

Your Community Impact Statement has been successfully submitted to City Council and Committees.

If you have questions and/or concerns, please contact the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment at [NCsupport@lacity.org](mailto:NCsupport@lacity.org).

This is an automated response, please do not reply to this email.

#### Contact Information

Neighborhood Council: Atwater Village Neighborhood Council

Name: Karen Barnett

Phone Number: (323) 230-3406

Email: [board@atwatervillage.org](mailto:board@atwatervillage.org)

The Board approved this CIS by a vote of: Yea(13) Nay(0) Abstain(1) Ineligible(0) Recusal(0)

Date of NC Board Action: 09/08/2022

Type of NC Board Action: For if Amended

#### Impact Information

Date: 09/24/2022

Update to a Previous Input: Yes

Directed To: City Council and Committees

Council File Number: 21-0828

Agenda Date:

Item Number:

Summary: The Los Angeles Zoo is an essential resource for all residents of Los Angeles. Most community members have wonderful memories of the Zoo visits with family, friends, or school. We appreciate the efforts to reduce the impacts of the initial 2021 proposals with the following changes.

- Eliminating the Africa Area (saves 6 acres of open space & 201 Protected Trees)
- Eliminating the aerial tram
- Eliminating the multi-story parking structure (replaced with solar panels)
- Eliminating the vineyard in the California Area

These changes are important because of our local drought conditions and the potential lack of sustainable access to water in the future. Because of regional and worldwide impacts of climate change, keeping established wooded areas is a positive direction for Griffith Park and residents of Los Angeles. These changes aligned with the Los Angeles Recreation and Parks Commission's adopted characterization of the park as an "urban wilderness" on January 8, 2014. We do question some of the changes in Version 1.5 and ask for further clarification and assessment of the following issues: Crystal Springs Drive & Griffith Park Drive Safety and Active Transportation Improvements Project: speeding, cut throughs, and safety issues

(<https://www.laparks.org/griffithpark/pdf/agenda/2022-07-28-GP-SATIP-GPAB-Meeting.pdf>)

Currently, Griffith Park has 10 million visitors annually. Alternative 1.5 would bring 750,000+ to the current annual total of 1,743,800 Zoo visitors. The Zoo exists within Griffith Park. The Zoo's plan doesn't analyze the full impact of access and traffic for the other 8-9 million visitors. In addition, we don't see an analysis that includes the 2022 road closure along Griffith Park Drive. This closure cuts vehicular circulation options. All visitors to the Zoo and this section of Griffith Park have to use Crystal Springs Drive. (please see attached letter)



3371 Glendale Blvd.  
P.O. Box 105, Los Angeles, CA 90039  
Email: Board@AtwaterVillage.org  
Message Phone: 323 230-3406  
Website: www.AtwaterVillage.org



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**AVNC Officers** Co-Chairs: Josh Hertz, Edward Morrissey • Treasurer: Anthony Forester • Secretary: Brett Kushner

September 8, 2022,

City Council Members and Arts, Parks, Health, Education, and Neighborhoods Committee  
200 North Spring Street, Room 275  
Los Angeles, California 90012

**Council File: 21-0828 (For if amended)**

Title Los Angeles Zoo Vision Plan / Environmental Impact Report / Infrastructure and Animal Facility Improvements

Dear Honorable Council Members,

The Los Angeles Zoo is an essential resource for all residents of Los Angeles. Most community members have wonderful memories of the Zoo visits with family, friends, or school. We appreciate the efforts to reduce the impacts of the initial 2021 proposals with the following changes.

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- Eliminating the aerial tram
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We do question some of the changes in Version 1.5 and ask for further clarification and assessment of the following issues:

**Crystal Springs Drive & Griffith Park Drive Safety and Active Transportation Improvements Project: speeding, cut toughs, and safety issues**

(<https://www.laparks.org/griffithpark/pdf/agenda/2022-07-28-GP-SATIP-GPAB-Meeting.pdf>)

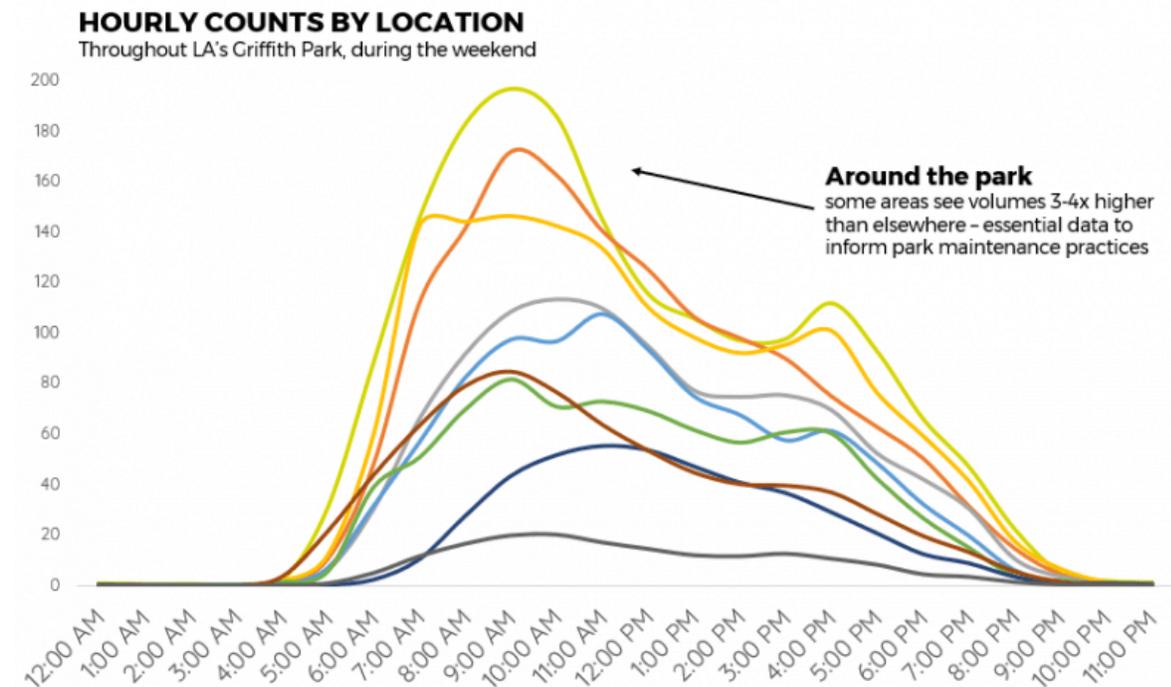
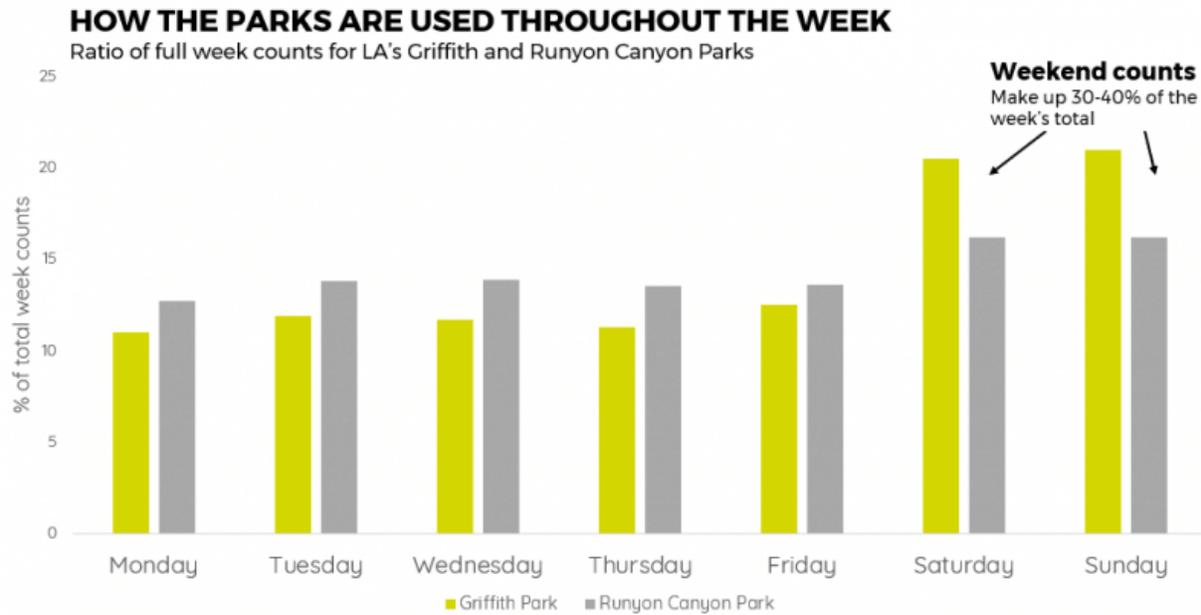
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During the summer of 2020, the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks – the Runyon Canyon and Griffith Parks managers – kicked off an extensive count program to understand how

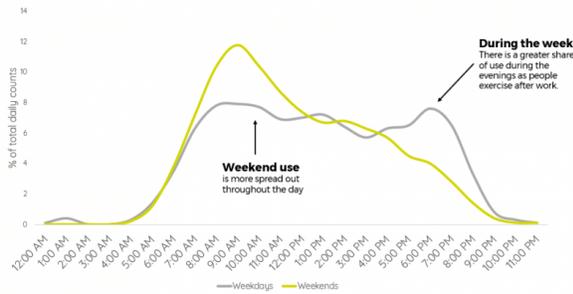
and when the parks were being used. In Griffith Park, 17 [Recycled Post PYRO people counters](#) were discreetly installed around the Griffith Park, on a mixture of trails, connectors, and trailheads.

We recommend that the Zoo look into this program for the overall Griffith Park traffic entrances in conjunction with their planned Peak Visitation Management Program”(PVMP). Since the park has 10 million annual visitors, increasing attendance for the Zoo and Zoo events would impact overall park users and facilities. Example of Griffith Park data from May 2021:

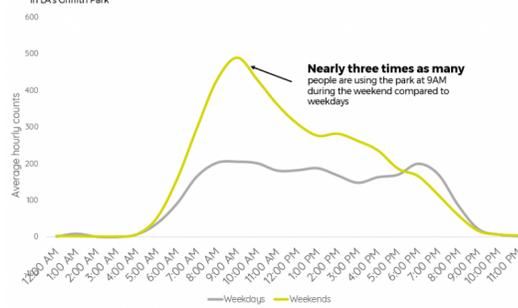
<https://www.eco-counter.com/blog/one-year-in-counting-a-million-visitors-in-los-angeles-parks>)



**HOW GRIFFITH PARK IS USED: WEEKDAY vs. WEEKEND**



**TOTAL COUNTS, WEEKDAY vs. WEEKEND**  
In LA's Griffith Park



**Lack of clarification on attendance increase:**

How many visitors will attend the Zoo vs. how many visitors will be attendees of Special Events? Since there are four event spaces with unknown capacity, more information needs to be provided on those spaces, including how and when they will be scheduled and available. Currently, there is no way to assess the impacts on Atwater Village.

A proposed plan for the event venues has not been provided. Also, under land use, the document has combined Animal Conservation & Visitor Service Areas which further muddies the water. For instance, Alternative 1.5 proposes the development of a new Zoo Entry, which would entail developing an unimproved dirt lot into a new 1.87-acre public gathering space to include approximately 60,000 sf of new visitor-services space. That is a large space. How and when will it be utilized? There are four event areas with little to no information on possible events, days, and hours of operation. 2022 recirculated EIR refers to the 2021 version, section 2.3.9. for additional information.

**Visitor-Serving Uses & Special Events**

The Project would include substantial improvement to and expansion of visitor-serving facilities, particularly event rental space, broadening Zoo attractions and supporting increased attendance and an expansion of special events. These in turn would meet Zoo goals to become a world class Zoo and destination. The proposed improvements and expansion would provide increased revenues to support Zoo conservation, learning, and engagement programs, development, operations, and maintenance. Overall visitor-serving space would increase by 58,800 sf in 2034 with the development of three visitor centers. Major visitor serving improvements would include reconstruction of the iconic spires for the new Treetops Visitor Center and construction of major new visitor centers in California and Africa, with new restaurants, classrooms, and event spaces. Three additional visitor service areas, including the Nature Play Park, Rainforest Interpretive Center, and gift shop, are proposed as part of Vision Plan implementation. Expansion of the gift shop at the Zoo's entry would provide additional retail at the Zoo. With these venues and services, the Zoo could support and accommodate increases in educational programs, weddings, private corporate or civic events, birthday parties, and other private events. By 2034 (Phase 5 of the Vision Plan), the Zoo is projected to host an average of 210 events per year, including birthday parties, company picnics, evening events, and walks.

We understand the desire for the Zoo to host special events for increased revenue. The EIR should include a detailed plan on how the Zoo will utilize these new areas and how often. While the Zoo may not run special events, its supporting arm, The Greater Los Angeles Zoo Association (GLAZA) does. The 2021 and 2022 draft EIR Vision Plans are building out multiple event spaces for private

and public use. *The EIR should provide more information and details on "Zoo is projected to host an average of 210 events per year,"*

The EIR should include and disclose those projections. Atwater Village residents (and other adjacent communities) need a sufficient amount of information to comment on potential impacts from events for fundraising or other special events on the Zoo property.

Atwater Village is east of the Zoo and adjacent to Griffith Park East. North Atwater Village is a residential equestrian community directly across Griffith Park. Sound and light from the hillside and/or hilltop evening events will travel into the community. After-hours events would have an impact on our community members and animals.

**Peak Visitation Management Program:**

The Zoo is within Griffith Park. Therefore it should work with other Park facilities in overall traffic management. This should be in addition to the PVMP program. The Zoo needs to be accountable to other Park users, facilities, and adjacent neighborhoods. This could include data collection on overall park users and a budget for traffic personnel at entrances and key intersections.

Note: while alternative 1.5 states that parking for employees is reduced, fewer employees are needed with the smaller footprint. We are not sure if that includes "non-employee" staff that might be working in retail, service, or events areas.

**Condor Corridor:**

We supported Alternative 1 with hesitations. This alternative did not include the Condor Canyon.

At this point and time, we, as a society, seek to undo past man-made features such as a cemented LA River and various dams across the country. It seems counterintuitive to create a "natural" wildlife habitat by excavating the hillside/ridgeline to create a corridor (or canyon).

Could the Condor-focused educational direction of this "corridor" be made in a virtual format, to be placed in the section "Condor East"?

Removing the existing "urban wilderness" habitat would impact our heat mapping and natural views. The Condor Corridor, if built as shown, could affect Atwater Village with more noise and lights depending on Zoo hours and events.

We appreciate your Alternative 1.5 efforts. We hope you will address our concerns and provide information on events and attendance, reduce impacts of the Condor Corridor, and address traffic issues that would impact Griffith Park and Atwater Village

Thank you for your time and consideration.



Josh Hertz  
AVNC Co-Chair



Edward Morrissey  
AVNC Co-Chair

CC: Mayor's Office, Hon. Mitch O'farrell and staff, Hon. Nithya Raman and staff, Jimmy Kim (RAP), Denise Verret (Zoo), Stefanie Smith (RAP), RAP Commissioners, and other staff members.