

LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF REGIONAL PLANNING

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR EQUITY

2023



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Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration.
Image credit: Mayra B. Vasquez / Los Angeles County

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Amy Bodek, the Director of LA County Planning.
Image credit: LA County Planning



It is my honor to share with you the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning's (LA County Planning) Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan). This Strategic Plan affirms our commitment to supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion in our land use planning activities throughout the nearly 125 unincorporated communities of Los Angeles County and in our internal operations.

Over the past year, LA County Planning has worked hard to understand and acknowledge the role land use planning plays in creating and perpetuating inequities, particularly past zoning practices that harmed our Indigenous partners, communities of color, and our LGBTQIA+ communities. We delved into our operational practices to reveal patterns of oppression in our institutional practices of hiring, promotions, and the expenditure of financial and staff resources. These reflections coincide with the 100th anniversary of the formation of the Regional Planning Commission and the upcoming 50th anniversary of the formation of LA County Planning, creating a unique opportunity to reset our vision for the Department. While we acknowledge and honor the commitment to public service and the many good works over the past century that have brought us to today, we must also acknowledge and address the historical inequities we had a hand in before we can chart a path forward. This Strategic Plan does just that.

This Strategic Plan is uniquely ours. Led by a Core Team of 15 individuals, the Strategic Plan was staff-driven from the start. With the assistance of HR&A Advisors and PROS Consulting, we held department-wide baseline focus group sessions to establish the concept of equity, how that definition of equity relates to LA County Planning's functions, and connect those conversations to the purpose of the Strategic Plan. These baseline sessions were followed by department-wide forums and break-out sessions to consider the vision for LA County Planning.

Following the visioning sessions, staff-appointed Goal Leads created and facilitated meetings that were focused on specific goals derived from staff input. Staff at all levels in LA County Planning were invited to participate in as many committees as they wanted, resulting in goals broadly informed by differing perspectives. A team of self-appointed Strategy Writers had the hard task of consolidating multiple or overlapping goals into a coherent outline that was approved by consensus through additional department-wide forums. Woven throughout these discussions, meetings, forums, and thought exercises were the concepts of anti-racism, diversity, and inclusion. The resulting blueprint for LA County Planning was further refined into the goals and guiding principles that form the basis of our Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan intends to drive our conversations and engagement with our unincorporated communities, to expand accessibility to our work via inclusive language access and simplified permitting procedures, and attempt to erase or lessen the burdens on communities historically facing inequities through land use practices. The Strategic Plan furthers our commitment to a safe and productive work environment for all staff, and to provide opportunities for professional growth.

Join me in making this vision a reality.

Respectfully,

Amy J. Bodek, AICP
Director of LA County Planning

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This plan exists thanks to the many hands involved in shaping it. LA County Planning staff participated in the Plan’s development through their contributions in meetings, brainstorming ideas, providing feedback, cheering on their colleagues, and drafting the Plan. The Plan represents all voices from all divisions and levels of seniority on what the next chapter of LA County Planning should be.

CORE TEAM MEMBERS

A Core Team of LA County Planning staff made up of members of the executive team and representatives from all divisions – Advance Planning (AP), Current Planning (CP), Land Use Regulation (LUR), and Information and Fiscal Services (IFS) – managed the creation of the Plan and will support the implementation of the Plan after it is finalized. The Core Team regularly provided direct feedback on materials drafted by HR&A Advisors, the consulting firm LA County Planning hired to support the development of the Strategic Plan.

Amy Bodek, Director	Diane Temple, LUR	Michele Bush, CP
Dennis Slavin, Chief Deputy Director	Jorge Andrino, IFS	Nick Franchino, IFS
Alex Garcia, LUR	Joseph Horvath, IFS	Rafael Andrade, CP
Bruce Durbin, AP	Julie Moore, UAS Liaison	Steven Jareb, LUR
Connie Chung, AP	Lana Faye Salle, IFS	Susie Tae, CP

GOAL COMMITTEE LEADS

Each of the five Strategic Plan goals had a committee led by 2-3 LA County Planning members who served as the primary points of contact and helped coordinate drafting materials between LA County Planning and the consulting team.

Goal One	Mark Herwick, AP	Elsa Rodriguez, CP	
Goal Two	Erica Aguirre, CP	Thuy Hua, AP	
Goal Three	Alex Garcia, LUR	Mi Kim, AP	Diane Temple, LUR
Goal Four	Jorge Andrino, IFS	Michele Bush, CP	
Goal Five	Hsiao-Ching Chen, IFS	Joseph Horvath, IFS	

STRATEGY DRAFTERS

Staff from all levels and divisions had an opportunity to join a committee based on one of the five Strategic Plan goals. Committee meetings were open to all staff to join and provide comments. LA County Planning staff who played a direct role in brainstorming and drafting strategies are listed below:

Ai-Viet Huynh	Jackson Piper	Michael Besem
Andrew Flores	Jesus Herrera	Michelle Lynch
Brian Lee	Jorge Andrino	Mitch Glaser
Brian McGinnis	Jose De La Rosa	Nathan Merrick
Bruce Durbin	Julie Moore	Nick Franchino
Caroline Chen	Julie Yom	Peter Tam, Jr.
Christian Turner	Karen Chin	Phillip Smith
Christina Nguyen	Kari Rodriguez	Ricardo Meza
Daisy De La Rosa	Katherine Lample	Sean Donnelly
Dennis Harkins	Katrina Castaneda	Steven Jareb
Edgar De La Torre	Lana Faye Salle	Thomas Dearborn
Edward Rojas	Lauren De La Cruz	Tiffany L. Caldwell
Elsa Rodriguez	Mark Herwick	Weleta Haregewein
Evan Sensibile	Marla Alvarez	
Gina Natoli	Melissa Reyes	

CONSULTING TEAM

LA County Planning hired HR&A Advisors and PROS Consulting to provide support on the development of the Strategic Plan.

Jayne Miller,
Principal (PROS Consulting)

Andrea Batista
Schlesinger, Partner

Connie J. Chung,
Project Manager

Kayla Jaffe, Deputy
Project Manager

Kas Tebbetts

Garrett Robinson

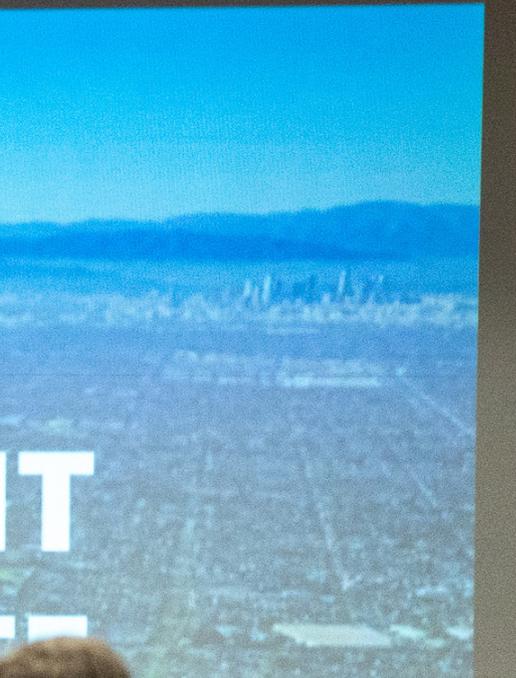
Michelle Castaneda

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LOS ANGELES COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

All-Staff Workshop – April 2023

Members of LA County Planning share a moment during the final All-Staff Meeting in April 2023.
Image credit: LA County Planning



LA County Planning’s 2023 Strategic Plan (the “Strategic Plan” or “Plan”) explicitly emphasizes the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The update reflects the anti-racism, diversity, and inclusion (ARDI) initiative of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and the recognition that our work needs to address our society’s systemic challenges. LA County Planning’s leadership understands that embedding equity into everything this department does – including how staff work together and what we work on – is a critical step in creating a more equitable LA County.

From the Summer of 2022 through the Fall of 2023, LA County Planning went through a deliberate and robust strategic planning process. The creation of this Plan was a collaborative and inclusionary effort, ensuring that the diverse perspectives of LA County Planning staff were incorporated throughout the process. Every employee in LA County Planning participated in equity baseline sessions and had multiple opportunities to participate in various workshops, brainstorm ideas, and share their thoughts about the Department’s future goals and priorities. Employee participation was high, ranging from attending workshops and meetings to drafting strategies and reviewing content.

EQUITY BASELINE WORKSHOPS

Throughout Summer 2022, LA County Planning staff participated in three virtual workshops to help orient everyone around shared definitions of equity, inclusion, and diversity. These workshops, two of which were broken out by both seniority and specific identity groups, were a way for staff to begin discussing how inequity shows up in their own personal lives and within their work in the County. Setting a “baseline” of terms and historical context provided an important foundation for the remainder of the strategic planning process. Here are some of the terms staff reviewed and continued to refer to throughout the strategic planning process:

Diversity is the state of having people who have a variety of differences among them, particularly in relationship to identities, including race, ability, sexual orientation, gender and/or trans status, immigration status, country of origin, etc.

Inclusion is a state in which a diverse group of people are valued, respected, and supported because of each person’s own unique qualities.

Equity is the condition that exists when one’s outcomes are not determined by one’s race, ethnicity, gender, ability, sexual or gender orientation, or location of residence.

Oppression is systematic targeting or marginalization of a social group with less systemic power for the benefit of a social group with more systemic power.

Racism is the systemic oppression of a racial group to the social, economic, and political advantage of another.

To learn more about the baseline sessions, turn to the [Staff-Led Engagement Process chapter](#).

These collective efforts resulted in a Strategic Plan that reflects the current needs and opportunities of LA County Planning while positioning our department to achieve its vision of becoming a nationally recognized leader. The result is a plan that includes 19 bold strategies across five goals.

VISION

LA County Planning will become a nationally recognized leader known for utilizing and developing policies, practices, and other necessary interventions that make unincorporated LA County a racially equitable place.

MISSION

LA County Planning provides equitable planning, development, and engagement for all unincorporated LA County residents and businesses to help create vibrant, sustainable, and resilient communities.

VALUES

- **Collaboration:** Fostering a collaborative environment, both internally and with the public.
- **Heritage:** Building upon a century of meaningful planning work in LA County.
- **Innovation:** Continuously seeking out new ways to address the County's challenges.
- **Service:** Delivering dependable, transparent, and equitable customer support.
- **Stewardship:** Caring for communities and the environment.
- **Equity:** Becoming an inclusive, equitable, and diverse workplace where everyone can succeed.

10-YEAR GOALS & STRATEGIES:

1. Address racial inequities found in past and current planning and land use practice by building new systems and policies that embed equity.

- 1.1 Update plans and ordinances to address the impact of LA County Planning's past and current planning practices.
- 1.2 Develop an equity impact assessment tool to ensure consistency in analyzing the impact of plans, ordinances, and developments.
- 1.3 Create new internal resources that support community's knowledge about contemporary planning practices or policies.

2. Make Los Angeles a safer, better place to live by proactively addressing climate change, housing crises, and other emergent challenges related to environmental justice.

- 2.1 Update our General Plan and Zoning Code based on best practices.
- 2.2 Streamline approvals for uses that meet community needs in underserved neighborhoods.
- 2.3 Launch additional mitigation and adaptation policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by identifying new ways to address environmental concerns in communities.

3. Earn a reputation as a community resource and trusted ally, partnering to design plans and policies that work for communities.

- 3.1 Provide ongoing staff training and internal resources on community engagement best practices.
- 3.2 Create a community relations office that augments engagement, communications, and marketing functions into centralized resources within LA County Planning.
- 3.3 Coordinate across divisions for fieldwork, site visits, counseling, engagement, and outreach, utilizing the skills and knowledge of each division to better serve community members.
- 3.4 Establish and maintain a presence in neighborhoods by building relationships with local community partners and providing assistance during the pre-application process.
- 3.5 Connect residents and business owners to resources that assist with compliance and permitting.

4. Foster a work environment for all staff that promotes equitable professional development and personal growth while building a diverse staff that represents unincorporated LA County.

- 4.1 Develop and implement recruitment, hiring, and promotion practices that place greater emphasis on creating a diverse and inclusive Department.
- 4.2 Formalize the Pilot Mentorship Program to include all employees.
- 4.3 Establish affinity groups for staff to discuss issues related to their unique identities.
- 4.4 Provide additional opportunities for professional development.

5. Increase financial stability by expanding funding opportunities to support LA County Planning's services and activities.

- 5.1 Proactively identify and pursue long-term funding streams for community-serving initiatives beyond the current general fund framework.
- 5.2 Update LA County Planning's fee schedule and permit requirements to reflect everyday operations and remove unfair barriers.
- 5.3 Ensure that all submitted recommendations regarding funding priorities and budget allocation are evaluated based on equity metrics.
- 5.4 Establish a transparent process for the development of Departmental budget requests and the allocation of funds in line with Strategic Plan priorities.



Groundbreaking at Jackie Robinson Park at Sun Village in 1963. Sun Village was one of several historically Black communities in unincorporated LA County that emerged in response to racist housing policies during the mid-20th century. Image credit: LA County Planning



INTRODUCTION: CONFRONTING THE COUNTY'S LEGACY OF INEQUITY

A STRATEGIC PLAN OUTLINES THE GOALS FOR AN ORGANIZATION,

how it will get there, and the ways it will measure success. LA County Planning updates the Strategic Plan on a regular basis to ensure that it aligns with the Countywide Strategic Plan and other Countywide initiatives but more importantly because, as the world changes around us, so too must our own goals and how we plan to accomplish them.

LA County Planning's 2023 Strategic Plan (the "Strategic Plan" or "Plan") explicitly emphasizes the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The update reflects the anti-racism, diversity, and inclusion (ARDI) initiative of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and the recognition that our work needs to address our society's systemic challenges. LA County Planning's leadership understands that embedding equity into everything this department does – including how staff work together and what we work on – is a critical step in creating a more equitable LA County.

This Strategic Plan process reflects a moment in our nation's history in which more people are confronting the structural racism found in our institutions and workplaces, including in land use planning, community development, and public policy. Since LA County Planning's last Strategic Plan, local governments and

institutions, including the County with its work through ARDI, have started to think about how structural racism and historical inequities continue to impact the communities they serve. Local governments have positioned themselves to address the systemic challenges found in marginalized communities and correct racial and economic inequality outcomes from their policies, which include segregation and redlining.

Our country has a long history of racial and socioeconomic inequality in urban and rural communities. It is a legacy that is still visible in how people experience the built environment today. Who you are and what you look like continues to play a large role in whether you live, how long you live, and what your potential life outcomes might include. Who you are and where you live can determine everything from your ability to access education or employment opportunities to how easy it is for you to access services and live a full, rich social life.

Confronting this legacy is the first step in enabling LA County Planning to become a nationally recognized leader known for utilizing and developing policies, practices, and other necessary interventions that make unincorporated LA County a racially equitable place.



Unlawfully detained Japanese Americans waiting to board a train to internment camps in downtown Los Angeles on New Year's Day 1942. More than a hundred thousand Japanese Americans on the West Coast were forced to leave behind their homes and communities following the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Image credit: Lee Russell, 1942

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Exclusionary planning practices based on race, religion, and other social identities are a foundational part of this country's history. The government's role in where people live, through both formal and informal segregation based on an individual's race, ethnic identity, economic status, and/or religion, has existed since the country's early days as a European colony. The very founding of the United States began with the genocide and displacement of Indigenous peoples. In the 19th century, recently arrived immigrants from countries like Ireland, Italy, and other Eastern European countries were viewed as distinctly different from the country's Protestant, Anglo-Saxon majority and were routinely persecuted. This type of ethnic discrimination and segregation was common, particularly in large cities along the East Coast like New York and Boston, where it led to the creation of neighborhoods like Little Italy.¹ Other parts of the country, including the West Coast, experienced similar forms of racial segregation, beginning with the arrival of Chinese workers, who helped build the transcontinental railroad, and the creation of Chinatowns.

However, racism in planning did not become fully embedded into our country's policies and practices until the ending of slavery, when the country's formerly enslaved Black population was freed and began to seek housing. Beginning in the early 20th century, cities began passing race-based zoning ordinances. These ordinances were in direct response to the movement of Black Americans from southern or rural communities into northern, more urban areas. The country's first race-based zoning ordinance was passed in Baltimore in 1910 and restricted Black Americans from buying homes in majority-white neighborhoods, codifying informal segregation practices.² Homeownership and holding

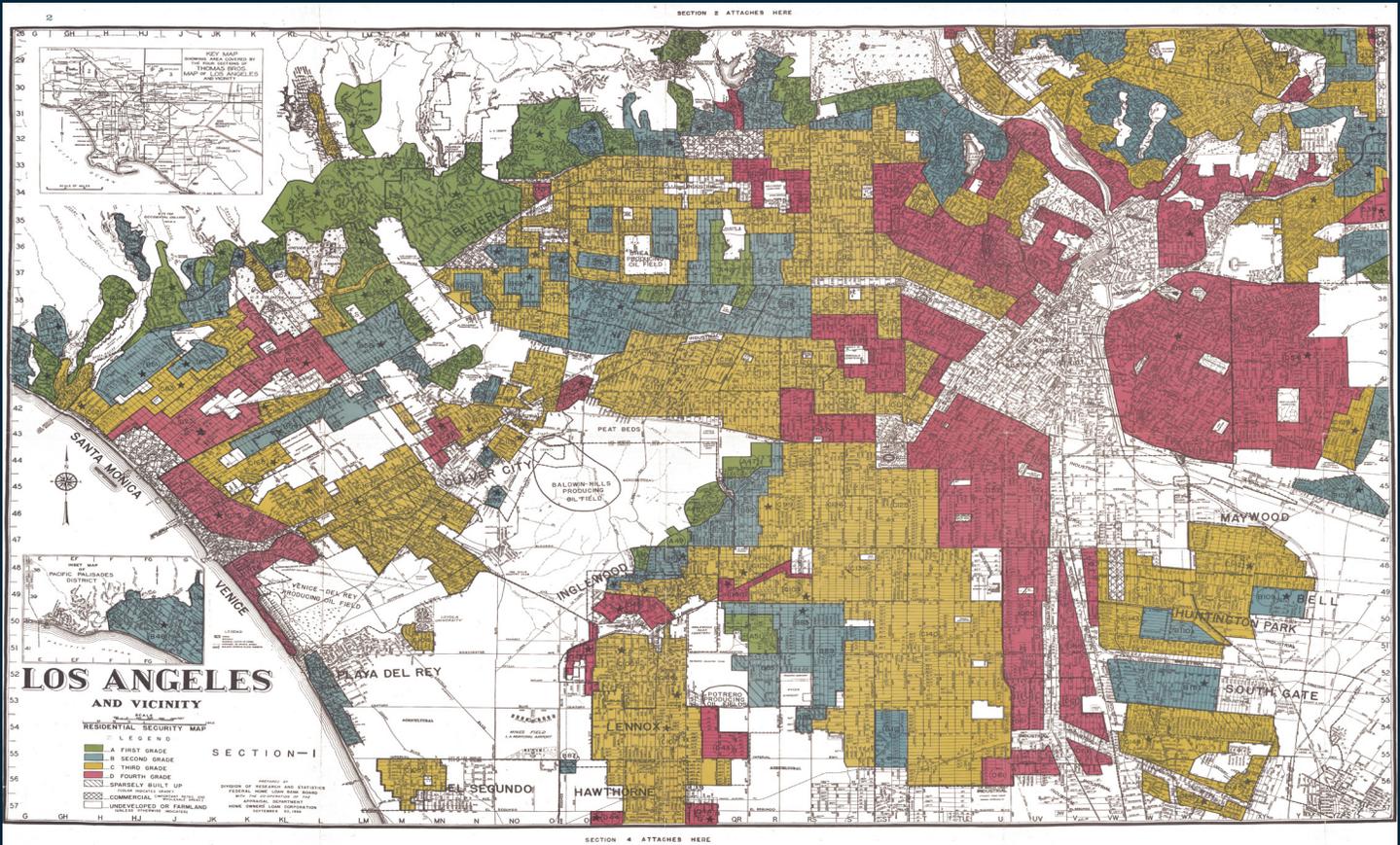
property is the primary form of intergenerational wealth in this country, yet over the next three decades, local, state, and federal governments adopted policies that either outright restricted or severely limited access to these opportunities for non-white residents. This limited access to housing led to the creation of Black enclaves all over the country including in unincorporated LA County - communities like Sun Village, Willowbrook, and Val Verde, which was once known as the "Black Palm Springs."³ The creation of communities segregated by race continues to have negative impacts to this day.

This type of segregation was a direct outcome of a series of government interventions and policies proposed and enforced by government entities, including planning departments throughout the country. Beginning in the 1930s, the federal government began imposing lending guidelines based on race or income to determine which neighborhoods could and could not receive federal home mortgages and loans. Neighborhoods that were labeled green or blue were viewed as desirable, and therefore applicants who wished to buy in these areas could more easily receive a home loan. These neighborhoods were almost always whiter and wealthier parts of a city, while communities marked in yellow or red were viewed as undesirable. Areas that the government viewed as riskier or unworthy of investment were overwhelmingly where communities of color, recently arrived immigrants, and religious or ethnic minorities lived. While this was federal policy, these maps also shaped how planners at the state, county, and city levels – as well as developers and homeowners – viewed and invested in neighborhoods. The effects of these "redlining maps," as they are known, remain today.

1 Staples, Brent. "How Italians Became 'White.'" *The New York Times*, October 12, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/10/12/opinion/columbus-day-italian-american-racism.html>.

2 Lieb, Emily. "The 'Baltimore Idea' and the Cities It Built." *Southern Cultures* 25, no. 2, 2019: 104–19. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26696401>.

3 Swann, Jennifer. "When Val Verde was Eureka Villa." *Curbed Los Angeles*, September 27, 2017. <https://la.curbed.com/2017/9/27/16351910/val-verde-landfill-eureka-villa-history-california>.



In the 1930s, the federal government began imposing lending guidelines based on race or income to determine who received home loans. This map from 1939 shows how the federal government rated neighborhoods in central Los Angeles County.

Image credit: Mapping Inequality - Redlining in New Deal America, University of Richmond's Digital Scholarship Lab.

It is important to note that while conversations about the historical impacts of race-based planning tend to center the experiences of Black Americans, other racial and ethnic groups experienced similar forms of housing discrimination during this time. Beginning in 1882 with the Chinese Exclusion Act, recent immigrants from Asia were also segregated from white immigrants, leading to the creation of Chinatowns and other ethnic enclaves, like Los Angeles' Little Tokyo for Japanese immigrants. This racism against Asian immigrants would result in the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act, which explicitly banned immigration from Asia to the United States. During the 1930s and into World War II, white homeowners began to restrict Asian Americans – particularly Japanese Americans – from purchasing homes. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the United States government unlawfully detained Japanese and Japanese American citizens in internment camps, forcing families to leave behind their homes and communities. Some families had non-Japanese friends or acquaintances who were able to manage their property during their imprisonment. However, for those who did not, their homes were taken from them because of unpaid taxes and mortgages - a loss that the U.S. government never fully compensated. It was not until 1988 and the passage of

the Civil Liberties Act that the United States government formally apologized to Japanese Americans.⁴

There are other examples of local governments interfering with families' ability to use, invest in, or transfer property with justifications that were grounded in race. In the early twentieth century, the Bruce family purchased a beachfront property in Manhattan Beach and ran a hospitality business catering to the Black community. White business owners and residents, jealous of the Bruce family's success and hostile to Black visitors, used legal methods to condemn the beach. The City took control of the property in 1924, under the pretense of building a public park, but the land sat vacant and undeveloped for three decades before the park was finally built. Los Angeles County came into possession of the land in 1995 via land transfers with the City of Manhattan Beach and the State of California. The land was not returned to the Bruce family until 2022, nearly a century after it had initially been taken. The City of Manhattan

4 Pearson, Bradford. "For Japanese-Americans, Housing Injustices Outlived Internment." The New York Times, August 20, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/20/magazine/japanese-internment-end-wwii-trailer-parks.html>

Beach, like many others around the country, was able to condemn Bruce's Beach under the policies of urban renewal and through legal methods, such as eminent domain. However, surviving documents from Manhattan Beach officials and white businessmen make their intentions clear: the seizure of land was not for the benefit of the public, but for racially-motivated material gain.⁵

While planners in LA County today do not have this authority or power, this form of policymaking was used throughout the mid-century in Southern California and throughout the country. These actions are often heavily influenced by political or other motives – to the benefit of others who would like to take over or otherwise benefit from the property. Another prominent case is that of Chavez Ravine and the construction of Dodger Stadium in the 1950s. At the beginning of the decade, the Los Angeles Housing Authority began taking control of land within Chavez Ravine, where hundreds of Mexican American families lived, with the intention of redeveloping it into a public housing community. The project was abandoned at the behest of Los Angeles City leadership, and ownership of the land was transferred to the Dodgers baseball team to construct their new stadium. The last remaining residents protested the development for months but were ultimately unsuccessful. The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department forcibly removed homeowners and renters during the final months before stadium construction began in 1959.⁶

The construction of freeways is another example in which planners have had a direct impact on communities of color. Like Chavez Ravine, East Los Angeles was home to many Mexican American families until it was labeled as “blighted” and targeted for the construction of freeways during the 1940s and 1950s. During this time, different levels of government – from the Los Angeles City Council to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and the California Division of Highways – all authorized the removal of hundreds of homes to make way for the construction of four freeways, despite intense community pushback. Today, the East Los Angeles Interchange, which was known as “the Spaghetti Bowl” because of the confluence of looping freeway interchanges, sees roughly 2.4 million cars per day and is a leading cause of pollution and negative health effects in the area.⁷

Displacing communities of color in LA County would continue well into the twentieth century including the construction and completion of Interstate 105 in 1993. The interstate was a decades-long project defined by community pushback from groups including the Sierra Club and a court challenge by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. While the lawsuit was ultimately settled and construction resumed, federal funding was used to build a rail line and new affordable housing units – though the 3,350 units replaced only half of the original units that were demolished.⁸

Highway development has a lasting impact on cities, not only because highways physically represent inequality and the division of communities, but because their presence leads to negative health impacts. Air pollution is undoubtedly a problem experienced throughout the County, but people who live near freeways experience higher rates of asthma compared to those who do not. East Los Angeles now has one of the highest concentrations of air pollution in the region.⁹

5 Bruce's Beach. Chief Executive Office. <https://ceo.lacounty.gov/ardi/bruces-beach/>

6 Chavez Ravine: A Los Angeles Story. Zinn Education Project. <https://www.zinnedproject.org/materials/chavez-ravine>

7 Boyle Heights, The Land of Freeways. KCRW. <https://www.kcrw.com/culture/shows/design-and-architecture/boyle-heights-the-land-of-freeways>.

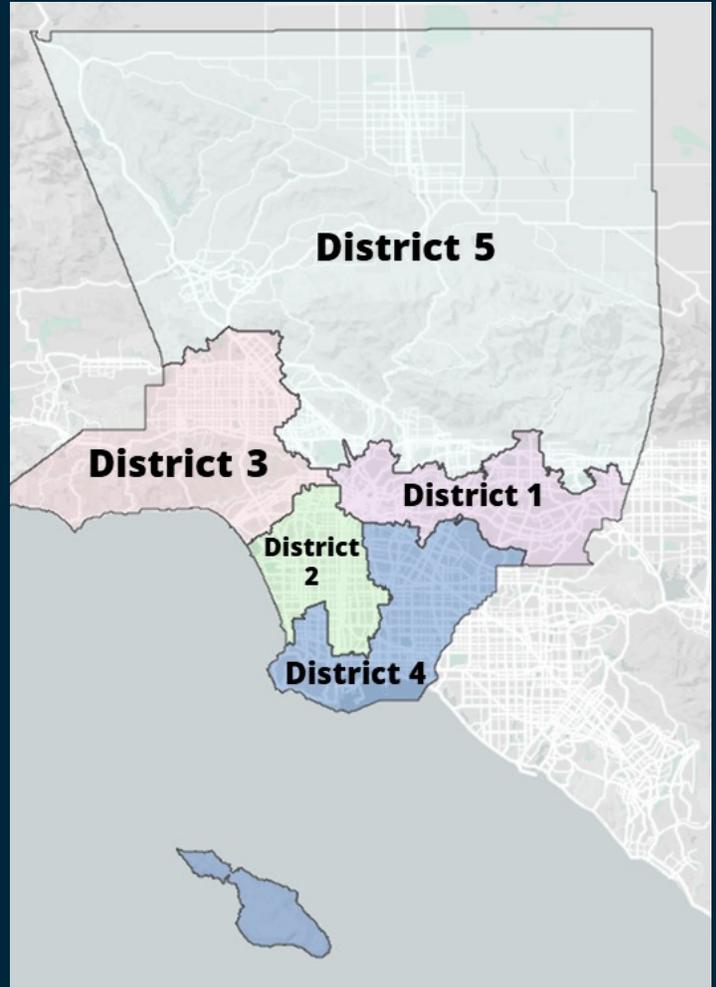
8 “Century Freeway – When It's Born, an Era Will Die,” LA Times, June 22, 1986.

9 CalEnviroScreen 4.0. California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment. https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/11d2f52282a54cee6184203/page/CalEnviroScreen-4_0/.

LEGACIES OF STRUCTURAL RACISM TODAY

In each of these examples, we can trace how racism influenced the discretionary choices of planners and others within government and led to inequality. While many of the policies discussed above are no longer in place, the harm they have done has created places in which a person's lived experience and background determine their outcomes. In other words, our communities are still unequal and inequitable. What that inequity looks like in unincorporated LA County today not only depends on what someone looks like but where they live. The racist policies discussed in the last section were put into place in the past and some have even been reversed, yet they have nonetheless influenced many subsequent decisions that created a dramatic and lasting impact in LA County.

Planners across the country were a key part of these policies and systems that limited how Black communities were able to invest in property, see the value of their properties grow, and transfer wealth from generation to generation. The disparate impact of structural racism in planning can be measured through data on social and economic outcomes by race. Homeownership is often one of the few ways the average American can accumulate wealth and pass that wealth on to future generations. Since Black Americans did not have the same ability to purchase homes until the Fair Housing Act of 1968, that community lost out on nearly three decades – between the 1930s and into the 1960s – of low interest rates and favorable mortgage terms compared with their white peers. The impacts of

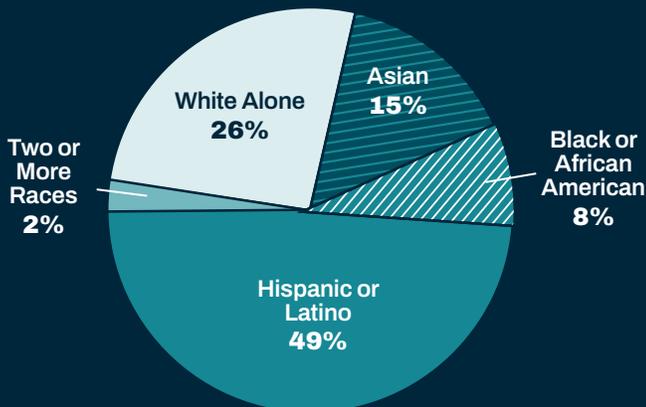


Map showing the district boundaries of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors as of 2022.

Image credit: Los Angeles County

OVERVIEW OF DEMOGRAPHICS IN LA COUNTY

Racial & Ethnic Composition of LA County



Diversity in LA County

66%
Speak a Language other than English

Major Languages

- | | |
|-------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Spanish | 4. Korean |
| 2. Armenian | 5. Mandarin and Cantonese |
| 3. Persian | |

34%
Born outside U.S.

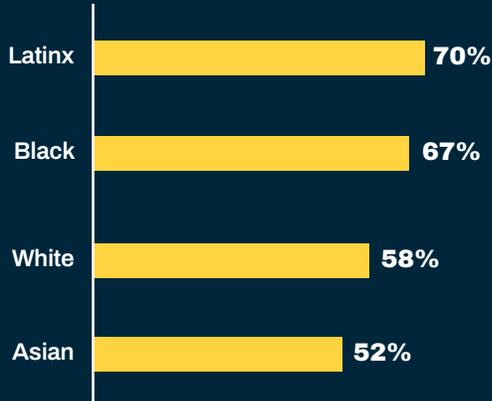
Top Countries of Origin

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------|
| 1. Mexico | 4. The Philippines |
| 2. China | 5. Guatemala |
| 3. El Salvador | |

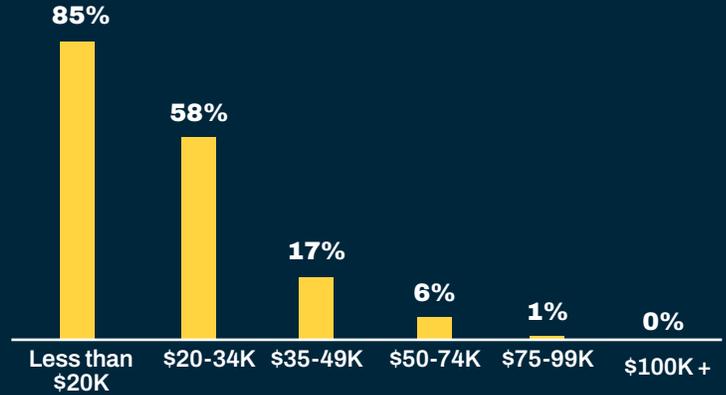
Source: American Community Survey 2020 (5-Year Estimates)

RIISING HOUSING COSTS IN LA COUNTY

Rent Burdened Households in LA County, by Race



Households Spending 50 Percent or More on Rent, by Household Income in Unincorporated LA County (2018)



Source: American Community Survey 2020, 5-Year Estimates & USC Center for Economic and Social Research

these restrictive policies are still seen today. In 2016, white families had more than ten times the wealth of Black families (a median net worth of \$171,000 compared to \$17,600), and eight times the wealth of Hispanic families (a median net worth of \$20,700).¹⁰

LA County is the most populous county in the United States. The region’s ten million residents are a diverse population, with nearly 75 percent of the population identifying as non-white and over two-thirds speaking a language other than English. In addition to Spanish, other major languages in LA County include Armenian, Persian, Korean, Tagalog, Mandarin, and Cantonese. This reflects some of the top countries of origin – Mexico, El Salvador, China, and the Philippines to name a few – for the more than one-in-three LA County residents who were born outside of the United States.

Despite this diversity, the County remains racially and economically segregated. In addition to the region’s 88 individual municipalities, LA County is governed by a five-member body known as the Board of Supervisors. Each Supervisor oversees a district that includes constituents from both cities and unincorporated areas of the county.

While the Supervisorial Districts are meant to have an equal distribution of constituents, the Districts are unequal in many socioeconomic, environmental, and life outcomes. Residents in unincorporated areas

of Districts 1 and 2 have a higher share of the population who have limited English proficiency compared with incorporated parts of the County. In District 1, where residents are predominately Latinx, roughly one in three residents have limited English proficiency. The unincorporated parts of District 3 have the lowest percentage of the population with limited English, at just 5 percent.

While over half (61%) of all census tracts earn below the County’s median income, residents in unincorporated LA County tend to have significantly higher median incomes than incorporated parts of the County. This is most pronounced in District 3, where the median household income for unincorporated census tracts is nearly twice as high as those of incorporated households. Higher median incomes in unincorporated LA County also translate to lower rates of poverty. This holds true except for District 2, where there is a slightly greater percentage of residents who earn less than 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. The Districts with the largest concentrations of non-white residents also have the highest concentration of census tracts below the median household income. In District 2, where a quarter of residents are Black, 12 percent of households are extremely low income, meaning a family of four earns less than \$35,000. In comparison, the Countywide average is only 5 percent of all households. Lower-income Districts

¹⁰ Recent Trends in Wealth-Holding by Race and Ethnicity: Evidence from the Survey of Consumer Finances. Federal Reserve. <https://www.federalreserve.gov/econres/notes/feds-notes/recent-trends-in-wealth-holding-by-race-and-ethnicity-evidence-from-the-survey-of-consumer-finances-20170927.html>.

tend to have a larger share of the population without access to the internet or computer at home. District 2 has the highest percentage of households without internet, at 16 percent, followed by District 1 at 15 percent. Internet access plays an important role in economic mobility.

Over half (54%) of all unincorporated LA County households rent. Roughly one in three renters spend 50 percent or more of their household income on housing costs; the median monthly rent is \$1,500. While District 1 has roughly the same renter-owner composition as the County overall, there is a higher percentage of renters who do not have access to a vehicle (18 percent compared with 14 percent Countywide). District 1 also has the lowest median home values out of any Supervisorial District. District 1 is predominately Latinx and Asian. District 2 has the largest share of renter households compared with the other districts. This area has the largest share of Black residents.

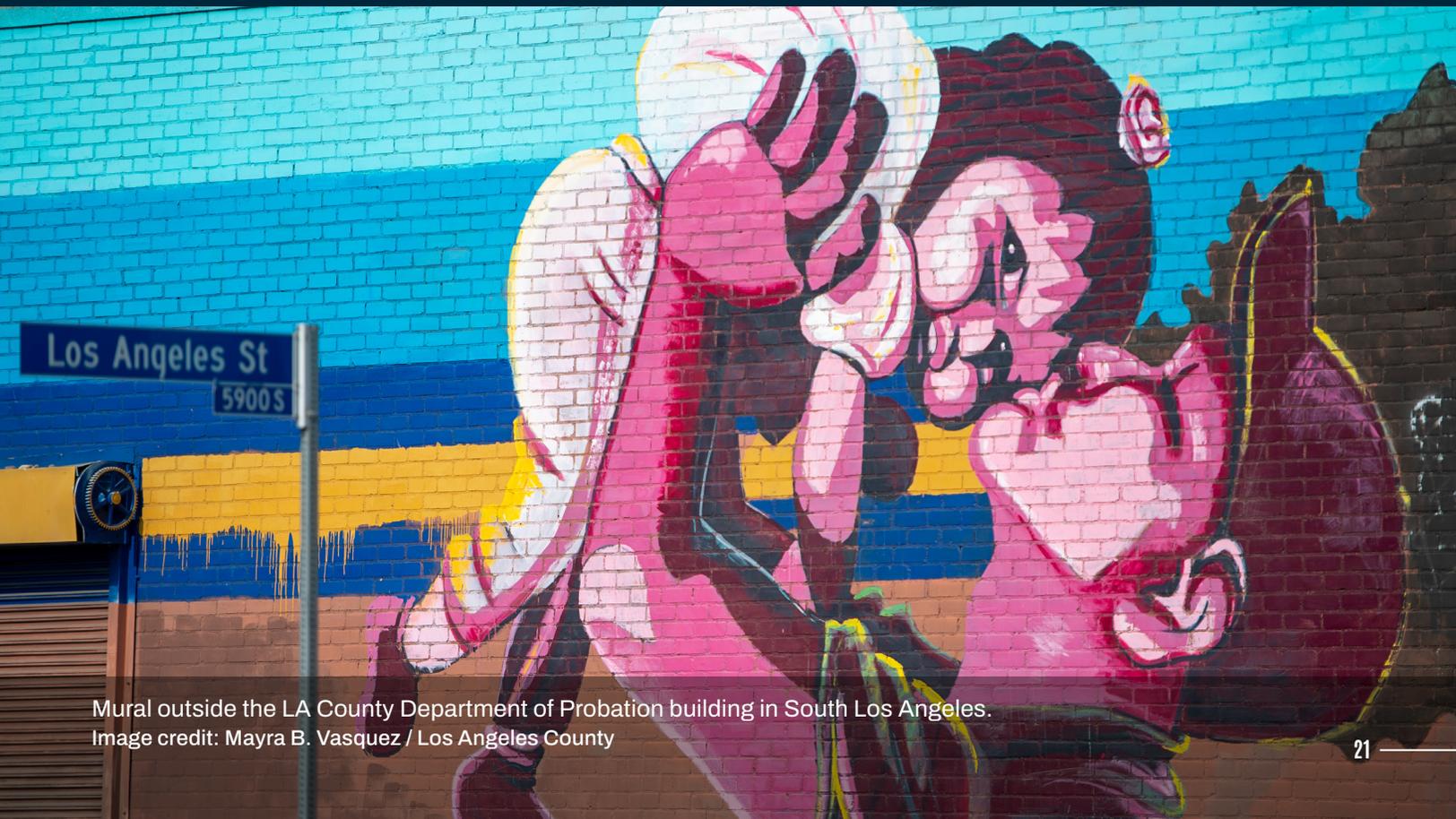
Differences in home values can also be observed across the Districts. The highest concentration of homes constructed before 1970 are in District 4, where nearly 70 percent of all homes are at least 50 years old. This District also has the second lowest median home values. District 5 has the highest share of owner-occupied households and the second highest median home values. This area also has the highest share of newer homes; roughly 10 percent of all homes were constructed after 2000. This area has the second highest

share of white residents. Median home values are the highest in District 3. This area also has the largest share of white residents of any Supervisorial District.

While roughly a quarter of LA County has some degree of tree cover, which helps lower energy costs and decrease air conditioning use, access to trees is not equitably distributed. The ZIP codes in South LA (District 2) have the lowest percentage of tree cover in the County.

Cleanup sites are defined as places where hazardous chemicals are present, and cleanup is required by either property owners or the government. These chemicals can move into either the air or groundwater, which poses additional health concerns for those living near them. Cleanup sites tend to cluster around the I-5 freeway, north into the San Fernando Valley, and around major thoroughfares, like Alameda Street heading south towards Long Beach.

These are not problems unique to LA County or this planning department, but representative of the systemic barriers facing cities and local governments. This Strategic Plan begins to explore what LA County Planning can do to create a more equitable unincorporated LA County. This work will not happen overnight but will instead require an approach over the next five years and beyond that changes how LA County Planning operates and interacts with the public.



Mural outside the LA County Department of Probation building in South Los Angeles.
Image credit: Mayra B. Vasquez / Los Angeles County



LA County Planning staff during the April 2023 meeting where goal committees presented their Strategic Plan goals and strategies.

Image credit: LA County Planning



LA COUNTY PLANNING TODAY

LA County Planning provides equitable planning, development, and engagement for all unincorporated LA County residents and businesses to help create vibrant, sustainable, and resilient communities. The Department has 191 budgeted positions and an annual budget of roughly \$41 million. It provides staff support to the Regional Planning Commission, Airport Land Use Commission, Historic Landmarks and Records Commission, and several County advisory boards focused on the protection of biological resources. In performing its core mission, LA County Planning supports major County initiatives related to sustainability, homelessness/affordable housing, equity development, and environmental justice.

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS:



Celebrating 100 years.
Image credit: LA County Planning



BACKGROUND OF LA COUNTY PLANNING AND REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

The Regional Planning Commission (RPC) was formed in 1922 by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to serve as an advisory body on all planning matters within the County. The first regional planning commissioners were appointed by the Board in 1923, making the RPC the oldest county planning commission in the United States. In 1974, the Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning was established to reorganize the structure of planning staff, who had previously worked directly under the RPC. Today, LA County Planning is responsible for formulating long-range land use plans and policies, reviewing development project proposals, and responding to zoning enforcement requests. The RPC – made up of five commissioners, plus four advisory non-voting members – serves as the liaison between the County Board of Supervisors and LA County Planning, advising on policies and conducting public hearings to ensure that standard or otherwise appropriate requirements for development are followed.

This work is critical to ensuring the safety and quality of life for more than one million residents living in unincorporated LA County.

REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION / LA COUNTY PLANNING TIMELINE



1954
East San Gabriel Valley Area Study Begins



1974
Regional Planning Department Established



1933
Original Subdivision Ordinance Adopted

1958
Master Plan Of Freeways & Expressways

1977
Antelope Valley and Santa Clarita Valley Area Planning

1959-1961
Planning for People in North Los Angeles County

1964
Hacienda Heights Community Plan

1966
Community Planning Countywide



1923
Regional Planning Commission Established



1940
First Master Plan of Land Use

1960

1965
East Los Angeles; The Need for Technology

1975
General Plan Elements

1920

1930

1940

1950

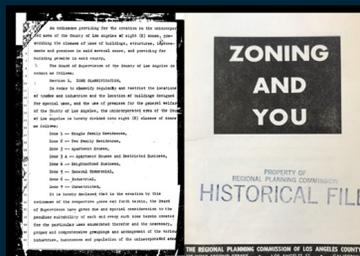
1954-1957
Area Studies Program Launched

1945-1947
Revised Master Plans

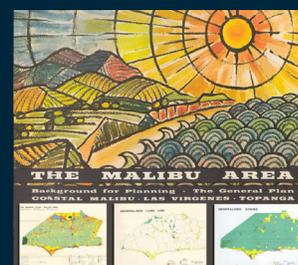
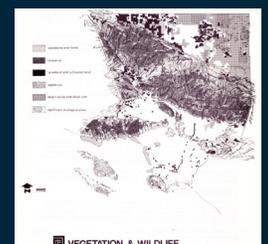
1963-1965
General Plan for Three Cities

1972
Environmental Resource Committee

1927
LA County Zoning Ordinance Adopted



1961
East Central Area and Malibu Area Studies Underway





1998
Department Website Launched

2006
Map Conversion Project



2010
RPC Hearings Streamed

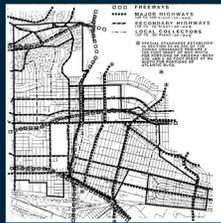
2019
Technical Update to Title 22

2014
East Los Angeles Third Street Specific Plan

2020
Unmanned Aircraft Systems Program Launched

1980
Countywide General Plan Adopted

1983
Diamond Bar General Plan Adopted



1988
Digital Mapping (GIS Established)

1999
GIS Expansion

1980
1982
Significant Ecological Areas (SEA) Ordinance & Oak Tree Ordinance Adopted

1987
Walnut Park Neighborhood Plan Adopted



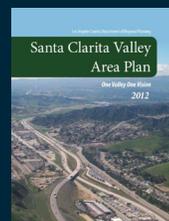
2003
Newhall Ranch Specific Plan Adopted



2015
Antelope Valley Area Plan Adopted; Electronic Permitting Launched; General Plan Update Adopted; Historic Preservation Ordinance Adopted



2012
Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan Adopted

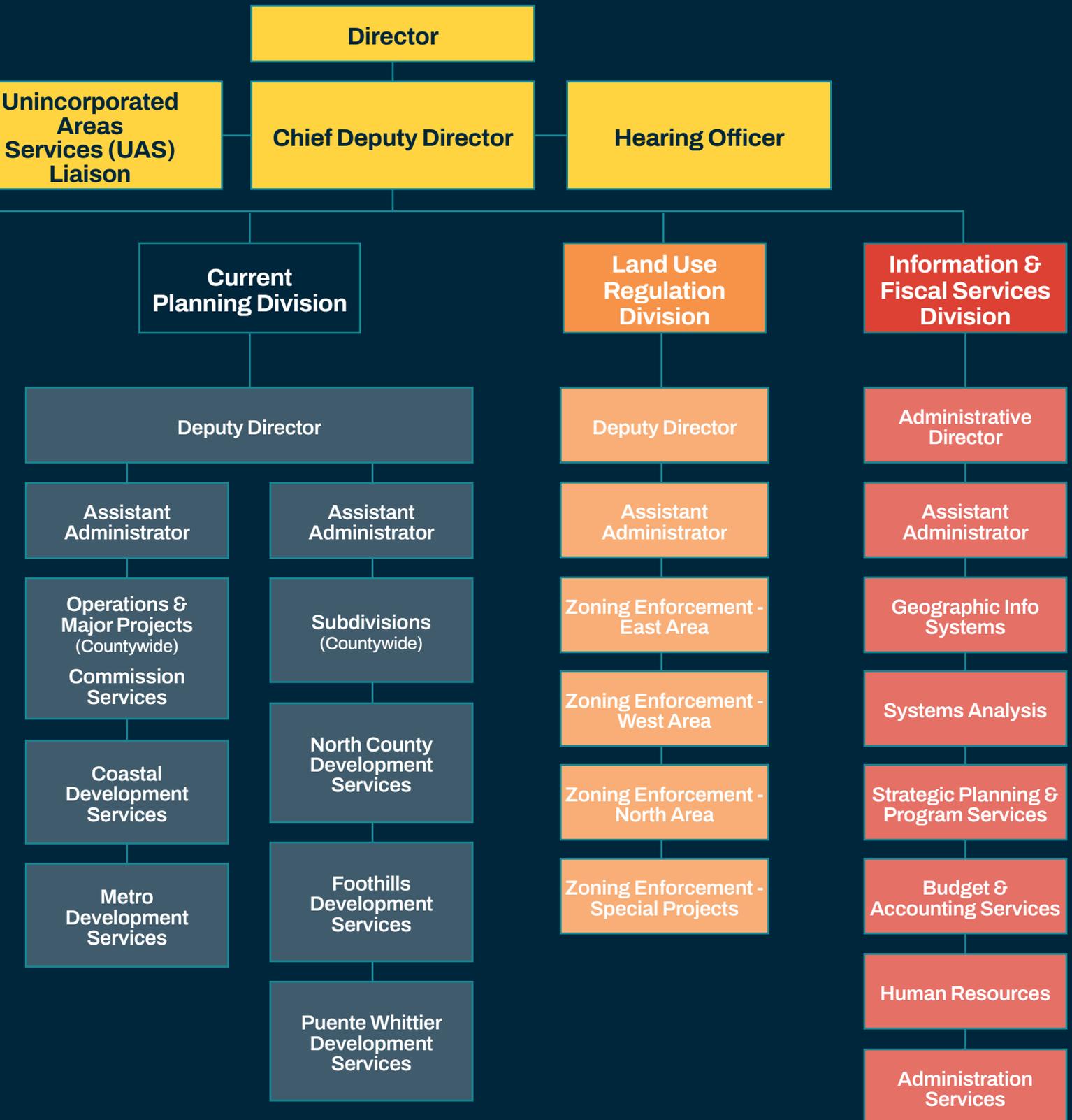


LA COUNTY PLANNING FUNCTIONS

Nearly 200 people support LA County Planning's efforts to deliver planning services, plans, and ordinances to unincorporated LA County residents. LA County Planning is currently organized into four divisions: Advance Planning (AP), Current Planning (CP), Land Use Regulation (LUR), and Information and Fiscal Services (IFS). Each division has unique responsibilities and key programs, which are described in more detail in the following section.



LA COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



ADVANCE PLANNING (AP) DIVISION

The Advance Planning Division updates, maintains, and implements the General Plan, which guides the long-term development of unincorporated LA County. Some of the ways that the Division implements the General Plan are through community-based plans. The Division also responds to legislative policy mandates and addresses Board motions regarding land use planning issues. Advance Planning participates in interdepartmental initiatives around important issues, such as housing and homelessness, economic development, climate change, conservation and protection of natural resources, and environmental justice.

In addition, the Division manages the following: Environmental Review Board and Significant Ecological Areas (SEA) Technical Advisory Committee; airport land use; historic preservation; and biological reviews. Policy development and community engagement are central to the Division's work, the latter of which is accomplished through a variety of outreach events, such as public workshops and community meetings.

PERSONNEL & BUDGET

With 31 budgeted positions, Advance Planning is the smallest division in terms of number of personnel. In the most recent fiscal year, it received approximately \$9.5 million out of LA County Planning's \$40.9 million annual budget. The majority of the grants LA County Planning receives are allocated to this division.

GENERAL PLAN

The General Plan provides the policy framework and long-range vision for how and where unincorporated areas will grow. The plan establishes goals, policies, and programs to foster healthy, livable, and sustainable communities. Unincorporated LA County is divided into 11 Planning Areas, many of which have their own community-based plans that respond to the specific and diverse needs of that region. The General Plan is constantly being updated and maintained through various planning efforts, including Housing Element, Safety Element, and other policy updates.

The Advance Planning Division implements the General Plan through several programs and policy initiatives; key initiatives are highlighted below.

Climate Action Plan: The latest version of the 2045 Los Angeles County Climate Action Plan (2045 CAP), drafted in March 2023, outlines steps for the County to meet greenhouse gas emission reduction goals and reach carbon neutrality for unincorporated LA County.

Housing Element: In accordance with California state law, cities and counties are required to update an assessment of their region's housing needs every eight years. The 2021-2029 Housing Element was finalized in May 2022. The Housing Element outlines policies and strategies that the County can implement to increase the area's housing supply.

Significant Ecological Areas: The County utilizes planning overlays to protect land that contains irreplaceable biological resources, also known as Significant Ecological Areas (SEAs). These areas of LA County represent the wide range of biodiversity found in Southern California and include undisturbed or lightly disturbed habitats that support valuable and threatened species.

Transit Oriented Districts: The County works to encourage transit-oriented development (TOD) where people can walk, bike, and use public transportation instead of relying on single-occupancy vehicles. The County develops specific development standards for each of the TOD areas located in unincorporated LA County.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The division is organized into six sections that help support and implement various aspects of the General Plan. There are two Community Studies sections, East and North, which provide long-range planning services for those respective regions. Long-range planning services include the development of community-based land use policy documents and ordinances to guide growth in a manner that promotes local economic development, supports active transportation, increases access to services and jobs, and preserves natural resources.

Community Studies-East:

Primarily provides comprehensive long-range planning services for the communities in eastern LA County. Communities served include San Gabriel Valley communities, such as La Crescenta-Montrose, Altadena, Glendora Islands, Avocado Heights, Walnut Islands; Puente Hills communities, such as Hacienda Heights, Rowland Heights, Whittier Islands; and Southern Los Angeles communities, such as Cerritos Island and Long Beach Island.

Community Studies-North:

Prepares and updates plans and ordinances related to northern LA County. Recent projects include development and updates to Community Standards Districts (CSD) for Antelope Valley communities. The section has also assisted with issues in other Supervisorial District 5 communities, such as the Chapman Woods CSD, and is presently working on completing CSDs for the communities of Lake Los Angeles, Pearblossom, Sun Village, and Littlerock, in southeast Antelope Valley. In the years ahead, the section will develop an area plan for the San Fernando Valley Planning Area.

Environmental Planning and Sustainability:

Develops plans, ordinances, and tools to protect biological resources and address climate hazards in unincorporated LA County. The section coordinates with other departmental sections and County departments to align resource protection and climate action initiatives. The section meets with diverse stakeholders and represents the County at regional task force, committee, and work group meetings as subject matter experts. The section additionally coordinates the Environmental Resources Board and the SEA Technical Advisory Committee, which are Brown Act advisory bodies that conduct biological review for proposed development projects.

General Plan/Transit-Oriented Communities:

Develops plans and ordinances related to General Plan implementation, and coordinates with County departments to update and maintain the General Plan. Major programs have included environmental justice and transit-oriented development initiatives, such as the Green Zones Program and the Florence-Firestone Transit-Oriented District Specific Plan. The section is currently working on establishing the Metro Area Plan and South Bay Area Plan, which cover unincorporated communities in the central and southwest portions of LA County.

Housing Policy:

The section works on area plans and also develops plans, ordinances, and tools to increase housing choice, affordability, and livability in unincorporated LA County. The section is tasked with updating, maintaining, and implementing the Housing Element, including but not limited to: Housing Element Annual Progress Report; technical assistance on affordable housing projects and related legislative analyses; annual Affordable Housing Costs and Income Limits; and implementation of Housing Element programs, including the ongoing tracking of the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA). The section also meets regularly with stakeholders and works closely with other County agencies to develop policies and facilitate County efforts to fund affordable housing and combat homelessness.

Ordinance Studies:

Prepares studies and countywide ordinances that implement the General Plan. In addition, this section handles airport land use planning. As staff to the Los Angeles County Airport Land Use Commission, this section reviews plans, regulations, and development projects of local agencies and airport operators to determine consistency with the land use, noise, and safety policies. The section also administers the Historic Preservation Program, including processing County Landmark, Historic District, Certificate of Appropriateness, and Mills Act cases, as well as managing historic preservation projects, such as the preparation of historic context statements and historic resources surveys.

CURRENT PLANNING (CP) DIVISION

The Current Planning division is primarily responsible for implementing zoning regulations adopted by the County and counseling the public on those regulations as they relate to the use, design, and development of their properties. These zoning regulations are embodied in both Title 21 and 22 of the Los Angeles County Code and are meant to ensure proper land use for the protection of the public's health, safety, and welfare. Current Planning staff work to guide these uses by meeting with applicants at the public counter, reviewing permitting applications, and bringing projects through the public hearing process to gather feedback from stakeholders.

PERSONNEL & BUDGET

With 67 budgeted positions, Current Planning is the largest division in both number of employees and allocated budget. In the most recent fiscal year, it received roughly \$13.1 million of LA County Planning's \$40.9 million annual budget.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The division processes ministerial and discretionary cases not associated with land use. Each section provides customer counseling and case processing services. Current Planning is organized into seven sections, five of which are based on specific geographic areas while the remaining two sections serve the County as a whole.

Coastal Development Services:

Processes all ministerial and discretionary cases that are not associated with a land division in the Santa Monica Mountains, Catalina Island, and Marina del Rey and responds to all general customer inquiries related to these communities.

Metro Development Services:

Serves unincorporated areas in East Los Angeles, South San Gabriel, South Los Angeles, and the South Bay.

North County Development Services:

Serves unincorporated areas in the Antelope Valley and the Santa Clarita Valley.

Foothills Development Services:

Serves unincorporated areas in the San Gabriel Valley foothills, including Altadena, East Pasadena, and La Crescenta-Montrose.

Puente Whittier Development Services:

Serves unincorporated areas in the East San Gabriel Valley, including Hacienda Heights, Rowland Heights, and Whittier.

Subdivisions (Countywide): Processes cases associated with new subdivisions and verifies compliance with subdivision conditions, lot creation history, and overall compliance with the Subdivision Map Act through Certificates of Compliance.

Operations & Major Projects (Countywide): Provides support to the entire Current Planning Division by administering supplemental case reviews and processing unique cases throughout unincorporated communities, such as County projects and large-scale commercial, industrial, and mixed-use projects.



Leadership from LA County Planning met in July 2023 to discuss how to implement the Strategic Plan. Image credit: HR&A Advisors



Staff from the Land Use Regulation division met in December 2022 to brainstorm the Department's vision and values. Image credit: HR&A Advisors

LAND USE REGULATION (LUR) DIVISION

Planners within the Land Use Regulation (LUR) Division respond to the public's concerns regarding zoning violations and aim to guide and educate residents into compliance with the zoning code. This work is often carried out in collaboration with planners from other divisions, representatives from other Los Angeles County departments, and other local agencies.

At its core, LUR is responsible for investigating and identifying zoning code violations, addressing quality of life issues, and ensuring that communities stay safe and well-maintained. This is accomplished by conducting complaint-based inspections and enforcing the land development regulations and statutes within the County's zoning code. Zoning enforcement staff respond to zoning complaints and address code violations on a variety of matters including: conducting discretionary permit condition checks; implementing, monitoring, and enforcing Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Programs (MMRP); referring unresolved code violations to the District Attorney and County Counsel; using noncompliance and administrative fees to encourage compliance; and participating in multi-agency Inspection Teams.

PERSONNEL & BUDGET

Land Use Regulation has 46 budgeted positions. In the most recent fiscal year, Land Use Regulation received \$9.09 million out of LA County Planning's \$40.9 million annual budget.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The division is organized into four sections, three of which are specific to geographic areas of the County.

East Section:

Serves a mix of urban, suburban, and foothill communities that includes over 50 percent of the County's unincorporated population. Unique projects and programs include the LA County Development Authority Site Plan Review, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Enforcement, Green Zones Pilot Project, and Permit Expiration Project.

North Section:

Serves urban, rural, and desert areas within unincorporated LA County, and includes primarily rural and desert communities, many zoned agricultural. This portion of the County also includes large areas designated as Significant Ecological Areas and within the federal forest. Given how rural this part of the County is, it is characterized by poor, undeveloped, or non-existent infrastructure conditions.

West Section:

Serves a broad range of communities that include multiple dichotomies – low-income and affluent residents; urban and rural environments; industrial uses near residential areas. This Section is also the only portion of the County that implements the State's coastal regulations. In recent years, this section has assisted with the impact of large-scale wildfires in the region's communities.

Special Projects:

Manages LUR's complex projects and efforts, especially those that have a high impact on surrounding communities, require long-term staff monitoring or involvement, and/or require considerable coordination across various levels of government. This includes LA County Planning's Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) program, as well as issues concerning landfills and surface mines.

INFORMATION AND FISCAL SERVICES (IFS) DIVISION

The Information and Fiscal Services (IFS) Division primarily provides internal administrative support functions, services, and programs for LA County Planning. These areas include, but are not limited to: the departmental budgeting process; emergency management; strategic planning; contracting and related monitoring; and administrative control mechanisms consistent with the County Fiscal Manual. The division also manages departmental computer systems and software, including the geographic information systems (GIS) section, which provides support for both LA County Planning and other County agencies.

EPIC-LA

In 2015, LA County Planning transitioned into a new permitting system (EPIC-LA). This system replaced the County's counter-based permitting system with an online system that allows people to submit applications online for licenses and permits, as well as obtain approvals for conceptual plans and analysis on a project.

The County is currently implementing the initial launch of EPIC-LA through an external consultant. As of December 2022, the County has successfully implemented the EPIC-LA service model in six departments. While the goal of the service is to provide centralized case management and internal referrals, services are still siloed by Department. For example, when a customer wants to build a house or open a business, they work with multiple departments, which leads to confusion and frustration for the end-user. EPIC-LA meets basic operational and user needs but there is room for improvement, especially in areas of educating the public, addressing language access, and providing a clearer timeline for the application process.

PERSONNEL & BUDGET

With roughly 47 budgeted positions, Information and Fiscal Services is the second smallest division within LA County Planning in both size and budget. During the recent fiscal year, IFS' annual budget was roughly \$9.2 million.

PROGRAMS & SERVICES

The division is organized into six sections:

Administrative Services:

Dedicated to providing administrative support services, such as: timely collection and routing of payroll documents; management of building and communication services; procurement; maintenance of Departmental supplies, inventory, and storage; and oversight of office renovations.

Budget and Accounting Services:

Provides budget and fiscal support for LA County Planning, including preparation and control of the budget, fiscal analysis, accounting/expenditure control, administrative studies, fee/revenue studies, and audit compliance.

Geographic Information Systems:

Provides application development, map production, GIS analysis, statistics, and other consulting support for LA County Planning staff and other County departments. This section also frequently works with staff to help formulate their data and/or GIS project requirements.

Human Resources:

Oversees the lifecycle and experience for all LA County Planning employees, including recruiting, hiring, onboarding, and promotions, as well as the management of staff-related conflicts and the administration of employee benefits. Also responsible for disability management and ensuring compliance for local, state, and federal legislation (e.g., FMLA, ADA).

Strategic Planning and Program Services:

Provides support in the following administrative areas: contract management, emergency preparedness, strategic planning, graphic design, and the County rideshare program, that benefit LA County Planning as a whole.

Systems Analysis:

Helps LA County Planning use technology effectively and to incorporate rapidly changing technologies into its existing systems. Responsibilities include technical and database support, information security, completing the annual technology audit, providing and configuring all desktop and portable computing devices, and developing and maintaining LA County Planning websites.



Members of the GIS section.
Image credit: LA County Planning



Erica Aguirre and Thuy Hua, the committee leads for Goal 2, share a final moment before presenting to LA County Planning during the April 2023 All-Staff Meeting. Each of the five Strategic Plan goals had a committee led by staff who served as the primary points of contact and helped coordinate drafted materials between LA County Planning and the consulting team. Image credit: LA County Planning



A STAFF-LED ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

FROM SUMMER 2022 TO FALL 2023,

LA County Planning underwent a strategic planning process that represented a radical shift in how the Department works together. The creation of this Plan was a collaborative and inclusive effort, reflecting the diverse experiences of LA County Planning staff. The process offered every employee in LA County Planning multiple opportunities to brainstorm ideas and share their thoughts about the Department’s future direction. Nearly every employee contributed during the process, from attending workshops and meetings to drafting strategies and reviewing content.

PRINCIPLES OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

LA County Planning leadership sought to build a new Strategic Plan while building a culture capable of creating and then implementing that plan. Accompanying the actual development of the Strategic Plan were deep Departmental conversations about the history of inequity in policy and planning, the ways in which inequity manifests in how people work with one another, and how LA County Planning could take a more active role in addressing the biggest manifestations of inequity in the County while reimagining its own critical functions. The development of the Plan was designed to ensure that staff were invested in LA County Planning’s future vision, saw themselves reflected in it, and could build a culture capable of implementing the required changes.

There was an acknowledgment, very early on, that this Strategic Plan could not come solely from the Director’s office or the consulting team: change happens when staff throughout an organization, not just management, feel invested in and valued. The planning process therefore began with the establishment of a Core Team, made up of LA County Planning staff representing each of the

STRATEGIC PLAN TIMELINE

Summer 2022	Fall 2022	Winter 2023
Phase 1. Strategic Plan Startup		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in Small Group Discussions • Attend All-Staff Workshop 		
	Phase 2. Departmental Mission, Vision, and Priorities	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend divisional workshops and All-Staff Meeting • Provide feedback on draft materials 	

LEGEND

Project Phases
Staff Involvement

Summer 2022	Fall 2022	Winter 2023
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divisions, including both planners and administrative staff. The Core Team’s primary purpose was to advise the consultant team on staff engagement and drafting the Strategic Plan. The Core Team met monthly during the course of the Plan’s development and will help support the plan’s implementation in the coming years.

The Core Team envisioned a successful Strategic Plan that embodies the Department’s values and vision (detailed in the subsequent chapter) while remaining grounded in the everyday work of LA County Planning. Throughout the strategic planning process, the Core Team worked to create a process based in the following principles:

1. Many strategic planning processes look only into the future but the Core Team felt strongly that **our plan needed to start from the past** to understand what changes the Core Team will need to make to our policies, practices and procedures.
2. The Plan would focus on what the Core Team were working toward, an equitable unincorporated LA County, but also **how the Department can build capacity to ensure equity** which is why several strategies focus on talent and retention, mentorship, and the staff experience.

3. The Core Team had to **build a culture around the Plan that reinforced themes of diversity, equity, and inclusion** so that staff feel prepared to embed it into their work or conversations with colleagues, not just during a yearly workshop.
4. Staff, not management or the consultant team, are the **biggest experts** in where there are areas for improvement in their work, so creating a staff-driven process, focused on **celebrating that institutional knowledge and front-line expertise**, grounded much of our work.
5. The Plan had to **fundamentally reexamine the core functions of each division** in LA County Planning – nothing was off the table.

Each element of the planning process, including all-staff workshops that became happy occasions for many to see colleagues in-person for the first time since teleworking, were rooted in these five principles. The process also emphasized transparency and communication, including a monthly newsletter about the strategic planning process and updates about how staff could continue to stay involved outside of Department-wide meetings.

	Spring/Summer 2023	Fall 2023
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Phase 3. Goals and Strategies	Phase 4. Final Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in goal committees and draft strategies • Provide feedback and support on draft materials • Attend All-Staff Presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide comments and feedback on final draft materials • Division management and goal committee leads attend Leadership Summit
Spring/Summer 2023	Fall 2023



Image credit: HR&A Advisors



Image credit: LA County Planning



Image credit: LA County Planning



Image credit: LA County Planning



Image credit: LA County Planning

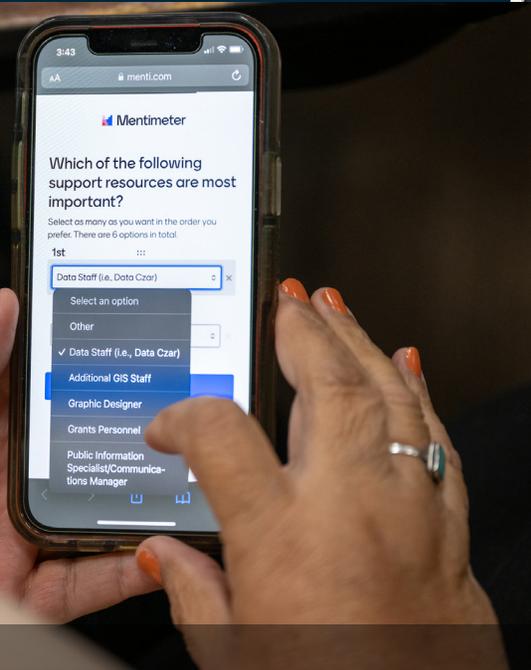


Image credit: HR&A Advisors



Image credit: LA County Planning



Image credit: LA County Planning



ESTABLISHING A BASELINE (SUMMER AND FALL 2022)

We began in Summer 2022 with baseline workshops, in which each staff member explored the concept of equity in their work and in their lives. There were three workshops in total: Establishing a Baseline, Equity vs Equality in Our Work, and Inequity in Planning. All staff were required to participate in each of the three workshops. These workshops helped us establish a “baseline” of existing conditions not only in our work and in the planning profession but in how we relate to one another as co-workers. Since the first two workshops focused on staff sharing their personal experiences, staff were invited to choose their sessions, which were organized by: administrative and clerical staff; race and ethnicity (e.g. Black staff members); English as a Second Language; women and LGBTQIA+ identifying staff. There was also a general option for staff who did not fall into or wish to participate in a specific identity-focused session. Attendance for the final workshop, which took a holistic view of how structural racism and racist practices are part of planning history, was organized by division.

Staff had the opportunity to listen and provide feedback on the draft goals and strategies for the Strategic Plan.
Image credit: LA County Planning

EQUITY BASELINE SESSIONS

Equity Baseline Session One

Before jumping straight into developing goals or a shared vision, it was important to communicate with staff about why this Strategic Plan is focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Taking the time to establish consistent definitions helped ground future discussions based on a shared understanding of a concept or term rather than leaving it up to the individual to interpret what it means when something like “intersectionality” or “privilege” is mentioned.

This workshop also briefly covered the different forms of oppression, beginning with how people might view themselves in negative or harmful stereotypes and leaving participants to consider the ways in which our larger society is structured to prioritize the needs of certain groups or identities at the expense of others. Discussion questions for this session asked people to think about and share examples in their life where they might have experienced both power and oppression, as well as how their different identities impact their life.

“I didn’t think about my identity really until today after learning about intersectionality.”

Equity Baseline Session Two

Building on the terms discussed in the first session, the second workshop explored the differences between equity and equality. Simply put, equality is when everyone receives the same resources, but equity is when everyone receives resources based on their unique needs and characteristics. The workshop asked staff to begin connecting these two terms to the policies, practices, and culture of LA County Planning.

People were placed into breakout rooms where they discussed two sets of questions: *Where do you see equality – or equity – in the department within certain internal functions (hiring; onboarding and training; staff evaluation and promotions; and project assignments and job transfers)?* And *What changes are needed for the department to embody equity?* The conversations from this workshop would go on to inform some of the final strategies for the Plan, particularly those found in Goal 4, which focuses on creating an equitable workforce. To read more about Goal 4, turn to page 84.

Equity Baseline Session Three

The final workshop transitioned from the abstract and asked staff to think about the ways in which inequity shows up within both LA County Planning and throughout the County. This included a historical context on how racism is part of planning’s history – much of which is included in the introduction chapter of this plan – before a longer discussion about how each division can wield its power to address those historical inequities. The conversations from this workshop would go on to inform some of the final strategies for the Plan, particularly those found in Goal 2, which explicitly calls out addressing past harms. To read more about Goal 2, turn to page 64.

“Even if we, this Department, didn’t write these policies, we still owe it to LA County today to address the impacts.”

“There are systemic barriers to the problems we want to overcome. We could do better.”

Following the three Equity Baseline workshops focused on the importance of how equity impacts our work, the strategic planning process formally kicked off in the fall. The entire Department came together in October in person to begin the strategic planning process. The meeting agenda was developed by the Core Team and hosted and led by two of its members, Michele Bush and Alex Garcia. The October meeting was an opportunity to introduce the planning process, including what a strategic plan is (and is not), and highlighted data illustrating inequities apparent in the County today.

BUILDING FLUENCY & TRANSPARENCY (FALL-SPRING 2023)

Regular communication about what happened in between meetings was an important part of establishing transparency and keeping staff informed about what the Strategic Plan Core Team members were working on. Each month during the planning process, staff received a newsletter from the Director sharing updates about the drafting of the Plan and links to a separate website – managed by the consultant team – that included resources on different equity topics. The topics ranged from sharing more about the Asian American Pacific Islander community to short articles about how other cities and counties are rethinking land acknowledgments to recognize the Indigenous nations that were the original stewards of the land. In keeping with the celebratory nature of the process, staff also had the opportunity to submit highlights from their work, like finalizing a community area plan, and personal lives.

The baseline sessions in the summer helped staff establish a shared understanding of equity definitions used throughout the planning process, but familiarity with something – particularly as complex as embedding equity into government – does not happen in one workshop. The Core Team felt it was important to continue offering opportunities for staff to learn and engage in conversations about embedding equity into our work.

Staff also had the opportunity to attend two panels as part of a series called “Equity in Planning.” One of the panels focused on affordable housing in LA County, which you can read more about on [page 65](#), and the other brought together policymakers and academics to discuss queer planning history in June for Pride Month.

DRAFTING A VISION FOR AN EQUITABLE LA COUNTY (WINTER 2023)

In line with keeping the process engaging and recognizing that staff are the true experts, each division hosted in-person Division Workshops in December. In these workshops, staff gathered to envision how we could create an equitable future for the County. Participants filled walls with sticky notes, brainstorming the values that motivate their work and the strategic priorities that might have a big impact in the County over the next several years.

Themes that emerged from this visioning process that would eventually inform the development of the final goals and strategies included:

- **Re-evaluating existing structures and processes to determine whether they are equitable and efficient.** For example, one area of inequity we heard repeatedly, across multiple divisional workshops, was our current permitting and fees structure. There was agreement that some fees were a barrier for lower-income residents or business owners, including what fees are required to build, resulting in code violations and additional costs. One of the strategies that emerged from these discussions now seeks to directly address that disparity (**Goal 3, Strategy 5**).
- **Exploring new ways to engage with the community to better meet the needs of all residents, not just those with the resources (time, money, or otherwise) to navigate complex planning processes.** In evaluating existing structures, staff also talked about the other ways they could improve interactions with the public. One issue consistently brought up was a desire to develop better engagement methods. When staff currently engage with the community on new planning ordinances or policies, divisions often rely on a handful of people to put together materials. Staff brought up the idea that if more people were trained on engagement practices and methods, the workload would not only feel more evenly distributed but staff would gain new experiences working with the public. This sentiment is now reflected in **Goal 3**.

- **Creating a new entry-level position that does not require a four-year degree.** Other discussions, in both the baseline sessions and visioning workshops, focused on LA County Planning’s current hiring practices. Several staff members mentioned how there was once a position in LA County Planning that did not require a four-year degree and asked what it would look like if LA County Planning brought this position back. There was a recognition that four-year college is not available to everyone, but qualified people might still fit into the needs of LA County Planning. This initial idea would lead to the development of Goal 4, which is entirely focused on improving the employee experience and hiring practices.

Following the visioning process, the Core Team worked with the Consulting Team to refine the notes from the workshops and turn them into a draft mission, value, and vision statement. Many of the strategic priorities that staff initially shared were consolidated into five draft goals and supporting strategies.

SHAPING STRATEGIES (FALL-SPRING 2023)

Staff attended a virtual All-Staff Meeting in late February that introduced the draft goals and strategies. The All-Staff Meeting launched the Goal Committees, which were created as an opportunity for all our colleagues to provide input in the development of the Plan. Each of the Goal Committees was led by two or three staff members who served as the primary points of contact for staff to share their ideas and helped coordinate the drafting of materials between LA County Planning and the consulting team. These Goal Committees were a way to make sure staff were involved in both the creation of the Plan and, eventually, future implementation. During the drafting process, more than 60 staff members participated in the Goal Committees and/or drafting strategies, which is especially remarkable considering these contributions were in addition to their day-to-day work.

LA County Planning initially started with over 30 draft strategies across each of the goals. Staff members met virtually throughout March and April to narrow down this list by first filling out worksheets for each of the draft strategies. These worksheets asked a series of questions, including defining success and identifying what the necessary staff resources or budget are to implement it. The worksheets were a way for staff to begin conceptualizing how a problem statement would translate into their day-to-day work. Based on this process, several of the initial strategies were either consolidated or removed.

TRANSITIONING TO IMPLEMENTATION (SUMMER-FALL 2023)

Following the strategy drafting process, the Department came together for another in-person All-Staff Meeting to hear their colleagues present on a few highlighted strategies. Staff also had the opportunity to review then provide feedback on draft materials before the final Strategic Plan was published.

As LA County Planning moved from drafting the strategic plan to implementation, the Department recognized that defining success for the Plan’s first year was an important step in beginning to align resources. Division leadership and Goal Leads each began to identify priorities for implementation in the first year. The planning process culminated in a leadership summit over the summer where the executive team, Division leadership, and goal leads met to begin mapping out the Year-One Action Plan including specific steps that the Department will take to begin implementing the Strategic Plan.



Members of the Sun Village Women's Club in 1965.
Image credit: LA County



A VISION FOR AN EQUITABLE LA COUNTY

THE RESULT OF THIS PROCESS IS A STAFF-LED STRATEGIC PLAN

that will guide LA County Planning in its work to make LA County an equitable place where everyone – regardless of their race, gender, income, or other identities – will have the opportunity to reach their fullest potential.

VISION

LA County Planning will become a nationally recognized leader known for utilizing and developing policies, practices, and other necessary interventions that make unincorporated LA County a racially equitable place.

MISSION

LA County Planning provides equitable planning, development, and engagement for all unincorporated LA County residents and businesses to help create vibrant, sustainable, and resilient communities.

VALUES

- **Collaboration:** Fostering a collaborative environment, both internally and with the public.
- **Heritage:** Building upon a century of meaningful planning work in LA County.
- **Innovation:** Continuously seeking out new ways to address the County's challenges.
- **Service:** Delivering dependable, transparent, and equitable customer support.
- **Stewardship:** Caring for communities and the environment.
- **Equity:** Becoming an inclusive, equitable, and diverse workplace where everyone can succeed.

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Flowers in bloom at the Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve.
Image credit: Mayra B. Vasquez / Los Angeles County



GOALS & STRATEGIES

10-YEAR GOALS & STRATEGIES

#	STRATEGY	DIVISION LEAD(S)	PAGE #
GOAL 1: Address racial inequities found in past and current planning and land use practice by building new systems and policies that embed equity.			
1.1	Update plans and ordinances to address the impact of LA County Planning's past and current planning practices.	AP	58
1.2	Develop an equity impact assessment tool to ensure consistency in analyzing the impact of plans, ordinances, and developments.	AP	60
1.3	Create new internal resources that support community's knowledge about contemporary planning practices or policies.	AP, CP, LUR	62
GOAL 2: Make Los Angeles a safer, better place to live by proactively addressing climate change, housing crises, and other emergent challenges related to environmental justice.			
2.1	Update our General Plan and Zoning Code based on best practices.	AP, CP	66
2.2	Streamline approvals for uses that meet community needs in underserved neighborhoods.	CP	68
2.3	Launch additional mitigation and adaptation policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by identifying new ways to address environmental concerns in communities.	AP	70
GOAL 3: Earn a reputation as a community resource and trusted ally, partnering to design plans and policies that work for communities.			
3.1	Provide ongoing staff training and internal resources on community engagement best practices.	AP, CP, LUR	74
3.2	Create a community relations office that augments engagement, communications, and marketing functions into centralized resources within LA County Planning.	AP, CP, LUR	76
3.3	Coordinate across divisions for fieldwork, site visits, counseling, engagement, and outreach, utilizing the skills and knowledge of each division to better serve community members.	AP, CP, LUR	78
3.4	Establish and maintain a presence in neighborhoods by building relationships with local community partners and providing assistance during the pre-application process.	CP, LUR	80
3.5	Connect residents and business owners to resources that assist with compliance and permitting.	CP, LUR	82

#	STRATEGY	DIVISION LEAD(S)	PAGE #
GOAL 4: Foster a work environment for all staff that promotes equitable professional development and personal growth while building a diverse staff that represents unincorporated LA County.			
4.1	Develop and implement recruitment, hiring, and promotion practices that place greater emphasis on creating a diverse and inclusive Department.	IFS	86
4.2	Formalize the Pilot Mentorship Program to include all employees.	IFS	88
4.3	Establish affinity groups for staff to discuss issues related to their unique identities.	IFS	90
4.4	Provide additional opportunities for professional development.	IFS	92
GOAL 5: Increase financial stability by expanding funding opportunities to support LA County Planning's services and activities.			
5.1	Proactively identify and pursue long-term funding streams for community-serving initiatives beyond the current general fund framework.	IFS	96
5.2	Update LA County Planning's fee schedule and permit requirements to reflect everyday operations and remove unfair barriers.	IFS, CP	98
5.3	Ensure that all submitted recommendations regarding funding priorities and budget allocation are evaluated based on equity metrics.	IFS	100
5.4	Establish a transparent process for the development of Departmental budget requests and the allocation of funds in line with Strategic Plan priorities.	IFS	102



Staff enjoy a moment of fun during the break at the October 2022 All-Staff meeting.
Image credit: HR&A Advisors

HOW TO READ THE STRATEGY DESCRIPTIONS

Each goal has an introduction page, followed by a brief overview for each of the supporting strategies.

GOAL # | STRATEGY

[Strategy Title]

Challenge: What problem does this strategy hope to address?

Solution: Briefly summarizes what this strategy will accomplish. How does this strategy support the associated goal it falls under? What are the steps that the Department will need to take in order to implement this strategy?

Open Questions: What information is still unknown? How does this unknown information impact the short and/or long-term implementation of this strategy?

Lead Division(s)	Which division is primarily responsible for implementing this strategy?
Connection to Other Strategies	What other strategies complement this one?
Action Steps & Timeline	What needs to happen within the first year of this strategy? Within the first two to five years?
Metrics	What are the quantitative metrics LA County Planning will use to track the success of this strategy?
Other Indicators of Success	What are the qualitative metrics LA County Planning will use to track the success of this strategy?
Partners	<p>Essential Partners: Does this strategy's success hinge on another County department or entity?</p> <p>Potential Partners: Are there other organizations or groups that are not essential to the success of the strategy but could still help with implementation?</p>

GOAL 1:

ADDRESS RACIAL INEQUITIES FOUND IN PAST AND CURRENT PLANNING AND LAND USE PRACTICE BY BUILDING NEW SYSTEMS AND POLICIES THAT EMBED EQUITY.

One of the discussions that we believed was central to this strategic planning process was how inequitably developed and implemented urban renewal programs and other historical land use decisions are not simply planning policies that happened in the the past but issues that continue to impact the lives of LA County residents today. Staff approached these conversations in both the Equity Baseline sessions and subsequent workshops with a recognition that while they specifically did not write or implement these policies, LA County Planning’s actions today may still contribute to reinforcing these historical policies (read more about the Equity Baseline sessions on page 43). The discussions from these workshops directly informed the creation of this goal.

The strategies in this section show the different ways that LA County Planning will work on addressing historical wrongs and improving its existing policies to better serve the diverse needs of LA County residents. While other goals of the Strategic Plan approach this mandate by addressing current challenges – like climate change or implementing new ways to engage with the community – creating an equitable LA County cannot happen without also taking a step back to assess how these disparities were created and what we can do to improve how we work with the communities we serve. LA County Planning will work to address past harms and policies through strategies that include developing an equity scorecard to track the Department’s progress on plans, ordinances, and development approvals.



Our land use applications are an example of equality in that it’s the same for everyone. In theory it’s the same application, but if you look at it through an equity lens it is not the same. Some people have means, money, or education and know automatically how to fill it out. Then there’s language barriers, people coming in with paper submittals - the disparity between applications like that really impacts how likely a project, like housing, will get through and approved.”

– Staff Comment from Equity Baseline Session 2



#	STRATEGY	DIVISION LEAD(S)	PAGE #
1.1	Update plans and ordinances to address the impact of LA County's past and current planning practices.	AP	58
1.2	Develop an equity impact assessment tool to ensure consistency in analyzing the impact of plans, ordinances, and developments.	AP	60
1.3	Create new internal resources that support community's knowledge about contemporary planning practices or policies.	AP, CP, LUR	62



The Wall that Speaks, Sings, and Shouts by Paul Botello is part of the Los Angeles County Arts Commission: Civic Art County Collection and is located at the Salazar Park Gym. Image credit: Mayra B. Vasquez / Los Angeles County

GOAL 1 | STRATEGY 1

Update plans and ordinances to address the impact of LA County Planning's past and current planning practices.

Challenge: Past and ongoing planning and land use practices have created harmful barriers to equitable development and sustainability in unincorporated communities. Changes that we would recommend to address these inequities often require changes in other County departments, leading to delays in implementing new plans and ordinances. The social, political, economic, and cultural conditions that affect land use planning require continued evaluation to ensure equitable practice and outcomes are not impeded. The Department has the ability to use policies, including the General Plan and Zoning Code, and its enforcement powers, to remove some of the structural barriers to racial equity.

Solution: During the Equity Baseline sessions, staff learned about and discussed the historical racial inequities built into how this country and region thought about planning and development. However, it is not enough to simply acknowledge that something happened but rather begin to look at what LA County Planning can do today to make our policies equitable. The first step is to institutionalize the acknowledgments that land use planning is a deliberate action that may benefit some groups over others, which LA County Planning began with the Baseline sessions and will continue to reinforce through additional trainings.

The Department must then establish a baseline of where inequities exist within LA County Planning's past and current policies or ordinances, by first identifying policies that the Department can independently amend (without consulting other agencies). The Department can then assess inequities within those policy areas and document recommended changes.

Once the Department has identified what it can directly impact, it should then prioritize where additional collaboration with other County departments is required: and then develop similar recommendations for removing or updating inequitable Department policies. Part of updating the County's code and policies will also include working with residents through a parallel community engagement process.

Open Questions: One policy area that LA County Planning can immediately begin to assess is its approach to land use and zoning studies, which historically have fostered the status quo and/or had inequitable consequences for disadvantaged communities. If LA County Planning were to amend its zoning code, how would this impact other departments' practices and what is required of these departments to ensure there are no roadblocks?

Lead Division(s)	Advance Planning		
Connection to Other Strategies	2.1 Update our General Plan and Zoning Code based on best practices. 3.5 Connect residents and business owners to resources that assist with compliance and permitting.		
Action Steps & Timeline	<p>First Year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify unincorporated communities that have historically been negatively affected by planning decisions of land use, freeway building, zoning, among others. Create a working group to look at what policies LA County Planning will need to update to address inequities. Identify countywide indicators of equitable development. Identify contextually important data on harmful land use practices, engaged stakeholders, and historically affected communities. Gain insights from staff and public on what they would like planning to do to identify policies and provisions which relate to harms. <p>2-5 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use surveys, workshops, listening sessions, and interactive mapping to get input from communities that were identified as negatively affected by county, state, and/or federal planning policies. Identify the funding, staffing, and programs necessary to update the zoning code, internal policies and practices, and any related educational campaigns. Determine best approach to updating the zoning code to address inequities or needs of communities affected by planning decisions on land use, freeway building, among others. Determine if countywide code changes, adoption of community-based plans, or development of Community Standards Districts (CSDs) are necessary. <p>6-10 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor progress and outcomes of new zoning code changes, community plan changes, or CSDs in affected unincorporated communities to ensure equitable development is underway. Engage communities in long range planning activities. 		
Metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced code violations based on zoning standards that were inequitable. Number of outreach meetings; number of inequitable or discriminatory zoning regulations that were changed. 		
Other Indicators of Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutionalized Departmental acknowledgement of land use planning as a deliberate action with potentially harmful societal outcomes. Reduced perception of gentrification – existing community members feel as though changes in their neighborhood are built around their needs rather than attracting higher-income individuals. Higher rates of homeownership and small businesses. 		
Partners	<table border="0"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p>Essential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p>Potential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board of Supervisors, LA County Development Authority Department of Parks and Recreation Department of Public Works Department of Public Health LA County Fire Department County Counsel </td> </tr> </table>	<p>Essential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<p>Potential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board of Supervisors, LA County Development Authority Department of Parks and Recreation Department of Public Works Department of Public Health LA County Fire Department County Counsel
<p>Essential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<p>Potential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board of Supervisors, LA County Development Authority Department of Parks and Recreation Department of Public Works Department of Public Health LA County Fire Department County Counsel 		

GOAL 1 | STRATEGY 2

Develop an equity impact assessment tool to ensure consistency in analyzing the impact of plans, ordinances, and developments.

Challenge: LA County Planning needs a consistent way of capturing existing barriers to embedding equity within plans, policies, and ordinances. Without this assessment, it is harder to identify policies and regulations that continue to reinforce racial or economic disparities. One example of this is limited affordable housing in communities like Florence-Firestone. In the absence of inclusionary housing requirements, developers have instead built market-rate or luxury projects, which pushes long-term residents out of their homes and contributes to displacement. There are other, subtler ways LA County Planning's existing code reinforces inequity, such as imposing fence heights or tree planting requirements that could result in development projects otherwise positively contributing to neighborhoods, getting denied.

Solution: In parallel with the work of Strategy 1.1, which charges LA County Planning to evaluate its existing policies, the Department will also develop an impact assessment matrix that provides a method for judging whether plans, policies, and ordinances are advancing the vision of an equitable LA County. Creating the matrix will help identify what adjustments are necessary to ensure that LA County Planning's plans, policies, and ordinances align with current climate, housing, and equity goals. Initial actions include identifying contextually significant issues that have caused harm and then determining ways to measure them.

The matrix will set a benchmark of what LA County Planning's current policies are and what the desired outcome is. For example, if during development of the matrix, analysis identifies that certain low-income neighborhoods disproportionately receive code violations, then the desired outcome of this assessment will be to reduce overall violations, particularly in those communities. The equity impact tool would also include an equity index that identifies places, historically impacted communities, important stakeholders, and methods to eliminate the harm of planning practices.

Open Questions: Which identified equity metrics components fall within or outside of LA County Planning's capacity to address systemic change? What is the Department's capacity to impact the equity components that fall outside of LA County Planning but are important to bring about changes to decisions in planning?

Lead Division(s)	Advance Planning
Connection to Other Strategies	<p>3.2 Create a community relations office that augments engagement, communications, and marketing functions into centralized resources within LA County Planning.</p> <p>3.3 Coordinate across divisions for fieldwork, site visits, counseling, engagement, and outreach, utilizing the skills and knowledge of each division to better serve community members.</p>
Action Steps & Timeline	<p>First Year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop guidance on using the Equity Indicators Tool to inform staff recommendations on projects, and develop language in the General Plan to support this practice. • Review work done by other jurisdictions on addressing harms. <p>2-5 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informed by the guidance developed in Year 1, determine if any additional tools or measures are needed to quantify and analyze causes of harm as they relate to planning policies and regulations. • Identify and begin to develop new systems and policies that embed equity. <p>6-10 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise the equity impact tool to continue making progress in eliminating inequities of past planning practices and in building equitable systems and policies.
Metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of zoning code changes adopted that removed/eliminated an inequity. • Number of CSDs adopted that removed an inequity standard. • Number of community plans adopted that changed an inequitable policy.
Other Indicators of Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More letters and vocal support for LA County Planning’s policies and new ordinances at public hearings from residents and community-based organizations (CBOs) that advocate for disadvantaged populations.
Partners	<p>Essential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-governmental partners that serve disadvantaged populations <p>Potential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government entities outside of the County like Governor’s Office of Planning and Research’s Integrated Climate Adaptation & Resiliency Program (ICARP) and the Governor’s Office of Tribal Affairs • Consultants and CBOs to provide expertise in specific communities

GOAL 1 | STRATEGY 3

Create new internal resources that support community's knowledge about contemporary planning practices or policies.

Challenge: There is no formalized process for LA County Planning staff to work across divisions to develop inclusive ordinances and regulations. Some sections within LA County Planning will regularly collaborate and coordinate, but this is done on a case-by-case basis. Division and section heads meet on a consistent basis, but sometimes information that is discussed in these meetings about what is happening in LA County Planning is not communicated to the rest of staff. The result is either the uncoordinated approval of new ordinances and/or non-management staff being unsure what new programs or policies are happening in other divisions. This means both Departmental staff and community members are missing important information about planning updates in their community.

Solution: LA County Planning will develop a cross-divisional and inclusive process that focuses on consistently sharing policy, program, and ordinance updates with staff. The first part of this process is to create a working group or task force made up of both managerial and line staff across the three planning divisions. The working group will initially focus on a specific area of planning – ordinance development – to pilot what an inter-divisional collaboration and internal communication process should include. This will begin by developing criteria for what would warrant cross-divisional collaboration and what is necessary to share out versus what can remain internal to the section or division. Creating criteria for working across divisions will ensure that information is shared consistently rather than at the discretion of an individual. Through incorporating broad perspectives from staff of all divisions, LA County Planning can achieve better implementation outcomes, including measuring the success or challenges such policies have in terms of impacting unincorporated communities and businesses. This will improve the community's experience by making sure information is no longer siloed. Improving our internal systems and supporting cross-divisional collaboration will result in improved outcomes for residents by making sure LA County Planning staff - regardless of their division - know what is happening in a community they serve.

Open Questions: What have other departments done to implement similar systems for sharing information internally? How can we build operational effectiveness given that the strategy requires cross-divisional collaboration?

Lead Division(s)	Advance Planning; Current Planning; Land Use Regulation
Connection to Other Strategies	3.3 Coordinate across divisions for fieldwork, site visits, counseling, engagement, and outreach, utilizing the skills and knowledge of each division to better serve community members.
Action Steps & Timeline	<p>First Year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a general task force or subject/project-specific working group to work collaboratively on ordinance development from data collection and ordinance drafting, all the way through to implementation and analyzing success. • Inform adoption process as per the mandated legal process. <p>2-5 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate success of ordinance development working group by sending a survey or other feedback collection method to staff. • Implement other working groups based on where there are other areas for more formalized cross-divisional coordination and communication. • Share information and best practices outside of the working group. <p>6-10 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure continuation of the policy by training new staff at all levels to participate in the process.
Metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of cross-divisional working group meetings. • Increased staff awareness of pending/ongoing projects, programs, efforts, etc. and how it impacts their work.
Other Indicators of Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved knowledge of updated policies for both staff and the community.
Partners	<p>Essential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-based groups and organizations <p>Potential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Councils • Community associations

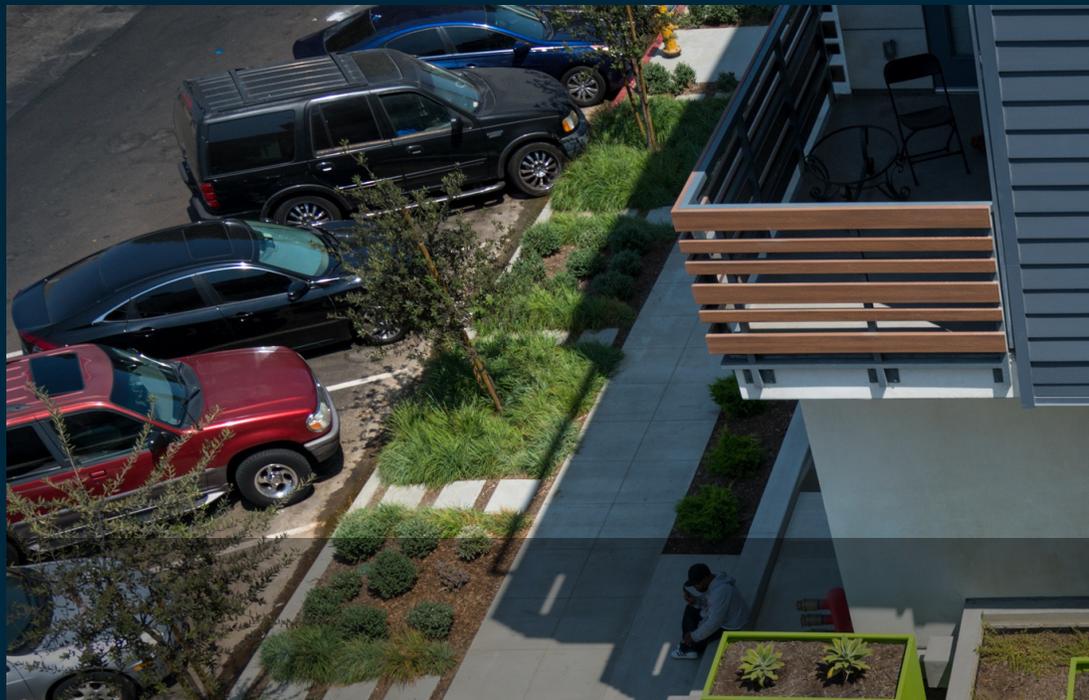
GOAL 2:

MAKE LOS ANGELES A SAFER, BETTER PLACE TO LIVE BY PROACTIVELY ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE, HOUSING CRISES, AND OTHER EMERGENT CHALLENGES RELATED TO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE.

LA County Planning’s work to make LA County a safer, better place to live is already ongoing, including by updating the Housing Element and implementing the 2045 Climate Action Plan. Whereas Goal 1 addresses past practices and policies, this Goal builds on existing LA County Planning programs and plans and asks: how can LA County Planning go even further? What are some of the County’s pressing planning challenges, and what role does LA County Planning want to have in changing those policies?

The strategies that support this goal do not replace existing programs, but instead push LA County Planning to become more proactive about how it can change its policies to address a community’s most urgent needs. The strategies in this section will help LA County Planning address these gaps to achieve its vision of an equitable county.

#	STRATEGY	DIVISION LEAD(S)	PAGE #
2.1	Update our General Plan and Zoning Code based on best practices.	AP, CP	66
2.2	Streamline approvals for uses that meet community needs in underserved neighborhoods.	CP	68
2.3	Launch additional mitigation and adaptation policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by identifying new ways to address environmental concerns in communities.	AP	70



HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS PANEL

The Southern California region is facing a housing affordability and homelessness crisis. In recent years, rising housing costs and instability have worsened inequity within the County. Of the households in unincorporated LA County that earn less than \$30,000, 85 percent spend 50 percent or more of their income on rent. In January 2023, the LA Homeless Services Authority counted over 75,000 unhoused individuals in LA County. These two data points alone show that this is an unprecedented challenge that will require bold solutions.

This strategic planning process, grounded in racial equity, has so far focused largely on the work that this Department does internally. LA County Planning is already involved in the policy conversations about housing and homelessness through efforts like the Housing Element and updated housing ordinances that support homelessness mitigation initiatives but this strategic plan unlocks the opportunity to consider if there are other ways LA County Planning can work with other County Departments and partners to play a more active role in creating solutions.

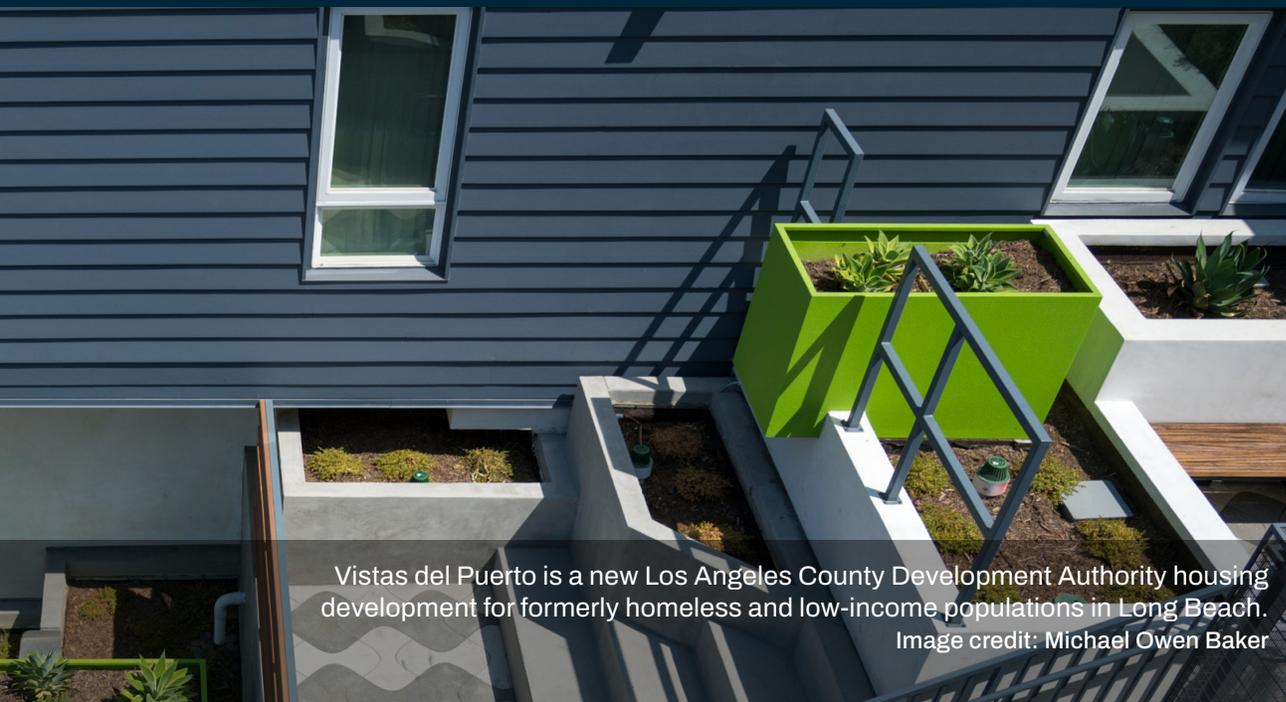
In March 2023, the consultant team hosted a webinar to discuss housing affordability and homelessness issues affecting our region. LA County Planning staff were invited to listen in and join the conversation about how the Department can play more of a role externally, not only on housing and homelessness but on other topics that the Strategic Plan have identified. The panel brought together some of LA County's most innovative and engaged policymakers, activists, and advocates to help LA County Planning start to imagine what that role might look like. The Housing and Homelessness panel included:

Perlita Carrillo from Brilliant Corners, a nationally recognized nonprofit service provider that administers a subsidy program that rapidly houses and provides wraparound support for thousands of people exiting homelessness each year;

Nicky Viola from Shelter Partnership, which works to solve homelessness in LA County through policy analysis, program design, and advocacy;

Lupita Gonzalez from the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment, a statewide nonprofit and community organization that advances tenants' rights and protections; and

Doug Smith, from Public Counsel, an organization that works on policy advocacy and coalition building within the legal system.



Vistas del Puerto is a new Los Angeles County Development Authority housing development for formerly homeless and low-income populations in Long Beach. Image credit: Michael Owen Baker

GOAL 2 | STRATEGY 1

Update our General Plan and Zoning Code based on best practices.

Challenge: The County's current General Plan and Zoning Code do not reflect contemporary socioeconomic or environmental concerns, including more frequent extreme weather events and rising costs of living. While specific sections within LA County Planning are working to address planning inequities within unincorporated LA County, these efforts are not shared or consistently communicated amongst staff. This creates silos, which limits opportunities for collaboration to address challenges in climate mitigation, transportation, affordable housing, or other systemic inequities residents might experience in unincorporated LA County. As LA County Planning begins changing its Zoning Code and General Plan, it must consider not only how to address these gaps in communication but also how it can work together to ensure these changes create better outcomes for unincorporated LA County residents.

Solution: LA County Planning can play a role by proactively amending its Zoning Code to reflect the future needs of unincorporated residents. Updating the Code will require building staff's knowledge about current internal initiatives and best practices. It is important to proactively prepare ourselves because staff cannot work towards changing or updating the code or other policies if they do not know what is currently happening. Ideas for sharing ongoing work within LA County Planning include "lunch and learn" virtual meetings, where a division can share a specific policy or program before facilitating a discussion about opportunities for collaboration.

Once a baseline level of knowledge is established, LA County Planning will then begin to assess where changes and updates are necessary. Accomplishing this assessment will range from partnering with other County departments to see where there is policy alignment or potential for collaboration, to updating permit development standards that align with best practices for resilience. Identifying what needs to change with the code also includes working more with local communities to understand their unique needs, educating the public about available resources, or providing updates on new policies, which aligns with Goal 3 (page 72).

Open Questions: What are other Departments within the County doing to advance climate change, transportation, and/or housing policies, and how can this strategy ensure this work is additive rather than duplicative? What are national best practices we can learn from other cities and counties?

Lead Division(s)	Advance Planning; Current Planning
Connection to Other Strategies	<p>1.1 Update plans and ordinances to address the impact of LA County Planning’s past and current planning practices.</p> <p>3.3 Coordinate across divisions for fieldwork, site visits, counseling, engagement, and outreach, utilizing the skills and knowledge of each division to better serve community members.</p>
Action Steps & Timeline	<p>First Year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an education “lunch and learn” program for staff to increase their knowledge on climate, housing, and equity. • Consolidate existing knowledge about the specific challenges unincorporated communities are facing into a centralized location so that information on LA County Planning’s housing, climate, and transportation work is easily accessible to all Department staff. • Use the equity matrix (outlined further on page 60) to build LA County Planning’s understanding of how existing code and/or policies can address climate change, housing affordability, and other emergent issues. <p>2-5 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish metrics for future years. • Support ongoing community engagement work to educate residents on available resources and updated policies. • Update permit development standards to align and support resilience efforts. • Annually assess number of submitted and approved permits that address specific climate and/or housing concerns (e.g., number of solar rooftops installed). • Work with other County Departments to implement new policies that support electric vehicles (i.e. require certain housing types or new construction to install charging). <p>6-10 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to update and revise internal resources highlighting ongoing resilience and housing policy efforts.
Metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County meets annual housing and climate action targets. • Increased number of permits that proactively address housing affordability or climate change (e.g., installation of rooftop solar panels; number of housing units approved). • Increased number of internal trainings and workshops offered for staff to learn more.
Other Indicators of Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities become more knowledgeable about LA County Planning policies and programs.
Partners	<p>Essential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Parks and Recreation • Department of Public Health • Department of Public Works • Chief Sustainability Office <p>Potential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Councils • Community associations • Community-based organizations

GOAL 2 | STRATEGY 2

Streamline approvals for uses that meet community needs in underserved neighborhoods.

Challenge: Low-income areas often have limited access to affordable housing and healthy food due to a combination of factors. Housing developers are less likely to invest in an area where they are unable to charge the necessary rents to achieve financially feasible returns. Developers are also unlikely to invest in a grocery store in low-income areas, in part due to their low profit margins and high property or insurance costs in dense urban areas, as well as the presence (real or perceived) of crime.

Solution: LA County Planning can implement flexible land use policies that require minimal review from planning staff to encourage property owners to address existing limitations to affordable housing and food access. Potential strategies regarding food security could include requiring liquor stores and other retail uses to add grocery or deli components, or creating criteria for food security-based incentives for new developments (e.g., incorporation of co-op/“dark kitchens”). Housing strategies could include determining whether restrictions for hotels/boarding houses can be reduced if affordable housing is included, or further encouraging adaptive reuse of buildings.

LA County Planning must create clear and understandable policies, and provide direct assistance to stakeholders to help them navigate potential changes in existing land use policies. The successful implementation of this strategy would result in local businesses and developers having a streamlined approach to adding much needed resources to historically marginalized communities. This strategy also helps lay the foundation for LA County Planning to work with residents to identify and solve other pressing challenges in their community (e.g., access to healthcare, childcare).

Open Questions: How will LA County Planning work together across divisions to ensure community needs are accurately captured? What communities are at risk for food insecurity and/or housing insecurity? What about asking the communities what they need? Who is to be ‘trusted’?

Lead Division(s)	Current Planning	
Connection to Other Strategies	<p>1.1 Update plans and ordinances to address the impact of LA County Planning’s past and current planning practices.</p> <p>1.2 Develop an equity impact assessment tool to ensure consistency in analyzing the impact of plans, ordinances, and developments.</p> <p>3.5 Connect residents and business owners to resources that assist with compliance and permitting.</p> <p>5.2 Update LA County Planning’s fee schedule and permit requirements to reflect everyday operations and remove unfair barriers.</p>	
Action Steps & Timeline	<p>First Year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize a working group made up of at least four people (one from each division) to begin developing future steps. Study existing code and local area policies in comparison with the needs of each community. Identify potential funding/grant sources and community partners. Conduct a survey with local businesses to determine what accessory uses were challenging to apply to a ministerial approval process. <p>2-5 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete a draft ordinance and/or code overhaul. Expand partnerships with relevant County Departments. Explore developing guidelines for discretionary permits that consider our food and housing policy work. <p>6-10 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inventory permits and entitlements directly tied to the policy changes to evaluate effectiveness and/or whether additional updates are required. Conduct an additional survey with local businesses to assess if there are other accessory uses that LA County Planning can encourage them to implement. 	
Metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased access to healthy food. Number of legal hotels and boarding houses. Increased number of administrative approvals between application and approval or between Base-Application submittal and official application approval (excluding CUPs/discretionary approvals). Improved turnaround times for applications in underserved communities. 	
Other Indicators of Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased community engagement and knowledge on available resources and programs. 	
Partners	<p>Essential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<p>Potential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LA County Development Authority Department of Public Health LA County Fire Department Department of Public Works Treasurer and Tax Collector CBOs

GOAL 2 | STRATEGY 3

Launch additional mitigation and adaptation policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by identifying new ways to address environmental concerns in communities.

Challenge: LA County Planning currently has several climate change and mitigation efforts under way but needs additional resources, particularly around data collection and analysis, to ensure these initiatives or programs are implemented and achieve their desired goals.

Solution: Building upon the Climate Action Plan 2045 and Safety Element Update, LA County Planning will review and plan for short-term, medium-term, and long-term changes in the built and natural environments. LA County Planning can accomplish this in three phases: (1) identify mitigation and adaptation efforts that could reduce greenhouse gas emissions and respond to climate change's harmful effects; (2) clearly articulate what the required regulations and policies are to appropriately address those identified efforts; and (3) implement the regulations and policies. Taking a sharper focus on data collection can help LA County Planning actively address the localized effects of climate change – such as urban heat island conditions or increased insurance costs in high-risk areas – on specific communities (adaptation) as well as take evidence-based actions to reduce regional contributions to the global climate problem (mitigation).

Open Questions: How will LA County Planning ensure it has access to reliable, current data to track progress? What are ways LA County Planning can work with communities to mitigate potential community pushback around topics like building out renewable energy systems or streamlining development?

Lead Division(s)	Advance Planning		
Connection to Other Strategies	N/A		
Action Steps & Timeline	<p>First Year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify appropriate mitigation and adaptation efforts through workshops, research, and conversations with policymakers in the region, nationally, and/or internally on best practices. • Map projected effects of climate change in unincorporated LA County. • Establish a department-wide working group on climate change. • Review climate-related actions and initiatives from other County departments. <p>2-5 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Climate Action Plan 2045 and Safety Element Update. • Develop a plan for expanding utility and small-scale solar production, enabling small-scale wind production and community microgrids, and expanding renewable energy storage capacity, with an emphasis on tying these resources to affordable housing and underserved communities. • Review and update projected maps of climate effects on an annual basis. • Connect these efforts to project mitigation measures. <p>6-10 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and compare short-term projections from inception of the Strategic Plan to current levels. • Continue to refine and adapt policies based on changing/emerging needs. 		
Metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve CAP target of a CO2e emissions reduction to 40%. • Increased adoption of regulations that facilitate renewable energy production and storage. • Improved air quality. 		
Other Indicators of Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities that can withstand climate change related events. • More walkable and transit-oriented communities. 		
Partners	<table border="0"> <tr> <td> <p>Essential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Works • Building and Safety </td> <td> <p>Potential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County Public Health, Office of Environmental Justice • Federal agencies (e.g. U.S. Forest Service) • Policy groups and nonprofits (e.g. Tree People; Green Building Council, Clean Power Alliance) • CA Energy Commission • State/Governor's office • Chief Sustainability Office • Internal Services Department </td> </tr> </table>	<p>Essential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Works • Building and Safety 	<p>Potential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County Public Health, Office of Environmental Justice • Federal agencies (e.g. U.S. Forest Service) • Policy groups and nonprofits (e.g. Tree People; Green Building Council, Clean Power Alliance) • CA Energy Commission • State/Governor's office • Chief Sustainability Office • Internal Services Department
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GOAL 3:

EARN A REPUTATION AS A COMMUNITY RESOURCE AND TRUSTED ALLY, PARTNERING TO DESIGN PLANS AND POLICIES THAT WORK FOR COMMUNITIES.

As staff began talking about addressing past planning policies or contemporary challenges in the Equity Baseline sessions, it became clear that our work in creating an equitable county needed to include a focus on working more closely with communities. LA County Planning is already taking steps to improve engagement through efforts like the language access tool, which lets staff know the major languages in a community so they can produce printed materials or hire a translator, but staff shared during the Equity Baseline sessions and future workshops that they would like to go even further.

Language access and communication are major points of inequity in the County's public outreach efforts. LA County Planning needs to ensure that County residents have a clear understanding of what is happening and changing in their communities. One way of doing this is by expanding materials and content to include other languages spoken in LA County. English, Spanish, and Mandarin are not sufficient when Tagalog, Armenian, Korean, and Japanese are also widely used. In addition, not all communities get their information directly from LA County Planning; therefore, the Department must think of ways to connect with groups whose primary sources of information about neighborhood developments are local organizations like churches and community centers.

The strategies in this section outline how LA County Planning will achieve its goal of becoming a trusted community resource and ally. This will begin with an assessment of LA County Planning's existing engagement efforts and creating a process where engagement resources are developed with specific community needs in mind. The strategy that represents perhaps the biggest departure from how LA County Planning currently operates is reimagining the current functions of the Land Use Regulation division and how it can play an education-focused role in the community rather than serving primarily as an enforcer.



#	STRATEGY	DIVISION LEAD(S)	PAGE #
3.1	Provide ongoing staff training and internal resources on community engagement best practices.	AP, CP, LUR	74
3.2	Create a community relations office that augments engagement, communications, and marketing functions into centralized resources within LA County Planning.	AP, CP, LUR	76
3.3	Coordinate across divisions for fieldwork, site visits, counseling, engagement, and outreach, utilizing the skills and knowledge of each division to better serve community members.	AP, CP, LUR	78
3.4	Establish and maintain a presence in neighborhoods by building relationships with local community partners and providing assistance during the pre-application process.	CP, LUR	80
3.5	Connect residents and business owners to resources that assist with compliance and permitting.	CP, LUR	82



LA County Planning came together in April to hear about how staff can work more in communities.
Image credit: LA County Planning

GOAL 3 | STRATEGY 1

Provide ongoing staff training and internal resources on community engagement best practices.

Challenge: Staff identified during the Equity Baseline sessions that LA County Planning needs additional training and skill development to support communities in a way that responds more to local needs rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. The current approach relies on leveraging a limited number of staff who are seen as “experts” in engagement by their peers but without any formal way to train others.

Solution: Effectively engaging with the community and maintaining a strong relationship requires consistent, accessible communication that avoids planning or procedural jargon. Becoming a valuable resource and ally for the community is not something that happens instantly but rather over time. Part of this work begins with all staff – both planners and non-planners – receiving training in engagement, outreach, and presenting to the public in various settings. In the early stages of this strategy, LA County Planning needs to identify best practices in public outreach and begin leveraging existing engagement “experts” within the Department to share knowledge, tips, and resources. Investing the time and resources in improving how LA County Planning trains staff in engagement techniques will ultimately result in residents having more knowledge of what is happening in their communities.

Open Questions: Does LA County Planning need a formal training program or is this something that already exists but is currently not utilized? What would an effective training program or resources need to include?



There’s too much of an expectation for planners to be community outreach experts; we’re also often asked to do so without getting the necessary resources and funding.”

– Staff Comment from Equity Baseline Session 2

Lead Division(s)	Advance Planning; Current Planning; Land Use Regulation
Connection to Other Strategies	<p>1.3 Create new internal resources that support community’s knowledge about contemporary planning practices or policies.</p> <p>4.4 Provide additional opportunities for professional development.</p>
Action Steps & Timeline	<p>First Year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify existing effective training courses in County Learning Link. • Provide planning staff with training courses ranging from social media outreach and communications to conducting public hearings and stakeholder workshops. • Arrange funding to appoint staff who will carry out the program in the short and long term. • Analyze the effective outreach strategies to then implement community engagement tools serving across divisions. <p>2-5 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and enlist locally successful outreach, engagement, grant-writing, and effective communicating trainings. • Engage executive management to encourage staff to take trainings. • Ensure all trained staff have the opportunity to participate in community engagement events. • Maintain database of community feedback, stakeholders, and leaders. <p>6-10 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish long-term engagement training avenues for all staff. • Review and enhance the engagement tools, outreach databases, and community feedback material to improve public service.
Metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of diverse trainings staff are taking. • Annually updated database of community leaders and stakeholders to measure community engagement effort. • Improved community feedback on the Department’s outreach efforts.
Other Indicators of Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved Department-community relationship, based on review of collected community feedback.
Partners	<p>Essential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A <p>Potential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American Planning Association • Dedicated outreach staff from other LA County departments • Informational training from other government entities • CBOs

GOAL 3 | STRATEGY 2

Create a community relations office that augments engagement, communications, and marketing functions into centralized resources within LA County Planning.

Challenge: Consistency in outreach efforts is needed to improve transparency and accountability. To advance the mission of the Department and provide the public with a better understanding of the planning process, LA County Planning needs to establish a coordinated communications process and build engagement strategies that share the overall department's goals and vision.

Solution: LA County Planning needs to create a centralized team that communicates with the public and trains staff on engagement best practices. While the goal is to one day create a new section that functions as an 'external affairs' lead for LA County Planning, securing the funding for this position is outside of the Department's direct power. Until additional resources are secured, the strategy's preliminary stage will consist of setting up a committee with representatives from all divisions who will develop a communications framework. The group will begin by evaluating the existing communications efforts within internal and public-facing documents, like the website or other engagement materials. In the later stages of implementation, dedicated personnel will lead a coordinated effort for all community relations in specific geographies, which will include planners, graphic artists, and communications professionals.

Open Questions: What are the costs related to setting up additional positions, trainings, and marketing material? What are the most relevant training programs and project coordination software for long-term sustenance of this strategy?

Lead Division(s)	Advance Planning; Current Planning; Land Use Regulation; Information & Fiscal Services
Connection to Other Strategies	5.1 Proactively identify and pursue long-term funding streams for community-serving initiatives beyond the current general fund framework.
Action Steps & Timeline	<p>First Year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up the committee in charge of developing the framework for the future section by evaluating the current and past efforts. • Analyze the communications housed in the current The Planners Zone (TPZ) website. List the gaps in the resources provided on the website. • Use this as a comprehensive content management springboard and platform for all engagements. <p>2-5 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up certain tools that will help establish lead personnel and tasks. • Create internal procedures to help identify who will lead tasks. • Update new TPZ website to ensure information is always available. • Organize and structure all events and training for supporting community engagement. • Re-evaluate if there is a need for a new section and budgeted positions. <p>6-10 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish dedicated personnel within the new section responsible for community relations in specific geographies. The section could consist of planners, graphic artists, and communications professionals.
Metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased visual aids and other alternative engagement tools at community events. • Increased engagement strategies with formal guidelines and procedures in place that the staff are trained and equipped to use for community events. • Increased social media and website engagement.
Other Indicators of Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent outreach for staff and community efforts, evaluated by reviewing post-event survey feedback.
Partners	<p>Essential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A <p>Potential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private firms that specialize in graphic design, marketing, etc. • Private firms to provide training and estimates for the costs of such positions

GOAL 3 | STRATEGY 3

Coordinate across divisions for fieldwork, site visits, counseling, engagement, and outreach, utilizing the skills and knowledge of each division to better serve community members.

Challenge: LA County Planning is currently siloed, with divisions – or even sections within a division – not knowing what each other is working on. When staff are not communicating with each other, it can result in planning fatigue or worse, frustration from the public that their concerns addressed during one team’s public outreach efforts are not acknowledged during another engagement process.

Solution: To improve customer service in LA County, LA County Planning will develop a framework to enhance collaboration and communication across all three planning divisions. The early stages of implementing the framework will include establishing a method that provides a clear sense of direction to all staff on their expected roles to enhance collaboration and communication. Ideas for cross-collaboration might include a shared calendar of upcoming outreach events, and spreadsheets tracking all comments on plans/ordinance reviews.

Open Questions: Since improving customer service is the long-term goal through cross-divisional collaboration, what are the major concerns raised by community members about community participation experiences that could be improved through collaboration?

Lead Division(s)	Advance Planning; Current Planning; Land Use Regulation
Connection to Other Strategies	1.3 Create new internal resources that support community's knowledge about contemporary planning practices or policies.
Action Steps & Timeline	<p>First Year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing collaboration efforts and develop a cross-divisional framework to strengthen interactions. The framework will find projects, define tools to measure collaboration, create a tangible methodology for specific projects, and encourage section heads to make engagement strategies a standing topic in meetings with the public. <p>2-5 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a cross-divisional approach for sharing public meetings and updates with the public. <p>6-10 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue implementing framework by enhancing steps and reassess the framework if needed.
Metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of cross-divisional field visits or counseling. Increased number of cross-divisional meetings with community groups.
Other Indicators of Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better perception of LA County Planning staff through analysis of public comments regarding the increased presence of LA County Planning staff in the community. Better engagements by nontraditional community members in county planning affairs. Better relationship between LA County Planning and the communities through increased interactions.
Partners	<p>Essential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A <p>Potential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocacy groups and other community groups Department of Public Works Department of Public Health LA County Fire Department Department of Consumer and Business Affairs

GOAL 3 | STRATEGY 4

Establish and maintain a presence in neighborhoods by building relationships with local community partners and providing assistance during the pre-application process.

Challenge: Constituents who have the time, money, and/or English language skills to navigate various application processes are often – unintentionally or not – prioritized by LA County Planning over those who do not, resulting in inequitable access to resources and support. Existing customer service hours, limited staffing, and online requirements are inequitable to those community members who do not have the knowledge, time, or resources to hire someone to submit an on-line application on their behalf.

Solution: Developing a stronger relationship with community groups will result in a planning process where historically excluded communities will have greater access to resources on par with well-resourced community members. One way LA County Planning can achieve this is through pre-application counseling, which formalizes and expands existing efforts by staff in Planning and other County departments to provide more transparent information to constituents in languages they understand, without jargon, and with a full picture of what their proposals could cost so that they can make informed decisions before submitting applications to the County. The County can also extend its available hours and days, accept paper applications, and provide the resources to do pre-application counseling at the field offices.

Open Questions: How will community partners receive compensation for their time? How does this strategy connect with larger County efforts?

Lead Division(s)	Current Planning; Land Use Regulation
Connection to Other Strategies	<p>1.3 Create new internal resources that support community's knowledge about contemporary planning practices or policies.</p> <p>3.5 Connect residents and business owners to resources that assist with compliance and permitting.</p>
Action Steps & Timeline	<p>First Year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish list of community partners and determine where there are gaps. • Determine necessary staffing and funding needed for pre-counseling services. • Communicate with other County departments to understand where their outreach and community education efforts are at, as well as any gaps. <p>2-5 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch pilot program and re-evaluate each year. • Train and/or hire new staff on new methods. <p>6-10 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate lessons learned from the pilot phases and continue to re-evaluate/innovate.
Metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of applications go from RPAP to RPPL. • Increased number of community meetings attended. • Increased number of meetings in historically disadvantaged communities.
Other Indicators of Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constituents know they are part of the County/live in unincorporated LA County. • Improved/stronger relationships with communities.
Partners	<p>Essential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Public Works • Department of Public Health <p>Potential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town councils • Community coordinating councils • HOAs, other community groups • Religious organizations/groups • Department of Consumer and Business Affairs • Department of Economic Opportunity

GOAL 3 | STRATEGY 5

Connect residents and business owners to resources that assist with compliance and permitting.

Challenge: Property and business owners with code violations sometimes fail to achieve compliance not because they don't know or care, but rather because actions needed to meet code requirements are cost-prohibitive.

Solution: The proposed strategy will identify resources and partnerships within the government and community that LA County Planning can connect to residents and business owners to assist with abating violations. Funding should be identified for property owners/business operators to have the opportunity to obtain grants for new projects to meet current zoning requirements, for abating code violations, and for proactive preparation of properties for climate change impacts.

Open Questions: What grants are available and how will LA County Planning manage and/or keep track of that information? What resources are available and how to track, especially financial resources that vary by political administrations? How do we not duplicate work done by the County's 211 LA program?

Lead Division(s)	Current Planning, Land Use Regulation
Connection to Other Strategies	<p>1.3 Create new internal resources that support community's knowledge about contemporary planning practices or policies.</p> <p>2.2 Streamline approvals for uses that meet community needs in underserved neighborhoods.</p>
Action Steps & Timeline	<p>First Year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research existing grant resources (county, state, federal). • Identify contacts and make connections with other Departments that have grant resources. <p>2-5 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop outreach information. • Research and develop informational handouts on projected monetary costs. • Develop a program to assist property owners/business operations in applying for grants by collaborating with other Departments. • Start a pilot program. <p>6-10 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a funding source and develop a grant program led by LA County Planning.
Metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of cases with assistance program, grant, or financing applications submitted by qualifying property owners. • Increased number of completed projects that received assistance. • Higher percentage of approved projects are built.
Other Indicators of Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved relationships with constituents.
Partners	<p>Essential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Los Angeles County Development Authority • Department of Economic Opportunity • Board of Supervisors <p>Potential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community groups • Small business training programs • Department of Consumer and Business Affairs

GOAL 4:

FOSTER A WORK ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL STAFF THAT PROMOTES EQUITABLE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PERSONAL GROWTH WHILE BUILDING A DIVERSE STAFF THAT REPRESENTS UNINCORPORATED LA COUNTY.

As LA County Planning begins to shift how it will support a more diverse and equitable LA County, this will also require changes in how the Department hires, trains, and promotes staff, and in how staff continue to grow professionally and connect with each other. LA County Planning started this work through the Equity Baseline sessions earlier in the strategic planning process. This involved building a shared understanding of how diversity, equity, and inclusion – as well as power, privilege, and oppression – impact individuals and people working together in teams or within society at large. The Equity Baseline sessions also created safe spaces for staff to discuss difficult issues with one another – in the first two meetings, management-level staff were separated from all other staff so that people could speak more freely. One of the themes that emerged during these workshops was that LA County Planning needs to do more to help improve the staff experience.

Staff noted that the training of new hires – and continued training of tenured staff – is not well structured. Staff have expressed disappointment that LA County Planning has phased out various elements of training over the years. Cross-training was a popular program that allowed people to become familiar with LA County Planning as a whole and familiarize themselves with the work of their colleagues.

Many also expressed a desire for a new mentorship program to fill in these gaps. Over the course of three months during the strategic planning process, LA County Planning ran a Pilot Mentorship Program to test a potential structure that LA County Planning can implement as part of the Strategic Plan update. This new program will ensure that all staff, no matter who they are or at what level they work, have access to mentorship opportunities and feel consistently and meaningfully supported during their tenures with LA County Planning.

The Pilot Mentorship Program – which initially included six mentees and twelve mentors – was intended to: (i) facilitate effective onboarding for new hires, (ii) generate interest from staff to participate in a future program, and (iii) identify areas for improvement before implementation.

The strategies in this section include a call to improve LA County Planning’s recruitment and promotion practices overall, expand the Pilot Mentorship Program to include all new hires, establish affinity groups based on staff’s unique identities, and expand professional development opportunities available to all staff.



#	STRATEGY	DIVISION LEAD(S)	PAGE #
4.1	Develop and implement recruitment, hiring, and promotion practices that place greater emphasis on creating a diverse and inclusive Department.	IFS	86
4.2	Formalize the Pilot Mentorship Program to include all employees.	IFS	88
4.3	Establish affinity groups for staff to discuss issues related to their unique identities.	IFS	90
4.4	Provide additional opportunities for professional development.	IFS	92



A guiding principle of the Strategic Plan was focusing not only on what we were working toward - an equitable LA County - but also how we were working together, which is why several strategies focus on talent and retention, mentorship, and the staff experience.

Image credit: LA County Planning

GOAL 4 | STRATEGY 1

Develop and implement recruitment, hiring, and promotion practices that place greater emphasis on creating a diverse and inclusive Department.

Challenge: LA County Planning must expand the diversity of its staff to effectively meet the needs of the communities that it serves, particularly those that have been historically under-resourced. It must also adapt to the standards set in place by the County's Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion (ARDI) Initiative. As LA County Planning takes measures to do so, its position as a public agency in California forces it to navigate two competing requirements: an increased duty to promote equal opportunity employment (EEO) and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the workplace, and the duty to comply with the constitutional prohibition against discrimination and "preferential treatment" under Proposition 209.

Solution: This strategy will develop and implement recruitment, hiring, and promotion practices that build highly diverse and qualified applicant pools that are reflective of the communities served by LA County Planning. This will enable LA County Planning to tap into a wide range of perspectives and life experiences, supporting its ability to make more genuine connections with constituents. Some of the immediate steps toward execution are the creation of an entry-level position that does not require a four-year college degree, and the launch of an early outreach program to local high schools and community colleges.

Open Questions: What are some of the best practices utilized by other organizations and departments? What data metrics are used to track success?

Lead Division(s)	Information & Fiscal Services
Connection to Other Strategies	<p>3.3 Coordinate across divisions for fieldwork, site visits, counseling, engagement, and outreach, utilizing the skills and knowledge of each division to better serve community members.</p> <p>3.4 Establish and maintain a presence in neighborhoods by building relationships with local community partners and providing assistance during the pre-application process.</p>
Action Steps & Timeline	<p>First Year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create entry-level positions that do not require a four-year college degree. • Create an early outreach program to increase the pipeline of interested planners by partnering with local high schools and community colleges. • Research equitable hiring and promotions best practices and identify areas of improvement within existing Department processes. • Update job descriptions and requirements to attract a diverse applicant pool. • Conduct a barrier analysis on each step of the hiring and promotions process. <p>2-5 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximize equity outcomes in the screening and interview process. • Establish a diverse hiring committee and provide necessary training. • Implement a diverse interview slate policy. Typically, panels are made up of planners from other jurisdictions; consider having LA County Planning do the same for hiring and promotions. • Hiring committees begin using objective evaluation criteria. • Create accountable and effective tools to keep DEI goals on track. • Benchmarking to set transparent goals and evaluate hiring and promotions over time. • Make the screening and interview process fair and equitable. <p>6-10 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider other more intentional and focused outreach and recruiting strategies. • Enhanced funding through the annual budgeting process to maintain proactive DEI recruitment, hiring, and promotion processes and programs. • Explore adding a division specifically focused on training and onboarding.
Metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater diversity and better trends in hiring, promotion, and retention practices. • Department recruiting and hiring from a greater number of universities and programs.
Other Indicators of Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fostering a diverse, inclusive, innovative, and respectful work culture where candidates from all backgrounds are welcomed and respected – the type of work culture that serves to attract and retain the employees contributing to LA County Planning’s diversity.
Partners	<p>Essential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A <p>Potential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American Planning Association (APA) • American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) • American Institute of Architects (AIA) • Local colleges and universities with a planning program • California Association of Code Enforcement Officers

GOAL 4 | STRATEGY 2

Formalize the Pilot Mentorship Program to include all employees.

Challenge: LA County Planning staff have expressed a desire for greater systems of support within LA County Planning, with some feeling that they or others have struggled to adjust to life in the planning profession without such systems in place.

Solution: A Department-wide mentorship program will create a more equitable and formalized system for relationship-building and knowledge-sharing within LA County Planning. It aims to promote a greater culture of collaboration within LA County Planning that supports professional and personal growth – one that is lauded as the “gold standard” for other departments in Los Angeles and across the country. To implement this program over the course of the strategic plan, lessons learned from the Pilot Mentorship Program of early 2023 must be executed, such as the codification of clear program goals, expansion of training materials and resources, and confirmation of boundaries between mentorship “trainings” and official supervisory trainings upon hiring.

Open Questions: How can we have clarity on the separation between mentorship “trainings” and official supervisory trainings will be a critical item to have clarity on, as overlap can lead to confusion and miscommunication? Since rewards for mentors can serve as incentives and support LA County’s goal of providing a workplace where collaboration is recognized, what are the most useful rewards like to be?

Lead Division(s)	Information & Fiscal Services
Connection to Other Strategies	N/A
Action Steps & Timeline	<p>First Year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codify the goals and structure of mentorship within the context of LA County Planning. • Establish a rewards or incentive system for mentorship participation. • Assemble a team of mentors to sufficiently cover new hires and those seeking mentorship. • Introduce avenues for mentee input and engagement as they enter the program. • Launch formalized department-wide mentorship program, initially geared toward new hires. <p>2-5 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess funding needs and identify sources. • Ensure that mentorship is integrated with other Department processes that serve the development and advancement of staff members. • Establish a system for gathering regular feedback from participants to keep the program relevant and conducive to the goals of the participants. • Open program to more tenured staff who are seeking out mentors of their own. • Offer special training to staff on the values and skills required for effective mentoring, differentiating it from regular work, managing, or supervising. <p>6-10 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop and improve program.
Metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater performance and retention trends for those with mentors compared to those who do not have mentors.
Other Indicators of Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved staff satisfaction based on surveys on general wellbeing and whether they feel supported.
Partners	<p>Essential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A <p>Potential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A

GOAL 4 | STRATEGY 3

Establish affinity groups for staff to discuss issues related to their unique identities.

Challenge: The prevalent lack of diversity and representation within the planning profession can worsen disparities in community planning outcomes. Planners are responsible for making or advising on substantial decisions that affect historically marginalized communities' ability to thrive. The composition of planning staff can contribute positively or negatively to these outcomes. LA County Planning needs new and more diverse perspectives if it wants to prevent itself from repeating the mistakes of the past.

Solution: This strategy seeks to empower LA County Planning staff to establish their own affinity groups based on personal identity or topic of interest, and to provide management with the tools and resources to support such efforts. Affinity groups will serve as spaces for staff to come together and discuss issues that are unique to that group, such as how to better connect with and serve certain communities or how to navigate Department culture as a member of a specific group. The presence of these groups, paired with support from management, will help to promote open dialogue and reflection that will help LA County Planning to foster a more equitable work environment and develop improved strategies for engaging with the public.

To implement this strategy, existing efforts to establish affinity groups must be identified. It will be important to loop in those who are already interested in and have put time into bringing these groups together. Management and executive leadership must also be consulted to assess how much support they can provide to these groups, particularly in terms of budget.

Open Questions: Research needs to be conducted on how other planning departments organize, vet, and support their affinity groups, if they have them. Budget projections should also be drawn up for social gatherings, networking events, or special panels.

Lead Division(s)	Information & Fiscal Services
Connection to Other Strategies	<p>1.1 Update plans and ordinances to address the impact of LA County Planning’s past and current planning practices.</p> <p>3.4 Establish and maintain a presence in neighborhoods by building relationships with local community partners and providing assistance during the pre-application process.</p>
Action Steps & Timeline	<p>First Year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess interest from staff in establishing affinity groups; see who has already been thinking about doing so and with what criteria. • Establish baseline goals and intentions for affinity groups. • Align implementation with Management Appraisal and Performance Plan (MAPP) goals. • Have a Deputy Director lead or sponsor an affinity group. <p>2-5 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within the first five years, there should be at least six affinity groups in existence. <p>6-10 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued support and evaluation of existing affinity groups.
Metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of affinity groups established and sustained throughout LA County Planning. • Increased staff retention. • Greater staff satisfaction, as well as greater public satisfaction with Department engagement efforts.
Other Indicators of Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A
Partners	<p>Essential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American Planning Association Divisions <p>Potential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A

GOAL 4 | STRATEGY 4

Provide additional opportunities for professional development.

Challenge: LA County Planning wants to be the “gold standard” for planning departments in terms of training and development. LA County Planning must build a skilled and knowledgeable workforce that can serve LA County communities effectively and compassionately. Staff should be renowned for the expertise that they built during their tenures, whether they continue working for LA County Planning or move on to other planning careers.

Solution: The strategy utilizes a variety of learning platforms and Department programs to provide inclusive professional development opportunities and certifications for all LA County Planning staff, fostering a diverse and skilled workforce. The resources deployed as part of this strategy focus on assessing the needs of employees at all levels, selecting relevant resources, promoting training opportunities, offering support, evaluating progress, celebrating success, and ensuring that long-tenured staff members are included and can effectively navigate certification processes and improve their skills.

To implement this strategy, LA County Planning must focus on developing high-quality onboarding materials for new hires and partnering with training and development platforms. This strategy also includes introducing a rotational program for all planners to cross-train in other divisions, building on a past successful cross-training program. The program will give the department an opportunity to develop planners that are well rounded and versed in all types of planning work the department is engaged with. Employees will gain professional experience and relationships in other divisions that will give them an understanding of the kind of work and workload done by staff in other sections.

An employee needs assessment will identify the specific areas in which employees require professional development and what types of courses and training programs would be most beneficial to the organization. Research will also be required to understand the organization’s current level of diversity and inclusion and the barriers that prevent employees from pursuing professional development opportunities. This can help guide the selection of relevant courses and training programs that promote diversity and inclusion and ensure that the training program is accessible to employees of all backgrounds and levels.

Open Questions: What are the best practices from other departments? Does LA County Planning have the necessary technology infrastructure to support the implementation?

Lead Division(s)	Information & Fiscal Services
Connection to Other Strategies	N/A
Action Steps & Timeline	<p>First Year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with professional development platforms and organizations to offer courses and certifications. • Identify and select relevant courses and training programs on the Udemy and Planetizen platforms that align with the identified areas for development. • Promote employee training opportunities via email, newsletters, and LA County Planning’s TPZ intranet. • Evaluate the training program’s progress to ensure it meets the needs of employees and the organization. • Establish an advisory committee or workgroup of staff from various divisions, including talented educators like Russ Fricano and Lynda Hikichi, allowing for the exchange of ideas and collaboration in a group setting. • Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to identify the areas where employees need professional development. <p>2-5 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and implement compensation or recognition for experienced staff who contribute to the strategy, such as professional growth opportunities, or public acknowledgment of their efforts. • Partner with Udemy, Planetizen, and the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) to offer employees relevant courses and certification programs. • Develop high-quality onboarding materials that will orient new hires with the operations and expectations of work in LA County Planning. • Develop a rotational program for all planners to cross-train in other divisions to ensure that all planners gain relevant experience and skills to prepare them for future promotions. • Evaluate the impact of training on employee performance and output. <p>6-10 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapt offerings based on customer feedback, market changes, and organizational requirements. • Partner with professional and educational organizations and platforms. • Track performance and adjust strategy by utilizing key performance indicators to evaluate success and make data-driven, corporate-goal-aligned adjustments.
Metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of employees enrolled in professional development opportunities, such as Udemy and Planetizen courses, and certification programs. • Greater workforce diversity based on demographics.
Other Indicators of Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater employee satisfaction based on periodic employee surveys or feedback sessions. • A mentoring culture with professional development opportunities.
Partners	<p>Essential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training providers such as Udemy, Planetizen, etc. • APA and AICP <p>Potential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational institutions • Industry associations • Diversity and Inclusion consultants

GOAL 5:

INCREASE FINANCIAL STABILITY BY EXPANDING FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT LA COUNTY PLANNING'S SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES.

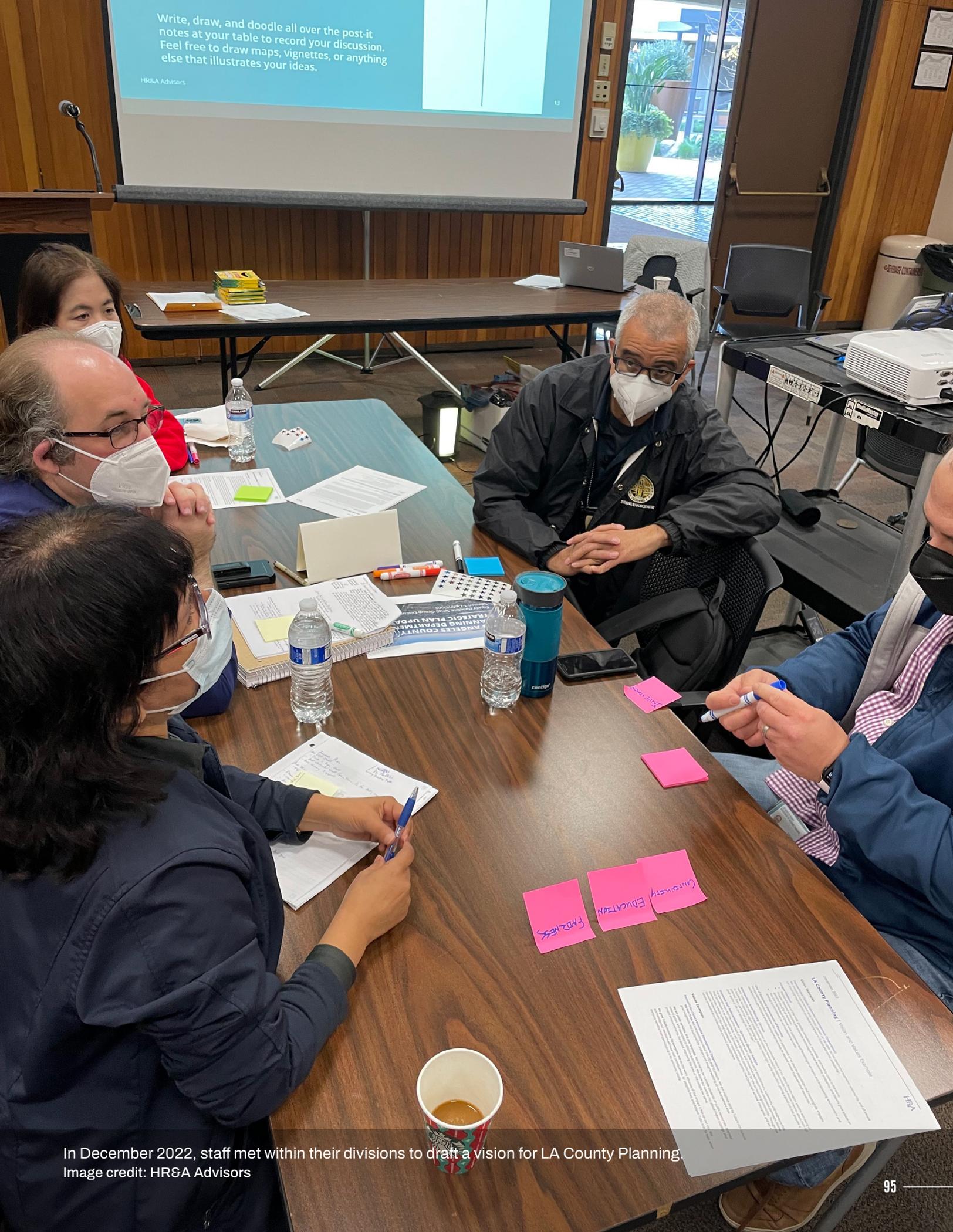
The Strategic Plan represents an entirely new direction in how LA County Planning currently operates while still building on existing programs and work. This will require additional financial resources to fund proposed initiatives or programs. Finding new sources of funding means changing how LA County Planning approaches things like grant writing or how it justifies increased expenses during the County budget allocation process. The strategies in this section, which includes a plan to update the fee study and improve LA County Planning's internal budgeting process, outline how the Department will financially implement the Strategic Plan.

#	STRATEGY	DIVISION LEAD(S)	PAGE #
5.1	Proactively identify and pursue long-term funding streams for community-serving initiatives beyond the current general fund framework.	IFS	96
5.2	Update LA County Planning's fee schedule and permit requirements to reflect everyday operations and remove unfair barriers.	IFS, CP	98
5.3	Ensure that all submitted recommendations regarding funding priorities and budget allocation are evaluated based on equity metrics.	IFS	100
5.4	Establish a transparent process for the development of Departmental budget requests and the allocation of funds in line with Strategic Plan priorities.	IFS	102

Write, draw, and doodle all over the post-it notes at your table to record your discussion. Feel free to draw maps, vignettes, or anything else that illustrates your ideas.

HR&A Advisors

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In December 2022, staff met within their divisions to draft a vision for LA County Planning. Image credit: HR&A Advisors

GOAL 5 | STRATEGY 1

Proactively identify and pursue long-term funding streams for community-serving initiatives beyond the current general fund framework.

Challenge: As LA County Planning expands its mission to equitably serve the people of unincorporated LA County, additional funding sources are needed to carry out its most impactful projects and initiatives.

Solution: LA County Planning will develop a plan to research, identify, and pursue various new or updated funding sources, including fees and grant programs, to expand and add services that equitably and more effectively serve the unincorporated communities. These funding opportunities could range from pilot projects to multi-year funding for Department-wide initiatives, division-specific projects, and inter-Departmental collaborations, as well as enterprise opportunities. By dedicating staff time to research and the pursuit of funding and partnership opportunities, LA County Planning can identify trends and resources (staff, financial, technology, space) needed for long-term success and to adapt to the County's changing budget conditions.

Open Questions: What other County departments would LA County Planning be competing with for grants? What type of funding exists for space/building needs? What are the historical trends and successes with LA County Planning applying for and receiving grants?

Lead Division(s)	Information & Fiscal Services
Connection to Other Strategies	N/A
Action Steps & Timeline	<p>First Year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify staffing needs and resources to assist in this phase’s research. • Review the non-General Fund grants/funding requests that have been submitted versus received and evaluate their success and if they may be a source of continued funding. • Review Strategic Plan projects and possible overlap for staffing/resources needed. <p>2-5 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and identify possible funding sources for Strategic Plan projects and create a timeline. This can include County, Board, local, state, and federal funds, foundations, and department fees. • Submit short-term project funding requests. • Complete short-term projects, evaluate their success, and build on them to submit longer-term or new requests. • Create evaluation tools/metrics to help refine existing projects and guide future projects. <p>6-10 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit long-term project funding requests. • Add staff to assist with this effort.
Metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased percentage of successful funding requests, successfully completed short-term projects, and amounts secured for long-term funding.
Other Indicators of Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A
Partners	<p>Essential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal, state, and local agencies for funding applications and reporting • Other County Departments when joint applications are more successful <p>Potential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private and public foundations • Non-profit organizations and other private entities

GOAL 5 | STRATEGY 2

Update LA County Planning's fee schedule and permit requirements to reflect everyday operations and remove unfair barriers.

Challenge: LA County Planning relies on fee revenue as a significant source of dedicated income to support its operations. Department fees should account for the cost to complete tasks – such as staff time to review applications – but to stay up to date, fee schedules should be updated regularly. LA County Planning has not updated its fee schedule in more than ten years. Instead, outdated fees are updated yearly based only on Consumer Price Index increases, which are not reflective of market conditions or the way LA County Planning must operate today in keeping with new tasks, changes in the process, new laws, new technology, wage increases, etc. This means LA County Planning falls short of full cost recovery for the important but growing workload it undertakes, which exacerbates other budget limitations such as lack of staff and inadequate funding to hire a consultant to perform more regular fee studies. It also contributes to staff burnout; staff members' assigned caseloads grow while budgets (and staffing levels) remain stagnant or worsen, as they are overly dependent on County General Fund revenues.

Meanwhile, the current fee schedule and permit requirements are overly detailed and include some fees that are simply too costly for many residents, particularly those from historically marginalized communities. Our current zoning code requirements were developed over various decades. Therefore, the zoning code has accumulated barriers where multiple permit types with similar end goals exist and our lengthy list of fees is not user-friendly. This can result in inequitable experiences for our applicants. These inequities can result in certain groups or neighborhoods having an undue advantage during our review process, while others are unnecessarily hampered by red tape. This results in inequities embedded into the fee schedule and permit requirements. Therefore, an audit of current fee and permit requirements is necessary to identify barriers.

Solution: LA County Planning should first complete its updated fee study – already underway – and seek Board approval for the resulting updated fee schedule. This will create, in the short term, an updated list of fees more reflective of current operations, and more revenue to fund new staff to share a growing workload. For example, if the updated fee schedule could result in annual revenue increases of \$1.5 million to \$2 million, this could equate to the costs of adding more than ten new positions. Fee studies need to be conducted every two to three years to remain up to date. As LA County Planning prepares for the subsequent fee study (i.e., in 2025 or 2026), it should scrutinize the fee schedule and permit requirements with an equity lens to understand which fees and requirements may be reduced or relaxed to better serve communities. LA County Planning should budget for a consultant to conduct the 2025/2026 fee study in order to preserve staff time for other matters. The consultant should evaluate the fee schedule using equity metrics.

Open Questions: What are the equity issues LA County Planning has encountered with its current fee schedule?

Lead Division(s)	Information & Fiscal Services; Current Planning
Connection to Other Strategies	<p>1.2 Develop an equity impact assessment tool to ensure consistency in analyzing the impact of plans, ordinances, and developments.</p> <p>2.2 Streamline approvals for uses that meet community needs in underserved neighborhoods.</p> <p>3.5 Connect residents and business owners to resources that assist with compliance and permitting.</p>
Action Steps & Timeline	<p>First Year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore viable internal and external resources to complete the fee study update. • Complete reviews of the fee study with County Counsel, the cluster meeting, Chief Executive Office, and Board of Supervisors. • Establish a fee schedule, categorize the fees, and analyze potential revenues. • Develop equity metrics related to fees and a structure to track those metrics. • Train staff on how to properly charge updated fees based on services provided and based on the type of permit. • Establish recurring bi-monthly meetings with Advance Planning, or the Budget and Advisory and Information Technology sections to discuss projects in the pipeline where fees need to be created or deleted due to State laws, Ordinances, technology updates, etc. <p>2-5 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a plan to prioritize fee updates to identify which fees should be updated frequently. • Establish a work group to work on the fee study; identify staff from different divisions. • Identify funding to pay for the expert fee study consultant. • Develop a strong statement of work, engage the consultant, complete the new fee study, and implement updated fee schedules and permit requirements. • Conduct community engagement as needed, in collaboration with other divisions, to explain the updates to communities most likely to be impacted. <p>6-10 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update the schedule of fees every two to three years.
Metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer revenue shortfalls, with full cost recovery. • Reduced reliance on County General Fund. • Updated fee study and fee schedules every two to three years.
Other Indicators of Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced staff burnout and better work/life balance.
Partners	<p>Essential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auditor-Controller • County Counsel • Board of Supervisors • Chief Executive Office • Building Industry Association <p>Potential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A

GOAL 5 | STRATEGY 3

Ensure that all submitted recommendations regarding funding priorities and budget allocation are evaluated based on equity metrics.

Challenge: Budgets reflect priorities, and data is required to understand how budgets can impact priorities. When LA County Planning transmitted past annual budget requests to the County CEO, the Department did not evaluate the equity impacts of the budget requests. As opportunities for internal or external funding or resources become available, LA County Planning does not have the necessary data and may miss out on opportunities. Budget recommendations should examine equity impacts to better understand and quickly advocate for funding and resources that make LA County Planning's work more equitable and improve constituent services.

Solution: Describing budget requests and decisions with an equity lens means LA County Planning can better describe, using data, how its budget proposals and use of funds will advance racial equity across the County. LA County Planning should expand efforts to identify, define, track, measure, and visualize equity-focused data points that measure outcomes of the Department's work, with a focus on underserved communities, and compare them to countywide metrics. This requires looking both externally at traditional equity metrics such as income and internally at how our systems and processes function. For example, how should we incorporate income, crime, and safety data in our analysis? Levels of services, response times, plan approval rates, enforcement efforts, and determining whether they are having the intended impacts are all critical to this approach. After relevant metrics are established, LA County Planning should periodically update equity data metrics and develop a process to evaluate budgeting decisions using those metrics. This work may be best supported by a Data Scientist hired by LA County Planning.

Open Questions: What are other jurisdictions, or those in the private sector, doing to measure and improve services with a focus on equity? Are there existing models and paths that we can build upon?

Lead Division(s)	Information & Fiscal Services
Connection to Other Strategies	1.2 Develop an equity impact assessment tool to ensure consistency in analyzing the impact of plans, ordinances, and developments.
Action Steps & Timeline	<p>First Year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define our equity-focused data points. • Develop better ways of defining communities who are underserved or historically left out of the planning process. • Define and develop a plan for tracking levels of service and measuring impact in communities. <p>2-5 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the need and feasibility of hiring a Data Scientist who can most effectively evaluate equity metrics and support other Department needs. • Establish LA County Planning’s equity-focused data points and adequate levels of service. • Implement a way to collect, analyze, and visualize those data points. • Use metrics to advocate for additional funding and resources. • Revisit and adjust data points as needed to make sure they are still relevant. <p>10 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to periodically revisit our data points to ensure they are adequate. • Examine changes year to year to see how we are performing over time.
Metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widespread use of equity metrics in developing budget requests. • Growth in Department budget allocated towards Strategic Plan and racial equity programs.
Other Indicators of Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A
Partners	<p>Essential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A <p>Potential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A

GOAL 5 | STRATEGY 4

Establish a transparent process for the development of Departmental budget requests and the allocation of funds in line with Strategic Plan priorities.

Challenge: To better serve constituents, LA County Planning must change the way it prioritizes and supports projects and budget requests. The current process simply adheres to ongoing mandates or revenue-offset work and offers little incentive for innovation or improvements. Greater emphasis must be placed on budget proposals within LA County Planning that further diversity, equity, and inclusion, and are backed by data.

Solution: This strategy aims to train staff to develop comprehensive business plans to request funding and will enable them and executive management to take a thoughtful approach when prioritizing which projects will be funded. Additionally, this will help the staff to fully understand the short-term and long-term implications of their goals.

Open Questions: How much time can staff devote to developing and training others in this new process?

Lead Division(s)	Information & Fiscal Services
Connection to Other Strategies	N/A
Action Steps & Timeline	<p>First Year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a template of a business plan. • Train Section Heads and applicable staff in understanding the components of the business plan. • Look to develop a repository of the business plan or integrate it into LA County Planning’s Budget Application. • Share updates with staff in a Departmentwide presentation. <p>2-5 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate this process with the broader program budgeting process that will be implemented by the CEO beginning FY 2023-24. Additionally, there should be a historical record of business plans to aid in the development of a similar business plan or used as a postmortem to determine the effectiveness of the projects by referring to the stated goals, costs, etc. listed in the business plan. <p>6-10 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to re-evaluate the process and make updates, as necessary.
Metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
Other Indicators of Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful implementation of this strategy will be evident in the organization of all submitted business plans by staff. For example, executive staff and budget staff will be able to identify and refer to all submitted plans like the eBR website used by the CEO. Additionally, the ability to think about creating a business plan can be performed at the staff level with input from the respective Section Head.
Partners	<p>Essential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A <p>Potential Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A

QUARTER 4

JULY '24

develop
virtual/
follow-up
3.4b

3.4a
Conduct
initial assessment
- did they apply?
- what worked
and what
didn't

Conduct
Exam
4.1

AUG '24

do
outreach
3.4b

3.4a
Make
adjustments
to the
program

Conduct
Interviews
4.1

SEP '24

GO
Conduct
initial
offerings
3.4b

Offer
Positions
4.1

LA County Planning will work over the next ten years on implementing the Strategic Plan.
Image credit: LA County Planning

CP

IMPLEMENTATION

FIRST-YEAR IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

YEAR-ONE ACTION PLAN

Division leadership, in partnership with HR&A Advisors, identified strategies to prioritize during the plan's first year. This became the Year-One Action Plan, an evolving, live document that exists separate from the Strategic Plan.

The Year-One Action Plan documents quarterly actions and milestones for each Year-One priority strategy, along with the individuals and divisions involved with each. The Year-One Action Plan was developed in recognition that because staff have limited internal resources, identifying what will make the greatest impact will help LA County Planning achieve its goals sooner. The Year-One Action Plans transparently track progress and help Department leadership and staff to adjust and adapt those priorities based on changes to resources, staffing, or funding in real time.



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