

# Finding the Link:

Evaluating the Link Program, Community Engagement,  
Funding Capacity and Climate Resilience

Yassaman Sarvian | June 2022



# Finding the Link

---

## Evaluating the Link Program, Community Engagement, Funding Capacity, and Climate Resilience

Client: Resources Legacy Fund

Advisor: Liz Koslov

Prepared by: Yassaman Sarvian

June 2022

A comprehensive project submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Master in Urban & Regional Planning.

# Disclaimer

This report was prepared in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master in Urban and Regional Planning degree in the Department of Urban Planning at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). It was prepared at the direction of the Department and of Resources Legacy Fund as a planning client. The views expressed herein are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Department, the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, UCLA as a whole, or the client.

# Table of Contents

Disclaimer .....	2
Executive Summary.....	4
Acknowledgements.....	7
Introduction .....	9
Literature Review .....	12
Research Question .....	14
Data and Methods.....	15
Key Findings.....	17
Preliminary Recommendations .....	23
Conclusion.....	26
References .....	27
Appendix A: Interview Protocol and List of Interviewees.....	30

# Executive Summary

Residents have radically unequal access to parks in Los Angeles County, and organizations that work toward bringing more parks to 'park poor' neighborhoods struggle to obtain public and private funding. The Link Advocates, Governments, Families and Parks initiative (or "Link") was established in July 2019 through a strategic partnership between Resources Legacy Fund, First 5 LA, and The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation to create a model of collaborative, community-driven, meaningful engagement between community members, advocates, and government partners to build healthier communities through parks and green infrastructure. The Link Program supports community-based organizations (or "CBOs") by expanding their civic and planning capacities to access local, state, and private funding to help bridge access to parks in under-invested communities such as the cities of Maywood, Cudahy, and El Monte, as well as Panorama City, a community within the City of Los Angeles.

Equitable park access is even more crucial in the context of climate change, which disproportionately impacts historically excluded communities of color. Literature has shown that park access, along with other forms of green infrastructure, can enhance community resilience to climate events like heat waves and flooding. However, research and interviews have shown that the term 'climate resilience' itself is not commonly used in community-level discourse. Rather, it is more frequently used as a broad 'buzz' term within public policy and academia to advance climate goals. This has resulted in a gap between communities, agencies, and public policy makers when it comes to understanding how capital projects like parks are related to terms like 'climate resilience'. This research therefore examines how participants in the Link Program understand the relationship between their park planning work and climate resilience, and assesses the potential for the Program to engage with underrepresented communities to further fund opportunities for climate resilience.

Using an observational, descriptive research methodological approach, I conducted ten semi-structured interviews with CBOs, funders, local agencies and representatives from elected officials' offices who were associated with or familiar with the Link Program to understand their experience with the Program, their community engagement approach under Link, the ways in which climate change and resilience are connected to park planning, and their experiences with accessing funding for parks and green infrastructure.

My research revealed several important findings. Overall, interview respondents expressed a positive experience with the Link Program and felt it was a step toward bridging the gap between park-poor communities and access to funding. Respondents did not feel that the Link Program prioritized or made a direct connection between community engagement and climate resilience, as Link-related community engagement works to address the park needs of the community more so than to introduce new terminology, revealing the extent to which 'climate

resilience' remains perceived as part of an elite and top-down discourse, rather than a grassroots agenda and discourse. This gap between community conversations and agency lingo speaks to a larger, systemic issue with how policy and funding interventions are developed, categorized, and structured in ways that limit the ability of historically excluded communities to access and determine the uses of those funds.

There is disagreement as to whether there is sufficient funding for park projects; multiple interviewees stated that there was insufficient funding available for park projects, while other interviewees believed that the funding was sufficient, but accessing it posed the greater challenge. CBOs also struggle to understand the application process for grants and how to be competitive.

A few respondents expressed frustration at the difficulties of obtaining technical assistance, or answers to funding cycle questions from funding agencies. When asked if they would be interested in applying for a hypothetical state funding grant focused on community-empowered climate resilience projects, all responded that they would apply, but roughly half expressed that they would apply with the caveat that they would want the funding structured to truly empower community engagement and project development.

Based on my findings, I offer three recommendations for consideration by policy makers, funders (in the philanthropic field), and public agency grant-makers. Policy makers should cultivate stronger linkages between CBOs and support increased access to community technical assistance for funding. Future legislation should allocate funding for talented grant writers to be accessible to CBOs who work in communities that have struggled to obtain funding in the past. Similar to how other state agencies provide technical assistance to underfunded communities, programs like Transformative Climate Communities (TCC) should be looked to as examples of how to provide robust technical assistance. More funding legislation should be passed that is focused on community-empowered climate resilience projects, with a stronger weight on community engagement and flexible project development. Grant-makers, especially at local and state agencies, should improve interdepartmental communication and coordination pertaining to application requirements, and increase flexibility and efficiencies within agencies if they are eager to disperse funds equitably and promptly. Philanthropy plays a pivotal role in providing flexible funding for opportunities to conduct community capacity building and engagement. Funders should continue to serve as the link between government technical assistance and communities. Future iterations of the Link Program and other programs like Redesign LA<sup>1</sup> and TCC<sup>2</sup> that prioritize a community driven planning process are

---

<sup>1</sup> ReDesign LA is a strategic initiative of the Council for Watershed Health, Water Foundation, and other program partners who, like the Link Program, provide technical assistance and accompaniment in "building the capacity of small municipalities, school districts, and local CBOs to develop and implement multi-benefit projects that integrate stormwater capture and climate resiliency" (ReDesign LA 2022). Unlike the Link Program, ReDesign LA is focused on projects relating to the Safe, Clean, Water Program (Measure W).

needed. The philanthropic sector should also look to prioritize broader community needs and private-public partnerships.

More funding and assistance are needed in park-poor communities; future research can help understand how to establish a funding application evaluation system that is free from bias yet is equitable in distributing funds to communities that need it the most. Additionally, further research is needed on the intersection of climate resilience, community engagement, and environmental justice, as the gaps in this scholarship are felt at the community level – this research can help identify gaps in collaboration and possibly funding.

---

<sup>2</sup> Transformative Climate Communities (TCC) program funds development and infrastructure projects that achieve major environmental, health, and economic benefits in California's most disadvantaged communities. TCC is one of many California Climate Investment Programs (SGC 2022)

# Acknowledgements

I was blessed with incredible luck and had the opportunity to work with an amazing group of people for this capstone project. This capstone would truly not be possible without the contributions, guidance, and accompaniment of the following individuals, both during the creation of this report, and, in some cases, in prior work involved with the Link Program. I wish to offer my sincerest gratitude and appreciation to the following individuals and institutions for their time and mentorship.

## Faculty Advisor

**LIZ KOSLOV, Ph. D.**

Assistant Professor

Department of Urban Planning, UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs  
Institute of the Environment and Sustainability

## Client

**ALFREDO GONZALEZ**

Director, Southern California  
Resources Legacy Fund

## Mentorship Support

**EVELYN BLUMENBERG, Ph. D.**

Professor

Department of Urban Planning  
Director, Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies  
UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs

**COLLEEN CALLAHAN**

Co-Executive Director

Luskin Center for Innovation  
UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs

**JON CHRISTENSEN**

Adjunct Assistant Professor

Institute of the Environment and Sustainability  
Laboratory for Environmental Narrative Strategies  
UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation  
Center for Digital Humanities



**MADLINE WANDER**

Doctoral Student, Urban Planning  
UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs

Last, but not least, I wish to thank the individuals and organizations who generously gave me their time to participate in interviews. Thank you to Active San Gabriel Valley, Communities for a Better Environment, First 5 LA, Los Angeles County Regional Parks and Open Space District, the Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust, Office of Los Angeles City Council President Nury Martinez, Pacoima Beautiful, People for Mobility Justice, and Trust for Public Land, for sharing your time, knowledge, and valuable input for this report. Any errors or misinterpretations in this report are mine and mine alone.

***The UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation provided financial support for this study via a Graduate Research Grant.***

# Introduction

Los Angeles County is embarking on dramatic transformations to its built environment, funded by ballot initiatives that created large ongoing funding sources for parks, stormwater management, and transportation. However, as the USC Equity Research Institute (ERI, formerly PERE) noted in its 2018 report *Measures Matter*, a lack of capacity in some underserved, under-resourced communities, particularly in government agencies and community-based organizations—as well as a lack of inclusion of parents, families and residents in decision-making processes—has led to an inability to compete for, and receive, these public infrastructure grants. The Link Program was developed through a collaboration between Resources Legacy Fund (RLF), First 5 LA, The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation, LA County Regional Parks and Open Space District, and the Wellness Foundation to: build the capacity of carefully selected under-resourced communities, community-based organizations (CBOs), park and green infrastructure advocates, and local governments in Los Angeles County to make the systems change necessary to solve this problem; secure public grants for parks and green infrastructure projects in the short term; create a pipeline of fundable projects for the medium to long term; and sustain this capacity, momentum, and success over the long term. Four selected communities have served as proving grounds for the Link strategy: the City of El Monte (located in the San Gabriel Valley), the cities of Maywood and Cudahy (located in South East Los Angeles), and Panorama City (located in the San Fernando Valley).

The UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation is currently evaluating the Link Program to identify what works, what does not, and the gaps that need to be filled to create successful ongoing equitable parks, green infrastructure, and community development. Its evaluation is conducted concurrently with the Program as a participatory action research project to provide ongoing, real-time feedback to the Link Program. At the end of the two-year pilot program (summer 2022), the Luskin Center will provide a final evaluation report on lessons learned and recommendations for scaling the Link Program.

The purpose of this capstone research is to provide a second concurrent evaluation of the Link Program, one which evaluates the efficacy of community engagement processes surrounding the theories, terms, and conversations pertaining to climate resilience. This capstone pays particular attention to parks and green infrastructure as strategies for informing and preparing community members for the impacts of climate change, through the lens of the Link Program.

## Context and Background

Residents in Los Angeles County's historically excluded communities have for years voiced concerns surrounding the lack of investment in their built environment. This impacts the

growth, learning, and development of families, especially children, and can exacerbate existing physical and mental health concerns and isolate families that are already socially isolated (First 5 LA 2022).

Los Angeles County voters approved various ballot measures in November 2016 and 2018 with the intention to invest public funding into infrastructure that will improve the sustainability, connectivity, and livability of the region. As a result, Los Angeles County voters supported the investment of billions of dollars from Measures W, H, A, and M (referred to as 'WHAM') in clean water, housing and homeless services, parks and open spaces, transportation, and climate resilience (Christensen & Prichard 2021). Approved in 2016, Measure M would focus on the build out of the region's transportation infrastructure, and Measure A on parks, open space, and green infrastructure. In 2017 Measure H was approved, which would raise approximately \$355 million each year for homelessness services and housing, and in 2018 Measure W was approved, which would raise approximately \$300 million yearly for stormwater projects (Drake 2019).

With the implementation of such measures came a call to ensure these funding sources were investing equitably across all communities within Los Angeles County. In responding to this substantial amount of investment, the Los Angeles Funders' Collaborative commissioned the University of Southern California (USC) Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE, now known as USC Equity Research Institute) to develop the *Measures Matter* report (First 5 LA 2022). Published in January 2018, the report created a framework, definition and principles for equitable implementation, offered a process for achieving equity, as well as metrics to track and ensure progress of the development of Measures A and M (USC Equity Research Institute 2022). Importantly, it also identified a key barrier to expanding open space in low-income, historically excluded neighborhoods: a lack of capacity amongst government agencies and community-based organizations, as well as a lack of inclusion of residents in the decision-making process. This has resulted in the distribution of funding resources to wealthier areas, directly impacting the health and thrivance<sup>3</sup> of children who, because of where they live, do not have access to parks and open spaces (First 5 LA 2022).

In response to PERE's report, Resources Legacy Fund (RLF) and First 5 LA formed a strategic partnership, the Link Advocates, Governments, Families, and Park Initiative (Link). Modeled after a successful collaboration in the City of El Monte, Link has been operating as a pilot program for two years in the cities of El Monte, Maywood and Cudahy, and the community of Panorama City in the City of Los Angeles. Through joint partnerships between CBOs, technical service providers, and local government, Link works to build healthier communities through Measure A funding. Since this initial cohort, Link has welcomed a South LA and Long Beach

---

<sup>3</sup> The term "thrivance" is defined by the Thrivance Project as follows: "The word "thrivance" is a direct reference to intersectionality. Thrivance theory asserts that the solutions and responses to interlocking systems of oppression must be interlocking systems which lead to holistic thriving." (Thrivance Project 2022)

working group. However, given the timing and schedule of this capstone project, the South LA and Long Beach groups were not included in this study.

# Literature Review

Despite its parks-focused lens, the Link Program’s objectives and efforts tie into a larger discourse pertaining to planning for climate resilience in ways that enhance environmental and climate justice. Climate change is a global issue with local effects that vary within a single city, given that access to green infrastructure like parks and tree canopy can contribute to significant differences in temperature and flood risk (Hoffman 2021; Rosso et al 2022; Schuch et al 2017). The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) outlined in their vision statement of climate resilience a world where people, livelihoods, businesses and economies, and environmental systems are resilient. Specifically, the vision emphasizes the need to finance local communities to achieve climate justice for all, leaving no one behind (UNFCCC 2020). This people-centered approach mirrors the Link Program’s goal, which focuses on providing park-poor communities with the civic capacity and funding sources necessary to develop green infrastructure for low-income neighborhoods in Los Angeles County and thus financial systems to support resilience-oriented infrastructure.

An extensive body of literature developed over the last ten years connects environmental justice with not only the uneven distribution of environmental hazards but also amenities like urban parks (Byrne, Wolch, and Zhang 2009; Wolch et al 2005). As elaborated by Byrne, Wolch, and Zhang, environmental justice can be considered both a theoretical framework and a civil-rights based social movement that “seeks to understand how environmental benefits and harms are ethno-racial and socio-economically differentiated among urban populations”, and “attempts to ameliorate incidents of inequity” (2009). In recent years, environmental justice discourse has expanded to include climate change and climate justice, as growing concerns for needs like food and energy are central to environmental justice organizing (Schlosberg 2013). Many scholars state that climate justice grew alongside the environmental justice movement (Jenkins 2018; Williams & Doyon 2019; Schlosberg & Collins 2014), but gaps and tensions exist between the two discourses. While climate justice is discussed in elite academic and NGO circles, as well as grassroots movements and CBOs, environmental justice remains most strongly associated with the latter (Schlosberg & Collins 2014). This may be changing, but was nonetheless noted as a persistent issue in interviews for this capstone research.

The term ‘climate resilience’ alone can conjure multiple definitions and meanings. Soden et al. (2015) explain that the notion of “be[ing] resilient” can include people, places, things, buildings, and systems, along with the relationships between these entities and the variety of forces they could be resilient against (p. 3). Other scholarship applies the term resilience to mental or physical health, ecosystem services, technology, or other industries (Friend & Moench 2013; Tyler & Moench 2012; Meerow & Stults 2016; Meerow et al. 2016). The World Bank, in a 2014 study examining their community-driven development portfolio to assess the potential for

building climate resilience of vulnerable communities, defined climate resilience as “actions that seek to reduce sensitivity to or increase adaptive capacity in the face of extreme weather events or longer-term climate changes” (Arnold et al., 2014). Similarly, the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions (CCES) defines climate resilience as the ability to “anticipate, prepare for, and respond to hazardous events, trends, or disturbances related to climate” (2021). For the purposes of this research, I draw upon Arnold et al.’s (2014) and the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions’ (CCES) definition of climate resilience and emphasize urban climate resilience given the geographic landscape of my study area (Los Angeles County) to ground this research in a definition that focuses on prioritizing people to ensure they and their environments are resilient from climate events.

While there is an abundance of information pertaining to the history of environmental justice and injustice within the Los Angeles metropolitan region (Sister et al 2010; Holifield 2001; Pastor et al 2002; Pulido et al 2013; Byrn et al 2009; Wolch et al 2005), little scholarship exists as yet on climate resilience and justice at the urban scale in California, particularly as it relates to the role of community engagement in resilience planning. International case studies exist, revealing the importance of conducting active and inclusive engagement with historically excluded communities, and engaging key stakeholders at the local, regional, and federal level to guide city-level resilience planning (Baybay, C. S., & Hindmarsh, R. 2019; Sharma, Singh & Singh 2014).

When it comes to advancing climate action generally, Pearson et al. (2017) note that race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and gender can independently and systematically shape people’s thoughts and opinions on climate change and their motivations to address it. These underlying factors can also influence participant engagement and consensus. As Moser and Pike (2015) illustrate, planners and municipal leaders struggle to engage with community members regarding climate adaptation. This is due to the challenge of communicating the urgency of climate change when there is a “spatial distance and temporal delay between cause and impact”; acute climate skepticism and denial; a lack of training on how to meet growing “emotional distress, hopelessness, and despair” in communities; and lack of communication and engagement capacity in the form of resources, leading to an “often total disengagement” or “active resistance to ‘top-down’ initiatives” (Moser and Pike 2015). These reasons point to a persistent “climate gap” between the needs of the most vulnerable communities and the global-scale focus of much climate planning and governance (Gaillard 2012), despite increasing recognition of the need to equitably plan for local-level urban impacts.

The existing literature suggests several ways to address this gap. Chavez and Gavin (2018), through their research practice involving Indigenous knowledge, utilized an analytical framework that involved an adaptable scale of community participation and establishing a set of indicators of responsible research practice with Indigenous communities. Along with an established conceptual framework focused on improving community engagement through

clearly connecting broader examples to local manifestations of climate change (Sheppard et al., 2011), these methods can strengthen climate-oriented community engagement. However, scholarship consistently stresses the enduring information and communication gaps that prevent productive engagement from occurring with the most disadvantaged communities (Fernandez-Bou et al., 2021). Despite these gaps, there are opportunities to advance justice in these communities, for instance by obtaining funding before a large disaster necessitates addressing existing issues, involving the community in the decision-making process, and ensuring their government representatives reflect their interests (ibid).

In reference to the Link Program, following the framework outlined in *Measures Matter* the Program has been structured to pair community-based organizations with non-profit technical assistance organizations who together work with municipalities to successfully apply for Measure A funding for park projects. In doing so the Link Program aims to provide solutions to bridge the gaps in engagement described above and offers opportunities to consider how to integrate the conversation of climate justice and resilience. More importantly, it offers the opportunity to examine how historically excluded and underrepresented communities understand how climate change is connected to larger 'top-down' investments and smaller, crucial investments like parks. Based on what we know from existing literature, Link appears to be a good fit to bridge gaps between communities and public policy.

It is evident through the available research that there are multiple forms of resilience, various ways to define climate resilience, and a visible gap between the attention given to international climate change efforts compared to the everyday needs of vulnerable communities (Gaillard 2012). For this specific research it was evident that there is a gap in the literature pertaining to climate resilience and community engagement, especially within California. While there is emerging literature pertaining to climate change, environmental justice, and park equity, more is needed, particularly regarding how communities themselves define and conceptualize climate resilience. For the purposes of this capstone research, Arnold et al.'s (2014) and the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions' (CCES) definition of 'climate resilience' will serve as the baseline definition; prompting questions around whether the Link Program allows community-based organizations and other partners to consider "actions that seek to reduce sensitivity to or increase adaptive capacity in the face of extreme weather events or longer-term climate changes" (Arnold et al., 2014); and, the ability to "anticipate, prepare for, and respond to hazardous events, trends, or disturbances related to climate" (2021).

## Research Question

My research poses the following question: To what extent does the Link Program engage with underrepresented communities to provide funding opportunities for climate resilience?

# Data and Methods

## Study Area

In the first phase of the pilot program Link served three cohorts: the cities of El Monte, Maywood and Cudahy (SELA), and the community of Panorama City within the City of Los Angeles. These sites were selected program based on their need for funding to develop more parks and green infrastructure. While the program continues to expand to additional sites, my study focused on these three since they have been in the Link Program the longest:

- City of El Monte (San Gabriel Valley)
  - Partners: Active San Gabriel Valley (SGV), Trust for Public Land
- City of Cudahy and Maywood (South East Los Angeles)
  - Partners: Communities for a Better Environment, Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust
- Panorama City (San Fernando Valley)
  - Partners: Pacoima Beautiful and the City of Los Angeles, Council District 6

## Methodology

To understand how community-based organizations are communicating with individuals through the Link Program about climate resilience, I used an observational, descriptive research approach involving semi-structured interviews with members and associates of the Link Program. Community partners at four Link pilot sites were interviewed in late January through mid-February 2022 to understand their approaches to community engagement and whether climate resilience is being discussed. Participants were recruited via purposeful sampling to ensure information-rich interviews, along with maximum variation sampling to ensure a diverse range of participants (Roszko, 2020). Snowball sampling was also employed to ensure key participants and community leaders were invited to participate (ibid). My client and I developed a preliminary set of nine interviewees, which included individuals who have been working on the ground within these communities and/or are familiar with the Link Program. One additional interview was conducted in May 2022 because of snowball sampling. A complete list is provided in Appendix A.

First5 LA was a program collaborator whose staff were also interviewed to understand how they evaluated the community engagement process and whether climate resilience was considered. Two individuals who were previously involved in the Link Program in varying capacities were also interviewed: one had long-term knowledge of the program and its origins, and the other had a local municipality perspective of the program that was valuable to include.



A total of ten interviews were collected digitally via Zoom for approximately one hour each. Interviewees were asked questions about their experience with the Link Program and its relationship to climate resilience. Questions aimed to clarify and expand upon their responses and honed in on whether climate resilience could be integrated into future iterations of the Program.

### Interview Design

Interview questions were open-ended and oriented to have the interviewee reflect on the Program's ability to engage with the community about climate resilience while also considering whether such a conversation is relevant to these specific communities and if lack of funding is preventing them from considering climate resilience further. Interviewees were asked to reflect on their experience working within the Program, their specific project work, insights gained, and how themes like climate resilience, climate justice, environmental justice, and related topics were discussed with the community or elsewhere. A complete interview protocol is included in Appendix A.

Each interview was transcribed using Zoom (through their complimentary transcription, provided by Otter.ai) and cross-referenced against the Zoom recording and interviewer's notes for accuracy. The transcripts were analyzed and organized via question to identify key themes. All identifying markers (including names and organizational affiliation) were redacted from interview transcripts ensuring the privacy of interviewees and the confidentiality of the data collected.

## Key Findings

Overall, interview respondents did not feel that the Link Program prioritized or made a direct connection between community engagement and climate resilience. Many argued that while this was not the intention of the Link Program, it speaks to a larger systemic issue with how policy interventions are built, categorized, and structured in ways that hinder much-needed conversations on how to enhance community-level resilience in the face of climate change. More specifically, current policy structures do not allow the space to have holistic conversations pertaining to climate resilience, and why these conversations are important to community development, capacity building, and successfully implementing infrastructure projects.

### **The Link Program is working, but “climate resilience is the outcome, not the goal”.**

All respondents expressed satisfaction with the Link Program and felt it was achieving its objective of supporting CBOs in “building civic and planning capacity to access funding for parks and other forms of green infrastructure” through a community-empowered, resident-first approach (First5LA 2022). One respondent noted that initially they (the respondent) were unclear if the Program would address the confusing relationship between Measures W, H, A, or M, but now see the Program as working within the sphere of Measure A. Interviewees from CBOs expressed gratitude for the Program’s support through funds and by connecting them with organizations with the capacity to help support their community-desired projects. Many respondents, both representing CBOs and not, said that Link is essential to connecting low-income and park-poor communities with regional and state funds. Moreover, for at least two sites the Link Program has been able to connect CBOs with representatives in local government who facilitated civic engagement and built momentum.

Most respondents did not see a direct connection between Link and climate resilience, but a few explicitly argued that the Program was connected to climate resilience, through its focus on parks. Many respondents mentioned that, though the Program is focused on identifying sites for future park projects, respondents are all operating peripherally under the concept of climate resilience. One respondent noted that Measure A, from which many of the Link participants are working to obtain funding, allocates funding toward climate resilience.<sup>4</sup> The same respondent noted that, in speaking to the purpose of the Link Program, “climate resilience is an outcome,

---

<sup>4</sup> In the Grants Administration Manual for Measure A, a document prepared by the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District (RPOSD), Category 2 (Neighborhood Parks, Healthy Communities, and Urban Greening) focuses on funding multi-benefit projects that should “seek to leverage public and private funding from” among other projects, “climate pollution reduction or adaptation; carbon sequestration; heat-island reduction [...] and environmental justice benefit programs” (RPOSD 2022). This may be the allocated funding this respondent speaks to. The Technical Assistance Program however, while separate from the categories of funding prioritizes multi-benefit projects like “climate resiliency and urban cooling” (p.2-76).

not the goal [...] the goal is getting people parks, shade, safe places to walk, reduced flooding, all these things that will help their lives become more livable and benefit from what their tax dollars are contributing too; a side effect is that you're making these communities more climate resilient".

Many respondents from CBOs noted that, in their community engagement efforts, the term 'climate resilience' is not often used. For instance, one respondent noted the challenge of translating the term from English to Spanish:

"I guess the translation of climate resilience is a little tricky, and we probably have to either define to them what that English word means, or find another way that would resonate better with them [...] we decided there isn't a good word that's going to define it [...] but you can still articulate the concept and I think our community members can understand it. And in many ways, I think they do things at home that are about conservation, taking care of the earth, cooling their houses, but they don't give it a specific name."

Others pointed out that residents are not immediately concerned with climate change; they are more concerned with social services and community resources like parks, clean water, shade, trees, safety, and housing. As noted by one respondent, "I think [climate resilience] is kind of in there, and it's part of the conversation, but I don't think it's the central piece of what we're talking about. Especially in a community like [redacted] where the existing infrastructure is run down, I think that's really top of people's mind. Can they get their parks to a point where it's clean and safe[...] I think when people talk about heat and shade, it's there, but it's not something we're leading with." The same respondent later noted that "[...] people feel a sense of urgency with safety, cleanliness and accessibility within their communities, I think that's the first layer." This appears to affirm what Moser and Pike (2015) noted in their research, and that climate change is prioritized behind more pressing, visible community concerns.

Some interviewees thought that not talking about climate resilience within this context was a flaw in the Program or their work that should be addressed, with one acknowledging the fact that their organization, which works on various projects addressing urban heat, could do better to frame the community conversations around climate change. Other respondents considered that they in their organizations can do more in their outreach to help their communities understand the connections between park access, green space, and climate resilience. Most respondents considered the relative lack of consideration of climate resilience a systemic flaw of funding and grant application structures. Although Measure A funding is designed to be inclusive of climate resilience terminology, there is a disconnect between the use of the term by various actors and institutions and the Link Program in its current stage, which is unable to address this gap as it is directly focused on addressing park equity without making explicit the link between park equity and decreased vulnerability to climate impacts.

### **Individuals engaged in community engagement do not discuss 'climate resilience' – though they view elements of it as integral to community thriving and empowerment.**

Many respondents who represented CBOs commented that the term 'climate resilience' is not explicitly discussed in community engagement work. The Link Program aims to help CBOs identify community park needs and then to translate these needs into funding for capital park projects. In doing this work, the CBO respondents reported they did not explicitly talk about climate resilience. Many interviewees commented that, though the Link Program did not make explicit the connection to climate resilience, park planning is a tool for climate resilience – a point that is also supported by existing literature (Rosso et al 2022; Schuch et al, 2017). Many respondents intimated that climate resilience is perceived as a 'government term' and is not used in everyday conversation.

Respondents agreed that when community members express the need for more parks, trees, shade, safe playground equipment, safe water quality, food supplies, cooling centers, or other social services that are tied to enhanced resilience, community members don't notice or acknowledge the climate component of this. As observed by one respondent, "folks are living on a day-to-day basis, reacting from fire to fire, issue to issue – surviving", and climate resilience is not framed as a matter of immediate survival. Many, if not all, respondents agreed that parks are the more pressing priority, despite people understanding subconsciously that parks are tools for climate resilience.

When asked, some respondents from NGOs did not see the need to bring up climate resilience, as their community engagement approach follows the community's lead. Other respondents, notably from CBOs, said it may be worth mentioning, as raising community capacity in this regard could have reciprocal benefits when it came to applying for and obtaining funding. One respondent noted that they are "doing the work" pertaining to climate change, specifically urban heat, but they're "just not framing it how I think we need to or give more emphasis to that point". The respondent felt that, if their project work was framed within the context of climate change that "it would give it more urgency [and people would] better understand that planting trees is not just making the community look pretty [...] it could save your life. [...] I think that the urgency would make people see it as more than just a pretty tree for the community but a tree of life."

### **Sufficient program funds don't make a difference if community-based projects struggle to qualify – even for communities that are able to get these grants, the application's measures of success are narrow and limiting.**

Interviewees expressed nuanced opinions regarding the availability of funds. Multiple interviewees stated that the amount of funding available was not their top concern; the challenge is getting access to it. While the intention of the Link Program is to be a link between

the CBOs and regional funding sources, the Program in its current form is not fully addressing the issue. One respondent, who was not a part of a CBO, stated that grant-makers and funding agencies are still struggling to understand how to advocate for park-eligible communities that need it the most:

“the piece that’s missing is what I’m calling a ‘parks advocate’, somebody who kind of helps bring all this – in the matchmaking way – bring all these resources together, and I think that [the] Link Program provides an opportunity to [...] identify the resources that are needed, and then to match up the people who need the resources with the availability of the resources. But it requires a direct grant application [...] that is itself a hurdle for most organizations.”

Later, the same respondent noted the challenge of applicants from varying communities receiving equitable access to funds, stating that, “just because the rules are the same for everybody, doesn’t mean everybody can follow the same rules”. Respondents, including the one quoted above, expressed that the Link Program fills a necessary gap between public funding and historically excluded communities that struggle to obtain it. The Program does this by giving both CBOs and NGOs the funding to conduct community engagement, work with city officials, and consult on the top community priorities and how to access funding sources to deliver on the community’s vision. According to most respondents, the reason typical funding streams cannot accommodate this type of community engagement work is because applications are structured to assume that the community has already agreed upon the project (or not even considered community engagement to begin with). The funding and application cycle consider community engagement a specific phase in a project timeline, rather than a fluid, iterative process. With Link, CBOs can have the funding to go back to the community and reassess their needs and priorities.

While Link helps significantly in providing nimble, philanthropic funds to help CBOs be competitive in application cycles, more roles like ‘park advocates’ at the grant funding agencies are needed to help continue to fill this gap. One respondent said that capacity is limited in terms of advocacy at funding agencies; further cooperation with other agencies pertaining to transportation, homelessness, affordable housing, and wastewater are also needed to ensure multi-benefit projects are successfully funded and implemented. In future iterations the Link Program should consider this coordination with other measures like W, H, and M and see if it would improve indicators of success. Further, there were differences in opinion on where the funding should be allocated; some respondents said more funding should be allocated to community engagement, while one said it should go directly to the capitalization of a park project, or (according to community experts who the respondent talked with) funding should be allocated to existing parks.

When asked if they would be interested in applying for a hypothetical State funding grant focused on community-empowered climate resilience projects, all respondents representing CBOs said they would apply. Roughly half expressed that they would apply with the caveat that

they would want the funding structured to truly empower community engagement and project development. One respondent said they would want to know more about how community benefit would be evaluated and calculated in the application process. Another respondent wanted flexibility in the funding schedule to allow for community participation, stating that “if [our legislators] were going to be forward thinking, I [they] need to rethink how funding plays out in communities, if they are truly interested in accurately representing what communities look for.” Further, respondents from CBOs wanted to understand how the funds would be dispersed at the community level, and what kinds of metrics would be used to measure success. More specifically, some respondents were curious to know how these hypothetical metrics (like community benefit and level of community engagement conducted) could be implemented in schoolyards. One Link cohort learned through experience about the challenges to convert schoolyards to public park access and leverage Measure A funding. Other respondents stated that they would prefer to be given a lump sum of money to be used however the community sees fit, even if this did not mean a specific park project. This perspective indicates that more private funding is desired, as it is not tied as strictly to specific indicators and metrics.

All CBO interviewees responded positively to the hypothetical climate resilience focused funding grants but noted that the amount of funding would need to be substantial. When it comes to funding for parks and recreation, interviews with agency representatives stated that existing funding is sufficient but inaccessible to CBOs.

Two interviewees noted the challenges of working within the Measure A structure and how, when working with schools, the ‘in-perpetuity’ clause and subsequent joint-use agreement is a barrier to implementing multi-benefit projects in specific communities. The ‘in-perpetuity’ clause, in this context, refers to the fact that school sites are designated legally as school sites forever (in perpetuity); as a result, it is necessary to obtain a joint-use agreement for school sites that wish to allocate portions of their school yards for park access after school and on the weekends. As elaborated by another respondent, “the in-perpetuity requirement [also] says that if you take measure A funds and dedicate them to a park, that capital project, that land has to be held as a park forever, for the benefit of the county of Los Angeles, the city of Los Angeles.” For one site in the Link Program, the collective desire amongst the school district and CBOs is to use a decommissioned school for a park and family resource center. It is likely that, had the ‘in-perpetuity’ clause not been a barrier to access funding, as it was in this case, that more sites would be eligible to be turned into parks and havens of climate resilience.

### **Grant agencies prefer quantitative, not qualitative, measures of success – perpetuating the climate gap.**

A few respondents cited difficulties with obtaining technical assistance or understanding the complex, bureaucratic funding application process. Several expressed frustrations with reaching individuals at the regional or state level to answer simple questions about the grant application deadline or were frustrated by the engineering-heavy metrics required by the grant

guidelines. Notably, a few respondents observed that, while Measure A and state funding grants strongly encourage community engagement, the grant application, timeline, and metrics of success do not reflect this interest, instead opting for more quantitative measures of success. Consequently, this results in communities who conduct extensive community engagement but do not have the funds to afford engineering consultants to produce quality plans from accessing funding. This in turn causes community members to become frustrated with the community outreach process and become disengaged, ultimately leading to a gap in understanding how these projects are connected to broader issues like climate change. Therefore, there is inconsistent messaging between policy, grant-makers, and eligible projects.

# Preliminary Recommendations

Based on these initial findings, I offer several preliminary recommendations for consideration for the next iteration of the Link Program. I present each recommendation below with a short explanation of what implementation could look like, and what challenges could arise from implementation.

## **Recommendation for Policy makers: Cultivate stronger linkages between community-based organizations and access to technical assistance for funding.**

Feedback from interviews repeatedly indicated that CBOs struggle to obtain funding when information is not available, when the process is confusing to interpret, and/or when it requires a skilled grant writer to prepare a competitive application. Respondents also viewed competing for state grants against fellow organizations in the same region as a frustrating, counterproductive side effect of going after funding. The Link Program in its next iteration should consider identifying and having grant writers on call in case a CBO wishes to apply. Future legislation should allocate funding for talented grant writers to be accessible to CBOs that work in communities that have struggled to obtain funding in the past. Similar to how other state agencies provide technical assistance to under-funded communities, programs like TCC should be looked to as examples on how to provide robust technical assistance. More funding legislation should be passed that is focused on community-empowered climate resilience projects, with a stronger weight on community engagement and flexible project development. Cultivating stronger linkages would, in turn, increase community capacity in understanding how these projects and funding sources are connected to broader issues of climate change, and could create community support for broader planning efforts compared to individual, one-off capital projects.

## **Recommendation for Grant-makers: Improve communication and collaboration internally and increase advocacy for parks in historically excluded communities.**

A few respondents expressed that they would often receive inconsistent or contradictory feedback when asking questions about the funding cycle, specific requirements, or general questions pertaining to funding agencies. Grant-makers, especially at local and state agencies, should improve interdepartmental communication when it comes to application requirements, and increase flexibility and collaboration within agencies if they are eager to disperse funds equitably. This could include reviewing and evaluating existing grant applications, timelines, and metrics of success with an eye for community engagement – ensuring community engagement is counted in the metrics of success could matter greatly for historically excluded



communities that put in this work often. Further, it continues to develop community capacity in understanding how these applications for projects are connected to climate resilience.

Feedback from agency representatives noted that some agencies are aiming to increase “park advocacy” but are still in the early stages of understanding what advocacy from the municipal level looks like. Grant-makers in leadership positions should actively and openly continue to learn, consult, collaborate, and listen to CBOs and engage with initiatives like the Link Program to understand how they can improve. This can only be done through a humble posture of learning, which must be integrated into the agency’s culture of operation.

### **Recommendation for Philanthropic Funders: Consider expanding the pool of funders to incorporate other focuses and private-public partnerships.**

Many interviewees shared that, within the communities they serve, residents are not looking to discuss climate resilience – they are more concerned about ensuring they have the resources they need to survive. Whether it is food, housing, security, and/or open space, these social services take precedence over considering how such services are integrated into climate resiliency. By expanding the pool of funders to include those who are focused on social services that are ‘barriers’ to thinking about climate resilience (such as housing, health services, healthy food access, etc.), this may not only enhance everyday resilience in advance of disaster but also expand opportunities to plan for climate resilience and get more projects done in more sites. When basic needs are met in a community, they are no longer in a state of survival, and can focus on other issues of concern to them. Philanthropic funders are in a pivotal position as their funding can pay for the soft costs needed to prepare communities to work towards bigger investments in state capital, like community engagement and consultation to identify what is needed before going after specific application cycles. Inviting public agencies to be a part of the collaborative process may also help in learning how to operate in a space where funding is not contingent on sticking to a specific scope, fee estimate, or plan and is informed by the needs of the community. This can lead to revised application requirements, improved applications, and more funds equally distributed for sustainable projects.

### **Future Research**

More funding and assistance are needed in park-poor communities; future research can help understand how to establish a funding application evaluation system that is free from bias yet is equitable in distributing funds to communities that need it the most. Additionally, further research is needed on the intersection of climate resilience, community engagement, and environmental justice, as the gaps in this scholarship are felt at the community level – additional empirical research can help identify further gaps in collaboration and possibly funding, as well as strategies to address them.

Future research should examine the ‘in-perpetuity’ clause and its legal strength under Measure A, and whether such a clause can be waived. One interviewee emphasized that the next round

of state funding should address this problem, along with the joint-use agreement problem, as well as lack of funding for park maintenance and servicing. Additionally, further research should be conducted on the correct allocation of funding for each need, as the same interviewee noted that funds for certain needs like technical assistance have not been sufficiently spent, whereas other funds have been depleted.

Future research is also needed to understand how to universally communicate about climate resilience. This could occur through the creation of a common language that elected officials, policy makers, funders, and community members can access, or through other means. Future research should examine the short- and long-term approaches to advancing climate resilience discourse at the bottom-up level.

Further research should also examine the emotional, psychological, and spiritual implications of planning for climate resilience in park-poor communities. While this was not directly noted in interviews, there is a subconscious understanding that the work of resilience and planning for climate change takes on more than a physical toll. It can impact communities' mental health, cultural competency, and relationship with individuals and the planet. Further research would benefit communities in having their voices heard.

## Conclusion

Climate change is the great multiplier; it further exacerbates infrastructure and inequity issues that currently exist in California. Though the Link Program is one positive step towards addressing climate resilience through parks and green infrastructure, significant progress is still needed to address the gap between park-poor communities and access to funding. This report presents qualitative data, analysis, and findings to deepen our understanding of how initiatives like the Link Program can and do integrate climate resilience into their work. The purpose of the report was to evaluate the Link Program's ability to engage with communities pertaining to climate resilience. Semi-structured interviews with CBOs, funders, local agencies and representatives from elected officials' offices who were associated with or familiar with Link revealed their experiences with the Program, how they engage with the communities they serve and seek funding, and how climate change and resilience are connected to their work in park planning.

This research observed that, while the Link Program is successfully addressing the gap between park-poor communities and access to funding, more collaboration, advocacy, and funding is needed. This cannot all come from the Link Program; it requires the increased engagement and advocacy of grant-makers, more policy and budget allocations from policymakers, and more private-public partnerships from philanthropic funders. Through these incremental steps, equitable park planning and funding can, eventually, be achieved. More work also needs to be done, through the Link Program or other similar ventures, to focus on linking community capacity with the concept of climate resilience. While perceived as an elite term, climate resilience is interrelated with existing community needs and initiatives. Working with communities to understand how their park planning work is connected to themes like climate resilience can assist in strengthening capacity and connecting with other communities and efforts working to advance climate and environmental justice.

## References

- Angel Santiago Fernandez-Bou, J. Pablo Ortiz-Partida, Kristin B. Dobbin, Humberto Flores-Landeros, Leigh A. Bernacchi, Josué Medellín-Azuara, Underrepresented, understudied, underserved: Gaps and opportunities for advancing justice in disadvantaged communities, *Environmental Science & Policy*, Volume 122, 2021, Pages 92-100, ISSN 1462-9011, Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2021.04.014>.
- Arnold, Margaret, Robin Mearns, Kaori Oshima, and Vivek Prasad. 2014. "Climate and Disaster Resilience: The Role for Community-Driven Development." Social Development Department. World Bank, Washington, DC. Available online: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/17553>
- Baybay, C. S., & Hindmarsh, R. (2019). Resilience in the Philippines through effective community engagement. *The Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, 34(1), 65–70. <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/ielapa.189447123598706>
- Center for Climate and Energy Solutions (CCEs). 2021. "Climate Resilience Portal". Webpage. Accessed November 18, 2021. Available online: <https://www.czes.org/content/climate-resilience-overview/>.
- Christensen, J., & Prichard, M. (Summer 2021). *Mobilizing the Transformative Power of WHAM*: 12. Retrieved May 19, 2022 from <https://www.ioes.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/WHAM-Implementation-Report-from-UCLA-and-LHF-Summer-2021.pdf>
- Drake, Julie. Valley Press Staff Writer (December 2, 2019). *County is considering what to do with funds from four measures*. Antelope Valley Press. Retrieved May 19, 2022, from [https://www.avpress.com/news/county-is-considering-what-to-do-with-funds-from-four-measures/article\\_fb118fc8-14cc-11ea-80e6-1f28037921c8.html](https://www.avpress.com/news/county-is-considering-what-to-do-with-funds-from-four-measures/article_fb118fc8-14cc-11ea-80e6-1f28037921c8.html)
- Dominique M David-Chavez and Michael C Gavin. 2018. *Environmental Research Letters* 13 123005. Available online: <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/aaf300/meta>
- Divya Sharma, Raina Singh & Rozita Singh (2014) Building urban climate resilience: learning from the ACCCRN experience in India, *International Journal of Urban Sustainable Development*, 6:2, 133-153, DOI: [10.1080/19463138.2014.937720](https://doi.org/10.1080/19463138.2014.937720)
- Hoffman, Jeremy. 2021. "Climate Resilience and Justice in Richmond". September 2021. Accessed February 21 2022. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.21974/3t4x-z726>

- J. C. Gaillard (2012) The climate gap, *Climate and Development*, 4:4, 261-264, DOI: 10.1080/17565529.2012.742846
- Los Angeles County Regional Parks and Open Space District (RPOSD) (January 2022). Grants Administration Manual for Measure A. Retrieved May 24, 2022 from [http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/dpr/1121397\\_MeasureA\\_GAM\\_January2022\\_Edition.pdf](http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/dpr/1121397_MeasureA_GAM_January2022_Edition.pdf)
- Meerow S, Stults M. Comparing Conceptualizations of Urban Climate Resilience in Theory and Practice. *Sustainability*. 2016; 8(7):701. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su8070701>
- Meerow et al. 2016. Defining urban resilience: a review. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 147:38-49. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0169204615002418>
- Our Vision. (2022, March 31). Thrivance Project. <https://thrivancegroup.com/vision>
- Orr, A. N. V. (2021, June 8). *Developing a Climate Resilience Scorecard for Marin County, California*. Oregon State University. Retrieved March 18, 2022, from [https://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/concern/graduate\\_projects/nv9359968](https://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/concern/graduate_projects/nv9359968)
- Pearson, Adam R., Matthew T. Ballew, Sarah Naiman, and Jonathon P. Schuldt. 26 Apr. 2017. "Race, Class, Gender and Climate Change Communication." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Climate Science*.; Accessed 24 Nov. 2021. Available online: <https://oxfordre.com/climatescience/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228620.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228620-e-412>.
- Redesign LA. About | RedesignLA. (n.d.). Retrieved May 30, 2022, from <https://www.redesign.la/about>
- Richard Friend, Marcus Moench, What is the purpose of urban climate resilience? Implications for addressing poverty and vulnerability, *Urban Climate*, Volume 6, 2013, Pages 98-113, ISSN 2212-0955, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.uclim.2013.09.002>.
- Roszko, A. (2020, Spring). *Climate Resilience Planning with Vulnerable Communities: A Case Study of Engagement and Citizenship in Edmonton, Alberta*. ERA. <https://doi.org/10.7939/r3-99ky-v257>
- Stephen R.J. Sheppard, Alison Shaw, David Flanders, Sarah Burch, Arnim Wiek, Jeff Carmichael, John Robinson, Stewart Cohen, Future visioning of local climate change: A framework for community engagement and planning with scenarios and visualisation, *Futures*, Volume 43, Issue 4, 2011, Pages 400-412, ISSN 0016-3287, Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2011.01.009>
- Strategic Growth Council (SGC). (n.d.). *Transformative Climate Communities (TCC)—Strategic Growth Council*. Retrieved May 30, 2022, from <https://sgc.ca.gov/programs/tcc/>

Soden, Robert & Palen, Leysia & Chase, Claire & Deniz, Derya & Arneson, Erin & Sprain, Leah & Goldstein, Bruce & Liel, Abbie & Javernick-Will, Amy & Dashti, Shideh. 2015. The Polyvolcality of Resilience: Discovering a Research Agenda through Interdisciplinary Investigation and Community Engagement. Available online:

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/296488770> The Polyvolcality of Resilience Discovering a Research Agenda through Interdisciplinary Investigation and Community Engagement

Susanne C. Moser, Cara Pike. Community engagement on adaptation: Meeting a growing capacity need. *Urban Climate*, Volume 14, Part 1, 2015. Pages 111-115, ISSN 2212-0955. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.uclim.2015.06.006>.

Stephen Tyler & Marcus Moench (2012): A framework for urban climate resilience, *Climate and Development*, 4:4, 311-326. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17565529.2012.745389>

The Link Advocates, Governments, Families, and Parks Initiative (Link). (n.d.). *First 5 Los Angeles*. Retrieved March 18, 2022, from <https://www.first5la.org/the-link-advocates-governments-families-and-parks-initiative-link/>

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). 2020. Climate Action Pathway: Climate Resilience, Executive Summary. Available online: [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/ExecSumm\\_Resilience\\_o.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/ExecSumm_Resilience_o.pdf)

USC Equity Research Institute. (2018 January). *Measures Matter: Ensuring Equitable Implementation of Los Angeles County Measures M & A*. Retrieved March 18, 2022, from <http://dornsife.usc.edu/perc/measures-matter-la/>

# Appendix A: Interview Protocol and List of Interviewees

Below is a sample of the research protocol used for each interview.

## Research Question

My research answers the following question: “To what extent does the Link Program engage with underrepresented communities to provide funding opportunities for climate resilience?”

## Defining “climate resilience”

The World Bank, in a 2014 study examining their community-driven development portfolio to assess the potential for building climate resilience of vulnerable communities, defined climate resilience as “actions that seek to reduce sensitivity to or increase adaptive capacity in the face of extreme weather events or longer-term climate changes” (Arnold et al., 2014). Similarly, the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions (CCES) defines climate resilience as the ability to “anticipate, prepare for, and respond to hazardous events, trends, or disturbances related to climate” (2021). With these definitions, this capstone research intends to be grounded in a definition that focuses on prioritizing people to ensure their environments are resilient from climate events.

## Interview Questionnaire

This questionnaire guide was modeled after Orr’s work in developing a score card to measure climate resilience (2021). Questions are numbered, follow up questions or notes to the interviewer are in *italics*.

1. Thank you so much for your time and for being a part of this interview. I wish to stress that your responses will be treated with confidentiality and (if needed) anonymity; it will have no bearing on your current funding. Additionally, I will be recording the interview solely for my notetaking purposes; I will not share the recording with anyone else. Your name will be included in the list of interviewees in my final report; if I do quote you directly, I will confer with you beforehand to make sure you approve.
2. I understand your organization’s vision is centered on the following [a description of the organization’s vision, goals, and approach is given]. Is there anything I missed?
  - a. Could you expand on what your role is in the organization? Are you this involved in your other projects as you are with the Link Program?
3. How would you describe the Link Program in your own words? Why is your organization involved in the Link Program?

- a. *See if the organization is oriented towards climate resilience; what are their priorities of the Link Program?*
- 4. **\*\*\*How do you and/or your organization engage with the community-based organizations through the Link Program? If you are a CBO, how do you engage with community members through the Link Program?**
  - a. *Any tie into climate resilience? Has the Program helped increase community capacity about climate resilience?*
  - b. *Do you think the community cares or is paying attention to climate resilience?*
- 5. Tell me about your experience of the Program so far; what are some insights your organization has gained, especially with respect to the development of parks, green infrastructure, and funding? What about the Program's efficiency to meet its partnership goals?
  - a. *What does success of the Program look like?*
  - b. *When thinking about the challenges of the Program, what keeps you up at night? What are your biggest challenges?*
  - c. *What do you find most meaningful?*
  - d. *Strengths/improvements?*
  - e. *what about community engagement? Has that changed?*
  - f. **How does climate change enter into/affect your work?**
  - g. *What would you like to improve for future similar programs?*
  - h. *Inquire about integrating climate resilience*

***[transition to talking about climate resilience]***

- 6. What do you think of when you think of climate change? How do you think climate change impacts locally, or the role of local actors to address it? What do you think when you think of climate resilience? Tell me about the first or most recent time you talked with someone about climate resilience (either in the Program, with an elected official, or a City employee). How much of your organization's work do you think is connected to climate resilience?
  - a. *How do you see this coming into the Program?*
  - b. *If they don't think their organization is involved, ask why.*
  - c. *Some might view CR as integral, others distracting; what are your viewpoints on it?*
- 7. **\*\*\*Do you think community-based organizations, community members, or other participants of the Link Program are concerned about climate change? What about climate resilience?**
  - a. *Probe further – why/why not?*
  - b. **\*\*\*Do you engage with them on the topic of climate resilience? How?**
  - c. *Use the definition above as a grounding in case they need it – maybe probe on if they agree with the definition.*



8. If there was a funding opportunity presented from the State that is climate resilience oriented, and focused on local community empowerment, would the Link Program seem like a good fit to apply through?
  - a. *The idea here is to see if they can see the connection between this theoretical funding source and their work in the Link Program.*
  - b. *Probe further on whether they have looked at programs like ReDesign LA (Link for Measure W) and how it is focused on "multiple benefit projects" – do they see Link as a program that helps "multi-benefit projects?"*
  - c. **\*\*\**(PB, Robin, and Tori) Transformative Climate Communities is another similar program – are you interested in these funding streams and if so, have you applied? If yes, how did you conduct community engagement?***
9. **(IF TIME)** Do you believe your political leaders are committed to addressing climate resilience in your community? If so, how? If not, why not?
  - a. *If you don't want to talk about it, that's no problem.*
  - b. *If they need help: I've noticed in other Site conversations that political support can be crucial in getting an application through the door, or getting enough political momentum to move an RFP forward; what role do you see political leadership playing in the program, it's success and its capacity to address climate resilience?*
  - c. *What do you think it would look like for political leaders to address climate resilience in their community?*
10. Is there anything else I didn't ask that you want to share with me, or you think I should know/is relevant? Is there anyone else you think I should interview for this project?

## Interviewees

The following list interviewees who were invited and agreed to participate in this research. A total of ten interviews were conducted, and interviewees were provided an e-gift card after to thank them for their time.

### Cities of Cudahy and Maywood

- Tori Kjer, Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust
- Dilia Ortega and Laura Gracia, Communities for a Better Environment

### Panorama City

- Max Podemski, Council District 6, City of Los Angeles
- Andres Ramirez, People for Mobility Justice
- Veronica Padilla, Pacoima Beautiful
- Vianey Moreno, Pacoima Beautiful

### City of El Monte

- Robin Mark, Trust for Public Land
- David Diaz, Active San Gabriel Valley

### Grant-Makers and Funders

- Jack Sahl, Consultant for the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District
- John Guevarra, First 5 LA