

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY

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Conservancy Opens New Park Near Downtown Los Angeles

10.5-acre Vista Hermosa Park brings nature back to the core of the city,

Creates new paradigm for revitalizing urban communities

Los Angeles—At a ceremony held today in an outdoor amphitheater shaded by sycamore trees and framed by a waterfall, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy opened the first new public park in the western Downtown Los Angeles area in over one hundred years. Named “Vista Hermosa” because of the park’s stunning views of the city skyline, the park offers residents and visitors alike the opportunity to experience nature in the urban core of Los Angeles.

“Vista Hermosa Park is more than just a beautiful place to look out at the city,” said Joseph T. Edmiston, Executive Director of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. “It is a place where visitors can take a deep and restful look back into the natural world.”

Speakers included Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, Los Angeles County Supervisor Gloria Molina, Congressman Xavier Becerra, State Senator Gil Cedillo, Assemblymember Kevin de León, LAUSD Board President Monica García, LAUSD Superintendent of Schools David L. Brewer III, and Joseph T. Edmiston. Their remarks noted the unprecedented cooperation and commitment between all levels of government that made the dream of this extraordinary new park a reality.

Vista Hermosa Park was developed as a model for urban revitalization by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority in a joint-use partnership with LAUSD and the City of Los Angeles. Providing a “mountain

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watershed experience,” the 10.5-acre park restores some of the natural topography and native vegetation of the area and features trails, streams, meadows, oak savannahs, picnic grounds, art elements, an environmentally-themed children’s adventure area, and a 120-student capacity outdoor amphitheater. Built with state-of-the-art “green” technologies, the new park will enhance environmental and natural history education opportunities for the adjacent Edward R. Roybal Learning Center, and provide a regulation soccer field for joint use by the school and the community.

Conservation is central to the park’s design. The park is a self-contained watershed. Almost every drop of water that falls on the park either percolates into the ground and replenishes the underlying aquifer—a critical source of drinking water in Los Angeles—or is collected in a 20,000-gallon capacity cistern under the lower parking lot and used to irrigate the park later. Hard surfaces, such as parking lots, pavers around buildings, and decomposed granite pathways are permeable and allow water to soak into the ground. The soccer field is made of synthetic turf so that it does not require irrigation or heavy maintenance.

Park buildings are capped with “green” planted roofs that retain rainwater and provide insulation, keeping the buildings warm in the winter and cool in the summer. Not only do they save energy and absorb CO₂, they look more attractive to the occupants of skyscrapers (and airplanes) looking down on them.

Because it is part of the Pacific Flyway, as many as 350 different kinds of birds might visit the park. Native plant communities provide the right variety of food for both local and migratory birds, lizards, butterflies, crickets, and other wildlife to live.

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy funded construction of the park through a variety of sources including State Bond funds approved by the voters including Proposition 84, Proposition 50, Proposition 12 (The Villaraigosa-Keeley Act); and Los Angeles County Proposition A funds. The City of Los Angeles Community Development Department

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contributed US Department of Housing Urban Development Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. Private funding sources included the LA84 Foundation and the Weingart Foundation.

The park will be operated by the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA). The City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks will operate the soccer field under a joint use agreement with the adjacent Edward R. Roybal Learning Center. Public community programs will be offered by MRCA naturalists. The park will also provide a gateway to Santa Monica Mountains parklands for youth and their families with the free monthly “Transit to Trails” bus program.

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy is a State Agency dedicated to the preservation, restoration, and creation of public parkland. The Conservancy’s mission is to form an interlinking system of urban, rural, and river parks, open space, trails, and wildlife habitat that are easily accessible to the public. Since it was created by the Legislature in 1980, the Conservancy has helped to preserve over 65,000 acres of urban and wilderness parkland throughout Southern California.

The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) is a local government agency established pursuant to the Joint Powers Act between the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, the Conejo Recreation and Park District, and the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District. The MRCA manages and provides planning, education and interpretation, construction, ranger and fire prevention services for parkland it owns or that is owned by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy or other agencies. The MRCA is one of the principal agencies working towards revitalization of the Los Angeles River and is the leader in providing nature parks in urban areas of Southern California.

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