

Urban Greening Projects at a Glance

RECENTLY COMPLETED

[Fighting Drought with Stormwater: From Research to Practice](#)

Funders: University of California Multi-campus Research Programs and Initiatives

We collaborated with researchers across the University of California system to assess the economic feasibility of stormwater permittees using enhanced stormwater capture techniques to address drought conditions, safely augment water supplies, and minimize flood risk in urban California.

[Understanding the Needs of Diverse Park Users](#)

Funder: U.S. National Park Service

Researchers and volunteers with the Luskin Center for Innovation worked with the National Park Service to survey more than 4,000 visitors of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, the nation's largest urban national park. Results are informing how to meet the needs of a diverse array of users, for improved park equity and access in L.A. County and with broader implications for park planning throughout the state and nation.

[SMART Parks Toolkit](#)

Funder: The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation

Our toolkit won a Best Practice Award from the American Planning Association, and is helping park managers, designers, and advocates plan for and use technology to improve service and enhance operations and management in urban parks.

CURRENT RESEARCH

[Assessing the Success of L.A. County's Safe Clean Water Program](#)

Funder: L.A. County Flood Control District

L.A. County's Safe Clean Water program (Measure W) funds projects to capture, clean, and reuse water runoff — and ultimately strengthen the local ecosystem and build community resilience. To help the program realize its full potential, we are conducting a 2-year study with collaborators from across UCLA. The Luskin Center for Innovation is leading the equity focus of the study, measuring how the program allocates funding to disadvantaged communities and how residents prioritize project types. Results from the study will help the county and Safe Clean Water Program stakeholders assess both the priority of investment proposals and the impacts of the program over time.

[Heat Mitigation through Streetscape-level Urban Design Intervention](#)

Funders: Various

A series of projects led by V. Kelly Turner are investigating the heat regulating benefits of urban design interventions in streetscapes, including greening, tree planting, and solar reflecting surfaces on and near streets. The team is using a combination of remote sensing, field data, and modeling. The work is part of the [Los Angeles Integrative Nature and Design \(Linda\) Collaborative](#), Linda involves an interdisciplinary group of researchers investigating urban design interventions. The goal is to identify what local-scale interventions can best help cities address the impacts of climate change.

Assessing State Policies and Programs for Equitable Access to the Outdoors

Funder: Resources Legacy Fund

California has an abundance of public lands, natural and cultural resources, and open space. However, access to these spaces is not equitable for all Californians. Governor Newsom and the California Natural Resources Agency have identified “Access for All” as a priority for the state. To support this initiative, we inventoried state programs, along with exemplary local and national programs, that advance equitable outdoor access. Findings from the inventory, in conjunction with interviews of stakeholders across the state, allowed LCI researchers to draft policy recommendations for addressing gaps and seizing opportunities, with the goal to ensure all Californians can benefit from public health, recreational, and educational benefits that access to the outdoors provides.

Evaluating Link for Increased Local Capacity to Implement Park Funding

Funder: Resources Legacy Fund in collaboration with Link partners

L.A. County residents voted to invest in local and regional parks by passing Measure A. Now, the Link Advocates, Governments, Families, and Parks initiative (Link) is working to create a model for residents, advocates, and government partners to engage meaningfully in community-driven planning that lays the foundation for local infrastructure funding, including access to Measure A funding to build parks. Resources Legacy Fund, The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation, and the California Wellness Foundation, in partnership with First 5 LA, are supporting community-based organizations and technical assistance providers to deliver on the vision of Link. We are providing evaluation services to assess this initiative as a potential model for increasing capacity and funding for parks where they are most needed.

Understanding Decision-making on Green Infrastructure and Stormwater Management

Funder: National Science Foundation

We are examining how cities make decisions about how to integrate green infrastructure and other stormwater management strategies into streetscapes and other urban places. The objective is to assess the impact of stormwater regulations and decision-making on environmental outcomes in urbanizing regions to support smart and strategic investments.

Equitable Community Development Planning Around Taylor Yard and in the Gateway Cities Region

Funder: TBD

Major public infrastructure investments are coming to the L.A. River around Taylor Yard near downtown, which Mayor Eric Garcetti has called the “crown jewel of river revitalization, and in Southeast L.A., with the coming of a new Metro light rail line, parks, river revitalization, green infrastructure, and a new cultural center designed by Frank Gehry. With these new developments come concerns about displacement. Jon Christensen is working with Resources Legacy Fund, the L.A. Regional Open Space and Housing Collaborative, and the City of L.A. on a Taylor Yard Equity Strategy, and with Assembly Speaker Rendon’s office, Gehry Partners, and others in Southeast L.A. on developing an equitable community development planning processes to accompany these infrastructure investments and lift up communities in place.

CONTACT

V. Kelly Turner, co-director (vturner@g.ucla.edu)

Jon Christensen, affiliated faculty lead on park equity research (jonchristensen@ioes.ucla.edu)