

July 18, 2017

Honorable Mayor and City Council  
333 W Ocean Blvd,  
Long Beach, CA 90802



**RE: Support for Agenda Item R-29: Park Equity**

Dear Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council:

It is with great enthusiasm that we at **Centro CHA Inc.** fully support, Item 29 on the July 18<sup>th</sup> Council Agenda titled "Park Equity", authored by Councilwoman Gonzalez.

The City of Long Beach is one of the most diverse cities in the entire nation. One can witness this diversity first hand when visiting the 162 different parks within the City. While these parks are held dear to our hearts for the over 3,000 acres of open space they provide, certain parks have not had an equitable level of attention and programming as others. The Open Space and Recreation Element of the General Plan, which was adopted in 2002, observed that "populations in the north, central and western areas of the City are underserved." Although certain objectives and policies were set in place to address this inequity, the problem, as this item points out, still remains 15 years later.



**Communities with High Crime and Obesity**

Disadvantaged communities across Long Beach 90810, 90813, 90805 are disproportionately impacted by violence and chronic disease. If the community does not feel safe, they are less likely to be physically active and engaged in the community, resulting in social isolation and poor health. Be Safe (formally known as SNL similar Safe Summer Park programs connected to gang violence reduction efforts in the LA County have shown potential to reduce crime, increase physical activity, and address health

Many community organizations, like ourselves, have attempted and have fill the gap in leveraging funding for programming providing residents in these underserved neighborhoods with the classes, activities and programs they deserve, such as

- 1) **Annual Cesar Chavez Naturalization workshop and Community Resource Fair;**
- 2) **Annual summer violence reduction initiative (Be SAFE/ SNL) parent and youth workshops, recreation activities and programming.**
- 3) **Annual Summer Jobs at the Parks**
- 4) **Latino Senior Age Wave Initiative programming to reduce cultural and language barriers and promote engagement in health and education classes and active living.**
- 5) **Traditional Calendar Programing for parent and youth workshops and special Cultural events**
- 6) **Access to kitchen to teach cultural and Healthy cooking and meal preparation**
- 7) **Music, food and arts events to promote community engagement.**

However, we face a multitude of challenges when attempting to bring innovation and vital program these parks. The strenuous permitting processes, the various permit fees, and at times, the outright denial of our efforts places these families and residents at a disadvantage.

Long Beach has formulated many plans (CX3, Westside Livability, etc.) that are related to quality of life as it pertains to poverty levels, unemployment rates, obesity rates and life expectancy. Historically, zip code, 90813 and 90805 have unfortunately experienced challenges in this respect, while also experiencing less park programs and hours, relative to other areas in the city. We can work together to find ways to elevate park programming in areas that do not experience weekly programming or consistent after- school and summer hours.

### **We support the following recommendation**

Overview of city-wide park programming (hours and funding expended in each location)

- Basis of prioritization for programming in each area
- Overview of current park programming participants based on zip-code
- Policies/processes that can be re-reviewed, example:
  - o Waiving park permit fees for organizations that are activating our parks in low programmed areas
  - o Providing umbrella permits for annual community events vs. having community groups apply each and every year for the same event
  - o Outlining clear rules for city-wide park entertainment, so that it either includes each region of the city OR provides the funding in lieu of, for areas that did not receive the benefit of the city-wide park entertainment
  - o Overall suggestions for more equitable programming city-wide from our Parks department

No words can describe **the love we have for Long Beach and its residents**. We wish to see everyone have the opportunity to experience the amenities our wonderful city has to offer in **their** neighborhood, regardless of where they live. With your assistance and affirmative vote for Item 29, we can make that wish a reality and work together to create a fair and equitable system.

In Service,



**Jessica Quintana, Executive Director**

**Centro CHA Inc.**

