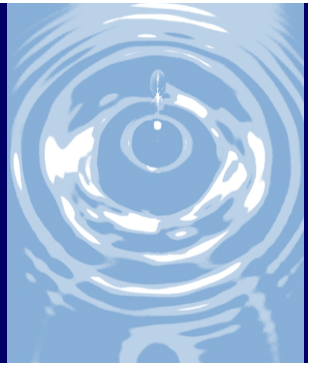


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Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRZ
Needs Assessment
Final Report

L.A. Mayor's Office
Gang Reduction Youth Development (GRYD)

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents 1

List of In-Text Tables..... 2

Acknowledgements..... 3

Chapter One: Overview of Study 4

 Study Purpose and Background 4

 Study Methodology 4

 Strengths and Limitations 6

Chapter Two: Community History and Profile..... 7

 Demographics 8

 Crime Patterns..... 10

 Summary 11

Chapter Three: Community Strengths & Needs Reported 13

 Community Strengths and Needs 13

 Community Survey and Focus Group Results 15

 Summary 24

Chapter Four: Building an Effective Community Response 25

 Overall Reflections 25

 Recommendations for Building Community Infrastructure 27

 Recommendations for Building a More Complete and Comprehensive Service Continuum 29

 Conclusion..... 31

APPENDICES 32

 Appendix A: Healthy Cities Figures and Tables..... 32

 Appendix B: Survey Instrument..... 34

 Appendix C: Focus Group Question Guide..... 37

List of In-Text Tables¹

Table 1.1	Summary of Focus Groups Held and Number of Participants	6
Table 3.1	Top 5 Strengths for Neighborhoods in Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD.....	13
Table 3.2	Top 5 Community Needs to Better Support its Children and Youth	14
Table 3.3	Fear of Crime	15
Table 3.4	Problems Facing the Community.....	16
Table 3.5	Effectiveness of Responses to Gang Crime	17
Table 3.6	Ratings for Importance in Strengthening the Neighborhood	18
Table 3.7	Level of Responsibility in Controlling Gang Problems	19
Table 3.8	Effectiveness of Stakeholders Responsible for Improving Safety	19
Table 3.9	Ability to Access Services.....	21

¹ Tables illustrated in text are listed here. For *Healthy Cities* figures and tables, which are referred to in Chapter 2 but not depicted in text, please see Appendix A.

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Chapter One: Overview of Study

Study Purpose and Background

The City of Los Angeles, home to nearly four million people, continues to struggle with one of the most serious public safety crises in its history. With the busiest port in the nation, proximity to an international border, and the dense five-county region surrounding the city comprising nearly 21 million people, resources are stretched as law enforcement struggle to respond effectively to gang crime and related community disorder. After more than two decades of concerted gang policing and prosecution efforts, Los Angeles has nonetheless more than 400 known gangs and roughly 39,000 identified gang members.

In 2007, Mayor Villaraigosa released the *City of Los Angeles Gang Reduction Strategy* (April 18, 2007) in response to the call for action by *The Advancement Project*² earlier in the year. The Mayor's Strategy called for building a comprehensive response system to the gang problem in eight targeted areas called Gang Reduction Youth Development zones. To accomplish this goal, the Mayor established the Office of Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD) to assist the areas in building their response systems, which includes programming and activities ranging from prevention to intervention to suppression to reentry. The first step in this process was to conduct needs assessment studies in each of the GRYD areas in order to tailor funding to the local needs of the community.

The current study summarizes the results of the comprehensive community-based needs assessment for the Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD area. The results are intended to reflect the needs of three distinct neighborhoods included in the GRYD: El Sereno, Lincoln Heights, and Ramona Gardens. It is important to note, however, that only portions of El Sereno and Lincoln Heights are included in the GRYD while the entire Ramona Gardens area is encompassed in the targeted area.

As indicated above, the aim of this study was to capture the community voice with regard to implementing an effective balance of gang prevention, intervention, suppression, and re-entry efforts. To this end, the research team approached this study from the perspective of overall community need, viewing gang membership and violence as a symptom of the problem rather than the problem in and of itself. This approach allowed respondents to provide feedback on the perceived strengths of their community as well as overall gaps in the programs and services available in their communities.

Study Methodology

The project was driven by a multi-pronged approach including: (1) Socio-demographic and crime data profiles of the Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD; (2) community surveys with residents in the area; and (3) focus groups with parents, youth, and agencies/entities that provide services in the GRYD. All data collection instruments were standardized and constructed in a culturally sensitive format in both English and Spanish; all methods of data collection involved interpreters and translators when necessary. Interpreter-translators, focus group leaders, and community survey interviewers were hired from within the community in order to increase participation and enhance the validity of information obtained. To better

² See Citywide Gang Activity Reduction Strategy: Phase III Report at http://www.advanceproj.org/doc/p3_report.pdf

understand the procedures used for each of these data collection methods, the methodology for each approach is described below.

Socio-Demographic and Crime Data Profiles

Analysis of general community descriptive and gang crime data was provided to CSLA research staff by *The Advancement Project* and was summarized by CSLA research staff in the current report. Consequently, we refer readers to the GRYD Office and research staff at The Advancement Project for any questions related to the type of data acquired for analysis and the procedures used for analyzing the data. The authors of this report can only take responsibility for the interpretation of the analysis provided to us.

Community Surveys

The purpose of Community Surveys was to assess community members' perceptions of community strengths, their fear of crime in the community, their access to services, areas for strengthening the community, extent of crime problems in the community, and their perceptions of responsibility for improving the safety of the community as well as the effectiveness of various entities to improve safety (see Appendix B for a copy of the survey). The survey was comprised predominately by close-ended items with Likert-style response categories (ranges 1 to 4 and 1 to 5). Additionally, two open-ended questions were included to capture residents' perceptions of strengths of and needs in the community. The survey was developed collectively by all GRYD needs assessment contractors and GRYD staff in order to create a standard survey instrument that would allow for comparison across GRYD areas.

Five interviewers were hired from the three neighborhoods in the GRYD to administer the survey in one-on-one sessions with residents. CSLA provided training to these interviewers prior to data collection. Convenience sampling was used given the extreme time limits; however, appropriate guidelines were instituted to ensure adequate sampling across domains (e.g., no more than 10% of respondents could be family/friends of the interviewer; 50% were to be female; 50% were to be residents over the age of 30yrs; 75% were to have children under the age of 18yrs). In total, 452 surveys were collected from Ramona Gardens GRYD community members during the course of this study. Of these, 181 surveys were completed by residents in El Sereno, 123 were completed by residents in Lincoln Heights, and 148 were completed by residents in Ramona Gardens.

Focus Groups

Focus groups with residents and agencies/entities that provide services in the area were conducted to collect qualitative data regarding perceptions of: (1) The most pressing problems in the area vis-à-vis gang crime/violence, (2) the need for specific type of resources, and (3) the types of responses necessary to improve the community's well-being and safety. Focus groups utilized a semi-structured format with groups of 8-10 participants.³ Separate focus groups were convened for youth, parents, business leaders, community-based organizations, the Los Angeles Unified School District, the Los Angeles Police Department, the Los Angeles County Probation, the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services, and the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health. Attempts were made, whenever possible, to ensure respondents represented all three neighborhoods in the Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD. Table 1.1 summarizes the total number of meetings held in the GRYD for all

³ Due to interest among various groups, many focus groups exceeded the initial goal of 8-10 people.

groups. As shown in Table 1.1, 203 individuals participated in discussions related to the needs of the community.

Table 1.1 Summary of Focus Groups Held and Number of Participants

Focus Group	# of Participants
Residents	
Parents	44
Youth	70
Business Owners	8
<i>Subtotal Residents</i>	<i>122</i>
Agencies/Entities that Provide Services	
LA Unified School District (LAUSD)--School Resource Group	10
Dept. of Mental Health/LAUSD Collaborative	12
Dept. of Children and Family Services (DCFS)	14
Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD)	8
Probation Department	8
Healthy Start Community-Based Organizations	29
<i>Subtotal Agencies/Entities</i>	<i>81</i>
Total All Participants	203

Focus group discussions were guided by a set of 8 to 10 questions (see Appendix C for a list of the questions by participant group). All facilitators for the youth, parent, and community-based organization groups were drawn from the community, and all focus groups with agencies/entities were conducted by CSLA project staff. Prior to conducting the groups, all participants were assured that all focus group data would be confidential. Focus group transcriptions were analyzed to identify themes and patterns.

Although the focus groups reported in Table 1.1 represent a wide variety of perspectives in the GRYD, the authors of this report acknowledge that everyone’s voice in the GRYD could not be included. Due to time constraints placed on this study (two months), we were limited in the number of focus groups we could conduct and the number of people we could reach. Given more time, additional focus groups would have been held in an attempt to connect with more community groups and government agencies such as Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs, Health Services, and California Department of Corrections—Department of Juvenile Justice.

Strengths and Limitations

Given the short timeframe allotted for this study (2 months), we are especially pleased with the amount and quality of data collected. In total, the viewpoints of 736 respondents were collected across the entire GRYD. Such a strong response is a testament to the dedication of community residents, community leaders, and agency personnel who willingly reached out to facilitate the process of data collection to ensure that the information we received was a valid reflection of community opinion and needs. The use of standardized community surveys and focus group guidelines assisted in this regard. However, our study does have some methodological limitations imposed largely by the tight timelines. As mentioned earlier, we utilized convenience sampling in the community (as random sampling was not possible), and not all voices in the three neighborhoods that comprise the large and diverse Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD could be studied within the timeframe. Nonetheless, the consistent pattern of results across data collection methods arguably reflects the validity of the data to reflect the experiences and concerns of residents as well as individuals who provide services in the area.

Chapter Two: Community History and Profile

The Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD is a 4.1 square mile sub-area located within the LAPD's Hollenbeck Division (see Figure 2.1)⁴. The Hollenbeck Division covers 15 square miles east of downtown Los Angeles and is home to over 30 gangs and over 6000 documented gang members. This area is primarily a Latino community, nearly a third of its 194,000 residents live in poverty, and unemployment is twice the national rate. Several hundred gang-related crimes take place in the area each year and gang-related homicides occur all too frequently.

Although this GRYD Zone is referred to as Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck, portions of two additional areas, El Sereno and Lincoln Heights, are part of this zone.⁵ Each of these areas is distinct from one another with different histories and gang problems. To better understand these areas, each one is briefly described below.

The Ramona Gardens area is predominantly a Latino community and is known for its colorful murals prepared by area artists. The Ramona Gardens community is structurally disadvantaged with high unemployment rates and poverty levels as well as violent and gang-related crime. Gang violence in Ramona Gardens is common and the cycle of gang violence has repeated itself for several years. Gangs and gang activity in the area can be traced back to the 1930's. The Ramona Gardens housing projects are among the oldest in Los Angeles dating back to the early 1940s. These housing projects are home to an indigenous three generations-old gang, Big Hazard, which has just under 300 members and has connections to the Mexican Mafia. Shootings, drug dealing, and shakedown schemes are among the many gang-crime related activities that occur in the area according to LAPD, and police officers indicate that they are frequently targeted by the Big Hazard gang. Ramona Gardens housing is described by police officials as secluded and difficult to patrol, which makes gang control very challenging. The Big Hazard gang is noted for terrorizing the local community and insisting that residents refrain from calling for police service and rely on the gang to police local conflicts and problems. The LAPD currently enforces a gang injunction in this area, which results in an average of about 20 arrests for month. Of these arrests, the LAPD estimates that 10 to 12 of the arrests are for violent crimes.

El Sereno sits at the top of Monterey Hills and is surrounded by South Pasadena, Alhambra, University Hills, City Terrace, Boyle Heights and Lincoln Heights. El Sereno was founded in 1905 as a working class community during the construction of the Pacific Electric Railway. As the area gentrified, and by the 1970s, most non-Latino residents had left the area to live in newer residential developments. The area transformed into a residential area of lower income, predominantly Latino families. The evolution of gangs in El Sereno more or less coincided with the general evolution of gangs in the Los Angeles area. In recent times, this low income area has become a significant source of gang recruits. This area is dominated by one large gang, El Sereno, so inter-gang rivalry within the area is limited. Historically, the Lowell clique, which is an offshoot

⁴ The figures and tables referred to in Chapter 2 are listed in Appendix A; they are not depicted in text.

⁵ The demographic profile presented in this chapter applies to the Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD as defined on attached maps based on LAPD's reporting districts. Specific neighborhood differences between El Sereno, Lincoln Heights, and Ramona Gardens are difficult to distinguish because the GRYD demographic profile encompasses only a portion of Lincoln Heights and a portion of El Sereno—not the entire neighborhoods. Neighborhood differences, however, will be distinguished in the results presented for the community survey and focus groups in Chapter 3.

of El Sereno, has been in conflict with the larger gang, but currently it is not much of a force due to its small size.

The development of Lincoln Heights dates back to the 1870s; adjacent to the Los Angeles River, it is in the same area as El Sereno, City Terrace, Boyle Heights, Chinatown, Solano Canyon and Cypress Park. Lincoln Heights was originally home to some of the wealthiest residents in Los Angeles who built numerous Victorian style mansions, some of which are preserved as historic sites. At the turn of the 20th Century, North Broadway, one of the district's major streets became a busy commercial and industrial area of development, and the influx of crowds and industry associated with this development resulted in the wealthy residents leaving the area. As a result the demographic character of the area changed and it became a residential area for Mexican American and Italian middle and working class families. Migration to the suburbs accelerated after World War II with freeway construction, and today the majority of residents in Lincoln Heights is low income and Latino. The population of Lincoln Heights is approximately 80,000 and about 80 percent of the residents are Latino, 17 percent are Asian and the remaining 3 percent are split between African Americans and Anglos. As Lincoln Heights became more and more economically and socially disadvantaged it provided an environment that fostered the development of gangs and intense gang activity and violence. Street gangs are notorious in Lincoln Heights and the principal gangs in the area include the 165 member Clover gang, the 117 member Lincoln Heights gang, and the 89 member East Lake gang. Conflict and inter-gang violence among these gangs is described by police officials as being a constant feature of gang activity in Lincoln Heights since all three gangs claim the same turf/territory. In several instances rival gang members live on each other's block and even cases of intermarriage between gangs is reported. Similar to other Los Angeles gangs in Hollenbeck, the gangs of Lincoln Heights engage in drug sales as well as property and violent crime.

Demographics

Total Population. In 2007, the Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD had a total population of just over 42,000 residents concentrated in an area of 4.1 square miles. Population density is distributed unevenly throughout the zone, but there are several high density areas with up to 3,859 residents living in one census block group, while others have as few as 230 residents (see Figure 2.2).

Race and Ethnicity. Latinos account for nearly 80 percent of the residents in the GRYD (see Table 2.1 and Figures 2.3, 2.4). The concentration of Latinos is substantially greater than for the City of Los Angeles (80% versus 50% respectively) and for Los Angeles County (80% versus 47% respectively). Asians and Asian Americans are also concentrated in the zone, making up approximately 15 percent of the population. This compares to only 10 percent for the City of Los Angeles and 13 percent for Los Angeles County.

Gender and Age. About 49 percent of the residents in the GRYD are males and 51 percent are females (see Table 2.2 and Figure 2.5). Although the distribution of youth and adults is relatively equal, there are two concentrations of age groups that should be noted: approximately 37 percent of the population is 19 years old or less, and about 14 percent are between the ages of 20 and 29. This means that there is a substantial proportion of the population (about 51 %) that is in a gang-prone/crime-prone age group. As Figure 2.6 demonstrates, the distribution of young residents in the Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD is uneven with some census block groups having concentrations of residents under age 18 as high as 81 percent.

Household and Family Characteristics. Household income in the Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD is lower than that of the overall Los Angeles metropolis. This is especially evident when the lowest income categories are considered and compared to the City of Los Angeles and to Los Angeles County. Nearly a fourth (23%) of the households in the GRYD had incomes of less than \$15,000 in 2007. This compares to 18 percent for the City of Los Angeles and 14 percent for Los Angeles County (see Table 2.3 and Figure 2.7). Median household income in the GRYD in 2007 was \$29,730, which is about 52 percent of the average household income for Los Angeles County, a percentage that has changed only slightly since 1990 (see Table 2.4). Interestingly, the sources or types of household income in the Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD are not much different than those for the City of Los Angeles or Los Angeles County. For example, 79 percent of household income in the zone is from wages, which compares to 73 percent for the City of Los Angeles and 75 percent for Los Angeles County. Household income sources such as supplemental security income or public assistance are also about the same (see Table 2.5).

The Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD is characterized by relatively high rates of unemployment as are the areas surrounding the Zone. The unemployment rate for residents over age 16 in a large portion of the GRYD Zone was 13 percent or greater, with some areas having unemployment rates as high as 22 percent (see Figure 2.8).

As would be expected, given the low levels of household income and the high unemployment rate, the Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD has a substantial number of families categorized as living in poverty. Overall, in 2007 2,173 or 25 percent of all Zone families were living in poverty, and in at least one census block group, 68 percent of all families were in this category (see Figure 2.9).

The Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD also has a high number and percentage of households headed by a single parent. Overall, 17 percent of the households were headed by a single parent. Between 6 percent and 35 percent of households were headed by a single parent, depending on the census block group. As Figure 2.10 shows, most of the census block groups in the Zone had over 6% of their households headed by a single parent.

Educational Attainment, Academic Performance, School Attendance and High Risk Youth.

Educational attainment in the Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD is less than in the overall City of Los Angeles or Los Angeles County in several educational attainment categories (see Table 2.6 and Figure 2.11). In terms of the percentage of residents 25 years or older, the Zone has about twice as many residents (39% versus 19% and 17% respectively) with less than a 9th grade education than the City of Los Angeles or Los Angeles County, and it has about the same percentage of residents (17% versus 17% and 19% respectively) who have earned a high school diploma or equivalent. Fewer Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD residents have some college (11% versus 18 % for the City of Los Angeles and 20% for Los Angeles County), and the percentage of residents with a baccalaureate degree is lower (4 % versus 16% and 16% respectively). The fact that nearly 40 percent of adults 25 years and older have less than a 9th grade education poses an extraordinary challenge for addressing the structural problems in the community related to unemployment, poverty, and gangs. It should be noted that several census block groups outside the Zone but within a one-mile radius of the zone had similar concentrations of adults without high school diplomas (See Figure 2.12).

Academic Performance Index (API) scores for schools (or school boundaries) within the Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD show considerable variability across schools. The API scores for elementary

schools range from a low of 659 (Murchison Elementary) to a high of 779 (Multnomah Elementary). The API scores for middle schools range from 589 for Hollenbeck Middle School to 627 for Nightingale Middle School. The range of scores for high schools was a low of 557 for Roosevelt High and a high of 593 for Lincoln High (see Table 2.7).

Elementary school attendance rates are fairly high and vary only slightly from one school to the next: they range from a low of 94.8 percent to a high of 96.8 percent (see Tables 2.8 and 2.9). The attendance rates for middle schools are quite high and range from 94.8 percent to 96.3 percent. For high schools the scores range from a low of 88.0 percent to a high of 91.1.

The Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD has a significant number of foster youth within LAUSD elementary school boundaries (see Figure 2.13), with the greatest number (n=16) located within the Sheridan St. Elementary School boundary. The boundaries for the middle schools also have significant numbers of foster youth with 30 residing within the Hollenbeck Middle School boundary, 24 within the El Sereno Middle School boundary, and 19 within the Nightingale Middle School boundary (see Figure 2.14).

Each of the middle schools has a small number (2 to 4) of youth on probation, but that number increases substantially, when Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD high school attendance boundaries are examined (see Figures 2.15 and 2.16). In 2006, there were 42 youth on probation within the Roosevelt High School attendance boundary, 33 within the Lincoln High School boundary, and 24 within the Wilson High School attendance boundary.

Crime Patterns

Violent Crime. The Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD experienced a substantial number (297) of violent crimes in 2007 (see Figure 2.17 and Table 2.10). Violent crime occurred in nearly all census block groups with the range running from a low of 2 violent crimes to a high of 22 violent crimes in a single census block group, with the average number of violent crimes in a census block group being 11. Nine homicides occurred in 2007 in four census tracts in the Zone (see Figure 2.18) Although there were a substantial number of violent crimes, it is important to note that there was a substantial 16 percent decrease in violent crimes in 2007 compared to 2006. As Table 2.11 (see also Figure 2.19) indicates, the biggest decrease in violent crime was in the midnight to 7:59 p.m. time period, with a much smaller decrease in the 8:00 a.m. to 3:59 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. to midnight time periods.

Property Crime. Property crime was prevalent in the Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD in 2007. Overall, there were 913 property crimes or an average of 30 property crimes per census block group. The range of property crime for census block groups was a low of 9 property crimes and a high a 102 property crimes (see Figure 2.20 and Table 2.10). Although property crimes occurred in every census block group, high numbers of property crimes could be found concentrated in several different block groups throughout the Zone. Property crime continued to decrease in 2007 by 19 percent over 2006 levels, and was 27 percent lower than 2005 levels. Figure 2.21 provides trend lines for both property and violent crime in the Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD.

Gang-Related Crime. In 2007, the Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD experienced 319 gang-related crimes (see Figure 2.22). The range of gang-related crimes among the census block groups in the Zone was from 1 gang-related crime to 41 gang-related crimes, with an average of five such crimes per census

block group. The number of violent gang-related crimes in 2007 was 133 and they tended to occur in the same census block groups as non-violent gang-related crime (see Figure 2.23). The maximum number of violent gang-related crimes in any census block group was 13, and in some census block groups there were no violent gang-related crimes. Figure 2.24 depicts the geographic distribution of violent gang-related crimes and their proximity to parks and schools.

As the figure demonstrates, nearly every school in the Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD is located in a census block group with at least some violent gang-related crime, and several schools are in areas with the highest concentrations of violent gang-related crime. Figure 2.24 also shows that all of the public parks in the GRYD are adjacent to census block groups with some of the highest concentrations of violent gang-related crimes.

Crime Victims. Property-crime victimization has decreased substantially for several age groups when victimizations for 2007 are compared to those in 2006. The overall decrease is 25 percent, and the magnitude of the decrease ranges from a low of a 4 percent decrease for the under 18 age group to a high of a 38 percent decrease for the 18 to 24 age group. The pattern of change for violent crime is somewhat different (see Table 2.12 and Figures 2.25 and 2.26). Violent victimization of those less than 18 years old decreased by 7 percent over the past year and by 15 % for those in the 18-24 age group. The decrease in violent victimizations was especially substantial for those in the 35-44 age group (-37%) and in the 45 and older age group (-27%).

The number of homicide victims is relatively small and therefore percentage changes are not very meaningful (see Table 2.13 and Figures 2.27 and 2.28). However, with regard to gang-crime victimization, there were several meaningful changes between 2006 and 2007. Gang-crime victimizations increased by 3 percent for those in the 18 to 24 age group, but decreased for those in each of the other age categories. These decreases were 17 percent for those in the 18 to 24 age group, 10 percent for the 25 to 34 age group, 21 percent for the 35 to 44 age group, and by 34 percent for those in the 45 years and older age group.

Summary

The Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD has all of the structural conditions associated with the establishment and maintenance of gangs and related crime. This GRYD has a substantial proportion of residents in gang-prone and crime-prone age groups, which constitutes a sizable potential supply of gang members. The Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD encompasses a seriously disadvantaged community with high levels of unemployment and with a substantial number of households living in poverty. This area also has substantial numbers of at-risk and high-risk youth living within its boundaries, including those in single parent families as well as foster youth and probation youth. Education levels in the GRYD are below those in the overall City of Los Angeles or Los Angeles County, and raising levels of educational achievement will be an important challenge for the community.

Although crime levels remain unacceptably high In the Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD, there have been impressive decreases in both violent and property crimes in recent years. Identifying and analyzing those factors associated with current decreases should be a top priority for criminal justice officials and community leaders. Such identification and analysis should play a central role in informing the development of gang reduction strategies for the GRYD. Ultimately, long-term success in reducing gangs and gang

violence will require addressing the community's structural conditions problems that constitute the root causes contributing to the community's gang problem. The focus on youth development is critical, but it needs to take place within the context of community development, which includes efforts to reduce poverty by increased levels of educational attainment and employment.

Chapter Three: Community Strengths & Needs Reported

Community Strengths and Needs

The socio-demographic and crime profile of the Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD portrays an area plagued by many economic and social structural disadvantages. Given such a profile, one might expect residents to be bleak in their view of the community and its potential; however, results from the community survey indicate that residents readily identify strengths within their neighborhoods and are often optimistic about the possibility of improving the well-being and safety of those neighborhoods. In Ramona Gardens, for instance, residents do not conceptualize their community as primarily dangerous and crime-ridden, rather, they frequently identify human and physical capital in their community which begs for development.

To explore the perception of community strengths, residents were asked what they considered to be the best things about their respective neighborhoods (Table 3.1). Common strengths among all three neighborhoods were local schools and school-related services. El Sereno and Lincoln Heights residents typically did not identify a particular school. Residents in Ramona Gardens, however, often mentioned the Murchison Street Elementary School by name or specifically cited the Murchison Family Center, a school-based program offering support services to students as well as their parents. Residents in each neighborhood also felt available local services were among the best features of their respective communities. This category encompassed a range of businesses providing useful services, including daycare, dry cleaners, banks, gyms, and gas stations. For El Sereno and Lincoln Heights residents, laundromats and their public library branches were among the most cited services.

Table 3.1 Top 5 Strengths for Neighborhoods in Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD

El Sereno (N=469)	% of Total	Lincoln Heights (N=361)	% of Total	Ramona Gardens (N=381)	% of Total
Schools	17.9	Environment	13.7	Schools	23.2
Shops	14.7	Shops	12.3	Churches	17.0
Local Services	11.7	Schools	10.5	Community Members	12.5
Health Services	10.0	Local Services	9.4	Environment	10.0
Community Members	9.2	Recreational Services/Facilities	9.4	Local Services	8.5

NOTE: All three strengths from respondents were combined to determine the top cited strengths for the community; hence, the N size represents number of responses rather than number of respondents.

In addition to Schools and Local Services, El Sereno residents also ranked Health Services, notably clinics offering residents low-cost or free services, highly. Residents felt members of their community represented another area of strength, particularly their neighbors. They also cited willingness to get involved and work together in order to address common problems as positive characteristics of their fellow community members.

As shown in Table 3.1, residents in Lincoln Heights felt physical features of their environment were among their neighborhood's top strengths. Lincoln Park, which features a recreational center as well as such facilities as tennis courts, a soccer field, a baseball diamond, and a skate park, was frequently noted. Residents also cited the cleanliness of their community. The abundance of local shops and markets was considered an equally valuable asset. Apart from schools and local services, residents also cited certain

government services and facilities within their community, such as Woman, Infants, and Children (WIC) and Welfare.

As previously noted, Ramona Garden residents felt one of their community’s strongest assets was the Murchison Street Elementary School. Likewise, residents frequently cited local churches as positive influences within their neighborhood. Community members were also viewed as a strength in that neighbors and families were perceived to have close ties, to share an interest in the community, and to share a willingness to get involved. Some residents noted physical features of their community as a source of pride such as its murals; most residents, however, referred to Hazard Park which features handball and tennis courts, multi-purpose sports field, jogging path, and a play area for children.

In addition to the community survey question related to strengths, youth were asked to identify the strengths of their communities when they participated in youth summits. The most dominant theme from these responses, regardless of location, was access to activities and local businesses. Local parks were clearly considered a center of activity, most notably park recreation centers and park-sponsored sports programs. Youth also counted the close ties and support of family and friends as strengths, including the ability of the community to work together. To a lesser extent, youth cited schools and churches as other areas of perceived neighborhood strengths.

Within the community survey, residents were asked identify what their neighborhood needed to better support its young children and youth. Responses were tabulated across more than two dozen domains; the top five answers for each neighborhood are presented in Table 3.2 The results across the three neighborhoods are more similar than different. Lincoln Heights and Ramona Gardens shared four of the top five concerns, whereas El Sereno voiced more safety-related needs. Specifically, while Lincoln Heights and Ramona Gardens focused on youth education and programs, job assistance, and local services, El Sereno residents were more interested in higher levels of youth supervision, drug and gang prevention programs, increased police presence and enforcement, and improved school safety.

Table 3.2 Top 5 Community Needs to Better Support its Children and Youth

El Sereno (N=471)	% of Total	Lincoln Heights (N=305)	% of Total	Ramona Gardens (N=363)	% of Total
Vigilance/Supervision	16.7	Youth Programs/Activities	18.3	Youth Programs/Activities	23.4
Youth Programs/Activities	14.3	Job Assistance	14.3	Job Assistance	16.8
Drug/Gang Prevention	10.3	Youth Education	11.0	Police Services	8.9
School Safety	10.1	Local Services	7.6	Local Services	6.6
Police Presence/Enforcement	8.5	Drug/Gang Prevention	5.5	Youth Education	6.1

NOTE: All three strengths from respondents were combined to determine the top cited strengths for the community; hence, the N size represents number of responses rather than number of respondents.

A starting point for building an effective comprehensive response system to gang involvement and gang crime is recognizing and understanding how the community positively views itself. By taking an assets-based approach to solving problems, communities focus on building resilience while at the same time reducing risks, thereby building hope, attachment, and efficacy among community residents and the agencies/entities that provide services within the community. Ironically, some of the strengths identified were ultimately identified as areas of improvement for the community. At first, this may seem contradictory, but to the contrary, such results, we believe, indicate the extent to which a community understands itself.

The true irony is that communities faced with extreme disadvantage and the constant pull of social problems may know itself better and therefore hold more potential than communities that do not face such adversity. In the end, no one thing is all good or all bad. Rather, everything offers opportunity.

Community Survey and Focus Group Results

The original plan for reporting survey and focus group results for the Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD was to separate the results and find commonalities at the end of each section; however, in preparing the results from both data collection methods, the themes were so similar that the report format was changed. Rather than separating the results by data collection method, this section integrates the results of both methods across the common themes that surfaced in analysis. Specifically, the thematic domains that guide this section are *Safety*, *Community Investment*, and *Access to/Need for Services*.

Safety

The theme of Safety captures residents’ concerns for physical safety. In particular, results indicated the need to (1) clean up and improve the physical features of the community such as graffiti removal, adding stop signs, lighting, and cleaning streets; (2) provide more security and safety in their neighborhood (i.e., on the streets and in the parks) by increasing resident vigilant supervision and police presence/enforcement; and (3) increase school safety, which includes safe passage for students to and from school as well as safety once students are on school grounds.

Personal safety was a common concern across community survey respondents. As might be expected, most residents reported feeling much safer in their neighborhoods during the day as opposed to the night (Table 3.3). This was true of residents in both El Sereno and Ramona Gardens, where fewer than one out of five felt unsafe during the daytime. Interestingly, residents surveyed in Lincoln Heights were different--approximately half were equally likely to feel unsafe during the day as during the nighttime. Nonetheless, despite reporting similar rates of concern about safety during the day as night, Lincoln Heights residents also reported the lowest rate of fear preventing them from doing things outside the home (just over a third reported fear prevented them from engaging in activities). Overall, residents of Ramona Gardens reported feeling the most secure and safe during both day and nighttime. El Sereno residents reported the greatest safety concerns at night (57% reporting feeling unsafe or very unsafe).

Table 3.3 Fear of Crime
Percentage of Respondents Reporting Feeling “Unsafe” or “Very Unsafe” in Their Neighborhoods

	El Sereno (N=181)		Lincoln Heights (N=123)		Ramona Gardens (N=148)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Feel Unsafe or Very Unsafe at Night	103	57	57	46	52	36
Feel Unsafe or Very Unsafe at Day *	33	18	58	47	20	14
Fear Prevents me from doing things	99	54	48	38	82	55

NOTE: The range for these variables was 1 to 5 and 1 to 4. For simplicity, only the results for the “Unsafe” and “Very Unsafe” categories are reported. Means were computed for each variable using all response categories and compared for statistical significant using analysis of variance procedures.

*Overall mean differences across neighborhoods were statistically significant at p<.05.

A range of activities was perceived to be a problem in communities surveyed (Table 3.4). A majority of residents (i.e., more than half of respondents) in all three neighborhoods reported their chief concerns as graffiti, drug sales, drug use, and intimidation by gang members. With only two exceptions (intimidation by gang members and police harassment), El Sereno rated these problems the highest followed by Lincoln Heights, and Ramona Gardens. Overall, approximately three quarters or more of El Sereno respondents cited graffiti, drug sales, and drug use as “often or always” a problem and more than one half of respondents reported gang activity and general crime as similar problems. Lincoln Heights and Ramona Gardens also reported these issues as “often or always” a problem but to a lesser extent. For instance, slightly less than half of the respondents in these two areas identified gang activity and general crime in this way.

The neighborhoods did not significantly differ with regard to intimidation by gang members, but differences in the ratings are still worth mentioning. Intimidation was reported to be more of a problem in Lincoln Heights (60%) compared to (54%) in El Sereno and only (46%) in Ramona Gardens. This finding parallels the results from the focus groups. Gang activity and intimidation was noted by parents and youth in all three neighborhoods, but it was viewed as more of a problem by parents and youth in El Sereno and Lincoln Heights than in Ramona Gardens.

Table 3.4 Problems Facing the Community
Percentage of Respondents Reporting Activity as “Often a Problem” or “Always a Problem”

	El Sereno (N=181)		Lincoln Heights (N=123)		Ramona Gardens (N=148)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Graffiti *	144	81	90	73	91	62
Drug Use *	128	77	78	64	73	54
Drug Sales *	125	72	80	67	84	58
Gang Activity *	100	55	55	44	64	44
Intimidation by Gang Members	93	54	70	60	62	46
Crime *	99	54	52	42	65	43
Police Harassment *	68	38	65	55	93	63

NOTE: The range for these variables was 1 to 5. For simplicity, only the results for the “Often a Problem” and “Always a Problem” are reported. Means were computed for each variable using all response categories and compared for statistical significant using analysis of variance procedures.

*Overall mean differences across neighborhoods were statistically significant at $p < .05$.

The presence of crime related problems underscores the need for more enforcement. This message was particularly delivered by residents in El Sereno. But the role of law enforcement is complicated by perceptions and/or experiences with police harassment. According to the results in Table 3.4, police harassment was less likely to be reported as “often or always” a problem by El Sereno respondents and most often reported by Ramona Gardens respondents. This finding is not necessarily surprising. The results for El Sereno consistently indicate that respondents feel their area is under-policed; if there are less police present, police harassment is arguably less likely to occur. Ramona Gardens, in contrast, is the primary target area for the LAPD’s CLEAR gang suppression program and has received considerable attention in the past few months as well as historically, creating the conditions for more harassment or perceptions of more harassment to potentially occur. A complaint often heard in adults and youth, particularly in Ramona Gardens, was the quality of police service in their communities. Participants were especially concerned with what they considered to be overly aggressive tactics (e.g. intimidation, brutality) and a lack of respect when dealing with youth. Adults perceived police as sharing responsibility for youth

becoming involved in gangs as a result of resentment and mistrust among youth fostered by negative encounters.

A second dynamic that impacts law enforcement’s ability to create safe environments is residents’ fear of retaliation. Fear of retaliation for reporting gang activity was also considered by adult focus group participants as both an obstacle to working with police and source for further mistrust of police. According to these participants, police often fail to protect the confidentiality of residents who report crimes and gang activity; thus, residents who report to the police are placed in danger from the local gangs. Focus group results from agencies also noted the limitations of police protection: Residents fear retaliation and are often intimidated by gangs, preventing them from more fully cooperating with police. Despite such problems related to police-community relations, there was general consensus that these respondents desired better relationships with the police, particularly for youth and cited the need for increased police-community meetings and cooperation and the need for better overall services provided by the police.

The challenges inherent to police-community partnerships in these areas were not lost from the perspective of law enforcement and other government agencies. Both police and other service providers cited the need for improved police-community relations and communication in the Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD. Law enforcement, in particular, cited the difficult history between the LAPD and Ramona Gardens and recognized the need to improve relationships in the community. In an attempt to do so, the CLEAR program currently holds a monthly informational meeting at the recreation center in Ramona Gardens to exchange information and concerns with residents. At one of these meetings, residents expressed frustration at limited attention on suppression without equal attention to prevention and intervention. Thus, it is critical that the comprehensive approach be developed in that area.

The concerns expressed above are reinforced by community survey findings related to the effectiveness of the police, CLEAR, gang injunctions, and elected officials (Table 3.5). Overall, most respondents were largely dissatisfied with all attempts to combat gang activity and crime. Especially singled out were elected officials with approximately three-quarters of Lincoln Heights and Ramona Gardens residents indicating they were “somewhat” or “very” dissatisfied. Adult focus group respondents as well as agency representatives expressed a sense of disillusionment with local officials, citing a pattern of unfulfilled promises made to the community. In general, residents indicated a desire for greater community involvement on the part of elected officials, greater accountability for them, and more funding for local programs and services to address the problems related to gang crime. Consistent with earlier results, El Sereno respondents took the most moderate stance with just under half of all respondents indicating dissatisfaction with all four categories equally.

Table 3.5 Effectiveness of Responses to Gang Crime
Percentage of Respondents Reporting “Somewhat Dissatisfied” or “Very Dissatisfied”

	El Sereno (N=181)		Lincoln Heights (N=123)		Ramona Gardens (N=148)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Police *	84	46	70	56	101	68
CLEAR *	84	47	80	64	102	68
Gang Injunctions *	84	47	76	62	97	65
Elected Officials *	80	45	91	73	114	76

NOTE: The range for these variables was 1 to 5. For simplicity, only the results for the “Somewhat Dissatisfied” and “Very Dissatisfied” are reported. Means were computed for each variable using all response categories and compared for statistical significant using analysis of variance procedures.

*Overall mean differences across neighborhoods were statistically significant at $p < .05$.

In addition to neighborhood safety, safety in local schools was also expressed as pressing concern in focus group discussions. According to adult, school, and service providers, youth routinely face intimidation and physical attacks by gang members inside school and on school grounds. Schools were generally not considered to provide adequate security or prevention to safeguard youth against such gang intimidation, and consequently, focus group participants felt youth did not attend school for fear of personal safety. Youth did not make mention of this particular issue, but peer pressure was commonly cited as a reason for youth joining gangs, and there was reference to gangs causing problems (e.g. graffiti) in school settings.

Taken together, the data depict common safety themes across all three neighborhoods; however, it also reveals important differences. As a general matter, all three neighborhoods are concerned with gang-related crime and community disorder; however, of the three, Ramona Gardens residents report more feelings of safety, less concern about gang-related crime and a more onerous police presence in their community. Not surprisingly, El Sereno, which reports higher levels of concern about crime, appears to be slightly more welcoming of police presence and enforcement efforts.

Community Investment

A second theme was residents’ desire for greater involvement by all stakeholders in the local community (Table 3.6) and improved community infrastructure to support programs, services, and activities in their neighborhoods. Their responses reflected an awareness that all invested parties must come together to increase neighborhood cohesion and build stronger networks.

The community survey asked respondents to rate the importance of various community stakeholders in strengthening the neighborhood (Table 3.6). Families and schools received the highest ratings by respondents in all neighborhoods. Just under half of all respondents in all three neighborhoods indicated that families and schools were “somewhat or very important” to improving the neighborhood. Between a quarter and a third of respondents felt police and religious organizations played an important role. For Ramona Gardens, though, respondents were more likely to identify religious organizations as important (49% compared to 20% and 26% for El Sereno and Lincoln Heights respectively). With the exception of El Sereno (14%), slightly more than a third of respondents rated recreations and parks as important to this process. Community leaders received the lowest ratings, with a quarter or less of respondents indicating them as “Somewhat Important” or “Very Important” to strengthening their neighborhoods.

**Table 3.6 Ratings for Importance in Strengthening the Neighborhood
Percentage Responding “Very Important” or “Extremely Important”**

	El Sereno (N=181)		Lincoln Heights (N=123)		Ramona Gardens (N=148)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Families	88	48	52	42	59	41
Schools	79	45	45	37	70	47
Police	53	29	43	35	37	25
Religious Organizations *	36	20	32	26	52	42
Recreations & Parks	26	14	48	39	58	39

Community Leaders	39	21	18	15	38	26
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NOTE: The range for these variables was 1 to 5. For simplicity, only the results for the “Somewhat Important” and “Very Important” are reported. Means were computed for each variable using all response categories and compared for statistical significant using analysis of variance procedures.

*Overall mean differences across neighborhoods were statistically significant at $p < .05$.

When asked who should be responsible for controlling problems related to gang crime (Table 3.7), respondents from across all three neighborhoods reported remarkably similar perceptions. Every community believed greater responsibility lay with families (as compared to police). However, nearly two-thirds of El Sereno respondents indicated that families bore the greatest responsibility (65%), as compared to Lincoln Heights (48%) and Ramona Gardens (58%). For all other entities, respondents attributed equal levels of responsibility to: Community leaders (22-33%), elected officials (39-44%), schools (42-52%), and police (43-50%).

**Table 3.7 Level of Responsibility in Controlling Gang Problems
Percentage Reporting “Very Responsible” and “Extremely Responsible”**

	El Sereno (N=181)		Lincoln Heights (N=123)		Ramona Gardens (N=148)	
	n	%	n	%	N	%
Families *	118	65	60	48	85	58
Community Leaders	60	33	28	22	46	32
Elected Officials	72	39	54	44	64	43
Schools	94	52	52	42	65	44
Police	93	50	72	44	78	43

NOTE: The range for these variables was 1 to 5. For simplicity, only the results for the “Very Responsible” and “Extremely Responsible” are reported. Means were computed for each variable using all response categories and compared for statistical significant using analysis of variance procedures.

*Overall mean differences across neighborhoods were statistically significant at $p < .05$.

The overall trend regarding residents’ perceptions of effectiveness in improving neighborhood safety is not promising (Table 3.8). Across the board, few entities were rated as highly effective. In fact, with the exception of families, only schools garnered more than 20% of respondents’ strong endorsement. Specifically, both Ramona Gardens and El Sereno had nearly a third of respondents indicating that schools were very effective in improving the safety of the neighborhood. However, it is unclear exactly how residents believe schools increase safety; this may simply be a measure of residents’ perception of schools as a safer environment relative to other public spaces in the neighborhood. Of greater significance is the category of families; nearly four out of ten El Sereno residents thought families were highly effective in improving neighborhood safety. By comparison, only 23% of Lincoln Heights residents and 27% of Ramona Gardens respondents believed families to be highly effective in improving neighborhood safety.

**Table 3.8 Effectiveness of Stakeholders Responsible for Improving Safety
of the Neighborhood-- Respondents Reporting “Very Effective” or “Extremely Effective”**

	El Sereno (N=181)		Lincoln Heights (N=123)		Ramona Gardens (N=148)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Families	71	39	29	23	41	27
Community Leaders *	23	12	11	9	25	17
Elected Officials	5	3	8	6	9	6
Schools *	54	30	25	20	45	30

Police	28	15	16	13	23	16
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NOTE: The range for these variables was 1 to 5. For simplicity, only the results for the “Very Effective” and “Extremely Effective” are reported. Means were computed for each variable using all response categories and compared for statistical significant using analysis of variance procedures.

*Overall mean differences across neighborhoods were statistically significant at $p < .05$.

Noteworthy is the relationship between perceived responsibility for addressing problems, and reported effectiveness of the same entities. For example, although El Sereno places the burden of responsibility largely on the shoulders of family members, the same neighborhood respondents indicate an effectiveness rate for families of only 39%. Similarly, Ramona Gardens and Lincoln Heights residents had approximately half of respondents indicating family responsibility; yet in these two neighborhoods, only about one quarter of respondents endorsed the effectiveness of family in improving safety conditions.

These findings parallel those from the focus groups. All focus group participants in the three GRYD neighborhoods were united in a belief that the family was a primary contributing factor for youth participation in gangs and therefore a primary area for intervention. Families contributed in at least two ways. First and most often heard was the complaint that parents were not sufficiently involved in their children’s lives and failed to provide adequate supervision or suitable role modeling. Although a lack of parental interest was cited as a reason for this, more often respondents acknowledged that many parents were absent from their children’s lives due to the need to work multiple jobs and long hours. Problems within the family represented a second way in which families contributed to youth problems. Absent fathers, abuse/neglect, domestic violence, parental substance abuse and/or crime, and intergenerational gang involvement created home environments that were unable to provide supervision and appropriate socialization and nurturing for children. As one example, a meeting with the DCFS Community Partners Executive Meeting revealed that El Sereno was one of the highest referral and detention areas for child abuse/neglect. Children from these types of environments, in turn, were considered more vulnerable to the lure often offered by gangs. In some families, children were socialized into gang membership from an early age due to intergenerational gang involvement by parents or siblings. Thus, focus group participants unanimously voiced the need for more parental involvement and positive role models in the community, access to alternate activities, and mentoring.

Schools were generally seen as a place of opportunity by focus group participants, but unfortunately, several problems related to the school environment were viewed as barriers to fulfilling their role. Parent and agency/service provider focus group participants opined the limited use of school sites for programming and recreation for youth in the respective neighborhoods. Schools were viewed as a central, generally safe location for parents and youth to access services, but due to legal and logistical barriers, schools were generally underutilized in this way. Additionally, school environments for education were viewed with concern. Some participants in both the parent and youth focus groups felt that teachers and administrators were not fulfilling their potential as positive influences in the lives of their students and were not sufficiently meeting the needs of youth, particularly those at-risk for gang involvement. Social workers and probation officers commented on the difficulty for youth to receive an Independent Educational Plan from schools. This is compounded by reflections that many parents do not understand the educational rights of their children and as a result, do not hold schools accountable. Social workers and probation officers also indicated that schools are sometimes reluctant to work with their agencies to develop programming on campus; this, however, varied by school.

Focus group participants that represented schools and agencies providing services at schools noted the numerous pressures on school personnel to address a wide range of social problems, which ultimately competed with the time needed to educate students appropriately and expose them to alternate activities. For instance, school-based mental health counselors and social workers emphasized the prevalence of trauma and grief among students, beginning in elementary school and continuing into secondary education. Despite the high rates of trauma and grief among students, trauma services are few and limited to crisis situations. Meanwhile, participants believed that many of the children who go untreated perform poorly in the classroom and engage in problem behavior in the classroom as well as in the community.

Finally, there was recognition among focus group participants that a community infrastructure was necessary to support the types of programs and services recommended in the community. Transportation, for example, was cited as a major barrier to accessing programs and services currently available. Being outside at night and crossing gang turf boundaries posed serious safety concerns for many residents. Youth, in particular, were at risk for violence when they crossed into rival gang territories. Additionally, focus group participants from agencies that provide services stressed the fact that community services are currently fragmented and that there was a strong need for collaboration among agencies in order to centralize direct services for residents and connect services more effectively.

Access to Services

The third theme identified from community survey and focus group results was Access to Services. Study participants consistently expressed a need for better and more access to services at the local level. Specifically, respondents wanted more youth programs (i.e., structured activities, drug/gang prevention and intervention, educational support programs); more social services for adults (i.e., clinics/healthcare, counseling, job assistance, life skills training, and educational programming); and improved community infrastructure to support the availability of and participation in activities and programs (i.e., community facilities and parks, local government and business services, and transportation).

Without exception, all three communities indicated problems locating and accessing local resources. Specifically, a majority (70 – 86%) of all respondents reported great difficulty finding help with gang prevention and intervention programs, early intervention programs, finding a job, mentoring, and counseling (Table 3.9). The one area with significant differences between neighborhoods was in obtaining healthcare. Getting medical and/or dental care was reported to be a significant problem by 72% of Lincoln Heights respondents and 63% of Ramona Gardens residents, but was perceived to be a problem by only 46% of El Sereno community members.

Table 3.9 Ability to Access Services
Percentage of Respondents Reporting “No Help at All” or “Very Hard to Get Help”

	El Sereno (N=181)		Lincoln Heights (N=123)		Ramona Gardens (N=148)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Finding a Job	149	82	103	84	104	72
Gang Prevention Programs for Youth	148	82	97	78	126	86
Early Intervention for Young Children	148	82	92	74	110	77
Transportation	145	81	94	76	116	78
Mentoring	141	80	89	76	120	84
Youth Recreational Programs *	136	76	71	57	93	62

Family/Mental health/ Substance Abuse Counseling	135	75	87	70	116	79
Afterschool Programs	125	69	75	61	98	66
Getting Medical or Dental Care *	83	46	86	72	88	62

NOTE: The range for these variables was 1 to 5. For simplicity, only the results for the “No Help At All” and “Very Hard to Get Help” are reported. Means were computed for each variable using all response categories and compared for statistical significant using analysis of variance procedures. *Overall mean differences across neighborhoods were statistically significant at $p < .05$.

Consistent with the results for Community Investment, both the community survey and focus group results stressed the need for parenting classes to provide gang awareness education for parents and to facilitate better parent-youth relations. Focus groups with agency personnel made particular note of the need for more successful integration of immigrant families into the community, citing language barriers and lack of education/skills as preventing immigrant parents from securing proper employment and becoming fully involved in community life.

The need for parenting classes raised the issue of increasing participation in available classes, especially for families that are in need of the services but generally reluctant to participate in them. Agency personnel and service providers unanimously believed that incentives related to the basic needs of families must be used. Gift cards for food or providing food at class meetings were two examples of such incentives. Additionally, there must be outreach to families from within the community to encourage participation. For families with intergenerational gang involvement, it is critical that their experience not be stigmatized; rather, it was believed that both parents and youth would respond better if their experience was recognized and incorporated positively into intervention. For youth, incentives that connect them to alternative, interesting activities must be used. Many youth avoid programs because they consider them boring and uninteresting.

As indicated in Table 3.9, respondents felt access to prevention programming was limited. Focus group results provided insight into the types of programming desired by these communities. First, all focus group participants stressed the need to begin prevention efforts as early as possible, starting at the elementary school level, if not sooner, and continue those efforts into the middle school and high school. There was frustration expressed about targeting secondary education schools while leaving little or no programming in the elementary schools. The predominant view was that gang recruitment began heavily in the early years of middle school; thus, beginning prevention programming in middle schools and high schools does little to reduce the impact of gang intimidation. Similarly, problem behavior generally is more likely to begin at an early age and if identified, is easier to address at younger ages than at older ages. LAPD officers believed strongly that early prevention efforts not only helped youth avoid problems in the long run, but programs that involve the LAPD were more likely to establish a solid basis from which to improve and develop relationships between police and community youth.

Youth as well as parents, business owners, agency personnel, and service providers emphasized the need to provide alternative, structured activities that would provide all youth with a safe environment, a desirable way to engage in constructive activities, positive role models, and access to opportunities outside of the neighborhood. Such activities included, but were not necessarily limited to: Art programs, music and dance programs, athletic activity, entrepreneurial projects, and field trips to museums, concerts, and other areas such as the mountains and/or the beach. Focus group participants also felt there was a need for programs that would allow youth to develop skills, facilitate future careers, and cultivate leadership (e.g., motivational speakers). Parents and youth cited the need for more programs aimed at helping youth succeed academically (i.e., tutoring) and for programs designed to prepare or otherwise encourage youth to pursue

higher education. With regard to educational performance, school respondents recommended more vigilance on the part of police and courts in enforcing truancy violations and the need for more programs that assist youth and families in addressing school failure and poor attendance.

It was added by many participants that youth activities should be available consistently after-school, on holidays, and during the summer. Furthermore, participants believed that the cost for these programs should be more affordable or free, as the costs for many of the current programs available have fees that youth and parents in these communities cannot afford. Parents and youth also believed that there was a need for greater public awareness of available programs and encouraged future efforts to explore new, more effective, methods for disseminating information about available programs, services, and activities.

Finally, there was discussion among agency personnel and service providers, in particular, about the need for intervention programming and services (i.e., tattoo removal) for youth actively involved in gangs. Participants often acknowledged, however, how difficult it was to extricate youth from gangs once they were a member, leaving many to conclude that services should assist youth and families to relocate from the community in which the gang membership is rooted.

Community survey data as well as focus group data stressed the need for the improvement of social services in the three neighborhoods. Specifically, all focus group participants saw a need for more job assistance programs, vocational or training programs, and greater job opportunities. Access to computer classes and working computers with Internet access were often mentioned by parents and youth as resources that would increase the employability of both youth and adults as well as provide an alternative activity that would potentially improve the academic performance of youth and assist them in their pursuit of higher education.

Increasing access to mental health and substance abuse counseling for community residents was also highlighted as necessary in these communities. Mental health service providers and school personnel overwhelmingly believed that there was a need for trauma counseling for all residents, particularly young children and adolescents. In fact, these focus group participants felt that much of the problem behavior and risk for gang involvement was at least in part due to the inability of children and youth to constructively cope with traumatic events and the resulting grief that often permeated their lives. Additionally, there was general support for increasing the number of support groups to focus on self-esteem, expressing feelings, and talking about problems. Drug use was noted as a problem in these neighborhoods in all sources of data. Consequently, there was a general perception that access to appropriate substance abuse treatment was needed in these areas.

Although the re-entry of offenders into the community was not addressed directly in many focus groups, there was a general sense that all of the programming described above should be harmonized with offender re-entry efforts. Many parents as well as agency personnel were concerned that the prison culture was spilling out into the communities and becoming a lifestyle for older youth and young adults.

Consequently, concern was expressed for increasing offenders' ability to get job, increasing their positive connections to the community, and providing them with incentives not to return to prison. It was generally acknowledged that for many youth and young adults, the only effective method of reducing the

attractiveness of gang membership is to equip them with job skills that would secure their entrance into a law-abiding lifestyle.

Summary

Throughout the survey and focus group data, the overarching theme expressed by respondents was the need to strengthen families and, by doing so, begin to rebuild their neighborhoods. Without exception, respondents felt that a strong community starves local gang recruitment efforts by providing attractive options and opportunities for local youth and re-entering offenders. A strong social network centered on resources for parents, youth education and job assistance programs, substance abuse and counseling resources, and adult education programs were unanimously identified as the key to enhancing the cohesion of a community. In this way, a cooperative effort will bring together such diverse stakeholders as business owners, religious organizations, and social services—all united in a willingness to invest in the future of their community. Next, we turn to specific recommendations for accomplishing these goals.

Chapter Four: Building an Effective Community Response

Overall Reflections

The CSLA research team was responsible for conducting needs assessment reports for both Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck and Baldwin Village GRYD areas. In doing so, we received feedback from more than 1,142 individuals, collectively, in these areas. Although the areas are distinct and different in many ways, we were surprised to hear many of the same issues arise in the data and in our discussions. Thus, the reflections and recommendations that we have are largely similar for both areas. While the recommendations themselves are similar across areas, the implementation of those recommendations will be vastly different; hence our call for a community infrastructure to individualize strategies for program and service implementation. Before we review our recommendations, however, we felt it was important to summarize the general sentiments expressed by respondents during data collection, as we believe they provide substantial insight for the City as it begins to partner with these areas to build a comprehensive response system.

During the data collection process, for instance, a majority of the respondents in both areas expressed frustration with attempts to address gang problems regardless of who the respondents represented (i.e., residents as well as representatives of schools and other social service providers). Specifically, respondents felt that their areas were constantly the focus of needs assessments without corresponding follow-through for resources to support community change. This frustration was amplified by perceived political pendulum swings in which promises by different administrations went unfulfilled or were only temporary. As one respondent pointed out, “It seems like the programs that work are the first to lose funding.” These feelings of unstable commitment fueled skepticism and pessimistic views of current efforts to effect change in the neighborhoods. Despite such views, however, all respondents were supportive of their communities and wanted them to succeed. Consequently, they provided our research team with two important suggestions that would help overcome the disappointments of the past.

Perhaps the most significant suggestion from study participants is attention to the terminology used to describe efforts intended to help communities. There was a general consensus among respondents to view their communities in more positive ways. The terminology often associated with gang reduction efforts has historically highlighted the problem rather than the solution. For example, in the past, the term *gang reduction zone* was used to identify priority areas for intervention. Such terminology may make sense from a political standpoint (i.e., reflecting the need for more attention and resources), but unfortunately, such terminology often reinforces stereotypes related to the dangerousness and undesirability of a community—images that residents, particularly youth, must battle every day.

For any effort to be successful, it is critical to recognize that gangs are a symptom of the overall social problems that face youth and families in these areas. Thus, a more desirable use of terminology would be naming areas, for example, Youth and Family Empowerment Zones, which focuses attention on the overall solution that communities need to successfully overcome the daily hurdles that residents face. Use of solution-focused terminology places attention on building strong communities for youth and families so that social and economic pressures do not lead to gang membership.

A second suggestion heard from respondents in both areas encouraged City and County governments to move from funding models that reinforce, if not create, uncoordinated and uninformed responses within a community to a model that centers on a strategic and coordinated use of funds. Currently, funds are often distributed in communities for independent services (e.g., recreational activities) that are not connected or coordinated with other services. This method of funding then creates at least two problems. First and most importantly, it limits the potential impact of the services in the community because the services are delivered in an isolated way. It is not uncommon to hear that a program cannot get enough referrals; yet, the program was developed based on the needs of the community.

Secondly, this funding model has inspired, arguably, a culture of competitiveness among community-based organizations. This, in turn, amplifies political influence in the use of funds and sustains a culture in which there is more attention placed on who is receiving funds and the amount of funds received than on how funding can and should be used most effectively for a community. As demonstrated in many of the conversations held in this study, the consequence of this is a lack of collective hope in the community and an absence of trust in the government's ability to assist in the process of change.

We argue that the key to successfully building stronger communities in the identified GRYD areas is to generate hope within communities by building trust in cooperative relationships among community residents, businesses, schools, other service providers, City government and County government. While this may seem like an ambitious goal, we believe that it is far more tangible than one might expect. Advocacy in these GRYD areas is not new. There are multiple groups organized to address youth development as well as other social problems in these areas. In fact, the presence of advocacy in these areas is an asset to these communities. The problem, then, is not a lack of will or person-power to effect change; rather, it appears that a lack of coordination and sustainable funding across agencies, programs, and services undermines much of the potential found in these areas.

Building hope and trust in this way requires a shift in thinking about community involvement in the strategic planning and funding process. It is essential that communities come together to coordinate the efforts that exist in their areas and to build a strategic plan (using this needs assessment as a basis) that is used to guide City funding. By doing so, communities become empowered and responsible to establish an internal infrastructure to eliminate unnecessary competition, duplication, and fragmentation and to enhance their ability to use funds effectively and efficiently. The City, in turn, must work collaboratively with the communities and use community guidance to make funding decisions. As one respondent commented upon hearing this idea, "...you mean a 'trickle-up economics' rather than 'trickle-down economics.'" "Exactly" was our response.

To help the City contemplate such an approach, we first provide a detailed explanation of how this could work. The recommendation for infrastructure applies to both the Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck and Baldwin Village GRYD areas. Following the recommendation for building community infrastructure for youth development, we offer specific programming recommendations for Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck based on the results reviewed in Chapter 3.

Recommendations for Building Community Infrastructure

To build a community infrastructure, we recommend that the City require the GRYD areas to create a Community Cooperative for Youth and Family Empowerment. In the case of Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck, this would involve three Cooperatives, one for each community (El Sereno, Lincoln Heights, and Ramona Gardens). The composition of the Cooperative must include (at a minimum) (1) representatives from the neighborhood (i.e., parents and youth); (2) a representative from all collaborative groups that exist in the area; (3) Los Angeles Police Department; (4) representatives from organizations that represent community based organizations (including group homes, foster care agencies, etc.—profit and non-profit); (4) representatives from all schools serving the area; (5) a representative from the business community; (6) representatives from key City departments (e.g., Parks and Recreations, CDD, HUD); (7) representatives from county agencies such as DCFS, DMH, ADPA, and Health Services; and (8) a representative from landlord/management associations in the area. The Cooperative is not intended to replace any other group; rather, the expectation is that the Cooperative will serve as a “hub” for exchanging ideas and identifying how the community can build its resiliency to social problems it faces.

Specifically, the goals of the Cooperative are to produce a local infrastructure through which communities can (1) take ownership of the solutions to the problems that they face, (2) utilize their local resources more strategically and effectively, and (3) interface proactively with City and County governments to ensure that their needs are met and sustained over time. The guiding philosophy of the Cooperative’s efforts is based on an assets-based model in order to give the community a venue to clearly and strategically voice its needs to effect sustainable progress and change. Although the Cooperative takes leadership and ownership over this process, the City and County become partners in helping communities grow stronger. For instance, any funding the City intends to distribute to the community would be coordinated with the priorities identified by the Cooperative based on their strategic plan.

In the first year, the Cooperative would be required to accomplish the following objectives:

1. Identify all representatives for membership and become a working body
2. Review the GRYD Needs Assessment Report and begin the development of a strategic plan from the results
3. Produce an inventory of community assets and add it to the strategic plan
4. Produce a resource inventory of services available in the area by categorizing them according to the components of the Comprehensive Strategy—Primary Prevention, Secondary Prevention, Intervention, Suppression, and Reentry (Note: This is a collective effort in which each representative must provide a list of services provided by the body he/she represents)
5. Identify current gaps in the continuum of services and work to redefine assessment, programmatic, and service needs according to the needs of the community and increase their ability to accomplish these needs (e.g., see programmatic recommendations below)
6. Identify current areas of fragmentation, lack of communication, and any other barriers that prevent effective programming and partnerships across agencies and services within the community
7. Prioritize the needs of the community and offer strategies to accomplish needs
8. Identify key outcomes that must be measured by all funded services and programs

Upon completing these tasks, the Cooperative will have a working strategic plan that guides community activities and City funding into the future. The City, in turn, should structure its funds to align with the needs

of the community. Each year, the Cooperative will provide an annual report that summarizes progress related to the strategic plan and signs of success such as new partnerships, physical and social changes in the neighborhood, and any other outcomes identified by the Cooperative. Based on its progress, the Cooperative will update its plan based on its progress and continue to build interagency communication and coordination using existing resources. Ultimately, the Cooperative should strive to identify the use of Best Practices, Evidence-Based Programming, and Promising Programming.

To ensure the Cooperative's ability to accomplish these tasks, a staffing and support plan is necessary. We recommend that the Cooperative be lead collaboratively by a person elected by the Cooperative members and a university based "Cooperative Manager." Additionally, the GRYD Program Manager will be part of the Cooperative Management Team. The role of the elected Cooperative Leader is to motivate the group and guide its work through the tasks. The Cooperative Manager will work with the elected leader to navigate and accomplish Cooperative tasks. In other words, the Cooperative Manager would produce the products based on the Cooperative's work. Another key responsibility of the Cooperative Manager will be to assist in building partnerships across agencies, providers, and residents. The Cooperative Manager represents a unique person who has both the ability to conduct academic work in an applied context and the ability to build bridges across individuals and groups who can partner with one another to be more effective. Due to the nature of these tasks, we believe it is essential that the Cooperative Manager be viewed as a neutral entity and have access to academic resources; consequently, we strongly recommend that the GRYD office consider contracting with a local university to provide this person to GRYD Cooperative groups. In the case of Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck, one university-based Cooperative Manager would be sufficient for the three Cooperatives in the GRYD (i.e., El Sereno Cooperative, Lincoln Heights Cooperative, and Ramona Gardens Cooperative). Finally, the role of the GRYD Program Manager is to represent the City, ensure the participation of other City departments in the process, participate in the planning process, and assist the Cooperative in connecting to private foundations to augment the existing funds and promote sustainability.

In addition to funding for a university-based Cooperative Manger, each Cooperative should receive a nominal amount of funding to provide team-building training for Cooperative members at the beginning of the effort and to support the completion of tasks throughout the year.

Ultimately, it is our recommendation that a GRYD must have a Cooperative before any funds will be distributed to the area. Until the initial work of the Cooperative is completed, however, we recommend that funding be distributed in accordance with the programmatic recommendations contained in the GRYD Needs Assessment Reports and all contractors who receive funds in the first year be required to participate in and report progress to the Cooperative.

Once the Cooperative strategic plan and priorities are identified, we recommend that agencies seeking funding be required to demonstrate the following in their application: (1) how their services would meet the prioritized needs identified by the Youth Development Community Cooperative comprehensive plan; (2) how their services will be coordinated or partnered with other services in the area; (3) their ability to partner with agencies in the community; (4) their use of Best Practice and Evidence-Based Programming or Promising Programming; (5) their commitment to report on outcomes identified by the Cooperative; and (6) their commitment to regularly participate and report to the Cooperative on their progress.

Recommendations for Building a More Complete and Comprehensive Service Continuum

In thinking about specific recommendations for the Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck area, it seemed consistent with the recommendation for building a community strategic plan to organize our suggestions according to objectives born from the themes reviewed in Chapter 3. Hence, the following objectives are recommended based on experience in the GRYD areas and analysis of the data provided by residents and agencies/entities that provide services to the area. As mentioned above, the recommendations are largely similar across GRYD areas; however, the implementation of them requires very different strategies. It is our opinion that the community is in the best position to decide how these recommendations are accomplished through the development of a Cooperative.

Objective 1: Improve community safety

- Fund efforts to improve the physical environment and safety of public places. Law enforcement's role is typically viewed as suppression; however, there is a significant need to utilize police resources in a way that helps communities feel safer when in public places. This requires a different interaction with the community and could ultimately assist in the overall suppression efforts.
- Involve law enforcement in community efforts to problem solve and in doing so, build trust between police officers and community residents.
- Consider using a CLEAR unit in other areas besides Ramona Gardens. As indicated in the data, El Sereno residents would like to see increased suppression in their area.
- When using CLEAR in Ramona Gardens, work with community residents to build a relationship that is not built on adversarial ways of thinking. CLEAR will only reach its potential if suppression efforts can be balanced with interaction and services that reflect an understanding and respect of the community.
- Beautify and utilize community parks once the safety of those parks is assured.
- Establish youth centers that are easily accessible to youth and involve youth in the design of those youth centers.
- Implement methods to ensure safe passage for children and youth to and from school.
- Improve the safety of school environments by collaboratively working with law enforcement agencies such as the LAPD, Probation, and the Department of Juvenile Justice.
- Work with government agencies to improve quality of life issues in the community (e.g., Housing and Urban Development Authority).
- Engage landlords and land owners to participate in discussions of community safety and ask them to play a role in ensuring their properties are provided with sufficient security and are not "breeding grounds" for criminal activity.

Objective 2: Strengthen communities.

- Coordinate community activities and services to address gaps in services and to reduce fragmentation and duplication of services.
- Hold community activities that express the cultural identity of the community and build pride among its residents, particularly youth. In general, create a sense of hope among residents and for youth, provide an infrastructure that will help them achieve their goals.
- Offer parent education as early as possible in the parenting process and continue education throughout the developmental stages of childhood.

- Provide family intervention within the home and/or in places that families can readily access.
- Create incentives for participation that connect to the basic needs of these families (i.e., food, childcare, etc.).
- Using parent mentors from within the community. This model requires identifying parents who are resilient within the community and using them to peer mentor other parents in the neighborhood.
- Build upon and improve relationships between parents and schools.
 - Increase parent education and awareness of their children’s needs and educational rights and keep them informed of their child’s progress in the classroom.
 - Provide teachers and school staff with training on how to better engage parents, children and youth from these neighborhoods.
- Train agency personnel and provider staff to understand the community and incorporate the cultural experience of the community into their interactions with clients and into the programming clients are given.
- Use current community groups and/or develop groups that will engage residents and provide a way to effectively and efficiently disseminate information throughout the community.
- Reintegrate offenders returning to the community by providing them with jobs and building positive attachments for them on the community.
- Connect more seamlessly with the faith-based community to provide critical services for youth, families, and offenders returning to the community.

Objective 3: Improve the availability and quality of prevention and intervention programming in the area.

- Conceptualize prevention programming in a continuous, developmental way rather than sporadic programming limited to one developmental stage. In other words, respondents consistently reported the need to saturate elementary schools with prevention programming and continue programming in developmentally appropriate ways into the middle school and high school. Although specific programs may end, targeting youth for age appropriate programming should be seamless and continue throughout their school career.
- Programming should provide easy access to positive, alternative activities. Particular emphasis should focus on youth who are not exhibiting behavior problems with outreach to youth engaged in problem behaviors. This provides these youth with opportunities to support their resiliency and gives youth who are engaging in problems an incentive to make better choices. These activities should become a reason to do well and make positive choices. Participation in these activities should be used as positive incentives to increase participation in various prevention and intervention services.
- Clearly define intervention programming, infuse Best Practice and Evidence-Based Programming into the services offered in the community, and make it more available to youth engaged in problem behaviors, such as (but not limited to) substance abuse, delinquency, and gang involvement. Gang intervention programming may need to consider ways to help youth and families relocate and succeed in new areas.
- Funding should be based on success—incentives for program staff should be developed to improve positive outcomes. For example, gang intervention workers can be hired on a base pay with incremental increases for proven success with youth on their caseload in areas such as school attendance, school grades, attendance in treatment programming, and behavior.
- Provide an array of structured activities that appeal to children and youth in these communities. Involve youth in choosing and designing their activities. For instance, youth often suggested

- programs such as arts programs, music programs, tutoring, educational counseling for college, and entrepreneurial programs in which youth have the opportunity to learn how to run a business.
- Overcome barriers that prevent agencies and programs from offering programming and services on school grounds.
 - Increase access to recreational activities and areas available to children and youth at schools, parks, and other open areas.
 - Involve the LAPD in prevention and intervention programming, particularly school-based prevention.
 - Coordinate community-based prevention and intervention programs with services available through DCFS, DMH, and Probation.
 - Develop and provide programming that is culturally competent and incorporates youths' backgrounds and experiences in a positive way.
 - Ensure that gender-specific programming is available. At the prevention level, this may involve dance programs, cooking programs, and fashion design programs (all indicated by youth respondents). At the intervention level, it is critical to provide counseling for young girls who are pregnant and who have abusive histories.
 - Reduce fees associated with activities.

Objective 4: Improve access to social services for residents.

- Make trauma and grief counseling widely available.
- Improve access to appropriate mental health and substance abuse programs to residents.
- Provide these services locally or provide safe passage to areas where services can be accessed.
- Make sure services are bilingual and understand the issues presented by newly arrived immigrants.
- Improve access to job training and job placement services for youth and adults. Connect offenders returning to the community with jobs that help them sustain a productive, crime-free lifestyle.
- Provide easy access to life skills courses for adults.
- Improve access to services that promote healthy functioning.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the results and recommendations contained in this report reflect the opinions of residents and agency/entity personnel that provide services in the Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD. We believe that the information we collected clearly reflects a collective belief that the communities within the GRYD can provide positive, supportive environments for children and families. It now becomes the responsibility of the communities in the Ramona Gardens/Hollenbeck GRYD to come together and work with the City of Los Angeles to best utilize funds and support. Likewise, it requires the City of Los Angeles to listen to these communities and allow them to lead the efforts toward building safer and more resilient communities.

Building hope as well as avenues for children and families to succeed requires funds but is not necessarily expensive; rather, it requires vision, leadership, commitment, determination, and patience. All of which are possible; in fact, we witnessed all of these qualities during the course of this project. We thank these communities once again for allowing us to tell their stories. We have tried to capture their stories accurately and hope the recommendations we have provided will help these communities achieve the visions they most graciously shared with us.

Appendix B: Survey Instrument

Date Completed: _____

GRYD Site: _____

Interviewer ID: _____

CITY OF LOS ANGELES GANG REDUCTION ZONES COMMUNITY SURVEY
(AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH)

Hi, my name is _____ and I am helping the City of Los Angeles in conducting a survey of our community. We are asking residents to answer a short set of questions about what they like or dislike in their neighborhood and any improvements they would like to see. Results of this survey will be used to provide better services in this area. Your answers will be kept confidential and at no point will we ask for your name or address. Would you like to participate?

1) Are you: <i>(Read each option and check one)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female				
2) What race or ethnicity do you consider yourself to be? <i>(Read each option and put a check next to those to which the person says yes. Okay to check more than one if the person says yes to more than one)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> American Indian <input type="checkbox"/> Black/Latino <input type="checkbox"/> Asian-Pacific Islander <input type="checkbox"/> Latino/Latino <input type="checkbox"/> Black/African-American <input type="checkbox"/> White/Caucasian <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____				
3) How old were you on your last birthday?	_____				
4) In which community do you live?	<i>Read them the 3 neighborhoods and if necessary explain</i> 1) <i>El Sereno</i> 2) <i>Lincoln Heights</i> 3) <i>Ramona Gardens</i>				
5) What would you say are the three best things about your neighborhood? a. b. c.					
6) How safe do you feel being outside in your neighborhood at night?	Very Unsafe 1	Unsafe 2	Somewhat Safe 3	Safe 4	Very safe 5
7) How safe do you feel being outside in your neighborhood during the day?	1	2	3	4	5
8) How often does worry/fear about crime prevent you from doing things you would like to do in your neighborhood?	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Often <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Often <input type="checkbox"/> Never				
9) In your opinion, how easy is it for people in your neighborhood to get help with the following? <i>(Read every statement and options 1- 5, circling only one answer)</i>					
	No Help Available at All	Very Hard to Get Help	Sometimes Available	Can Usually Find Help	Help is Always Available
a. Finding a Job	1	2	3	4	5
b. Preventing Youth from Joining a Gang	1	2	3	4	5
c. Early intervention programs for young children to prevent them becoming involved with gangs	1	2	3	4	5
d. Stopping Gang Violence	1	2	3	4	5
e. Getting medical or dental care	1	2	3	4	5

f. Getting Family/ Mental Health/Substance Abuse Counseling	1	2	3	4	5
g. Mentoring for Youth	1	2	3	4	5
h. Afterschool Programs for Youth	1	2	3	4	5
i. Transportation assistance	1	2	3	4	5
j. Youth Recreational Programs	1	2	3	4	5

10) Please rate the importance of each of the following for strengthening your neighborhood:

(Read every statement and options 1- 5, circling only one answer)

	Not at All Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Very Important	Extremely Important
a. Families	1	2	3	4	5
b. Community Leaders	1	2	3	4	5
c. Religious Organizations	1	2	3	4	5
d. Community Youth Service Organizations	1	2	3	4	5
e. Businesses	1	2	3	4	5
f. Elected Officials	1	2	3	4	5
g. Recreation & Parks	1	2	3	4	5
h. Schools	1	2	3	4	5
i. Police	1	2	3	4	5

11) Please indicate how much a problem, in your opinion, each of the following is in your neighborhood.

(Read every statement and options 1- 5, circling only one answer)

	Not a Problem at All	Rarely a Problem	Sometimes a Problem	Often a Problem	Always a Problem
a. Gang Activity	1	2	3	4	5
b. Crime	1	2	3	4	5
c. General Disorder (trash, noise)	1	2	3	4	5
d. Family Stressors and Instability	1	2	3	4	5
e. Police harassment	1	2	3	4	5
f. Domestic Violence	1	2	3	4	5
g. Graffiti	1	2	3	4	5
h. Too many liquor stores	1	2	3	4	5
i. Homelessness	1	2	3	4	5
j. Drug sales	1	2	3	4	5
k. Drug use					
l. Intimidation by gang members					
m. Lack of Jobs	1	2	3	4	5
n. Poor Quality Schools	1	2	3	4	5

12) What level of responsibility do you feel each of the following should have in controlling problems related to gangs (e.g., crime, intimidation)?

(Read every statement and options 1- 5, circling only one answer)

	Not Responsible at All	Only Somewhat Responsible	Moderately Responsible	Very Responsible	Extremely Responsible
a. Families	1	2	3	4	5
b. Community Leaders	1	2	3	4	5
c. Religious Organizations	1	2	3	4	5

d. Community Youth Service Organizations	1	2	3	4	5
e. Elected officials	1	2	3	4	5
f. Schools	1	2	3	4	5
g. Police	1	2	3	4	5

13) Over the past year, how effective do you think each of the following groups/agencies has been in improving the safety of your neighborhood?

(Read every statement and options 1- 5, circling only one answer)

	Totally Ineffective	Only Somewhat Effective	Moderately Effective	Very Effective	Extremely Effective
a. Families	1	2	3	4	5
b. Community Leaders	1	2	3	4	5
c. Religious Organizations	1	2	3	4	5
d. Community Youth Service Agencies	1	2	3	4	5
e. Elected officials	1	2	3	4	5
f. Schools	1	2	3	4	5
g. Police	1	2	3	4	5

14) How satisfied are you with the response of each of the following to gang problems in your neighborhood during the past year?

(Read every statement and options 1- 5, circling only one answer)

	Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied
a. Police	1	2	3	4	5
b. The Community Law Enforcement and Recovery (CLEAR) Program	1	2	3	4	5
c. Gang Injunctions	1	2	3	4	5
d. Elected officials	1	2	3	4	5

15) What three things do you feel your neighborhood needs in order to be better able to support its young children and youth?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Thank you for helping us with this survey.
Your answers are very important for helping improve services in the community.

Appendix C: Focus Group Question Guide

Questions Used for Parent Focus Groups

1. Are gangs a problem in your neighborhood? If so, what types of problems do gang members cause in your neighborhood?
2. Have you noticed any changes with regard to gangs over the past 3-5 years—e.g., changes in the number of members, activities, etc?
3. What do you think is causing the gang problem in your community?
4. What is the risk (low, moderate, high) of an average child in your neighborhood becoming involved in gangs and which youth are most vulnerable to join gangs?
5. What is your community currently doing to respond to gangs? What are the strengths of these approaches? What are the weaknesses of these approaches?
6. What does your neighborhood still need in terms of resources and responses to effectively address the problem?
7. How would rate or prioritize the list of resources and responses you just listed?
8. What do you perceive as barriers to improving the response to gangs in your neighborhood?
9. How can participation in services and programs for parents and youth be increased?
10. Is there anything else you would like to add to this discussion?

Questions Used for Youth Focus Groups

1. Are gangs a problem in your neighborhood? If so, what types of problems do gang members cause in your neighborhood?
2. Have you noticed any changes with regard to gangs over the past 3-5 years—e.g., changes in the number of members, activities, etc?
3. Why do kids join gangs? Why do kids not join gangs? What types of things might motivate a gang member to leave a gang?
4. What is the risk (low, moderate, high) of an average child in your neighborhood becoming involved in gangs and which kids are most vulnerable to join gangs?
5. What do you think your community is currently doing to respond to gangs? What are the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches?
6. What should your community be doing to respond to gangs? For example, what types of programs, services, and activities do you think will discourage kids from joining gangs or encourage gang members to leave a gang?
7. How would rate or prioritize the list of programs, services, activities, etc. you just listed?
8. How can participation in services, programs, and activities be improved among kids?
9. Is there anything else you would like to add to this discussion?

Business

1. Are gangs a problem in your neighborhood? If so, what types of problems do gang members cause in your neighborhood?
2. Have you noticed any changes with regard to gangs over the past 3-5 years—e.g., changes in the number of members, activities, etc?
3. What has been the impact of gangs on commercial business in the area?
4. What do you think is causing the gang problem in your community?
5. What does your neighborhood still need in terms of resources and responses to effectively address the problem?
6. How would rate or prioritize the list of resources and responses you just listed?
7. What do you perceive as barriers to improving the response to gangs in your neighborhood?
8. Is there anything else you would like to add to this discussion?

Questions for Focus Groups with Department of Children and Family Services, Department of Mental Health, Schools, Community-Based Organizations, Police, and Probation

1. To what extent are your clients and the services you provide impacted by gangs in this area?
2. Have you noticed any changes in the impact of gangs over the past 3-5 years?
3. What does this community still need in terms of resources and responses to effectively address the problem?
4. What do you perceive as barriers to improving the response to gangs in this community?
5. How can participation in services and programs for parents and youth be increased?
6. What role can and should your agency play to improve the community's response to gangs?
7. How would you describe the level of collaboration between schools, law enforcement, social service agencies, and community-based organizations? Briefly explain.
8. Is there anything else you would like to add to this discussion?