



salton sea amenities engagement

findings and summary report

kounkuey design initiative

with support from:
imperial valley equity & justice coalition

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01. executive summary

engaging the salton sea region

In late 2022 and early 2023, with funding from the Salton Sea Authority (SSA), Kounkuey Design Initiative (KDI) developed an engagement framework for the Better World Group (BWG) in order to inform their Community Amenities Strategy document. The purpose of this effort was to collect feedback on the Salton Sea region's needs and community members' desired amenities for the futures of the area. This engagement consisted of nine mobile data-collecting activities (mobile engagements), five community focus group workshops, and the distribution of a bilingual survey that was intended to be far reaching.

A priority was to be given to the Imperial County shoreline communities for this data collecting effort, so KDI partnered with Imperial Valley Equity and Justice Coalition (IVEJC) as the Imperial County community experts. IVEJC were brought on as consultants for strategy development and outreach and engagement support.

Through this effort both KDI and IVEJC teams surveyed 508 people, met with 55 focus group workshop participants and engaged approximately 225 individuals through the mobile "obelisk" engagements in Brawley, Calipatria, Westmorland, Salton City, El Centro, Calexico, and Thermal.

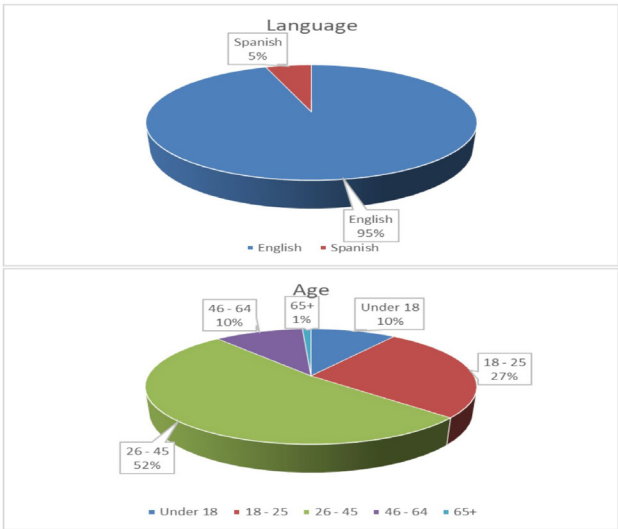
This report includes a summary of the survey results, the voting counts from the mobile engagements and content from memos prepared by the KDI community team for each of the focus group workshop.

The intention of this report is to capture all of the engagement outcomes in one document and to serve as a data reference point for use in the Community Amenities Strategy document.



02. survey results

Total number of respondents: 508

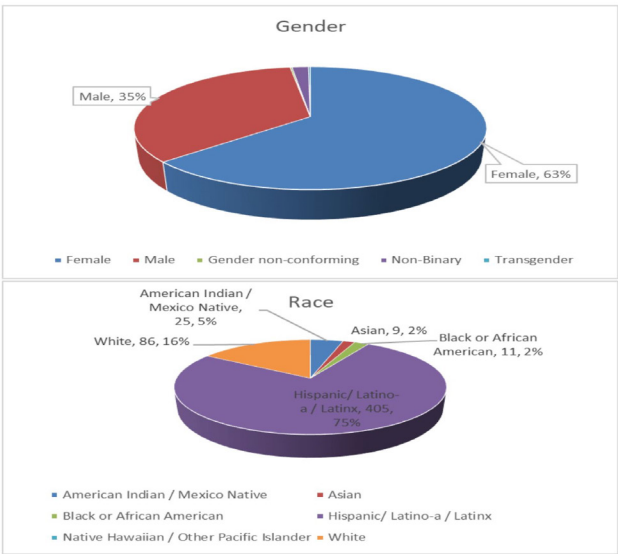


summary

The “Salton Sea Benefits Survey” went live on December 14th, 2022 and was closed on January 23rd, 2023. A total of 508 surveys were taken with 95% of them being completed in English (Spanish was also provided as an option). The age demographic most engaged were from ages 25 to 45 with 63% respondents identifying as female, and 75% identifying as Hispanic and/or Latino.

The survey was distributed through various social media platforms and online outlets, as well as through community contacts and the networks of BWG, the SSA, and the State of California’s Salton Sea committees.

Total number of respondents: 508



“[I want the Salton Sea to be] “a healthy place for the community, and a place that the residents can enjoy.”

-Maria Cervantes, Thermal



Total n



transportation

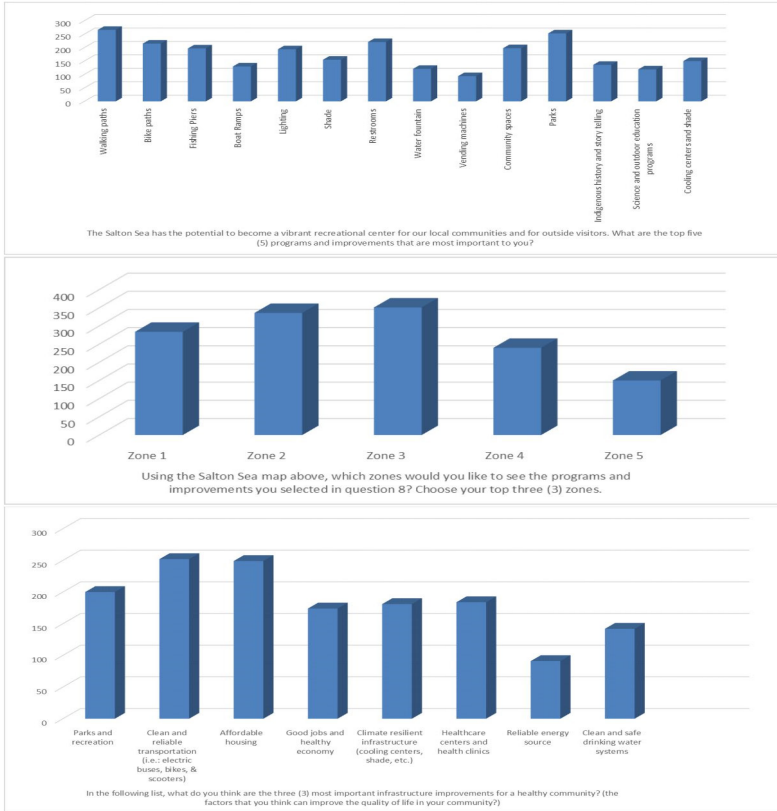
When asked about primary mode of transportation, over 300 people said they drove a car. Public transit followed as the second choice at a little over 100 responses. Over 250 survey takers said they would like to see improvement to public transportation access near their community as well as safety improvements on roads and vehicle access to the Salton Sea.

Total number of respondents: 508



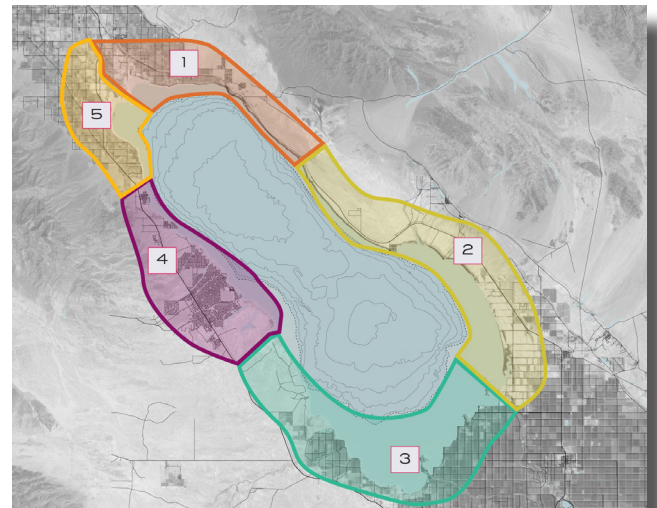
“[I want the Salton Sea to be] “a clean and ecologically sustainable space.”

- Aranza Mascareno, Calexico



recreation and infrastructure

Parks and walking paths were the highest ranked amenities, and housing and clean and reliable transportation where the two top infrastructure needs. The geographical areas where most respondents would like to see these types of projects implemented are near Bombay Beach, the south shoreline of the Salton Sea, and North Shore (areas 2, 3, and 1 respectively on the map below).



“[Quiero que el Salton Sea sea] un lugar mas iluminado y seguro.”

-Maricela Arredondo, Salton Sea

03. mobile engagements



In order to quantify priorities for individual shoreline communities of the Salton Sea, the KDI team developed a prioritizing tool called the "Obelisk", made out a 5ft tall, 4 window pegboard display and metal hooks. The obelisk displayed images representing community needs, previously chosen by community members in 4 categories. The 4 categories are:

Transportation
Recreation
Placemaking
Infrastructure

For the priority activity participants were given 5 metal rings and were instructed to place the rings in the hooks representing the community benefit of their choice. With about 30 options available, participants had to think about their choices and prioritize what was most important to them. In addition to the obelisk, the KDI team also displayed a map of the Salton Sea region where participants were able to draw and/or write in more detail about community benefits and their desired location.



To ensure all shoreline communities of the Salton Sea were accounted for, the KDI team stationed the obelisk at 9 different popular locations in close proximity to the Salton Sea. Those locations were:

Oasis: Oasis del Desierto Park
North Shore: North Shore Community Park
Brawley: Inferno Restaurant
Calipatria: Market Square
Westmorland: El Sol Market
Thermal: Chapala Market
Salton City: North Marina & Highway 86
El Centro: El Centro Courthouse
Calexico: Los Pinky's Hot Dog Stand



Approximately 225 participants were engaged in 9 mobile beacon deployments. The KDI team counted all collected votes and developed a chart for record keeping. Here are the quantifiable results for each of the available categories, organized by identified priority.

transportation

street lighting	70 votes
public transportation	65 votes
bus shelters	65 votes
paved roads	55 votes
sidewalk	28 votes

infrastructure

medical clinics	76 votes
ecological restoration	72 votes
wi-fi	56 votes
cooling centers	43 votes
green jobs	37 votes
informal economy support	37 votes

recreation

parks	85 votes
trails/bike paths	67 votes
shoreline access	57 votes
bird watching	42 votes
camping	38 votes
kayaking/water access	16 votes

place making

shade trees	68 votes
community gathering spaces	67 votes
community art pieces	48 votes
display community narrative/histories	34 votes



After voting on the obelisk, participants were asked to work on a map outlining the Salton Sea and shoreline communities. KDI facilitators provided participants with colored markers and asked them to draw or write specific locations within the map where participants would like to see community benefits. Participants were also encouraged to engage in detailed conversations with facilitators about the needs in the individual's community.



KDI facilitators developed a matrix to capture and categorize qualitative comments received during the conversations they had with participants. Based on this matrix, the KDI team sorted all comments into 3 levels of priority in order of importance and frequency. The 3 categories are: highest level of priority, high level of priority, and considerable level of priority.

highest level of priority

- shade (trees, structures)
- paved roads
- information about and more accessibility to programs, events, governance meetings, and resources offered (available times, language, cost, distance)
- parks and facilities maintenance
- street lighting
- faster response time from law enforcement and public safety departments
- availability of and accessibility to public transportation
- community gathering spaces (parks, community centers)



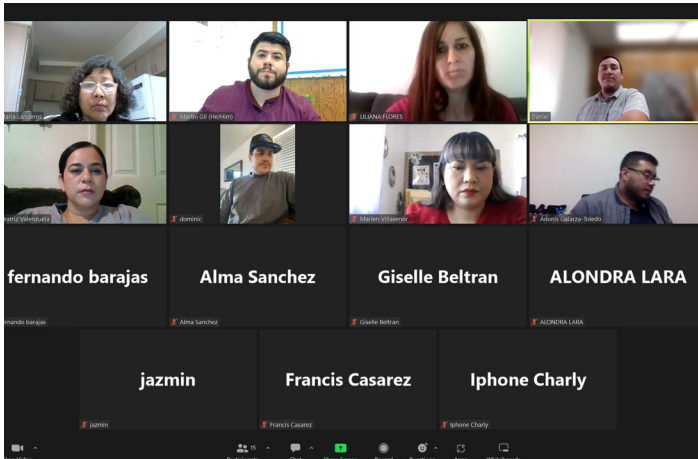
high level of priority

- medical clinics
- traffic control (speed bumps, stop signs, traffic lights, traffic control personnel during traffic hours)
- programs and activities for people of all ages
- assistance and resources for farm working individuals
- investment from governing agencies (jobs, housing, community aesthetic)
- support for local businesses (loans, resources, permit requirements, availability and access to agents)
- internet access

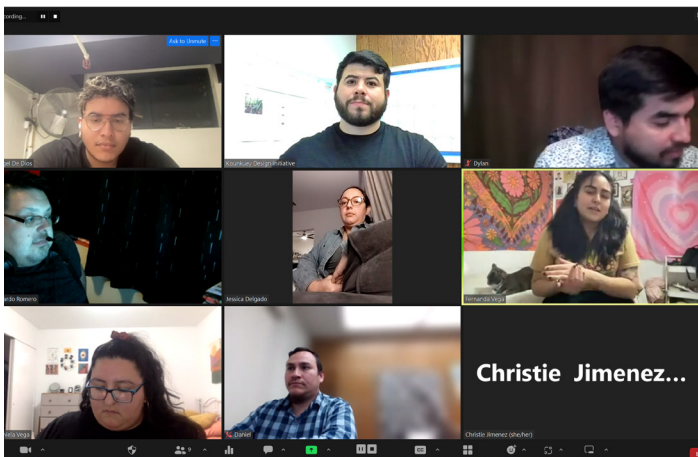
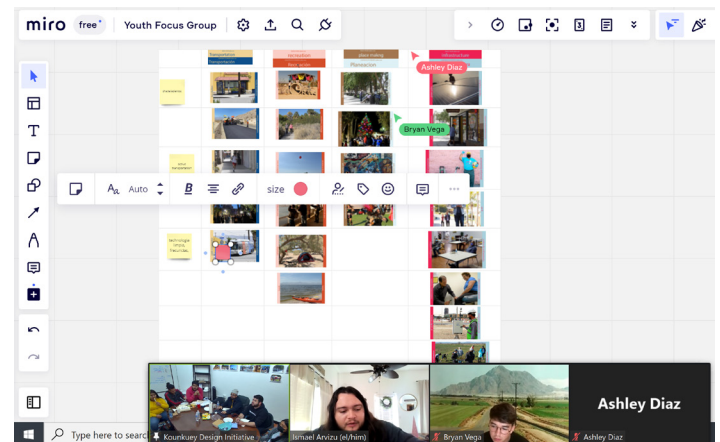
considerable level of priority

- shoreline access
- trainings for jobs that will become available
- markets, restaurants
- outdoor activities
- outdoor spaces for recreation

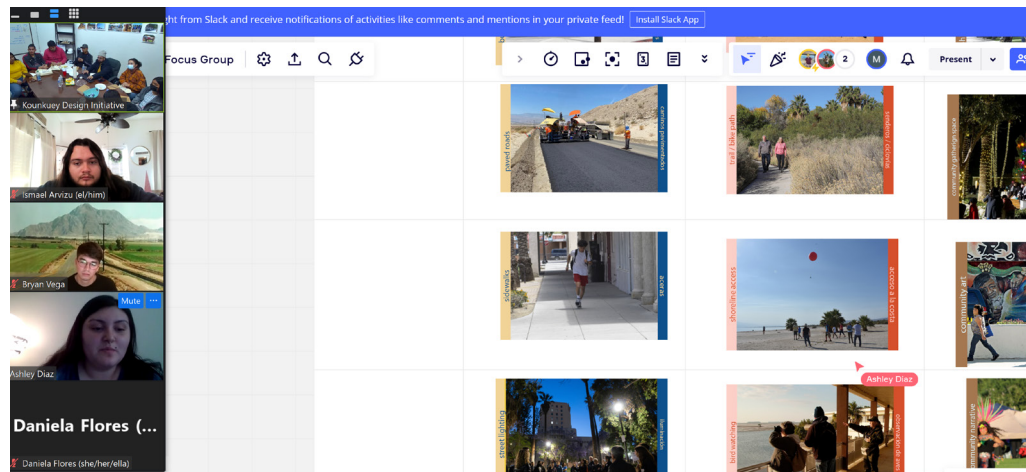
04. focus groups



The KDI team, with support from IVECJ and FIELD, conducted five focus group workshops. Each focus group met for 1 to 2 hours to discuss various topics based on the engagement framework developed for the survey. The focus groups were structured to facilitate in depth conversation around potential amenities and benefits as they pertained to their demographic. The focus groups targeted a work force development group, youth from both Riverside and Imperial county, a group of seniors who meet regularly at the Brawley Senior Center, and one focus group for community leaders in each of the two counties. In order to accommodate different needs, some workshops were done in person while others were done over Zoom using Miro boards as tools to facilitate interactive activities.



focus group: youth



Workshop Overview

On January 20th, 2023 the KDI team met with youth from Riverside and Imperial counties over zoom for a focus group discussion about the different needs that exist in communities around the Salton Sea. In order to keep the conversation focused, the KDI team limited the number of participants to 10 available spots. During this conversation, nine participants from communities including Thermal, Oasis, Mecca, Brawley, El Centro, Calexico, and Calipatria were part of the conversation. Facilitators from the KDI team started the meeting with some introductions and an overview of the Salton Sea Benefits Engagement process that had been going on for the past month.

Obelisk Activity

To start the conversation, the KDI team replicated the obelisk activity from the mobile engagements and made it compatible for viewers on line. The purpose of the activity was to have participants choose their top 5 benefits from the list of opinions available. After completing the activity, facilitators asked participants to provide their reasoning for making their choices. The top three benefits selected were public transportation, street lights, and sidewalks.

Here are comments from participants regarding these priorities:

- The bus route schedule needs to be more flexible. Instead of every hour, the buses should be stopping more frequently.
- Bus routes are inadequate and inaccessible.

- More lights are needed since workers are waiting in the streets early in the morning when it is still dark.
- Sidewalks would provide safety for families making their way to public areas.

The main portion of the workshop was discussing heat impacts and transportation needs as well as uses and finally a conversation around broadband. Here are comments from participants regarding each topic:

Regarding Heat:

- Medical centers should offer free showers for the unhoused and serve as community cooling centers.
- Community centers could serve as cooling centers and resource centers.

Regarding Transportation:

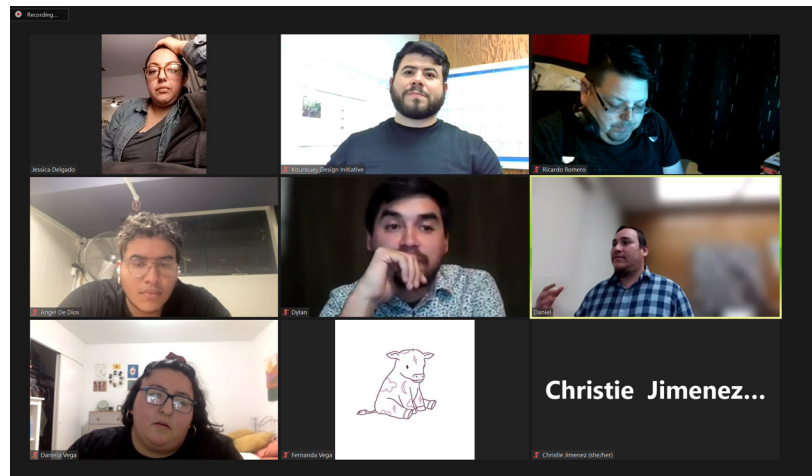
- There are too many bus stops with no bus shelters.
- We need buses that run on clean energy.
- SunBus has a ride-share function, but it needs to be more reliable. The location doesn't refresh and it is not accessible to people that live in remote areas.
- Improving access would fuel other amenities.

Regarding Broadband:

- Better internet access would help stimulate local businesses to grow.

Why does the Salton Sea matter to you?

- Not good for the environment
- We need to save it
- Fish had died, now it will be people



Workshop Overview

On January 24th, 2023 the KDI met with residents of Imperial County over Zoom for a focus group discussion about the different needs that exist in communities around the Salton Sea. During this conversation, 9 participants from communities including Bombay Beach, Calipatria, Calexico, El Centro, Westmorland, and Brawley were part of the conversation. Facilitators of the KDI team started the meeting with some introductions and overview of the Salton Sea Benefits Engagement process that had been going on for the past month.

Obelisk Activity

To start the conversation, the KDI team replicated the Obelisk activity from the mobile engagements and made it compatible for viewers on line. The purpose of the activity was to have participants choose their top 5 benefits from the list of opinions available. After completing the activity, facilitators asked participants to provide their reasoning for making their choices. The top three benefits selected were paved roads, public transportation, and ecological transportation.

Here are comments from participants regarding each of the top three priorities:

Paved Roads:

- We need better roads because people can get flat tires when trying to get to a place. This can be too costly for some people.
- How can we have access to the Salton Sea if there are no roads to get there.

Public Transportation:

- Not everyone has access to a vehicle so there needs to be more accessibility in transportation. More places to visit, more bus stops. It is also good to reduce environmental damage.
- We need more eco-friendly transportation. So improving public transportation will do just that.
- The idea of having a trolley system is good but it needs to be reliable.

Ecological Restoration:

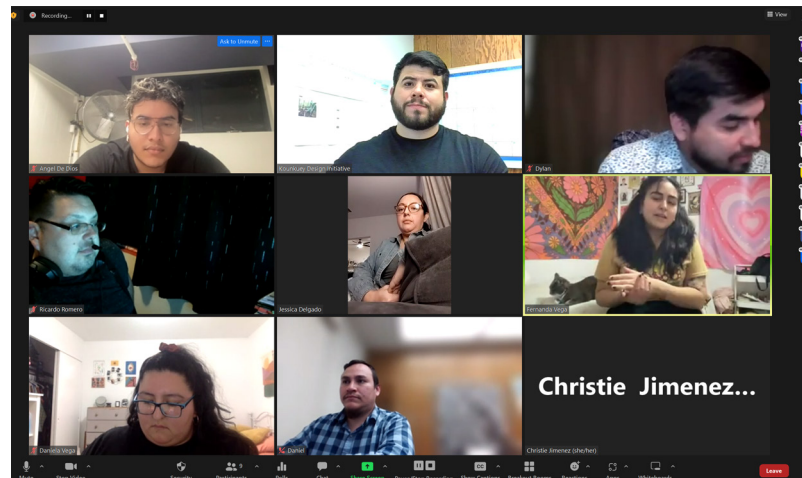
- We need to do something about it. We need to raise awareness for the salton sea. We need more programs and money to be invested here.

The main portion of the workshop was discussing heat impacts, transportation needs, and broadband. A question was posed for each topic. Below are some responses:

Regarding Heat:

- There are a lot of people in Calipatria and Bombay Beach that don't have an air conditioner.
- Cooling spaces often reject the unhoused, leaving them with no places to cool off.
- This is a life and death situation.
- Coming from a family of HVAC specialists I recall growing up and hearing some calls for help to my family. We had to go and help families in need that did not have air conditioners and were suffering through the summer heat.
- Some communities don't have water.
- We just don't go out.
- I recognize that I am privileged to have air condi-

focus group: imperial county (cont.)



tioning when a lot of families don't count on those measures to deal with the intense heat.

- Everyone already knows that they will have a high electricity bill during the summer.
- There is no infrastructure to combat the heat.
- No water in some areas.
- Heat makes you tired all the time.
- I recall those summer days where I would just feel drained all the time just for running errands, going in and out of this extreme heat.

Regarding Transportation:

- We need to have cars to move.
- It is essential to have a car to travel and go to your daily needs in the valley.
- Transit takes too long.
- The amount of time between stops is too much.
- Its unreliable.
- Sometimes you have to drive around the valley in the summer with your windows down to conserve gas.
- Even with all the talk about bringing these amenities I doesn't trust the system to do a good job.
- We need some way to track exactly where the public transit is to plan accordingly.
- Because of the unreliability of public transit we often miss our buses and would have to wait hours to catch the next bus.

Regarding Broadband:

- Better reception.
- We need more affordable access.
- Many services that are in the area are not good enough to keep up with the demand.



Workshop Overview

On January 24th, 2023 the KDI met with seniors at the Brawley senior center for a focus group discussion about the different needs that exist in communities around the Salton Sea. During this conversation 9 participants were part of the conversation.

Obelisk Activity

Facilitators of the KDI team started the meeting with some introductions and overview of the Salton Sea Benefits Engagement process that had been going on for the past month. To start the conversation the KDI team replicated the Obelisk activity. The purpose of the activity was to have participants choose their top five benefits from the list of opinions available.

After completing the activity, facilitators asked participants to provide their reasoning for making their choices. The group selected their top 5 benefits: camping, parks, bird watching, trails, and kayaking.

Comments we received from participants when providing reasoning for some of their choices:

Public transportation:

- We need more access to transportation for seniors .
- Seniors have to walk long distances to get to a bus stop.
- Sometimes I don't go out because I don't have a ride and I can't walk to a bus stop.

Camping:

- Would like to be able to spend more time outdoors.

- it would be good if we had classes and equipment to be able to camp.
- I would like to connect more with nature.

Parks:

- I would like more parks with games for children to play.
- There is no park close to where I live, so besides the senior center there is no other place I go.

Bird watching:

- I heard that there are really beautiful places for bird watching at the Salton Sea, but I have never been there so I don't know how to get there. Also there is no public transportation that can take me there.

Trails:

- I love to walk on trails. We need more trails around here.
- It is a good activity to stay healthy and connect with family members

Kayaking:

- People need activities to do outdoors and kayaking seems like a fun activity for folks to do

The main portion of the workshop was discussing heat impacts, transportation and broadband.

Response from participants:

Regarding Heat:

- There are not enough places for people to cool off.
- There is no way for me to go the beach and enjoy a day away from the heat.

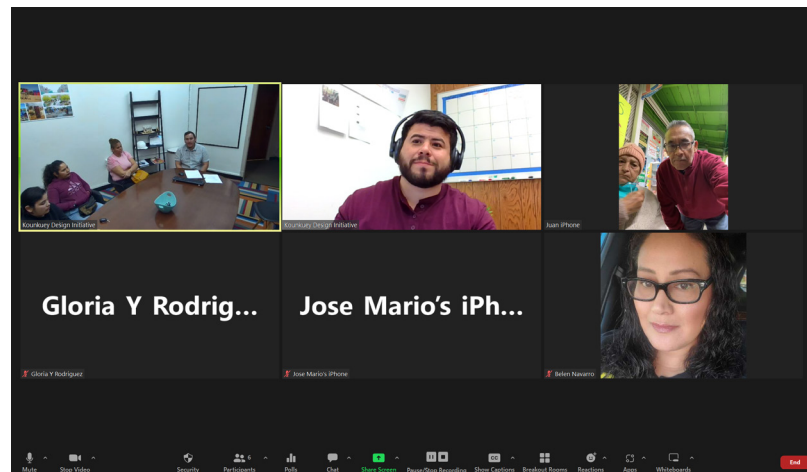
focus group: seniors (cont.)



- I don't have transportation to cooler places near by.
- We need some pools here in the community.

Regarding Transportation:

- I get around with IV Transit, or drive my car or bicycle.
- It is important to note that there are a lot of people who don't have access to cars and rely on public transportation. The amount of activities they could do is based on where the buses can take them.
- I can't walk too much so I only go out when I have a ride
- I would like to be able to go to San Diego to enjoy a fresh day at the beach.
- We need to have field trips that can take seniors from Brawley to San Diego.
- We need a ride share system that is affordable for people.



Workshop Overview

On January 25th, 2023 the KDI met with residents of Riverside county over zoom for a focus group discussion about the different needs that exist in communities around the Salton Sea. During this conversation, 9 participants from communities including Thermal, Oasis and North Shore were part of the conversation. Facilitators of the KDI team started the meeting with some introductions and overview of the Salton Sea Benefits Engagement process that had been going on for the past month.

Obelisk Activity

The KDI team replicated the Obelisk activity and made it compatible for viewers on line. The purpose of the activity was to have participants choose their top benefits from the list of opinions available. After completing the activity, facilitators asked participants to provide their reasoning for making their choices. The top three benefits selected were parks, street lights, and shade.

Comments from participants regarding each of the top three benefits.

Parks:

- We need to finish part 2 of the Oasis park. We have been waiting for too long.
- There is a need for more parks in the area of Oasis and Thermal.
- We need a park with pool for kids to play in the summer.

Street lights:

- Streets are so dark and it is dangerous to come out at night.
- We need more safety measures.
- Don't feel good about letting my kids go outside and play because it is dangerous.

Shade:

- We need a lot more shade to protect from the sun.
- There needs to be more shade for farmworkers.
- When I work in the fields it's too hot, but there are no places for me to get shade.

The main portion of the workshop was discussing heat impacts, transportation and broadband.

Participant responses:

Regarding Heat:

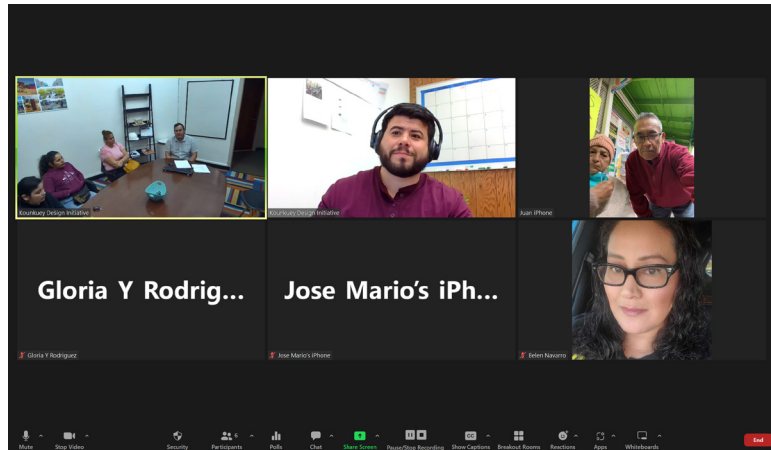
- We need more parks with pools
- We need more markets to sell ice
- More ice machines
- We need bus shelters to have shade
- Water fountains

Regarding Transportation:

- Bus stops end on Ave 70, but there are people passing that street that still need to use transportation. They have to rely on other people to move around.
- We need affordable transportation options, such as ride share.
- Students can't get to school if they missed the bus.
- More bike racks on buses and bike racks in schools, so that students can take the bus and ride their bike

focus groups

riverside county (cont.)



home.

Regarding Broadband:

- We should have free wi-fi at stores and markets
- Free wi-fi at parks
- There is no signal at parks. So I don't feel safe because I cant use my phone.
- Phone signal is not good at trailer parks.
- There are a lot of dead zones in Oasis trailer parks.
- We should have access to better internet companies.
- More towers from providers.



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