

# CITY OF LONG BEACH

## DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND BUILDING

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ADVANCE PLANNING DIVISION

January 6, 2005

CHAIR AND PLANNING COMMISSIONERS  
City of Long Beach  
California

SUBJECT: Annual Report on General Plan Open Space and Recreation Element

LOCATION: Citywide

SUBMITTED BY: Fady Mattar, Acting Director of Planning and Building

### RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Planning Commission approve the report and instruct staff to forward it to the City Council for their review.

### BACKGROUND

On October 15, 2002, the City Council adopted, by Resolution No. C-28096, the new Open Space and Recreation Element of the City's General Plan. Program 4.14 of this Element stipulates that the Planning and Building Department, in conjunction with the Parks, Recreation & Marine (PR&M) Department and the City Attorney, are to provide an annual report to the Planning Commission and City Council on each of the implementation programs in the Element.

### PROGRAMS AND IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

Listed in the report are each of the programs outlined in the Open Space and Recreation Element and the implementation measures taken this past year.

### PUBLIC HEARING and ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Public hearings and environmental review are not needed for this report.


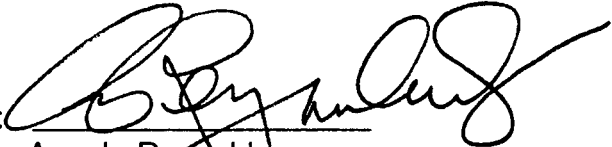
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CHAIR AND PLANNING COMMISSIONERS  
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Respectfully submitted,

FADY MATTAR  
ACTING DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND BUILDING

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**LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA**

**OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION ELEMENT**  
**2004 ANNUAL REPORT**



Prepared by:

Long Beach Planning and Building Department  
Advance Planning Division  
333 East Ocean Boulevard  
Long Beach, CA 90802

**CITY OF LONG BEACH**

**OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION ELEMENT**  
**2004 ANNUAL REPORT**

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Dan Baker  
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## A. Open Space for the Preservation of Natural Resources

### 1.1 *Ensure compliance with all federal and State laws that protect rare, threatened and endangered species*

The City and Port environmental planning divisions continue to comply with all environmental laws and procedures under both federal and State regulations.

### 1.2 *Plan for and make improvements to the El Dorado Nature Center and the DeForest Park Nature Area including native plant community habitats*

During the year, the Parks, Recreation and Marine (PR&M) Department began the feasibility study of using dry season runoff in the San Gabriel River and/or Coyote Creek to connect the six lakes in El Dorado Regional Park and Nature Center as a naturally flowing stream. A treatment wetland would be used at the north end of the park to clean the water and natural riparian habitats would be developed along the streambed. The wetland would also expand the Nature Center south of Willow Street. Funding for this study was received from the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy. Implementation of the El Dorado Nature Center Master Plan (NCMP) is being delayed to determine if connecting the lakes to the river will impact the NCMP.

Plans for a wetland restoration in the DeForest and Dominguez gaps Detention Basins are advancing with design and environmental review funding from the California Coastal Conservancy and the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy. The design and Environmental Impact (EIR) process is in the third month of a yearlong process. Los Angeles County Department of Public Works is the lead agency on the EIR and has construction funding for the Dominguez Gap portion of the project. The PR&M Department is seeking a funding source for construction of the DeForest basin.

### 1.3 *Work to acquire and restore the Los Cerritos Wetlands*

During the year negotiations between the Trust for Public Land (funded by the Coastal Conservancy), the Bixby Ranch Company, and several State and local agencies continued without agreement. A joint powers authority is being developed with the Rivers and Mountain Conservancy, Seal Beach, and other agencies to more effectively engage in negotiations and implementation.

### 1.4 *Work to acquire and restore lands along the San Gabriel and Los Angeles Rivers for wetland habitats and greenways*

The PR&M Department has undertaken RiverLink, a greenway master plan for the eastern bank of the Los Angeles River. The plan attempts to identify open space opportunities along the river, propose uses for those open spaces, and develop linkages from the river to the neighborhoods in the western portion of the City. A final report from the consultant is expected in late 2004.

The PR&M Department recently received another grant of \$2.2 million for acquisition of sites along the Los Angeles River, supplementing the \$12 million received earlier. Further, negotiations involving four properties along the River, totaling approximately 40 acres, are well underway. Recently one of them was purchased and the remaining three are near to reaching agreements.

The response to program 1.2 (above) indicates activities along the San Gabriel River. One additional action along the San Gabriel River is the beginning of planning for a greenway along the west bank of the river, including a bicycle trail and habitat restoration in the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power easement. Grants for implementation funding have been submitted totaling \$315,300 and construction design is underway.

- 1.5 *Continue to study, develop plans, and implement programs to protect and improve local beaches, waters, wetlands, and coastal bluffs and update the General Plan related to these issues.*

The PR&M Department has been working on bluff erosion issues cited in the Local Coastal Program since 1999. In 1999, staff began working with a consultant on a plan to reduce bluff erosion. A series of community meetings was held in 2001. The resulting plan, called "A Design for Development," was approved by the Recreation Commission and the Marine Advisory Commission (MAC) in November of 2001. The plan identified a priority list of areas to address. Two top tier of projects located at 5<sup>th</sup>; and 7<sup>th</sup> Places, are now in building plan check preparing for construction. A third top tier project, 12<sup>th</sup> Place, has received Building Permit approval and is pending a Local Coastal Development Permit (LCDP) approval. A fourth project, the re-contouring of the bluff below Bixby Park with an amphitheater and skate park is pending approval with the California Coastal Commission after receiving a LCDP for the majority of the site.

A committee of the Marine Advisory Committee (MAC) developed a beach master plan in the late 1990 to attract more users to the City's beaches. A team of artists was hired to advise on the bluff plan, and their design ideas plus the community input from the bluff erosion community meetings were added to the MAC committee's work and led to the preparation of a plan for the City's beaches. The PR&M Department will conduct additional community meetings to review the draft ideas on the Beach Master Plan. Submittal as a Local Coastal Program amendment was anticipated in 2004, but other priorities have delayed implementation until next year.

Other activities regarding wetlands and the rivers are discussed above.

- 1.6 *Restore Colorado Lagoon to serve as both a productive wetland habitat and recreational resource by reducing pollutant discharges into the water, increasing water circulation with Alamitos Bay and/or restocking or planting appropriate biological species.*

A restoration feasibility study to assess restoring the estuarine system of Colorado Lagoon, improving water and sediment quality, and managing storm water while supporting environmental education, public recreation and public access, is well underway. Funded by a grant from the Coastal Conservancy, this study being led by the Department of Public Works, is nearing completion. It is anticipated that the final results will be disclosed by the end of this year. Interim indications are that a Local Coastal Program amendment concerning the lagoon will be recommended.

### 1.7 *Clean up contaminated sites and brownfields*

The Community Development (CD) Department is involved in a number of clean up efforts; each is outlined in the paragraphs that follow.

The CD Department is participating in re-use efforts to convert a former oil field south of Spring Street between Orange and California Avenues to a 56 acre sports park complex designed to include: 6 softball fields, 4 soccer fields, a skateboard park, volleyball courts and youth golf training facility. The Sports Park Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is being prepared and will be released for circulation and public comment in December 2004.

The CD Department has acquired, characterized and conceptually designed a park over the former landfill at 2910 55<sup>th</sup> Way. Staff and their consultants have prepared and submitted a Post-Closure Land Use Plan to a number of regulatory agencies to seek approval for a partial landfill closure and conversion of this former municipal landfill to a neighborhood park. The 55<sup>th</sup> Way EIR has been certified.

In the Wrigley Heights area, CD Department staff have acquired two sites and are in active discussions to acquire a third site for a total of 23 acres slated for conversion from oil operations to open space.

The CD Department has foreclosed on a site at 1152 Hill Street with a history of automotive-related uses and will seek Brownfields funding to conduct an environmental assessment leading to conversion of the site to open space. This site is now cleared of improvements and has been fenced and secured. Funding sources for the environmental assessment are still being pursued.

The CD Department is actively engaged in acquiring a Brownfields site along Atlantic Avenue, which was formerly used as a gas station. CD Department staff and consultants have conducted a number of assessments under purview of regulatory agencies, ultimately leading to an approved clean up plan and providing an environmental indemnity for future developers. The CD Department is involved in ongoing negotiations with the owner's counsel and anticipates the acquisition of the site in the next few months. All adjoining properties have been acquired in support of the housing concept planned for this area.

The CD Department is working with an owner of property containing environmentally sensitive uses. Under the Polanco Act CD staff have successfully accessed and

characterized the property, resolving incorrect perceptions of environmental hazards on the site. The CD Department is now moving forward on acquiring the property which is slated for new housing.

Finally, the CD Department is working with various regulatory agencies to adequately characterize and appropriately close a number of environmentally impacted Westside properties. These include 243 Chestnut Avenue (recently closed with a No Further Action Letter issued by the Regional Board) slated for housing infill; and, 1669 Anaheim (which being further characterized is likely to need quarterly monitoring), and a parcel at Anaheim and Hayes, both of which are planned for redevelopment with industrial uses.

## **B. Open Space for the Managed Production of Resources**

### *2.1 Inventory and maintain the existing amount of public open space devoted to community gardens*

Five community gardens exist. With the adoption of the park dedication ordinance, two of the City-owned gardens at El Dorado Park and Hudson Park are now dedicated park uses. A third garden is located on the Southern California Edison (SCE) Transmission Right-of-Way in north Long Beach. A fourth community garden is located on 6<sup>th</sup> Street and Pacific Avenue in the Downtown Redevelopment Project Area. This site, owned by the Redevelopment Agency, is leased to Long Beach Organic for \$1 a year, has received \$5,000 in Agency assistance to establish the garden, and is considered an interim use.

Finally, a fifth community garden was completed this year on the former Pacific Electric Railroad Right-of-Way at Tenth Street and Loma Avenue. This garden is also now considered an interim use, as it will eventually be removed for the future installation of improved storm drainage in east Long Beach, to be constructed by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works. The site is City-owned, zoned for park use and administered by the PR&M Department. The Department has indicated that it is planning to restore this land as public open space after the County storm drain improvements are completed.

### *2.2 Work with non-profit groups (such as Long Beach Organic) to examine the feasibility of expanding open space for community gardens*

Both the CD Department and the PR&M Department continue to work with Long Beach Organic as opportunities arise. The new community garden at Tenth Street and Loma Avenue was completed as a cooperative program between the PR&M Department and Long Beach Organic.

### *2.3 Preserve and protect water resources available to the City of Long Beach; use porous surfaces and expand recharge capabilities where appropriate and feasible*



Several departments have made progress in implementing measures for program 2.3, they are listed below.

The Water Department reports that they have expanded the reclaimed water distribution system and are now delivering over 1.5 billion gallons of reclaimed water throughout the City. They have also expanded their aggressive water conservation program, resulting in a per-capita water use in Long Beach to where it is much lower than almost every other major city in California. Although near surface groundwater is not a productive source for the City, the Water Department continues to work closely with the Water Replenishment District to ensure that our deep water aquifer remains a viable water resource. In 2004 our Water Department continued implementing a program to store over four billion gallons of water for emergencies and dry year needs. This five million dollar project, paid for entirely with non-City funds, is approximately more than half complete and over one billion gallons of water has been stored.

The Public Works Department's Clean Water Division has received one million dollars from the State to address pollution abatement citywide. A Best Management Practices report is being used to reduce outfall drain runoff into Hamilton Bowl/Chittick Field. A vortex trash separation system has been installed at 20<sup>th</sup> Street and Walnut Avenue. Another vortex system to reduce trash flowing into the Los Angeles River is being implemented. Six pump stations on the Westside have been retrofitted with more efficient trash racks and/or netting devices. And, up to 500 catch basin inserts, designed to collect trash, debris, sediments, hydrocarbons, metals and bacteria, are currently being installed.

The PR&M Department is working with the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Watershed Council on a study to monitor the percolation of urban runoff through a cistern and well now being drilled in Veterans Park. This system will monitor whether recharging parking lot runoff poses a danger to polluting groundwater supplies.

The PR&M Department is also discussing the use of low water consuming plants and porous concrete surfaces with the Public Works and Water Departments in future PR&M development and rehabilitation projects.

*2.4 Manage oil and natural gas operations throughout the City to protect the environment, extend the life of the resources and benefit the public*

The Departments of Energy and Oil Operations report that they continue to operate with these missions in mind.

*2.5 Develop new and enhance existing marine life habitats in Long Beach*

See responses 1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5 and 1.6 above.

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### **C. Open Space for public health and safety**

#### **3.1** *Identify the need for and maintain open space buffers to protect lives and property from natural and man made disasters*

The City's Fire, Health and Human Services, Airport, Harbor, and Planning and Building Department's continue to monitor hazardous conditions and maintain open space buffers to protect lives and property from natural and man made disasters. The PR&M and Public Works Departments continue to address beach erosion through their highly successful beach nourishment program. The PR&M Department measures beach width monthly in critical areas and reports that data to a community association every two months. An ongoing project is the installation of mini-sand bag groins to test if soft groins will be cost effective in reducing the rate of beach erosion. The PR&M Department has also engaged the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to do a major study of the feasibility of several approaches to reducing beach erosion. The Corps is about one quarter of the way into a two-year study. The PR&M Department has also been working on a program to control bluff erosion where this is a concern along the beachfront. (See 1.5 above)

#### **3.2** *Continually monitor areas that are physically hazardous*

In addition to the bluff erosion program discussed in Program 3.1 above, second priority projects, including bluff top street ends other than 1<sup>st</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Places, and the slopes below Bluff Park will be addressed beginning in 2005.

With regard to the mini-sandbag groins that were installed in 2003, the Department continues to evaluate their effectiveness. While preliminary results appear to be positive, bag longevity is not as good as originally expected.

Also, with regard to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) study of the feasibility of several approaches to reducing beach erosion mentioned in Program 3.1 above, little progress was made on that study this year as Corps staff members were pulled off to work on other projects.

#### **3.3** *Identify areas of flood, earthquake fault, noise and other hazards for purposes of open space acquisition*

All of the above areas have been identified and mapped.

### **D. Open Space for Outdoor Recreation and Recreation Facilities**

#### **4.1** *Inventory and analyze City-owned lands, blighted properties, and former oil drilling sites to identify parcels that can be converted to open space or parks and recreation uses.*

In collaboration with the PR&M Department, the Redevelopment Agency has purchased a vacant, tax delinquent property at 2023 Pasadena Avenue for the

creation of a neighborhood mini park. Named after slain police officer Daryle Black, the Agency and PR&M Department have worked with the community to develop the park design and amenities. Funds to develop the site have also been allocated by the Agency. The park is scheduled to be completed and hold its grand opening before the end of 2004.

The Community Development Department continues to maintain a property database of City-owned lands and potential park sites. Brownfield sites have been and continue to be identified along several major corridors and in areas where wetlands may be restored.

Further, the Community Development Department is in active negotiation with a number of landowners of underutilized and vacant properties for acquisition of open space. A majority of these properties are along the Los Angeles River and provide opportunities for both passive and active parks and for wetlands restoration. This past year one property was acquired and two more properties should close within the next few months. An additional property will likely require extensive negotiations and may not be acquired until the end of 2005. See also 1.7 above.

4.2 *Adopt a citywide ratio of eight acres of parkland for each 1,000 residents*

This ratio was accepted with the adoption of the new Open Space and Recreation Element. Implementation began last year in 2003 with the acquisition of 21 acres of additional park space. No new parkland was acquired in fiscal year 2004; however, negotiations with property owners to acquire six additional sites totaling 36 acres are proceeding. Staff expects that most of these properties will be acquired in early 2005. These include the Wrigley Heights property where the City received a grant of five million dollars for the acquisition of 20 acres along the Los Angeles River in Council District 7, and the Drake/Chavez Greenbelt in Council District 1 where the City has received nearly 9.2 million dollars more in grant funds. The City also received a 1.2 million dollar grant for acquisition of undeveloped portions of the Pacific Electric Railroad Right-of-way in Council District 6 and has requested one million dollars more.

Ten new parks or expanded parks completed in 2004 are:

Peace Park (14 <sup>th</sup> and Atlantic)	0.4 acres	Council District 1
Santa Cruz Park (Ocean and Cedar)	0.2 acres	Council District 2
Victory Park (Ocean and Cedar)	0.77 acres	Council District 2
East Village Arts Park (Elm & Broadway)	0.09 acres	Council District 2
Greenbelt Gardens (10 <sup>th</sup> & Loma)	1.4 acres	Council District 4
Officer Daryle Black Park (2103 Pasadena)	0.14 acres	Council District 6
Fellowship Park (Willow & Pasadena)	0.37 acres	Council District 6
Tanaka Park (Wardlow & Caspian)	1.4 acres	Council District 7
Burton W. Chace Park (Market & Dairy)	0.3 acres	Council District 8
South Street Expansion (South & Jay Mills)	<u>1.3 acres</u>	Council District 9
Total	6.37 acres	

Five sites under construction or nearing construction in 2004 for parkland development are:

Victory Park Expansion (Ocean & Elm)	1.0 acre	Council District 2
Rotary Centennial Park (PCH & Junipero)	1.3 acres	Council District 4
Plymouth & Elm	1.12 acres	Council District 8
Jack Nichol Park (PCH & Costa del Sol)	3.48 acres	Council District 3
55 <sup>th</sup> Way (55 <sup>th</sup> and Cherry)	<u>5.84 acres</u>	Council District 9
Total	12.74 acres	

In the 2003 report, 180 acres were added to the inventory as undeveloped City-owned property planned for park development. During 2004, several of these undeveloped sites were developed totaling 6.37 acres of new park acres. The additional finished parklands in 2004 bring the completed park and open space inventory to 2640 acres.

Yet, in spite of recent progress in acquiring parkland our continuing population growth is exceeding our rate of growth in finished park space. The population estimate for Long Beach in 2004 was 487,000. This is dramatically up from the 2003 estimate of 472,000, a jump of 15,000 persons. As a result, the number of finished recreation open space acres for each of us has declined over the past couple of years, going from 5.6 acres of recreation open space for each 1,000 residents in 2002 to 5.4 acres in 2004.

4.3 *Review and revise as necessary the Park Impact Fee Ordinance in order to achieve the community's open space and recreation goals*

The PR&M Department has hired David Rosen and Associates to provide an economic analysis of the nexus between the current park impact fees and new residential development. This will help calibrate the current fee, which has not been adjusted for inflation since its adoption in 1989 and does not reflect the current eight acres per 1,000 residents standard. The report is nearly complete and will be presented in early 2005.

4.4 *Formally dedicate all City-owned parks and designate them to be preserved in perpetuity*

All existing developed City-owned parklands were dedicated on June 23, 2003. Newly developed City-owned parklands for calendar year 2004 will be rezoned as necessary and dedicated in perpetuity for park use in the first quarter of 2005. These include: Peace Park, the East Village Arts Park, Fellowship Park, Burton W. Chace Park, Rotary Centennial Park, and expansions to Victory Park, Santa Cruz Park and the South Street Parkway greenbelt.

4.5 *Require that any conversion of parkland be replaced amenity-for-amenity and acre-for acre at a 2:1 ratio. One acre of replacement land shall be located in the park*

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*service area where the land was converted and an additional acre of replacement land shall be located in a park service area needing parkland – as determined by the Parks and Recreation Commission.*

No parkland was converted to other uses in 2004.

- 4.6 *Integrate the provisions of the Department's Strategic Plan for the socially, economically and environmentally sustainable development of the City's park and recreation system with short and long-term Capital Improvement Plans*

The PR&M Department's Strategic Plan has been integrated into all of the Department's budgetary decisions, both operating (short-term) and capital (long-term) budgets.

- 4.7 *Develop a long-term funding mechanism for park and open space acquisition and development*

This issue has been studied with no viable new alternative discovered. Additional interdepartmental discussion will take place in 2005. Meanwhile, the PR&M Department has aggressively pursued one-time grants, mainly available through California bond acts approved in 2000 and 2002. Additional Statewide bond acts are being contemplated for the 2006 ballots.

- 4.8 *Analyze opportunities for open space linkages that include bicycle trails, drainage channels, right-of-ways, parks, rivers and beaches; and develop an integrated open space recreation trails plan.*

The RiverLink Plan, mentioned in program 1.4, is a plan intended to accomplish this for the western section of the City. It includes improvement to the Los Angeles River Trail on the levee of the Los Angeles River and connecting routes to that trail including 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Spring Street, and the Southern California Edison transmission right-of-way in north Long Beach.

Additionally, the PR&M Department has sought to acquire and develop remaining portions of the former Pacific Electric Railroad right-of-way which diagonally crosses the southern portion of Long Beach. They also reports that they are working to restore wildlife habitat and create new trails along portions of the west bank of the San Gabriel River.

- 4.9 *Hold community meetings to devise and establish solutions to park safety, maintenance and development issues for each park. Foster park stewardship through building inclusive relationships with the community.*

Community meetings of this nature occur on a regular basis at Stearns, Bixby and Bluff Parks, and with residents on the Alamitos Bay Peninsula. Additional parks will be added in the future, and intensive community input is collected in the design process for all new parks being developed.

*4.10 Develop a special use park oriented to the viewing and playing of adult active recreational sports*

The PR&M Department is actively pursuing the development of a 56 acre sports park south of Spring Street between Orange and California Avenues. An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on the proposed development is now being prepared for the project that includes six softball, four soccer fields and a golf training facility. Public review of the EIR is scheduled for late 2004.

See also Program 1.7.

*4.11 Create a top level committee composed of City Council members, City administrators and key Long Beach Unified School District officials to address enhanced utilization of school sites for public recreation*

The Mayor convenes a meeting quarterly called a Collaborative Conversation Committee. It includes the mayor, superintendent of schools, two council members, two school board members, and key staff. City management has also formed a couple of partnering groups of staff from both these organizations. One of these groups focuses primarily on joint property development between the City and the School District.

*4.12 Modify provisions of the General Plan and zoning for complete consistency of recreation open space locations, uses and building coverage*

This program was completely implemented with the adoption of the new Open Space and Recreation Element.

*4.13 Place before the voters a City Charter Amendment to update and clarify the (Parks and) Recreation Commission's role relative to non-recreation uses and development in City parks*

On November 5, 2002, the citizens of Long Beach voted in favor of Measure T, which amended the City Charter by changing the name of the Recreation Commission to the Parks and Recreation Commission, and modifying the Commission's jurisdiction to include all activities on and the use of park lands in the City.

*4.14 Provide an annual report to the Planning Commission and City Council documenting progress in each of the implementation programs of this Element*

This is that report.