GREEN THE NEIGHBORHOODS

Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan

The "Headworks" along the Los Angeles River, adjacent to Griffith Park (2006)
GREEN THE NEIGHBORHOODS

This chapter describes proposals for “greening neighborhoods” by transforming the River Corridor into a continuous, Los Angeles River Greenway that functions as the “green spine” of the City.

Safe bicycle and pedestrian-friendly connections to the Greenway are provided via a system of arterial and local “green streets” and paseos with pedestrian walks, wide sidewalks, and shady tree lawns. To aid in restoration of functional upland habitat, requirements for these landscaped areas are presented that would meet these goals.

As this system develops, signature elements such as gateways and bridges, are added to reinforce the River’s identity. Building on past efforts, public art is a major component.

Within neighborhoods, underused or vacant space, as well as existing public spaces such as schoolyards, are refurbished and made a part of an emerging green space system.

To accomplish this vision, prototypical cross-sections are provided that can be used as “building blocks” to give form to the Greenway, to new “green streets,” to pocket parks, and to signature River elements.

Green the Neighborhood

A continuous River Greenway, Green Street connections into the neighborhood, improved and expanded open space within the neighborhoods, and an enhanced River identity, are proposed along the Los Angeles River and within the surrounding neighborhoods.
Recommendation #5.1:
Provide opportunities for continuous and uninterrupted movement along the River.

Recommendation #5.2:
Establish a River Buffer area within and adjacent to the River that meets riparian or upland habitat requirements.

Recommendation #5.3:
Extend open space, bike paths, and multi-use trails into the tributaries.

Recommendation #5.4:
Provide green arterial connections to the River. Where suitable, landscaped areas should be designed to meet upland habitat requirements.

Recommendation #5.5:
Create safe, non-motorized routes between the River and cultural institutions, parks, civic institutions, transit-oriented development, schools, transit hubs, and commercial and employment centers within 1 mile of the River.

Recommendation #5.6:
Increase direct pedestrian and visual access to the River.

Recommendation #5.7:
Increase open space throughout the River Corridor. Where suitable, landscaped areas should be designed to meet upland habitat requirements.

Recommendation #5.8:
Provide a diverse system of interconnected parks, recreational fields, and outdoor classrooms.

Recommendation #5.9:
Incorporate best management practices (BMP’s) in streetscapes and all public landscapes.

Recommendation #5.10:
Identify brownfield sites for potential open space acquisition.

Recommendation #5.11:
Daylight historic streams that once flowed into the River.

Recommendation #5.12:
Identify physical opportunities to improve the visibility of the River Corridor.

Recommendation #5.13:
Identify opportunities to improve public perception of the River Corridor.

Recommendation #5.14:
Encourage local and diverse character within the River Corridor.

Recommendation #5.15:
Identify physical opportunities to introduce art along the River.

Recommendation #5.16:
Create a River arts program that reflects and celebrates the history of the River and the diverse cultures of its surrounding neighborhoods.

Goal: Create a Continuous River Greenway

Goal: Connect Neighborhoods to the River

Goal: Extend Open Space and Water Quality Features into Neighborhoods

Goal: Enhance River Identity

Goal: Incorporate Public Art Along the River
RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #5.1:
Provide opportunities for continuous and uninterrupted movement along the River.

Recommendation #5.2:
Establish a River Buffer area within and adjacent to the River that meets riparian or upland habitat requirements.

Recommendation #5.3:
Extend open space, bike paths, and multi-use trails into the tributaries.

PROTOTYPICAL ELEMENTS AND THEIR USE

Building blocks that can be used to create the River Greenway system:
- The Greenway itself;
- River Promenades;
- Riverside Streets; and
- Grade-separated Crossings.

Key design features for these elements and guidelines concerning where to apply them are described in the next section.

Create a Continuous River Greenway

A continuous River Greenway is proposed along the Los Angeles River.
GOAL: CREATE A CONTINUOUS RIVER GREENWAY

THE CHALLENGE

A continuous River Greenway could serve as the City’s “green spine,” a framework around which the rest of its public open space is oriented. When complete, it will be one of the longest U.S. urban greenways.

The Los Angeles River Greenway, from the Canoga confluence to Downtown (and eventually to Long Beach), must overcome three challenges. First, there are few opportunities to move uninterrupted along the River without having to cross a street. Of the 80 vehicle and rail bridges, just 12 now allow passage underneath. Providing grade-separated undercrossings at all the bridges will require significant public investment. Until these crossings are completed, the River Greenway will be discontinuous and less safe.

Another challenge is the lack of pedestrian crossings along the River. In some areas, bridges are more than a mile apart, which is a substantial barrier to reaching existing open space, trails, and bike paths. Construction of new pedestrian bridges may require air rights as well as easement negotiations and acquisitions. With more pedestrian bridge crossings, the River can reconnect communities, and link visitors to a larger open space system and to other public resources.

A third challenge is the use of some of the River maintenance rights-of-way by private landowners, for powerlines, and as rail easements. In Studio City, for example, large segments of the maintenance right-of-way are occupied by the motion picture industry and private golf courses. The Downtown right-of-way is occupied mostly by railway and electrical towers. In these areas, easements for public access will have to be negotiated with private landowners, utilities, and rail companies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #5.1: Provide opportunities for continuous and uninterrupted movement along the River.

A continuous network of non-motorized, multi-use trails and bike paths can form the backbone of the Los Angeles River Greenway. The only comparable precedents within the County are along the Pacific Ocean beach, where a pedestrian/bicycle pathway extends 8.4 miles.

The Los Angeles County Master Plan proposed continuous bike paths and multi-use trails along the River. This Plan is consistent with the County Plan’s recommendations for new pedestrian bridges along the River. The Revitalization Master Plan recommends that pedestrian bridges be placed approximately every half-mile along the channel, in addition to the proposed connections across the channel. The Plan recommends that all existing and proposed vehicle and rail bridges provide grade-separated undercrossings and bicycle/pedestrian facilities.

Recommendation #5.2: Establish a River Buffer area within and adjacent to the River that meets riparian or upland habitat requirements.

A River Buffer area parallel to the River would provide an important separator between the River proper and active uses and development while meeting wildlife and plant habitat requirements, and providing for water quality treatment.

Recommendation #5.3: Extend open space, bike paths, and multi-use trails into the tributaries.

The Los Angeles River Greenway could extend alongside the connecting tributaries, to provide a framework for connecting public and natural open spaces. Bike paths and multi-use trails can be added to all tributaries to connect communities to the River, and to grow an open-space and non-motorized transportation network within the City.
LOS ANGELES RIVER GREENWAY

- A continuous bike path and pedestrian trail that incorporates grade-separated crossings for safety at all major cross streets, and provides parallel facilities where needed to minimize user conflicts.

POTENTIAL LOS ANGELES RIVER GREENWAY PROJECTS

- Canoga Avenue to Vanalden Avenue
- Vanalden Avenue to Balboa Boulevard
- Reseda Park
- White Oak to Balboa Lake
- Van Nuys Boulevard to Burbank Boulevard
- Studio City / Sherman Oaks
- Woodman to Whitsett
- Valleyheart (Coldwater to Whitsett)
- Radford Avenue to Weddington Park
- Cahuenga to Headworks
- Weddington Park to Riverside Drive (by Forest Lawn)
- North Atwater Greenway
- Riverside Drive (by 110 Freeway) to North Spring Street

GOAL: CREATE A CONTINUOUS RIVER GREENWAY

THE LOS ANGELES RIVER GREENWAY

An overarching goal of both the Los Angeles County Master Plan and this Revitalization Master Plan is to create a continuous 32-mile Los Angeles River Greenway. The Greenway would provide a dedicated bicycle path on the south and west side of the River, and a multi-use trail on the north and east side. Where feasible, both types of pathways should be provided on both sides.

The Greenway could feature significant amenities such as shade trees, and showcase sustainable practices such as biofiltration swales and the use of locally available materials. The County Master Plan Landscaping Guidelines and Palettes have already established standards for many of these amenities. Other elements may be added in keeping with local neighborhood needs and character.

Guidelines:

- The bikeway should be designed to reduce the flow of untreated stormwater runoff into the River through appropriate BMP’s.
- Where separate bike and pedestrian trails occur, locate the pedestrian path next to the River, and construct using permeable natural surfaces, such as decomposed granite.
- Color bikepath to distinguish the route and add character.
- Provide site amenities at key locations including site furniture and water fountains.
- Provide frequent access at key locations.
- Provide wayfinding and interpretive signage.
- Provide lighting and security.
- Refer to the Los Angeles County Master Plan: Landscaping Guidelines and Plant Palettes for specific guidance.
- All circulation and spaces will be ADA-compliant regarding maximum grades and surfacing materials.

Where to apply the element:

- Select priority areas that would serve to connect existing completed segments of the bike path
- Locate priority areas where grade-separated underpasses can be built
- Establish connections to major destinations, other bike paths, and public transportation
- Negotiate joint use for portions of the right-of-way that have been encroached on by other users

Legend

- Bikeway
- Trail/Sidewalk
- Multi Use Trail
- Traffic Lane
- Traffic Lane Shared with Bikeway
- Parking
- Water Quality BMP
- Vegetation/Canopy
- Porous Paving
- Unpaved Surface
- Lighting Standard

Emrie’s Walk along the Los Angeles River near Kester Avenue. (2006)
GOAL: CREATE A CONTINUOUS RIVER GREENWAY
RIVER PROMENADES

In more urban locations along the River Corridor, River Promenades with amenities and features, such as significant public art, parallel trails, and room for riverside concessions, should be established. Depending on adjacent conditions and desires, River Promenades can become enhanced linear parks, or take on more civic and urban qualities. They should make the most of adjacent natural features, vistas, and local opportunities to define their content and character.

Guidelines:
- The River bike path and recreation pedestrian trail must be incorporated within the Promenades.
- Recreational and multi-use trails should front the River.
- Belvederes and other amenities should encourage people to spend time next to the River.
- Bikepath and recreational trails could be separated to reduce conflicts.
- Contextual public art could be used to add character and highlight ecology and cultural history.

- Expand native landscaped areas with native plants along the length of the promenade to maintain a continuous functional wildlife habitat within the corridor.
- Integrate promenades with commercial areas, civic institutions, and residential neighborhoods.
- Celebrate local character, geography and vistas.
- Consider the potential for event programming such as farmers’ markets, art fairs or performances.
- Refer to Los Angeles County Master Plan Landscaping Guidelines and Plant Palettes for detailed guidance.
- All spaces and circulation should be ADA-compliant to standards for grading and surfacing materials.

Where to apply the element:
- Where wider right-of-ways exist, use available land. Where narrow right-of-ways exist, consider acquisition
- Locate next to high-traffic areas, including high-density developments, commercial areas (possibly facing the River), public institutions, and Metro stops
- Locate facing new development where the River Greenway and new structures complement the urban environment
- Locate as River frontage for new and existing River parks

RIVER PROMENADE
- Includes urban elements such as plazas, belvederes or overlooks, and public gathering spaces, such as cafes, appropriate for more urban and populated settings.

POTENTIAL RIVER PROMENADE PROJECTS
- Canoga Park
- Reseda Park
- Weddington Park
- Spreading Grounds
- 134 Freeway to Colorado Avenue
- North Atwater Walk
- Taylor Yard River
- Chinatown/Comfield Opportunity Area River
- Downtown Industrial Opportunity Area River

Visualization of a River Promenade at the River Glen Opportunity Area
GOAL: CREATE A CONTINUOUS RIVER GREENWAY

RIVERSIDE STREETS

- Streets that run parallel to the River, that can allow an experience of the River from a car or other vehicle.

POTENTIAL RIVERSIDE STREETS PROJECTS:

- Basset Street
- Valleyheart (Cedros to Sepulveda)
- Valleyheart (Sepulveda to Kester)
- Valleyheart (Hazeltine to Woodman)
- Valleyheart (Fulton to Coldwater Canyon)
- Valleyheart (Whitsett to Radford)
- River Glen Opportunity Area
- Chinatown/Cornfield Opportunity Area

Guidelines:

- Use street rights-of-way to enhance the experience of the River and the Greenway.
- Create an active street edge facing the River Greenway including commercial, residential, and civic frontage.
- Reduce or eliminate existing landscape screens (i.e. high hedges). Create intimate Riverside streets with two lanes of traffic and traffic-calming measures.
- Provide additional amenities within and adjacent to Riverside Streets
- Utilize River adjacent parking lanes to expand the River Greenway.

Where to apply the element:

- At existing River-adjacent streets
- Use at redevelopment or at new development, with commercial or residential areas fronting the River
- Use in areas with serious safety issues that would benefit from increased public activity
- Use at streets and alleys that could be vacated and converted to open space
- Use in areas with minimal wildlife habitat value
- Use at streets that provide bicycle and pedestrian connectivity to the transportation network

- Refer to the Los Angeles County Master Plan: Landscaping Guidelines and Plant Palettes for specific guidance.
- Ensure that circulation and spaces are ADA-compliant.

Goal: Create a Continuous River Greenway
GOAL: CREATE A CONTINUOUS RIVER GREENWAY

GRADE-SEPARATED CROSSINGS

Grade-separated undercrossings or overpasses should be provided at every vehicle and railway bridge. While the Los Angeles River and Bridge Access Report recommends grade-separated crossings, other solutions will be needed for areas where these are not feasible (City of Los Angeles, DPW 2002). Appropriate undercrossing typologies for the rectangular channel portion of the River in the San Fernando Valley should be studied further.

All crossings should be wide enough to accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, and in certain cases, equestrians on parallel trails. Public art and lighting should be used to illuminate dark undersides. Blind corners or “gauntlet scenarios” should be avoided.

Guidelines:
- Light underpasses for safety and winter commuting.
- Include wayfinding signage indicating overhead streets.
- Accommodate both pedestrians and bicyclists on discrete parallel paths where possible.
- Enhance crossings with public art and decorative elements.
- Minimize blind curves or “gauntlet scenarios.”
- Place grade-separated crossings above appropriate flood levels.
- Require all River Bridge improvements and construction to include or accommodate a grade-separated crossing on both sides of the River.
- All spaces and circulation should be ADA-compliant to standards for grading and surfacing materials.

Where to apply the element:
- On both sides of the River right-of-way throughout the 32 miles
- Connecting major destinations
- To create connections between park-poor areas, River-adjacent parks, and gateways
- Connecting to existing bike paths
- At crossings where at-grade crossing is difficult or impossible

Potential Grade-separated Crossing Projects:
- Orange Line Bridge
- 405 Freeway
- Laurel Canyon Boulevard
- CBS Studio
- 101 Freeway at Weddington Park
- 134 at Spreading Grounds
- Riverside Driver by 110 Freeway
- Railroad Bridge
- 110 at Arroyo Seco
- Railroad Bridge
- Broadway Bridge
RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #5.4:
Provide green arterial connections to the River. Where suitable, landscaped areas should be designed to meet upland habitat requirements.

Recommendation #5.5:
Create safe non-motorized routes between the River and cultural institutions, parks, civic institutions, transit-oriented development, schools, transit hubs, and commercial and employment centers within 1 mile of the River.

Recommendation #5.6:
Increase direct physical and visual access to the River.

PROTOTYPICAL ELEMENTS AND THEIR USE

Several building blocks can be used to create a Green Streets system. These include:

- Arterial Green Streets;
- Primary Local Green Streets;
- Local Green Streets;
- Neighborhood Walking Loops;
- Industrial Green Streets;
- Enhanced Intersections;
- Paseos; and
- Equestrian Loops.

Key design features for these elements, and guidelines concerning where to apply them are described in the next section.

Connect Neighborhoods to the River

An interconnected system of Green Streets, Walking Loops and Equestrian Loops is proposed to connect neighboring communities along the entire River Corridor.
GOAL: CONNECT NEIGHBORHOODS TO THE RIVER

THE CHALLENGE

More than 70 percent of Los Angeles residents lack safe, walkable access to parks or other green space within one-quarter mile of home. Residents must be able to access the Greenway safely and conveniently from their homes, workplaces, and schools. By improving non-motorized circulation, the River Corridor can provide a new and safe means of commuter travel.

Many U.S. cities have employed “green streets” programs that transform arterial, connector, and local streets into safe, easily identified green connections that serve both motorized and non-motorized users. Existing streets designated as “green streets” feature traffic calming measures to slow speeds, intersection improvements to provide safer bicycle and pedestrian crossings and facilitate pedestrian access, wider sidewalks to promote cafe culture, and water quality features that treat stormwater runoff. Portland, Oregon, Denver, Colorado and Chicago, Illinois are among the major cities that have created a green streets program.

Not all streets in the River Corridor are recommended to become green-streets. Such designation is typically reserved for streets that provide major neighborhood connections to an amenity like the River, or that connect major destinations, such as schools, transit hubs, or employment centers, to significant natural resources. In most cities, Green Street improvements are folded into a public works capital repair program, so that construction of these improvements are completed as a street is designated for resurfacing or other major reconstruction.

A Los Angeles River Green Streets initiative would provide ways for residents to reconnect with the River, and would complement important parallel greening initiatives, including the Mayor’s Million Trees Initiative.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #5.4: Provide Green Arterial and Local Street connections to the River. Where suitable, landscaped areas should be designed to meet upland habitat requirements.

Recommendation #5.5: Create safe non-motorized routes between the River and cultural institutions, parks, civic institutions, transit-oriented development, schools, transit hubs, and commercial and employment centers within 1 mile of the River.

Recommendation #5.6: Increase direct pedestrian and visual access to the River.

The green system will extend into the City laterally, linking the River to the City. Green Arterial Streets should be retrofitted to include bike lanes, BMP’s and enhanced pedestrian amenities. New street sections should be considered that create safer connections and more sustainable environments.

To extend ecosystem restoration beyond the River Corridor, requirements for establishing upland habitat should be incorporated into the design of landscape buffers, median strips, and tree lawns.

Recommendation #5.7: Increase visual and direct pedestrian access to parks and community facilities in adjacent neighborhoods through streetscape and signage improvements that lead to the River.

CONCURRENT PLANNING EFFORTS

- The County Master Plan encouraged connections to the River from schools, parks, workplaces, and “public gathering locations” located within one mile of the River. It also recommends that as trails are developed and improved, they should be connected to parks and community facilities in adjacent neighborhoods through streetscape and signage improvements that lead to the River.

- The Trust for Public Land (TPL) Urban Greenway program, developed by the Mountains Conservancy Foundation, proposed three greenways along the River.

- Metropolitan Transit Authority (Metro) has recently completed the Orange Line route. This system also includes a Class I Bike path that connects Canoga Park, both along the River and through the Sepulveda Basin, to Burbank.

- North East Trees has a studied the systematic application of green-streets and their integration with street-end parks to serve water quality goals and beautification. They propose routing residential stormwater into biofiltration swales located in modified existing parkways. The parkways then terminate into street-end parks that further detain and infiltrate runoff.
ARTERIAL GREEN STREETS

- Major connectors that incorporate safe connections for cyclists and pedestrians, water quality features, functioning habitat where appropriate, and identity elements.

POTENTIAL ARTERIAL GREEN STREETS PROJECTS

- Canoga Avenue
- DeSoto Avenue
- Winnetka Avenue
- Reseda Boulevard
- Sepulveda Boulevard
- Van Nuys Boulevard
- Laurel Canyon Boulevard
- Lankershim Boulevard
- Los Feliz Boulevard
- Fletcher Drive
- Broadway
- 1st Street
- 4th Street

GOAL: CONNECT NEIGHBORHOODS TO THE RIVER

ARTERIAL GREEN STREETS

Arterial Green Streets should be a prominent feature in the River Corridor. They can provide safe connections to the River for bicyclists and pedestrians. These would also include integrated stormwater management, use of drought-tolerant, native streetscape plantings, themed street furniture, and public art identifying the street’s connection with the River.

Because of the amount of vehicular traffic often found on Arterial Green Streets, it will be often challenging to improve access and use for cyclists and pedestrians. However, due to the critical linkages these streets can provide, and the profound effect they will have in defining the River Corridor, future planning efforts should identify ways to improve access for non-motorized users. Unless an alternative comprehensive bike path network is created, these streets are the primary means by which non-motorized users will travel between local and regional destinations and the River. Arterial Green Streets will ensure that these trips are safe and comfortable enough to encourage daily use.

Guidelines:

- Include bike paths and enhanced pedestrian facilities.
- Include water quality improvements, such as porous parking strips, bulb-outs, and infiltration and biofiltration planting strips, to be studied by the City’s Street Standards Committee.
- Create continuous shade along the street, with trees spaced every 20 to 25 feet.
- Consolidate existing utilities, and place powerlines underground.
- Include amenities, such as furniture, lighting, vegetation, signage, paving, and public art to connect the street to the River.
- If bikeway facilities cannot be accommodated on the Arterial Green Street, create an alternative route on nearby local streets.
- Incorporate traffic-calming measures.
- Adapt Arterial Green Street designs to the different prototypical street widths within the City.
- Create off-street parking areas to remove on-street parking and create room for non-motorized transportation facilities.
- Work within the City to redefine standard street types and sections.
- Refer to the County Master Plan Landscaping Master Landscaping Guidelines and Plant Palettes for specific guidance.
- All spaces and circulation should be ADA-compliant to standards for grading and surfacing materials.

Where to apply the element:

- Every arterial street that intersects the River
- On streets that connect to major destinations and other non-motorized transportation routes
- On River Corridor arterial streets scheduled for renovation or improvements
- Connecting to existing but incomplete bikeway networks

Legend:
- Bikeway
- Trail/Sidewalk
- Multi Use Trail
- Traffic Lane
- Traffic Lane Shared with Bikeway
- Parking
- Water Quality BMP
- Vegetation/Canopy
- Porous Paving
- Unpaved Surface
- Lighting Standard

Montage of Arterial Green Street design that includes native plant species, in the Taylor Yard Opportunity Area
GOAL: CONNECT NEIGHBORHOODS TO THE RIVER

PRIMARY LOCAL GREEN STREETS

Primary Local Green Streets are non-arterial streets that can provide neighborhood access to the River. They often offer safer access for non-motorized users than the arterials due to reduced vehicle speed and volumes, and should be considered important River accessways. Primary Local Green Streets differ from Local Green Streets in that they are often situated between major access points, and provide important connections to local destinations, such as schools, employment centers, and public transportation nodes.

Because of their important role as connectors, bike paths and wider sidewalks should be accommodated as these existing streets are repaired or retrofitted. Guidelines also call for integrated stormwater management elements, native streetscape plantings, and themed street furniture.

Guidelines:

- Include bike lanes and enhanced pedestrian facilities.
- Include water quality improvements, such as porous parking strips, bulb-outs, and infiltration and biofiltration planting strips, to be studied by the City’s Street Standards Committee.
- Create continuous shade along the street, with trees spaced every 20 to 25 feet.
- Include elements such as distinctive furniture, lighting, vegetation, signage, paving, and public art to connect the street to the River.
- Place local gateways and nonvehicular bridges where streets meet the River.
- Adapt Primary Local Green Street designs to the different prototypical street widths within the City.
- Refer to Los Angeles County Master Plan Landscaping Guidelines and Plant Palettes for detailed guidance.
- All circulation and spaces will be ADA-compliant regarding maximum grades and surfacing materials.

Where to apply the element:

- Local streets intersecting the River
- Local streets with freeway underpasses and/or exceptional access to surrounding neighborhoods
- Local streets that connect with major destinations

Potential Primary Local Green Streets Projects:

- Varied Avenue
- Varalden Avenue
- Wilbur Avenue (Sherman Way to Orange Line)
- Amigo Avenue
- Etiwanda Avenue
- Laurel Grove Avenue
- South Mariposa Avenue
- Goodwin Avenue
- Silver Lake Boulevard
- Dorris Place
- Commercial Street
- Industrial Street & Jesse Street
- Bay Street & Sacramento Street

Proposed improvements to a Primary Local Green Street
SECONDARY LOCAL GREEN STREETS

- Streets that contribute to establishing a distinct River identity and character, but are not primary connectors.

POTENTIAL SECONDARY LOCAL GREEN STREETS PROJECTS

- As local streets within the River Corridor undergo improvements

GOAL: CONNECT NEIGHBORHOODS TO THE RIVER

SECONDARY LOCAL GREEN STREETS

Secondary Local Green Streets are nonarterial streets that can serve to improve the character and water quality of streets within the River Corridor, but serve only as a local connector to the River. These residential streets will serve as access points through existing neighborhoods. They are tree lined and may have some public amenities.

North East Trees has a studied the systematic application of green streets in Elysian Valley. Since 80 percent of residential stormwater runoff sheets off concrete driveways, North East trees proposes routing water into biofiltration swales located in modified existing parkways. The parkways then terminate into street-end parks that further detain and infiltrate runoff. These street-end parks then act as local gateways to the River.

A similar systematic and integrated approach to multi-objective planning can be applied to the River’s many adjacent residential streets.

Guidelines:

- Include some water quality improvements, such as porous parking strips, bulb-outs, and infiltration and biofiltration planting strips, to be studied by the City’s Street Standards Committee.
- Route to street-end parks for detention and/or infiltration.
- Create continuous shade along streets with trees spaced every 20 to 25 feet and by placing utility lines underground.
- Refer to Los Angeles County Master Plan Landscaping Guidelines and Plant Palettes for detailed guidance.
- All spaces and circulation should be ADA-compliant to standards for grading and surfacing materials.

Where to apply the element:

- Neighborhood Streets anticipated to become River access points
- Neighborhood streets with parks
- Neighborhood streets with direct water flow into the River
- Local streets within the River Corridor

Local Green Street improvements include an improved pedestrian environment and vegetated bioswales to treat storm runoff before being released into the River.
GOAL: CONNECT NEIGHBORHOODS TO THE RIVER

NEIGHBORHOOD WALKING LOOPS

Neighborhood Walking Loops will be routes that individuals and families can follow along the River. Walking Loops are important for promoting fitness and can also define the local character of the River’s diverse neighborhoods and communities. The Loops will emerge along the River, as communities and neighborhoods engage in planning and improving their local River reaches. Typically 2-4 miles in total length, the location of crossings would depend on land use, infrastructure, and community needs. These Loops will therefore define the local character of a section of the River and might include public art, interpretive signage, and other features. Grade-separated crossings on both sides of the River will be necessary to create a continuous and enjoyable loop.

Guidelines:

- Use Walking Loops as a catalyst to build grade-separated crossings.
- Walking Loops should average two miles in length.
- Incorporate fitness elements within Loops to encourage exercise.
- Create Loops that give a distinctive character to discrete sections of the River with public art and signature amenities.
- Seek investment and involvement from the local community, including businesses and schools.
- Establish a Loop identity with environmental graphics and wayfinding.

- Refer to the Los Angeles County Master Plan Landscaping Guidelines and Plant Palettes for specific guidance.
- All circulation and spaces will be ADA-compliant regarding maximum grades and surfacing materials.

Where to apply the element:

- Loop ends located at non-motorized bridges and other safe crossings
- Between difficult obstacles, such as tributaries, that cannot be easily crossed at-grade or grade-separated
- In conjunction with grade-separated crossings and River trail improvements
- Within a distinct cultural or geographical area, including neighborhoods, historical areas, parks, and newly recognized districts
- Linked to or included as a distinctive local feature of the River or adjacent areas
- In areas lacking recreational opportunities
- Where grade-separated crossings exist on both sides of the River

This map depicts potential Walking Loop configurations using existing River crossings.

Existing Recreational loop around Balboa Lake (2005)

Mission Yard River Loop
1st to 6th street River Loop

many more could be developed on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis

The Echo Park promenade has become a popular strolling and exercise system for adjacent communities. (2006)
Industrial Green Streets should be improved streets within the River Corridor that provide safe and comfortable bike/pedestrian access through existing and proposed industrial areas. These areas and adjacent neighborhoods can greatly benefit from improved association with the River.

Sidewalks with appropriate tree protection measures can also shade and beautify portions of these zones. In appropriate locations, tree wells and street-ends may incorporate water quality BMP’s to mitigate direct runoff and can become Gateways. Signage and wayfinding systems can help Greenway users to access the River through industrial tracts, with expanded sidewalks that could be designed to allow non-motorized access.

Potential Industrial Green Streets Projects
- Doran Street
- Brazil Street
- Electronics Street
- East 3rd Street
- East 6th Street
- South Mission Street

Guidelines:
- Improve streets to allow safe River access by non-motorized users
- Add access points at River
- Add trees and vegetation
- Add water quality BMP’s
- Add signage and wayfinding elements.
- All spaces and circulation should be ADA-compliant to standards for grading and surfacing materials.

Where to Use:
- Streets in industrial areas within the River Corridor
- Streets that connect directly to the River
- Streets that connect to major destinations, transit hubs, and schools

Legend:
- Bikeway
- Trail/Sidewalk
- Multi-Use Trail
- Traffic Lane
- Traffic Lane Shared with Bikeway
- Parking
- Water Quality BMP
- Vegetation/Canopy
- Porous/Pervious
- Unpaved Surfice
- Lighting Standard

An improved Industrial Green Street with street trees and vehicle and pedestrian circulation
**GOAL: CONNECT NEIGHBORHOODS TO THE RIVER**

**ENHANCED INTERSECTIONS**

Enhanced Intersections offer safe and aesthetic crossing and access to the River Greenway for vehicles and non-motorized users. These Enhanced Intersections will occur within the River Corridor at arterial intersections and at bridges. Enhanced Intersections should celebrate the River as it flows through the City. The ground plane and crosswalks can have premium materials such as colored asphalt and concrete with patterns and texture. Wayfinding signage, including maps and directional markers, can introduce and guide users to the River Greenway System. Public art and environmental graphics may be installed to create new landmarks and River related spaces. Site utilities can be similarly iconic and aesthetic. For example, unique lighting and traffic signals can announce the presence of the River Greenway.

Transportation authorities should consider alternative signaling systems. Smart crosswalks and scatterwalks can allow alternative crossing patterns and access to the River.

An Enhanced Intersection creates a safer pedestrian environment

Guidelines:
- Include traffic-calming measures such as lighting, bicycle-signal systems and improved signage.
- Employ crossing refuges, enhanced crosswalks, and pedestrian signals.
- Incorporate premium and graphic surfaces at intersections.
- Include amenities such as distinctive site furniture, lighting, vegetation, signage, and paving.
- Incorporate public art.
- Provide premium utilities such as custom lighting standards.
- All spaces and circulation should be ADA-compliant to standards for grading and surfacing materials.

Where to apply the element:
- At busy intersections, along heavily used streets
- At freeway on-ramps and off-ramps in the River Corridor
- At intersections connecting to major destinations, schools, and transit hubs
- On an improved River Green Street
- Any arterial intersections near the River
- At signalized bridges

An Enhanced Intersection with patterned concrete along the 3rd Street Promenade in Santa Monica. (2006)

**ENHANCED INTERSECTION**

- Intersections that support safe connections to the River with traffic-calming measures, special paving, bulb-outs, and/or other features.

**POTENTIAL ENHANCED INTERSECTION PROJECTS**
- Tampa Avenue and Victory Boulevard
- White Oak Avenue and Victory Boulevard
- Ventura Boulevard and Coldwater Canyon Boulevard
- Ventura Boulevard and Laurel Canyon Boulevard
- Lankershim Boulevard and Cahuenga Boulevard
- Doran Street and San Fernando Road
- Brazil Street and San Fernando Road
- Fletcher Avenue and San Fernando Road
- Fletcher Avenue and on/off ramp to the 2 Freeway
- San Fernando Road and Elm Street (at Taylor Yard)
PASEOS

- Intimate, non-motorized passageways through existing or new developments that are characterized by differing scale and materials.

POTENTIAL PASEO PROJECTS

- West end of Brazil Street
- West end of Electronics Street
- West end of Edward Way
- West end of Media Center Drive
- Blimp Street
- East end of Dorris Place
- Link between Hollenbeck Park and Inez Street

GOAL: CONNECT NEIGHBORHOODS TO THE RIVER

PASEOS

Paseos create intimate pedestrian and bicycle thoroughfares for new and existing developments. They can provide a concise and elegant route to the River within River adjacent developments. Planted areas on both sides buffer the Paseos from adjacent land uses. Best management practices may be employed throughout, to improve water quality. In many cases, Paseos also serve as required fire lanes and service access.

Guidelines:

- Include pedestrian and bicycle facilities where possible.
- Include elements such as distinctive furniture, lighting, vegetation, signage, paving, and public art to create a connection to the River.
- Include extensive water quality improvements, including infiltration planters, porous paving, rain gardens and cisterns.
- Incorporate multiple uses, such as a fire lane, emergency vehicle access, flood channel maintenance and other service access.
- Coordinate with new Portals, so that the Paseos can create access to Portals.
- All spaces and circulation should be ADA-compliant to standards for grading and surfacing materials.

Where to apply the element:

- At new and existing private and public developments without public River access every 400 feet
- As access to major destinations
- Where fire lanes are required
- Where service lanes are required
- At vacated streets and alleys

Where to apply:

- West end of Brazil Street
- West end of Electronics Street
- West end of Edward Way
- West end of Media Center Drive
- Blimp Street
- East end of Dorris Place
- Link between Hollenbeck Park and Inez Street

Legend:

- Bikeway
- Trail/Sidewalk
- Multi Use Trail
- Traffic Lane
- Traffic Lane Shared with Bikeway
- Parking
- Water Quality BMP
- Vegetation/Canopy
- Porous Paving
- Unpaved Surface
- Lighting Standard

Paseos create intimate pedestrian and bicycle thoroughfares with direct access to the River

17' MIN.

18' MIN.
EQUESTRIAN LOOPS

Equestrian loops are riding circuits in areas adjacent to equestrian facilities. Ideally they should provide for easy trailhead access, especially for riders who may be trailering horses. Loops should be designated as equestrian-only trails. If placed within a corridor that will serve multiple user types (including pedestrians or cyclists), a parallel system should be provided with a minimum separation of 5 feet between equestrian trails and those serving bicycles.

Guidelines:

- Install signal crossing buttons, signage, and other elements at heights suitable for equestrian users.
- Maintain 10 foot height clearance for equestrian users.
- Maintain a minimum of 5 foot spacing buffer containing a low fence and shrubs between equestrian and bicycle paths.
- Sight distance should be 100 feet when possible.
- Provide areas for animals to rest and water.
- Provide surface runoff treatment to mitigate the effects associated with animal waste products.
- Establish Loop identity with environmental graphics and wayfinding.
- Equestrian trails at proposed equestrian loops should have appropriate surfacing, such as dirt or decomposed granite.
- Seek investment and involvement from the local communities, including businesses and schools.
- Conduct meetings with equestrian groups at existing equestrian centers to determine the most appropriate locations for equestrian loops and regional open space access.

Where to apply the element:

- Connect Loops with existing and proposed equestrian facilities, including stables, paths, and equestrian bridges
- Connect Loops with existing and proposed parks
- Place Loops in areas that minimize conflict between equestrian and bicycle users
- Provide connections to local and regional equestrian and multi-use trail systems, such as the “Rim of the Valley Trail” and the “County Hiking and Riding Trail.”

Proposed equestrian loop through Griffith Park, Glendale and the River Glen Opportunity Area

Legend
- Bikeway
- Trail/Sidewalk
- Multi Use Trail
- Traffic Lane
- Traffic Lane Shared with Bikeway
- Parking
- Water Quality BMP
- Vegetation/Canopy
- Porous Paving
- Unpaved Surface
- Lighting Standard

POTENTIAL EQUESTRIAN LOOPS PROJECTS

All potential projects should be coordinated with the local equestrian community to ensure trail and terrain conformity to equestrian needs.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #5.7: Increase open space throughout the River Corridor. Where suitable, landscaped areas should be designed to meet upland habitat requirements.

Recommendation #5.8: Provide a diverse system of interconnected parks and outdoor classrooms.

Recommendation #5.9: Incorporate best management practices (BMP’s) in streetscapes and all public landscapes.

Recommendation #5.10: Identify Brownfield sites for potential open space acquisition.

Recommendation #5.11: Daylight historic streams that once flowed into the River.

PROTOTYPICAL ELEMENTS AND THEIR USE

Building blocks that can be used to extend open space, habitat, and water quality features into neighborhoods include:

- River Parks and recreational facilities
- River Park Buffers
- Outdoor Classrooms and Learning Centers
- Pocket Parks.

Key design features for these elements and guidelines concerning where to apply them are described in the next section.

Extend Open Space and Water Quality Features into Neighborhoods

By adapting existing open spaces and repurposing the outdoor spaces of existing public facilities, water quality treatment and open space can become a part of all public facilities within the River Corridor.
GOAL: EXTEND OPEN SPACE AND WATER QUALITY FEATURES INTO NEIGHBORHOODS

THE CHALLENGE

According to a 2004 Trust for Public Land (TPL) survey of the 50 largest Cities in the U.S., Los Angeles has the lowest per-capita green space. It is also below the norm in walkable access to parks. With the Los Angeles River Greenway and an accompanying network of new parks and public spaces, the City can become a greener, more beautiful place to relax and retreat.

Los Angeles is also faced with an aging stormwater infrastructure, which is in areas undersized to serve current development and focused almost solely on flood management. This Plan advocates a vision for green space that provides flood storage and landscape-based water quality treatment along the River channel, within public street rights-of-way, in public parks, on school properties, and on other civic spaces. Parks, green space, and public rights-of-way outside the River channel proper also should be incorporated into a comprehensive multi-objective stormwater management system, as described further in this chapter.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #5.7: Increase open space throughout the River Corridor. Where suitable, landscaped areas should be designed to meet upland habitat requirements.

The River Greenway should be expanded by acquiring new open space areas that, where feasible, can be restored to fulfill habitat requirements. Opportunities exist for such expansion through existing rights-of-way, powerline easements, and rail easements, and might be leveraged through joint-use and maintenance agreements. Open space opportunities also should be explored outside the River Corridor, by reclaiming and restoring underused or vacant properties and transforming them into parks or open space that connect wildlife-sustaining habitats.

Recommendation #5.8: Provide a diverse system of interconnected parks and outdoor classrooms.

All Pocket Parks should serve a water quality function, though this can be balanced with recreational enjoyment. Ten schools are located within one quarter-mile of the River and additional schools may be located near the River in the future. This offers the potential to create a system of jointly used Parks and Outdoor Classrooms that would provide students and the schools with spaces for ecological classwork and fieldwork such as water quality monitoring, and would lay the groundwork for instilling environmental ethics.

Recommendation #5.9: Incorporate best management practices (BMP’s) in streetscapes and all public landscapes.

Existing roadways, new streetscapes and all public landscapes should incorporate a variety of BMP’s, such as water quality treatment, and permeable surfaces that can help reduce pollutant loading and encourage infiltration where soils are suitable. Other cities, including Portland and Chicago, have undertaken similar efforts, resulting in cleaner and greener communities that improve environmental function, economic value, and quality of life.

Recommendation #5.10: Identify Brownfield sites for potential open space acquisition.

Due to its industrial history, the River Corridor includes many sites which are listed as brownfields. Where possible, new development and open space should occur on brownfield sites. These sites offer opportunities for in-situ remediation, environmental education, and site healing, in the creation of open space. Recent precedents for brownfield acquisition and conversion to open space include the Los Angeles State Historic Park (The Cornfields) and the Rio de Los Angeles State Park (at Taylor Yard).

Recommendation #5.11: Daylight historic streams that once flowed into the River.

Many streams that once connected to the River have been encased in underground culverts. This Plan suggests a comprehensive inventory of historic streams and an assessment of the feasibility of stream daylighting and restoration. The plans for North Atwater Park offer an example of a daylighted stream, and the potential for improved habitat and landscape treatment of urban stormwater runoff.

CONCURRENT PLANNING EFFORTS

- A number of pocket parks (for example Marsh Park and Steelhead Park) in Elysian Valley provide stormwater detention and infiltration and interpretive functions.
- The Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) and the County Department of Public Works have also sponsored a stenciling program for drain inlets to raise public consciousness about water quality and the connection to the River.
- The Griffith Park Master Plan working group is presently focusing on the establishment of an “Urban Wilderness Identity.”
- The City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks has initiated a 5 year process to produce a citywide park master plan. This process is evaluating the long-term conditions of existing facilities and developing a community needs assessment survey.
RIVER PARK AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

• Parks and recreational facilities located along and oriented toward the River.

POTENTIAL RIVER PARK AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES PROJECTS:
• River Origin Park
• Canoga Park River Park
• Aliso Creek Confluence Park
• Encino Velodrome Wetlands Park
• Hjelte to Dam Wetlands Park
• Castle Family Park
• Hazeltine River Edge Park
• Fashion Square River Park
• Muro Park Park
• Headworks Wetland Park
• Spreading Ground River Park
• Ferrari Fields River Park
• River Glen River Park
• Pollywog Park Renovation
• N. Atwater Park-River Vista Expansion
• Legion Lane Park
• Sunnymoak River Park
• Taylor Yard Wetland Park
• Riverside Park
• Arroyo Seco Confluence Park
• Cornfields Wetland Park
• Albion Dairy Park
• Chinatown/Cornfield River Park
• Mission Yard River Park
• Downtown Industrial River Park
• 7th Street River Park
• Rio Vista Blufftop Park
• Crown River Gateway and Ecological Park

GOAL: EXTEND OPEN SPACE AND WATER QUALITY FEATURES INTO NEIGHBORHOODS

RIVER PARKS AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

River Parks should be designed to improve and engage the River Greenway. When possible, park land adjacent to the River should be used to widen and green the River. Recreation facilities should respond to specific neighborhood needs and be balanced with water quality improvements and restoration of wildlife habitat. River Parks should seek to improve water quality, both by using best management practices and by treating flows from tributaries or daylighted stormwater systems.

Guidelines:
• Maintain and enhance River Greenway trails within River Parks.
• Create enhanced River Greenway habitat with special features and native vegetation.
• Incorporate elements along the River’s edge that can enhance recreation and enjoyment, improve water quality, and expand wildlife habitat.
• Incorporate water quality improvements as Park features, including daylighting stormdrains and constructing wetlands.
• Encourage design competitions and community participation to ensure high-caliber designs that serve community needs and advance the quality of open space.

Where to apply the element:
• Within areas with a high incidence of youth density
• Where habitat restoration is needed
• Where channel modification possibilities are augmented by more Riverside park land

Legend
- Biken
- Trail/ Sidewalk
- Multi-Use Trail
- Traffic Lane
- Traffic Lane Shared with Bikeway
- Parking
- Water Quality BMP
- Vegetation/Canopy
- Porous Paving
- Unpaved Surface
- Lightning "Subnet"
All River-adjacent parks and open space should incorporate a minimum 30-foot Buffer from the right-of-way to create an effective separation between recreation uses and restored habitat areas along the River’s edge. This requirement should be applied in all new open space or parkland created along the River, and selectively applied in existing parks and open spaces based on identified conflicts between recreational uses and ecosystem function. These can also serve to provide multiple-benefits in the form of recreation and water quality improvements.

Guidelines:

- Create a natural open space Buffer area 30 feet wide along existing Riverside Parks that is integrated with the River Greenway. This area will improve water quality, and add habitat, trails, and other passive amenities.
- Include multiple points of access to the River, including Gateway elements.
- Note improved River access in park signage.

- Refer to Los Angeles County Master Plan Landscaping Guidelines and Plant Palettes for detailed guidance.
- All spaces and circulation should be ADA-compliant to standards for grading and surfacing materials.

Where to apply the element:

- Small vacant lots and other available land opportunities
- At local access points and neighborhood gateways
- Cul-de-sac’s and street-ends
- Vacated streets

Cuernavaca Park provides a 100-foot native buffer between the Platte River and usable open space in Denver, Colorado. (2005)

RIVER PARK BUFFER

- A natural area that provides physical separation between the River Corridor proper and adjacent active recreation uses.

POTENTIAL RIVER PARK BUFFER PROJECTS:

- Reseda Park
- Sepulveda Basin
- Weddington Park
- Griffith Park
POCKET PARKS

- Opportunities to provide additional parks and natural areas by acquiring smaller properties along the River, or by recapturing underused space outside the River Corridor in the neighborhoods.

POCKET PARK PROJECTS:

- Varied Avenue
- Varalden Avenue
- Amigo Avenue
- Etta Edwards Avenue
- Laurel Grove Avenue
- South Mariposa Street
- Silver Lake Boulevard
- Dorris Place
- Commercial Street
- Industrial & Jesse Street
- Bay and Sacramento Street

GOAL: EXTEND OPEN SPACE AND WATER QUALITY FEATURES INTO NEIGHBORHOODS

POCKET PARKS

Pocket Parks provide opportunities for neighborhood-scale green space, rest areas, and Gateways. They can transform small, underused spaces into public spaces. These small spaces can be rich with amenities, including interpretative signage, public art, and water quality features. Several have already been built along the River and serve as local landmarks and destinations.

Guidelines:

- Refer to Los Angeles County Master Plan Landscaping Guidelines and Plant Palettes for guidance.
- Encourage the recognition of local identity and character.
- Incorporate public art.
- Include Park amenities, such as seating, interpretative signage, interactive features, lighting, and water fountains.
- Require water quality BMP’s and sustainable materials and construction methods including recycling of construction materials, such as concrete.
- Integrate with neighborhood Gateways and Primary Local Green Streets.
- All spaces and circulation should be ADA-compliant to standards for grading and surfacing materials.

Where to apply the element:

- Small vacant lots and other available land
- At local access points and neighborhood Gateways
- On cul-de-sacs and street-ends
- At vacated streets
Regional and local facilities help educate the community and children about the River and about environmental stewardship. Outdoor Classrooms near schools can serve as year-round living laboratories that are integrated into school curriculums. Regional River Learning Centers can hold exhibits and provide facilities for public gatherings, and attract visitors from throughout the region. Together these facilities can improve understanding of the River and of local and regional environmental issues.

Guidelines:
- Create local and regional facilities.
- Include teaching facilities, such as outdoor laboratories, classrooms, amphitheaters, and exhibits.
- Include demonstration projects to test sustainable technologies and water quality monitoring.
- Create interactive elements that involve schoolchildren in their design and construction.
- Incorporate public art.
- All spaces and circulation should be ADA-compliant to standards for grading and surfacing materials.

Where to apply the element:
- At sites with bicycle and pedestrian access to local schools
- As local gateways to schools near the River
- In areas with specific ecological value or near River channel improvements

Potential Outdoor Classrooms and River Learning Centers Projects:
- Canoga Park High School
- Reseda High School Outdoor Classroom
- Sepulveda Basin (Birmingham School)
- Colfax Avenue
- River Glen Opportunity Area
- Taylor Yard
- Donna Place
- Lincoln Heights Riverfront Cultural Center
- Chinatown/Comfielde Opportunity Area
- Albion Street
- Downtown Industrial Opportunity Area
ACTIVE RECREATION

The Los Angeles River Greenway has great potential to meet some of the demand for new parks and recreation facilities, with equitable distribution and access. The River can become a continuous route, that safely connects teams and users to active recreation opportunities. At present, families living near the River must drive 20-30 miles to access soccer facilities. This has many secondary impacts, such as increased traffic, air pollution, energy consumption, and safety concerns. Recreation facilities should be planned for areas of greatest need, such as within areas of high youth density. The human health benefits of recreation, such as reducing obesity, diabetes, and other diseases, is well documented (Richard J. Jackson et al. Creating a Healthy Environment: The Impact of the Built Environment on Public Health). Opportunities also exist adjacent to the Greenway for the location of regional active sports complexes, attracting teams both locally and nationally. This has the added benefit of revenue generation and job creation. Sports fields and recreational facilities are often thought of as being at odds with habitat and passive uses. When reconsidered as multi-objective projects, active sports fields can serve to improve water quality, through detention, retention, and filtration (See diagram below.). For example, Pierce College in Canoga Park recently installed a water infiltration basin beneath its soccer field, collecting run-off from the adjacent parking lots.

DEFINITION: ACTIVE RECREATION

Active recreation can involve cooperative or team activity, with associated facilities, or individual activities. Facilities typically include athletic fields, buildings and structures for recreational activities and administration, community gardens, courses or courts, children’s play areas, recreational water bodies, dog areas, bikeways and equestrian trails. These uses may require recreational staffing.

A NEED FOR ACTIVE RECREATION

Increasing child obesity rates are a concern for children throughout Los Angeles. In the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), 87% of all students are classified as not physically fit. The relationship between improved public health and the availability of parks and open space—particularly those that provide active and passive recreation—are well known (e.g., Sherar 2006; TPL 2006; Garcia and White 2006). The Plan offers an important opportunity to provide much-needed active recreation facilities where they are currently lacking—along the River.

GOAL: EXTEND OPEN SPACE AND WATER QUALITY FEATURES INTO NEIGHBORHOODS

ACTIVE RECREATION

The diagram above illustrates the potential of recreation fields to improve water quality. A dry weather flow might come from a culvert or tributary, and run through a natural treatment system before entering the River.

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AN INTEGRATED RECREATIONAL SYSTEM

The River Revitalization Master Plan offers a vision to create opportunities to improve public health and fitness. With 32 miles of bikeways and trails, designed family walking “loops,” equestrian loops, and the River Greenway, the Plan provides an integrated system of recreational opportunities.

The River Greenway will also serve as a connector to a great diversity of existing and emerging recreational systems. The continuous 32 mile bikeway can be both a commuter route and a recreational bikeway, offering safe, non-motorized access to local and regional recreational facilities, and to joint-use destinations throughout the City.

GOAL: EXTEND OPEN SPACE AND WATER QUALITY FEATURES INTO NEIGHBORHOODS

FUTURE DECISIONS

The specific locations and quantities of parks and active recreational facilities will be determined through a public participation process. Communities will have active involvement in determine the future of new open space in their areas. Planners for each area will gather information, listen to stakeholders, identify issues, hold public workshops, and conduct an open house with a public hearing.

Recreation areas and access should be planned so as not to conflict with proposed or existing conservation and habitat areas.

According to the Citywide General Plan Framework adopted by the City Council on August 8, 2001, the City of Los Angeles should provide, “sufficient and accessible parkland and recreation opportunities in every neighborhood of the City, which gives all residents the opportunity to enjoy green spaces, athletic activities, social activities and passive recreation.” The City should also “Prioritize the implementation of recreation and park projects in areas of the City with the greatest existing deficiencies.”
DEFINITION: PASSIVE RECREATION

Passive recreation is usually defined as activities that require limited physical exertion and few support facilities. Popular examples of passive recreational activities include bird watching, walking or photography. Associated facilities and amenities may include interpretive signage, benches, and picnic areas.

PASSIVE RECREATION

Passive recreation occurs in a variety of open space types. These can include parks, landscaped areas, natural areas, ornamental gardens, interactive water features, picnic areas, water bodies, or trails. The River Greenway has the potential to provide a diversity of passive social spaces and respites from the busy City, a place to walk and to learn.

Few opportunities exist in the City for connection with natural systems. Many of the existing areas are popular and overloaded and typically require significant driving time for access. Hollywood’s Runyon Canyon is an example of an overused passive open space that hosts thousands of visitors and pets. The River Greenway will offer myriad opportunities for passive recreation with improved habitat areas to expand wildlife viewing opportunities and provide environmental education opportunities.

Outdoor classrooms will not only serve an educational function, but will also serve as community meeting places and destinations for ecological education through creative, River-oriented interpretive programs.
Passive recreation provides the opportunity for significant economic growth as well as providing public access to open space. The diversity of recreation types associated with passive activities caters to many audiences of all ages. In 2001, Birdwatching alone included some 46 million individuals throughout the United States who spent over $32 billion in 2001 on birding activities, primarily on lodging and other travel costs (U.S. Fish & Wildlife, 2001).

Additionally, the reduced maintenance and water use associated with passive recreation areas offers economic savings. The economic benefits associated with passive recreation areas could be significant when considered in the context of the entire Los Angeles River Greenway.

The City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks Community Needs Assessment, begun in 2006, will work with communities to develop strategies that help prioritize and address the tremendous needs for recreation and open space. It will also include an assessment of existing programs and facilities.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #5.12: Identify physical opportunities to improve the visibility of the River Corridor.

Recommendation #5.13: Identify opportunities to improve public perception of the River Corridor.

Recommendation #5.14: Encourage local and diverse character within the River Corridor.

PROTOTYPICAL ELEMENTS AND THEIR USE

Building blocks that can be used to enhance River identity. These include:
- River Bicycle and Pedestrian Bridges
- Multimodal Bridges
- Portals
- Local and Regional Gateways

Key design features for these elements and guidelines concerning where to apply them are described in the next section.
GOAL: ENHANCE RIVER IDENTITY

THE CHALLENGE

In the past, the River suffered from negative perceptions and a general lack of visibility within the City. These conditions predate the 1938 lining of the channel by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Indeed, the River was omitted from many tourist maps from the first quarter of the 20th century. Lined with railways and industrial development, today many River reaches are virtually invisible, and where they can be seen, they do not present a welcoming environment.

The City has the opportunity to reveal the River, to restore public awareness, and to make the River visible and perceptible as the central feature of a new revitalized River Corridor. This will be an area that is green, more pedestrian-friendly, and environmentally sustainable and can be a new source of pride for the region.

This section describes how the River’s identity can be enhanced through physical elements that lend a signature quality, such as Bridges and Gateways. It also describes how programmed events and educational opportunities could be used to strengthen awareness of the River as an engaging place. A concluding section of the chapter describes recommendations for a public art program and series of policies that can complement these features.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #5.12: Identify physical opportunities to improve the visibility of the River Corridor.

While visibility can be improved with signage, the River Corridor also should be identifiable through other means, including a greater density of street trees and other public amenities. Many barriers, including topography and freeways, also currently interrupt views and experiences of the River. For these conditions, the Master Plan recommends “Portals” and Gateways that bring the River’s presence into the City.

Recommendation #5.13: Identify opportunities to improve public perception of the River Corridor.

Event programming can help improve the perception of the Los Angeles River. Imagine if a national event such as the Los Angeles River Ride, were to occur along the Los Angeles River Greenway. Both regional and local event programming can enliven and provide new visibility and attention to the River. Some possible events include team sporting events, after school activities, a “River Rangers” program, and intergenerational activities such as community gardens.

Recommendation #5.14: Encourage local and diverse character within the River Corridor.

This recommendation suggests that while certain design guidelines, such as those outlined in the County’s Landscaping Guidelines and Plant Palettes, should be maintained to enhance continuity, other elements should reflect the diverse cultural, environmental, and artistic elements of the different areas of the City the River traverses.

CONCURRENT PLANNING EFFORTS

- The County Department of Public Works, with the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (M RCA), has established a uniform regional mapping and sign system, incorporating a distinctive logo that signals when one is near the River. These signs occur at many vehicular bridges and at key points on the City’s freeways and off-ramps.
- The City has recently completed a mile marker pilot project, intended to increase safety in the River right-of-way. This system includes station points marked along the River that, in the event of an emergency, enables users to provide their locations to emergency personnel.
- The Friends of the Los Angeles River (FoLAR) organizes annual cleanups, called “La Gran Limpieza” which have become extremely popular and successful events.
- The City of Los Angeles hosts an annual “River Day.”
- Many recent projects, such as Elysian Valley’s Oso Park, incorporate large sculptures as iconic gateways. Similarly, the County of Los Angeles with technical support from The River Project recently planned the Valleyheart Greenway, which uses sculptural gateways and other design elements to celebrate the River and draw people to it.
GOAL: ENHANCE RIVER IDENTITY

RIVER BRIDGES

Vehicle roadway bridges will continue to serve as a primary means of crossing the River for non-motorized users. As such, they must be retrofitted or expanded to include enhanced bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Some of the bridges crossing the River are historic, so it is important that pedestrian features be integrated carefully with historic features. Future River Bridges (and existing non-historic bridges) might incorporate contemporary stylistic elements that improve the experience of crossing on and under them. Belvederes and other viewing structures on these Bridges should be encouraged so that people can enjoy River vistas from the Bridges. Other enhancements to the Bridges could also include green spaces or gateway elements, such as banners and decorative lighting and interpretive signage. As specific bridges are selected for improvements, further study will be necessary to determine feasibility of bridge widening and the potential impacts on the adjoining neighborhoods that could result.

Guidelines:

- Create safe bike lanes on bridges according to Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT), CALTRANS HDM, California 2006 MUTCD, and 2003 MUTCD standards for bike paths.
- Construct overlooks and belvederes to view the River.
- Include lighting below bridges for safe undercrossings.
- Integrate modifications to avoid impacting the character of historic River Bridges.

- Incorporate habitat features, such as underside nesting areas.
- All spaces and circulation should be ADA-compliant to standards for grading and surfacing materials.

Where to apply the element:

- On bridges planned for improvement, widening, and/or retrofitting
- For every arterial street crossing the River
- On arterial streets that connect to major destinations
- For bridges connecting streets that have existing bike paths

POTENTIAL RIVER BRIDGE PROJECTS:

- Canoga Avenue
- Winnetka Avenue
- Reseda Boulevard
- Sepulveda Boulevard
- Van Nuys Boulevard
- Laurel Canyon Boulevard
- Lankershim Boulevard
- Los Feliz Boulevard
- Fletcher Drive
- Broadway
- 1st Street
- 4th Street

Legend:

- Bicycle
- Trail/Sidewalk
- Multi-Use Trail
- Traffic Lane
- Traffic Lane Shared with Bicycle
- Parking
- Water Quality BMP
- Vegetation/Canopy
- Porous Paving
- Unpaved Surface
- Lighting Standard

10' min.
6' min.
6' min.
10' min.
Belvedere
Belvedere

Broadway Bridge Belvederes
GOAL: ENHANCE RIVER IDENTITY

NON-MOTORIZED BRIDGES

Non-motorized Bridges are recommended to augment street bridge crossings that are narrow, congested, or somewhat inaccessible. They should be installed first in locations where they will fill significant gaps in connectivity and improve non-motorized mobility. Non-motorized Bridges should be designed to serve as signature elements within the River Corridor. Some bridge crossings may include amenities, such as shade structures, overlooks or belvederes, concessions, and interpretive signage.

Guidelines:

- Commission “signature” Non-motorized Bridges that express a design or artistic sensibility and become landmarks for the River.
- Bridges should always safely accommodate both pedestrian and bicycle traffic, with widths determined by intended use. Path sizes and alignments should follow CALTRANS HDM, California 2006 MUTCD, and 2003 standards for bike paths.
- Light for safety, and design lighting features to highlight the bridge.
- Include amenities such as seating areas, interpretive and wayfinding signage, kiosks, concessions, belvederes, and shade structures.
- Incorporate wildlife habitat, such as underside nesting areas.
- All spaces and circulation should be ADA-compliant to standards for grading and surfacing materials.

Where to apply the element:

- At the end of Paseos, Local Green Streets, and Primary Arterial Streets
- Next to vehicle River crossings where expanding existing facilities to accommodate additional bicycle and pedestrian traffic would be more costly
- Approximately every 1/2 mile to provide safe pedestrian crossings
- Connecting to major destinations
- At tributary confluences to facilitate access to bicycle and pedestrian paths

Sunynook Bridge photo taken just downstream of Los Feliz Boulevard. (Councilmember Tom LaBonge’s 2003 Calendar “Los Angeles: Photographing the Fourth District.”)

One of many signature non-motorized bridges along the Cheong Gyechon River in Seoul, South Korea. (Arman Rin Jr. via Creative Common License and e-mail contact, 2006)
PORTALS

- Freeway or rail underpasses that provide gateways to the River.

POTENTIAL PORTAL PROJECTS

- Kester Avenue under 101 Freeway
- Van Nuys Boulevard under 101 Freeway
- Hazeltine Avenue under 101 Freeway
- Fletcher Drive under 5 Freeway
- Edward Way and Railway
- Media Center Drive and Railway
- Newell Street under 5 Freeway
- East End of Los Angeles State Historic Park
- North Main Street under 5 Freeway
- Commercial Street and Railway
- 4th Street under 5 Freeway
- Sacramento Street and Railway

GOAL: ENHANCE RIVER IDENTITY
PORTALS

Portals improve access to the River from areas isolated by infrastructure such as freeways or railways. Portals may provide access where none existed before, but they predominantly are intended to improve existing access points. For instance, freeway underpasses are often neglected spaces that divide communities from the River. Portals provide an opportunity to celebrate and mark the presence of the River with public art, vegetation, lighting, and street furniture, and thus improve the experience of people finding passage to the River.

Guidelines:

- Include bike paths and enhanced pedestrian facilities.
- Include water quality improvements, such as porous parking strips, bulb-outs, and infiltration and water treatment strips.
- All spaces and circulation should be ADA-compliant to standards for grading and surfacing materials.

Where to apply the element:

- At existing underpasses, overpasses, and crossings of major infrastructure and linear obstructions, such as freeways and rail, that lead to the River and are within or near the River Corridor
- At underpasses in areas with few alternative routes to the River
- At underpasses that link to major destinations
- Combined with paseos in areas with limited access that are isolated from the River

Legend

- Bikeway
- Trail/Sidewalk
- Multi-Use Trail
- Traffic Lane
- Traffic Lane Shared with Bikeway
- Parking
- Water Quality BMP
- Vegetation/Canopy
- Porous Paving
- Unpaved Sediment
- Lighting Standard

Proposed Portal in the Downtown Industrial Opportunity Area
GOAL: ENHANCE RIVER IDENTITY
LOCAL AND REGIONAL GATEWAYS

Located at major access points and near regional landmarks, Gateways employ signature features to celebrate the River Corridor. Given the low profile of the River, Gateways can be important visual elements to mark the presence of the River. Already there are several great examples of local gateways within the River Greenway that exemplify the value of employing local artists and crafts people. As the River Corridor expands, Gateways into the River will mark its expanded influence. Gateways are suitable for many locations, such as at streets, trail access points, large parks, and at regional connections.

Guidelines

- Commission artists and designers to create distinctive signature Gateways that relate to the cultural, natural, and geographic context.
- Include multiple amenities, such as vegetation, furniture, and lighting at the Gateway.
- Scale Regional and Local Gateways appropriately.
- All spaces and circulation should be ADA-compliant to standards for grading and surfacing materials.

Where to use

- At any access point along the River
- At access points that connect to other River elements, such as Green Streets, Paseos, and other trail systems
- In places that are highly visible, such as along major Freeways and Arterial Streets

Rattlesnake Park entry gateway in Elysian Valley along the River (2006)
GOAL: ENHANCE THE USE OF ART ALONG THE RIVER

THE CHALLENGE

Art of many types can be used to add life to the revitalized River. Art can inspire, create interest and wonder, offer interpretations, and serve as a way for communities to participate in Revitalization. There is a rich history of art and the River, including murals and the well-known painting of storm sewer covers as “River Cats” by Leo Limón. The latter seemingly simple act of art brought attention to the River and its condition, caught the attention of adults and children, and contributed to a generation of people who began to wonder how the River might be improved. The cats were more than an attractive idea; they also called attention to the relationship between the River and the stormwater system of the City. This helps to remind people of the relationship of the River to an extensive upstream infrastructure, and raises questions about the quality of the water in the River.

Murals have also played a role in greater Los Angeles, especially “The Great Wall of Los Angeles” mural wall in the Tujunga Wash created by Judy Baca and the numerous groups that have helped her maintain and expand it over the years. Beyond the beauty and cultural interest of the mural, the act of organizing the community to understand, celebrate and participate in honoring the Wash and its significance, has played a role in the environmental and cultural education of the community. Elsewhere in the City, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California sponsored an art exhibit entitled, “Liquid Art” designed to reflect the region’s cultural relationship to water.

In more recent years, art has become an important part of several community-based and nonprofit River improvement efforts by groups such as FoLAR and North East Trees. Artistic benches, gates, fencing, pavements, plantings, and other features have been installed to enhance the experience of visiting and learning about the River. Performances from dance to theater and music have been held in and along the River. The River as a venue for film and advertising is recognized internationally.

Beyond the use of the River as a venue for the creativity, performance, and recording of art and art activities, the River itself has been the subject or backdrop for countless creative endeavors that range from prose and poetry to song, drawings, paintings, collage, art constructions and installations, photo essays, and documentary films. The scale, appearance, and history of the River have made it an iconic emblem of Los Angeles that is not always thought of as a positive reflection on the City.

This legacy of art will continue and hopefully accelerate with the revitalization and increased awareness of the River. In the past, some River art has been established with the permission of the County (which today manages the River right-of-way), some has been informally placed, and other pieces have been placed as visible public monuments. Important work can also be done in conjunction with the City’s Cultural Affairs Commission to incorporate art in both landscape and structural elements of the Plan’s recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #5.15: Identify physical opportunities to introduce art along the River.

Recommendation #5.16: Create a River Arts Program that reflects and celebrates the history of the River and the diverse cultures of its surrounding neighborhoods.

This identity and awareness of the River within the community at large can be enhanced by a program to encourage, support, and maintain art that enhances the beauty and diversity of meaning and interpretations that the River inspires in people. The revitalization effort will benefit if an arts program is established to coordinate how art is commissioned, funded, and managed to improve upon and to guide the eclectic artistic activities of diverse communities.

Art placement, performances, and activities may be focused near the River, but should also occur outside the River right-of-way. Visual art, graphic art, sculpture and light could all be among the elements that contribute to the identity and character of the River at Gateways, along pathways leading to the River, and in other places of significance within the River Corridor.
Recommendation #5.16: Create a River Arts Program that reflects and celebrates the history of the River and the diverse cultures of its surrounding neighborhoods.

There are a number of ways that the arts can be brought to the River. It is important to recognize that there are already many different artists, art groups and alliances, art advocates, art patrons, and other constituents that make up the arts community in Los Angeles. If a program for the arts on the River is to be successful and sustainable it will need to be developed in a way that is open to many interests and ideas, inclusive in how it is developed, fair in how it is administered, and effective in how art is commissioned and managed. River art programs and cultural centers can also engage youth and families by encouraging their appreciation and participation in the creation of art.

To begin development of the River Arts Program, an interim art coordinator could work with staff at the City’s Cultural Affairs Department and the County to coordinate and track art activities associated with the River.

The Interim Art Coordinator could participate in discussions about the formation of the Plan’s proposed River Foundation, which could be responsible for developing and managing the River Arts Program. The Foundation would need to work with the City and the County, through the proposed Joint Powers Authority and the Revitalization Corporation, to develop agreements that would establish roles and responsibilities to manage art within the River right-of-way, and regarding cooperation of art activities on public lands and streets within the River Corridor.

The Foundation would need to establish its own approach to developing the Arts Program; the following ideas provide a beginning point for discussion:

- Consider establishing an Arts Program advisory group as a sounding board for issues and ideas. This group may include artists, arts managers or producers, and representatives of existing arts management entities.
- Invite the arts community to workshops to discuss issues that influence the establishment of the River Arts Program.
- Develop guidelines for:
  - Selection criteria
  - Selection process and participation
  - Location and venue opportunities
  - Guidelines for each type of art such as visual, performance, and film
  - Guidelines for commissioned work
  - Guidelines for donated work
  - Tools for public information and interpretation
  - Partnerships with other entities and foundations
  - Foundation staffing and operational needs
  - Capital funding program and sources
  - Operation funding program and sources
  - Ongoing role of the advisory group
  - Process for monitoring and refining the program
  - Formalizing the River Arts Program by adoption of the board of the Foundation with appropriate staff and funding support.
- Elements of arts and culture should be considered in the development of parks and open space. Contemporary research stresses the need for cultural sensitivity in such planning efforts. (e.g., Loukaitou-Sideris and Stieglitz 2002)

An art installation along the Cheong Gyecheon River in Seoul, South Korea. (Arman Rin Jr. via Creative Common License and e-mail contact, 2006)

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