

LA County Parks Funding Measure Multi-Benefit Principles

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We urge Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation and Department of Public Works to create together a funding measure that incorporates a multi-benefit, climate-resilient approach and simultaneously addresses a range of critical regional needs. Parks and open spaces present extraordinary opportunities to address many of the region's greatest challenges. In this new climate reality, every opportunity should be considered when designing new parks or retrofitting existing parks to examine how they can best serve the multiple needs of the region and the communities that depend on them. Consideration must be given to sequestering carbon, augmenting our water supply, improving our water quality and reducing peak flood flows. More specifically, in developing criteria for expenditures, Los Angeles Open Space District should prioritize projects that:

Integrate multiple objectives, including: water conservation and supply; water and air quality improvements; flood risk management; greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction; carbon sequestration; heat-island reduction; habitat protection and biodiversity; alternative transit; urban agriculture; public health and environmental protection and justice. Parks and open spaces should be considered as green infrastructure.

Leverage opportunities identified in integrated regional planning efforts (such as the Los Angeles County Climate Action Plan, Watershed Management Plans, Enhanced Watershed Management Plans, the County's Los Angeles Basin Stormwater Conservation Study, and the LADWP Stormwater Capture Master Plan). No individual park project should be evaluated and designed in a vacuum, but rather planned as part of a comprehensive, data-driven strategy in partnership with regional planners, municipalities, agencies, and local stakeholders.

Apply design principles that prioritize sustainability and ease of maintenance. Plants should be climate-appropriate and have "Low" or "Very Low" water needs. They must not be listed in the Cal-IPC Invasive Plants database. The design should conserve the natural features of the site to the greatest extent possible and provide for the continued ecological health of the area, including a preference for native plant material and enhancement of soil health.

Utilize carbon negative materials and construction practices. Project planners should minimize the cost of construction, installation, operation and maintenance by using: gravity flow rather than pumped flow; living filtration over synthetic/mechanical filtration; and living surface infiltration instead of piped drainage. Avoid the use of carbon intensive Portland cement and utilize low albedo materials for any hardscapes. Priority should be given to pervious surfaces over impervious surfaces. Parking areas should include adequate tree canopy using appropriate native tree species, and should be designed to manage a 5-year storm without creating off-site nuisance flow. Planners should include sufficient spaces for healthy, living soils and native vegetation to sequester carbon, reduce runoff water volume and pollutant load, provide shade and cooling, and enhance wildlife habitat and sense of place.

Mimic natural processes. Integrated design strategies that serve to manage, harvest and store rainwater can transform a flooding liability into an on-site irrigation resource. Where feasible, projects should direct off-site runoff into the park space, employ visible grading and contour practices that maximize stormwater capture and infiltration and daylight channelized subsurface flows. Native landscapes that have local sources of water enhance natural habitat and reduce the need for imported water and costly drainage conveyance infrastructure.

Support local water supply strategies that measurably reduce GHG emissions, climate change impacts, and reliance on water imports. Projects should incorporate stormwater management to reduce energy intensive water imports for irrigation through rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, and efficient irrigation practices. These methods are cost-effective, resilient to changes in climate, and benefit local communities and ecosystems.

Outdoor Water. Parks should use stormwater and other non-potable sources as primary irrigation sources. They should feature water efficient landscape and irrigation strategies, including water harvesting, reuse and recycling, to reduce outdoor potable water consumption by a minimum of 50 percent over that consumed by conventional practices. Planners should employ design and construction strategies that reduce stormwater and polluted site water runoff.

Indoor Water. Parks should incorporate strategies that in aggregate reduce potable water use by at minimum 20 percent below the indoor water use baseline calculated for the building, after meeting the Energy Policy Act of 1992 fixture performance requirements.

Potable Water. Drinking water needs to be available in L.A. County parks near restrooms, libraries, most information booths and on trail heads when water access is available. Existing fountains need to be assessed and tested for lead in pipes and replaced when water flow is compromised. New bottle refill stations need to be installed where locations have high pedestrian use. Tap water education should be supported through interpretive signage where possible.

Maximize educational interpretive opportunities. The benefits of green infrastructure practices are ecological, economic, and social. Actively engage park users with strategies and best practices being deployed in their parks through interpretive features and programming so that they may see, understand, appreciate, and replicate the many benefits being provided.

Employ a comprehensive approach. A park's composition should be comprehensive and promote many healthful benefits, so as to ensure that these many benefits extend beyond its boundaries to the surrounding community. When possible, public grounds should be connected by greenways, including alternative transit ways and boulevards so as to extend and maximize park spaces, and improve the integrity and resilience of ecological corridors.

In the face of climate change and water scarcity that now impact our daily lives, it is irresponsible to invest scarce public funds to meet only *one* goal. Our parks have the capacity to easily accommodate multi-benefit infrastructure to meet regional goals, such as: water conservation and supply; water and air quality improvements; flood risk management; greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction; carbon sequestration; heat-island reduction; habitat protection and biodiversity; alternative transit; urban agriculture; public health and environmental protection and justice.

The Los Angeles County community needs this comprehensive approach to park funding to enhance our quality of life and ensure a resilient future.

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