



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Joseph Edmiston, SMMC, MRCA  
**From:** Robert García  
**cc:**  
**Date:** February 14, 2008  
**RE:** **Planning Griffith Park on the East Bank of the Los Angeles River**

### Executive Summary

The City Project seeks a \$35,000 planning grant under Prop 84 including \$10,000 for the City of Los Angeles Recreation and Parks Department to carry out a detailed planning study to transform the service yard in Griffith Park on the East Bank of the Los Angeles River into a multi-benefit park with clean water, air, land, and interpretive elements that would serve one of the most park starved neighborhoods in Los Angeles, and serve the region as a whole. The proposed study period is six months starting with the approval of the grant. This site has been identified by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and nonprofit groups as the next great urban park in Los Angeles and as part of the revitalization of the Los Angeles River. This proposal furthers the goals of the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan. The funding will be used to collect data from the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks (LADRP); prepare a demographic and multi-benefit water and open space analysis of a three-mile radius around the site; prepare a conceptual plan; and engage in limited out reach to community leaders to determine park and recreation needs in the area consistent with the terms of Prop 84.

Greening this site would primarily constitute implementation of watershed protection activities throughout the watershed of the Upper Los Angeles River pursuant to section 75050(g)(2) of Prop 84. By protecting, preserving, and restoring the land along the river and cleaning the water that is discharged into the river from that site, the project would also serve to protect the Santa Monica Bay and its watersheds under section 75060(d)(1): the project would help prevent contamination and degradation of coastal waters and watersheds, protect and restore the natural habitat values of coastal waters and lands, and promote access to and enjoyment of the coastal resources of the state. Finally, the grant will be used for planning the successful design, selection, and implementation of the greening project, under section 75072.

### Institutional Background

The vision for The City Project is to build a new sense of community, one that promotes environmental quality, economic vitality, democratic participation and a higher quality of life for underserved populations. The City Project uses land use planning, land conservation, policy and legal work, partnerships, and grassroots community organizing to:

- Increase park space, school fields and access to natural public places for underserved urban communities,
- Build healthy communities by focusing on active recreation and nutrition in the inner city,
- Promote transit to trails and transportation justice for the working poor.

By working with local communities to ensure that their priorities and quality-of-life issues were considered and by providing sound analyses of the value of parks and recreation, The City Project has helped create the **Los Angeles State Historic Park (Cornfield)** and the **Río de Los Angeles State Park (Taylor Yard)** as part of the **revitalization of the Los Angeles River**. We have helped save the **Baldwin Hills Park**, the largest urban park in the U.S. in over a century. We also helped create **Ascot Hills Park**, the next great urban park in East L.A. With Anahuak Youth Association and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), we have created a robust “**Transit to Trails**” program taking hundreds of Latino youth on mountain, river, and beach trips to learn about water, wildlife, land, and healthy activity and eating.

We have worked in collaboration with the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC) and MRCA over the past seven years. Through the land acquisition, park planning and design process, and implementation of park activities, The City Project has identified opportunities for multi-benefit park and water projects to serve disadvantaged communities in Los Angeles. This has resulted in successful organizing and advocacy in support of public lands, beaches and trails; and a proactive effort to identify new potential park sites.

### **Project Description**

The City Project has identified a 28-acre site in Griffith Park on the East Bank of the Los Angeles River that is already parkland but which is being used as a service yard. This misuse reflects the need for cultural change away from treating the river as an industrial wasteland to treating the river as one of the environmental jewels that can serve disadvantaged communities and bring people together throughout the Los Angeles region. The site appears to be located in a disproportionately working-class and Latino neighborhood. Although the neighborhood is close to the 4,107-acre Griffith Park, pedestrian access from the east side is almost impossible because of the L.A. River, freeways, and arterial traffic. Preliminary conversations with agency and nonprofit partners have encouraged The City Project to move forward with a targeted effort to establish this 28-acre site as a real park along the river, to bring a regional park within walking distance of this neighborhood.

The park space can be transformed to promote conservation values including clean air, water, and ground; habitat protection; and climate justice. The site is mostly covered with asphalt now, resulting in polluted water run-off into the Los Angeles River and the Santa Monica Bay. Greening the site can help clean water through natural filtration, and reduce the urban carbon footprint and heat island effect. Interpretive elements can teach people about water quality; fish, wildlife, and habitat protection and restoration; and associated land and natural resource concerns.

The City Project’s next step is to complete a thorough analysis of water, land, and habit concerns around the site, as well as a demographic profile of a three-mile area around the park. As part of

this analysis, The City Project proposes to include access to transportation, parks per thousand residents, access to school fields, child obesity levels, income and poverty levels, racial and ethnic composition, and the economic value of parks. Links with existing parks and schools, as well as the Los Angeles River revitalization, will be highlighted. Using data from the U.S. census and other sources, The City Project will prepare maps and supporting documents to build a case for a new multi-benefit park with water, land, air, and recreation, and interpretive values. The proposal will be consistent with the policies underlying Prop 84 to serve disadvantage communities.

Partners will be a key element in this effort, especially the L.A. Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP). The City Project seeks \$10,000 from this grant for RAP to cooperate thoroughly in the study and transition to a real park. The City Project will work with RAP to identify relevant data sources, compile and prepare the information in a GIS database, brainstorm recreational and activity links to existing parks, and prepare a report that supports a park at the site. Other agencies that will be approached as part of the data identification phase will be SMMC, MRCA, Bureau of Engineers, and the Department of Public Works.

Local community groups will also be important as this effort moves forward; The City Project will identify and communicate with local groups and individual residents to help build local support for a park site. Finally, The City Project will work with key elected officials.

To support this effort, The City Project will publish maps, a report, and a conceptual plan in hard copy and on the web. The report will explain the facts from the maps, and will lay out a strong proposal for a multi-benefit park at this site. The City Project will also produce photos, blogs, media articles, and public testimony as the process moves forward.

**Conclusion**

With a \$35,000 planning grant, The City Project intends to launch a detailed study of the proposed 28-acre site and a three-mile radius in order to build a case for a multi-benefit park there that serves clean water, air, land, and interpretive values for disadvantaged communities and all the people of the Los Angeles River watershed. At the end of this initial process, The City Project will have maps, a supporting report, conceptual plan, agency and community partners, and a strong proposal to move forward with another anchor site on the Los Angeles River.

**Budget Six Months**

The City Project	
Staff Salaries and Benefits	\$15,800
Local Travel	\$500
Map and Report Publication	\$2,000
GreenInfo Network	
Database and Map Preparation	\$2,500
Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks	\$10,000
Community Partners (12% fiscal agency fee)	<u>\$4,200</u>

**Total:**

**\$35,000**