

Building for Impact

A Framework for Evaluating Multi-Benefit and Community-Engaged Infrastructure Projects Under Existing Policy in Los Angeles County

A Report from the USC Dornsife Public Exchange



Authors

Santina L. Contreras, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Urban Planning and Spatial Analysis, Sol Price School of Public Policy, University of Southern California

D'Ella Heschmeyer, Research Assistant, Master of Urban Planning, Sol Price School of Public Policy, University of Southern California

Monica Dean, Climate and Sustainability Practice Director, Dornsife Public Exchange, University of Southern California

Carling Monder, Project Manager, Dornsife Public Exchange, University of Southern California

Belinda Faustinos, Strategic Advisor, LA Waterkeeper

Maggie Gardner, Science & Policy Manager, LA Waterkeeper

Madeleine Siegel, Compliance & Research Manager, LA Waterkeeper

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Introduction

In 2016 and 2018, Los Angeles County voters passed four funding measures — Measures W (water), A (parks), M (transportation), and H (housing) — which collectively aim to invest over \$1.2 billion annually in infrastructure projects. Many advocacy organizations supporting these measures recognized the potential to leverage them for integrated, multi-benefit projects that address water quality, parks, transportation, and housing, particularly in front-line communities. Several nonprofit organizations committed to integrated planning, worked to encourage the LA County Board of Supervisors to adopt policies prioritizing multi-benefit projects in the County’s programs. This effort, initially known as the WHAM Coalition, was rebranded as the Infrastructure Justice for LA (IJLA)¹ Coalition in 2023.

In Spring 2024, IJLA initiated a call to engage academic partners in the development of a “scorecard” for climate-resilient infrastructure projects identified by public agencies and non-profit organizations as being multi-benefit in nature. In response to this call, in April 2024, USC and IJLA began investigating this question together, through an exploratory study led by Dr. Santana Contreras in the Price School of Public Policy, in partnership with representatives of LA Waterkeeper (a member organization and the fiscal agent of IJLA), and with project management support provided by Dornsife School’s Public Exchange.

In this first phase of research, we worked to establish an initial framework and evaluative methodology for use in identifying existing multi-benefit and community engagement themes within LA County infrastructure funding measures. Through this process, our work aims to guide the selection of projects for funding in LA County that meet integrated infrastructure needs, support climate-resilience, and provide ample opportunities for equitable community engagement.

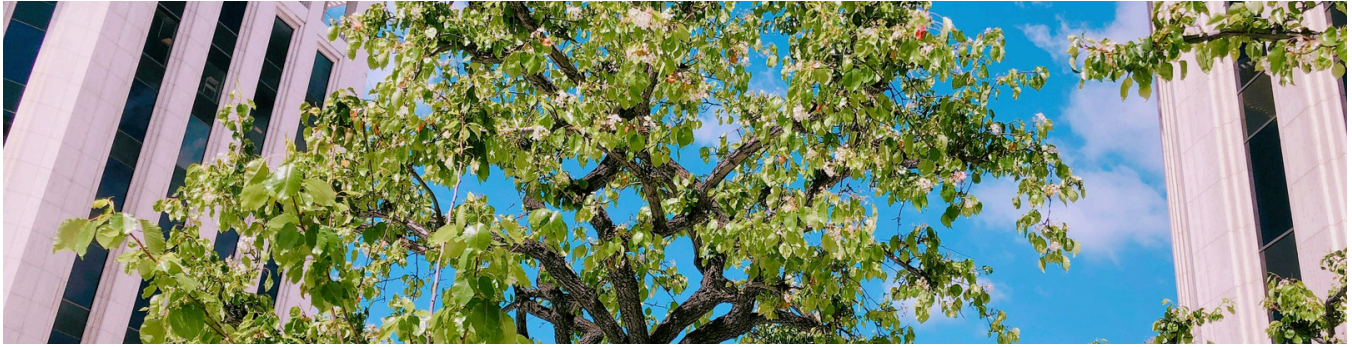
¹ IJLA is comprised of nine organizations and has served as an external body providing an NGO perspective on a broad range of issues since late 2021. The members of the coalition include ActiveSGV, Climate Resolve, Conservation Corps of Long Beach, Holos Communities, Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust, LA Waterkeeper, Pacoima Beautiful, Promesa Boyle Heights, and the Trust for Public Land.

Research Design

The study team conducted a qualitative content analysis to assess the consideration of multi-benefits and community engagement in the guidelines and criteria associated with Measures W (water), A (parks), M (transportation), and H (housing). Our partner organization, IJLA, provided an initial set of documents associated with the four measures, including ordinances, guidelines, and manuals. The research team then conducted an independent search across all four measures, to identify any additional publicly available implementation documents pertaining to agency administration of the measures. We then compiled these resources to develop a list of primary materials guiding project selection and funding decisions surrounding the four measures. See Table 1 for further details on the implementation and administration documents analyzed.

Table 1: Summary of Key Implementation and Administration Documents Analyzed

Document Name	Measure	Description
Measure A Ordinance	Measure A	The legislation for the implementation and administration of Measure A.
Measure A Grants Administration Manual	Measure A	A guiding document prepared by the Measure A Implementation Steering Committee to provide guidance in applying for and administering Measure A funds.
Measure A 2021 Guidelines	Measure A	A guiding document to provide information about Measure A's Category 3 Grant Program (Natural Lands, Local Beaches, Water Conservation, and Protection).
Safe Clean Water Program Regional Program Committee Handbook	Measure W	A guiding document to provide operational rules for feasibility studies, the Regional Operating Committee, and the Scoring Committee.
Measure W Chapter 16 Ordinance	Measure W	The legislation for the administration of Measure W.
Measure W Chapter 18 Implementation Ordinance	Measure W	The legislation for the implementation of Measure W.
SCWP 2022 Interim Guidance	Measure W	A guiding document developed by the Los Angeles County Flood Control District to support the Regional Program call for projects, scoring, and Stormwater Investment Plan processes.
2017 Measure M Final Guidelines	Measure W	A guiding document prepared by Los Angeles Metro that provides a comprehensive review of all aspects of administering and overseeing Measure M.
Measure M Ordinance Expenditure Plan	Measure M	The legislation for the implementation of Measure M.
Measure H Chapter 4.73 Ordinance	Measure H	The legislation for the implementation and administration of Measure H.



All data was coded in ATLAS.ti qualitative analysis software to identify broader themes and findings. For the initial framework, the analysis focused on the sections of the implementation and administration documents related to rating projects, including evaluation questions, assessment metrics, and scoring elements. Within these sections of the documents, we identified evidence of multi-benefit language and goals. Multi-benefit codes were assigned in two ways: (1) when there was direct mention of multi-benefits within the evaluation, metric, or scoring element; or (2) when an evaluation, metric, or scoring element was provided for an infrastructure area outside of the primary area of the measure being analyzed. For example, if an evaluation question for water was identified in the assessment for Measure A (parks), this was identified as a multi-benefit. Additionally, codes were also created to capture any mention of community engagement themes within the evaluation, metric, or scoring elements of the documents. Future research would benefit from the assessment of the full implementation and administration documents (i.e., analyzing aspects of the documents beyond the evaluation questions, metrics, and scoring elements), as well as further refining the methods used to identify the evidence of a multi-benefit, in order to provide additional context on the broader framing of multi-benefits and community engagement across the funding measures.










Considerations for Measures H and M

During initial conversations with our IJLA collaborators, we established an understanding that metrics for evaluating housing and transportation impacts are underdeveloped. Further conversations with practitioners working in these sectors not only confirmed this, but revealed additional pathways for developing and funding multi-benefit projects. For example, Measure H (housing) does not focus on infrastructure development, but rather the delivery of housing services; and projects that might be funded under both Measures H and M (transportation) may require the involvement of numerous additional planning and policy frameworks to meet multi-benefit goals. This piecemeal guidance from different agency and advocacy documents underscores the lack of clear standards for developing multi-benefit infrastructure projects that efficiently and adequately serve community needs. As a result, the development of the framework leaned heavily on evaluation metrics in the implementation and administration documents associated with Measures W and A.

Results










Through our analysis, we found evidence of multi-benefit and community engagement evaluation metrics in the implementation and administration documents associated with Measures W, A, M, and H² but found Measures M and H to be most lacking in this evidence. We then adapted the identified metrics into an evaluative framework for scoring multi-benefit and community engagement elements of future LA County infrastructure projects. We present these frameworks below.

Table 2: Multi-Benefit Framework Based on Existing Evaluation Metrics in L.A. County Measures W, A, M, H

Multi-Benefit Framework Based on Existing Evaluation Metrics in L.A. County Measures W, A, M, H ¹					
	Evaluation Question	Originating Agency Document for Metric	Points Available	Points Earned	Notes
Infrastructure Project Areas	 Water Does the project include features to capture stormwater and attenuate potential flood conditions that go beyond those required by State and local codes?	Measure A 2021 Guidelines	1		
	 Parks Does the project include the creation, enhancement, or restoration of a park space, habitat, or wetland space?	Measure W Safe Clean Water Program: Regional Program Committee Handbook	1		
	 Transportation Does the project include new or improved connections to transportation infrastructure to increase the ability of users to travel to and from the project by transit connections beyond the local vicinity and by active forms of transportation?	Measure A 2021 Guidelines	1		
	 Housing²				
Other Multi-Benefit Considerations	 Education Does the project incorporate elements that provide interpretation and education to foster user connection and awareness of the environment, the outdoors, and/or recreation, or other components that encourage regional visitation?	Measure A 2021 Guidelines	1		
	 Safety Does the project include features that improve safety conditions and visibility through the provision of safe equipment and facilities, and thereby reduce or prevent gang activity, violence, and crime?	Measure A 2021 Guidelines	1		
	 Public Health Does the project provide infrastructure and equipment that encourages physical activity?	Measure A 2021 Guidelines	1		
	 Social Does the project include elements that promote social interaction ² ?	Measure A 2021 Guidelines	1		
	 Environmental Does the project include features that contribute to air quality improvements and greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions ⁴ , including carbon sequestration, and heat island reductions ⁵ in ways that go beyond typical elements? AND/OR ⁶ Does the project include features to create, preserve, and/or enhance important habitat areas and biodiversity?	Measure A 2021 Guidelines	1		
Total Score (Maximum Points Available: 8):			8		

² See Appendix A for a summary of existing multi-benefit scoring/evaluation metrics in Measures A, W, M, H (and associated agency documents).

Table 3: Multi-benefit Summary: Integration Across Project Areas

Multi-Benefit Framework Based on Existing Evaluation Metrics in L.A. County Measures W, A, M, H ¹									
Specific Multi-Benefit Areas Met in Project									
Infrastructure Project Areas				Other Multi-Benefit Considerations					
Water	Parks	Transportation	Housing ²	Education	Safety	Public Health	Social	Environmental	Total
									

¹ For the purpose of this framework, a multi-benefit was assessed based on the identification of an evaluation metric for a project area outside of the primary focus of the measure.
² No metrics for the assessment of multi-benefits surrounding housing infrastructure were identified in the assessment of Measures W, A, M, H.
³ Examples include projects that promote social interaction, such as safe, attractive, and interactive gathering areas; public art; and infrastructure geared toward socialization.
⁴ Examples include (but are not limited to) tree planting, low-allergen palette selection, active transportation options, and sustainable maintenance of amenities.
⁵ Examples include (but are not limited to) the use of light-colored and/or reflective surfaces, planting trees, providing shade, and reducing hardscape.
⁶ 1 point available for completion of one or both activities.

Table 4: Community Engagement Framework Based on Existing Evaluation Metrics in L.A. County Measures W, A, M, H

Community Engagement Framework Based on Existing Evaluation Metrics in L.A. County Measures W, A, M, H					
	Evaluation Question	Originating Agency Document for Metric	Points Available	Points Earned	Notes
Community Outreach and Engagement: General	Does the project conduct community outreach and engagement efforts to ensure demonstrated strong local, community-based support?	Measure A Grants Administration Manual/ Measure W Safe Clean Water Program: Regional Program Committee Handbook	1		
Community Outreach and Engagement: Scale-Determined	Does the project include community outreach ⁷ and engagement ⁸ activities in alignment with the specified project budget? • For projects with budget up to \$2M: outreach or engagement • For projects with budget up to \$10M: outreach AND > 1 engagement • For projects with budget over \$10M: outreach AND > 2 engagements	Measure W SCWP 2022 Interim Guidance	1		
Community Outreach and Engagement: Best Practices	Does the project engage in community outreach and engagement activities that are considered “best practices” ⁹ ? • For unacceptable practices = 0 point • For good practices = 1 point • For better practices = 2 points • For best practices = 3 points	Measure A 2021 Guidelines/ Measure W SCWP 2022 Interim Guidance	3		
Language Inclusion: Materials	Does the project provide necessary materials in the primary languages spoken in the community? • For communities with smaller % of language diversity ¹⁰ : Recommended that outreach and printed meeting materials be translated • For communities with moderate % of language diversity ¹⁰ : Key written materials must be translated, including all printed meeting materials and at least one form of outreach • For communities with larger % of language diversity ¹⁰ : All written materials must be translated, including outreach materials, signage, agendas, and all other printed meeting materials	Measure W SCWP 2022 Interim Guidance	1		
Language Inclusion: Workshops & In-Person Meetings	Does the project provide necessary provisions for workshops and in-person meetings in the primary languages spoken in the community? • For communities with smaller % of language diversity ¹⁰ : No requirement • For communities with moderate % of language diversity ¹⁰ : Must provide consecutive or simultaneous interpretation services upon request • For communities with larger % of language diversity ¹⁰ : Must provide consecutive or simultaneous interpretation services	Measure W SCWP 2022 Interim Guidance	1		
Non-Profit/NGO Inclusion	Does the project engage in outreach with a local CBO or NGO?	Measure W Safe Clean Water Program: Regional Program Committee Handbook	1		
Community Concerns	Does the project respond to known and anticipated concerns from the community?	Measure A Grants Administration Manual	1		
Total Score (Maximum Points Available: 9):			9		

Table 5: Community Engagement Summary: Integration Across Project Areas

Community Engagement Summary: Integration Across Project Areas							
Specific Community Engagement Metrics Met in Project							
Community Outreach and Engagement: General	Community Outreach and Engagement: Scale-Determined	Community Outreach and Engagement: Best Practices	Language Inclusion: Materials	Language Inclusion: Workshops & In-Person Meetings	Non-Profit/NGO Inclusion	Community Concerns	Total

⁷ Community outreach activities should provide information to residents and information about upcoming meetings or other engagement event activities to be scheduled. Outreach methods may include but are not limited to: online media outreach (email blasts, social media, publication on a website); local media outreach (newsletters, local and regional newspapers, and local radio and television); or grassroots outreach (door-to-door canvassing, phone banking, surveys and focus groups, and distribution of flyers or other printed materials).

⁸ Community engagement activities should solicit, address, and incorporate input from community members for funded activities. Engagement methods may include but are not limited to occurring: as part of any public meeting with multiple agenda items such as council, commission, or committee meetings where public input is invited; or at festivals, fairs, or open houses where a table or booth may be set up.

⁹ See Appendix 1 for description and point breakdown of "best practices."

¹⁰ Communities with smaller % of language diversity = 1-4.9% of the population is linguistically isolated for any given language.

¹¹ Communities with moderate % of language diversity = 5-14.9% of the population is linguistically isolated for any given language.

¹² Communities with larger % of language diversity = 15% or more of the population is linguistically isolated for any given language.

Case Studies: Demonstrating Framework Application

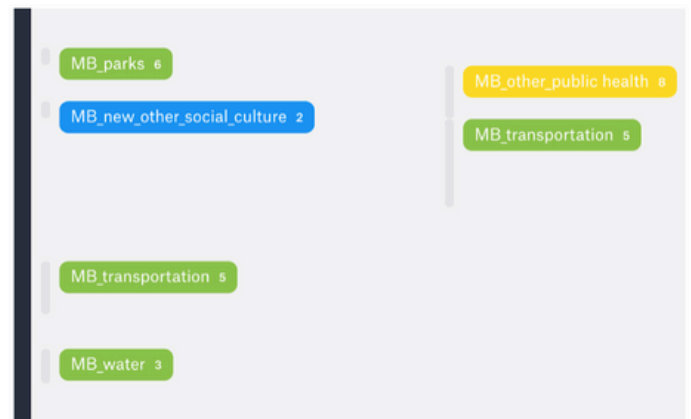
To demonstrate the applicability of the evaluation framework, we apply it to project documents for two case study projects selected by IJLA. Below we present the framework results of the Via Princessa Park, as well as the Laurel Grove Pocket Park and Living Lung Project.

Fig. 1: Project Summary of Via Princessa Park in Atlas.ti with coding for multi-benefits

Project Summary Description

The Project proposes to construct and operate Via Princessa Park on an approximately 34-acre area of primarily vacant City-owned land, which would include athletic fields with sports field lighting, pickleball courts (also with lighting), playground equipment and other recreational facilities, such as walking paths, shade structures, picnic areas, public art, and education and monumentation signage. Additionally, the Project would provide parking, park access, and other amenities and improvements, including alterations to the existing Via Princessa Metrolink Station parking lot, potential maintenance-level improvements to the Metrolink Station platform and facilities, construction of a pedestrian and vehicle (restricted access) railroad undercrossing (including removal of the existing at-grade pedestrian crossing), installation of an additional culvert under the railroad, replacement of an existing storm drain line with a culvert under the railroad, construction of a new restroom building with associated utilities, improvements to the existing restroom/office building located in the parking area, landscaping and irrigation improvements, and restoration of the existing Honby drainage channel. Additionally, a fourth lane may be added to Weyerhauser Way and modifications may be made to Via Princessa road to accommodate a double-left turn lane into and/or out of Weyerhauser Way. **Figure 6** depicts the preliminary Project site plan.

In addition to recreational improvements, the Project would include a regional stormwater infiltration facility. Other Project civil and geotechnical design features include, buried bank protection, a storm drain culvert extension, and channel restoration, as well as removal of an agricultural well.



Via Princessa

For the Via Princessa Park project, we evaluated the Final Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Via Princessa Park project scored 8 out of 8 points for multi-benefits based on the evaluation metrics within the existing infrastructure measures. The project gained points for consideration in the following categories: Parks, Water, Transportation, Education, Safety, Public Health, Social, and Environment. The project proposes to construct a park on primarily vacant land.

Given the focus of the project document used for the scoring of this project, no community engagement themes were covered and thus could not be properly evaluated.

Table 6: Multi-Benefit Scoring for Via Princessa Park










Multi-Benefit Framework Based on Existing Evaluation Metrics in L.A. County Measures W, A, M, H ¹						
		Evaluation Question	Originating Agency Document for Metric	Points Available	Points Earned	Notes
Infrastructure Project Areas	Water 	Does the project include features to capture stormwater and attenuate potential flood conditions that go beyond those required by State and local codes?	Measure A 2021 Guidelines	1	1	
	Parks 	Does the project include the creation, enhancement, or restoration of a park space, habitat, or wetland space?	Measure W Safe Clean Water Program: Regional Program Committee Handbook	1	1	
	Transportation 	Does the project include new or improved connections to transportation infrastructure to increase the ability of users to travel to and from the project by transit connections beyond the local vicinity and by active forms of transportation?	Measure A 2021 Guidelines	1	1	
	Housing ² 					
Other Multi-Benefit Considerations	Education 	Does the project incorporate elements that provide interpretation and education to foster user connection and awareness of the environment, the outdoors, and/or recreation, or other components that encourage regional visitation?	Measure A 2021 Guidelines	1	1	
	Safety 	Does the project include features that improve safety conditions and visibility through the provision of safe equipment and facilities, and thereby reduce or prevent gang activity, violence, and crime?	Measure A 2021 Guidelines	1	1	
	Public Health 	Does the project provide infrastructure and equipment that encourages physical activity?	Measure A 2021 Guidelines	1	1	
	Social 	Does the project include elements that promote social interaction ³ ?	Measure A 2021 Guidelines	1	1	
	Environmental 	Does the project include features that contribute to air quality improvements and greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions ⁴ , including carbon sequestration, and heat island reductions ⁵ in ways that go beyond typical elements? AND/OR ⁶ Does the project include features to create, preserve, and/or enhance important habitat areas and biodiversity?	Measure A 2021 Guidelines	1	1	
Total Score (Maximum Points Available: 8):				8	8	

Table 7: Multi-benefit Summary: Integration Across Via Princessa Park Project Areas

Multi-Benefit Framework Based on Existing Evaluation Metrics in L.A. County Measures W, A, M, H'									
Specific Multi-Benefit Areas Met in Project									
Infrastructure Project Areas				Other Multi-Benefit Considerations					
Water	Parks	Transportation	Housing ²	Education	Safety	Public Health	Social	Environmental	Total
1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	8

Table 8: Community Engagement Scoring for Via Princessa Park

Community Engagement Framework Based on Existing Evaluation Metrics in L.A. County Measures W, A, M, H					
	Evaluation Question	Originating Agency Document for Metric	Points Available	Points Earned	Notes
Community Outreach and Engagement: General	Does the project conduct community outreach and engagement efforts to ensure demonstrated strong local, community-based support?	Measure A Grants Administration Manual/ Measure W Safe Clean Water Program: Regional Program Committee Handbook	1	0	
Community Outreach and Engagement: Scale-Determined	Does the project include community outreach ⁷ and engagement ⁸ activities in alignment with the specified project budget? • For projects with budget up to \$2M: outreach or engagement • For projects with budget up to \$10M: outreach AND > 1 engagement • For projects with budget over \$10M: outreach AND > 2 engagements	Measure W SCWP 2022 Interim Guidance	1	0	
Community Outreach and Engagement: Best Practices	Does the project engage in community outreach and engagement activities that are considered "best practices" ⁹ ? • For unacceptable practices = 0 point • For good practices = 1 point • For better practices = 2 points • For best practices = 3 points	Measure A 2021 Guidelines/ Measure W SCWP 2022 Interim Guidance	3	0	
Language Inclusion: Materials	Does the project provide necessary materials in the primary languages spoken in the community? • For communities with smaller % of language diversity ¹⁰ : Recommended that outreach and printed meeting materials be translated • For communities with moderate % of language diversity ¹¹ : Key written materials must be translated, including all printed meeting materials and at least one form of outreach • For communities with larger % of language diversity ¹² : All written materials must be translated, including outreach materials, signage, agendas, and all other printed meeting materials	Measure W SCWP 2022 Interim Guidance	1	0	
Language Inclusion: Workshops & In-Person Meetings	Does the project provide necessary provisions for workshops and in-person meetings in the primary languages spoken in the community? • For communities with smaller % of language diversity ¹³ : No requirement • For communities with moderate % of language diversity ¹⁴ : Must provide consecutive or simultaneous interpretation services upon request • For communities with larger % of language diversity ¹⁵ : Must provide consecutive or simultaneous interpretation services	Measure W SCWP 2022 Interim Guidance	1	0	
Non-Profit/NGO Inclusion	Does the project engage in outreach with a local CBO or NGO?	Measure W Safe Clean Water Program: Regional Program Committee Handbook	1	0	
Community Concerns	Does the project respond to known and anticipated concerns from the community?	Measure A Grants Administration Manual	1	0	
Total Score (Maximum Points Available: 9):			9	0	

Table 9: Community Engagement Summary: Integration Across Via Princessa Park Project Areas

Community Engagement Summary: Integration Across Project Areas							
Specific Community Engagement Metrics Met in Project							
Community Outreach and Engagement: General	Community Outreach and Engagement: Scale-Determined	Community Outreach and Engagement: Best Practices	Language Inclusion: Materials	Language Inclusion: Workshops & In-Person Meetings	Non-Profit/NGO Inclusion	Community Concerns	Total
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Laurel Grove

For the Laurel Grove Pocket Park and Living Lung project, we evaluated a funding application for grant funds for the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy Climate Resilience Grant Program. The project scored 4 out of 8 points for multi-benefits within the parameters of the evaluation metrics of the existing infrastructure measures. The project specifically gained points for its inclusion of the following categories: Parks, Education, Public Health, and Environment. The project’s main objectives involve building a community park and redeveloping an existing building into affordable housing. The additional objective of creating a living lung contributed to environmental multi-benefits.

Fig. 3: Project Summary of Laurel Grove Pocket Park in Atlas.ti with coding for multi-benefits

This project will create a pocket park, convert a hotel into a new 98-unit affordable housing development, and plant a "living lung" running along the site's approximately 575-foot western edge, adjacent the 605 Freeway in Whittier. Continuing the shared mission of the RMC and Holos Communities, Laurel Grove will create functional open space and improve the environmental quality of life for the residents in disadvantaged communities in LA County. This project will a) expand public green space for the surrounding community, which includes a high school located across the street from the project; b) cultivate a living lung – the organization's second – which will increase the urban tree canopy, lower the immediate area's on-ground temperature and naturally remove harmful pollutants from the air; c) install an air quality monitoring system to track the impact of the living lung; and d) add a capture and reuse storm water system to collect and distribute rainwater throughout the site.

The living lung that will be installed will add approximately 80 new trees on the site, vastly improving the existing urban canopy. New drought-tolerant plantings will also be added to the site, along with the development of passive recreation spaces, including picnic tables for resting, ADA-accessible walking paths built out of decomposed granite and simulated wood planks, and educational plaques for experiential learning. A low mounded lawn within the park will add variation in scale and seating for park visitors and slowly absorb rainwater over more time, furthering the resilience of this project. With the nearest public parks being all approximately 2 miles away from the site, this new public pocket park will be a welcome community amenity. The park will also connect new passive recreation space to those using the San Gabriel River Mid Trail that runs along the San Gabriel River approximately ¼ miles from the site.

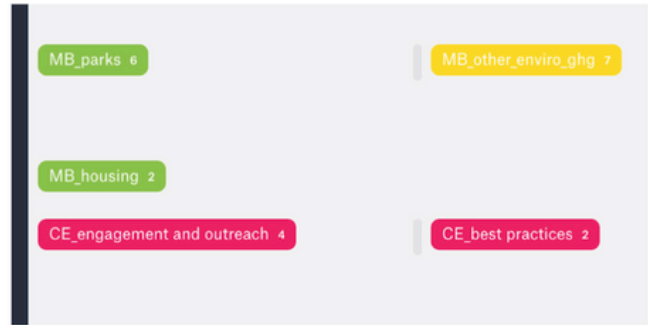
MB_parks 6 MB_new_housing_affordable de
 MB_other_enviro_ghg 7
 MB_other_enviro_ghg 7
 MB_other_public health 8 MB_other_education 6
 MB_new_transportation_connectivity 1

The project creates affordable housing, however, due to the fact that there were no scoring metrics identified in the measure documents for the development of housing, no points were received for this benefit. Additionally, this project did not earn a point for water or transportation. Based on the existing metric, the project does not include water benefits that go beyond those required by State and local codes, although water infrastructure is mentioned throughout the application. The project also did not mention any new active or public transportation infrastructure that would increase accessibility to the project site; however, trail and park connectivity, a recurring theme (but not metric) in Measure A materials, was found in the project application.

Fig. 4: Project documents for Via Princessa Park in Atlas.ti with coding for multi-benefits and community engagement

In order to accomplish the goals of this project, Holos will achieve two overarching objectives:

- 1) Elevate a single parcel for multi-benefit use. Holos will create a publicly-accessible park, a living lung, and a 98-unit affordable housing project on the site of an old hotel/parking lot.
 - a. This project will include native and drought-tolerant plantings, educational plaques, areas for passive recreation, an increased urban tree canopy, and green stormwater runoff capture infrastructure.
 - b. This project highlights the benefits and efficiencies of multi-use siting; for example, using greywater from the building to water the plantings on the site, and also naturally mitigate the effects of green gentrification through the provision and proximity of additional affordable housing.
- 2) Engage with the community. Holos will facilitate meetings with local community members and door knock to immediate surrounding residents and businesses to ensure the concerns and needs of the community are addressed. Holos will develop relationships with community leaders, including (as applicable), LA County supervisors, State Assemblymembers, staff at Pioneer High School, and other local community stakeholders.



The Laurel Grove Pocket Park and Living Lung project scored 4 out of 9 points for community engagement. The application mentioned community engagement activities in a very general way throughout, mentioning a few specific activities that allowed for points to be given for engagement best practices. There was no mention of the number of activities based on project scale, whether community organizations were involved, and whether proper language inclusion was utilized throughout the engagement process.



Photo Credit: Foursquare, Dianna N.

Table 10: Multi Benefit Scoring for Laurel Grove Pocket Park and Living Lung Project










Multi-Benefit Framework Based on Existing Evaluation Metrics in L.A. County Measures W, A, M, H ¹						
		Evaluation Question	Originating Agency Document for Metric	Points Available	Points Earned	Notes
Infrastructure Project Areas	Water 	Does the project include features to capture stormwater and attenuate potential flood conditions that go beyond those required by State and local codes?	Measure A 2021 Guidelines	1	0	
	Parks 	Does the project include the creation, enhancement, or restoration of a park space, habitat, or wetland space?	Measure W Safe Clean Water Program: Regional Program Committee Handbook	1	1	
	Transportation 	Does the project include new or improved connections to transportation infrastructure to increase the ability of users to travel to and from the project by transit connections beyond the local vicinity and by active forms of transportation?	Measure A 2021 Guidelines	1	0	
	Housing² 					
Other Multi-Benefit Considerations	Education 	Does the project incorporate elements that provide interpretation and education to foster user connection and awareness of the environment, the outdoors, and/or recreation, or other components that encourage regional visitation?	Measure A 2021 Guidelines	1	1	
	Safety 	Does the project include features that improve safety conditions and visibility through the provision of safe equipment and facilities, and thereby reduce or prevent gang activity, violence, and crime?	Measure A 2021 Guidelines	1	0	
	Public Health 	Does the project provide infrastructure and equipment that encourages physical activity?	Measure A 2021 Guidelines	1	1	
	Social 	Does the project include elements that promote social interaction ³ ?	Measure A 2021 Guidelines	1	0	
	Environmental 	Does the project include features that contribute to air quality improvements and greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions ⁴ , including carbon sequestration, and heat island reductions ⁵ in ways that go beyond typical elements? AND/OR ⁶ Does the project include features to create, preserve, and/or enhance important habitat areas and biodiversity?	Measure A 2021 Guidelines	1	1	
Total Score (Maximum Points Available: 8):				8	4	

Table 11: Multi-benefit Summary: Integration Across Laurel Grove Project Areas










Multi-Benefit Framework Based on Existing Evaluation Metrics in L.A. County Measures W, A, M, H ¹									
Specific Multi-Benefit Areas Met in Project									
Infrastructure Project Areas				Other Multi-Benefit Considerations					
Water 	Parks 	Transportation 	Housing ² 	Education 	Safety 	Public Health 	Social 	Environmental 	Total
0	1	0		1	0	1	0	1	4

Table 12: Community Engagement Scoring for Laurel Grove Pocket Park and Living Lung Project

Community Engagement Framework Based on Existing Evaluation Metrics in L.A. County Measures W, A, M, H					
	Evaluation Question	Originating Agency Document for Metric	Points Available	Points Earned	Notes
Community Outreach and Engagement: General	Does the project conduct community outreach and engagement efforts to ensure demonstrated strong local, community-based support?	Measure A Grants Administration Manual/ Measure W Safe Clean Water Program: Regional Program Committee Handbook	1	1	
Community Outreach and Engagement: Scale-Determined	Does the project include community outreach ⁷ and engagement ⁸ activities in alignment with the specified project budget? • For projects with budget up to \$2M: outreach or engagement • For projects with budget up to \$10M: outreach AND > 1 engagement • For projects with budget over \$10M: outreach AND > 2 engagements	Measure W SCWP 2022 Interim Guidance	1	0	
Community Outreach and Engagement: Best Practices	Does the project engage in community outreach and engagement activities that are considered “best practices”? • For unacceptable practices = 0 point • For good practices = 1 point • For better practices = 2 points • For best practices = 3 points	Measure A 2021 Guidelines/ Measure W SCWP 2022 Interim Guidance	3	2	
Language Inclusion: Materials	Does the project provide necessary materials in the primary languages spoken in the community? • For communities with smaller % of language diversity ⁹ : Recommended that outreach and printed meeting materials be translated • For communities with moderate % of language diversity ⁹ : Key written materials must be translated, including all printed meeting materials and at least one form of outreach • For communities with larger % of language diversity ⁹ : All written materials must be translated, including outreach materials, signage, agendas, and all other printed meeting materials	Measure W SCWP 2022 Interim Guidance	1	0	
Language Inclusion: Workshops & In-Person Meetings	Does the project provide necessary provisions for workshops and in-person meetings in the primary languages spoken in the community? • For communities with smaller % of language diversity ⁹ : No requirement • For communities with moderate % of language diversity ⁹ : Must provide consecutive or simultaneous interpretation services upon request • For communities with larger % of language diversity ⁹ : Must provide consecutive or simultaneous interpretation services	Measure W SCWP 2022 Interim Guidance	1	0	
Non-Profit/NGO Inclusion	Does the project engage in outreach with a local CBO or NGO?	Measure W Safe Clean Water Program: Regional Program Committee Handbook	1	0	
Community Concerns	Does the project respond to known and anticipated concerns from the community?	Measure A Grants Administration Manual	1	1	
Total Score (Maximum Points Available: 9):			9	4	

Table 13: Community Engagement Summary: Integration Across Laurel Grove Project Areas

Community Engagement Summary: Integration Across Project Areas							
Specific Community Engagement Metrics Met in Project							
Community Outreach and Engagement: General	Community Outreach and Engagement: Scale-Determined	Community Outreach and Engagement: Best Practices	Language Inclusion: Materials	Language Inclusion: Workshops & In-Person Meetings	Non-Profit/NGO Inclusion	Community Concerns	Total
1	0	2	0	0	0	1	4



Limitations and Next Steps

During the initial analysis, while we found evidence of multi-benefits in the evaluation questions, assessment metrics, and scoring elements, we found that there was minimal focus on multi-benefit themes within the implementation and administration documents surrounding the four measures. We also found limitations in the extent to which the measures provide guidance to the broader infrastructure development process in LA County. This can include the measures having a minimal focus on infrastructure development (i.e., measure H in housing focuses on housing service delivery), and multi-benefit infrastructure decisions being guided by policies and plans outside of these measures (i.e., transportation infrastructure project selection being guided by long-range plans, short-range plans, mobility concept plans, and other planning and policy frameworks).

Future research should work to build upon the analytic framework developed in order to assess additional relevant planning and policy documents, providing additional insights on the broader decision-making process being used to guide infrastructure project development. This research could encompass interviews with expert stakeholders working in the relevant sectors to better understand (1) how multi-benefits and community engagement are considered in their area of work, (2) what they see as the challenges and opportunities for achieving multi-benefit goals and improving integrative planning practices across project areas, and (3) recommendations for new scoring metrics for use in evaluating multi-benefit and community engagement aspects of infrastructure projects. Additionally, further content analyses of planning and policy documents guiding infrastructure development in water, parks, transportation, and housing in LA County will provide additional knowledge on the broader decision-making process being used to guide infrastructure project development.

Any additional research endeavor would continue to benefit from having an eye towards understanding the role of community engagement within the infrastructure planning process.



Conclusion

Our findings provide a first step in promoting multi-benefit and community engagement efforts within the infrastructure development process in LA County, by addressing the ways in which these themes are currently addressed in the evaluation metrics of existing infrastructure measures. By synthesizing metrics across multiple infrastructure categories (water, parks, transportation, and housing) alongside community engagement considerations, our work contributes to a critical gap in research and practice surrounding multi-benefit and equity-driven development approaches. Specifically, the consideration of these themes in a collective manner will help guide project developers to better meet the needs of communities by encouraging the advancement of projects that meet integrated infrastructure needs and provide ample opportunities for equitable engagement of impacted communities. Furthermore, the development of this current evaluation framework, provides additional support in the advancement off a future scoring framework that can assist Los Angeles County agencies in their project selection process in a time of increased climate-resilience planning and development, such that they can better target investments towards achieving true multi-benefit and equitability goals.

Appendix

Appendix A. Existing multi-benefit scoring/evaluation metrics in Measures A, W, M, H (and associated agency documents)

Taken from	Measure A 2021 Guidelines (Parks)	Measure W Safe Clean Water Program: Regional Program Committee Handbook (Water)
Parks		Creation, enhancement, or restoration of park space, habitat, or wetland space. (pg. 55)
Water	Water Quality Improvements and Stormwater Capture and Conservation; Project includes features to improve water quality which go beyond those required by State and local codes. Project includes features to capture stormwater and attenuate potential flood conditions which go beyond those required by State and local codes. Examples include swales, rain gardens, retention basins, pervious pavement, use of drought-tolerant plants, use of drip irrigation, and other ways to use recycled water and reduce runoff. (pg. 21)	
Housing	Anti-displacement Mitigation; Project includes advance displacement avoidance strategies to prevent displacement if a potential unintended consequence associated with the project creates a significant increase in the cost of housing. (pg. 19)	Feasibility Study must include an acknowledgment that the Project will be fully subject to and comply with any County-wide displacement policies as well as with any specific anti-displacement requirements associated with other funding sources. (pg. 48)
Transportation	Project accommodates regional access by providing trail connectivity, transit connections beyond the local vicinity, trailhead and/or parking improvements, or ADA improvements (pg. 18) Safe and Active Transportation; Project includes connections to transportation infrastructure to increase the ability of users to travel to and from the project by active forms of transportation such as walking, biking, skateboarding, scootering, etc. Examples include sidewalks, multi-use paths, bikeways, and Safe Routes to School. (pg. 20)	
Other Areas	Project includes interpretive, educational, programmatic, or other components that encourage regional visitation (pg. 18) Community Safety, Gang Activity Reduction, and Violence Prevention. (pg. 19) Interpretive Programs and Education (pg. 19) Physical Activity. (pg. 20) Social Interaction; (pg. 20) Air Quality Improvements and Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reductions, including Carbon Sequestration; (pg. 21) Heat-Island Reductions(pg. 21) Habitat Protection and Biodiversity; (pg. 21)	Community Investment Benefits include: Enhanced or new recreational opportunities (pg. 55) Project: Implements natural processes or mimics natural processes to slow, detain, capture, and absorb/ infiltrate water in a manner that protects, enhances and/or restores habitat, green space and/or usable open space = 5 points Utilizes natural materials such as soils and vegetation with a preference for native vegetation = 5 points Removes Impermeable Area from Project (1 point per 20% paved area removed) = 5 points (pg. 55)

Appendix 1. Summary of “Best Practice” Activities drawn from Measure A Guidelines 2021 (pg. 24-25); Measure A Grants Administration Manual (pg. 59-60); SCWP 2022 Interim Guidance (pg. 9-10)

	Unacceptable	Good	Better	Best
Example Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing public comment at a City Council Meeting during a timed 1-3 minute time allotment • Inform or announce the project information to only one entity/organization/ stakeholder • Holding a meeting with the public too late in the process of the project • Text blast • Holding meetings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Without proper notice ◦ With inaccessible, limited, or no parking ◦ With a lack of signage ◦ At an inconvenient time ◦ Language translation not provided • Requesting feedback and not allowing sufficient time, capacity, and resources to respond to engagement req 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fact Sheets with translation as needed³ • Open Houses • Presentations • Videos • Online Media³ • Social Media³ • Local Media³ • Listening Sessions • Public Comment • Focus Groups³ • Surveys³ • Polling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House Meetings • Interactive Workshops³ & Tours • Community Forums • Canvassing³ • Transparent responses to community comments • Document expanded understanding and commitment to ongoing relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOUs or support letters with Community Based Organizations • MOUs or support letters from Elected Officials • Community Organizing • Citizen Advocacy Committees • Open Planning Forums with Citizen Polling • Community-Driven Planning • Consensus Building • Participatory Action Research • Participatory Budgeting • Cooperatives • Information Sharing (Engagement)⁴ • Concurrent Participatory Engagement⁴ • Dedicated Participatory Engagement⁴

³ Classified as shown in Measure W documents, but Classified as acceptable outreach methods in Measure A documents

⁴ In Measure A documents, engagement practices are classified distinctly and separately from outreach practices

Project Team



Santina Contreras, Ph.D.

Project Lead

Santina Contreras is an Assistant Professor of Urban Planning and Spatial Analysis at the USC Sol Price School of Public Policy. Her research focuses on examining the implementation, equitability, and underlying power dynamics associated with community engagement activities in hazard, disaster, and environmental planning spaces. In her work, she takes an interdisciplinary approach toward understanding relationships between local communities and external stakeholders (organizations, planners, engineers, etc.) to highlight the ways in which inequitable engagement approaches undertaken by these entities can lead to the overburdening and extraction of local communities.



D'Ella Heschmeyer

Research Assistant

D'Ella Heschmeyer is a Master of Urban Planning student at the University of Southern California. Her academic concentration is Planning for Sustainability and Climate Change, with a specific interest in the areas of hazards and disasters, climate change mitigation, and natural resource management.



Carling Monder

Project Manager

Carling is a Project Manager at Public Exchange. She develops and manages partnerships between multidisciplinary teams of academic researchers and the public and private sector in the realm of climate & sustainability. In her current role, she is developing various climate initiatives while managing work surrounding community-inclusive, interactive approaches to designing climate-resilient infrastructure. Carling brings to Public Exchange her strong relationship-building abilities, boundless curiosity, and a passion for advancing solutions to address climate change.



Monica Dean

Project Advisor

Monica Dean is the Climate and Sustainability Practice Director. She brings more than a decade of experience to USC from across the climate, energy and environment field. Most recently, Monica served as an expert senior advisor to the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry and Assistant Secretary for Oceans, International Environmental and Scientific Affairs Monica Medina, leading negotiations and international policy on climate and biodiversity. Before joining the Biden Administration, Monica worked for the United Nations Foundation, the Energy Future Coalition, the American Public Power Association, and the Maryland Clean Energy Center. She is a graduate of Tel Aviv University and California State University, Sacramento.