment conditions, like there's a lot of over concentration of nuisance sites, and that includes liquor stores, illegal dispensaries, smoke shops. Now vacant lots. So all of these sites are a big part of the fabric of our community..... And that has been a challenge because there's not a lot of alternative options and oftentimes it's just a decision of there's no intention or or willingness to invest in a low income predominantly black and brown community. And so now it's just understanding that not only what there isn't but what there is, is impacting the built environment. What there isn't, are green spaces, publicly invested spaces, like plazas, or spaces for farmers markets. There are no grocery stores, there's no green streetscape. tree canopy, there are no bus stops. Yeah, the bus stops have no shelter, have no shading. Our schools have no greenery. It's asphalt concrete yards. And what there is is like the opposite, which is what puts us into the negative which is what I mentioned invites an over concentration of vacant land and then a hoarding of land, which ultimately results in like abandoned decades, multiple decades. Long, multi decade-long like abandoned buildings or underutilized buildings that again, not only impact what's there but prevent there from being something more favorable for the community.”

- Oscar Alvarez, Resident of South LA
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Finding a sense of control over their health and environment was another theme that transcended many of the interviews. Colonial history, redlining, racism, past harms or exclusionary planning practices were raised in several interviews, however there was a range in how respondents described their present experiences of their community in connection to certain histories and social or political processes. These cognitive lineages typically informed their theories of change that they wished to see (I will elaborate further in the section on Future Visions and Possible Interventions).

The strong sense of belonging and investment in community was expressed further by respondents in their commitment to organizing and advocacy on behalf of their communities. This took on the form of spreading awareness about environmental issues and health impacts, serving as mediators/translators between corporations, government officials, or other organizations, volunteering their time or working for community-based organizations that focus on environmental justice and health issues, attending public meetings, communicating with electeds, encouraging neighbors to vote, facilitating community events and actively listening and learning.

"I think even though it can be rough sometimes it is. There is a community, a sense of community and in certain neighborhoods, like everyone knows each other and everyone. I think everyone just stands together and being where they're from, it's very, I don't know how to put it. It's a very community based neighborhood. It's like a very small town, and even though it's a part of Los Angeles, which is huge. I've always gotten really big, small town vibes from Pacoima and I've always been really proud of that."

- Calvin Garcia, Resident of Pacoima

Most, if not all respondents had a very strong pride in their communities and faith that their communities are powerful through the unity, resourcefulness and legacy of activism they possess. There was a common desire for investment and improvements in neighborhoods, celebration and respect of their cultures and histories, and interventions that are relevant and reflect community needs and wants. Many respondents expressed these common hopes, but also with fear or skepticism of how change might come and recognition that their communities are not monolithic and there can be very different versions of history within the same place.

Built Environment Injustices

The second set of questions in the interview focused on the environment and health. Respondents were asked about the history of the environment in their neighborhood, places/landmarks that they perceived as having a negative effect on the community/environment, and changes or characteristics of the neighborhood that improved the neighborhood, as well as the dominant

health concerns they witness in their community or have personally experienced. There was significant overlap among respondents from the same neighborhoods in the physical attributes they identified in the environment as evidence of injustice.

In South Los Angeles, common issues were the presence of undesirable businesses like liquor stores and marijuana dispensaries, proximity to freeways with heavy truck and auto traffic, oil drilling operations, vacant lots, lack of access to healthy food options, lack of park space and trees, polluting services such as auto body shops, gas stations and dry cleaning businesses, and developments that were not built to serve the community.

“I never imagined that the oil wells had such effects that are so bad for your health. I didn’t know. I never thought about that. It was that time I went to that meeting, I listened and I was shocked because I heard that all these chemicals that are there cause cancer and when they extract and remove all the liquid from down there the chemicals are activated. That’s what struck me is that those chemicals are silent and they harm our health.”

- Juana Ramirez, Resident of South LA

In Wilmington the goods movements, the port, the oil refineries, and lack of amenities and resources were all mentioned by respondents. Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles residents cited lack of and poorly maintained parks, proximity of freeways, homelessness, gentrification, soil contamination from the Exide battery plant accident, and poor planning around housing developments.

“They think about building, building, building, but housing, without parking! So that also generates chaos outside the building and there is no green area. Green areas are needed because we’re always inside and for mental health you need to have a connection with nature. Sometimes there are people who may be disabled and there is no area nearby where they can go to relax, breathe fresh air.”

- Evelyn Pacas, East LA resident

Central Los Angeles/Koreatown respondents saw similar issues as East Los Angeles, but also raised concerns of risks posed to the unique immigrant community that largely supports itself through the informal street vending economy and fears of potential green gentrification. Sun

Valley residents cited a host of environmental problems including high amounts of pollution resulting from the nearby concrete, recycling, and gravel crushing plant and other construction and waste processing facilities that exist in very close proximity to sensitive populations in residential neighborhoods, schools, and community institutions. The neglect of the development of the Rory Shaw Reservoir project was also cited as a major environmental injustice.

Challenge on the ground is among other things, to live life breathing dust and toxins on any given day. People are unable to open their windows to let fresh air in because there is no such thing as fresh air. In the last few days of rain, Sun Valley Community is under the water because there is no flood control in most areas. Another major challenge is the future Rory Shaw Wetlands Park that is a 20+ year old project of Public Works intended to provide flood protection and save precious water. It is sitting on a former landfill, and represents a hazard in itself. There are still traces of methane in this site but implementation of Rory Shaw is not on the horizon.

The challenge is that any critical project for Sun Valley is always put on a back burner. When there was funding, the project never started, now the favorite excuse is “there is no funding” due to increase in cost. Projects are delayed for over 20 years, so long as to allegedly run out of funding. Things of this nature are numerous.

- Mariam Moore, Sun Valley resident

The unique environmental problems and burdens in each neighborhood revealed the granularity with which data on environmental problems needs to be collected in order to devise policy solutions that are specific to each locale’s unique set of environmental burdens. There were nearly one hundred observations on environmental justice and health issues in the built environment by respondents. Below is a chart providing the full list of observations on injustice in the built environment.

Industrial Zoning	Point source pollution	Aging Housing Stock	Toxic	Sensitive Land Use/Receptors near emissions/pollutants
Landfills	Trucks	Disinvestment	Lack of neighborhood amenities	Poorly maintained park/public spaces
Junk yards	Health Hazard	Removal of Community Amenities	Toxic Chemicals	Homelessness

Recycling/Trash Facilities	Fossil Fuel dependency	Diesel Pollution	Cosmetic Industry	No fresh air
Air pollution	Industry accidents (fires, leaks, spills)	Sacrifice Zone	Workplace hazards	Neglect of Rory Shaw Wetland Project
Waste Management	Poor upkeep of infrastructure	Freeways (Expansion, proximity, etc)	Water insecurity	Proximity of industry
Incompatible land use	Neglect of city/county	Vacant lots	Plastic pollution	Odor/Smells
Proximity of freeways	Climate Change impacts	Water contamination	Highways	Noise
Hazardous Leaks	Drought	Respiratory Illness	Cumulative Impacts	Concrete Industry
Lack of park space	Flooding	Pollution	Auto Body Shops/Garages	Gravel/Stone processing/crushing
Dust	Flaring	Poverty	Disparity	Gentrification
Lack of health food options	Harbor/Port Industry	Nearby industry	Aging infrastructure	Green gentrification
Litter	Asbestos	Nuisance zoning (liquor stores, dispensaries, etc)	Heat	Market Rate Development
Outdated zoning	Poor access to specialized health care	Absent landlords	Tension of public goods being used by homeless vs community	Car dependence
Increasing polluting industries	Lack of resources	Unsafe streets	Airports	Liquor Stores
Land Use Violations	Segregation	Gas stations	Oil (Drilling/Industry)	Dry Cleaners
RVs and Encampments	Goods movement	Lack of Shade	Lack of pharmacies	Cost of living
Bad or outdated land use planning	Warehouses	Oil refineries	Need for Street Improvements	Urban Heat Island
Poor quality schools	Soil contamination	Marijuana Dispensaries	Lack of Parking	Increasing density with proper infrastructure
Lack of grocery stores	Lead poisoning	Degradation of the environment	Traffic	Impact of developments
Rising rents	Unaware of industries nearby	Negative experience with neighborhood changes	New housing developments are not accessible to community	Housing development should not come at the price of removing trees/green space

Figure 2. Injustices in the Build Environment

Physical and Social Health Issues

Respondents were briefed on the topic of the interview being environmental justice, and most had a particular idea of their definition of the term; however, the range of health effects, which included both physical diseases and ailments as well as health framed in social and economic terms, demonstrated the breadth of views as to what the concept of environmental burdens and justice includes. As with built environmental injustices, each neighborhood also had unique health issues but a number in common. As is to be expected of Los Angeles, with its history and ongoing struggles with air quality, health issues such as asthma, bronchitis, allergies and other respiratory illnesses related to air pollution were prominent. Cancer, miscarriages, nose bleeds, and children born with developmental challenges were mostly cited in South Los Angeles, East Los Angeles and Wilmington, where proximity to oil refineries, drilling sites, and industries and businesses that emit toxins are most concentrated.

“We are surrounded by monsters and a ticking time bomb, because you fall asleep and you don’t know if you’re going to wake up or not. On January 20th there was just a Warren crude oil spill and then later on the 30th there was another like in the alley in the building where my daughter lives. It got all over the place, daughter’s parking lot...What happened?...A company went to clean and vacuum all those chemicals. But what happened, that they went looking like they were going to the moon, well covered. All covered up. But the community is not protected...what does that mean? That they are chemical and that they do a lot of damage. And one of my granddaughters has eczema and she scratches and scratches until she bleeds and it hurts. But the itching is strong, She bleeds and she is the one with nose bleeds and a lot of headaches. She has missed school due to these symptoms.”

- Dulce Altamirano, Resident of Wilmington

Obesity and diabetes, exacerbated by the inability to exercise due to feeling unsafe or lack of accommodating outdoor spaces, as well as lack of access to healthy food, were presented as interconnected health issues, particularly in South and East Los Angeles communities.

“The lack of not having a neighborhood that we can go out safely and you know, being able to take a walk, even run, whatever it is that we want to do. I think we suffer a lot from obesity and diabetes.”

- Adela Mariano, resident of South LA

“Another challenge is we don’t have access to healthy options, like healthy food options. I feel like the difference that I see here in in South LA, we only have access to like fast food and yes, we have grocery stores, but I think even then, like the vegetables and fruit sections that we have in these grocery store, like a lot of the time I feel like it’s like the last pick produce that we get here....I’m telling you from experience..I’ve lived in Westwood and I go visit my partner I go to the grocery stores in the valley and then when it comes to South LA it feels like the produce that in the these grocery stores don’t feel as healthy or look good enough...a lot of the time they look they’re past their time.”

- Ivana Munguia, resident of South LA
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Mental health was a recurrent theme among many of the interviewees, who understood poor mental health as the impact of social and economic struggles that many respondents witnessed and experienced in their neighborhood, compounded by the impact of a highly hazardous and prohibitive built environment on the community psyche. Another common theme that arose in many of the interviews were social and economic struggles in communities: youth struggling and falling into gangs, use of drugs and alcohol, overcrowding, poverty, and racism.

A lot of our community tends to ignore mental health because of the need to survive to the next day....And so I think that was one of the things that really impacted us from the pandemic beyond the socio economic issues that were exacerbated. I think there was a need to really address the built environment as a factor contributing to their decaying mental health. So that's another and I think that's been talked about and elevated by our youth since before the pandemic, but now you have an intergenerational conversation of mental health being had that really elevates mental health as an overall health aspect that our community wants to address.

- Oscar Alvarez, Resident of South LA
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These social issues enlarged the framework of what could be categorized as a health impact that results from environmental injustices. The broad scope of health struggles calls for a broad range of geographically relevant health policy recommendations. Below is a table that lists all the

physical, social and economic health issues which respondents described as consequences of environmental injustices.

Asthma	Miscarriages	Allergies	Displacement
Cancer	Obesity/Diabetes	Gang Activity	Wealth Loss
Reproductive Harm	Lead poisoning	Racism	Concern about community's mental health
Cardiac Disease	Overcrowding	Lack of resources	Environmental hazards are bad for neighborhood economy
Allergies	COVID	Loss of jobs/closures of industries	Crime
Health Issues/Diseases caused by the environment	Birth defects/premature births	Cumulative Impacts	Unable to exercise due to safety concerns
Obesity/Diabetes	Social challenges in neighborhood	School Absence	Poverty
Nose bleeds	Concern about community's mental health	Cardiac Disease	Concern for kids
Headaches	Respiratory Illness	Birth defects/premature births	Developmental issues in kids (autism, ADHD, etc)
Addressing urgent and basic needs of community	Suffering	Overcrowding	

Figure 3. Physical, Social and Economic Health Consequences of Environmental Injustices

Participatory, Procedural, Representational, Legal and Other Injustices

Respondents alluded to various forms of injustice throughout their interviews, in the context of speaking about the history of their neighborhoods and the environmental issues they experience, but the third and fourth sections of the interview elicited the more direct answers around how injustices are perpetuated or rooted in governance structures, including approaches to community engagement past and present. The third section of the interview asked respondents to speak explicitly about organizing around environmental justice issues and the future vision they are working towards or hoping for in their neighborhood. We asked what they thought about when they heard the term environmental justice; if they were or had been a part of any grassroots or other movements around environmental justice issues; what were the most effective strategies in those movements and organizing; and, finally, what their vision for the future of their neighborhood was.

The questions around organizing and the definition of environmental justice, as well as in the next section of the interview, which asked about the role of planning, drew responses about how environmental justice, but also justice in general, could be better upheld and fought for by the government. Participatory, procedural and representation justice were the three frameworks of justice most prevalently described by respondents. Nearly all respondents spoke to the importance of having their voices heard and the need for government/the city to engage with residents in a consistent, long-term, transparent, and accessible manner that demonstrates follow-through and continuity from outreach to policy and implementation of that policy.

“I think what is very discouraging is when we engage in conversations like these, it’s very like when government entities dive into this practice of community engagement, it’s very check the box approach. Let’s host a meeting and bring a monitor, people ask them a couple questions. Have them fill out a questionnaire but there’s limited engagement and genuine connection from the stakeholder. Developing the engagement with community members. Entities like CoCo that can help also facilitate those conversations. There’s just limited connection and so that then creates distrust and unwillingness to engage....in planning you have to move at a certain pace, at the pace of the city, considering all the bureaucracy and that limits their ability to engage with new members at their pace.”

- Oscar Alvarez, resident of South Central

Many respondents cited feeling that their communities were left behind, forgotten, disrespected, and unprotected by regulatory bodies. Their in-depth input in the development of plans or policies that directly affected them was rarely, if ever, sought. Transparency around process and policy was expressed in terms of creating better access to information and education about their environment and how it may affect their health; collection of more data both from residents’ experiences and monitoring of environmental conditions; and clarity around how resources are being allocated. Some respondents described a sense of distrust in the legitimacy and effectiveness of government as they witnessed instances where profit was prioritized rather than people, government lacking accountability through staff turnover, or in poor enforcement, oversight or means of implementation.

“There are different standards for remediation of contaminated land. And one of those standards is like open space and that does not require as much cleanup as residential and there’s even standards above residential. We know that industries don’t want to have to pay for clean up, so then they’re a little bit more

inclined to go for parks or conservation unless they think they're gonna make a big payout from redevelopment. So honestly I think that, you know if a child spills milk you would clean it up, you wouldn't just be like, you only have to clean up 25%. Like you would clean it up! I think this idea that if someone makes a mess, they should clean it up...It just needs to be baked into policy and it shouldn't be like you only have to clean up this amount or this amount. Based on what it's going to become. Land should have intrinsic value beyond human desires for that land. And that is not currently how our system works"

- Tianna Shaw-Wakeman, Resident of South Los Angeles

Common among many respondents was a recognition that change is slow, and small changes can help but are often band-aid solutions to larger structural issues and barriers that prevent environmental justice issues from being fully addressed.

"I feel like community members, whenever there's like, these public hearings, like they go, because there's a problem, and like, I think that like as you know, the city a like a decision maker, I think it can be frustrating to just hear people come and like complain to you, right? But I also think that it's like, this is like one of the very few avenues where people actually can be heard. So I feel like not requiring community members to constantly have to prove what they're living through, I think it is something that comes up a lot."

- Dilia Ortega, resident of Southeast LA

Procedurally, respondents explained that communities should not be required to prove their problems repeatedly and, in the same vein, have to constantly be in emergency mode to maintain any progress they make and get the resources they need. One of the key mechanisms to ensure that these burdens are lifted is by designing engagement processes that meet the community consistently and in an accessible manner and make the procedures (of planning and policy-making) transparent and easy to understand in themselves. Below are the themes/codes from the interviews that described various forms of injustice as it relates to governance and addressing environmental justice issues.

Lack/slow implementation	Empty promises	Lack of health data	Disinvestment	Lack of funding as an excuse
Poor upkeep of infrastructure	Constant battle to maintain progress (litigation, organizing)	Structural barriers to EJ solutions	Favoring profit over people	Plans don't reflect the community

Neglect of city/county	Lack of diverse representation in planning/policy dept (i.e. few Black women)	Long Term commitment to solutions	Structural barriers to EJ solutions	Lack of Protection/Safety
Poor communication or lack of transparency around planning projects or decisions	Outreach and engagement should be made accessible (digital divide, unhoused, elderly, different languages)	Need for more and continuous engagement	Lack of health data	Corruption
Siloed government/regulatory bodies	Burden on community to prove again and again	Long term commitment to environmental justice	Band-aid solutions to on-going harms	Trust in elected officials or government
Disinvestment	Making zoning and other city processes easy for the public to understand	Negative experiences with regulatory bodies	Putting blame on community (i.e. why don't you move? You have a choice)	Policing
Poor regulation/lack of oversight	Turnover of planning staff is a problem	Community input is not prioritized or even sought	Negative experiences with regulatory bodies	Impact of regulations/permitting decisions
Disregard/Disrespect of Community	Impact of regulations/permitting decisions	Transparency or access of information about health or environment	Lack of trust in/betrayal of electeds	Resources not being used effectively
Forgotten/Left Behind	Need or lack of environmental monitoring/analysis	Need or lack of environmental monitoring/analysis	Lack of enforcement of policies or tools to protect people from environmental hazards	Empty promises

Figure 4. Injustice in Governance

Future Visions

As mentioned previously, the third section of the interview asked respondents to speak to their vision of the future for their neighborhood. The question posed to interviewees encouraged them to imagine they had a magic wand and could create the world they wanted without limits or constraints.

“Transportation is obviously tied to density, right? In some parts of the city where they want to increase density, that means transportation.. I'm talking about buses, right? Like Metro buses, light rail, or subway, that includes bicycle infrastructure as well. That should be part of the conversation as well, bicycle infrastructure, and bicycle facilities. We don't have that. I hope that if they do want to increase

density housing, to increase housing supply, that they would also move on increasing and making improvements to public transit and mobility.”

- Lionel Mares, resident of Sun Valley

Interviewees responded with visions for change at various scales, from having more shade and green spaces in their neighborhoods to calls for a just transition. Many respondents described their aspirations in relation to their concern for their children’s well-being and health and the overall hope that their quality of life will improve.

“It’s worth dreaming about, right? I would like it if my neighborhood was free of businesses that didn’t affect our health because what they sell is harmful to our health. If I had a magic wand I would remove those businesses, for example the one with marijuana. I would remove them and the one with cigarettes also. I would move the gas station a little further away and live in a place with clean air and chemical free.”

- Juana Ramirez, resident of South LA

Other major themes included addressing sources of pollutants, remediation, and design interventions in the build environment, such as improved walkability by creating safer streets, increasing access and maintaining beautiful parks and green spaces, and developments that meet community needs in terms of affordability and do not add additional burdens on communities.

“I would say just improve green spaces without necessarily having it backfire...because, you know, once you improve these spaces, it just attracts like, you know, the wrong people or other people and just may cause gentrification as well. So it’s just improving developments, like bringing new development and improving current development in a way that doesn’t disproportionately impact those that already inhabit those spaces.”

- Martiza Vasquez, resident of Central LA/Westlake

A number of respondents also envisioned a future that had social and economic transformation in terms of improved relationships among community members, investment of the city in community events and spaces, and support of the informal economy, i.e. street vending, creating

an atmosphere that reinforces community pride, identities, and sense of belonging. Below is a table of all the themes that emerged representing the respondents' future visions.

Improving public transportation	Bus Shelters	Job Creation and Security	Cool pavement	Street medians	Just Transition
Bike Lane Improvements	School greening	Increasing density with proper infrastructure	Street furniture	Elimination of polluting industries	Collecting more data on health/environment
Bike Infrastructure improvements	Systems thinking	Supporting informal economy/street vending	Need for improved bus stops (benches, shade structures)	Investment and businesses to come to the neighborhood	Rebate programs (ACs, converting gas to electric, etc)
Shade Trees	Public health	Electrification	Healthy economy	Green community	Complete the Rory Shaw Wetland Project
Environmental justice is transportation justice	Housing security	Neighborhood Amenities	Alternative transportation options (EVs, car shares, etc)	Need for better infrastructure before more low income housing is built	Developments that meet community needs
Shut down oil wells	Energy democracy	Affordable housing	Access to cooling centers	Healthy schools and kids	Access to nature
Safety	Remediation	Street lights	Green infrastructure	Water conservation	Peace among community members
Native Plants	Need for more programming for kids in poor areas	Desire for keeping neighborhoods clean	Social housing	Equity is important	Climate Justice
Buffer from industrial use	Affordable social services	Direct Action	Healthcare	Removing nuisance businesses (ie smoke shops)	More community events
Renewable Energy	Support for the arts/creativity	Improved mobility	Food	Air purifiers	Walkability
Supporting local/small businesses	Need more activity for kids	Stormwater capture	Need for neighborhood amenities that focus on health	Programming for Black Homeowners	Desire for better/well-maintained parks
Tree Planting	Holistic view of health	Community Spaces	Quality of Life	Need for emergency preparedness	Playgrounds for kids
Social mobility	Consider disability	Need more activity for kids	Shade	Restorative Justice	Legal justice
Enclosing/capping sources of pollution	Ample green space/trees for physical and mental health	Desire to beautify their neighborhood (more landscaping, clean up streets, more trees, maintained infrastructure, etc)	Environmental justice includes both the social and the environmental aspects	Need for exposure and generating awareness about issues that affect community	Need for social services (i.e. to address drug or gang issues)

Figure 5. Future Visions

Role of Planning

The final section of the interview invited respondents to give their opinions as to how they see the role of planning in addressing environmental justice issues. Respondents were asked how the city has or hasn't worked to address environmental and health issues in their neighborhood; the role they think city planning should play in addressing environmental injustices; what they think engagement should look like; when the last time they interacted with a planning or government official was; and if they feel that they are represented in the city planning processes and/or documents.

"We currently don't really have people involved from the city on what's happening here, that could come and be willing to let us know what's happening. That's why when they told me that you were coming, I was very happy because finally, finally there is a light from someone who is concerned about our community at home."

- Angela Gutierrez, resident of East LA

The most broad and prevalent theme raised in this section was the notion of government accountability. Under the umbrella theme of government accountability existed sub-themes including: continuous engagement with communities; the development of policies that are updated and informed by community input and histories; enforcing and having proper oversight of the implementation of policy and regulations; and having a long-term commitment to reaching solutions and maintaining quality of life for residents.

"They should have more people, like city planning, come out into our neighborhoods, you know, meet our neighbors, not just in the meetings, because not everybody shows up in the meeting. But maybe just walk around the neighborhoods and talk to the neighbors, you know, get engaged and listen to everybody's point of view, you know, because we all have different burdens. We all think differently. We all want something different, but maybe just kind of, you know, getting a little bit of different people and their opinions. I think that will be very helpful. Maybe for the city to understand what you know. What our needs are here, just just hearing it from different perspectives. I think that that will be something that will

be very helpful for them...it will make our community feel heard as well. Because sometimes we do feel abandoned, you know, we feel like okay, you don't care."

- Adela Mariano, resident of South LA

Procedurally, a number of ideas around community engagement were raised. These included: adjusting the pace at which the city engages to instill trust among community members; creating partnerships and learning from nonprofits and community-based organizations that are already established in communities; and engaging with stakeholders who are overlooked or lack access, such as youth, elderly, disabled individuals, and the unhoused. The vast majority of respondents expressed that this interview was a first-time experience and they do not feel that they are properly represented in either policy or planning processes, underscoring that investments should be made to meaningfully listen and engage with people.

"Sometimes we talk about bringing more chairs to the table, but what if all we have is a bench? We should bring the table over to that bench."

- Hilda Avila, resident of Wilmington

Transparency of city planning was also raised as a key issue, with distrust around investment and development choices either because decisions are out of touch with the needs of the community or seem to serve interests of profitability over the livability of neighborhoods.

The chart below displays the themes around the role of city planning and how residents would like to see planning shift its approach.

City Planning Outreach	Implementing changes	Improving quality of life and environment in one neighborhood is good for the region	Solution requires multi-level governance/regulatory bodies
Engagement with City Planning	Representation	Considering elderly population	Need for accountable leadership and oversight
Community outreach	Definition of Environmental Justice	Prioritizing EJ communities	Need for more and continuous engagement
Policies informed by updated data and community input/histories	Environmental justice policies	Preventing more pollution through better and more regulations	Long-term commitment to solutions

Solutions that are locally relevant	Community engagement	Technological improvements to reduce emissions	Long term commitment to environmental justice
Regulations for emission reduction	Transparency or access of information about health or environment	Financial incentives for transition to green economy/non-polluting industry	Importance of taking vulnerability of community into account for planning decisions of
Need for participatory research	Taking the time and asking questions	Environmental Justice Committee/Council	Improving public spaces
Accountability of government	Need for pedestrian planning	Political alliances	Investing time and resources in people
EJ must be integrated into city's General Plan	Partnership with nonprofits/CBOs	Communication with elected	Putting resources and investment towards community engagement
Need for strict and detail-oriented regulation of land use decisions	Meet community where they are		Effective and clear messaging
EIRs should always be required for new developments	Importance of engaging with youth in communities	Holding corporations accountable	Companies investing in environmental issues
Need to reassess past land use and permitting decisions	Teaching about environmental issues/climate at schools		

Figure 6. Role of Planning

Sentiments

Speaking about injustice, health, and organizing raised a lot of emotions given the very challenging circumstances and struggles that the respondents in this project experience themselves and witness in their communities.

"I want her to be empowered. I want my children to be empowered and know they are not alone, that there are many people...that they are not alone with the diseases, battling for the environment and they are supported. And that they can make a difference. They can make a difference and learn to advocate, let them learn and see what they can do and how they can fight."

- Dulce Altamirano, resident of Wilmington

Part of the procedural and representative justice within the scope of this project was to honor these emotions by naming them and raising them as inextricable to the other themes related through concrete observations, critiques and visions. Much of planning policy-making attempts to impose a distance from the emotional weight of histories and ongoing human struggles,

adhering to standards that are reinforced through sanitized language and removed from actual lived experiences in communities.

“It is a challenge to bring the trust back in for people who have heard many promises over the years but saw no action, no change. People lost any confidence in elected officials. They don’t even want to vote.”

- Mariam Moore, resident of Sun Valley

There is a value in standardization, but a dominant theme in this project was a call for planning and governance to design mechanisms to absorb and take into account the diversity of voices and the multiplicity of experiences, especially of the most vulnerable communities.

“You go to West LA and trees galore. Beautiful old trees and then in South LA that’s not the case. And you know, stories of the city, not even that long ago, when they were pulling the Endeavour in the Science Center...If this happened in Beverly Hills, they would have listened to their demands and they would have never cut them down....So just this like strong awareness that the city just does not give the same care and deference to the public health and safety of South Los Angeles residents as it does West Los Angeles residents and that the reason for that is race and class. Primarily race.”

- Tianna Shaw-Wakeman, resident of South LA

Below is a collection of the sentiments and emotions expressed through many of the interviews. These emotions were expressed in tone, in tears and explicitly in words.

Distrust	Community deserves to be treated with dignity
Anger	Choosing to try to make change despite circumstance that they can't control
Empowerment	Fear of changes
Pride in community	Frustration
Uplifting	Disenchanted
Forgotten/Left Behind	Love for their community and neighborhood

Powerlessness of over circumstances	Connected and united
Overcoming obstacles/sense of hope	Sense of belonging
Systemic change is slow	Disrespected

Figure 7. Sentiments

Research Limitations

This project attempted to cover a large number of topics which required interviews to take at a minimum one hour and up to two hours. Given the constraint on time and budget resources, we were limited to only conducting one interview per person and in some instances interviews had to be cut short due to limited time on the part of respondents. This study attempted to gain grounded perspectives on environmental and health justice issues across a broad range of geographies and neighborhoods in Los Angeles. While we covered a broad area, we were not able to compare different accounts from many individuals from the same neighborhoods. In addition, certain neighborhoods were more represented in our sample than others (we had the most interviewees residing in South Los Angeles). Our study did not select for particular demographics given the limited time to access individuals to interview and therefore our sample is not representative of the larger city population and would have been enriched further by representation from unhoused individuals, indigenous communities, and elderly. Given the nature and scale of the study, however, the interviewees did represent a spectrum of identities in terms of race, age, gender and ethnicity.

Discussion & Conclusion

The results from the interviews demonstrate the varied and complex nature of environmental justice in a city like Los Angeles. A wide range of environmental justice struggles were identified, in terms of health, social impacts, and beliefs and theories around how change will come about. The unique identities of the respondents and how they connect to their home and environment, and the neighborhood-specific environmental injustices that they identified, speaks to the need for studies on environmental injustice to be approached on a community level through ongoing participatory research and monitoring of environmental conditions to meet

established standards of health to protect communities. The granularity of the problems and complex combinations of factors that contribute to environmental justice in different neighborhoods necessitates community engaged research that can capture these nuances in order to create policy frameworks that are locally relevant.

The results from the interviews reveal that the definition of environmental justice is broad and evolving. It not only encompasses the proximity of pollutants to sensitive receptors but also takes other burdens and vulnerabilities into account, including housing insecurity, lack of access to nature, histories of disinvestment, climate injustice, and environmental racism to name a few. The interviews offered substantial feedback and information as to how city planning can procedurally improve their engagement practices in order to uphold and give legitimacy to the effort of instituting environmental justice policy that positively impacts communities. Some specific mechanisms to improve procedural and representative justice included maintaining on-going engagement in an accessible and transparent manner; meeting communities where they are rather than placing further burdens on them as they attempt to make their voices heard; monitoring and enforcing regulations that protect residents from environmental harm; and seeing that environmental benefits and neighborhood amenities are distributed equitably among communities in Los Angeles. Each interview offered insight into the distinctive social processes and dynamic realities of communities both in how they relate to each other and to local community-based organizations and nonprofits, and the city. These nuances offer critical insights at a scale that city policy does not take into account as consistently as it could to fully embed policies and planning decisions that are built from the vantage point of the people who will be most directly impacted.

Recommendations

The following list is a series of policy recommendations derived from the interview findings. The recommendations primarily focus on procedural aspects of developing meaningful policy to truly reflect the interests of communities dealing with the brunt of environmental injustices.

- **Geographic-specific policies:** Policies should be specific to the unique environmental burdens of a neighborhood, informed by what community members identify as the most critical environmental and social problems. Granularity of policy should be paramount so

that residents are able to identify and track environmental justice issues that are specific and relevant to their lived experience in their communities.

- **Neighborhood-level, embedded planning practice:** Urban planners should be distributed across Los Angeles and assigned to neighborhoods to specialize in and build relationships with residents, with the goal of engaging in frequent, consistent and rooted outreach that informs granular, place-specific policy and planning. These assignments should have long time-frames and aim to avoid frequent turnover in the interest of creating continuity and trust between planning officials and community members.
- **Clear metrics:** All environmental justice policies should have clearly defined metrics for success that are highly specific to each problem identified. For example, if residents in South LA are asking for more park space, the metrics could include goals for the distribution, the amount of shade to be created, climate resilience features, maintenance goals and other specific valuation tools that are informed and envisioned through community input and assessment of community health needs.
- **Accessible policy language:** Policy must be written in straightforward language and translated to Spanish and other dominant languages spoken in Los Angeles.
- **Clear presentation of rationale and research backing:** Policy should be written in a manner that allows people to easily understand why it exists, by making the information and data gathering process used to come to that conclusion explicit.
- **Timelines and assigned roles:** Policies should include a timeframe and identify responsible actors, strategic partnerships, the funding that will be allocated to assure it is implemented, and the mechanism tracking and measuring approaches to ensure this.
- **Communities are the experts:** Policy makers should honor and allocate resources to community based organizations to help them develop locally relevant engagement strategies, education forums and streams of communication.
- **Daring policy:** Policy writers and planners should be daring and call out systemic issues that require reform around governance that perpetuates extractive industries and poor land use decisions that place profit over people.

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Appendix

Appendix A

Interview Instrument

Voices from the Frontlines Project

Part 1: History and connection to neighborhood

1. To begin, can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
 - a. What is your name?
 - b. What part of Los Angeles do you live in? Tell me how you came to be living there.
 - c. Can you tell me about your community?
2. What do you like about your neighborhood?
 - a. What are its strengths?
 - b. What are its challenges?
3. Can you tell me about a time when you felt very connected to your neighborhood?
 - a. What are the strengths or aspects you love about your neighborhood?
 - b. Can you tell me a time where you felt challenged in your neighborhood?

Part 2: Environment and Health

1. Tell me about what you know of the history of the environment in your neighborhood.
2. What places/landmarks/developments within your neighborhood do you perceive have had a negative effect on the community/environment?
3. Are there any characteristics or changes to the neighborhood that have improved the environment?
4. Would you like to share any health concerns that you or your neighbors have that are related to living in your neighborhood?

Part 3: Organizing and future vision

1. What do you think of when you think about environmental justice?
2. Have you been a part of any grassroots or other movements around environmental justice issues?
3. What strategies do you think have been the most effective for the movements and organizing you have been a part of?
4. What is your vision for the future of your neighborhood?

Part 4: Role of Planning

1. How do you think the city has or hasn't worked to address environmental and health issues in your neighborhood?
2. What role do you think city planning should play in addressing environmental injustice?
3. What do you think the engagement process to create better neighborhood and city plans should look like?
4. Tell me about the last time you interacted with a government official on the topic of Environmental Justice (if any).
5. Do you see yourself or your community represented in city planning processes and/or documents? Do you have ideas about how you might see more of your community represented?
 - a. Example can include: having more interviews with community members and including their accounts in planning documents, expanding the outreach to groups that may not otherwise have access (unhoused, non-english speakers, children, elderly, etc.)
6. If there's anything I didn't ask that you think I should know, please feel free to pitch in. Additionally, if there is anyone you think I should be speaking to in your community or otherwise about this please let me know.

Appendix B

tag	#	tag	#	tag	#	tag	#
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Accountability of government	94	Definition of Environmental Justice	13	Landfills	5	Need for pedestrian planning	2
Organizing	73	Long Term commitment to solutions	13	Coalition building	5	Nose bleeds	2
Advocacy	62	Equity is important	13	Suffering	5	Miscarriages	2
Safety	61	Concern about community's mental health	13	Litter	5	Individualism	2
Health Issues/Diseases caused by the environment	60	Industry accidents (fires, leaks, spills)	12	Outdated zoning	5	Supporting informal economy/street vending	2
Concern for kids	60	Tree Planting	12	School Absence	5	Teaching about environmental/climate at schools	2
Air pollution	54	Need for Street Improvements	12	Solution requires multi-level governance/regulatory bodies	5	Constant battle to maintain progress (litigation, organizing)	2
Spreading information and education about environmental issues	47	Working Class Communities	12	Prioritizing EJ communities	5	Empowerment	2
Disregard/Disrespect of Community	45	Impact of regulations/permitting decisions	12	Financial incentives for transition to green economy/non-polluting industry	5	Holistic view of health	2
Disparity	44	Community input is not prioritized or even sought	12	Redlining	5	Birth defects/premature births	2

Need for more and continuous engagement	41	Desire for investment and businesses to come to the neighborhood	12	Laundromat	5	Housing development should not come at the price of removing trees/green space	2
community engagement	41	Need to reassess past land use and permitting decisions	12	Poor quality schools	5	Different histories in the same place	2
Connection to neighborhood	40	map	12	new housing developments are not accessible to community	5	Colonial history	2
Neglect of city/county	39	Nuisance zoning (liquor stores, dispensaries, etc)	12	Important to celebrate community and inspire joy	5	Strikes/Resistance/Activism	2
Affordable housing	38	Mutual aid/internal community support	12	Improving public spaces	5	Sense of control over health	2
Poor regulation/lack of oversight	36	Buffer from industrial use	11	Crime	5	Developmental issues in kids (autism, ADHD, etc)	2
Need to have a voice	36	Heat	11	Social mobility	5	Native Plants	1
Health Hazard	35	Aging Housing Stock	11	Importance of green space/trees for health	5	Airports	1
Oil	35	Diesel Pollution	11	COVID	5	Drought	1
Lack of park space	34	Healthcare	11	Learning	5	Wealth Loss	1
Lack of Protection/Safety	34	Walkability	11	Bus Shelters	4	Indigenous Land	1
Neighbors take care of each other	32	Healthy schools and kids	11	Junk yards	4	Electrification	1

Improving public transportation	31	Need for more programming for kids in poor areas	11	Would rather live elsewhere	4	Enclosing/capping sources of pollution	1
Community outreach	31	Affordable social services	11	Market Rate Development	4	Job Creation and Security	1
People are the strength of the community	31	Policing	11	Reproductive Harm	4	Workplace hazards	1
Homelessness	31	Partnership with nonprofits/CBOs	11	Social housing	4	Plastic pollution	1
Social challenges in neighborhood	31	Outreach and engagement should be made accessible (digital divide, unhoused, elderly, different languages)	11	Uplifting	4	Street lights	1
Pollution	30	Trucks	10	Empty promises	4	Rory Shaw Wetland Project	1
Listening and Acting	30	Poor upkeep of infrastructure	10	Lack of funding as an excuse	4	Gravel/Stone processing/crushing	1
Importance of taking vulnerability of community into account for planning decisions of	30	Black Community	10	Need for collecting more data on health/environment	4	Increasing polluting industries	1
Implementing changes	29	Fear of Change	10	"green community"	4	Street medians	1
Pride in community	29	Sensitive Land Use/Receptors	10	Need for improved bus stops (benches, shade structures)	4	Cool pavement	1
Gentrification	28	Need or lack of environmental monitoring/analysis	10	Siloed government/regulatory bodies	4	Street furniture	1

Past Harms	28	Impact of developments	10	Blue collar/manual labour workforce	4	Air purifiers	1
Volunteering in the community	27	Desire to beautify their neighborhood (more landscaping, clean up streets, more trees, maintained infrastructure, etc)	10	Just Transition	4	EJ must be integrated into city's General Plan	1
poor communication or lack of transparency around planning projects or decisions	26	Bad or outdated land use planning	10	Tension of public goods being used by homeless vs community	4	EIRs should always be required for new developments	1
Distrust	26	Support for the arts/creativity	10	Green gentrification	4	Solutions that are locally relevant	1
Green infrastructure	26	Rising rents	10	Segregation	4	Improving quality of life and environment in one neighborhood is good for the region	1
Sense of identity connected to the neighborhood	26	Shut down oil wells	10	Goods movement	4	Neighborhood has improved	1
Racism	25	Need for developments that meet community needs	10	Tension between homeowners and renters	4	SB1000	1
Food	24	Oil refineries	10	Community is not a monolith	4	Poor access to specialized health care	1

Lack of trust in/betrayal of electeds	23	environmental justice is transportation justice	9	Headaches	4	Programming for Black Homeowners	1
Disinvestment	22	Vacant lots	9	Corporations	4	Renters have less rights than homeowners	1
Forgotten/Left Behind	22	Toxic Chemicals	9	School greening	4	Warehouses	1
Desire for better/well-maintained parks	22	Language Barriers	9	Systems thinking	4	Lead poisoning	1
Lack of grocery stores	22	Traffic	9	Remediation	4	Turnover of planning staff is a problem	1
Asthma	21	Environmental justice policies	9	Degradation of the environment	4	Healthy economy	1
Lack of neighborhood amenities	20	Need for exposure and generating awareness	9	Feeling of powerlessness of over circumstances	4	Access to cooling centers	1
Importance of Community Events	20	Car dependence	9	Blue-collar union community	4	Rebate programs (ACs, converting gas to electric, etc)	1
Changes/transitions in the neighborhood	20	Marijuana	9	Fossil Fuel dependency	3	Effective and clear messaging	1
History	20	Bike Lane Improvements	8	Political alliances	3	Companies investing in environmental issues	1
Industrial Zoning	19	Cost of living	8	Stormwater capture	3	Housing security	1
Poor/low income communities	19	Smells	8	Sacrifice Zone	3	Energy democracy	1
Environmental Racism	19	Highways	8	Proximity of industry	3	Lack of diverse representation in planning/policy dept (i.e. few Black women)	1

Sense of belonging	19	Trust in elected officials or government	8	Loss of jobs/closures of industries	3	Consider disability	1
Meet community where they are	19	No fresh air	8	Concrete Industry	3	Overcrowding	1
Lack/slow implementation	18	Odor/Smells	8	Structural barriers to EJ solutions	3	Environmental Justice Committee/Council	1
Cancer	18	Quality of Life	8	Elimination of polluting industries	3	Anger	1
Environmental Justice	18	Long term commitment to environmental justice	8	RVs and Encampments	3	Facilitating communication/understanding between different communities	1
Climate Justice	18	Need for accountable leadership and oversight	8	Showcasing creativity of community	3	Young people leading	1
Favoring profit over people	18	Preventing more pollution through better and more regulations	8	Taking the time and asking questions	3	False image of Los Angeles	1
Lack of health food options	18	Unaware of industries nearby	8	Communities of color	3	Must take care of yourself/each other to fight	1
Lack of resources	18	Difficulty getting community participation	8	Obesity/Diabetes	3	Unity and love for community	1
Importance of spaces for community	18	Holding corporations accountable	8	Soil contamination	3	Restorative Justice	1
Shade Trees	17	Direct Action	7	Community gardens	3	Legal justice	1
Proximity of freeways	17	Bike Infrastructure improvements	7	Gas stations	3	Environmental justice includes both the social and the environment	1

Engagement with City Planning	17	Increasing density with proper infrastructure	7	Shade	3	Resources not being used effectively	1
Toxic	17	Climate Change impacts	7	Importance of preserving community identity	3	Plans don't reflect the community	1
Desire for keeping neighborhoods clean	17	Flooding	7	Band-aid solutions to on-going harms	3	Services should be infused with dignity	1
Policies informed by updated data and community input/histories	17	Auto Body Shops/Garages	7	Public health	3		
Need for social services (i.e. to address drug or gang issues)	17	Lack of Parking	7	Putting blame on community (i.e. why don't you move? You have a choice)	3		
Immigrant Communities	17	Need for strict and detail-oriented regulation of land use decisions	7	Flaring	3		
Building Relationships	16	Poverty	7	Need unity to fight larger systems	3		
Freeways (Expansion, proximity, etc)	16	Culture	7	Accessing resources	3		
Cumulative Impacts	16	liquor stores	7	Addressing urgent needs of community	3		
Negative experience with neighborhood changes	16	Need for neighborhood amenities that focus on health	7	Choosing to try to make change despite circumstance that they can't control	3		
Importance of engaging with youth in communities	16	Neighborhood/city planned to be exclusionary	7	Systemic change is slow	3		

Unsafe streets	16	Legacy of community activism leading to success	7	Hazardous Leaks	2		
Incompatible land use	15	Absent landlords	7	Renewable Energy	2		
City Planning Outreach	15	Alternative transportation options (EVs, car shares, etc)	7	Urban Heat Island	2		
Aging infrastructure	15	Mobility	6	Cosmetic Industry	2		
Neighborhood Amenities	15	Removal of Community Amenities	6	Water insecurity	2		
Respiratory Illness	15	Water contamination	6	Lack of pharmacies	2		
Negative experiences with regulatory bodies	15	Interconnectivity	6	Importance of voting	2		
Vision for neighborhood	15	Noise	6	Water conservation	2		
Lack of enforcement of policies or tools to protect people from environmental hazards	15	Dust	6	Cardiac Disease	2		
Generations living in the same neighborhood	15	Need for better infrastructure before more low income housing is built	6	Lack of health data	2		
Need more activity for kids	15	Need for participatory research	6	Allergies	2		
Putting resources and investment towards community engagement	15	Considering elderly population	6	Land Use Violations	2		

Point source pollution	14	Creating urban gardens	6	Lack of environmental justice organizing or organizations in the area	2		
Communication with elected	14	Supporting local/small businesses	6	Playgrounds for kids	2		
Tree cover	14	Burden on community to prove again and again	6	Regulations for emission reduction	2		
Corruption	14	Making zoning and other city processes easy for the public to understand	6	Environmental hazards are bad for neighborhood economy	2		
Transparency or access of information about health or environment	14	Access to nature	6	Technological improvements to reduce emissions	2		
Gang Activity	14	Overcoming obstacles/sense of hope	6	Nearby industry	2		
Recycling/Trash Facilities	13	Investing time and resources in people	6	Public Art (i.e. murals)	2		
Waste Management	13	Promotores/Community Health Workers	6	Representation	2		
Displacement	13	Fighting for greener future	6	Asbestos	2		
Poorly maintained park/public spaces	13	Harbor/Port Industry	6	Need for emergency preparedness	2		