HEALTHY, SAFE COMMUNITIES HAVE THRIVING PARKS

Parks Strengthen Communities

Parks provide countless health, social, environmental and economic benefits to communities. Communities with excellent and abundant parks thrive.

Improving Health

In communities that are underserved by parks, as many as 30% of LA County adults and children are obese—and they have the fewest physical activity opportunities. More than 1.5 children in LA County do not live within walking distance of a public park. LA County has an urgent need for more parks and recreational facilities in low-income communities where diabetes, obesity, hypertension and heart disease are increasing at alarming rates. Study after study has shown that access to well-maintained parks increases physical activity among both children and adults. Teens who live near parks are 30% more likely to get recommended amounts of physical exercise. Increased activity in nature or parks is proven to lower obesity rates, improve general health, reduce levels of attention deficit in children, improve cognitive ability and reduce aggressive behavior.

Increasing Community Cohesion

Parks are equalizers—people from all backgrounds and all ages can use the same park, interacting and learning about each other in a social atmosphere that encourages them to be more active. That’s true while using the park and even more so while participating in one of the many programs local parks provide. Parks bring communities together, creating safer, stronger neighborhoods.

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Improving the Environment
When rain flows off roads and paved areas it picks up pollutants, which then flow into our rivers, lakes and beaches. As unpaved areas, parks play a key role in capturing and holding rainwater, allowing it to percolate into the ground where it’s naturally cleansed. The trees and shrubs in parks also remove air pollutants, improving the air we breathe and helping reduce greenhouse gasses.

Boosting the Economy
Studies have shown that the property values of homes near excellent parks can be as much as 15% higher than similar homes not near a park. Cities also benefit from the higher property taxes generated. LA County also attracts tourists to miles of beaches and major parks, boosting local businesses and generating sales and hotel tax revenue.

Toward Park Equity
However, not all Los Angeles residents benefit equally from parks. Only 15% of the region’s population has pedestrian access to parks or green spaces. And while the nationally accepted standard of parks space is 4 acres for every 1,000 people, many communities fall short. Predominantly African American communities have just 1.7 acres and Latino communities just .6 acre for every 1,000 people.5

Make Your Voice Heard!
The County and all 88 cities are taking stock of what we currently have—parks, recreation facilities, open space and cultural and performing arts venues. What’s the condition of the park and what would it cost to get it into good shape? Do residents have a park within a 10-minute walk? Is the park used beyond capacity and needs expansion or different amenities? This assessment will provide a good snapshot of the current status of our parks.

We need to hear what residents want and need to ensure great, well utilized parks and recreational facilities

From December through early February, the County and cities will be conducting almost 200 needs assessment workshops. This is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to shape the priorities for how and where park funding will go for the next several decades.

Come to a Needs Assessment Workshop
Join us a meeting near you. Find out where and when:
LACountyParksNeeds.org

1 From a September 2011 study, “Obesity and Related Mortality in Los Angeles County,” County of Los Angeles Department of Public Health and a 2004 study, “The Relationship Between Community Physical Activities Settings and Race, Ethnicity and Socioeconomic Status,” in Evidence-Based Preventive Medicine.


4 From a March 2013 study, “Physical Activity, Park Access and Park Use among California Adolescents,” by the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research.