



2450 LA Park Needs Assessment

Meeting Date: Apr 15, 2025
Meeting Time: 10am-12pm PST
Meeting Location: In-Person; EXPO Center, Comrie Hall
 3980 Bill Robertson Ln, Los Angeles, CA 90037
Subject: LA Park Needs Assessment - Steering Committee Meeting #3

Project Team Attendees:

City of Los Angeles, RAP

- Ryan Carpio
- Darryl Ford
- Meghan Luera
- Jeremy Silva

GreenInfo Network

- María Lamadrid

Agency: Artifact

- Viraj Chauhan

OLIN

- Jessica Henson
- Andrew Dobshinsky
- Sarah Swanseen

Estolano Advisors

- Cecilia Estolano
- Thomson Dryjanski
- Sasha Ragland

The Robert Group

- Christina Monzer

Better World Group

- Kimberly Guo

KDI

- Lauren Elachi

UCLA/Luskin

- Jon Christensen

West of West

- Jonathan Rieke

HR&A

- Connie Chung

Steering Committee Member/Organization	Committee Member		Present
	First Name	Last Name	
Trust for Public Land	Guillermo	Rodriguez	Yes
Resources Legacy Fund	Alfredo	Gonzalez	Yes
The Nature Conservancy	Kelsey	Jessup	Yes
LA Neighborhood Land Trust	Tori	Kjer	Yes
LA County Department of Parks and Recreation	Sean	Woods	
Community Partners	Yvette	Lopez-Ledesma	Yes
University of Southern California	Vanessa	Carter Fahnestock	Yes

LA Waterkeeper	Bruce	Reznik	Yes
Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy	Lauren	Ahkiam	
Prevention Institute	Francisco	Romero	Yes
Friends of the LA River	Candice	Dickens-Russell	Yes
Deputy Mayor of Infrastructure, City of LA	Randall	Winston	
Deputy Mayor for Neighborhood Services, City of LA	Jacqueline	Hamilton	Yes
Deputy Mayor of Community Safety	Karren	Lane	
Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority	Brian	Baldauf	Yes
Individual Expert	Deborah	Cohen	Yes
Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative	Veronica	Hahni	Yes
Los Angeles Parks Foundation	Tony	Budrovich	
California Conservation Corps	Duane	Wilson	Yes
City of LA Recreation and Parks Commission Representative	Marie	Lloyd	Yes
Los Angeles City/ County Native American Indian Commission Chair	Shawn	Imitates Dog	

Alternates and Other Attendees Organization	Name		Present
	First Name	Last Name	
Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative (Alternate)	Aleigh	Lewis	Yes
Prevention Institute (Alternate)	Rob	Baird	Yes
California Conservation Corps (Alternate)	Nikki	Morales	
LA Waterkeeper (Alternate)	Maggie	Gardner	
Office of the Mayor	Estephany	Garcia	
Trust for Public Land (Alternate)	Lee	Clauss	
Trust for Public Land (Alternate)	Nola	Talmage	
Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (Alternate)	Stephany	Calvillo	Yes
Promesa Boyle Heights (Proyecto Pastoral)	Cesiah	Romo	Yes
LA County Department of Parks and Recreation	Sheela	Mathai Kleinknecht	Yes

Meeting Objectives

- 1) Share research on how the different park amenities promote improved public health outcomes.
- 2) Build understanding of RAP's past and current budgets and how this benchmarks against comparable cities.
- 3) Discuss the project's methodology for selecting sites of analysis, for both areas with and without existing parks.

AGENDA

Time	Agenda Items	Notes
10:00	1. Welcome	Cecilia Estolano (Estolano Advisors, Better World Group) called the meeting to order.
10:05-10:15	2. Updates: <i>Project schedule, engagement meetings, and Community Partner Program</i>	<p>Jessica Henson (OLIN) presented a status update on the project including engagement and outreach efforts of the project. Analog post card mailers have been mailed to households across the City. There have been banners about the project posted at recreation centers across the City. Twelve Community Partner groups have been brought on to the project and will be performing outreach in geographies across the City.</p> <p>Additionally, an advanced package of data and engagement notes, draft web survey results, and upcoming dates was provided to the Steering Committee ahead of this meeting.</p>
10:15-10:30	3. Research on Park Benefits: <i>Deborah Cohen, Steering Committee Member</i>	<p>Deborah Cohen, a physician at Kaiser Permanente, presented findings from her research on parks and wellness. Her findings support more programming in parks, ensuring park access within ½ mile, and playgrounds within ½ mile to improve public health outcomes.</p> <p>Deborah’s research used the SOPARC (System for Observing Parks and Recreation in Communities) method which maps park visitation with counts by gender, age group, and activity level. This was done for 14 hours a day at over 100 parks within the City of LA. Additionally Deborah’s research looks at national trends in recreation and parks.</p> <p>When looking at gender and age nationally, park users are majority male, and senior citizen users are under represented. The most-used park facilities are gyms and walking paths. Baseball fields and other traditional sports fields have the lowest usage per square foot.</p> <p>Deborah reported that when a park has a walking loop there was 80% higher park usage and twice as many senior citizen users. Parks without walking loops are twice as likely to be uninhabited.</p> <p>Supervised activities and on-site marketing were the greatest contributors to park usage (resulting in a 48% and 62% increase in usage respectively).</p>

		<p>From 2014 to 2016 there was a 5% decline in park use nationally. In contrast Westminster Colorado increased their usage by 31%. They achieved this through creative marketing and events that energized people to go to park facilities like adult easter egg hunts and costume and themed sports league events.</p> <p>In Los Angeles and Southern California, Deborah and her team researched the impact of adding new facilities to parks. This included new recreation centers, gyms, and picnic areas. This was focused in low income neighborhoods across the City and the time of the study was 2003-2008. During this time, these parks showed a decrease in park use. This was correlated with staffing cuts and less funding. Those surveyed included over 730,000 Kaiser members within 10 cities in Southern California.</p> <p>Deborah and her team found that residents who live closer to parks had better mental health. Additionally, every \$30 per capita spending on programming was correlated with better health outcomes. Another key finding was that for every 1 dollar spent in programming, it saves 11 dollars in healthcare.</p> <p>Discussion: Tori Kjer (LANLT) noted that RAP does programming really well but there needs to be more funding to expand. She asked how we might quantify the quality of a space and how that impacts these findings. Deborah noted that there should be a balance to match the development of parks and maintenance of infrastructure with the support of park programming and marketing.</p>
<p>10:30-11:00</p>	<p>4. RAP Economics and Budget <i>Presentation on RAP's current operating budget, with benchmarking to other peer cities. A short discussion follows.</i></p>	<p>Connie Chung (HR&A) presented the economic and budget findings of the PNA analysis to date. This information has been gathered through reviewing provided data from RAP as well as through dialog and interviews with RAP staff over the course of the project so far.</p> <p>Key takeaways presented include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● LA RAP's operating budget is constrained by General Fund reimbursements. More than one-third (36%) of RAP's operating budget funds General Fund reimbursements. ● LA RAP's operating budget has increased more slowly than the City budget overall. While the City's overall budget grew by 68% between FY2009 and FY2023, RAP's budget grew at half this pace (35%) over the same period once adjusted for General Fund reimbursements. The increase is less than the rate of inflation.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">● LA RAP staff manage a park system which continues to grow with a workforce that continues to shrink, straining its ability to maintain facilities, offer programs, and care for parks and open spaces. Full- and part-time staffing at RAP has decreased since 2008 while park space acreage and facilities have increased.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ It was asked if the staffing numbers shared were approved positions or filled positions. It was noted by the Consultant Team that the slides represent approved positions. A vacancy slide can be added to better demonstrate that aspect of staffing.● LA spends less on parks per capita than peer cities, limiting service quality and park access. At \$92 per capita park investment, LA's per-capita investment is lower than that of all other benchmarked cities except NYC, which has a much higher population density. <p>Discussion</p> <p>Deborah Cohen noted that in their research they found most people were willing to pay more taxes to support their parks.</p> <p>It was noted that the upcoming city-wide increases to sanitation fees for residents also applies to RAP as they pay their own utility costs.</p> <p>Marie Lloyd (City of LA RAP Commission Representative) is interested in understanding peer studies as well as impact of foundation and philanthropic spending. Control over budgets to match the mechanisms that other peer cities have.</p> <p>Tori Kjer (LANLT), RAP gets little to no money for capital improvement projects from the City General Fund. How are other cities doing this? Are other cities charging their other departments for utilities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Connie noted that it is common for other cities to pay utilities. <p>Guillermo Rodriguez (TPL) noted that public financing strategies are common to create less encumbered monies in the City. He added that alongside this LADWP should be investing funds back into parks to improve efficiencies. He also noted that upcoming engagement meetings and materials should include distilled budget and financial takeaways to help communicate these dynamics to the public. He added that keeping the lens of equity on investment in the future is important and that in future presentations he would be interested to better understand the attrition of RAP staff.</p>
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		Deputy Mayor Jacqueline Hamilton noted that she wants to better understand the volunteer numbers within RAP.
11:00-11:05	<i>Stretch Break</i>	
11:05-11:55	<p>5. Universe of Sites: <i>Presentation on the project's site analysis methodology, followed by a group discussion.</i></p>	<p>Andrew Dobshinsky (OLIN) and Jon Christensen (UCLA/GreenInfo Network) presented on the concept of the Universe of Sites that will be evaluated during the PNA process.</p> <p>The Universe of Sites includes the existing parks in RAP's system as well as potential future park sites. The Consultant Team has been working to determine potential sites through the utilization of the PerSquareMile tool.</p> <p>Jon framed the discussion around two ideas: one that focused on providing any size park in areas that are currently lacking parks (Park Access), and one that focused on providing additional park acreage in areas in need to meet a 3-acre per 1000 resident standard (Park Acreage). When doing research on park service in the PerSquareMile framework, Jon described that there are diminishing returns when addressing park access and park acreage across the City. For example, 10% of the problem of Park Access can be addressed through 7 new sites and 25% through 21 new sites. And 10% of the problem of Park Acreage can be addressed through 11 new sites, but these sites would accumulate to 1,094 new park acres.</p> <p>Future population growth and densification will result in the same areas being impacted just more acutely.</p> <p>Discussion Guilermo Rodriguez (TPL) noted that other City Agencies need to be involved in these discussions to balance priorities. This includes the planning department, housing department etc. He emphasized the need to not let perfect be the enemy of the good; however, the corner pocket park cannot be the only strategy. Acreage needs to be a part of the discussion. County, State, and Federal land should be assessed for the best use.</p> <p>Tori Kjer noted that past experiences with LADOT land was difficult to acquire for parks. New state legislation prioritizes housing as the primary usage for new development on underutilized sites.</p> <p>Deputy Mayor Jacqueline Hamilton noted that the programming and public health discussion from the first half of the meeting relates directly to this discussion of site acquisition. Perhaps increased</p>

		<p>investment in parks and programming would have a bigger impact compared to new park sites.</p> <p>Jessica Henson noted the importance of balancing the need for new space with investment in current spaces. Andrew Dobshinsky also highlighted that each “new” park can also be flexible in its definition, for example a new community school park (CSP) or partnership.</p> <p>Bruce Reznik noted that there is an importance to focus on multi-benefit use. Bond measures are the best opportunity to finance facilities and capital improvements whereas programming is better served by the public-private partnerships. For upcoming bond measures Bruce noted that there will be a need to assess ancillary benefits within other funding measures (i.e. resiliency, water quality, etc.) to all work together towards the City's goals.</p> <p>Kelsey Jessup (The Nature Conservancy) noted that we cannot necessarily depend on our other state and federally provided park spaces. It was noted that it would be interesting to better understand how much we currently rely on assets outside of RAPs purview. It is important to highlight nuance when presenting data related to what issues we are trying to address (i.e. public health and resiliency).</p> <p>Francisco Romero (Prevention Institute) noted that both acreage and access is important when selecting new potential sites. He highlighted that an acre of park size is relatively small, especially when it is under pressure in densifying neighborhoods. He highlighted the importance of considering school property with robust joint use agreements.</p> <p>Jessica noted that the Consultant Team is working on a school layer that would show potential high value CSP sites within the City.</p> <p>Candice Dickens-Russell (FoLAR) noted that there are opportunity sites along the LA River that should be considered. People are already using these spaces as park spaces.</p> <p>Aleigh Lewis noted that there are over 6,000 acres in the City LAUSD land holdings. Many of these acres are not “park ready” and are primarily asphalt lots that would need dedicated maintenance dollars.</p> <p>Yvette Lopez-Ledesma noted agreement with the statements about CSPs and the LA River. She also underscored the importance of creativity when thinking about new sites. I.E. other spaces like easements, trails etc.</p>
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11:55-12:00	6. Next Steps	<p>Jessica Henson closed the meeting by listing upcoming meetings and events that will be forthcoming.</p>

These Meeting Notes represent the Landscape Architect's summation of the proceedings of the meeting and are not a transcript. Unless the Landscape Architect receives written notice of any corrections, additions, or clarifications within ten (10) days of the issue, this report shall be considered factually correct and become part of the official project record.