



## “Water and People” Public & Private Sector Workshop Summary

### Workshop Overview

UCLA convened decision-makers from public and private sector organizations across the county to provide input on the topic of Water. The “Water and People” workshop, held on July 23, 2018 at Los Angeles Cleantech Incubator, attracted over 60 attendees from public agencies across the region, private sector entities, utility companies, and members of the Our County Strategic Engagement team. The three and a half-hour workshop engaged 41 individuals representing 31 organizations. Stakeholders participated in several breakout sessions to provide input on Water-related goals and strategies they most want the Our County plan to address.

At the workshop, the L.A. County Chief Sustainability Office provided an overview of the Our County plan development and UCLA presented key background, data, and findings regarding water use, procurement, distribution, regulation, and policymaking around L.A. County. An accompanying briefing document outlined this information, which stakeholders were sent prior to the workshop and was additionally distributed at the event. Workshop participants then met in breakout groups to provide feedback on general water goals that were included in the briefing and framed the discussion. Facilitators led the conversation and took notes on butcher paper and in a typed document. Each breakout group shared their discussion in a report back to the larger group. After a break, the second breakout session featured a series of prompts evoking cross-cutting sustainability themes. Participants voted on the three prompts they felt should be most prioritized, and developed a list of water-related sustainability strategies based on the prompt. These results were shared in a report back with the larger group. The final breakout session had one attendee from the public sector pair off with an attendee from the private sector. Each pair were handed one of the cross-cutting prompts and developed a concept for a water-focused public-private partnership opportunity relating to the prompt. The workshop ended with final remarks and completion of a feedback survey.

This summary report compiles and synthesizes over 300 comments that the Strategic Engagement team was able to capture through butcher paper notes, typed transcription, and written note cards, as well as written feedback received after the workshop.

## Key Takeaways

- The need to **improve residents' water literacy** through public education was widely discussed throughout the workshop. Many discussed wanting to see more educating of residents and businesses on water literacy, with focused engagement on local communities that face unique disadvantages from potential water policy changes.
- Public and private sector stakeholders agreed on the need for L.A. County to **consider regional water interdependency** in policymaking. Participants want to see a simpler water governance structure with better coordination and collaboration with regional water providers. They asserted the importance of communicating and coordinating with other regional governments and state government to collaborate on the many layers of water management in order to create effective water policy.
- **Improving infrastructure resilience** was mentioned in every breakout group. Stakeholders shared desires for improving water infrastructure resilience in preparation for increasing intensity of weather and geological events. Experts shared desires for LA County to require both residential and commercial buildings to capture and use storm water, and to take action to require and incentivize property owners to raise building standards with on-site water capture, solar roofing, and grey water distribution.
- Participants highlighted that **integrating natural and urban needs and prioritizing open space** are key to achieving water sustainability goals. They shared how open space can be used to start with consensus between environmental groups and infrastructure groups, and can be a nexus of water education opportunities. Several spoke of how “open space” should include everything from agricultural lands to river rehabilitation and the smaller spaces that water permeates, noting many features of the built environment that should better integrate water reclamation strategies.
- For all aspects of water sustainability, stakeholders highlighted the need for L.A. County to identify **financing and funding mechanisms**, expressing a need to include this in the goals. Many people shared the need for determining who pays for improvements and ensuring equity is taken into consideration so costs are not passed down to those who are most disadvantaged and negatively impacted.



## Draft Goals

Overall, stakeholders responded enthusiastically to the goals. Participants were encouraged to change the wording of goals, add and remove goals, and prioritize the goals in order of importance and relevance to the topic of water. Critical feedback included a need for more consideration of who is using water in the goal language, especially in regards to Goal B. Participants noted the interdependence of the goals, including the idea that Goal B and D could be merged. Participants recommended inclusion of a goal around funding and financing. Goals A and E emerged as top priority goals, as stakeholders felt this is where sustainability work was most lacking, in comparison to Goals B and F, which they felt are areas on which L.A. County is already working.

Below is a summary of feedback regarding each goal with additional notes from the goals breakout session:

### **Goal A: Improve Community Benefits and Reduce Disparities in Water-Related Impacts**

Stakeholders noted the challenge of defining “equity,” explaining the importance of political voice as well as other factors. Access to benefits and resources for low-income and other vulnerable populations is a recurring challenge throughout this goal and others. Specifically, some stakeholders were concerned with deterioration of drinking water quality (“brown water”) caused by poor quality building pipes. Stakeholders noted the challenges of identifying the source of surface water quality problems and suggested that L.A. County should determine the best way to correct them. Water quality impacts caused by rain/storm water runoff may be solved by improving street infrastructure and drainage, presence of trees, among others. Water quality impacts caused by building water piping may require improving building codes. However, requiring building improvement costs may increase rent costs for tenants, and increase disparities. Stakeholders suggested instituting a rebate program that would discourage building owners from raising rents, and creating public/private partnerships to address the issue.

### **Goal B: Reduce Water Use**

Stakeholders identified the challenge in determining the most effective methods of reducing water use, noting it could be either most efficient to reduce outdoor water use or potable water use for outdoor irrigation. However, they found improving public water use literacy as an opportunity to improve water sustainability.

### **Goal C: Protect and Improve Water Quality**

Stakeholders were unclear on what L.A. County intends to protect in this goal, noting that it could imply protecting water supply, rights, or quality. They also suggested that this goal should focus on groundwater, but that improvements should be inclusive to encompass pipes and transmission systems.

### **Goal D: Advancing Water Self-Sufficiency**

Stakeholders generally took issue with the phrasing of this goal, and suggested that the L.A. County clarify what types of self-sufficiency it intends to improve (e.g., local, personal, or regional). Stakeholders also noted that some methods for promoting water self-sufficiency may not be sustainable (for example, desalination would improve water self-sufficiency, but is not sustainable). Stakeholders noted that this issue is similar to Goal B (Reducing Water Use), differentiating this goal as one that is perhaps at a larger scale than Goal B. However, if L.A. County keeps this goal independently of Goal B, L.A. County should add the word “sustainable” to the language.

### **Goal E: Enhance Water Infrastructure while Prioritizing a Natural Systems/Green Infrastructure Approach**

Stakeholders felt that L.A. County’s biggest challenge will be in assessing the cross-cutting impacts of any potential water or green infrastructure improvement, particularly on ecosystem health. As an example, stakeholders noted that reducing outdoor water use is often interrelated with urban heat island, urban tree canopy maintenance, and groundwater recharge. Relatedly, L.A. County has an opportunity to assess the beneficial impacts of understanding ecosystem health could have in improving stream flow in concrete channels.

### **Goal F: Improve Governance Structure to Better Accountability and Water Management**

Stakeholders noted the challenges in the overlaying water systems that are managed by varying levels of government. However, L.A. County can collaborate with these various levels to determine the best policies for effective water management. They suggested that internally, various L.A. County agencies and departments should coordinate and collaborate with each other to improve water management. Externally, stakeholders suggest that the L.A. County utilize success stories in water management from other regional governments. A few stakeholders pushed back on this and suggested that localizing water management may also provide some opportunities for improving water efficiency. L.A. County may face challenges in considering the tradeoffs between local versus regional approaches to water governance. Stakeholders also noted that proper water management includes improving water infrastructure resilience in preparation for increasing intensity of droughts and precipitation events, particularly on water storage. Finally, stakeholders doubted the ability for this sustainability plan to effectively implement governance structure improvements, since such improvements would require changing overall L.A. County governance.

### **Other Goals**

Throughout the workshop, various stakeholders noted aspects of water sustainability that were not included in the above goals and felt should be incorporated:

- L.A. County should consider its impact on ocean water quality, specifically looking at runoff impacts it may control.
- Goals and briefing document were not specific on “who” was using the water. L.A. County should be more specific with which types of water users it intends to target in its eventual Sustainability Plan.



- Although innovative planning goals are important, L.A. County should also consider creating regional targets and goals to provide a signal to residents and businesses on the L.A. County's political and policy push for sustainability.
- L.A. County should carefully consider the avenues for funding and financing. Stakeholders were primarily concerned with who L.A. County envisioned would pay for water infrastructure improvements, and whether any there were existing bonds or economic incentives that would fund these improvements.

## Recommended Strategies

To improve L.A. County’s water sustainability practices, stakeholders prioritized strategies related to water, including infrastructure resiliency; open space, recreation, biodiversity, and habitat; and climate change. While brainstorming specific recommendations, stakeholders were interested in several key major themes throughout. Stakeholders repeatedly emphasized the need for community engagement, to promote water literacy, and implement best practices for communities most affected by water policy changes. They also noted the importance for considering natural solutions for water issues, including water treatment and stream flow, which provides the co-benefit of saving energy and carbon emissions. Water infrastructure was also heavily discussed, with stakeholders keen on improving all buildings and parks with storm water capture, gray water recycling, on-site water treatment, among others. Finally, stakeholders noted the importance of considering funding and financing, emphasizing the need for collaboration between state and other regional governments, as well as ensuring that all mechanisms prioritize long-term sustainability. Specific recommendations are provided in the table below.

<p><b>Resilient Infrastructure:</b></p> <p>Invest in Infrastructure to maintain and enhance services, even when facing shocks and stresses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Divert storm water to a collection point to be treated onsite and to recharge aquifers.</li> <li>• Require residential buildings to capture and use storm water, similar to the current requirements for commercial buildings.</li> <li>• Improve building standards to include on site water capture, solar roofing, and grey water distribution.</li> <li>• Assess methods in which all water systems can work together to improve infrastructure resilience, including but not limited to improving the balance between distributing recycled water and groundwater.</li> <li>• Find and apply for funding and financing for water infrastructure improvements from cities and the state, focusing on improvements that will simultaneously build the local economy.</li> </ul>
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**Open space, recreation, biodiversity, and habitat:**

Ensure parks and open space are accessible for all, integrate natural and urban needs, and account for the inherent value of the environment.

- Reform any permitting requirements for parks and other open spaces that are a barrier to incorporating natural water treatment systems that are less energy- and infrastructure-intensive.
- Incorporate native plants while landscaping any open spaces to reduce heat island effects.
- Incorporate existing flood control and stormwater capture infrastructure into existing parks.
- Reconcile hardscape with floodplain maps and leverage natural systems to control storm water and mitigate flooding.
- Engage with communities most disadvantaged by water issues related to parks when devising L.A. County-wide policy improvements to water infrastructure in open spaces.
- Engage with environmental groups and infrastructure developers to determine a common vision over open spaces.
- Establish a long-term planning horizon through L.A. County Planning for all natural landscaping policies.
- Funding and financing mechanisms should ensure that funding language includes issues regarding sustainability.
- Assess ways in which it can improve the accessibility of all open spaces, and implement them.
- Implement policies that protect agricultural land and easements, particularly looking to agricultural land trusts that support regenerative uses and biodiversity.

<p><b>Climate:</b></p> <p>Significantly reduce and sequester greenhouse gas emissions and prepare all communities for a changing climate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess how green infrastructure improvements can be implemented with the co-benefits of reducing the need for transportation and improving parks and green spaces.</li> <li>• Determine how zoning regulations may be changed to discourage larger lawns that are water inefficient.</li> <li>• Find natural systems and methods to treating water, moving away from current wastewater treatment methods that are carbon-intensive.</li> <li>• Institute public education campaigns on the water-saving and methane-saving benefits of composting.</li> <li>• Institute public education campaigns on soil health improvement methods that improve carbon sequestration.</li> <li>• Educate farmers on crop production methods that are water- and carbon- efficient.</li> <li>• L.A. County’s Community Choice Aggregation utility provider should ensure that it provides more “green” options to residents and businesses.</li> </ul>
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## Other Strategies

Below is a summary of discussions around prompts that multiple stakeholders were interested in, but did not receive as much overwhelming interest as the strategies above.

- Stakeholders found funding and financing mechanisms essential to ensuring that the Sustainability Plan is effective.
- L.A. County’s Community Choice Aggregation utility provider should ensure that it provides more “green” options to residents and businesses. Stakeholders felt that this is a core issue for the L.A. County to be addressed in more ways than just in water management.
- Stakeholders were specifically concerned about the adverse water efficiency impacts of low cost dwellings like Accessory Dwelling Units, which are usually fitted with lowest cost (and water inefficient) appliances. Further, stakeholders noted the importance of L.A. County educating the public on the benefits of weatherizing homes. Stakeholders also noted the importance of “greenscaping” new buildings that promote increased infiltration.
- Stakeholders noted the unique importance of this issue to beach communities, and for public education on waste reduction and resource recovery. They suggested that this incorporates waste prevention, not only resource recovery. Stakeholders also suggested the L.A. County include organic waste into this topic.



## Opportunities for Cross-Sectoral Collaboration

The following are some ideas for initiatives that public and private sector stakeholders expressed interest in collaborating on:

### Waste

- Developing regulations that support businesses that have or remediate waste on a local level
- Incentivizing private investment in resource recovery technology
- Creating a framework to monetize waste

### Infrastructure Resiliency

- Incentivizing private investment
- Creating a market for conserved water

### Public Health/Well-being impacts

- Health professionals can educate the public about adverse health impacts of heat and poor air quality
- Utilizing art as a catalyst for change by encouraging the community through creative projects to promote public health issues on a personal level

### Funding/Financing

- Developing standards and criteria for public-private partnerships to allow projects to move forward
- Providing tax incentives for privately owned vacant lots when they are used as green space in high park-need areas

### Economic Development

- Support development of greywater systems in appropriate commercial areas as a means of promoting job creation

## Comparative Assessment

Comparing the feedback from the Public & Private Sector Workshop to the summary report from the concurrent Nonprofit Sector Workshop reveals overlaps and a few key differences in stakeholder input.

In comparison to the Nonprofit Workshop, feedback from participants at the **Public & Private Sector Workshop** featured:

- Greater emphasis on funding and financing
- A discussion about Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) and ensuring that CCA provides “green” options
- Interest in finding common ground between environmental groups and infrastructure developers around open space uses and regulations
- Debate over the meaning of “equity”
- Conversation around the uniqueness of different communities within L.A. County and their respective needs (i.e. waste impacts on beach communities)

In comparison to the Public & Private Sector Workshop, feedback from participants at the **Nonprofit Sector workshop** featured:

- Greater emphasis on economy and workforce development
  - Requests to focus on green career education programs and invest in environmental stewardship jobs
- Strong desire to enact preventative measures on the private sector, such as forbidding expansion and development of toxic industrial facilities and banning companies that take water rights away from communities and contaminate water
- Discussion around water testing requirements and standardization and remediation strategies

Feedback at **both workshops** featured many similarities, including:

- The need to provide incentives for retrofitting homes and infrastructure
- Ensuring renter populations are safeguarded from housing cost increases related to water infrastructure improvements and increased property values
- Incorporating natural water treatment systems that are less energy- and infrastructure-intensive
- Desire for more landscaping with native plants to reduce heat island effects
- Focus on existing flood control and stormwater capture infrastructure
- Interest in leveraging natural systems to control stormwater and mitigate flooding
- Critical need for engagement with communities most disadvantaged by water issues
- Protection of agricultural land and easements, particularly mentioning agricultural land trusts that support regenerative uses and biodiversity