



HEADWATERS AREA PROJECT (HAP) COMMUNITY MEETING #2

Engagement Report

LA County Public Works

16 November 2021

MEETING #2: Virtual / Zoom

Tuesday, November 16, 2021, 6-8pm

Purpose

The goal of the second virtual community meeting was to update the community on Los Angeles County Public Works' Headwaters Area Project Concept Design, answer community questions, and solicit input and feedback. This is the second of two meetings that were scheduled to engage the community on this phase of the Headwaters Area Project during fall 2021. This effort is part of a larger program for engagement in the Headwaters Area which began with the LA River Master Plan in 2018 and includes the Digital Public Engagement Tool, stakeholder meetings, and local workshops as a response to local community interest in the LA River.

Meeting Overview

A virtual community meeting for the Headwaters Area Project was held on November 16, 2021. Seventy individuals registered for the event, and 35 community members attended the event. A total of 54 attendees, including community members, stakeholders, and panelists, joined the meeting. The meeting was translated in real time to Spanish, and all presentation materials were in English and Spanish.

The LA County Public Works Project Management team and the Project Design team discussed data and information presented at the first community meeting in August, the project timeline, previous and ongoing planning efforts and projects, programs for river staff, engagement feedback, future concept opportunities for the 1-mile area from Canoga Park High School to the confluence of Brown's Canyon Wash and the LA River, and an update on a demonstration project that LA County is doing now at the intersection of Bassett Street and Alabama Avenue.

Outreach Methods – Turnout

A variety of methods were used to generate interest and solicit attendance for the event from community members within the Canoga Park and Winnetka neighborhoods as well as from relevant stakeholder organizations. Participants from the first engagement meeting including those who identified themselves as local stakeholders were also engaged individually since the last meeting and encouraged to attend. Social media blasts and emails were employed in English and Spanish on project-specific channels as well as other relevant channels. Elected Officials and community organizations notified their constituents through email and social media. Both a digital flyer and personal outreach contributed to meeting registrations. Flyers were also posted in local businesses and around the neighborhood.

Meeting Summary

The meeting began with a welcome and introduction from Rebecca Klein of OLIN, the meeting facilitator, as well as a Native Tribes land acknowledgement. There were opening remarks from several officials who thanked the attendees, reminded them of previous and future funding opportunities for improvements along the LA River, and affirmed their confidence and optimism around these efforts.



Welcoming remarks were made via pre-recorded and live messages by the following officials:

Los Angeles County Supervisor for District 3, Supervisor Sheila Kuehl (pre-recorded),

Director of Los Angeles County Public Works, Director Mark Pestrella (pre-recorded),

California State Senator for District 27, Senator Henry Stern (live),

and City of Los Angeles Councilmember for District 3, Councilmember Bob Blumenfield (pre-recorded).

Following introductions, Jessica Henson of OLIN, Tensho Takemori of Gehry Partners, and Mark Hanna of Geosyntec gave a 30-minute presentation on the project scope and the nested scales of LA County efforts near the Headwaters of the LA River, including the LA River Master Plan, the Headwaters Area Project, and Demonstration Project River Pavilion and Water Quality Improvement. The team noted that LA County is investing and beginning implementation of efforts in the Headwaters area as a direct result of community feedback during the LA River Master Plan process and a very engaged local community at this location.

Throughout the presentation, poll questions were conducted to engage the participants on different themes. Results of the poll questions were displayed immediately to all participants. Participation in each poll question was optional, so all attendees did not answer all questions. The questions and results of the poll are in the section "Poll Data" below.

The update included information on past planning efforts as well as current efforts to implement the river staff program for safety and maintenance. The team presented updates on the Digital Public Engagement Tool Survey and feedback results and reviewed technical studies that informed the Site Design Concept. The Project Design team presented the project opportunity areas and programmatic ideas followed by an update on the current LA County Public Works Demonstration project which is currently underway and was introduced in the August meeting as a response to community feedback during the LA River Master Plan process. The team discussed the ongoing engagement efforts specifically related to the demonstration project. The meeting wrapped up with various opportunities to stay involved with the project and explore the information presented at both engagement meetings. It was noted that the full technical report for the Headwaters Area Project Concept will be available in late 2021 or early 2022.

Public Works project manager, Genevieve Osmeña, Senior Civil Engineer with LA County Public Works, thanked community members for joining the meeting and gave an update on future engagement opportunities for the pavilion.

Attendees were encouraged to submit questions for the second half of the meeting during the Q+A and follow the project on social media channels or email Public Works with any follow up questions. Osmeña, Henson, Takemori, and Hanna answered questions for approximately one hour. Questions were read aloud by the meeting facilitator and included a range of topics from safety and maintenance to water quality in addition to the rationale behind the geographic scope of the project. Along with these questions, several community members shared comments in the Q+A box, which were also read aloud by the meeting facilitator. Nearly all questions and comments were able to be read aloud during the allotted time, and questions were answered live. Attendees were invited to submit via email any questions that they may have after the meeting. The full list of submitted questions is at the end of this summary. Osmeña, Henson, Takemori, and Hanna ended the meeting with closing remarks and a thank you to the community, and the facilitator concluded the meeting.



Poll Data

Poll 1 _____ **near the Headwaters of the LA River, in Canoga Park and/or Winnetka.** [Fill in the blank / Choose all that apply]

live (7 responses)

work (1 response)
go to school (0 responses)
ride my bike / run / jog / walk (4 responses)
explore nature (1 response)
know very little about the area (4 responses)
N/A (2 responses)

A total of 15 respondents participated with 19 responses:
Most respondents (37%) live near the LA River; followed by 21% of respondents each saying that they ride their bikes/run/jog/walk or do not know much about the area.

Poll 2 Which activities do you think you would participate in more often if your community had more spaces for the activities? [Choose all that apply]

Gardening (3 responses)
Walking/hiking (6 responses)
Biking (6 responses)
Playing sports/exercising (3 responses)

Enjoying nature (7 responses)

Spending time with friends or family (2 responses)
Attending community events, music, or festivals (4 responses)
Attending museums / cultural sites (4 response)
Pet walking (5 response)
Working or studying outdoors (1 responses)

A total of 15 respondents participated with 41 responses:
Most respondents (17%) would enjoy nature; followed by 15% of respondents each saying that they would enjoy biking or walking/hiking.

Poll 3 Which issues do you think are most important in your community today? [Choose all that apply]

Health and well-being (1 response)
Crime prevention (7 responses)
Growth of the local economy (3 responses)
Environmental improvements (e.g., planting or improving natural habitat) (11 responses)
Quality parks and open spaces (7 responses)
Access to public transportation (5 responses)
Affordable housing (5 responses)
Employment opportunities (1 response)
Access to local amenities (0 responses)
Social equality and cultural recognition (3 responses)
None of the above (0 responses)



A total of 17 respondents participated with 43 responses:

Most respondents (26%) said environmental improvements were most important; followed by 16% of respondents each saying quality parks and open spaces and crime prevention.

Poll 4 Which types of projects would you prioritize to happen along the LA River?

[Select up to 3]

New park and/or open space (7 responses) Local business development (0 responses)

Increased transportation mobility (i.e. – bike paths along the river) (3 responses)

More and/or improved natural habitats along the river (5 responses)

Stormwater quality improvement projects (6 responses)

More and/or improved access points and gateways along the river (4 responses)

More and/or improved amenities along the river bike trail (4 responses)

More and/or improved pedestrian bridges or river crossings (3 responses)

Improved flood risk management (2 responses)

A total of 13 respondents participated with 34 responses:

Most respondents (21%) said they would prioritize a new park/open space; followed by 18% of respondents saying stormwater quality improvement projects.

Poll 5 What types of programs or events would you like to see in a new park or open space near your community? [Select your top 3]

Water Capture (collect and store rainwater) (12 responses)

Community Events (i.e. farmer's markets or outdoor performances) (8 responses)

Art and Culture (i.e. artist run workshops or arts education) (4 responses)

Local Garden Space (8 responses)

Indigenous Peoples Cultural Events (7 responses)

Open Space for Sports (1 response)

Outdoor Gym Space (0 responses)

Free WIFI (2 responses)

A total of 15 respondents participated with 42 responses:

Most respondents (29%) said they would like to see water capture; followed by 19% of respondents each saying community events and local garden space.

Poll 6 A work of civic art can respond to and enhance a specific site, it can reflect a neighborhood's unique recent history, or share a more ancient history. Art can mirror the culture and identity of residents and foster dialogue. It can encourage reflection in difficult times or around specific issues, or it can enhance our connection to the natural world around us. What would you like this artwork to do? [Select all that apply]

Respond to the landscape (6 responses)

Reflect the neighborhood's recent history (2 responses)

Reflect indigenous history (7 responses)

Reflect diverse cultures in the area (3 responses)



Foster dialogue (2 responses)

Encourage reflection or meditation (4 responses)

Reflect local plants and animals (13 responses)

A total of 17 respondents participated with 37 responses:

Most respondents (35%) said they would like artwork to reflect local plants and animals; followed by 19% of respondents saying reflect indigenous history.

Poll 7 Which two ideas or feelings best describe your desire for the future civic artwork for the LA River Headwaters? [Select 2]

Celebratory (2 responses)

Calming (4 responses)

Reference to Nature (9 responses)

Welcoming (1 response)

Reference to history of place (5 responses)

A total of 16 respondents participated with 21 responses:

Most respondents (43%) said reference to nature was their top idea or feeling for future artwork; followed by 24% of respondents saying a reference to history of place.

Full List of Questions Asked

General

- How many people are at this meeting please?
- How many attendees are there tonight?
- Hello and Welcome Senator Stern!
- Any reason why West Hills is not included in the discussion since the LA River source comes through West Hills?
- I've been working for years to expand recognition that the true headwaters of the river is due west at the origin point of Bell Creek. I believe a much preferable headwaters park would be the basin at the base of Bell Canyon in West Hills. I'm bringing this up here with hopes that this idea will be considered in the future.
- Great job tonight. Looking forward to hearing the combined feedback. You all do a great job on virtual public meetings!

Flood Risk/Water Supply/Water Quality

- Have you reached out to Pierce College regarding storm water capture? They have a new President this year. The LA River TMDL Expert Panel was trying to do storm water capture there more than a decade ago.
- Please also note the Millions that will be displaced by a 100-yr flood. How does this project mitigate climate change?
- I heard the answer regarding why you are not extending the project into Bell Creek in West Hills. I know that most of West Hills have single family homes that back to the river. How will those homes be impacted by a 100-year flood?



- Please let people know that FEMA does not account for climate impacts, so the information online for a 100-year event does not reflect the risks they face in the next decades, and also that they reflect maps made 35 years ago.

Housing

- Could you please reference how many people will be displaced by the widening of the LA River based upon previous meetings. I believe that the elected officials should be made aware of that. Thank you.

Implementation/Development

- Thank you for this helpful presentation. How are the 2028 Olympics impacting the speed or deliverables of this project? Is that being used as a completion target of some kind?
- Who is in charge once the project is completed?
- I have personally painted 6 of the bridges over the LA river. I have painted the Variel bridge. It is a filthy mess, especially on the south side. What are you going to do to clean it up? The design and maintenance of the access to the bridge is a mess. You need to guarantee the public that you are capable of cleaning up after yourselves.

Indigenous People

- Have you done a complete archaeological survey of the whole river? You should have an archeologist and a Native American Monitor for any areas that are disturbed for this project.
- FYI - According to a former Pierce College Geography Professor - Mark Powell - Chalk Hills is the northern part of the Santa Monica Mountain range. The road entering Pierce College from DeSoto was determined to be one of the oldest roads in the Woodland Hills area. This is important because the Native Americans - particularly the Chumash that had trails from Malibu, and the Ventura County area, would have traveled at the base of the mountains as they moved into the San Fernando Valley. In other words, from my understanding, the El Camino Real would have been at the base of Chalk Hills
- Mark is deceased. Other geographers at Pierce are probably able to access those old maps.
- Mark is a former colleague of my husband - Emeritus Professor of Anthropology at Pierce College - Bruce M. Rowe. That is how I was able to learn this from Mark decades ago. I was standing in his backyard which was above Pierce College to the south; his property was adjacent to the college itself.

Local Economy

- How are going to attract local businesses?

Questions about Other Agencies

- The County should be aware that local community groups including people from the Woodland Hills/ Tarzana Chambers and the Woodland Hills Warner Center Neighborhood Council are constantly cleaning the bridges / painting graffiti. Can LA County do more to keep the bridges painted and graffiti free? Thank you.



Safety

- What is the plan for when the water fountains are abused and misused? We asked for them to be turned off due to criminal and foul usage.
- What is your plan to ensure the safety of the bike path and the surrounding neighborhoods? I live on the county side of river between Winnetka and Corbin. People are living and selling drugs out of the culverts and under bridges. Fires are a constant threat, motorcycles riding up and down on the river floor. Lights are always broken making the area dark. much vandalizing, many neighbors' properties have been breached from fences on property lines on the river. Visible security needs to be allocated in your budget.