

we all need

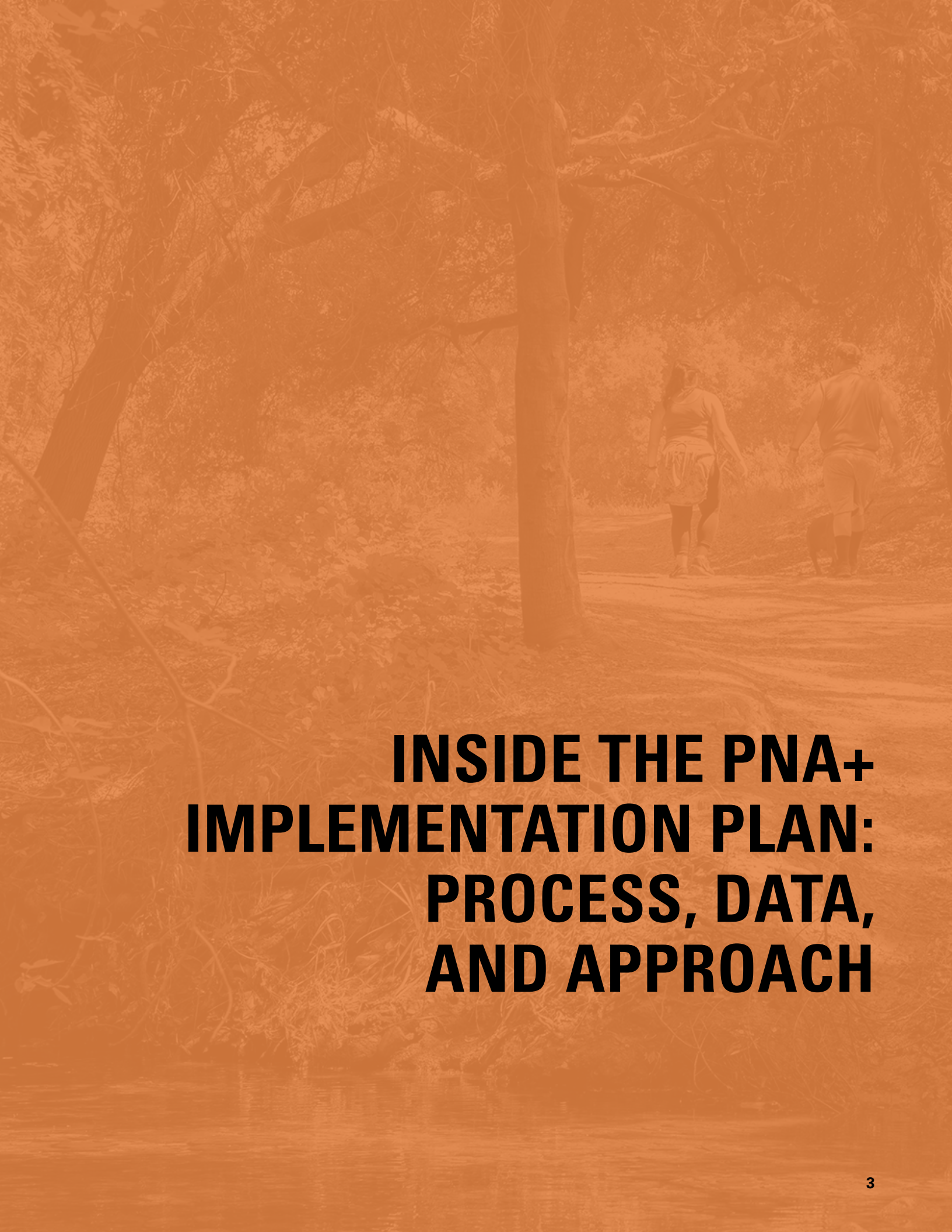


PNA+ IMPLEMENTATION PLAN COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

**Resources to help advocate for equitable
park investments in LA County**

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INSIDE THE PNA+ IMPLEMENTATION PLAN: PROCESS, DATA, AND APPROACH

THE PNA+ IMPLEMENTATION PLAN STORYMAP CAN BE ACCESSED HERE:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/788cdf8510764a42a2d8a5c5b959322c>

This interactive digital storytelling tool combines maps, data, narrative, and images to tell the story of the PNA+ Implementation Planning process in an engaging and accessible format.

The PNA+ Implementation Plan: From Assessment to Action

Discover how Los Angeles County is working to ensure that everyone has easy access to high-quality parks, recreation, and open space.

County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation; M16, Inc (2025)



[Overview](#) [Coalition](#) [History & Approach](#) [Maps](#) [Programs & Policy](#) [Get Involved](#)

The PNA+ Implementation Plan represents the culmination of over a decade of work led by the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation, the Board of Supervisors, and countless community advocates across the region.

Note: This Story Map provides a summary of the PNA+ Implementation Plan. [Click here to download the entire plan.](#)



INTERSECTIONAL IMPACTS: HOW PNA+ IMPLEMENTATION ALIGNS WITH KEY ISSUES

WHAT IS THE PNA+ IMPLEMENTATION PLAN?

The PNA+ Implementation Plan is a bold, action-focused roadmap designed to bring the goals of the 2022 Parks Needs Assessment Plus (PNA+) and the 2016 Parks Needs Assessment (PNA) to life. It aims to close long-standing park equity gaps in Los Angeles County by turning community priorities into real, on-the-ground improvements.

THE PLAN INCLUDES THREE KEY COMPONENTS:

- » A shared advocacy strategy to align efforts and build momentum.
- » A focus on the areas of LA County with the greatest need, along with clear opportunities for new park projects.
- » Policy and systems changes to break down barriers and expand access to parks and recreation opportunities for everyone.

The plan prioritizes **56 projects in the areas of greatest need**—many with early planning already underway and strong community or agency support—creating a solid foundation for both immediate and long-term action.

WHAT GOALS DOES PNA+ IMPLEMENTATION ADDRESS?

- » GOAL #1 Connect Park Equity to Environmental Justice
- » GOAL #2 Increase Park Access
- » GOAL #3 Stabilize Communities
- » GOAL #4 Sustain Physical & Social Infrastructure
- » GOAL #5 Improve Climate Adaptation & Resilience
- » GOAL #6 Expand Nature-based Projects

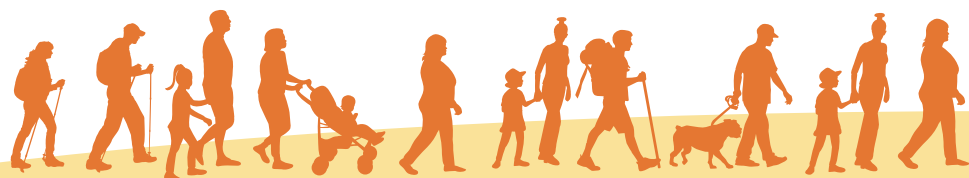
Learn more at www.lacountyparkneeds.org

ARE YOU CURIOUS ABOUT— OR ALREADY WORKING ON— ANY OF THE FOLLOWING ISSUES IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

The PNA+ Implementation Plan aims to deepen public understanding of how these critical issues connect to the broader need for investment in parks, open spaces, and trails across Los Angeles County:

- » **Access**
- » **Anti-displacement strategies**
- » **Biodiversity and conservation**
- » **Climate resilience**
- » **Community safety and homelessness**
- » **Equity and environmental justice**
- » **Green infrastructure**
- » **Health**
- » **Housing intersections**
- » **Workforce development**

Together, we can build healthier, more resilient communities through equitable access to green spaces.



ACCESS

WHY IS ACCESS AN ISSUE?

In Los Angeles County, geographic, economic, and social barriers prevent many residents—especially in underserved areas—from easily accessing parks, open spaces, and trails. This lack of access affects quality of life, including physical health, mental well-being, and social connection. As affirmed in the County’s Children’s Bill of Rights, every child deserves the chance to play outside, explore nature, and connect with the outdoors.

The PNA+ Implementation Plan addresses these gaps by prioritizing investments in the highest-need areas. This includes building new parks, improving and maintaining existing amenities, creating green schoolyards, and expanding safe routes to parks and open spaces through greenways, active transportation, and better transit service—all to ensure everyone can enjoy the benefits of nature close to home. These investments, all aimed at **improving access**, are prioritized in the highest needs areas of Los Angeles County.

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

Access to parks, trails, and open space is a key focus of the PNA+ Implementation Plan—and your voice matters. Your community connections, advocacy, and passion for parks and nature can help drive change.

Use these talking points to **raise awareness about equitable park access** with your neighbors, colleagues, community leaders, and public officials. Together, we can build momentum for a more equitable, connected, and nature-rich Los Angeles County.

ACCESS TALKING POINTS:

- » In Los Angeles County, more than 1 in 4 residents live in areas with both low life expectancy and limited access to greenspace—a double burden affecting health and quality of life (Prevention Institute, 2022).
- » Parks in communities of color are under-resourced. Across the U.S., majority nonwhite neighborhoods have parks that are half the size and serve nearly five times more people than parks in majority white neighborhoods. Parks in low-income areas are four times smaller and serve four times more people than those in high-income areas (Trust for Public Land, 2020).
- » Even when parks exist, access can be unequal. Neighborhoods with higher proportions of people of color tend to have poorer access to large parks via transit, even when controlling for other factors (Park et al., 2022).

PRIORITY PROJECTS:

The PNA+ Implementation Plan identifies priority projects with a focus on increasing access to parks and open space, including:

- » **3** Sixth Street PARC, Los Angeles
- » **4** 92nd St Linear Park, Florence-Firestone
- » **9** Ballona Creek Bikepath, Culver City
- » **12** Caltrans Surplus Land, Lennox
- » **16** Compton Creek, Compton
- » **22** Emerald Necklace, San Gabriel Valle
- » **31** LAX Northside Lands, Los Angeles
- » **45** Schabarum Skyline Trail, Los Angeles County
- » **47** SGV Greenway Network, San Gabriel Valley
- » **48** Slauson Rail to River, Bell, Maywood, Huntington Park, and Florence-Firestone
- » **56** Willow Springs Park, Long Beach

ANTI-DISPLACEMENT STRATEGIES

WHY IS DISPLACEMENT AN ISSUE TIED TO INVESTMENT IN PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND TRAILS?

Investments in parks, open space, and trails can unintentionally contribute to displacement when they increase property values in low-income neighborhoods—pricing out long-time residents and disrupting community ties. This process, often referred to as green gentrification, turns well-meaning improvements into sources of harm without safeguards in place.

Anti-displacement strategies—such as rent control, anti-eviction protections, preserving and creating affordable housing, land banking, and supporting community-led revitalization—help ensure that residents can stay and benefit from these investments.

The PNA+ Implementation Plan is committed to helping residents thrive in place by coupling park investments with equity-focused policies and community capacity-building. Parks should not only enhance public spaces but also reinforce community resilience, health, and belonging.

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

PNA+ Implementation priority projects recognize the **critical link between park investments and anti-displacement**. Your advocacy, expertise, and community relationships can help amplify this message. Use these talking points to engage your neighbors, colleagues, community leaders, and public officials in **promoting equitable, inclusive park development that protects long-standing communities**.

ANTI-DISPLACEMENT TALKING POINTS:

- » Parks support health and community connections, but only when paired with strategies that ensure longtime residents can stay and thrive in place (Rigolon & Christensen, 2019).
- » Green infrastructure increases property values, but it's crucial that these projects are paired with strong community engagement and anti-displacement strategies to prevent pushing out long-time residents (Urban Land Institute, 2020).
- » Greenways can significantly raise property values. In Austin, Texas, the value of homes adjacent to a greenway in three neighborhoods increased by an estimated \$27 million. The true economic value is likely much higher, as this estimate doesn't account for homes near the greenway or other nearby neighborhoods (Nicholls & Crompton, 2020).
- » To prevent displacement, park projects must begin early—before rising property values attract investors—and include strong, ongoing community engagement. The most effective efforts combine new parks with affordable housing, job training, and small business support, alongside policies that protect longtime residents from being pushed out (Rigolon & Christensen, 2019).

PRIORITY PROJECTS:

The PNA+ Implementation Plan identifies priority projects with a focus on protecting communities from displacement, including:

- » **27** 100-Acre Partnership, Los Angeles
- » **31** LAX Northside Lands, Los Angeles
- » **32** Lower LA River, Los Angeles County
- » **49** Taylor Yard G2 River Park, Los Angeles

BIODIVERSITY AND CONSERVATION

HOW CAN BIODIVERSITY AND CONSERVATION BE ADDRESSED BY PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND TRAILS?

Parks and open spaces do more than provide recreation—they deliver vital ecosystem services that benefit both people and the environment. They help clean the air and water, reduce extreme heat, and support biodiversity by preserving and restoring natural habitats.

The PNA+ Implementation Plan promotes multi-benefit park projects that enhance biodiversity and expand conservation in areas with the greatest need. This work supports California’s 30x30 goal—to conserve 30% of lands and coastal waters by 2030—as a key strategy to fight climate change and protect our natural environment.

WHAT DOES A HEALTHY ECOSYSTEM LOOK LIKE?

Key indicators of healthy, biodiverse parklands include:

- » **Species Biodiversity:** A wide variety of native mammals, birds, reptiles, fish, amphibians, and insects.
- » **Significant Habitat:** Large, contiguous spaces that provide food, shelter, and protection.
- » **Habitat Connectivity:** Safe corridors that allow wildlife to move freely between areas.
- » **Proximity to Water:** Natural water sources such as wetlands, ponds, or streams.
- » **Native Vegetation:** Plants that support wildlife reproduction, protection, and attraction of other native species.

Investing in parks that protect these features helps ensure thriving ecosystems and healthier communities for generations to come.

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

The success of PNA+ Implementation depends on community partnerships and advocacy. Your expertise, connections, and passion for nature can help **raise awareness and ensure biodiversity remains a priority in park planning**. Share these ideas with your neighbors, colleagues, community leaders, and public officials to build momentum for environmental conservation through parks.

BIODIVERSITY AND CONSERVATION TALKING POINTS:

Nature isn’t just found in remote wilderness—urban conservation is just as vital. It supports climate resilience, public health, environmental justice, and biodiversity, while connecting cities to broader ecosystems. With over 85% of people in the U.S. living in urban areas, engaging and educating city residents is key to building a more sustainable and equitable future (González, 2024).

A strong majority of people support local park and recreation agencies’ environmental efforts, including conservation, climate resilience, and habitat restoration (National Recreation and Park Association, n.d.).

Insect populations have declined by over 40% globally in the past decade, threatening ecosystems and food systems (Peterson, n.d.).

PRIORITY PROJECTS:

The PNA+ Implementation Plan identifies priority projects with a focus on biodiversity and conservation, including:

- » **6** Ascot Hills, Los Angeles
- » **18** Dunes Below LAX, Los Angeles
- » **20** El Segundo Blue Butterfly Preserve, Los Angeles
- » **44** Rim of the Valley, Los Angeles County

CLIMATE RESILIENCE

HOW IS CLIMATE RESILIENCE ADDRESSED BY PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND TRAILS?

Parks and open spaces are critical tools in the fight against climate change. They help mitigate climate impacts by increasing carbon sequestration, cooling neighborhoods, and managing stormwater. Planting trees, expanding green spaces, and installing green infrastructure reduce the urban heat island effect, filter air and water, and capture greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.

Trees and native vegetation also store carbon in their leaves, roots, and wood—helping to offset emissions and protect air quality. These nature-based solutions not only support environmental health, but also make adjacent communities more resilient to heat, drought, floods, and other climate-related stressors.

HOW DO CLIMATE RESILIENCE EFFORTS AT PARKS MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE?

The PNA+ Implementation Plan supports efforts to conserve and enhance Los Angeles County's natural and working lands—including forests, wetlands, coastlines, and urban green spaces. These investments strengthen climate resilience, promote biodiversity, and ensure that parks serve as essential infrastructure for healthy, climate-ready communities.

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

Your voice, expertise, and community relationships can help **advance climate-resilient park investments**. Use the points below to engage your neighbors, colleagues, community leaders, and public officials in advocating for parks that not only serve people—but also protect the planet. Together, we can grow greener, cooler, and more resilient neighborhoods for future generations.

CLIMATE RESILIENCE TALKING POINTS:

- » Trees, shrubs, and grasses do more than beautify our cities—they help clean the air and absorb harmful carbon dioxide, playing a key role in climate action (Wei et al., 2022).
- » Large parks—especially those over 25 acres—provide the strongest and widest-reaching cooling effects in cities, helping reduce heat for nearby neighborhoods (Aram et al., 2020).
- » A single mature tree may take about 50 pounds of carbon dioxide per year, equivalent to the CO2 emissions from driving a car about 50 miles (Community Forest Management Plan for Los Angeles County, 2024).

PRIORITY PROJECTS:

The PNA+ Implementation Plan identifies priority projects with a focus on increasing climate resilience, including:

- » **12** Caltrans Surplus Land, Lennox
- » **44** Rim of the Valley, Los Angeles County
- » **56** Willow Springs Park, Long Beach

COMMUNITY SAFETY AND HOMELESSNESS

HOW IS COMMUNITY SAFETY AND HOMELESSNESS AN ISSUE FOR PARKS?

In many areas, people experiencing homelessness seek refuge in parks, greenways, sidewalks, and other public spaces. While parks are essential community assets, some residents may avoid using them due to safety concerns tied to visible homelessness. At the same time, **parks help make neighborhoods safer**. They bring people together, give kids and teens safe places to play, reduce crime by keeping public spaces active, and support local businesses and jobs.

HOW IS LA COUNTY ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC ISSUES THAT LEAD TO HOMELESSNESS IN AND AROUND PARKS?

Los Angeles County is working with cities, service providers, civic leaders, and faith-based organizations to address homelessness through:

- » Expanded outreach and supportive services
- » Emergency shelter and rapid rehousing
- » Permanent supportive housing
- » Benefits advocacy for unhoused individuals with disabilities

Additionally, the County's updated Housing Element outlines long-term strategies to address the region's affordable housing shortage.

WHAT CAN MAKE PARKS FEEL SAFER FOR ALL USERS?

- » Expanded services and support for unhoused park users
- » Installation of emergency call devices along trails
- » Better lighting in parks, especially at night
- » Targeted efforts to reduce crime and graffiti
- » Expand programming to activate parks

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

The PNA+ Implementation Plan recognizes that **community safety and homelessness are deeply interconnected with park access and use**. Your community connections, lived experience, and advocacy are vital to shaping equitable solutions. Use the points below to engage your neighbors, colleagues, community leaders, and public officials in conversations about creating safe, inclusive, and supportive public spaces for all. Together, we can ensure parks remain places of connection, healing, and opportunity.

COMMUNITY SAFETY AND HOMELESSNESS TALKING POINTS:

- » An evaluation of LA County's Parks After Dark program found that between 2010 and 2023, 74 serious crimes and 43 nonviolent crimes were avoided—saving an estimated \$10.5 million in criminal justice costs (UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, 2024).
- » Studies show that urban parks and green areas are linked to lower crime rates, partly because they promote social connection, reduce stress, and signal community care (Shepley et al., 2019).
- » In inner-city Chicago, access to trees and grassy areas led to stronger social ties, fewer crimes, and healthier play among children (Kuo, 2003).
- » In low-income San Francisco neighborhoods, renovated parks more than doubled visitor numbers and increased physical activity—while also improving residents' sense of safety (Cohen et al., 2015).

PRIORITY PROJECTS:

The PNA+ Implementation Plan identifies priority projects with a focus on community safety and addressing homelessness, including:

- » **3** Sixth Street PARC, Los Angeles
- » **9** Ballona Creek Bikepath, Culver City
- » **32** Lower LA River, Los Angeles County

EQUITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

HOW CAN PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND TRAILS ADVANCE EQUITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE?

In Los Angeles County, many communities—particularly those impacted by pollution and industrial activity—lack safe, accessible green spaces. This isn't just an environmental health issue—it's also about environmental racism, rooted in discriminatory policies that pushed people of color into the most polluted neighborhoods. Yet within these same areas lie opportunities to transform degraded lands, such as orphan oil wells and other contaminated sites, into multi-benefit parks that restore ecosystems, improve health, and deliver long-overdue investment. By converting environmental liabilities into community assets, parks can directly address historic inequities and bring environmental justice to frontline communities.

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

The PNA+ Implementation Plan is committed to promoting equity and environmental justice. Use the points below to raise awareness about **the role of parks in repairing environmental harm and advancing environmental justice**—engage with your neighbors, colleagues, community leaders, and public officials to push for bold, community-driven solutions. Together, we can ensure every resident has access to clean, safe, and vibrant neighborhoods.

EQUITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TALKING POINTS:

- » Restoring degraded lands—like brownfields, landfills, and oil fields—in low-income communities of color is essential for environmental justice. People of color make up 84% of those living in LA County's highest-priority areas for restoration, where pollution and health burdens are most severe (County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation, 2022).
- » Out of fifty-seven toxic waste sites in Los Angeles, over 60% are located in zip codes that are majority Latino, highlighting a clear pattern of environmental injustice (Pulido, 2004).

- » Oil drilling near homes poses health risks. People living within 1,500 feet of active wells report more serious health issues—like chronic coughs, nosebleeds, severe headaches, and joint pain (Johnston et al., 2018; Wong, 2017).
- » Covering contaminated soil isn't enough. Effective remediation—like soil excavation and area-wide cleanup—is needed to prevent recontamination and truly protect local communities from toxic exposure (Sinnott et al., 2022)
- » Converting orphaned oil wells into green space offers major long-term benefits—but cleanup is costly. Without dedicated funding, these projects often get sidelined in favor of other urgent needs. Advocates must make the case that safe, green reuse can deliver lasting social, environmental, and economic gains (Lau, 2024).

PRIORITY PROJECTS:

The PNA+ Implementation Plan identifies priority projects with a focus on advancing equity and environmental justice, including:

- » **7** Baldwin Hills Oil Field, Los Angeles
- » **12** Caltrans Surplus Land, Lennox
- » **27** 100-Acre Partnership, Los Angeles
- » **28** Jefferson Oil Field, Los Angeles
- » **32** Lower LA River, Los Angeles County
- » **34** Montebello Hills Oil Field, Montebello
- » **42** Puente Hills Regional Park, Los Angeles County
- » **55** Watts Cultural Crescent, Los Angeles

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

HOW CAN PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND TRAILS SUPPORT GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE?

Parks and open spaces are ideal settings to show how green infrastructure can manage stormwater, conserve water, and protect local ecosystems. Features like bioretention areas, permeable surfaces, and cisterns capture, absorb, and filter polluted runoff—helping replenish groundwater, reduce flood risk, and store water for irrigation. By integrating green infrastructure, parks can model climate-smart practices that benefit both people and the environment.

BENEFITS OF GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE IN PARKS CAN INCLUDE:

- » Cleaner water and improved stormwater quality
- » Reduced flood risk and avoided flood damage costs
- » Cooler neighborhoods and reduced urban heat island effect
- » Increased habitat for wildlife and pollinators
- » Improved air quality
- » Enhanced equity and access to healthy environments
- » Opportunities for education, stewardship, and youth engagement
- » Better public health outcomes
- » Lower long-term maintenance costs
- » Stronger community resilience in the face of climate change

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

The PNA+ Implementation Plan supports **green infrastructure as a key strategy for building climate-resilient, equitable communities**. Your expertise, advocacy, and local connections can help advance these efforts. Share the benefits of green infrastructure with your neighbors, colleagues, community leaders, and public officials to build support for greener, more resilient parks.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE TALKING POINTS:

- » Developing affordable housing alongside urban greening directly improves park access for low-income households—a need identified in the County’s Parks Needs Assessments (LA Thrives & LA ROSAH, 2018).
- » A healthier Los Angeles means more parks, more biodiversity, and smarter water use to become more self-sufficient (Parker, n.d.).
- » Green infrastructure boosts nearby property values. That’s why community engagement and anti-displacement strategies must be built in from the start (Urban Land Institute, n.d.).

PRIORITY PROJECTS:

The PNA+ Implementation Plan identifies priority projects with a focus on green infrastructure, including:

- » **3** Sixth Street PARC, Los Angeles
- » **16** Compton Creek, Compton
- » **22** Emerald Necklace, San Gabriel Valley
- » **25** Hollenbeck Park Lake Restoration, Los Angeles
- » **32** Lower LA River, Los Angeles County
- » **37** Pacoima Wash, Los Angeles
- » **49** Taylor Yard, Los Angeles
- » **54** Urban Orchard, Long Beach
- » **56** Willow Springs Park, Long Beach

HEALTH

HOW DO PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND TRAILS SUPPORT PUBLIC HEALTH?

Parks are essential infrastructure for health, supporting physical, mental, and social well-being. Access to parks and recreation areas encourages physical activity, which lowers the risk of chronic diseases like heart disease, diabetes, and asthma. Beyond physical health, green spaces improve mental well-being, reduce stress, and foster social connection. Research also links access to parks with reduced teen pregnancy rates and improved food security. In short, parks contribute to healthier, more resilient communities.

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

The PNA+ Implementation Plan champions **parks as essential to public health**. Your advocacy, community ties, and passion for wellness can help build support for health-focused park investments. Use the points below to raise awareness about the connection between parks and health with your neighbors, colleagues, community leaders, and public officials. Together, we can create healthier, more connected communities through parks.

HEALTH TALKING POINTS:

- » Parks help kids stay healthy. Children who grow up near parks are less likely to become obese. A 10-year study of over 3,000 Southern California kids found that those living near parks and recreational programs had lower obesity rates at age 18 (Wolch, 2011).
- » The closer people live to a park—and the safer they feel using it—the more likely they are to use it for physical activity. People with access to parks and trails are more likely to walk, bike, and stay active than those without nearby green space (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2025).
- » Spending time in parks and green spaces can help reduce depression, anxiety, and stress—promoting emotional well-being for people of all ages (National Recreation and Park Association, n.d.).
- » Nearly half of Americans say they feel lonely or left out—and one in five rarely feel close to others. Parks and green spaces can help. Whether it's a group activity like community gardening or a simple chat while walking the dog, parks create opportunities for connection and belonging (Trust for Public Health, 2023).

PRIORITY PROJECTS:

The PNA+ Implementation Plan identifies priority projects with a focus on promoting public health, including:

- » **4** 92nd St Linear Park, Florence-Firestone
- » **27** 100-Acre Partnership, Los Angeles
- » **28** Jefferson Oil Field, Los Angeles
- » **34** Montebello Hills Oil Field, Montebello
- » **42** Puente Hills Regional Park, Los Angeles County
- » **54** Urban Orchard, Long Beach

HOUSING INTERSECTIONS

HOW DOES HOUSING INTERSECT WITH PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND TRAILS?

As Los Angeles County addresses the urgent need for affordable housing, it's essential to recognize the vital connection between where we live and how we access nature. Not all undeveloped lands will be preserved in their entirety—some will be developed for housing. In these cases, plans often include dedicated parkland or open space within private developments, offering a valuable opportunity to advance both housing and environmental goals. The PNA+ Implementation Plan supports this dual-priority approach through collaboration with developers, public agencies, conservancies, and community partners to **expand access to parks while supporting the creation of affordable housing**—especially in areas of high need.

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

PNA+ Implementation recognizes that housing and parks must go hand-in-hand to support livable, equitable communities. Your experience, advocacy, and community ties can help ensure that new developments include accessible, high-quality green spaces. Use the points below to raise awareness about the importance of **integrating housing and park planning** with your neighbors, colleagues, community leaders, and public officials—so that every community has both a place to live and a place to thrive.

HOUSING AND PARKS TALKING POINTS:

- » Housing and parks can coexist. Development sites can be designed to include both affordable housing and publicly accessible green space or infrastructure—creating healthier, more livable communities (LA Thrives & LA ROSAH, 2018).
- » When new housing includes new parks, inclusionary zoning helps make sure those green spaces are accessible to everyone—not just the wealthy. These policies ensure that people from all income levels can live near and benefit from new parks (Trust for Public Land, 2023).
- » Developing affordable housing alongside urban greening directly improves park access for low-income households—a need identified in the County's Parks Needs Assessments (LA Thrives & LA ROSAH, 2018).

PRIORITY PROJECTS:

The PNA+ Implementation Plan identifies priority projects with a focus on housing, including:

- » **28** Jefferson Oil Field, Los Angeles
- » **32** Lower LA River, Los Angeles County
- » **34** Montebello Hills Oil Field, Montebello
- » **49** Taylor Yard G2 River Park, Los Angeles

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

HOW CAN PARKS SUPPORT WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT?

Parks are not only essential community spaces—they're also **powerful engines for workforce development** and economic opportunity. Workforce development programs connected to parks can open doors to green jobs in nature education, conservation, resource protection, outdoor recreation, and park management. To build a strong and inclusive parks workforce, it's vital to expand career pathways for young people, especially Black, Brown, and other youth from the highest park need areas, who are often underrepresented in these fields.

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

The PNA+ Implementation Plan supports workforce development as a key strategy for building equity and community stability. Your advocacy, relationships, and knowledge can help grow local awareness and support for programs that train and hire community members—especially youth—in parks-related jobs. Use the points below to engage your neighbors, colleagues, community leaders, and public officials in conversations about **investing in local talent and creating equitable opportunities in the green workforce**.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TALKING POINTS:

- » Parks and recreation agencies are doing more than building green spaces—they're helping young people build their futures. Nearly 1 in 3 agencies, and over half in urban areas, offer youth workforce development or career exploration programs to support first-time job seekers (California Conservation Corps, n.d.).
- » Workforce programs in parks help young people gain confidence, job skills, and exposure to green careers—opening doors to long-term opportunities in public service and environmental stewardship (National Recreation and Park Association, 2021).
- » Invest in homegrown talent. Park projects in underserved communities should prioritize hiring local residents, especially those facing barriers to employment. Requiring local hiring and working with alternative employment agencies helps ensure park investments also support economic opportunity and equity (Prevention Institute, 2020).

PRIORITY PROJECTS:

The PNA+ Implementation Plan identifies priority projects with a focus on workforce development, including:

- » **16** Compton Creek Compton
- » **32** Lower LA River, Los Angeles County
- » **42** Puente Hills Regional Park, Los Angeles County
- » **54** Urban Orchard, Long Beach

A photograph of a person and a dog walking away on a dirt path in a forest, overlaid with a semi-transparent orange filter. The person is wearing a light-colored shirt and shorts, and the dog is a small, dark-colored breed. The path is surrounded by trees and dense foliage.

PRIORITY PROJECTS: HIGH-IMPACT PROJECTS READY FOR INVESTMENT

PNA+ COALITION/CONSERVANCY PRIORITY PROJECTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The PNA+ Coalition and State Conservancies identified 107 priority projects across Los Angeles County—56 of which are located in the highest-need areas. These projects already have community input, active partnerships, early-stage funding, and strong momentum. Many are underway or have completed initial planning, making them prime opportunities for partners to support. Each project is briefly described below, with links to more information.

PRIORITY PROJECTS: PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND TRAILS

1–3701 PACIFIC PLACE, LONG BEACH, CA 90806

<https://www.riverparkcoalition.org/>

A 14-acre site at 3701 Pacific Place in Long Beach, California, is slated for development into a 4-story self storage facility, RV storage/parking facility, and a private car wash. Environmental groups oppose the proposed development and advocate for the land to be preserved as public park space in a part of Long Beach with green space inequity. The alternative park project aims to address soil contamination and blight, reduce heat, and prevent flooding. It includes plans for a public trail connecting the Los Cerritos neighborhood to the LA River bike path and a native plant preserve.

Primary partners: Riverpark Coalition



2–430 ACRES, MALIBU, CA

<https://saveopenspace.com/current-projects/over-the-edge-malibu/>

The “430 acres in Malibu” refers to three large, privately held coastal-view property clusters. These lands are significant because they fill a topographic gap in the Santa Monica Mountains’ coastal slope, and have been identified as high priority by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. Development proposals for multi-estate compounds on these parcels have been resisted due to environmental concerns. Conservation groups and local authorities are working to acquire them as public open space to protect wildlife habitat, scenic views, and trail connectivity along the coast.

Primary partners: Save Open Space



3—SIXTH STREET PARK

<https://engineering.lacity.gov/about-us/major-projects/sixth-street-viaduct-parc>

<https://la.urbanize.city/post/signs-progress-new-park-below-sixth-street-viaduct>

Construction of the \$60 million Sixth Street PARC (Park, Arts, River & Connectivity) Project began in 2023 and will be completed by 2026. The project creates 12 acres of open and recreational space in areas underneath and adjacent to the new Sixth Street Viaduct, which connects historic Boyle Heights with the Arts District neighborhood and crosses the Los Angeles River. Formerly called the Sixth Street Bridge Park, PARC includes a performing space, public restrooms, public gathering areas, flexible play areas and lawns, adult fitness equipment, dog play areas, landscaping and trees, public art, sports fields and courts, children's play areas and mister pad, picnic and grilling areas, skate park elements, bicycle and pedestrian paths, roadway connectivity improvements and parking areas, and stormwater infrastructure improvements.

Primary partners: City of Los Angeles Bureau of Engineering, City of Los Angeles Rec and Parks



4—92ND ST LINEAR PARK

<https://www.parksforcalifornia.org/project/1504/>

The proposed 92nd Street Linear Park in the community of Florence-Firestone includes construction of new jogging/walking paths, three half basketball courts, multi-purpose sports field, four playground areas, shade structures, exercise equipment, outdoor performance stage, public art, community garden, fencing/gates, and landscaping and lighting throughout the park. The existing linear site is a 160' wide and 1300' long utility corridor with overhead voltage towers.

Primary partners: LA County Parks



5—ARROYO SECO CANYON PROJECT

<https://www.arroyoseco.org/ascp/>

The Arroyo Seco Canyon Project is a water infrastructure and habitat restoration initiative led by Pasadena Water & Power. Its goals include improving surface water diversion from Arroyo Seco stream, repairing or replacing existing intake/weir structures, expanding spreading basins to capture stormwater, and increasing recharge of the Raymond Basin aquifer. The project involves ecological restoration in Hahamongna Watershed Park, enhancing habitat for wildlife, including native fish species. Notable projects include demolition of old headworks, new rest/picnic areas, trail and access improvements, parking lot redesign, restroom facilities, and upgraded water diversion infrastructure. The project will reduce imported water dependence, enhance local water supply resilience, and improve environmental outcomes in this urban-adjacent watershed.

Primary partners: Pasadena Water & Power, Arroyo Seco Foundation



6—ASCOT HILLS

<https://ascothillspark.org/>

Ascot Hills Park, a 93-acre oasis in the El Sereno community of Northeast LA, offers trails, scenic views toward downtown, a natural setting for Eastside residents, and a peaceful escape from city life. There are ongoing restoration efforts to preserve it for future generations, with wildlife and habitat restoration a priority of the park's many advocates and undertaken by dedicated volunteers.

Primary partners: Los Angeles Parks Foundation



7—BALDWIN HILLS OIL FIELD

<https://www.nrpa.org/blog/transforming-oil-fields-into-parks-a-cornerstone-of-just-transition/>

The Baldwin Hills Oil Field is a future park site that envisions converting portions of the nearly 1,000-acre Inglewood Oil Fields into community open space, linking to existing green spaces like Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area. Current efforts are focused on well plugging, community engagement, and addressing environmental justice concerns. In recent years, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors' motions and revised ordinances have sought to phase out new drilling and ensure existing wells are managed under enhanced environmental and public health standards. The long-term goal is to gradually reclaim parts of the oil field, remediate and reuse the land, and expand the park system in Baldwin Hills to serve community needs and ecological restoration.

Primary partners: LA County Parks, Baldwin Hills & Urban Watersheds Conservancy



8—BALDWIN HILLS STATE RECREATION AREA/ SCENIC OVERLOOK

https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=22790

Baldwin Hills State Recreation Area/Scenic Overlook is a 57-acre urban open-space park in Culver City, Los Angeles. The park is well known for its steep, winding main trail and expansive, recycled concrete staircase. Facilities at the summit include a visitor center with exhibits, a small theater, meeting rooms, and an observation deck with dramatic panoramic views—from downtown LA and the San Gabriel Mountains to the ocean and Palos Verdes Peninsula. Extensive native-plant landscaping, trails, and picnic areas invite wildlife viewing and passive recreation. The park is part of the Park to Playa Trail network, which connects neighborhoods to open space and emphasizes habitat restoration, water conservation, and public wellness.

Primary partners: Baldwin Hills & Urban Watersheds Conservancy

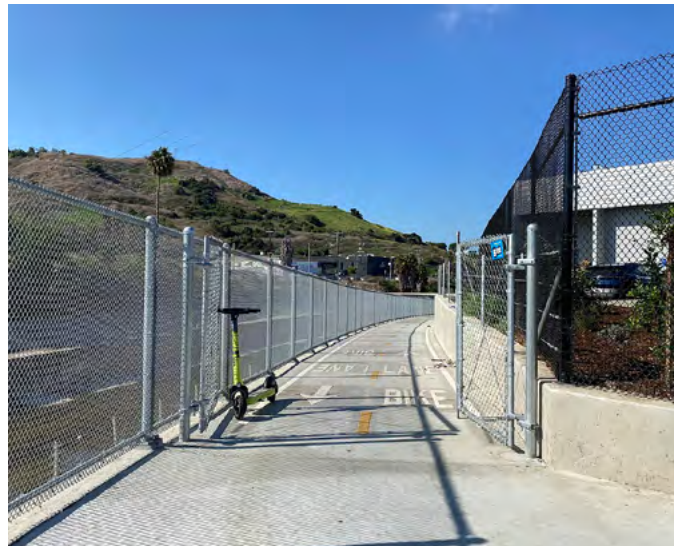


9—BALLONA CREEK BIKEPATH

<https://ballonacreek.org/bike-path/>

The Ballona Creek Bike Path starts in Culver City and extends about 7 miles to the beach. Improvements in recent years include native landscaping, artist-designed gates, benches, drinking fountains, murals, and other projects by public agencies and local non-profit organizations. This continuing process creates a pleasant recreational facility for riders, walkers, joggers, and skaters, including families and commuters. Improved accessibility and safety features are needed for areas with limited visibility where the path goes through underpasses and ramps, some of which exceed accessibility standards.

Primary partners: Ballona Creek Renaissance



10—BALLONA WETLANDS

<https://wildlife.ca.gov/Regions/5/Ballona-EIR>

The Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve is one of the last remaining coastal wetland ecosystems in Los Angeles County, covering approximately 577 acres near Playa del Rey and Marina del Rey. Once part of a much larger wetland complex, Ballona has been reduced and altered by urban development, flood control, and the construction of Marina del Rey. Still, the wetlands remain a critical habitat for hundreds of native species, including migratory birds, fish, and plants. Ballona Wetlands feature a mix of saltwater marsh, freshwater areas, dunes, and upland habitats, providing ecological diversity and flood protection. Ongoing improvements, led by the CA Department of Fish and Wildlife (CA DFW) and other environmental partners, aim to restore natural tidal flows, remove invasive species, and enhance wildlife habitat. Providing better public access and preparing the area for future climate challenges like sea-level rise are other project goals.

Primary partners: CA DFW



11—BIRD ISLAND

<https://www.ballonafriends.org/restoring-ballona>

Bird Island is a moated 2-acre nesting and resting area in the Ballona Wetlands intended to provide birds protection from predators. The area is part of a larger 216-acre Audubon Society restoration effort to restore coastal wetland, salt and fresh water marshes, and native habitat in a heavily urbanized setting by re-establishing channels for saltwater and freshwater flow, removing invasive vegetation, creating ponds, and enabling controlled public access to some restored zones. Bird Island provides a sanctuary for vulnerable bird species to nest and rest undisturbed. It serves species such as the California least tern, brown pelican, peregrine falcon, bald eagle, and Belding's savanna sparrow. Bird Island restoration efforts will mitigate habitat loss and preserve biodiversity in coastal Southern California.

Primary partners: Friends of Ballona Wetlands



12—CALTRANS SURPLUS LAND IN LENNOX

The unincorporated community of Lennox is hugely impacted by the presence of the 105 and 405 freeways on its southern and western boundaries. In the future, Caltrans-owned lands along these highways may no longer be necessary for transportation projects or operational needs and could be offered for sale at auction or to adjacent landowners. These lands are often space-constrained and difficult to access, but some can serve unmet community needs as linear greenways, community gardens, planted sound buffers and screens, and visual gateways. Opportunity sites for new projects include fenced-off lands abutting residential areas along West 111th Place and the 105. Opportunities for sustained improvements include the existing community gardens along West 112th Street.

Primary partners: Caltrans, Baldwin Hills & Urban Watershed Conservancy



13—CANYON HILLS PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The Canyon Hills proposed development project is a gated, luxury residential subdivision proposed in the Verdugo Mountains. It covers nearly 900 acres, with plans for over 280 single-family homes clustered on 194 acres. Over 75% of the land (nearly 700 acres) would be preserved as permanent open space. The development would also include a 3-acre publicly accessible equestrian park, private recreation areas, vista points, a pool, and other amenities. Approved by LA City Council in 2005, the development has drawn opposition from locals and environmental groups concerned about habitat loss, hillside grading, wildfire risk, and impact on native flora and wildlife.

Primary partners: Sierra Club



14—CANYON OAKS OPEN SPACE

<https://ceqanet.lci.ca.gov/2015021008>

The Canyon Oaks Open Space is a protected natural area in the western Santa Monica Mountains. Located near Topanga Canyon, the land was acquired under conservation programs in the early 1990s by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and includes 677 acres of open space and habitat in Western Topanga Canyon comprised of oak woodlands, chaparral, and other native Southern California habitats. The open space provides biodiversity, watershed health, and wildlife movement corridors, as well as passive recreation opportunities such as hiking, nature appreciation, and trail usage, while safeguarding ecological values. The area's conservation status reflects local efforts to balance development pressures with preserving open space, erosion control, native species protection, and preserving scenic landscape character.

Primary partners: Santa Monica Mountain Conservancy

15—CHATSWORTH NATURE PRESERVE

<https://savechatsworthpreserve.org/>

Chatsworth Nature Preserve is a 1,325-acre protected open space in the northwest San Fernando Valley. Formerly the site of the Chatsworth Reservoir, it was designated a nature preserve in 1994. The preserve includes diverse habitats of oak woodlands, grasslands, riparian zones, seasonal wetlands, and an ecology pond that functions as a crucial water source for wildlife. It supports over 200 bird species and mammals (coyotes, gray foxes, bobcats, and deer), reptiles, and amphibians. Managed by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, public access is restricted, with rare exceptions such as the annual Earth Day open house and guided educational events.

Primary partners: Los Angeles Department of Water and Power



16—COMPTON CREEK TRAIL

<https://trails.lacounty.gov/NewsAndEvents/1249/compton-creek-trail-phase-iii-is-on-the-move>

Two phases have been completed for the Compton Creek Trail, a third phase is in the works to provide enhanced connectivity between parks, greenways, and safe transportation routes. Phase three will include a 0.75-mile multi-use trail along the western bank of Compton Creek. The new trail will run parallel to the Compton Creek Walking Path Phases I & II that are located along the eastern bank of Compton Creek from 118th Street to El Segundo Boulevard. Other Phase III improvements include decomposed granite, drought-tolerant landscaping, stormwater BMPs for water collection and filtration, and amenities such as seating, signage, improved fencing, decorative access gates, civic art elements and gateways at 118th Street, 120th Street and El Segundo Boulevard. Once Phase III is completed, the community will have 1.5 miles of connected urban trail along Compton Creek.

Primary partners: LA County Parks, Willowbrook Inclusion Network (WIN)



17—DEL REY LAGOON

<https://www.laparks.org/aquatic/lake/del-rey-lagoon>

Established in the late 1960s, Del Rey Lagoon Park is a 14-acre municipal park in Playa Del Rey, Los Angeles, featuring a 6-acre lagoon that is part of the Ballona Creek watershed. The shallow lagoon provides habitat for both wild waterfowl (buffleheads, coots, great blue heron) and domestic ducks. The park includes lighted baseball and basketball courts, a children's playground, restrooms, and other recreational amenities. Boating and swimming are not permitted. Public use centers on passive recreation and the experience of the lagoon scenery.

Primary partners: Sierra Club



18—DUNES BELOW LAX

<https://www.santamonicabay.org/resources/los-angeles-international-airport-coastal-dunes-improvement-project-ecological-monitoring-report/>

The LAX Dunes (also known as the Los Angeles/El Segundo Dunes) lie between the Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) and the Pacific Ocean. The 302-acre site provides habitat for over 900 species, some of which cannot be found anywhere else on Earth, including the beautiful and delicate federally endangered El Segundo blue butterfly, and other rare plant, animal, and insect species. Local non-profit organizations have been supporting ongoing restoration efforts at the LAX Dunes, as well as coordinating monthly volunteer events and an Adopt-a-Dune Program.

Primary partners: The Bay Foundation, Baldwin Hills & Urban Watershed Conservancy



Figure 6. Photographs of community restoration event on 23 February 2019, including before (top left) and after (top right) picture of restoration area.

19—EAST FORK SAN GABRIEL RIVER

The East Fork San Gabriel River is a 17-mile upstream tributary of the San Gabriel River, originating in the San Gabriel Mountains within the Angeles National Forest. Popular destinations along the East Fork include Heaton Flats and the Bridge to Nowhere, a remnant concrete arch bridge abandoned after a flood in 1938. The area attracts heavy recreational hiking, swimming, and fishing. Challenges include littering, intensive pedestrian foot traffic, and resource management.



20—EL SEGUNDO BLUE BUTTERFLY PRESERVE

<https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/el-segundo-butterfly-preserve>

The El Segundo Blue Butterfly Preserve near LAX is the largest, with an estimated 125,000 butterflies taking flight each summer. As a butterfly sanctuary, it is unique to be both adjacent to and maintained by a major airport. The preserve remains entirely closed off to the public, though remnants of the now-demolished Surfridge community infrastructure (paved roads, power lines, and fire hydrants) are still visible through fences from the sidewalks and paths that surround the preserve.

Primary partners: Los Angeles World Airport, City of Los Angeles



21—ELEPHANT HILL

Elephant Hill is a 110-acre open hillside in the El Sereno neighborhood of Northeast Los Angeles. It features oak and walnut woodlands, native scrub, and a spring/seep system, making it a valuable habitat for wildlife and native plants. Community groups in recent decades have successfully fought off urban development to secure protection of a portion of the hill, including 20 acres that the city acquired and about 8 acres that the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) now manages. Issues affecting Elephant Hill include illegal off-roading, dumping, and habitat disturbance. Local conservation efforts focus on land stewardship, native plant restoration, and creating safe public access trails.

Primary partners: MRCA, Save Elephant Hill

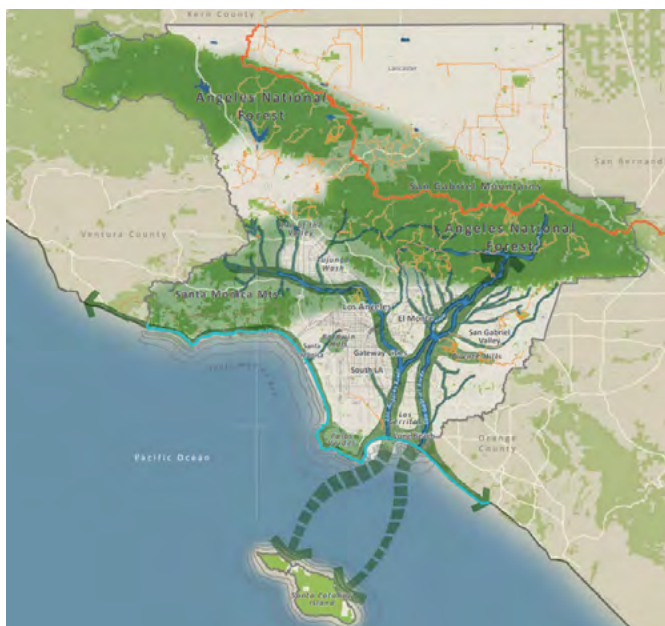


22—EMERALD NECKLACE

<https://amigosdelosrios.org/emerald-necklace/>

The Emerald Necklace is an interconnected loop of parks and greenways along LA County's urban waterways. Nestled in the heart of the San Gabriel Valley and extending from the San Gabriel Mountains to the Angeles National Forest down to the Pacific Ocean, the open space system provides desperately needed recreational areas. An expanded vision plan is grounded in a green infrastructure approach that emphasizes identifying and implementing multiple-benefit conservation, restoration, and recreation projects. Since 2005, the Emerald Necklace Vision has worked with five adjacent communities to implement multi-objective projects successfully.

Primary partners: Amigos de los Rios, The Conservation Fund



23—THE FAIRFAX PARCEL

The Fairfax Parcel is a 7.5-acre site purchased by the County in 1996 with Proposition A funds. The property contains seven oil wells that were previously plugged and abandoned but do not meet current state standards. In 2015, a review identified the need for re-abandonment, with estimated costs of \$1.9 million. The parcel lies within an Area of Priority for Environmental Restoration and Population Vulnerability. Parks is updating cost estimates and conducting technical investigations to define re-abandonment requirements. The long-term goal is to restore the site as a safe, accessible community space.

Primary partners: LA County Parks

24–HOAG/SENDEROS CANYON

Hoag Canyon, also called Senderos Canyon, is a 260-acre undeveloped parcel in Bel Air bordered by several adjacent neighborhoods and the 405 Freeway. The canyon features oak woodlands, annual grasslands, rugged canyons, rock outcroppings, and a perennial stream, making it a rich habitat for many plant and animal species. Most of the canyon remains undisturbed. In 2023, the Los Angeles City Council unanimously passed a motion urging the acquisition and preservation of the canyon, exploring partnerships and funding with agencies like the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. The goal is to preserve Hoag/Senderos Canyon as open space, support public access and recreational uses, and maintain ecological connectivity with nearby wilderness areas.

Primary partners: Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy

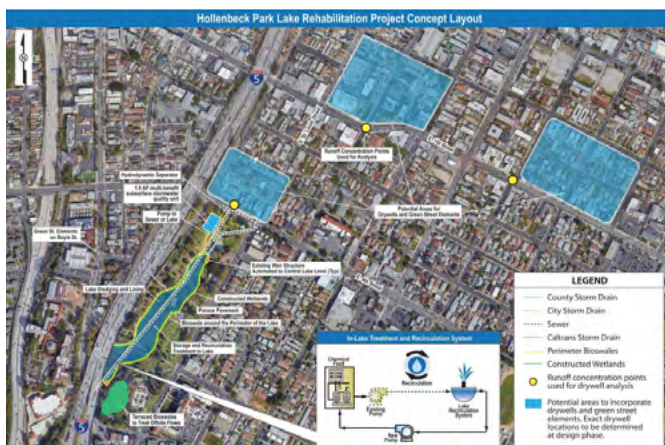


25–HOLLENBECK PARK LAKE RESTORATION

<https://safecleanwaterla.org/content/uploads/2023/01/IP-Hollenbeck-Park-Lake-Rehabilitation-Project.pdf>

The Hollenbeck Park Lake Restoration aims to improve water quality and increase water supply using stormwater diversions, storage capture, treatment structures, and green street network components. In doing so, the restoration will enhance recreational and educational opportunities and provide appealing green spaces for residents of the Boyle Heights community. The desired budget for planning, design, and construction is \$25 million.

Primary partners: Promesa Boyle Heights, City of Los Angeles Council District 14, Social Model Recovery Systems



26–HONDO OIL PROPERTY

This former Hondo Oil property offers potential habitat connection into the San Gabriel Mountains.

Primary partners: Sierra Club

27–100-ACRE PARTNERSHIP

<https://www.100acrepartnership.org/>

The 100-Acre Partnership is a joint effort that will collaboratively plan and develop the largest, continuous open space along the Los Angeles River on a former brownfield remediation site. Committed to nature-focused open space and the restoration of native habitat, the Partnership's projects are currently in the design, community engagement, environmental review, and construction phases. The project includes an equity strategy to benefit neighbors and lessen the risk of displacement and gentrification.

100-Acre Partnership includes the following:

- » G1 Bowtie parcel (18 acres)
- » G2 parcel, aka Taylor Yards (42 acres)
- » Rio De Los Angeles State Park (40 acres)

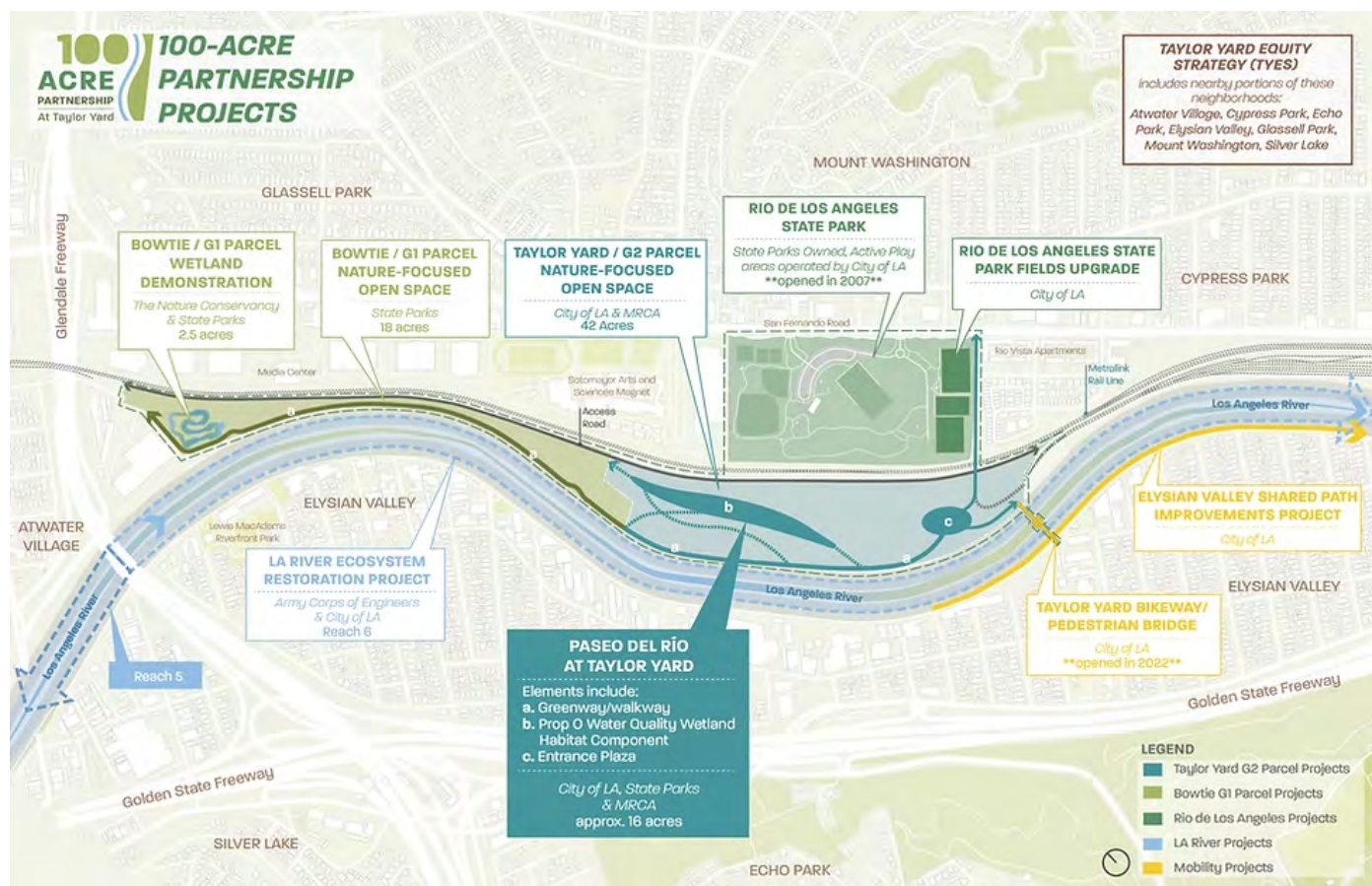
Primary partners: City of Los Angeles, California Department of Parks and Recreation (CA State Parks), Mountains and Recreation Conservation Association

28–JEFFERSON OIL FIELD

<https://www.nhslacounty.org/nonprofit-plans-to-transform-a-former-oil-drilling-site-in-south-l-a-into-affordable-housing/>

After a years-long neighborhood battle against an oil drilling site in South Los Angeles, a local nonprofit purchased the now-demolished facility and plans to transform the 1.86-acre site into a park, community center, and affordable housing. Purchased for \$10 million, the Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust and its partners are now seeking grants and other funding sources to pay for planning, remediation, and project execution.

Primary partner: Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust



29—KITE HILL

<https://silverlakeheritage.org/kite-hill>

Kite Hill is a 1-acre open space located north of the historic Baxter Stairs in the Elysian Heights neighborhood of Los Angeles. Kite Hill's name is derived from its windy setting, historically used for kite-flying. The area features native vegetation such as black walnut, Mexican elderberry, and toyon trees. A trail connects from the Baxter Stairs to John Lautner's Salkin House on Avon Terrace. A public space for many decades, the Kite Hill is under threat of development involving a proposed roadway that could degrade the habitat and block access. Community efforts aim to raise funds to allow the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy to acquire it as permanent open space.

Primary partners: Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, Silver Lake Heritage Trust



30—KURUVUNGNA SPRINGS, UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL

<https://gabrielinosprings.com>

Kuruvungna Springs, also called the Tongva Sacred Springs, is a historic natural spring site on the campus of University High School in West Los Angeles. Used by the Gabrieliño-Tongva people since at least 400 BC, the springs still produce roughly 20,000–25,000 gallons of fresh water daily. The site has deep cultural significance with archeological remains, including a native village. Damaged by neglect over the mid-20th century, the site was restored starting in the 1990s. Today, the springs are preserved as a place of Native heritage, ecological refuge, and public education. The site has monthly open-house hours and cultural events.

Primary partners: Gabrielino-Tongva Springs Foundation, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy



31—LAX NORTHSIDE LANDS

https://clkrep.lacity.org/online/docs/2013/13-0285-S3_misc_1_04-20-2016.pdf

Northside Lands focuses on future parks and open space potential for lands north of Westchester Parkway near LAX. The recreation concept for Northside Lands would develop recreation and open space uses and associated ancillary support facilities for use by the community, and community organizations, including programs for area students and youth sports. Sports fields to include multipurpose sports fields, volleyball, basketball, and tennis courts, and supportive ancillary facilities (parking, picnic areas, restrooms, dog park, welcome center, etc.).

Primary partners: Los Angeles World Airports, Board of Airport Commissioners



32—LOWER LA RIVER

<https://lowerlariver.org/>

The Lower Los Angeles River serves a critical role by managing flood risk and protecting life and property by collecting stormwater from surrounding areas and conveying it to the ocean. The River's paths and trails also provide a space for the community to recreate and travel within the region. Despite these functions, the River's potential value as a place for relaxation, discovery, recreation, tourism, and economic development is yet to be realized. Extensive planning has identified 155 multibenefit projects (including seven signature projects with more detailed analysis) within one mile on each side of the 19-mile river, with opportunity for expanded multiuse path systems, complete streets, river channel enhancements, and bridge crossing improvements.

Primary partners: Lower LA River Implementation Advisory Group, San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy, LA County Parks and Public Works



33—MARINERS VILLAGE MARQUESAS WAY ROOKERIES

There have been five main waterbird nesting colonies in Marina del Rey at Admiralty Way, Marquesas Way, Mariner's Village, in the vicinity of the fuelbait dock at the end of Bora Bora Way, and Villa Venetia. Historically, the colonies in this eight-acre area use mature trees for nesting, with opportunities to protect and expand rookery habitat.

Primary partners: Sierra Club



34—MONTEBELLO HILLS OIL FIELD

<https://www.sierraclub.org/angeles/save-montebello-hills-task-force>

A long-established Sierra Club vision for the Montebello Hills, a former oil drilling field, includes a mix of loop trails, walk-in access, picnic areas, and natural habitat, outdoor classrooms, gathering areas, and a concert amphitheater. Currently, a housing developer is in the process of construction on the large central portion of the Montebello Hills, which includes multi-family and single-family homes. High-quality, diverse park investments in the Montebello Hills are critical given the park and open space needs of future residents. Remaining spaces not part of the development can and should be used to provide some of the desired community needs for open space, natural habitat, walking trails, gathering areas, and picnic areas.

Primary partners: Sierra Club



35—NATIONAL RECREATION AREA ALONG SAN GABRIEL & RIO HONDO RIVERS

The San Gabriel/Rio Hondo National Recreation Area is a proposed 51,000-acre protected zone spanning the San Gabriel River corridor from the foothills near Azusa, through the San Gabriel Valley, down to Whittier Narrows. The plan aims to unite parks, trails, greenways, habitat areas, and cultural sites. The existing Santa Fe Dam Recreation Area and Whittier Narrows Recreation Area would fall within its boundaries. Benefits proposed include increased public access, environmental restoration, equitable recreation opportunities, and improved watershed management.

Primary partners: Sierra Club, National Park System (NPS)

36—NORTHERN ANGELES NATIONAL FOREST MONUMENT EXTENSION

<https://www.sierraclub.org/angeles/forest-committee>

The Northern Angeles National Forest Monument Extension proposal seeks to designate about 240,000 acres of Angeles National Forest north of Santa Clarita as a National Monument. Building on the existing San Gabriel Mountains National Monument, it includes rugged canyon and mountain lands, key wildlife corridors for species like the California condor, and culturally significant areas tied to the Tataviam and Chumash peoples. The aim is to safeguard natural resources from threats like mining, development, highways, and fragmentation, while improving recreation, heritage preservation, and environmental stewardship. Designation as a monument would bring increased protections, management resources, and recognition for biodiversity, cultural sites, and open space values in a region adjacent to urban Los Angeles.

Primary partners: NPS, US Forest Service, Sierra Club

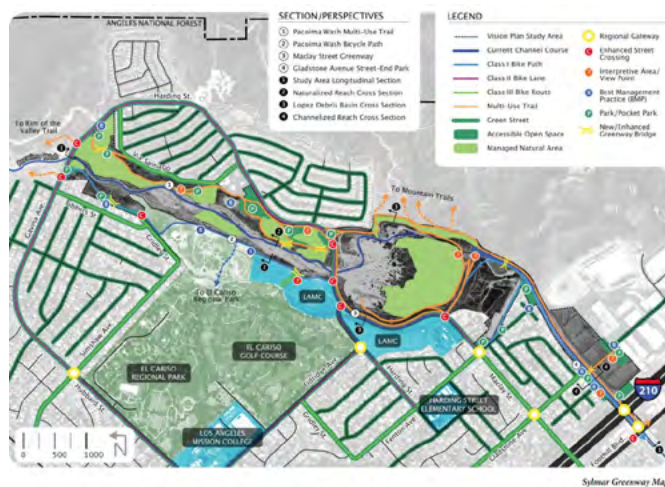


37—PACIOMA WASH GREENWAY

<https://www.pacoimabeautiful.org/programs/pacoima-wash>

The Pacoima Wash Greenway is a four-mile stretch of existing and planned multipurpose greenway along the embankments of the Pacoima Wash that connects current and future park spaces along it, including Cindy Montañez Natural Park, a 4.75-acre linear park completed by MRCA in 2014. The larger Pacoima Wash Greenway vision addresses environmental justice and health challenges in the San Fernando Valley with project goals promoting community health through creating connections that support active living, developing park and greenway space, restoring natural areas, improving water quality, and maintaining or improving existing levels of flood protection. The greenway is envisioned as the spine for multiple efforts to promote community connectivity, which include green streets, accessible open space, managed natural areas, interpretation, pocket parks, and other multi-modal and pedestrian-oriented investments. Design concepts exist for various segments and sub-areas along the greenway, from the more rural areas of Sylmar between the San Gabriel foothills to Highway 210, to more urbanized areas of Pacoima between Highway 210 to the wash Spreading Grounds west of I-5. Various state and local jurisdictions, agencies, and districts have purview over the future greenway project site, so coordination, shared vision, funding, and leadership are needed to continue implementation of this important community vision.

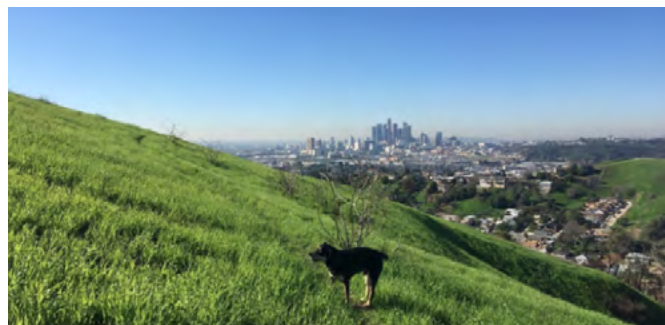
Primary partners: Pacoima Beautiful, LA County Parks



38—PARADISE HILL PROPERTY

Paradise Hill is a 30+ undeveloped hillside parcel located in the Lincoln Heights/Northeast LA. area, with borders near Highland Park, Montecito Heights, El Sereno, and Hermon. The land provides sweeping panoramic views of Downtown LA, Glendale, Pasadena, and the Catalina Islands. The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority has been negotiating to purchase the land, but faces funding challenges.

Primary partners: MRCA



39—PLAYA DEL REY SAND DUNES

The sand dunes at Playa del Rey are ancient wind-blown dunes, sometimes called the Del Rey Hills, rising up to 125 feet above sea level. The dunes run parallel to the coastline, from Playa del Rey southward toward Palos Verdes. This rare coastal dune ecosystem includes native vegetation, wildlife habitat, and scenic hills overlooking the ocean. Portions of the dunes have been disrupted by development, grading, and erosion. Local groups and regulatory agencies are pushing for protection and restoration.



40—POPPY PEAK

Poppy Peak is a historic district and hillside neighborhood of southwest Pasadena. Developed by William Carr beginning in 1924, the district features 45 residential properties built between 1935 and 1968. About 30 homes are notable for their Modern Movement architecture and were designed by prominent architects. The rugged terrain is marked by steep, narrow, winding roads, few sidewalks, and minimal front lawns, and the homes are designed to maximize views of the San Gabriel Mountains. Communities are working to preserve portions of the undeveloped hillsides at or around Poppy Peak, which offers views, open space, and native habitat. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2009.

Primary partners: Save Poppy Peak



41—PUENTE-CHINO HILLS WILDLIFE CORRIDOR

https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=21973

The Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor is a 31-mile stretch of undeveloped hills linking the Puente Hills Open Space (near Whittier) through Chino Hills State Park. The corridor provides habitat for over 100 wildlife species (mainly deer, mountain lions, bobcats, coyotes, and numerous birds and reptiles). It supports species of oak, walnut, sycamore woodland, and coastal sage scrub plant communities. The corridor provides wildlife connectivity as animals can cross under the 91 Freeway (via Coal Canyon). Animals can also use a wildlife underpass under Harbor Boulevard. Both these connections maintain movement between fragmented habitat patches. Major development pressures threaten to sever the corridor. Conservation efforts aim to prevent habitat loss and keep the wildlife corridor functional.

Primary partners: CA State Parks



42—PUENTE HILLS REGIONAL PARK

<https://puentehillslandfillpark.org/>

The once industrial landscape of the landfill will be re-tooled and reimaged to provide a natural recreational experience emphasizing the enjoyment of trails, outdoor fitness, scenic views, the history of the site, and the celebration of the flora and fauna of the majestic Puente Hills. The landfill's topography and geography will become the landscape of dynamic outdoor exploration and recreation experience, from quiet contemplation, to rigorous exercise, to ecological celebration. LA County Parks is excited to be leading the charge to convert the Puente Hills Landfill into an invaluable community asset of park lands, natural habitat, education, and community celebration for generations to come. A 2016 Master Plan outlines the desired outcome. In 2024, the project was awarded \$15 million by the National Park Service through the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Grants Program, a nationally competitive program that provides matching grants for park projects in underserved urban communities.

Primary partner: LA County Parks



43—PUVUNGNA NATIONAL REGISTER SITE CSLUB

<https://www.friendsofpuvungna.org>

Puvungna is an ancient and sacred site of the Tongva and Acjachemen peoples, located within and around the California State University, Long Beach campus. Recognized on the National Register of Historic Places since 1974, the site preserves remnants of a village, burial grounds, and ceremonial spaces tied to creation narratives. Over time, development pressures on surrounding land sparked protests, legal actions, and community efforts to protect the site. In 2021, a settlement granted permanent protection to approximately 22 acres of Puvungna and placed portions under a conservation easement, solidifying its status as a cultural, spiritual, and public heritage site.

Primary partners: Friends of Puvungna

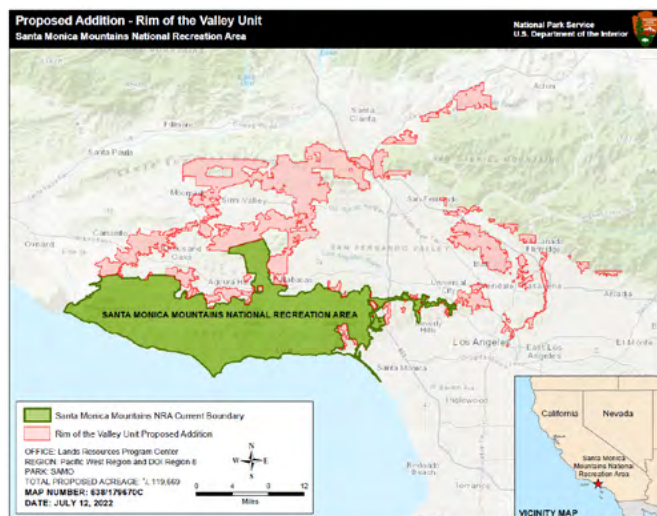


44—RIM OF THE VALLEY

<https://www.samofund.org/blog/rim-of-the-valley-corridor>

The 2023 Rim of the Valley Corridor Preservation Act expands the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area to nearly double its previous size. This new expansion will be known as the Rim of the Valley. As a result of the act, the National Park System (NPS) will have the authority to improve access to the land (e.g. trails, roads), study the wildlife, participate in conservation and recreation planning, coordinate programs with non-federal land management partners, provide technical assistance for protecting resources, and contribute financially to programs that protect natural resources.

Primary partners: NPS



45—SCHABARUM SKYLINE TRAIL

<https://trails.lacounty.gov/Trail/53/schabarum-skyline-trail>

Schabarum-Skyline Trail is a 29.7 mile long connector trail through open spaces and flood control channels connecting communities from Covina to Whittier. The trail allows recreational users and commuters to connect to a variety of other trails in the area, such as those in the Peter F. Schabarum Regional Park and Puente Hills Nature Preserve, as well as the San Gabriel and Rio Hondo River Trails. Safety and access improvements are needed where the existing trail passes under roads and railroad tracks.

Primary partners: LA County Parks



46—SAN GABRIEL & RIO HONDO RIVERS

<https://www.sierraclub.org/angeles/san-gabriel-valley-task-force>

Related to the Emerald Necklace but expanding to the San Gabriel River and Rio Hondo watersheds and tributaries, the goals are to restore the rivers' natural functioning; to set examples for conservation of water resources; and promote the cultural heritage and historic significance.

Primary partners: Active SGV, LA County Parks, Amigos de los Rios, Emerald Necklace Stewards

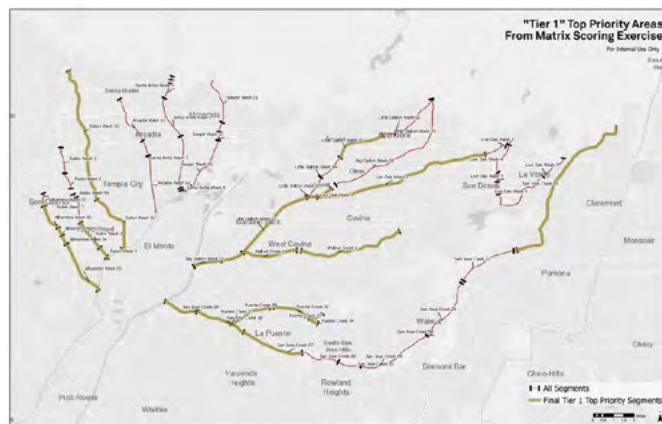


47—SGV GREENWAY NETWORK

<https://www.sgvgreenway.org/about>

In 2017, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution “to create a countywide network of interconnected, multi-use community greenways” by transforming the storm channels, washes, and creeks that feed into the San Gabriel and Rio Hondo Rivers into a modernized network of bicycle and pedestrian pathways in the San Gabriel Valley. The goal is to create 130 miles of bike paths, trails, and green spaces for everyone in the San Gabriel Valley along existing flood control channels.

Primary partners: Active SGV, City of Los Angeles, San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments, Los Angeles County DPW



48—SLAUSON RAIL TO RIVER

<https://www.metro.net/projects/r2rb/>

<https://la.streetsblog.org/2023/05/17/eyes-on-the-path-metro-posts-first-look-at-slauson-corridor-bike-walk-path-ahead-of-tonights-construction-update>

Segment B of the Rail to River project is a biking and walking path connecting A Line Slauson Station to the LA River. The Segment B Project is designed to create a safe, continuous corridor for biking and walking, extending approximately 4 miles east along Randolph Street from the Metro A Line Slauson Station to the Los Angeles River. This route will connect the cities of Bell, Maywood, Huntington Park, and the unincorporated Florence-Firestone community in Los Angeles County. The project is currently under design and environmental review, and is forecasted to open in 2027.

Primary partners: LA Metro, Baldwin Hills & Urban Watershed Conservancy, and the communities of Bell, Maywood, Huntington Park, and Florence-Firestone



49—TAYLOR YARD

<https://tayloryardriverprojects.lacity.gov/projects/taylor-yard-g2-river-park-project-final-draft-implementation-feasibility-report-ifr>

The Taylor Yard G2 River Park will be built on a 42-acre site acquired by the city in 2017 for \$60 million. The park's proposed recreational space, wetlands, and other amenities have been described by as the "crown jewel" of a broader ongoing initiative to restore 11 mi (18 km) of the Los Angeles River. Concept design alternatives were completed in 2019. The park is expected to be completed by 2028, in time for the Summer Olympics. A viewing platform will be built to enable the public to view changes to the river habitat. Taylor Yards is a component project of the larger 100-Acre Partnership (see priority project #12).

Primary partners: MRCA, City of Los Angeles, CA State Parks



50—TEMESCAL CANYON

<https://trails.lacounty.gov/Trail/285/temescal-canyon-trail>

Temescal Canyon is a scenic valley in Pacific Palisades. The Canyon is located along Pacific Coast Highway and offers shaded hiking trails, picnic areas, restrooms, and creek views. The Temescal Ridge/Loop Trail is about 3.1 miles long, with 1,500+ feet of elevation gain, providing sweeping views of Santa Monica Bay, the Los Angeles basin, and nearby ridges. The park contains native oaks, sycamores, chaparral, and seasonal waterfalls during wetter months. After the 2025 Palisades Fire, the park is undergoing restoration including repairing trails, landscape areas, and erosion control efforts.

Primary partners: State Parks, Temescal Canyon Association



51—THOUSAND TRAILS SOLEDAD CANYON

Thousand Trails Soledad Canyon is a 266-acre recreational vehicle and camping resort located in Acton. The park is nestled at the base of the San Gabriel Mountains in the Santa Clara watershed, offering a lush, shaded setting with cottonwood, Italian stone pine, palm, and elm trees. It features resort-style amenities, including two large pools, lodge facilities, picnic areas, mini-golf, playgrounds, and sports courts. With over 850 sites, the campground is open year-round and allows RVs, cabins, and tent camping. Located about one hour from major Los Angeles attractions, it offers a retreat atmosphere and accessible facilities.

Primary partners: TPL, SMMC, MRCA



52–TOES BEACH DUNES

Toes Beach Dunes is the northernmost part of Playa del Rey Beach, adjacent to Dockweiler Beach. The dunes are coastal sand formations that once represented a natural habitat of dune flora and fauna. Over time, development pressures and human impact have reduced and disturbed these dunes. The area is ecologically sensitive and protected under coastal habitat rules. Unpermitted grading has led to enforcement actions by the California Coastal Commission.

Primary partners: The Bay Foundation

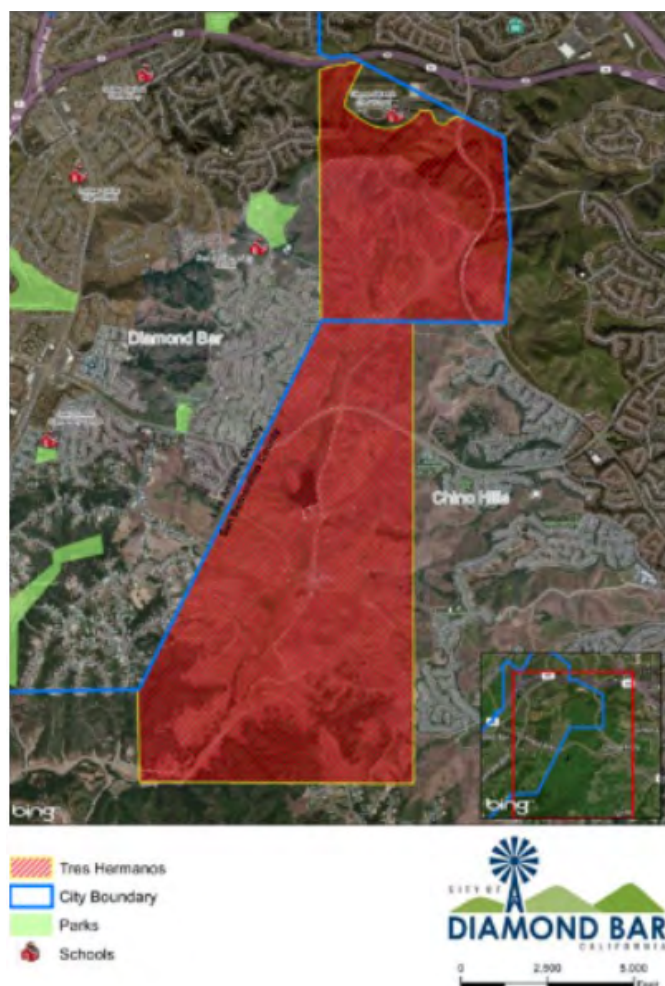


53–TRES HERMANOS

<https://treshermanos.org>

Tres Hermanos Ranch is a nearly 2,445-acre tract of undeveloped open space on the border of Diamond Bar and Chino Hills. It features oak woodlands, savannah, wetland springs, canyon creeks, grazing land, and habitat for wildlife like bobcats, golden eagles, and burrowing owls. In 2019, ownership transferred from the City of Industry to the newly re-constituted Tres Hermanos Conservation Authority, a joint powers body including Industry, Chino Hills, and Diamond Bar, with restrictions limiting land use to "open space, public use or preservation." There have been proposals to develop solar farms or housing, but community and municipal efforts emphasize conservation and connectivity to nearby wildlife corridors.

Primary partners: Tres Hermanos Conservation Authority



54—URBAN ORCHARD

<https://www.tpl.org/our-work/urban-orchard>
[https://www.cityofsouthgate.org/Government/Departments/
Public-Works/Capital-Improvement-Program-Projects/Urban-
Orchard-Project](https://www.cityofsouthgate.org/Government/Departments/Public-Works/Capital-Improvement-Program-Projects/Urban-Orchard-Project)

The future 7-acre Urban Orchard will have a grove of 200 fruit trees, walking paths, native landscaping, an educational building and gardens, and a nature-based playground. The park will feature an artificial wetland capable of capturing and filtering stormwater that inundates the land during the rainy winter months. Urban Orchard inspires the community to embrace the outdoors. This densely populated community faces elevated levels of air pollution and social vulnerability. Trust for Public Land aims to see residents thrive holistically and benefit from local job opportunities with the Conservation Corps of Long Beach. The project construction is anticipated to be completed in summer 2025. Ongoing funds will support orchard programming, volunteer efforts, needed amenities, and upkeep.

Primary partners: Trust for Public Land



URBAN ORCHARD

55—WATTS CULTURAL CRESCENT

<https://www.behrrowers.com/cultural-crecent-mp-watt>
The plan envisions a linear park design paralleling Santa Ana Boulevard that includes the historic Watts Train Station, new buildings housing multimedia training facilities, integration of the historic Watts Towers created by Italian immigrant Sabato “Simon” Rodia, passive park areas, and various other community-focused projects. The Crescent includes a planned amphitheater with a removable tensile shade canopy.

Primary partners: Trust for Public Land



SITE PLAN

56—WILLOW SPRINGS PARK

<https://www.longbeach.gov/park/park-and-facilities/directory/willow-springs-park---longview-point>

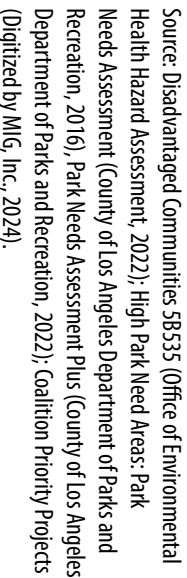
The Willow Springs Wetlands Restoration Project opened in October 2017. It restored 16 acres of a 48-acre degraded site into wetlands that highlight the pivotal role in Long Beach's establishment in the late 1800's by preserving the history and unique topography of the site.

The proposed restoration, led by the Conservation Corps of Long Beach, would gradually transform another 32 acres of unrestored park land using Proposition 68 funds. Plans call for removal of invasive plants and replacement with native species, new irrigation lines to establish growth, and 700 feet of pedestrian trail within the park space along a former dirt road.

Primary partners: Civilian Conservation Corps of Long Beach, City of Long Beach



Disadvantaged Communities and Park Need

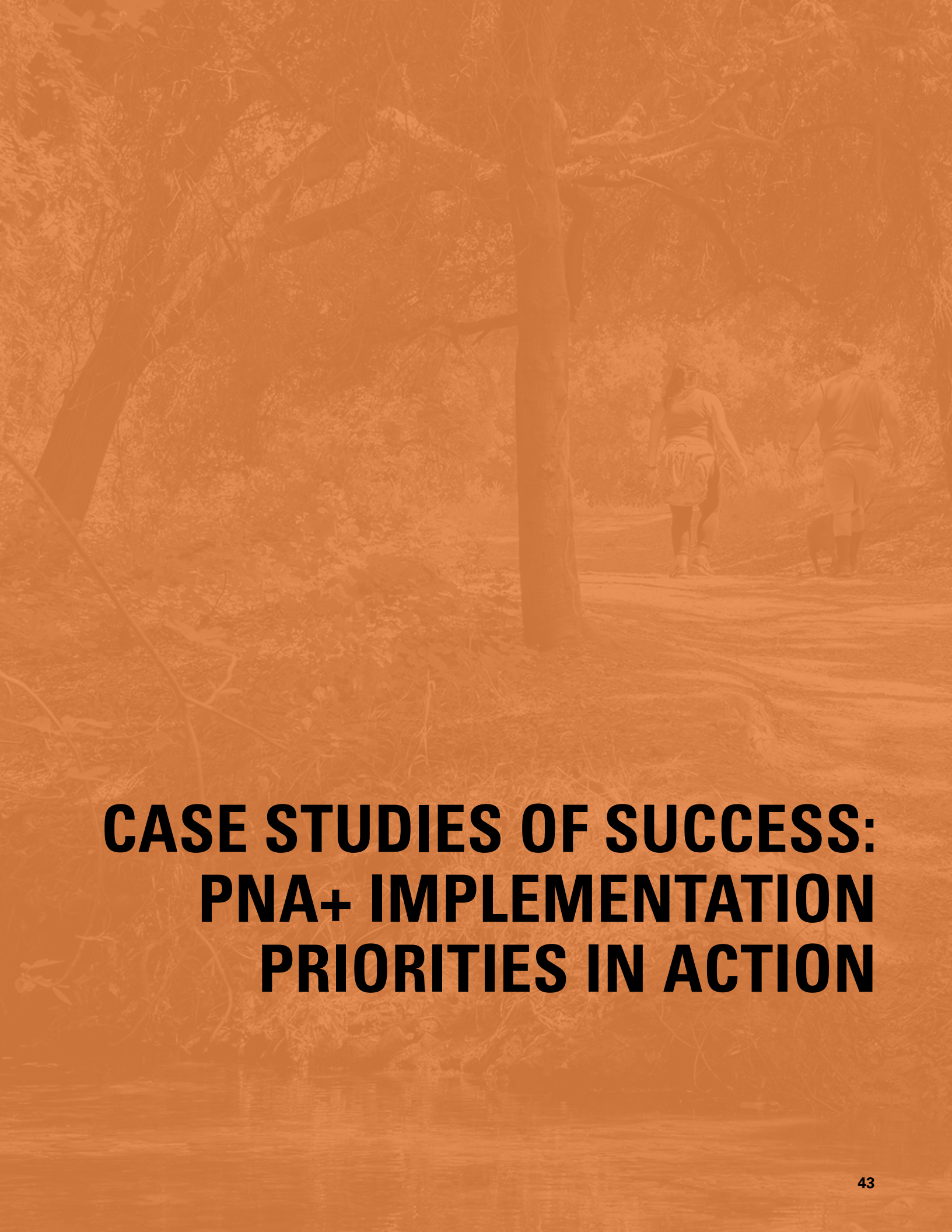


COALITION PRIORITY PARK PROJECTS IN HIGH PARK-NEED AND DISADVANTAGED AREAS

LABEL NUMBER AND PROJECT NAME

1	3701 Pacific Place, Long Beach, 90806	20	El Segundo Blue Butterfly Preserve	38	Paradise Hill Property
2	430 Acres Malibu	21	Elephant Hill	39	Playa del Rey Sand Dunes
3	6th Street Bridge Park	22	Emerald Necklace	40	Poppy Peak
4	92nd St Linear Park	23	Fairfax Parcel	41	Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor
5	Arroyo Seco Canyon Project	24	Hoag/Senderos Canyon	42	Puente Hills Regional Park
6	Ascot Hills	25	Hollenbeck Park Lake Restoration	43	Puvungna National Register Site CSU LB
7	Baldwin Hills Oil Field	26	Hondo Oil Property	44	Rim of the Valley
8	Baldwin Hills State Recreation Area/Scenic Overlook	27	Hundred-Acre Partnership	45	Schabarum Skyline Trail
9	Ballona Creek Bikepath	28	Jefferson Oil Field	46	SG & Rio Hondo Rivers
10	Ballona Wetlands	29	Kite Hill	47	SGV Greenway Network
11	Bird Island	30	Kuruvungna Springs, University High, LA	48	Slauson Rail to River
12	Caltrans Surplus Land in Lennox	31	LAX Northside Lands	49	Taylor Yard
13	Canyon Hills Proposed Development	32	Lower LA River	50	Temescal Canyon
14	Canyon Oaks Open Space	33	Mariners Village Marquesas Way Rookeries	51	Thousand Trails Soledad Canyon
15	Chatsworth Nature Preserve	34	Montebello Hills Oil Field	52	Toes Beach Dunes
16	Compton Creek	35	National Recreation Area Along SG & RH Rivers	53	Tres Hermanos
17	Del Rey Lagoon	36	Northern Angeles National Forest Monument Extension	54	Urban Orchard
18	Dunes Below LAX			55	Watts Cultural Crescent
19	East Fork SG River	37	Pacoima Wash	56	Willow Springs Park

Source: Disadvantaged Communities SB535 (Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, 2022); High Park Need Areas: Park Needs Assessment (County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation, 2016) and Park Needs Assessment Plus (County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation, 2022); Coalition Priority Projects (Digitized by MIG, Inc., 2024). Data contributions include projects from coalition partners such as the Sierra Club (100 Acre Partnership, SMMC, BH UWC, RMC), Advocating Agency, City of Pasadena, Canyon Hills Development, Save Elephant Hill, The River Project/FOLAR, and NPS. Note: Not all projects are mapped due to non-location-based initiatives or unverified locations.



CASE STUDIES OF SUCCESS: PNA+ IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES IN ACTION

AMARGOSA CREEK RECHARGE PROJECT AND AMARGOSA CREEK NATURAL TRAIL ENHANCEMENT PROJECT CASE STUDY

I. WATER NEEDS PRESENT PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES

In the City of Palmdale, two project development teams saw the opportunity to coordinate a water recharge project and habitat mitigation efforts with a trail enhancement project—with the ultimate goal of providing intersecting benefits for the community.¹ The City of Palmdale, like many areas in Southern California, invests in water conservation strategies to mitigate ongoing drought and looks for ways to improve parks and open space. To address these considerations, two projects were developed in proximity and partnership along Amargosa Creek.

The first project, the Upper Amargosa Creek Recharge Project (Recharge Project), was completed in 2020 and helps to address drought conditions in the area. The project aims to reduce reliance on imported water while undertaking habitat improvements. Nearby, the Amargosa Creek Natural Trail Enhancement Project (Trail Enhancement Project), which is estimated to break ground in 2025, will build upon existing trail networks in the region and bring additional recreation amenities to the community.²

II. PROJECT COORDINATION

Project teams, which included the City of Palmdale, State of California Department of Water Resources, Los Angeles County Water District, Palmdale Water District, and Antelope Valley East Kern Water Agency (AVEK), working on the Recharge Project and Trail Enhancement Project saw an opportunity to maximize the City's investments through co-located projects. The Recharge Project was initially developed to improve groundwater levels for the City of Palmdale and provide habitat restoration for the area. Groundwater levels had been declining by about 200 feet a year since the 1990s and were exacerbated by ongoing drought.³ The Recharge Project sought to expand AVEK's water supply portfolio by recharging about 1,600-2,350 acre- feet of water per year. This expansion would reduce the area's reliance on imported water from the State Water Project.^{4, 5} The Recharge Project was completed in 2020 but disturbed local habitat in its construction. As part of the project's approval, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife required habitat mitigation of 25 acres along Amargosa Creek.^{6, 7} This habitat mitigation effort included restoration of juniper tree woodland, Joshua tree woodland, rubber rabbitbrush scrub, and enhancement of California buckwheat scrub, and Great Basin sage scrub.⁸

Adjacent to the site of the Recharge Project is a trail system that connects to nearby foothills. The Trail Enhancement Project builds upon and expands this existing network. The Trail Enhancement Project is still underway but once completed, it will span 50 acres of habitat, preserving juniper and Joshua trees. It will also provide residents with hiking trail improvements, new trailheads, picnic tables, educational signage, fitness equipment, bicycle repair infrastructure, and fishing and camping opportunities.⁹

III. GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY COLLABORATION

The development of the Recharge Project and Trail Enhancement Project is a testament to the benefits that can be realized when government agencies coordinate and collaborate. Without collaboration and funds from various agencies, the projects likely would not have been developed.

Project partners for the Recharge Project included the City of Palmdale, the State of California Department of Water Resources, Los Angeles County Water District, and Antelope Valley East Kern Water Agency (AVEK). Thanks to this partnership, the Recharge Project was completed for a budget of \$16 million.

Funding sources for the Recharge Project include:¹⁰

- » \$6,500,000 from Proposition 1E. Proposition 1E funds stormwater management projects and is managed by the Department of Water Resources.¹¹
- » \$3,000,000 from the City of Palmdale
- » \$2,500,000 from Antelope Valley East Kern Water Agency
- » \$1,250,000 from LA County Water District
- » \$1,250,000 from Palmdale Water District

The Trail Enhancement Project was led by the City of Palmdale. Funding sources for the Trail Enhancement Project include:^{12, 13}

- » \$1,000,000 from Measure A under the City Natural Lands, Local Beaches, Water Conservation and Protection grant and an additional \$780,000 contribution from the City of Palmdale. Measure A funds projects that improve and protect open space, watersheds, and water resources through the acquisition, development, improvement, and restoration of multi-benefit projects.

IV. ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Governmental agency collaboration can lead to more robust funding

Having multiple government agencies collaborate on the Recharge Project opened opportunities to apply to multiple funding sources, which made the ambitious project a reality.

Water recharge is proving successful

Thanks to the collaboration of the project team, the Recharge Project has already started to successfully recharge the local aquifer and store water for future use during times of drought.¹⁴ The Recharge Project also intends to utilize recycled water (if allowed) for homes and businesses within the area.¹⁵

Identifying complementary projects led to more community benefits

Coordination of the Recharge Project and Trail Enhancement Project by the City of Palmdale and various project partners exemplifies how drought and habitat mitigation and enhancement projects can work together to provide increased community benefits. Investment in both projects will result in increased water resilience and improved recreation opportunities in the community for years to come.



Credit: Visit Palmdale

¹ (FN/EN). Interview with project manager, December 19, 2024.

² Ibid.

³ Christensen, Allen H., Adam J. Siade, Peter Martin, Victor E. Langenheim, Rufus D. Catchings, and Matthew K. Burgess. "Feasibility and Potential Effects of the Proposed Amargosa Creek Recharge Project, Palmdale, California." U.S. Geological Survey, 2015. <https://www.usgs.gov/publications/feasibility-and-potential-effects-proposed-amargosa-creek-recharge-project-palmdale>.

⁴ "Upper Amargosa Creek Recharge Project." Antelope Valley-East Kern Water Agency. Accessed June 24, 2024. <https://www.avek.org/upper-amargosa-creek-recharge-project>.

⁵ (FN/EN). Interview with project manager, December 19, 2024.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ "Upper Amargosa Creek Recharge Project." Antelope Valley-East Kern Water Agency. Accessed June 24, 2024. <https://www.avek.org/upper-amargosa-creek-recharge-project>.

⁸ PSOMAS. "Mitigation Areas: Amargosa Creek Realignment Project," 2023.

⁹ "Amargosa Creek Trail | Palmdale, CA." Accessed January 6, 2025. <https://www.cityofpalmdaleca.gov/992/Amargosa-Creek-Trail>.

¹⁰ "Upper Amargosa Creek Recharge Project." Antelope Valley-East Kern Water Agency. Accessed June 24, 2024. <https://www.avek.org/upper-amargosa-creek-recharge-project>.

¹¹ "Proposition 1E Stormwater Flood Management Grant Proposals: Upper Amargosa Creek Flood Control, Recharge, and Habitat Restoration Project." City of Palmdale, April 15, 2011. <https://pw.lacounty.gov/wwd/avirwmp/docs/City%20of%20Palmdale%20Prop%201E%20Application.pdf>.

¹² "Amargosa Creek Trail Enhancement Project." City of Palmdale. Accessed June 24, 2024. <https://www.cityofpalmdaleca.gov/1186/Amargosa-Creek-Trail-Enhancement-Project>.

¹³ (FN/EN). Interview with project manager, December 19, 2024.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ "Upper Amargosa Creek Recharge Project." Antelope Valley-East Kern Water Agency. Accessed June 24, 2024.

CINDY MONTAÑEZ NATURAL PARK CASE STUDY

I. FROM A DUMPING GROUND TO A MULTI-BENEFIT PARK

Situated along the Pacoima Wash in the City of San Fernando, Cindy Montañez Natural Park provides 4.75 acres of green space to the surrounding community. Originally called the Pacoima Wash Natural Park, the park was renamed in 2023 to honor the late San Fernando Council Member Cindy Montañez.¹ The Northeast San Fernando Valley is densely populated and partially industrial, and residents have faced issues with industrial pollution and lack of open space. The site that is now Cindy Montañez Park was previously a vacant lot used as an illegal dumping ground, which negatively impacted both the surrounding environment and community.² Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) and the City of San Fernando partnered to transform it into a unique space that would provide multiple benefits for the neighborhood.³

Cindy Montañez Park's features create social benefits and recreational opportunities for the surrounding community. Space for picnicking, bird watching, and gathering are dispersed throughout the park and are linked by a half-mile trail for walking and jogging. Other amenities include shade structures and arbors, turf for free play, educational signage, and an entrance plaza that has an area for seating and public gatherings. These features promote recreation and engagement with the park and others.

Cindy Montañez Park's environmental amenities, such as its sophisticated stormwater management system, surround and enhance its recreational amenities. A prominent and innovative feature of the park is two placitas, which are small circular concrete plazas designed in the Spanish mission style. They discreetly swirl, slow down, and pass runoff through a system of grates and filters, then divert it into a stony creek bed parallel to the Pacoima Wash. This bed acts as a bioswale, where the runoff percolates into the ground and helps replenish the San Fernando Groundwater Basin. Cindy Montañez Park was one of the first in Los Angeles County to integrate stormwater management in this manner; the placitas are aesthetically pleasing and blend seamlessly with other park elements while capturing up to 371,000 gallons of water from a 33-acre area.

Cindy Montañez Park is also defined by its plant palette, featuring riparian and drought-tolerant plants that are native to the Los Angeles River Watershed, as well as a wildflower meadow. This landscaping is not only visually pleasing but creates habitat for and facilitates the movement of wildlife, primarily bird species.^{4,5}

II. TRANSFORMING A VACANT AND POLLUTED PARCEL INTO A PARK

The dumping ground before Cindy Montañez Park

The Pacoima Wash was constructed in the 1940s as a 10-mile-long flood control channel. It was a purely utilitarian conduit for water and was fenced off from the surrounding communities. Prior to Cindy Montañez Park, the Pacoima Wash was considered unclean and hazardous as it was typically filled with trash and polluted runoff from the urban surface water that entered it from many culverts when it rained.⁶ This water carried litter, sediment from construction sites, nutrients and bacteria from pet waste and fertilizers, heavy metals from automobile parts, household building materials, and other pollutants. 8th St, the property near the Pacoima Wash that would become Cindy Montañez Park, was often littered with garbage and abandoned home appliances.

In addition to being a hotspot for runoff pollution, the Pacoima Wash was one of several physical barriers in the area that impeded efficient travel and contributed to air pollution. The neighborhood surrounding Cindy Montañez Park lies at the intersection of freeways, railroad tracks, industrial buildings, and the Pacoima Wash. These elements created barriers for transit-dependent residents and pedestrians to navigate their neighborhood. It was difficult for residents to connect to each other and to park space, despite San Fernando being near other green spaces, such as the Angeles National Forest.⁷



Credit: Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority

The development of Cindy Montañez Park

Cindy Montañez Park was conceptualized as a part of an effort to create a multi-purpose greenway, which is a corridor of undeveloped land preserved for recreation or environmental protection, along the Pacoima Wash to simultaneously address its environmental, social, and health challenges. In 2003, the cities of San Fernando and Los Angeles commissioned a planning study by Cal Poly Pomona's Landscape Architecture Program to design a greenway along the Pacoima Wash.⁸ The study included a series of community outreach surveys and workshops to gain input and support from stakeholders for converting the Pacoima Wash into a multi-purpose amenity.⁹ This process received overwhelming public interest and support, and resulted in the adoption of the study by the City of San Fernando as the Pacoima Wash Greenway Master Plan for improvements along the Wash.¹⁰

In April of 2005, MRCA released the Pacoima Wash Greenway Plan which included plans for a park on the 8th St property. MRCA purchased this property after the community objected to a proposal to convert the property into a storage facility.¹¹ Representatives from MRCA met with the City's ad hoc Pacoima Wash Committee and City staff to request that the City apply for grant funding for the park's planning and construction. In July of the same year, the City applied for the Proposition 50 Grant Program, and in 2006, MRCA was awarded the grant.¹² Construction on the park began in 2008 but was halted a few months later due to the California state bond freeze. In 2011, MRCA resumed construction, and the park was opened to the public in 2014.¹³

The opening of Cindy Montañez Park

The opening of Cindy Montañez Park elicited a sense of pride in the community. Then-Senator Kevin de Leon told the Los Angeles Times, "For too long, green parks and open space were an entitlement for certain parts of our city, certain parts of our state. In Latino communities, there are no parks or open space ... Our children deserve access to open space".¹⁴ Cindy Montañez Park brought beautiful, open green space to a neglected and polluted parcel of land.

The construction of the park initiated a broader effort led by community groups to create a greenway along the entire length of the Pacoima Wash. Namely, Pacoima Beautiful created the Pacoima Wash Vision Plan in 2012, which presented plans for greenways in Pacoima and Sylmar that would link with Cindy Montañez Park.¹⁵

III. CROSS-AGENCY PARTNERSHIPS

The collaboration between MRCA, which is a joint powers authority, and the City of San Fernando was crucial in successfully planning, constructing, and operating the park. The two parties signed a memorandum of understanding in 2008 before commencing construction, which helped clearly define their roles. MRCA would take full responsibility for the design, development, and construction of the park, as well as maintenance—including landscaping and other park elements such as benches or trash receptacles—for a three-year period. At the end of this period, they would assist the City in finding another organization to assume maintenance duties. The City of San Fernando would agree to full cooperation during the development and construction of the park, including waiving associated fees. The City would also install irrigation and potable water services in the park, as well as provide street sweeping services to the placitas and maintenance to the sediment traps.¹⁶

IV. FUNDING CINDY MONTAÑEZ PARK

The total cost for the planning, engineering, and construction of Cindy Montañez Park was \$3.4 million. The three main funding sources that contributed to this were:

- » \$1,634,183 from Proposition 50: The Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Bond Act of 2002. \$1,061,858 was granted by Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC), while \$572,325 was from the California Department of Water Resources' Integrated Regional Water Management Plan funding, a collaborative effort to implement water management solutions on a regional scale.
- » \$1.2M from Proposition 84: The Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006. This funding was granted by SMMC.
- » \$100,000 from Supervisorial District 3: This funding was used to purchase and plant about 150 new trees.^{17,18}

V. ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Multi-benefit infrastructure is crucial

Cindy Montañez Park is a model of how to create multi-benefit infrastructure that helps address critical regional water issues while providing much-needed park space in Los Angeles' urban areas. Space is often scarce in Los Angeles County and existing infrastructure, like the Pacoima Wash, can present opportunities for park development, but come with their own challenges.

Communities also have various social, recreational, and environmental needs that can be challenging to address. However, Cindy Montañez Park seamlessly addresses these environmental and social needs in San Fernando by incorporating infrastructure to clean water and garbage pollution and recharge the groundwater while providing social and recreational opportunities, demonstrating that parks can and should provide multi-benefits.

¹ "Celebrating Cindy Montanez: A Driving Force Behind TreePeople's Remarkable Growth and Impact." TreePeople, October 23, 2023.

² Branson-Potts, Hailey. "Pacoima Wash Is Getting a Makeover." Los Angeles Times, June 9, 2014. <https://www.latimes.com/local/la-me-pacoima-wash-20140609-story.html>.

³ "Pacoima Wash – 8th Street Park: Multiple Benefit Natural Park Project." Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, Unpublished document.

⁴ Jao, Carren. "New Pacoima Park Provides Open Space and Water Replenishment." PBS SoCal, January 19, 2014. <https://www.pbssocal.org/shows/earth-focus/new-pacoima-park-provides-open-space-and-water-replenishment>.

⁵ "8th Street Park – Pacoima Wash: Project Goals." Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, Unpublished document.

⁶ "The Water Issue." Symbiosis: Newsletter of the MRCA, Winter 2014. <https://www.crp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/MRCA-Newsletter-Symbiosis-The-Water-Issue.pdf>

⁷ Branson-Potts, "Pacoima Wash Is Getting a Makeover."

⁸ "Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperative Agreement (MOU) Between the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) and the City of San Fernando." Unpublished document, July 1 2008.

⁹ "Pacoima Wash Greenway Master Plan." Department of Landscape Architecture, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, June 2004.

¹⁰ "Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperative Agreement (MOU) Between the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) and the City of San Fernando." Unpublished document, July 1 2008.

¹¹ "Pacoima Wash Natural Park Talking Points." Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, Unpublished document, May 2015.

¹² "Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperative Agreement (MOU) Between the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) and the City of San Fernando." Unpublished document, July 1 2008.

¹³ "Pacoima Wash Presentation Text." Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, Unpublished document, September 8, 2011.

¹⁴ Branson-Potts, "Pacoima Wash Is Getting a Makeover." Los Angeles Times, June 9, 2014. <https://www.latimes.com/local/la-me-pacoima-wash-20140609-story.html>.

¹⁵ "Pacoima Wash Vision Plan: Imagining a new multipurpose greenway for the Northeast San Fernando Valley." Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Accessed June 13, 2024. http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/place/docs/Pacoima_Wash_Vision_Plan%20Book_FINAL.pdf

¹⁶ "Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperative Agreement (MOU) Between the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) and the City of San Fernando." Unpublished document, July 1 2008.

¹⁷ "The Water Issue." Symbiosis: Newsletter of the MRCA, Winter 2014. <https://www.crp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/MRCA-Newsletter-Symbiosis-The-Water-Issue.pdf>

¹⁸ Pacoima Wash Greenway – Eighth Street Park: Summary of Funding." Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, Unpublished document.

EARVIN “MAGIC” JOHNSON RECREATION AREA CASE STUDY

I. A WORLD-CLASS PARK FOR AN UNDERSERVED COMMUNITY

Earvin “Magic” Johnson Recreation Area (EMJ) is a critical community resource that provides space for recreation, community events, and environmental benefits for the wider region. EMJ is located in Willowbrook, a high park need neighborhood in South Los Angeles.¹ This dense residential area is home to a quarter million youth living within a five-mile radius.² The park has undergone various renovations with the most recent renovation completed in 2022.^{3,4} Encompassing over 100 acres, the park was once an oil storage site and then a housing site. EMJ now features green space for recreation as well as a community center, outdoor classrooms, wedding area, computer lab, game room, dog park, educational native garden, outdoor amphitheater, picnic areas, children’s play area, splash pad, fitness equipment, and walking trails.⁵ In addition to these community benefits, the park employs innovative water recycling practices at the lake which provide numerous environmental benefits.⁶

II. TOXIC CONDITIONS IMPACT PARK SITE

The site of EMJ has undergone several transformations in its evolution from oil field to park. From the 1920s through the 1960s, the site was home to an oil processing and storage facility despite its proximity to residential areas.⁷ After the oil field ceased operations, part of the site became home to Ujima Village (Ujima) in the 1970s. Home to approximately 600 renters and owners, Ujima offered an opportunity for working-class Black families to be homeowners.⁸ Ujima Village was situated next to EMJ for a number of years and residents had access to the pre-renovation park space.⁹

The dream of Ujima did not last and conditions at the site left lasting impacts on a community in need. Ujima fell into disrepair by the 1990s and was taken over by LA County. The Department of Housing and Urban Development conducted an environmental investigation where they found chemicals on the site but determined they did not pose a significant threat to the health of residents. However, a civil lawsuit detailed how tenants living at the site were collectively getting sick, with 38 deaths tied to the contamination of the site.¹⁰ In 2007, the Regional Water Board issued an order to the County Housing Authority and ExxonMobil directing assessment, monitoring, and cleanup of the site consistent with the US Environmental Protection Agency’s requirements. This required residents to relocate, and many had to leave the area due to relocation funds not

covering the cost of homes in the area.¹¹ By 2008, LA County was ordered to clean up the site and Ujima was closed.¹²

III. COMMUNITY FEEDBACK SHAPES PARK FEATURES

Community feedback shaped the design process of EMJ and ultimately resulted in features that better meet community needs. Prior to the renovation, EMJ was heavily used despite its state of disrepair due to poor maintenance.¹³ The Department of Parks and Recreation underwent a robust community engagement process during the master planning and design phase of the park’s renovation. Several community engagement events took place at the nearby Athens Park and at EMJ. Local community churches were instrumental in driving participation to engagement events.¹⁴

Community members were presented with multiple design options and potential park features. The community center, which was a \$22 million construction project, was central to the project.¹⁵ The center has helped create space for community organizations to host events and implement programming. Community member feedback also impacted the location and inclusion of proposed park features. Moving the location of the dog park to a different side of the site was in direct response to community members’ desire for an off-leash dog park, the first of its kind in South LA. The park design initially included an equestrian center, which was removed due to concerns from residents about smell and noise.¹⁶

IV. ROBUST FUNDING PAVES THE WAY FOR A CUTTING-EDGE PARK

Renovating EMJ from the once polluted oil farm and shepherding it through various iterations that did not fully meet community needs was no small feat. The most recent renovation phase of EMJ carried an \$83 million price tag with all phases of the renovation project estimated to cost \$135 million.^{17,18} Funding sources for this massive renovation effort included: ^{19,20}

- » \$28 million from LA County Public Works
- » Proposition O: Clean Water Bond which funds projects that prevent and remove pollutants from regional waterways and oceans.²¹

Funding sources for future renovation phases include:^{22,23}

- » \$3.74 million from Measure A which provides funding for capital improvement projects under the Community-based Park Investment Program and Neighborhood Parks, Healthy Communities, & Urban Greening Program through the collection of a parcel tax.

V. ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Innovative water recycling practices

Today, the recycled water lake at EMJ is one of its defining and most successful features. It was also an inspired engineering and design decision that solved a funding and environmental challenge. Originally, the landscape design team thought they would have to drain the lake due to concerns with groundwater pollution infiltrating the lake. However, securing funding from LA County Public Works facilitated the decision to make the lake a net zero recycled water system. It was less expensive to introduce a recycled water system than it would be to drain the lake. This decision freed up about half of the anticipated budget for other park features, many of which were covered by Proposition O.²⁴

The recycled water system treats stormwater from the Compton Creek watershed to remove pollutants and bacteria, replenish the lake's water, and irrigate the park's landscaping. Any excess recycled water is released back into Compton Creek.²⁵ This system helps to mitigate coastal pollution.²⁶ Maintaining EMJ's lake and restoring the wetlands has also introduced new habitat for fish and birds, with new species of birds sighted at the park by ornithologists.²⁷

Operations and maintenance funding challenges and successes

Many parks in Los Angeles struggle with securing long-term funding for operations and maintenance. EMJ has had some recent success. In 2023, Public Works applied to and was awarded funding from the LA County Safe Clean Water Program to help fund the ongoing maintenance of the park's stormwater features and to fund additional park enhancements.²⁸



Credit: MIG

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- ⁴ "2021 Sustainable Innovation Award Case Study Earvin Magic Johnson Park." PACE Advanced Water Engineering, 2023. <https://pacewater.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Earvin-Magic-Johnson-Park-SIA-Case-studies.pdf>.
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- ⁸ "What's Hiding in Plain Sight at Magic Johnson Park? Maybe a Solution to Our Water Problem." Los Angeles Times, May 20, 2021. <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/story/2021-05-20/magic-johnson-park-water-capture-station>.
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- ¹¹ Hennessey-Fiske, Molly. "Ujima Village, a Onetime Urban Oasis, Closes Down." Los Angeles Times, April 17, 2009. <https://www.latimes.com/local/la-me-outthere17-2009apr17-story.html>.
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- ¹⁵ 3QC Inc. "Los Angeles County, Earvin 'Magic' Johnson Community Center." Accessed January 28, 2025. <https://3qcinc.com/portfolio/los-angeles-county-magic-johnson-community-center/>.
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- ¹⁷ Sharp, Steven. "\$83-Million Renovation of Willowbrook's Earvin 'Magic' Johnson Park Completed | Urbanize LA," February 17, 2021. <https://la.urbanize.city/post/83-million-renovation-willowbrooks-earvin-magic-johnson-park-completed>.
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- ²⁰ "South LA's Earvin 'Magic' Johnson Park Renovation-Lai & Murdoch on Design, Sustainability & Community Enhancement." The Planning Report, September 2021. <https://www.planningreport.com/2021/09/28/south-la-s-earvin-magic-johnson-park-renovation-lai-murdoch-design-sustainability>.
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LINEAR PARKS CASE STUDY

I. WHAT ARE LINEAR PARKS?

Often built along facilities such as electrical lines, railroads, roadways, or waterfronts, linear parks are unique from other parks in that they are significantly longer than they are wide. Despite their non-traditional shape, linear parks can effectively connect neighborhoods, give opportunities for exercise and recreation, and provide access to urgently needed green space in urban areas. Due to its relatively small and narrow footprint, this park typology is particularly effective at providing green space in dense urban environments with limited open space.

II. SMALL FOOTPRINT, BIG IMPACT

Located on a narrow, formerly unused parcel of land directly adjacent to the I-105 freeway in Lynwood, California, Senator Ricardo Lara Linear Park is a strong example of how to transform a small or underutilized parcel of land into a space for recreation and well-being. Completed in 2016, Ricardo Lara Park is a 5.2-acre park spanning a length of approximately one mile.¹ At just 45 feet wide, the park highlights how municipalities can take advantage of seemingly limited and undesirable open space. Transformed from a long strip of dirt encompassing five city blocks into a linear park, this narrow plot of land is now a community asset that serves more than 26,000 neighbors in Lynwood and improves social cohesion throughout the neighborhood by providing space for community gatherings.

This project highlights how linear parks can remedy the negative impacts of freeways built in the 20th century. The park features include landscaping, a community garden, fitness stations, play structures, a different theme for each city block, and a series of plaques that tell the story of Lynwood's history.² These features have improved connectivity and a sense of community while simultaneously reducing environmental and health burdens in Lynwood.

III. RECLAIMING THE LAND

When the I-105 freeway was constructed in the 1990s, it cut directly through the predominantly working-class city of Lynwood, severing the community and exacerbating environmental, health, and economic burdens for residents. The freeway reduced walkability in the neighborhood while simultaneously increasing harmful pollutants from automobiles. The park is located within a census tract that is now in the 93rd percentile statewide for pollution burden, with extremely high exposure to diesel particulate matter, particulate matter 2.5, and other toxic releases.³

In 2002, the city of Lynwood took a step towards ameliorating these harms by purchasing the property from Caltrans at a significant discount.⁴ The City's redevelopment agency originally bought the property for a future residential housing development, but a feasibility study determined that the site was not a good fit.⁵ After letting the property sit idle for several years, the City shifted gears and began planning a linear park on the unused site.

In 2010, the City started conducting community outreach to turn the vacant property into a park.⁶ Project staff noted that the City was very intentional about engagement to ensure that the surrounding community felt a sense of ownership over the project.⁷ The outreach team went door to door to invite residents to the site and gather feedback on the design. The City incorporated feedback from the community on how to reduce the harm caused by the freeway, and the community suggested providing a community garden, a community gathering space, green space, and opportunities to walk or exercise.⁸ The community was also heavily involved in the design and creation of the artistic elements of the park; the park even includes mosaics that incorporate drawings and designs from the community.



Credit: Jonnu Singleton

IV. FUNDING

The City of Lynwood relied on a combination of internal and external funding sources to complete the project:

- » \$3,949,957 from Proposition 84: The Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act (Prop 84) provides funding for projects that provide safe drinking water, protect the public from flooding, protect waters of the State from pollution and habitat destruction, protect coastal areas for future generations, and provide for sustainable and livable communities through urban greening.⁹
- » \$1,579,238 from the City of Lynwood: This funding comes from a variety of sources, including their “Art of Public Places” program and general fund dollars.

OTHER LINEAR PARKS

V. VETERANS PARK

Veterans Park, a half-mile linear park in the city of Huntington Park, is another excellent example of how the region can convert underutilized corridors into vibrant, linear community parks. Located underneath high-voltage power lines, Veterans Park shows how municipalities can creatively maximize existing infrastructure and build multi-use public spaces. Measuring just fifty feet wide and over half a mile long, the park’s unique footprint allowed it to take advantage of the compact and seemingly unusable land under the existing power lines. This design provides a blueprint for how other municipalities can use existing infrastructure to create more green space. Largely funded through the California Natural Resources Agency’s Urban Greening Program, the park features bioswales, a biking trail, fitness stations, and a playground.¹⁰ The northern end of the park is located just two blocks from Metro’s future Southeast Gateway light rail line, thus serving as a key first-last mile connection that will benefit communities serviced by the future line.



Credit: Joe Linton/Streetsblog L.A.



Credit: Chris Greenspon/SBLA

VI. MERCED AVENUE LINEAR PARK

The City of El Monte recently completed Merced Avenue Linear Park, a quarter-mile linear park doubling as a street median and designed to increase safety and park space in a park-poor community. Before El Monte built this linear park, Merced Avenue looked like countless other wide residential streets in SoCal that encourage speeding and discourage pedestrian use. Because this kind of roadway is so prevalent in the region, municipalities in LA County have ample opportunities to implement this park typology. Linear parks in street medians can be an effective way for municipalities to improve existing automobile infrastructure while increasing desperately needed green space in LA County. The park features picnic tables, tree canopy, space for walking and cycling, and landscaping to capture and clean water runoff.¹¹ This small park replaces a neighborhood street that suffered from hostile pedestrian infrastructure and frequent reports of speeding.¹² Funded by Measure W, this multi-benefit park makes the street safer for pedestrians, provides community gathering spaces, and replenishes the region's groundwater with sustainable infrastructure features.¹³

VII. ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Urban areas in LA County often lack significant open space to build new parks, but the region has opportunities to reclaim underutilized land to give back to the people. Linear parks offer a promising solution to the countless park-poor communities throughout LA County that have been negatively affected by the construction of highways or other infrastructure. Dozens of highways, waterways, and utility lines bisect communities throughout the County, leaving behind small, underutilized parcels owned by public agencies. Advocates can use successful linear park projects as examples of what's possible on these leftover parcels.

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NOGALES PARK CASE STUDY

I. A SMALL SPACE WITH A BIG IMPACT

At just one half-acre in size, Nogales Park has had a significant positive impact on its surrounding neighborhood. The park is located in the community of Walnut Park, a densely populated and highly urbanized neighborhood about five miles south of Downtown Los Angeles. When Supervisor Hilda Solis made a motion to the Board of Supervisors in 2019 to acquire the site, it was one of the last two undeveloped parcels in the community.^{1,2} It was also within a half-mile walk for over 13,000 people, including 4,000 youth.³ The County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation (LA County Parks) and the Department of Public Works (DPW) partnered to ensure that this space would be maximized to provide the greatest benefit to residents of Walnut Park.⁴

Nogales Park provides recreational amenities and programming for the residents of Walnut Park. These amenities include walking paths, benches, fitness stations, a playground, a splash pad, a picnic area, and restrooms.⁵ These features offer a combination of active and passive opportunities for recreation, serving the diverse needs of the surrounding neighborhood. LA County Parks staff have observed a variety of community members using the park in their daily routines. Some use Nogales as a part of their morning rituals, going for walks, reading the newspaper, and drinking coffee, while others use the space to play and bond with their children and grandchildren. Community members have also organized recreational opportunities in the space such as dance and yoga groups. The park has a small LA County Parks office onsite which assists community members with organizing events and other needs that is unique to Nogales Park.⁶

The recreational amenities of Nogales Park blend seamlessly with the environmental ones. Its sophisticated stormwater management system can capture and filter up to 3.2 million gallons of water annually through underground infiltration dry wells, reducing bacteria and metal pollutants entering the Los Angeles River.⁷ The park also features 38 drought-tolerant native trees that have the potential to sequester about 81,000 pounds of carbon dioxide collectively over their lifetime, as well as a shade structure that provides relief from the heat for visitors.⁸ All the features of Nogales Park help create a healthier Walnut Park.

II. NOGALES PARK SERVES A HIGH-NEED COMMUNITY

Before Nogales Park was constructed, Walnut Park did not have dedicated park space, which may have negatively impacted the community's health. The impact of low green or park space to a community's health was underscored by the 2016 Los Angeles County Department of Public Health study titled Parks and Public Health in Los Angeles County that aimed to "assess park space per capita in relation to premature mortality from cardiovascular disease (heart disease and stroke) and diabetes, childhood obesity prevalence, community level economic hardship, and race/ethnicity in cities and unincorporated communities across Los Angeles County." This study found that Walnut Park was one of the most park-poor areas in LA County, ranking 116 out of 120 cities and communities in park space per capita. Correlated to the lack of park space, it scored in the 4th quartile for measures of diabetes, premature mortality (years of potential life lost per 100,000), and childhood obesity prevalence, demonstrating the negative impact associated with a lack of parks in the community.⁹ Before Nogales Park, Walnut Park's sole open space was a 4.5-acre playground for the local elementary school that was only open to the rest of the community for a few hours each day.¹⁰ The construction and opening of Nogales Park was a critical step towards a healthier neighborhood.

Nogales Park was the first park where LA County Parks and DPW partnered on both construction and maintenance for a new build. The two agencies frequently collaborate on projects, such as Measure W infrastructure upgrades at existing parks, but at Nogales Park, the park amenities and stormwater infrastructure were constructed simultaneously.

By collaborating, LA County Parks and DPW shared costs that were not covered by grant funding. These include the implementation and capital construction of the park, operations and maintenance, and labor. The two agencies share funding streams and oversee the park to ensure that equipment and other features remain functional and safe.

III. DESIGNING THE PARK COLLABORATIVELY WITH THE COMMUNITY

Since the site for Nogales Park was a blank slate, LA County Parks conducted extensive community outreach to design the park. Parks are rarely built on a site mostly free of existing infrastructure. Therefore, LA County Parks wanted to maximize this opportunity and ensure that Walnut Park residents actively helped shape the space that would become Nogales Park.

To kick off community engagement, LA County Parks staff began by disseminating their plans to turn the empty parcel into a park through several forms of outreach. They conducted multilingual outreach to the community through surveys and flyers and canvassed the neighborhood to engage with residents. LA County Parks also connected with trusted community organizations by contacting organizations that had advocated for a park space in the neighborhood and attended community meetings and events hosted by local groups, such as the YWCA and neighborhood watch.

Following this initial outreach, LA County Parks hosted their own meetings and hands-on workshops where participants discussed what they wanted to see for the space. These workshops invited community members to work in small groups to choose and arrange to-scale cutouts of various potential park features. Groups then presented their designs and explained their reasoning to the other groups. This led to attendees collaborating with each other until they reached a consensus on a design for Nogales Park.¹¹

IV. FUNDING SOURCES

At the start of construction, Nogales Park was estimated to cost \$9.8 million.¹² Four main funding sources were pooled to construct the park, including:

- » \$4,322,842 from Proposition 68: The California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018. This proposition was intended to fund projects that plan, develop, and implement climate adaptation and resiliency projects, including those that create or rehabilitate state or local parks, provide flood protection, protect natural resources and water supply, and improve water quality.¹³
- » \$1.26 million from Proposition 1: The Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014. This measure was intended to fund projects that provide more reliable water supplies, restore important species and habitats, and develop a more resilient and sustainably managed water system that can better withstand environmental pressures in the coming decades.¹⁴

- » \$300,000 from Supervisorial District 1: This funding was awarded to use towards environmental studies, community outreach, and site development.¹⁵

LA County Parks and DPW covered the remaining costs of construction and presently fund the operations and maintenance of Nogales Park.¹⁶



Credit: County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation, (LA County Parks)

V. ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Overall, Nogales Park offers lessons in partnerships and maximizing space that could help create other successful park projects, especially in communities with high park needs and limited available park space.

Partnerships create successful parks

In terms of partnerships, the collaboration between LA County Parks and DPW was extremely beneficial because it lessened the burden of construction and maintenance on both agencies. Additionally, by partnering with the community early in the process, LA County Parks was able to increase both the quantity and quality of their outreach. The agency reached a significant portion of the neighborhood by engaging with the community early on in the process and through multiple existing relationships. This gave an equitable amount of decision-making power regarding what the park would look like to the community.

Multi-use features maximize limited space

The multi-use features of Nogales Park maximize their benefits. For example, the park includes a splash pad for use on hot summer days, but because the water nozzles are not obstructive, this space can double as a small amphitheater, where community members gather for events or organized recreation. To increase accessibility, LA County Parks also constructed a small office at Nogales Park that is regularly staffed. The consistent presence of staff at the park ensures the consistency of the park's maintenance and facilitates the arrangement of resident-led programming or events.

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⁹ "Parks and Public Health in Los Angeles County: A Cities and Communities Report." Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. May 2016. http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/chronic/docs/Parks%20Report%202016-rev_051816.pdf

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RUDY ORTEGA SR. PARK CASE STUDY

I. A PARK SHOWCASING SAN FERNANDO'S RICH INDIGENOUS HISTORY

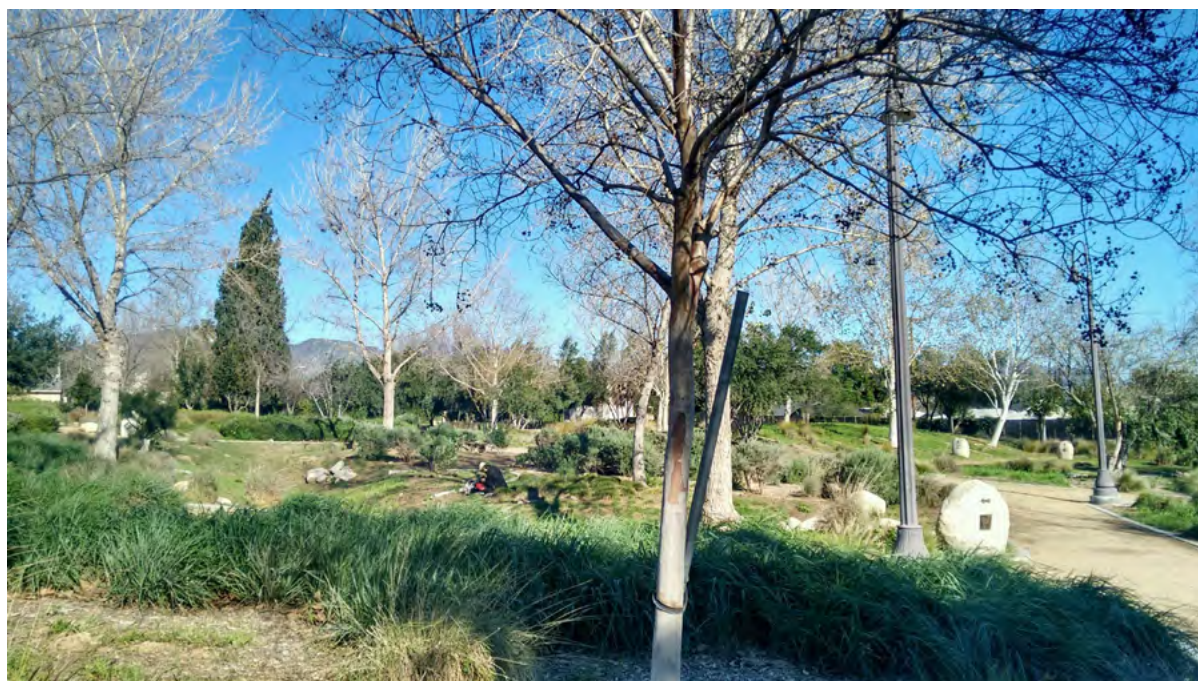
Rudy Ortega Sr. Park is a unique example of how a partnership between a Tribal government and a local government can reinstate land sovereignty and stewardship for Native Tribes, while increasing community access to green space. Located in downtown San Fernando, the 3.5-acre park is located on the historical site of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians' (FTBMI's) village of Patzkunga. The FTBMI were unjustly dispossessed of these lands in the 1700s by Spanish, Mexican, and American colonization.¹ The Tribe's leadership with this park is one step towards a land back movement in LA County.

Previously known as Heritage Park, the City of San Fernando partnered with the FTBMI to upgrade the park site in the early 2000s. The Tribe shaped the restoration to incorporate elements that reflected the Tribe's cultural heritage into the park, such as native and drought-tolerant plants, a replicated traditional village, and interpretive signage. Through a continued partnership with the City, the FTBMI holds key access and maintenance authorities over the park. This access means that the Tribe can host Tribal events, cultural celebrations, and educational events with the larger San Fernando community without the restrictions typically imposed on non-city groups.

II. RECKONING WITH LAND DISPOSSESSION

Rudy Ortega Sr. Park is located on a site with a cultural history far pre-dating the City of San Fernando. The park—and the entire City of San Fernando—are located within the ancestral lands of the FTBMI, a native sovereign nation from northern Los Angeles County.² These lands include the San Fernando, Santa Clarita, and Simi Valleys.³ To this day, their tribal administration is headquartered in the City of San Fernando. The village the park site is located on, known as Patzkunga or "place with water", was sited due to a nearby natural spring.⁴ Following periods of colonization and land dispossession by both the Spanish and Mexican governments, FTBMI Tribal Captain Rogerio Rocha came to own the site with the spring through a land grant from the Mexican government.⁵

However, the dispossession of FTBMI members repeated as the American government continued its settler colonial project of westward expansion. In 1874, Captain Rocha was forcibly removed from his land when then-state legislator Charles Maclay purchased 56,000 acres of land that included Rocha's property, known then as Rancho San Fernando. Rocha's land was particularly valuable due to the water source located there.⁶ Through this acquisition, Maclay would be known to history as the founder of the City of San Fernando. His name can be found on San Fernando's schools and



Credit: Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians

main street, while the Tribe's presence and history was reduced.⁷ Despite this, members of the Tribe continued using the natural spring on the site into the 1960s when it was fenced off.

In the early 2000s, San Fernando Mayor Cindy Montañez approached the FTBMI to discuss opportunities for the City to begin a process of repair for previous injustices. At the time, the Tribe lacked a permanent location where it could host tribal events that are essential to their cultural practices. The two parties explored opportunities to transfer the land back to the Tribe but this option was infeasible due to political factors at the time. Instead, the City partnered with the Tribe to serve as an advisor to redesign and upgrade the park. After seeking funding for several years, upgrades to the park began in 2008.

The FTBMI's leadership took multiple roles throughout the project. During the park's construction, Tribal members were deployed as Native American Monitors—experts in preserving sacred tribal artifacts during earth-disturbing activities—and as an educational partner to the City.⁸ Following the project's completion, this partnership grew through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City and the Tribe. This MOU granted the Tribe access and stewardship responsibilities over the park. Through this process of partnership and shared expertise, some of the sovereignty of the land that was stripped from the FTBMI had been restored.

III. MAKING INDIGENOUS HISTORY VISIBLE

Rudy Ortega Sr. Park honors the rich history of both the FTBMI and the City of San Fernando through its design, naming, and functions. When updating the park, the Tribe envisioned it to have a “balanced, low maintenance ecosystem” that resembled what the area may have looked like centuries ago.⁹ The park's facilities include a simulated traditional FTBMI village, as well as a Japanese tea house, a mission-style plaza, a restored historic water tower, and a small amphitheater.¹⁰ Some of the natural features of the park include drought-tolerant native plants, native trees, and walking trails that link these features together.¹¹

The park has had positive impacts on both the FTBMI and the wider San Fernando community. Firstly, the park was renamed to increase the FTBMI's visibility in the City and honor the legacy of late FTBMI Chief Rudy Ortega Sr. Tribal Chief Ortega Sr. was a lifelong advocate for the Tribe's recognition from the federal government and historical land rights.¹² Secondly, the park provides a much-needed gathering space for the Tribe. The Tribe often hosts meetings and tribal celebrations at the facility. Additionally, the park serves as an educational space for the Tribe to educate the broader San Fernando community on the Tribe's history and stewardship practices.

IV. AN IMPACTFUL PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE FTBMI AND THE CITY

A joint MOU between the City and the FTBMI was crucial to increasing the agency of the Tribe to develop, access, and maintain Rudy Ortega Sr. Park. However, the Tribe has to use intermediary organizations as signatories on the MOU. The FTBMI is currently not recognized by the federal government as a “domestic dependent nation.” Native American tribes with federal recognition are engaged on a government-to-government basis and provides access to federal funds, services, and protection of sovereignty.¹³ It is worth noting that the Tribe has been petitioning for federal recognition since 1843; their pursuit is still active with a recent petition filed in 2024.¹⁴ With the Tribe's current status, they must use associated nonprofits to receive grant money or enter partnerships with local municipalities.¹⁵ The MOU formalizes the relationship between the City and the Tribe's nonprofits.

The MOU was executed in 2009 and designated the FTBMI with authority over park maintenance, joint scheduling, and holding key access to the facility. Many of these duties fall outside of the typical ways that a government entity shares responsibility with a non-profit. These unique considerations created a more equal relationship between the City and the Tribe and helped to create a space that represented the Tribe's vision.

This agreement grants the Tribe the ability to freely host Tribal events and steward the park under their auspices, rather than working through the City. Because they have authority over scheduling and access to the space, the FTBMI can host events ranging from government meetings to informal community gatherings without having to pay fees or acquire permits. The MOU also designates the Tribe as being responsible for the maintenance of the park. While park maintenance is a budgetary challenge for many government entities, taking on the maintenance responsibilities has presented the FTBMI opportunities for workforce development and cultural stewardship. It supports their growing Tribal Conservation Corps with a site to train new workers and most importantly means the Tribe can steward to the land in alignment with their cultural practices.

While the MOU provides a framework for the City and Tribe to collaborate, it also has its challenges. Because the Tribe had to rely on its associated non-profits to enter this MOU, the Tribe is treated as a non-profit rather than a government entity. However, the Tribe is a Native Sovereign Nation that has exercised its governance since before the establishment of the Spanish, Mexican, and American governments. They have a constitution, laws, a governance structure, staff members, and more. If the MOU viewed the Tribe as a government of equal standing, they would have greater autonomy over land management at the park site.

Nonetheless, this MOU between the FTBMI and the City had opened other opportunities for continued partnership. The FTBMI has formed a new MOU with the City of San Fernando to grant their Tiüvac'a'ai Tribal Conservation Corps access and shared maintenance responsibility of Cindy Montañez Park, another park located in San Fernando.¹⁶ Additionally, the Tribe developed another citywide MOU for support on grants related to climate resilience and heat abatement. Going forward, the MOU framework offers a useful model, albeit with opportunities for improvement, for tribal and municipal partnerships.

V. ENGAGING THE WIDER COMMUNITY

There was a process of education required to shift San Fernando residents' perspectives on the Tribe's approach to land stewardship. When the park first opened, residents had misconceptions of the native plants in the park, referring to them as "weeds," because they were unfamiliar with these plants.¹⁷ The park also faced challenges with native plant maintenance in its first few years, when some of the original native plants died because of irrigation challenges.¹⁸

Through community outreach events, the Tribe provided education on native plants to the broader San Fernando community. One of these events was the successful park restoration community event the FTBMI hosted in partnership with Tree People and the Theodore Payne Foundation in December 2021.¹⁹ Enthusiastic volunteers, from families to college students, attended the event and helped successfully plant around 200 new native plants at the park, which were donated by the Theodore Payne Nursery and TreePeople.²⁰ During the event, the FTBMI educated community members on San Fernando's Indigenous history, the importance of native and drought-tolerant plants, and Indigenous approaches to environmental stewardship.²¹ Utilizing the park as a gathering space provides the Tribe an avenue to educate and connect with San Fernando residents as well as to engage in cultural practices, ceremonies, and community traditions.

VI. ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Rudy Ortega Sr. Park is a strong model for Tribal and local government partnerships. The lessons learned here can show other cities how to address land back scenarios and create spaces for Indigenous groups' cultural activities while increasing access to green space.

Government-to-Government Partnerships with Tribes

The FTBMI faced some challenges in the development and implementation of the MOU with the City of San Fernando. Per the standard operating procedures regarding municipalities working with non-recognized tribes, the Tribe could only be represented through their non-profit. This is the case even though the FTBMI is a government entity that has its own governing structure, senate, and laws. Moving forward, governments and policymakers must engage all Tribes, regardless of recognition status, as governments on land management or land transfer opportunities. Still, the MOU framework offers an avenue through which a Tribe and local government entity can enter into a formal partnership.

It is also important for MOUs between local governments and Tribes to clearly define roles while leaving opportunities for expansion in the future. The MOU between the FTBMI and the City of San Fernando clearly outlined what role each entity would have in managing Rudy Ortega Sr. Park. Clearly defined roles and shared responsibilities and costs help strengthen an MOU between two entities. It is also important that there is procedural equity within MOUs, where both entities have a balanced set of shared duties and costs. The capacity of Tribal governments is likely to be very different from municipal agencies and requires flexibility in working methods.

Understanding Tribes' Land Back Capacity

The process for returning land back to Tribes occurs on a case-by-case basis, without much precedent or guidance. In an interview, the FTBML shared that while land back initiatives are well-intentioned, the lack of structure can lead to unintended consequences. Entities should take into account the following considerations when exploring land back opportunities. These processes can be lengthy and require significant time and workload from the Tribal entity. Also, land back does not always look like a donation or no-cost transfer; land back may include Tribes purchasing the land. Regardless of the mechanism, FTBML leadership emphasized that land back opportunities must be led by Tribes. Going forward, cities need to create opportunities for Tribes to lead land back processes and to be mindful of capacity when exploring these opportunities.

Cultural Practices

It is also important for local governments to understand Tribes' cultural practices. The FTBML cited challenges with hosting Tribal celebrations at Rudy Ortega Sr. Park, such as baby showers, and needing to justify that these gatherings are Tribal sanctioned events. An event held by the Tribe, regardless of the content, is a Tribal event. Therefore, municipalities need to understand a Tribe's traditions and be flexible in their definitions as they enter into new MOUs regarding access.

¹ Fernandño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians. (n.d.). History. Fernandño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians. Retrieved April 3, 2025, from <https://www.tataviam-nsn.us/heritage/history/>

² Fernandño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians. (n.d.). Patzkunga (Rudy Ortega Sr. Park). Fernandño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians. Retrieved April 3, 2025, from <https://www.tataviam-nsn.us/community/places-to-visit/rudy-ortega-sr-park/>

³ Fernandño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians. (n.d.). History. Fernandño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians. Retrieved April 3, 2025, from <https://www.tataviam-nsn.us/heritage/history/>

⁴ SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA SUMMARY, City of San Fernando City Council Special Meeting (2021). 5 Ibid.

⁶ Martinez, D. (2021, December 15). Tataviam Tribe, Tree People replant Rudy Ortega Sr. Park in San Fernando. The San Fernando Valley Sun. <http://sanfernandosun.com/2021/12/15/replanting-and-sowing-rudy-ortega-sr-park-with-native-plants/>

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Fernandño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians. (n.d.). Native American Monitoring. Retrieved April 3, 2025, from <https://www.tataviam-nsn.us/government/departments/thcp/native-american-monitoring/>

⁹ Martinez, D. (2021, December 15). Tataviam Tribe, Tree People replant Rudy Ortega Sr. Park in San Fernando. The San Fernando Valley Sun. <http://sanfernandosun.com/2021/12/15/replanting-and-sowing-rudy-ortega-sr-park-with-native-plants/>

¹⁰ Fernandño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians. (n.d.). Patzkunga (Rudy Ortega Sr. Park). Fernandño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians. Retrieved April 3, 2025, from <https://www.tataviam-nsn.us/community/places-to-visit/rudy-ortega-sr-park/>

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Modesti, K. (2017, August 28). Rudy Ortega Sr., local Indian leader, killed in car crash. <https://www.dailynews.com/2009/08/01/rudy-ortega-sr-local-indian-leader-killed-in-car-crash/>

¹³ Fernandño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians. (n.d.). Government. Native Sovereign Nation: Government. Retrieved April 3, 2025, from <https://www.tataviam-nsn.us/government/>

¹⁴ Fernandño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians. (2024, April 9). Federal Recognition Status. Petition Towards Federalization. https://www.tataviam-nsn.us/federal_recognition/

¹⁵ Munoz, A. (n.d.). Our America: Reclaiming Turtle Island | Fernandño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians explains why sovereignty is multifaceted. ABC7 Los Angeles. Retrieved April 3, 2025, from <https://abc7.com/fernandeo-tataviam-band-of-mission-indians-san-fernando-valley-los-angeles-county-native-sovereignty/12494701/>

¹⁶ Tiüvac'a'ai Tribal Conservation Corps. (n.d.). Tiüvac'a'ai – Tribal Conservation Corps. Retrieved April 10, 2025, from <http://tribalconservationcorps.org/>

¹⁷ Martinez, D. (2021, December 15). Tataviam Tribe, Tree People replant Rudy Ortega Sr. Park in San Fernando. The San Fernando Valley Sun. <http://sanfernandosun.com/2021/12/15/replanting-and-sowing-rudy-ortega-sr-park-with-native-plants/>

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

HILDA L. SOLIS AQUATIC CENTER CASE STUDY

I. RESPONDING TO A COMMUNITY'S NEED

Located in the unincorporated community of West Puente Valley, the Hilda L. Solis Aquatic Center will provide aquatic and recreation amenities to a high-need community. The lot previously housed Temple Academy which closed in 2020, and the Hacienda La Puente School District is now leasing the site to the County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation (LA County Parks) to operate and maintain the future park.¹ The future project will feature an Olympic-size pool, a practice pool, an aquatic center with changing rooms and classrooms, and a public park with a plaza, playground, walking path, and exercise equipment.²

In a community that lacks adequate access to aquatic facilities and where only 11.6% of the community goes swimming at least once every year, this aquatic center will provide affordable and accessible swimming opportunities for residents for years to come.³ The Hilda L. Solis Aquatic Center exemplifies how park projects can be designed to meet the unique needs of their local community. This project is the result of a multi-year effort to use data to identify communities with significant and specific park needs. Spearheaded by LA County Supervisor Hilda Solis in partnership with residents and local stakeholders, the Hilda L. Solis Aquatic Center will be the first public swimming pool in West Puente Valley.

II. A DATA-DRIVEN PROJECT

Initially conceived and prioritized because of the 2016 Park Needs Assessment (PNA), this project is the result of extensive data analysis and community outreach. After initiating the PNA in March 2015, LA County Parks spent 16 months developing data-driven techniques to determine the type and location of park need in Los Angeles County.⁴ This process culminated in a detailed profile for each of the County's 188 study areas. Each study area profile included an evaluation of community needs and identified future park investments.

Responding to community feedback and the high need for swimming pools in the West Puente Valley Study Area, LA County Parks prioritized building a new aquatic center facility in the community.⁵ Upon completion, this project will be one of the most high-profile park developments in LA County that stemmed from the 2016 PNA.

III. BRINGING GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY TOGETHER

The Aquatic Center is the result of agency partnerships between LA County Parks, LA County Public Works, and Hacienda La Puente Unified School District. The school district owns the property, but the LA County Department of Public Works is leading the design and construction. The County also brought in Active SGV, a local nonprofit, to assist with community-based planning and outreach. Hacienda La Puente Unified School District is leasing the land to LA County Parks, which will operate and maintain the aquatic facility and surrounding park space.

A testament to the careful planning that went into this project, LA County Parks conducted significant outreach to ensure that the project catered to the unique needs of the community. They led numerous engagement events at different times of day and conducted focus groups with specific stakeholder groups such as students, seniors, and working adults.⁶ Takeaways from these focus groups included the community's desire for outdoor exercise equipment, public murals, and a pollinator garden. LA County Parks also ensured that community members had access to project information throughout the lifespan of its development by creating a project website that enabled the community to learn about the project on their own time and stay informed over the years.⁷

IV. POOLING FROM SEVERAL SOURCES

Given the large scale of this project, the County relied on multiple local, state, and federal funding sources to plan and construct the project, such as:⁸

- » \$14.75 million from LA County Proposition A Excess Funds: This funding provides money for the purpose of developing facilities and open space for public recreation.
- » \$8.5 million from the State of California Department of Parks and Recreation under the Statewide Park Development and Community Revitalization Program: This grant program creates new parks and new recreation opportunities in underserved communities across California.
- » \$8.21 million from LA County Net County Costs
- » \$2 million from the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC) under the Regionwide Grant Program: RMC provides tens of millions of dollars for projects that preserve open space and habitat, increase access, and create healthy and climate-resilient communities.

- » \$1.5 million from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development Community Project Funding Grants: These grants provide funding for a variety of projects such as workforce training, parks, public facilities, and other critical infrastructure or services.

LA County Parks used several strategies to make their applications more competitive for these grant sources. For example, the inclusive and robust engagement techniques described in the previous section made LA County Parks more competitive for grant funding as strong engagement is a key metric for many park development grants. Community support was also crucial, as grantors often assess community support to determine whether a project is appropriate for funding.⁹ With support from the local school district,

Supervisor Solis, and many other community stakeholders, this project was very competitive for grant applications. Lastly, LA County Parks recognized that workforce development components would make their project more attractive on grant applications, so they highlighted in their grant applications that they would train lifeguards on-site once the aquatic center opens.¹⁰ Future park development projects should incorporate these techniques to increase benefits to the community while simultaneously maximizing their competitiveness when applying for grant funding.



Credit: County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation, (LA County Parks)

V. ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Creating Partnerships

LA County Parks created strategic partnerships to improve this project’s efficiency and scale. The planning and development of the Hilda L. Solis Aquatic Center presented significant capacity challenges due to the substantial scope of the project. By creating a team of agencies to partner on this project, LA County Parks was able to distribute responsibilities and increase their overall capacity. As a result, the project had adequate capacity to develop competitive grant applications, ultimately enabling the project to secure the necessary funding for planning and construction.

Leasing the Land

The Hilda L. Solis Aquatic Center highlights how interagency coordination can help agencies achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. Oftentimes, parks are unable to be built in high-need communities due to the lack of available vacant land, and Hacienda La Puente Unified School District is unable to build this type of facility due to its significant capital and maintenance costs.¹¹ By allowing LA County Parks to build the facility and then lease the land from Hacienda La Puente Unified School District, this park turned from an idea into a reality. As a result, LA County Parks and the school district will be able to use this facility for physical education and sports programming under a joint-use agreement.

Using a Data-driven Approach

The Aquatic Center is an excellent example of how LA County Parks leveraged data to build a park that met the unique needs of the West Puente Valley community. The 2016 PNA allowed LA County Parks to visualize where and what kind of parks are needed. Future park development in LA County should use this data-driven approach to first identify high-need communities, and then target investments that are most relevant to those communities. By doing this, agencies can work towards achieving the goal of equitable and accessible park and recreation space for all communities in LA County.

¹ Huang, Ethan. “San Gabriel Valley Leaders Break Ground on New Aquatic Center.” San Gabriel Valley Tribune, July 18, 2023. <https://www.sgvtribune.com/2023/07/17/san-gabriel-valley-leaders-break-ground-on-new-aquatic-center/>.

² San Gabriel Valley Aquatic Center. Accessed January 9, 2025. <http://www.sgvaquaticcenter.com/>.

³ “ESRI Market Potential.” Business Analyst Data Estimates, 2024.

⁴ San Gabriel Valley Aquatic Center. Accessed January 9, 2025. <http://www.sgvaquaticcenter.com/>.

⁵ Los Angeles Countywide Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment: Appendix A. LA County Department of Parks and Recreation, May 9, 2016. <https://lacountyparkneeds.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/FinalReport.pdf>.

⁶ (FN/EN). Interview with LA County Department of Parks and Recreation, December 10, 2024.

⁷ San Gabriel Valley Aquatic Center. Accessed January 9, 2025. <http://www.sgvaquaticcenter.com/>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ (FN/EN). Interview with LA County Department of Parks and Recreation, December 10, 2024.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

SCHOOLYARD GREENING CASE STUDY

Green schoolyards are a key solution to creating equitable park space in Los Angeles County, where over half of residents do not have access to a park within walking distance of their homes.¹ Space is scarce in the County, but the Los Angeles Unified School District has over 1,000 campuses, all of which are publicly owned. Transforming schoolyards, where children already spend a significant portion of their day, into community green space can help close the park access gap. Green schoolyards can give children, regardless of what neighborhood they live in, access to not only a nice space to play but also a systems-based approach to mitigating pollution and climate change, boosting mental and physical health, improving educational outcomes, creating opportunities for social and emotional development, and strengthening local communities. These benefits are amplified when the schoolyards are open to the public outside of school hours through joint-use agreements between school districts and municipalities.²

This case study presents three distinct examples of green schoolyards in Los Angeles County: Jeff Seymour Family Center, Castellanos Elementary Living Schoolyard Project, and Walnut Nature Park. Jeff Seymour Family Center is a unique model where greening and social services amenities are co-located on a decommissioned school campus. Castellanos Elementary Living Schoolyard Project shows how large public landholders can influence park access regionally, highlighting the Trust for Public Land's 28x28 campaign. Lastly, Walnut Park demonstrates how a small community asset with a constricted footprint can be transformed to have multiple uses.

JEFF SEYMOUR FAMILY CENTER

I. FROM DECOMMISSIONED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TO COMMUNITY HUB

True to its original use as an elementary school, Jeff Seymour Family Center (JSFC) serves as an important community hub. JSFC is in El Monte, a high park-need city in the San Gabriel Valley. It is located at a previously decommissioned elementary school that was revamped to provide social and health services as well as green spaces and urban forestry benefits to the surrounding community; every feature was thoughtfully designed around community wellness. This space unites the surrounding neighborhood and increases social connectedness, community mobilization, and access to support and services.

By co-locating social services with green space, JSFC provides social, recreational, environmental, and economic benefits in one site and serves as a crucial resource for El Monte families. Amenities and benefits offered include neighborhood beautification, opportunities for walking and biking, recreation, educational signage, community science educational opportunities, and hands-on learning in science, math, nutrition, and land stewardship.³ The Family Center houses services including urban conservation corps youth development programming, dental and health clinics, college support programming, parenting workshops, preschool programs, special education elementary programs, curriculum for students from County probation programs, and more.

II. JSFC SERVES A HIGH-NEED COMMUNITY

The social services provided at JSFC are aimed towards community members with the highest need for supportive services, such as at-risk youth, students with disabilities, and immigrant and low-income families. It is in an underserved community with little green space, where about half of the population are immigrants.⁴ According to the 2010 Census, the median household income was \$39,535, with about 24% of the population living below the poverty line.⁵

III. A SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT'S LEADERSHIP AND VISION

JSFC was born from the work and ideas of its namesake—Jeff Seymour—in partnership with members of the El Monte School District and nonprofit Amigos de los Rios. Seymour was an educator in the El Monte School District for much of his career and initiated the transformation of an empty elementary school into a community hub. Mulhall Elementary School, a part of the El Monte School

District, was decommissioned in 2009 due to depopulation resulting from the housing crisis and economic issues. In the interim, El Monte School District continued to own and maintain the property but let various community groups borrow the space for projects and events.

Jeff Seymour already had a holistic approach to education and thought about schools as critical community hubs, particularly in areas with a significant population of immigrants. The philosophy of the El Monte School District is that schools are a trusted place that nurture the community's children. Therefore, schools are ideal places to extend services to families effectively.

Seymour envisioned co-locating social services and integrating nature at Mulhall Elementary. El Monte School District invited community organizations to use the elementary school as an office, and as diverse community members began using the space, it began to take shape as a hub where all could connect with services and collaborate with each other. With the transformation of the campus as a multi-use space, Seymour proposed incorporating nature to serve as a common thread to formalize, upgrade, and unify the campus. To renovate the outdoor space, El Monte School District partnered with Amigos de los Rios, a community-based, environmental justice nonprofit with long-standing and trusting relationships with the district and with a deep understanding of the social and environmental needs of the neighborhood.⁶

IV. PARTNERSHIPS TO MAXIMIZE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND BENEFITS

The partnerships between El Monte School District, Amigos de los Rios, and the City of El Monte increased the impact of JSFC on the community. JSFC is owned and administered by the school district, making it a natural extension of the other schools in the community. Parents and families already trust the school district and its staff, making them more likely to utilize the space and services at JSFC. Partnerships with Amigos de los Rios and the City of El Monte provided unique but critical contributions to the JSFC that boosted its reach and benefits.

Partnerships to engage the community and volunteers

El Monte School District partnered with Amigos de los Rios to help engage community members and volunteers in the transformation of the outdoor campus due to their expertise in creating well-used, multi-benefit parks and connections with the San Gabriel Valley. Amigos de los Rios, utilized their strong relationships with volunteers and experience with volunteer training to engage community stakeholders in their work. For example, they leveraged volunteers from over 40 high schools and colleges who participated in their Emerald Necklace Stewardship program. Amigos de los Rios also encouraged other students who frequented the campus to participate in the renovation. Lastly, Amigos de los Rios led a community art project to transform the campus into a colorful, engaging and inviting space, which was a key factor that helped make JSFC more welcoming.⁷

Amigos de los Rios hosted volunteer events for community members to work with the Conservation Corps, specifically on the stormwater management infrastructure, which included bioswales and rain harvest areas. Some of these events were intentionally hosted in the rain so that Amigos de los Rios, the Conservation Corps, and volunteers could see in real-time their efforts to capture rainwater. Participants were encouraged to watch as water fell off the roof or collected in other areas, and then adjust the size or depth of the ditches accordingly. Community members learned how to read the landscape and developed a sense of agency in caring for and stewarding it. Participants learned first-hand the importance of capturing water and its relation to the regional watershed.

Partnerships to increase public access

Many schoolyard greening projects face issues of open access and the need for an operator to take on liability after school hours. The City of El Monte entered into a joint-use agreement with the School District to make the JSFC campus more accessible by taking on liability, which allowed for additional amenities and after-hours use. Amigos de los Rios also created a joint-use bike pump track in response to community requests. This partnership expanded the recreational and access benefits of the JSFC campus.

V. FUNDING

Funding for Jeff Seymour Family Center came from three main sources, including:⁸

- » The California Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund through the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Urban and Community Forestry Program. This fund was intended to support projects that plant trees, reduce stormwater runoff, provide shade, lower energy consumption, improve air quality, and provide jobs.⁹
- » The Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program through the California Department of Natural Resources. This program was intended to fund environmental enhancement and mitigation projects that are directly or indirectly related to transportation facilities.¹⁰
- » Philanthropic funding from the REI Corporation.



Credit: Amigos de los Rios

OTHER GREEN SCHOOLYARD PROJECTS

I. CASTELLANOS ELEMENTARY LIVING SCHOOLYARD PROJECT

In the Pico-Union neighborhood of Los Angeles, a low-income community of color that is one of the most densely populated neighborhoods in the city, the Camino Nuevo Charter Academy's Jose A. Castellanos Elementary schoolyard renovation brought greenspace to hundreds of children. The project removed 1,500 square feet of asphalt and replaced it with 26 native trees, over 500 native shrubs, a new play structure, and a shaded outdoor classroom. The designers used as many natural materials as possible, including boulders, plants, and grass.

Trust for Public Land (TPL), a nonprofit dedicated to creating parks and protecting land, partnered with Los Angeles Unified School District and Camino Nuevo Charter Academy to transform the campus of Castellanos Elementary. The three partners worked collaboratively with students, parents, and teachers to create a student-led design for the schoolyard. TPL also spent several weeks teaching 4th-grade students about the environmental and sustainability benefits that could be incorporated into their visions for their school. This offered a unique opportunity for students to meaningfully shape and engage with the new green space.

The Castellanos Elementary project was the kickoff for TPL's 28x28 initiative, a project aiming to green 28 schoolyards in Los Angeles by the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games. TPL has raised over \$36 million in public and private funding for this effort.¹¹



Credit: Aaricka Washington/ LAist

II. WALNUT NATURE PARK

Walnut Nature Park is located at and shares amenities with Walnut Park Elementary School, located in the densely populated unincorporated community of Walnut Park. As a joint venture between the County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation (LA County Parks), County Supervisor Gloria Molina, and the Los Angeles Unified School District in 1998, the park is an early example of a joint-use green schoolyard in Los Angeles County. It provides the community with both organized activities and open recreation for youth and adults. Features include children's play areas, public restrooms, an amphitheater, picnic tables, and a softball field. On the weekends, the park is open to the public from dawn until dusk. On school days, the park is open to the public for just a few hours, from the time that school ends until dusk.¹² The overall goal of Walnut Park is to increase individuals' and families' involvement in their community in a location that many of them already frequent.¹³



Credit: County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation, (LA County Parks)

III. ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

School facilities provide beneficial structure

Jeff Seymour Family Center offers lessons in co-locating more structured, educational space with green space. An educational institution, when combined with non-institutional or unconventional features, can create a safe community hub. Educational institutions can provide structure, which is beneficial for creating routine and predictability. These are major components of trust and comfort for visitors.

Other features of the JSFC were de-institutionalized, including the colors used and the layout of the outdoor campus. The partners on the project added bright colors and green infrastructure and chose to move the fence from the front of the building to create a pocket park for the general public to use, whether they were entering the campus or not. These features work in tandem with the more traditional elements of a school campus to create a holistic hub with which the neighborhood can engage.

Nonprofits are essential partners

JSFC demonstrates how nonprofits with knowledge of their communities can be essential to creating well-used and sustainable spaces. Amigos de los Rios had deep connections with the community in El Monte as well as the San Gabriel Valley broadly, which helped them conduct meaningful community engagement and design and implement infrastructure that is reflective of community input; the organization reports having “a pulse of the different mini, micro- constituencies” in the community. This was key to knowing which groups within the community would benefit the most from JSFC, as well as the organization’s ability to engage volunteers to transform the campus. The nonprofit’s relationships helped weave together a culture of care for the land and others in the community. This culture is what makes the space so well-loved and cared for.¹⁴

Joint use is necessary to fully realize the benefits of green schoolyards.

For green schoolyards to reach their maximum effectiveness, they must overcome the barrier of joint use or shared use. Joint use or shared use agreements allow schoolyards to be accessed by the wider community outside of school hours.¹⁵ For some school administrators and districts, concerns about after-hours liability, funding, and maintenance will stop their green schoolyard projects from being truly open to the community. Instead, these projects will only benefit school-age children and the school’s staff.

This case study shows three different examples of access agreements for the different school sites. Castellanos Elementary is a green schoolyard that provides numerous benefits to its students but does not allow access to the public. Walnut Nature Park is open to the public outside of school during daylight, with County Parks assuming operations and liability after hours. Meanwhile, Jeff Seymour Family Center’s main campus is open to the public during daylight hours and its small pocket park is accessible at any time.

Joint use can transform green schoolyards into shared public parks, extending the benefits of projects such as JSFC, Castellanos, and Walnut Nature to an entire community. This is a common sense and cost-effective solution to the park equity gap, and there are various means of achieving it.¹⁶ Local municipalities—such as the City of El Monte in the case of JSFC—can facilitate joint use agreements by assuming liability for the schoolyard after school hours. Alternatively, outside intermediaries can offer programmatic solutions to stand in for school districts of park operators. The Community School Parks program, run by the Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust, provides supervision and programming on LAUSD schoolyards after hours. Moving forward, schools, municipalities, and non-profits can all have a role in facilitating the transformation of schoolyards into public parks, and this would have a critical positive impact on park equity and climate resilience for millions of Angelenos.

School facilities provide beneficial structure

Jeff Seymour Family Center offers lessons in co-locating more structured, educational space with green space. An educational institution, when combined with non-institutional or unconventional features, can create a safe community hub. Educational institutions can provide structure, which is beneficial for creating routine and predictability. These are major components of trust and comfort for visitors.

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VISTA HERMOSA NATURAL PARK CASE STUDY

I. FROM CONTAMINATION TO RECREATION AND LEARNING

Vista Hermosa Natural Park (Vista Hermosa) demonstrates the necessity of transformation and remediation of hazardous sites located in urbanized areas of Los Angeles County. When Vista Hermosa opened in 2008, it was the first park to open in Downtown Los Angeles in over 100 years.¹ Its opening was touted as a major civil rights victory, with the park serving a historically low-income community of color and increasing the average park acreage by 13 percent for the 111,000 residents of the Westlake neighborhood.²

In a community in need of space for recreation, the development of this 9.5-acre park is made possible through the collaboration between government agencies to pivot the site from an abandoned school construction project and through ambitious site remediation. The park was a joint partnership between the City of Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC). LAUSD owns the land with MRCA leasing the space to provide park services. MRCA hosts educational programming at the park along with the “Transit to Trails” program which provides free bus service from the park to the Santa Monica Mountains.³

The park also offers unique recreational opportunities for nearby residents as well as sophisticated stormwater management and climate-resilient features. The park features walking trails, meadows, picnic grounds, a nature-themed playground, an amphitheater, and a FIFA-regulated soccer field. Climate resilient features include permeable surfaces for water capture, green roofs that retain rainwater and absorb carbon dioxide, and a water collection and irrigation cistern system.⁴

II. BALANCING COMPETING COMMUNITY NEEDS

While the area surrounding Vista Hermosa is today still considered a very high park need area, the need for a school on the site initially took precedence.⁵ The current site of Vista Hermosa was the intended home for the Belmont Learning Center. The construction of this school was proposed to relieve overcrowding from other nearby LAUSD schools. Construction began in 1997, even though the State Division of Oil and Gas had raised alarms about the site’s history as an abandoned oil field. By 1998, construction was halted due to the presence of methane and hydrogen sulfide gases and major fault lines beneath the site.⁶

Despite the clear presence of harmful gases and potentially dangerous fault lines, the need for a new school was still present. This need was debated by a citizens’ commission appointed by LAUSD to weigh the present environmental risks and the ongoing pressure to relieve severe school overcrowding.⁷ After consultation with the citizens’ commission, LAUSD ultimately concluded that the major and minor fault lines beneath the site presented serious safety concerns, and no school construction should take place over fault lines. LAUSD demolished any construction over fault lines but maintained control of the school facilities constructed on the eastern part of the site. To address the presence of harmful hydrogen sulfide and methane gasses, thirty-six inches of topsoil was removed, and eighteen inches of sand and eighteen inches of topsoil was laid down to allow escaping gases to percolate horizontally.⁸ While the original school project was not realized, this challenge presented a new opportunity to meet the community’s need for a park and open space. With LAUSD leasing the land to MRCA, this opportunity became a reality.

III. CROSS-AGENCY PARTNERSHIPS

The collaboration between the City of Los Angeles, LAUSD, MRCA, and SMMC to establish a joint-powers agreement was a critical accomplishment, allowing Vista Hermosa to be funded, constructed, and operated in the long term. The park had a budget of \$14 million, which was administered by MRCA. Funding sources included:⁹

- » Proposition 12: The Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Bond Protection Act which funds projects that repair and improve the safety of state and neighborhood parks.¹⁰
- » Proposition 50: The Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Act which funds projects that protect communities from drought, protect and improve water quality, and improve local water security by reducing dependence on imported water.¹¹
- » Proposition 84: The Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act which funds projects that provide sustainable and livable communities through urban greening.¹²
- » The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development Community Development Block Grant Program administered by The City of Los Angeles Community Development Department which funds projects that help develop viable urban communities by providing suitable living environments.¹³

- » Proposition K: L.A. For Kids provides funds for the acquisition, improvement, construction, and maintenance of City parks and recreation facilities through an annual property tax.¹⁴
- » Proposition A: The Los Angeles County Safe Neighborhood Parks Act provides funding for capital improvement projects under the Community-based Park Investment Program and Neighborhoods parks through a parcel tax.¹⁵
- » Philanthropic funding from LA84 Foundation which awards grants focused on equality of access to youth sports and The Weingart Foundation which provides grants advancing racial, social and economic justice in Southern California.^{16,17}

IV. PARK FEATURES REFLECT COMMUNITY INPUT

MRCA approached this project set in a densely urbanized region of Los Angeles with the spirit of bringing the benefits of mountains and open space to the city. To marry the two, MRCA held listening sessions where community members shared what park features they would like to see. The inclusion of a large lawn for sunbathing and picnicking and the intertwining walking paths throughout the park are both features in direct response to community wishes.¹⁸

The ongoing popularity and usership of the park are a testament to the community outreach efforts made during the planning stage. Vista Hermosa operates as a space of learning, recreation, and refuge for local communities. MRCA continues to oversee the educational programming at the site, providing education for an average of 1,485 visitors per year through programming and hosting 1,500 to 2,000 athletes per week on average. Programing includes school class programs, extracurricular after-school programs, and family and community programs.¹⁹ While some of the programs have had to scale back since the COVID-19 pandemic and due to lost revenue from ceasing filming at the site, the ongoing benefit of the park endures.²⁰

V. CLIMATE RESILIENT PARK FEATURES

The inclusion of climate-resilient features at the park site also points to the park designers' forward-thinking nature and consideration of community needs. The climate-resilient elements present at Vista Hermosa were cutting-edge at the time of the park's creation in 2008 and their benefits are still being realized today. The park features 2,576 square feet of green roofs on park buildings, drought-tolerant plantings, permeable surfaces, drip irrigation, and natural cistern basins to retain stormwater and irrigate plantings at the park.²¹ These features help to capture 54 percent of water runoff at the park annually and retain 120 thousand gallons of water during storm



Credit: Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority

events. The 600 to 700 trees planted on-site help to cool the park by almost one degree Fahrenheit and save 8.1 million gallons of water annually. The park reduces carbon emissions by 84 percent and sequesters 22.23 tons of carbon annually.²²

The forward-thinking spirit of the park's design and careful consideration of community needs have helped Vista Hermosa remain a neighborhood asset. The success of this park can help serve as a model for other ambitious remediation projects in Los Angeles.

VI. ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Joint use agreements represent opportunity and challenges

While the partnership between the City of Los Angeles, LAUSD, SMMC, and MRCA resulted in a wonderful community asset, there have been challenges with the joint use agreement over time. LAUSD has recently banned filming within the park, posing revenue challenges to MRCA which used filming fees to help fund various park programs.²³

Climate resilient technology challenges

There were challenges to being an early adopter of climate-resilient technologies. These challenges mean that not all climate features at the park are fully realized. For example, the green roofs present on building structures at the park require extra irrigation to keep the plants alive, which conflicts with the park's goal to minimize water use. The permeable concrete paving in the parking lot requires unanticipated vacuuming to remain functional.²⁴

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WISHING TREE PARK CASE STUDY

I. A PARK BUILT FOR AND BY THE COMMUNITY

Located on a now-remediated superfund site in the unincorporated community of West Carson, Wishing Tree Park provides 8.5 acres of desperately needed green space to one of the most park-poor urban communities in LA County. Adjacent to a synthetic rubber manufacturing plant, the heavily polluted site posed significant environmental and health risks to the surrounding community. After years of advocacy and cleanup, Wishing Tree Park now serves a predominately working-class Latinx neighborhood that previously had zero acres of park space. The recently opened park includes a community building, a walking trail, and recreation areas like a basketball court, futsal soccer courts, and a baseball field. To benefit the climate and local ecosystem, the park provides carbon-sequestering native trees, drought-resistant landscaping, a pollinator garden, and a high-efficiency irrigation system.¹

As a result of community organizing and partnerships, Wishing Tree Park is an excellent example of how a formerly contaminated site can be turned into a community asset. Brownfield and superfund sites are notoriously difficult to clean up and redevelop, and remediation of industrial waste requires extensive regulatory oversight, often demanding multiple rounds of assessment and cleanup. At the same time, remediation funding is limited, and most grant funds require the applicant to be the site owner. Despite these challenges, the Del Amo Action Committee (DAAC), a community-based organization created to promote better environmental and health conditions in the community, led a decades-long campaign to restore the site. After years of determination and support from partners such as the Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust (LANLT) and LA County Department of Parks and Recreation (LA County Parks), the community celebrated the opening of Wishing Tree Park in 2024.



Credit: County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation, (LA County Parks)

II. PROJECT BENEFITS

This park provides environmental and health benefits to a historically underserved neighborhood. Before the creation of this park, the unincorporated community of West Carson had no park or open areas.² This park now provides needed space for residents to exercise, play, and gather. The new park provides direct environmental benefits; for example, the new landscaping captures carbon dioxide from the air, and the stormwater-capture elements improve and increase our local water supply. There are indirect environmental benefits as well, as community residents will no longer need to drive up to two miles to access the nearest park, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions by decreasing vehicle miles traveled (VMT).

III. FROM A BURDEN TO AN ASSET

Wishing Tree Park serves a community burdened by decades of environmental injustice. From 1943 to 1972, the site area was part of a much larger, 280-acre industrial operation producing synthetic rubber. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) placed the Del Amo site on its National Priorities List in 1997 after finding contaminated soil and groundwater on the site.³ Contamination in the area included benzene, tetrachloroethene, and trichloroethene, pollutants that pose significant threats to the local ecosystem and neighboring community. The effects of these pollutants were apparent to the community—before remediation, residents reported experiencing headaches, bloody noses, rashes, and other health issues.



It took nearly thirty years and many setbacks for the community's vision of this park to become a reality. Community members began to organize for testing and cleanup in 1990 after finding repeated cases of contamination in the soil, groundwater, and inside homes.⁴ Starting in 1995, DAAC began advocating for Montrose, Shell, Dow Chemical, and the US EPA to buy all the homes of 60 families along 204th Street, ultimately leading to the demolition of 27 homes in 2001 to create a buffer between the contaminated site and the community.⁵

Following this success, DAAC then redirected its focus to turn the now-empty lot into an asset for the community. After significant advocacy from DAAC, the EPA mandated a \$55 million cleanup of the site funded by Shell Oil and Dow Chemical, the responsible parties.⁶ In 2002, the EPA and the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) identified the site as a "no further action" site, but DAAC sampled the soil for heavy metals and found lead, chromium, arsenic, aluminum, and nickel, chemicals that are known to cause nausea, rashes, headaches, and many other health issues.⁷

In 2010, DAAC convened a 204th Street Park Stakeholder Meeting, forming a task force to develop partnerships to achieve the long-standing goal of having a safe, community-supported park in the Del Amo community.⁸ Over the next five years, the community worked to fundraise and eventually construct a water-permeable barrier that separated the contaminated soil from a new layer of clean soil. In 2015, LANLT purchased the property for \$1 from Shell Oil. After LANLT secured sufficient funding, Wishing Tree Park began construction in late 2018; approximately five years later, on May 16, 2024, DAAC, LANLT, and LA County Parks held a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the opening of this hard-fought park.

IV. FUNDING

Remediated land converted into park projects are some of the hardest parks to fund and implement, highlighting the need for partnerships and significant fundraising capacity. The Wishing Tree Park project, for example, required multiple funding sources to construct the \$16.35 million dollar park:⁹

- » \$4 million from California State Parks: Funded through Prop 68, this program funds projects that improve parks, including creating new parks, improving safety, and adding recreational amenities.
- » \$4 million from Shell Oil.
- » \$2.5 million from the California Natural Resources Agency: This funding comes from the Urban Greening Program, which funds the establishment, enhancement, and expansion

of community spaces and parks, tree planting, green infrastructure in streets and alleys, and the construction of active transportation infrastructure.

- » \$1.69 million from LA County Quimby: The Quimby Act in Los Angeles County requires developers to dedicate land for parks and recreation when they subdivide land. The Quimby Act also allows developers to pay fees instead of dedicating land.
- » \$1.1 million from the Coastal Conservancy: These grants fund a wide variety of projects to increase the availability of beaches, parks, and trails for the public.
- » \$812,362 from LA County Measure A: The Los Angeles County Safe, Clean Neighborhood Parks and Beaches Measure provides funding for park development throughout LA County.
- » \$750,000 from the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy: RMC provides tens of millions of dollars for projects that preserve open space and habitat, increase access, and create healthy and climate-resilient communities.
- » \$500,000 from Assemblyman Al Muratsuchi.

V. ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Communication with Partners and the Community

Wishing Tree Park highlights the significant challenges associated with redeveloping a contaminated site, but it also provides insight into how future projects can learn from this model. A key challenge for brownfield and superfund redevelopment is that remediation is heavily regulated throughout assessment and cleanup, often resulting in a long and arduous planning process. Project partners from Wishing Tree Park noted that they often had to fight to be included in this process, leading to frustration within the community and inefficiencies throughout redevelopment.¹⁰ Future remediation projects should prioritize frequent and meaningful communication between regulatory agencies and the community to promote transparency and accountability. This can be a symbiotic relationship—frequent communication between agencies and stakeholders can build trust with the community, and it can also allow the community to serve as a local resource for the project lead (i.e. helping to identify future barriers or constraints).

Leaning into Community Advocacy

Wishing Tree Park underscores the invaluable benefit of developing a strong partnership with the community throughout project development. Project partners noted, for example, that DAAC played a crucial role in the engagement process, advising on the best ways to engage with the community and even conducting some of the engagement themselves.¹¹ LANLT was able to quickly develop trust and prioritize neighborhood needs due to DAAC's deep ties to and understanding of the community.

This project may never have materialized if not for the community's tireless advocacy. Decades before the ribbon-cutting ceremony, neighbors affected by the contaminated site started DAAC to create a safer and healthier community for themselves and their families. DAAC served as a strong advocate for the contaminated site and actively fought for the buyout of homes closest to the contamination, advocated for increased cleanup measures, and pressured local, state, and federal agencies to expedite the project's timeline. The completion of this park is a testament to the dedication and perseverance of DAAC, their supportive partners, and the community they worked with.

Reusing the Land

Much of urban LA County lacks access to crucial park space, leaving millions of residents without access to nearby outdoor recreation. What little open land is left is, like Wishing Tree Park several years ago, polluted and unsafe for human activity. While much of this land has been reserved for business and industry in the past, Wishing Tree Park proves that this land can be reclaimed for people.

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PNA+ COALITION: SHARED PRIORITIES FOR PARK EQUITY IN LA COUNTY

we all need



PNA+ PRIORITIES

Los Angeles County is leading a growing movement for park equity and environmental justice. Amidst the bustling landscape of the nation's most populous county, a vision for more accessible, equitable, and vibrant parks is taking shape. This work is built upon a solid foundation laid by the 2016 Parks Needs Assessment (PNA), a data-driven initiative that evaluated L.A. County's existing parks resources and identified those areas with the least access to open space and recreation. Building on that groundbreaking assessment, the 2022 Parks Needs Assessment Plus (PNA+) highlighted vulnerable communities as well as four key additional topics of focus: environmental conservation, restoration of degraded lands, regional recreation, and rural recreation, each with its own set of unique challenges and opportunities.

Now, community-based organizations, public agencies, and elected officials across L.A. County have joined together in a collaborative effort to advance park equity by implementing the recommendations of the PNA+.

We are a coalition of community-based, public health, environmental, and other partner organizations representing L.A. County's diverse communities and geographies. Collectively, we are part of dozens of additional allied networks and movements. Our coalition supports the following core values:

- 1. PARKS ARE ESSENTIAL INFRASTRUCTURE.** Parks, other green spaces, and recreation facilities are critical public spaces, contributing to the health and wellness of L.A. County's diverse population. However, lack of sustained funding means that many of our parks are overlooked and in disrepair. Too often, community members who are the most vulnerable do not have access to parks and open spaces where they can safely gather and recreate. We must invest in our current parks infrastructure and increase funding to create new parks.
- 2. STAFF SUPPORT KEEPS OUR PARKS SUSTAINABLE.** Safe, accessible, quality parks and open spaces require ongoing funding for operations and maintenance (O&M), especially staffing. However, with property tax and other limitations, many cities struggle to find adequate funding for this essential work. We seek to increase dollars for O&M through new and existing measures and grant programs.
- 3. THE CONVERSATION ABOUT CONSERVATION INCLUDES CITIES.** Conservation programs that seek to protect undeveloped natural areas at a large scale are essential for preserving critical habitats and ecosystems. We also believe that restoration projects on a smaller scale in urban communities offer similar benefits. Transforming degraded lands into ecologically vital areas increases biodiversity, preserves habitats, and combats the impacts of climate change in areas that are often most impacted. We need to explore new funding mechanisms to expand the restoration of degraded lands for park use, especially in communities that have experienced environmental injustices in our region.
- 4. JOIN TOGETHER FOR JUSTICE.** Much of the degraded land in L.A. County is located in racially and economically marginalized communities, who have shouldered the burden of environmental hazards for far too long. Restoring these sites—turning brownfields into green spaces—is central to the principles of environmental justice, as well as those of conservation. Every community in L.A. County deserves healthy open spaces where diverse species thrive and people can enjoy meaningful connections to nature.



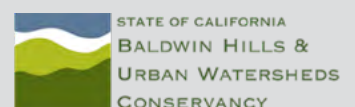
PNA+ PRIORITIES

- 5. YES TO MORE AMENITIES.** In many communities (especially those in rural areas), the issue is less about access to open space than it is about the amenities offered at the parks. Tree canopies, shade structures, and water-based features like hydration stations, splash pads, and swimming pools make parks more climate-resilient and provide important community health benefits.
- 6. REMOVE BARRIERS TO CREATE NEW PARKS.** Children living in park-poor communities need green space *now*, not in 20-30 years. We seek to streamline the process from site identification through acquisition to implementation, while retaining essential environmental safeguards that protect the health and safety of our communities as we transform brownfield sites to baseball diamonds.
- 7. FIND THE WORKFORCE FOR THE FUTURE.** To grow and strengthen the parks and recreation workforce, we must create career pathways for young people, especially young people from vulnerable communities. Providing job training skills, mentorship, and career exposure—especially for young people of color from neighborhoods with high park needs—can prime the pipeline for future park professionals.
- 8. SUPPORT LEGISLATION THAT HELPS TO IMPROVE EXISTING PARKS AND DEVELOP NEW ONES.** Pass a robust and equitable climate bond in November 2024. More than 100 organizations aligned to recommend \$10 billion in investments that California needs to continue making timely progress on our climate and natural resources commitments. We affirm the priorities articulated in their comment letter. In particular, we support advancing Justice 40 principles by directly allocating more than 40 percent of the total investments to the highest priorities identified by urban and rural disadvantaged communities.

We invite you to join us in supporting this regional vision for park equity in L.A. County.



This initiative is a joint endeavor, proudly supported by the L.A. County Department of Parks and Recreation, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, Rivers and Mountains Conservancy, and Baldwin Hills and Urban Watersheds Conservancy.





SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLKIT: TOOLS TO AMPLIFY THE CALL FOR PARK EQUITY

SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLKIT

Help spread the word about park equity in LA County! This toolkit is designed to help you share your voice and build support for the PNA+ Implementation Plan—a bold effort to improve parks, open spaces, and trails in the communities that need them most. By posting on your social media, you can help raise awareness and rally support for projects that bring health, safety, and environmental benefits to neighborhoods across LA County.

WHO THIS IS FOR:

Anyone can use this toolkit! It's especially helpful for:

- » Local conservancies and public agencies
- » Community coalitions and advocacy groups
- » Funders
- » Anyone passionate about making parks better and more accessible

WHAT TO SHARE:

Use your social media to highlight the values and goals of PNA+ Implementation. Here are some ideas:

- » Celebrate community wins – Share updates about PNA+ priority projects and how people can get involved
- » Support nature and green space – Talk about how parks help with climate resilience, biodiversity, and clean water
- » Connect parks to community needs – Show how park projects support equity, safety, health, housing, and workforce development
- » Tell your story – Post photos, short videos, or collages from local parks, volunteer days, or events
- » Urge leaders to act – Tag and message elected officials to show your support for park investments

HASHTAGS

#PNA+
#PNA+Implementation
#LACountyParks
#ParksMakeLifeBetter
#WeAllNeedParks
#ParkEquity
#LACountyTrails

LET'S KEEP THE MOMENTUM GOING:

- » Share before/after photos or old snapshots of a beloved park
- » Use PNA+ logos and hashtags to link your post to the larger movement
- » Post regularly to keep friends, neighbors, and decision-makers engaged

Together, we can grow awareness and build a future where every community has access to quality parks and green spaces.

TAGLINES

We all need parks.
Parks make life better!

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

THEME 1: Promoting values of PNA+ Implementation

Example post:

🌱 What's a Multi-Benefit Park—and Why Does It Matter?

Multi-benefit park projects tackle several community challenges at once—like boosting climate resilience, supporting biodiversity, and creating local jobs. That's why PNA+ Implementation prioritizes them!

Projects like [insert project name] are putting these values into action—get involved today and be part of the change!

#PNAImplementation #ParkEquity #ClimateResilience #GreenJobs

Photo/video clip idea:

Photos of a workday event where trainees/volunteers are doing trail maintenance work, close ups of native plants, and signs of habitat/ or wildlife.

THEME 2: Highlighting priority projects in your community and identifying ways to get involved

Example post:

🌱 In the community of [insert name here], support is growing for [insert name of priority project]—and it's getting closer to becoming a reality!

👉 Join us for a community work day to help remove invasive species and restore this site on [insert date] at [insert time].

📱 Sign up here: [insert URL]

#LACountyParks
#ParksMakeLifeBetter
#CommunityAction
#ParkEquity
#VolunteerDay

Photo/video clip idea:

Photo of a previous work day or a picturesque view of the site at sunset.

THEME 3: Spotlighting volunteer and staff work on parks efforts

Example post:

The [insert name of coalition partner] is working hard to bring more parks to LA County!

Last week, construction officially broke ground at [insert name of site]—an exciting milestone for this PNA+ Implementation project.

Huge thanks to LA County Parks and all the partners making this possible. Your dedication is helping build a healthier, greener future for all!

#WeAllNeedParks
#PNAplusImplementation
#LACountyParks
#ParkEquity
#CommunityInAction

Photo/video clip idea:

Photo of the groundbreaking, construction equipment, and image of the concept design.

THEME 4: Supporting park and trail fundraising efforts

Example post:

🌟 Help PNA+ Implementation bring new life to [insert park, trail, or site name]!

Your donation—big or small—can help fund upgraded facilities, inclusive design, and engaging programs that make this space more welcoming for everyone.

❤️ Give today and be part of the movement to create parks that serve all communities.

🔗 [Insert donation link]

#LACountyParks
#ParksMakeLifeBetter

Photo/video clip idea:

Photos of the existing park, park concept design, or special features under consideration with additional funding.

THEME 5: Reaching out to government leaders who can (and should!) support PNA+ Implementation

Example post:

🌱 Friends and neighbors—let's grow more parks, trails, and open spaces across LA County!

Support PNA+ Implementation by contacting your local leaders—City Councilmembers, Parks & Rec Commissioners—and let them know you back priority projects like [insert project name].

📣 Sharing your support is a powerful way to serve your community. Every voice counts!

#WeAllNeedParks
#PNAplusImplementation
#LACountyParks

Photo/video clip idea:

Photos of your favorite LA County parks, trails, and open spaces.

THEME 6: Highlighting the history of the park or site and expressing support its renovation and future benefits as a PNA+ priority project

Example post text, option 1:

Big changes are coming to [insert name of site]!

Thanks to funding from [insert funding source], this beloved space will soon undergo exciting renovations to [restore native habitat, improve accessibility, capture stormwater, and replace aging facilities — update this list with park-specific upgrades].

Stay tuned for the grand reopening this [insert season/month]—and get ready to enjoy a park that’s greener, more inclusive, and built for the future.

#WeAllNeedParks
#PNAplusImplementation

Photo/video clip idea:

Series of photos of the park/site before construction.

Example post text, option 2:

Planning and design are underway for the former [insert name] industrial site in [insert name of community]. With support from [insert funding source], the site will be cleaned up and reimagined as a vibrant new community space: [insert name of park].

Your voice matters! Share your ideas during the public engagement period this [insert season] and help shape the future of this exciting project.

#LACountyParks
#PNA+Implementation

Photo/video clip idea:

Series of any available historical photographs that show the site’s industrial past and clean up efforts.

THEME 7: Highlighting issues and multi-benefit projects addressed by PNA+ Implementation

- » PNA+ Implementation Issues:
- » Access
- » Anti-displacement strategies
- » Biodiversity and conservation
- » Climate resilience
- » Community safety and homelessness
- » Green infrastructure (e.g., stormwater management)
- » Equity and environmental justice
- » Health
- » Housing intersections
- » Workforce development

Example post:

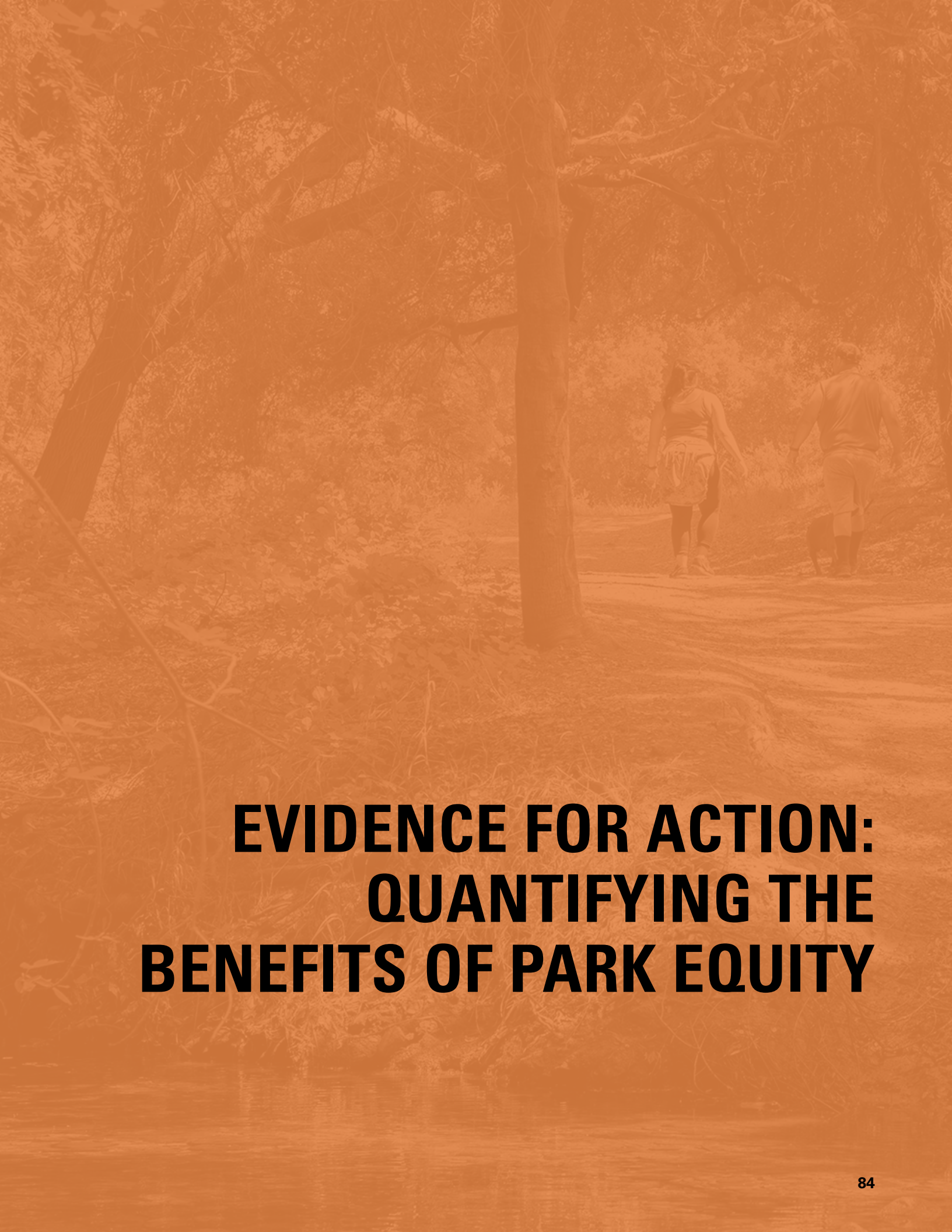
At [park name], we’re seeing how parks can do more than provide recreation. This project restores native habitat, manages stormwater, attracts local wildlife, and helps reduce flood risk—all while creating beautiful, usable park space.

Parks like this show how we can boost biodiversity and build green infrastructure at the same time.

#PNA+Implementation
#ParksMakeLifeBetter
#biodiversity

Photo/video clip idea:

Series of photos of park, native habitat plantings, and stormwater facilities.



EVIDENCE FOR ACTION: QUANTIFYING THE BENEFITS OF PARK EQUITY

PNA+ IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

A SUMMARY OF SELECTED RESEARCH ON THE BENEFITS OF PARK EQUITY

ACCESS

Source:

Christensen, J., & Rademacher, D. (2024, June). *New approaches to understanding equitable access to the outdoors: Equitable Access Research Project final report*. UCLA Institute of the Environment and Sustainability & GreenInfo Network. Retrieved from https://www.wilderness.org/sites/default/files/media/file/Report_Equitable%20Access_ParkAccess_7.30.24.pdf

Key Data:

- » Research has shown that whether people visit parks depends not just on whether they can get to the parks, but also whether the parks feel safe and welcoming; whether the parks contain amenities such as parking, restrooms, trash cans, recreational equipment, trails, sports fields, and a wide variety of other amenities; whether information is provided in languages other than English; and whether programs in the parks attract particular audiences and participants.
- » By prioritizing areas with the greatest number of people, investments can have the biggest impact in new local parks, in programming designed to attract people to more distant parks, and transportation to bring people to parks. This data can also be combined with data on household income, social vulnerability, pollution burden, health outcomes, and other demographic characteristics to further prioritize investments and impact.
- » Our research found that there are significant populations in all of the states that we studied where households that have no parks within walking distance of their homes also have limited access to vehicles.
- » In some states, white residents are over represented in the population without access to a neighborhood park, and Hispanic/Latino and Black residents are underrepresented.

- » Our data shows that between 36% and 43% of all people who live farther than a half-mile from a park have either low income or very low income.
- » As noted in our methods documentation, we used national travel survey data to determine reasonable driving distance for a frequent social or recreational trip. According to the National Household Travel Survey, the average recreational or social trip by car is 13 miles in urban areas and 23 miles in rural areas.
- » With about 1,300 strategically located new parks, California could serve 4 million people who lack local parks. Beyond that, we see a long tail where 10,000 new parks would reach 93% of people lacking a local park, but the state would need another 40,000 parks to serve the last 7% of people who lack a local park. Focusing resources in areas with more people who lack parks is the best way to maximize impact on access.
- » Communities of color have 43% less park acreage than white neighbors.
- » Research shows that people living farther away from parks are less likely to use them: one study found a 30 percent decline in a park's likelihood of use for users living more than three-quarters of a mile from it.

Source:

Gamson Danks, S., Chiesa, A., Knoppke-Wetzel, V., McKenna, L., & Ashenmiller, B. (2024, April). *California Schoolyard Tree Canopy Equity Study: Part 1*. Green Schoolyards America. Retrieved from <https://greenschoolyards.org/tree-canopy-equity>

Key Data:

- » Less than half of the tree canopy on California's K-12 public school properties is accessible to students during the school day. The rest of the tree canopy (55%) is located outside the student zone, in exterior ornamental areas such as school entrances, parking lots, and along the property's perimeter.

Source:

Yee, T., Trinh, S., & Zappella, N. (2017). *Pathway to parks and affordable housing*. LA THRIVES & Los Angeles Regional Open Space and Affordable Housing (LA ROSAH). Retrieved from https://larosah.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Pathway_to_Parks_and_Affordable_Housing.pdf

Key Data:

- » Low income residents are far more likely to utilize transit—70% of mass transit riders earn less than \$25,000 per year.
- » 70% of park-poor areas in Los Angeles County are located in low-income communities of color.
- » Communities with higher Black and Latino populations have less park acreage per resident.
- » The median household income in areas with high park need is less than half that of low-need areas.
- » LA County owns hundreds of parcels of surplus, vacant, or underutilized land with potential for joint park and affordable housing development. Schoolyards, utility corridors, and flood control channels represent additional underused land opportunities.
- » A single joint-development project (housing and parks) can double the open space per capita in some neighborhoods.

Source:

May, K. (2011). Access to parks: Barriers in rural communities. *Parks and Recreation*, 46(10), 57-58.

Key Data:

- » While rural communities have been defined in different ways, research shows that residents living in rural communities often have poorer health, including higher rates of obesity than those living in more urbanized areas.

Source:

Wen, M., Fan, J. X., Kowaleski-Jones, L., & Wan, N. (2018). Rural–urban disparities in obesity prevalence among working age adults in the United States: exploring the mechanisms. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 32(2), 400-408.

Key Data:

- » Rural areas had a greater number of supermarkets, playgrounds, swimming pools, and public open space per 1,000 persons than urban areas, but greater travel distances were required to reach these amenities in rural areas.

Source:

Park, K., Rigolon, A., Choi, D. A., Lyons, T., & Brewer, S. (2021). Transit to parks: An environmental justice study of transit access to large parks in the US West. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, 60, 127055.

Key Data:

- » Neighborhoods with larger shares of racial/ethnic minority residents tend to have poorer access to large parks via transit in those regions, when other factors are equal.
- » [The analysis] reveals environmental injustices in transit access to large parks based on race/ethnicity and age group (in particular, older adults). Not only do BIPOC communities have worse walking access to large parks, but they also have worse transit access to such parks than non-Hispanic White people.
- » Service that favors economic access for disadvantaged neighborhoods might also favor park access, at least in terms of transit system access at the origin. However, we report income-based injustices for walking access to large parks. Taken together, these findings suggest that transit might help attenuate existing income-based injustices in walking access to parks by providing affordable transportation options to reach large parks from park-poor, low-income neighborhoods.

Source:

Sister, C., Wolch, J., & Wilson, J. (2010). Got green? Addressing environmental justice in park provision. *GeoJournal*, 75, 229-248.

Key Data:

- » Latinos, African-Americans, and low-income groups in general were likely to live close to parks with higher potential park congestion. On the other hand, predominantly White, high-income areas were typically located close to parks with lower potential park congestion levels.

Source:

Foderaro, L. W., & Klein, W. (2023). *The power of parks to promote health: A special report*. Trust for Public Land. Retrieved from <https://www.tpl.org/parks-promote-health-report>

Key Data:

- » When people are able to spend time in parks, it benefits their health. Yet over 100 million people across the country, including 28 million kids, don't have a park within a 10-minute walk of their home. In California, for example, 42 percent of low-income parents report that their children have never participated in outdoor activities.
- » Many researchers and advocates have identified strategies for preventing displacement. These include preserving existing affordable housing; helping long-term residents remain through policies such as rent control, incentivizing (or requiring) developers to construct affordable housing, supporting community-based organizations that create and manage affordable housing, and tax-increment financing to support affordable housing.
- » Recent studies suggest that new parks and park upgrades do not invariably lead to gentrification. A study by Alessandro Rigolon and Jeremy Németh¹⁰ reviewed the gentrification impact of 621 new parks and greenways across 10 U.S. cities between 2000 and 2015 (with gentrification defined as a steeper increase in a neighborhood's income, education, or housing value than that of the city median). In general, new parks were not associated with gentrification. However, greenway parks with walking and cycling trails—think iconic projects such as New York's High Line, The 606 in Chicago, or Atlanta's BeltLine—were associated with nearby gentrification. So were parks close to downtown areas.

Source:

Yañez, E., Aboelata, M. J., & Bains, J. (2020). *Park equity, life expectancy, and power building: Policy brief*. Prevention Institute. Retrieved from <https://www.preventioninstitute.org/tools/advocacy-toolkit-park-equity-life-expectancy-and-power-building>

Key Data:

- » More than 1 in 4 LA County residents live in census tracts with low life expectancy and limited access to greenspace and parks.
- » While Latinos make up 49% of LA County's population, they make up 64% of residents living in communities with high park need and low life expectancy.

ANTI-DISPLACEMENT

Source:

Yee, T., Trinh, S., & Zappella, N. (2017). *Pathway to parks and affordable housing*. LA THRIVES & Los Angeles Regional Open Space and Affordable Housing (LA ROSAH). Retrieved from https://larosah.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Pathway_to_Parks_and_Affordable_Housing.pdf

Key Data:

- » Over 85% of census tracts in LA County that are park-deficient are also at risk of gentrification or displacement.
- » New park investments can trigger green gentrification without safeguards such as community land trusts or anti-displacement policies.

Source:

Nicholls, S., & Crompton, J. L. (2005). The impact of greenways on property values: Evidence from Austin, Texas. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 37(3), 321-341.

Key Data:

- » In Austin, Texas, the increase in the value of homes adjacent to a greenway in three studied neighborhoods adds up to an estimated \$27.28 million. The actual economic value of the greenway is likely much higher, as the calculation does not include homes that are near, but not adjacent to the greenways, nor does it include all neighborhoods proximate to the greenway.

Source:

Crompton, J. L. (2005). The impact of parks on property values: empirical evidence from the past two decades in the United States. *Managing Leisure*, 10(4), 203-218.

Key Data:

- » Parks and open space contribute to increasing nearby property values. This review of numerous studies indicates that a 20% increase is a reasonable estimate, though the impact varies with park size, use, and design.

Source:

Donovan, G. H., & Butry, D. T. (2010). Trees in the city: Valuing street trees in Portland, Oregon. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 94(2), 77-83.

Key Data:

- » A study of houses in Portland, Oregon found that on average, street trees add 3% to sales price and reduce time-on-market by 1.7 days. In addition, the study found that the benefits of street trees spill over to neighboring houses.

Source:

Bowman, T., Thompson, J., & Colletti, J. (2009). Valuation of open space and conservation features in residential subdivisions. *Journal of Environmental Management*, 90(1), 321-330.

Key Data:

- » Conservation subdivision design, a greenfield development practice that utilizes site analysis methods to preserve significant portions of environmentally valuable land, was shown to produce a higher 5-year appreciation rate for homes compared to traditionally developed subdivisions (10.85% vs. 4.35%) in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

CLIMATE ADAPTATION

Source:

Los Angeles Times Editorial Board. (2024, June 9). *Editorial: California's next school bond should include money for grass, trees and green spaces on campuses*. Los Angeles Times. Retrieved from <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2024-06-09/editorial-californias-next-school-bond-should-include-money-for-grass-trees-and-green-spaces-on-campuses>

Key Data:

- » Schoolyards with expanses of hard surfaces absorb and radiate heat throughout the campus, contributing to hotter classrooms that are linked to lower test scores and cause heat-related illnesses, dehydration, burns and other injuries. When it's 92 degrees outside, a school's asphalt can reach a surface temperature of 149 degrees and rubber mats around playground equipment can hit 165, hot enough to burn the skin within seconds.

Source:

Aram, F., García, E. H., Solgi, E., & Mansournia, S. (2019). Urban green space cooling effect in cities. *Heliyon*, 5(4).

Key Data:

- » According to a review of studies on park size and urban cooling effect, large urban parks with an area of more than 10 hectares (24.7 acres) provide the highest-intensity cooling effect as well cooling over the farthest distance from the park.

Source:

TreePeople, Los Angeles Cooling Collaborative, & UCLA Institute of Environment and Sustainability. (2023). *Rx for hot cities 2: Reducing heat and ER visits with trees and high albedo surfaces in Los Angeles*. Retrieved from <https://www.treepeople.org/research/rx-for-hot-cities-2/>

Key Data:

- » Black Americans are 52% more likely than average to live in areas where a high risk for heat-related health problems exists, while Latino/a communities are 21% more likely to live under such conditions.
- » Continued warming is projected to increase average temperatures 4-5°F by mid-century, and by 5-8°F by the end of the century, with temperature extremes expressed both in the rising number of extremely hot days, and in the hottest days being up to 10°F hotter than we see today.
- » Due to climate and topographic variability in Los Angeles County, some cities will have 5 to 6 times the number of extreme heat days compared to current levels.
- » During extended heat waves in L.A., mortality already increases about five-fold from the first to the fifth consecutive day; after the fifth day, mortality risk increases 46% in Latino/a communities and 48% in elderly Black communities.
- » Residents of neighborhoods that were formerly subject to redlining... experience higher surface temperatures (on average +4.7°F and up to +12.6°F) than their non-redlined counterparts more than 50 years after the end of redlining policy.

Source:

Trust for Public Land. (2020). *The heat is on*. Retrieved from <https://www.tpl.org/the-heat-is-on>

Key Data:

- » Our researchers analyzed thermal satellite imagery for 14,000 cities and towns and found that areas within a 10-minute walk of a park can be as much as 6 degrees cooler than neighborhoods outside that range.

Source:

Vicarelli, M., Sudmeier-Rieux, K., Alsadadi, A., Shrestha, A., Schütze, S., Kang, M., & Mysiak, J. (2024). On the cost-effectiveness of Nature-based Solutions for reducing disaster risk. *Science of The Total Environment*, 174524.

Key Data:

- » In a review of 87 studies published from 2000 to 2021, 71% demonstrated that nature-based solutions were a consistently cost-effective approach to mitigating hazards. Among these studies, 65% found that nature-based solutions are more effective in attenuating hazards than engineering-based solutions.

Source:

Pugh, T. A., MacKenzie, A. R., Whyatt, J. D., & Hewitt, C. N. (2012). Effectiveness of green infrastructure for improvement of air quality in urban street canyons. *Environmental Science & Technology*, 46(14), 7692-7699.

Key Data:

- » Judicious use of vegetation can yield rapid and sustained improvements in street-level air quality in dense urban areas. A 2012 study found that planting grass, climbing ivy, and other greenery in urban street canyons can reduce the concentrations of street level NO₂ by up to 40% and PM by 60%, eight times more than previously thought. Trees were also shown to be effective, but only if care is taken to avoid trapping pollutants beneath their crowns.

Source:

National Recreation and Park Association. (n.d.). *Parks and recreation is essential*. <https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/building-a-movement/parks-and-recreation-is-essential/>

Key Data:

- » Parks lower ground temperatures with tree canopy, clean water, reduce flooding and contribute to healthier air.
- » Trees and vegetation in parks help reduce air pollution directly by removing pollutants and reducing air temperature.
- » Urban parks can improve the environment, enhance storm water management, reduce traffic noise and increase biodiversity.
- » The U.S. public wants parks and recreation to protect natural resources and mitigate the impact of climate change.
- » 93% of U.S. adults agree that it is critical that their local government develops local parks, trails and green spaces near bodies of water for the purpose of protecting natural resources in their community.
- » Six in seven U.S. adults support their local park and recreation agency's environmental initiatives, including wildlife conservation, educating the public on environmental issues, natural resource management, mitigating the impacts from climate change, nurturing pollinator habitats and managing land for flood mitigation.
- » 89% of U.S. adults want their local park and recreation agency to reduce the impact of extreme temperatures through the planting of trees and other vegetation.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Source:

Cohen, D. A., Marsh, T., Williamson, S., Derose, K. P., Martinez, H., Setodji, C., & McKenzie, T. L. (2010). Parks and physical activity: why are some parks used more than others? *Preventive Medicine*, 50, S9-S12.

Key Data:

- » Park size (acreage) was positively associated with park use such that with every 1 acre increase in size, we observed an additional 95 persons. The more organized activities we saw, the larger number of users, with 58 more users for each additional activity.

Source:

Negami, H. R., Mazumder, R., Reardon, M., & Ellard, C. G. (2018). Field analysis of psychological effects of urban design: A case study in Vancouver. *Cities & Health*, 2(2), 106-115.

Key Data:

- » Sites with inexpensive community-driven design interventions like colorful crosswalks and greenery in concrete lanes may be associated with higher levels of happiness, more trust in strangers, and greater sense of environmental stewardship as compared to typically-designed urban sites. According to this study of participant perception of six urban sites in Vancouver, simple design interventions may increase subjective well-being and sociability among residents.

Source:

Pourat N, Haley LA, O'Masta B, Garcia C, Huerta D, and Zhou W. (2024). *Parks After Dark evaluation report*. UCLA Center for Health Policy Research. Retrieved from <https://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/our-work/publications/pad-evaluation-report-2024>

Key Data:

- » Between 2010 and 2023, 74 serious crimes and 43 nonviolent crimes were avoided—saving an estimated \$10.5 million in criminal justice costs (UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, 2024).
- » Among PAD attendees who expressed not feeling safe in their neighborhood, 64% felt safe at PAD.

- » In 2023 PAD participant surveys, attendees overwhelmingly reported that PAD increased quality time with family members (96%), provided a sense of belonging within the community (96%), and improved their relationship with their neighbors (94%).
- » Of attendees who did not meet the recommended activity guidelines for their age, 76% participated in physical activity at PAD. Using a modified version of the Integrated Transport and Health Impacts Model (ITHIM), the level of physical activity at PAD, if sustained year-round, would primarily reduce stroke and ischemic heart disease and lead to an overall decline of 20 years of life lost, 20 fewer years of disability adjusted life years, and avoidance of two premature deaths for the entire PAD population in 2023.
- » A vast majority of attendees expressed high levels of satisfaction, with 97% saying they would attend PAD again and 97% also said they would recommend PAD to others.

Source:

National Recreation and Park Association. (n.d.). *Parks and recreation is essential*. <https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/building-a-movement/parks-and-recreation-is-essential/>

Key Data:

- » High-quality parks and built environment features help to foster positive social interactions and increase social capital within historically marginalized communities.

Source:

Branas, C. C., Cheney, R. A., MacDonald, J. M., Tam, V. W., Jackson, T. D., & Ten Have, T. R. (2011). A difference-in-differences analysis of health, safety, and greening vacant urban space. *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 174(11), 1296-1306.

Key Data:

- » An analysis of the impact of greening 4,436 vacant lots in Philadelphia from 1999 to 2008 found that vacant lot greening was associated with residents' reporting significantly less stress and more exercise in select sections of the city. Because newly greened vacant lots may serve as safe havens, residents may have felt less stress or may have seen greater outdoor opportunities for exercise in a cleaner, more attractive, and safer environment.

Source:

Shepley, M., Sachs, N., Sadatsafavi, H., Fournier, C., & Peditto, K. (2019). The impact of green space on violent crime in urban environments: An evidence synthesis. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16(24), 5119.

Key Data:

- » The presence of parks and other green space reduces urban crime, according to a systematic review on the relationship between violent crime and urban green spaces. Potential causes include the role of green spaces in social interaction and recreation, their ability to affect community perception, their role in stress reduction and climate modulation, and their ability to indicate community ownership.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Source:

Christensen, J. (2016). *Environmental bonds should equitably benefit all communities: Looking forward based on an analysis of Prop 84*. UCLA Institute of the Environment and Sustainability. Retrieved from <https://www.ioes.ucla.edu/project/environmental-bonds-equitably-benefit-communities-looking-forward-based-analysis-prop-84/>

Key Data:

- » When it came to spending the \$1.9 billion earmarked in Prop 84 for traditional resource protection and conservation of land, rivers, beaches, and bays, of the \$984 million spent so far on grants with an identifiable local impact, we found that \$758 million, 77 percent, went to rural areas, while urban areas received \$226 million or 23 percent. Rural residents within walking distance of projects saw \$9,860 in per capita spending, while residents near urban projects saw \$161 in per capita spending in their neighborhoods.
- » Rural areas, with lower population density, received just as much funding as urban areas with larger populations.
- » Residents in rural areas within a half-mile walking distance of projects saw \$7,475 per capita in spending in their neighborhoods, while residents in urban areas saw \$209 in per capita spending.
- » We found that communities that lack parks received less funding than areas that already have parks.

- » 56 percent of the funding overall was spent in areas that already had more park acres for each resident, while 44 percent was spent in park-poor areas.

Source:

Douglas, J. A., Archer, R. S., & Alexander, S. E. (2019). Ecological determinants of respiratory health: Examining associations between asthma emergency department visits, diesel particulate matter, and public parks and open space in Los Angeles, California. *Preventive Medicine Reports*, 14, 100855.

Key Data:

- » In addition to reducing diesel particulate matter and improving access to public health clinics, community members living in census tracts with high concentrations of diesel particulate matter and asthma emergency department visits may benefit from improved access to public parks and open space, as 79% of the census tracts in the current study revealed negative associations between diesel particulate matter and asthma emergency department visits and public parks and open space.

Source:

Anderson, M. (2020, January 14). Racist housing practices from the 1930s linked to hotter neighborhoods today. *NPR*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2020/01/14/795961381/racist-housing-practices-from-the-1930s-linked-to-hotter-neighborhoods-today>

Key Data:

- » In 37 cities around the country, formerly redlined neighborhoods have about half as many trees on average today as the highest-rated predominantly white neighborhoods on those maps.
- » Nearly 90 years after those maps were created, redlined neighborhoods are hotter than the highest-rated neighborhoods by an average of almost 5 degrees.

Source:

Shamasunder, B., Sadd, J., Silber, E., & Johnston, J. (2023). *The geography and health consequences of oil drilling in Los Angeles: An update on a decade of research*. Retrieved from https://issuu.com/libertyhill/docs/power_of_persistence_summer_2023/s/25151926

Key Data:

- » From canvassing trips to the Baldwin Hills neighborhood in the spring of 2022, our teams contacted over 14,000 households. Their views on the Inglewood Oil Field were loud and clear. The survey responses collected from nearly 3,000 residents confirmed the scope of the harm being done by the oil field:
- » 73 percent were somewhat or very aware that the nearby oil field can cause health problems.
- » 60 percent reported knowing someone who had potentially been affected (by either asthma, cancer, headaches, nosebleeds, low birth weight/premature birth, or other health impacts) due to living near the oil field.
- » 79 percent were willing to contact the County right then to support the end of oil drilling at the Inglewood Oil Field.
- » The closer someone lives to an active or recently idled well site, the poorer the person's lung function, even after adjusting for other risk factors, such as smoking, asthma, and proximity to a freeway. Living near an oil well worsened lung health. On average, the impact on residents' lungs is worse than living beside a highway or being exposed to secondhand smoke every day.
- » Studies over the past decade show that communities living near oil and gas extraction facilities face a range of adverse health consequences. Health studies of residents living near petroleum extraction sites report throat and nasal irritation, eye burning, sinus problems, headaches, skin problems, severe fatigue, loss of smell, coughing, nosebleeds, respiratory harm, psychological stress, and higher cancer mortality in communities exposed to oil extraction, including increased diagnoses of children with leukemia. Adverse impacts during pregnancy make up the strongest body of evidence. Living in close proximity to active oil and gas extraction during pregnancy can impact a fetus' development. Worsened birth outcomes include preterm birth, low birth weight, and small for gestational age births, which can also carry health consequences through adulthood.

Source:

Sinnett, D., Bray, I., Baranyi, G., Braubach, M., & Netanyanhu, S. (2022). Systematic review of the health and equity impacts of remediation and redevelopment of contaminated sites. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(9), 5278.

Key Data:

- » This systematic review found consistent evidence that remediation of contaminated soils is effective at reducing direct and indirect exposure to pollution in local populations... and contributes to improvements in health outcomes.

Source:

Siikamaki, J., & Wernstedt, K. (2008). Turning brownfields into greenspaces: Examining incentives and barriers to revitalization. *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law*, 33(3), 559-593.

Key Data:

- » The International Economic Development Council's (2001) examination of the off-site impacts of a half-dozen brownfield-to-greenspace projects estimates that property values in neighborhoods surrounding these projects have increased more than two times those in control neighborhoods lacking conversion efforts.
- » Potential brownfield-to-greenspace conversion projects must confront the financial realities of brownfields revitalization. Such revitalization typically is powered by the promise of housing opportunities or the economic gains—jobs, increased incomes, heightened tax revenues, for example—associated with commercial or industrial reuse. The benefits of greenspace, in contrast, frequently appear more invisible, qualitative, and longer term. As a consequence, conversions have frequently lacked the political champion necessary for implementation. Much of the federal and state financial support for brownfields redevelopment has contributed to this dynamic by focusing primarily on reuses designed to furnish more immediate economic gains.

HEALTH

Source:

Christensen, J., Rigolon, A., Robins, S., & Alemán-Zometa, J. (n.d.). *California State Parks: A valuable resource for youth health*. UCLA Institute of the Environment and Sustainability. Retrieved from <https://www.calparks.org/what-were-doing/research>

Key Data:

- » A study of California children showed that living within 500 meters of park space was associated with gaining significantly less body mass by age 18.
- » A study of California teenagers showed that 45% of teenagers who lived within a park service area engaged in 60 minutes of physical activity five days a week, compared to 34.7% of those who did not live near a park.

Source:

Wolch, J., Jerrett, M., Reynolds, K., McConnell, R., Chang, R., Dahmann, N., & Berhane, K. (2011). Childhood obesity and proximity to urban parks and recreational resources: a longitudinal cohort study. *Health & Place*, 17(1), 207-214.

Key Data:

- » A ten-year study of over 3,000 children in southern California found that those living near parks and recreational programs had lower rates of obesity at 18 years of age than comparable children who lived further away.

Source:

Salmond, J. A., Tadaki, M., Vardoulakis, S., Arbuthnott, K., Coutts, A., Demuzere, M., & Wheeler, B. W. (2016). Health and climate related ecosystem services provided by street trees in the urban environment. *Environmental Health*, 15, 95-111.

Key Data:

- » It has been found that a 20% increase in vegetation cover resulted in a 7.18% decrease in 24-hour average temperature in Phoenix, Arizona, where hot dry conditions dominate. This was then projected to reduce average annual heat-related emergency calls by 11%.

Source:

TreePeople, Los Angeles Cooling Collaborative, & UCLA Institute of Environment and Sustainability. (2023). *Rx for hot cities 2: Reducing heat and ER visits with trees and high albedo surfaces in Los Angeles*. Retrieved from <https://www.treepeople.org/research/rx-for-hot-cities-2/>

Key Data:

If L.A.'s urban environment had more trees and higher-albedo surfaces, between 25% and 50% of emergency room visits—all-cause and heat-related visits—could be avoided, and roughly one in four lives currently lost during heat waves could be saved.

Source:

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. (2016). *Parks and public health in Los Angeles County: A cities and communities report*. Retrieved from http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/chronic/docs/Parks%20Report%202016-rev_051816.pdf

Key Data:

- » Lower park access is associated with higher rates of premature mortality from cardiovascular disease and diabetes, as well as with higher rates of childhood obesity.
- » Communities with least park space per capita had double the diabetes-related premature mortality (189 Years of Potential Life Lost per 100,000 population) compared to communities with the most park space (96 Years of Potential Life Lost per 100,000 population).
- » Communities that rank higher on the Economic Hardship Index—a composite measure based on crowded housing, poverty rate, unemployment, educational attainment (less than high school), age dependency (under 18 or over 64), and income per capita—have less park space.
- » In LA County, African American and Latino residents are disproportionately concentrated in areas with less park space: 56% of African Americans and 50% of Latinos lived in the two quartiles with the least park space. Only 27% of Whites and 36% of Asians lived in those areas.
- » Parks support:
 - Physical activity and reduced obesity
 - Violence prevention (e.g., Parks After Dark)
 - Heat island mitigation (through tree cover)
 - Community cohesion and service access
 - Fresh food access (via gardens and farmers' markets)

Source:

Foderaro, L. W., & Klein, W. (2023). *The power of parks to promote health: A special report*. Trust for Public Land. Retrieved from <https://www.tpl.org/parks-promote-health-report>

Key Data:

- » Nearly half of Americans report feeling alone or left out sometimes or always and lacking meaningful social interactions on a daily basis. One in five report rarely or never feeling close to other people... Parks and green spaces are part of the solution. Park access can bolster social connections. Structured group activities such as community gardening and tree planting bring people together, but even informal encounters while minding children in a playground or walking on paths can yield gratifying social contacts.

Source:

Yañez, E., Aboelata, M. J., & Bains, J. (2020). *Park equity, life expectancy, and power building*. Prevention Institute. Retrieved from <https://www.preventioninstitute.org/tools/advocacy-toolkit-park-equity-life-expectancy-and-power-building>

Key Data:

- » Increasing park acreage has the potential to increase life expectancy for residents in areas that have less tree cover or lower vegetation levels than the county median. LA County tracts with less tree cover are typically park poor, disproportionately low income, and generally home to majority people of color: about 60% of LA County's Latino residents and 67% of Black residents live in these areas, compared to 31% of white residents.
- » This predictive model shows that if all of the census tracts in LA County with park deficits and low tree canopy levels had an increase in park acreage up to the median for LA County tracts (about 54 acres within a two-mile radius of each census tract), LA County would likely see an average gain of two-thirds of a month of life expectancy for each LA County resident living in those tracts.

Source:

National Recreation and Park Association. (n.d.). *Parks and recreation is essential*. <https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/building-a-movement/parks-and-recreation-is-essential/>

Key Data:

- » Parks provide opportunities for physical activity and connecting with the outdoors. The resulting impacts are better mental health, improved physical health and increased physical activity.
- » Walking, park prescriptions, community gardening and farmers' market vouchers may promote nature contact, strengthen social structures, and improve longer term mental and physical health by activating intrapersonal, interpersonal and environmental processes.
- » Access to indoor and/or outdoor recreation facilities and frequency of park visitation correlate with greater physical activity; people who use parks and open spaces are three times more likely to achieve recommended levels of physical activity than non-users.
- » Children with access to parks and facilities have shown decreased prevalence of obesity compared to children without access. By contrast, children lacking parks are more likely to be physically inactive, have excessive screen-time (greater than or equal to four hours daily), obtain inadequate sleep, and be obese, overweight, or diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).
- » Eighty-three percent of U.S. adults agree it is important to have access to indoor and outdoor recreational areas, classes and activities in order to lead a healthy lifestyle.
- » Green space exposure in urban environments corresponds with lower mortality.
- » Green space exposure corresponds with improved physical health, including decreases in stress, blood pressure, heart rate, and risk of chronic disease (cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular heart disease)
- » Parks promote positive mental health by providing access to nature and encouraging recreational and sporting activity.
- » Parks and recreation counters social isolation by connecting people with nature and each other through festivals, parades, social events, performing arts, tours and other programming.

- » Time spent in nature positively impacts mental health by increasing cognitive performance and well-being and alleviating illnesses such as depression, attention deficit disorders, and Alzheimer's.
- » Mental health is significantly related to residential distance from parks. People living more than 1 kilometer away from a green space have nearly 50 percent higher odds of experiencing stress than those living fewer than 300 meters from a green space.
- » Physician-diagnosed depression was 33 percent higher in residential areas with the fewest green spaces compared to the neighborhoods with the most.
- » The positive effects of nature exposure for children include improved cognitive functioning (including increased concentration, greater attention capacities and higher academic performance), better motor coordination, reduced stress levels, increased social interaction with adults and other children, and improved social skills.
- » Nature play is an important component of the development of resilience in early childhood.
- » Participating in outdoor recreation bolsters adolescent resilience to external stressors and improves overall adolescent mental health
- » Youth who spend more time in nature tend to place a higher value on nature and have greater pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors.

Source:

Van Den Eeden, S. K., Browning, M. H., Becker, D. A., Shan, J., Alexeeff, S. E., Ray, G. T., & Kuo, M. (2022). Association between residential green cover and direct healthcare costs in Northern California: An individual level analysis of 5 million persons. *Environment International*, 163, 107174.

Key Data:

- » People living in neighborhoods with the most vegetation cover saved an estimated \$374 annually in healthcare costs and had fewer ER visits and hospitalizations as compared to people in neighborhoods with the least vegetation cover, even when adjusting for individual neighborhood characteristics, based on a study of over 5 million people in Northern California.

Source:

South, E. C., Hohl, B. C., Kondo, M. C., MacDonald, J. M., & Branas, C. C. (2018). Effect of greening vacant land on mental health of community-dwelling adults: A cluster randomized trial. *JAMA Network Open*, 1(3), e180298-e180298.

Key Data:

- » The greening of vacant lots can reduce self-reported feelings of depression in adults. In a Philadelphia study of 324 participants living in an area where 110 vacant lots received clean-up and greening interventions, the number of participants self-reporting feelings of depression decreased by 41.5% after vacant lot greening.

Source:

Ogletree, S. S., Huang, J. H., Reif, D., Yang, L., Dunstan, C., Osakwe, N., & Hipp, J. A. (2023). The relationship between greenspace exposure and telomere length in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. *Science of the Total Environment*, 905, 167452.

Key Data:

- » At the individual level we did find longer telomere lengths associated with neighborhoods with higher levels of greenspace present. This lends evidence for one explanation, for the beneficial outcomes found with greater greenspace, that greener neighborhoods contribute to longer telomeres and the benefits of these genetic structures on health.

Source:

Aubrey, A. (2024, May 13). *More outdoor play can help protect kids' eyesight, study finds*. NPR. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2024/05/13/1250555639/kids-eyesight-myopia-near-sighted-nearsightedness-outdoor-play>

Key Data:

- » In the U.S., 42% of people are now myopic—up from 25% back in the 1970s. A study from Taiwan found that children who reported spending more time outdoors were less likely to be myopic and, we showed later on, less likely to become myopic.

Source:

Jarvis, I., Sbihi, H., Davis, Z., Brauer, M., Czekajlo, A., Davies, H. W., & van den Bosch, M. (2022). The influence of early-life residential exposure to different vegetation types and paved surfaces on early childhood development: A population-based birth cohort study. *Environment International*, 163, 107196.

Key Data:

- » Children growing up in environments with more vegetation, especially with more trees, achieved more positive early childhood development outcomes as compared to children growing in environments with more paved surfaces, even after controlling for demographic and socioeconomic factors, according to a study of over 25,000 Vancouver-area children.

PUBLIC SUPPORT

Source:

National Recreation and Park Association. (n.d.). *Parks and recreation is essential*. <https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/building-a-movement/parks-and-recreation-is-essential/>

Key Data:

- » 62% of U.S. adults—crossing ages, income levels and political affiliation—are more likely to vote for politicians (e.g., mayor, county executive or council member) who make park and recreation funding a priority.
- » Nearly nine in 10 people agree that it is important for local, state and federal governments to fund local park and recreation agencies sufficiently in order to ensure every member of the community has equitable access to amenities, infrastructure and programming.
- » 66% of U.S. adults say that they support their local government dedicating revenues, taxes and levies that specifically target park and recreation operations or expansion projects.
- » 81% of U.S. adults want parks and recreation to ensure inclusivity through policies and practices. Inclusive practices and policies are those that take into account people of all mental and physical abilities, as well as ethnic, religious, racial, cultural or socio-economic backgrounds or orientations.

- » 86% of U.S. adults believe it is important for their local government to make investments that ensure children have access to safe and inclusive playgrounds.

98% of U.S. adults agree that it is important to provide youth with equitable access to sports opportunities.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Source:

National Recreation and Park Association. (2021). *Parks and recreation workforce development report*. Retrieved from <https://www.nrpa.org/contentassets/c2e4bf8e532c40bc919b143be6aaf935/2021-workforcedevreport.pdf>

Key Data:

- » Workforce development and career exploration programs play a vital role in connecting youth and young adults to the possibilities of a park and recreation career. These programs help build self-confidence and provide valuable work experience for thousands of people each year, while exposing them to a world of career opportunities in parks and recreation.