



URBAN NATURE

INTERRELATED ACTIONS



Buildings & Neighborhoods



Water



Green Jobs/Business

In an urban environment like Long Beach, where the most of the city is buildings, streets and sidewalks, it is easy to overlook the natural environment that is all around us and that the fact that it plays an important role in how the city looks and functions. Urban nature is a part of our city from trees and parks to wetlands and beaches. Recognizing this and promoting environmental stewardship is fundamental to a sustainable city.

Both recreational and natural open space is essential to a sustainable city. Recreational open space provides for healthy outdoor activities and a community gathering place, while natural open space is important for habitat and species protection as well as for the health and wellbeing of our City and its residents. Wetlands, rivers, lagoons, lakes, and beaches are natural resources that provide not only recreation but also necessary habitat.

While public open space is the most recognizable type of open space, it is equally important for each residence to be its own sustainable ecosystem. Private yards can become edible gardens that provide healthy food for families or drought tolerant and native gardens that attracts birds and butterflies.

Ecosystems provide vital services to its inhabitants. Society is dependent on many of these services, often unconsciously. For example, ecosystems provide food and water, regulate the climate, protect biodiversity, and provide recreational outdoor experiences. We rely on these systems for our health and wellbeing; however, we often overuse or destroy these resources and problems such as climate change, overfishing, and pollution result. A fundamental shift in how we interact with nature is necessary to ensure sustainable ecosystems.

Education is an important component of connecting to and improving urban nature. Too many people, especially children, do not have regular access to open space and do not understand the interconnectedness of people and nature. Such an understanding is vital, as our community must become environmental stewards to truly advance sustainability and effectively protect and preserve the Long Beach environment.

The initiatives, goals and actions in this section will improve existing urban nature, expand park and wildlife areas, and encourage sustainable uses of open space while fostering a sense of place and understanding of nature. The actions in this plan are interrelated, and the goals that follow will contribute to the neighborhoods and water use goals that are discussed in other sections. A sustainable city is one where nature is protected and restored, where ecosystems thrive and both people and animals have a healthy habitat to enjoy.

SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

1. 8 acres of open space per 1,000 residents by 2020
2. Create 100 miles of green linkages by 2020
3. Establish one or more Nature Centers along the L.A. River by 2016
4. Establish a native landscape demonstration in every park 1 acre or larger by 2020
5. Establish a community garden in every park 5 acres or larger by 2020
6. 1,000 front yards converted to native or edible landscape by 2020
7. Train 500 Habitat Stewards by 2016

Together, we can become stewards of our environment by protecting and conserving our natural resources and providing accessible open space for all.

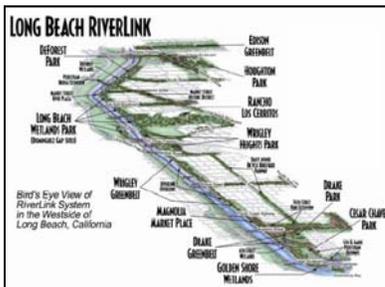


A HISTORY OF LEADERSHIP



EL DORADO NATURE CENTER

For more than 30 years, the El Dorado Nature Center's 102.5 acres has been an oasis of greenery in the midst of Long Beach's busy urban landscape. Two lakes, a stream, 2 miles of dirt trails and a ¼ mile paved trail wind through meadows, coastal sage scrub and woodlands offering visitors a serene getaway. The Center provides habitat for many wild animals and the museum has interactive hands-on exhibits and a mini zoo. Educational programs are provided monthly for adults and youth that focus on our natural world, and how to live a more sustainable life.



RIVERLINK

The Department of Parks, Recreation and Marine adopted "*Riverlink*", an integrated open space plan, to green the approaches to the Los Angeles River and make it more accessible to nearby neighborhoods which suffer from a deficit of open space. When fully implemented, RiverLink will comprise 263 acres of open space.



WETLANDS RESTORATION

Wetlands restoration and preservation is continuing in Long Beach, including projects such as the Colorado Lagoon, Sims Pond, Dunster Reserve, Dominguez Gap and DeForest Park. The Colorado Lagoon park includes a Wetland and Marine Science Education Center and wetland tours, which provides critical education about the City's wetlands and habitats.



AQUARIUM OF THE PACIFIC

Aquarium of the Pacific provides a journey of discovery through the world's largest ocean where visitors can at the discover sunny Southern California and Baja, the frigid waters of the North Pacific, and the colorful reefs of the Tropical Pacific. The Aquarium also recently opened *Our Watersheds: Pathway to the Pacific*, the new watershed environmental exhibition, classroom and native garden. The Aquarium also provides a traveling education center, the *Aquarium on Wheels* as part of their many educational programs.



LONG BEACH GREENBELT

The site served for over half a century as a portion of the Pacific Electric Red Car line until it closed in 1961. In 1999, the City of Long Beach converted the land to recreational park lands, the Long Beach Greenbelt. One block on the right-of-way, between 7th and 8th streets, was set aside for native habitat restoration. Since then, the City has actively purchased all available Pacific Electric right-of-way area to be used as park or open space.



Urban Nature Initiative 1:

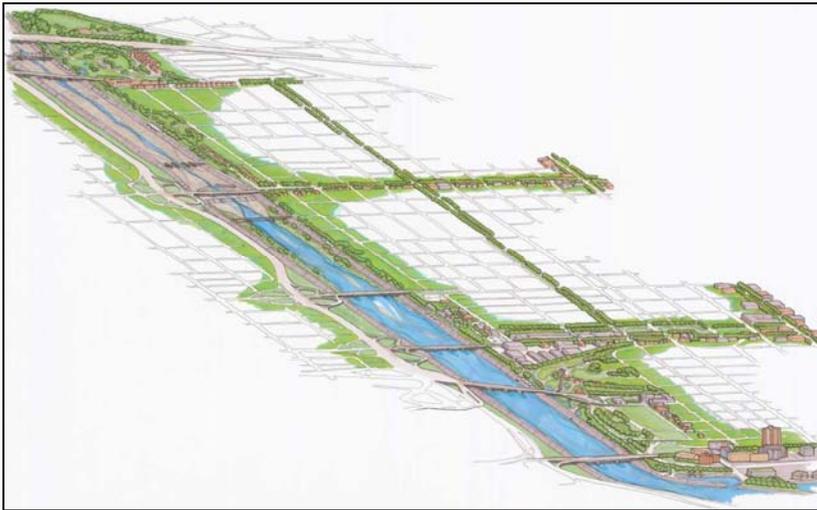
Create a more balanced network of open spaces through acquisition, restoration and greenway linkages, consistent with the 2002 Open Space and Recreation Element of the General Plan

SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

8 acres of open space per 1,000 residents by 2020

Create 100 miles of green linkages by 2020

Establish one or more Nature Centers along the L.A. River by 2016



STATISTICS

- There are currently 6.1 acres of park land for every 1,000 residents.
- 8.9% of our City's land area dedicated to parks.
- Approximately 300 acres of joint-use open space exists in Long Beach.
- El Dorado is the 133rd largest park in the U.S. at 800 acres
- 3100 acres within the City's 50 square miles are dedicated to recreation, including recreational waters and 155 parks and encompasses 1672 acres.
- Since 1998, \$188.7M has been invested in City parks and 126.3 acres of parks have been added, with 60.3% added in western Long Beach, 31% added in central Long Beach and 8.7% added in eastern Long Beach.

ACTIONS

1. Create a Green Linkage Plan that connects existing and future parks and open space through greenway linkages and pedestrian and bike paths
2. Create a diversity of recreational space including pocket parks, playing fields, playgrounds, trails, etc.
3. Expand the adopt-a-park program and create public-private partnerships for continued park maintenance
4. Create joint use park facilities and work with LBUSD to enhance the utilization of school sites for public use
5. Work with local transit partners to create transit connections within and to parks and open space and explore a recreational transportation program
6. Identify partnerships, funding and begin the planning process for an urban nature center along the L.A. River
7. Incorporate sustainable principles and practices into golf course, marina, park and playground/field design and maintenance (grasscycling, reclaimed water irrigation, water conservation, recycling and waste management)
8. Require all new developments to provide usable open space tailored to the recreational demands they would otherwise place on public resources
9. Create walking trails and use native, drought-tolerant landscaping in street and frontage road medians



Urban Nature Initiative 2:

Promote biodiversity citywide by encouraging the wide scale use of native or edible landscapes

SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

Establish a native landscape demonstration in every park 1 acre or larger by 2020

Establish a community garden in every park 5 acres or larger by 2020

1,200 front yards converted to native or edible landscape by 2016



STATISTICS

- Native landscape demonstration gardens exist at the Nature Center, Rancho Los Cerritos and the Long Beach Water Department.
- The Long Beach Water offers free residential landscape classes. Department sponsored a
- Long Beach has 5 miles of ocean-facing beach and 15 miles of river paths.
- The Los Cerritos Wetlands once stretched over 2,400 acres at the mouth of the San Gabriel River and today, approximately 415 acres of the tidal marshes remain in southeast Long Beach and Seal Beach.

ACTIONS

1. Identify partnerships, funding and complete the Deforest Wetlands project
2. Work with utility companies and others who own the former Pacific Electric right-of-ways to create projects that green our right-of-ways
3. Ensure all open space and greening project incorporate native/drought tolerant plants and use low-water strategies
4. Encourage private residences to remove water intensive landscapes and replace them with native, drought-tolerant and/or edible landscapes
5. Protect and restore the City's urban creek system
6. Leverage public and private dollars to implement habitat and wetland restoration projects in the community and develop new and enhance existing marine life habitats
7. Work to acquire and restore lands along the San Gabriel and Los Angeles Rivers and Los Cerritos Wetlands and Colorado Lagoon
8. Work with schools and community groups to create and maintain community gardens

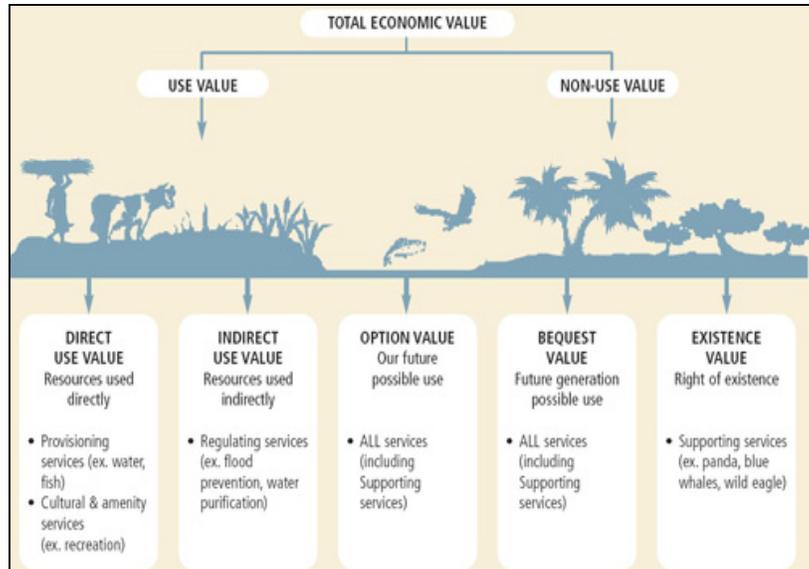


Urban Nature Initiative 3:

Increase awareness and promote the natural environment as a place to play, learn and be active

SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

Train 500 Habitat Stewards by 2016



STATISTICS

- The El Dorado Nature Center is the 69th most visited park nationwide with 500,000 visitors per year.
- The Aquarium of the Pacific is the fifth largest in the nation and the third largest cultural attraction in the Los Angeles area, with 1.4 million annual visitors, including 200,000 school children.
- The Aquarium of the Pacific offers a multitude of on-site and off-site educational activities and programs for schools, including Aquarium on Wheels and Oceanographer for a Day.

ACTIONS

1. Offer environmental habitat educational programs for schools and partner with LBUSD, LBCC and CSULB to incorporate educational courses/lessons about nature and our impact on the environment
2. Support the Wetland and Marine Science Center at Colorado Lagoon and other experiential learning opportunities in our outdoor classroom
3. Encourage and promote local entertainment, leisure and community events at the beaches and in parks
4. Aggressively promote tree planting in city parks and open space and promote the tree dedication program
5. Promote the Ranchos as locations for history and nature, including native, drought-tolerant landscapes
6. Promote volunteer opportunities with Adopt-a-beach, Adopt-a-wetland, Coastal Cleanup days and the Aquarium of the Pacific
7. Participate and encourage community participation in Green Port Fest and other community festivals geared toward environmental education and stewardship
8. Incorporate community participation in planning parks, open space, gardens and demonstration projects to increase community ownership