

# ASSESSING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN THE LOS ANGELES RIVER REVITALIZATION EFFORTS

A report prepared for the 2018-2019 IoES Practicum

# Assessing Community Engagement in the Los Angeles River Revitalization Efforts

A report prepared for the 2018-2019 IoES Practicum by:

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The team would also like to acknowledge the contributions of all of the residents, community activists, workers, government officials, and academics who freely shared their experiences and hopes for the future of the Los Angeles River. In particular, we would like to recognize:

The City of South Gate

Sayd Randle

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Finally, the team would like to thank the Institute of the Environment and Sustainability (IoES) at UCLA and LA Waterkeeper for providing the foundations for our project.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*“For native people, our land is a reflection of who we are. It's like looking into a mirror. So how do you think I feel looking into LA? I don't feel very good.” - Tongva Tribe Member (Other Researchers)*

Since its channels were lined with concrete in the 1930s, the Los Angeles River has remained largely unchanged. Although the river passes through dozens of communities and has hundreds of thousands of neighbors, many Angelenos will say their relationship to the River is passing at best. This is something that Los Angeles (LA), County and City, is trying to change.

The 2007 Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan marked a dramatic shift in recognizing the River as something beyond a key piece of flood control infrastructure. The Plan made provisions for expanding green space, public access, and even returning portions of the riverbank to its natural, non-concrete state. Former mayor Antonio Villaragosa pictured this revitalized River as a continuous greenway, the City's “emerald necklace.” Over the last ten years, the visions outlined in the Plan have begun to take shape. A massive network of government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private firms have taken an interest in the transformation of the River, yet although several notable projects are underway, many communities remain unaware that the Revitalization is even happening.

Over the course of the 2018-2019 academic year, our team has taken a closer look at this phenomenon. We began with a comprehensive review of existing community survey efforts around Revitalization projects that are either completed or under way. Surveys were analyzed for subject matter and question type (i.e. multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank) to better understand the information that is being collected and communicated between planning entities and neighborhoods along the River. Based on our findings, we formulated our own survey that focused on giving community members the opportunity to express their perspectives on the River and Revitalization through their experiences.

The next phase of our project involved identifying a river-adjacent community with a demonstrated disconnect between current Revitalization plans and community engagement. South Gate was ultimately selected for its demographics and the presence of Revitalization projects. We attended community events, interviewed residents, activists, and professionals about their experiences with the River and their visions for its future. After conducting over 40 semi-structured interviews, we transcribed, coded, and analyzed the results to identify key themes. These included: concerns about homelessness and unhoused populations residing on the River; lack of awareness of the risk of flooding, and a general disconnection to the River and Revitalization plans. These responses diverge from responses in previous survey efforts, which has shown that residents are concerned about increasing access to the River and improving its



environmental and natural quality. This represents a major disconnect between what current plans believed is the general public opinion to what community members actually feel, specifically South Gate community members. As such, our recommendations and guidance for future outreach included utilizing a broader range of methods, targeted outreach to marginalized groups, and clearer goals for planned projects, as well as acknowledgment of their trade-offs.

The River sits in the heart of our City, and it must be treated as such. Revitalization planning activities that foreground local perspectives have the greatest potential to be an asset to the communities they are in, and therefore have the greatest potential to be an asset to Los Angeles. As the Master Plan continues to unfold, we hope our research serves as a testament to the importance of qualitative data collection in the planning processes, listening to the experiences and aspirations of everyday people in our City and across the world.

*–River’s 8*



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# INTRODUCTION

## LOS ANGELES RIVER HISTORY

Before 1542, the Los Angeles River Basin was home to the Tongva, Chumash, and Tataviam tribes. The Tongva tribe has “been indigenous to the Los Angeles Basin for 7,000 years” (Tribal History, n.d.). Likewise, the Tataviam occupied the San Fernando Valley as early as 450 C.E. (Historical Timeline, n.d.). The Chumash tribe moved with the seasonal variation of the River flows and described the area as being bountiful and full of life. The River experienced wet and dry seasons, drastically changing flow rates during each season. After a wet season, the sediment deposits left by the River provided nutrients that suited agriculture. In 1542, Spanish colonizers founded the Pueblo of Los Angeles and capitalized on this, creating an agricultural industry in the River basin.

The underground and aboveground characteristics of the River created a shallow water table and poor channel. When hit with a powerful storm, the small channels were inundated with large quantities of water causing the meandering streams to become a torrential river. In 1936, after multiple rounds of flooding caused millions of dollars in damage, Los Angeles County and the United States Army Corps of Engineers concretized the channel to set a permanent course for the River and to mitigate flood risks (Bigger, 1959). Today only 13 of the 51 miles retain the original soft-bottom river bed and only two sections completely resemble the natural ecology.

## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF REVITALIZATION

In 2007, the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan was released by the City of Los Angeles. It explored the idea of removing the concrete and restoring the River at some locations, while creating an engaging community environment at others. Supported by climate scientists, politicians, NGOs, and community members, the Plan claims that a restored River would provide native habitat, water reclamation, and flood protection, open space, recreation, and housing for adjacent communities. We define ‘Revitalization’ as any anthropogenic (human-made) changes to the River and surrounding areas. We use the word ‘restoration’ for our interviews, as this word is more common in colloquial language.

This Revitalization plan was just one of many planning efforts to create a connected greenway of parks and recreational areas along the River. It featured many types of projects aiming to, for instance, extend open space, improve water quality, enhance river identity, and incorporate public art. Other projects and plans also emerged: the Los Angeles River Greenway, the City of Los Angeles’ Revitalization Master Plan, the County

River Master Plan, Glendale Narrows Riverwalk, and the Lower Los Angeles River Revitalization Plan. Public outreach in the form of public meetings, surveys, and educational campaigns accompanied many of these plans. While these efforts are commendable, they may be inadequate, excluding certain topics and communities.

When imagining the River's future, it is important to consider at once its ecological history, existing habitats, and adjacent community concerns. Our research provides insight into a subset of LA residents' experiences of, and priorities for, the Los Angeles River Revitalization.

## **STRUCTURE OF PRACTICUM**

As a part of the Environmental Science curriculum at UCLA's Institute of Environment & Sustainability (IoES), all graduating seniors must conduct a yearlong research project, known as the Senior Practicum. The program pairs teams of students with a faculty member or IoES affiliate. These teams then select a project to pursue. Each year a variety of clients present potential projects pertaining to environmental systems and sustainability problems. This year included governmental agencies, NGOs, businesses, and prominent institutions such as the Natural Resources Defense Council, Los Angeles (LA) Fire Department, LA Waterkeeper, Bludso's Bar & Que, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Waitt Foundation.

Our cohort, also known as "River's 8," consisted of seven team members: Andrew Nguyen, Camila Tipan, Corey Ly, James Javelosa, Kamryn Kubose, Nathan Lopez, and Scott Brown. Partnering with our IoES faculty advisor Dr. Liz Koslov and our client Melissa Von Mayrhauser of LA Waterkeeper, our research team focused on assessing community perceptions of impacts caused by continuing and future development of the LA River. Particularly, we explored the gaps between the current planning process, holistic river management, and community engagement.

Fall Quarter (September 2018 to December 2018) consisted of conducting background research and pertinent literature reviews regarding river revitalizations in general (See Appendix D for literature reviews). Some topics explored included River history and jurisdiction, urban renewal and gentrification, current plans for the river, and past case studies.

During Winter Quarter (January 2019 to March 2019) our team focused on developing a research plan (See Methodology & Results) and conducting preliminary research. This included attending meetings hosted by the LA County River Master Plan team (the organization conducting community engagement on behalf of LA County for the River



Master Plan update), site selection for our own survey, and initial data collection. Additionally, our project proposal was peer-reviewed by respected social researchers Sayd Randle, an environmental anthropologist and current postdoctoral fellow at USC studying water systems and waterscapes in Los Angeles, and Jon Christensen, a professor at UCLA, journalist-in-residence at IoES, and founder of the Laboratory for Environmental Narrative Strategies.

Spring Quarter (April-June 2019) consisted of data collection and analysis and preparation of our deliverables, which included a website and final report with data from interviews, maps, key findings, and overall discussion. On June 8th, we attended the IoES Environmental Science Practicum Presentations to share our findings with our peers. Lastly, on June 11th, we presented our in depth findings and to LA Waterkeeper at their headquarters in Santa Monica, CA.

## PRACTICUM OBJECTIVES

This Practicum is unique in that our client, LA Waterkeeper, gave us a great deal of autonomy over the direction of our research, while suggesting some important topics to explore, such as existing community relationships to the River and perceptions of climate change and flood risk. Because of this, our team was able to dive deep into the LA River in all of its complexities and decide for ourselves how to structure our research.

Informed by current scientific literature, our team realized that Revitalization efforts can have potentially large impacts on the environment and public health of nearby communities. We were specifically interested in negative consequences of River Revitalization, such as “green gentrification” and displacement, and how the dominant data collection methods deployed by official planning entities may be inadequate to capture the full range of community concerns—as well as more positive visions and potential alternatives. Our advisor Dr. Liz Koslov, whose background is in social research and ethnographic methods, provided direction to our team and ultimately refined our practical goals for the project to include:

1. Obtain qualitatively rich types of data about perceptions of LA River Revitalization efforts that were previously unable to be obtained through conventional survey methods.

2. Present our findings to LA Waterkeeper and other stakeholders in an attempt to influence ongoing community engagement and decision-making by River planning officials.
3. Share with community members our research findings, facts about climate change and flood risk, and ways they can get more involved in the planning process.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Our research aimed to answer two main questions:

1. What gaps in geography and subject matter exist in LA River community survey efforts?
2. What can alternative approaches to community surveying reveal about community members' relationship to the River and current planning efforts?

The first question sought to determine which communities and subject matter have been excluded from previous Revitalization surveying efforts. Those whose voices, for whatever reason, were not represented in existing surveys could, we believe, provide valuable and necessary insight based on their experiences and connections to the River. The second question worked to fill these gaps and to highlight both the findings and broader implications of doing so.

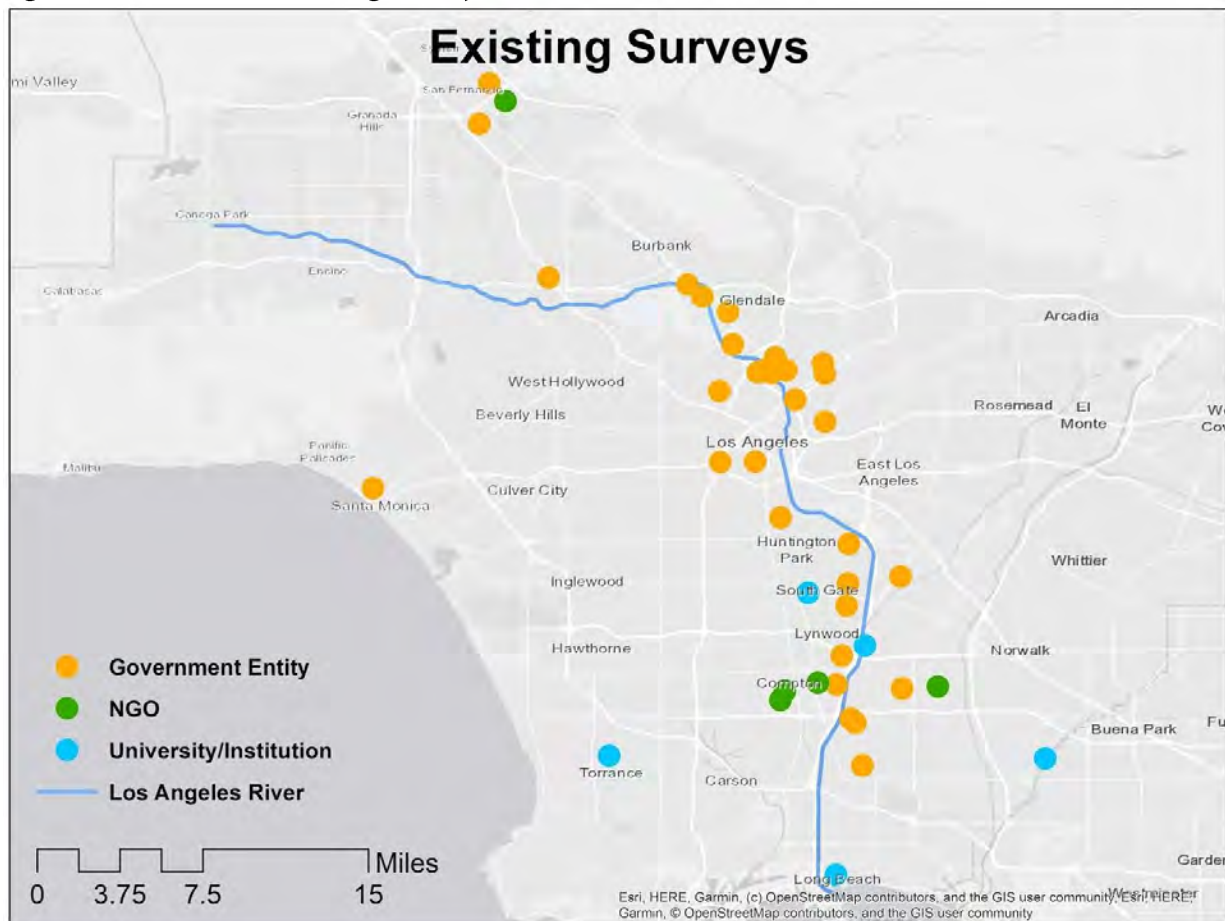
There are many stakeholders involved with Revitalization efforts. Numerous organizations have their own visions for the River, with some of these visions in direct conflict. Furthermore, some visions do not take into consideration the wants and needs of the people who live near the River already and would be the most impacted by the Revitalization. By exploring both how outreach has been conducted and new methods of data collection, we provide a framework that foregrounds the thoughts and concerns of the communities surrounding the River—regardless of their level of formal involvement in Revitalization planning. This approach allowed us to develop ideas for how to improve future community engagement so that it is more inclusive, able to better encompass and represent the visions of all the communities surrounding the River. In the end, we plan to publish our results online and provide input to the future LA County Master Plan.

Our full research proposal may be found in the Appendix E. The proposal split our research into four phases. The first focused on locating and identifying the existing community survey data collected as part of River Revitalization planning. Upon completion, phase two included selecting sites along the River that needed further

research. These were identified by locating communities that had few completed projects, surveys, or community engagement events regarding Revitalization efforts. Phase three included creating our own interview questions and having our research proposal peer reviewed. In addition to our client, Jon Christensen and Sayd Randle identified areas that needed more clarification within our proposal. Lastly, phase four consisted of selecting our target site, South Gate, and conducting data collection and analysis.

## EXISTING SURVEY ANALYSIS

Figure 1: Locations of Existing Surveys



As previously mentioned, our team aimed to understand what community surveys were already conducted and what they found. Our methods included researching project plans, studies, and papers published online that included some component of

community outreach. Some surveys were found via recommendation from our client and other academics. This included those by a variety of government agencies, universities, non-profits, and consulting firms. From there we refined our findings to include only surveys that were conducted for the sole purpose of gaining public input. Some were excluded on the basis that they were out of the scope of our project (e.g., ecological surveys), had no published results, or were still being conducted.

Figure 1 depicts the approximate locations that were the focus of Revitalization surveys. The points were made using Google Maps, exported as KML data, and edited in ArcMap. Some of the surveys have exact locations, but many listed entire cities as their study site. It is important to note that this map does not represent every survey since some did not list locations or were conducted online without a geographic focus.

## METHODOLOGY & RESULTS

The most common types of questions that appeared in existing social surveys on the River were as follows: rate, multiple choice, and check-all-that-apply. These surveys were distributed via posters, tabling, online websites, and affiliate organizations. The majority of these methods allow respondents to select from a few predefined options, but do not have much room to include personal experience or divergent viewpoints. As a result, surveyed participants are typically unable to expand on *why* they made their selections.

The surveys we analyzed were conducted by a broad range of government agencies, NGOs, universities, and from 2002 to 2018. Most surveys were conducted online; some were distributed in public spaces or at public events.

*Figure 2: Methodology of Existing Surveys*

Type of Questions	# of surveys
Rate	6
Multiple Choice	3
Check all that apply	1
<b>Survey Distribution</b>	
Online	5
In Person	4
Poster	1
Tabling or Booth	1



## THEMES & RESULTS

Surveys that were completed but not publicly available were not part of our analysis. As such this may skew our results. However, from the surveys we were able to find and analyze, a majority focused primarily on access and uses of the LA River. Six of the nine surveys analyzed contained questions that focused on gauging how respondents interacted with and used the river. Some example questions include:

What keeps you and members of your household from visiting the LA River? (Place dot)

- ☐ Concerns of safety
- ☐ Lack of restrooms
- ☐ Not well lit

...

How do you use existing LA River Path? (check all that apply)

- ☐ Recreation
- ☐ Commuting
- ☐ Exercise

...

Does anything discourage you from using the Los Angeles River Bicycle Path / the river? (check all that apply)

- ☐ It is hard for me to get to the path / river (either by walking, biking, taking transit, or driving)
- ☐ People on wheels go too fast
- ☐ I feel unsafe along the path / river Trail /
- ☐ river is poorly maintained

...

- ☐ Other:

Six surveys focused on access to the river. This included questions such as: How long do you travel to visit the river? What keeps you from visiting the river? Some questions within a survey did not ask explicitly about access, but responses show that access is a motivating factor for many respondents. For example, in the G2 Taylor Yard River Park Project Survey, “Access to Nature” was the highest requested park feature (other options include walking/hiking trails, scenic views, habitat areas, playgrounds, event space). Four surveys, all conducted by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro), centered on completing the LA River bike path.

Surveys included input on possible designs, locations, and entry points. We classified these as transportation-related surveys. Other themes that were found, but not in large proportion, included safety, homelessness, recreation, education/programming, gentrification, and public health (see Appendix A for existing surveys). Notably absent from existing surveys were questions dealing with climate change or concerns about flooding.

The results of existing surveys expressed that most respondents use the River to walk, bike, and horseback ride. Most respondents (91% in Compton Creek Trails Community Assessment, 19% in LA River Master Plan) also expressed that if the river was safer, cleaner, and well-maintained they are more inclined to use it more. Only one survey specifically mentioned safety from gang activity. The Taylor Yard survey was the only survey that included responses from residents that wanted more native planting and biofiltration elements. It was also the only survey where education on the River's history was an important feature. An interesting survey to note is the LA River Ranger Plan. The survey consisted of both an online survey and in-person poster activity. Concerning the role of a river ranger, it is interesting to note that online survey results showed that the rangers' highest priority should be care for natural resources. In-person poster results showed that safety and maintenance should be prioritized. This further underscored the importance of our research as public opinions can vary based on engagement methodology.

*Figure 3: How Surveys were Distributed*

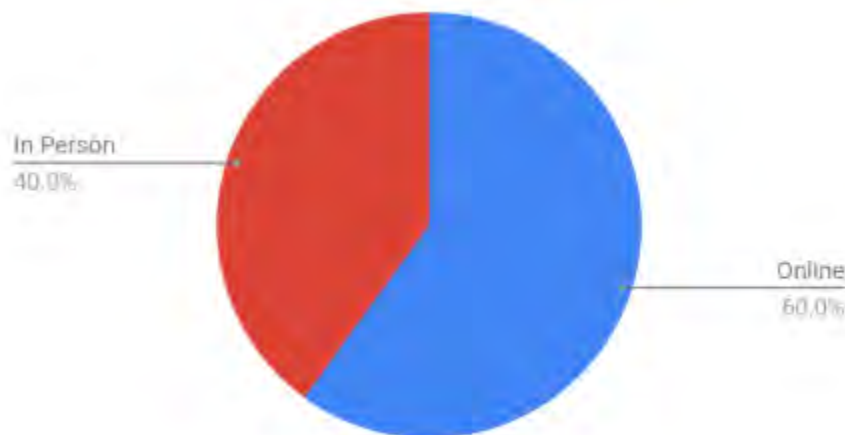


Figure 4: Who Conducted The Survey

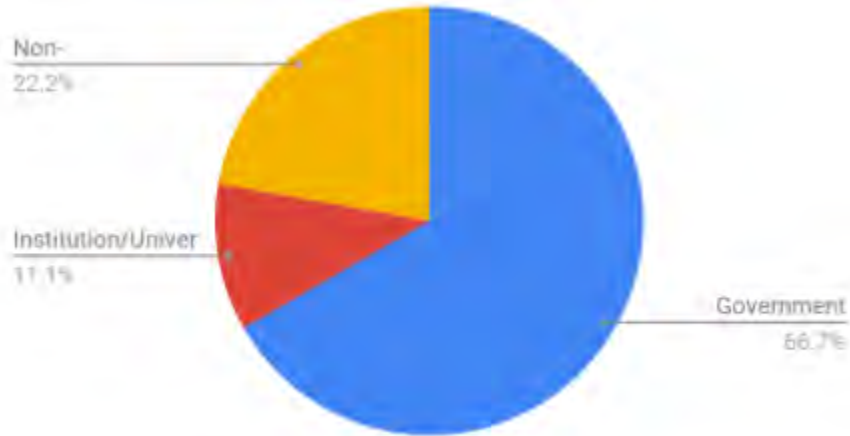


Figure 5: Themes of Existing River Surveys

	Themes								
	Access	Uses and Interactions with the River	Transportation	Safety/Homelessness	Recreation	Environment	Education and Programming	Gentrification and Displacement	Public Health
<b>Survey Name</b>									
Los Angeles River Master Plan Community Meeting				✓		✓			
Taylor Yard, River Park Project Community Survey		✓							
Metro LA River Path Project Feasibility Study	✓	✓	✓		✓				
Metro LA River Path Project Survey	✓	✓	✓		✓				
Los Angeles River Ranger Plan Survey		✓		✓			✓		
Lower Los Angeles River Revitalization: An Inclusive Approach to Planning, Implementation, and Community Engagement	✓	✓						✓	
Compton Creek Trails Community Assessment			✓				✓		✓
Northeast LA Riverfront Collaborative Resident and Small Business Surveys	✓	✓		✓					
Your LA River Path	✓		✓						

## OUR INTERVIEWS

After looking at existing surveys, we decided to take a qualitative and more ethnographic approach that focused on gaining the unfiltered perspectives of community members, including those heretofore uninvolved in the Revitalization or unaware of its existence. This meant structuring our form of data collection as in-person interviews and in-situ observation rather than surveys, to allow a broad range of respondents to answer questions in an open-ended manner.

Martinez, Verplanke, and Miscione (2016) adapt the emic/etic dichotomy to planning activities in a way that is helpful in understanding our motivation for collecting open-ended responses. Etic refers to the view of the expert in planning matters. It is informed by research and can be reached by any combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Conversely, emic denotes the perspective of the community subject to study, which is informed by everyday experience. In the context of urban planning and community engagement, “social” research means any research that focuses on data that is emic—that is, sourced from and representative of the community. Analysis of dialogue and behavior in a community (emic) is a useful cross-reference to data collected using expert-driven methods (etic). Mixing methods in research provides at least three advantages: it broadens the range of questions that can be answered, it increases the potential that data will represent a greater diversity of divergent views, and it strengthens inferences (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

As we progressed with data collection, we refined our interviews to center on three main questions. These helped guide the conversation and allowed us to engage people who did not have much time to talk. We also found people were more willing to answer questions if they knew exactly what they were getting themselves into. These three questions were designed to be open ended and allow for nuance among responses. More specifically, our questions asked:

1. Describe your relationship with the LA River, or any memorable experiences you’ve had with the river.
2. Have you heard of the current restoration efforts, and what type of efforts would you implement?
3. What are your thoughts on climate change and flood control in regards to the River?



## OUR SELECTED CITY: SOUTH GATE

Due to the River crossing through various jurisdictions, plans for its restoration varied greatly and sites along the River show these differing priorities. Informed by our existing surveys analysis, we identified five locations along the River that were potential candidates for further research.

These five sites include the neighborhoods of Reseda, Boyle Heights, South Gate, Maywood, and North Long Beach. After further researching these communities, our team narrowed down our research to the South Gate community. Sites located in the northern sections of the River featured more completed projects, while sections in the south are still currently in the planning phases. This presented an opportunity to focus our research on areas where changes to project plans can still be made. South Gate was selected due to its demographics, previous engagement attempts, and future plans. South Gate is home to 90,000 residents with more than 90% being Hispanic. In addition to this, the average and median household income is lower than that of LA County (South Gate: \$48,312, LA County: \$60,197) (Los Angeles County, 2018).

While not officially confirmed, future plans for South Gate include: capping the river, placing a park above the river, creating an urban orchard, or creating a cultural center ([Critic, n.d.](#)). Our team is concerned that the general public may be unaware of these plans or other future plans to drastically alter the River. Since South Gate has had few surveys and only a few projects completed (See Figure 1) we chose this location to collect data. Additionally, our client and one team member had numerous community contacts that aided our efforts. Specifically, Camila Tipan grew up in the neighboring city of Downey. Her local knowledge allowed us to not only communicate better with residents but also contextualize the data we collected.

## RESULTS

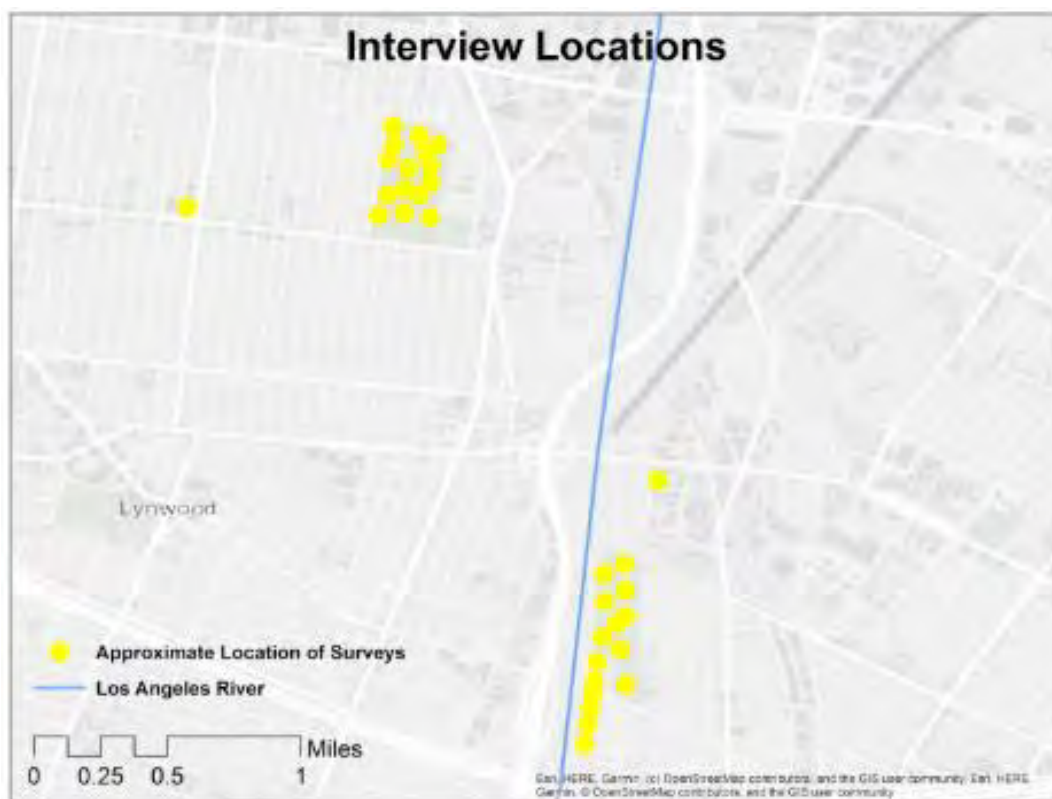
### INTERVIEW METHODS AND SAMPLE SIZE DISCUSSION

Before we get into the results, it's important to address the issue of sample size. While our research mainly focused on South Gate, we did not intend to capture a representative sample of South Gate residents. Rather, our goal was to collect qualitative data in an ethnographic manner that lends itself to generating insights and hypotheses

for further study. We are not making generalizable claims about people's perceptions of LA River Revitalization efforts but striving to understand a diversity of more nuanced views not yet captured by existing surveys.

We began interviews in April (04/12/2019) and concluded in May (05/23/2019). A total of 41 people were interviewed, primarily in South Gate Park, Hollydale Regional Park, and Tweedy Mile. Some interviewees were referred to us by our advisor and client. One of the interviewees requested that their information was excluded for confidentiality purposes and we were forced to turn down many others due to language barriers.

*Figure 6. Interview Locations*



## CATEGORIES

The people we interviewed fell into four categories: "Voices of Influence," "River Frequenters," "Other Researchers," and "River Adjacent Residents." Voices of Influence included South Gate business managers, workers, government officials, and NGO members. River Frequenters included residents of South Gate, visitors to Hollydale Park, and attendees at the South Gate Earth Day event on April 13th. Other Researchers included faculty and graduate students working on a topic related to LA River

Revitalization efforts. River Adjacent Residents included those who live directly alongside the River, specifically near Hollydale Park.

## KEY FINDINGS

### THEME 1: SAFETY

Twenty-six of the total forty-one we interviewed brought up the safety (lighting, flooding, homelessness, crime) of the River as a concern. Safety took on different meanings from person to person. Interviewees wanted Revitalization efforts to include different plans in order to address safety concerns. For example, when asked about personal relationships and encounters with the River, one of our interviewees said:

*“So the most [experience I’ve had is], I’ve biked it once but I thought it was scary because it’s very dark and there’s not a lot of access points so you’ll go in, in certain ways, but then you have to go really far to be able to go back out. So I kind of didn’t do that after that [experience].”*

When asked about the River restoration she suggested: *“Make it, like put lights so it’s not so scary.”*

Of those that brought up safety as a concern, twelve specifically have the impression of the River as a dark and frightening place, a place where they question their safety. The addition of lights would be beneficial in order to increase safety.

Other people were concerned about the dangers the River poses due to its structure:

*“Pues, siempre se preocupa uno porque veces hay niños se pueden resbalar como está así la cuneta se pueden resbalar y se puede ahogar o se puede perder y a no van a ver. (Well, one is always worried a bit because sometimes there are kids that can slip because of the ditch, they can slip and drown or get lost.)” (River Frequenter)*

This is particularly dangerous during flash floods where the River grows in height and the water is rushing past at high speeds. This is a valid concern as in 2016 two teenage boys drowned in the River by Highland Park. “Police said the pair may have ended up in the Los Angeles River after one fell in and his friend tried to save him” (Mather, n.d.). There was another instance in 2006 where a 14 year-old boy drowned by Glassell Park

("Families of two teenage best friends who drowned in L.A. River share stories and tears - Los Angeles Times," n.d.).

Other interviewees framed their concerns about safety in relation to crime or homelessness. When asking a park-goer if he had heard about Revitalization efforts he talked about a couple "run-ins" he experienced with gangs as well as with homeless people, linking these to his concerns about Revitalization efforts:

*"[It would be like I just said], people that live under the bridges and just tend to you know be around there when they're not supposed to and just claim as their own little spot in their territory and they tend to get pretty aggressive, so I can only imagine what's it gonna be like when they actually have little recreational centers that they can actually take over and you know have their own little renowned spot you know so it's like who's it really gonna be for? There has to be eyes there, there has to be constant surveillance definitely because it's just it's just currently like I don't see it as a safe place. I wouldn't let my kids or younger relatives go out there and you know trust them to be out there safe when I've been there myself and know what it's like you know?" (Voice of Influence)*

This person feels threatened by those living in the River and sees them as invaders or even colonizers. He even feels the need to protect others from the River's environment. His suggestion to make the River a safer place was installing emergency blue-light phones, like those on college campuses. Another interviewee similarly saw the homeless population as a threat to his safety:

*"También me doy cuenta que hay mucho malandrín. Entonces, no se si lo que quiera hacer la ciudad o el gobierno [es] hacerlo como parque, no se, para que los malandrines no vayan para allá. Por eso no voy yo, porque sé que me puede pasar algo." (I've also noticed that there are a lot of scoundrels [referring to the homeless population]. So I don't know if what the city or the government wants to do are parks so that scoundrels don't go there. That's why I don't go, because I know they can harm me.) (River Frequenter)*

This man's main concern was what would happen to him at the River. When asked what South Gate could do to solve this problem, he thought that the issue of homelessness was not one that South Gate, through Revitalization efforts or otherwise, could solve or improve:



*“La realidad, no puedes porque yo pienso que eso ya viene de familia. De los padres o algo. Si les dan buena educación no se tienen a... osea como ustedes. Vas a UCLA, tienes tu mente fijada en un punto. Tu, si vives aqui, talves ya no vives aquí porque vas a económicamente estar más bien. Si yo vivo aquí es porque aquí puedo pagar mi casa pero a mi me gustaría vivir en otro lado.” (To be honest, I don’t think so because I think that’s something you learn with your family, with your parents or something. If you have a good education you don’t have these problems. Like you guys you go to UCLA, you have your mind fixed on a goal. If you live here, maybe you won’t live here because economically you’ll be better off. I live here because I can pay my house here, but I would like to live somewhere else.)(River Frequenter)*

He believes that homelessness is a cultural or social problem, and thus disconnected from Revitalization planning efforts. By contrast, other respondents framed homelessness as a potential result of River Revitalization, expressing concerns not about homeless populations possibly harming other river-goers but about the adverse effects that Revitalization could have on the houseless populations that currently call the River and nearby areas home:

*[When asked about building new parks or amenities ] “But then you're taking them out of there, and of course they are gonna make [the new park] their new home because they were not guided to where they can get help. We are taking them out of where they call home and you're gonna place a park for instance, of course they are gonna make it their home. Now if we direct them somewhere, where they can get help, housing, or whatever... then they won't be there in the park.” (River Frequenter)*

This person sees that Revitalization would displace people who are homeless and would rather see them be helped than simply removed. Not everyone views unhoused people as a nuisance or threat, but rather as subject to broader social problems that require public aid, and take steps to ameliorate the problem.

The three primary safety concerns we identified stemmed from design features (lack of lighting and access points, the concrete channel and associated dangers of falling or drowning in the River, and crime or fear of crime as linked to homelessness and desire for more surveillance). These three issues recurred when those we interviewed explained why they hesitated to view the River as a resource or see the inherent benefit of

Revitalization projects that expanded public space without associated attention to public problems that might continue to dissuade use.

## THEME 2: DON'T KNOW, DON'T CARE

*"I don't know if everyone in the South Gate community is aware that the restoration is even happening. So, I think that was one thing that I would want people to do. Maybe more outreach. I feel like maybe when you're asking people, they're not even aware of the fact that it's being restored." (Voices of Influence)*

A significant amount of interviewees we encountered while out in the community or at local events had a dismissive or ambivalent attitude towards the River. A recurring pattern in conducting our interviews is that people would decline because they felt they weren't informed enough or weren't interested. For every person we interviewed that provided some insight or meaningful discussion on their experiences with the river, there would be at least one person who declined or only provided limited information based on limited experience. Some of the local business owners were not even aware there was a river at all. This is notable because people who are not aware of restoration efforts or changes to the River will be unlikely to attend community meetings or fill out a survey regarding Revitalization plans—even if those plans are set to affect them in critical ways. The lack of information about River issues we found among South Gate residents points towards partial or inadequate community engagement efforts on behalf of planning entities. Many interviewees felt they did not have a motivation to visit the river, or actively avoided it for other reasons. South Gate locals like these who are not aware of the River are not inclined to stay informed about Revitalization issues, and thus have been left out of both current and future visions for River use. Those who reported visiting the River mainly did so for recreational purposes or were just passing through on their way to other places:

*"We know the LA River is there but it's kind of like part of our daily transit rather than our daily lifestyle." - (Voices of Influence)*

To many South Gate residents we interviewed, the River played a passive rather than active role in their lives and daily experience. Most interviewees were unaware of development plans for the River. Almost none were able to name a Revitalization project; those who discussed Revitalization by name often belonged to organizations that worked on the River. The River's presence in South Gate was characterized by one interviewee officially engaged in River planning as "divisive," yet respondents often did not feel that the River or the Revitalization played a role in their daily lives. When asked about the

potential benefits of a revitalized River in his community, a local business owner felt it wouldn't make a difference to him:

*"There's nothing to use in the River...I'm not going to see any benefit out of it. Where we are here, this is just my office. This is my work. I'm not going to see any benefit of it." (Voice of Influence - Local Business Owner)*

The perception of Revitalization as something that has no personal benefits is another major roadblock in community engagement. If community members don't feel like this issue is important to them or will have an effect on them, they are unlikely to participate in the planning process. Without an incentive, the immediate threat of things getting worse for them, or a connection to the issues and concerns they face in daily life, community members will not feel compelled to voice their opinions, much less to form them.

#### **THEME 4: WHO IS THE RIVER FOR?**

*"Well, I mean, I understand what the city and the county and the state are trying to do. I understand that. And I think that in some cases it is a good idea. It's poor execution. Their thought process is good to help these struggling cities and to do these things. But what they're doing is not necessarily going to help... I can almost guarantee that no one in their right mind would want to step foot in the L.A. River" (Voice of Influence - Local Business Owner)*

Conversations around the agents of Revitalization often came up in our interviews. Residents and local business owners expressed their sense that Revitalization plans would not directly benefit them or their communities. Concerns like these raise the question of who is benefitting from Revitalization, if not the neighborhoods adjacent to the River. Respondents who suggested that the plans were not "for" them may not be aware of community outreach efforts to include their opinion, or may not feel that their opinion has weight in the planning process. Responses like these all point towards a lack of community engagement, let alone a community-driven vision for the River's future. The local business owner whose quote is displayed above felt that expanding green space along the River will only attract more people who are homeless. Describing the Revitalization process as "good idea/poor execution" portrays planning entities as unable to engage with the realities of local communities. This connects to a prevalent belief that top-down development does not have the best interests of the community in mind, and can be inappropriate to local context.

*"I mean we have enough parks. We don't need a park. I feel they make too many little parks. People don't really go to them, they just vandalize them." (River Adjacent Resident)*

This resident also questioned the logic of expanding green space along the River. She felt that the City of South Gate (here referred to as "they") is quick to create small, fragmented parks in the community that only attract crime and vandalism. Planning entities do not understand this, and may only believe that additional green space can be a good thing for the communities.

*"That's a big thing that Mayor Garcetti is like all about, like these green jobs. But yeah, not too excited about his sustainability plan. Not unless you have a bunch of native advisors that I'd feel like then we're going to do justice to this word sustainability and this concept of, you know, regeneration. Restoration. Revitalization. Yeah. We need more native people at the table, as many as possible." (Voice of Influence)*

The exclusion of native voices is one example of the way planning entities may fail to engage with marginalized communities in the planning process. A researcher we interviewed expressed concerns that although the River runs through the homeland of her people (the Tongva Gabrielino Tribe), her inputs in the planning process are tokenized at best. The source of "expert" knowledge, in her opinion, should not come from government planners, but from those who are sensitive to local context, and especially those who have inhabited the River and its banks for a far more significant amount of time than the City of Los Angeles. Again, she expresses the idea that planning entities assume that they have or can collect knowledge that will provide them with the ideal plan for the River, one that will benefit all parties equally, whereas this is not occurring in practice.

## **METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS AND OVERALL CONCLUSIONS**

To reiterate the purpose of our project, our team sought to explore the difference in opinions and concerns about the LA River that emerged through the use of different methods. Specifically we sought to understand how survey methods and interview methods shape the kind of responses received from residents and others with a stake

in the River's future. The disjuncture between the two is apparent when it comes to what people considered important for Revitalization. According to our analysis of prior surveys, the two most common concerns related to access and the environment from ranked choice format questions. That is respondents cared most about opening access and increasing signage to the River. Additionally, strategies to create habitat and vegetated areas, trails, and clean areas was a common request.

Given this information from previous community surveys, it would be expected that residents of South Gate would share these concerns to a certain degree. But our findings diverge greatly from those who have previously been surveyed. The foremost concern that residents expressed related to the broader problem of homelessness, and what effect Revitalization would have in increasing or displacing the present homeless population on the River. This issue may be only experienced by residents of South Gate, but given that Revitalization plans are expansive, it is important they make room for local issues to be addressed (though homelessness is a region-wide and growing issue) (Stiles & Ruben, 2019). As such, South Gate provides a key case study as to how survey methods can overlook—intentionally or not—certain barriers to future development that may be given a voice in other fora. It may also very well be that homelessness is such a prevalent issue city and county-wide that Revitalization planners have explicitly discounted the issue, leaving it up to other agencies of government to solve. This compartmentalization, while efficient, may not be feasible in regards to the River. As many residents have expressed, if Revitalization plans are completed without regard for homeless residents, these residents may end up displaced and further victimized or, according to the fears of some, may end up vandalizing or dissuading broad use of newly built amenities. Given that removing homeless encampments and seizing property are not viable strategies to tackle homelessness (Chiland, 2019) the success of Revitalization plans may rely on housing people beforehand or in tandem. It was one limitation of our study that we did not interview unhoused residents themselves, to understand their knowledge of the River and views of the Revitalization process.

An issue that seemed of very little concern amongst our respondents and the existing surveys we analyzed was that of climate change and flooding. No interviewee brought up the issue on their own. Only when prompted did they talk about it. Even of the four residents we spoke to who have seen the River flood, all believe that the government has the issue under control or that the region typically does not receive enough rain to warrant flooding. Only when followed up with the fact that the historical floodplain has been transformed through many infrastructural interventions, do interviewees reconsider this assumption. Such flood amnesia –and now climate silence – is left

unchallenged and even at times reinforced by current planning efforts ([de Vries, 2011](#)). Many plans explicitly state that all flood control capacities of the River would be maintained if Revitalization plans continued, but make no attempt to utilize or highlight any strategies ensure this in light of climate change's increasing risks. This may be intentional so as to not fill plans with technical details. But much like residents, flood control seems to be taken for granted in that the Army Corp of Engineers, Public Works, and/or a future government agency would still maintain the flood control aspects of the River. This represents another both political and temporal compartmentalization that may prove costly in the future.

Given the disconnect between current plans, associated surveys, and residents' concerns as we encountered them during our semi-structured interviewing and in-situ observation, our team has developed three main strategies for future engagement efforts to consider:

**Utilizing Interview Methods** - As the data have shown, open-ended interviews provide the opportunity to express very localized issues as well as greater nuance around topics of widely shared concern. As plans may be trans-city it is important to address how regional concerns such as homelessness impact particular sites. Additionally, ethnographic interview methods is a useful tool to reach people who are otherwise unaware. Many interviewees had very little to no knowledge of Revitalization plans. This potentially serves as another tool to have unengaged persons to have an avenue of input. But as we have experienced, it is important to conduct interviews in both Spanish and English as people refused to be interviewed due to the language barrier.

**Actively Engage and Prioritize Marginalized Groups** - Flooding and climate change seem to be issues that many residents do not see as connected. Further educational outreach on this matter would help Revitalization efforts align more closely with what communities want, once they are informed.

**Clarify Revitalization Goals** - Finally we believe that future plans should engage conflicts about who and what the River and associated development is and should be for. Much speculation about why the government is revitalizing the River at all speaks an ongoing lack of transparency despite existing outreach efforts (Critic. n.d.). Opinions range from viewing the Revitalization as a real estate scheme to a political tool for re-election. Given the longevity of the project, and at times lack of progress, it is vital for planners to reiterate—and be open to transforming—project goals and targets. Having



more specific, realistic, and locally oriented goals can provide the necessary support for project sustainability and viability.

In conclusion, Revitalization efforts have the potential to provide residents with amenities such as recreation and green space. But there is a missed opportunity to address local concerns that are not within the current scope of many projects. Addressing these can not only help solve them, but provide public support for Revitalization planning more broadly. There is a tremendous amount of investment in the idea of restoring the River. But projects may do little to result in meaningful impacts if aspects of community engagement are ignored. As such we hope our research will add to the body of knowledge that would not only help these projects succeed but also connect residents to them in ways that see the LA River become, once again, the heart of a thriving set of human and ecological communities. ■

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: EXISTING SURVEYS

Here we will provide the surveys that we found online, with a summary of each one. At the end of this appendix, we provided tables to show our analysis of types of conducting organizations, themes and/or topics, and methodology (types of questions and distribution).

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### Los Angeles River Master Plan Community Meeting, Cudahy

- Government Entity
- *Location:* Cudahy, Bell Gardens (90201), South Gate (90280) & small numbers from others
- *Themes:* Environment (protect plant & animal species), safety (address homelessness), access points, water supply -- most important issues of attendees
- *Methodology:* In-person engagement. Rate (most important), closed-ended, open-ended
- *Date:* August 2018. Mostly focusing on present and future, while addressing/informing attendees about past (flooding)
- *Significant Results*
  - What keeps you and members of your household from visiting the LA River?
    - Safety concerns 19%
  - What is the highest you have seen the water level in the river?
    - Up to the tops of banks/levees 49%
  - What would you do with the low flow water in the river?
    - Reduce the flow of water down the channel and recharge the groundcover to increase water supply 56%
  - Where have you observed animals along the LA River?
    - Lower part of River 60%

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### Taylor Yard, River Park Project Community Survey

- Government Entity (City of LA)
- *Location:* Glassell Park (90065), Cypress Park, Northeast Los Angeles, Silver Lake: 59% of total responses received were reported from within a 3.5 mile radius of the Project
- *Themes:* Park design input. Interaction/relationship with River
- *Methodology:* Online survey. Rate, closed-ended
- *Date:* August 2018
- *Significant results:*
  - “The community clearly understood the historical importance of the site and the location on the Los Angeles River. Specifically, for types of Educational Elements, River History was overwhelmingly the most frequent selection with 44% of respondents requesting this type of feature (Figure 8).”
  - River access and trails were the most requested natural space, over 40%.
  - Sustainability elements questions: native planting and biofiltration were the most requested of the respondents, 50% each.

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### Metro LA River Path Project Feasibility Study

- Government Entity (Metro LA)
- *Location:* Focuses on feasibility, potential usage of 8-mile gap in bike paths through Elysian Valley, Vernon, Downtown, Maywood
- *Themes:* Personal usage, accessibility, transportation, recreational activities

- *Methodology*: Online survey. rate/number scale type questions
- *Date*: October 2017; focuses on present/future aspects of river restoration
- *Significant Results*: Not published/available

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#### Metro LA River Path Project Survey

- Government Entity (Metro LA)
- *Location*: Focuses on the design of 8-mile gap in bike paths through Elysian Valley, Downtown, Maywood
- *Themes*: Personal usage, transportation, accessibility, recreational activities
- *Methodology*: Online survey. Rate/number type, multiple choice gives the respondent the ability to view different design choices for the river
- *Date*: Ongoing
- *Significant Results*: Not published/available

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#### Los Angeles River Ranger Plan Survey

- Government Entity (LA River Ranger Pilot Project)
- *Location*: Communities adjacent to middle and upper river: North Hollywood, Pacoima, San Fernando, Compton, Houghton Park, Bixby Knolls, Glassell Park, Lynwood, South Gate, Paramount, Elysian Valley, Santa Monica
- *Themes*: Roles of a “River Ranger”, usage, safety concerns, education
- *Methodology*: Online surveys, in-person engagement at community meetings (posters), Rate/number scale type questions
- *Date*: May 2018
- *Significant Results*:
  - 28% of respondents visit the river to walk, 16% to bicycle, 15% to enjoy the view
  - Respondent priorities differed from poster to paper survey:
    - Survey responses:
      - Role of ranger - Care for natural resources, safety, maintenance, educational programs, access + signage, recreations, peace officer
      - Safety concerns - trash, maintenance, pollution, lighting, crime, other
    - Poster responses:
      - Role of ranger - safety, maintenance, access + signage, recreation, education programs, peace officer
      - Safety concerns - trash, pollution, maintenance, crime, lighting, other

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#### Lower Los Angeles River Revitalization: An Inclusive Approach to Planning, Implementation, and Community Engagement

- Report by Masters in Urban Planning candidate at UCLA, prepared for client Urban Federal Waters Partnership
- *Location*: South Gate, Hollydale Park; Long Beach, Del Amo Blvd
- *Themes*: Gentrification/Displacement, Community Access, Use Patterns of Public Space
- *Methodology*: Tabling/Booth setup, 7 closed-ended (check all that apply) questions, 2 open- ended questions
- *Date*: April 2017; Focused on present and future use
- *Significant Results*:
  - 71% Health and Exercise, 25% Recreation
  - Walking, Biking, Jogging - main uses of the river

- Wants - better security most important, more amenities, improved maintenance

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#### Compton Creek Trails Community Assessment

- NGO: Rails-to-Trails Conservancy Project Team
  - *Location:* Compton
  - *Themes:* Transportation, Programming and Activities, Obesity and Public Health
  - *Methodology:*
    - a. The study area includes the half-mile on each side of the creek and is roughly bounded by El Segundo Boulevard on the north, Greenleaf Boulevard on the south, Willowbrook Avenue on the east, and Central Avenue and Wilmington Avenue on the West
    - b. Survey distributed by affiliated organizations: INMED LA, Compton Jr. Posse, Washington Elementary Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and the Compton High School Recycling Club
  - *Date:* 2010; focuses on current uses
  - *Significant Results*

Some of the significant findings were that many residents were not aware of the existence of the trail, yet a large portion indicated they would use the trail if it were safe and convenient to do so - 80 respondents

    - a. 91% would use the Trail or use it more if maintenance, safety and cleanliness issues were addressed
    - b. Current Uses 55% Walking, 37.5% horseback riding, 30% biking
- 

#### Northeast LA River Riverfront Collaborative (NELA RC) resident and small business surveys

- *Location:* 11-mile River stretch in NELA known as Glendale Narrows near Atwater Village, Cypress Park, Elysian Valley, Glassell Park, and Lincoln Heights
  - *Themes:* Perceptions (safety), access points, relationships to the River, and much more about demographic data
  - *Methodology:* Not completely clear, but seems very likely that they are close ended questions/multiple choice
  - *Date:* Summer 2014, focuses on present and somewhat past aspects of the River
  - *Results:*
    - When asked if they spent time by the L.A. River, 61 percent responded yes as
    - When asked how the survey respondents traveled to get to the river, the top responses were 71 percent by walking, 27 percent by bike, and 23 percent by car
    - The majority of respondents believed making the River cleaner, 40 percent, and safer, 20 percent, would make them spend more time by the River.
    - When asked about the one biggest problem in their neighborhood, residents from the different neighborhoods had very similar responses, with gangs being the top response
    - See map for access points
- 

#### Your LA River Path

- Online so anyone, the survey focused on a project to develop the path between Elysian Valley and the City of Vernon
- Pathway, access points
- Choices, ranking/number scale, educational / distributed online
- Currently taking place. Focuses on future aspects of their path project

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The following is a tally of information found above:

#### Conducting Organization

Type of Organization	# of surveys
Government Agency	6
Institution/University	1
Non-governmental Organization	2

#### Themes and Topics of Surveys

Themes or Topics	Frequency of Occurrence
Access	6
Uses and Interaction with the River	6
Transportation	4
Safety/Homelessness	3
Recreation	2
Environment	2
Education and Programming	2
Gentrification and Displacement	1
Public Health	1
Park Design	1

#### Methodology of Surveys

Type of Questions	# of surveys
Rate	6
Multiple Choice	3
Check all that apply	1

Survey Distribution	
Online	5
In Person	4
Poster	1
Tabling or Booth	1

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*The following documents were excluded (specified under each survey/project) from our analysis of surveys on the LA river, but still played a role in informing our understanding of community engagement under the current revitalization paradigm.*

#### The River Project, TUJUNGA WATERSHED

- Pacoima
- NGO
- Ecology, Community Engagement Programming and Education, Public Health
- Tabling, booth, and community surveys in Pacoima
- 2003-2004
- Results
  - Best way to get involvement was through educational programs in primary school. If the kids are interested, the parents will be.
  - Created outdoor education classroom next to the River with a Studio City Elementary School. Outdoor classroom is still used 15 years later.
- Excluded from the analysis because this is a document that mandates community involvement in river-related projects

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#### East Rancho Dominguez Community Plan (LA Parks and Recreation Department)

- Focuses on improving and expanding green spaces in the community of East Rancho Dominguez
- Questionnaires distributed during key community events, focus groups conducted
- February 2016
- Results:
  - Safety was the biggest concern for citizens when visiting parks; greater law enforcement presence is desired
  - Concerned citizens often go to parks outside of the community
  - Youth sports, exercise classes, and arts/culture programming most desired by community members
- Boyle Heights Property Ownership, Displacement, and Recommendation Report — Understanding the Needs of a Neighborhood at a Crossroads by Leadership for Urban Renewal Network
- Los Angeles, Boyle Heights
- Community Involvement, Rent Increases, Age and Ownership, Low Access to Key Information
- The sample size (431) is larger than what is required for a statistically significant sample size (383) for a population the size of Boyle Heights' (~100,000) with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%. The survey is stratified according to gender and age



populations, and was implemented randomly by community promotoras. Close ended questions (multiple-choice).

- The survey took place in early 2018, report published April 2018. The survey is mostly about home ownership and asks about past, present, and future
- Results
  - As the data indicates, Boyle Heights residents seem confident that they will remain in Boyle Heights for a long period of time (table 4), however, the majority of residents in Boyle Heights do not own any form of property in their neighborhood. 86% of survey respondents do not own property, indicating that the census numbers showing renter occupied units has risen in the past two years.
  - A majority of participants expressed that their rents have increased in the past three years and are heavily concerned over future, potential increases. One participant in particular expressed that in order to cover her rent, she has had to share her home with other adult family members (more than one would expect in her space) so that collectively they can afford to remain in their home.
  - One of the reasons for primarily selecting participants between the ages of 35-55 was to further explore an interesting trend in our survey data: a large portion of middle-aged respondents expressed low interest in owning property... A majority of our participants shared horror stories about older people, in Boyle Heights, losing homes they could no longer afford. Our participants grounded their sentiments in these stories and shared their fear of finding themselves in similar situations. Thus our participants were very aware of their age and viewed it as an additional barrier to ownership. Many also believed that passing down their potential homes, for which they would still owe money, would be a burden and not potential assets for their families
  - When asked about housing issues in Boyle Heights, several residents were capable of describing the major trends and experiences of Boyle Heights residents, as well as including terms like “displacement” and “gentrification” in their comments. However, when asked about knowledge regarding the specific processes involved in acquiring property or purchasing a home, fewer participants (if any) were able to contribute accurate information.
- This document was excluded from existing survey analysis because it doesn’t focus specifically on the river, but on expanding green space in a river-adjacent community

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#### Los Angeles River Habitat Enhancement Study and Opportunities Assessment

- Prepared by the Nature Conservancy (NGO), funded by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Grant
- *Location:* Los Feliz Blvd. to Taylor Yard
- *Themes:* “identifying habitat enhancement requirements, opportunities, and constraints in the Elysian Valley of the Los Angeles river”
- *Methodology:* “multi-taxa biological surveys, historical ecology investigation of the Elysian Valley, and a review of historic and existing hydrological and hydraulic conditions”
- *Date:* Published December 2016
- *Significant Results:*
  - “Bringing the various hydrologic plans and possibilities for the watershed into a single integrated vision of system flow characteristics will allow certainty and clarity at the site level for the design of habitat projects anywhere in the River system, including the Conservancy’s study area.”

- “The study area currently has higher flood and much higher dry weather flow rates than its historic condition. These high flow rates are supporting and encouraging non-native and invasive species”
- “Enhancing and increasing the amount of perennial riparian habitat in-stream alone will not create as much biological value as identifying complementary enhancement opportunities outside of the River channel”
- “Land uses adjacent to the River and throughout the watershed are a part of the solution and part of the Los Angeles River’s biological and hydrologic system.”
- Excluded from our analysis because this is an ecological survey, but still reflects health and attitudes towards the river

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#### Long Beach Fish Study

- Friends of the LA River (NGO)
- *Location:* Long Beach
- *Themes:* Environment, pollution, ecology
- *Methodology:* "A survey of fish species composition and abundance at the mouth of the LA river"
- *Date:* June 2016
- *Significant Results:*
  - “We will never return the Los Angeles River to the meandering riparian corridor that historically supported [native species], but we can definitely take action to improve conditions to the point where it would be feasible for native species...to once again recolonize reaches upstream”
  - “It took significant effort to encase the Los Angeles river in concrete many years ago, and ongoing effort to maintain that system. Similarly, it will take significant and coordinated effort to restore the function of the river so that it could once again support native species”
- Excluded from our analysis because this is an ecological survey, but still reflects the health and attitudes towards the river

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#### KCET “How Do You Use the Los Angeles River?”

- KCET, public television
- *Location:* Entire length of river
- *Themes:* Demographics, use, access, observed activities around the river
- *Methodology:* Google form
- *Date:* April 2011
- Excluded from our analysis because no results published

## APPENDIX B: MAPS AND FIGURES

Figure 1: Locations of existing surveys

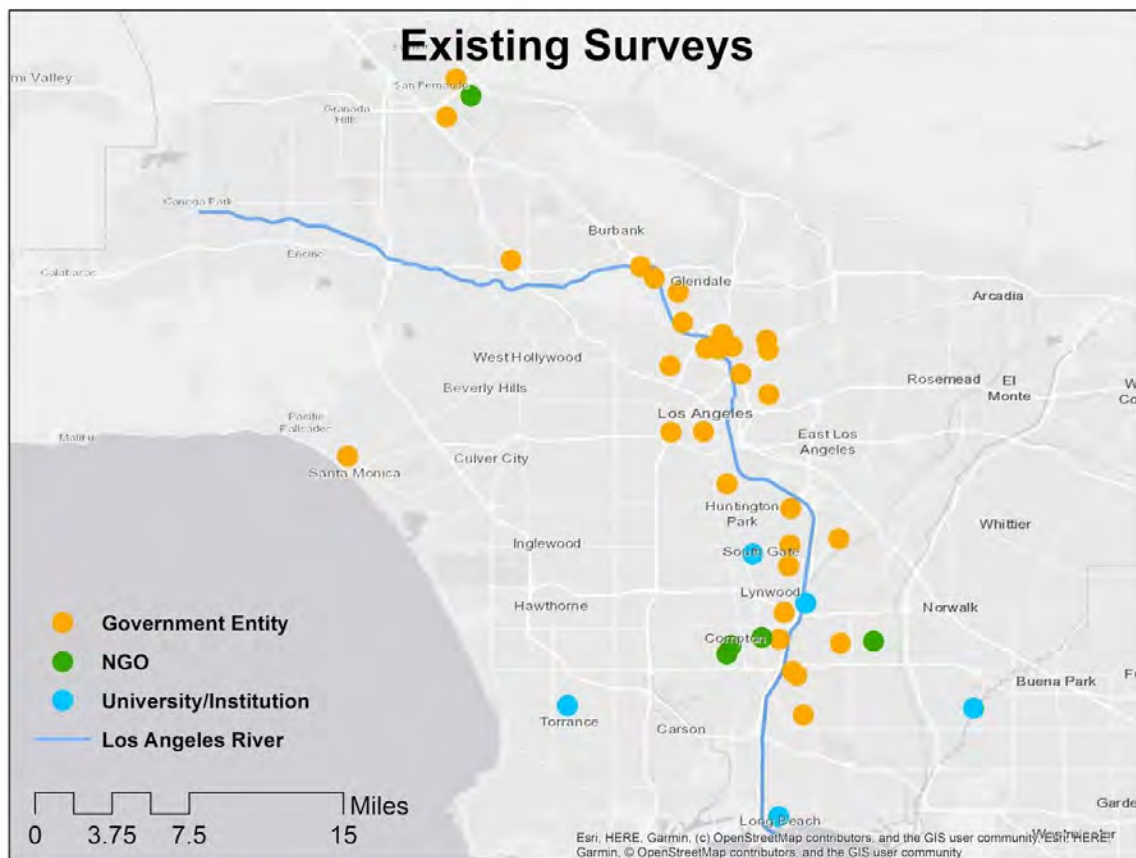


Figure 2: Methodology of Existing Surveys

Type of Questions	# of surveys
Rate	6
Multiple Choice	3
Check all that apply	1
<b>Survey Distribution</b>	
Online	5
In Person	4
Poster	1
Tabling or Booth	1

Figure 3: How Surveys were Distributed

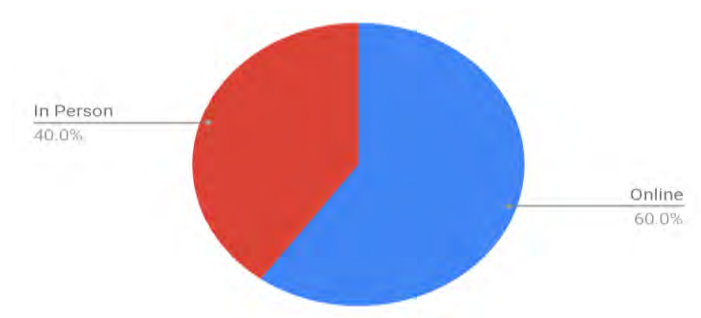


Figure 4: Who Conducted the Survey

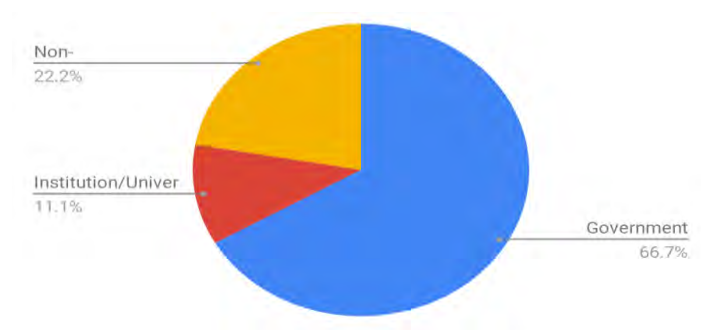


Figure 5: Themes of Existing Surveys

	Themes								
	Access	Uses and Interactions with the River	Transportation	Safety/Homelessness	Recreation	Environment	Education and Programming	Gentrification and Displacement	Public Health
<b>Survey Name</b>									
Los Angeles River Master Plan Community Meeting				√		√			
Taylor Yard, River Park Project Community Survey		√							
Metro LA River Path Project Feasibility Study	√	√	√		√				
Metro LA River Path Project Survey	√	√	√		√				
Los Angeles River Ranger Plan Survey		√		√			√		
Lower Los Angeles River Revitalization: An Inclusive Approach to Planning, Implementation, and Community Engagement	√	√						√	
Compton Creek Trails Community Assessment			√				√		√
Northeast LA Riverfront Collaborative Resident and Small Business Surveys	√	√		√					
Your LA River Path	√		√						

## APPENDIX C: TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEWS

<b>1</b>	Stevie and Marge (Check names)	Voice of Influence	NGO and South Gate Residents	South Gate Park (Earth Day Event)
<b>2</b>	Maricarmen	Voice of Influence	NGO, Client, South Gate Resident	South Gate Park (Earth Day Event)
<b>3</b>	Gladis	Voice of Influence	City of South Gate, Resident	South Gate Park (Earth Day Event)
<b>4</b>	Lane	River Frequenters	Scout Leader, Resident	South Gate Park (Earth Day Event)
<b>5</b>	Rita	River Frequenters	Resident	South Gate Park (Earth Day Event)
<b>6</b>	Leticia Nunez	River Frequenters	Resident of Paramount, Works in South Gate	South Gate Park
<b>7</b>	Melissa	River Frequenters	Resident	South Gate Park (Earth Day Event)
<b>8</b>	Chris	River Frequenters	Downey Resident	Hollydale
<b>9</b>	Olivia Vega	River Frequenters	South Gate Resident	South Gate Park (Earth Day Event)
<b>10</b>	Annette	River Frequenters	Southgate Resident	South Gate Park (Earth Day Event)
<b>11</b>	Cathy & Vinny	River Frequenters	Residents	South Gate Park
<b>12</b>	Elizabeth	River Frequenters	Southgate Resident	Hollydale
<b>13</b>	Steven	Voice of Influence	Business Owner South Gate	Suregrip
<b>14</b>	Nora	Voice of Influence	Business Owner South Gate	Eyebrow
<b>15</b>	Yvette	Voice of Influence	Business Owner South Gate	Boba
<b>16</b>	Cafe China	Voice of Influence	Business Owner South Gate	Cafe China
<b>17</b>	Lucky Manager	Voice of Influence	Business Owner South Gate	Lucky Supermarket
<b>18</b>	Pizza Manager	Voice of Influence	Business Owner South Gate	Little Caesar
<b>19</b>	Foto Studio	Voice of Influence	Business Owner South Gate	Foto Studio
<b>20</b>	Richard Ludt	Voice of Influence	Business Owner South Gate	Interior Removal Specialist
<b>21</b>	Steven	River Frequenters	Resident of Watts	South Gate Park

22	AnMarie (Kamryn)	Other Researchers	UCLA Grad Student	UCLA
23	Hector de la Torre	Voice of Influence	Former councilman of SG	DTLA
24	Manuel	River Frequenters	South Gate Resident	South Gate Park
25	Natividad	River Frequenters	South Gate Resident	South Gate Park
26	<del>Nicholas*</del>		<del>South Gate Resident</del>	<del>South Gate Park</del>
27	Teodoro	River Frequenters	South Gate Resident	South Gate Park
28	Simon	River Frequenters	South Gate Resident	South Gate Park
29	<del>Rodar</del>		<del>South Gate Resident</del>	<del>South Gate Park</del>
30	Alon	Random Encounters	Uber Driver	Uber/Ride
31	Joshua/Edelyn	River Frequenters	South Gate Resident	Hollydale Park
32	Endy	River Frequenters	South Gate Resident	Hollydale Park
33	Daniel	River Frequenters	South Gate Resident	Hollydale Park
34	Jock	River Frequenters	East Coast Transplant	Hollydale Park
35	Art	River Adjacent Residents	Paramount Homeowner	Paramount by River
36	Alex	River Adjacent Residents	Paramount Homeowner	Paramount by River
37	Jovino	River Adjacent Residents	Paramount Homeowner	Paramount by River
38	Nicholas	River Adjacent Residents	Paramount Homeowner	Paramount by River
39	Equestrian Guy	River Frequenters	South Gate Resident	Hollydale Park near River
40	UCLA Dogwalker	River Frequenters	South Gate Resident	Hollydale Dog Park
41	Girl w/ Tattoo & Puppy	River Frequenters	South Gate Resident	Hollydale Dog Park
42	DT South Gate Girl	River Frequenters	South Gate Resident	Hollydale Dog Park
43	Family Walker	River Frequenters	South Gate Resident	Hollydale Dog Park

\*26/29 were crossed out/excluded due to double input or name mix-up error



**Name:** Stevie and Marge

**Location:** South Gate Regional Park (Earth Day Event)

**Date:** April 13, 2019

**Interviewers:** Kamryn and Scott

**Language:** English

**Kamryn** [00:00:00] Can we interview you two? We'll interview you [Stevie] first, and then ask the same questions to you [Marge] after.

**Stevie** [00:00:03] Okay. I just do the booth. We just do it for the city, for whatever they need done. To make, to help the environment. That's what I do. She does the river walk. She knows everything about the river walk.

**Kamryn** [00:00:20] We have just some general questions.

**Scott** [00:00:29] Can you describe an experience with River that you have? Maybe one of the most memorable ones?

**Marge** [00:00:36] When we did the River walk. When you get a group walking, there's a lot of different problems cause you run into homeless people. We ran into that. There's a lot of trash that has to be picked up. The last one we did, we had about 75 bags of trash and it makes you feel, when you do the riverwalk, that you've accomplished something.

**Scott** [00:00:46] What do you think the purpose of the revitalization effort is?

**Marge** [00:01:28] What is the purpose of what?

**Scott** [00:01:29] The purpose of the Revitalization efforts to you.

**Marge** [00:01:29] Uhh, let's see. Well first of all, it's the problem with the water. You have to get the water; the water is bad. Period. And you have to get something working to get the water cleared up. We've been doing projects at schools to get kids informed about water and where it comes from and where it runs through L.A. and stuff like that.

**Scott** [00:01:31] What are your thoughts on climate change and flood control in regard to the river?

**Marge** [00:02:20] Uhhh, that's a hard one. I don't know.

**Stevie** [00:02:20] I think that if we don't do something, we aren't going to have anything left. The only thing I do, because I can't go on the river walk due to being in a wheelchair, is work here. I work with young children. And at my school it's the teachers mostly doing as much to educate the kids at a very young age that this is a life that whole the rest of your life you're going to need to do this [maintain the river]. If you want your children to enjoy the same things that your grandparents enjoy. You have to do it now. And that's why I come and get the literature and I take it back to school. And I share it with my kids. And I work kindergarten through fifth grade. And if we don't do something, I don't know.

**Marge** [00:03:13] And they're trying to figure out a way to get the water clean. We have meetings once a month and they've been talking about how to bring the water back to the channel to make it clean. But we haven't got it to a point where it's completed yet. We're still working on that to have it recycled. So, we're working on that one.

**Stevie** [00:03:48] Well sometimes people overlook small children, but some of our greatest advocates for all of the environment started in elementary school. If we don't start there, it's kind of a little late.

**Marge** [00:04:08] If you don't start young, then you go down the line, then they don't really care. You got to start with them young. The kids these days, it's a different story back when I was younger. Kids these days, as they move on, they'll lose interest.

**Stevie** [00:04:23] And they need to do more on the internet. To bring it up every once in a while because the kids would really take notice of it if you did that. Because that's where they're at right now. I have to take phones away from my kindergarten kids because they're now baby sitters for parents. So that's where you want to hit them.

**Marge** [00:04:45] They just need to educate the little kids also, about the water. How bad it is. Some of the water is not good for you to play. And get them involved in the River walk.

**Marge** [00:04:57] It's not that they're insensitive to it, they're just not aware of it and it's not important in their everyday life unless we bring it to them at school. It's up to us. I work at a middle school.

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**Stevie** [00:05:12] I tried it for two years. That ship sailed!

**Marge**[00:05:22] You have to spread the word because that the only way you're going to get anything done. It's by word of mouth. I've been doing it for over 60 years.

**Name:** Maricarmen

**Location:** South Gate Regional Park (Earth Day Event)

**Date:** April 13, 2019

**Interviewer(s):** Scott

**Language:** English

**Scott** [00:00:02] Could you describe your experience and relationship with the river?

**Maricarmen** [00:00:07] So, the river is, about, I would say a mile from my house. I live in Mid-South Gate, downtown area South Gate. So the most, I've biked it once but I thought it was scary because it's very dark and there's not a lot of access points so you'll go in in certain ways but then you have to go really far to be able to go back out. So I kind of didn't do that after that. That's like the one experience and then besides that, I always pass it to get into the Downe area. So I mean we know the L.A. River is there but it's kind of like part of our daily transit rather than our daily lifestyle.

**Scott** [00:00:47] What do you think the purpose of the restoration efforts is?

**Maricarmen** [00:00:50] I want, well I think the goal would be to make it a green space. Where people can congregate and they could actually put it to use. I know one thing that would be pretty cool is if people could actually canoe on it. That would be really nice. Or just people can like actually access it, you know? Make it, like put lights so it's not so scary. Yeah. I mean a river is supposed to be like pretty you know, nature. That would be a pretty good goal.

**Scott** [00:01:19] What do you think of the current efforts?

**Maricarmen** [00:01:20] So, me being involved with L.A. Waterkeeper kind of shows me what's happening. I mean, I get a deeper understanding of the movements and what's being talked about. But I don't know if everyone in the South Gate community is aware that the restoration is even happening. So, I think that was one thing that I would want people to do. Maybe more outreach about like I like to go surveying when I can. I feel like maybe when you're asking people they're not even aware of the fact that it's being restored. But, I hope it works out. I hope it's successful.

**Scott** [00:01:57] What are your opinions of climate change and flood control in parts of the L.A. River?

**Maricarmen** [00:02:01] Same thing I'm thinking. You know a hundred years rain is coming. So I feel like people will have to be more aware of it. It's like things, since it's not happening immediately, people are not taking action. But it's going to be too late to take action if it's already happening. I think again more awareness and people like bringing the cause to them and explaining it could be a possibility.

**Name:** Gladis

**Location:** South Gate Regional Park (Earth Day Event)

**Date:** April 13, 2019

**Interviewer(s):** Scott

**Language:** English

**Scott** [00:00:09] Could you describe your relationship with the L.A. River?

**Gladis** [00:00:20] My name is Gladis. I'm a Senior Engineer with the city. I've been involved in the river for many years now. I've been involved in the efforts of the L.A. River Master Plan. Efforts that AB530 did a few years back. And now I'm actually working on the upper L.A. River through the L.A. county steering committee. I've been someone simply participating in that for the past year now. It's exciting to see the efforts that the region is putting on and revitalize the River.

**Scott** [00:01:15] What's your most memorable experience with the River?

**Gladis** [00:01:16] One of the most memorable experiences actually is standing at the confluence point of the L.A. River and Rio Concho. That is an impressive view that the community hasn't seen. And I'm very fortunate to have been able to do that. It's amazing to have a geographic element such as that, the two river meeting in our city. We're going to basically try to showcase it.

**Scott** [00:01:37] What do you think the purpose of the revitalization effort is?

**Gladis** [00:01:48] There's numerous purposes for that. The River has long been a very divisive element in the city and we want to change that at least in South Gate. We want to make sure to make the River an asset in the city instead of a divisive element. The

revitalization efforts encourage community participation just because we want to make it more inviting. The City of South Gate is planning to construct a new park which is an urban orchard. Which is right adjacent to the river. That project has different elements that just wouldn't happen in the community.

**Scott** [00:02:31] What's your opinion about the current efforts?

**Gladis** [00:02:31] The current efforts, I'm actually astonished by the various entities. Speaker Randon has produced and given us a lot of variety of the L.A. River, thankfully. It's definitely, I'm very fortunate to be a part of the current efforts for the region.

**Scott** [00:03:04] What are your thoughts on climate change and flood control in regard to the river?

**Gladis** [00:03:08] Those are very key issues. The river itself, it an essential flood control management structure and we need to be very cognizant of that. That it has to remain that. At the moment, we want to enhance that feature and make it an asset. Not just a flood control element. We want to create opportunities for our community to enjoy.

**Scott** [00:03:36] That's the end of our questions! Is there anything you want to add in about the L.A. River or the urban orchard?

**Gladis** [00:03:42] The L.A. River definitely is an asset that needs to be looked at in a little bit more detail. There's a lot of things that could be done and we're very fortunate that our legislative bodies looked into it and prioritized it. That the city has taken such an active position in revitalizing the river.



**Name:** Lane (Scout Leader)

**Location:** South Gate Regional Park (Earth Day Event)

**Date:** April 13, 2019

**Interviewer(s):** Kamryn

**Language:** English

**Kamryn** [00:00:00] Can you tell us a little bit about yourself? Are you from here?

**Lane** [00:00:00] My name is Lane Robles. I have a troop here in South Gate, in the park. So we do a lot of things for the community of South Gate.

**Kamryn** [00:00:14] Awesome! And describe your relationship with the river do you have any experiences with the river.

**Lane** [00:00:18] Well we do this [earth day event] every year. And we clean up the edges of the L.A. River. And also we do that for the San Gabriel River and Azusa mountains. We do all that river cleanup. So we take these scouts. What they do is they clean up all, take all that trash. [00:00:34] Break [down] the things that they do without water you know. [3.4s] So we do a lot of stuff with them. We love doing that cleaning with the River, anything to clean. To have a better environment for the boys.

**Kamryn** [00:00:50] And then what are your thoughts on the current restoration efforts? You know, building things around the river? Have you heard of anything that's going on?

**Lane** [00:00:58] Well the City of South Gate, they're doing a lot of things for cleaning the river in this area. And actually, today when we were taking out, removing the graffiti, the thing that we saw was there were no more homeless not no more trash. It was nice and clean. Even our scouts were like "Oh it smells good. It doesn't smell like before. Because they are doing something about it. South Gate is doing something about it.

**Kamryn** [00:01:25] And the last question what are your thoughts on climate change and flooding in regards to the river?

**Lane** [00:01:37] Flooding especially when it rains here! South Gate it gets pretty bad. That's because a lot of people, most people don't care that much and throw things in the river that stuff gets over-flowed. But you see the water coming out of trees and all

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that trash. But you know like Mother Nature does. It just does. Takes everything away, cleans the river like she wants to have everything clean again. The thing is it goes to the ocean. That's a bad thing about it. We have to think more about cleaning it up and not throwing things it in our rivers because a lot of people do that.

Name: Rita  
Location: South Gate Regional Park (Earth Day Event)  
Date: April 13, 2019  
Interviewer(s): Kamryn  
Language: English

Kamryn [00:00:00] Are you from this area?

Rita [00:00:01] Yes I live here in the city of Southgate.

Kamryn [00:00:05] How long have you been living here?

Rita [00:00:09] About 20 years.

Scott [00:00:16] Could you just describe your relationship with the river? Maybe a memorable experience you have with the river?

Rita [00:00:20] The river. Well, I used to work over in the Atwater area and the river runs right by there. Off of Fletcher crosses it and then Riverside is on one side. Anyway. Yeah. So yeah. We used to walk a little bit during lunchtime on the river there. And then you know, my best friend's parents lived further down right by the river also. Her mom walks there now. I've always been intrigued by it and stuff yanno.

Kamryn [00:01:13] What are your thoughts on the current restoration efforts going on? Have you heard of any projects?

Rita [00:01:19] No. I know South Gate is getting involved and working with the friends of the L.A. River I believe. They're trying to restore it and stuff at least. Yeah. Up further up North where I was working is where they do a lot with it. I believe I'm not sure. But yeah I'm really happy cause I've always liked, I loved that L.A. River, always. Where the greenery part is, where there's concrete it's okay, you know. But over there and you can see the greenery and stuff like that. Yeah it's nice.

Kamryn [00:02:02] And the last question that we have. What are your thoughts on climate change and flooding with regards to the rivers?

Rita [00:02:07] Like what do you mean?

**Kamryn** [00:02:10] Like just your general thoughts on climate change and any concerns with flooding of the river or with the river?

**Rita** [00:02:19] Nope. Not Really. Like this last rainfall, which was really pretty intense and stuff we had. I've noticed other times the LA river here has gone up really high but I don't know. I guess maybe there's not that much flooding. I don't know it didn't really go as high as other times and we did have a lot of rain. I don't know. Does that mean because they're cleaning it and there's less debris for it to flood or what? What's that? But the flooding, I don't know. What would cause the flooding? Like the debris?

**Kamryn** [00:03:06] They have predictions for like 100 year flood could happen soon, yeah.

**Rita** [00:03:14] Okay, yeah.

**Kamryn** [00:03:16] Some of the projects going on are like concerned about that.

**Rita** [00:03:20] Yeah yeah well it is is concerning if it's inevitable to happen.

Name: Leticia Nunez  
Location: South Gate Regional Park  
Date: April 21, 2019  
Interviewer(s): James  
Language: English

James [00:03] so I guess I can't talk about like I guess if you don't mind saying your name and like I guess where you're from?

Leticia [00:14] We're actually residents, we're Paramount residents. I just work for the city of South Gate

James [00:20] And are you familiar with what the LA River is or not really?

Leticia [00:25] Um no I'm not really that familiar with it, I know where its at, I know where it's located but no I don't really know.

James [00:30] Would you say like you've you've, are you familiar with what the city of South Gate has tried to do with the LA River revitalization and restorations?

Leticia [00:40] I don't know actually.

James [00:44] Basically they're like trying to open up access and create recreational facilities like [South Gate Park] but adjacent to the river. What would you think you would want to see out of that, personally what would you think you would use it for?

Leticia [01:02] So what is the reason why they they're gonna try to do that?

James [01:07] So a lot of the reasons why, is the city wants to create more park space more recreational space, but at the same time there's been a lot of investment like in other parts of the river like in the northern section of the river. The city of South Gate and other [South East LA] cities located near the river kind of like want to do the same thing.

Leticia [01:29] Oh..

**James** [01:31] A lot of it is like creating like habitat for [wildlife] and [possibly] remove the concrete on the river.

**Leticia** [01:44] They want to remove what I'm sorry?

**James** [01:46] The concrete, that's ideally what they want to do and that's like the [end goal] they've been trying to get to and so a lot of times in nearby communities [the city] is trying to reach out to people who live nearby and see what they want.

**James** [02:02] Since you don't really know much about that, what ways do you think the city can improve...

**Leticia** [02:08] to let people know like the community, how will they voice that? I just feel like they can in voice it in pretty much, maybe set up I don't know like workshops, educational workshops, or during the city hall meetings. They could go voice that, what [it] can be, what's the benefits. I know there's a pros and cons to that I'm sure but I mean that's how they would really go about it within the community because that's you know they can put it out on the paper maybe social media. I mean not everyone is computer savvy but whoever is you know, it's good.

**James** [02:51] A lot of times with development of projects [like these], citizens are concerned about like...

**Leticia** [03:00] The funding

**James** [03:02] Yeah the funding and possible gentrification and things like that. Do you have any issues particularly [for] yourself like concerning? If [the restoration] were to happen, what would be like a concern for you?

**Leticia** [03:19] So a concern can be... I would fear it would just be the funding just because it is tax...

**James** [03:26] Okay.

**Leticia** [03:27] Tax money, yes! I mean if you, usually when you know citizens want to, we want to be sure that it is a good project and it's gonna be beneficial their tax money is gonna be for a good cause.



James [03:39] Okay.

Leticia [03:40] If not then it's not.

James [03:46] I'm sorry your name again?

Leticia [03:47] My name is Leticia Nunez.

James [03:53] My name is James again, thank you so much

[shakes hand]

Leticia [03:54] Oh! I have been having food I hope you don't mind!

James [03:56] It's ok!

Leticia [05:57] All right, you have a good one.

James [03:58] And you too!

James [04:01] I forgot to ask one more question.. one of the reasons why the LA River is the way it is because... why the river was concretized was because of flooding. So do do you share that concern with the river and do you think climate change should affect some of the decisions about the way they the river should be used?

Leticia [04:28] The River, you know how its a home for a lot of homeless. You know what I should've told [you], how are they gonna go about that? With the homeless, will there be a place to direct them? Just because they need that type of resource.

James [04:43] I've also talked to some other people and that is their concern with any of the projects.

Leticia [04:49] That's their home

James [04:52] People I've talked to, if they do create a park, they are worried the homeless will cause trouble or..

Leticia's Husband [05:03] They're gonna be there camped out.

**Leticia** [05:07] I think if they are going to do that kind of renovation or expansion then they should have somewhere to redirect them, the homeless.

**Leticia Husband** [05:17] Or they can keep it gated

**Leticia** [05:21] But then you're taking them out of there, and of course they are gonna make it their new home because they were not guided to where they can get help. We are taking them out of where they call home and you're gonna place a park for instance, of course they are gonna make it their home. Now if we direct them somewhere, where they can get help, housing, or whatever... then they won't be there in the park

**James** [05:47] Okay all right thank you so much! This is really helpful!

Name: Melissa

Location: South Gate Regional Park

Date: April 13, 2019

Interviewer(s): Nathan, James

Language: English

- 23 - Grew up in South Gate, just graduated from college.
- Doesn't think the river offers much to community members outside of its use as a bike path. Only people with bicycles have an incentive to go to the river.
- She ran along the bike path once but was chased by a homeless person so she doesn't do it anymore.
- Melissa thinks the restoration should focus on creating space for community activities.
  - She emphasizes that these activities should be either chosen by or run by the residents, and that the activities are "for" community members.
  - She is worried about the city planning something for the community members that does not line up with their interests.
  - She discussed a division she sees in the community between the "good" part of south gate (near where the park is) and the "bad" part of south gate, and thinks that maybe green space can mend this divide
- One of her main concerns with development is traffic - she is worried that construction from multiple projects can create congestion in the community.
- Melissa doesn't think that it rains enough in LA for flooding to be a concern along the river.

**Name:** Chris

**Location:** Hollydale Regional Park

**Date:** April 12, 2019

**Interviewer(s):** James

**Language:** English

**James** [00:00] I guess you can tell us your name, where you are from?

**Chris** [00:05] Chris and I'm from Downey

**James** [00:07] Downey, okay. And what is your experience with the LA River, have you..what have you used the River for, like today you're walking your dog. Is that what you mostly do?

**Chris** [00:18] Yeah I just let her walk. I wanna say I don't even go to the River that much. I just go here cuz its a bigger park than anywhere else. There's a park near Downey and there's a river down there but its not as big for her to run around in the grass. And honestly she just wants to lay in the grass but the river itself doesn't mean anything to me. It's not even a real river, it's fake.

**James** [00:041] Yeah so kind of piggybacking off of that, the city of South Gate and the city of LA they kind of want to make it into a real river in that sense, and so there's a lot of development projects upcoming with it. Are you familiar with any of what those are?

**Chris** [00:55] I'm not so tell me about it.

**James** [00:57] Ok so the city is... basically they want to...kind of similar to this park, re-open up access to the River and use it as a community asset in terms of parks and recreational areas for community members to use.

**Chris** [01:14] That'd be nice.

**James** [01:15] Yeah and so if that were to happen, what would you say you would want to see built or developed here?

Chris [01:24] Honestly better parks more areas for the dogs because if you look at the other side of here and I actually saw several dogs on that side like over [there] they'll let you but... they put a little, crappy little spot over there for the dogs and no one really even uses this area if you look at it, no one is ever here.

James [01:40] Yeah

Chris [01:41] So you just have a whole open grass that no one can ever really use. It looks nice but that's about it

James [01:46] Okay and so that's pretty much what you would hope for? Just recreational.

Chris [01:51] Yeah because I only do it for my dog otherwise I'm working I don't really care.

James [01:55] Okay, and then...

[01:58] Oh shit! Come here! Oh! You asshole, come here! Bad Girl!

James [02:06] Strong dog!

Chris [02:08] She's a puppy still, she saw like something. Sit! Come here! She got scared of that or something she ran away from it.

James [02:18] No worries.

Chris [02:19] Something scared her, sorry about that.

Andrew [02:22] No, no, no

Chris [02:22] Go ahead.

James [02:22] Are you okay, do you need to collect yourself?

Chris [02:23] Nah I'm okay.

James [02:25] And so what was I just...develop okay like the development [some] cities are planning to do projects what would you say is a big concern if they were to go through with some of the things like..

**Chris** [02:38] You know what I would like to see! More actual water! Yeah you know because it's all grass and it's nice and everything but the dogs like running in water in a water area. I would say having a closed area where they can have dogs run around. In an enclosed area, let's say they enclose this entire area and there's a little pond. They don't actually have this for dogs, and that's what I'd like to see. It's a great thing they have the slides and all the stuff for the kids I think it's great! But I don't have kids so.

**James** [03:08] Okay, and then one of the biggest reasons why the LA River was concretized and made into this channel was the concerns of flooding. So part of our research is also to kind of gauge what concern level do community residents have in terms of the Rivers capacity to mitigate flooding for the community

**Chris** [03:35] You know honestly I'm not an engineer, I don't know much about that stuff but all I know is, every time we talk about the River you know that's not a real river. C'mon yanno its concrete. It's not a real river so we all laugh about it.

**James** [03:50] Because right now the LA River is pretty good at keeping and maintaining flood control but do you think in the future in terms of climate change do you think the LA River would be able to handle that? Do you think that would be a concern?

**Chris** [04:06] I don't know, you know I'm not sure you remember climate change but now it's global warming but before it was global cooling, you know climate is always gonna be changing. They just change the terminology.

**James** [04:16] Yeah

**Chris** [04:17] Did they just... honestly I think it's more fear-mongering so people can make money off of it

**James** [04:21] Oh, interesting okay.

**Chris** [04:22] You know what I mean? Cuz when it was global cooling they tried to make money off of that. Once the temperature went up they changed it to global warming and then when it cools again they're just gonna change the term to an open term with everything. That's just my thought on it.

**James** [04:36] Alright

**Chris** [04:37] But it's smart though, if I would make money off of that I would too.



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James [04:40] Ok and then...

Chris [04:41] Because the climate's always gonna be changing just look at history you know?

James [04:48] Any final questions? Final thoughts?

Chris [04:51] No not really.

James [04:52] Okay yeah alright thank you!

**Name:** Olivia Vega

**Location:** South Gate Regional Park (Earth Day Event)

**Date:** April 13, 2019

**Interviewer(s):** James

**Language:** English and some Spanish

**James** [00:00] Yeah so I guess you could start off by saying your name and like where you're from, about yourself [that] kind of thing.

**Olivia** [00:12] My name is Olivia Vega. I'm from Mexico. I have three kids. Two of them, they go to CSUN and one to South Gate High School in tenth grade. And yes I'm not working, [I'm] staying home.

**James** [00:33] So our research is about the LA River and so do you have any experiences with that or have you ever used the river before?

**Olivia** [00:45] Mm no.

**James** [00:46] Okay.

**Olivia** [00:47] It's very dangerous, a lot of people in the river bank, the homeless people, the homeless people.

**James** [00:56] Okay. So are you familiar with what the city hopes to do with the River in terms of redeveloping the River?

**Olivia** [01:01] Uh huh, and they, they will make another park?

**James** [01:12] Do you..if they were to do other projects what would you want to see?

**Olivia** [01:17] In the park?

**James** [01:19] Yeah or like other amenities or facilities.

**Olivia** [01:23] I want more homes for the homeless for security.

**James** [01:30] For safety?

Olivia [01:31] The safety, and more... uh...homes for the people that can't afford the rent.

James [01:43] Affordable housing?

Olivia [01:44] Affordable housing.

Olivia [01:47] I wanna park for those.

James [01: 51] Are you..do you have any concerns or like any negative...?

Olivia [01:55] Things?

James [01:56] Yeah because if the city does like build more parks or if the city builds more housing?

Olivia [02:03] Mmm... The last buenas...qué será...qué más quisiera...Mmm (What else, what else would I want)

James [02:15] If you can only say it in Spanish, you can say it in Spanish and we can probably translate it later.

Olivia [02:23] Y la seguridad, la seguridad alrededor de la ciudad. (The safety/security in the city.)

James [02:29] Okay.

Olivia [02:30] Porque si, no hay policías, antes si habia pero hay mucha gente y en la noche es dangerous, es peligroso. (Because there are no police, there used to be, but there's a lot of people at night, it's dangerous.)

James [02:37] Okay.

Olivia [02:38] Es peligroso. (It's dangerous.)

James [02:40] Okay I see, in the River.

Olivia [02:41] On the River.

James [02:42] Yeah okay and I guess one last question, the LA River is like usually used for like when [there's] flooding. Are you concerned about flood damage or if they do have development in the in the River, are you concerned about flooding?

Olivia [03:08] Como no e tenido la experiencia, porque allá en Los Ángeles si lo tienen verdad es para pasearse ahí en el Río? (Since I haven't had the experience, because in Los Angeles, they have it right, to walk around the River?)

James [03:15] Okay.

Olivia [03:16] No no no sabría decir cual es la experiencia. (I couldn't tell you.)

James [03:21] Okay.

Olivia [03:21] Pero si me gustaria. (But I would like to.)

James [03:23] I see. Okay so you like [think] that you haven't had any flooding?

Olivia [03:27] No.

James [03:28] Okay alright then I think.. I think that's pretty much it.

Olivia [03:34] Thank you!

**Name:** Annette

**Location:** South Gate Regional Park (Earth Day Event)

**Date:** April 13, 2019

**Interviewer(s):** James and Nathan

**Language:** English

**James** [00:00:09] I guess, could you just start by stating I guess your name and like where you're from? Have you ever used the L.A. River before or like done anything on the River?

**Annette** [00:00:17] I use it as I run.

**James** [00:00:21] And are you, are you a resident of South Gate?

**Annette** [00:00:25] A resident of South Gate, yes I am.

**James** [00:00:25] Okay. Oh and I'm sorry your name again?

**Annette** [00:00:28] Annette, and you?

**James** [00:00:29] James and Nathan. What would you specifically want to see if the city wants to do projects on the River? Like what would you want?

**Annette** [00:00:47] For me, it would be trail instead of cement, because I run on the cement and the next day, my knees hurt. So I don't know how it would work, maybe more dirt to run on the trail instead of cement. It's nice for bike riding and I see that a lot. For me personally I like would like trails.

**Annette's Friend** [00:01:15] Cleaner. It's kind of smelly too.

**Nathan** [00:01:17] A lot of people we've talked to say that they don't want to visit because of homeless people, or the pollution, or the smell.

**James** [00:01:27] What would you say is like a big concern for you if the city was going to do projects?

**Annette** [00:01:33] My concerns?

**James** [00:01:35] Yeah, yeah. Like any reservations, any negatives. Do you see any negatives?

**Annette** [00:01:43] No, as long as it improves and gets people out there. Like to be active, I'm up for it. Yeah, nothing negative. The homeless, help them out don't just kick them out. They're just going to go to another location and cause the same issues. Just help them out. Keep it clean and definitely keep it safe. Sometimes it's kinda scary to go by yourself.

**James** [00:02:07] And then I guess like the final like question is like. The L.A. River mostly acts as a flood channel. Like right now the way it is, the way it's designed. And so, like, in the future, are you ever concerned about the possibility of the River overflowing or like damaging property in that way?

**Annette** [00:02:33] Well we never get that much rain here, but at one point we did. Not too long ago?

**Nathan** [00:02:41] That it overflowed? The River?

**Annette** [00:02:42] It never did but it was one time that. I'm not good at remembering, but it rained a lot. Yeah. So we got it got pretty high. Yeah, that I know since I've been living here, no. Never has overflowed.

**James** [00:02:58] Do you think the city should like make that as a priority?

**Annette** [00:03:03] It hasn't been a problem til now. I'm hoping that they keep it the way it is. There's always room for improvement. So, you know. If it hasn't happened doesn't mean it won't happen. Yeah. So. They need to be on top of everything.

**James** [00:03:26] Any final questions that I might have missed?

**Nathan** [00:03:37] So you do use it for running? How often do you go?

**Annette** [00:03:39] Once a week or last month.

**Name:** Cathy and Vinny  
**Location:** South Gate Regional Park  
**Date:** April 12, 2019  
**Interviewer(s):** Nathan and Scott  
**Language:** English

Female: Mid 20s. Doing Yoga in the Park. Were apprehensive of having audio and video taken. Not from South Gate, from Commerce, but they work in South Gate.

"The River should have added pollinators, butterflies, and natural wildlife and the city should make it a priority to plant trees and feature flood control measures."

There should be a symbiotic relationship--ecology with oxygen producing algae.

"We should have a homestead mentality of going back to nature.  
The River should have a nature park and provide placard information.  
Innovative ways to clean up trash.  
Separation from nature and human use.

"More programs are necessary in order to involve in these types of communities. They should be focused on how to maintain the natural resources. Learning about something creates an appreciation for something."



**Name:** Elizabeth

**Location:** Hollydale Regional Park

**Date:** April 13, 2019

**Interviewer(s):** James and Andrew

**Language:** English

**James [0:00]** I guess you can just start off by telling us your name, where you live?

**Elizabeth [00:07]** My name is Elizabeth, and I live in South Gate, Hollydale park, I've been here for like 2 years. We recently just moved here from not that far so not too far but... big difference it's a lot nicer here.

**James [00:23]** Yeah it's really nice! I guess what would you say is your experience with the LA River?

**Elizabeth [00:30]** Umm I think there's only two major things that just might be some opportunity... like population and then the other thing is a lot of [events] they also have here. So they have a lot of, I wanna say hispanic oriented type of festivals. So they do a lot of having to do with smaller businesses. So they encourage those businesses to come out and they'll have a little post so they can sell things. And it's usually free, you buy the food and everything. But they also have uh people that educate us on the LA River and what it brings to the community, like transporting water and providing homes for certain animals. So they try to educate our community, which is nice.

**James [01:20]** So what have... you're out here walking your dog. What do you normally use the River for?

**Elizabeth [01:31]** Probably just walking the dog and then sitting. More or less probably just talking to the homeless community because you have to get the word out that we're gonna be building a shelter. So that people don't have to stay out there, especially with the rain.

**James [01:43]** Oh okay. I see. And then I guess we'll move on to the next question. Are you familiar with the LA River revitalization efforts and projects?

**Elizabeth [01:53]** No not really.

**James** [01:56] So um basically the city is like, the city of South Gate specifically, they're hoping to like build more projects like a lot more park-space, opening access to the River, community amenities for the community people nearby. One of the questions we have is what do you think you would want them to build, or your priorities if they were to do projects like that?

**Elizabeth** [02:33] Maybe more accessibility for like runners and stuff, I know they have stuff like that. But maybe lights because it gets pretty dark. Because honestly I think... it scares me to think that someone is out there... I don't know.

**James** [02:54] And then piggybacking off of that, like what would you say is a concern if they were to move forward with certain projects on the River?

**Elizabeth** [03:05] I feel like if they were to build more bridges and things like that, a lot more homeless would be there and especially the past few months of all the rain that we've got it takes a lot of time out of LAPD's time to come over here. Because we've had people who are you know homeless people, who are unfortunately addicted to drugs, some are anyway. And sometimes people aren't just very cautious. They fall in and then that's essentially what happens here. That's kind of a big concern for me.

**James** [03:39] And then like you mentioned that the River can be pretty dangerous in terms of like when it's raining. Do you have any concerns especially because you live close to the River. Do you have any concerns with flooding into you area?

**Elizabeth** [03:56] Not so much because I mean, it wouldn't rain as much to fill the entire thing. I don't believe it would, so... I think it's pretty deep enough where something like that isn't gonna happen.

**James**[04:10] Do you think climate change will have an effect on that?

**Elizabeth** [04:14] Eventually, with something like that? Maybe yeah maybe not in my lifetime, but in the next lifetime of course.

**James** [04:20] Okay, and then that's pretty much it

**Andrew** [04:23] We were also gonna do like kind of like Humans of the New York and we're like trying to take pictures of the community members and if you're interested we'd take a picture of you.

**James** [04:36] Anything that you [think the city can do better to publicize or community outreach]?

**Elizabeth** [04:38] Maybe more like city council meetings? I know they have them every once in a while but the last one we pretty much had, was big concern was building the homeless center because it was gonna bring down home prices which kinda sucked.

**James** [04:54] I see.

**Elizabeth** [04:55] But um, maybe they could do things to involve the community in the project for the LA River. Not everyone wants something to be built without everyone knowing about it. Maybe something like that can work? Communication between the community.

**James** [05:10] Do you think like social media as well?

**Elizabeth** [05:11] Yeah! Cuz I know some, my next-door neighbors have been here a really long time and they have an app where they talk to each-other. But it's only a few members... so maybe something on a bigger scale for everybody. Everyone knows everyone, kids all go to the same school and it's like we're all the same community because we are pretty much in one corner so it's like maybe something like that would help like a twitter?

**James** [05:40] I think that's it for now, thank you so much!

**Name:** Steven

**Location:** SureGrip South Gate

**Date:** April 12, 2019

**Interviewer(s):** James and Andrew

**Language:** English

**Steven** [00:00:00] Well. I mean, I understand what the city and the county and the state are trying to do. I understand that. And I think that in some cases it is a good idea. It's poor execution. Their thought process is good to help these struggling cities and to do these things. But what they're doing is not necessarily going to help. Doing a revitalization of the L.A. River and having people kayak down the L.A. River is not going to happen. I can almost guarantee that no one in their right mind would want to step foot in the L.A. River. OK. Not to mention that taking out the concrete and putting in green space and putting in parks and things like that. Great. But every city that borders the L.A. River is not exactly a good city. And it's just going to make...it's going to give the homeless people more places to stay. And it's going to give more drug use and drug sales and all that kind of stuff that's already happening in and around the L.A. River already. They want to help. And I get it. I think that that's great. But there's other ways that I think that they can do this instead of revitalizing or not revitalizing. The L.A. River was never nice to begin with. So it's mainly just a project to you know spend money that the federal government is giving them to do. And if that's what they have to use it for then I guess that's what they had to use it for. I'm not going to see any benefit out of it. Where we are here, this is just my office. This is my work. I'm not going to see any benefit of it. The L.A. River's right there. You know I know that but I'm not sure exactly what they're planning on getting out of this whole project. They're also doing a lot of Section 8 housing locally here. Doing one right across the street from me. I'm not excited about that. We already get a lot of homeless people that walk around here all the time. They damage property. They steal things. And that's what I think they should be doing more to help that than anything else. And I just don't think that it's going to do much. I mean I applaud their efforts I really do they're doing something. And I think that that's the right step to do. But spending all this money. To make a green space for people to go buy drugs and you know that's what they want to do it's what they want to do.

**James** [00:02:48] OK. So yeah, you would say in your opinion the L.A. River restoration should focus on solving the homeless and drug problems before putting in amenities?

**Steven** [00:03:03] I think doing this is going to escalate the problems. OK. It's going to give them more places for them to do what they need to do. Mm hmm. I think it's probably a good thing for the ecological system. The environmental science aspect of it I think is probably pretty good. I think what they're failing to understand is that the cities that are bordering this the L.A. River are, are notoriously not very good cities. Boyle Heights, Southgate, Lynwood, Paramount. You know they're not very good cities when it comes to a lot of this stuff. And if they're going to benefit from this and have a park. That's great. But if you look at all the parks in the cities right now. There really aren't any, and if there are. There's a lot of drug use a lot of homeless people live in there. All right that's all I'm saying. And I don't know what to do with the homeless population. I don't know. I'm not a politician. I'm not an urban planner I'm an urban developer. I don't know. But when we have people wandering into our property and stealing things in the back. Which we have camera systems and I can show you all these people that come here. It's going to be a problem. And they're taking money from the from the government which is great. And obviously there are probably a lot of corrupt individuals that are just probably pocketing a lot of this money. Bell Gardens they've all been accused of corruption in the past and they've never had to do anything for it. And that's a problem. And this being a problem, just the same, is getting money from the federal government. People making plans, overages, construction companies. I can see it already. I've seen it too many times since I've been here in and around this this area. I mean that's just my personal opinion. I know it's not exactly what you were hoping to hear today.

**James** [00:05:23] A lot of people have brought up the issue of homelessness and drug use. And so it's a pretty common theme amongst people we've talked to about their worry about it. So yeah that's kind of what we've encountered so far.

**Steven** [00:05:39] I think from an environmental standpoint environmental science standpoint it makes sense and knowing what you're doing now on the phone I didn't know your environmental science major. I didn't actually know what that was or what you did. I think from that standpoint it makes a lot of sense and I think that that's probably a good thing to do to get water back in the water table and this and that blah blah. But I don't know if you were born here or from Southern California but the L.A. River is nasty when it rains and it's just you can't go to the beach for a week because of the water.

**James** [00:06:15] Yeah. I'm actually not from the area.

**Steven** [00:06:18] Where are you from?

**James** [00:06:19] Guam.

**Steven** [00:06:20] OK. Yeah that's a long way away. Quite a bit yeah right.

**James** [00:06:26] L.A., the whole L.A. River, is actually pretty interesting to me and pretty interesting topic. So it's nice to hear what the actual people on the ground are thinking and we kind of jumped ahead but I guess you can just introduce yourself your business.

**Steven** [00:06:39] Sure, my name is Steven Ball. I own a business here with my family. We manufacture roller skates in South Gate, California. We've been in this facility since 1980. Before that we were across the riverbed in Lynwood. And we've been in business since 1937. It's a family business. It is a family business has been very good to my family over the years. The fourth generation of my family to be in this business. I'm lucky. I don't take anything for granted. I work my ass off. I do everything that I can. And when you contacted me, being you know a college graduate myself, I like to give back. I like to do things for for the education system as much as I can. My family or my father unfortunately or fortunately went to USC. Yeah I did not. I got rejected. I end up playing baseball at a smaller school so I end up doing that little bit different around here though. So I've been born and raised been here all my life. So I'm the one that you probably want to talk to. These types of things that I've been around it for my whole life.

**James** [00:07:55] So I guess like on a personal level, on a personal level like have you ever visited the river or use the river for anything?

**Steven** [00:08:03] There's nothing to use in the river. There's like a couple of bike paths on top of it. I did that when I was a kid. I have not done it since and I don't particularly want to. Underneath all the overhangs, It's where all the homeless people live. And when you come out here and you know the cops you call the cops they know that's where they live. That's where they stay. They don't even want to go over there because they don't want to go into their habitat or habitats not the right word. They don't want go into the territory because of the drug use and needles they don't want to get get hurt and I don't, I don't have a problem with that. But you know nobody wants to to face the facts. Nobody wants to confront the homeless people if you've seen them. If you went on the 710 right over here there's a huge encampment on the side of the

riverbed. Where are they going to go? What are you going to do with them when you bulldoze that thing and make a nice little park? Where are they going to go? Yeah you know I can see a recreational thing, I can see doing something I can really see it. As that as being a benefit but in the city of L.A., I just don't see that working. I see that working in Denver. I see that working in you know like Austin, you know in San Antonio, in maybe like Chicago area. But in Los Angeles with the gangs and stuff that we have here. It's just not I don't think it's you're going to get families to go there and picnic on a Saturday unfortunately. Yeah and kayaking down the L.A. River is by far the funniest thing I saw on that website. And I just kind of thought that was hilarious but maybe it's because I've grown up with the river the way that it is. And anybody who goes in the rivers can get hepatitis. And anybody who's gone in the river who have in the past, if you've lived, looked it up on the news there's always some kid every year when it rains. Got a boogie board trying to go to the beach on the L.A. River and he always has to be rescued. Okay so that's the L.A. River to me. Yeah that's what I see. Now if they want to redo it and make it really nice and actually like a real river there's no real water. That like feeds the L.A. River, it's just rain. So that's where you get all the mud and all the nasty stuff that happens, so when that happens in the L.A. River it does flood. It does get pretty high from time to time. I mean what's going to happen to our nice green space that we build. I don't want that to just to be decimated. You know I've seen what happens when rivers flood and trees and everything just get eroded. You know it could be a potential problem. And I'm sure that's where the environmental science major comes in at to figure all that stuff out. And I'm not smart enough to do that. But I know or I feel like I would know about what's going to happen once this is done and my interpretation of it is no one's really going to use it okay.

**James** [00:11:03] That kind of jumps in to like the kind of final part of our topic discussion as the L.A. River. It is kind of the way it is the concrete channel because of like flood control. Do you feel like, are you concerned about its flood capacity and the flood control abilities in terms of moving forward in terms of climate change?

**Steven** [00:11:27] I don't know. I don't see it. It's never overflowed as far as I know. I've seen it pretty high. These last big rains we have. It's gotten pretty high but I've seen it higher. So I don't really think that it's going to cause much of an issue where it overflows the banks, in my personal opinion. But you know I don't know as far as climate change is concerned. I'm not trying to say that I'm a skeptic of it. I'm not. I think there needs to be more research involved in it. We can discuss ice ages in the past that didn't have CO2 gas emissions and all that stuff when I was in school. I heard a very interesting talk in my environmental science class and forget who the gentleman was



that they got. But he came in and it was kind of sad what happened because in school you know you're not... you're made to kind of think for yourself and to make decisions for yourself and to learn and to learn that process that goes into the education system and how you get to graduating and becoming smarter. And I liked the fact that at my school, we brought in some people who you may not see at a university. In most cases you see someone who would argue the other side. And I really liked that fact because we go down in the education system we always go one direction. We never really get to see everything. You know schools like Berkeley and things like that you're really only going down one side. And I like the fact that to at least address the other side's concern. There is climate change and I'm not trying to say there's not climate change because clearly there is but I like listening to what someone else has to say about it. So for climate change, I don't know what's going to happen and nobody knows what's going to happen. You know it's our Earth. It's our planet, our weather systems. I don't think anyone's really going to know exactly what's going to happen tomorrow. Anything can happen. But I think trying to do things and what we're doing trying to eliminate emissions and all this stuff I think is a great idea. I mean you can smell the air here is terrible, you know. But coming from some place like Guam it's a lot cleaner and a lot clearer outside not as much smog going to Hawaii or things like that. It's a lot better you know. But this is what we got for right now so we need to make the best that we can and in this situation you're trying to revitalize the riverbed. Probably a good idea. More water in the water table. There's nothing wrong with that. You know I think that's a good thing but I'm just concerned about the other side of it.

**James** [00:14:27] All right. I think, that's pretty much wraps up here. [To Andrew] you have anything to comment?

**Andrew** [00:14:35] No not really. I was just going to say that we're also doing like a humans of the L.A. River kind of thing and if you're interested, if we were to picture a you and just post it on our research, a little profile.

**James** [00:14:49] Yeah sure yeah. And if you want. Yeah. And any final thoughts from you or pretty much said it all? I mean.

**Steven** [00:15:12] No not really. Yeah. I mean I didn't know anything about this. So I don't even know if I voted on this or not. But you know typically, you know it costs money and I'll vote for it but that's just me. But now we're getting into a whole other side. Which is you know poor use of government funds.

**James** [00:15:19] That was also something that I've encountered OK. Some people like they're like well this isn't gonna take money to do all these things and this is going to come from taxes. So that's also another concern. Which if that is a concern for you, we would also like to hear what you think about that.

**Steven** [00:15:36] What was the someone said something the other day was a quote from Ronald Reagan? And it was something about like the government doesn't do whatever, it just subsidizes everything. So it's like it doesn't actually make any money doesn't actually create something all you do is just spend. And spending money on this is probably a good thing. Although you probably drove up here and our roads are terrible. You know the roads are falling apart every time it rains a fall. I'd rather have money go spent on that. There's supposed to be a gas tax. And all that money's supposed to go to roads. The money from the lottery is supposed to go to the schools. You know I don't see that. I see the schools cutting programs not increasing programs. They cut, when I was in high school they cut athletics from the middle schools. And giving kids something to do after school other than go home and play video games or do drugs is the important thing. And they're cutting those programs. I don't. And then you see, you know kids out on the streets or whatever and then I think it just perpetuates the problem. And you know say what you want about sports or extracurricular activities. They want a lot of kids just to go and learn and to be better at taking tests. Essentially, and I don't think taking a test really gives you a lot of like life skills and life lessons. I wasn't a very good test taker. I didn't go. I went to public school but I didn't get into a good college. I wasn't very smart. But I wasn't a very good test taker. And my dad didn't bribe the right people at USC to get me in. I didn't do crew. So you know, I just think that there's other things that the government could spend their money on to kind of help the situations and all they want to do is get elected because they make a two hundred thousand dollars a year being a senator. And that's what they want to do. And then you get Bernie Sanders writing a book and makes a million dollars writing a book. What?! I have no idea what that book was about. Like you get Barack Obama and his wife. His wife wrote a book. About what being the first lady I guess, and you make millions of dollars on it. And I don't understand, you become president. He's president for two years and now he's somewhat retired. I thought she wanted to be in public service. Yeah I thought she wanted to continue to give back. So you just quit. You're 40 50 years old. OK I'm done. Yeah. Interesting. So I just think that it's kind of a... it's like a one way street for a lot of those guys. All they want is get paid. I don't think they really want to give back to the community. It's my personal opinion. All right. Well but prove me wrong. Yes. Let's build a river.

Interviews 014, 015, 016, 017, 018, 019

April 12, 2019

### **Observations**

Lots of Spanish speakers and some Chinese/Asian-language speakers. Of the people Andrew and Kamryn interviewed, most didn't know about the River or knew of any restoration projects in the area. Some people commuted to work in South Gate. At the River, there were maybe 4 bikers, a couple walking, a guy walking and listening to music and sitting in the River. It was a hot day out.

**Name:** Nora

**Location:** Eyebrow Threading

**Date:** April 12, 2019

**Interviewer(s):** Kamryn and Andrew

**Language:** English

I live in Artesia

Working here for 3 years

She does not know about the LA River at all and does not have knowledge about restoration.

Climate change due to weather

A female employee from a beauty salon lives in Artesia, but has been working in South Gate for 3 years. She doesn't know about the LA River at all, nor does she have knowledge about restoration. She believes that climate change is due to weather.

**Name:** Yvette

**Location:** Boba Store

**Date:** April 12, 2019

**Interviewer(s):** Kamryn and Andrew

**Language:** English

Ivette has been living in South Gate for 6 years, went to South Gate High School, and has worked here for a year and a half.

She likes to be outdoors.

She hasn't heard about the restoration effort about at all or the LA River.  
She doesn't think we have deep floods so it doesn't affect it.

A young female employee working at a boba shop, has been living in South Gate for 6 years, went to South Gate High School, and has worked in the city for a year and a half. She hasn't heard about the LA River or any restoration efforts. She doesn't think we have deep floods.

**Name:** Cafe China Employee

**Location:** Cafe China

**Date:** April 12, 2019

**Interviewer(s):** Kamryn and Andrew

**Language:** English

She's from Alhambra and comes to South Gate to work

She's been at the River only by passing by it.

She's never seen or heard of the LA River restoration, she's just seen the expansion of the bridge.

She thinks the water gets high.

A female employee at a Chinese cafe is from Alhambra. She's never seen or heard of the LA River restoration; she's just seen the expansion of the bridge. She thinks the water gets to high levels.

Demographics:

Asians and Indians working here

**Name:** Manager of Lucky Supermarket

**Location:** Lucky Supermarket

**Date:** April 12, 2019

**Interviewer(s):** Kamryn and Andrew

**Language:** English

He work In the area but does not live here.

He has no experience with the LA River.

He doesn't know much about the River.

He believes restoration efforts will benefit everyone, the environment and the community.

He has just heard about restoration but no specific projects.

Climate change affects all of us so we have to do our best individually

The business manager of a supermarket does not have any experiences with the LA River. Additionally, he is not informed with the LA river altogether. He believes that restoration efforts will benefit both the community and environment. However, he has not heard about any specific projects in terms of restoration. He also mentions that climate change will affect everyone equally, so each individual in society must do their part individually to protect the earth.

**Name:** Little Caesar's Pizza Manager

**Location:** Little Cesar

**Date:** April 12, 2019

**Interviewer(s):** Kamryn and Andrew

**Language:** English

He is from South Gate.

He has never heard of the River.

He has no thoughts on climate change or flooding.

The manager from a pizza place, a South Gate native, has never heard of the River. Additionally, he has no thoughts or opinions on climate change and flooding.

**Name:** Foto Studio Employee

**Location:** Foto Studio

**Date:** April 12, 2019

**Interviewer(s):** Kamryn and Andrew

**Language:** English

He is from Bell Gardens but works in South Gate.

He doesn't know about the River but passes by it.

He doesn't know about the changes to the River.

He doesn't think climate change and flooding will affect the South Gate community at all.

An employee of Foto Studio, a native of Bell Gardens, does not know about the River although he passes by it to get to work every day. He has not heard of any changes and revitalization efforts with the River. Additionally, he does not think climate change, particularly in relation to flooding, will be a detrimental effect to the South Gate community.

**Name:** Richard Ludt  
**Location:** [Emailed]  
**Date:** [Emailed]  
**Interviewer(s):** Andrew  
**Language:** English

**Andrew** How might the river revitalization plans might affect your business?

**Richard** As a demolition contractor and recycler, it would have no real effect on our business.

**Andrew** Have you personally visited the river in the last year?

**Richard** I have been to the river for a campaign stop with Anthony Rendon and Kamala Harris a couple of years ago, but that is about it.

**Andrew** Roles that the river plays in the city?

**Richard** I know the City of South Gate has big plans for the river. Talk to Arturo Cervantes, head of Public Works, he is leading that push.

**Andrew** Do you see any impacts that the river changes might have on aesthetic purposes/climate change/flood control/etc.

**Richard** Please see above. With the plans the City has for the river, I think it will greatly enhance the City.

**Name:** Steven  
**Location:** South Gate Regional Park  
**Date:** April 27, 2019  
**Interviewer(s):** James and Camila  
**Language:** English

**Camila** [00:00] Oh I'm Camila.

**James** [00:02] Yeah and then James.

**Steven** [00:03] Steven, I would shake your hand but my hands are dirty...

**Camila** [00:05] And your beautiful dog is?

**Steven** [00:07] Pook

**James** [00:09] I guess you can just tell us.. are you from South Gate?

**Steven** [00:15] I actually live in Watts, yeah. I only come down here to walk my dog, ya know. Over there they'll try to take him. I don't wanna deal with it.

**James** [00:24] And so do you know about the LA River?

**Steven** [00:027] I mean I used to go, I used to go ride my bike around there. I used ride fixes and whatnot so. Just to ride that...that that pathway.

**James** [00:36] And then what would you say is your experience like with the River could you talk more about what you do or what you would experience down on the River?

**Steven** [00:48] Uhh dang well when I used to ride my fixie I'll usually go like sometimes I'll go alone sometimes go with group but there's a lot of sketchy things on the River honestly, a lot of sketchy people. You know especially like on the under the bridge part where the traffic is

**James** [01:03] Yeah.

**Steven** [01:04] So like definitely I've had a couple of run-ins. There's even like a couple of gang houses down there I don't know if you guys know about those down by Atlantic so...yeah there's a lot of things to just watch out, a lot of people but its just.. other than that I just go for the path along and what not.

**James** [01:23] so are you familiar with what the city is trying to do with the LA River in terms of like restoration and revitalization?

**Steven** [01:31] Mm no. I don't know what is going on.

**James** [01:34] So basically the city is kind of trying to kind of create more paths more recreation and more parks on the river and so we're trying to see what the community wants and what their concerns about if things like that were to happen.



**Steven** [01:51] Oh definitely would be like I'd say just other people like I said the people that live under the bridges and just tend to you know be around there when they're not supposed to and just claim [it] as their own little spot in their territory and they tend to get pretty aggressive so I can only imagine what's it gonna be like when they actually have little recreational centers that they can actually take over and you know have their own little renown spot you know so it's like who's it really gonna be for? There has to be eyes there. There has to be constant surveillance definitely because it's just it's just currently like I don't see it as a safe place. I wouldn't let my kids or younger relatives go out there and you know trust them to be out there safe when I've been there myself and know what it's like you know?

**Camila** [02:39] Right.

**Steven** [02:40] So yeah I don't know/

**James** [02:42] Is there anything you would like to see happen there, like specifically if they work to, if not a park something else?

**Steven** [02:49] I mean I honestly just that long sometimes it could be very like that long little long in the route long little walkway down the LA River, it's really nice and really calm I mean if there wasn't like trash or what not around. Of course we could like pick up, but that's just uh a community effort you know it is not a thing that one one group can focus on. It has to be like a community of the whole and I feel as though like, if there just [had] more surveillance more security there... you know just like more people are forcing like the no soliciting type thing then I think it'd be pretty nice to see something go down there maybe you know? A place where people just...like even like a little jogging community I don't know.

**James** [03:35] And so you said you didn't you didn't really know about what the city's plans are how do you think the city could improve that in terms of communicating?

**Steven** [03:49] I don't know if you guys have seen those like your campuses, I'm sure UCLA has them but the emergency lights you know the emergency little beacons those would be like I think the best thing to have around there. Like I know like recently there's been like I don't know it's just so much crime lately, so much stuff is going on. But I say like just more security, more surveillance, a couple of those beacons around, more lights, definitely.

**James** [04:23] And I guess if you were to describe the LA River in like one word?

**Steven** [04: 29] One word...

**Camila** [04:31] Any word.

**Steven** [04:31] It's unpredictable. You know what I mean because it could be really it could be really calm and tranquil. But it can have you really edgy and I don't know if I wanna be here but I wanna be here but I can't because I can't enjoy it, you know what I mean? It's beautiful though, a couple tags here and there, trash nobody likes to see trash, it just ruins everything.

**James** [05:03] As a part of, we're environmental science students and so a part of our research is asking what the community feels about flooding risk and climate change in terms of that there's a higher risk that the River will over flood it in terms of future climate change. Do you do you have any concerns about that or any thoughts about flooding?

**Steven** [05:30] Ooh about flooding? Yeah we're dry over [here] so.

**James** [05:34] Hahaha

**Steven** [05:34] I don't know if I would mind I mean... I know but that would be actually be a serious problem and issues though. I'm gonna be real honest I haven't really I wasn't really aware of any potential flooding you know? Like the River's never too high I don't know. I never would have figured it could flood you know..something definitely that you got me worried about.

**James** [06:01] it's kind of interesting because when you said you described it as unpredictable, that's kind of like the first thing that popped into my head is that usually that LA River is nice and calm but when there's a winter storm it can actually get pretty violent and unpredictable in that way yeah... So I guess that pretty much hit all the marks yeah, all right. Thank you so much have a good Saturday.

**Steven** [06:24] No problem you guys have a good one!

**Name:** AnMarie

**Location:** UCLA

**Date:** May 02, 2019

**Interviewer(s):** Kamryn

**Language:** English

**Kamryn** [00:00:00] Like who you are and then what your involvement is.

**AnMarie** [00:00:03] Involvement is. Okay. So my name's AnMarie Mendoza. I'm a current grad student. I am a tribal committee member for the Tongva Gabrielino Tribe. There's different family sects that make up Tongva. Like there's just people that don't call themselves the Tongva but I associate myself with Tongva Gabrielino. And I work in water. I've been doing this since I was an undergrad. My first. My first introduction into actually working with water was working with the Paiute of the Owens Valley. So currently Los Angeles receives 30 percent of their water from the Owens Valley. And like. I remember being an undergrad having one of the Paiute come in and talk about their water experiences and then just realizing that our stories are connected so you know 100 years ago Moho?? came in and they made this aqueduct and the way that it's praised and everybody was just you know this person that's like this marvelous engineer brought all this water from this unknown area to build the city of Los Angeles but no one ever talks about the indigenous perspective like what does it mean to actually degrade the homelands over there and bring water in here. Like. Who said we wanted more people here. You know obviously Los Angeles. Couldn't sustain itself with the water they did have. So they had to ruin other people's homelands and building connections with those tribes. So we have a lot of similarities. So I worked with the Paiute and a lot of my understanding of water comes from them which is interesting because I grew up in the ghetto and like in the hood and I was in a gang when I was younger so I didn't get to know myself as a tribal person but I dealt with all the. Bad things of my homelands. They never got to like reap any of the good things. And now that I'm older and have a kid and in a privileged space I'm able to realize like my connection to the line is deep and I need to fight for it. And it's always been in my heart but now I get to actually do it. And you know it's a little different. I mean I'm not the most traditional person but I feel like that works in my favor because I could communicate to a bigger audience of people that. Come from where I come from. That want to do. Good things for their communities. So it's like it sucks because I would have loved to grow up traditionally and to understand the songs and to have that connection. But like you know I do what I can now and it's good. Like my son will grow

up with it with tribal consciousness. And. That's a good thing for me. But no matter if what you're native and you feel the love for water. You you know you just grow up like that. I remember having dreams of water when I was little and I was just like oh that's cool but like not being able to connect until I got older like more like the water talking to me like this is my life's work. So it's really interesting coming full circle. But yes I work and decolonizing the Los Angeles water narrative so that means you know changing the mainstream conception about how. Well where water comes from whose land you're on and you know what a shitty job people are doing with managing the resource and even problematizing calling it a resource. I have an elder who's things Craig Torres. Site your elders. He tells us to look at you know the plants the water animals not as resources but as relatives. So imagine the paradigm shift of not looking at you know water as a resource but looking at it as something that you know that's like your family member like this game changing and that's something that I try to bring to my work. I like the idea of changing a paradigm changing how people think about it. Tell me a little bit more about like what you mean like. You learned about water when you're younger. When I was younger like you just have to look around and you know I grew up in the San Gabriel Valley. So there's a lot of mining going on. So you literally like you know San Gabriel. Mountains. Like they always kind of spoke to me and they always like. They were like the postcard of my life. And you know anytime something came for them as far as development goes because as of right now they just keep tearing sides of mountains down to make concrete to build the city. And like I always thought that was wrong or I didn't like it it bothered me. But I you know obviously like when you're. Come from like low income family. And single parent like you're not even able to wrap your head around these things because you're literally just trying to make it week to week. And also grew up in what I now know as water poverty which I did not know I grew up in a mobile home. So like mobile homes have horrible piping. So there's a lot of times like I would say at least once a month we didn't have water because something would break down. You don't have money to fix it you're fucked. You don't get you don't have water. And that really made me conscious of water and water use and how much it sucks to not have water. And that's one thing in L.A. people where every time they turn on the faucet that they could at least depend on that. But I grew up where that wasn't always dependable. I like to struggle and to have to watch people's house to take showers and. To do all that. So I always like grew up with the appreciation of water and knowing that. Like what I actually didn't know I got here like not everybody lives like this you know when I go to college to realize like man like, what the fuck. We were like really rugged and like roughing it. But I didn't know you know obviously you don't know you don't know. So anyways the was like. We always had a strong connection to water but it wasn't until older that I realized like. My

my history and my connection to this land in a deeper way not like over from here okay. What does that mean? Like no like our people like had this knowledge that is embedded in our DNA. And you know in our in our souls and our spirits and that it does try to come and communicate with you. It's just. When you have like colonization waves of colonization and you just doing what you think you're supposed to be doing then. You don't. It speaks to you and it bothers you. And I remember like looking towards gangs or looking things to like kind of feed this need for community slash like to do something more but not knowing what to do with it. And. I went back to college after I had my son and. I knew I wanted to do something to help. Take care of my land.

**AnMarie** [00:00:00] But it felt like I wanted to stop this mining. I won't. Why is this air quality so shitty. Why. Why is it like this. But. You know God opens all these doors and here I am doing this work. I was called to do it. I just did it. No like. Yes life is crazy. I tell you.

**Kamryn** [00:00:17] Yeah no it's awesome because now you're like on this path now through your experience experiences this is what you're doing. Exactly. Yeah it's been pretty cool. Yeah. Yeah I agree with you on that. Yeah. We turn on the faucet. We don't think twice about oh just getting this water. And I like your approach of like kind of like the relationship with the land. Like taking care of the land.

**AnMarie** [00:00:39] Like it's part of you guys. It really. There's no separation. I have. Let me cite my elder again Julia Morgan. She said something great was just like for native people our land is a reflection of who we are. So it's like looking into a mirror. So how do you think I feel looking into LA I don't feel very good. So I got to do what I need to do. To make it better because it really really is like I attacked your being your consciousness. There is even I have sisters or relatives that are Tongva guys while they're like sometimes we just we feel like dying because it's like the hurdles are so. Big to overcome here and like the state of our rivers and the more development. And. Like I totally feel that way too just like hopeless. But at the same time like future generations that depend on us to do this work now. So it's so important in this critical juncture of sustainable planning and a sustainable plan LA and Grand Challenges and all this bullshit and you're just like well we've got to do something and we've got to insert ourselves somehow and we can't just give up. So that's where I find myself today. I it so weird. I never thought like who would think I worked on so I'm working on water three four years ago just because I wanted to work with water and now like all this you know. This stuff is happening politically I'm like Oh. Well I guess this is. You know our

ancestors are crazy man. Like they were like No it always happened is oh yeah So here we are.

**Kamryn** [00:02:01] No that's awesome and kind of like. Kind of somewhat related but like. That when you said like it's like a mirror. Right. Like what do we see when we see all of this and we're not connected at all to it and it's a mirror of ourselves. I forget who was listening to but it's kind of like.

**Kamryn** [00:02:18] The state of kind of where we're like on a global scale like let's say for instance like so Mother Nature is has more feminine energy let's say it does. And so yeah. And so like well why is there such a big thing in society right now about. Feminine energy and females and. Society and females in the workplace whatever and it's like how we're treating our environment like we don't have any appreciation for female energy. And so yeah I definitely agree with what you're saying. Yeah.

**AnMarie** [00:02:49] Yeah. It's like native people acknowledge that because we look at water as having a feminine energy and a lot of times and even in my writing I'm like I don't even do it. I want to put she like she's wants to be restored she blah blah blah but it's just like how is this. I don't know. It's just like the breaking of the paradigm. But it is definitely feminine and you know. I always like personified the LA river and I'm like I feel like her. I feel like I'm channelized like I feel like you know. You know. a bunch a bunch of like societal concrete is poured on me and I can't function the way I want to function or need to function and I'm hurting and I'm like I feel your pain girl like I pass her all the time and I'm just like. Same bitch like you know like we're on the same page and. A lot of my older relatives feel that way too and it's not just know me I'm not creating the nothing new it's just. I'm able to. Transcribe it in this realm. And like I that's why it's like to cite people because this is work done by community not just one person. And like. I'm just happy to have people to talk to about it now. And now we're just like Oh my God I feel like that too and like. It's really it's really powerful to have like the sisterhood of people that I work with that aren't in academic spaces but definitely like help me with my work. Yeah. So. I'd like to acknowledge those as many times so I always say site my Elder site my community member because we have to do it for you know this shit like why don't we do that for the actual people who are. Really inspiring our work.

**AnMarie** [00:04:16] That's what my writing I'm sorry it's all relative cuz I'm writing my thesis and I'm like no they're getting their shout out.

Kamryn [00:04:21] Yeah. So tell me a little bit more about your thesis and your project.

AnMarie [00:04:24] Oh my God it's a hot mess but it's like there's two parts of it cuz I hate myself. So there's a community part of my documentary. It's a. Practice of Public pedagogy and then there's this. The second part which is to me like little not as exciting part of the writing. So it's really hard to like divide my time but the community part is really important to me. I have done, in the past 3 years done on a lot of like actions and I actually walked with some Paiute along the Los Angeles River. You know the entirety of it as much as you can because there's some parts you can't get to but we spent a night at parks and we did like this huge walk it was for this thing called Walking waters. I didn't know what I was getting myself involved with but this is where the idea started to come take shape. And so walking Waters is primarily like a white enviro thing which I didn't know which was kind of creepy. When I finally was into it. But they've been walking from the Owens Valley to here to restore our relationship with water. You know like that was their fucking thing but a lot of Paiute work with them and they're good. They're good folks. So the Paiute were like what well we're gonna do our last leg in Los Angeles it's like where you come on this walk because we need to have at least some, cuz tribal people are about protocol. So we're gonna be walking your land you want to do this walk. It's two weeks was like 17 days. You're gonna be spending night apart pretty much going to live homeless. Yeah and I was like Hell yeah let's do this. So I was like shook because I'm like First off nobody in L.A. could get these permits but yet this outside White group comes in like oh can you sleep at these parks and they're like sure. They just sign these fucking. I'm like you're over here you're criminalizing the people who actually live here for sleeping in parks. But here we are. So it was like protected by a blanket of whiteness. So I just wanna put that out there. But anyways. So I got to really see the. State of the river and it was heartbreaking and I learned a lot and I got to talk to the native folks and sing with them and you know just be along the river to see like you know how it changes from neighborhood to neighborhood and then also to see who the fuck's using water and who's using it responsibly who's using it irresponsibly how the DWP targets certain neighborhoods to conserve while they don't target some other neighborhoods.

[00:00:49] Look around you. No no DWP is out here telling these folks to conserve. Like it's ridiculous. But in low income people say oh change out your lawns we'll give you money to change you know and just like I see you like to. It's just the conservation. That's where I learned to. But anyway so during his walk I was like All right. There's obviously like this big disconnect about even the folks coming in. These well-meaning white folks coming in they, the they had no idea that they're on Indigenous land and



anything about us they're just like oh well you guys are stealing Owens Valley water and I do the British voice because there's a lady she's pretty irritating but she was like oh you guys you know using this water don't even know, but it's like well you're coming to my land we know that you're here. So like there's problems all across the board. So I thought I need to make like some kind of PSA a very basic one oh one who's land you on whose water are you using and how has it impacted Indigenous people especially like during that time I was like I kept hearing all these DWP people and communities and organizations like sustainability sustainability like you know hearing that and then hearing you know Paiutes talking about well sustainability is a buzzword for yall.

[00:02:00] Allen Bay Cox had this sustainability is a buzzword for you all but for us it was a way of life you know and you guys are watering down what this really means about reciprocity of taking stuff or putting it back and taking stuff and putting it back. So I say I learned a lot from a Paiute like that's this shit I was like. That's how we do it like you know is resourceful you just you know you don't take more than you need because that's just how you're gonna keep going and like western like consciousness it's like well we've got to build and you know extract and market driven logic and it's just like this ain't working for us anymore. So on that walk I thought I need to do something and I need to do something that is close to home. So with me I grew up in the hood. And the people that I feel like have a lot of power that are very underrated our graffiti artists. Because everybody loves them some graffiti artists. So one of the people that was very popular hood famous if you will lives close to my mom and I asked him you know hey you want to work on this project with me because we threw an event. He did a flyer and this flyer like everybody loved the flyer because it told a story within a picture I can show you the pictures. Yeah but so. So I said All right I have an idea. We're gonna do five part series but the pictures are gonna tell a story. But with the access of a QR code it's going to be like a two to three like real basic breaking down what the picture means. So what I want. My vision was to talk about Lands before contact. So who were we. What do we do. How do we live. Then we're gonna talk about it. Colonialism. Like what that took away from our people. How the landscape started changing the current state of affairs and then possible solutions. And all Native people no white experts. Just all Native people speaking to our understanding of water and our lands and what we need to do to restore that because that that's a perspective that's totally erased. So with the hopes when this project is finished is that you know goes you know people will be exposed to that and you know start integrating us in a real way because we're at the end a day where nations we're not another minority group we're nations we have sovereignty and we're not being respected in that way in the city's landscape and it's like the trajectory of doing that. It's built into the system.



So I guess I just want to like you know agitate people because I feel like the everyday person in Los Angeles doesn't even know this stuff because we have a low quality of life people that actually live here have a low quality of life. They have to work two or three jobs for their shitty rent. You know this is just bad. So it's like how do I communicate with those people because our oppression is needs you know what they did to us they doing to you know gentrification is nothing but neo colonialism of displacing people that you know are from a place and you know all not get out of my way because I want to build here I want to gentrify this area like they David that was first you know and so how can we connect our stories and become stronger. And then also use our sovereignty to uplift other people that are being oppressed. So it's it's like a process. But yeah that's that's where I got the idea to do the work and. You know being from the hood is not always about things like these are audience I'm trying to get to so. I have resources. I have my brother who makes documentaries or he's I have my brother who makes documentaries or he's he's making a documentary now and then I have. My friend who's a graffiti artist that because of him thousands of people would be exposed to the story that wouldn't otherwise be exposed to this story. So I'm really happy that he's involved and on board.

**Kamryn** [00:00:17] That's crazy because like you have a lot of outlets to reach a lot of people which is great.

**AnMarie** [00:00:26] Not just circle jerk here because it's like nobody, nobody cares here like they do but they don't like. It doesn't matter because a lot of people are just coming in here using up resources and bouncing and doing their own thing. Well I'm living here long term. Generations my family will be here long term so I am invested. So my work isn't for academic consumption. That part now I'm working on this other part where I'm like uh it's. Terrible.

**Kamryn** [00:00:49] That's crazy. So he's going to have these pictures can you show them some?

**AnMarie** [00:01:00] so its a five part series. And hopefully in the middle of June. But I think my take a little bit longer because I did find somebody that will translate so that's important. I want it translated all in Spanish. So then even more people could have access to it. Yeah. Because I think the more people who understand. What the city was before. That could really make those connections look like how it is now. It's not that much different. You know it's really not. it's transformed. Colonization transforms. You know that's that's what it does it's good at that.

[00:01:48] AnMarie: While we wait is there any like other things. kamryn: Yeah. So in terms of like the actual like restoration efforts define that how you will. with Like. Projects or. gentrification putting up. Hotels right next to the river. Like what are your opinions about those current efforts that are going on.

[00:02:07] Oh like I said it's just like neocolonialism transforming to displacing people. It's really hard to get excited. About projects. It really really is. I remember we , not that long ago. We talked to a developer in South for a certain area in south gate and he had these beautiful pictures about where we're going to clean up the water to the point where. we can touch The water. And let alone, like I don't want it like like this this looks like hella gentrifying to me like you know. And I remember being in this meeting and somebody I would quote her but i don't know but she's like we can't have nice things because of racism because literally this would it sounds like all these restoration projects sounds like a huge gentrification fucking project. One after one. Like I'm not excited for prop 68 funding I'm not excited for you know the. Prop 1 funding that goes into restoring like in that sad to say as an Indigenous person. The one thing I do want is my water restored. But dammit.. Who's it for? Who's it for. And that hurts because it's like these you know families have been there for generations not as long as you know. Because even me like I live in Pomona. I go to school here but Pomona is like the outskirts of. L.A. County. Because I can't afford to live out here. And eat and raise a kid. And so I'm just thinking wow you're gonna put all these other people out too because oh look. Now we have riverfront. You know. Availability. And a bike trail and this and that cause. You know look at what they did to frog town and how that changed the landscape of in that section of the river. Now there's a brewery and the coffee bean right off the thing like Oh that's cute but not really you displaced a bunch of fucking people. Now they live in San Bernardino. So it is just like this cycle of doing that. So it's like that sucks like. Of course I want my river to look nice but we need to put things in protection and like housing protection and rent control like things. Are people to be informed about their rights. Because you can't just restore something. Without doing that community work as well because it literally goes hand in hand. If it looks nice. Bunch of people are gonna get kicked out. So I don't know. And then I'm not too happy about this. Valley River steering committee. Like all these committees but yet no Tongva representation and they've often tokenize like maybe they find one native person to be on it but they're not Tongva. And most of the river runs through from my homeland. So what the fuck. So it's just one of those things where I'm like it's an uphill battle. And I. And I. Am involved in enough spaces to know. It's. Just yeah it's a lot. Everyone has a stake in it and you know the people that are speculating have big big stakes in it. Like. What could be the economic the jobs the. That's a big thing that

Mayor Garcetti is like all about like these green jobs. But it's like yeah not too excited about his sustainability plan. Not unless you have a bunch of native advisors that I'd feel like then we're going to do justice to this word sustainability and this concept of. You know regeneration. Restorative. Revitalization. Yeah. We need more native people at the table as many as possible. Okay so this is a. OK that's as bad as it goes. But this is the first picture. So this is a symbolic representation of who the tongva. People were pre-contact. So there's this various things that are important to my culture that are in here. There is this, is our original home. We're known for our baskets This is like a lot of symbolism it's like you know every art piece has like things to break down. From right here. You see that there's like a pouring of a basket. This represents our river water because all of our river water goes into the ocean. Now I don't know why this shit won't go up oh here and now sees the river waters leading to the ocean. And I chose we had a very like very crack in societies and the river and also like in the ocean. So that's what that's representative of all these animals are very significant to our people as well. We have stories about them. Right here is like representing ceremony where a ceremonial people you know of people. That lived by the L.A. River villages they would wake up. At dawn to greet the day and bathe. And they did that every day. And it was a part of their ceremony to thank the water that would start their day. So we had a very strong connection to our water. And then. For the first two art pieces where it's introducing tribal communities the women is front and center because we're primarily like you know matriarchal. We had a respect like women had to make rules in society that were. You know equal to that of their male. Of course there was you know gender dynamics but it was not nothing like how it is today elderberry Like, just various things and then right here at the very corner is the foreshadowing of the mission which represents our first colonial. Like. Colonial. Way. Took the second picture is the Paiute. So it's like the same thing, who the Paiute people were before contact. Lots of symbolism the animals of the valley. This is where we receive our water from- Their land was called "Paiute --" not the Owens Valley, Paiute -- means land of the flowing water. And I learned so much from them and these are just like a very symbolic. Picture of who they were and with the QR code you'd be able to access the two to three minute documentary of Paiute people speaking of who they are and the same for the first one who we were before. This shit happen and this is where the third picture comes in which is this is the shared colonization that went through a lot of our stories are interconnected. So right here this is a traditional Paiute water carrying basket. And as you could see it's like symbolizing the aqueduct that was built that was they had been they think of themselves as having two ways of colonialism. So the first were the settlers the gold rush settlers that came in the home squatters. And then L.A. the city of L.A. coming in Cali they look at them to this day as a colonial force. I remember someone thing. Out

there I think that I believe it was Harry Williams. He's an elder. He was saying how they look at the LADW trucks as. As tanks like you know. They don't necessarily belong there but here they are occupying so much space only like 80 percent of the private property out there and in their homeland 250 miles away. So anyway so. There's that and then for us and Tongva territory when the Spanish came in to Los Angeles we were actually the people that would deliver water to the homes. The Spanish homes because these people were too damn lazy to go to this "San Madre?" Which is a mother ditch to go get the water they would employ native people and then even water was weaponized against us. So any time the ditch was really low they would look for native people to arrest because we make very Jim Crow like oh if we have you under arrest and you could do free labor. So it was a lot of that going on during that time when the city first became the city and like so this is where. We'll talk about that in this video. And it's I mean there's so much complexity so many things to say but it's like a very like one oh one. Basic thing because there's so much to say but you know I don't want to overwhelm people and everybody here got it hard and short attention span. So the big thing for us is to give enough. But not too much. Yeah because then it's like a 40 minute documentary as opposed to two to three minute clip. Yeah. And then this is the. The fourth picture. Play. The fourth picture is about our current state. So this is a current state and as you notice the man's in the middle now he's a native man but a man nonetheless. And that's kind of. Alluding to the fact that patriarchy is the way that our society is run and. You know women aren't front and center are appreciated the way they need to be appreciated. This for like seeing. So right here is the DWP building which I was like you know site of trauma for both of us because who said we even wanted to bring all these people in without the water there would be no this you know so nobody asked us how we felt this is alluding to like I was talking to you before. Conservation and how it's equally distributed in. Los Angeles. Oh we got to save but what about you folks out here like the drought. Never hit them you know. And then right here is the. Representation of the. Owens dry lake. Which is the largest. Well one of the largest producers a particulate matter. So the fact that we drain the river now they have like these huge dust storms and DWP like took. All these people to court because they don't want to fix a problem you know they caused it. And the courts making them fix it. It was just a big mess. So that's going to be talked about in the last but not least is like a representation of the L.A. River. And you know talking about homelessness and dispossession or displacement and how that is an indigenous thing and how it's changed over time and how unsustainable this. LA is and. How how sustainable is this. Is this county if there's 60 thousand homeless people like you know obviously does not out of jobs and not enough housing but yet you want to keep bringing in more water for what. For who you know who's it all really for. So these are

gonna be issues that are talked about. Multiple tribal members and then the last picture is under construction which is kind of like. The hopefulness of the project. With. This. business led. Regenerative ideas even as simple as planting plants they don't need a lot of water that are needed and. Adding up to the decision making table think just different things that the that. The interviews produced and should be interesting. Now we're in the process of narrowing everything down. It's hard though because it's like everything's important. You know what I mean but then it's like. But then you're going to lose people. It took too long and too this or too that. So that's what I really need. Who's my audience. Audience is a person of LA. That is dealing with a lot of shit already you know like you know not not an academic I just get to could teach it like somebody that just needs to know like hey that's fucked up. I see that. And you know what. When it comes time to vote because in L.A. in order to do anything with water two thirds of the vote people even know that like you know so that's something.

**Name:** Hector De La Torre

**Location:** 660 Figueroa Downtown LA

**Date:** April 30, 2019

**Interviewer(s):** Corey

**Language:** English

**Corey** [00:00:02] The first question is just really simple. Just describe your relationship with the river. Like maybe a memorable experience you've had with it?

**Hector** [00:00:12] I don't know about a memorable experience but I use it every day almost. That's where I run a lot. Along the River bike path runs along the river road going on that almost every day. So I use it every day. I can't think of one you know one time, anything unique. But I have used it in different places, down by Long Beach where the cement runs out. I've been in that area and actually walked down on the sand. I've been out to the very end of it where the city of Long Beach for a time had some booms that would capture the trash that would end up down there, which is a big problem for them because obviously they have beaches and a marina. They wanted it to be nice and all this junk floats down there. Obviously I know about frogtown and I've never actually been down in the town part of it and never walked and looked down on there but I could, you can see from the freeway driving by on the 5. So I've seen that and I know what it can be. Having seen that and having seen the Long Beach part where there is no cement I think it's not hard to imagine what it could be like if you took the bottom out. At least the bottom, cement, all of it out hmm.

**Corey** [00:01:56] So is it ever difficult to find access points to the River? Like finding access points the river or like? How do you feel about accessibility?

**Hector** [00:02:08] There is an entry way. There is a bridge where Garfield meets and it's actually the same, San Gabriel? The Rio Honda channel. The bridge goes over it. So at the four points of the bridge going in both directions there are entries onto this bike path onto these bike that says to one side. So there's entry points on both sides, both sides of the river including both directions. So uh it's pretty easy for me at that point. I know there's uh a couple of entry points at a Hollydale Park in Southgate. I've used those before. In fact there was a restroom in the park and there's a gate, an open gate. I think it's open all the time. It's always open when I see it, that goes between the bike path and the restrooms in the park. So you know if you're riding along and walking along or whatever there is a restroom. I don't know about other places I haven't seen I haven't been up and down the whole thing. I know there's the bike the bike path goes

all the way down to Long Beach. So there there must be on every mile fence along the way. There are major intersections or something.

**Corey** [00:03:45] And so the next question you kind of talked about a little bit. So what do you think is the purpose of the restoration? Like your opinion and also...

**Hector** [00:03:56] Meaning what do I think they're trying to do or meaning what do I think they should do?

**Corey** [00:04:01] Both actually. Yeah.

**Hector** [00:04:03] Uh what I think they're trying to do is make it as natural as possible. It is a river. Although it sometimes looks like a sewer an open sewer. And what do I think it should be done? I think it should be made as natural as possible. You have to respect the flood control aspect of it. That river was wild before in fact. And of course I haven't got into this, but it changed. It used to empty out into the Santa Monica Bay. Now because of one really bad storm, it changed it. It broke its banks and shifted and ran down to Long beach. Now that's pretty scary when you consider how many people live on either of those parts. So um you have to respect the flood control aspect. But I think we must have learned something since the 1940s when they concretized it to make it a flood control channel but...allowed to be more organic.

**Corey** [00:05:20] So that's actually going into our last question which basically just like your thoughts on climate change and flood control concerning the river. You kind of answered about flood control.

**Hector** [00:05:33] If you're going to have these wild storms in fact that that is a powerful memory of mine, of the river in the late 70s early 80s, there was a really bad storm. I distinctly remember driving on Firestone, on the bridge over the river and the water was was wild all the way up to the top of the channel. And it was splashing and spraying up you could see that as you drove on the bridge because it's not much higher than the top of the banks. So you could actually see this in the middle of the storm. And. It's just a remi... I haven't seen anything like that since I've lived [here] thankfully. But that's something you don't forget that, you know that that could happen and it's happened in my lifetime means it could happen again. And so you have to respect that. But like I said before you know we must have best practices, learnings that what we've had about flooding and and find ways to fix it. When I was on the city council the Corps of Engineer Army Corps of Engineers did do a project to do more



flood control within the existing footprint. And what that meant that...the two things I remember that they did. One was in some places they raised the wall on the sides. They actually put an additional wall above roughly where the bike path is now Uh to make it higher so that it could take more volume of water came up to the level. And then they put these arched supports that they attach to the bases of the bridges to make the water stay down and not come up and splash up against the columns that support the bridge. Out of concern that it can take a bridge out...which the L.A. River did in the 1930s. It took out a bridge at Southern in Suffolk Southern Avenue there used to be a bridge there just south of firestorm. And during a flood during the bad storm it took the bridge out. It wasn't you know big cement bridge like we have today. But it still took the bridge out and that's powerful. So those two changes allowed them to remove the requirement that houses along that part where they did the work. Removed the requirement for flood insurance which was a big deal to the homeowners in that area. And so again you can't forget the flood control piece of it. Yeah but you have a massive flood plain. On either side of the river before it was channelized. It was a flood plain and you should take advantage of that. And I think that means allowing the water to spill over in places where you can control it onto the parks and other great space. And that would help also with our stormwater recharge of the aquifers because the water could seep down into the aquifers for us to be able to use it down the road. So I think and I know there's lots of plans around that concept but I think it makes sense. I think the Army Corps of Engineers should be at the table and they should be flexible in protecting the flood control aspect but being more flexible in how we use the channel.

Corey [00:10:21] And that's actually my last question.



Name: Manuel

Location: Southgate Regional Park

Date: April 27, 2019

Interviewers: James and Camila

Language: Spanish, translated by Camila

Camila [00:00:00] Mi nombre es Camila su nombre era Juan? (My name is Camila, your name was Juan?)

Manuel [00:00:05] Manuel.

Camila [00:00:05] Manuel Mucho Gusto. (Nice to meet you)

James [00:00:05] James.

Camila [00:00:05] Entonces nuestra primera pregunta es, usted ha escuchado sobre los planes de la ciudad para revitalizar al Río de Los Ángeles? (Our first question is, have you heard about the City's plans to revitalize the Los Angeles River?)

Manuel [00:00:16] O no.

Camila [00:00:18] Ha tenido usted una relación personal con el Río? O sea... (Have you had a personal connection to the River )

Manuel [00:00:24] No no.

Camila [00:00:25] Y, por qué cree que es eso? Tiene alguna razón, o simplemente no se ha dado? (Why do you think that is? Do you have a specific reason or simply, it just hasn't happened?)

Manuel [00:00:28] No me e dado cuenta. (I haven't noticed.)

Camila [00:00:34] Usted vive en South Gate? (Do you live in Southgate?)

Manuel [00:00:37] Si.

Camila [00:00:37] Y frecuenta este parque [mucho]? (Do you come to this park often?)

**Manuel** [00:00:38] A veces. (Sometimes.)

**Camila** [00:00:40] A veces. Cuando tiene tiempo. Que cree que la ciudad pudiera hacer para que a usted le interese más al Río, o que usted quiera ir al Río? (Sometimes. When you have time. What do you think the city could do to make you more interested in the River or for you to want to go to the River?)

**Manuel** [00:00:59] No sé, porque no tengo que ir al Río. (I don't know, I just don't have to go to the River.)

**Camila** [00:01:04] No tienen por qué ir, no tienen ninguna razón. Sí, porque por ejemplo ahorita lo que hay es para ir, para andar en bici. (You don't have to go, you don't have a reason. Right, because, for example, right now one of the things the River has are bike paths.)

**Manuel** [00:01:14] También me doy cuenta que hay mucho malandrín. Entonces, no se si lo que quiera hacer la ciudad o el gobierno [es] hacerlo como parque, no se, para que los malandrines no vayan para allá. Por eso no voy yo, porque sé que me puede pasar algo. (I've also noticed that there are a lot of scoundrels. So I don't know if what the city or the government wants to do are parks so that scoundrels don't go there. That's why I don't go, because I know they can harm me.)

**Camila** [00:01:34] Y qué cree usted que pueda hacer la ciudad en términos de eso mismo? Ósea, algunas personas han dicho que quieren ver más luz, otras personas quieren más vigilancia o cosas así. Cree que algo pueda ayudar en eso, que puede cambiar en eso? (And what do you think the city could do to fix that? Some people have said they want more light, other people want more surveillance or things like that. Do you think something could help change that?)

**Manuel** [00:01:51] La realidad, no puedes porque yo pienso que eso ya viene de familia. De los padres o algo. Si les dan buena educación no se tienen a... osea como ustedes. Vas a UCLA, tienes tu mente fijada en un punto. Tu, si vives aquí, talves ya no vives aquí porque vas a económicamente estar más bien. Si yo vivo aquí es porque aquí puedo pagar mi casa pero a mi me gustaría vivir en otro lado. (To be honest, I don't think so because I think that's something you learn with your family, with your parents or something. If you have a good education you don't have these problems. Like you guys you go to UCLA, you have your mind fixed on a goal. If you live here, maybe you won't

live here because economically you'll be better off. I live here because I can pay my house here, but I would like to live somewhere else.)

**Camila** [00:02:21] Yo soy de Downey, estoy bien cerca. (I'm actually from Downey, so I am pretty close.)

**Manuel** [00:02:27] Pero tú vienes por una razón. Estas mejor que aquí. El gobierno. La gente que se comporta más bien. Entonces. Yo iría a Bel-Air claro, pero cuanto me costara una casa? Dos millones. Cuanto sale al coche? [can't entirely understand] Aquí cuesta como medio millón, seis mil dólares en impuestos. Alla cuanto saldria? 100 mil dólares en impuestos no? (But you're here for a reason, you're somewhere better than here. The government. The people that behave better. Then. I would go to Bel-Air of course, but how much would my house be? Two million. How much would my car be? Here it would be half a million, six thousand in interest. There how much would it be, 100,000 in interest no?)

**Camila** [00:02:58] Claro. (Right.)

**Manuel** [00:02:59] Cada quien vive donde podemos vivir. Hay latinos que viven en Compton porque allí pueden pagar su renta. Pero no es porque seamos tontos somos muy buenos. Si sabemos. Si, no podemos. Cada quien vamos donde podemos pagar. (Everyone lives where they can. There are Latinos that live in Compton because that's where they can pay their rent. But it's not because we're dumb, we're good. We know. If we can't [pay somewhere specific], we go where we can pay.)

**Camila** [00:03:15] Claro se hace lo que se puede. (Right, you do what you can.)

**Manuel** [00:03:18] Cómo te digo, tú vas a llegar un día a ganar mucho dinero y qué bien. Porque dicen que la educación es cara. No, yo digo que es más cara la ignorancia que la educación. Puedes llegar a ganar 100 mil o 200 mil al año. Te van a quitar 20 mil al año de taxes. Pero es mejor que ganar 15 o 20 mil al año y que te den. Es mejor. Porque no. Tienes otra calidad de vida, es no más que la gente no piensa en eso. Si, se acostumbra a vivir de la basura, ahí te vas a mantener por eso no hacen la lucha de ganar algo más de 6 mil dólares. (Like I'm telling you. One day you're going to earn a lot of money, and that's good. Because they say that education is costly but I say ignorance is more costly than education. You can end up earning 100k or 200k a year. They'll take 20k a year for taxes. But it's better than earning 15 or 20 k a year and that you would receive government help. It's better. Why not. You have a different

quality of life, except people don't think about that and they get used to living off of trash, you'll stay there. That's why people don't do more to earn more.)

**Camila** [00:03:59] Y usted. No se si ha escuchado del calentamiento global (Have you heard about global warming?)

**Manuel** [00:04:06] Si si. (yes)

**Camila** [00:04:10] Y no sé si usted ha visto cuando el Río se sabe llenar mucho [y] puede haber inundaciones. Entonces. Con estos cambios que hay en el medio ambiente y como nuestro Río se sabe llenar usted tiene algún miedo por las inundaciones (I don't know if you've seen the River, it can fill up and there can be floods. So, with those changes that are occurring in our environment and since our River fills up, do you have any concerns about flooding?)

**Manuel** [00:04:24] No. También veo así como políticamente están equivocados. Este como se llama. Al Gore. Dice el presidente el anda viajando en todo el mundo. Para promover eso que el mismo anda contribuyendo que se calienta. Porque anda en el avión. Y dos aviones al lado de el cuidándolo. Que ande promoviendo eso en bicicleta [o] caminando [pero] anda en avión. (No. I also see how politically they're wrong. What's his name. Al Gore. He's flying around the entire world to promote what? He's the one contributing to warming because he's on a plane. And two other planes follow him on each side that take care of him. He should promote that on a bike or walking--he's on a plane.)

**Camila** [00:04:54] En eso tiene algo de razón, es algo en lo que tenemos que pensar. (That's something we have to consider.)

**Manuel** [00:05:02] Esos se mueven [con] forme el aire [les] mueve. Osea como la política te mueve. Te haces paca te haces palla. (They move whichever way politics move. You go here and there)

**Camila** [00:05:14] Tienes que adaptarte (You have to adapt.)

**Manuel** [00:05:16] Así como te digo el Al Gore anda palla y paca. Que anda haciendo calentando el ambiente. Por que anda viajando en avión? Porque no lo hace caminando, en bicicleta, o algo. Porque no lo hace asi. No puede. Por qué? Sus guardaespaldas, su gente que le protege va a los lados de cada avión. Como me dice

que está protegiendo el ambiente cuando lo anda contaminando? (it's like I'm telling you, Al Gore is here and there. What is he doing, warming up the environment. Why is he on a plane? Why doesn't he do it walking or on a bike or something like that? He can't. Why? His security, his people are protecting him on either side of the plane. How can he say he's protecting the environment when he's the one contaminating it?)

Camila [00:05:43] Eso es en algo que tenemos que pensar. Did I miss any questions? (That's something to think about.)

James [00:05:47] I don't think so.

Camila [00:05:47] I think we covered everything

Camila [00:05:54] Le pregunté si me olvide algunas preguntas. O. Si usted [pudiera] caracterizar al Río en una palabra cuál sería? O sea por ejemplo, cómo le describiría usted al Río en una palabra? (I was asking him if I forgot any questions. Oh, if you wanted to describe the River in one word what would it be?)

Manuel [00:06:13] Fíjate que no tengo tiempo. Paso cruzando ahí. No lo veo. (You know I don't have time to see it, I just cross by there, I don't see it.)

Camila [00:06:21] Entonces creo que ese es todo muchas gracias. Que tenga lindo día. (I think that's everything, thank you, have a nice day)

Manuel [00:06:26] Cuéntale lo que te dije. (Tell him what I told you.)

Camila [00:06:28] Sí claro. Ahorita yo voy a traducir la entrevista y ya vamos a tener toda esa información, muchas gracias. (Of course, we're going to translate the interview and we'll have all the information, thank you.)

Name: Natividad

Location: South Gate Regional Park

Date: April 27, 2019

Interviewers: James and Camila

Language: Spanish, translated by Camila

Camila [00:00:02] Mi nombre es Camila. Cual es su nombre? (My name is Camila. What's your name?)

Natividad [00:00:02] Natividad.

Camila [00:00:02] Mucho Gusto. (Nice to meet you.)

James [00:00:07] James. My name is James.

Natividad [00:00:08] Jace?

Camila [00:00:10] O James.

Natividad [00:00:10] O James.

Camila [00:00:11] Asi es mas facil. Somos estudiantes de UCLA y estamos haciendo una investigación sobre el Río de Los Ángeles y la comunidad de South Gate. Usted es de South Gate? O... (That's easier, we're UCLA students and we're doing research on the Los Angeles River and the South Gate community. Are you from South Gate or?)

Natividad [00:00:27] South Gate.

Camila [00:00:28] South Gate. Usted a escuchado de los planes que tiene la ciudad para renovar el Río o para hacer algunos cambios? (South Gate. Have you heard of the city's plans to renovate the River or to make some changes?)

Natividad [00:00:39] No.

Camila [00:00:39] Usted ha ido al Río alguna vez? (Have you been to the River?)

Natividad [00:00:43] No, nunca he ido al Río, iba a la playa. (No ilve never been to the River, I used to go to the beach.)

Camila [00:00:44] Claro. Por qué cree que no ha ido al Río. Simplemente. No ha pensado? (Of course, why do you think you haven't been to the River? Has it simply not happened?)

Natividad [00:00:55] No e pensado. No e pensado (I haven't thought about it.)

Camila [00:00:57] No. Cree que tal vez. Su.. piensa que... se me escapa la palabra. (Do you think maybe... ah the word escapes me)

Natividad [00:01:07] Peligroso? (Dangerous?)

Camila [00:01:08] Peligroso si, piensa que es peligroso o? (Yes, dangerous, do you think it's dangerous?)

Natividad [00:01:11] No. La verdad no e pensado ir. Porque hay mucha gente ahí viviendo en el Río. (I honestly haven't thought of going because there's a lot of people living on the River)

Camila [00:01:20] Si. Usted sabe venir más aquí al parque? (Do you come more to the park?)

Natividad [00:01:26] Vengo aquí al parque, camino todo el alrededor. (Yeah, I come and walk the perimeter.)

Camila [00:01:30] Qué cambios cree que la ciudad pudiera hacer en el Río como para que usted quiera ir? (What changes do you think the city could make to the River so that you would want to go?)

Natividad [00:01:37] Que [limpien], que no viviera gente ahí. Vive mucha gente que... (Cleaning it, that people wouldn't live there, a lot of people...)

Camila [00:01:47] Y a usted ha experimentado algunas inundaciones que pueden venir por el Río y piensa que es peligroso por las inundaciones? (Have you experienced floods that can occur on the River, and do you think it's dangerous because of the floods?)

Natividad [00:01:57] Pienso que es peligroso. (I think it's dangerous.)

Camila [00:01:58] Está preocupado por eso? (Are you worried because of that?)

Natividad [00:02:00] No, porque no me dan ganas de ir. (No because I don't want to go.)

Camila [00:02:04] Claro. (Of course.)

Camila [00:02:06] Y con el cambio ambiental, que no se si usted ha escuchado, no sé lo que piense sobre el cambio ambiental y el calentamiento global, pero cree que eso tal vez empeore la situación con el Río o con las inundaciones o no se, es algo que ha considerado? (With the changes in the environment, I don't know if you have heard or what you think of climate change or global warming, but do you think that would make the situation with the River and floods worse or is that something you have considered?)

Natividad [00:02:27] Si se inunda hay que limpiar la situación. (If it floods we have to fix the situation.)

Camila [00:02:31] Claro. (Of course)

Natividad [00:02:34] Especialmente cuando llueve. (Especially when it rains.)

Camila [00:02:37] Si le a visto al Río cuando se llena? (Have you seen the River when it's full?)

Natividad [00:02:41] Si (Yes.)

Camila [00:02:46] Es una fuerza (It's a force.)

Natividad [00:02:46] El agua lleva mucha fuerza. (The water has a lot of power.)

Camila [00:02:48] Sí. Sí, y siempre hay ese peligro de deslaves o de que se vaya... (Yeah, it's dangerous with landslides and such.)

Camila [00:02:57] Usted qué cree que puede hacer la ciudad como para comunicarse mejor con usted? No sé si a escuchado por lo que usted me dice que. No he escuchado que quieren cambiar al Río. Quieren renovar al Río. Entonces cómo cree que la ciudad le puede ayudar a usted? Para que le importe o para que sepa simplemente, para que... (What do you think the city could do to better communicate with you? Based off of what you tell me, you haven't heard about the changes to the



River, so how do you think the city could help you so that you care or you simply have the information?)

**Natividad** [00:03:18] No me importa ir al Río. No. (I don't care about going to the River, no.)

**Camila** [00:03:21] Está bien cómo es. Ok. Usted le a visto al Río, le a visto lleno. Si pudiera caracterizar al Río en una palabra cuál sería? (It's fine how it is, okay. You've seen the River, you've seen it full. If you could describe the River in one word what word would it be?)

**Natividad** [00:03:41] Pues no sabría decir. (I wouldn't know.)

**Camila** [00:03:46] Ok. está bien. Do you think I missed any questions. (Okay, that's fine)

**James** [00:03:47] I don't.

**Camila** [00:03:59] Solo le estaba preguntando si me olvide de alguna pregunta. Muchas gracias por su tiempo. Que disfrute su día que la pase bien. (I was just asking if i forgot any questions. Thank you for your time. Enjoy your day)

**Name:** Teodoro

**Location:** Southgate Regional Park

**Date:** April 27, 2019

**Interviewers:** James and Camila

**Language:** Spanish, translated by Camila

**James** [00:00:02] James, my name is James.

**Camila** [00:00:02] Entonces quería saber si es que... like what's his connection to the river? (So what we wanted to know is...)

**James** [00:00:10] Yeah.

**Camila** [00:00:10] Like what's his connection.

**James** [00:00:10] Yeah how have you used the River before?

Camila [00:00:13] Usted a tenido contacto con el Río de Los Ángeles que hay aquí en South Gate? (Have you had contact with the Los Angeles River that passes through here in South Gate?)

Teodoro [00:00:21] Contacto de que? (What contact?)

Camila [00:00:22] Osea ha ido a caminar? (Like, have you gone for walks?)

Teodoro [00:00:25] O Si. (Oh, yes)

Camila [00:00:26] O andar por bici? (Or have you biked?)

Teodoro [00:00:28] En bicicleta. (On bike.)

Camila [00:00:29] Entonces a escuchado usted que están tratando de revitalizar al Río? Hay planes para hacer más lugares de recreación y cosas así. (So, have you heard that they are trying to revitalize the River and there's plans to make more recreational spaces and things like that?)

Teodoro [00:00:44] Bueno. Mi opinión es esta verdad. Que los baños. Se trata de decir todo verdad? Los baños donde va uno al baño pues, a veces están muy sucios. Como que se desatiende la comunidad. (Well, my opinion is this. That, the bathrooms are sometimes dirty. The community doesn't pay attention.)

Camila [00:01:05] De South Gate? (Of South Gate?)

Teodoro [00:01:06] De darles más limpieza. Pero también. Uno mismo. Como los que están aquí los que estén jugando. Los que andan en el parque no tienen respeto cuando van al baño. Le ponen los papeles adentro. Y se tapa, se taponea y ya no vaja. Y se tira un tiradero de agua. Está la suciedad, está feo todo eso. Como una cosa... así estan todos los baños y como hay mucha gente que viene a comer No tienen cuidado no tienen. No tiene cuidado como para ahí hacer el bano. Y lo dejan sucio. Y uno se sienta. Uno levanta la tapa al toilet. No levantan y ahí se orinan. De mi parte digo de los hombros. En el de las mujeres nunca me e metido. Por que el de los hombres es de los hombres y el de las mujeres es de las mujeres. Esa es mi opinion que les puedo dar que en este parque deben de haber un poco más de (They need more cleaning. But also, its on the individual. Like the ones that are here that are playing. The people that are in the park have no respect when they go to the bathroom. They

put paper inside. It clogs and it doesn't flush. And then it floods. It's all gross. And all the bathrooms are like that and there's always a lot of people here, eating. They aren't careful. They leave it dirty and then one sits. At least the men's bathroom. I haven't seen the women's bathroom. The men's bathroom is for the men and the women's for the women. That's my opinion that i can give you that the park should have more..)

Camila [00:02:42] De cuidado. (more care)

Teodoro [00:02:43] De cuidado. Mas limpieza (More care. More cleaning)

Camila [00:02:46] Usted es de South Gate? O de que parte es, dónde vive. (Are you from South Gate, or where are you from?)

Teodoro [00:02:50] Yo tengo aquí dos años atrás viviendo. (I've lived here two years.)

Camila [00:02:52] Dos? Y. Ha escuchado alguna cosa de los planes que tienen para revitalizar al Río? O Qué opina de que están tratando de hacer más lugares de recreación o más lugares de? Osea más campos verdes. Piensa algo de eso? Le beneficiaría a usted? (Two? And have you heard anything about the plans that they have to revitalize the River or what do you think about them making more recreational spaces and more open spaces? Do you think that would benefit you?)

Teodoro [00:03:20] Campos creativos. Si hay mucha, esta grande este parque. No, hay mucho. Centro de Recreación. Muchos campos del deporte, voleibol, básquetbol, béisbol. Si hay mucho aquí, hay bastante de lo que quiera. (Creative spaces. Yes, this is a big park. There's a lot. A recreation center. Sports fields, volleyball, basketball, baseball. There's a lot here, whatever you want.)

Camila [00:03:58] Que cambio quisiera ver usted en el Río? Osea que quisiera, mas luz, quisiera mas... (What changes would you want to see in the River? Would you want more light would you like more...)

Teodoro [00:03:58] Si mas alumbrado, más luz porque en la noche se ve muy opaco. (Yes more lighting, more light. At night its very dim.)

Camila [00:04:03] Ya.

Teodoro [00:04:04] Las luces de aquí si, todavía aya se ve cómo de día donde juegan beisbol y todo eso. Es todo lo que puedo decir. (The lights here are good. It seems like daylight where they play baseball and all that. That's all I can say.)

Camila [00:04:18] Anything else I may have missed if you understood any of that.

James [00:04:25] Did you know about the projects already? Or no?

Camila [00:04:28] O. Si había escuchado de los proyectos que quieren hacer, la ciudad de Los Ángeles y la ciudad de South Gate con el Río? O esta es la primera vez que escucha sobre eso? (Oh, have you heard about the projects they want to do, the city of Los Angeles and South Gate with the River? Or is this the first time you hear about it?)

Teodoro [00:04:42] Como que, remodelar? De remodelación? (Like what, remodelling?)

Camila [00:04:47] Remodelación o sea más... A veces algunas personas por ejemplo quieren quitar el concreto del Río. Las personas quieren poner arte, otras personas quieren poner más paths para las bicicletas. (Remodeling or more like, some people want to take out the concrete, others want art installations, others want more bike paths.)

Teodoro [00:05:00] O si también eso falta, un estacionamiento para bicicletas. (Oh yes, that's lacking, parking for bicycles)

Camila [00:05:04] O estacionamiento. (Oh, parking.)

Teodoro [00:05:06] Si eso está bien dicho está bien dicho. (Yes, that.)

Camila [00:05:09] Que bueno. (Sounds good.)

Teodoro [00:05:10] Porque no hay no hay. (Because there isn't any.)

Camila [00:05:12] No hay muchos lugares? (There isn't a lot of places?)

Teodoro [00:05:13] Lugares donde ponga uno así. Ya ve como hay las ponen paraditas y ya uno las amarra para que no haya un robo verdad. La mía la tengo ahí. (Places to put it like this. You know how they put them standing up and then you tie it up so it isn't robbed, I have mine here.)

Camila [00:05:31] Y usted se siente a salvo en el Río cuando ha ido. O piensa que es un poco peligroso? (And do you feel safe on the river when you've been there? Or do you think its a bit dangerous?)

Teodoro [00:05:44] Eh. Aquí en el Río o aya? En el Río lo que hay es pista para bicicletas. (Here on the River or there? On the River there are bike paths.)

Camila [00:05:52] Claro. (Right.)

Teodoro [00:05:52] Hasta Long Beach de ida y vuelta. (To Long Beach, there and back.)

Camila [00:05:54] Sí. (Yes)

Teodoro [00:05:55] Está muy bien. Es una como, como un freeway para puras bicicletas. (It's good, it's like a freeway only for bikes.)

Camila [00:06:01] Hahah yeah si.

Teodoro [00:06:01] Ahí no está peligroso. (It's not dangerous.)

Camila [00:06:03] Qué bueno. Y que es un cambio que quisiera ver por el Río, aparte del estacionamiento? (Good, and what change would you want to see on the River, besides the parking)

Teodoro [00:06:09] Ok. Que. Sí. Que pusieran más vigilancia. Porque hay mucho malandrín. (That they would put more surveillance because there are a lot of scoundrels.)

Camila [00:06:16] Ya.

Teodoro [00:06:17] A un lado y otro. (On one side and the other.)

Camila [00:06:20] Eso hemos escuchado, así estas respuestas. (We've heard that, those responses.)

**Teodoro** [00:06:24] No puede uno pasar en la noche por ahí porque lo golpean y le bajan la bicicleta. Por los puentes (You can't go by at night because they hit you and rob your bike, by the bridges.)

**Camila** [00:06:33] Claro si. Ah, se me fue la pregunta, que le iba decir. O, si es que, usted a escuchado que el Río se sabe inundar a veces o antes mismo se sabía inundar mucho si es que usted piensa que ese es un riesgo que todavía corremos? (Right. Ah, I forgot the question. What was I going to say? Oh right, have you heard that the River used to flood sometimes, do you still think that's a risk?)

**Teodoro** [00:06:54] Esta es mi respuesta. Muchos que van a acabamos de decir de esos borracho malandrines haciendo maldades. Se toman una cerveza y la avientan en que se quebra. (This is my response. A lot of the people that go, like we've just said are drunks and scoundrels doing bad things. They drink a beer and they throw them and they break.)

**Camila** [00:07:12] Hay Mucho. (There's a lot)

**Teodoro** [00:07:13] Hay mucho vidrio. Ahí se le falta una limpieza y es todo desde Long Beach a no se donde. (There's a lot of glass. There needs to be cleaning there from Long Beach to I don't know where.)

**Camila** [00:07:24] Ooooh va hasta, son 51 millas por sea caso. (Yeah it's like 51 miles.)

**Teodoro** [00:07:29] Pero está muy bien. Que le den una limpieza. Aurita que está seco. Aurita que no hay mucha agua porque cuando llueve no se puede. (But it's good, it just needs a cleaning. Right now that it's dry. Right now that there's not a lot of water because when it rains you can't.)

**Camila** [00:07:44] Si

**Teodoro** [00:07:45] Se junta el agua y se va para todo lado. (All the water piles up and goes everywhere.)

**Camila** [00:07:47] Si usted lo a visto cuando está bien lleno? Si no se si a escuchado que antes el Río se sabía inundar mucho y podría haber deslaves y así y a usted eso todavía le preocupa o asi ya no? (Yeah, have you seen it when it's real full? I don't

know if you've heard but the River used to flood a lot and there could have been landslides and stuff, does that worry you or no?)

**Teodoro** [00:07:58] Pues. Siempre se preocupa uno porque veces hay niños se pueden resbalar como está así la cuneta se pueden resbalar y se puede ahogar o se puede perder y a no van a ver. Por descuido las mamás que se descuidan de los niños está peligro para los niños porque esta así la cuneta (Well. One always is worried a bit because sometimes there are kids that can slip because of the canal they can slip and drown or get lost because of an oversight by their mothers that aren't paying attention to their kids. It's dangerous for the kids because of the way its built.)

**Camila** [00:08:24] si yo e tratado de bajar si se. (Yeah I've tried to go down, i know.)

**Teodoro** [00:08:28] Si.

**Camila** [00:08:28] Si. Y usted...What was the climate change question again?

**James** [00:08:35] Oh like do you think, will climate change are you worried about the effect of flooding due to climate change?

**Camila** [00:08:42] No sé si he escuchado lo que, como está cambiando el clima el calentamiento global. Y está preocupado que se afecte el Río y los efectos que pueda tener? (I don't know if you've heard of climate change and global warming and are you worried about how that could affect the River and the effects that could have?)

**Teodoro** [00:08:58] Una contaminación. Pues, entre mas habitantes haya, mas contaminación. Y entre mas fabricas, impresas de huile, plastico todo eso, lata, es contaminación. (Contamination. Well, the more people there are, more contamination. If there's more factories, oil companies, plastic, all that, metal, it's all contamination.)

**Camila** [00:09:26] Claro si ese es un gran problema. (Right that's a big problem)

**Teodoro** [00:09:28] Eso que le hechan a los muebles. Todo eso. Va al Río a los drenajes y al Río todo eso. (Furniture chemicals, all that, it goes to the River and the drains and all that.)

**Camila** [00:09:40] Todo eso se ve. Y usted tiene alguna memoria del Río que haya sido una memoria bonita o algo que le impactó del Río algo personal así si no le importa

[compartir]? (Right there's all that. And do you have any fond memories or anything. Something that impacted you that you wouldn't mind sharing?)

**Teodoro** [00:09:52] Antes. Digo yo apenas tengo 20 años, pero yo he visto ríos, aparte de este. Cualquier Río. Halla puede uno hasta tomar el agua así porque esta limpia, cristalina y aquí ya lleba todo. Me tomó agua de ahí [y estoy muerto] (Before, well I've been here for 20 years, but I've seen rivers besides this one. Any other river, there you can drink the water because it's that clean, crystalline and here it has so many things in it. If I drink it here I die.)

**Camila** [00:10:22] Si pudiera describir al Río en una palabra. (If you could describe the river in one word what would it be?)

**Teodoro** [00:10:34] Que lo. Cuando menos son de lluvia unos 5 meses. Cuando hace calor es cuando tiran sus botellas se van ahí al Río y tiran vasos cartones y cuando hace mucho calor todo en tiempo de lluvias hay que tener uno mas cuidado es como se limpia el Río como se descontamina. (There's only like 5 months of rain. When its hot is when people throw bottles and go to the River and throw cups and cardboard and when its raining you have to be more careful and it's when the River cleans itself or decontaminates itself.)

**Camila** [00:11:14] Va toda la suciedad al océano pues (All of it goes to the ocean.)

**Teodoro** [00:11:20] Sí mucha. (Yeah a lot.)

**Camila** [00:11:22] Muchas gracias por su tiempo nos ayudado mucho. (Thank you for your time, you've helped us a lot.)

**Camila** [00:11:28] Su nombre era Teodoro.

**Teodoro** [00:11:31] Teodoro.

**Camila** [00:11:33] Muchas gracias y que tenga un lindo día que descansen se.

**Name:** Alon

**Location:** Uber Ride near UCLA

**Date:** May 10, 2019

**Interviewer(s):** James, Camila



Language: English

James [00:00:05] I guess you can start off telling us your name where you're from.

Alon [00:00:07] Oh really? It's got to be like that.

James [00:00:11] Yeah.

Alon [00:00:11] Why? Well how about we start by you telling me why you're doing the research.

James [00:00:18] Well we're seniors in the environmental science program.

Alon [00:00:22] OK.

James [00:00:22] I'm not sure if you know the plans about the L.A. River.

Alon [00:00:30] Yeah they're trying to do something there.

Camila [00:00:33] Essentially.

James [00:00:33] Yeah. Right. So. Our research is mostly focused on the City of Southgate.

Alon [00:00:42] OK. Why? Did they give a grant to the UCLA or something or?

James [00:00:47] So basically they're having specific projects there that are already in the works.

Alon [00:00:53] I see.

James [00:00:53] And we kind of wanted to do community outreach.

Alon [00:01:00] Right.

James [00:01:00] And see what the community feels about the project.

Alon [00:01:05] And what are they proposing down there?

James [00:01:09] Yeah. So they're proposing an urban orchard, some new parks.

Alon [00:01:15] Urban orchard, okay.

James [00:01:18] And then one of the biggest things that they haven't really released yet is a project, capping the river.

Alon [00:01:27] Capping?

Camila [00:01:28] Yeah.

James [00:01:28] Yes. So like covering it and building on top of it. So that's likely.

Alon [00:01:36] Isn't it like our flood kind of thing?

Camila [00:01:39] Yeah.

Alon [00:01:39] Don't they have to maintain it?

Camila [00:01:41] Mhm.

James [00:01:41] And so that's also like another one. Well what we're looking up is how do people view or respond to the question, in terms of like future weather events...

Camila [00:02:00] Yeah.

James [00:02:00] Future weather events and future climate instability.

Alon [00:02:03] Right.

James [00:02:04] Whether they feel that the L.A. River is safe and meets up to capacity where they don't have a concern about flooding.

Alon [00:02:14] Okay. Gotcha.

James [00:02:18] Yeah.

Alon [00:02:19] Cool. So. So my name is Alon. And what else would you like to know?

James [00:02:27] I guess. Are you from Southgate?

Alon [00:02:31] No.

James [00:02:31] No. OK.

Alon [00:02:32] I live here in Westwood.

James [00:02:33] OK.

James [00:02:35] And um what is your like. How have you used the river before? What is your experience?

Alon [00:02:41] For using the bike path to cycle.

Camila [00:02:47] Do you know from what area to what area?

Alon [00:02:49] Yeah. All the way up from the top, all the way down to the bottom.

Camila [00:02:54] So as long as far as the bike path goes.

Alon [00:02:56] Yeah because I was training for a bike ride from San Francisco to L.A.

Camila [00:03:01] Oh wow.

Alon [00:03:02] So we were using the bike path to train.

Camila [00:03:07] Yes. So you have heard of some of the revitalization efforts. Do you have any thoughts on what you've heard so far even from what we've just told you?

Alon [00:03:22] Well I'm all for the people. So whatever plan will make sense for most people. I'm all for it. Obviously maintaining. You know if it's required to save lives then. Right. I mean if it's our main flood gates or flood zone thing. So I don't have enough information on how we use the river and some of the plans. But I heard Gary, he wants to do something. This and that. But I don't have any clear idea of what the specifics are.

Camila [00:03:58] You've used the river and so have there been any things that you would like to see improvement upon?

Alon [00:04:06] Yeah maybe the homeless situation along the riverbank. That's very sad. And also [it's] like eerie when you arrive and all of a sudden somebody is getting out of a tent right under an overpass or something like that. So definitely what I saw that was glaring was this idea of the homeless situation. I don't know if it's specific in Southgate. Or.

Camila [00:04:35] Yeah it seems to kind of be a lot all over.

Alon [00:04:38] Yeah.

Camila [00:04:40] From what we know from it as well.

Alon [00:04:44] Is this your first time going to South Gate?

Camila [00:04:49] No.

Alon [00:04:49] So you've been on it's already?

James [00:04:51] It's like our fourth time yet.

Alon [00:04:51] OK.

Camila [00:04:52] And I'm from Downey so.

Alon [00:04:54] I see so you know that area.

Camila [00:04:55] Yeah yeah.

Alon [00:04:58] So what are your thoughts on what should happen. Obviously you're learning it. You're a little bit more in depth.

Camila [00:05:03] Yeah.

Alon [00:05:04] What do you think?

Camila [00:05:05] Definitely not for capping.

Alon [00:05:08] Yeah capping sounds a little.

Camila [00:05:08] It hurts me a little bit.

Alon [00:05:12] Okay, why? Share with me why please.

Camila [00:05:17] It's just...we have this resource.

Alon [00:05:23] Right.

Camila [00:05:25] And as humans we have this consistent desire to control everything. And just like manipulate things and make things worse. That's what it feels like what is going on with the river. Especially by capping and not thinking about flood risk and things like that. At this point it's too late to take out concrete. I really feel like we have too many people living by the edge of the river.

Alon [00:06:00] Okay.

Camila [00:06:01] Too many. Too much housing. And businesses. And at this point we can't move those people back. Really. Unless we have this huge ordeal thing or something. And so we can't take out the concrete. So let's not make things worse by like capping it.

James [00:06:26] For me I think I would want to see like an actual like natural river. And it may not be possible now to do that. Feels like in the future. Yeah. So. Like. Capping the river I would definitely like put a nail in the coffin.

Alon [00:06:46] So that's probably the worst option.

Camila [00:06:48] Right.

Camila [00:06:49] The thing for me is I think that means maintaining the areas that do have the natural.

Alon [00:06:57] Around it.

**Camila** [00:06:57] Yeah and I understand the need or the desire for parks and orchards. I think that's great because not only are you building more green spaces in a community that some people perceive that they need it but you are also using the river as like. It introduces people to the river that otherwise wouldn't know it's there or wouldn't think about it.

**Alon** [00:07:23] Like an attraction.

**Camila** [00:07:25] Yeah several of our interviews were like "why would we go there? There's nothing to do." Like there's so. Building parks or building an orchard like that can definitely change that.

**Alon** [00:07:42] Well good luck. This is important.

**Camila** [00:07:44] Thank you.

**Alon** [00:07:45] When are you guys graduating?

**Camila** [00:07:46] June.

Name: Joshua & Edelyn  
Location: Hollydale Park  
Date: May 10, 2019  
Interviewer(s): James, Camila  
Language: English

James [00:00:01] So we're students at UCLA and we're conducting research. My name is James.

Camila [00:00:06] I'm Camilla.

James [00:00:07] And then.

Joshua [00:00:09] My name is Joshua.

Edelyn [00:00:11] Edelyn.

James [00:00:11] Evelyn?

Edelyn [00:00:11] Edelyn.

James [00:00:11] Edelyn. OK. Nice to meet you guys. Yeah. So we're doing research about the L.A. River. And so we kind of just wanted to talk to the people here who are by the river, who use the river. So I guess if you guys didn't like...Have you guys use the river before or like what's your experience with the L.A. River?

Joshua [00:00:35] It's pretty pretty empty. That's fine I guess you don't really see...um you know that many, I guess crazy people down there. We haven't been there lately but it's pretty good. I guess.

James [00:00:52] So when you when you have used the river like what specific activities would you guys do, anything specific or...

Edelyn [00:01:00] Skateboarding I tried taking my skateboard down there. Otherwise it's not a good road its bumpy from all gravel not exactly. Right. I guess.

**James** [00:01:14] Yeah. So are you familiar with what the city of Southgate and the L.A. City is trying to do with the river in terms of the projects that they have a plan coming up with the river.

**Joshua** [00:01:28] With the river bed. I don't think so I know the plans they're having and I know for a while it's just more security down there. But other than that, no I don't know what they're doing down there.

**Camila** [00:01:39] So you've seen a change in security would you say?

**Joshua** [00:01:42] There was there was more patrols going down and they ended up adding I know like porta potties down under the bridge over there. They had a security ring there walking it, since sometimes necessary. But that's it. Yeah.

**James** [00:02:04] Is there anything you guys would want to see like built or done?

**Joshua** [00:02:09] Done in the river bed? I don't think so.

**James** [00:02:13] OK. So you would say like you're fine the way is?

**Joshua** [00:02:16] Yeah very much fine like that.

**James** [00:02:19] And then.

**Camila** [00:02:22] I don't know if you guys know that the rivers used to kind of to control floods and stuff. I don't know if you guys experienced any of that. Or seen the river when it's super full. Do you have any safety concerns about flooding in the area and like really like living near the area.

**Joshua** [00:02:40] I do live nearby. Um. It's pretty good. I don't really see anyone go down into the river when it's flooded. I think I have seen them probably closing up the gate. Stuff like that but other than that I think it's I think it's pretty fine. It seems like it's gone in like a couple of days.

**James** [00:03:00] Do you think with climate change like the river do you think has uh. Are you concerned about it over flooding or in terms of climate change? And extreme weather.



**Joshua** [00:03:11] Probably not. Not really. No not really. I don't see it overflowing or anything. Haven't seen it get like this super high where it's like blocking even the road to walk on and stuff.

**James** [00:03:23] And I guess like if the city does like have plans to build more parks and put more amenities like would you have any concern about that or like any worries?

**Joshua** [00:03:36] No I don't think so.

**James** [00:03:40] And then I guess last question if you can describe the river in like one word what would you describe it as?

**Edelyn** [00:03:54] It's pretty safe, I guess. Just don't go that night because there's homeless people.

**Joshua** [00:04:00] Calm I guess.

**James** [00:04:07] That's a good one.

**Edelyn** [00:04:10] Yeah.

**James** [00:04:10] All right. I think that we hit all the marks all right. Thanks guys so much.

**Camila** [00:04:15] Enjoy.

Name: Endy  
Location: Hollydale Regional Park  
Date: May 10, 2019  
Interviewer(s): James and Camila  
Language: English

James [00:00:00] So my name is James. This is Camila. And I'm sorry your name?

Endy [00:00:08] My name is Endy.

James [00:00:09] Endy. Okay. And are you a resident of South Gate or Hollydale Park?

Endy [00:00:14] Lynwood which is right next to South Gate.

James [00:00:18] So I guess the first question we have is what would you say is your experience with the L.A. River? Like have you used it for anything?

Endy [00:00:29] No. I mean just. My connection would probably be social media. I've never been there. I know people go down there. A couple times I've heard helicopters flying up and down the River. I've never seen it. But I can hear, thought that was pretty cool.

James [00:00:48] So you've never been to the River.

Endy [00:00:51] No never been.

James [00:00:55] And would you say like have you heard any stories or like anything like perception wise like?

Camila [00:01:01] Or from what you've seen on social media like what's your take?

Endy [00:01:04] I mean just like a photo shoots and stuff like that. And uh I guess movies you know. Yeah. Mostly just photoshoots and movies. I've never heard any stories about anything that goes on down there.

James [00:01:20] So the city of South Gate and the entire city of L.A. they kind of want, they have plans to kind of open access for the River kind of create more parks on the River.

**Endy** [00:01:34] Oh really?

**James** [00:01:34] More community amenities. And so, what would you, if it was up to you, like what would you like to see and maybe like what are your concerns about having projects on the River?

**Endy** [00:01:45] I don't know. Sounds kind of like a cool idea but I don't know what the impact would be on keeping the water clean you know cause its the one that goes out to the ocean right? Obviously environmental concerns would be something that I would first think about. Yeah I don't. What are they planning on doing?

**James** [00:02:11] So in South Gate there are plans for an urban orchard adjacent to the River and also plans to cap the River actually to cover it up and build on top of it. And so part of our project is to kind of gauge how community residents would feel about certain projects like that and see if that if they see any issues or concerns about them or if they support them in general.

**Endy** [00:02:46] That sounds pretty interesting. I mean it sounds like a pretty bold idea. Pretty innovative pretty smart. Yeah I mean if you're putting parks on top or orchards or putting something more green that sounds pretty cool. I'd like to get more info on that.

**James** [00:03:08] So would you say you are, you're not familiar with those kind of projects?

**Endy** [00:03:13] No I wouldn't.

**James** [00:03:16] Would you have any like um, how would you think that at least like the city could best communicate with you if you would like to know more? Or like how do you think they should outreach more so that people like you have more idea of what's going on?

**Endy** [00:03:31] I get a lot of my news from Facebook and radio like NPR, stuff like that. Maybe they can reach out to radio stations and add some spots or something.

**Camila** [00:03:46] So obviously you come to this park and what do you usually come here for?

**Endy** [00:03:50] I just bring my dog out and let him run. He's pretty big, pretty active dog so if I don't take him out he gets pretty antsy.

**Camila** [00:03:56] Yeah and you said you're from Lynnwood. So is there a reason that you specifically come to the Hollydale?

**Endy** [00:04:02] Hollydale yeah I mean because this is just a big wide expanse over here and it's kind of separated from the soccer fields and the baseball field over there and the school right over there. And there is hardly anybody ever here and there's a dog park literally right here. So kind of take advantage that. He's a nice dog, you know he's big but he's harmless. He's over there making holes right now. Hey, no come here! No. So yeah I mean that sounds pretty interesting.

**James** [00:04:48] So one of the biggest concerns we're actually working on for our client L.A. Waterkeeper and one of the concerns with having more projects on the River and basically developing the River is that I'm concerned about flooding and flood control especially going forward in terms of weather events caused by climate change and extreme weather events caused by climate change. Do you have any experience with flooding here or like concerns?

**Endy** [00:05:21] No not at all but I mean I think from what I can see the River bed is pretty big. You know I've never seen it anywhere close to being full or even halfway full. That's not to say it can't happen. During one thing. When you really think about it. What's good about this is I mean whether the idea is good or bad [it] just opens, it opens up the dialogue to something that maybe a lot of us don't think about. And it's good to have innovative conversations with people. I think that's pretty cool.

**James** [00:05:58] I think that's pretty much then.

**Camila** [00:06:00] Although you haven't super been to the River, but you've seen it, what is one word you could use to describe the River as?

**Endy** [00:06:01] It's pretty big.

Name: Daniel

Location: Hollydale Regional Park

Date: May 10, 2019

Interviewer(s): James and Camila

Language: English

James [00:00:04] I guess we are we're good to go. So I'm James.

Camila [00:00:08] I'm Camilla.

Daniel [00:00:09] Nice to meet you James and Camila. Daniel.

James [00:00:11] Daniel, are you a resident of Southgate?

Daniel [00:00:15] Yes.

James [00:00:15] Yes. So I guess our research is about the LA River. Do you have any experiences with the river. Like what have you done, if any, have you done anything on the river, with the river?

Daniel [00:00:29] I have not. I'm just coming here to this dog park. I've taken her up just to go see it you know but that's about it. I haven't walked the bike path or anything so..

James [00:00:42] Anything when you were a kid or anything like that?

Daniel [00:00:45] No.

James [00:00:45] No. And so I guess, a lot of people don't know that there is actually an river. What was the first time you heard about the river or like?

Camila [00:01:00] When you realize it existed haha.

Daniel [00:01:01] I would say when I was a kid I mean we used to drive down the freeway you know down the street you see it. You know it usually has signs on the bridges. It would say LA river. You know. So it'd be it'd be kind of interesting because you don't really see, like natural rivers. Just to know that, we do have somewhat of a river. Yeah you just kind of interesting but I just never really looked into it.

**Camila** [00:01:28] I thought I was a ditch of water myself. I grew up in Downey so I was just like cool stuff. So from the interactions that you have had with the river it just literally looking at it. You're driving by what's your perception would you say?

**Daniel** [00:01:47] Like what do you mean?

**Camila** [00:01:48] Like how do you see it as? Why do you think you haven't really interacted with the river? That sort of thing.

**Daniel** [00:02:02] I'm not too sure. Like I would just be like. I mean I would just think that you know it's, it's kind of manmade. I would think you know the fact that it has concrete and then you know I've seen on the news and stories of you know people get in the water it's dangerous. So I've just never really been interested in going in there or anything like that.

**Camila** [00:02:34] So the city of South Gate and the city of L.A. and a couple other cities along the river do have revitalization plans. And that has included things like adding more parks or just like amenities for the community and stuff. Now have you heard about any of that?

**Daniel** [00:02:49] One thing that I have heard is that they're going to have or they're trying to expand or connect the bike path from here to like the one that they have out in Glendale. So that's kind of cool because I actually work in downtown L.A. so. I've actually thought of riding my bike. I'm not really a bike rider but you know I can be but I can be I mean that's probably one of the safest ways of riding your bike you know and no traffic you know as far as vehicles. And things like that so. That would be kind of interesting and I guess kind of fun, to have that.

**James** [00:03:28] Do you have any concerns or if they were to have projects on the river?

**Camila** [00:03:35] How that would affect you or your community?

**James** [00:03:37] Did you have any concerns?

**Daniel** [00:03:38] I don't think. I mean. As far as like just the construction of it or like?

**James** [00:03:49] It could be that.

**Daniel** [00:03:58] I don't I mean I don't think I would have. I don't think it'll affect me personally in any way. I mean I think it you know debris or anything like that falls on the river and other rivers goes down to the oceans. But as far as personally I don't think it would affect me in any way.

**James** [00:04:21] So I guess one of the, you mentioned that you know about like one or two projects but specifically do you think the city can do anything to improve communication with you guys the community residents?

**Camila** [00:04:40] Or what's the most successful way, you get news or things that would be helpful to you?

**Daniel** [00:04:46] I would say probably emails do the news. I do watch news. And I didn't hear about that through the news I heard it to a friend actually and then I see I think on social media I seen a video of them talking about that but I've not I haven't really seen anything like that. I think the news would be a good way of communicating.

**Camila** [00:05:17] And you didn't mention that you knew people going into the river and that being dangerous and stuff like that. I don't know if you know but the river is susceptible to flooding and with climate change happening. That can be made even worse and at a larger scale is that of any concern to you? Have you thought about flooding or have you seen the river when it's really full after raining.

**Daniel** [00:05:45] I mean I have seen it you know fill up more but I've never really seen it up to the top. I mean it is pretty deep. You know see I mean I have family that lives in Reseda. So when I would go and visit them. And like after rain or something like that I would see some of the rivers out there that would be you know pretty much high. Like almost from top. But here the L.A. River I haven't really seen it up high and. You know I drive through it you know this past storm that we had. And it wasn't it was too bad I mean it didn't seem like it was going to flood or anything like that

**James** [00:06:27] And if you described in at east in one word the river or your experience with the river. What word would you use?

**Camila** [00:06:43] It's a lot. It's a lot to to break into one word.

**Daniel** [00:06:54] It's something that I've never really looked into. It's got history its been around forever. It's a long river. You know. Uh uh I would say interesting. The fact that you know it looks more natural like towards Glendale area you know like this more like rocks and trees and stuff. It is it is pretty interesting like if you were trying to go down the river and you can see a lot of interesting things. I would say interesting.



Name: Jock  
Location: Hollydale Regional Park  
Date: May 10, 2019  
Interviewer(s): James and Camila  
Language: English

James [00:00:03] So I'm James and this is Camila.

Jock [00:00:09] Okay.

James [00:00:10] John?

Jock [00:00:11] Jock.

James [00:00:11] Jock okay. Nice to meet you.

Jock [00:00:11] Nice to meet you too.

James [00:00:12] I guess so could you tell us about the first time you heard about the L.A. River or like?

Jock [00:00:18] Uh just now.

James [00:00:19] Just today. Wow Okay. So how did you end up here today? What brought you here today?

Jock [00:00:29] This little girl here and the dog park.

Camila [00:00:36] So are you looking to move into this area, like South Gate area, or?

Jock [00:00:40] I don't know yet. I'm kind of checking everything out. I was checking out Compton, checking Long Beach, checking out Glendale. Pretty different parts.

Camila [00:00:51] Yeah seeing what works.

James [00:00:54] And so have you walked the L.A. River or have you been up there yet?

Jock [00:00:58] I have not. No.

Camila [00:00:59] Okay. Have you ever physically seen it?

Jock [00:01:00] I have never seen it. You guys informed me there's a river back there.

Camila [00:01:03] But have you seen Grease?

Jock [00:01:05] Yeah of course.

Camila [00:01:06] So when they're driving in that little puddle water thing that's the L.A. River.

Jock [00:01:12] Oh Grease the movie. I thought you meant Greece the country. No I have not seen Grease the movie. So they're running through a puddle?

Camila [00:01:21] Essentially that's kind of what it looks like. There's a race car scene. I'm trying to think if there's another movie

James [00:01:29] Terminator I think.

Jock [00:01:31] I saw Terminator.

James [00:01:32] There was I think it was in Terminator 2. Okay. I believe it's the scene where Arnold's on a bike and John's on the back.

Jock [00:01:43] On the moped.

James [00:01:43] Yeah. And then they're going through this little concrete little ditch thingy.

Jock [00:01:48] Yeah.

James [00:01:49] So that was filmed in the L.A. River. And so.

Jock [00:01:52] There's no water in there.

Camila [00:01:53] Exactly.

Jock [00:01:54] Okay.

James [00:01:55] So if you look over to the like after your dog is done in the park you might want to check it out for yourself. But basically the history of the L.A. River was that it was like there was like massive flooding in like the 20s and 30s and so they decided just to like channelize and build a concrete bank. And so they basically turned it into a ditch, a water ditch. And so the city of L.A. and some other cities along the River want to possibly like remove the concrete and create an actual river.

Jock [00:02:36] Yeah.

James [00:02:37] So a lot of them want to build parks by the River like this one, other amenities and make recreational areas. And so what we're doing is kind of just talking to community residents.

Jock [00:02:49] Does water ever go through that?

Camila [00:02:50] When it rains.

James [00:02:51] Yeah and then in L.A. it rains like maybe water mostly like two months of the year. Like in winter.

Jock [00:02:59] So there's no recovering the River itself.

James [00:03:03] So that thing about the hydrology of the River. I think it's not always gonna be full [and there isn't going to be a] drought the whole year. So that's one of the biggest reasons why I think it was concretized was just because the consistency of the water level made everything [unpredictable].

Jock [00:03:23] I think if you put it back nice and natural, other people will go to turn it around real estate of some sort.

James [00:03:33] So yeah. So there's some places where realistically [it will] not be able to be natural. But there are some areas that do want to have it more for as a community asset, more housing development, more for even just like bike paths walkable streets and so yeah. I guess if you do end up moving somewhere by the River like what would you say is you would want to see or like.

Jock [00:04:06] I'm not sure how wide, is just as wide as the movie average like that?

James [00:04:11] So pretty wide here actually I think this is probably the widest portion of it.

Camila [00:04:19] The four cities that you mentioned actually do have the L.A. River it's kind of adjacent to the L.A. River. Right so you said Glendale, Compton, and uh.

Jock [00:04:24] Long Beach.

Camila [00:04:24] Oh Commerce?

Jock [00:04:24] Long Beach.

Camila [00:04:24] Oh Long Beach is actually where the River flows out and to the ocean. So yeah you would definitely have access to the River.

Jock [00:04:39] I don't need access to the River. But yeah that would be pretty cool actually if they put like parks and paths. So is there a controversy about doing that?

James [00:04:53] So that's, there has been some controversy in the sense that some people are worried about gentrification some people are worried about, here specifically, there are plans to cover parts of the River and build on top of the River. And so that presents some controversy in terms of their lives. Environmentalists also have like a kind of like a stake in the L.A. River as well. And so right now.

Jock [00:05:21] Right now it's not a river right now. Right now it's just concrete. It's not even nature.

Camila [00:05:27] It is [a] very urbanized version of what a river can look like.

James [00:05:31] Yeah.

Camila [00:05:32] And it's to varying degrees.

Jock [00:05:34] Does everyone agree that something should be done?

**Camila** [00:05:39] There's people that are indifferent just like you put. Yeah. So just like we said in the 1920s flood risk was a big thing and that still applies today especially with climate change. And so a lot of the reasons why we have that concrete up so high. because this is, we're at this level I don't think, we don't even reach the River['s level]. The River is actually a lot lower than us because this area would flood and we would see loss of life. So that's why they went with this way.

**Jock** [00:06:18] So right now that prevents flooding.

**Camila** [00:06:20] Yes that's right. So we haven't seen a flood in maybe more than 20 years, before I was here.

**Jock** [00:06:35] Did it flood like really bad?

**Camila** [00:06:35] In the past it has. The water has led to like a couple streets flooding and nothing super recent but with climate change being a thing and seeing bigger more extreme weather events that's definitely a concern. Yeah.

**Jock** [00:06:54] What's the prediction if all that happens?

**Camila** [00:06:58] If there is flooding or?

**Jock** [00:07:00] Yeah if climate change doesn't improve and it just goes through.

**James** [00:07:04] Well there is a concern that the banks would.

**Camila** [00:07:07] Overflow.

**James** [00:07:08] Overflow or they would break. I think a lot of the infrastructure a lot of the infrastructure as much as the dams along certain parts of the River are like a big concern. I can't really tell you off the top of my head like that's like what the exact....

**Camila** [00:07:29] Yes but there's like information on which areas are more susceptible to flooding.

**Jock** [00:07:35] Yeah its a problem. That's that's a huge problem.

**James** [00:07:37] Yeah.

Jock [00:07:38] So we've got competing interests.

Camila [00:07:40] Definitely.

Jock [00:07:42] So how sure is climate change to have that effect?

Camila [00:07:49] I'm not really sure. Actually we don't have anything to compare it to since we're kind of walking into the unknown I would say. But generally with climate change what you see is whatever the status quo is, it, it'll be intensified. So if you have an area that is susceptible to flooding you'll see more flooding if you're susceptible to drought you will experience more drought and things like that. If that makes sense. So if I could generalize that in a super basic terms. Obviously it's more complicated. But you are from Connecticut, do you have any experience with other rivers?

Jock [00:08:32] There is a Connecticut River. I don't have personal experience with it.

Camila [00:08:35] But you know it's there. Probably doesn't look like the L.A. River.

Jock [00:08:41] No there's a lot of water.

Camila [00:08:43] Yeah.

Jock [00:08:45] So it's quite green.

Camila [00:08:47] So you said you've never heard about the L.A. River?.

Jock [00:08:50] No I literally have not. Legit you guys. I mean that's probably like around my part to cause you know if it's going to be a problem.

James [00:08:59] A lot of people in L.A. don't know there's an L.A. River

Jock [00:09:00] There's no water.

Camila [00:09:02] Growing up I thought it was a ditch. So definitely don't worry about that.

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**James** [00:09:08] I think we've kind of extracted as much info as we can. Yeah I guess that. I guess if I was going to ask if you could describe the L.A. River in one word that you probably might not be able to answer that.

**Jock** [00:09:28] It looked cool in the movie I can say that.

**Name:** Art

**Location:** Gated community in Paramount adjacent to the River/Hollydale Regional Park

**Date:** May 10, 2019

**Interviewers:** James and Camila

**Language:** English

**James [00:00:00]** So , you live by the River I guess. What is your experience with L.A. River.

**Art [00:00:09]** Oh my wife and I run on it all the time. We're probably [there] once or twice a week we're out running with the dog. We would run down to the next part down there and back. That's about seven seven eight miles. Sometimes we go that way. The other experience obviously is the homeless. There's a bit of a homeless problem under the bridge. Who knows otherwise. It's nice now.

**James [00:00:31]** Did you did you specifically move to this spot here because you wanted to be by the River?

**Art [00:00:38]** No, well that just happened. It seemed like a really cool house. I was in a position where I could get it, I was commuting from Moreno Valley so that drive was killing me anyway. So we used that as our downpayment to get into here. And I was working at that time about five miles from here so just. It worked out, it was convenient, it just happened to be near the River. And it just happened to be zoned equestrian too. So there was always a dream of having a horse. So I didn't move here for the River but it's kind of nice. Yeah.

**James [00:01:17]** And so are you familiar with like some of the city's plans to revitalize the River.

**Art [00:01:23]** I don't know of any plans that are set in stone. I'm not aware of any there that there are. I heard about this now over the years, I mean way back, probably before you guys were born I was at a meeting in the park, there was a group there trying to bring it back to its natural state. That was FOLAR, one of the groups trying to bring it back to its natural state. There was a lot of ideas presented at there - I know last year I think they did they had some movies down there, but that stuff was being talked about back then. Geez I think that was back in the 90s. That was way back in the day.



**James** [00:02:08] If there are some projects specifically in South Gate to add more parks more community amenities and possibly to cap the River and build on top of it. Are there any concerns?

**Art** [00:02:28] What are they gonna build?

**James** [00:02:29] There's no actual [plans]... I think it's a cultural center?

**Camila** [00:02:29] So that's the proposal, it's not super public knowledge right now. They're still talking about it. Yeah, because it's so controversial as you can imagine. It's not something they're explicitly advertising.

**Art** [00:02:44] So it would be a cultural center? What does that mean? That is a pretty ambiguous term...but like at the corner down there if you look down on Gardendale they're using homes for patriots. What does that mean? I doubt that's veterans, I think that's more, you know, homeless. So yeah. When you use these ambiguous terms, what are you talking about? That's really, be up front. When you say cultural center, what does that mean? What does that word even mean? What culture?

**Camila** [00:03:17] That's that's all we know.

**James** [00:03:20] There's also plans for like an urban orchard.

**Art** [00:03:23] I think that an urban orchard would be very very cool. Of course I'm into the gardening stuff.

**James** [00:03:28] Yeah, I think at the confluence of the LA River and the Rio Hondo is like another section of the River. It's just about like a few miles north of here.

**Art** [00:03:39] Very familiar with it. Years ago, a lot of years ago there was a shotgun range there. A South Gate run gun club had that piece of pie shaped that separated them. And they got so much pressure from the EPA because of the lead shot going into watershed. And they had to end up getting rid of that property up that from some high school shooting years ago, before you guys were born.

**Camila** [00:03:58] Kind of a general question, is this still South Gate, or Paramount?

**Art** [00:04:10] This is Paramount. Actually, I'll tell you, the border runs, actually if you look at a Thomas Guide, if you guys ever look at the Thomas Guide, I know nobody knows what the Thomas Guide is. You know, now you're on Mapquest and Google Maps. But the Thomas Guide is fascinating because you'll see the border of South Gate and Paramount, part of it goes right down the middle of Century. Okay, actually if you look at the old Thomas Guides, it's kinda interesting you know because you don't pay attention but there's these dotted lines in there. They'll have the old rancher's names like that San Antonio rancher you know, when the Spaniards came, big huge grants you know and they broke up their families. That was right down that line there, right down there and that's actually the border of South Gate and Paramount. I'm actually the farthest north in Paramount because if you look at the map we're in this little leg that sticks out in Paramount because there is actually South Gate. It's weird. This is actually the farthest north in Paramount.

**Camila** [00:05:07] Yeah. The zoning for the city is weird here. I'm from Downey. And so you use the River, you're right by it. Do you have any concerns, whether that's safety, whether that's flood risk, anything like that, that you've thought about?

**Art** [00:05:27] No. No. I think that it's a pretty big River. Well, I mean the 100 year flood, it's the 100 year flood. What are you gonna do? You know but I don't think it's practical to sit and worry about that. I would rather, because I know way back then years years ago there was a lot of talk about taking these courses back to its natural state. That would be fantastic and so great to go on down in there. You know, if there were actually fish there, imagine that. You go down there now it just smells, it's just nasty. And then every so often you read the paper where there's something got loose from somebody's, I don't know, plant or something and they're telling you, hey, stay away from the water, but you go down there and it smells nasty. It would be nice to get that cleaned up.

**Art** [00:06:22] You know what they should do with it? What I think they should do with it? One thing that I know, I'll tell you what I don't like seeing over there is when you see the tractors in there and they do a lot of stuff in here I don't know by whose direction it is, but you'll see all this growth, a lot of reeds growing up and stuff like that. And why is this stuff growing? OK. It's consuming all the all these nutrients that are in that water that would otherwise just get flushed into the ocean which would cause, are you guys environmental students by any chance?

**James, Camila** [00:06:55] Yes we are. Eutrophication!

**Art** [00:06:59] Red tides. Yes.

**Art** [00:07:00] OK. So boom we dump all that in there. Why not leave that growth alone. It drives me nuts, I swear. I mean, if I know this stuff they should know this stuff. You leave that in there let it consume all that stuff, you know? Another thing would be nice too is if that water wasn't a straight line. We have a straight line in the River right? So if there is a flood, out she goes, right? But it'd be nice to see it meander. And then you can have tributaries coming off, you know soak areas like they do some ways down in Long Beach, if you run down that way a ways you see these areas, and it's kind of nice, because I mean you know, let the water table clean things up and what not.

**Camila** [00:07:40] Often times that's actually the Army Corps of Engineers that goes through and pulls all that growth. They call that revitalization sometimes.

**Art** [00:07:50] Well you've got mallard ducks in there and you got geese. Flying over here, but there's a lot of mallard ducks in there you'll see and then we get a lot of rich good natural habitat there and they don't worry if a flood comes. They can fly, they'll be out of there. But I think that greenery, we need that, you know? Now you'll go down to Long Beach, and you don't swim in that beach, it's nasty.

**James** [00:08:14] One of the big reasons they do the dredging of all the plants and sediments that are there is because it's basically a flood channel in terms of how it's governed. So like usually like when there is growth in it like impairs the capability of like as a flood channel. The way it was designed kind of thing.

**Art** [00:08:38] Yeah. You know I would not buy that argument at all. No way I would say the real reason is they, you know managing their budgets and things, they need to spend money. They need money coming in. They need to keep things active. Last thing they want to do is leave it alone. There's no way. You know what. You ever see it flood? I've seen it flood. You see it rush down, that water, what does it go 30 miles an hour or so that water? I don't think those reeds are gonna be there any more. Okay. The River will clean it out for us, we don't need all these tractors digging it up, in the meantime when there is some water spreading out over there, sitting there, it's filtering and cleaning it. And then when it does get to the ocean we help the ocean out. Leave it alone. That's probably my biggest, when I see these guys I say, why are you guys doing this? And won't buy that argument. No way. Rivers at 30 miles an hour. That's enough water, 10 feet deep? There's not a reed on that planet that would stay put.

**James** [00:09:44] The Army Corps of Engineers are pretty like selective in what they release online. I feel like a lot of their calculations are private but our client is L.A. Water Keeper and they've had multiple attempts to try and get what their calculations are and what they actually do in terms of, how they manage the flooding control, and a lot of the time they'll say things like, "we can't do that"

**Camila** [00:10:16] So it's very hush hush.

**Art** [00:10:16] Is there anything else? Any more questions?

**James** [00:10:24] I'm trying to think. You talked about floods. We talked. Yeah.

**Art** [00:10:30] We only touched on the homelessness, is that an issue for anybody?

[00:10:32] Usually we ask people what are their concerns with the River, what they would like to see changed, and that's usually one of the answers.

**Art** [00:10:40] And that's a hard question, I mean there's there's no way, nobody has the answer. That's a growing epidemic. It's just there's no right answer. And this is you know a natural magnet for, what are you gonna do?

**James** [00:10:49] And you mentioned, you talked about the meeting with FOLAR in the 90s right. Or something like that.

**Art** [00:10:56] OK. So I've read about FOLAR but I wasn't sure if it was them or not, but there was an organization way back there. We had a meeting. It was at progress Park at Paramount, a lot of folks out there. And they threw out all kinds of ideas, they were talking about those theaters back then.

**Camila** [00:11:11] Yeah. I believe that was probably around the first phase of the L.A. River Master Plan. So now I think that they've taken whatever information they had back in those meetings.

**Art** [00:11:26] Wow, they're quick.

**Camila** [00:11:29] You know bureaucracy, so fast. And so they're kind of doing.

James [00:11:34] They're doing an update to the plan right now.

Art [00:11:35] So they're handing it off to their grandkids, right?

Camila [00:11:35] Essentially.

Art [00:11:40] You know what's really cool that you see, doing the kayaking way up there. Imagine doing that here now. That would be fantastic. I own a few. I could set up shop. Right in my garage.

James [00:11:54] So there are like current plans and current meetings and to update some of the L.A. County's masterplan for the River. Even the City of Southgate is having meetings. How can the city better communicate to you like about upcoming meetings and upcoming projects?

Art [00:12:16] Well I guess. Social media is there. Geez you just put that out there. Lord, now with that technology they have. I mean what's better than that? They can put it in the local paper. You know, because I didn't know that you guys were out here interviewing people and doing that. That was way back 20, almost 30 years ago, that they talked about that, and now somebody's breathed some life back into it. But you know I know they get all got to do is go on. They could if they put it on Facebook it's going to hit me. I google something and jumped back to Facebook and it's there. Yeah. How does that work. You know so I just. They would get me. Like that, easy. Social media. It's just too too invasive. I couldn't hide from it.

Camila [00:13:02] If you could describe the River in one word, what word would you use?

Art [00:13:15] Only one word? I don't know one word. That would fit that.

James [00:13:42] Or maybe if you were to summarize some like a sentence or two your experience.

Art [00:13:50] There's a lot of missed opportunity. If I can use two words.

James [00:13:54] Yeah that's fine.

**Art** [00:13:55] It's just a golden missed opportunity, which cause got a fascinating history you know? Did you guys know that at one time it dumped, it changed its course? I think above Palos Verdes or Santa Monica. But you know by Redondo Beach or whatever is way up there, I guess you guys know the history.

**Camila** [00:14:17] It's an unpredictable body of water.

**Art** [00:14:20] It's a mile wide in some spots and it had Indians on it.

**Camila** [00:14:24] The Tongva people.

**Art** [00:14:25] Yes, it would be so cool to have some of that brought back. Right. I'd rather take the risk right here.

**Camila** [00:14:34] You're down, you're game.

**Art** [00:14:34] Yeah, to see rocks in there and streams and fish. Imagine the birds coming down. Bees would love it. They would pollinate.

**James** [00:14:49] Yeah. I think that's it, thank you.

**Name:** Alex

**Location:** gated community in Paramount adjacent to the River and Hollydale Regional Park

**Date:** May 10, 2019

**Interviewers:** James and Camila

**Language:** English

**James** [00:00:01] So my name is James.

**Camila** [00:00:02] I'm Camila. And your name is?

**James** [00:00:05] Alex. Nice to meet you. I guess we could talk about like, what do you normally use the River, have you ever used the River for anything? Or your experience with the River.

**Alex** [00:00:16] Or just like the River...

**Camila** [00:00:18] Right behind you.

**Alex** [00:00:19] Yeah normally I'll go in the stroller with my baby and take a walk and just look around. I mean it's different every day. There is people that live under it. Well we try not to pass through there as much. But we did notice that there is like a little restroom there for them. I guess the city takes care of them. They know they live there and they have like nothing much there. So they come and clean it up once in a while. I would go walk the kids with the dog. Take them out there, they really love it.

**Camila** [00:00:53] Yeah.

**James** [00:00:55] And so, I'm not sure if you're familiar with what the city of Paramount, South Gate, and L.A. the revitalization of the River. Are you, does that ring any bells?

**Alex** [00:01:06] No.

**James** [00:01:06] Yeah. So a lot of people kind of want to, some possibly like make the River into like an actual River without concrete.

**Alex** [00:01:19] Oh ok. I didn't know that.

**James** [00:01:20] And some, that's like the one extreme of it. And then the other is just like building more parks opening up access to the River creating more paths and like recreational areas. If the city, the city has plans to do some things like that like what would you like to see more of?

**Alex** [00:01:40] I feel the River because I feel we need, honestly we don't have that much water to begin with. I feel we need the water. I mean we have enough parks we know we have enough areas to be around. We don't need a park. I feel they make too many little parks. People don't really go to them, they just vandalize them. It makes us not want to go to them.

**Camila** [00:02:02] Do you have any safety concerns when you've been at the River? Can the city help with any of those?

**Alex** [00:02:10] My only concern is when it rains because it gets flooded. But that's that's only it. Besides that I don't have any concerns. I mean, it's not it's not a big bother to us. It's not like we're getting water over here and there. We're right next to. But I mean we just see people walking. Enjoying their times as well just as us.

**James** [00:02:28] And so you mentioned you don't really know about those plans like. How do you think the city can better reach you communicate with you?

**Alex** [00:02:41] Flyers if anything because obviously not everyone is home all the time, so they can't go ask us. But yeah just flyers or. I think flyers honestly because it's hard to take calls from people during the day.

**Camila** [00:02:58] If you could describe the River using one word, what word would you use? Or a couple if one is too hard.

**Camila** [00:03:15] Or if you were to describe the River to someone like they'd never seen it. They didn't know anything about it. How would you do that?

**Alex** [00:03:27] I don't know. I don't know. Actually a hard question.

**James** [00:03:32] You can think about that but I got one more question... The LA River's kind of the way it is because it acts mainly as a flood control channel. And so like have you ever experienced flooding here or like have concerns about flooding?



**Alex** [00:03:50] I haven't experienced flooding here because we just recently moved here although about a year ago. But. I don't think I'm that concerned about it because obviously when it has rained a lot and I have seen it flood it doesn't overflow. Because I've walked through it and I see that there's a small River and then there's still have pools on the sides. But. There's no way. I don't think it will fill.

**James** [00:04:17] Yeah. Yeah. So because we're environmental science students then. With the reality of climate change. The likelihood of more.

**Camila** [00:04:28] Extreme weather.

**James** [00:04:29] Extreme rain and flooding is a possibility and we're kind of gauging how the community feels about that especially because historically there has been some floods in this area before. We just talked to some one of the other residents who's been here for a while and 20 years ago it actually flooded over.

**Alex** [00:04:48] Yeah yeah. We just moved here.

**Camila** [00:04:50] Yeah. Not to scare you. They fixed it. Yeah.

**Alex** [00:04:54] I know but honestly I will when I walked through here. I see how everything I guess is built and stuff and I feel like. I feel it looks safe. They have a plan in case there overflows could even have like little tunnels that are long but I guess in the overflow they're probably automatically open. You can then take the water out. Yeah that's right. That's what I noticed before.

**Camila** [00:05:16] Yes. Before we notice them but we weren't exactly sure what they were for, that makes sense.

**James** [00:05:25] Yeah. Did you ever come to one word?

**Alex** [00:05:26] Uh.

**Camila** [00:05:30] Like to inspire you, some people have said unpredictable, dirty, unsafe. Other people have said safe.

**James** [00:05:39] Opportunity. Interesting.

Alex [00:05:43] Well I can think of a word more but. I don't know I just remember. Yeah. Useful because, before we lived in this house. We used to live in another house in South Gate on the other side of the River bed. But my brother will take his bike through the Riverbed to go to school in Long Beach.

Camila [00:06:01] Oh.

Alex [00:06:01] It was useful for him. He used it as transportation to go through, pretty much. And it was the easiest way for him to go.

Camila [00:06:07] Would you mind if we took a picture of you for our research?

Alex [00:06:12] Can I just change my shirt?

Camila [00:06:16] Yeah. Yeah. Definitely.

Jovino

Relation to the river

- He used to walk on the river but he doesn't anymore because there are suspicious people
- He lives in paramount (bordering Hollydale Park)
- He hasn't heard about revitalization

How could the City best communicate with him about plans and meetings?

- Sometimes the city calls, the best way would be by mail

Is flood risk something he considers?

- He isn't worried about flood risk he noticed there weren't problems with the rain. He sees the river is fine. It's not dangerous bc there's walls. The only problem he sees is the people living on the river that he's not comfortable with. He says not everyone is homeless some people are just doing drugs

**Name:** Nicholas

**Location:** gated community in Paramount adjacent to the River and Hollydale Regional Park

**Date:** May 10, 2019

**Interviewers:** James and Camila

**Language:** English

**How have you used the river?**

He has walked, biked, and ran the River

**Do you have any experiences with flooding?**

"Yeah before concrete the park would flood they raised it higher cuz I it flooded once"

He lived there while it flooded. The government actually built higher banks after flood damage occurred. If they change it back there would be more floods.

It just came over the bottom of the flooring of their house, 20 years ago.

Government added ten feet higher, raised the banks.

**What would you like to personally see from revitalization efforts? How would you describe the LA River in one word?**

He wants cameras.

One word he would use to describe the River: kinda sucks, a lot of tagging, a lot of bums.

It'd be nice but more cameras are needed or they would mess it up

They burned the playground up before, some random people at night.

Actually, they didn't do it right before, when they raised the banks.

They pushed the dirt to their fence and now it's falling.

They reported to LA county, City of Paramount, South Gate--they won't do anything if you have any concerns about the River.

**Name:** Equestrian Guy

**Location:** Hollydale Park, near River

**Date:** May 11, 2019

**Interviewer(s):** Kamryn, Andrew

**Language:** English

- This is the only place he goes with his horse (right next to the river, on a dirt path)
- He comes here every day in the afternoon
- Hasn't heard of any river efforts
- Has no concerns about flooding

**Name:** UCLA Dog Walker

**Location:** Hollydale Dog Park

**Date:** May 11, 2019

**Interviewer(s):** Kamryn, Andrew

**Language:** English

**UCLA Dog Walker** [00:00:02] I guess my only relationship really is that I really drive over it a lot and I used to ride my bike along the river. Maybe like six, seven years ago but I stopped riding my bike.

**Kamryn** [00:00:16] Have you heard of any projects or restoration efforts happening in this area?

**UCLA Dog Walker** [00:00:25] Um. I mean I always hear of things like they're gonna put parks along the river and stuff like that but I never really see much happening so. It would be nice to see something happen and we get a little bit prettier.

Kamryn [00:00:39] Yeah. Yeah. Is this the only area that you come to or do kind of go to different areas of the river?

UCLA Dog Walker [00:00:44] I guess so yeah. I mean I live around the area I'm mostly around here. I work up in Marina Del Rey so a lot of my time is spent there.

Kamryn [00:00:56] And then our last question is what are your thoughts on climate change and flooding with regards to the river?

UCLA Dog Walker [00:01:01] I mean you can definitely tell that there's issues about climate change and like when it's really really dry like for the last few years, it was super dry. And I think this year was the first year we actually saw an actual river along here. But, you can definitely tell there's issues with climate change in regards to the River.

Kamryn [00:01:21] Awesome.

Andrew [00:01:21] Thank you so much.

Kamryn [00:01:22] Can we take a picture?

Name: Girl with tattoo and puppy

Location: Hollydale Dog Park

Date: May 11, 2019

Interviewer(s): Kamryn, Andrew

Language: English

Lives close by to the River, comes often to the dog park.

She notices that there are a lot of homeless.

She just knows about conserving water and city stuff but not river based

She didn't think about flooding for the la river but she does know about the existence of climate change

Name: DT South Gate Girl  
Location: Hollydale Dog Park  
Date: May 11, 2019  
Interviewer(s): Kamryn, Andrew  
Language: English

Kamryn [00:00:00] Do you live here?

DTSGCM [00:00:02] I do actually live here in South Gate but not in this area. I live more in downtown.

Kamryn [00:00:08] And describe your relationship to the river, like do you come here often?

DTSGCM [00:00:11] I do come often, yeah to walk my dog actually. That's pretty safe, pretty clean.

...

Kamryn [00:00:20] Have you heard of any like restoration projects with the river happening here in South Gate?

DTSGCM [00:00:25] No.

Kamryn [00:00:26] There haven't really been any parks or anything?

DTSGCM [00:00:28] No. No. Yeah.

Kamryn [00:00:29] Okay. And then our last question is what are your thoughts on climate change and flooding with regards to the river.

DTSGCM [00:00:36] Sad. You know, I'm saying, if we don't like try and take care of this world right now, the climate, the pollution, global warming is again worse.

Kamryn [00:00:47] Yeah.

DTSGCM [00:00:48] My thoughts, you know? So I mean we need to pick it up and keep it clean.

Andrew [00:00:53] Do you have any suggestions to improve the L.A. River in this area or do you like it how it is so far?

DTSGCM [00:01:03] Um, like in general?

Andrew [00:01:04] Yeah, just in general.

DTSGCM [00:01:04] Probably like provide more recycling. You know, volunteers, like cleaning and everything. You know just try to keep it... because here, there is a lot of parties you know and people just don't clean up after themselves. So maybe have like more strict things here.

Andrew and Kamryn [00:01:27] Thank you so much.

DTSGCM [00:01:27] You're welcome.

Name: Family Walkers  
Location: Hollydale Dog Park  
Date: May 11, 2019  
Interviewer(s): Kamryn, Andrew  
Language: English

Kamryn [00:00:00] Describe your relationship to the river, do you come here often?

Wife [00:00:02] Yes. That's my husband. We come to the dog park once a week. We live nearby.

Kamryn [00:00:09] OK. And then have you heard of any restoration efforts going on with the river, any parks or projects that you've heard happening?

Wife I don't have any that we know, no.

Kamryn [00:00:22] And then our last question is, what are your thoughts on climate change and flooding in regards to the river?

Wife [00:00:37] Well. Whenever it rains it does get a little bit floodish. The, I don't know what it's called.

Husband [00:00:45] The levels.

Wife [00:00:45] The level of the river does seem to escalate. Like about two months ago when we did have a lot of rain.

Husband [00:00:51] There was a lot of contamination.

Kamryn [00:00:55] Well thank you so much for your time.

Andrew [00:00:57] Yeah thank you.

Kamryn [00:00:58] Do you mind if we take a picture?



## APPENDIX D: COMPLETE LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

Only 1% of Californian Rivers are considered wild or scenic. The state, along with other localities across the country, decimated a majority of its rivers systems by paving, culverting, and or damming them. The Los Angeles River is a prime example of this type of project—engineered to reduce flood damage, the channel acts more as a ditch than a river. The ongoing movement to restore the river to its pre-concretized character shows tremendous potential. Local groups and government agencies hope to maximize the use of the river but in varying ways—each with distinct goals and challenges. Environmentalists may prefer an ecological restoration, whereas business and land developers advocate for an urban renewal. Local residents may resist any changes at all. As the city and county try to accommodate different interests, the revitalization effort poses complex political, economic, and social obstacles. Such complications will be further explored within this complete literature review.

For simplification, the Los Angeles River will be referred to as the River, the City of Los Angeles will be referred to as the City, and Los Angeles County will be referred to as the County.

### Chapter 1: The Tale of a City and a River

by Scott Brown

Nestled in the foothills of the Santa Susana Mountains, the Los Angeles River (the River) winds through sixteen Southern California cities before emptying into the San Pedro Bay in Long Beach Harbor. The River, once the backbone of a growing city, provided the landscape with drinking water, wildlife refuge, and an irrigation system. However, in order to meet the demands of urbanization, the River was transformed into a concrete channel to protect Los Angeles (the City) from perennial flooding—rendering its ecological services useless. Scientists and politicians have reassessed the value of these services and promoted a revitalization plan that utilizes green and gray infrastructure. Green infrastructure mimics the natural processes involved with flood mitigation, water treatment, and water collection, thus suggesting a return to the riparian landscape of its past. Gray infrastructure utilizes the current man-made water collection and recharge systems. Examining the River's watershed, history of channelization, and lost ecological services, the future of the Los Angeles River lies in its controlled past. This chapter will look at the timeline of the Los Angeles River Watershed; its physical and ecological developments and the environmental implications of reconnecting the City with the River.

## Physical and Ecological Setting Over Time

Before being claimed by Spain in 1542, the greater Los Angeles area was home to the Chumash and Tongva (Gabrielino) indigenous tribes (Weibel-Orlando, 1999). These first people hunted and gathered in order to sustain their tribe. Using the River as a source of food and water, these tribes took from the land only what they needed (Johnston, 1962). However, when looking at the River, it is nearly impossible to imagine that the little stream was once used to support one of the largest indigenous centers and then later as an agricultural center in the Spanish Empire (Gumprecht, 1997).

In the 18th Century, the Los Angeles River Watershed was called *Pwinukipar*, which translates to “full of water,” (Gumprecht, 1997). Emerging from an underground, natural water reservoir, the River spanned a wide area in the San Fernando Valley (Mendenhall, 1905). Forming a floodplain forest landscape, the physical geography around the River changed drastically. In areas prone to flooding and of permanent flow, the River welcomed cottonwoods, sycamores, and willows (*The Biota of the Los Angeles River*, 1993). Accompanying the towering trees were many saltwater and freshwater marshes. This provided a habitat for dense undergrowth of huckleberry and alders (*The Biota of the Los Angeles River*, 1993). Other native plants like the California Rose and grapes grew untamed among the dense thicket. In areas of permanent flow that were not prone to flooding, oaks and walnuts formed the River landscape. In drier months and farther east, the River also contained an arid region. Cacti, tulles, and other vegetation could be found along the River’s banks. Indigenous tribes utilized each area of the River for different aspects of life (*The Biota of the Los Angeles River*, 1993).

Historically, the 51 miles of the River was spotted with marshes, wetlands, and lagoons across the Southern California landscape. While salmon and steelhead navigated the waters, deer, bear, antelope, gophers, mountain lions, and various birds of prey inhabited the adjacent riparian habitat. From the upstream woodlands, hunting and fishing allowed for a sustainable food system. In the southern marshes downstream, the naturally soggy soil and thickets provided a doorway into agriculture. Home to one of the most biologically diverse habitats in North America, the River basin would serve as a driving force of agricultural innovation and urban exploitation (Crespí, Brower, & Bolton, 1927). However, this urban center was threatened by natural floods that 826 square mile watershed is prone to.

Throughout the history of the River, the physical geography and landscape have drastically changed. Before the area was claimed by Spain, the Southland’s river wound 51 miles through the watershed (DORLAND, 1893). The River flows from its headwater in the Angeles National Forest and drains into the Pacific Ocean via Ballona Creek and Santa Monica Bay. Most of the water never reached the sea, but instead formed marshes, lakes, and ponds (DORLAND, 1893). However, after a series of torrential downpours, the River ran a new course emptying into Long Beach Harbor. While flooding has caused the River to change course

before, the floods of 1836 led to its current path (Gumprecht, 1997). Man-made changes to the River will be discussed further on.

Having no resemblance to its natural character, the River now serves as a reminder of Western civilization's quest to tame the wild. Instead of the River owning and controlling the City, the City controls and owns the River. The once wide, winding, and flood prone River now is a concrete stormwater ditch. Instead of wetlands and lagoons for miles around, a glitter of skyscrapers and a plume of smog surround the River visual indicating its now urban character. The River was straightened and channelized in order to mitigate flooding and promote massive urbanization of the area (Bigger, 1959). The Los Angeles River Basin, once described as the most biologically diverse area, now is described as a garage drain where "... trash litters its channel. Little water flows in the river most of the year and much of that is treated sewage and oily street runoff. Fish are rare in the river. Weeds that poke through cracks in the pavement are the only plants visible along most of its course. Cats, rats, and human transients are the dominant life on its shore" (Gumprecht, 1997, p. 431) The same author later calls the River a joke. Decimated and depleted, many argue that there is no future for the River (Watson, Peene, Flemming, & Ackerman, n.d.).

The future of the River's character is still up for debate. City plans include adding eight-foot walls to the increasingly concretized channel, while non-for-profit organizations propose returning the River to its natural landscape. Differing governmental bodies currently own the Los Angeles River have resulted in divided goals. Additionally, economic, social, and cultural disparities further cloud what revitalizing the River entails. With these differing parties and viewpoints, it is unclear where the future of the River lies. Many journals have claimed that the River is too far gone to do anything about it. In 2007, the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan was released and gave slight insight to the purposes in revitalizing the River. With climate scientists, politicians, and NGOs, the report claims that a return to the environmental and ecological services is necessary for the future sustainability of Los Angeles ("Master Plan | Los Angeles River Revitalization," n.d.).

### Contributing Factors to Ecosystem Changes

It is important to look at the geological history of the Los Angeles area. Over 20 million years ago, the region was under seawater. As time progressed, the sea retreated, and the surrounding mountain range rose. Due to tectonic faulting, the mountains shifted and the rivers carried rocks, sand, and silt into the alluvial plain of the region. Consequently, runoff during the rainy season infiltrated into underground reservoirs. Only in the event of extreme flooding did these reservoirs surface forming the River. It would disappear and reappear

between the mountains and sea. (Mendenhall, 1905). The underground and aboveground characteristics of the River created a poor channel and a shallow water table. When hit with a powerful storm, the small channels were inundated with larger quantities of water causing the meandering streams to become a torrential river. The River, along with the Santa Ana and San Gabriel Rivers, had braided channels over the alluvial flood plain of Southern California. Each river changed its course and flowed “where it wanted, when it wanted” (Gumprecht, 1997, p. 431). From extreme flooding events, these rivers deposited rich soil, allowing Los Angeles to become one of the largest agricultural centers in North America.

The indigenous villages impacted the landscape very little. The Gabrielino tribes have been described as a “tribe that took what the soil gave them” (Weibel-Orlando, 1999). They sustained themselves off acorns, berries, and animals that roamed the area. The River served as a water source for drinking. Unsurprisingly, the ecosystem was not drastically changed by the indigenous tribes settling there.

Human intervention began to impact Southern California biodiversity during European colonization. European settlers first arrived in California in 1542 (Gumprecht, 1997). Before the Spaniards arrived, the River meandered through a riparian landscape. In areas of year-round flows, towering trees dominated the banks of the river. Fish spawned and land mammals ran among the forest-plain. In seasonal flow areas, the River ran through dense shrubbery and occasional wetlands, marshes, and lagoons. Due to the surrounding Santa Monica, Santa Susana, and San Gabriel Mountains, the River was known to have extreme flooding events.

The rich diversity of organisms found along the River allowed the Los Angeles area to have extremely fertile soil (*The Biota of the Los Angeles River*, 1993). But shortly after the Spanish discovered the ecosystem along the banks of the River, the landscape began taking a different shape. Father Juan Crespi described the scene as:

... a spacious valley, well grown with cottonwoods and alders, among rich ran a beautiful river. This plain where the River runs is very extensive. It has fertile land capable of growing various types of grain and seeds, and it is the most suitable site of all that we have seen for a mission, for it has all the requisites for a large settlement. (Gumprecht, 1997, p. 437).

The area would soon see a large settlement. In 1781, the Spanish had established the Pueblo of Los Angeles (Gumprecht, 1997). Soon after this, the Spanish began diverting, damming, and preparing the land for sustained agriculture. Many of the tributaries and streams of the River were dammed to prevent flooding and water was diverted from the River in order to sustain their settlements. The native species of sage, clover, and pepper grass were replaced with invasive weeds and grasses—specifically mustard. The green and lush vegetation became fields of agricultural crops, such as oranges and grapes. The trees were logged for timber and in less than 100 years, the landscape became barren and desolate (Gumprecht, 1997). Nevertheless,

more drastic changes were to come for the River.

In 1850, after joining the United States of America, California experienced a population boom. This caused a higher demand for both water and land. The growing city settled the low water supply by expanding the ditches that the early Spanish settlers had started. By 1880, nine ditches ran from the River to various parts of Los Angeles in order to transport the water throughout the city (Gumprecht, 1997). However, the periodic floods plagued these systems, sometimes shutting them down for a month. Attempting to solve the issue, city officials limited access and leased the water to various municipal bodies that would manage the untamed River. In 1886, the Los Angeles Water Company was formed in order to increase the City's water reservoir and stormwater collection (Gumprecht, 1997). However, the additional capacity was not enough to supply the growing city. In downtown, construction companies used exposed riverbed sand as a source of gravel, further degrading the natural landscape. By 1900, the water supply of the River drastically dwindled, causing many other smaller cities to become annexes of Los Angeles (Gumprecht, 1997). The River flow was roughly 45 million gallons per day, providing for 150,000 people. Los Angeles' population at 102,000, grew 10,000-20,000 per year ("1931 - Rainfall and Stream Run-Off in Southern California since 1769," 2018). In order to address this issue, the city installed wells to tap into underground reserves. Inevitably, the City had to outsource its water from the Owens River Valley and the Colorado aqueduct, a system still maintained today. While flood control is attributed to the concrete channel, the rapid population growth can be attributed for the diminished water levels of the River.

Between 1830-1850, Los Angeles experienced torrential rains. Due to excessive runoff from the surrounding mountains, the river wiped out many structures that Spanish settlers had put in place, including the dams. In 1868, winter storms caused the San Gabriel River to cut a new channel and combine with the Los Angeles River, forming the modern day course of the River (Gumprecht, 1997). In order to mitigate further damage from floods, the city removed the riverbed gravel and deepened the channel by 20 feet. While this protected the city from flooding, it narrowed the channel and increased its flow rate. In February 1914, the Los Angeles River spilt over its banks once again, destroying over 100 roads and 35 bridges and triggering action by the City (Gumprecht, 1997). However, due to conflicting projects, the measures put in place were not adequate. New Year's Day of 1934 in Los Angeles marked the worst flood event caused by the River. Flood waters released a "wall of water, mud, and rocks 20 feet high that surged the city" (Gumprecht, 1997, p. 455). With over \$6 million in damage, Los Angeles County turned to the federal government. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers took it upon themselves to tame the River. The Corps moved the mouth of the River east, deepened, and widened its channel. In 1938, Los Angeles was struck with another catastrophic flood, costing the City nearly \$78 million (Daingerfield, 1938). At this time, the River's course was straightened and the banks of the River were lined with concrete. The sole purpose of the concrete channel was to transport the storm water to the sea as quickly as possible without harming the City (Lynch,

n.d.). The wetlands, fertile soil, and wildlife were soon replaced with concrete, industry, and highway overpasses. The River turned from a national park visual into a post-apocalyptic movie backdrop.

By 1960, the concrete channel was completed. Most areas of the River were lined with concrete banks. The Army Corps of Engineering was not consistent throughout the River as some locations still retain its original soft riverbed. The vegetation that surrounded the River, the species that used to roam the Southland, and the fish that spawned in it are now a thing of the past. The water quality has degraded to the point where only small organisms can survive in its water in some locations (Gumprecht, 1997). However, the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan addresses this environmental degradation and aims to bring back some of these ecosystem services.

### Climate Change and The River

Along with the rest of the Southland, climate change will have a substantial impact on the River and its watershed. Due to rapid advancements in technology, it is crucial to look at current modeling methods. In May 2018, the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) modeled future precipitation events of Southern California (Swain, Langenbrunner, Neelin, & Hall, 2018). The study concluded that the region would experience increased frequency in both wet and dry season extremes (Swain et al., 2018). Compared to mid-19th century floods, wet season events showed a similar intensity but a narrower time frame. Dry season events became more frequent in Northern California, while remaining the same in Southern California. The UCLA team also looked at the whiplash effect between wet and dry season events. Models show a more volatile pattern than the region currently experiences (Swain et al., 2018). If they represent accurate future patterns, the River will experience more severe flooding. However, it should also expect more severe droughts. This should be considered when looking into future plans of the River. In order to sustain the City of Los Angeles, water collection methods in flooding events should be explored if more intense droughts are to be expected in the region.

Other studies have similar thoughts. Berg modeled twelve different systems and came to the conclusion that wet seasons will become wetter. Results indicated that wet season frequency will increase as the century progresses. This further highlights the need to invest in a storm water collection system and increasing water storage capacity, either man-made or natural. The study also looked at soil moisture over the next century. Southern California models predicted drier soils, leading to the potential increase of wildfires across California (Berg, 2015). Another UCLA study took a look at models predicting future El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) cycles. Similar to the studies already mentioned, the results from these models predict an increased intensity of El Niño and La Niña Events (Berg & Hall, 2015). For the Southern California region, this would correlate with wetter wet seasons and drier dry seasons. This validates another study conducted by the University of California at San Diego, which



modeled future sea surface temperatures. Higher temperatures were predicted in most of the models. These temperatures would lead to more intense ENSO events (Cayan, Maurer, Dettinger, Tyree, & Hayhoe, 2008). In relation to the River watershed, this indicates increased flooding during the wet season and drought during the dry season. While these studies recognize that climate change will affect the wet and dry seasons, there are many unknown variables that make it difficult to predict the impact on the River watershed. However, it is expected to receive more severe flood and drought events (Yoon et al., 2015). In order to sustain Los Angeles, it will be critical to incorporate strategies to mitigate flooding and drought in the Los Angeles watershed (Srивer, Lempert, Wikman-Svahn, & Keller, 2018).

### Green and Gray Infrastructure

Revitalization of the Los Angeles River is necessary in order to mitigate future flood and drought events, improve water quality, and reestablish its ecosystem services to Southern California. The use of green and gray infrastructure can achieve this. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), green infrastructure is the use of “vegetation, soils, and other elements and practices to restore some of the natural processes required to manage water and create healthier urban environment” (EPA, 2014). Gray infrastructure is defined as “conventional piped drainage and water treatment systems designed to move urban stormwater away from the built environment” (EPA, 2014). Currently, the River’s developed gray infrastructure decreased the biodiversity of the area and disrupted natural ecological water regimes. Instead of being distributed throughout the alluvial plain, the water is sent quickly to the Pacific Ocean. The City’s “Green Blue City One Water Program” proposes different ways to build sustainable green infrastructure. In 2004, Proposition O was passed, investing over \$500 million in green infrastructure (Hagekhalil Adel, Kharaghani Shahram, Tam Wing, Haimann Richard, & Susilo Ken, n.d.-a). The benefits of these projects include improved water quality, habitat suitability, recreation, urban island heat reduction, and community revitalization (Hagekhalil Adel, Kharaghani Shahram, Tam Wing, Haimann Richard, & Susilo Ken, n.d.-b). Additionally, the City developed a Low Impact Development (LID) ordinance for private green infrastructure. This 2012 ordinance required new development to recapture the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile of storm water of all storms (Chau, 2012). Published in 2007, the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan (LARRMP) suggests dissuades the use of gray infrastructure in favor of green infrastructure as the path forward (Perini & Sabbion, 2016).

The LARRMP originally was tasked with modifying channel cross sections to reduce water velocity, retain waters, and to provide areas for recreation and habitat restoration. Thirty-two miles are included in the revitalization plan (Hagekhalil Adel et al., n.d.-a). This plan is a collaborative approach to reduce the water bought from Metropolitan Water District, and to recapture, infiltrate, and reclaim the biodiversity this land once provided. While it is important

to note the shift to green infrastructure, it will be imperative to study the social, cultural, and economic implications of removing miles of the concrete corridor. Gray infrastructure degraded the River to an unrecognizable sewer, but green infrastructure provides hope for a cleaner River and more sustainable Los Angeles (“Master Plan | Los Angeles River Revitalization,” 2007).

### **Concluding Remarks**

Economic, social, and cultural issues must be addressed in order to reintegrate natural processes into the hydroclimatic system of Southern California and the River specifically. It is possible to revive the ecosystem services that the region once provided to the indigenous communities.



## Chapter 2: Social, Environmental, and Health Implications

by Andrew Nguyen

The River has been physically and historically altered by the surrounding occupants and environment. As previously mentioned, the River flows approximately 51 miles downstream to the Pacific Ocean at the Port of Long Beach (Mika *et al.*, 2017). For over 1000 years, the indigenous Tongva community occupied its surrounding banks (Deverell and Sitton, 2016). Beginning with the 19th century, Spanish settlers settled near the River and used its water sources for irrigation and agricultural purposes, as well as for drinking water (Deverell and Sitton, 2016). Today, approximately 1,100,000 people live within one mile of the River and 71.7% of these residents constitute minority populations (8.1% Black, 52.2% Latino/Hispanic population) as well as homeless individuals (Post, 2017; US Census Bureau 2017, n.d.). This is significant because the River is in the process of revitalization which poses displacement and gentrification risks for these minority groups. Because of increasing urbanization coupled with rapid population growth overall, there are concerns of environmental/social injustices and lack of space for occupants residing near the River. As the City of Los Angeles embraces a greener landscape with River revitalization plans, there will be both benefits and burdens for residents living along the River. These include ecosystem restoration, equal access to green space, increased physical activity and psychosocial wellbeing, lack of affordable housing, gentrification, and displacement (Alvarado, 2016).

The primary goal of this chapter is to examine the social geography of the Los Angeles River and its watershed and explore the social, environmental, and health implications of such revitalizations. Additionally, this chapter seeks to understand different revitalization approaches in restoring the River, as well as its potential benefits and burdens.

### History

For over 1000 years, the Los Angeles River was home to the Tongva, also known as the Gabrielino Indians. As previously stated in Chapter 1, these natives occupied the banks of the River for its vegetation and water (History of the Los Angeles River, n.d.). Specifically, their territory encompassed most of Los Angeles and Orange Counties (History of the Los Angeles River, n.d.). Towards the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, Spanish explorers settled along the River and by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the 51 mile-long River “changed course between flowing west into the Santa Monica Bay along the course of Ballona Creek and flowing south towards San Pedro Bay” (History of the Los Angeles River, n.d.). By the late 1930s, the River was “tamed by concrete beginning in the late 1930s... and became a flood-control channel” (Christensen, 2018). Presently, the Los Angeles River contains an upper watershed and lower watershed which is consequently divided by social status and poverty level. The disparities between the two upper

sheds will be further discussed later in this chapter. Efforts to revitalize the River began as a way to restore the natural water source and its ecosystem, as well as improve the quality of life for its surrounding occupants.

## Planning

Revitalization, which is the act of instilling new life and vitality, contains goals to restore the Los Angeles River and its watershed by providing/expanding parks, pathways, and green spaces for communities surrounding the River (Alvarado, 2016). Revitalization efforts will provide networks along both sides of the River, some of which include “community access points, parks and other green spaces, pedestrian, bike, and equestrian paths, as well as bridges for non-motorized use” (UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation, 2016, p. 2). Additionally, such plans will enhance environmental conditions, provide community awareness and education about the River and its history/usage, improve environmental habitats and water quality, and allow for more open spaces and retail stores, such as restaurants and convenient stores (Bureau of Engineering, Department of Public Works, n.d.). Because the flood of 1938 greatly impaired the structure and quality of the River, it was deemed as “unappealing.” This contributed to reduced rent prices near the River and resulted in significant concentration of low-income minority group—including immigrant, underserved, and working-class communities—living within a 5 mile radius of the riverfront (Khafagy, 2018). Additionally, many factories are placed along the River, providing employment and an immense source of income for these minority groups (Khafagy, 2018). Thus, different revitalization planning and approaches contain goals that will provide varying outcomes, both positive and negative, for low socioeconomic status/disadvantaged or minority communities.

## Benefits

Revitalization efforts for the River provide benefits that impact the psychosocial wellbeing of the communities living nearby. Such efforts will also contribute to increased physical and recreational activity for these communities, as well as improved environmental quality through an increase of public access to green spaces and parks (Alvarado, 2016). Additional green spaces and parks may indicate better mental health outcomes for individuals, through stress reduction and cognitive restoration (Dadvand and Nieuwenhuijsen, 2019). Greater exposure to green space has also been correlated to lower risks of psychological distress and psychiatric conditions including depression and anxiety (Gascon et al., 2015). With the River efforts, such developments will also increase the likelihood of physical activity and social interaction amongst community members residing near the River (Dadvand & Nieuwenhuijsen, 2019).

Low socioeconomic status/disadvantaged communities affected by River revitalization plans may also experience a reduction in health inequalities (ex: differences in health status or mortality rates), lower risks for obesity concerns, as well as less engagement in youth-violence (Alvarado, 2016). These communities would experience such reductions through greater public access to green spaces and from maintaining an overall sustainable aesthetic that is beneficial for the physical and mental wellbeing. Access to green spaces can also promote therapeutic exercises, especially for those recovering from health conditions, including coronary artery disease or diabetes (Astell-Burt, Feng, & Kolt, 2014; Grazuleviciene et al., 2015). Evidently, the River and its transformation efforts can induce greater social interaction and physical activity amongst those living near the River. In doing so, the River's surrounding occupants will benefit both physically and mentally.

Additionally, the presence of more parks and trees may improve environmental quality by reducing air pollution (Gromke & Blocken, 2015; Alvarado, 2016). Through the River efforts (with vegetation surrounding/nearby the River), there will also be an increase in shade and a reduction of the urban heat island effect in Los Angeles. Evidently, cooling effects will thus reduce heat intensity and heat waves, which will contribute to less illnesses and hospitalizations amongst older adults (especially those who have limited/lack of healthcare coverage) (Zupancic, Westmacott, & Bulthuis, 2015). In addition, the River revitalization efforts will lead to increased ecotourism along with more "hip architectural firms, design shops, art studios, craft-beer makers, and artisan restaurants" (Alvarado, 2016, p. 12). With the potential growth of ecotourism, these River plans will protect, improve, and increase the amount of natural habitats for organisms (fish, amphibians, insects, etc.) living along the River, as well as provide improved wildlife corridor and better integration/linkage for river channels (Alvarado, 2016).

## Burdens

River revitalization plans may provide social, environmental, and health benefits; however, there is the likelihood that such plans will create burdens, including gentrification and displacement for those living along the River. Gentrification occurs when "communities experience an influx of capital and concomitant goods and services in locales where those resources were previously non-existent or denied" (Prince, 2014, p. 2). More affluent communities will move into areas previously populated with socioeconomically disadvantaged groups. As a result, displacement, which is the forced movement of people, will occur for current residents. This in turn may create negative social implications by "widening the gap inequalities for the low-income, communities of color, for both residents and businesses" (Alvarado, 2016, p. 25). Gentrification also raises property prices/values of land and homes, as

well as rent prices. This can further lead to threats of displacement and homelessness. In addition to gentrification and displacement, River revitalization efforts can also cause a loss of industrial land as well as burden sewers and waterways.

### **Growing debate/Additional information**

There is a growing debate about the potential benefits and burdens from River revitalization planning and efforts. Residents living within the same census tract or 1/3 mile radius of gentrifying neighborhoods experience higher unemployment rates and a lack of available jobs compared to residents of non-gentrifying areas (Meltzer, 2017). However, the River revitalization projects envision an increase in economic opportunities for “economically-disadvantaged communities adjacent to the project area..., with a significant increase in economic growth, employment, and income tax revenues” (Alvarado, 2016, p. 11). Evidently, there are opposing viewpoints on the benefits and burdens of River revitalization plans. Alternatively, the increased investment may displace current residents resulting in homelessness, elevated stress and anxiety levels, as well as the overall deterioration in the mental wellbeing of such individuals. However, benefits include more accessible green spaces/parks for current residents, which may lead to lower risks of psychological distress and psychiatric conditions (Beyer et al., 2014). The extent to which these benefits and burdens will occur is a continuing debate that needs to be further explored and researched into with community surveys and input.

There is also variety perspectives from grassroot organizations with the River revitalization plans. Grassroot organizations, such as the Southeast Asian Community Alliance, expressed concerns that the River revitalization plans will exacerbate issues of gentrification, displacement, and homelessness for underserved immigrant neighborhoods in Los Angeles, including Chinatown, Lincoln Heights, and Solano Canyon. These communities “live slightly above or below the poverty line and are majority people of color who also happen to share an uneasy and often antagonistic relationship with the rapidly changing the River waterfront” (Khafagy, 2018, p. 2). City officials and developers such as the Lincoln Property Company and Fifteen Group have incorporated the “language of ecology, equality, and livability” to portray the River’s revitalization plans as a “social-justice cause.” However, the extent to which these efforts will primarily benefit surrounding communities remains uncertain (Khafagy, 2018, p. 3). For example, the land value within the Los Angeles Frogtown neighborhood (a community which adjoins the River and maintains a majority of Hispanic residents) has “more than doubled”, and rents have also increased “astronomically along other waterfront communities, such as Chinatown, where in at least one building rents have risen by as much as 50%” (Khafagy, 2018).

The River revitalization plans precipitated the formation of several non-governmental/non-profit grassroots organizations (NGO), including the Friends of the Los Angeles River, the Los Angeles Conservation Corps, and Community Nature Connection. These organizations have been instrumental in providing educational resources and awareness about the River to the general public. Additionally, Assembly Bill 530, a legislation for the Lower Los Angeles River, contributed to the development of the Watershed Education Program “to engage and educate the Lower Los Angeles River communities about the river and its watershed, while reconnecting these communities and increasing their recognition of the value of the river” (Watershed Education Plan, 2018, p. 1).

Cities that reside along the Lower Los Angeles River watershed include Maywood, Bell, Lynwood, Compton, Paramount, and Long Beach cities. Demographically, there are 72.9% Hispanic, 10.5% African American, 7.9% White, and 7.1% Asian American populations along the lower watershed of the River (Watershed Education Plan, 2018). Within the upper watershed of the River, surrounding cities include Glendale, Pasadena, South Pasadena, San Marino, San Gabriel, Alhambra, Rosemead, Monterey Park, and Montebello (Cook, n.d.). There is a social status divide between the upper and lower watersheds of the Los Angeles River, with a significant higher percentage of White residents (~53-75% depending on the individual city) in the upper watershed compared to Hispanic, African American, or Asian American populations (Cook, n.d.; US Census Bureau 2017, n.d.). Furthermore, the percent of persons in poverty in the lower watershed region, e.g. Compton city, is 23%, whereas the percent of persons in poverty of the upper watershed, e.g. South Pasadena city is 8.2% (US Census Bureau 2017, n.d.). In relation to the River revitalization plans, such greening efforts will evidently create both benefits and burdens to communities within the lower and upper watersheds of the River. Socioeconomic status, income, and race are factors that may influence the outcomes for individuals living nearby or along the Los Angeles River.

## Conclusion and Suggestions

The Los Angeles River revitalization planning and efforts have social, environmental, and health implications (both benefits and burdens) to the surrounding community residents and businesses. Such benefits include enhanced ecosystems, improved air and water quality, increased job opportunities for current residents, as well as greater access to parks and pathways. However, the River efforts may also burden minority populations or low socioeconomically/disadvantaged communities surrounding the River through gentrification or displacement. To ultimately assist in the restoration of the River while improving living conditions for its community members, further community surveying and collaboration between various sectors (local, city and government) must happen. To fully revitalize the River

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and protect current resident members living along the River, considerations of gentrification and displacement, as well as a community's input must be taken into account within the implementation and policy planning process in order to ensure the viability of such groups of people.

## Chapter 3: Urban Greening, Gentrification, and Displacement

By Corey Ly

In an attempt to increase the amount of green spaces in Los Angeles, elected officials, community leaders, and advocacy groups in the City have created a bold vision to restore the Los Angeles River to its former glory before it was channelized. According to the City's "Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan," one of the lofty goals established by the Plan is to "green the neighborhoods." This entails re-connecting adjacent communities to the River and to each other. The City hopes to develop a 32-mile Los Angeles River Greenway from Canoga Park through Downtown Los Angeles as the centerpiece of the City's green space system. As follows, the goals of "Greening the Neighborhood" set forth by the Master Plan are to: create a continuous river greenway, connect neighborhoods to the river, extend open space and water quality features into neighborhoods, enhance river identity, and incorporate public art along the river (2007). However, these improvements involving the LA River are controversial; with so many promising plans to promote a better quality of life, has the City done enough to protect the residents of communities near the river from gentrification and displacement?

In an effort to improve the wellbeing and reduce the morbidity and mortality of their residents, many cities have begun to implement urban greening programs. Urban greening programs typically include the creation and maintenance of green space, which include parks, forests, green roofs, streams, and community gardens (Wolch, Byrne, & Newell, 2014). Urban green spaces provide a variety of public health and environmental benefits and are integral to maintaining and improving human and ecosystem health. For example, green spaces directly benefit health by providing urban residents with spaces for physical activity and social interaction, and allowing psychological restoration to take place (Lee, Jordan, & Horsley, 2015). Furthermore, urban green spaces provide environmental benefits by negating urban heat, offsetting greenhouse gas emissions, and attenuation stormwater (Lee, et al., 2015). However, it is important to note that access to these spaces is not always equitable. Unsurprisingly, many studies reveal that White and more affluent communities disproportionately benefit from the uneven distribution of parks and green spaces (Wolch, et al., 2014). Furthermore, in Los Angeles, Latinos, African-Americans, and low-income groups were more likely to live closer to parks with higher potential park congestion (Wolch & Wilson, 2009). Due to their profound impact on human and environmental health, green spaces should be spread equitably in order to benefit all communities, especially who need it the most.

Although urban greening programs generally improve the quality of life and add aesthetic value to many communities, they can also contribute to gentrification by driving up property values. Gentrification is defined as, "the process by which central urban neighborhoods that have undergone disinvestments and economic decline experience a reversal, reinvestment, and the in-migration of a relatively well-off middle-and upper-middle class population"



(Hwang & Sampson, 2014). Although gentrification has a few positive impacts, many researchers suggest that the negative effects often outweigh the former. For example, many people associate gentrification with a decrease in crime. However, a study about gentrification and crime rates claims otherwise; in 1994, Los Angeles experienced a devastating earthquake known as the Northridge earthquake, which was the costliest natural disaster in U.S. history at the time (Lee, 2010). This catastrophic event significantly damaged housing stock and induced middle- and upper-income people to purchase homes in earthquake-affected low and moderate-income neighborhoods (Lee, 2010). The results from the study revealed that gentrification increases assaults, robberies, automobile thefts, and thefts from automobiles in the short term (Lee, 2010). Even though gentrification and renewed areas can attract new businesses and wealthier residents, the side effects are often more damaging and complicated than they may seem.

A current example of gentrification in Los Angeles involves Skid Row, an area of Downtown Los Angeles known for its overwhelming homeless population. The Safer Cities Initiative, established by the Los Angeles Police Department, is place-based policing intervention that targeted crime and disorder associated with homeless encampments in and around Skid Row. An analysis of the initiative revealed that although the program was successful in making the area physically safer, it also resulted in an increased difficulty for many people to escape homelessness. Rather than systematically addressing the housing crisis, LAPD relies on arrests to forcibly remove homeless people. This has in turn generated the interest of residents seeking housing in Downtown Los Angeles and provided a catalyst for the subsequent gentrification of Skid Row.

One central concern about gentrification is displacement, which occurs when residents can no longer afford the cost of renting. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development considers housing to be unaffordable when costs exceed 30 percent of a family's income (Feldman, 2017; Herbert, Hermann., & McCue, 2018). In 2018, Harvard's Joint Center for Housing Studies reported that 38.1 million households spent more than 30 percent of their incomes on housing and that only 30 percent of renters could afford the median asking rent of \$1,550 for a new apartment in 2017 (2018). Some research argues that gentrification could boost upward mobility for the low-income residents that managed to remain through gentrification. However, the aggregate number of displaced residents can be high and have serious consequences. One study estimated that nearly 10,000 households were displaced due to gentrification each year in New York City and that many of those who were displaced ended up living in overcrowded apartments, shelters, or in the worst case: became homeless (Newman & Wyly, 2006). Displacement is considered a social justice issue because in-movers are also usually wealthier, whiter, and of higher educational attainment and out-movers are more likely to be renters, poorer, and people of color (Chapple, 2016). Displacement is one of the most damaging effects



of gentrification and strategies to combat it should be kept at the forefront of the City's agenda during the Revitalization process.

Urban greening, gentrification, and displacement are connected through the notion of environmental gentrification. Environmental gentrification, or green gentrification, is the influx of wealthy residents to historically disenfranchised neighborhoods due to new green spaces and often causes the displacement of the residents that the green spaces were originally designed to benefit (Anguelovski, Connolly, Masip, & Pearsall, 2017). To reduce the effects of environmental gentrification, many community activists are advocating for a strategy called "just green enough," in order to achieve environmental remediation without environmental gentrification (Wolch et al., 2014). Although adding urban green space seems like a simple solution to improving health and wellbeing, doing so without caution can have adverse and paradoxical effects. The creation of green spaces can make neighborhoods healthier and more aesthetically attractive, but it can also increase housing costs and property values (Wolch et al., 2014). Consequently, this can lead to gentrification and a displacement of the residents that these green space strategies were designed to benefit (Wolch et al., 2014). It is also a possibility for the socially vulnerable residents that are displaced by environmental gentrification to be moved to a different neighborhood that is benefiting from new green amenities, but with worse living conditions such as poor housing, lower connectivity to downtown, or less public infrastructure and facilities (Anguelovski, Connolly, Garcia-Lamarca, Cole, & Pearsall, 2018). Therefore, our research aims to determine whether or not the communities surrounding the River could potentially face similar issues and if the creation of green spaces will actually benefit these communities.

In the concrete jungle of Los Angeles, green spaces are scarce. The lack of green spaces in Los Angeles is evident in the amount of park space per person. The median for acres of park spaces per person across high-density United States cities is 6.8 acres (Neighborhood Data for Social Change, 2018). By contrast, Los Angeles has 3.3 acres of park space per person (Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, 2016), which is much lower than the national median. Every year, ParkScore evaluates park spaces in the 100 most populous cities, which includes cities such as San Francisco, St. Paul, and Minneapolis. Los Angeles was ranked 74th (ParkScore, 2018). Therefore, implementing urban greening programs seems like a logical solution to improving the amount of green spaces in the City and to improve the public and ecological health of residents. However, the impacts of environmental gentrification show that there is a necessary strategy and intervention to prevent displacement as a result.

Creating green spaces in communities is not a straightforward task. By introducing green spaces into neighborhoods, this can potentially raise property values, but adding green spaces itself does not necessarily guarantee gentrification. Research shows that property values are more likely to rise in denser, centrally-located, upper-income, family-oriented, and higher-

crime neighborhoods (Anderson and West, 2006; Anguelovski, 2018). For instance, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, properties that were located on vacant lots that were converted in green spaces saw a higher increase in value than those located closely to untouched lots (Heckert & Mennis, 2012). Contrastly, property value is less likely to rise and gentrification potential is attenuated when parks are under-funded or under-maintained (Wolch et al., 2014). The City should be conscious of how the Revitalization will impact vulnerable residents who live in close proximity to the River and take the necessary measures to protect those residents.

As the City moves forward with revitalization efforts, they should use other large green infrastructure projects that have been completed as examples of how to prevent and minimize environmental gentrification. Large green infrastructure projects, such as the Revitalization, are different from smaller neighborhood green spaces because they often link commerce, recreation, tourism, and real estate development to create signature projects in urban areas (Rigolon, & Németh, 2018). One important aspect of the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan is to create a continuous greenway with trails and bike paths to connect communities. However, similar connective efforts in Chicago have shown that this can contribute to gentrification. In June 2015, Chicago's 606 Trail was officially opened, but was met with contention; hundreds of protesters renounced the trail because of the increase in rent and other major changes to the character of the neighborhoods along the 606 Trail (Rigolon, & Németh, 2018). However, Chicago's 606 Trail is not alone. New York's High Line, Atlanta's BeltLine, and Seoul's Gyeongui Line Forest Park were similar projects that converted disused architecture into green spaces intended to increase the value of the land and property of surrounding neighborhoods, which displaced long-term low-income residents (Rigolon, & Németh, 2018). The City has framed the Revitalization as an opportunity to create an iconic green space in Los Angeles. However, based on the outcomes of other large green infrastructure projects, the Revitalization seems poised to encourage environmental gentrification on communities surrounding the River.

Urban greening interventions can create elite enclaves of environmental privilege and environmental gentrification that exclude low-income and minority residents from their benefits. In a diverse city, such as Los Angeles, this can cause disproportionate access to green spaces. A report on parks by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health has found a negative relationship between park spaces and income level (2016). This means that the lower the income-level of the community, the lesser park spaces available. Since green spaces, such as parks, are so beneficial to the health of a community, having less park spaces could negatively impact the health of these communities that are already underserved. The report also found that White citizens are less likely to reside in communities with inadequate park space (2016). In fact, 56% of African Americans, 50% of Latinos, 36% of Asians, and 27% of Whites resided in communities with the least park space (Los Angeles County Department of

Public Health, 2016). This finding is concerning as it implies that low-income communities of color face compounded negative health impacts due to lack of park spaces. As green spaces continue to be implemented, the City should keep in mind the difference between equity and equality.

Although public health and sustainability are extremely important factors in urban greening projects, it is often used to depoliticize urban greening programs and to dismiss the concerns about affordable housing. The research about Chicago's 606 Trail interviewed residents and stakeholders in the project. One of the key findings of the interviews was that putting an agency that is "not in the business of housing" in charge of the redevelopment project created a tense situation where park development and affordable housing were on opposing sides (Rigolon, & Németh, 2018). An improvement to public health was championed as an argument in favor of park development. The same research study describes the term "green growth machines," which are the allied forces of public agencies and developers that purposely aim to establish large green infrastructure projects in susceptible neighborhoods (Rigolon, & Németh, 2018). The results are increased property tax revenues for cities and the ability of developers to charge substantial premiums for real estate located near new green amenities. These green growth machines present urban greening projects as technocratic efforts that will improve the wellbeing of residents, which depoliticizes planning processes and makes opposition extremely difficult (Rigolon, & Németh, 2018). There is no substantiated evidence yet that a green growth machine is necessarily backing the Revitalization, but one could still see the same issues from the 606 Trail applied to the Revitalization. Creating a continuous greenway and improving environmental quality is promoted consistently throughout the Master Plan, but housing affordability is not really addressed by the City's plan.

A project completed by master's students at the University of California, Los Angeles has suggested a few strategies that be implemented to discourage gentrification in the lower part of the River (Vernon to Long Beach). A recurring theme is controlling rent either through pricing or by offering external assistance. The latter entails establishing rent review boards, developing strong rental assistance programs, bolstering rental rights counseling programs, and partnering with renters advocacy groups (Arriaga, et al., 2017). The other recurring theme in strategies to ameliorate gentrification is providing affordable housing units through adopting community-led community land trusts, linkage fee ordinances, an inclusionary zoning ordinance, a strategic density bonus policy, and encouraging the development of accessory dwelling units. Community-led community land trusts are nonprofit organizations that are managed through a dual-ownership model and preserve affordable housing, stabilize communities and foster investment by only allowing local organizations to merge as a single property owning entity (Arriaga, et al., 2017). Meanwhile, linkage fee ordinances provide a mechanism allocate funds to support affordable developments and inclusionary zoning

ordinances mandate that a certain percentage of affordable units within a market-rate development (Arriaga, et al., 2017). Inclusionary zoning ordinances are most efficient when implemented with linkage fee ordinances or strategic density bonus policies, which create incentives to produce affordable housing units (Arriaga, et al., 2017). Lastly, accessory dwelling units are small scale developments that can meet a range of housing needs (Arriaga, et al., 2017). It is currently unclear whether or not the City is using any of these policies, but these are steps that should be considered in the Revitalization process.

Lastly, concern about gentrification from the Revitalization is affirmed by examining the effects the project has already has on the Elysian Valley, otherwise known as Frogtown. The Bowtie Project is effort spearheaded by California State Parks in partnership with the nonprofit Clockshop to host a variety of arts and educational programs while awaiting park development (Pino, 2018). In the next few years, California State Parks has plans to transform the Bowtie Parcel along the Glendale Narrows section of the Los Angeles River into a Los Angeles River-adjacent Park (Pino, 2018). The promise of park development has caught the attention of property developers, who have been purchasing Frogtown properties for high-end condominium, home, and retail developments (Pino, 2018). This has resulted in pushing out long-time residents who can no longer afford the rising rents. According to a 2014 study conducted by RAC Design Build, more than half the properties in the neighborhood of Frogtown have changed ownership from 2011 to 2014 (Jao, 2015; Pino, 2018). Some of these upscale housing developments have advertised river- and river-park-adjacent living (Jao, 2015; Pino, 2018). The paper concludes by suggesting that officials establish anti-gentrification policies, promote private sector regulation by the public sector, and pursue community based development for all future development.

The Los Angeles River Revitalization is a very ambitious green infrastructure project with many goals to improve the quality of life of City residents. However, concerns of how the project will impact vulnerable communities is a cause for uncertainty; by implementing green spaces along the River, will the City be promoting environmental gentrification? Most research suggests that the Revitalization is setting up the gentrification and displacement of people along the River, as seen by many of the projects predecessors in other states such as Chicago's 606 Trail. Furthermore, even though the project has not even truly begun, the example of Frogtown shows that many developers are already thinking ahead in terms of property values and exploiting vulnerable communities. The implementation of the Revitalization, and many other large green infrastructure projects, is from the top-down. There are some efforts to engage the communities near the Los Angeles River, but they are decentralized. Therefore, this research project will place an emphasis on community engagement and voicing the perspectives of excluded residents in the Revitalization Process.

## Chapter 4: Governance and Planning Efforts

by Kamryn Kubose

### Introduction

When it comes to ownership, the Los Angeles River has been exchanged by many hands in its history, as mentioned in Chapter 1. Sometimes seen as ugly, or even called “the longest sewer in California” by Mayor Eric Garcetti (Stockstill, 2018, p.1), the River has recently been in the spotlight for revitalization plans. Countless stakeholders, including powerful government agencies, see the environmental, social, and economic potential that the fragmented River can offer.

Incorporated fully into the complex American legal system, the River’s revitalization process is met with many legal hurdles; however this chapter will seek to untangle the complex governance on the River in regards to its revitalization plans. I will discuss: who is involved and what their roles are in revitalizing the River, how the River is governed, who is excluded from formal planning efforts, and how revitalization will affect both the LA community and future governance on the River. Lastly, I will provide a timeline of planning efforts up to the present day.

### Who is involved and how?

The stakeholders involved with River revitalization projects range from community interest groups to federal government entities. Community interest groups provide the backbone for revitalization efforts. Passionate about the environment, the people of LA, and the resources that the River has to offer, these groups are heavily involved in the political processes that revitalization projects require. The non-profit organization, Friends of the LA River (FoLAR), for instance, formed in 1986 and has since played a substantial role in various River projects (Advocacy, n.d.). FoLAR, in collaboration with lawyers from the Environmental Law Clinic at UCLA, wrote and successfully passed SB-1201, which expanded recreational access to the River’s channels (Kim, 2017). Likewise, River LA is another non-profit organization whose mission is to “integrate design and infrastructure to bring people, water and nature together across all 51 miles of the LA River” (Mission & Vision, n.d.). In addition to those groups, Heal the Bay, the National Resources Defense Council, the Northeast LA Riverfront Collaborative, and Amigos de los Rios represent just a handful of the exhaustive list of active community interest groups that have advocated for River revitalizations in one way or another (Community Stakeholders, n.d.). Throughout the whole revitalization process, community meetings are held by the County of LA in order for the public to voice their “thoughts on the future of the LA River,

hear the vision of the LA River Master Plan, and receive updates on river-related issues” (Community Meetings, n.d.). Community meetings provide a liaison between community groups and government agencies.

As previously mentioned, the other main stakeholder is the government. At the lowest tier, the City of LA’s most substantial effort to the River’s revitalization is the 2007 LA River Revitalization Master Plan (LARRMP) which encompasses the 32 miles of the River within city limits (Pasillas, Tran, & Robertson, 2016). Written and approved by the City’s Ad Hoc River Committee, the LARRMP spells out a 50-year plan for “ecological rehabilitation, economic redevelopment, and cultural revitalization” as well as appoints both the Department of Water and Power and the Bureau of Engineering to carry out its plans (Cardenas, 2016). In the LA River Ecosystem Restoration Final Integrated Feasibility Report, many alternative project plans were developed but only one, Alternative 20, was chosen to be the Recommended Plan (Reader’s Guide, 2016). Being the most expensive plan at \$1.31 billion, Alternative 20 will boast the highest percentage of increased habitat, will restore a total of 719 acres around the River, and will meet passive recreation objectives by linking more trails and increasing public awareness (Reader’s Guide, 2016).

On the county level, various agencies are involved with the River. As a precursor to the City’s LARRMP, the County Departments of Public Works, Regional Planning, and Parks and Recreation wrote the LA River Master Plan (LARMP), which was approved by the County Board of Supervisors in 1996 (Community Stakeholders, n.d.). The LARMP includes a “detailed a list of recreational, aesthetic, and ecological improvement guidelines and potential projects for the entire Los Angeles River and Tujunga Wash” (Kim, 2017, p. 86). Project proposals are reviewed by the Advisory Committee, who directly supervises the LARMP, along with government agencies that issue legal documentation (Committee Stakeholders, n.d.), as will be discussed in the next section.

The State of California helps coordinate projects and provides both resources and grant funds. The State also has laws, regulations, and protocols that must be abided by in conjunction to those of the City and County. In 1970, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) was passed in order to require environmental impact assessments on projects that may cause changes to the environment (CEQA, n.d.). Similarly, the Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act was passed in 2014 which dedicated \$60 million towards watershed restorations (AB-530, n.d.). Assembly Bill 530 established the Lower LA River Working Group, assigning the group with responsibilities to address and plan for the lower sections of the River (AB-530, n.d.).

One of California’s biggest impacts on the River’s revitalization, however, is the passage of bills by state voters. The Parks, Environment, and Water Bond, or Prop 68, was passed in June 2018



(Stockstill, 2018). The passage of this proposition “authorize(d) \$4 billion in general obligation bonds for state and local parks, environmental protection projects, water infrastructure projects, and flood protection projects” (California Proposition 68, 2018). Legal measures such as these provide the necessary resources for revitalization projects to be realized and for the State of California voters to express their opinions about the River.

The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) plays a major role in this whole revitalization process on the federal level. Due to a series of major floodings in the 1930s, the County requested federal help, and USACE was the answer. USACE responded by damming and concretizing parts of the River. Still today, they hold authority over flood control plans and engage in river restorations that they deem necessary (Stockstill, 2018).

### **Explanation of the Complex Governance on the River**

\_\_\_\_\_As hinted above about jurisdiction, any changes to the River requires legal documentation and involvement from the proper authorities. In this section, I will go in depth about the laws, acts, and policies that revitalization projects must adhere to; who manages what of the River; and how permitting, ownership rights, and easements function.

\_\_\_\_\_According to the City of LA’s About the LA River webpage, the River cuts through “7 U.S. Congressional Districts, 10 Council Districts, approximately 20 Neighborhood Council areas, and 12 Community Plan areas,” all within the City’s limits. When proposing a project involving the River, the proponents of said project must factor in all of the necessary legal steps, including the time it may require, into their planning efforts. Multiple layers of governance encompass the River. Concerning ownership rights, there are 15 cities next to the River that hold authority over land use, each with their own unique building codes and regulations (Pasillas, 2016). Furthermore, some sections of the River corridor are owned by government agencies, private landowners, or other public entities (Pasillas, 2016). Unfortunately, as information about private land ownership is scarce, it is impossible to research all owners of land near or including the River. So I will summarize by mentioning that the proponents will need to research and contact the specific landowner that their project will affect.

In addition to land ownership, easements exist over the River that allow for temporary right-of-way by holders for a specific function. For example, both USACE and the LA County Flood Control District (LACFCD) hold easements for flood control along the River. Additional types of easements include utilities and transportation maintenance (Pasillas, 2016).

After the proponents define its project goals and consults the County’s LARMP, they can then apply for permits. A project needs all necessary permits and approvals before construction. The Bureau of Engineering, the State Water Resources Board, and all levels of

government are just a handful of the possible agencies that administer permits regarding changes to the River. With regards to building on or near flood control infrastructure, a permit must be obtained by either USACE or the LACFCD—whichever has jurisdiction over the proposed project's land (Pasillas, 2016). Likewise, under the Clean Water Act, if a project includes pollution discharge, it requires a permit. Since the River is unique in its flooding and overall ambiguous structure, only recently has it been determined to be a “traditionally navigable waterway” from the EPA (Carstens, 2011, p. 2). Essentially, a project must obtain a pollution discharge permit from the EPA or a dredge and fill permit from USACE (Carstens, 2011).

In addition to the easements and permits mentioned above, the type of project proposed requires different legal work and protocols. There are three main projects that are outlined in the LA River Greenway Guide (Pasillas, 2016) that I will discuss: parks, pathways, and bridges. For park projects, possible legal planning steps include conducting hazardous or toxic waste tests, submitting documentation for an official CEQA review, and receiving approval from the EPA and Water Quality Board to continue construction after remediations (Pasillas, 2016).

For pathway projects, the proponents will need their development plans approved by the County Department of Public Works if the project is bordering the River. Furthermore, if there will be any possible changes to existing flood control infrastructure, the project will need a permit from USACE. Lastly, proponents that submit their project plan to the County to review specifications must also review their code compliances on the County level and have all maintenance agreements in place (Pasillas, 2016).

Bridge projects require extensive legal approval from many agencies. For example, the La Kretz Crossing bridge project needed encroachment and transportation permits from Caltrans, a Traffic Control Plan Review from the City Department of Transportation, and a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Entitlement Requirement just to name a few legal approvals that they needed (Pasillas, 2016). Because this was a large engineering project, the La Kretz Crossing bridge also required a permit from the Bureau of Engineering and contract approval from the Bureau of Contract Administration (Pasillas, 2016).

In summary, when projects are proposed, the proponents must acquire all necessary legal documentation, such as permits and easements, and they must notify all levels of government, landowners, and any entities that may jurisdiction over the piece of land or River that their project will encompass.

## The Inevitable Excluded Voices

\_\_\_\_\_Despite heavy involvement from government agencies, opportunities for the public to voice their opinions, and participation from community interest groups as all mentioned above,



some groups are inevitably excluded from any formal planning processes. For instance, prevalent homeless communities in LA and low-income communities with long histories of residence along the River represent just a couple of groups that may not have sufficient opportunities to fully express their opinions. To expand on homeless communities, many issues arise with regards to homeless communities and their impact on River revitalization projects. Because they camp in the river banks and channels, homeless people will be displaced when construction takes place and when permanent, homeless-proof structures are built (Foster, n.d.). Their livelihoods must be taken into account during revitalization processes because they represent a large, voiceless community that will be affected.

Another community that has been unfortunately excluded from formal planning efforts is the indigenous tribes of LA. These tribes share a deep relationship with the River and its plants and animals. Recently, a chief of the Fernandeano Tataviam tribe sat at one of the County's steering committee meetings; however, some believe that more tribe voices need to be included. Moreover, one member of the Kizh-Gabrieleeño Nation explains that the tribes themselves serve as a "voice for the plants and animals that don't have a voice anymore" (Lozano, 2018).

With such an economic, political approach to handling the revitalization of this natural resource, opinions are bound to be unheard or to not be prioritized. Yet, those who sit in higher positions hope that the project will address these issues by focusing attention on the project's impacts on rent and to solutions for the homeless (Kim, 2017). Lastly, community interest groups can and have advocated for excluded groups in the past in order speak for them.

### **The Future Potential Impacts of a Successful Revitalization Project**

The River's revitalization may cause modifications in the governance on the River. One suggestion from the LA River Greenway Guide was to seek support or collaborate with the City or County governments (Pasillas, 2016). This strategy would make planning efforts much easier and much more timely. The current legal hoops that organizations and hopeful proponents must jump through in order to realize their visions prove that governance is complex; perhaps the City and County could agree upon a joint master plan, so as to bring all resources together and to spark a synergistic collaboration with the same well-defined goals in mind.

There is no clear measurement or description of what a successful revitalization of the River would look like; yet, a strong indicator would be the balance of sustainability, environmental justice, and economic goals. The River's revitalization holds potential to set off a positive, cascading effect on LA. Countless new programs, including educational opportunities for school

children, sustainable clubs focused on River maintenance and beautification, and sports enthusiasts, can spur from such a welcoming, green space. If revitalization is successful in the years to come, it will be a huge step towards reaching environmental justice and towards greening an urban, megacity such as LA. Revitalization of the River will prove to the world that an urbanized city can “reclaim nature” (Kim, 2017, p. 256) and make sustainability a priority.

### Timeline of Planning Efforts

- **2000-2006:** Various props passed for bonds to be allocated for water & park projects
- **2001-2002:** Two lawsuits dealing with land use projects are filed and won by communities. Parks were created over the proposed industrial buildings
- **2002:** Ad Hoc River Committee is formed, is now the official governing authority for LA River revitalization projects
- **2007:** The LA River Revitalization Master Plan is created by the Ad Hoc River Committee
- **2009:** A Memorandum of Understanding is signed by the City, the County, and US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), which created the River Cooperation Committee
- **2010:** Friends of the LA River and lawyers from UCLA’s School of Law write and pass SB-1201, requesting more River recreational access.
- **2012-2013:** The City receives funding from various sources to conduct studies on the impact of the revitalization project
- **2015:** A USACE board approved and sent out the Final Integrated Feasibility Report for NEPA review
- **2016:** LA County voted for taxes and bonds that will provide millions of dollars to projects including the LA River Revitalization
- **Present Day:** Surveys are being conducted and some progress is being made on already-approved projects, with most located in the northern sections of the River

## Chapter 5: Competing Visions

by Camila Tipan

### Introduction

As mentioned earlier, the Los Angeles River stretches a total of 51 miles, with 32 miles running through the City of Los Angeles. It runs through countless cities and as the Los Angeles River Revitalization website states, the River flows through 7 US Congressional Districts, 10 Council Districts, about 20 neighborhood councils, and 12 Community plan areas. There are many factions with different visions for the River.

Stakeholders include all individuals, organizations, and businesses in Los Angeles County (Community Stakeholders | Los Angeles River Revitalization, 2017). According to the Los Angeles River Revitalization-Community Stakeholders webpage the stakeholders are as follows:

#### City of Los Angeles stakeholders include:

the Mayor's Office, the City Council, the Board of Public Works, the Bureau of Engineering River Project Office, the Bureau of Sanitation, the Bureau of street Services, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, the Department of City Planning, the Economic and Workforce development Department, the Department of Recreation and Parks, the Department of Building and Safety, the Department of Cultural Affairs, the Department of Transportation, and the Housing Department.

#### The Los Angeles County stakeholders include:

the County Departments of Public Works, Parks and Recreation, and Regional Planning.

#### State of California stakeholders include:

the California Coastal Conservancy, the California Department of Water Resources, the California Resources Agency, the California State Parks, the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, and the State Water Resources Control Board-Los Angeles Regional Quality Control Board.

#### Federal stakeholders include:

US Army Corps of Engineers (Los Angeles District), the US Environmental Protection Agency-Urban Waters Federal Partnership, the US Department of Interior-National Park Service, US Housing and Urban Development.

#### At the international level, a Sister Rivers program began in 2006 which includes:

the Cheonggyecheon Stream Project in Seoul, South Korea, Yargon River in Tel Aviv, Israel, and the Isar River in Munich, Germany.

Community Stakeholders include:

Amigos de los Rios, Anahuak Youth Soccer Association, the Arroyo Seco Foundation, the Audubon Center at Debs Park, the City Project, the Council for Watershed Health, Farmlab and Metabolic Studio, Friends of Atwater Village, Friends of the Los Angeles River, Green LA Coalition, Heal the Bay, the Los Angeles Audubon Society, the Los Angeles Conservation Corps, the Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition, the LA Creek Freak, Mujeres de la Tierra, Natural Resources Defense Council, the Nature Conservancy, North East Trees, Remapping LA, River LA, the River Project, Save LA River Open Space, the Trust for Public Land, TreePeople, Urban Rivers Institute, Urban Semillas, Village Gardeners, and the William C. Velasquez Institute.

It is important to remember, as stated in the previous chapter, that any modification to the River's physical structure, like the concrete riverbed, needs to be approved by the United States Army Corp of Engineers (Robins, 2018). The fact that the River includes varying and diverse organizations indicates the complex and differing visions for the Los Angeles River.

## Components to Consider

Upon reflection of the many stakeholders involved in the Los Angeles River, there are different perspectives to consider when envisioning its future. These aspects are: history, ecological purpose, safety of surrounding communities, economic value, and the wants and needs of nearby communities.

The River contains a rich history. As stated in Chapter 1, the River is the settlement place of the first people to occupy the Los Angeles Basin, the Tongva or "People of the Earth." The River served as a source of water, food, transportation, and shelter for them ("Gabrieleno Tongva Mission Indians," 2011). The Tongva people identify with the River today. As Mark Acuna (Walking Earth Keeper), tribal historian puts it, "despite everything that's happened we are still here, that's sort of like that feeling when we were down at the River it's a gunky dirty slimy terribly depressed and destroyed River and yet it's still here...despite everything, *ecuashem*, the people and the River are still here" (*Tongva - Walking Earth Keeper Mark Acuna - We are Still Here*, 2013).

During the time the Tongva inhabited the land around the River, it had an incredible ecosystem consisting of willow forests all along the River from its opening in Canoga to Long Beach. Other types of vegetation included ceremonial and medicinal plants such as reeds, *hierba santa*, and arrow weed. One of the most integral resources to California indigenous groups is the Oak

Tree. The River provided a habitat to herons and trout. Today, we can still see remnants of the original habitat in small seemingly untouched pockets of vegetation along the River due to the efforts of organizations aiming to revitalize the River (*Tongva - Walking Earth Keeper Mark Acuna - The Land of Forests*, 2013). This past vision of the River should be taken into consideration when looking at the River's ecological state and planning what types of vegetation would be reintroduced as part of revitalization.

When industry was ushered in during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the River provided transportation and led to a robust economy ("About the LA River | Los Angeles River Revitalization," 2017). With industry and economic growth came further development in the floodplain of the River leading to floods that destroyed homes and businesses. This is what led to the channelization of the River in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The communities surrounding the Los Angeles River are integral to its Revitalization. A study was conducted by Goldstein, Wessells, Lejano, and Butler on how communities can enhance social-ecological resilience in an urban setting, specifically looking at the Los Angeles River. They reasoned that it was a unifying narrative, meaning everyone shared the same mentality, that led to the channelization of the River when it posed a threat to the community. However, it is that same unifying narrative that can turn the community back towards the River. The key in restoring the River is restoring the human relationships with the River (Goldstein, Wessells, Lejano, & Butler, 2015).

All of these factors, ecology and habitat, social needs, economic development and safety, are important of the River, and their importance and emphasis vary on the particular area of the River. Each project aims to keep these perspectives in consideration when planning and envisioning projects. I will be looking at five different visions and projects: the Los Angeles River Greenway, the two Master Plans, Glendale Narrows Riverwalk, Taylor Yard, and the Lower Los Angeles River. These projects are in varying degrees of completion, but all aim at revitalizing the River.

## The Los Angeles River Greenway

The Los Angeles River Greenway is a vision that the entirety of the River would have a "continuous, comprehensive, and accessible greenway" (Creating a Complete Los Angeles River Greenway for All: Stories and Guidance | Luskin Center, 2016, p. 2). In this case, a greenway is defined as "an active transportation, open space, and recreational corridor involving a network along both sides of the 51-mile river of: 1) community access points, 2) parks and other green spaces, 3) pedestrian, bike, and equestrian paths; and 4) bridges for non-motorized use" (Creating a Complete Los Angeles River Greenway for All: Stories and guidance | Luskin Center,

2016, p. 2). Projects that aim to further these goals could provide social, health, transportation, and environmental benefits. A unified greenway could provide transportation and recreational areas that will link communities along the County, unify areas that were historically separate, and make them more accessible.

A caveat of these projects is that they are often inconsistent and inequitable. There are long vacant 3- to 6-mile stretches between projects that fragment the greenway. Another criticism is that while one side of the bank will have some sort of path, the other side will not.

Geographically, it seems that most of the pedestrian bridges are in the northern part of the River, north of the City of Vernon. The Luskin Center's report also notes that the Lower LA River, from Vernon to Long Beach, has not had a similar level of attention as the Upper portion from the State and Federal government even when these cities show that communities have a disproportionate need for more recreational areas.

An important point to keep in mind is that it is necessary to guarantee equal access for communities and to have their voices heard. It is important for planning to be community-driven and collaborative. In this way, communities can be sure that the projects will benefit them through projects that incorporate things like the construction of affordable housing along the River and jobs that would profit their residents. On the other hand, it is necessary that the community ensures that projects do not blatantly hurt the community for example in the case of housing displacement.

### **Los Angeles River Master Plan and the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan**

There are two master plans: the Los Angeles River Master Plan (LARMP) designed by the County in 1996 and the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan (LARRMP) designed by the City in 2007. The soon-to-be updated County LARMP attempts a holistic approach to the 51 miles of the River. It is led by the LA County Department of Public Works and is accompanied by Geosyntec (an engineering firm), OLIN (a landscape architecture and planning firm), and Gehry Partners (a design firm), River LA, a nonprofit organization, maintains and coordinates community outreach and engagement (About The LA River Master Plan, n.d.). The LARRMP provides a 20-year plan for development and management of the River within the City boundaries (LA River RMP - Background, n.d.). It prioritizes community engagement by including public workshops and meetings, participation in appropriate neighborhood and community events, and their website which updates and further informs the public about the LARRMP.

### **Glendale Narrows Riverwalk**

Glendale Narrows is a three-phase project. Phase I was completed in December 2012. Located where the 5 and 134 freeways intersect, the area used to be plagued with graffiti, vandalism, and gang activity. Now, Glendale Narrows boasts a half-mile stretch of recreational area with native California trees and shrubs called the Glendale Narrows Riverwalk. It features benches, paths, and art installations. The fencing features art by Brett Goldstone, which illustrate scenes from the River. Residents eagerly waited for the Park to open as it provided a family-friendly environment. The River itself does not have a concrete riverbed in this area, and therefore the public is able to enjoy a small piece of nature. It also provides an area for the equestrian community to exercise their horses. Not everyone is as eager about the Riverwalk, as some people anticipate more people from outside the community flooding the area to rent horses and exercise their own horses (Jao, 2012).

Phase II of the Glendale Narrows Riverwalk is still in progress and will provide a one mile trail for cyclists and pedestrians. It will expand on Phase I by including river overlooks, interpretive signage, and possibly a bridge connecting the Riverwalk to Griffiths Park and/or North Atwater. Phase II will specifically focus on the construction of Flower Plaza Park (alongside the intersection of Flower Street and Fairmont Avenue) which will connect bike paths to the north and south. It will also consist of the construction of Confluence Park, located at the confluence of the River and the Verdugo Wash alongside the 134 Freeway in the southeast (Glendale Narrows Riverwalk, Phase II | City of Glendale, CA, n.d.).

Phase III will focus on future bridges that will span across the River and the Verdugo Wash. It will connect the Riverwalk bike path to the LA River bike trail alongside Griffiths Park. Another bridge, the Verdugo Wash Bridge, will connect the Riverwalk to North Atwater (Glendale Narrows Riverwalk, Phase III | City of Glendale, CA, n.d.).

Phase I and II make Glendale the only city on the River that has dedicated its riverfront entirely to recreation (Jao, 2012). It will also be the longest bike path and recreational area in the United States, according to 2012 Glendale Mayor Frank Quintero. This vision is focused on an ecological purpose since California native vegetation was reintroduced. It also focuses on community as it strives to attract a bigger equestrian community of homeowners, whether the whole community wants that remains unclear. It also benefits the cycling community as more bike paths become available.

### **The Taylor Yard G2 River Park Project**

The Taylor Yard G2 River Park project began in 2017 when the State Legislature allocated \$100 million and the City of Los Angeles allocated \$60 million to purchase the G2 parcel (Robins, 2018). The site is 42 acres big and is located in the old Taylor Yard (Taylor Yard G2 River Park,



n.d.). It will focus on habitat restoration and support environmental sustainability. The goal is to open access to the River by opening up parts of the G2 Parcel in phases. There will be a park and open space that will for the local community but also as a destination for the rest of the City (About | Taylor Yard G2 River Park Project, n.d.).

Taylor Yard was used by rail operators for about 100 years. The rail operators used resources such as diesel and gasoline fuel, oils, greases, acids, paint, paint thinner, pesticides, herbicides, lead, and cleaning and chlorinated solvents (“Remediation/Clean-Up | Taylor Yard G2 River Park Project,”). In order to assess the safety of the site, soil samples, soil gas samples, and groundwater samples were taken to look for petroleum hydrocarbons, metals, VOCs, pesticides/herbicides, and PCBs. Now, the City is looking at solutions and remedies. These solutions start with a risk assessment for soil, soil gas, and groundwater. In practice, solutions include excavation and engineered cap/paving for soil, extraction/venting and a vapor mitigation system for soil gas, and extraction for groundwater (Remediation/Clean-Up). Phytoremediation, the use of living green plants in place to remove, degrade, or contain the contaminants in soils, sludges, sediments, and surface water and groundwater can also help remediate the area (What Is Phytoremediation, n.d.),

A series of community meetings keep the community aware and engaged, and they also give them a seat at the Table to form Taylor Yard into what the community wants and needs.

## **The Lower LA River Revitalization Plan**

The Lower Los Angeles Revitalization Plan (the Plan) began in 2015 because the California State Assembly Bill (AB-530) was passed in order to develop a watershed-based, equitable, community-driven plan (Mathews). It intends to improve the environment and quality of life for residents and is adamant on ensuring that the voice of residents are heard so that the River can become an integral part of the community.

Part of AB-530 was the mandate to instill a Working Group whose members were appointed by Secretary John Laird from the Natural Resources Agency in consultation with the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. The Working Group is chaired by the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (Mathews, n.d.). The Working Group involves 40 stakeholder groups and 15 cities located within a mile of the River from Vernon to Long Beach. The Plan’s vision for the future of the River entails nature-based solutions to create healthy ecosystems and improve the quality of life of surrounding communities (Loechner, n.d.). The community-driven process will create local business opportunities, equitable access to the River, and an improved experience. The process was used and identified 155 project opportunities. The Working Group also developed four project templates: multi-use path



enhancements, complete streets, river channel enhancements, and bridge crossing improvements. In addition, the Working Group developed a Watershed Education Program to teach the community about the interconnectedness of the people, the culture, the river, and the watershed.

## Constraints and Challenges

The challenges that exist in attempts to revitalize the River entail physical barriers, use agreements, and ownership structures. The infrastructure currently in place includes rail and highways, drainage and sewage conduits, electrical utility infrastructure, and other industrial infrastructure. These pose as some of the physical barriers for a river greenway. As stated earlier, the River runs through several different governmental entities at the local, regional, state, and federal level, thus making use agreements difficult to navigate. This is why the River is being revitalized one project at a time; a holistic approach proves to be impossible at this time. Open communication and coordination between projects can address these barriers.

Another challenge is deciding what the habitat of the River should look like. The reintroduction of native species means the removal of non-native species that may serve as a habitat for birds. Removing concrete could also threaten the current bird habitat, and the algae that grows on the concrete serves as food for migrating shorebirds (Robins, 2018).

## Conclusion

There are many perspectives to take into account when envisioning the future of the Los Angeles River. The most important thing, a growing desire in communities to revitalize the River, has already been accomplished. Communities strive to regain a relationship with the River and engage with it. Some plans rely heavily on state and federal funding, while others involve private companies in their endeavors. All of the different plans and projects have similar elements, but they all prioritize the input of the community and community-driven processes. This will hopefully guarantee a great future for the River that will benefit all.

## Chapter 6: Social Research in Urban Planning

by Nathan Lopez

At the core of urban planning is a desire to integrate the needs of a population into the built environment. In order to ensure that these needs are met, planners must have comprehensive knowledge of the way economic, social, and political processes shape how a community engages with space. Researching the effects of these processes on the built environment is central to realizing and addressing a wide variety of problems a community may have with its surroundings (problems with housing, transportation, use of public space, air and water quality, etc.). Tactful planning begins with tactful research; data must shed sufficient light on these problems while taking into account logistical constraints of time and resources. Research in urban planning that lends itself to useful and applicable answers incorporates both social and numerical methods. I will make a case for the importance of multiple social research techniques in detail with respect to their effectiveness, inclusiveness, and ethical implications. Among these methods are traditional interview methods such as surveys, focus groups, interviews, ethnographic/observational methods, and online-based data collection.

### The Case for Social Research

Martinez, Verplanke, and Miscione (2016) adapt the emic/etic dichotomy to urban planning in a way that is helpful in formulating a definition for social research. Etic refers to the view of the expert in planning matters. It is informed by research and can be reached by any combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Conversely, emic denotes the perspective of the community subject to study, which is informed by everyday experience. In the context of urban planning and community engagement, “social” research focuses on data that is emic—that is, sourced from and representative of the community. Analysis of dialogue and behavior in a community (emic data) is a useful cross-reference to data collected using expert-driven methods (etic). Mixing methods in research provides at least three advantages: it broadens the range of questions that can be answered, increases the potential that data will represent a greater diversity of divergent views, and strengthens inferences (Tashakkori, Teddlie 2010).

Social data, like etic data, may be quantitative or qualitative, but this review will focus on qualitative methods. Qualitative methods in geography and urban planning fall into three categories (Mikkelsen, 2015). The first and most common form of social research engages with populations directly through interviews, surveys, questionnaires, etc. Another form of research focuses on observing everyday interactions between people and space. These methods are called observational or ethnographic methods. The final category of research is the analysis of qualitative data that collectively represent a population’s interaction with space. Qualitative social data collection methods are voluntary or community-driven and rely increasingly on the

internet (Wieters, 2016). Each of these methods have a unique set of both drawbacks and advantages in urban planning research that will be discussed over the course of this review.

## Interview Methods

Conducting in-person interviews and distributing questionnaires or surveys have become primary methods for mixing emic and etic approaches in the study of urban quality-of-life (Tonon, 2015). Numerical representations of a community's function and quality may diverge from their subjective perception of their surroundings (Berhe & Verplanke, 2014), so it is important that both are incorporated in the research process. Dialogue between planning experts and populations helps to better understand the interaction between objective and subjective indicators of quality-of-life. This interaction can be best understood through qualitative study. Clifford, Gillespie, and French (2016) highlight two major categories of questions in interview methods: open-ended and fixed-response. Questionnaires and surveys primarily make use of fixed-response questions, in which respondents must choose from a finite set of responses and may be given the option to answer "other" in certain situations. Questionnaires and surveys may be used to gauge public opinion on a wide range of topics, including but not limited to: work, housing, transportation, schools, hospitals, environmental quality and access, etc., and they may generate qualitative or quantitative data. While interviews can be used in a similar range of topics, they rely primarily on open-ended questions where the subject can speak freely about the topic on hand. Open-ended questions may better represent the spectrum of opinions held by members of the public, but they are harder to perform quantitative analysis on. Fixed-response questions are more useful for quantifying public opinion, but may be overly discrete. Rather than viewing open and fixed response questions as mutually exclusive, it's useful to consider them as opposite ends of a continuum. For example, quantitative analysis can be performed on open-ended interview data to increase its utility, and fixed responses can be constructed to increase the potential that a diverse set of opinions will be represented. Semi-structured interviews—that follow a loose guide and incorporate both fixed and open responses—generate useful data while giving respondents the ability to expand on opinions as they see fit (Håkansson, 2014).

While interview methods may in theory capture diverging viewpoints, there are a few reasons this may not be the case in practice. First, interview methods lack spatial diversity. Upon conducting a review of research methods in planning, Kabisch, Qureshi, and Haase (2014) noted that many projects only conducted interviews on a single site. Although the choice of a single interview site vs. multiple interview sites may be a logistical preference, it ignores the effect space may have on formulating respondents' opinions as well as the role of mobility in the selection of respondents. Studies that seek to capture a community's subjective views on

urban areas must, at the very least, acknowledge the way spatial limitations affect results. If the necessary resources are available, a study should cross-examine interview results in one area with those in another. The second problem with interview methods is that they suffer from response bias. Interview respondents, whether in-person or online, tend to represent only a limited portion of the population. In the case of Czepkiewicz et. al (2016), the majority of respondents to voluntary surveys were middle-aged, college-educated males whose voices are already well-integrated into the planning process. The final problem with interview methods relates to the role (if any) interview data play in the formulation of planning solutions. As urban research informs urban planning, experts must decide how and what elements of interview data will be taken into account in the policy-making process. It is entirely possible that opinions expressed in interviews will not be included in the post-research planning process. While interviews are a necessary tool in data collection, they tend to look past critical contextual information and cannot be the sole source of data that informs decision-making.

## Ethnographic Methods

Ethnographic research in urban planning means analyzing a population as they exist in their everyday lives. This approach differs from interview-based methods which remove participants from natural contexts. Ethnography is a useful method for critically analyzing the status quo; it “illuminates the unknown... [and] interrogates the obvious” (Fassin, 2013, p.644). Ethnography subverts traditional roles of researcher and subject, instead framing research in terms of “observer” and “informant” (Spradley, 2016). This alternative framework highlights the value of emic knowledge and ensures that both parties have a degree of control over research. Conducting interviews with informants as they go about their lives and observing individuals at work or in leisure are common examples of ethnographic research, though the term may apply broadly to any qualitative approach that seeks experiential knowledge (Pierce and Lawhon, 2015; Pinel, 2014). Farthing (2015) suggests that ethnography excels at capturing the experiences of marginalized groups because of its bottom-up approach. However, there are a number of ethical considerations that must be made in order to determine a) how to conduct an appropriate study in the context of the study environment; and b) how to maximize the amount of information a study will produce.

The first methodological choice that must be made in performing an ethnographic study is outlining the area and subject of study. For example, a researcher who wants to conduct walking interviews must pick an area where they are free to approach and talk to people without fear of this behavior being perceived as hostile or threatening. Although navigating an urban area on foot may be considered a relatively “neutral” activity, this is not always the case. An examination of who moves through certain areas (with special regard to gender, race, able-

bodiedness etc.) reveals that a complex set of social, economic, and cultural factors influence the path an individual takes on foot (Warren, 2016). Similarly important to a research project is deciding the means by which a researcher gains access to the setting of interest. The relationship between informant and observer plays a crucial role in the quality and quantity of information, so it's important that observations be made in a way that won't distort the authenticity of the situation. Among other things, the researcher must consider the way an individual's interest may change between an isolated academic setting and their natural setting, who is leading and following the interview (both figuratively in the questioning process or literally in the case of the walking portion), and the way bodies may demonstrate bias (Warren, 2016). Interviews must be conducted with the right amount of interpersonal flourishes to maintain interest and keep the interview moving in a positive and meaningful direction (Spradley, 2016). A final notable ethical consideration involves keeping participants continuously aware of their relationship to the study. Although the goals of a study conducted using these methods are not always immediately clear—a researcher may simply set out to examine a day in the life of "X"—they should be communicated to participants as they develop because ethnographic knowledge is of equal value to both observer and informant (Spradley, 2016).

## Data Collection Methods

The final category of social data is volunteer and community-driven data collection projects. Two tools in particular will be of focus: Public Participatory Geographic Information Systems (PPGIS), which are created with the express purpose of informing research and/or planning, and Volunteer Geographic Information (VGI) systems, which are solely data collection and distribution tools (Kahila-Tani, 2016). Although these tools are often expert-developed, they rely on data that is voluntarily supplied by the public and are thus representative of the public's views. PPGIS and VGI excel in collecting data in real-time via analysis of social media traffic or reporting on dedicated apps. Traffic management and disaster response are two examples of sectors that make use of these methods because of the need for up-to-date information (Kusumo, Reckien, & Verplanke, 2017; Aissi & Sboui, 2017). When compared with paper methods of data collection (described above), online methods tend to receive more responses, meaning more data at a potentially lower cost (Czepkiewicz et. al, 2016). For these reasons, PPGIS and VGI tools are becoming increasingly preferred over analogous paper methods in social research (Wieters, 2016). Although online methods present tempting benefits, further study reveals they may face a similar set of drawbacks as paper methods, mainly in providing adequate representation.

Haklay (2016) and Ferster et. al. (2017) both identify a clear trend of “participation inequality” in VGI systems. As with paper methods, a relatively small subset of the population tends to contribute a bulk of the data collected using PPGIS and VGI. In fact, electronic tools favor the responses of white, college-educated males just as paper surveys and questionnaires do—although respondent populations are younger in online studies (Czepkiewicz et. al, 2016). Without diverse perspectives, planning research cannot make inferences based on the collective interest of a population. Assertions made from limited viewpoints are extensions of existing socioeconomic disparities; planners must at the very least familiarize themselves with a breadth of potentially diverging viewpoints to ensure that these disparities are not being worsened by imprecise research (Haworth, 2017). Ethnographic research plays a critical role in filling the contextual gaps left by data-driven methods. Ideally, planners should be sensitive to the needs of the population they are planning for and thus should tailor collection tools to account for local forces that seek to exclude or marginalize people (Chu, Anguelovski, Carmin, 2015).

## Conclusion

Gaber (2017) provides six phenomena that qualitative data excel at capturing: capturing the ebb and flow of daily life, getting the “big” picture, finding the connective tissue that tie a series of events together, documenting finer details of what’s going on, discovering situations that defy quantification, and bridging the gap between planning researcher and the community they plan with. These items collectively bridge the gap between the etic knowledge of planning experts and the emic knowledge of the communities they work with. Each method of social research foregrounds at least one of these qualities and may neglect the rest. For example, ethnography may be the best method to examine the nuances of daily life, but has little power to contribute finer, process-based analysis to answer a research question. Interviews may fill the gaps created by ethnography, but poor representation may lead to a gap between planners and their communities. Research design that is context-sensitive and relies on the use of multiple methods will minimize exclusion from the planning process. This is of increased importance in the case of the River, which has a complex network of stakeholders and policy-making bodies.

## Chapter 7: Urban River Case Studies

by James Javelosa

Historically, most river projects have been aimed at flood control, achieved by hard engineering techniques (Buchholz, Madary, Bork, & Younos, 2016). Engineers culverted numerous rivers due to excessive flooding and poor water quality—essentially converting them to sewers and storm-water pipes. Consequently, the habitat and recreational uses of these rivers were lost. New waves in “soft” engineering have reexamined this approach, in favor of a multi-functioning river channel. Past urban river revitalizations have focused on daylighting these rivers for the sake of urban renewal, increasing flood capacity, or restoring habitats. Daylighting being the removal of the culvert and re-exposing the river to its surrounding environment. As the River Revitalization is quite unique and unprecedented, this chapter will focus on cases of both daylighting and restoration of non-channelized rivers to inform our research. Case studies in Korea, Taiwan, Europe, and America have exhibited top-down approaches to implementing these projects. But due to funding, public perception, or project leadership, these restorations focused on public utility and beautification.

An aesthetic restoration, although easier, forgoes the opportunity of a multi-faceted restoration which is more economical and publicly supported. Most river projects are flood control oriented, but using green infrastructure and a watershed approach can achieve the same flood mitigation capacity while also re-naturalizing the river (Nakamura, Tockner, & Amano, 2006). Providing recreational and cultural facilities also proved very valuable. In most cases, politics and public perception played a major role on how “restored” a river became (Cho, 2010). Public approval and success of projects are highly dependent on the visual naturalization of the banks, experienced benefits, and social context. Despite few cases of completed restorations employing soft engineering techniques, a multitude of proposals and plans have been done. Completed master plans, economic evaluations, and public responses provide a glimpse into strategies that are applicable to the River. As follows will be case studies across the world that provide strategies and best practices to inform the River Revitalization.

### Cheonggyecheon River, South Korea

Large scale river restorations have squarely focused on aesthetic value and in turn economic renewal. The Cheonggyecheon River in South Korea provides a key case study that highlights the economic motivation to restore urban streams. The 7-mile stream through downtown Seoul was previously culverted and used as a sewer. In 1976, the city built a freeway over the river with the goal of capitalizing on increased traffic. However as the infrastructure aged, Mayor Lee Myung-bak centralized his political campaign on removing the highway and re-establishing the



river to its historical character (Cho, 2010). Frequent studies have explained the political nature of river revitalization and exposed the two diametric views of renaturalization; “deep ecologicalism and environmental managerialism” (Cho, 2010, p.164). This presents two competing visions for restoration: reestablishing wildlife or a public garden. This case study is unique because the river had been altered by humans for thousands of years. A true ecological restoration was never a possibility. So if it was to be restored, “it either had to be reinvented or reconstructed in the urban context of global Seoul” (Cho, 2010, p.151). Mayor Lee used this to frame the project more as an urban renewal project and less of a river restoration.

After project completion in 2005, there was minimal reestablishment of natural embankment of the river and it is highly engineered; water is supplemented by the nearby Han River (Hyungkyoo & Yoonhee, 2018). It is largely a public water fountain, rather than a river. Despite the highly engineered approach, the project was overall well-received (J. Y. Lee & Anderson, 2013). A key characteristic of the project was a very firm goal and vision—mostly set by the mayor. Interestingly, the protest and lack of public input did not hinder the execution of the plan. Many shopkeepers and street vendors protested the construction, citing decreased foot traffic, but the mayor managed to quell public dissent by providing broad benefits (i.e. opening a market in a separate location) (Cho, 2010). In doing so, Mayor Lee kept his vision by effectively negotiating with opposing groups. Some areas of compromise were relocating street vendors (as previously mentioned) and relocating historical bridges to different parts of the river. Despite wide positive publicity, the river has proven to be uneconomical due to its effects on traffic congestion and its inauthenticity. While the river has both increased property values and commercialism, the benefits of the river are highly disputed.

### **The Laojie River, Taiwan and The Tama River, Japan**

The Laojie River in Taiwan is another restoration with similar project goals as the Cheonggyecheon River. Many residents in the city of Taoyuan supported the Laojie River restoration wanting their own “Cheonggyecheon.” Although the reestablishment of a natural river was seen as a tool of economic renewal, most residents had concerns that daylighting the river decreased flood control capacity. In urban settings, especially in developing countries, perceived success is based on the reduction of flood risk and the improvement of recreational and aesthetic values (Taichung River Restoration Network, n.d.; Prior, 2016).

Beginning in 2011, the ongoing river improvement plan aimed to replace the drainage and transport infrastructure with an accessible green corridor. Taiwan attempted to implement soft or ecologically driven engineering for river management, but “a lack of confidence in the system... [became] a fundamental issue, particularly for those living in flood-prone areas” (Chou, 2016, p.4; Taichung River Restoration Network, n.d.) Due to the high human and capital



costs of floods and poor communication by the city, adopting an ecologically functioning river was highly unlikely. Despite 50 public forums and studies that proved the daylighted river can handle a 100-year flood, communication by government officials was not effective (Chou, 2016). Local researchers recommended “plain language, cumulative probability and people-friendly, web-based map systems” as communication tools between the public and local government (Chou, 2016, p.19).

In large contrast, the Tama River in Japan was able to gain support for its river restoration by ensuring flood capacity was expanded via naturalization. The public wanted both a functional flood channel and an improved river environment and aesthetic. One of the key principles of river management in Japan is flood risks reduction by ecological restoration. In the Tama River, gravel bed restoration reduced “the inundation frequency...from several times a year to once every 5 years” (Nakamura et al., 2006, p.423) Interdisciplinary advisory groups consisting of ecologist, civil engineers, and river managers collaborated to provide an integrated approach towards river, lake, and marsh restoration (Nakamura et al., 2006). Beneficial to both wildlife and people, this multidisciplinary strategy presents an alternative to gray infrastructure which has largely satisfied human needs but ecosystems distressed.

### **Mei Stream, Taiwan**

Water quality, and as a consequence its visual aesthetics, provides great incentive to mobilize either support or opposition. The Mei Stream is a 5-mile stream in the city of Taichung, also in Taiwan. The daylighting of the river was heavily opposed by community residents as it exposed poor quality water. One section of the river remained culverted but with a man-made stream built atop. Despite its artificiality, the pseudo-stream was well-received as it used clean groundwater, established green parkways (popular areas for local residents’ leisure activities), and maintained perceived flood capacity benefits of culverts (Chou, 2013). The water quality of the original stream was so degraded that residents vehemently opposed exposing the river. The second portion of the stream was daylighted, much to residents disapproval (Chou, 2013). The viability of pseudo-streaming other rivers is highly disputed; there is no true sustainable water source, no ecological restoration, and high maintenance costs. This short-term solution did not address the issue of poor water quality. In a report from Chung Yuan Christian University, researchers suggested utilizing NGO’s bottom-up information dissemination to change public perceptions about de-culverting (Chou, 2013). While pseudo-streaming may not be applicable to LA, the Mei Stream highlights publicly-held priorities of city river projects: green parkways and clean water. Thus it is important that current plans for the River address poor water quality, and in turn aesthetic value, to gain public support.

## Anacostia River, Washington D.C.

Water quality is major driver of American river restorations (Bernhardt et al., 2005). Similar to the River, the Anacostia River in Washington D.C. has a very active government role, highly fragmented jurisdictions, and a soft engineering approach to revitalize the river. Its eight miles runs through much of Maryland and Washington D.C. into the Potomac River. The innovative revitalization plan includes projects throughout its 26-mile watershed: projects focusing on LID and green infrastructure throughout the watershed to clean the river (DC Appleseed, 2011). Currently, most of the projects are waiting on funding and legislation with no completion date set.

Much of the Anacostia River restoration relies on a top-heavy governance structure. The restoration began due to the EPA-enforced Clean Water Act. A key aspect of the project is to meet these water quality mandates by implementing storm water diversion and capture. This encompasses a wide surface around the watershed. To achieve this, the plan proposes firm mandates and financing from the federal government to spur projects at the local level (DC Appleseed, 2011). For private landowners, tax credits would be given for implementing green infrastructure and local stormwater utility rates would be set “based on impervious surface areas” (DC Appleseed, 2011, p. 9). Currently, there has been no strong action from the federal government and most projects lack funding. As this strategy has yet to be realized, its effectiveness is unclear. However this provides a possible project structure for the Revitalization. As the River crosses many cities and unincorporated areas, a strong incentive program by the LA County can hasten progress.

Focus groups conducted by Lake Research Partners on the Anacostia provide a guideline to engage and earn public support for the River. Residents of Maryland showed a lack of connection to the river (National Wildlife Federation, National Wildlife Federation, & Lake Research Partners, 2012). Consequently, residents were unaware of specific behaviors that polluted the river. Respondents were open and supportive of behavior change when seen as mutually beneficial. Framing the project as a tool for community improvement increased its public support. For example, stressing that LID increases property values, makes neighborhoods safe, and creates job is an effective tool to gain public support (National Wildlife Federation et al., 2012). Residents would have a personal stake in the project. This is a vital tool to ensure public interest and support.

## Economic Evaluation

Despite high favorability, beautification-only projects do not support long-term economic gains. In order for projects to be considered financially beneficial, they exhibit low maintenance costs and high public use (Gobster, 1995). Although the Cheonggyecheon River has shown to increase tourism and has advanced the country's reputation, a cost-benefit analysis at the KSCE Journal of Civil Engineering demonstrated that residents did not realize the benefits (Lee & Jung, 2016). The study found that the cost of traffic congestion was larger than expected. Additionally, the willingness-to-pay (WTP) of Seoul residents was lower than expected due to the "artificial nature, the Grade III water quality, and the insufficient historical and cultural restoration of the restored stream" (Lee & Jung, 2016, p.161). A similar study at Sunmoon University highlighted that its \$170 million valuation does not overcome its high capital costs and forgone ecosystem services (Y. Lee, Kim, & Hong, 2016). Maintenance, energy, and water costs are also higher than expected. Consequently, the project can not be sustained without financial resources from the government, locals, or private businesses. This is the same case for the pseudo-stream section of the Mei River in Taichung; it's unsustainable. For this reason, artificial river restoration for the sole purpose of increased economic activity is not practical.

Conversely, the Zenne River restoration in Brussels showed major public support and high WTP due to a more holistic restoration. Residents highly valued improvements in water quality and public recreational facilities (Chen, Liekens, & Broekx, 2017). They also exhibited low WTP's for hydro-morphological changes, i.e. daylighting rivers. Researchers clarified that this can be offset by good water quality and rich species diversity (Chen et al., 2017). Simply daylighting a river is not successful. It is only financially worthwhile when paired with naturalization, ecosystem restoration, and recreational facilities. These components facilitate interaction with the restored river and promote higher valuation. The Zenne River signifies the importance of people having a human utilitarian component, in addition to aesthetics. The value of restoration is much higher when it serves either a physical or social purpose.

The Emscher River in Germany also shows high WTP and more direct economic benefits. The 30-year project converted open concrete wastewater channels into a re-naturalized stream. Costing over \$5.5 billion, the project built a new separate waste water plumbing system in conjunction with river restoration. Researchers utilized the Demonstrate Ecosystem Services Enabling Innovation in the Water Sector (DESSIN) evaluation framework to calculate both direct and indirect economic impacts (Gerner et al., 2018). The results show a \$24 million dollar value due to increased property value, commercial activity, increased flood protection, and new sanitation systems compared to a non-market value of \$124 million per year (Gerner et al., 2018). This non-market value is associated with the WTP by residents for the project. While direct economic impacts are substantial, the indirect value of the river is much higher. This provides more evidence that a holistic naturalization of the river is more valuable, both

intrinsically and economically. Primarily, the restoration is highly economical when residents view its individual targets of a project —such as improved water quality, wildlife, recreation—as something useful and beneficial. Fortunately, these have high intrinsic value and are achievable by ecologically-driven restorations.

## Lessons for the LA River

While these case studies provide best practices for the River, many of these are much smaller in magnitude. The River revitalization is unprecedented in its scope and ambition; however, from past urban river cases, people are more willing to daylight and restore culverted rivers when water quality and aesthetics are taken into account (Taichung River Restoration Network, n.d.; Prior, 2016). Additionally, the public will support the current revitalization of the River if they have a connection to the river, understand its financial and social benefits, and experience those benefits firsthand. As flood control is a major concern, it is important to publicize how a natural stream may have higher flood capacities. It is important not to just remove the concrete, but to complement it with habitat, recreational, and cultural spaces. This fosters interaction and gives people a vested interest in the river. How “natural” the river should be is highly dependent on its historical and cultural context. Although ecologically functioning rivers have high capital cost, they require less maintenance, are considered more aesthetic, and may be more economically viable. How the restoration is executed is also equally important. While plans may come from higher authorities, it is important for the city to hear citizen’s concerns and negotiate compromises. Strong standards and financial incentives at the county level may provide a framework to implement projects across LA’s various localities. In addition, a revitalization plan that encompasses multiple goals (ecological, recreational, urban renewal) are economically and socially viable. Ultimately, the River should be more than a garden. Implementing these principles on the Revitalization will not only enhance it, but also provide a blueprint for other rivers abandoning hard engineering techniques and embracing a holistic restoration.

## APPENDIX F: PRACTICUM PROJECT PROPOSAL

The ongoing movement to restore the River into a community asset shows tremendous potential. Local groups and government agencies hope to maximize the use of the River but in varying ways—each with distinct goals and challenges. Consequently, development along the River has the potential to also negatively impact surrounding communities. The purpose of this literature review is to provide relevant background information and identify the potential impacts of Revitalization efforts, current actors in the process, and case studies that we will utilize for the project.

For simplification, the Los Angeles River will be referred to as the River, the City of Los Angeles will be referred to as the City, and Los Angeles County will be referred to as the County.

### River History

Before 1542, the River Basin was home to the Chumash and Tongva people, or “the People of the Earth.” The Chumash tribe moved with the seasonal variation of the River flows and described the area as being bountiful and full of life. Emerging from an underground, natural water reservoir, the River spans a wide area in the San Fernando Valley (Mendenhall, 1905). Previously forming a floodplain forest landscape, the River was spotted with marshes, wetlands, and lagoons across the Southern California landscape. Salmon and steelhead navigated the waters while deer, bears, antelopes, gophers, mountain lions, and various birds of prey inhabited the adjacent riparian habitat. From the upstream woodlands, hunting and fishing provided a sustainable food source. In the southern marshes downstream, the naturally soggy soil and thickets provided a doorway into agriculture. Home to one of the most biologically diverse habitats in North America, the River basin would serve as a driving force of agricultural innovation and urban exploitation (Crespi, Brower, & Bolton, 1927). The River experienced wet and dry seasons, drastically changing flow rates during each season. After a wet season, the sediment deposits left by the River provided nutrients that suited agriculture. In 1542, Spanish colonizers founded the pueblo of Los Angeles and capitalized on this, creating an agricultural industry in the River basin. With irrigation and the promise of economic return, LA became a major hub for agriculture. The city kept growing, using more water and diverting water from the River to crops. Eventually, dams were created in order to collect and store the water for year-round use. The River still meandered, had its natural banks, and even experienced extreme flooding.

The underground and aboveground characteristics of the River created a shallow water table and poor channel. When hit with a powerful storm, the small channels were inundated with large quantities of water causing the meandering streams to become a torrential river. In 1936, after flooding caused millions of dollars in damage, LA County and the Army Corps of Engineers concretized the channel to set a permanent course for the River and mitigate flood risks

(Bigger, 1959). After it was channelized, flow rates increased from 80 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 226 cfs in dry season, to 105,000 cfs in flooding events, equating to nearly 48 million gallons of water per minute (USGS National Water Information System, 2011). At the time, this project created many jobs and served as an economic advantage to Los Angeles during the Great Depression ([Salazar, 2013](#)). Although some sections resemble their former natural ecology today, most of the River remains a concrete channel. Only 13 miles retain the original soft-bottom river bed and only two sections resemble the original ecosystem.

In 2007, the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan was released by the City. It explores the idea of removing the concrete and restoring the River at some location, while creating an engaging community environment at others. Supported by climate scientists, politicians, NGOs, and community members, the plan claims that a restored River would provide native habitat, water reclamation, and flood protection, open space, recreation, and housing for adjacent communities; All of which are necessary for the health and sustainability of the River, the surrounding communities, and LA as a whole (“Master Plan | Los Angeles River Revitalization,” n.d.).

This Revitalization Plan is just one of many plans that hope to create a connected greenway of parks and recreational areas along the River. This Plan features many types of green infrastructure projects, such as connecting neighborhoods to the river, extending open space and water quality features into neighborhoods, enhancing river identity, and incorporating public art along the river, that will inevitably be crucial in creating this continuous greenway. When considering these plans, ecological history, existing habitats, and future conditions are important facets to consider. The Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan proposes solutions to create a socially engaging setting while returning the advantages of the ecological past of the region, but only for the 32 miles of the River within the City limits. Our analyses will give insight to LA residents’ experiences of, and priorities for, the river revitalization. But who has power to have the final say over how to revitalize the River? Whose views are already represented in the process? Answering these questions requires understanding the many stakeholders involved in revitalization efforts so far.

## Stakeholders

Various stakeholders at all levels of government and within the LA community see the environmental, social, and economic potential that the River can offer. This section will discuss who is involved and what role they play in revitalizing the River; who is excluded from formal planning efforts; and how the Revitalization may affect both the community and future governance of the River.

The stakeholders involved with the River’s revitalization range from community interest groups to the federal government. Community interest groups provide the backbone for revitalization



efforts. Passionate about the environment, the people of LA, and the resources that the River has to offer, these groups are heavily involved in the political processes that Revitalization projects require. The non-profit organization Friends of the LA River (FoLAR), for instance, formed in 1986 and has since played a significant role in various projects (Advocacy, n.d.). FoLAR, in collaboration with lawyers from the Environmental Law Clinic at UCLA, wrote and successfully passed SB-1201 which expanded recreational access to the River's channels (Kim, 2017). Likewise, River LA is another non-profit organization whose mission is to "integrate design and infrastructure to bring people, water and nature together across all 51 miles of the LA River" (Mission & Vision, n.d.). In addition to those groups, Heal the Bay, the National Resources Defense Council, the Northeast LA Riverfront Collaborative, and Amigos de los Rios represent just a handful of the exhaustive list of active community interest groups that each have advocated for the River's revitalization in one way or another (Community Stakeholders, n.d.).

As previously mentioned, the other main stakeholder is the government. At the local level, the City of LA developed the LA River Revitalization Master Plan (LARRMP) in 2007, which encompasses the 32 miles of the River within city limits (Pasillas, 2016). It spells out a 20-year plan for "ecological rehabilitation, economic redevelopment, and cultural revitalization" as well as appoints both the Department of Water and Power and the Bureau of Engineering to carry out its plans (Cardenas, 2016).

On the county level, the County Departments of Public Works (DPW), Regional Planning, and Parks and Recreation created the LA River Master Plan (LARMP), which was established by the County Board of Supervisors in 1996 (Community Stakeholders, n.d.). Currently, community meetings are being held by the County in order for the public to voice their "thoughts on the future of the LA River, hear the vision of the LA River Master Plan, and receive updates on river-related issues" (Community Meetings, n.d.). These are ultimately inputted in the upcoming update of the LARMP.

On the state level, besides state laws, the biggest role the state plays is providing funding. Proposition 68 provided \$4 billion for "state and local parks, environmental protection projects, water infrastructure projects, and flood protection projects" (California Proposition 68, 2018). Similarly, the Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 dedicated \$60 million towards watershed restorations (AB-530, n.d.). Plans utilizing state funding are required to meet mandates set by the law. This limits the types of development and may diverge from local wants and needs.

On the federal level, the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) plays a pivotal role in Revitalization. Due to the Army Corps's concretizing of the River, they still hold authority over flood control plans (Stockstill, 2018) and engage in river restorations they deem necessary, for

example laying more concrete for flood control or cutting down vegetation to ward off homeless encampments (Kim, 2017).

Many of these government agencies and non-profit organizations have been conducting public surveys to determine priorities and concerns for the River Revitalization. Despite this, some groups are likely to be or feel excluded from the formal planning process. For instance, homeless and low-income communities are typical examples of groups that have little input in current development plans due to lack of resources despite their existing relationships and proximity to the River. People who are homeless, for instance, camp in the river banks and channels, but risk being displaced when River renovations take place and when permanent, homeless-proof structures are built (Foster, n.d.). There is currently more of a focus towards cleaning up homeless encampments rather than explicitly inviting the homeless to community meetings (Haskell, 2018). Their input may provide information that eases the transition from what the River is used for now, to what it will be used for in the future. Another community that has not had many opportunities to express their perspectives on formal planning efforts are the indigenous tribes of LA. These tribes share a deep relationship with the River and its plants and animals. However, a member of the Kizh-Gabrieleno Nation shared that his tribe hasn't gotten an invitation to discuss Revitalization efforts from any planners (Lozano, 2018). Just recently, a chief of the Fernandeno Tataviam tribe sat at one of the County's steering committee meetings; however, indigenous peoples and at least one community liaison of the Master Plan believe that more tribal voices need to be included. Moreover, one member of the Kizh-Gabrieleno Nation explains that the tribes themselves serve as a "voice for the plants and animals that don't have a voice anymore," similar to what the louder non-profit organizations have been advocating for. (Lozano, 2018).

### **Community Benefits and Harms**

There are valid concerns and aspirations underlying stakeholders' different visions for the River. Development along the River in the form of greenways can impact the psychosocial wellbeing of the communities living nearby. It can contribute to increased physical and recreational activity and improved environmental quality through access to public green spaces and parks (Alvarado, 2016). Greater access to these amenities may improve mental health outcomes through stress reduction and cognitive restoration (Dadvand and Nieuwenhuijsen, 2019). Vegetation surrounding the River will also provide a reprieve from urban heat island effects. This can reduce the frequency and intensity of illnesses and hospitalizations associated with extreme heat waves (Zupancic, Westmacott, & Bulthuis, 2015). Disadvantaged communities may experience these and other benefits firsthand with reduced health inequalities (ex: differences in health status or mortality rates), lowered risks for obesity, and decreased youth-violence engagement (Alvarado, 2016).



However, the potential for gentrification and displacement may cancel out these benefits. Development projects can boost economic opportunities for nearby disadvantaged communities, “with a significant increase in economic growth, employment, and income tax revenues” (Alvarado, 2016, p. 11). But increased development associated with the Revitalization may raise property values and induce displacement/gentrification. Residents living within a gentrifying neighborhood, or 1/3 mile radius away, experience higher unemployment rates compared to residents of non-gentrifying areas (Meltzer, 2017).

Such negative consequences may disproportionately affect residents along the lower watershed. A larger proportion of white affluent residents live in the upper watersheds of the Los Angeles River, with 53-75% of residents being white (Cook, n.d.; US Census Bureau 2017, n.d.). Whereas the lower watershed consists of a substantial proportion of minority and low income residents. Cities in the lower River consist of 72.9% Hispanic, 10.5% African American, 7.9% White, and 7.1% Asian residents (Watershed Education Plan, 2018). Furthermore, the percent of persons in poverty in the lower watershed region, e.g. Compton city, is 23%, whereas the percent of persons in poverty of the upper watershed, e.g. South Pasadena city, is 8.2% (US Census Bureau 2017, n.d.).

This disparity highlights the economic and social inequality that already exists along the River. As such, it is important for our research to not only showcase the possible benefits of revitalization, but also take seriously those communities that have concerns about and potential for gentrification and displacement. Taking their visions for the River into account could help mitigate the negative consequences of development, ensuring that as revitalization enhances River health it also provides minority, low income communities access to resources that can increase their health and social well-being too.

### **A Deeper Look: Urban Greening, Gentrification, and Displacement**

As there is minimal park space per person in Los Angeles, many river revitalization projects focus on providing open green space to nearby communities. The median acres of park space per person across high-density United States cities is 6.8 acres (Neighborhood Data for Social Change, 2018). By contrast, LA has a much lower median at 3.3 acres of park space per person (Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, 2016). Every year, ParkScore evaluates park spaces in the 100 most populous cities, which includes cities such as San Francisco, St. Paul, and Minneapolis. LA was ranked 74th in 2018 (ParkScore, 2018).

In an attempt to increase the amount of green space in LA, elected officials, community leaders, and advocacy groups have created a bold vision to restore the River. The County’s plan establishes “greening the neighborhood” as a project goal, promising to reconnect adjacent

communities to the river and to each other. The City, meanwhile, hopes to develop a 32-mile Los Angeles River Greenway from Canoga Park through Downtown LA as the centerpiece of its green space system. As follows, the goals are: to create a continuous river greenway, connect neighborhoods to the river, extend open space and water quality features into neighborhoods, enhance river identity, and incorporate public art along the River (2007).

As noted above, however, these “improvements” involving the River are controversial; with so many plans that aim promote a better quality of life, there may not be efforts to protect existing residents from gentrification and displacement. LA is one of many cities implementing urban greening programs, which include the creation and maintenance of green spaces (Wolch, 2014). Green spaces not only provide urban residents space for physical activity, social interaction, and psychological restoration, but they also negate urban heat, offset greenhouse gas emissions, and attenuate storm water (Lee, 2015). Although urban greening programs tend to improve quality of life and add aesthetic value to many communities, they can also contribute to gentrification by driving up property values.

Gentrification is defined as, “the process by which central urban neighborhoods that have undergone disinvestments and economic decline experience a reversal, reinvestment, and the in-migration of a relatively well-off middle-and upper-middle class population” (Smith, 1998). One central concern of gentrification is displacement, which occurs when residents can no longer afford the cost of renting. Typically, gentrifiers are young professionals with high incomes whose presence risks displacing existing lower-income residents. The in-movers are usually wealthier, whiter, and of higher educational attainment, while out-movers are more likely to be renters, poorer, and people of color (Zuk, 2017).

Urban greening, gentrification, and displacement are connected through the notion of environmental gentrification. Environmental gentrification is the influx of wealthy residents to historically disenfranchised neighborhoods in tandem with the introduction of new green spaces, causing the displacement of the residents the green spaces were originally designed to benefit. In response, many community activists are advocating for a strategy called “just green enough,” in order to achieve environmental remediation without environmental gentrification (Wolch et al., 2014). This model aims to improve green spaces, but not so much that it radically transforms a neighborhood and directly contributes to displacement.

Although adding urban green space seems like a simple solution to improving health and wellbeing, doing so without caution can have adverse and paradoxical effects. Urban greening interventions can create elite enclaves of environmental privilege and environmental gentrification that exclude low-income and minority residents from their benefits. In a diverse city, such as Los Angeles, this can cause disproportionate access to green spaces. A report on parks by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health has found a negative relationship between park spaces and income level (2016). This means that the lower the income-level of the community, the lesser park spaces available. Since green spaces, such as parks, are so beneficial to the health of a community, having less park spaces could negatively impact the health of these communities that are already underserved.

Critics of the Revitalization are concerned about gentrification and displacement related to the Revitalization. Joe Edmiston, the executive director of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy said, “As things get more attract, they get more expensive and then folks who live below the income line are impacted. Gentrification is the fundamental public policy issue that must be addressed” (Sahagun & Saillant, 2014). However, city officials seem more focused on the positives. Omar Brownson, the executive director of the Los Angeles River Corp described the Revitalization as a “game-changer” for the City and the epicenter of transformation (Sahagun & Saillant, 2014). However, residents who will most likely be impacted by the Revitalization are more concerned about their housing security. Cecilia Dominguez, 60, is one of the man residents who were uprooted from Chavez Ravine, Los Angeles in 1959 to build Dodgers Stadium (Sahagun & Saillant, 2014). She and her family sought refuge and stability in Elysian Valley, but are now facing another plight of displacement from the Revitalization.

In Los Angeles, the impacts of the Revitalization can already be predicted by examining the changes in the Elysian Valley, a neighborhood better known as Frogtown. In the next few years, California State Parks has plans to transform the Bowtie Parcel along the Glendale Narrows section of the Los Angeles River into a Los Angeles River-adjacent Park (Pino, 2018). The promise of park development has caught the attention of property developers, who have been purchasing Frogtown properties for high-end condominium, home, and retail developments (Pino, 2018). This has resulted in pushing out long-time residents who can no longer afford the rising rents. According to a 2014 study conducted by RAC Design Build, more than half the properties in the neighborhood of Frogtown have changed ownership from 2011 to 2014 (Jao, 2015; Pino, 2018). Some of these upscale housing developments have advertised river- and river-park-adjacent living (Jao, 2015; Pino, 2018).

## Lessons from Other River Projects

The LA region is not alone in its efforts to revitalize an urban river in ways that expand its function for the city. Historically, most river infrastructure projects have been aimed only at flood control (Buchholz, Madary, Bork, & Younos, 2016). But new waves of “soft” engineering have reexamined this approach in favor of re-establishing a multi-functioning river channel. Other cases of urban river revitalization have tended to focus on river restoration for the sake of urban renewal, increasing flood capacity, and/or re-establishing wildlife habitat. Responses to these projects hold lessons relevant to predicting responses in the case of LA residents.

Flood control was a major measure of success in many river restorations, most notably in Asian countries. In 2011, Taiwan attempted to implement ecologically driven engineering for river management, but those in flood prone areas were not confident it had sufficient flood control (Chou, 2016). By contrast, the Tama River restoration in Japan ensured flood capacity was expanded via naturalization. The restored gravel bed reduced “the inundation frequency...from several times a year to once every 5 years” (Nakamura et al., 2006, p.423). LA residents are already concerned that current stormwater infrastructure is below tolerable risk in the event of a very large storm (Sahagun, 2019). Climate change exacerbates this risk as it increases the likelihood of extreme weather events and dam failure (Sahagun, 2019). This underscores the need to implement holistic river management, which takes this into account, for the revitalized LA river.

In addition to flood control, recreational and cultural amenities have been shown to be a highly valued part of restoration projects. But projects that only focused on these amenities, to the exclusion of ecological restoration, had high maintenance costs and low economic returns. The Cheonggyecheon restoration in Korea, for example, re-exposed the historic river and established a continuous greenway but served largely as a large public water feature. The project was successful insofar as it produced an increase in tourism and property values, catalyzing the revitalization of downtown Seoul (Cho, 2010). But the willingness-to-pay (WTP) of Seoul residents was lower than expected due to the “artificial nature, the Grade III water quality, and the insufficient historical and cultural restoration of the restored stream” (Lee & Jung, 2016, p.161). The Mei Stream restoration in Taiwan, meanwhile, developed a wholly artificial river, choosing to bury the actual river. The project was well-received but like Cheonggyecheon it resulted in high maintenance and energy costs in addition to lower than expected WTP (Chou, 2013).

Conversely, the Zenne River restoration in Brussels had high public support and WTP due to a more holistic restoration. The project removed concrete walls along the river, naturalized its banks, and reintroduced vegetation. Residents highly valued improvements in water quality and public recreational facilities (Chen, Liekens, & Broekx, 2017). The Emscher River in Germany

also showed higher “existence value” or WTP for its “good ecological status” (Gerner et al., 2018, p. 335). These cases show a multifunctioning river ecosystem is highly valued, with restorations that accomplish this being far more successful and financially viable long term.

When it comes to the Los Angeles River revitalization, it remains to be seen whether the various plans for its future will be able to successfully balance what are, at times, conflicting desires for flood control, amenities, and ecological function. As a result of the variety of government and community interest groups involved there is an abundance of complex and differing visions for the River. These visions take into account, to varying degrees, the River’s history, ecological purpose, economic value, and safety and priorities of nearby communities laid out in the sections above. The key to restoring the River, many would argue, lies in valuing and restoring human relationships with the River (Goldstein, Wessells, Lejano, & Butler, 2015). Each project must grapple with these multiple considerations and perspectives as it is being planned and executed. At the same time, in addition to the multiple visions found in official visions and projects, there are also multiple stakeholders who have not been heard.

For now, a holistic view of the River is difficult to come by. Current projects direct resources to a few sections of the river while ignoring others. The sections that follow explain the contribution our survey effort will make in this context, as it aims to gather data on some of the themes, voices, and visions that have heretofore been largely absent from existing official engagement.

## Research Questions

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Our group seeks to answer a few research questions:

1. What geographical and thematic gaps exist in LA River restoration community survey efforts?
2. What can alternative approaches to community surveying reveal about community members’ understanding of current planning efforts and aspirations for the future of the river?

The first question seeks to identify which communities and topics have been excluded from formal surveying and engagement efforts surrounding River Revitalization. These communities, for whatever reason, are not being represented in the Revitalization or given the opportunity to

voice their full range of experiences and opinions, but could provide valuable and necessary insight based on their connections to the River. The findings from the first question feed into our own survey effort, which will provide data to address the second. We hope to gain a deeper, more nuanced understanding of people's relationships with the River and the impacts existing and future development could have on them and their communities.

As stated earlier, there are many stakeholders involved with Revitalization efforts concerning the River. Many of these groups have their own vision for the River, with some of these visions competing or conflicting with one another. Furthermore, some of them may not take into consideration the wants and needs of the people who live near the River and would be the most impacted by the Revitalization. Our research will provide an in-depth analysis of the thoughts and concerns of some of those who live, work, and play near the River but may not be involved in existing community engagement around its planning. In addition to findings from this research, reflecting on our approach will allow us to create guidelines on how to improve future community engagement so that it is more inclusive and responsive to the visions of all the communities with a stake in the River and its future. In the end, we aim to share results with River-adjacent communities and provide input to the LA County Master Plan.

## Methods and Data

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Our project consists of two parts: a comprehensive analysis of existing community surveys conducted as part of the formal LA River Revitalization efforts, and the generation of our own survey questionnaire and dataset. The main goal of the former is to identify gaps in knowledge while the latter focuses on filling these gaps.

The current River development paradigm is a synthesis of social, cultural, economic, and political forces. Development projects are created based on the way these forces interact to produce both a set of community needs and a solution to these needs. Because of this, there is a significant possibility that items will be left off of the planning agenda. Voices and opinions that lack political power will be excluded from the planning process. Our project seeks, in part, to address these exclusions. The main types of knowledge "gaps" that will be addressed in our project are geographic, social, thematic, and methodological:

**Geographic gaps** are physical locations along the River that have not been covered by previously conducted community surveys. These include areas where development projects are

not taking place or places where development is expected, but no public input has been provided.

**Social gaps** refer to the voices that have been excluded, in otherwise, areas that have had formal community outreach. A number of factors, such as race, income, and age may be responsible for this.

**Thematic gaps** are failures of community surveys to address specific issues relevant to the revitalization. For example, surveys may not include questions relating to climate change or flood control in fear of “politicizing” a project.

**Methodological gaps** relate to the way data is collected. For example, a fixed-response survey may provide community members with an opportunity to voice their opinions, but only within a narrow set of parameters determined by survey conductor. Strategies such as door-to-door canvassing or public event booths also constitute methodological gaps as both are limited to what kinds of data may be found.

Conducting an in-depth analysis of existing Revitalization-related surveys includes compiling available survey forms (and responses when available), and contextualizing them using geospatial analysis, development plans, academic research, and notes from community meetings. This will allow us to discover to what degree these gaps exist.

Informed by the analysis of existing surveys, we will conduct in-depth interviews that targets overlooked areas. We are particularly interested in capturing emic data which conveys the perspective of the community and is informed by everyday experience (Martinez, Verplanke, Miscione, 2016). Conversely, etic is informed by research by either or both qualitative and quantitative methods (Martinez, Verplanke, Miscione, 2016). Current planning efforts have thus far, been highly etic planning. Utilizing both methods for our research provides three advantages: it broadens the range of questions that can be answered, represents a greater diversity views, and strengthens conclusions inferred from the data (Tashakkori, Teddlie 2010). While numerical data are useful in collecting data, dialogue can provide a better understanding between objective and subject quality of life indicators (Berhe, Verplanke 2014).

Conducting in-person interviews and distributing questionnaires (time permitting) have become primary methods for mixing emic and etic approaches (Tonon 2015). This will be our preferred strategy in collecting data for the project. Gathering our own set of data allows us to further analyze previous outreach in depth. As such, it is vital to conduct the study in a timeframe and manner that conforms to the public input process for the county master plan.

After refining our questions and interview protocol (see Appendix A), we will conduct in-person interviews. If needed, we will include in an additional online survey component. In-person interviewing and associated fieldwork will focus on the site (or sites) identified below, with a



particular interest in minority and low-income communities that may be underrepresented in formal engagement efforts ([Einstein, Palmer, & Glick, 2019](#)). Interviews will be audio-recorded with consent (see Appendix B). Interview data will be kept anonymous unless given consent by community members. Once the interviews are completed, we will transcribe them using an audio-to-text converting software and code the transcripts for opinions, ideas, and concerns that are frequently discussed between multiple interview subjects.

For various reasons, studies tend to show that there are insufficient outreach or accessibility for underrepresented community members, which lead to attendances at public meetings that are disproportionately whiter, wealthier, or more populated by informed community members about a given issue ([Einstein et al., 2019](#)). We believe that gathering the input of minority and low-income communities will help positively influence how river development projects proceed. By conducting in-person, semi-structured interviews we aim to allow for open-ended answers that can reveal the diversity, depth, and complexity of communities' existing relationships with the River. By collecting these oft-marginalized or excluded perspectives, we can further understanding of the impacts and possibilities of river development.

### Site Selection

It is important that current planning represents the shared vision of all Angelenos. Formal engagement and survey efforts, however, tend to skew toward more affluent and politically active community members. Our proposed survey area and approach thus focuses on predominantly minority, low-income, or heretofore uninvolved community members in order to discover how their views and experiences align or diverge from current goals for the LA River Revitalization.

Due to the structure of the Practicum, our research is limited to nine months. We plan to spend the bulk of spring quarter in the field, conducting in-person interviews and observations. Our focus area for conducting interviews will be limited to organized meetings and locations less than 0.7 miles from the River channel and access points. As this is this the average walking distance, respondents will more likely have seen and interacted with the River. They will also be the population most affected by future development.

After preliminary analysis of existing surveys and projects, our team has selected the following potential sites to conduct further research: Reseda, Boyle Heights, Southgate, Maywood, and North Long Beach. It is our goal to select at least one site in the northern river and one site in the southern river. From preliminary research, communities along the northern portion of the river prioritize different aspects of revitalization than communities along the southern river. These communities vary in demographics and will most likely be affected differently from revitalization efforts. With these site locations, our research will show a range of relationships to the river that span different portions of its ecology and social context.



**Reseda:** Based upon our research of completed surveys and completed projects, there lies a large gap in knowledge between Sherman Oaks and Canoga Park. Reseda is a neighborhood in the middle of this gap and contains residential properties along the River. Reseda is an ideal city due to the amount of proposed projects surrounding this community. Community engagement is just beginning along this side of the river. **Median Household Income:** \$54,771

**Boyle Heights:** With recent political activism at the Los Angeles River Path Project meeting hosted by LA Metro and the City of LA, Boyle Heights appears to be a community with a voice previously absent from formal community outreach. Boyle Heights is also an area vulnerable to gentrification from city projects. **Median Household Income:** \$33,235

**South Gate:** Future plans for Southgate include capping the river and placing a park above the river in order to mask its current appearance. Our team is concerned that the general public may be unaware of this plan or other future plans to drastically alter the River. Southgate has had few surveys and only a few projects completed. **Median Household Income:** \$48,312

**Maywood:** Maywood City is one of the most densely-populated neighborhoods in LA adjacent to the River. This would likely allow the team to obtain a substantial number of respondents during the survey period. Maywood is also over 97% Hispanic. The completion of the Maywood Riverfront Park provides an opportunity to inquire about the effectiveness of the planning process for that site. Some residents have noted they do not use the park due to a belief that contamination, due to previously being a chemical mixing site, still exists there (Mok, 2018). **Median Household Income:** \$41,203

**North Long Beach and De Forest Park:** North Long Beach, along with De Forest Park, is a final potential research site. De Forest Park opened an additional thirty-four acres of nature trails earlier this year. The park has a local lore of hauntings that draw the local community to explore the park on the banks of the River. This site is also subject to a gap of surveys despite the completed project. **Median Household Income:** \$50,985

*Target Groups and Locations*

There are four main types of location types we intend to target for conducting our surveys: homes, businesses, on the River, and community events/meetings. For homes, we will go door-to-door in the areas that, according to our existing survey analysis, were not surveyed by any previous organization or not surveyed thoroughly. We plan to conduct the bulk of our interviews with people who live near the River but have not been engaged by existing survey efforts or actively involved in community meetings.

We also plan to spend time in local small businesses, interviewing patrons, staff, and business owners, because we have found that their views have been overlooked. By asking business owners questions tailored to them in addition to the main survey questions, we can assess their thoughts on the greening or gentrifying of surrounding neighborhoods and the effects on their businesses.

Additionally, we will spend time along the River itself, both observing and surveying River-goers and passersby. We plan to document what types of people are present and learn more about how and why they interact with the River.

Finally, we plan to attend community events and meetings hosted by current actors in the revitalization effort. So far, we have attended two community meetings held by River LA at Studio City/North Hollywood and Reseda. Other meetings we will attend:

River LA: Southgate

River LA: Pacoima

## Survey Questions

As mentioned above, existing surveys have strayed away from asking respondents questions about climate change or flooding. We hope to address these thematic gaps in our survey, as well as assess people's understanding of other concepts including: the government's role in Revitalization efforts, the reason for Revitalization in the first place, and their own personal role in Revitalization. Other topics we want to expand upon are: people's relationships with the River, how they feel about the River as part of their community, and their imagined fears or desires coming from current Revitalization efforts. Additionally, our survey will attempt to answer these questions with emic data rather than typical etic data (see above). A sample interview may be found in **Appendix A**.

## Deliverables

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1. Analysis of Existing Surveys
  2. Team River Survey
  3. Website
  4. Final Report
  5. Final Presentation

At the culmination of our research, we plan on presenting our findings in the following ways: an analysis of the existing surveys, the survey we used in our research, a website, a report detailing our findings, and a presentation we will give before a group of stakeholders. Our analysis of the existing surveys details the geographic areas that were previously surveyed by different agencies and organizations. It will also analyze the types of questions that have been previously asked in past surveys. This will highlight the geographic disparity along the River, in terms of development and community outreach. It will also highlight the differing goals of the survey-conducting groups, whether that be bike paths, public parks, etc. This assessment of the River will enable us to glean gaps in knowledge and design our own interview protocol that targets those shortcomings. Our approach can be used as a model for further research in other communities.

On our website, we will present our project findings as well as images of the landscape and surrounding communities along or nearby the River. From our findings, we will discuss the potential outcomes of various revitalization plans on these landscapes and communities. Additionally, depending on the interest and willingness of those we interview, we may provide a “Humans of the Los Angeles River” section modelled on the “Humans of New York” project that contains excerpts of interviews with community members who are or will be affected by the River revitalization plans. This section will be optional for participants and will only be used if such participants agree to participate. In doing so, we hope to translate and disseminate the findings of our research to diverse audiences in ways that will allow officials and Revitalization planners to gain a deeper understanding of community viewpoints.

Finally, we will present our information in a final report and presentation to stakeholders convened by our client.

Management Plan

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## Group Structure

Team River's group structure attempts to evenly distribute the workload, with most aspects of the project being led by two people. This ensures maximum effectiveness and communication regarding each task. The two leaders of a task can request help from other members as needed.

*Kamryn Kubose: Project Manager & Website Manager*

Kamryn's role as Project Manager is to oversee the team. This includes: facilitating conversations, distributing tasks, and making sure the team works in a timely manner. Every week, she and James draft a meeting agenda and decide main topics of discussion as well as tasks that must be completed. She is also the main point of communication between the team and the faculty advisor. As Website Manager, she is in charge of making executive decisions about the website deliverable, with the help of Scott.

*James Javelosa: Project Manager & Editor*

As Project Manager, James drafts a meeting agenda each week with Kamryn. He advises and supports Kamryn on various decisions and on the inner workings of the team. James steps in for Kamryn when she is unavailable. As the Editor, James is responsible for editing the proposal, along with Corey. Proving his editing skills for the compiled literature review assignment last quarter, he will be in charge of making decisions regarding the proposal, final report, and presentation as well as making the final edits and refinements.

*Nathan Lopez: Survey Design Manager & Data Design Manager*

Nathan went above and beyond in his chapter literature review by diving deep into the social research of urban planning. As a result, he will be the Survey Design Manager with Andrew. He will create the survey by deciding what types of questions should be included. He will design the survey with our team's research questions in mind. Additionally, he will find the best platform to host the survey. Nathan's second role is data design manager. He and Scott will work together to organize and analyze the data we collect in our research.

*Andrew Nguyen: Survey Design Manager & Photographer*

Andrew will assist Nathan with the task of designing the survey. His literature review covered the social, environmental, and health implications of revitalizing a river. As a result, he will take this knowledge and apply it to the survey questions. One of Team River's goals is to connect river health to human health, and Andrew will find the best ways to integrate this goal into the

survey. As Photographer, Andrew will document our team, record videos of survey respondents for our website deliverable, and snap photos of the river itself.

*Camila Tipan: Secretary & Travel Manager*

As secretary, Camila will be responsible for recording the meeting minutes on the agenda that the project managers create each week. She will also pick up tasks as needed, including renting projectors, booking rooms, and buying any supplies for our deliverables. In addition, since an important aspect of our research is traveling to the LA River, Camila will be the travel manager. She will assist in travel reimbursements and coordinate and plan trips.

*Corey Ly: Communications Manager & Editor*

Corey will serve as our team's communications manager. He will be responsible for handling any communications with outside sources, including NGOs and government agencies. The purpose of this role is so that our individual members do not accidentally contact the same person, rather, we will have Corey keep track and handle our communications. As editor, Corey will help James with the majority of editing by making decisions on aesthetics of our project as well as making sure that we have met and exceeded proposal expectations.

*Scott Brown: Data Design Manager & Website Manager*

Scott will assist Nathan in the data design. He will be responsible for collecting, organizing, and analyzing the data that we collect as part of our research. This role is integral to our team because the data we gather must be analyzed so we can then answer our research questions. Equally important is Scott's role as website manager. He and Kamryn will be leading the website deliverable by making executive decisions about what information we will include on the website and how we will present that information.

## **How Meetings Will Be Run**

As mentioned in our group structure, Kamryn and James will both create that week's meeting agenda in the shared Google Drive. Our advisor Liz also has access to this drive, in the case that she wants to add her own meeting points. The agenda will be finalized a day before the meeting is held. All meetings will include our advisor, unless she is unable to attend. Camila is responsible for taking meeting minutes on the agenda document. Kamryn will ensure that the team's progress is on track and that team members are reminded of deadlines via our main source of communication, Facebook Messenger. Additionally, Kamryn and James have created a project timeline, which is available to everyone on the shared Google Drive. In terms of deliverables, it is understood that our team will decide deadlines with our advisor, including time for her to review and make suggestions. Our advisor will also decide grading criteria for our work and participation.

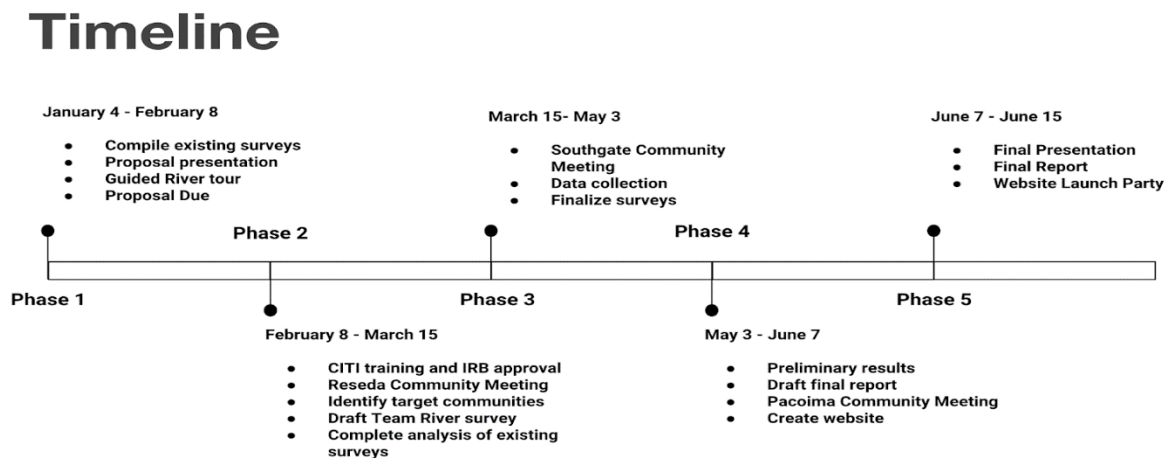
## Conflict Resolution Process

When dealing with slackers, sensitive subjects, or any issues that arise during this project, we have collectively decided to individually message either Kamryn or the team member involved in the issue in order to quickly and effectively resolve conflicts. In the case that there is a slacker, Kamryn and James will discuss the best way to handle the situation, for example to motivate them or offer support. Should the slacker not cooperate, then Kamryn and James will elevate the issue to our advisor Liz and ask for her advice on next steps.

## Guidelines for Advisors, Clients, or Consultants Interaction

With regards to interacting with consultants or other outside contacts, Corey, the communications manager, will be primarily responsible for handling interactions. He will conduct communications professionally, cordially, and timely. Kamryn and James will respond to our advisor's emails once we discuss and hear from all the other members. Our advisor then will be the one responsible for contacting and communicating with the client. We will meet with the client as often as necessary and possible, as determined as our research goes on.

## Timeline



At one of our initial meetings, our team drafted a timeline with our advisor. We first listed all of the important dates for the practicum, including proposal presentations and the final report. Then we discussed the deliverables we wanted to pursue and how long we wanted to dedicate time to those deliverables. Other important dates specific to our project, like community meetings, were added in. Finally, the whole project was divided into five phases which reflect

time and quarter structure. Our timeline allows us to clearly see the current progress towards our project as well as focus only on the tasks we have assigned ourselves for that phase.



#### UCLA Practicum Team River Interview 2019

1. 5-Digit ZIP Code
2. Tell us a little bit about yourself. Where you work, if you have kids, where you're from (if not LA), etc.
3. Describe a recent memorable experience you've had at the river.\*
4. What does revitalization mean to you?\*
- a. How do you think revitalizing the river would benefit your community? the city?
- b. Climate change? Flood control? Aesthetic purpose?

*The following questions are intended as follow-up.*

5. How many times have you visited the river in the last year?
  1. For what purpose?
  2. What are your reasons for visiting or not visiting?
6. What role do you believe the river plays:
  1. In your community
  2. In the city
7. What would you do to improve the role the river plays in your community? In the city?

8. Have you noticed areas around the river changing at all in recent years?
  1. How would you describe these changes?
9. Have you heard of plans to revitalize the LA river? If so, in what context?
  1. Have you been surveyed about revitalization plans before?
10. What do you believe your role in revitalization is?
11. What do you believe the government's role in revitalization is?

*The following questions are intended for specific stakeholders.*

- **Business owner:** How do you think the river plans will affect your business?
- **City officials:** What is your role in the project? How do you imagine the project outcomes to be? Whatever role they are, do you think it is crowded in terms of various city officials working on it at the same time (county, master plan, federal government)
- **Community members** (parents/teachers): Education type questions, would you integrate these type of topics into your teaching? What are some aspects of the river plans would you implement in your class/work?
- **Community activists:**
  - Pro questions: Take me through your first time advocating for the river projects? How would you continue to support the river plans?
  - Con questions: What are your main concerns about the river plans? If you could change something about these river plans, what would it be?



## Consent Form for Adults

You have been invited to take part in a UCLA research study about the Los Angeles River revitalization planning efforts. This study will be conducted by Andrew Nguyen, Camila Tipan, Corey Ly, James Javelosa, Kamryn Kubose, Nathan Lopez, and Scott Brown, Institute of the Environment and Sustainability, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) as part of their Environmental Science Senior Practicum. Their faculty sponsor is Dr. Liz Koslov, Institute of the Environment and Sustainability, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to take part in an interview about your experiences with the Los Angeles River planning efforts.

Your interviews will be audiotaped for transcript purposes. You may review these tapes and request that all or any portion of the tapes be destroyed. Participation in this study will take approximately one hour of your time. You have the right to refrain from answering any questions that come up during the interview. Participation in this study is voluntary. Additionally, a photograph of you may be taken for the promotion of community members purposes. You have the right to refrain from having your picture taken. You may also review this photo of you (if taken) and request that it be destroyed. Confidentiality of your research records will be strictly maintained by assigning a pseudonym to you, unless you have elected to speak in your own name. All consent forms will be kept in a locked cabinet only accessible to the investigator.

If there is anything about the study or your participation that is unclear or that you do not understand, if you have questions or wish to report a research-related problem, you may contact Dr. Liz Kozlov at [koslov@ucla.edu](mailto:koslov@ucla.edu). For questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Office of the Human Research Protection Program - CITI training at the UCLA Office of Research Administration.

<http://ora.research.ucla.edu/OHRPP/Pages/CITITraining.aspx>

You have received a copy of this consent document to keep.

## Agreement to Participate

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Subject's Signature & Date

\*\*Preference to use real name, organizational affiliation, and photograph taken.

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Subject's Signature & Date

LaKretz Hall, 619 Charles E Young Dr E #300, Los Angeles, CA 90024

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