

Wilmington

Improvements Network (WIN)



WIN Community Needs Assessment

August 2014

Credits

Cover Photos

Provided by the Wilmington Improvements Network (WIN).

Quantitative Analysis

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Gulf Avenue Elementary Parent Center

George De La Torre Elementary Parent Center

Hawaiian Avenue Elementary Parent Center

Wilmington Middle School Parent Center

Harry Bridges School Parent Center

Banning High School Parent Center

Iglesia Nuevo Nacimiento

Los Angeles Harbor College

Saint Peter and Paul Catholic Church

United Wilmington Youth Foundation

Hojas Tea House

The Wilmington Improvements Network is responsible for all the content of this report.

Foreword

In January 2014, a group of concerned Wilmington residents created the Wilmington Improvements Network (WIN) to tackle longstanding problems through strategic research and community assessment. The group envisioned a grassroots and organic approach to addressing the challenges and opportunities within the beloved “Heart of the Harbor.” The Wilmington Community Needs Assessment is the first step in the process to heal old community wounds and provide self-determination to solving the neighborhood’s challenges. The results of this survey reveal some common concerns and priorities of Wilmington residents that might otherwise go unheard.

The responses to this survey present new paths towards social and communal justice. Wilmington residents often feel neglected with the distribution of private and public funding; furthermore, in the political arena, surrounding communities tend to have elected leaders generated from sister communities, allocating generous time and focusing on communities who vote and perpetuate electoral power.

Sparking conversation to critically analyze how to address current and historical community challenges may result in proactive approaches to ultimately cultivate and engage youth to take ownership and leadership of Wilmington. Wilmington residents must now take the call of action to inspire, organize, and mobilize a voice for positive change.

Wilmington Improvements Network
Steering Committee

Recommendations

The 2014 Wilmington Community Needs Assessment offered stakeholders an opportunity to identify the wants and needs of the community. The findings reiterate that basic quality of life issues such as low voter turnout and economically depressed areas hurt the morale of the *Heart of the Harbor*. From the information provided by Wilmington residents, the **Wilmington Improvements Network (WIN)** offers the following recommendations to address public policy in Wilmington:

Mass Voter Registration Outreach

Wilmington, like most of Los Angeles County, struggles to bring voters to the polls. Based on the findings of this survey, the City of Los Angeles should work with local community organizations to increase both voter registration and voter turnout. Both officials and local leadership need to focus on cultivating political efficacy. More importantly, local leadership should educate residents on the role that voting plays in bringing resources to Wilmington. Considerable attention is needed toward increasing voter registration rates for **young adults** (e.g., residents between the ages of 17 and 18), **renters**, and **Spanish speaking residents**. **Targeting young adults** will help expand Wilmington's current registered-voter population. Similarly, **targeting renters** will also help bring a new, previously unheard voice to Wilmington's political landscape. Community organizations should not solely rely on help from the City of Los Angeles. Local organizations, like WIN, would do well to **create partnerships and initiatives with churches and local businesses** that promote voter participation.

Economic Revitalization

Wilmington has over 1,000 businesses but only a small percentage of them are owned by Wilmington residents. Community organizations should work with city officials to help **promote small business ownership** and partner with Wilmington's Commercial Business Improvement District (BID) to **expand the boundaries of the BID** and promote local entrepreneurship. One way to **support local entrepreneurship** is to **use vacant commercial properties as temporary pop-up shops** where local residents and existing businesses can test their ideas without having to pay the upfront costs associated with starting a small business.

Recommendations

In addition, community organizations need to work with city officials to help **increase the number of local jobs that pay a living wage** and **increase the number of job training facilities** in Wilmington. Job training facilities have the best chance of benefiting the community when they are accessible to residents who need them the most. Therefore, we recommend city officials to focus their efforts on economically depressed areas of Wilmington. The City should conduct further research to identify areas of disproportionate need.

Community Peace

The survey data indicate that residents do not feel safe in Wilmington. To create a safer Wilmington, community organizers and City officials need to **bring members of the community together and help instill pride for their neighborhood**. This can be done by **implementing public arts projects**. Residents would like an increase in art education programming. It is widely known that cultural activities increase community pride, which helps foster a sense of identity and ownership of space. Increasing art and cultural opportunities would also allow local youth to express themselves in constructive platforms rather than self-destructive means. Evidence also suggests that **community bonds** form when residents come together for a common cause or project. Bringing residents together would help **create a community where everyone feels accountable for the status of the area** and promote a **safer Wilmington**. Although crime can be reduced by creating **accountability within the community**, there is still a need for the City of Los Angeles to step up and help create a safer environment. Both residents and community organizers insist that the City **install more streetlights and increase the number of local police patrols**. Given Wilmington's reportedly high rates of crime, we suggest that the City of LA consider **creating a police sub-station in Wilmington**. This would help make police officers more accessible to community members.

Recommendations

Education

Education is an avenue to achieve social and economic mobility. Wilmington residents struggle to attain higher education and a majority of those surveyed report that Wilmington youth lack access to quality public education. City officials desperately need to partner with Wilmington community organizations to help increase the success of local schools. This goal can best be accomplished by creating peer mentorship programs, expanding after school programs, increasing internship opportunities for high school students, and increasing funding for parent centers. **Mentorship programs** will help local youth realize the role that academic success plays in one's future employment/economic endeavors. Mentorships also have the potential to help increase local educational attainment rates. Survey respondents stressed the need to **prioritize after-school programs** to improve education in Wilmington. Expanding after school programs will help schools reach a larger audience, which in turn may also lead to increased educational attainment rates. Increasing **access to local internships** will allow students to explore different professions and would also help forge a valuable bond between schools and local businesses. **Parent Centers** are a critical link to creating an inclusive educational system, improving both student and parental involvement. Additional funding for existing parent centers would strengthen this link.

About the Survey

In March 2014, WIN conducted more than 85 in-person random surveys of Wilmington residents and stakeholders. An additional 300 surveys were completed with the help of local schools and parishes. The survey consists of questions ranging in all aspects of community life such as the environment, voting, and education (See Appendix 1).

The figure below presents a profile of survey respondents. The bulk of the surveys were administered in Spanish (58%) with the remaining in English (42%). Females account for the largest percentage of survey respondents (67%). Most of the survey respondents are Wilmington residents (95%) that have lived in the area an average of 17 years. The average respondent was 35 years old at the time of the survey. A large percentage of the respondents were renters (72%).

Profile of Respondents	
Survey Language	
Spanish	58%
English	42%
Residents of Wilmington	95%
Sex	
Male	33%
Female	67%
Average Age	35
Average Years in Wilmington	17
Ethnicity	
Hispanic	94%
White	4%
Black	1%
Asian	1%
Educational Attainment	
Less Than High School	25%
High School	47%
Trade School	3%
College	25%

About the Survey

Limitations of the Survey

The WIN Community Assessment Survey provides useful statistical information about of the community of Wilmington; however, there were several limitations of the survey and the project. Financial constraints and limited staffing played a significant role in the shortened timeframe of the project and the distribution of the survey. As with any survey, several residents of the randomly-selected population refused to participate. Of those who elected to participate, a large percentage left at least one survey question unanswered. Lastly, the method used to distribute the questionnaires resulted in a survey population that over-represents female.

Housing

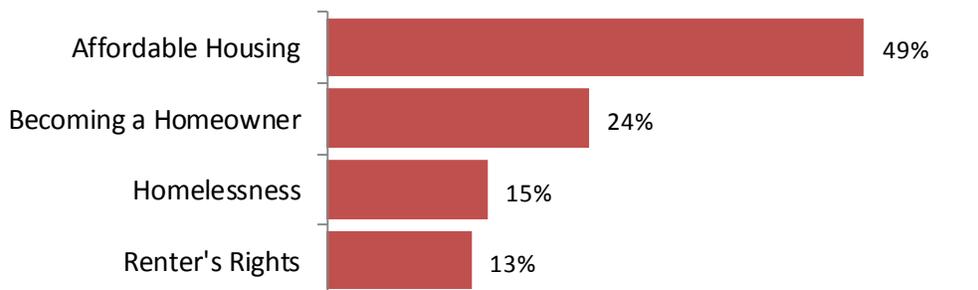
Housing Status

The survey revealed that Wilmington has a large renter population. Approximately 72% of the survey respondents identified themselves as renters. Only 22% of respondents identified as being homeowners. Despite having a large renter population, Wilmington appears to have no issue retaining residents. According to the survey data, the average Wilmington resident has lived in the community for approximately 17 years.

Housing Burden

Although over 50% of Wilmington residents believe they have affordable housing, over one third of the respondents face challenges either paying their rent or mortgage (35%). This reflects the general trend in the Los Angeles area, which is facing a large gap between affordable housing supply and demand.¹ The vast majority of those burdened by housing costs did not vote in either the most recent city or congressional elections (80%). Like most people, Wilmington residents appear to be concerned with affordable housing. Approximately 50% of the surveyed population believes that access to affordable housing is the most important housing-related issue for policymakers to address. According to respondents, the ability to become a homeowner is the second most important housing-related issue in Wilmington.

Most Important Housing-Related Issue in Wilmington



¹ Ray, Ong and Jimenez, 2014. "Impacts of Widening Divide: Los Angeles at the Forefront of the rent burden Crisis." <http://www.anderson.ucla.edu/Documents/areas/ctr/ziman/2014-08WPrev.pdf>

Safety

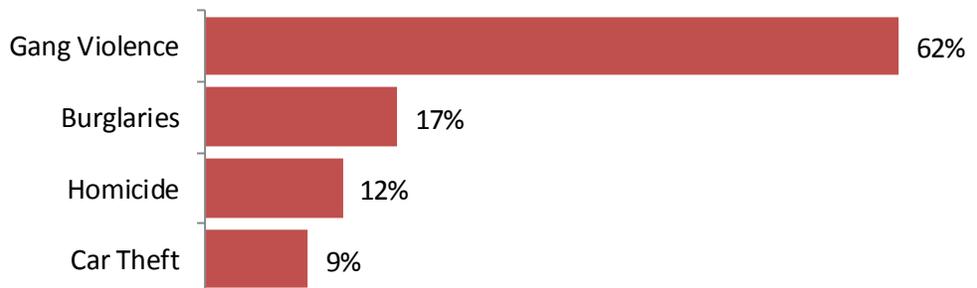
Safety

Residents appear to be concerned with their safety in the community. Only 31% of the respondents feel that they are safe while walking around Wilmington. A significant proportion of residents are also concerned about limited safe spots within the community. Nearly half of the survey respondents feel that there are no safe places in Wilmington (47%). The open-ended questions revealed that residents would like policymakers to address public safety.

One respondent recommended more bicycle cops. Another respondent recommended more streetlights.

Nearly two thirds of survey respondents believe that gang activity is the biggest safety-related problem in Wilmington (62%). Concerns over gang activity may also explain why 41% of survey respondents believe that controlling graffiti is the key to improving the appearance of the neighborhood.

Most Important Crime-Related Issue in Wilmington

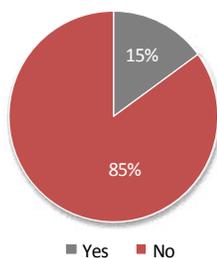


Public Health

Public Health

Only 15% of survey respondents believe that the air in Wilmington is clean. Poor air quality also proved to be a reoccurring theme amongst respondents in the open-ended portion of the survey as was improving the air quality in Wilmington. Several respondents attributed the poor air quality to the refineries located in Wilmington. Although the refineries do provide employment opportunities, numerous respondents suggested that closing refineries was the best solution for eliminating local pollution. The Air Quality Management District (AQMD) have issued several reports in the last ten years, each suggesting that local ports and nearby refineries pose serious public health risks to Wilmington residents. The AQMD's most recent report, found air quality to be at its worst in neighborhoods close to refineries.³ A separate AQMD report concluded that living near refineries increases one's risk of getting cancer.⁴ Wilmington houses four refineries, Phillips 66, Air Products, Tesoro, and Valero. Wilmington residents believe that the local refineries have a negative impact on air quality. In addition to air quality, nearly one-third of the respondents (31%) also appear to be concerned with alley and street dumping. Illegal dumping certainly adds to the already high levels of pollution within the community.

Do you feel that the air in Wilmington is clean?



² South Coast AQMD. 2014 "Flare Operator Information" <http://www.aqmd.gov/home/regulations/compliance/r1118/flare-operator-information>

³ South Coast AQMD. 2008 "Mates Report Executive Summary" <http://www.aqmd.gov/docs/default-source/air-quality/air-toxic-studies/mates-iii/mates-iii-draft-report-january-2008/mates-iii-executive-summary.pdf?sfvrsn=4>

⁴ South Coast AQMD. 2014 "Notice of Public Meeting to Discuss Toxic Risk From a Facility in Your Neighborhood" http://www.aqmd.gov/docs/default-source/planning/Tesoro/publicnotice_800436.pdf?sfvrsn=0

Civic Engagement

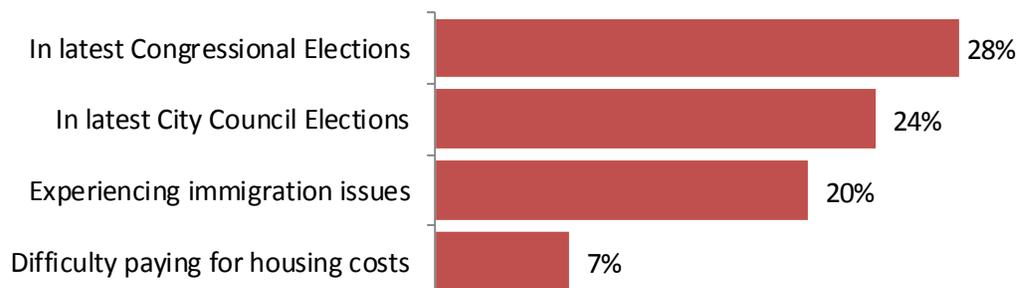
Voting

Voting is an important political function for residents of any neighborhood in order to elect officials that will reflect the interests of the community. Low voter turnout can prove detrimental as residents of that neighborhood are subject to decision-making by officials that may fail to adequately represent their needs. In Wilmington, a disconnect exists between the issues facing residents and the use of voting as a tool to address these challenges.

While 66% of survey respondents are registered to vote in Wilmington, voter turnout seems to be a continuous struggle. Of those surveyed, about 28% voted in the last congressional election and only 24% voted in the last election for Los Angeles City Council. Despite relatively high voter registration rates among respondents only a small percentage actually votes. Low voter turnout is somewhat surprising given that 50% of survey respondents believe that local government is the most important way to influence the political landscape of Wilmington.

Factors such as citizenship status appear to limit the ability of some Wilmington residents to participate in the electoral process. The survey finds that immigration issues affect about 46% of respondents or their families. Of these impacted by immigration policy, only 20% voted in the most recent city or congressional elections.

Reported voting by various stakeholders



⁵Manturuk, Lindblad, and Quercia, 2009. "Homeownership and Local Voting in Disadvantaged Urban Neighborhoods." <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20868721>

Civic Engagement

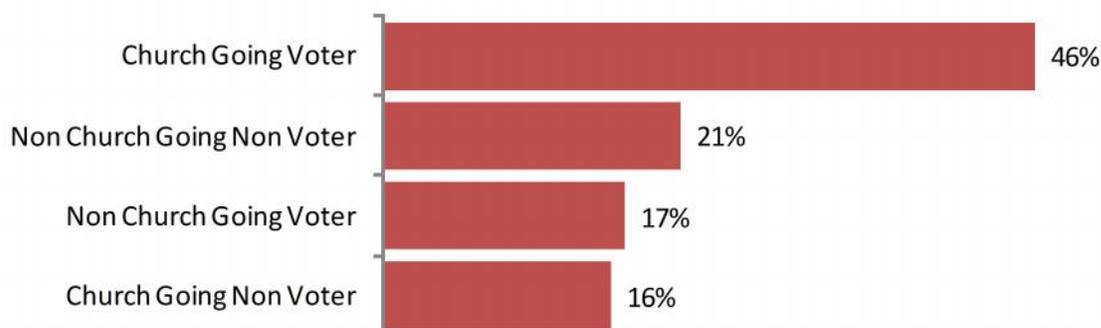
Homeownership, the cornerstone of the American Dream, has been associated with greater community involvement.⁵ A homeowner in Wilmington is over three-times more likely to be a registered voter than a renter (69% compared to 22%). This stark contrast in voting participation is of concern given that a recent demographic profile of the area confirmed that the vast majority of Wilmington households are renters.⁶

Improving Civic Engagement

The survey results pertaining to voting show that some common concerns and priorities of Wilmington residents may likely go unheard by local decision makers. Further, some of the most disadvantaged residents may be cut off from local political structures that are said to afford increased opportunities for socioeconomic mobility.⁷

Places of worship often serve as a connective tissue of communities, providing opportunities for not only worship, but also to develop social ties among different members of an area and roots to an area itself. Regular church attendance is also associated with a higher probability of voting.⁸ While the survey shows that more than half of respondents (62%) stated they attend church or a place of worship, only about 30% of those individuals were registered to vote in the last election. Nonetheless, given the importance of local parishes and churches to civic life, these spaces have the potential to serve as conduits for registering and mobilizing congregates to vote.

Religiosity Voting Patterns



⁶UCLA Community Scholars Program, 2014. "Envisioning a Greener LA: Environment and Local Sustainability for Boyle Heights, Pacoima, and Wilmington." <http://www.libertyhill.org/document.doc?id=414>

⁷Manturuk, Lindblad, and Quercia, 2009, p. 214 "Homeownership and Local Voting in Disadvantaged Urban Neighborhoods." <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20868721>

⁸ Gerber, Gruber, and Hungerman, 2008. "Does Church Attendance Cause People to Vote? Using Blue Laws' Repeal to Estimate the Effect of Religiosity on Voter Turnout." <http://www.nber.org/papers/w14303>

Youth Empowerment

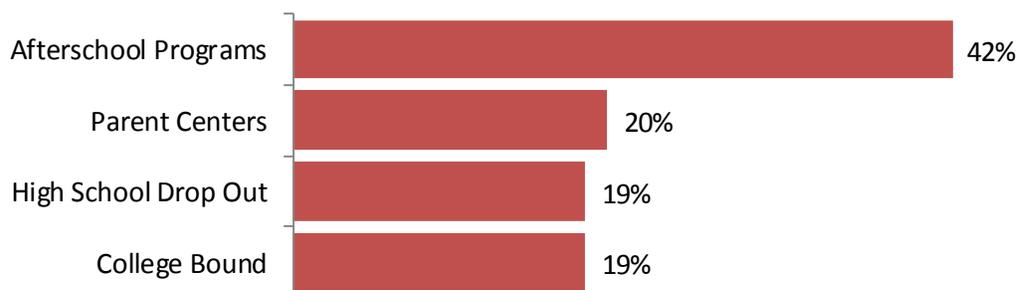
Public Education

Wilmington's younger residents will inherit the community that today's leaders leave for them. Therefore, it is imperative that community leaders acknowledge the needs of the local youth. Community organizations and local government can help empower the local youth by improving public education opportunities. According to the survey data, over 50% of Wilmington residents believe that the local youth do not have access to quality public education.

Improving Public Education Opportunities

A large percentage of survey respondents (42%) indicated that afterschool programs would have the largest effect on improving the community's educational opportunities. Improving Wilmington's public education system would help boost local educational attainment rates. Educational attainment appears to be a significant issue for the community. According to a recent UCLA Community Scholars report, only 7 percent of Wilmington residents 25 and older have a four-year college degree. The same report also found that nearly half (44%) of Wilmington residents have less than a high school education.⁹

Most Important Education-Related Improvement



⁹ UCLA Community Scholars, 2014 "Envisioning a Greener LA: Environment and Local Sustainability for Boyle Heights, Pacoima, and Wilmington." <http://www.libertyhill.org/document.doc?id=414>

Economy and Employment

Local Economy

Wilmington is home to over 1,000 retail and commercial businesses, many of which are small businesses.¹⁰ Survey data suggests that these small businesses have owners that reside outside of Wilmington. Only about 4% of the respondents identified themselves as small business owners. Community leaders should be deeply concerned with these figures. Increasing the number of local owners would certainly help forge a bond between the community and the local economy. It is also likely that local owners would have a better understanding of what the community needs. Data strongly suggests that residents feel that businesses in Wilmington are out of touch with what the community wants. Approximately 79% of survey respondents do not believe that Wilmington has a thriving and appealing downtown shopping center.

Transportation

Transit limitations appear to be a concern for Wilmington residents. Of those who responded to the survey, 86% said that they would like to see more bus routes, bike lanes, and walkable streets in Wilmington. Increasing the number of transit lines would make it possible to shift toward a less car-dependent community, which in turn would help improve air quality in Wilmington. Adding more bus routes would also help stimulate the local economy by giving residents access to parts of town that would have otherwise been unreachable. In addition to more bus routes, bike lanes, and walkable streets, Wilmington residents would also like to see an increased number of streetlights (41%). Investing in additional streetlights would likely reduce criminal activity as well as improve driver and pedestrian safety.¹¹

¹⁰ UCLA Community Scholars, 2014 "Envisioning a Greener LA: Environment and Local Sustainability for Boyle Heights, Pacoima, and Wilmington." <http://www.libertyhill.org/document.doc?id=414>

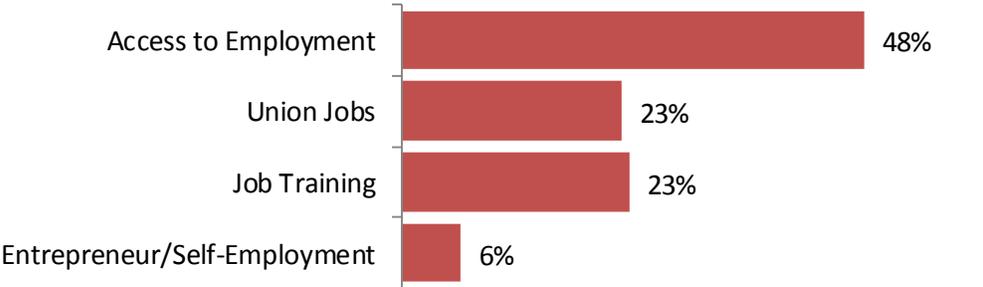
¹¹ Ronald V. Clarke. *Improving Street Lighting to Reduce Crime in Residential Areas*. December 2008. <http://cops.usdoj.gov/Publications/e1208-StreetLighting.pdf>

Economy and Employment

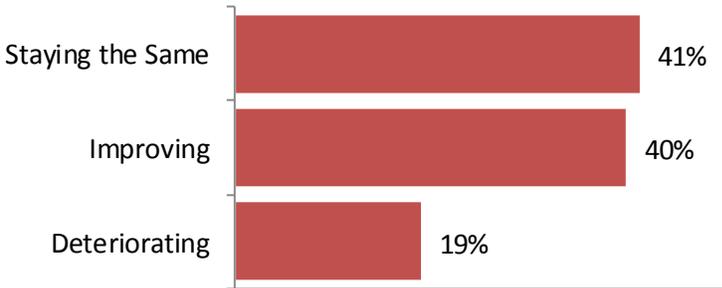
Employment

Gaining employment is a difficult task in any community, but it appears to be especially difficult in Wilmington. Only 39% of survey respondents reported that they were employed full-time. Most respondents (48%) were either unemployed or only employed part-time at the time of the survey (23% and 25%, respectively). Wilmington's high proportion of unemployed and part-time residents could be the result of limited access to jobs. According to most respondents (48%), access to quality jobs is the most important employment-related issue facing Wilmington. Limited access to jobs coupled with high rates of under-employment has certainly affected the way the residents perceive the community. A disproportionate number (60%) of residents believe that Wilmington is not improving.

Most Important Employment-Related Improvement



Status of Wilmington



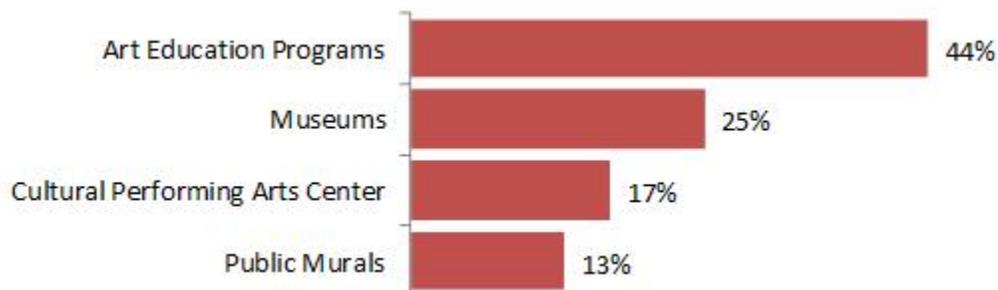
Community Needs

Community Building

Research suggests that communities benefit from the increased promotion of local art activities. According to the Project for Public Spaces, “Civic institutions, like museums, public galleries, community art organizations, performing art institutions, arts councils and public arts organizations have a rare opportunity to lead significant change by engaging specific groups to help devise and carry out creative community-building neighborhood programs.”¹²

The survey data certainly indicates that residents would like to see more art in the community. Over 80% of the surveyed population believes that Wilmington would benefit from more public art/murals. Furthermore, approximately 45% of the respondents believe that adding art education programs is best way to help create a culture that is unique to the Wilmington area. In addition to increasing the number of art education programs, 30% of the respondents would like to see either more public murals or a cultural performing arts center (13% and 17%, respectively).

Most Important Community Improvements



¹² John Burrop. 2013. “5 Ways Art Projects can Improve Struggling Communities.” <http://www.pps.org/reference/artsprojects/>

APPENDIX I—Survey Instrument

WILMINGTON IMPROVEMENTS NETWORK (WIN)

Survey generated solely for the purposes to interview Wilmington residents to discover more about our community needs. The information provided will be used to better understand how to approach improving our neighborhood. Your personal information is confidential and will not be used, sold, or shared with outside parties. Thank you!

Do you live in Wilmington?: Yes or No **If so, how many years?** _____

Do you like living in Wilmington?: Yes or No

Why?: _____

Do you see Wilmington: (a) improving (b) deteriorating (c) staying the same

Social Entrepreneurship

1. Do you own a small business? 1. Yes or No

Environment

2. Do you feel Wilmington’s air is clean? 2. Yes or No

Public Art

3. Do you want to see more public art/murals in Wilmington? 3. Yes or No

Senior Citizens

4. Do you feel senior citizens are respected in Wilmington? 4. Yes or No

Transportation

5. Do you want to see more bus routes, bike lanes, and walk able sidewalks? 5. Yes or No

Public Education

6. Do you feel Wilmington’s youth have access to quality education? 6. Yes or No

Urban Design

7. Does Wilmington have a thriving and appealing downtown shopping center? 7. Yes or No

Public Health

8. Do you currently have health insurance? 8. Yes or No

Immigration

9. Do immigration issues affect your family? 9. Yes or No

Public Safety

10. Do you feel safe walking down the streets of Wilmington? 10. Yes or No

Housing

11. Do you have challenges either paying your rent or mortgage? 11. Yes or No

Community Safe Spaces

12. Are there safe places in Wilmington to simply “hang out”? 12. Yes or No

Council District 15 Political Landscape

13. Did you vote in the most recent Los Angeles City Council election? 13. Yes or No

44th Congressional Landscape

Did you vote in the most recent United States Congressional election? 14. Yes or No

Faith

Do you regularly attend church or place of worship in Wilmington? 15. Yes or No

Please check the most important item for each category. Only **CHECK ONE** item per box/category.

Culture _ Public Murals _ Museums _ Art Education Programs _ Cultural Performing Arts Center	Social Activities _ Dances _ Cafe/Coffee Shops _ Shopping _ Community Festivals	Employment _ Union Jobs _ Job Training _ Access to Employment _ Entrepreneur/Self Employment
Housing _ Affordable Housing _ Homelessness _ Renters’ Rights _ Becoming a Homeowner	Government _ Neighborhood Council _ City Council _ Congressional Leadership _ Community Groups	Safety _ Homicide _ Car Theft _ Gang Violence _ Burglaries
Transportation _ Bike Lanes _ Dash Buses _ Street Lights _ Affordable Transportation	Neighborhood Cleanliness _ Graffiti Control _ Potholes _ Animal Control _ Alley/Street Dumping	Education _ Parent Centers _ Afterschool Programs _ College Bound _ High School Drop Out

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Living Wage Job

What does a “living wage job” mean to you? Or “I don’t know?”

Afterschool Programs

How can we encourage our youth to volunteer with community service and civic participation during afterschool hours?

Tell us how YOU would like to see Wilmington improved:

Contact Information & Demographics

Name: _____ Age: _____ Race/Ethnicity: _____ Gender: _____

Email: _____ Telephone: _____

Annual Income: _____ Occupation: _____

Employment Status: [Full-Time] [Part-Time] [Unemployed] [Retired] [Student]

Housing Status: [Renter] [Homeowner] Other: _____

Primary Home Language: _____ Highest Educational Attainment: _____

Single Parent: Yes or No

Are You A Registered Voter?: Yes or No

Please answer YES or NO to the following questions:

Would you like further information about the **Wilmington Improvements Network (WIN)**? YES or NO

Would you like to participate in a discussion about this survey? YES or NO

If yes, please provide best way to contact you (circle one):

[PHONE]

[EMAIL]

[FACEBOOK]