# An Analysis of Community Engagement for the LARMP

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S. Jawaid, Feb 2021
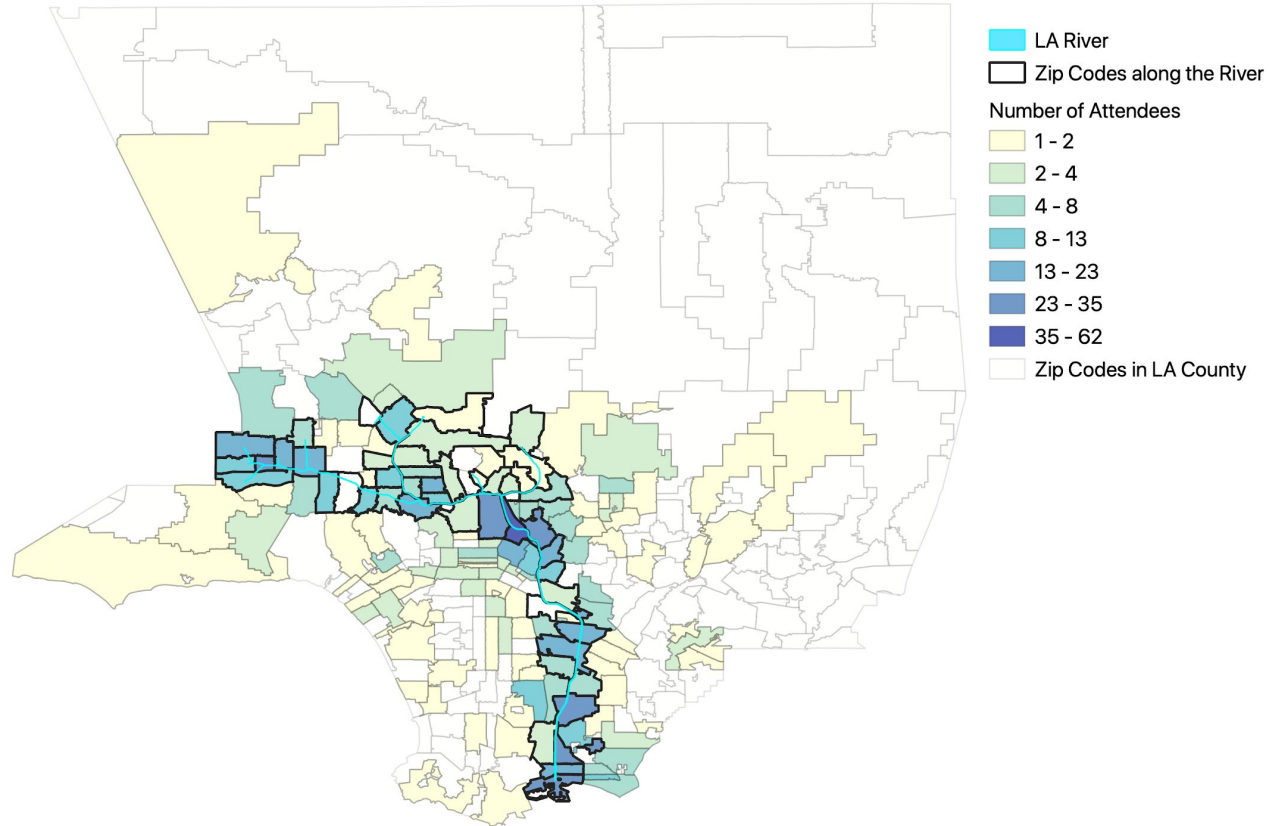
# Community Meetings

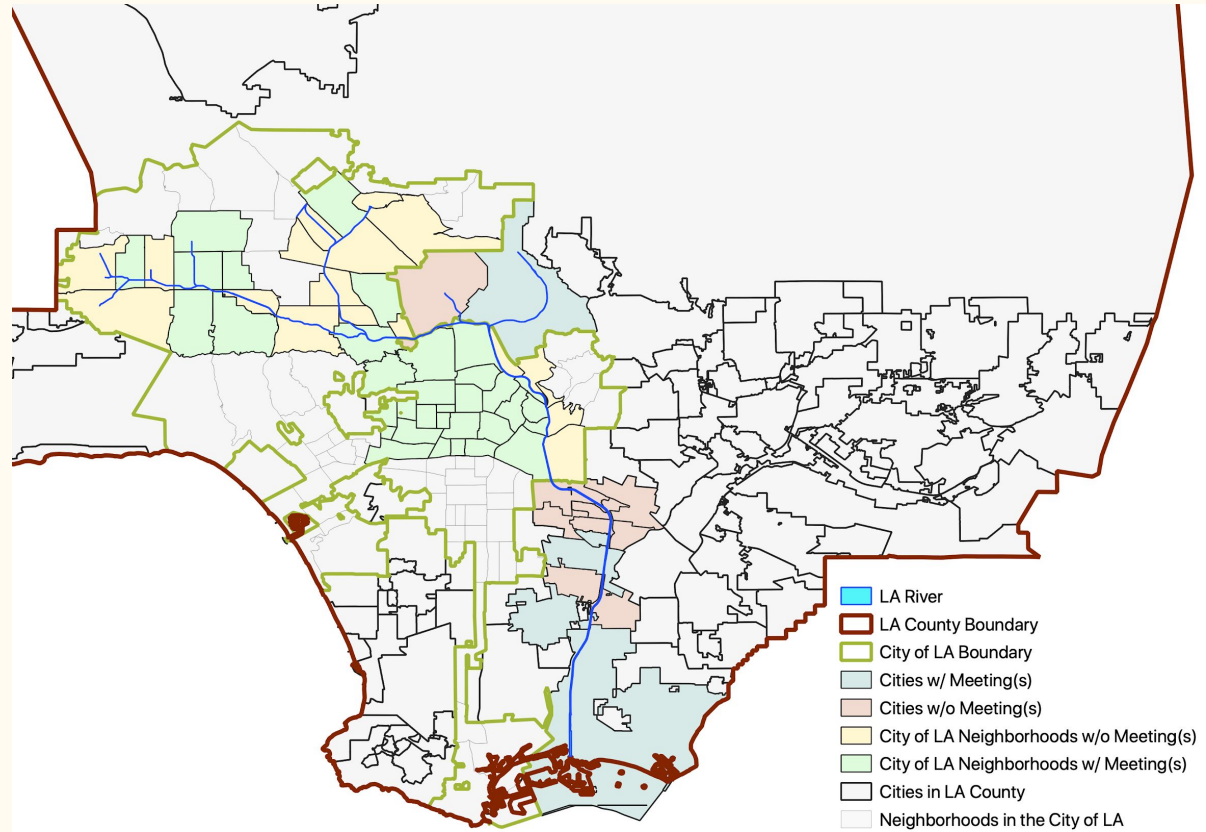| Meeting Location | Date |
|---|---:|
| Canoga Park | 7/25/2018 |
| Cudahy | 8/22/2018 |
| Long Beach | 10/24/2018 |
| Friendship Auditorium (Griffith Park/Los Feliz) | 11/13/2018 |
| North Hollywood Studio City | 12/13/2018 |
| West Valley | 02/13/2019 |
| South Gate | 3/28/2019 |
| Compton | 4/24/2019 |
| Pacoima | 5/5/2019 |
| Glendale | 06/12/2019 |
| Canoga Park 2 | 10/15/2019 |
| North Long Beach | 10/16/2019 |
| Central LA | 10/17/2019 |

Total Meetings: 13

Total Attendees: 1,017

# Attendees by Zip Code

# Where did the meetings take place?

- Green represents neighborhoods in the City of LA that did have community meeting(s)
- Yellow represents neighborhoods in the City of LA that touch or border the LA River, but did not have a community meeting
- Blue represents cities in LA County (not including the City of Los Angeles) that did have community meeting(s)
- Red represents cities in LA County that touch or border the LA River, but did not have a community meeting
- Certain community meetings in the City of LA (e.g. West Valley, Central LA) covered multiple neighborhoods



**Legend:**
- LA River
- LA County Boundary
- City of LA Boundary
- Cities w/ Meeting(s)
- Cities w/o Meeting(s)
- City of LA Neighborhoods w/o Meeting(s)
- City of LA Neighborhoods w/ Meeting(s)
- Cities in LA County
- Neighborhoods in the City of LA

# City of LA Neighborhoods with/without meetings

| Neighborhoods Along the River | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Arleta | Encino | Reseda | Valley Glen |
| Atwater Village | Glassell Park | Sepulveda Basin | Valley Village |
| Boyle Heights | Griffith Park | Shadow Hills | West Hills |
| Canoga Park | Hansen Dam | Sherman Oaks | Winnetka |
| Chinatown | Hollywood Hills | Silver Lake | Woodland Hills |
| Cypress Park | Lincoln Heights | Studio City | Lake Balboa |
| Downtown | Northridge | Sun Valley | |
| Elysian Park | Pacoima | Tarzana | |
| Elysian Valley | Panorama City | Toluca Lake | |

| consulted | not consulted |
|---|---|

Certain community meetings (e.g. West Valley, Central LA) covered multiple neighborhoods

# Cities along LAR with/without Meetings

| Cities Along the River | | |
|---|---|---|
| Bell | Glendale | Maywood |
| Bell Gardens | Huntington Park | Paramount |
| Burbank | Long Beach | South Gate |
| Commerce | Los Angeles | Unincorporated |
| Compton | Lynwood | Vernon |
| Cudahy | | |

| consulted | not consulted |
|---|---|

# Specific Questions from the Community Surveys

# Which of the following goals for the LA River are most important to you?

**40.1% of respondents listed goals with an emphasis on the environment/nature**

| Response | n Responses | % Responses |
|---|---|---|
| Provide equitable, inclusive, and safe parks, open space, and trails. | 757 | 17.7% |
| Support healthy, connected ecosystems | 673 | 15.7% |
| Promote healthy, safe, clean water | 541 | 12.7% |
| Provide protective and resilient flood management | 496 | 11.6% |
| Improve local water supply reliability | 428 | 10.0% |
| Embrace local arts and culture and strengthen communities | 410 | 9.6% |
| Address potential adverse impacts to housing | 333 | 7.8% |
| Enhance opportunities for equitable access to the river corridor | 326 | 7.6% |
| Foster learning and opportunities for education | 312 | 7.3% |
| Total | 4276 | 100.0% |

Lines highlighted in green represent environment related responses

# When it is not raining, there is still flow in the LA River. What do you think is a better use for this water instead of letting it flow to the ocean?

**61.4% of respondents chose uses with an emphasis on the environment/nature**

| Response | n Responses | % Responses |
|---|---|---|
| Native Habitat | 491 | 33.2% |
| Local water supply (groundwater recharge, recycled water) | 417 | 28.2% |
| Recreation | 173 | 11.7% |
| Direct irrigation of nearby landscapes | 172 | 11.6% |
| Nothing. It should continue to flow to the ocean | 123 | 8.3% |
| Fountains, streams, and water features | 101 | 6.8% |
| Total | 1477 | 100.0% |

Lines highlighted in green represent environment related responses

# What do you think is most important for people to learn about the LA River?

**59.1% of respondents were interested in learning about environment/nature**

| Response | n Responses | % Responses |
|---|---|---|
| How the river benefits and supports the environment | 750 | 24.5% |
| Ecology, habitat, and vegetation | 644 | 21.1% |
| Current hydrology, sources, and uses of the river | 413 | 13.5% |
| Cultural history | 375 | 12.3% |
| Current communities along the river | 329 | 10.8% |
| Hydrologic history | 314 | 10.3% |
| Flood history | 230 | 7.5% |
| Total | 3055 | 100.0% |

Lines highlighted in green represent environment related responses

# Text Analysis of Additional Comments from the Community Survey

# Anything we missed?

- From the 466 additional comments submitted, 25 distinct themes were identified via text mining
- Right: word cloud of top 13 themes weighted by frequency
- Top 4 Themes:
  1. environment (24.0%)
  2. access/connectivity (12.7%)
  3. homelessness (8.8%)
  4. diversity/equity/inclusion (8.2%)

maintenance/improvement
gentrification concerns
homelessness
information/education/awareness
cleanliness/beautification
access/connectivity
environment
accountability
amenities/facilities
safety disaster planning
activities/events
diversity/equity/inclusion

# Text Analysis: Methodology

Theme

Code

Comment

Comment

Code

Comment

Comment

# Text Analysis: Example

Theme:
Environment

Code:
Trees

"You don't have
an urban tree
canopy"

"More tree
coverage"

Code:
Green space

"making more
green spaces"

"Open a
greenway to
the pacific"
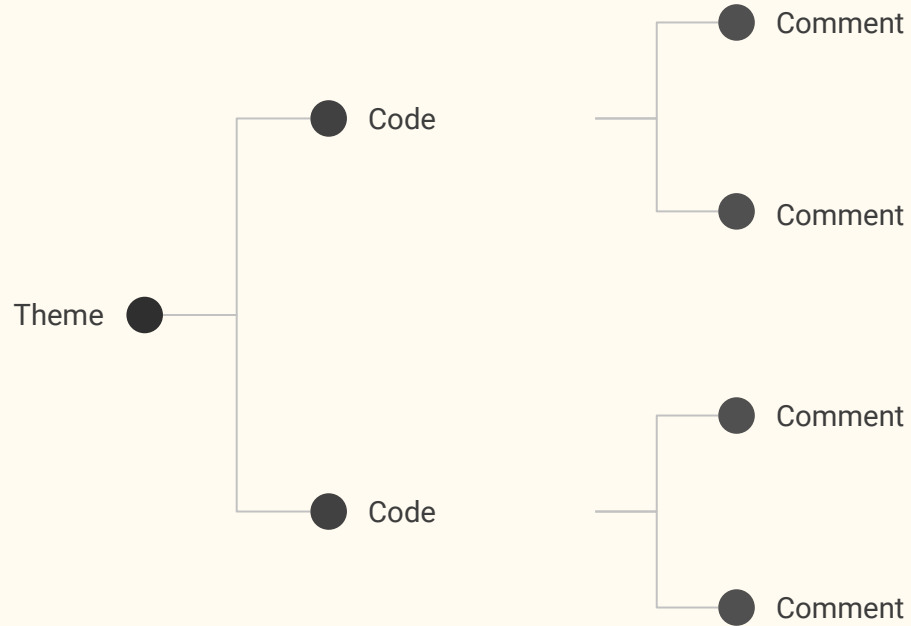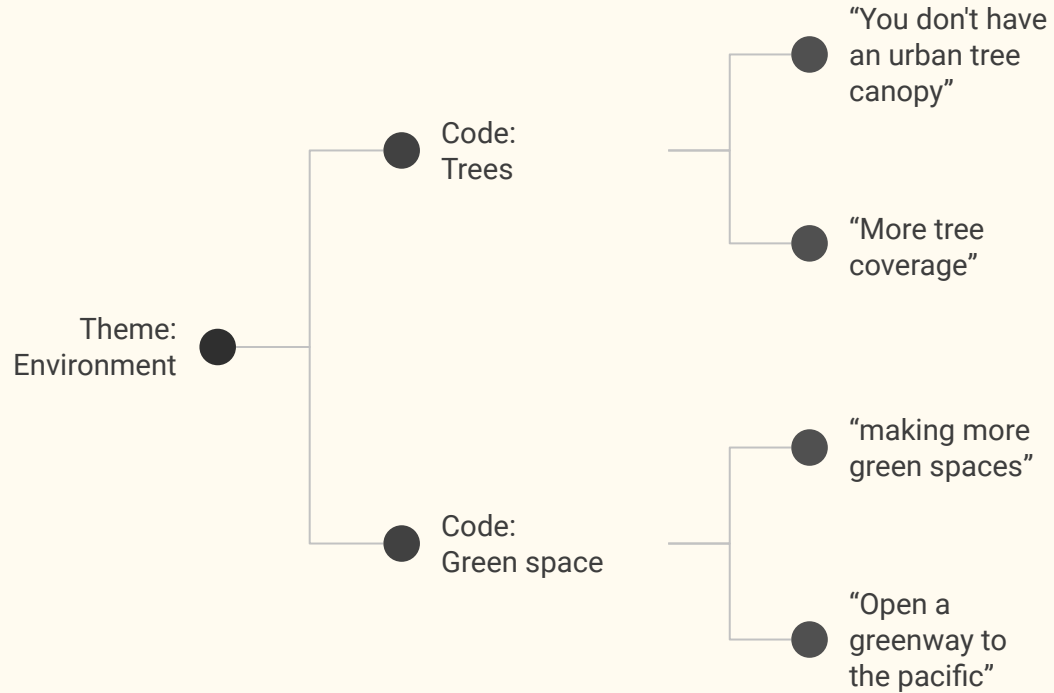
# Other Important Themes from the Additional Comments

# Themes by % of comments

- Miscellaneous *  3.9%
- art  1.5%
- parks/open space  1.5%
- community resources  2.1%
- disaster planning  2.8%
- maintenance/improvement  2.8%
- gentrification concerns  3.0%
- amenities/facilities  3.4%
- activities/events  3.6%
- accountability  4.5%
- cleanliness/beautification  5.6%
- information/education/awareness  5.8%
- safety  5.8%
- environment  24.0%
- access/connectivity  12.7%
- homelessness  8.8%
- diversity/equity/inclusion  8.2%

*Any theme that had <=1% frequency was categorized as miscellaneous

# Theme Frequency Table

| Theme | n Comments | % Comments |
|---|---:|---:|
| environment | 112 | 24.0% |
| access/connectivity | 59 | 12.7% |
| homelessness | 41 | 8.8% |
| diversity/equity/inclusion | 38 | 8.2% |
| safety | 27 | 5.8% |
| information/education/awareness | 27 | 5.8% |
| cleanliness/beautification | 26 | 5.6% |
| accountability | 21 | 4.5% |
| activities/events | 17 | 3.6% |
| amenities/facilities | 16 | 3.4% |
| gentrification concerns | 14 | 3.0% |
| maintenance/improvement | 13 | 2.8% |
| disaster planning | 13 | 2.8% |
| community resources | 10 | 2.1% |
| parks/open space | 7 | 1.5% |
| art | 7 | 1.5% |
| miscellaneous | 18 | 3.9% |
| **Total** | **466** | **100.0%** |

# Codes under the Environment Theme

# Environment Codes by % of Comments



- renewable energy 1.1%
- climate change 2.7%
- greenspace 3.8%
- pollution/contamination 3.8%
- tributaries 5.9%
- trees 7.0%
- hydrology 16.1%
- conservation 58.7%
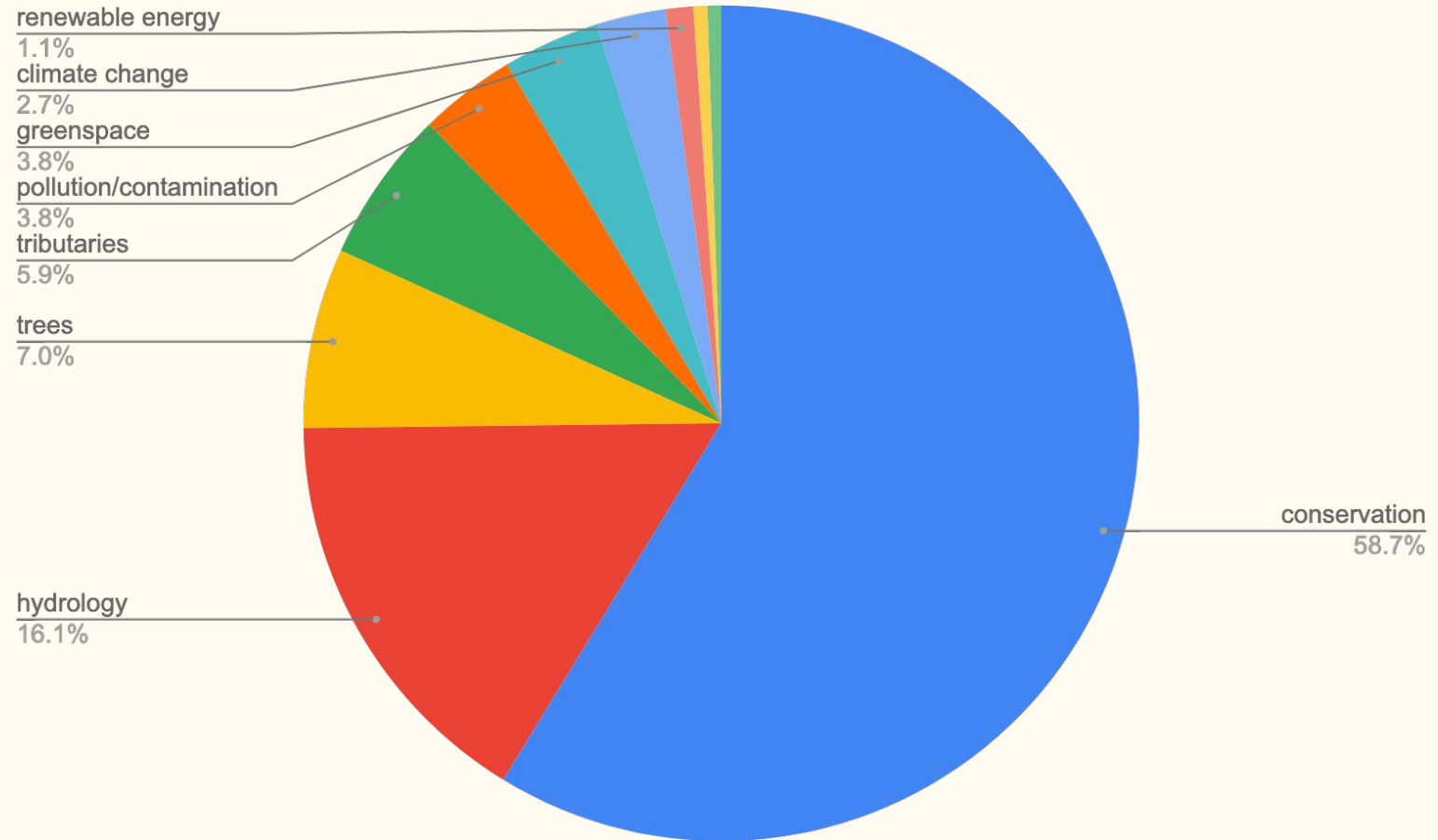
# All Codes under the Environment Theme

| Environment Codes | n Comments | % Comments |
|---|---:|---:|
| conservation | 66 | 58.7% |
| hydrology | 18 | 16.1% |
| trees | 8 | 7.0% |
| tributaries | 7 | 5.9% |
| pollution/contamination | 4 | 3.8% |
| greenspace | 4 | 3.8% |
| climate change | 3 | 2.7% |
| renewable energy | 1 | 1.1% |
| public health | 1 | 0.5% |
| CEQA | 1 | 0.5% |
| **Total** | **112** | **100.0%** |

# Environment code: Conservation

- Conservation included comments pertaining to protecting and maintaining nature, biodiversity, ecosystems, and wildlife
  - 58.7% of environment comments
  - 14.1% of total comments
- Notable comments:
  - "Environment should be #1 - we need more shade and trees - nature for the sake of nature"
  - "Use of projects to increase native biodiversity."
  - "Need to address protection of established wildlife and habitat during transition periods for redevelopment and revitalization"
  - "Include also health of animals/wildlife (no destroying of wildlife habitat)"
  - "let it be "wild" wherever it can be wild and naturalized inside and alongside the channel"
  - "Native plants & trees everywhere. Have connected areas for native wildlife, insects, birds, fish, mammals"

# Environment code: Hydrology

- Hydrology included comments pertaining to water quality, watershed management, and water conservation
  - 16.1% of environment comments
  - 3.9% of total comments
- Notable comments:
  - "Focus on water quality!"
  - "Providing more soft bottom sediment areas for groundwater recharge in Los Angeles County"
  - "Use greywater (treated and reclaimed) to fill watershed for aquatic habitat connectivity"
  - "Collect water in aquifers"
  - "There is opportunity to capture and spread water in Verdugo Wash to increase relocation and recharge in the Verdugo Basin which two communities rely on"

# Other Important Themes from the Additional Comments

# Other themes: Access/Connectivity

- The access/connectivity theme contained codes pertaining to trails/paths (pedestrian, biking, equestrian), and accessibility to the river
  - 12.7% of total comments
- Notable comments:
  - "Continuous 51 mile bike path! (pls)"
  - "More contiguous bike paths"
  - "Pedestrian access/more obvious entrance to park"
  - "Equestrian access and safety"
  - "Hopefully there will be running trails along the way"
  - "Vital to have connected bike/walking paths - continuous and contiguous - long stretches"
  - "Accessibility for people of different needs/abilities"

# Other themes: Homelessness

- Homelessness was a major concern expressed in the additional comments
  - 8.8% of total comments
  - Homelessness is one of the most pressing issues in Los Angeles
- Notable comments:
  - "Integrate homeless folks, don't just push them out under guise of "clean up""
  - "funding to address homelessness and when funding river projects don't just kick out homeless population"
  - "Accommodation for the homeless, especially in west Long Beach. Nothing was mentioned about addressing the people who are homeless and living on the riverbed."
  - ""Address homelessness" what does this mean? it should mean connecting to services + coordinating w/ other agencies, housing, mental health, substance use"
  - "Don't get rid of people who don't have homes, let's create solutions!"

# Other themes: Gentrification

- Gentrification and displacement of current residents was an important concern in the additional comments
  - 3.0% of total comments
  - Despite it being a not as frequent as other themes, this is important to note, considering LA's housing crisis
  - Lower-income, communities of color who may face the pressures of rising rents are often underrepresented at community meetings
- Notable comments:
  - "making sure existing communities along the LA River are not displaced or pushed out due to rising rent as a result of the revitalization/development of the river (maybe some sort of rent control is needed)"
  - "How will you prevent gentrification?"
  - "don't raise our rent"
  - "What can realistically be done to prevent skyrocketing property values and neighbors being able to remain in their homes?"

# Key Takeaways

1. There could have been greater effort for community outreach
   a. Only 13 total meetings were held with a total of 1,017 attendees over the course of roughly 1.5 years
   b. Key neighborhoods and cities along the river  such as Atwater Village, Boyle Heights, Huntington Park, and Maywood should have had specific meetings for their communities
2. The environment was the overwhelming priority of the community
   a. People hope to see the river return to a more natural state and improvements in water quality/capture
3. The community feedback on homelessness focused on finding solutions, not "just kicking out" the people experiencing homelessness
4. Gentrification fears must be taken into account in planning river restoration
   a. Equitable development needs to be integrated into the master plan
5. The community wants easy and safe access to a network of connected trails/paths

# About

**Sul Jawaid** is deeply interested in issues of equity and environment. He is getting his master's degree in Urban Planning at CSU Northridge, and works at Binti - a mission-driven company building modern software for foster care agencies.

**Zaynab Jawaid** is a freshman at Diablo Valley College studying Environmental Science. She hopes to use her education in work that helps conserve California wildlife.