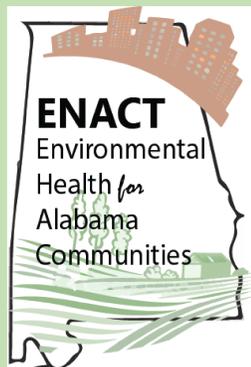


# A Community-engaged approach to understanding environmental health priorities in urban and rural Alabama

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## INTRODUCTION



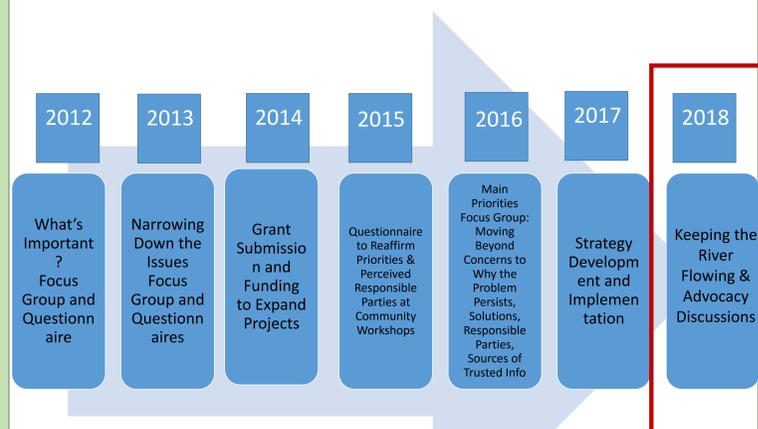
FRIENDS OF WEST END

### KEY

- City of Birmingham in Jefferson County
- Wilcox County
- Montgomery, AL (state capital)

## METHODS

Figure 1. Flow diagram of community-engagement activities related to establishing environmental health priorities



## PARTICIPANTS

Table 1. Workshop Participants from May 2018

	Birmingham, AL	West Central AL
n	23	30
Age Mean (Range)	50.9 (25, 71)	53.1 (19,69)
Female	22 (95.7)	26 (86.7)
African American or Black	23 (100)	29 (96.7)
Education- Some College Courses or Associate's Degree	10 (43.5)	11 (36.7)
Income-\$20,000 to \$49,999	11 (47.8)	7 (23.3)
Participant in Monitor Study (Summer 2017)- Yes	16 (69.6)	19 (63.3)
Participant in Previous Focus Groups- Yes	6 (26.1)	19 (63.3)
Lived in this Community- More than 15 years	15 (65.2)	26 (86.7)
Health- Good	14 (60.9)	21 (70.0)

## RESULTS

### DRINKING WATER ACCESS AND QUALITY ISSUES: WEST CENTRAL AL

- Yes, drinking water and wastewater issues are still the most important environmental health priorities for my community (70%).
- Several issues relating to drinking water and waste water have been brought up as issues in my community. The most important is
  - quality of the drinking water (57%),
  - access to drinking water (27%),
  - and access to wastewater treatment (e.g. hookup to municipal sewage line or community or private septic system) (17%).
- I'm concerned about access and quality of the drinking water and wastewater treatment issues because
  - the taste, color, and smell are concerning (77%),
  - digging wells is too expensive (7%),
  - and installing private septic systems is too expensive (7%).
- The local government like the County Commissioners (43-45%) and the Water Board or Water Authority (40-45%) are the MOST responsible for giving people access to and ensuring quality of drinking water in their homes.

I'd like to see community leaders do the following to address the water issues:

- write grants proposals for money to either fix the problem or get money to incentivize more people to participate in the process (35%),
- start a Riverkeeper (35%),
- and hold a local meeting for the community to be more informed and united (23%).

I'd like to see state and local governing officials do the following:

- put more resources towards water lines, wells, and waste water treatment (33%),
- evaluate whether the pipes are safe or need to be replaced (24%),
- have independent people test the water and communicate the results (15%),
- and conduct a Cancer Cluster Study to see if people in this area have more cancer than other areas (15%).

I can personally help to ensure my drinking water is safe by:

- going to Water Board meetings and County Commissioner Meetings (71%)
- and reading the annual statement from the water company on quality (25%).

### ABANDONED HOUSES/ OVERGROWN LOTS: BIRMINGHAM, AL

- Yes, these are still most important environmental health priorities (69.6%)
- My concerns about abandoned houses/ overgrown lots are related to: crime—drugs, sexual assault, vandalism, break-ins (41.5%)
- Responsibility for resolving this lies with: Local government: City, Mayor, City Councilor (46.2%)
- In place of torn down houses, I'd want to see: New houses by Habitat for Humanity (60.9%)
- I can personally: Go to City Council Meetings (33.3%) or Neighborhood Meetings (29.2%)
- I want community leaders to go to City Council meetings and report back at Neighborhood meetings (42.9%)
- I'd like to see state/ local officials: Devote more work crews to tearing down abandoned houses, mowing overgrown lots, and towing abandoned cars (42.4%)

### Summary of Workshop Results:

#### Both Communities:

- Participants want more frequent studies in their communities with more participants involved.
- Participants want to hear the results of the studies and questionnaires. They suggest mailing results and having more community meetings.
- Participants from Birmingham and West Central AL identified roads needing repair, dumping and garbage, and safety related to reducing crime and drugs as additional environmental priorities, beyond abandoned housing and drinking water, respectively.
- All participants expressed a desire for more programs for children.

### Next Steps:

- Create a collective graphic from all the groups' River of Life and potentially hang in a public building
- Dissemination of results to community members and publication to scientific community
- Community Advisory Board (CAB) meetings and workshops to implement strategies identified and build community capacity
- Spring 2019 grant writing

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## River of Life: A history of the partnership

### City of Birmingham



Mistrust of research and hospitals  
Kellogg church based health initiative



2009- CSCH (PRC) Jefferson County Community Participation Board



2002-2014 EPA Community Advisory Board  
2003-Black Belt Institute



Wilcox Co.  
Community Advocacy & Civil Rights

CHAs & VISTAs  
1984- Prevention Research Center (PRC) CDC  
1988-1997-Kellogg Natural Helpers  
1999- Community Needs Assessment (CNA)



Lack of Drinking Water



2011- Focus Group- Identify environmental health priorities

Sanitation & Water Quality



Community Events

Coke production & preterm birth



EDUCATION TO ACTION

2013- Pilot Heat and Light Study

2017- Sampling of Air and Heat Exposure  
2017- Engage for Equity Workshop



2017- UAB Dept. of Service Learning and Undergrad Research

BAMA Kids- "Wilcox Water and Me"

