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CITY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION AND PARKS

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TO: BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

FROM: 
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General Manager

SUBJECT: THE 50 PARKS INITIATIVE

BACKGROUND:

One of the greatest challenges facing the City of Los Angeles is how to provide for the recreation and park needs of the diverse communities that make up the City. This challenge is complicated by ever-changing demands and expectations caused by population growth, increased urbanization and density, shifting community demographics, and a relatively large youth population.

In 2009, the Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP) completed its Citywide Community Needs Assessment. One of the key findings of the Citywide Community Needs Assessment was that the City's over 420 parks and facilities are not equitably distributed and many communities do not have parks within a reasonable distance. The Citywide Community Needs Assessment identified walking and biking trails, small neighborhood parks, and fitness facilities as the three amenities most needed in the City.

In recognition of the need to develop a coordinated long-term strategy to meet the recreation needs of current, and future, residents of the City, and the fact that recent national economic challenges has provided a unique opportunity to acquire land for new parks and recreational facilities, RAP has undertaken an initiative to acquire and develop at least fifty (50) sites into new public parks -- The 50 Parks Initiative.

The 50 Parks Initiative

Goal

The goal of The 50 Parks Initiative is to substantially increase the number of parks and facilities available across the City, with a specific focus on densely populated neighborhoods and communities that lack sufficient open space and recreational services.

Benefits

The development of new public parks in neighborhoods where a large percentage of residents do not live in close proximity to a park or recreational facility will provide innumerable physical, social, health, and environmental benefits to those communities and to the City as a whole. These new parks could help stabilize neighborhoods - and property values - by providing needed public infrastructure improvements, removing blight caused by abandoned buildings and empty lots, and beautifying underutilized public property. Additionally, studies have shown that parks and green space provide sustainable benefits to human health by providing opportunities for recreation and increased physical activity; activities that help reduce the risk of obesity and help individuals manage stress. In densely populated urban areas, green space located within walking distance is more likely to promote physical activity outside the home. Finally, green space can benefit communities in a variety of ways including increasing levels of social contact and social integration, particularly in underprivileged neighborhoods.

Program Implementation

Increasing the amount of open space in the City will require the collaboration of City departments and agencies, non-profit organizations, and private individuals and foundations. In order for The 50 Parks Initiative to be successful, RAP will need to develop and leverage partnerships with community organizations, local businesses, and state and federal agencies.

RAP has analyzed key community demographic statistics, and existing park facilities, parkland, and open space, in order to identify high priority areas where funding and resources could be focused to make the greatest impact. In each of these priority areas staff has worked to identify publicly owned and privately owned sites that could be acquired, either via purchase or lease, and developed into new parks.

Project Partners

As part of The 50 Parks Initiative, RAP is working with a number of local partner organizations and agencies in order to develop and implement many of the new park projects. These community partner organizations will work in close coordination with RAP to help identify and secure funding for potential projects, to conduct outreach and organize local meetings, and to design and implement individual projects.

Community partner organizations that are either (a) working in cooperation with RAP in the design, development, and implementation of park projects included as part of the 50 Parks Initiative; or (b) donating or leasing land to RAP for these park projects, include the following:

- California Department of Transportation
- CRA/LA (Former Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles)
- Heal the Bay
- Los Angeles County Flood Control District
- Los Angeles Department of Public Works, Bureau of Sanitation
- Los Angeles Department of Water and Power
- Los Angeles Housing and Community Investment Department
- Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative
- Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust
- Los Angeles Parks Foundation
- Los Angeles World Airports
- Mountains Recreation Conservation Authority
- Restore Neighborhoods LA
- The Trust for Public Land

Project Funding

RAP and/or its community partner organizations have identified various grant programs and funding opportunities that could be utilized to acquire and develop new park land and open space. It should be noted that, as grant programs are typically very competitive and offer relatively limited amounts of capital funding, the identification of alternative, non-traditional, sources of funding for The 50 Parks Initiative will be instrumental to its success.

Agencies, organizations, and individuals that have provided funding and resources (directly or as a pass-through entity) to RAP, or one of the implementation partners working in cooperation with RAP, for the design, development, and construction of park projects included as part of The 50 Parks Initiative, include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Aileen Getty
- California Department of Housing and Community Development
- California Department of Parks and Recreation
- California Department of Transportation
- CRA/LA (Former Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles)
- El Nativo Growers
- First 5 LA
- Grifols Inc.
- J. P. Morgan Chase & Co

- Los Angeles Housing and Community Investment Department
- Los Angeles Parks Foundation
- PlayCore Inc.
- Rain Bird Corporation
- Restore Neighborhoods LA
- Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy
- State of California Natural Resources Agency
- The California Endowment
- The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation
- The Trust for Public Land
- U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- ValleyCrest Landscape Companies

The final cost to develop each park will vary depending on its size, the types of amenities and features included, and the site acquisition costs, if any.

Project Implementation

Each new park created through The 50 Parks Initiative will be implemented through an iterative and incremental development process as resources and funding are identified and secured. The keys to the successful implementation of each project will be (1) the establishment of local partnerships; (2) the use of a community driven design process; and, (3) the strict use of low maintenance design standards.

As funding is identified and secured for each new park site, RAP and/or its community partner organizations will engage in a collaborative planning and design process with area stakeholders in order to customize each park to the needs of local residents. The use of this type of community driven design and development process will help to inspire a sense of “local ownership,” which is a critical component in the long-term success of any public space.

Additionally, and as feasible, each new park will be designed to include certain elements that could be installed by local community members during a “community build day event” where volunteers would have the opportunity to help install park amenities, decorative elements, and plant trees and landscaping.

Each park will be designed to include with sustainable landscapes (e.g. smart irrigation systems, drought tolerant landscaping), water and energy conservation elements (e.g. solar powered trash cans, solar lighting), and safety and security measures (e.g. decorative fencing, automatic time-lock gates, motion activated cameras). The small size of each park, and the use of the aforementioned sustainable design features, will help limit amount of maintenance required at each park. Finally, while it is anticipated that it will be necessary to utilize existing RAP staff and resources to maintain each park, RAP will work with local partner organizations and

non-profits to identify any alternative community resources or partners that may be available to assist in the maintenance of each park.

Current Status

Project Status

A total of sixty (60) sites have been identified for inclusion in The 50 Parks Initiative. Of these sixty (60) sites: forty-eight (48) sites have already been acquired, transferred, leased, or secured by RAP and twelve (12) sites are in the process of being acquired, transferred, or leased by RAP.

To date, nineteen (19) parks have been completed. An additional six (6) parks are currently in construction and a total of nine (9) parks (inclusive of the six (6) parks currently in construction) are anticipated to open by June 30, 2014. With the completion of those nine (9) parks, a total of twenty-eight (28) parks will have been completed and open to the public by June 30, 2014.

Total acreage for all sixty (60) sites is 220.11 acres. Of that amount, 88.22 acres have officially been acquired by RAP and 131.89 acres are in the process of being acquired, transferred, or leased by RAP.

Partner Status

Community partner organizations have taken the lead in the design, development, and implementation of twenty-two (22) of the sixty (60) sites identified for inclusion in The 50 Parks Initiative:

Heal the Bay	1 Site
Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative	4 Sites
Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust	4 Sites
Los Angeles Parks Foundation	4 Sites
Mountains Recreation Conservation Authority	2 Sites
The Trust for Public Land	<u>7 Sites</u>
Total:	22 Sites

Funding Status

Total program funding secured or identified by City of Los Angeles (City) and community partner organizations for the acquisition, design, and construction of these sixty (60) sites is approximately \$108.6 Million (some of which is already expended) and there are currently no outstanding funding requests still awaiting award.

Of the \$118.6 Million in funding currently secured for The 50 Parks Initiative, approximately \$86.9 Million was awarded to or secured for projects being implemented by the City and \$31.7 Million was awarded to or secured for projects being implemented by community partner organizations:

City of Los Angeles	\$86.9 Million
Heal the Bay	\$1.3 Million
Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative	\$2.3 Million
Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust	\$7.7 Million
Los Angeles Parks Foundation	\$2.5 Million
Mountains Recreation Conservation Authority	\$1.9 Million
The Trust for Public Land	<u>\$16.0 Million</u>
Total Awarded or Secured:	\$118.6 Million

These funds have been secured from over a dozen sources, and include both public funds (Federal, State, and local) and private funds (from foundations, non-profits, and corporate donations).

The Planning, Construction and Maintenance Branch maintains a current summary of the location, size, funding, and status of each project identified for inclusion in The 50 Parks Initiative Project Status.

This report was prepared by Darryl Ford, Management Analyst II, Planning, Construction and Maintenance Branch.