

DRAFT
Temescal Canyon Project Plan

This project plan addresses only improvements made and planned for under grant SMM 0760 of Proposition 84 funds and the proposed Conservancy Fund grant. Nothing in this plan deals with the ultimate decision of having a pool in Temescal Canyon.

Project Site Description

Temescal Canyon consists of Temescal Gateway Park (20.5 acres)and the Temescal Canyon Conference and Retreat Center (141 acres) and is one of the most popular parks in the Santa Monica Mountains. Located in Pacific Palisades, the park encompasses oak and sycamore canyons, ridgetop views, and provides access to miles of trails in Topanga State Park, Will Rogers State Historic Park, and the 20,000-acre "Big Wild." Park amenities include easy to moderate trails, picnic tables and grassy areas, restrooms, a camp store, meeting rooms, an auditorium, and classrooms. The MRCA provides a variety of public and school programs (both overnight and day use) throughout the year at Temescal Canyon. The Temescal Canyon Conference and Retreat Center provides overnight accommodations for up to 150 people, and the architecturally distinctive Temescal Dining Hall serves as a beautiful location for events of all kinds.

The Reverend Dr. Charles Holmes Scott developed what is now both Temescal Gateway Park and the Temescal Canyon Conference and Retreat Center for the Methodist Church in 1922 as a West Coast center for the Chautauqua movement. Originated in 1874 on the shores of Chautauqua Lake in Southwestern New York State, Chautauqua assemblies were aimed at challenging the minds and spirits of its participants by offering families seasonal programs of lectures, music, elocution, and open discussion of public issues, literature, and science. Some of the canyon's earliest structures are still in use. Built in 1922, the building known as the Temescal Camp Store was two buildings—a grocery store complete with a butcher shop, and the local post office. The Presbyterian Synod purchased the property in 1943 and used it as a private retreat center until the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy purchased the property in 1994.

The project lies within the Pacific Palisades community of Los Angeles, Council District 11 (Councilman Bill Rosendahl). It is within State Senate District 23 (Senator Sheila Kuehl), State Assembly District 41 (Assemblymember Julia Brownley), Los Angeles County 3rd Supervisorial District (Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky), and United States Congressional District 30 (Congressman Henry Waxman).

Government Agencies with Jurisdiction Over Project Area

City of Los Angeles
County of Los Angeles
California Department of Parks and Recreation
California Department of Fish and Game
Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority
Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy
Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board
California Coastal Commission
National Park Service

Planning Objectives and Principles Sought to be Achieved by the Project

Under the ownership of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, Temescal Canyon is managed by the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority.

The project would implement the *Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Plan*. Improvements to the subject property will protect the open space and resources of the property, and provide for public use, public access to nature education and access to low-impact recreational opportunities. Management objectives for Temescal Canyon under this plan seek to maximize appropriate public use in both developed and natural areas of the park.

The property is located at the intersection of Sunset Boulevard and Temescal Canyon Road. Hikers currently have access to the extensive system of public trails in Topanga State Park. The property presents ideal accessibility by public transportation, private car, bicycle or foot.

The project is also in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act. Per California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, Section 15316 the following is exempt: acquisition of land for the purpose of establishing parks, where the land is in a natural condition and either the management plan for the park has not been prepared, or the management plan proposes to keep the area in a natural condition. Acquisition of lands for wildlife conservation purposes (Section 15313) and transfer of ownership of interest in land to preserve existing natural conditions (Section 15325), are also exempt. Under Sections 15303 and 15304, minor park improvements such as trails or pathways, and signage are also exempt.

Proposed Land Uses

Public day uses include hiking, picnicking, and other low-impact recreational activities. The public may rent various facilities throughout the park for programs, workshops, meetings and other special events. A wide spectrum of school groups, camps, and non-profit organizations make use of the all the amenities in the park.

The MRCA operates a variety of public and school programs throughout the year and is dedicated to bringing enriching, hands-on outdoor experiences to Los Angeles' under-served, urban youth.

The Temescal Field Science Program is a 3-day/2-night science program that aligns with the California State Science Content Standards adopted by the California State Board of Education. In order to attend the program, elementary, middle, or high school classes apply for a grant through LAUSP, the Los Angeles Urban Systemic Program. Participants stay in the dormitories and meals are provided in the Dining Hall. The students participate in a variety of activities including hands-on experiential science, hiking, sensory and team building activities, nature games, and a campfire program. Many of the students who attend the program have never had this kind of outdoor adventure. Experiences like these expand students' perspectives of the world and can profoundly impact the course of their lives.

The MRCA is working to increase the educational and outreach programs at Temescal. To accommodate increased youth participation and other public use, renovations will be made to the cabins, dormitories, classrooms, restroom buildings, shower building, Dining Hall and Stewart Hall. The landscape will be restored around all these structures. Health and safety improvements to facilities in the park will be made based upon the recommendations of outside consultants.

In addition to these building renovations, multiple public use and ecological areas throughout the park are in need of improvement. Restoration of the stream as it passes through the built section of the canyon is a high priority. The removal of non-native eucalyptus trees has left some areas in need of habitat restoration. There are opportunities to add sycamores, willows and other riparian plants. The creation of new public use areas would occur. Throughout the park, picnic tables and benches would be replaced and added; informal picnic areas installed; fencing repaired; and irrigation upgraded to provide more and better opportunities for public use. Trail realignment in various places in the park would be made to better meet public needs.

Additional fire safety measures in the canyon that are necessary to protect the existing

resources. These measures will include but not be limited to the installation of water tanks, the creation of safe storage for flammable maintenance products like oil, gas and paint, and the relocation of equipment storage.

Site Analysis

Temescal is one of the most highly used parks in the Conservancy's holdings. The public access improvements contemplated here will only serve to enhance the visitor experience. Additional picnic tables, benches and other amenities are greatly needed to satisfy the demand for low-impact recreational opportunities in the canyon. Slight realignments to pedestrian pathways and trails will increase public safety in the park.

Areas planned for improvement in the canyon are already developed. Existing buildings are slated for renovation that in many cases will make them more sustainable and energy efficient. Other improvements will provide necessary protection to the resources in the canyon. Development of landscaping around the existing structures will aid in the transitions from the built portions of the property to the natural environment. The additions of native trees and other riparian plants in the stream corridor will increase beneficial habitat in the park.

Government Agencies, Organizations and Private Parties Consulted

Over the past few years, many groups, organizations, and stakeholders have been updated, consulted and provided input on both the programs in the canyon and the proposed improvements. This plan represents the general consensus of these many interactions. These groups include: Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, LA County Regional Park and Open Space District, National Park Service, California Coastal Commission, California Department of State Parks, Los Angeles Unified School District, Temescal Canyon Association, Pacific Palisades Historical Society, Friends of Temescal Canyon, Fulcrum, Los Angeles Conservation Corps, Agape, Sickle Cell Foundation, Urban Semillas, Outward Bound Los Angeles, and Wildwoods Foundation.

Comment on the plan has been solicited from: Councilman Bill Rosendahl, Senator Sheila Kuehl, Assemblymember Julia Brownley, Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, and Congressman Henry Waxman.

Analysis of Economic Feasibility of Proposed Project

Improvements to the facilities will be funded through grants of Proposition 84 and Conservancy Funds to the MRCA. Revenue from outside public uses for workshops, meeting, camps and other special event rentals is likely to increase due to the improved facilities. Increased costs for more public outreach and school programs would be offset by the additional revenue generated by the other public uses.