

City Council Motion 13-1100-S2 (Wesson – Krekorian – Garcetti, et al.) directs the city attorney “to draft a resolution for a measure to be placed on an election ballot that would provide a dedicated revenue stream and raise \$39 dollars per parcel on an annual basis in additional revenue for city parks and park programs, potentially as early as the March 2013 ballot.”

**The City Project and a diverse and growing alliance support dedicated funding for parks and park programs with an equity plan in place to ensure the benefits and burdens are distributed fairly for all, including park poor and income poor communities. We look forward to working with the city, the city attorney, and the people of Los Angeles to implement these goals.**

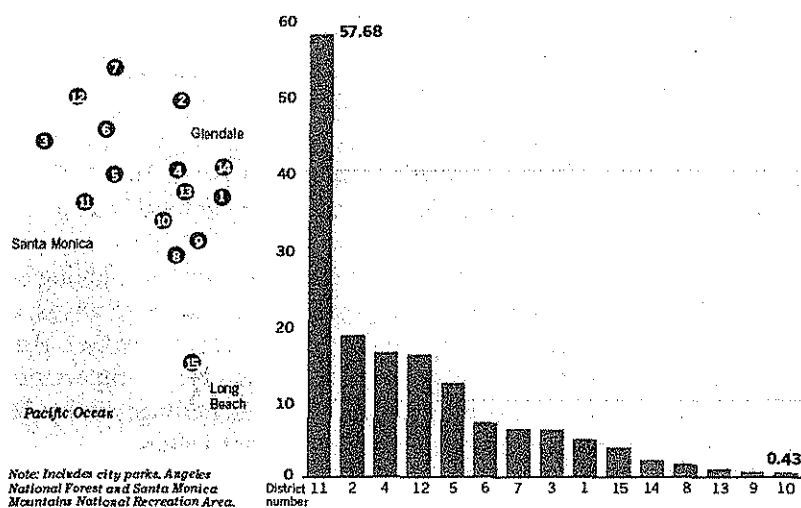
An equity plan is good policy, *and* good law. Los Angeles has fewer acres of parks per thousand residents compared to other major cities. Park programs are disproportionately lacking in park poor, income poor, communities of color, and located in wealthier communities. An equity analysis will help ensure equal access to parks and park programs *for all*.

### Los Angeles parkland

The amount of park acreage available to L.A. residents varies widely from one part of the city to another. Nationally, some park planners recommend six to 10 acres of parks per 1,000 residents.

City Council districts

Acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, by council district



Note: Includes city parks, Angeles National Forest and Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

Source: The City Project: "Healthy Parks, Schools and Communities," 2006

Los Angeles Times

The equity plan should include the following elements:

- (1) A clear description of what the City plans to do with the proposed revenue.
- (2) An analysis of the *burdens* (taxes and fees) *and benefits* of parks and programs on all people.
- (3) An analysis of alternatives.
- (4) The full and fair inclusion of minority and low-income populations in the decision-making process.
- (5) An implementation plan to address any equity concerns identified in the analysis.<sup>1</sup>

This equity plan is consistent with the action by the Department of Housing and Urban Development that led to the creation of the Los Angeles State Historic Park downtown. Then-Secretary Andrew Cuomo directed the City to engage in full environmental review to consider the park alternative and the impact on people of color as a condition of receiving federal funding. This action led to the state buying the land to create what is now Los Angeles State Historic Park. Secretary Cuomo’s letter is available at [www.cityprojectca.org/ourwork/urbanparks.html](http://www.cityprojectca.org/ourwork/urbanparks.html) - cornfield.

<sup>1</sup> This is consistent with the equity plan that the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has required as a condition of an agency receiving federal financial assistance under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its regulations. See letters from FTA to MTC and BART dated January 15, 2010, and February 12, 2010, available on the web at [www.cityprojectca.org/blog/archives/4468](http://www.cityprojectca.org/blog/archives/4468); Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000d - 2000d-4a; 45 C.F.R. Part 80; *Committee Concerning Community Improvement v. City of Modesto*, 583 F.3d 690 (9th Cir. 2009) *Larry P. v. Riles*, 793 F.2d 969 (9th Cir. 1986). See also Cal. Gov’t Code § 11135; and Cal. Code Regs. tit. 22 § 98101(i) (equal access to public resources by recipients of state funding). The City of Los Angeles and its Recreation and Parks Department sign agreements to comply with Title VI as a condition of receiving federal financial assistance.

City Councilmembers Eric Garcetti, Ed Reyes, Jose Huizar, and Tom LaBonge, and now-Controller Wendy Gruell, have each emphasized the need to invest funds in the most underserved communities. Their comments are available on YouTube. See [www.cityprojectca.org/blog/archives/643](http://www.cityprojectca.org/blog/archives/643).

As City Controller, Laura Chick published a series of audits of the City Recreation and Parks Department calling for a strategic plan to improve parks in every neighborhood, a fair system of finance and fees, standards to measure equity and progress, and reform of the distribution of Quimby park fees. The city now has the opportunity to implement those recommendations to improve parks and recreation for all. See, for example, [www.cityprojectca.org/blog/archives/255](http://www.cityprojectca.org/blog/archives/255); [www.cityprojectca.org/blog/archives/642](http://www.cityprojectca.org/blog/archives/642).

The City Project has documented park and health disparities extensively in its Policy Reports, including *Healthy Parks, Schools and Communities: Green Access and Equity for the Los Angeles Region (2011)* and *Healthy Parks, Schools and Communities: Green Access and Equity for Southern California (2011)*. The reports are available at [www.cityprojectca.org/mapjustice](http://www.cityprojectca.org/mapjustice).

Prof. Jennifer Wolch and her colleagues have also mapped and analyzed green access and equity for the Los Angeles region in their Green Visions work with Active Living Research. See [www.activelivingresearch.org/node/12099](http://www.activelivingresearch.org/node/12099).

The National Park Service recognizes the need to address park and health disparities in its strategic action plan for Healthy Parks, Healthy People U.S. (2011). See [www.cityprojectca.org/blog/archives/12550](http://www.cityprojectca.org/blog/archives/12550).

The City should prioritize parks and park programs in underserved communities, and provide standards to measure progress and equity and hold officials accountable in the distribution of revenues, parks, and programs. Thus, for example, the state of California adopted standards to invest resource bond funds in *park poor* (less than three acres of parks per thousand residents) and *income poor* areas (below \$47,331 median annual household income).<sup>2</sup> While the specific numbers may vary here, the City should follow this best practice example for quantifiable standards.

Why do parks and park programs matter? The values at stake include the simple joys of playing in the park; physical, psychological and social health; improved academic performance; positive alternatives to gangs, crime, drugs, and violence; and economic vitality for all through local green jobs and increased property values. Parks offer conservation benefits: cleaner air and water, land conservation, and habitat protection. Parks play an important role in mitigating climate change and promoting climate justice. Parks promote spiritual, cultural, heritage, and public art values. Fundamental values of equal justice and democracy underlie each of these other values.

The Olmsted Report of 1930 proposed a vision for a green, prosperous, and culturally rich Los Angeles. Among other things, the Report recognized that low-income people often live in less desirable areas, have fewer leisure opportunities, and should receive first consideration in parks and recreation. The Report's recommendations remain valid today – but unfulfilled. It is time once again to develop a vision and plan for Los Angeles parks that will diversify public access to and support for parks and recreation while ensuring the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes under federal and state civil rights, environmental, and other laws. See KCET Departures, *What Is Green Justice?* at [www.greenjustice.org](http://www.greenjustice.org).

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<sup>2</sup> See Robert Garcia et al., *Economic Stimulus, Green Space and Equal Justice* (The City Project Policy Report 2009) at pages 3, 8, available at [www.cityprojectca.org/blog/archives/1450](http://www.cityprojectca.org/blog/archives/1450).