Good morning everyone. Welcome to USC Price School. My name is Raphael Bostic. I'm a professor here at the Price School of Public Policy and the Director of the Bedrosian Center on Governance and the Public Enterprise. It's really good to see so many of you here to talk about the LA River Revitalization plan. This is a program that we are running as part of a--actually two series. One is through the Price School and we've had a number of programs already through the course of the year about the LA River Revitalization, and this is part of that. It's also a part of the Bedrosian Center is Leading from the West program. We believe that there are very interesting things going on in the west that can set a tone and set an example for others to follow. And we believe at this plan and the challenges and the opportunities that represents are one way to do that. I want to give you just a brief description of the center just so you understand the perspective for tonight, because we're--we really--we're taking a slightly different angle. So, the Bedrosian Center is a center on Governance and the Public Enterprise. So, we're going to talk about governance and when I talk to people about what the program is and what the center does, I think about policy in two ways. There's the design of the policy, so getting the incentives right and all those structures but there's also the actual implementation of the policy. So, once you know what to do, you actually have to do it. And in many instances, the difficulties and the hurdles of being effective and efficient in delivery of policy have to do with that second category. And the Bedrosian Center is really dedicated toward lifting up those issues and getting you to think about the implementation pieces, as well as the design that what are we trying to do. And so we have a great program tonight. We have five speakers, well four--five speakers, four who are joining me in a panel discussion, one who's going to set the tone in a second. Just a couple of things. So, one of many things about events in general is speeches are less interesting to me, so I don't like to have speeches in my events. And so, we're going to try to have a conversation and it'll be a moderated conversation. I'll be the moderator. We'll talk for about two-thirds of the time and then we'll open it up and try to have a conversation, bring you into that conversation, so we can cover as much as we possibly can. But also cover the things that you're interested in. So, I hope this will be fun. I hope it'll be interesting and engaged and--so to kick us off, we have Renee Dake Wilson, who is the Vice President of the LA City Planning Commission. She's an architect with Dake Wilson Architects, and has been a long time leader and activist in city planning issues, in design issues, and in livability issues throughout the city. Really pleased to have you here with us. Please join me in welcoming Renee.
Renee Dake Wilson: I want to thank Raphael Bostic and Donnajean Ward of USC's Bedrosian Center on Governance for bringing us all here around the resource that hundreds of thousands of Angelenos live within a quarter mile of. When I think of the LA River, I think of Lewis MacAdams poems and picking up trash with FOLAR. I think of lobbying the Army Corps of Engineers to declare the navigable waterway. I think of lobbying the federal government for the all-20 approval and funding. Let's keep crossing our fingers for today's news. I think of the Gold Line, taking the Gold Line down the LA River. I think of Miguel Luna educating kids by teaching them water testing through Agua University. I think of the LA River run through LA River Revitalization Corp and think about--when I go on that run down the river, I think about how the five freeway cuts off access to the river from Griffith Park. I think about--to the animals that need the water is the point there. I think about kayaking the river in the valley with LA Conservation Corps and I don't see any of the city there. I just see nature. I think of a bike tour I took in valley neighborhoods with multicultural communities for mobility, which I do with my children. I think of biking the LA River ride with the LA County Bike Coalition into the ocean in Long Beach where I saw sea lions playing in the warm water from the power plant outfall. I think of the follies and design along the river with Lauren Bon of Metabolic Studio and Mia Lehrer Landscape Architects. I worked on neighborhood character, appropriate uses and attracting investment, while preventing displacement of entrenched low-income communities with the Department of City Planning through the LA Rio in the past but now they're like other like-minded regulations and guidelines. I drink the Kool-Aid of the drought and stormwater management with street design for water infiltration to manage flooding and water supply with Jonathan Palfrey of Climate Resolve. All these issues about recreation, transportation, habitat for animals and people, stormwater management and infrastructure are what the LA River means to me. And I hope that after tonight through implementation, it will be something that means to you that will be a way that you'll find a way, your way of making my LA River your own my LA River and together we'll have our LA River. So, I'm going to introduce our panelists now. First--Let's see, Carol Armstrong, oh you're not in order. Here, I'm going go in order, call me crazy. On the far side, Josephine Axt from the Army Corps of Engineers. She's got a PhD--She is a PhD. She's the Chief of Planning Division at US Army Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles District. She leads the 50-person Planning Division in the formulation and evaluation of solutions to water resource issues like flooding, ecosystem degradation, and navigation improvements. Dr. Axt oversaw the corps draft LA River Eco Restoration Feasibility Study. That's a lot of long words. And then Mia Lehrer of Mia Lehrer Landscape Architects, she's the founding principal of her firm. She's born in San Salvador, El Salvador. Miss Lehrer received her Masters of Landscape Architecture from the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University. Her firm as a consultant for the LA River Revitalization master plan, currently leading efforts to identify and plan a comprehensive open space network that interfaces with channel restoration and urbanism. Next stop, in the middle, we have Omar Brownson from the LA River Revitalization Corporation. He joined them in January of 2011 as its first executive director. He's a former corps fellow. He received his BA from UC Davis and holds a graduate degree in Public Policy and Urban Planning from Harvard.
Brownson's project will determine how to create a collective civic movement to achieve his organization's goal to connect the 51-mile LA River Greenway. And last we have--closest to Raphael--we have Carol Armstrong. She directs LA Mayor Eric Garcetti’s LA River Works Team. She served as the project manager for, and now implements the city's LA River Revitalization master plan prioritizing the river in policy, planning, and development. She earned a PhD in what is now the Sol Price School of Public Policy at USC. And, OK an MPP from Georgetown University and a BA from Purdue University. I'm jealous of everybody's education over there. And last but not least, we have Raphael Bostic from the USC Bedrosian Center. He's the director and he served for three years in the Obama Administration as the Assistant Secretary for Policy Development and Research at the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. Bostic arrived at USC in 2011 where he served as a professor in the School of Policy, Planning, and Development. Thank you so much for organizing us.

>> Raphael Bostic: Thank you. Thank you very much Renee. I actually got here in 2001. So, I'm older than I look. So, when I started, I had my staff do some research on the LA River Revitalization plan. When you go to the city website, and you look through all the parties that are involved, it's like 66 organizations at the federal, the state, the local, and the international levels. And so, to start the talk--discussion about governance, how did you get to that level? And I'll start with you Carol, I think. Sixty-six is a big number. Like what was the process by which you decided that--that's what we needed to hear from and engage to have this plan really work moving forward?

>> Carol Armstrong: OK, well, I think 66 is closer to 200 now at least. So, the city was listening to the community. We have to remember that the river revitalization movement started with the community. People who lived along the river, for a long time have wanted access to the river. And not just as a flood control channel but as a natural, cultural heritage resource for recreation and just reconnecting communities that were historically divided by the river channelization. And so, that took formal form in the city through the ad hoc committee of the city council and they directed my boss, the city engineer, to develop the LA River Revitalization master plan. And our plan covers the first 32 miles of the river but the river is 51 miles and all 51 miles are within the county. And I want to point out my river brother in the audience, Kevin Kemp [assumed spelling] from the county who we work very closely with, as well as the Army Corps of Engineers and so many others. But the idea is when you start to look at how do you revitalize a waterway that is 51 miles and drains at 870 square mile watershed, all of the sudden it snow balls on who needs to be included. And it's really not just about the bunnies and the butterflies and the bees, it's also about all different kinds of organizations, social justice, environmental justice, economic development, community revitalization, artists. And so, when we started out the master plan process, we had 18 formal public meetings that thousands of people showed up at. We had 40 smaller meetings and then we had, you know, so many other organizations doing their own kind of meetings like the Alianza de los Pueblos del Rio formed during the plan process to make sure that some of the historically--the folks that weren't historically engaged...
were engaged. And I'm sorry to--I'm going on and on, but the idea is we came up with the plan that is not perfect but it had a little bit of a lot of things. And in terms of governance, we knew that the city couldn't do it all, and so it recommended a three-tiered governance structure that we needed to continue to engage parties outside the city and the long-term implementation. So we recommended a entrepreneurial entity, a philanthropic entity, and a governmental partnership entity. So, the governmental one is the LA River Cooperation Committee, which is a partnership with the city, the county, and the Corps of Engineers, and we hope to expand that and include the state. And then the entrepreneurial is my river brother Omar, the LA River Revitalization Corporation, and the philanthropic was intended to be the LA River Foundation but we found that there's a really a richness already out there in the nonprofit community. So, that one hasn't taken form just yet.

>> Raphael Bostic: So, I want to get back to that one in a second.

>> Carol Armstrong: OK

>> Raphael Bostic: I'll turn to Omar next. So, you're the entrepreneurial leg of the stool and you--66 organizations, 200 organizations, how are you working with such a large group? I mean, you could conceivably just be in meetings one-to-one all day long everyday, right? And--

>> Omar Brownson: I didn't make it to the office yet today, so--

>> Carol Armstrong: Yeah, there you go.

>> Omar Brownson: I mean, I think that we've had the fortune of a master plan and so, yeah, I think Carol said that it's not a perfect plan. I don't think perfection was what we're looking for, we're looking for progress. And I think that as, you know, the LA River is sort of something that--it's a baton that's sort of is carried forward. And so, you know, from the river corporation's perspective as a nonprofit organization, you know, I think part of why we were created is that government alone cannot do all the work. And so, part of what we're trying to do is how do we bring the philanthropic and the private sector into the fold of what we're trying to do. And we kind of see that happening in three ways. One is making projects real and so how do we continue to move projects forward and we just finish raising funds to build the first cable-stayed suspension bridge in LA, and hopefully be moving that forward this year with all of our permits aligning public policy in sort of creative ways. And so, for example, one of the goals in the city's master plan and the county's master plan was to connect the LA River bike path, but in some ways it had been done on a piecemeal basis. And so, one of the things that we said is there a way that we could rebrand this and create some urgency behind it so we created the Greenway 2020 campaign. So, can we set a broader agenda and goal in the river corporation? We didn't say we're going to be the ones that builds it. We're going to see if we can bring the right people and players together and in fact--was that yesterday, we were in the front of a major foundation with the city, the county, and metro, all saying we want to connect the LA River bike path, and we all are doing this together. And I think that's sort of an example of, again, stitching of interest together. And then, last year, we threw about 40 events from bike--or runs on the river to dinners in the channel, to bike and movie theater events, and I think part of that is just--it's keeping it--giving lots of different ways for people to participate. Not everybody is sort of that Al Gore inconvenient truth, so people just want to have a great space to enjoy the weekend. And so, it's just not hitting people over the head with some big policy message but just recognizing this is a great public space and let's celebrate it.
>> Raphael Bostic: US Corps of Engineers, your organization created the river to be how it is today.
>> Josephine Axt: Yeah, the river. Well, we did implement the [inaudible] risk management infrastructure that you see out there--
>> Raphael Bostic: She's government person. That's a government language right there.
>> Josephine Axt: I know but, yeah, it's true. It's government language but--
>> Raphael Bostic: So, in terms of trying to imagine a new river--
>> Josephine Axt: Right.
>> Raphael Bostic: --how much did the legacy affect how you engage and were able to engage with organizations both at the sea level but also at the community level?
>> Josephine Axt: Yeah. There's a lot of things I'd say. I'd say we did implement this project, you know almost 80 years ago. It took decades to finish and I think it's a fair statement that the city has developed and looks like how it looks today, because the flood protection has been put in place. And so, I often get asked would the Corps of Engineers build what's there now if you were doing it today, you know, if that was the problem you had today. And the question is or the answer is, of course, no, we have different--it would probably be multipurpose. We would approach it in a different way so we are looking at 20th century infrastructure and there's great interest recently in, you know, re-tooling it with the 21st century perspective. Getting at your question directly, the corps has environmental operating principles that we take to heart. It's part of my job and responsibility to ensure that we--when we go through the National Environmental Policy Act process or the California Environmental Quality Act, I'll try not to speak too much government. And we don't do sequel per se but our [inaudible] sponsors do. I mean, we--It may surprise you, sometimes the public doesn't agree with our decisions but we--our job is to be very clear and transparent about the analysis we did and why decisions were made and, you know, have all the information in front of the public so they can see how we came about to a certain decision. So, getting at your question of working with groups, I think that was your question, if I remember it right.
>> Raphael Bostic: Yeah so--Now let me ask you more plainly. How much did you to get yelled at? And--
>> Josephine Axt: I get yelled at--
>> Raphael Bostic: --how did you incorporate the energy and emotion, and translate that into something else? I mean, the people get emotional about the river, right. I mean, Renee was very passionate in creating all the images that people have about their river and--
>> Josephine Axt: I'm trying to think of passion and emotion in my planning guidance notebook. I don't think it is. So, it's going to be hard to answer without using government speech. But the Corps of Engineers has mission areas and one of them is ecosystem restoration. So, within that mission area, we have certain criteria that we have to follow and planning objectives that we developed in order to figure out what makes sense to do in, for example, along the LA River. So, we had--we were part and parcel, full partners with, you know, during the plan and process actually before my time I started in LA District in 2007. But all the public meetings that got the information from the public, that did go directly into informing the environmental sciences and the wildlife biologist, and the culture resources people, and the engineers of all the different disciplines that developed and worked with the city on the different measures that have turned
into these alternative plans that are in our draft report. So, I mean, we listened and we had to put that input into our government lens of how we do business and how we make decisions.

>> Raphael Bostic: Well, I think--

>> Josephine Axt: Yeah.

>> Raphael Bostic: I think that's an important message. So, you know, I oversaw a revision of the regulation and you put that stuff out the public comment, and you have to answer every comment. And so [inaudible] we had I think 1,200 comments.

>> Josephine Axt: Wow.

>> Raphael Bostic: And you actually have to have a response to every single one of them.

>> Josephine Axt: Yeah.

>> Raphael Bostic: And so--

>> Josephine Axt: Exactly.

>> Raphael Bostic: And so--

>> Josephine Axt: That's what our final report is going to have. You know, all those 500 or so comments we got--I interrupted you, I'm sorry.--

>> Raphael Bostic: No, no, no. But this is--I'm an easy--I'm a mellow moderator so if you have to feel you have to speak, you should definitely speak. But I do think it's important to sort of highlight the deliberative process and that it is serious.

>> Josephine Axt: Yeah.

>> Raphael Bostic: And that there isn't--in many instances, there's not a preordained way to go.

>> Josephine Axt: Oh. They're really wasn't. This was a disciplined rigorous process. You know, we--as the Corps of Engineers, we know all about process and we have a very structured process. It has a lot of latitude and can accommodate a lot of different missions and projects but we have to go through that process to get to our endpoint, and I'm sure we'll get to this later in terms of where the larger project is in the process. But--

>> Raphael Bostic: So, that's where I want to go to next and I want to bring Mia into the conversation because, you know, you're legendary on these type of issues and--

>> Mia Lehrer: Under what issues?

>> Raphael Bostic: On these type of issues.

>> Mia Lehrer: Oh, OK.

>> Raphael Bostic: And I think your gravitas brings a lot to this and it changes the nature of the conversation in a very constructive way. As you think about designing that open network, how are you working to incorporate the many different voices and visions that are part of this?

>> Mia Lehrer: It's, we know--It's an exciting time. You know, it's like there--to see the river coming to life and the way it has since we've been working on it for about 15 years, pretty exciting. And so, the different types of projects, you know, for example, we've come up and worked with the Army Corps and National Park Service of this issue that in the drought and given all the projects that are supposedly on the books and along the river ways, there aren't enough plants in, you know, in Southern California to meet the demand and there aren't--there won't be for five years unless we do something about it. So, it may not sound like a river effort but it is a river effort. And we've put together a strategy for series of nurseries and the first nursery is already sort of being--there's some funding coming forward from all the agencies and
from some public private funders to actually build the first one, temporary one on the Bowtie Parcel, which is one of the purchase--or pieces of land that was purchased about five years ago, six years ago. And so, I think, you know, it's interesting because I love the--I love Renee's sort of poetics because people come to LA and they want to see all the projects along the river and I have to like take a deep breath, you know, when the--about to share like there are no--like let's face it, there are no big projects yet. I mean, yesterday was a big day at the city council for the piggy backyard, but there are no big projects. So, we're happy with changing them that regime convincing the army corps that they do not have to mow down the plant material in the river anymore. We're happy that we can use the bike--the maintenance roads as bikeways. We're happy about many--you know, the fact that we could do kayaks for five months out of the year and go hang out in the river. But, you know, basically, the project--so you have to--you know, in my world, my cohorts all want to have the covers of magazines, right? And I don't have covers of magazines. I mean, I do OK. I do OK. I do OK. But no, it's true. But, I mean, it's in the satisfaction of mobilizing and working together and, you know, it's sort of--it's a legacy project for all of us. And, you know, some of us are not all over the world doing many rivers where in the, you know, Southern California sort of really engaged and I think for school of policy and for students who are involved, you know, just the idea that you go from policy and then you understand the process and the politics and that you're there to advocate and promote and design. In the end, that's what I bring to the table. So hopefully, there will be some amazing project opportunities in not to a distinct future.

>> Raphael Bostic: So it's interesting when you say, "There are no big projects", because I do not think that's how people view the whole effort. I mean, it's been a tremendous amount of energy that's been expanded to get to this point and--I'm trying to get my eye--

>> Mia Lehrer: I mean, I think--

>> Josephine Axt: Maybe no built project.

>> Mia Lehrer: Built project.

>> Raphael Bostic: No completely--

>> Josephine Axt: She meant like in the ground project.

>> Mia Lehrer: Yes. So you, for example, you say--when you talk about as a policy maker about design, you talk about designing a policy and I talk about designing space and building space. Well, there aren't a lot of projects, big projects that have been built, yet. You know, there's pocket parks, there's, you know, a number of parks that are built but, you know, we're still--all of this is preparation for big projects. Everything that's happened since 2007, all the activities, [inaudible], you know, the city, the, you know, federal government, the state, the county--

>> Raphael Bostic: The county as well.

>> Mia Lehrer: --the county. All of that is in the nonprofits. All the advocates, all that is they're setting the stage for the movie and the movie still got to happen.

>> Raphael Bostic: So, it's interesting, you know, when I think about policy and trying to change a regime. You know, sometimes, you know, you have almost two strategies. You can go for the home run or you can get the few singles to try to score a bunch of runs. And it seems like we're doing the single strategy. Do what you can. Get things rolling, create momentum that
then gets people plan. Would you agree with that? And if so, how do you figure out which singles you're swinging for first? Like how do you identify the lowest hanging fruit? And do you coordinate that or is that something where everyone can just go off and--

>> Omar Brownson: Only in LA with a billion dollars would be considered single, I don't know.
>> Carol Armstrong: Well, I was going to say, I don't think it's a baseball analogy.
>> Omar Brownson: Yeah.
>> Carol Armstrong: I think it's a football analogy. Fight on. And they say that defenses win championships. They're not sexy but that means a whole team of people are working together on the same page, reading it the same way, and making progress. And, you know, anticipating what's going to happen in working in lockstep. Whereas in baseball single is one person at the plate against one pitcher, right? So, I think that we're at the--we're definitely at the team river, right?

>> Josephine Axt: Well, I liked your analogy. And I'll say that I'm thinking there's lots of singles going on and these three could speak about them much better than I. Well simultaneously, we're going for the home run which a lot of folks have identified as the core-city-county-larger-billion-plus dollar project. And I was thinking of the Urban Waters Federal Partnership an entity of I do not know how many were up to now, the 11 or so federal agency state, stakeholders, nonprofits that meet quarterly and few years back identified this larger core-city-county project as the number one priority. So, they have this long list of studies and projects. They're all important and they were all moving simultaneously but the number one went to the larger project in recognition that if we could get that built, it would have all this synergy, you know, this synergistic effects with everything that's out there now would benefit from something bigger coming in and would have that connection ability and--yeah, it would increase the value of all the singles that are going on right now.

>> Raphael Bostic: So, who convene that?

>> Josephine Axt: So, I made up for interrupting you, right, because I agreed with your analogy.

I would say that the America's Great Outdoors initiatives through President Obama. The Urban Waters Federal Partnership was a direct offshoot of that. There were seven watersheds that are identified throughout the country and the LA River Watershed was one of those first seven. Carol would probably know how many we're up to now, 10 or 14 or something nationwide, but it was in recognition of the importance of connecting community and urban rivers and health-related topics. So even though the corps' mission isn't health-related per se, you know, we have the restoration mission. It has those other ancillary benefits.

>> Raphael Bostic: But it was like a federal--
>> Josephine Axt: Yeah--
>> Raphael Bostic:--structuring process by which this happened.

>> Josephine Axt: Yeah, prioritization. It did not come with funding but it was a recognition of the importance of urban rivers. And it got a lot of people connected. And I think we're ahead of the game in LA River. I think a lot of those conversations in connections were already happened and then it was like great we got to be under this umbrella of the Urban Waters
Federal Partnership and there was money for what's called the watershed ambassador, a woman who from HUD--
>> Carol Armstrong: Kind of like a quarterback [inaudible]. It was a HUD employee on one of the EPA working out on one of our NGOs like [inaudible] watershed help.
>> Josephine Axt: Like that's partnership.
>> Raphael Bostic: So a HUD employee on loan to EPA--
>> Josephine Axt: Right.
>> Raphael Bostic: --who is working at a nonprofit?
>> Josephine Axt: Yes.
>> Carol Armstrong: She's our Urban Waters Federal Partnership ambassador.
>> Josephine Axt: Organizing all this entity.
^M00:30:02
>> Raphael Bostic: And how long it's going take you to set that up or to take them to set that up?
>> Josephine Axt: Started in 2011 and I think it came together fairly quickly. Yes.
>> Raphael Bostic: And the federal agencies get along?
>> Josephine Axt: We do. We work pretty well. We really do.
^M00:30:16
[ Laughter ]
^M00:30:17
I sense doubt but, yeah.
>> Raphael Bostic: OK. So, the federal government is large, it has--every agency has its own interests and getting them all to point in the same direction on a regular basis is difficult.
>> Carol Armstrong: Right.
>> Josephine Axt: Because we all have our different missions and our different objectives--
>> Raphael Bostic: And different funding sources?
>> Josephine Axt: Yeah, yeah.
>> Raphael Bostic: So distinct funding sources and blending them is extremely difficult.
>> Josephine Axt: Right.
>> Raphael Bostic: So getting people to go on the room and agree to coordinate those expenditures is really difficult.
>> Josephine Axt: But in an era of scarce--you know, federal dollars, it's very important for there to be--for the federal agencies to be on the same page. It makes the message stronger to say, "Hey look, fish and wildlife service." Or, you know, fill in your federal agency, also supports this and things that it's important, so.
>> Omar Brownson: That's where we are able to start aligning while it's the river, the river has multiple interests, right? And so if the Army Corps is looking at it from an ecosystem--
>> Josephine Axt: Yeah.
>> Omar Brownson: --sort of perspective in addition to flood control, for example, why we're able to get the city, the county, and metro together yesterday is because 30% of all the metro stops in the regions are within 1 mile of the river. And metro cares about first-last mile connectivity. So then all of a sudden, metro, if you'd pitch them on the river as an environmental asset, they're really like, "Well, great. Good luck with that."
Carol Armstrong: Yeah, right, right.

Omar Brownson: But if you sort of communicated to them that this becomes one of the largest alternative transportation court orders in the region, that connects 30% of their infrastructure, then all of a sudden, it's in their interest. And I think that's, you know, I think Carol's analogy of getting people to sort of figure out how to come together and they have different roles to play. I think, the analogy that they have sometimes use with the river is because sometimes people think of built space is binary. It's either blank piece of dirt or something built. And I think the LA River is more of like an adaptive reuse. It's an existing kind of space that is constantly evolving and you can say, "Let's have this edition. Let's maybe demo that piece. This maybe needs some new infrastructure inside the house to keep it working." And I think that--I think the analogies are important as to how do we think about moving it forward.

Mia Lehrer: The relationships between the agents, between the federal agencies, a lot depend on sort of creative ways of thinking of funding. So, the minute carbon trading became effect, you know, an opportunity, all of a sudden, you know, whether it's the National Park Service or the Forest Service, the Army Corps, they're all of a sudden in these opportunities, right? And it's just--I think that, you know, people get stuck with, you know, in their own sort of territory because, you know, there's ways to deal with things and there's limitations to funding. But I think it's a little bit more open now with some of these opportunities.

Raphael Bostic: It's very interesting to listen to you because so much of the discussion in Washington is how do you get coordination across disciplines across the fields, you know the housers [phonetic] know housing, the health care people know health, the transportation people know transportation. And yet--

Carol Armstrong: Yeah.

Raphael Bostic: --they all happen in the same place. And we'd be better off if we could get those things coordinated. But one of the biggest challenges and you all have talked about how you've overcome this, is that in each of those bases, they have their own language. They have their own incentives. They have their own programs. And someone had to figure out how to do that translation. And that doesn't come easy. Do you have insights as to how to do that well or is this--was this just organic or did you have some guru who walked in the room and say, "I've got it?" How did you come to be at kind of translation so that everyone could talk in everyone else's space?

Omar Brownson: We're all [inaudible].

Carol Armstrong: I think we're all riverly [phonetic]. That's our word, really.

Raphael Bostic: That's a new word for us.

Carol Armstrong: Yeah. But I think that the federal program was particularly tailored to places like Los Angeles, because you have a lot of river organizations that are multidimensional. They're not single-issue focus. And so there are already was a lot of organization happening. And so when that came in, it matched because our quarterback Pauline Lewis [assumed spelling] said that across the country, the other ones are wondering what's going on in LA, why--
Josephine Axt: Right, right. They show together.
Carol Armstrong: --is it working so well there?
Josephine Axt: Yeah, yeah.
Carol Armstrong: And an example is, you know, the neighborhood councils, 14 have bonded together and now call themselves the Alliance of River Communities. They did that of their own accord because they found commonality.
Josephine Axt: Yeah.
Carol Armstrong: And it's--you know, we see people all the time going to different places. It's river family. It doesn't, you know, you see people from one river community going to events in other communities and they're learning from each other. And it's very, very sophisticated intelligent, dynamic, and passionate constituency for sure.
Mia Lehrer: I think a very educated--
Carol Armstrong: Very educated.
Mia Lehrer: So when we first started the river master plan community meetings, it was amazing like, you know, yes, there were some areas of the city when we met because we used to meet in at least four areas, the same set of meetings would happen in, you know, in a sequence. And it was so interesting. People knew what most people knew what passive recreation or active recreation, what a multi-benefit solution is. What is--
Carol Armstrong: Density bonus.
Mia Lehrer: Density bonus. I mean, it was just really interesting. And in part it was because there was already a lot of activism around environmental issues and the river. I mean, four had done in--you know, done it in amazing job at sort of garnering people's interest and getting them engaged. All you have to do in 1990 is go down into the river and, you know, pick up a cat that was half frozen in action with your 5-year-old and, you know, you were hooked in trying to figure out how do you solve this problem literally. That's my image. I actually--
Raphael Bostic: I hope there were other ways to hook children, so you didn't have to go to quite that level.
Mia Lehrer: Well, there were some shopping carts and sofas.
^M00:36:52
[ Laughter ]
^M00:36:53
[ Inaudible Remark ]
^M00:36:54
No cadavers.
Raphael Bostic: So, that's a good thing. So, this all sounds really nice, I mean, it sounds like everybody gets along--
Josephine Axt: He doesn't buy it. He's looking for the--
Raphael Bostic: --everybody, you know, we all just came to the room, we just had a couple of meetings around town. And everybody was like, "This is great. We should all just do this. I'm going get my multi-benefits and--
Carol Armstrong: Yes.
Raphael Bostic: --get the density bonus going." What opposition, complaints, the fights with--
Carol Armstrong: I fight everyday all day long.

Raphael Bostic: And what are you fighting about? I mean, what—because I know I'm hearing it—I'm sorry, but I don't hear corporate opposition to this. You know, this is not like in some instances there's a tension between sort of the environmental interest and then business. And if we do these things, it's going to kill jobs. And I don't hear that in the context of LA River, partially, because how we've developed in our history but—So, what are you fighting about?

Carol Armstrong: So, I'm a planner but the plan was sent to the Bureau of Engineering, the channel was put there by engineers its infrastructure. And it's capital projects. You're talking very expensive capital projects, bridges, railway, all that kind of stuff. And any kind of changes to that are going to be really expensive and complicated and take a long time. So, there's excitement that builds and then there's short-term wins and then there's a long-term goal. And so, you have to fight each and everyday to make sure that the river stays in the conversation for the long-term infrastructure funding. In the past, we have piecemeal small projects. Why? Because that's the only way that we can garner the attention. We get lot of support from the state. You'll get some money to design and construct but only a small thing, right? So, you can't design a huge project when you know the construction dollars are going to come later. So, it's very complicated to try and tell people, it is transportation, it is a park, it is water quality, it is water supply, it is ecosystem, and making sure that the river is in every conversation because it's not, still.

Omar Brownson: So, we use the analogy of metro in the sense that as a whole, I think there's a common—

Mia Lehrer: Metro as in MTA or metro?

Omar Brownson: MTA in the sense that there's a common value that public transportation is good. Now, are there going to be disagreements on where the lines go? Are there going to be disagreements on where the stops are? Is there—Are there going to be disagreements on whether or not a particular area should be serviced by rail or by bus? Yes. But on the whole, there's an understanding that public transportation is again, one of my—this is total non sequitur but I am up here.

Josephine Axt: Yeah.

Carol Armstrong: There was this great idea that sort of a good society isn't one where everyone has car but where the sort of the rich are actually taking public transit, right? And I think that the idea that the LA River is a public good.

Now, there are going to be disagreements on tradeoffs of what equality versus land use, you know, because that right there can be a tradeoff, right? Like, well, I want greater density which might then limit permeability, which then might limit the opportunity to infiltrate water. But the idea of the LA River is a public good and it is a public good. It's a thousand
acres onto itself, right, and 51 miles. And so I think that's where the sort of the tensions and challenges come. But I think as a general value for--well, on the whole, is LA a better more livable place if we invest in this resource? Yes.

>> Mia Lehrer: Well, and frustrations, the donation--the seed donation, rather large donation from a private individual for the cable-stayed bridge was as a result, a friend of mine who said, you know, "I want to do something in the river." And it was at his 80 something birthday. And I said, "It has to be soon. I need to get it done soon." And so I said, "Do I need to know something? Like I didn't know what soon really meant so that I can go and talk to, you know, the River Corp about ideas?" And the fact is that he went for it--it's been six years?

>> Omar Brownson: I've only been there for four. So I'm only going to say four from my perspective.

>> Mia Lehrer: It's been six, but yeah, from his perspective. I mean no and he has nothing to do with the River Corp. It has to do with the permit process and, you know, they haven't done a bridge in a long time and this is basically a bridge that's for pedestrians, bicycles, and equestrians. It's a--It has a column in the middle. It actually, you know, challenges on the way the water moves. And it's just very complicated to get these projects in the ground. So, you know, the same goes for funding that we've had for a bike way in Studio City. That's been Prop K funding, that's been in place for 11 years and, you know, Wendy Greuel was not even a councilwoman at that time. So, that's how long ago that was. And only now that we finish the first phase. So these, you know--

>> Carol Armstrong: June 12th, grand opening.

>> Mia Lehrer: Yes.

>> Josephine Axt: Yehey.

>> Carol Armstrong: June 12.

>> Mia Lehrer: So, what I'm saying is that from an implementation perspective, this is a big city. And you can imagine it's an enormous city, it's the 10th economy in the world. It's enormous, lots going on. And, you know, we're dealing with a federal--you know, federal agency in the county and the city and things take a long time. And hopefully, we can cut--this would be a form where we beg for, you know, a process that's simpler, more straightforward in the future.

>> Carol Armstrong: I wanted to call Glen Dake in the audience because he helped designed the La River Veteran Tribute Park. And it would be the first park for veterans recognized in local veterans along the river and the Sepulveda Basin which is owned and operated by the Army Corps of Engineers. And this would be on land that's leased to the Department of Recreation and Parks in partnership with the county and maintained by the LA Conservation Corps. But they are these two 97-year-old gentlemen that said "Please, please, build this park because we don't even buy green bananas anymore."

>> Raphael Bostic: Yeah.

>> Carol Armstrong: But--I'm serious. It hurts when you think about that and when you think about--

>> Josephine Axt: It took me a while to get that.

>> Carol Armstrong: --infrastructure in the life of a child. You know, we started the Army Corps study 10 years ago.

>> Josephine Axt: Yeah.
Carol Armstrong: If you had a 10-year-old kid now that kid's potentially gone and hasn't seen anything. So, it's a problem, and I feel it very acutely.

Raphael Bostic: So, what should we do like how do you make this go--

Carol Armstrong: Cut checks, cut checks.

Raphael Bostic: But that's--no, but--

OM00:44:11

[ Laughter ]

OM00:44:12

Omar Brownson: Is that on the way out?

Josephine Axt: Right, yeah, right.

Mia Lehrer: So I think everybody needs to vote. Seriously, I think, you know, people need to vote and people need to write letters or get engaged in the conversations, find ways to engage in issues of the river that actually, you know, make them more--I think there's the power of the vote in the citizen.

Raphael Bostic: I want to ask a little differently. So, the project, it took 11 years to do. You had the money?

Mia Lehrer: Yes.

Raphael Bostic: Right, so this was not about--

Mia Lehrer: Well, I didn't. She had the money and I don't.

Raphael Bostic: But this--Someone had the money.

Mia Lehrer: Somebody.

Raphael Bostic: Right? And so this wasn't about funding.

Mia Lehrer: No.

Raphael Bostic: This is about public hearing, public process. Is there a way to streamline that or is there--I mean, so there's this tension--

Mia Lehrer: Yes.

Raphael Bostic: --that you want to have it be publicly reviewed, get there all the participation, all the voices and all that stuff.

Mia Lehrer: Yeah.

Raphael Bostic: But then you want to get it done, right? And you can't really do one really fast and get the other or can you?

Omar Brownson: I guess I'm going to--metro must be on my mind today because I would just again go back to this idea that I grew up in LA and in grew up in LA that like you drove in your car. And it is so strange to be up at like Baldwin Hills Scenic Park and looking down and seeing this moving object flying through the trees. And I was like, "That's a train." And my daughters are going to grow up in Los Angeles that they're going to be able to jump on a train and go from here in USC to Sta. Monica. They're going to grow up in an entirely different Los Angeles. They are also going to grow up in Los Angeles that when we drive over to LA River, they point it out and they say, "Hey daddy. Look! There's the LA River," right? And I say all that because I think part of the challenge in the opportunity, frankly, is that we can think even--and I think going back to your [inaudible] about the homer is we can think even a little bit bigger. We tax ourselves in Los Angeles on the sales tax $40 billion to invest in our public transportation system. We are--There are active conversations moving forward right now to invest another
$90 billion in our public transportation. There was a measure last year to potentially look at how to create $200 million a year to invest in our stormwater system. We bring a billion dollars worth of water into LA every year, 90% of our water. There's been some studies, three people and others that suggest if we captured around rainwater, we could cut in half the amount of water that we import. So, that's $500 million a year that we could be investing in smarter infrastructure. And I think that we're at a time now where we can make the bigger case. I don't think actually Alternative 20 is the bigger case. I think that's the double or triple. I think we have an opportunity to actually make the cases to why we need to invest in our infrastructure in our city because that's what it was. The city that we live in today can only exist because of what we did to that channel. Love it or hate it. We wouldn't have it in LA in some ways. The LA River use to swing seven miles in any given direction because there were no walls, right? So Bayonne Creek used to be connected to the LA River because they could just swing around.

>> Carol Armstrong: Yup.

>> Omar Brownson: Right. We would not be sitting here if we didn't actually channelize it. Now, I want my daughters and I want their kids, you know, a hundred years from now, to be able to look back and say, "What did they do a hundred years ago to make this a livable city? Particularly in one where we have climate change and things are much more dramatic. And I think that's where we're moving. It's from static siloed engineer to understanding we live in a much more dynamic world. And that it isn't about efficiency anymore but it is about resiliency. How can we adapt to change better? And this is where social communities, their culture adaptation, economic mechanisms and the sort of infrastructure--

>> Carol Armstrong: Yeah.

>> Omar Brownson: --need to be done together and I think we have that opportunity.

>> Hi! I'd like to direct the question that you just asked, Raphael to Carol. What would it look like to streamline the process for your governance?

>> Carol Armstrong: Well, one of the things we've been working on is this River Cooperation Committee which was supposed to be a JPA. If you look at the county's 1996 plan, they said that there--right, a Joint Powers Authority. So, they said there should be a Joint Powers Authority for the river. And then our master plan, the cities also said that that would work. That would be something to explore. And so--

>> Raphael Bostic: And what does the Joint Powers Authority give you? Like how does that streamline the process?

>> Carol Armstrong: Well, it depends on which powers that you're sharing.

^M00:48:51
[ Laughter ]

^M00:48:52
Like for instance, we would--when we talk about the Greenway 2020 which we got to build in five years, that--most of that happens on LA County Flood Control Easement. So they have to be a party to it, right? And right now, the way it happens is you have an individual agreement each time you do a project. And then the Corps has to permit it, right? So, if we had everybody in agreement on what would be allowed and what it would look like and what wouldn't be allowed and then we could have a streamline standard all along the entire 51 miles. And then we could make these things happen more quickly. And it would be more legible to the public.
And then we would all be able to pull our money and be more efficient. So instead of having 50 different people doing, you know, 80 different projects, you would have it all streamlined.

>> Raphael Bostic: And just to be clear on this. So, when you don't have it in a Joint Powers Authority structure, you go to each individual agency and then they do their full process in their time table with whatever time they have. So, if you missed around or if you missed a meeting, it could be another two months before that comes back around. And that--it's those sorts of things that really cause this process to take stand pretty significantly. That said, JPAs don't happen a lot.

>> Raphael Bostic: Next question. Right here.

>> Carol Armstrong: You're looking at me?
OK. Well, I think part of the drama of Alternative 20 that everybody is talking about, the Army Corps study, the project, is that a lot of the land is private. And in particular, there's a 125-acre rail yard that's in that. And that's what's caused the cost to go up considerably. And we had a decision to make, do we avoid all the private land and come up with a much lesser project or do we aim high and go big? And we went big. So, does that mean that we're going to acquire the property tomorrow? No. But does that mean we want it in the footprint because we want everybody to know that we see the value in it for publicly accessible open place? Yes. Does that mean that it's probably going to cause properties to--property values to escalate? Already has. You know, but it's--we have to be honest in the public dialogue and we, you know, everybody thinks that billion dollar check is in the mail. That billion dollar check is not in the mail. And we also have to remember that property values and things like that go up because people believe it as project. They think it's going to happen. And so, what we need to do is look at the tools that are available now like the EIFD, and figure out how do we capture that incremental increase in value and redistribute it locally so that we can have our parks in open space. And so that Alternative 20 doesn't become the big sucking sound to take it all. But how do we balance that with the other things that we need to do like with our aging infrastructures, our streets and our storm drains and everything else and our water supply.

>> Omar Brownson: The other issue with the sort of adjacent private property is land use policy. And so, how do you sort of look at Sony and other mechanisms to make sure that what you're building adjacent to the rivers, assuming that the river's transformation continues to move forward, complements that. And so I would just say, for example, there wouldn't be necessarily an interest to recreate Malibu where, yes, the beach is a public resource and good, but the homes, for example, block access, right? And so I think, this is where making sure that if we're going to invest in this public good then it has to be publicly available. And then that's where sort of private property and land use planning what Renee gets to do, becomes really important.

>> Raphael Bostic: Next question? Yes?

>> And so, consider the limitations in the funding, could you address or talk about the potential for a ballot measure like Measure R but as applied to [inaudible] project or has that been discussed or could you talk about the constraints of that?

>> Omar Brownson: Just my theoretical perspective.

>> Mia Lehrer: Well, I mean, I think within the, you know, I mean, the idea--well, the issues of drought and water and water sort of distribution and management, there is, you know, an opportunity there to try to address, you know, the river as one of the mechanisms to actually be able to attenuate and hold water and, you know, infiltrate into the act for or do all the things we need to do in order to deal with conservation and other issues at the same time and a water management. So, there is probably a way, I mean, there are already--it's in prop 1. Prop--Does prop 1 have--
Omar Brownson: The Water Bond?
>> Mia Lehrer: Yeah
>> Omar Brownson: Yeah, the Water Bond which is about 6.7 billion.
>> Mia Lehrer: Yeah.
>> Omar Brownson: At about 100 million--$120 million in there for the river. You know, I remember actually seeing some polling two years ago. That was for a parks measure. But what was fascinating was they started the poll--posters were using different languages to why people would want to invest in parks. And because we contributed a little bit to the polling, we're able to insert some of our own self-interest questions like, "Do you like the Los Angeles River? Would you invest in parks along Los Angeles River?" And fascinatingly enough, that polled the highest reason for why people would want to invest in parks in Los Angeles, because of the language [inaudible] the river. The measure didn't move forward at all actually, I mean, they actually never even went to a--
>> Mia Lehrer: Yes.
>> Omar Brownson: --a ballot. So it wasn't as if--it is at that time, there wasn't generally enough will to invest even in parks. And then--But just from a messaging standpoint in where the public mind was at, and that was two years ago years ago. And I would say that this mayor and, you know, the new county supervisors and a lot of the state reps, the current president of the senate, his district is included to the LA River. And that's where the State Historic Park is. And they just are investing $20 million. And this is what's funny about LA, is that we invested $25 million just the improvements. I don't even know how much they spent on the acquisition alone. And that's small project in LA. I mean, just to give a sense of scale. The High Line in New York which everybody is sort of is excited about is a mile a half. And, you know, it was $150 million. And so I mean, we could easily point $250 million worth of projects along the LA River. And so I think, we have a scale challenge in LA.
>> Carol Armstrong: I do want to point out the State of California has spent a $100 million to create the two state parks near the river. There's Rio de Los Angeles State Park and LA State Historic Park, both are not connected to the river, both would be connected to the river through the Army Corps study. So it's leveraging a previous state investment and multiplying that. And to answer the question, I don't think that a riverbank, funded through river bond would be an unrealistic thing to do. If you look at places around the country and how they have funded their projects, that is what they have done. And when we look at the projects that have been built along the river, they have come from previous bonds, a lot of state park bonds, state water bonds, things like that. So, it's not beyond the realm of possibility to do something like that. But we also have to be more creative. And we've look at cities around the world and why their waterfront revitalization efforts thrive. And it's because it's always uppermost in their mind again, not just as an environmental project but as, you know, the heart of their civic everything. You know, it's where their artistic cultural places are. It's where--you know, they recognize already that it's a part of how you maintain a healthy lifestyle. And so, you know, in particular in Europe, in similar climate, some Mediterranean type climate cities, they always leverage transportation funding. So it's often tied to tunneling roadways, a rail project or something like that. And we haven't done that. We have the five freeway going right down next to the river. We let any transportation project cross it, but we never leverage any of that money to help us
revitalize the river. And that's what we have to do because if you talk about transportation projects, even in the valley, you know, the cut-through and all things, they talk in the order of 10, 15, 20, $30 billion, nobody blinks. You talk about revitalizing the Los Angeles River and you say, 1.4, and people are like, "1.4 billion, oh my God. It's too much." It's not too much. It's what it costs.

>> Mia Lehrer: So in the positive, note, in the master plan for Union Station and, you know, the MTA did purchase the property in the last couple of years. When we first started working on the master plan, the river was like over there and nobody wanted to even draw it because, you know, Bi-Protect was between us and the river. And that's where all the storage facilities for all the files for the city of Los Angeles are. And, of course, you couldn't possibly skip--

>> Josephine Axt: They need to be by the river clearly.

>> Mia Lehrer: They need to be right by the river. But by time we got through the conversation in the master plan and if you look at the some of the, you know, drawings of the project, you see all of a sudden, you know, towers and river coming into the property and Bi-Protect has gone bye-bye. So, you know, it's starting to percolate, people are starting to understand some of--and in part because also Carol does a really good job with some of her peers and some of the agencies, you know, constantly rattling people sort of, you know, fight in realization that the river is there.

>> Raphael Bostic: Person in the back, yes.

>> Can someone speak to what kind of revisions are being made for some of the low-income communities to reach the river bonds especially low-income renters?

>> Josephine Axt: That's another [inaudible] question.

>> Carol Armstrong: Yeah, it is.

>> Omar Brownson: Go to it.

>> Carol Armstrong: Well, so, this is happening throughout the river corridor on a--and every neighborhood is experiencing this kind if thing. Our city council particularly, our council Arts, Parks, Health, Aging and River Committee which is chaired by Councilman O'Farrell, is convening meetings on homelessness looking at the issues affecting folks that are at the margins. And also delving into what kind of affordable housing policy we need to put in place. Just today, there was an announcement that the mayor through metro, they're requiring 35% affordable housing on any property owned by metro and developed by metro. This is the kind of things that we're going to need to do in order to make sure that we--again, to the EIFD, when value goes up, we need to capture and we need the community stabilization so that we make sure that there's affordable rentals and affordable choices. And again, it's all--a lot of these activities happening because of the idea of the billion dollars, not the actual billion dollars.

>> Raphael Bostic: And so, just in this--families that have fewer means, less means, for them, the river can actually be more important, right? And so, because they don't have alternatives, this could be their recreational vehicle. Are you anticipating that as we move forward, there will be a skew to maybe accelerate those projects, serving those communities first? Has there been conversation around that?

>> Omar Brownson: I think one of the things that the state cap-and-trade program and the Senate Pro Tem has moved forward was the SB535, where they've created with the CalEPA.
And it's called EnviroScreen where they essentially have looked at the most heavily impacted communities through the lens of pollution and align that with income and about 50% of the properties that are along or 50% of the communities along the river fall on to the top 20% most impacted communities in the State of California. And I think one of the things—and then I know this is terrible to say here but there's a professor at UCLA, Professor Dick Jackson who's the Head of the Environmental Health Program, former Head of—for the Center of Disease Control in Atlanta. And he recently released the paper on the public health benefits of urban river and greenways because if you overlaid the environmental pollution with obesity, you would see and then sort of park access. A lot of those communities are right along the river. But I think it's slightly separate from sort of the issue of affordable housing. And I think, that is a sort of a policy issue in terms of how do you create more inclusionary zoning.

>> Raphael Bostic: But I think—I would say I think it's a mistake to think about the needs of lower-income people just in terms of the housing. I think it's much—it's a multidimensional issue. And you said, the UCLA professor, I was going to tell, as a professor.

Lisa Schweitzer had done some work.

>> Omar Browson: I'd be happy to read that paper.

>> Raphael Bostic: That really shows that when you think about where the highways go, where the pollution is most intense.

>> Josephine Axt: Yeah.

>> Raphael Bostic: It hits lower income and minority communities, disproportionately. And if you think about where our freeways go in the Southland, they go along rivers, right? San Gabriel River, the LA River, they become sort of the conduits by which these transportation happens. So, I think it's—I mean, it all fits together. And it'll be important that as we make more progress, hit these doubles and triples and even a couple of homeruns, that the lower-income communities that have been borne the brunt of our investments today get the benefits of our investment moving forward. Next question, yes.

>> I have about two quick questions. Let me get back to learning from other communities which I don't know that LA always likes to do that. But, I think—first about, are there any other cities that you've learned from such as the Riverwalk in San Antonio, you know, what they've done and how long it took them to do it and how they were doing with at this point in process? And also, learning anything from being in Washington, DC and looking at the [inaudible] in Philadelphia and looking at the Schuylkill River. You know, some of these are really older cities and with that kind of vitality has brought. And two cities that are pretty picturesque. That's question number one. And question number two is with Homesteads visit to Los Angeles a very long time ago and would build [inaudible] even by design. I was curious if there's any inspiration from any of that could help us in the Water Bond?

>> Carol Armstrong: So the Homestead plans, if it had been built up, we would be the greenest city in the country, I believe. And there are folks that are talking about resurrecting pieces of the plan but I feel like our world today is very different than our world was then. And so, there's a greater diversity of interests in what our watersheds might look like. And so, there is--to our
east, there's the Emerald Necklace Plan which is, you know, evokes the Homestead plan. But I think, you know, Omar had mentioned the High Line, you mentioned San Antonio. And I know, I get criticized because, you know, we say that you really can't compare anything to LA. It's just so vast. Our LA River is so vast. The High Line is half a mile, you know, and San Antonio is kind of disneyfied [phonetic]. I mean, when you think about what we're dealing with, it's just incredible. And the idea is maybe, little pieces will look like other places. But the whole thing cannot be consistent. Everybody wants to impose a design on it, right? We have the river improvement overlay, district, the next step is the design guidelines and there can be some coherence but there's a great diversity in LA that's messy, and I don't think we want to control that and push that out too much. I think if we do it then we're not LA anymore. And then I don't remember the other part of your question.

>> A part of the--

[ Inaudible Remark ]

>> Carol Armstrong: OK.

>> Mia Lehrer: Part of, you know, if you think of Manhattan, first of all the high line is three projects, each of them $125 million. So I just want to say that so we all get down to reality a little bit when we're talking about 52 miles. But if you think of the whole perimeter starting from binary parks city, all the edges along Manhattan, all those parks that got built, 25 to 30 years. And there is a coherence, both urban design strategy, the edges they're not all the same designer and the same developer but along the way there's certain parameters. There's always access high quality design, high quality materials and so you start seeing that. But I guess one of--in terms of the--one of the projects that has been pretty inspiring in some of the work that's being done in Europe is the project in Madrid that we both visited last year independently, where they actually had to--a freeway was sort of down--was going--where was it? There was a tunnel built over the freeway and then it--over the river, and then the tunnel was taken out and then the park was built on either side to bring the river back. And that is an incredibly beautiful project that really bring--you know, that's about 5 to 10 miles long on two sides and really connects communities and takes advantage of infrastructure with all sorts of art pieces and all sorts of creative ways of children engaging with the landscape and restoration. I mean it was an incredible project and it was $1.4 billion.

>> Carol Armstrong: And they did it in four years.

>> Mia Lehrer: And they did it in four years because of election cycles and other things, all of which, you know, we also worked with. So, there's interesting projects--because we always try to look at waterways and, you know I like the analogy that Potomac and other rivers also. But we'd like to actually look at dry Mediterranean rivers because it's a little easier for us to really understand that there's never a large pool of water and how we manage the water and that feeling of the space in the waterway is so important. So you look at a sister city, the Yarkon River in Tel Aviv which has also done a tremendous amount of work along its edges. And if we talk about governance it's basically geopolitical governance because we're talking about a river that--
Carol Armstrong: Yeah. The Schuylkill is great for stormwater capture. Also, it teaches us that you can come to the river and not necessarily get in it. It's as important for civic gathering space and the Potomac, the same thing. But the Anacostia in DC is more of a case for us because of its existence historically underserved communities and it's also about the same stage that we are in revitalization.

Josephine Axt: It's one of those urban–federal urban water partnership locations.

Omar Brownson: Yeah, Anacostia watersheds.

Josephine Axt: Yes.

Raphael Bostic: Well then, it's interesting with the Anacostia because the juxtaposition between Anacostia and the Potomac which was the same city.

Mia Lehrer: Yes.

Carol Armstrong: Yeah.

Raphael Bostic: It is striking and nice to see the Anacostia start to come around--

Josephine Axt: Yeah.

Mia Lehrer: That's right.

Raphael Bostic: --and get the same sort of attention. It's just quite important and people do not get nearer at the Schuylkill. So, Schuylkill and they don't do that. You got a question way in the back.

Yeah, kind of going along with the measure of kind of frame of mind. That was just like the new railings or kind of bring along regional impacts that other river really kind of stands chance and have follow that impacts [inaudible] throughout the county just like most things that LA does and happen. I was wondering what kind of impacts or either as a result of, you know, taking all that as an example or you could just can just expanding, you know, in particularly, works of your organized committee in expanding its power to really kind of address the channelized river stuff kind of things up for 250 miles of channels.

Josephine Axt: Yeah, I'll get at your question a little bit and say that we're talking when we say the corps study and I keep saying the corps and city because the corps doesn't do anything by itself. It works with what we call nonfederal sponsors. It's looking at 11 miles so there's 32 miles in the city, 51 miles of the main stem. And then as you say, there's hundreds of miles of other channelized--other channels that have largely been encased in concrete throughout the county. So, when the corps was directed by Congress back in the '30s to implement the plan the county had develop and then we work with them on and then built, you know, we had the single vision mindset. And I can say in addition to the LA River Study, we're talking about here, the corps working with the county on the Arroyo Seco, for example, going from the confluence with the LA River up to past Devil's Gate Dam basically, if you know. So the bulk of the Arroyo Seco main stem, the headworks which is at the beginning of the 11 miles stretch of the LA River which is just where Griffith--where that big right turn in the river is the Griffith Park, the headwork site, if you know the river, is another project that we're doing with Department of Water and Power. So the corps is doing various things in our restoration mission throughout the county. And I can't speak for the county, of course, but they've gotten a lot of public input where people are looking at sediment management issues and saying, you know, you've lost that functionality, you know, now you've got all these debris basins and such and the dams get sedimented and then, you know, you have a watershed but you also have the sunshade. So there's an issue
going on both with habitat and with natural sediment transport. So, the corps and the county have had conversations about what could we do together and maybe do some pilots first to get at that sun issue as well. And that speaks to the larger, you know, ultimate dream of 100 years from now. We're at a place where a lot of the currently concrete channels have been multipurpose such that they don't lose their flood conveyance capability. I mean, that's critical that they continue to provide the flood protection that they do but they also bring in other benefits.

>> Raphael Bostic: So, we have time for one more question. Yes.

>> So I guess my question is kind of table one that what kind of percentage do you guys feel like you're at now, projects that have been completed or actually completed? And then, what kind of timeline do you see, you know, in a perfect corps or maybe not [inaudible]. In a realistic way, if you could get all the things that are in the master plan done, what would--how do you see that?

>> Omar Brownson: What order--

[^M01:15:28]

[ Laughter ]

[^M01:15:29]

>> Josephine Axt: We're in two.

[^M01:15:32]

[ Laughter ]

[^M01:15:33]

>> So, city sponsor plan was adopted about the city council in 2007. It proposes 240 potential projects and has build out horizon of 20 to 50 years. So, I would say--

>> Josephine Axt: In two.

>> Raphael Bostic: 70 to 80 years.

>> Carol Armstrong: We're making progress.

[^M01:15:49]

[ Laughter ]

[^M01:15:51]

>> Omar Brownson: I love that joke. Thank you very much.

>> Carol Armstrong: Yeah right.

[^M01:15:54]

[ Laughter ]

[^M01:15:55]

>> Raphael Bostic: So, I'd really enjoyed this conversation. It's been interesting. I've learn some things. And hopefully, you have as well. As I said, this was about governance. This is about actually getting it done. And as Carol said many times, the check isn't written, right? There's still a lot of work to be done in implementing this plan and getting it to a place to where the communities can benefit from it, to where we all can bike and have access to it, and to where we all can look at the LA River and say, "That's a river. That's our river."

>> Carol Armstrong: Yeah.

>> Raphael Bostic: And I remember when I first came to LA, the very first time I came here, I saw the river. And I didn't know it was the river because it just didn't have that river character
and quality that you—that I was used to in the East Coast. So, it's very exciting to see all the
effort and to see how the work. Carol Armstrong, Omar Brownson, Mia Lehrer, Josephine Axt,
thank you very much and thank you all for coming.

[Applause]

And I would be remiss if I didn't do two things. One is thank you Donna Jean Ward [assumed
spelling] and Aubrey Hexer [assumed spelling] in the back.

[Applause]

They're my staff members and they really run the show. I just show up and then talk a little bit.
And then the second thing, please do sign up for Bedrosian Center listservs for our web things
and so that you hear about our events because we do a lot of these things in a wide range of
issues. And hopefully, you found this interesting. We want to continue to be interesting for you.
So, have a great night and thanks for coming.