

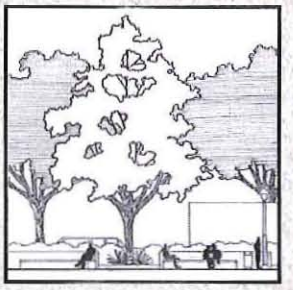





Long Beach RiverLink

February 2007

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San Pedro Bay Estuary Project
Susan Zoske, Director

Design Team
606 Studio, Department of Landscape Architecture
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
Edward Anaya
James Chaddick
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Professional Advisory Group
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Rick Meghiddo, AIA
Jon Summers, AIA
Rick Harter, Executive Director, Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council (2004)
Mike Bassett, Executive Director, Conservation Corps of Long Beach

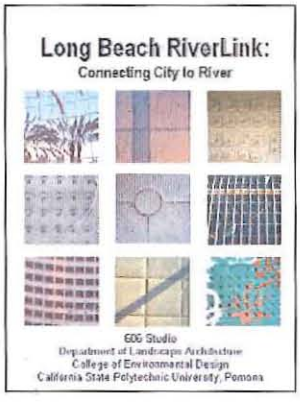
A special thanks to Susan Zoske and Joan Greenwood for conceiving of a cost effective approach to accomplishing the RiverLink study and assembling the consultant team.

Long Beach Department of Parks, Recreation and Marine
Phil T. Hester, Director
Dennis Eschen, Manager of Planning and Development
Geoffrey Hall, Special Projects Officer

RIVERLINK GENESIS

The RiverLink concept took root in January 2003, when the Department of Parks, Recreation and Marine contracted with the San Pedro Bay Estuary Project, a local non-profit agency, to manage a study of the opportunities to create a continuous greenway along the east bank of the Los Angeles River. The west bank of the Los Angeles River was not included in the study due to the close proximity of the 710 Freeway and the discussions that were taking place regarding its potential redesign. However, it will be possible to transfer some of the design concepts to the west bank as the overall 710 Freeway plan is implemented.

The RiverLink project team was comprised of graduate students from Cal Poly Pomona's Department of Landscape Architecture – a group known as the "606 Studio." The team held a series of 12 public outreach meetings in neighborhoods along the Los Angeles River, and then set about to develop their plan.

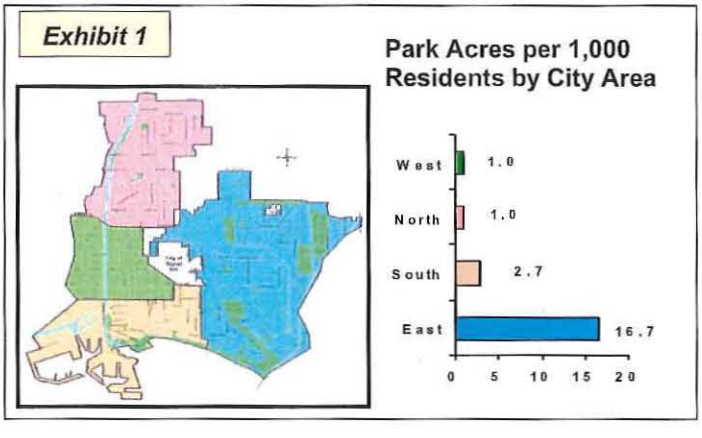


The RiverLink plan was presented to the public in June 2003, as the students' Master's Degree project. It was then refined by a committee of volunteer design professionals who critiqued and supplemented the plan, and by feedback from the community in a second series of meetings.

The plan was presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission in December 2004 as the San Pedro Bay Estuary Project's final report. It was approved in concept by the Parks and Recreation Commission in April 2005, with staff suggested revisions and recommendations.

OPEN SPACE NEEDS

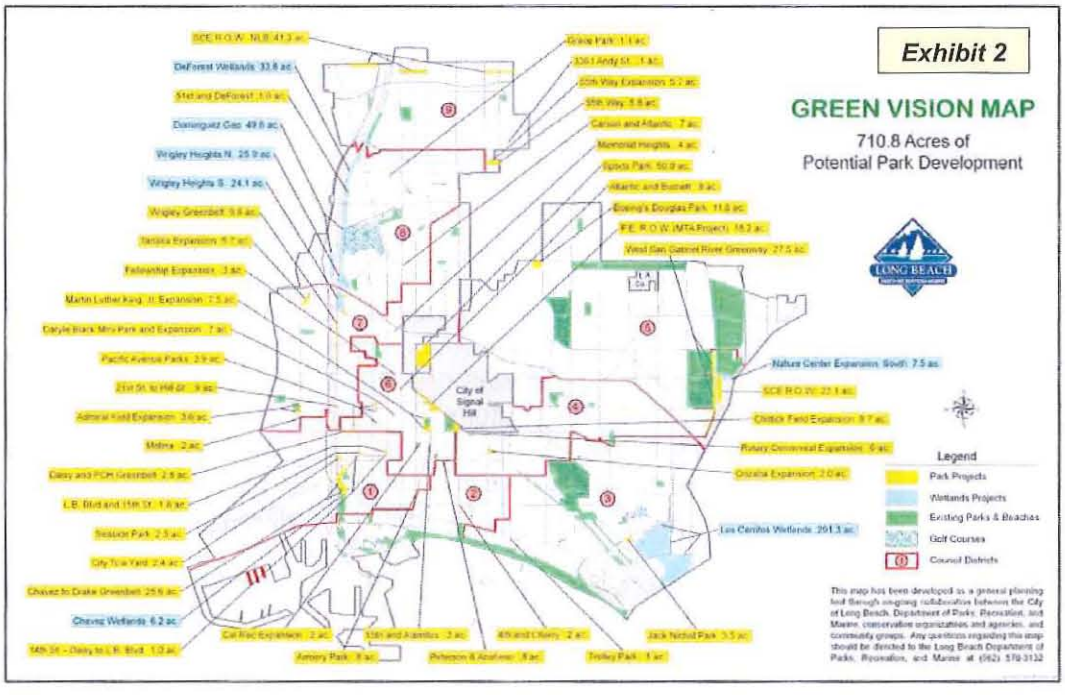
The City has a great need for additional parkland, especially along the western edge of the City, where the Los Angeles River is located. The City's Open Space and Recreation Element approved in October 2002 established a goal of having an average of eight (8.0) acres of recreational open space per 1,000 residents. Currently, the city has a citywide average of 5.4 acres.



However, as shown in *Exhibit 1*, there is tremendous disparity in the distribution of open space across the City. The eastern quadrant of the City has 16.7 acres of open space per 1,000 residents, whereas the northern and western quadrants have a mere 1.0 acre per 1,000 residents. The southern section is not much better with just 2.7

acres per 1,000 residents. Thus, it is essential that the City continue to concentrate its park development efforts in underserved areas.

The map below *(Exhibit 2)* shows all of the opportunities that have been identified for new park space, as of February 2007.



The large majority of these opportunities are in the city's underserved areas, and many of them are along the Los Angeles River. RiverLink views these opportunities as an integrated system, rather than viewing them as individual projects.

RIVERLINK VISION

RiverLink seeks to define a sense of place and envision possibilities for an integrated open space system for the west side of Long Beach. The plan provides a framework to connect west side neighborhoods, and greater Long Beach, with the Los Angeles River greenway.

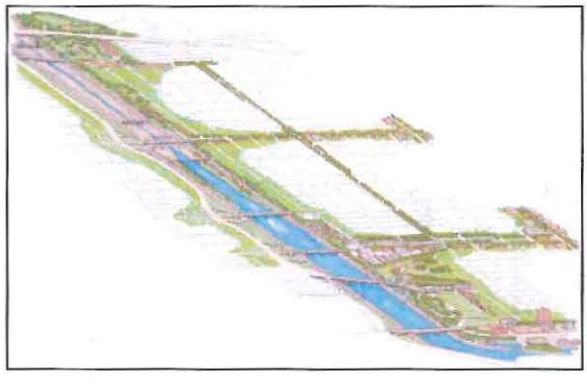
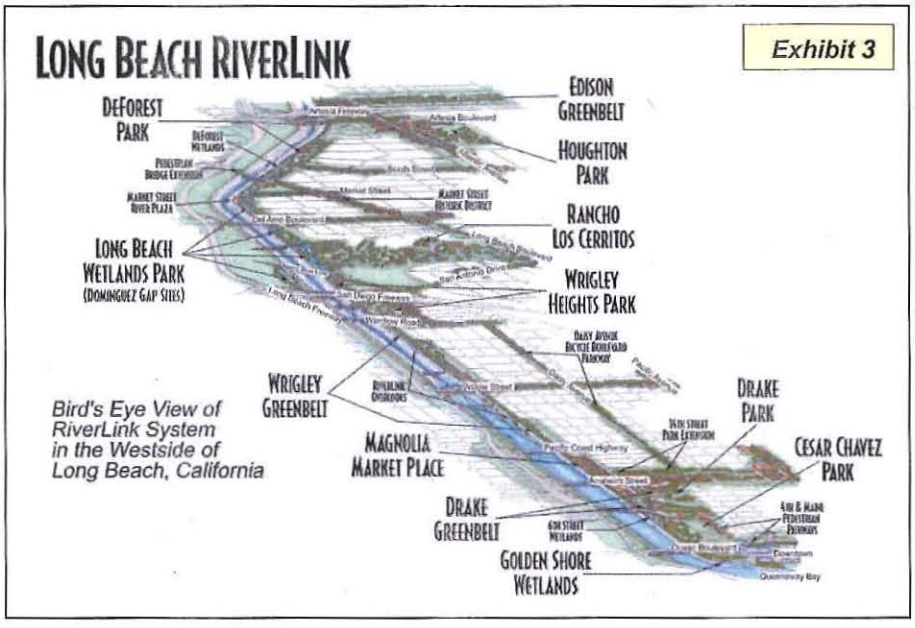
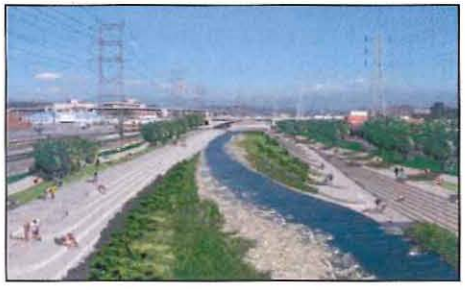


Exhibit 3 shows more specifically what the framework or system could look like when RiverLink is fully implemented.



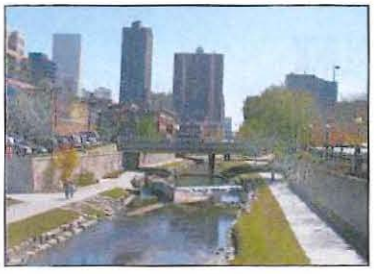
Long Beach's vision for the Los Angeles River, which is not unlike that of the City of Los Angeles', is one of a river that provides aesthetic, recreational, and ecological benefits, in addition to serving its flood control purposes. Where RiverLink differs from the City of Los Angeles' plan is that it does not currently envision a reconfiguration of the existing flood control levees.

The following are renderings taken from the City of Los Angeles' Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan:

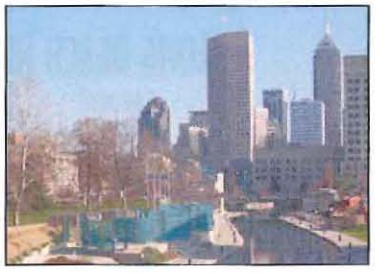


Los Angeles is not the first metropolitan area to renovate a channelized, urban river. The following photos are examples of urban rivers in other cities:

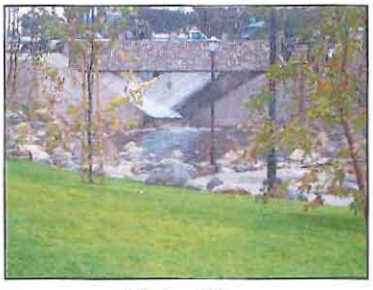
San Jose, CA



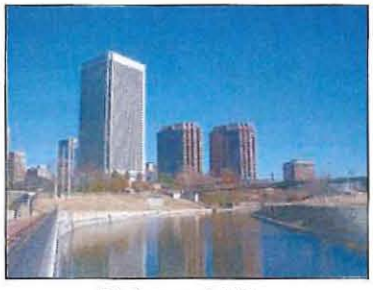
Denver, CO



Indianapolis, IN



Vista, CA



Richmond, VA

RIVERLINK GOALS

The main goals of RiverLink are:

- To identify areas for the acquisition of additional open space.

  As previously mentioned, the City is seeking to provide eight (8.0) acres of recreational open space for each 1,000 residents of the city. To achieve this, approximately 1,100 acres needs to be added to the current inventory of 2,855 acres.

- To identify ways to connect city residents to the Los Angeles River.

  This is primarily oriented toward improving physical access to the bicycle and pedestrian trails on the levees and open spaces along the River.

- To identify locations along the Los Angeles River where the native habitats could be restored.

  This is to preserve the scarce remnants of Long Beach's biological heritage, and to allow that heritage to recover to the point that its existence will no longer be threatened. Furthermore, this is to provide places of contact where residents can understand and value that heritage.

- To improve the aesthetics of the Los Angeles River and the City.

RIVERLINK COMPONENTS

RiverLink addresses the historical Los Angeles River basin, or habitat zone, in Long Beach. This habitat zone is shown in blue in *Exhibit 4*. Habitat is generally defined as the environment in which biological populations (e.g., vegetation, insects, animals) live and grow. Six types of vegetation were known to have existed within the habitat zone: native grassland, riparian woodland, oak woodland, coastal sage scrub, emergent wetland, and tidal wetland.

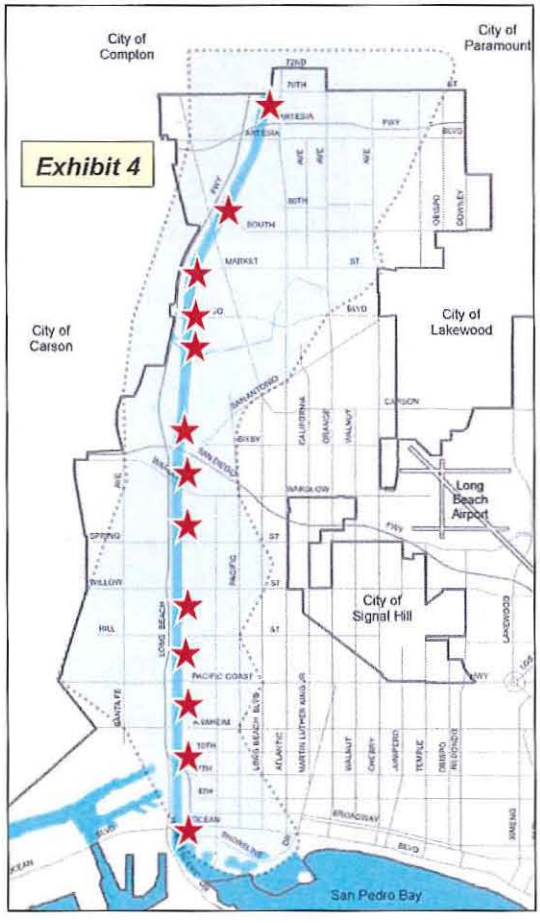
RiverLink has four main components within the habitat zone:

- Destinations
- Gateways
- Pathways
- Connections

Each of these components will be discussed separately. It is important to note that RiverLink is a conceptual plan. The large majority of the Destinations, Gateways, Pathways, and Connections presented are simply ideas to be discussed and pursued.

DESTINATIONS

Destinations are places where accessible recreational open space or habitat restorations are located. The locations of the destinations proposed by RiverLink are depicted as stars in *Exhibit 4*.



Destination 1: SCE Transmission Right-of-Way

This site, which is the northernmost destination, provides an open visual access way to the Los Angeles River from Atlantic Avenue, without the need to cross through an established residential neighborhood (see *Exhibit 5*). The site is also near horse trails and stables on flood control right-of-way, and near economically underproductive commercial and industrial properties that could be added to create a community scale park, possibly extending as far south as Artesia Boulevard.

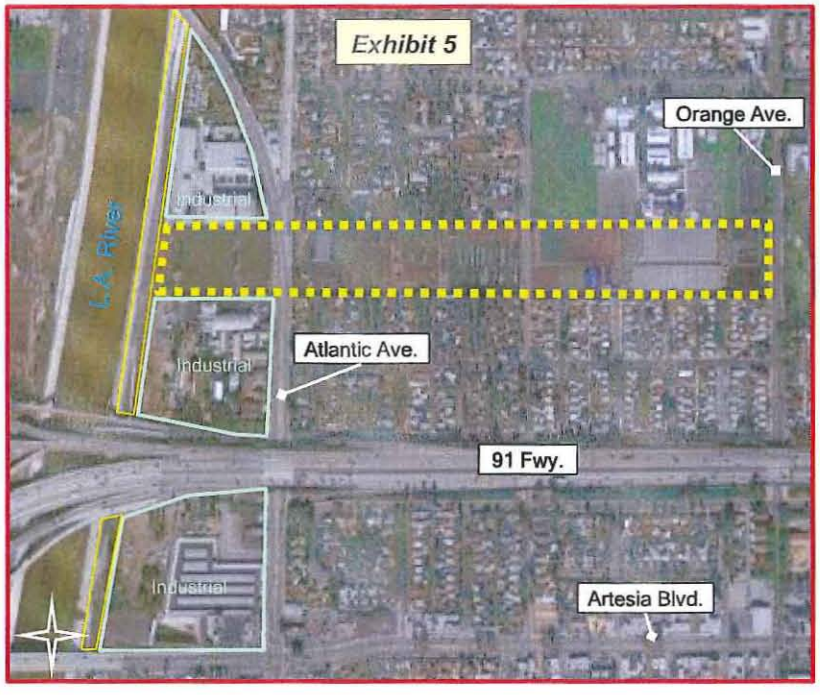
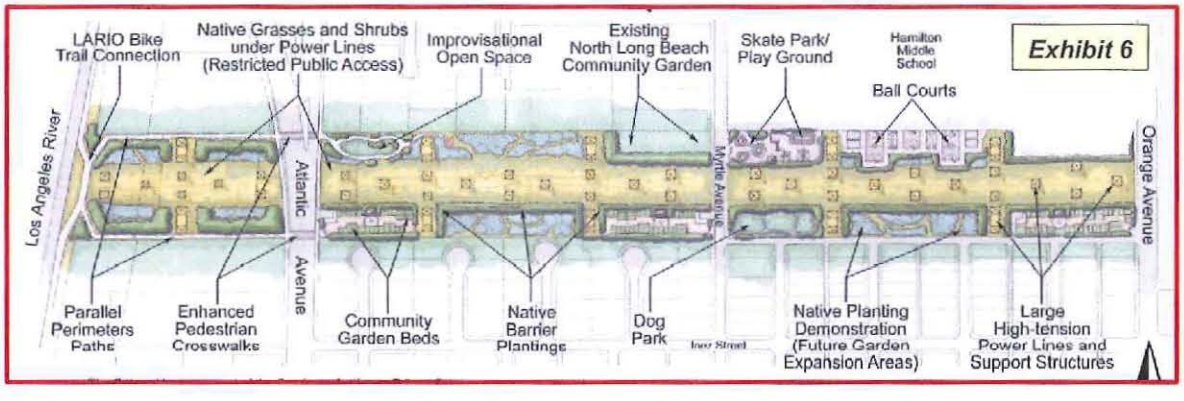


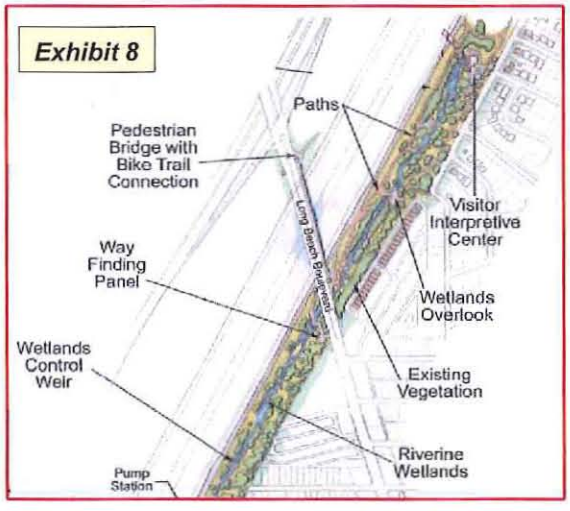
Exhibit 6 is a rendering of what the SCE right-of-way could look like.



Destination 2: DeForest Park and Wetland

Deforest Park is a 16-acre park adjacent to the Los Angeles River (see *Exhibit 7*). South of the park is a 34-acre Los Angeles County flood detention basin. The detention basin is planned for a habitat restoration with walking trails, observation overlooks and educational displays (see *Exhibit 8*). A "nature center building" at the edge of the park with a classroom and an outdoor amphitheater is a long-term possibility. RiverLink supports and incorporates this proposed use. The development concept is to take the dry season flows from three major storm drain lines and reconfigure the flows into a stream like condition.

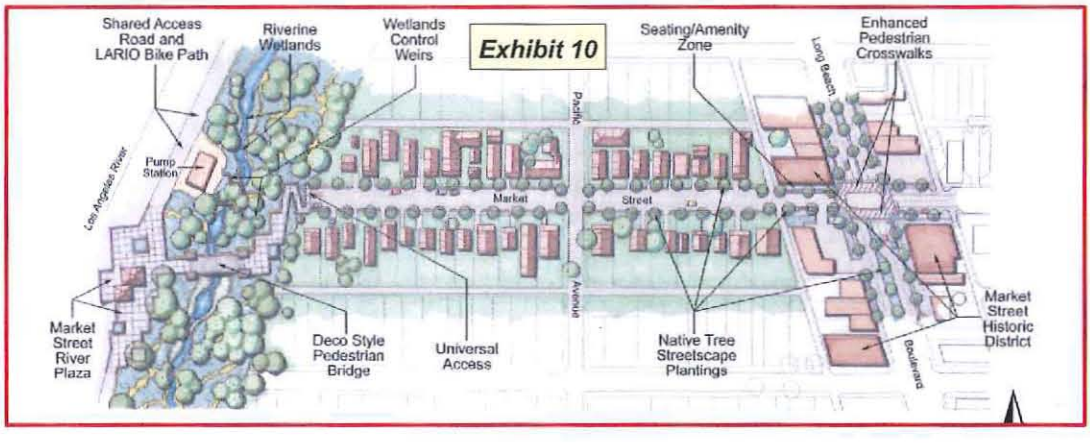
Natural wetland processes will be utilized to clean the water before its eventual discharge into the Los Angeles River. The project will recreate deep and shallow water habitats, as well as native habitats adjacent to the stream and on the upper slopes of the detention basin. The walking trails will be designed so as to protect the native habitats, while providing adequate exposure and viewing education and nature watching.



Destination 3: Market Street Overlook

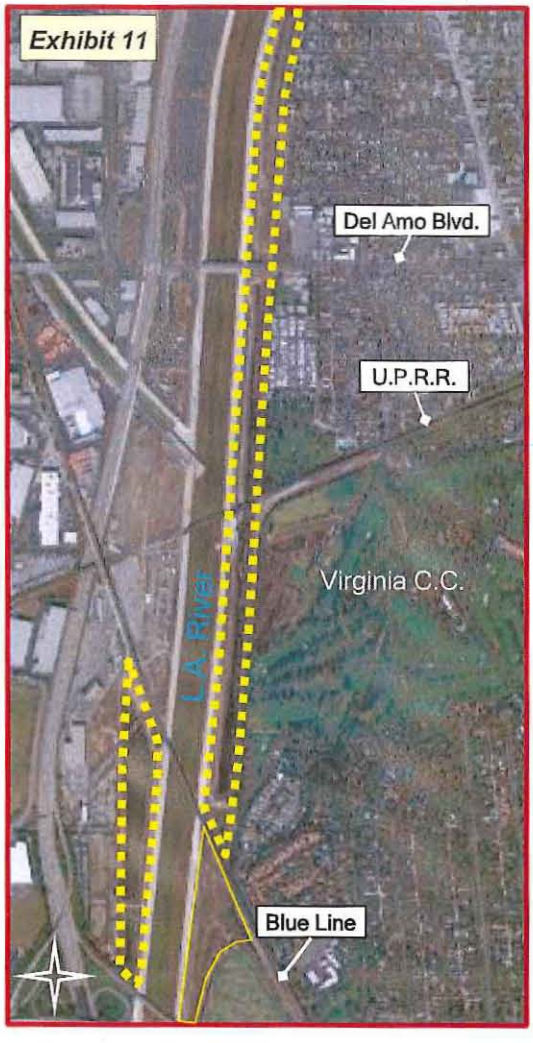
The intersection of Market Street and Long Beach Boulevard is the historical commercial hub of North Long Beach, and it is only two blocks from the Los Angeles River (see *Exhibit 9*). The levee of the River is close to the elevation of Market Street, and the River bends at that location to provide a dramatic view sweeping from the downtown Los Angeles skyline to the Palos Verdes Peninsula.

Taking advantage of the that opportunity, RiverLink proposes a pedestrian plaza spanning across the DeForest Detention Basin, as an extension of Market Street as a main street square for North Long Beach (see *Exhibit 10*).



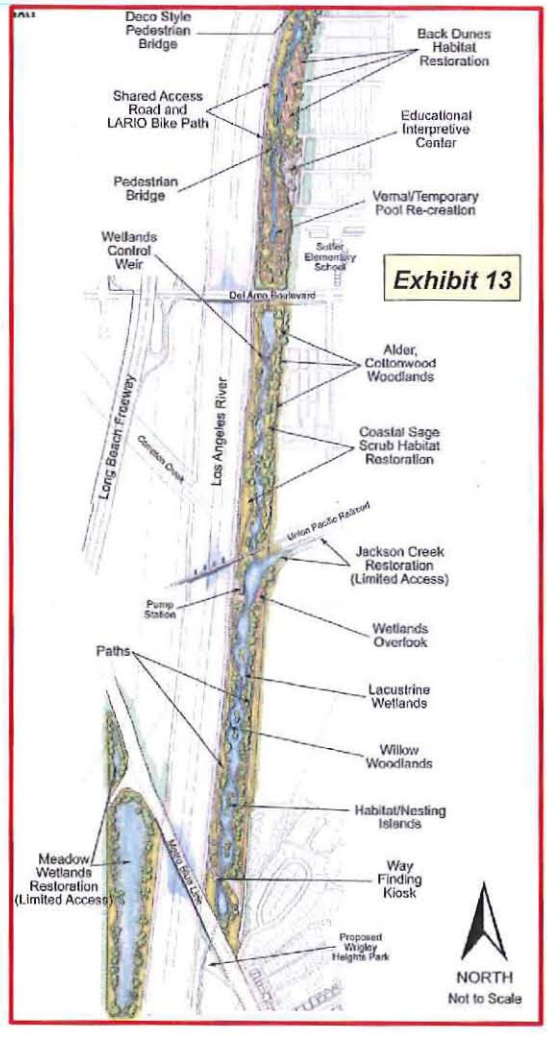
Destination 4: Dominguez Gap

Dominguez Gap contains two flood retention and recharge basins in a 50-acre area, with one basin located on each side of the Los Angeles River (see *Exhibit 11*).



Los Angeles County Department of Public Works is in the process of restoring the eastern basin, which extends from Del Amo Boulevard to the I-405 Freeway, as riparian wetland (see *Exhibit 12*). Public access trails, overlooks, and educational displays will also be included. The west basin will continue to be used for ground water recharge of storm runoff and will be enhanced with native plantings.

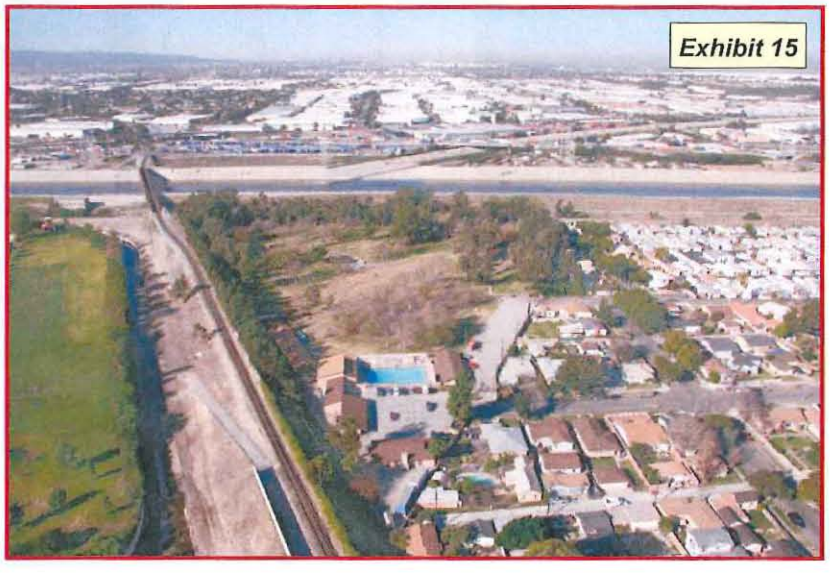
Exhibit 13 provides an idea of what the project will look like when it is finished.



Destination 5: Reid Boy Scout Camp

The Reid Boy Scout Camp is located adjacent to the Dominguez Gap East Basin on its west and adjacent to the Union Pacific Railroad Line on its south (see *Exhibit 14*).

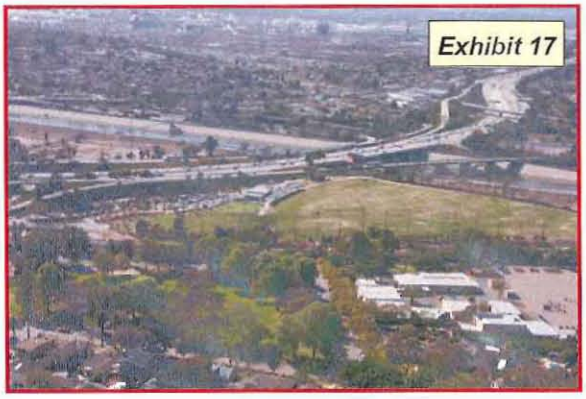
This site is 10 acres of open space used by the Boy Scouts for camping and administrative offices (see *Exhibit 15*).



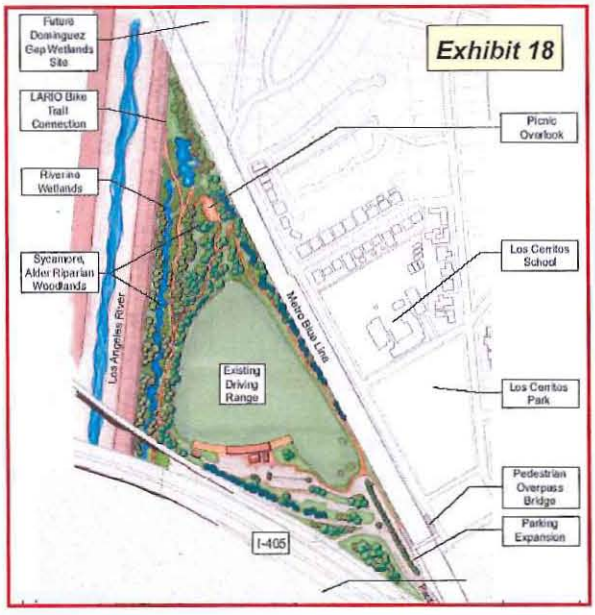
RiverLink recommends that the site be considered for acquisition as an open space destination, if it is ever proposed for conversion to another use.

Destination 6: Wrigley Heights - North

Wrigley Heights is a 50-acre area split into two parts by the I-405 Freeway. The northern portion, or Wrigley Heights - North, contains two main parcels, a site that is part of the Los Angeles River flood control right-of-way and a privately owned site used as a driving range (see *Exhibits 16 & 17*).



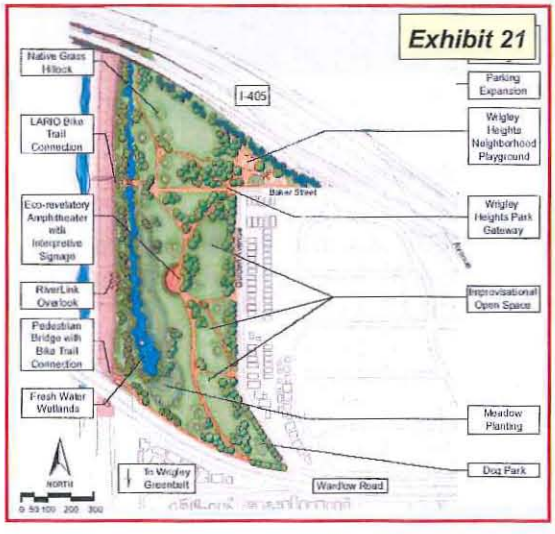
RiverLink proposes keeping the driving range and improving the excess River right-of-way as a riparian woodland to complement the adjacent wetland at Dominguez Gap (see *Exhibit 18*).



Destination 7: Wrigley Heights - South

The southern section of Wrigley Heights, or Wrigley Heights - South, contains four properties. Two of these are small properties the City has acquired. A large privately owned parcel separates the City owned parcels (see *Exhibits 19 & 20*). The Los Angeles River flood control right-of-way is the fourth parcel.

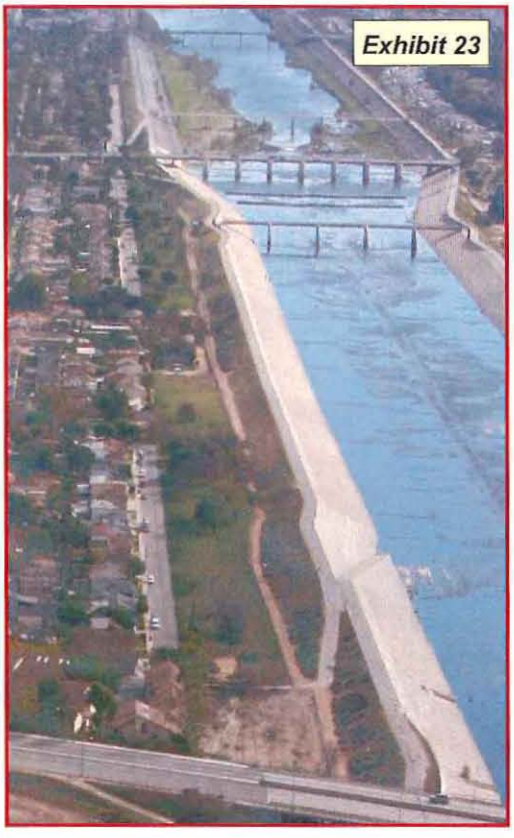
RiverLink proposes that as much of the area as possible become an open space destination containing a restored wetland, riparian woodland, pedestrian and bicycle paths, and a neighborhood park with a playground, picnic areas, and other amenities (see *Exhibit 21*). Any private development in this area should be buffered from the Los Angeles River right-of-way by a setback, not less than 15 feet wide, of riparian woodland plants.



Destination 8: Wrigley Greenbelt - North

This is the area of excess Los Angeles River right-of-way extending from Wardlow Road to Willow Street (see *Exhibit 22*). It is east of the fenced right-of-way and has been partially landscaped (see *Exhibit 23*).

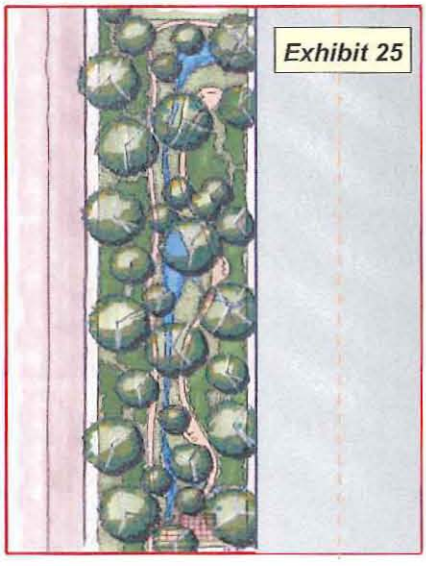
Further improvements proposed are additional native landscaping, especially replacing existing ice plant, decomposed granite walking/jogging trails, exercise stations, and vegetated swales and/or the day-lighting of existing storm drain lines to create a stream-like amenity.



Destination 9: Wrigley Greenbelt - South

This is the area along the river from Willow Street to Hill Street (see *Exhibit 24*). In this area, DeForest Avenue separates the residential neighborhood from the Los Angeles River, but only the back yards of homes front on DeForest, and the edge of DeForest adjacent to the river right-of-way is unimproved.

RiverLink proposes to narrow the DeForest Avenue roadway and improve the edge adjacent to the River with a decomposed granite walking/jogging path, with exercise stations and an alee of riparian woodland trees (see *Exhibit 25*).

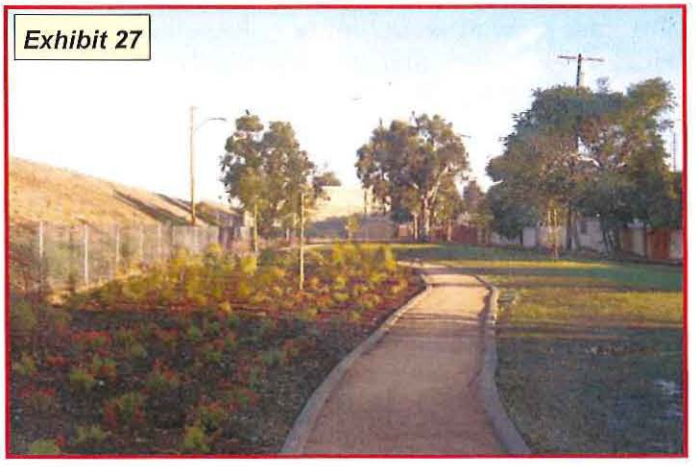


Destination 10: Los Angeles River Greenway

This is the area between Hill Street and Pacific Coast Highway (see *Exhibit 26*). The City owns a number of scattered parcels in this area, generally between homes and the Los Angeles River.

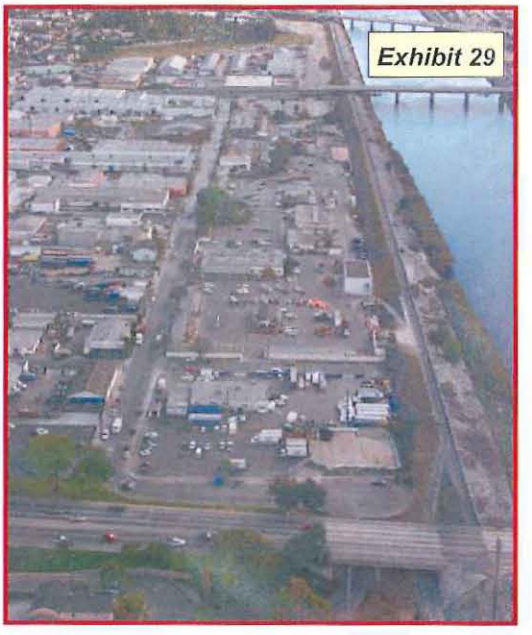
RiverLink proposes linking these parcels, wherever possible, and constructing a greenway similar to the Wrigley Greenbelt. Bridge abutments at Pacific Coast Highway and at Willow Street provide sizable turf areas. These should be preserved as landscaped areas, expanded into unneeded roadway rights-of-way, where possible, and improved as mini-parks.

Exhibit 27 is a photo of the recently completed greenway area between 21st and Hill Streets, which is at the northern end of this destination.



Destination 11: City Public Service Yard

In the area between Pacific Coast Highway and Anaheim Street, the City owns and uses most of the blocks adjacent to the Los Angeles River as the City's corporate yard (see *Exhibits 28 & 29*). With consolidations of operations, some of the area is believed to be excess and is being evaluated for reuse.

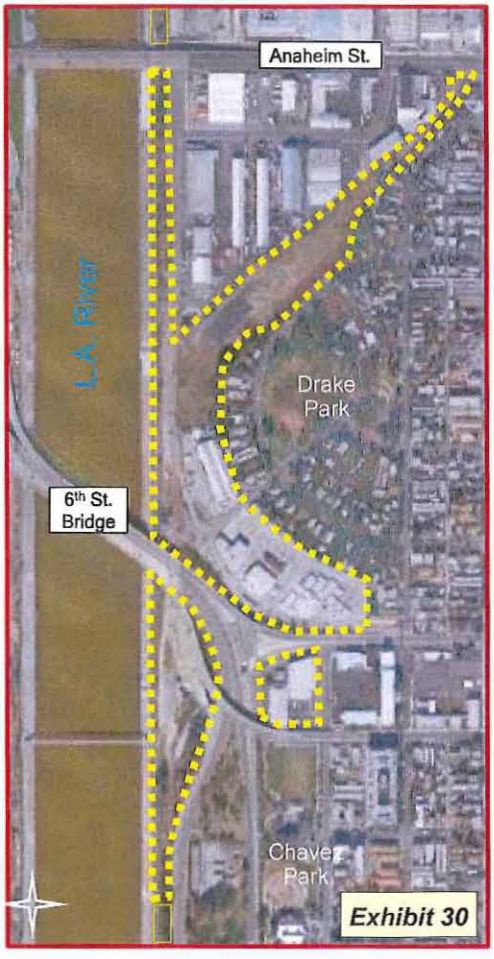


As the property to the east is all in industrial use, the site is not viewed as suitable for use as part of RiverLink. However, one unused building on the site, a former Pacific Electric Railway depot, is of historic and aesthetic importance. This building should be preserved and moved to a park site to be reused as a community recreation center, or used as a rest area adjacent to the Pacific Coast Highway – Los Angeles River connection. Further, reuse of the sites should be buffered from the River by a setback, not less than 15 feet wide, landscaped with riparian woodland plants.

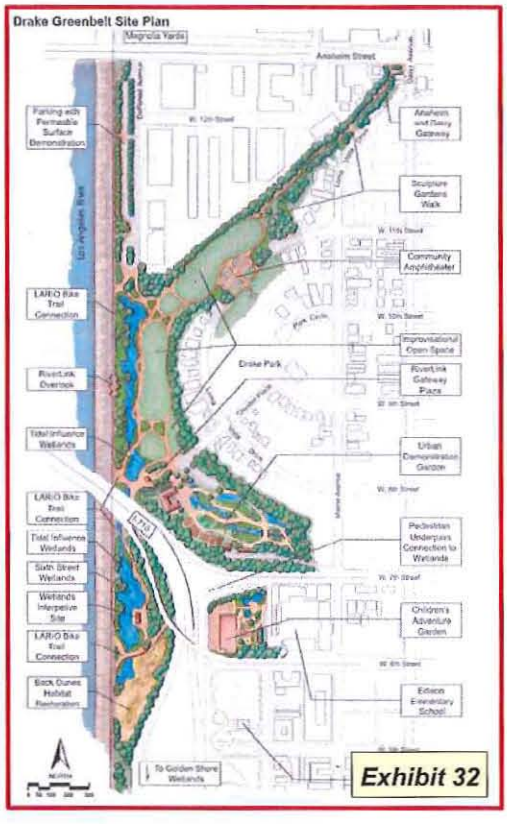
Finally, an area should be reserved adjacent to Anaheim Street for a bicycle connection to the LARIO Trail and small landscaped rest area, and the public right-of-way under the Anaheim Street Bridge retained.

Destination 12: Riverside Park (Drake/Chavez Greenbelt)

This is the area along the Los Angeles River from Anaheim Street to Ocean Boulevard. This is about a 25-acre area, including unused and underused industrial property and vacant public right-of-way (see *Exhibits 30 & 31*). The City has acquired this property, which will connect Drake and Cesar E. Chavez Parks together under and around various roadway overpasses and bridges.

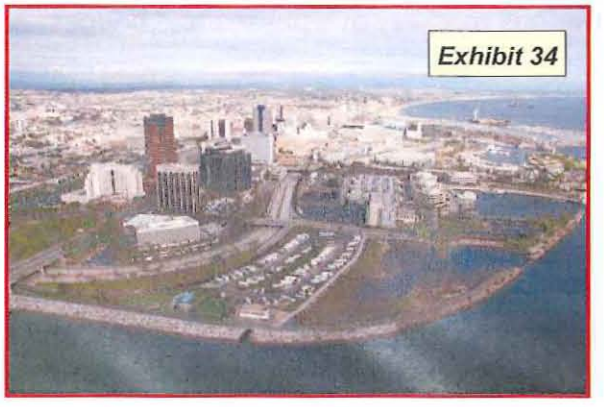


RiverLink proposes that the area be used to create a neighborhood park closest to the residential neighborhood of Willmore City, and a saltwater tidal wetland closest to the River (see *Exhibit 32*). Existing industrial buildings will be investigated for reuse as an urban nature center. Whenever possible, unused street rights-of-way and bridge abutments should be landscaped, or covered with murals or river rock treatment consistent with the Cesar E. Chavez Park design theme. It should be noted this particular conceptual plan does not account for the potential realignment of the 710 Freeway. RiverLink will adjust to that design.



Destination 13: Golden Shore Biological Reserve

This six-acre area, which is the southernmost destination, is a former small boat launch ramp that has been converted into a saltwater marsh at the mouth of the Los Angeles River (see *Exhibits 33 & 34*).

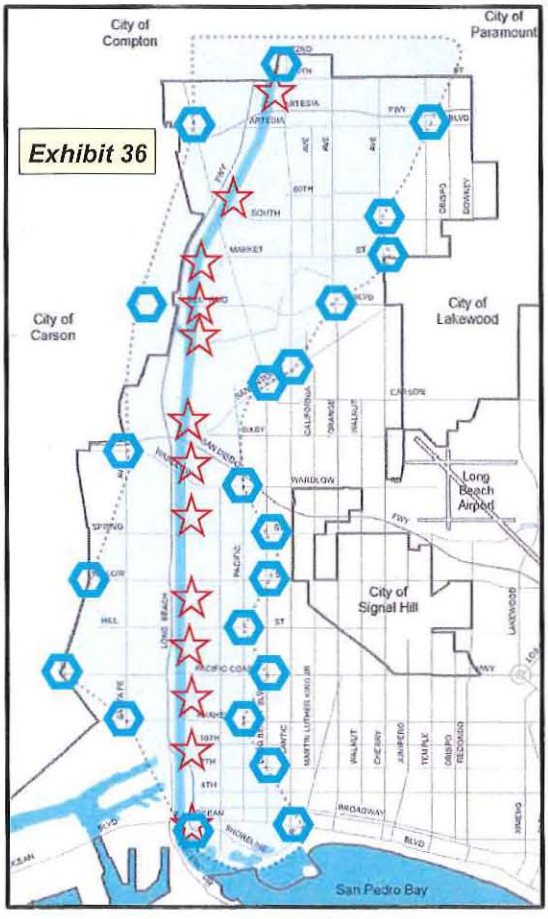


As proposed in RiverLink, a rest area is being developed on part of the rock dike that defines the wetland from the River to provide an overlook area for viewing the wetland and the river, and as a rest area at the terminus of the LARIO Trail (see *Exhibit 35*).

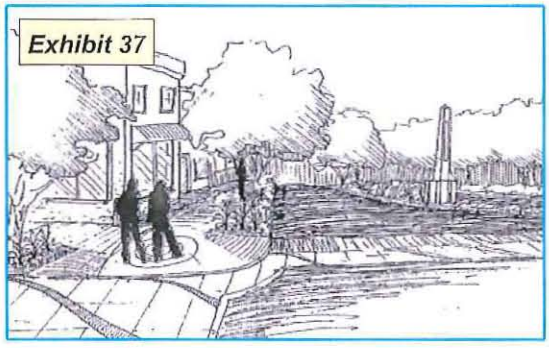
A grant has been received to make this improvement. Educational signage has been installed, and a gateway obelisk will provide information about the wetland and more clearly make the beginning of the LARIO Trail.

GATEWAYS

The second component of RiverLink is **Gateways**. RiverLink seeks to identify the native Los Angeles River habitat zone by creating gateway markers along major thoroughfares to indicate the entry into the habitat zone. The locations of the gateways proposed by RiverLink are depicted as hexagons in *Exhibit 36*.



Gateways are those points where a visitor begins the journey along a pathway towards a connection or destination.



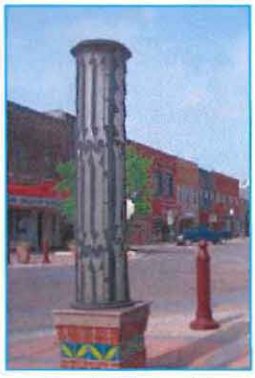
As envisioned, the gateway markers would be obelisks in the roadway medians (see *Exhibit 37*). The obelisks would be uniform in size and format, but would contain design elements specific to the architectural history of the neighborhood being entered and would contain neighborhood identifying graphics.

The following photos are public art pieces utilized as gateway markers in other cities:


San Diego, CA

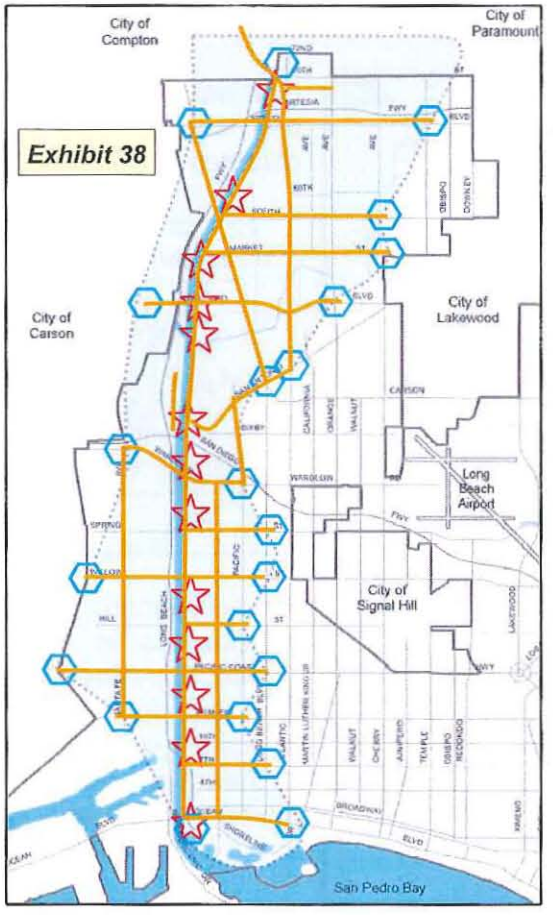

Palm Dessert, CA


San Francisco, CA

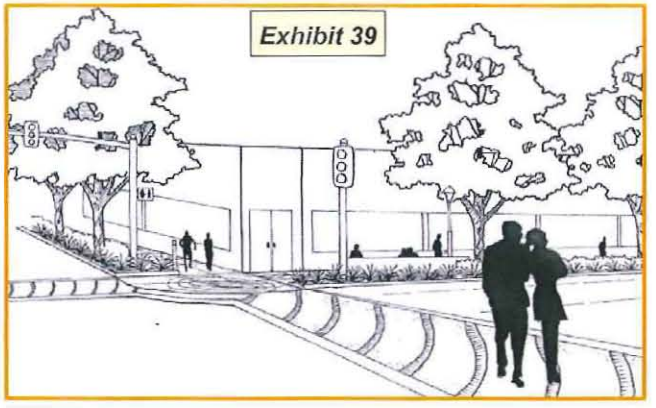

Des Moines, IA

PATHWAYS

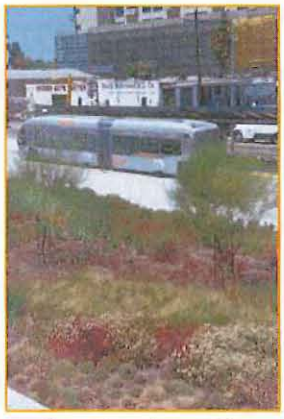
The third component of RiverLink is **Pathways**. RiverLink proposes a large network of pathways (see *Exhibit 38)*.



Pathways facilitate movement in and around the neighborhoods to the Los Angeles River (see *Exhibit 39*).



The following photos are examples of pathways in other cities:

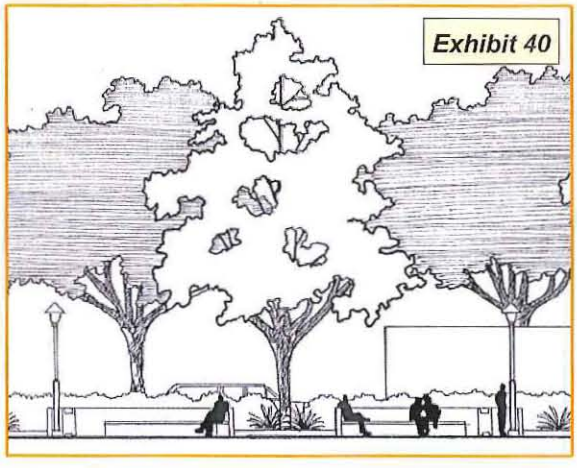

Los Angeles, CA


Phoenix, AZ


Phoenix, AZ


Tucson, AZ

Pathways also encourage pedestrian activity by providing amenity zones where people can stop and rest comfortably (see *Exhibit 40*).



The following photos are examples of amenity zones (rest areas) in other cities:


San Francisco, CA

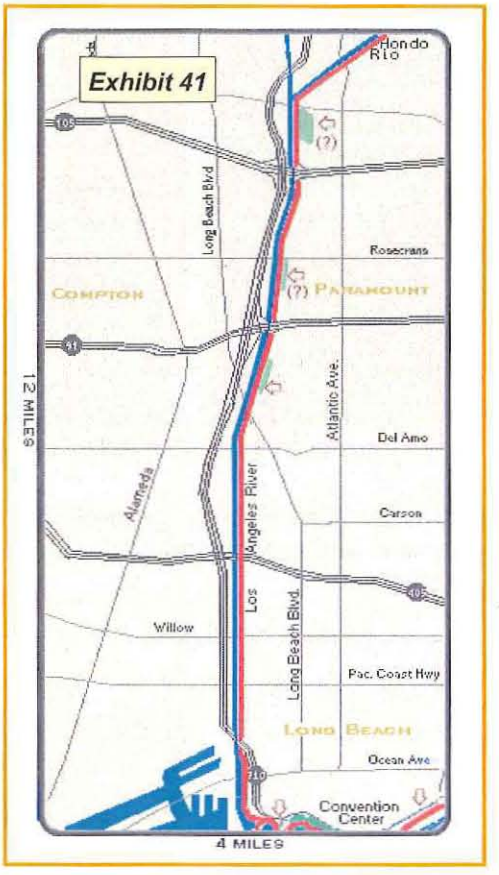

San Diego, CA


San Jose, CA

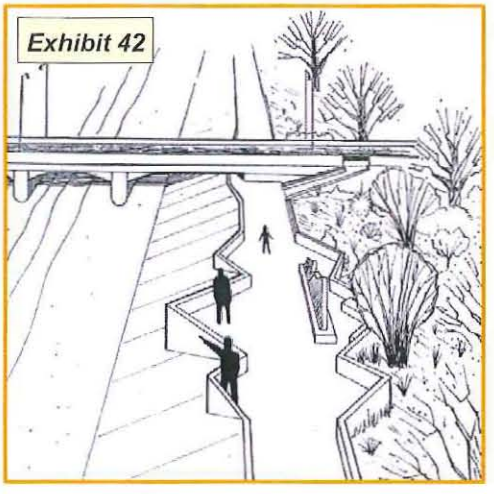
There are two types of pathways in RiverLink – the Los Angeles River Trail (LARIO Trail) and "CityLinks."

LARIO Trail

The LARIO Trail is a regional trail with bicycle and pedestrian areas on the top of the Los Angeles River's levee, and an equestrian trail, north from Wardlow Road, generally adjacent to the base of the levee (see *Exhibit 41*). This is a Los Angeles County trail system that provides a regional connection.



As important and heavily used as the LARIO Trail is, it has deficiencies in width, rest locations, shade, traveler orientation and perceived safety. Built as a maintenance road on the River levee, it lacks the amenities of a full recreational trail. RiverLink proposes to provide those amenities by creating landings on the sides of the levees to provide extra room for rest areas without interfering with the travel on the top of the levee (see *Exhibit 42*).



The following photos are examples of river overlooks in other cities:

New York, NY

San Luis Obispo, CA

Chattanooga, TN

CityLinks

"CityLinks" are bicycle and pedestrian pathways that connect neighborhoods to the LARIO Trail. From north to south, the proposed CityLinks are:

Southern California Edison has a transmission line right-of-way that crosses North Long Beach in an east/west direction from the Los Angeles River to the eastern edge of north Long Beach only a few blocks from the city's northern border (see *Exhibit 43*). Easements should be acquired throughout the right-of-way with eventual potential connection to the San Gabriel River through Bellflower and Lakewood.

There is an existing connection from the LARIO Trail to DeForest Park just north of the DeForest Wetland (see *Exhibit 44*). This connection should be maintained and enhanced with a rest area, and extended as a Class 2 (on-street) bicycle path to Jaymills Avenue and South Street.

Market Street provides an opportunity to make an additional connection to the LARIO Trail (see *Exhibit 45*). Market Street currently terminates at the edge of the DeForest Detention Basin. From that point, a relatively small grade difference separates Market Street from the levee of the DeForest Basin, and the levee of the DeForest Basin provides a connection to the LARIO Trail. Market Street then provides a Class 2 (on-street) bicycle path opportunity across North Long Beach.

Del Mar Avenue adjoins the Dominguez Gap East Basin (see *Exhibit 46*). It can be linked to the LARIO Trail through the pathways being developed for the Dominguez Gap Wetland Restoration Project. It then connects to a Class 2 (on-street) bicycle path on San Antonio Drive. This can also provide a connection to the Wrigley Heights - North and South Destinations.

A CityLink is proposed at the Wrigley Heights - South destination (see *Exhibit 47*). This would connect back to the Wardlow Road Class 2 (on-street) bicycle path.

The former Pacific Electric right-of-way runs diagonally across the city from the north to south, from the middle of the city on the western boundary to the southeast corner. From the western border to Willow Street at Long Beach Boulevard, the right-of-way has been used for the MTA Blue Line. Approximately one-half of the former right-of-way has been developed, and one-half is vacant, with the City owning most undeveloped blocks. Blocks at Orizaba Park and Rotary Centennial Park have been developed as parks. Acquisition of additional sections is underway. Eventually, a mix of Class 1 (off-street) and Class 2 (on-street) bicycle paths will extend from Alamitos Bay to the LARIO Trail at Spring Street (see *Exhibit 48*).

Before leaving the Pacific Electric right-of-way, it is interesting to note how it will look and function as a pathway as the various right-of-way properties are acquired and developed as parkland. The photos below show the Rotary Park site, which is located on the former right-of-way, prior to and after development.

Another Citylink is 14th Street (see *Exhibit 49*). 14th Street Park is a five block-long linear park in the middle of 14th Street. This was once the right-of-way of a Pacific Electric Railway spur.

This will be rebuilt as a Class 1 (off-street) bicycle path from the future Seaside Park at Chestnut Avenue to the Long Beach Boulevard Blue Line stop at Anaheim Street. A Class 2 (on-street) bicycle path on the north side of Anaheim Street from Magnolia Avenue to Golden Avenue, a frontage road west of Golden could accommodate a Class 1 section to connect to the LARIO Trail, or to Riverside Park (Drake/Chavez Greenbelt) under the Anaheim Street Bridge. Alternately, this pathway could connect to the Riverside Park by crossing Anaheim Street at Daisy Avenue.

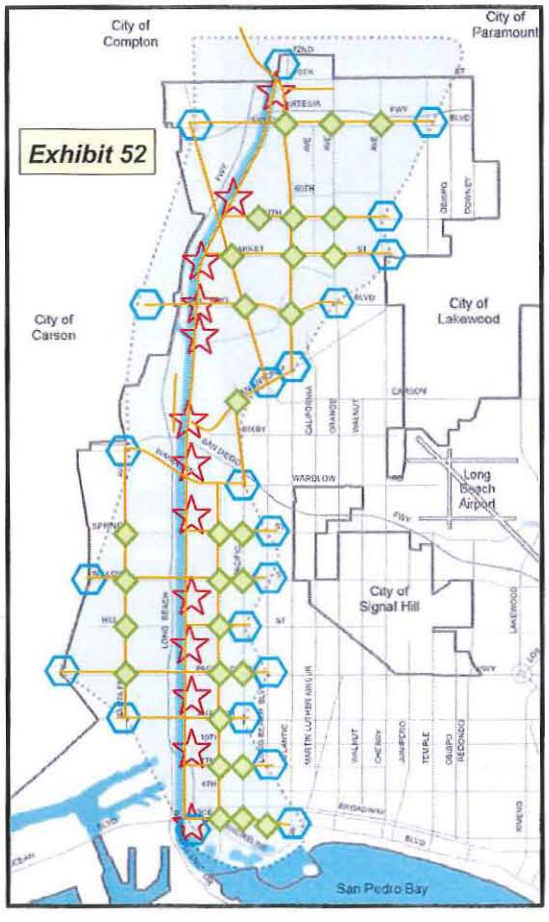
The next CityLink pathway is the Los Angeles River to Downtown Connection (see *Exhibit 50*).

This recently constructed pathway uses the underpass under Shoreline Drive to connect the Civic Center and the Transit Mall at 1st Street with the LARIO Trail. Class 2 (on-street) and Class 3 (on-street, no lane) bicycle path sections on 6th and 7th Streets, and Chestnut Avenue would connect the underpass to the Civic Center. The proposed extension of 1st Street, and installation of a traffic signal, provides another link to the downtown area.

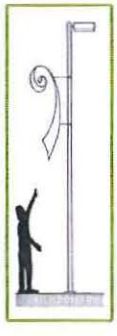
The final CityLink is Daisy Avenue (*see Exhibit 51*). Daisy Avenue is a north/south street with a wide and unique median and relatively light traffic between Willow Street and Pacific Coast Highway. South of Pacific Coast Highway, it is a more typical residential street that then allows a connection to the Riverside Park trail south of Anaheim and to the LARIO Trail at Anaheim.

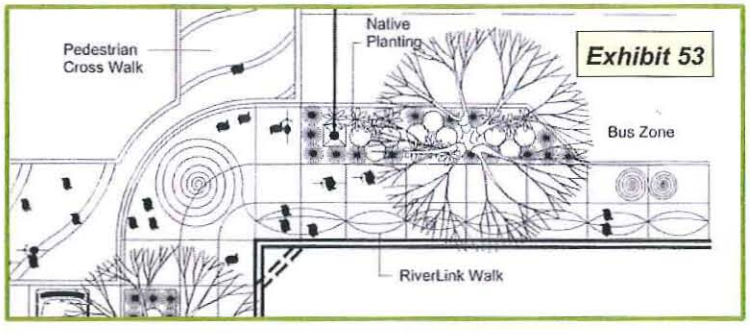
CONNECTIONS

The fourth, and final, component of RiverLink is **Connections**. Connections link pathways together, and they are of particular importance as they provide access to the LARIO Trail or the destinations. The locations of the connections proposed by RiverLink are depicted as diamonds in *Exhibit 52*.



Such connections will be marked by pavement markings that have a directional content with a swirl pattern or "eddy" leading to a directional arrow. This can be done in the sidewalk markings and in lamp pole logos (see *Exhibit 53*).





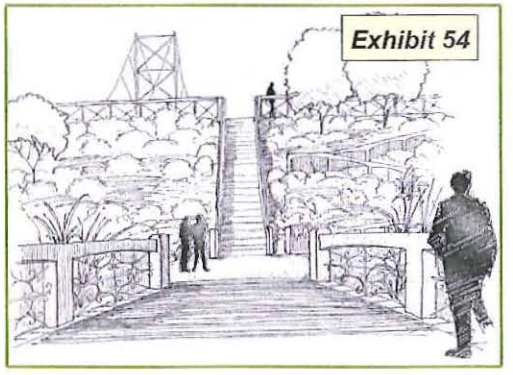
The following photos are examples of connections in other cities:

Santa Monica, CA

Athens, GA

San Jose, CA

Connections along the greenway provide universal access to the Los Angeles River, and improve the public perception of safety (see *Exhibit 54*).



The following photos are examples of greenway connections in Los Angeles and other cities:

Los Angeles, CA

Los Angeles, CA

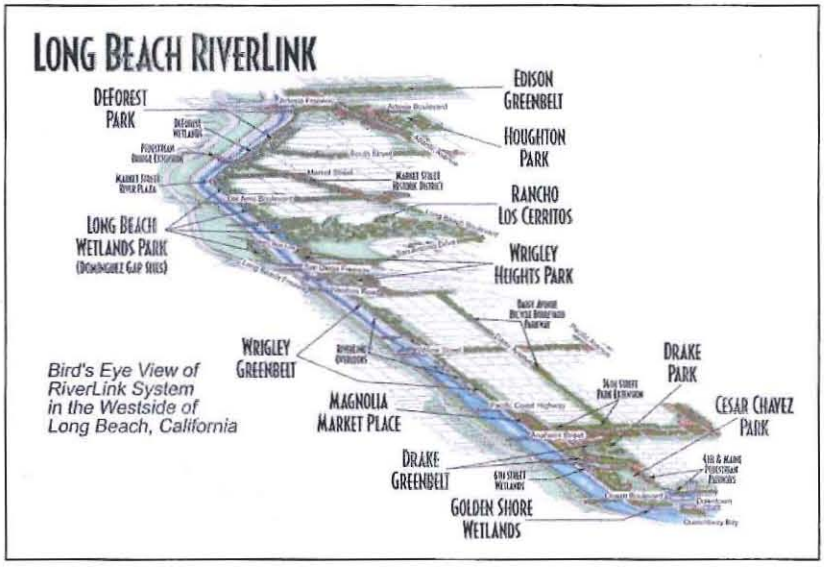
Los Angeles, CA

Chattanooga, TN

Phoenix, AZ

SUMMARY

To summarize, RiverLink provides a vision of an integrated open space system and a framework to connect west side neighborhoods, and greater Long Beach, with the Los Angeles River. When fully implemented, RiverLink will comprise 263 acres of open space. Of this amount, 217 acres are not currently counted in the city's acreage total.



FUNDING

Funding obtained for RiverLink as of February 2007 includes:

- $14.4 million in grants for land acquisition, with up to $2 million more expected from Los Angeles County. Eighteen (18) acres have been purchased to date. Purchases include two parcels in Wrigley Heights: South, the MTA property, the ceramics factory property, and the Union Pacific Railroad property in Riverside Park (Drake/Chavez Greenbelt).

- $700,000 in grants received for feasibility studies and design costs associated with the DeForest Wetlands. A grant for $3 million to develop the wetlands has been submitted.

- $190,000 in grants for Golden Shore rest area. Construction is set to begin in Fall 2007.

- Los Angeles County has spent approximately $7 million on the design and construction of the Dominguez Gap wetlands. The project is 50 percent complete.

- Lastly, a portion of the $25 million CDBG park bond approved by the City Council will be devoted to RiverLink projects.

NEXT STEPS

On February 15, 2007, the Parks and Recreation Commission approved RiverLink (as presented herein) in concept, and recommended that plan be forwarded to the Planning and Building Department for inclusion in the General Plan update, which is currently underway.

City staff will continue to seek new grant funding from Proposition 84, the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy, and other state and federal agencies. Staff will also evaluate the potential for private sector support.

Lastly, staff will continue moving forward with the individual RiverLink projects with assistance from other City departments, the County of Los Angeles, the Trust for Public Land and other interested agencies and organizations, City leaders, and the citizens of Long Beach.


Long Beach RiverLink