

Community-Centered Green Space Development

Toolkit

*For Community Engagement,
Partnerships,
and Displacement Prevention
Strategies*

San Gabriel & Lower Los Angeles



**RIVERS AND
MOUNTAINS
CONSERVANCY**

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Introduction

The San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC) funds projects that preserve open space and habitat, increase public access to open spaces, foster healthy and climate resilient communities, and protect wildlife habitat and watersheds. Some of the grants that the RMC distributes specifically fund projects within 1.5 miles of the Lower LA River (LLAR), from Vernon to Long Beach.

These grants help to advance the 2018 Lower Los Angeles River Revitalization Plan and support the creation and improvement of parks and open space in some of the highest-need and historically disadvantaged areas within RMC's territory.



This Toolkit offers guidance to current and potential RMC Grant Program applicants to ensure funded projects are inclusive, equitable, and contribute to the long-term well-being of the communities they serve.

The following sections include best practices for community outreach and engagement, building partnerships between cities and community-based organizations (CBOs), and incorporating community stabilization measures into green space development projects. The strategies described in this document not only benefit the community, but also the project developer by fostering community support, building trust, and enhancing overall project success and longevity.

The RMC strongly encourages applicants to start incorporating these best practices into project activities as early as possible (i.e., conceptual and planning phases). However, the RMC recognizes that many potential applicants may have limited capacity and not all strategies will be feasible to implement. This toolkit represents an ideal framework, but the RMC does not expect projects to adopt it in full. The following sections are designed to help applicants understand the broad range of best practices, while encouraging them to pursue only those that best align with their project scope and resources.

Photo Source: RMC- Wrigley Greenbelt, City of Long Beach



Conducting Meaningful Community Engagement

..... Purpose

Projects awarded San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC) funds are expected to conduct quality community outreach and meaningful community engagement. These efforts ensure RMC-funded projects are community-driven, fostering trust, collaboration, and lasting local impact.

Quality community outreach provides information in a way that's accessible, inclusive, and maximizes reach while maintaining transparency.



Meaningful community engagement involves long-term relationship building and collaboration with residents where their input is integral to decision-making.

Sustainable, iterative, and ongoing outreach and engagement results in the following benefits:

- The project is aligned with the current needs of the community;
- Local knowledge is leveraged throughout planning and implementation;
- Residents support the project and feel a sense of ownership;
- Project leads build trust in the community that carries over from one project to the next; and
- Communities strengthen their capacity to tackle future challenges collaboratively.

The following sections provide guidance to current and prospective applicants and are intended to promote early and comprehensive community outreach and engagement planning.



Start Early & Continue through All Project Phases

Meaningful outreach and engagement requires more than just a one-off public notice or community meeting. Projects are expected to use multiple ways of reaching the community and gathering their input throughout all project phases:

- Designate a point person on the project team whose name, title and email will be publicly available so community members can share questions or input throughout the entire project, creating a person-to-person, by-name relationship.
- Start outreach and engagement early (i.e., in the conceptual phase and early planning).
- Inform, engage, and respond to community members throughout the planning phase, design phase, and implementation phase.
- Hold public meetings post-implementation to review outcomes.
- Engage the community at least once every two years post-implementation to maintain relationships for future projects and long-term ownership over the project.

Set Aside Funds

Set aside a reasonable amount of budget to ensure outreach and engagement efforts have sufficient resources to be implemented effectively.

- Document the budget allocation (% of total funds) and how it meets the needs of all activities described in the project's outreach and engagement plan.





Move from Information Sharing to Collaboration

Outreach is an important tool that informs the community about the project, upcoming meetings, and other engagement activities. However, projects are expected to use outreach as a stepping stone towards active collaboration and empowerment. By making this shift, project developers build trust and ensure community needs are at the forefront of project development.

Key tactics that facilitate this shift and ensure long-term project success include:

- **Stakeholder mapping:** capturing the landscape of community-based organizations, neighborhood groups, and other local agencies with pre-existing relationships and local knowledge that can enhance outreach and engagement efforts.
- **Potential partnership identification:** reviewing the mission and focus area of each stakeholder group and highlighting those that align with project goals

By collaborating with local community partners, project developers can more easily and effectively move away from information-sharing alone toward meaningful engagement. Examples of this spectrum from outreach to engagement are outlined below:

Engagement Stage	Example Activities	Approach
 <p>Inform. Provide the information needed to engage in the project</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fact sheets • Presentations • Signage • Social media • Website content • Newsletters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate project timeline, how the project is addressing community need(s), and how to get involved • Implement a mix of outreach methods to increase reach • Explore opportunities to utilize local groups already trusted in the community as the messenger
 <p>Listen. Gather input on community needs and concerns</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public comment period • Surveys (digital and print) • Focus groups • Interactive online platforms • Conversations with residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide multiple opportunities for residents to voice their comments, concerns, or ideas across various platforms • Allow community members to provide input in their preferred language(s)
 <p>Incorporate. Show how input was used to build trust</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow-up reports • Website + email updates • “We Heard You” presentations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish mechanisms for ongoing dialogue to adjust actions based on real-time input
 <p>Collaborate. Create opportunities for community-driven decision-making</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local community-based group (CBO) partnerships • Citizen Advisory Committees • Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with community-based groups • Co-design workshops • Participatory budgeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training and resources to facilitate collaboration. Consider using a workforce development program (e.g., Conservation Corps) or a local capacity-building group • Foster shared ownership by distributing tasks among community groups from early planning to maintenance • Give residents the final say

Further Reading: For additional examples of activities and considerations at each level of engagement, see the Tamarack Institute’s Index of Community Engagement Techniques.





Historic Whittier Boulevard Bicycle and Pedestrian Bridge in Pico Rivera

The City of Pico Rivera conducted extensive engagement for the project, including open houses, surveys, and sessions at local sites like the Senior Center and Rivera Park. The City moved from listening alone to active collaboration by establishing a Stakeholder Advisory Group of residents, as well as launching the IDEA Lab to host workshops, design labs, and interactive displays that allow residents to shape the future of Whittier Boulevard in an accessible and innovative environment.



- [Historic Whittier Boulevard Existing Conditions and Engagement Report](#)
- [Pico Rivera's Project Website](#)



Further Reading: Taking incremental steps from passive outreach towards active collaboration fosters trust and builds capacity among residents. These steps and their best practices are further explained in:

- **Facilitating Power's** Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership: Classifies five stages of engagement by the associated activities, their impact on the community, and the project's goals, as well as the project's resource allocation ratios.
- **The International Association for Public Participation's** Spectrum of Public Participation: Defines five levels of engagement based on their impact on decision-making, as well as the promise to the public at each level.
- **The LA County Safe Clean Water Program's** Interim Guidance: Provides "Good, Better, Best" practices of engagement and encouragement for applicants to set aside a reasonable budget for these activities.

Make it Inclusive

Successful projects engage all community members affected by the project, with clear, demonstrated inclusion of historically marginalized people in planning discussions. Additionally, projects are expected to identify and if applicable, conduct and document engagement with vulnerable communities as described in *Defining Vulnerable Communities in the Context of Climate Adaptation*, a resource guide developed through the Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program (ICARP):

Vulnerable communities experience heightened risk and increased sensitivity to climate change and have less capacity and fewer resources to cope with, adapt to, or recover from climate impacts. These disproportionate effects are caused by physical (built and environmental), social, political, and/or economic factor(s), which are exacerbated by climate impacts. These factors include, but are not limited to, race, class, sexual orientation and identification, national origin, and income inequality.

1. Understand the Community's Diversity and Current Needs:

- a) Document the local demographics, languages, values, and accessibility needs
- b) Engage local leaders and community groups to gather insights on how to best reach and support various groups.
- c) Identify opportunities for educational engagement that touches on the intersection of project goals with topical community needs

CASE STUDY



Urban Orchard Project in South Gate

Partners include: The City of South Gate, The Trust for Public Land and From Lot to Spot.

Trust for Public Land (TPL) fulfilled the under-resourced City of South Gate's need for co-creation and co-management. The nonprofit identified high park needs in the region, developed the park concept in collaboration with the city's Public Works, and managed the project's development as the implementation lead.

From Lot to Spot, a no-longer operational CBO that worked to transform vacant lots into community-designed greenspaces, was brought on by TPL to lead community engagement given their unique expertise. They worked directly with residents to identify community needs and priorities for the park and foster local investment in its features. Through this process, residents highlighted the scarcity of close healthy food stores, which inspired the inclusion of an orchard with 200 fruit trees as well as educational gardens in the park's design.



- [Trust for Public Land's Project Website](#)

2. Use Multiple Communication Channels:

- To reach different groups, use a mix of online platforms, local radio stations, physical flyers, and even word-of-mouth through trusted community members. This approach considers both those with internet access and literacy and those without.

3. Ensure Information Accessibility:

Printed or digital materials should be visually accessible and welcoming, including use of accessible language, font(s), formatting, colors, and images. Sightsavers, an international nonprofit, provides a comprehensive accessibility toolkit with clear guidelines for numerous project materials such as flyers, presentations, and digital content. The resource also includes best practices for in-person and online meetings.

Provide information in multiple languages relevant to the community by using professional translation and interpretation services as-needed. Make sure to understand the size of the linguistically isolated population in the project's community and tailor the volume of translation provided accordingly. Linguistically isolated populations are those that speak English "less than very well," as reported in the most recently-available U.S. Census.

Tier	% Linguistically isolated*	Requirement
1	15% or more	Workshops and in-person meetings must provide interpretation services. All written materials must be translated, including outreach materials, signage, and meeting materials.
2	5-14.9%	Workshops and in-person meetings must provide interpretation services if requested. All meeting materials and at least one form of outreach material must be translated.
3	1-4.9%	It is recommended (but not required) that outreach materials and printed meeting materials be translated.

4. Flexible Event Formats and Times:

- Host events at various times and offer both in-person and virtual options to accommodate different work shift schedules and accessibility needs.
- Consider providing childcare and accessible facilities, and ensure virtual events are compatible with screen readers or captioning for those with disabilities.

5. Join Existing Community Events:

- Seek out ways to meet people where they are and where they feel comfortable, like community church services or school parent-teacher association (PTA) meetings. This ensures that the context of engagement activities are relevant and respectful of local cultural norms.

6. Provide Transportation Assistance:

- For in-person events, consider offering transportation options, especially if the location is not easily accessible. Providing bus passes, arranging shuttles, or hosting events near public transit can make a big difference.

7. Offer Incentives or Compensation:

- Acknowledge participants' time and contributions, especially for underrepresented communities, by providing stipends, meals, or gift cards, which can lower barriers to participation.

8. Create a Welcoming Environment:

- Ensure spaces are inclusive by training staff in cultural competence, addressing biases, and establishing codes of conduct to make all attendees feel safe and respected.

Get Creative

Unconventional, creative community engagement strategies can be highly effective in reaching diverse or underrepresented populations and encouraging deeper ownership of the project.

Pop-up events and "engagement on the go" where community members are already gathering, including those who might not attend formal project meetings. These can include "mobile engagement units" to engage passerby at parks, shopping centers, or other community spaces.

CASE STUDY



Merced Avenue Greenway in South El Monte

The City of South El Monte implemented various outreach methods like a website, flyers, door-to-door canvassing, and tabling at community events. In addition to traditional engagement methods like meetings and workshops, the City conducted on-site biking and walking street studies where residents could visualize the changes they'd like to see in real time and voice their input.



- **Merced Avenue Greenway Website**

Games and interactive apps to make participation fun and engaging

- Example: Digital planning/visioning games residents can participate in at home
- Example: Workshops with development simulation games

Art as a medium for the community to express opinions, ideas, or desires in their neighborhood and feel represented in the project development process.

- Examples include:
 - Interactive, public visioning boards where individuals can write or illustrate their responses to a specific prompt
 - Co-hosting a community event that celebrates the local culture
 - Inviting residents to help design and paint a mural or public art piece that reflects the history, identity, or aspirations of their neighborhood



Maywood Riverfront Park's Sleepy Lagoon Memorial

Partners include East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice, Dake Luna and Mapache City Projects. Funding sources include The Rivers and Mountains Conservancy.

The proposed Sleepy Lagoon Memorial Landscape honors the significance of Sleepy Lagoon to communities of color who used the lagoon for recreation, the incident that took place there in the 1940s, its impact on Pachucx youth as well as the Tongva, the original caretakers of the land. Developed through extensive community engagement, Maywood Riverfront Park was chosen as the memorial's site.

The concept design runs alongside the park's existing swale and includes increased stormwater capture elements, new native plants, decorative meditation seat stumps, a seat wall, interpretive signage, and symbolic writing on the existing bridge.



- [The Sleepy Lagoon Memorial Website](#)

Food-based community events with culturally-relevant cuisine to encourage participation, uplift local businesses and create a relaxed environment for residents to voice their thoughts. These could include:

- Pop-up cookouts in partnership with local food vendors or community cooks
- Community potlucks
- Food bank distribution events

Set Realistic Expectations

Transparency is essential for fostering trust and understanding among community members. By setting realistic expectations around key project components like timelines, decision-making, and constraints, project developers can mitigate frustration or disappointment.

Communicating Key Project Details & Processes

Project Development Timeline:

Break down project timelines into clear phases (e.g., planning, design, permitting, construction, completion) and specify approximate durations for each. Clearly state if certain timelines may shift due to external factors. Use visual aids like Gantt charts or infographics to make these phases more accessible and understandable.

Construction Complexity:

Communicate specific challenges that might affect timelines or impact the community, such as site preparation, seasonal work limits, or phased road closures, and convey why they're important to address. Offer updates on construction milestones and challenges at regular intervals through accessible platforms (e.g., social media, newsletters).

Permitting and Regulatory Constraints:

Explain the permitting process and why certain regulations must be met before the project can progress. Highlight this in project updates, emphasizing the importance of these steps in ensuring community safety, compliance, and quality. Provide an estimated timeline for each phase of the permitting process, noting which steps involve external agency approvals, which may take longer.

Decision-Making Process Transparency:

Offer a clear outline of how decisions are made, including input from community feedback, engineering assessments, and legal considerations. Describe any stages where and how community input can directly influence decisions. If possible, make available minutes or summaries from planning meetings to show how public feedback was considered and incorporated.

Creating Transparency in Community Engagement Processes

Develop a Consistent Engagement Schedule:

Outline key dates when updates will be shared, and specify when community input will be solicited. For example, provide quarterly updates at a minimum and more frequent check-ins during critical stages, like prior to construction. Share this schedule at the start of the project to set expectations about when and how community members will hear updates or receive answers to questions.

Regular Engagement Channels:

Use a mix of communication methods and clarify how each will be used. For example, email for detailed updates, social media for short announcements, and public meetings for two-way discussions. Clearly indicate where community members can go to find the latest information and to provide feedback, and keep these channels consistently updated.

Feedback Deadlines and Response Times:

Specify deadlines for community feedback at each stage and commit to a response timeline, such as acknowledging feedback within two weeks and providing a summary of input and responses within a month after significant feedback periods. Set expectations for how feedback will influence the project and communicate back how input was used or why certain suggestions may not be feasible.

Final Transparency Commitments:

Provide a clear commitment to transparency by making an open-access project dashboard or webpage available to the public with milestones and potential delays. Acknowledge and explain any adjustments to the timeline or project scope proactively, emphasizing the commitment to keeping the community informed.



Document Outputs and Outcomes

Meaningful public involvement not only considers engagement **outputs** (e.g., meetings held, mailers sent, surveys conducted), but also demonstrates **outcomes** – how community input was incorporated and influenced decisions made about the project. Projects can build trust in the community by sustaining two- way communication, and showing accountability.

- **Demonstrate alignment** with community needs with community survey results, public meeting transcripts, or research conducted by reputable entities
- **Develop feedback loops** or specific mechanisms for regularly gathering and incorporating community feedback

Gathering Community Input through Co-Design

Working collaboratively with community members at key stages – like initial concept development and design decision-making processes – helps produce projects that reflect the community’s needs and wants. Meanwhile, the local community feels a stronger sense of ownership and connection to the project, enhancing its long-term success.

Examples of Co-Design Activities:

- Inviting passers-by to document how they use the project area and how it could be improved on a scaled-down model
- Hosting co-design workshops with residents and community groups, which can include:

- Collaging community characters, needs, and hopes through role playing exercises
- Using materials like LEGO or Play-Doh so community members can create their own project designs
- Creating an interactive and collaborative mind map

- Creating an interactive exhibit of all the feedback collected from residents and asking visitors to give suggestions as to what and what should not be included in final designs

Further Reading: **The Inclusive Design Research Centre’s** *Co-designing Inclusive Cities* offers best practices, learnings, and practical tools to incorporate co-design opportunities into your engagement process.

Document all outreach and engagement efforts, including outputs and outcomes.

Outputs

The strategies, resources, and funds used to reach the community and their results

- Photos from community events attended
- Copies of outreach materials
- Public meeting transcripts
- Community survey findings
- Reach
- Funds allocated

Outcomes

How the program or project changed based on the input collected through engagement

- Documentation of project modifications and how they align with the information on community needs and input collected
- Whether participants felt their input was valued in the process
Whether participants felt they had adequate notice of an engagement activity

Track Progress

Projects are expected to adaptively manage their outreach and engagement strategies by evaluating effectiveness throughout the project lifecycle.

- Collect, track, and assess outreach and engagement performance metrics.
- Identify and implement opportunities to use new outreach and engagement methods, re-allocate resources across existing efforts, or fill in gaps in project reach.

Examples

Engagement effort	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• # of Community meetings• # of Progress Updates Published• # of Mailers sent• # of Workshops held
Reach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• # of Meeting attendees• # of QR scans from printer flyers, mailers, etc.• # of Survey responses• # of Social media likes, shares, etc.
Inclusivity/ Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• % Non-English speaking• % Low-income• % Per age group
Engagement Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• % Participant attrition rates• Satisfaction scores from post-event feedback and satisfaction surveys
Engagement Breadth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stakeholder list developed• # Meetings by stakeholder type (e.g. neighborhood association vs local nonprofit)
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• % of Feedback addressed (e.g. incorporated into project or reason for not doing so explained in follow-up activities)• % of Participants in support of the project

Develop a Plan

Community Engagement Plan Checklist

1

Outreach and Engagement Goals

- Define clear and measurable objectives for community engagement.
- Identify specific outcomes you hope to achieve through engagement.

2

Stakeholder Map

- Identify key stakeholders, including nonprofits, relevant agencies, and leadership.
- Assess the influence and interests of each stakeholder group, including their relation to one another.

3

Project Demographics and Language Access Verification

- Gather local demographics on age, ethnicity, language, and socio-economic status to help shape and guide outreach and engagement efforts.
- Verify language access needs to ensure effective communication.

4

Project Contact Person

- Designate a primary contact person responsible for community engagement. Ensure they are equipped to handle inquiries and provide information.

5

Communication Methods and Frequency

- Develop a communication plan detailing methods (e.g., newsletters, flyers, meetings) and frequency (e.g., weekly, monthly). Tailor communication strategies based on stakeholder preferences and needs.

6

Timeline

- Create a timeline with key milestones and deadlines for engagement activities.
- Include estimated dates for outreach events, meetings, and feedback sessions.

7

Budget

- Estimate costs for outreach activities, materials, and any necessary resources.
- Identify potential external funding sources or community partnerships to support the budget.

8

Feedback Loops / Project Evaluation Metrics

- Establish methods for collecting feedback from the community (e.g., surveys, focus groups). Determine evaluation metrics to assess the effectiveness of engagement efforts. Plan for ongoing evaluation and adaptation of the engagement strategy based on feedback.

Additional Considerations

- Cultural Competence: Ensure that all engagement activities are culturally sensitive and inclusive.
- Documentation: Keep records of all outreach efforts and community responses for future reference.
- Adaptability: Be prepared to adjust the engagement plan based on feedback and changing community needs.

Additional Resources

Current and potential applicants are encouraged to reach out to RMC Grant Managers for guidance on community outreach and engagement plans. Supplemental, non-RMC resources are included below as additional resources for project developers' reference.

Groundwork USA's "Equitable Development Resource Hub" offers additional tools, templates, and guides on best practices, including:

- A guide to creating a resource and stakeholder list, including blank templates that can be downloaded and/or printed
- Resources and lessons-learned around youth-driven community engagement efforts

Coastal Conservancy's Tips for Meaningful Community Engagement handout, which covers topics like setting realistic expectations, deciding who will lead engagement activities, and services to provide to increase participation.





Building City-CBO Partnerships

..... Purpose

RMC encourages cities and community-based organizations (CBOs) to collaborate on projects or project components to promote equitable outcomes, overall engagement, and trust between the community and public agencies.

CBOs can offer valuable knowledge of local history and community needs, long-standing relationships with local stakeholders, effective community engagement strategies, and capacity to develop project concepts in partnership with technical assistance providers. Municipalities lacking capacity to develop new parks or open space can provide the CBO(s) with grant application support and project operations and maintenance.

Photo Source: SELA Collaborative

Build a Strong Foundation

Prepare Internally

- **Train internal staff** on productive, efficient, and respectful approaches to partnership.
- **Develop a resource** that clearly describes the agency's mission, values, and work agreement expectations for agency staff to reference when partnering with CBO(s).
- **Establish "a model Memorandum of Understanding"** (MOU) for all participating agencies and organizations to adopt to streamline the partnership formation process.

While the specifics will vary based on the organizations and project at hand, the MOU template should include sections for:

- Partnership purpose and scope
 - Roles and responsibilities
 - Resource allocation and funding
 - Timelines with specific phases and milestones
 - Decision-making and governance structure (e.g., regular meetings, advisory committees)
 - Reporting requirements and metrics to measure progress and success
 - Communication and confidentiality expectations
 - Regulatory compliance and non-discrimination policies that the partner must abide by Partnership termination clauses
 - Signatures and primary contact information for both the City and the CBO
- **Ensure Fair Compensation:** Establish a standardized process for determining whether an organization should be compensated for their time and effort on the project,

Example: LA Metro's Standardized Compensation Tool
([Metro's Community-Based Organization Partnering Strategy](#), page 17)

This checklist does not have a score or point system, but rather serves as an informal tool to help Metro staff better understand the value CBOs provide and identify if and when they should be considered for compensation. As such, Metro as an agency evaluates the extent of the CBO's involvement under these same criteria across projects:

- The work the CBO will be conducting is aligned with agency goals and priorities,
- Contractors provide similar services to the agency and would expect payment for the activities requested of the CBO,
- The agency is asking the CBO to fulfill specific objectives or produce tangible deliverables to the benefit of the project, program, or initiative, and/or
- The CBO offers knowledge, skills, connections, or other resources that the agency lacks or would benefit from.



Photo Source: SELA Collaborative

- **Understand the Needs of Partnership and Potential Partner Roles:** A CBO can contribute varying levels of effort depending on alignment between project needs and the strengths, resources, and expertise of the CBO.

Project Need	CBO's Role	Example of CBO Activities
Information Sharing	Disseminate project details and updates as a trusted messenger.	Place flyers in their gathering space(s) Send email to their list-serve Add project details to their website
Consultation	Provide feedback during engagement, which may be one-off events or ongoing, longer-term commitments	Attend focus groups Provide feedback on the approach and/or content the project developed for community members Serve on a committee
Implementation	Conduct community engagement, trainings, or other project-supporting efforts	Provide translation services Canvas Facilitate focus groups Deliver workforce development programs Conduct research to inform project work
Co-creation	Share equal decision-making responsibilities with the project	Co-decide key pieces of the work Jointly design, plan, and execute work



Initiate Partnership

- **Acknowledge Pre-Existing Cultural Tensions** that may impact collaboration and share or propose solutions to facilitate partnership moving forward.
- **Create Shared Vision & Language:** Begin by establishing a shared understanding of the project's purpose. Develop a common vocabulary to ensure consistent communication and transparency throughout the partnership.

CASE STUDY



Martin Luther King Jr. Park Vision Plan in Long Beach

Partners include: The City of Long Beach, Boys and Girls Club of Long Beach, Long Beach Alliance for Food and Fitness, King Park Steering Committee and City Fabrick.

Martin Luther King Jr. Park, an important park in a high-need area, was in need of renovations due to years of inadequate upkeep and investment. To facilitate a community-driven planning process, Long Beach Parks, Recreation, and Marine partnered with City Fabrick—a nonprofit design studio serving as the lead consultant—and the Long Beach Alliance for Food and Fitness (LBAFF) to create a recently-approved vision plan. The King Park Steering Committee, made up of park users, residents, community partners and City Officials was set up to help guide this visioning process.

With City Fabrick leading the community-driven vision planning process, LBAFF worked with them to engage residents and help build consensus. They started by acknowledging the historical inequities that led to the park's decline and used innovative games, such as participatory budgeting and character role-playing exercises where participants were asked to think about the needs of other user groups, in order to build empathy among the diverse community members.



- **Martin Luther King Jr. Park Vision Plan**

- **Set Mutually Reinforcing Goals:** Ensure the project aligns with both the CBO's mission and the city's strategic objectives.
- **Formalize Commitment:** Request the CBO sign an MOU or commitment letter with the municipality, including a formal agreement to evaluate the equality of partnerships at project mid- and end-points.

Establish a Strategic and Equitable Process

- **Collaborative Development:** Foster a collaborative approach throughout the partnership's lifecycle, including:
 - Jointly defining a clear scope of work,
 - Determining each partner's roles and responsibilities,
 - Establishing desired outcomes and timelines, and
 - Creating working agreements for effective communication and conflict resolution.
- **Neutral Convening Entity:** Consider engaging a neutral convening entity (external professional facilitators or a task-oriented committee within the group of collaborators) to facilitate partnership processes. This entity can:
 - Guide a strategic review process, helping identify and align goals and strategies,
 - Facilitate communication, collaboration and problem-solving, and
 - Support meetings and coordinate project implementation.
- **Division of Labor:** Define a clear division of labor based on each partner's strengths and capacities. The Link model suggests the following general division of labor for multi-benefit project between three key partners:
 - The CBO: leads community engagement campaigns and leverages relationships within the community to ensure planning is community-driven.
 - The nonprofit technical assistance provider (TAP): supports community-driven park planning, design and building, grant writing, contracting, project management, etc.
 - The municipality or public agency: typically owns the land, is willing to collaborate with CBOs and TAPs, including providing support navigating bureaucratic processes.



Norwood Elementary School in El Monte

Partners include: El Monte Unified School District, Active San Gabriel Valley (ASGV), and Trust for Public Land (TPL).

The nonprofit project partners (ASGV and TPL) used the **Link Model** to develop a community-driven plan for school greening at Norwood Elementary. By working with the City of El Monte and its school district, they developed a successful \$10 million grant application to the Safe Clean Water Program. The team has now submitted applications with the district to green three additional schoolyards.



- **[A model for building and renovating multibenefit parks in underserved communities](#) (Case Study on page 9-10)**



Ensure Partnership & Project Sustainability

- **Capacity Building:** Invest in building partnership capacity. This may include:
 - Hosting regular workshops to provide guidance on partnership processes, proposal writing assistance, and/or project management best practices.
 - Sharing resources that enhance CBO capacity to successfully secure and manage public contracts. (e.g., Community Partners, Center for Nonprofit Management, California Community Foundation, Liberty Hill Foundation)
 - Educating city staff about local CBOs and their work/programs and training them on best practices for navigating partnerships.
 - Aligning with regional collaborative efforts by working with entities such as the LA County Center for Strategic Partnerships.
 - Providing resources for relationship building and community engagement.
 - Examples include UCLA's Link Model, Earth Economics' 'The Collaborative Advantage' report outlining core principles of partnership and collaboration, and Metro's Community-based Organization Partnering Strategy.
- **Operations & Maintenance:** Consider engaging community volunteers and promoting community stewardship to support continued public involvement in the ongoing operation and maintenance of the project site.

CASE STUDY



Jeff Seymour Family Center (JSFC) in El Monte

Partners include: El Monte City School District, Amigos de los Rios, and Active San Gabriel Valley (ASGV)

The lead CBO, Amigos de los Rios, developed project components for the El Monte City School District that align with community needs and provide a wide range of programmatic services to the surrounding community. This project was unique in utilizing well-trained and highly engaged Conservation Corps workers and community volunteers to regularly maintain the site on an on-going basis.



- **Jeff Seymour Family Center Website**
- **Case study highlighted on page 40 of Earth Economics & Accelerate Resilience LA's [The Collaborative Advantage](#)**

- **Metrics & Evaluation:** Establish clear metrics to track progress and evaluate the partnership's success. Consider:
 - Using both **process metrics** (e.g., collaborative efforts, MOU development) and **outcome metrics** (e.g., project funding secured, park construction).
 - Conducting mid-point and final evaluations to identify areas for improvement and ensure the partnership is meeting its goals.

Examples of Metrics to Collect & Track Throughout Partnership, as identified by the Link Model:

<p>Pre-project metrics</p> <p><i>Conditions for success</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community need for a project and willingness to engage • An existing CBO working in the community • A technical assistance provider (TAP) • Municipal governance, capacity and willingness • Potential funding
<p>Process metrics</p> <p><i>Progress toward desired outcomes</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early assessment of partnership capacity, roles, and responsibilities • A memorandum of understanding with the municipality • Community engagement • Project funding proposals
<p>Outcome and impact metrics</p> <p><i>Achievement of desired goals and impact</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding secured Construction of new park or open space developments • Community stewardship and use of new developments • Sustained community engagement and advocacy Improved community health (e.g. pre- and post-project) • Census data or informal survey responses related to public health) • New projects in the pipeline as a result of efforts completed
<p>Systems change metrics</p> <p><i>Broader improvements for future success</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthened Relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network density and diversity Stakeholder satisfaction and engagement • Long-Term Capacity Building <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of Training sessions, workshops, or mentorship programs • New organizational practices, frameworks, or processes • New policies enacted (internally or regionally)



Learning & Adaptation

- **Case Studies & Best Practices:** Draw lessons from successful CBO-City partnership projects. The sources provided in this toolkit offer examples of local projects that highlight effective collaboration, innovative approaches, and strategies for overcoming challenges.
- **Flexibility:** Remain adaptable and responsive to the unique needs of the project and partnership. Successful collaboration requires both partners to accommodate evolving circumstances of the other.

Additional Resources

- **Metro's [Community-based Organization \(CBO\) Partnering Strategy](#)** outlines clear and equitable processes to leverage internal and external expertise and lessons-learned. The research-backed recommendations presented in the report intend to support efficient, cost-effective, and strong relationships with CBOs based on trust and respect.
- **UCLA Luskin Center's [Link Roadmap](#)** provides an overview of the 17-step process of partnering to develop multi-benefit park projects as well as strong examples of local Los Angeles project partnerships.
- **Earth Economics & Accelerate Resilience LA's [empirical report](#)**, "The Collaborative Advantage" explores partnership strategies used toward multi-benefit infrastructure projects in LA County.
- **The Urban Institute's** toolkit, "[Fostering Partnerships for Community Engagement](#)"



Incorporating Community Stabilization Measures



..... Purpose

The development of green spaces, such as parks and greenways, can often lead to **green gentrification** and **displacement** of existing residents and businesses.

Green Gentrification

describes the influx of more affluent residents and capital (for instance, new real estate development) to previously underserved communities due, in part, to the creation of new green spaces, such as parks, green schoolyards, and trees.



Displacement

can refer to both the physical departure of existing residents or the cultural replacement of norms with those of new residents.

Project developers have a responsibility to address this challenge by integrating **community stabilization measures**: policies, programs, and strategies that mitigate the potential negative consequences of green space development and promote inclusive outcomes. If residents are displaced due to a lack of stabilization measures, the park or open space project ultimately will not be enjoyed by the very people it was originally designed to benefit.

Failing to address displacement concerns can lead to community opposition to projects, creating conflicts and delays. Engagement efforts can help increase residents' support, while also fostering a sense of ownership that enhances the project's long-term success.

Photo Source: RMC- Riverfront Park, City of Maywood

Understand the Context

Before initiating any project, it is essential to thoroughly assess the existing community landscape. This understanding will inform the development of tailored strategies to mitigate potential negative impacts and promote inclusive outcomes.

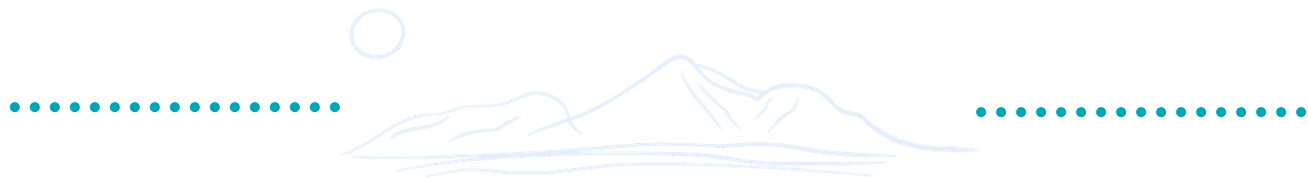
- **Demographics:** Age, race/ethnicity, income levels, and languages spoken in the community.
- **Local Businesses:** Types of businesses, ownership demographics, vacancy rates, and business displacement trends.
- **Cultural Assets:** Community centers, arts organizations, historical landmarks, and cultural events that contribute to the neighborhood's identity.
- **Local History:** Historical land usage, socioeconomic or political shifts, and notable events that have caused or contributed to the current makeup of and challenges in the community.
- **Housing Market:** Homeownership rates, rental prices, availability of affordable housing units, and trends in property values.
- **Existing County and City Displacement Avoidance Measures**
 - Local housing policies and programs, such as tenant protections, homebuyer assistance programs, and policies to create and maintain affordable housing:
 - Examples: Countywide Rent Stabilization Program, Stay House L.A., and adherence to the California Tenant Protection Act of 2019
 - Workforce development initiatives, including career-specific training programs, Project Labor Agreements, and financial support for small businesses:
 - Examples: LA County Department of Economic Opportunity initiatives and ordinances; LA County's Community Workforce Agreement (CWA) Program.
- **Current Research:** Identify and partner with existing, locally-relevant anti-displacement research initiatives to share data. Initiatives may be led by another public agency or a research institution.



Take a Holistic Approach

Green space development projects should not be considered in isolation. Projects are expected to: understand the current landscape of the area, while also making an effort to coordinate with local housing, community development, and city planning initiatives; find opportunities to support local workers and small businesses; and uplift local arts and culture.

Green gentrification risks are highest in communities facing compounding disadvantages across all aspects of life, so understanding and working to alleviate those burdens is central to an equitable project development process.



Provide Workforce Development Opportunities

Parks and open space projects can directly promote residents' financial resilience to displacement by providing workforce development training and jobs, which can:

- **Reduce geographic inequalities** by keeping project funds in the community;
- **Help residents afford rising living costs** that might accompany new development; and
- **Foster a sense of ownership and pride** by actively involving residents in the development and maintenance of community spaces.

Provide workforce development and training opportunities for local residents

Projects are expected to develop workforce development training programs that prepare local residents for high-quality career pathways.

- **Partner with existing workforce development programs** to facilitate the program development process and promote quality training and education. Potential partners in the Lower LA River region include, but aren't limited to:

- Conservation Corps of Long Beach
- LA Conservation Corps
- YMCA of Greater Long Beach, Community Development Branch
- Western States Carpenters Union
- The LA/OC Building Trades Union and their Multi-Craft Core Curriculum (MC3) Apprenticeship
- Readiness Program training partners:
 - Long Beach City College
 - Women in Non-Traditional Employment Roles (WINTER)
 - Richard N. Slawson Southeast Occupational Center/ Slawson AJCC (Americas Job Center of California) operated by the Hub Cities
- Southeast LA AJCC operated by the Hub Cities Consortium
- Rancho Dominguez AJCC operated by Managed Career Solutions
- Community based organizations such as Centro CHA in Long Beach



- **Understand and align training efforts with varying levels of employment readiness** among project area residents, including those with barriers such as lack of skills, limited education, past criminal records, and lack of transportation. Ensure the training program is tailored to address these specific needs.
- **Reduce barriers to participation** by providing support services, such as transportation assistance and childcare services, and by ensuring recruitment materials are accessible to residents with limited English proficiency.

The training program must provide participating community members with transferable skills and recognized credentials in RMC project-supporting industries to promote long-term career prospects and lasting economic mobility:

- **Transferable skills that support RMC projects**

- Relevant, construction-focused hard or technical skills, like carpentry, welding, and project maintenance.
- Soft skills to promote cross-industry hireability, such as communication, leadership, and project management.

- **Recognized credentials** (e.g., certifications or licenses) sought or accepted by relevant employers and endorsed by a nationally recognized trade association or organization, as per the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE).

- Examples include OSHA 10, CPR, and First Aid certifications; and
- Completion certificates from standardized, comprehensive courses like the Multi-craft Core Curriculum (MC3)

Provide economic opportunities through the creation of high-quality jobs

Creating job opportunities and providing workforce training for local residents ensures that they can benefit from the economic growth generated by green space projects.

- **Target Hard-to-Employ Residents:** Develop strategies to recruit, support, and retain residents facing barriers to employment. Hard-to-employ residents in the project area may include youth, veterans, returning citizens, individuals with disabilities, those experiencing homelessness, and individuals with criminal records, and those with limited English proficiency.

- Recruitment Strategies:

- Partner with Local Organizations: Collaborate with organizations that specialize in serving hard-to-employ populations, such as Veterans Affairs of Los Angeles County, Youth@Work, Conservation Corps, and local reentry programs and nonprofits.
- Targeted Outreach: Conduct hiring outreach specifically designed to reach hard-to-employ populations, including advertising in community centers, places of worship, and other relevant locations.
- Remove Application Barriers: Simplify the application process by minimizing required documentation, offering application assistance, and providing translation services as needed.

- Comprehensive Support Services:

- Provide ongoing mentorship to help new hires navigate project work.
- Offer financial support for transportation, childcare, work uniforms or tools, or other required items that will remove barriers to employment.
- Uplift existing resources and programs in the community for workers seeking mental health care, family support, and other social services.

- Retention Plans:

- Provide or share opportunities for training, promotions, and higher wages.
- Offer flexible work arrangements to accommodate the needs of workers, such as scheduling flexibility and accommodations, when possible.

CASE STUDY



Wrigley Greenbelt In Long Beach

Project and funding partners include the City of Long Beach, Conservation Corps of Long Beach, Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District, Cal Fire, State Senator Lena Gonzalez and The Rivers and Mountains Conservancy

Improvements to Greenbelt, which stretches along DeForest Avenue from 26th Way to 34th Street, were completed in 2023 and included a one-mile walking trail, new picnic tables, and a sustainable design with new landscaping of drought resistant native plants, a new irrigation system, and dry stream beds to improve stormwater runoff.

Participants in the Conservation Corps of Long Beach Youth Training Program were hired to help with site preparation and the planting of this new native landscaping with a 3:1 replacement of trees.



- [Wrigley Greenbelt Project Webpage](#)

- **Provide Living Wages and Benefits:** Ensure that jobs created through green space projects offer living wages, benefits, and opportunities for career advancement.
- **Track and Report Progress:** RMC projects are required to report specific metrics to evaluate their effectiveness in creating equitable, high-quality job opportunities.

Metrics may include:

- Percentage of jobs filled through designated workforce programs or local hiring agreements
- Percentage of project hours worked by employees who are local residents
- Percentage of project workers who meet hard-to-employ criteria (e.g., veterans, individuals with disabilities, formerly incarcerated individuals, or those from low-income areas)
- Project workforce demographics (race, ethnicity, gender, household income, etc.) to ensure diversity and equity

Additional Workforce Development Resources

- **The National Recreation and Park Association's (NRPA's) document**, Workforce Development: A Resource Guide
- **The Aspen Institute's Job Quality Center of Excellence's** Statement on Good Jobs (definition of job quality)
- **Pacific Community Venture's** Good Jobs, Good Business Toolkit
- **MIT's** Living Wage Calculator for Counties and Statistical Areas in California

Support Small & Local Business

Supporting local businesses is essential to maintain the economic vibrancy and cultural character of neighborhoods. Green space projects can provide opportunities to foster small business growth and prevent displacement.

- **Provide Business Opportunities:** Integrate local businesses into the project's community engagement events and designate spaces in the park's design for kiosks, pop-up shops, and other ventures featuring local businesses, particularly those from surrounding neighborhoods.
- **Support Businesses Surrounding the Park:** Connect local businesses with technical assistance, access to capital, and mentorship opportunities. Advocate for policies that incentivize developers to lease commercial space to local businesses.
- **Connect the Park to Business Corridors:** Improve walkability and wayfinding to encourage pedestrian traffic between the park and nearby business districts. Collaborate with local Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) to promote local businesses to park visitors.

Further Reading: [The Small Business Anti-Displacement Network Toolkit](#)



Uplift Affordable Housing Resources

Addressing housing affordability and stability is paramount to prevent displacement. Implementing strategies that preserve existing affordable housing and create new opportunities are essential. While many strategies are beyond the control of a project developer or Parks and Recreation Department, there are still some that can be supported and uplifted by a developer through the design and community engagement process:

- **Educate and Inform Residents:** Provide residents with information about existing housing resources and programs, such as tenant protection rights, homeownership assistance programs, and property tax relief programs.
- **Expand Affordable Housing Options:** Leverage public and private funding to develop new affordable housing units near green space projects. Explore innovative models like Community Land Trusts and permanently affordable homeownership programs.



11th Street Bridge in Washington DC

Partners include: Building Bridges Across the River (BBAR) and the District of Columbia's Office of Planning

The project team conducted community meetings and consultations to understand neighborhood priorities and concerns, aiming to ensure long-term affordability and prevent displacement. These long-term engagement efforts and the diverse stakeholders they engaged eventually formed the Douglass Community Land Trust (CLT).

With financial and policy support from local government and nonprofits, the CLT acquired land to create affordable housing options, allowing it to secure a stable future for low-income residents and ensure they could benefit from the bridge park development.

The success of the 11th Street Bridge Park CLT model is often highlighted as an example of how community land trusts can serve as effective tools for inclusive urban development, especially in projects that risk driving up housing costs in surrounding neighborhoods.



- **11th Street Bridge Park's Equitable Development Plan**
- **Douglas Community Land Trust**



- **Preserve Existing Affordable Housing:** Partner with housing organizations and city agencies to implement policies or programs that protect tenants, preserve subsidized housing, and stabilize rents.



Mission District Green Space Initiative in San Francisco

The Mission Economic Development Agency (MEDA) and community partners like Galería de la Raza have worked to ensure that new green spaces don't inadvertently displace low-income residents, particularly in a neighborhood known for its Latinx cultural heritage.

MEDA actively secures affordable housing through its Community Real Estate Program, which preserves existing affordable units and creates new ones. These efforts are financed by San Francisco's Small Sites Program, allowing nonprofits to acquire small residential buildings to keep them affordable. This approach not only addresses physical displacement but also works to prevent cultural erosion by integrating artists and cultural organizations into these spaces, thereby keeping the local artistic community visible and engaged in the area.

Additionally, the partnership between MEDA and Galería de la Raza extends to advocacy for equitable policies that account for cultural identity, or "place-keeping," rather than mere "placemaking." This cultural aspect is recognized as vital in retaining the community's unique identity amid urban development pressures, and it is an example of "Culture-in-All-Policies" that aims to sustain the Mission District's heritage alongside its green space improvements.



- **PolicyLink Blog Post**
- **Case Study covered in the Trust for Public Land's *Great Parks Should Not Uproot Communities: Green Gentrification, Risk Factors And Anti-Displacement Options Research Report***

- **Support Community Organizing:**

- Provide park facilities as neutral gathering spaces for town halls, forums, or workshops on housing topics and support those community-led events;
- Collaborate with local housing advocates and nonprofits to help amplify their messaging through park programming; and
- Engage in advocacy for policies that support housing stability.

- **Help Build Capacity:** In addition to information-sharing with residents, consider:

- Hosting resource fairs where residents can learn about housing rights, financial assistance, and other resources available;
- Implementing community leadership training programs; and
- Integrate a community garden or farmers market into the project design in order to increase food security.

CASE STUDY



Metro's Blue A Line First/Last Mile Community-Based Process and Plan in LA County

Multicultural Communities for Mobility (MCM) (now known as People for Mobility Justice) was one of 7 participating CBO's in Metro's planning engagement process. MCM had eviction defense lawyers attend their pop-up events at Vernon Station, giving residents the opportunity to learn about tenant rights in an informal setting. MCM worked to make these pop-ups welcoming and fun by providing a live DJ and healthy drinks for residents on-the-go.



- **Metro's Blue A Line First/Last Mile Community-Based Process and Plan**

Uplift Local Arts & Culture

Green space projects should celebrate the history and culture of surrounding communities and provide opportunities for local artists and cultural organizations to thrive.

- **Create an Information Hub:** Share information about cultural events and programming happening both at the park and in surrounding neighborhoods through a dedicated space, website, and social media.
- **Ensure Accessibility and Affordability:** Designate spaces that support various artistic activities and ensure that programming and events are affordable and accessible to all residents. Ensure the park's permitting process is accessible for small community organizations by keeping the required paperwork and associated fees to a minimum.
- **Prioritize Collaborative Programming:** Develop programs that foster collaboration between artists, cultural organizations, residents, and local institutions, especially those that amplify historically marginalized voices.
- **Support Capacity Building for Artists:** Facilitate mentorship programs, internships, and professional development opportunities for local artists, particularly emerging artists and youth.

Additional Resource

Trust for Public Land's Report, "Great Parks Should Not Uproot Communities: Green Gentrification, Risk Factors And Anti-Displacement Options"

This toolkit was developed in 2024-2025 as part of the Lower LA River 'Para Todos' Campaign.

