

# Los Angeles River Natural Park

STUDIO CITY, SAN FERNANADO VALLEY

## VISION & CONCEPT DESIGN



SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY

Community Conservancy  
International

BlueGreen  
CONSULTING

# Los Angeles River Natural Park

STUDIO CITY, SAN FERNANADO VALLEY

*Planning, Analysis, Design  
and Report prepared by*



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Los Angeles, California



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**GreenInfo Network**  
Culver City, California



*Funded by*  
**Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy**  
**Studio City Residents Association**

## Project Overview

This report presents a forward-thinking vision and conceptual site design for the last remaining unprotected open space along 22 miles of the Los Angeles River in the San Fernando Valley. The plan focuses on public access, riverfront preservation, water quality and recreation. Funding was provided by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and the Studio City Residents Association. The vision and conceptual design was developed by Community Conservancy International and BlueGreen Consulting, with technical input from Geosyntec. A diverse group of regional and community leaders and organizations provided input to and guidance for this vision and conceptual design.

The conceptual design and vision encompassed the following guiding principles:

- Emphasize, celebrate and protect the regional importance of the site
- Preserve and enhance connections and public access to the Los Angeles River
- Improve water quality by integrating natural treatment of urban runoff
- Provide for regional public access to the Los Angeles River and other river trails
- Emphasize pedestrian access and links to public transit
- Restore native habitat and preserve open space
- Preserve historic recreational uses
- Address regional and community needs and concerns
- Assist in meeting Los Angeles River and regional water quality improvement goals of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and other conservation organizations
- Be consistent with the L.A. City Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan and the L.A. County Los Angeles River Master Plan

## Background

This 16-acre Los Angeles riverfront property is the only remaining unprotected open space remaining along 22 miles of the river throughout the entire San Fernando Valley, from the headwaters in Canoga Park to the 170 freeway. It is a unique and irreplaceable link in the 51-mile Los Angeles River Greenway, and is the only viable opportunity to provide a significant regional public access and trailhead to the Los Angeles River for nearly two million residents of the densely-populated and park-deficient San Fernando Valley.

*The banks of the Los Angeles River on the project site are currently devoid of native vegetation and dominated by Mexican Fan Palms.*



Public transportation to the site is readily available within less than 1/10 of a mile, connecting to both the Metro Rail and Metro Bus systems. A 391-space public parking garage 400 yards away along the Los Angeles River provides an unparalleled opportunity to develop a regional Los Angeles River trailhead and public access staging area that is pedestrian and bicycle focused, while accommodating parking off-site. There is easy pedestrian access to nearby Ventura Boulevard, providing important economic linkages to future Los Angeles River and park visitors.

Because of the site's Los Angeles River location in an easily-accessible and central area of the San Fernando Valley, the hydrology of the surrounding area, and proximity to public transportation and significant off-site parking, this riverfront property provides a unique—and

exciting—opportunity to create a contemporary **Los Angeles River Natural Park** that integrates badly-needed water quality improvements, restoration of native habitat, protection of open space, active recreation and creation of a public access Los Angeles River trail staging area.

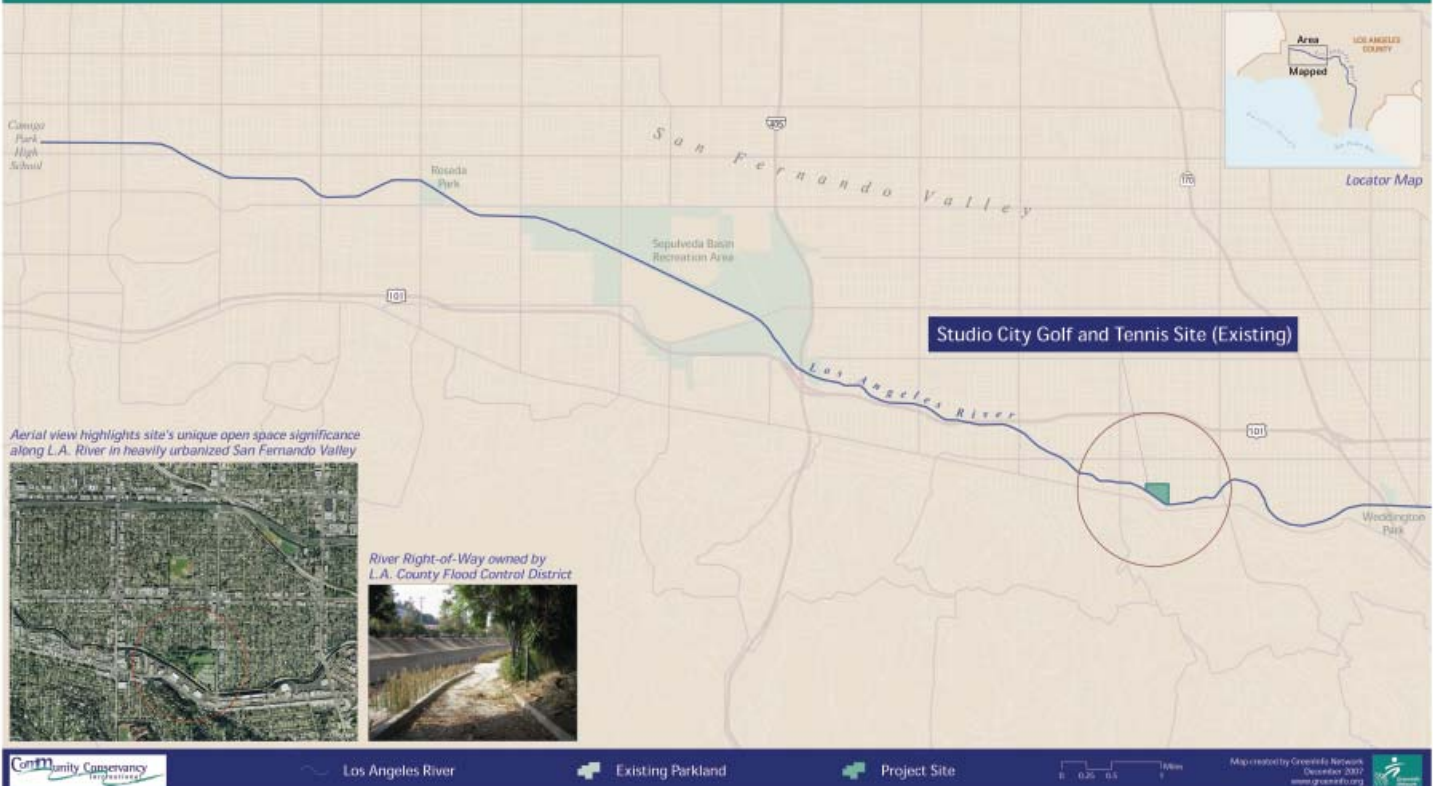
Regional and City of Los Angeles river plans call for revitalizing the Los Angeles River as an inter-connected, green, natural habitat and open space recreational resource serving the entire region, and significant public funds have already been invested along the Los Angeles River downstream. The City of Los Angeles has built a mile-long Los Angeles River trail and pedestrian bridge along the Los Angeles River just downstream of Whittsett Boulevard, which would connect to this site. The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority has purchased and developed several riverfront parks further downstream, which would link to this site via the Los Angeles River Greenway trail. A number of existing and planned river greenways and trails on major tributaries of the Los Angeles River would connect to this site, providing access to residents from throughout Los Angeles County, including the Northeast Valley, Pasadena, San Fernando and Pacoima.

**FIG. 1**

*The site is located two blocks north of Ventura Blvd. and is easily accessible by existing public transportation.*

## LOS ANGELES RIVER 16-ACRE OPEN SPACE

Last Remaining Unprotected L.A. Riverfront Open Space in San Fernando Valley



Regional river, park and trail connections to and from the project site include:

- All 51 miles of the Los Angeles River
- Tujunga Wash Greenway
- Pacoima Wash Greenway
- Arroyo Seco
- Hansen Dam
- Sepulveda Basin
- Verdugo Mountains
- Santa Monica Mountains

This site has been used as recreational open space for more than fifty years as Studio City Golf and Tennis (now Weddington Golf and Tennis), providing a popular and regionally-used small golf course, putting green, driving range and tennis courts. The Los Angeles County Flood Control District owns and maintains the wide and unpaved right-of-way along the Los Angeles River's edge along the property, the concrete flood channel, and the right-of-way immediately across the river.

*Many San Fernando Valley residents learned to play golf on the links of Studio City Golf and Tennis.*



Proposed development for the property includes 200 units in six four-story buildings forty-five feet high. Development would result in the loss of this last remaining Los Angeles riverfront open space, and would prevent creating badly-needed regional public access to the Los Angeles River and river trails for the entire San Fernando Valley. Surrounding communities have long been opposed to this development.

### **Overall Design Goal**

Preserve and enhance connection to the Los Angeles River and restore natural riverfront open space

- Provide regional public access to Los Angeles River
- Connect to upstream and downstream river parks and trails
- Maximize the site's riverfront location
- Connect to Santa Monica Mountains and other river parks and trails
- Compatibility with L.A. City's Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan and other regional plans for the Los Angeles River

## THE VISION

**A natural, river-oriented park that integrates the Los Angeles River, habitat restoration, regional public access, open space and natural runoff treatment to improve water quality.**

## Workshop and Meetings: Regional and Community Input

On July 11, 2008, a by-invitation workshop was held to solicit input, ideas and guidance from representatives of diverse regional community and conservation organizations, public agencies and elected officials. Thirty-four people attended the workshop (see Section 5).

Community input was gathered from several meetings with committees of the Studio City Residents Association and from the results of the Studio City Residents Association Community Survey in 2006.

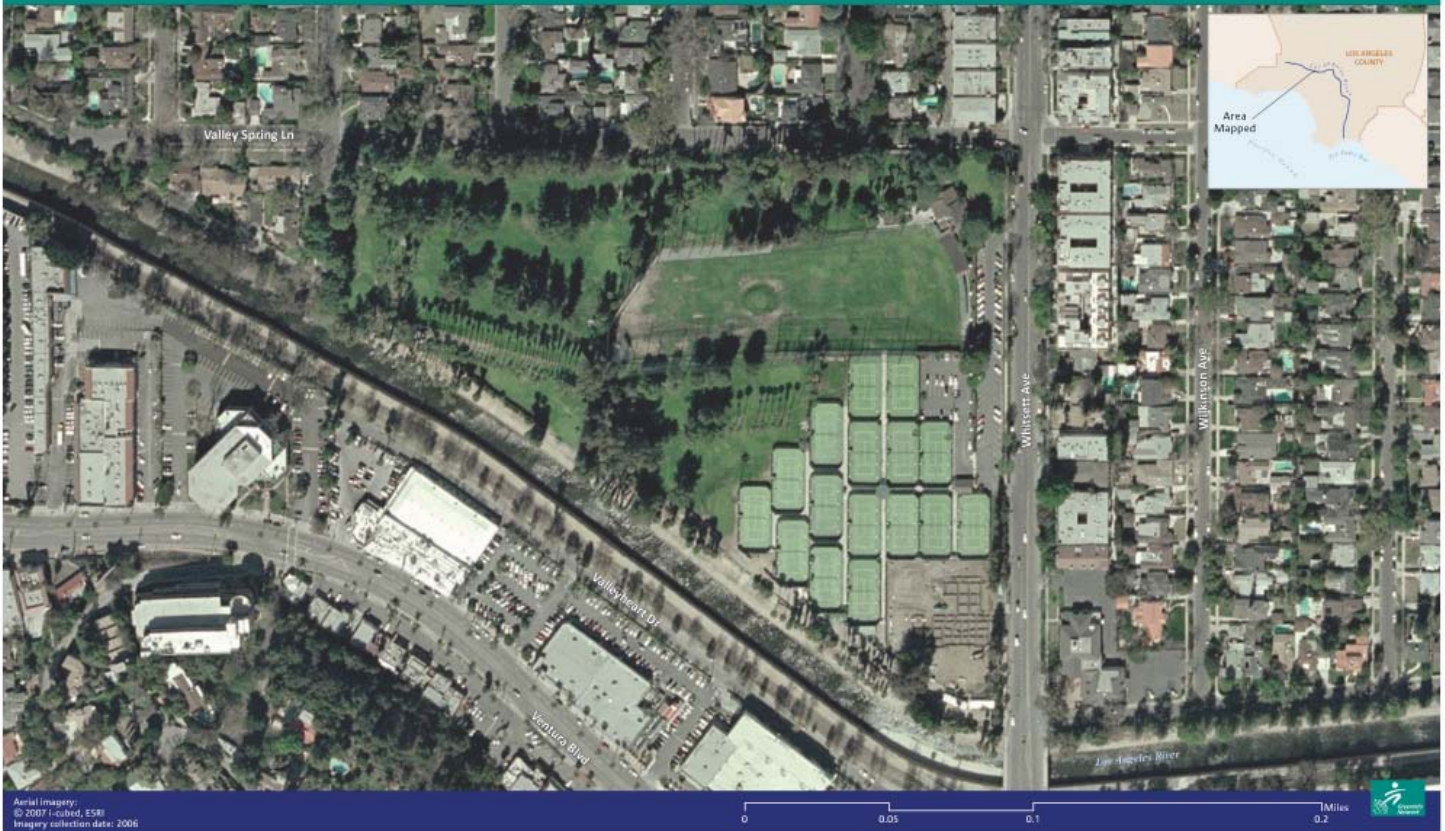


*The Design Workshop engaged regional, community, conservation and elected leaders.*



## Site Description

The 16-acre site is located immediately adjacent to the Los Angeles River in Studio City, between Whitsett Avenue and Coldwater Canyon. Adjacent streets are Whitsett Avenue, Bellaire Avenue and Valley Spring Lane. Existing on the site are a 9-hole golf course, driving range, putting green, 16 tennis courts, parking, club house and large mature trees. The site slopes southerly with a significant slope differential along the county's right-of-way between the project site and adjacent to the Los Angeles River.



**FIG. 2**  
*Aerial view of the 16-acre open space site on the Los Angeles River*

The reach of the Los Angeles River adjacent to the project site is managed and maintained by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works.

The property is adjacent to a 20 to 40 foot wide county right-of-way along the Los Angeles River. The County’s right-of-way on the north bank of the Los Angeles River consists of approximately 20 to 30 feet of flat, unpaved access road immediately adjacent to the river, and 10 to 15 feet of sloped, vegetated area between the access road and Valleyheart Drive. Vegetation consists primarily of non-native plants including oleander and eucalyptus, and a few native plants including laurel sumac.

Use of and access to the County’s right-of-way is key to providing public access along most of the Los Angeles River, including this property. A wide County right-of-way extends along both banks of the river both upstream and downstream of the project area. In recent years, Los Angeles River access gates, trails, plantings and mini-parks have been developed within the County right-of-way along many reaches of the river.

An unpaved section of Valleyheart Drive that was never developed (a “paper street”) abuts the southern boundary of the property and has been encroached upon by the existing tennis and golf facility. The Valleyheart Drive right-of-way is owned in fee by the City of Los Angeles and is parallel to the north bank of the Los Angeles River.

### Hydrology of the Site and Surrounding Area

The neighborhood immediately north of the Los Angeles River is not currently tied into a storm drain system. During rainfall events, stormwater runs southward along street curbs and enters the river untreated. The nearest existing storm drain north of the project area runs parallel to Moorpark Street. Hence, an area of 149 acres between Moorpark Street and the Los Angeles River contributes untreated urban and stormwater runoff to the river in the immediate vicinity of the project.

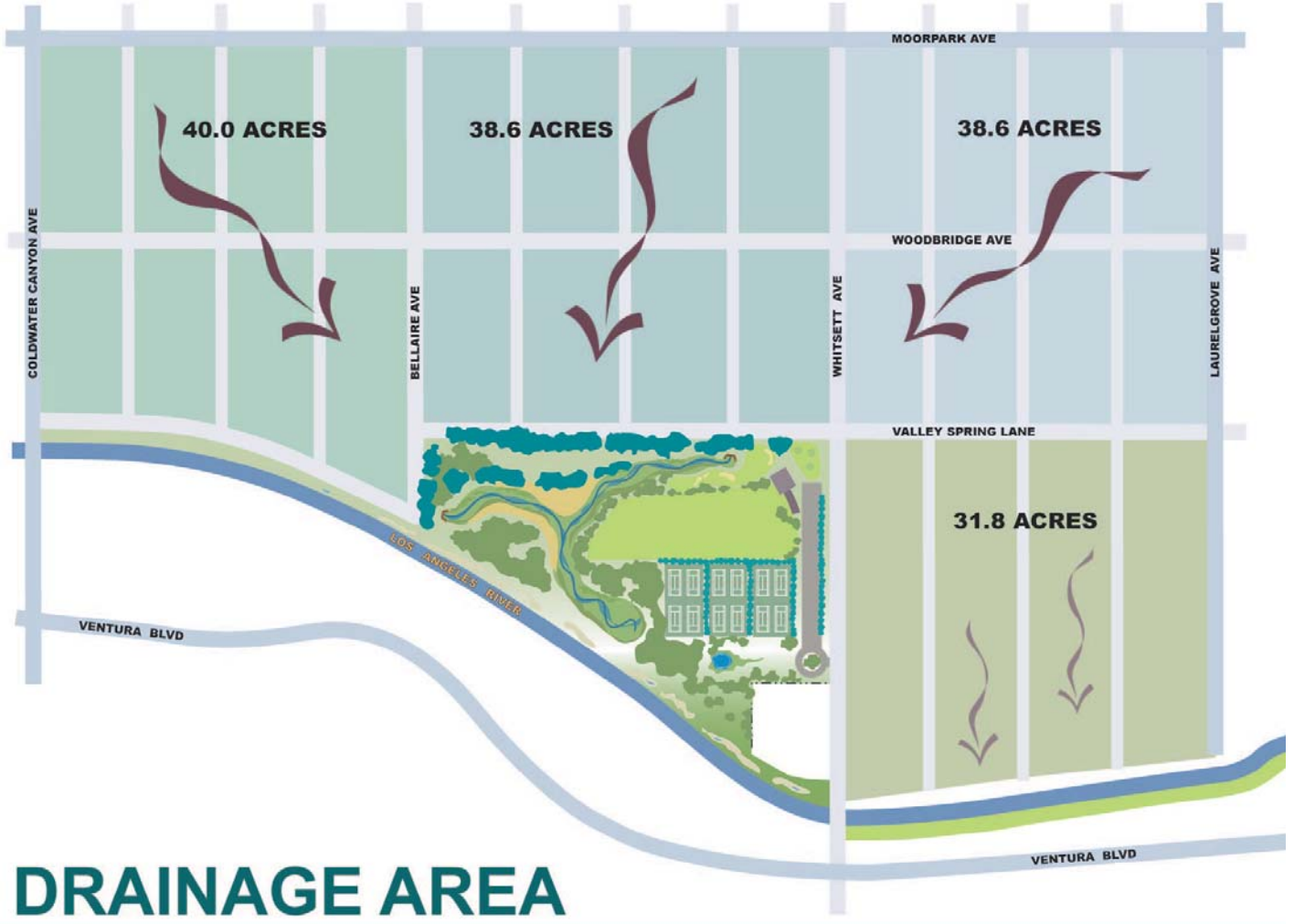
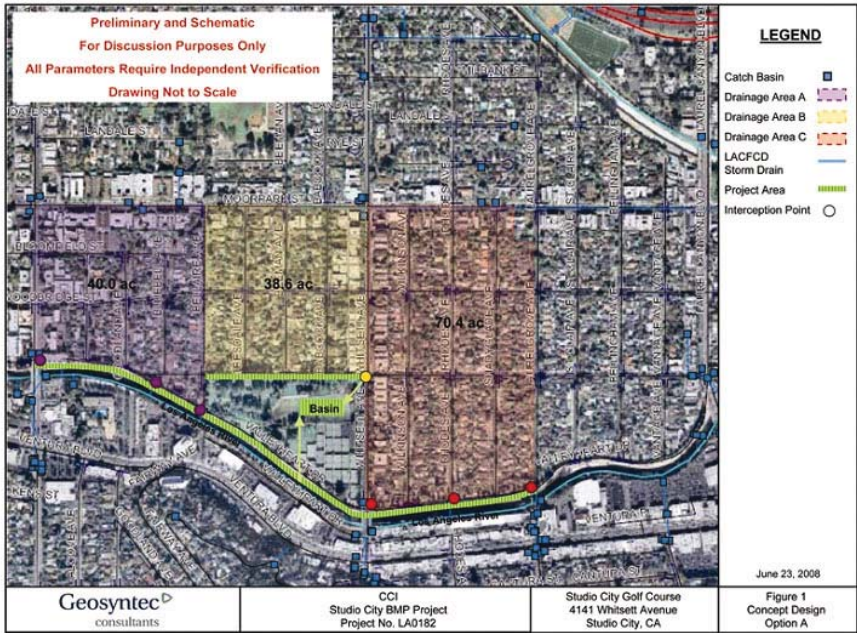
*The Los Angeles River flows, in a box channel, along the County right-of-way at the southern edge of the site.*



One of the goals of this concept design effort was to provide multiple benefits by addressing serious urban and stormwater runoff quality issues and integrating natural treatment processes with other public amenities and site improvements to improve water quality along this stretch of the L.A. River. One of the ways this can be accomplished is by intercepting urban and stormwater runoff at various locations along the surrounding streets and directing it into the proposed Los Angeles River Natural Park area for treatment, infiltration, and potential storage and re-use for irrigation. Local street greening efforts could be used to further expand the general benefits of the project to the extended neighborhoods in upstream and downstream directions.

**FIG. 3**  
*The Preliminary Schematic identified runoff areas of the neighborhood that could potentially be directed to the Los Angeles Natural Park.*

**FIG. 4**  
*Polluted runoff from over 100 acres of surrounding urban area can be cleaned by the proposed park.*



# DRAINAGE AREA

**Design Philosophy**

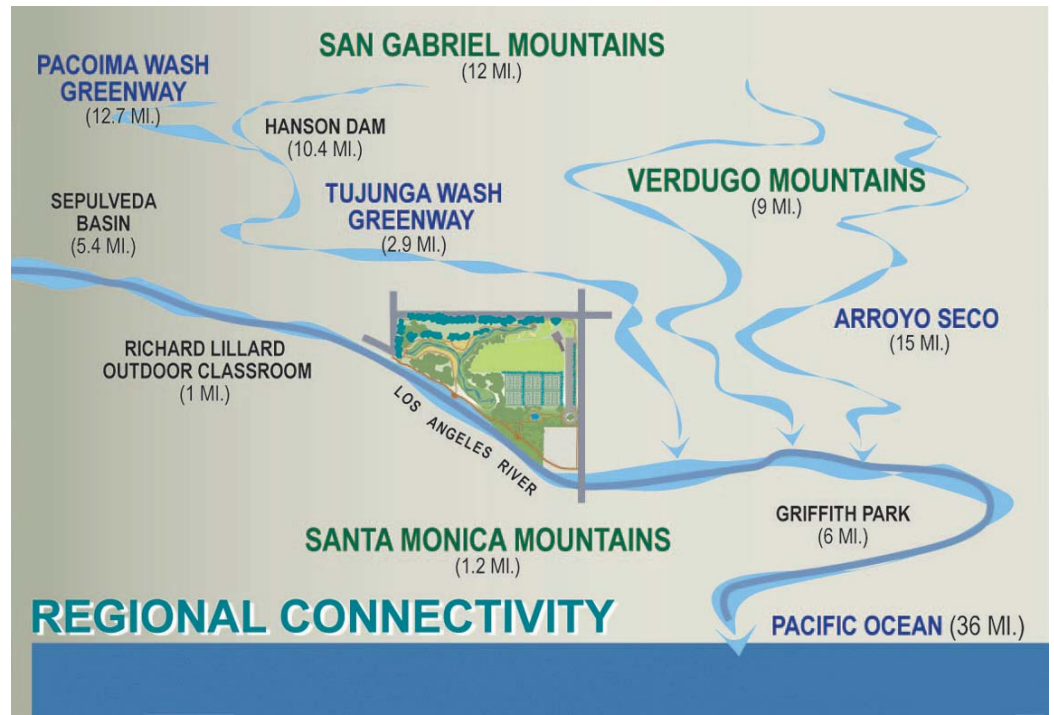
*This site is only as important as its connection to and interaction with regional natural and human communities.*

**Regional Significance**

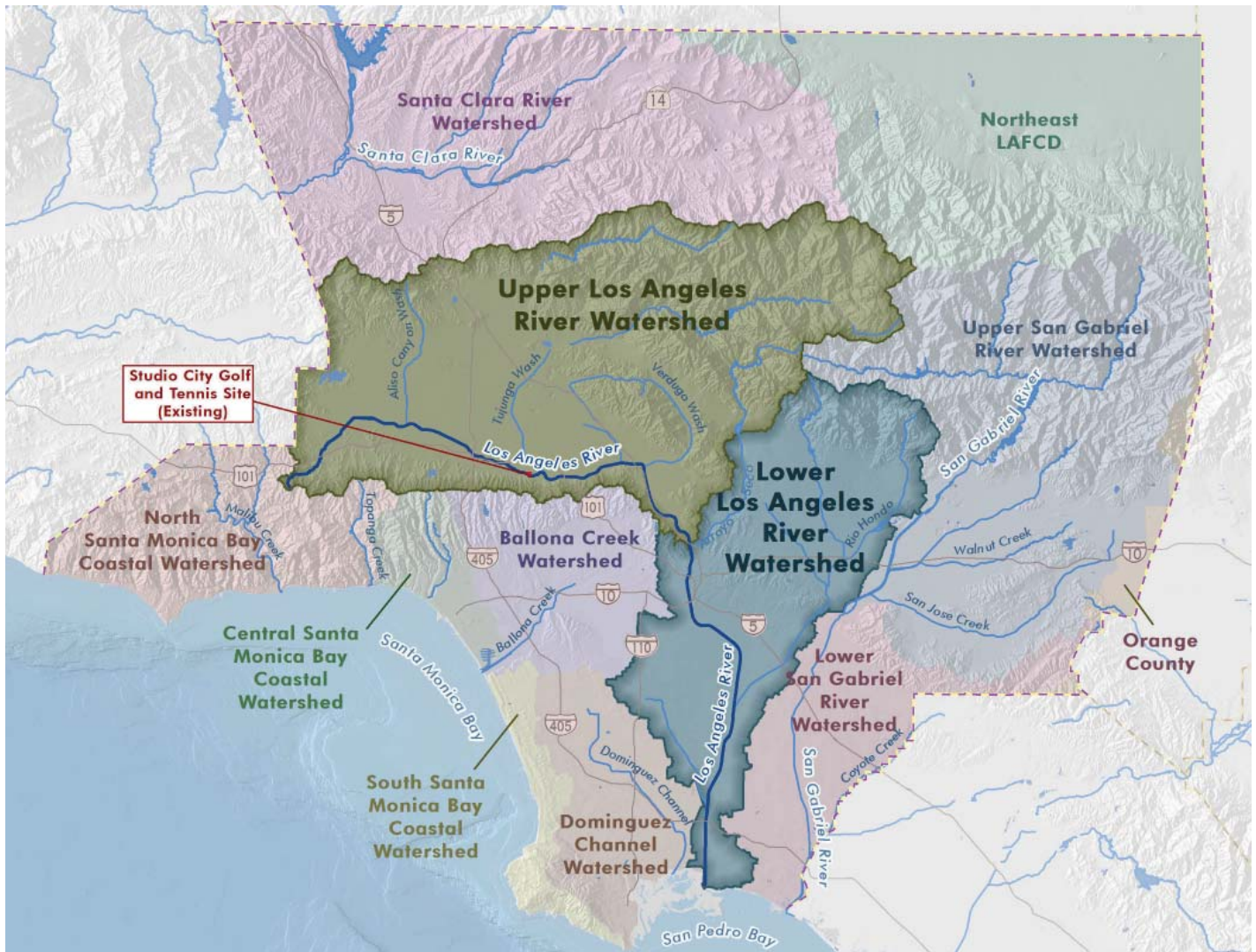
Regional significance of the site includes:

- Proximity and adjacency to Los Angeles River
- Unique Los Angeles River public access and trailhead opportunities
- 391-space public parking garage 500 yards from site along Los Angeles River
- Easy access to regional public transit
- Connectivity to existing Los Angeles River parks and trails
- Connectivity to river parks and trails on tributaries of the Los Angeles River
- Hydrology allows natural treatment of up to 149 acres of surrounding urbanized area
- Potential for water catchment and storage for re-use
- Large size permits integrated natural treatment to catch polluted runoff and improve water quality in the Los Angeles River and coastal waters
- Can assist in meeting regional water quality improvement goals

**FIG. 5**  
*The Los Angeles River Natural Park will be a critical regional public access hub connecting the river to the mountains and other valley parks.*



**FIG. 6**  
*Los Angeles River Watershed*

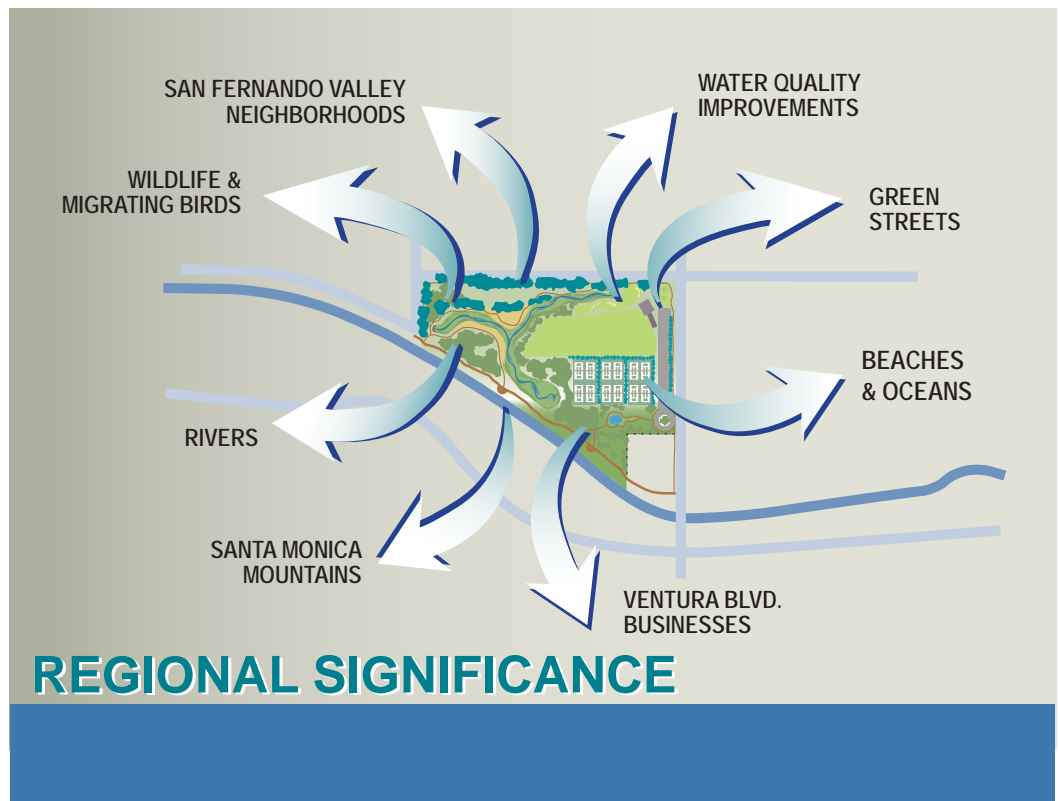


## Community Benefits

In addition to regional benefits, the proposed vision and concept design for an L.A. River Natural Park can provide multiple neighborhood benefits including:

- Preserve and enhance natural open space
- Incorporate mature trees
- Traffic control and calming
- Perimeter security fencing
- Address flooding problems
- Address current lack of storm drain system
- Improve neighborhood drainage
- Preserve historic recreation: tennis & golf
- Off-Site parking & public access (Los Angeles River Parking Garage)
- Improve walking opportunities
- Pedestrian connections to Ventura Boulevard
- San Fernando community involvement
- Neighborhood health and quality of life
- Education and interpretation

**FIG. 7**  
*The 16-acre site provides extensive regional, environmental, economic and social benefits.*



## The Vision: A Natural Los Angeles River Park

*A natural, river-oriented park that integrates the Los Angeles River, habitat restoration, regional public access, open space and natural runoff treatment to improve water quality.*

### Concept Design Description

The proposed Los Angeles River Natural Park vision and concept design for this site would transform a privately-owned golf and tennis facility into a cutting-edge, regionally-serving public Los Angeles River Park with multiple environmental, water quality, public access, recreational and community benefits. The Plan emphasizes pedestrian access to the Park. Nearby parking facilities make it possible to locate parking and staging areas off-site, preserving the vast majority of this last-remaining open space in the heart of a densely-populated urban area. The new Los Angeles River Natural Park will serve both adjacent neighborhoods and regional communities by providing access to the Los Angeles River greenway and regional trail system, as well as to other river greenways along the Tujunga Wash, Pacoima Wash and Arroyo Seco.

The site is large enough to use natural treatment processes to clean polluted runoff from over 100 acres, making this property an important part of the “Green Solution” critical to address the serious water pollution problems affecting the Los Angeles River, coast and beaches.

The function of the site as a green oasis in the San Fernando Valley will be retained. The groves of large evergreen trees which surround the site will be preserved. The surface will be re-graded to direct and filter dry and wet weather runoff through a sequential treatment train and bioswale to capture and clean polluted runoff draining from the surrounding area.

The surrounding drainage area to be treated is currently designed to direct unfiltered polluted runoff along street surfaces which flow directly into the Los Angeles River. The project site’s topography and the topography of the surrounding area allow for the capture of off-site stormwater and dry weather runoff from over 100-acres.

The bioswales will be riparian habitat with streams that flow through the core of the Los Angeles River Natural Park, and will be planted with sycamores, alders and other native riparian plants to mimic local native habitats. Higher elevation areas will contain oaks and associated species.

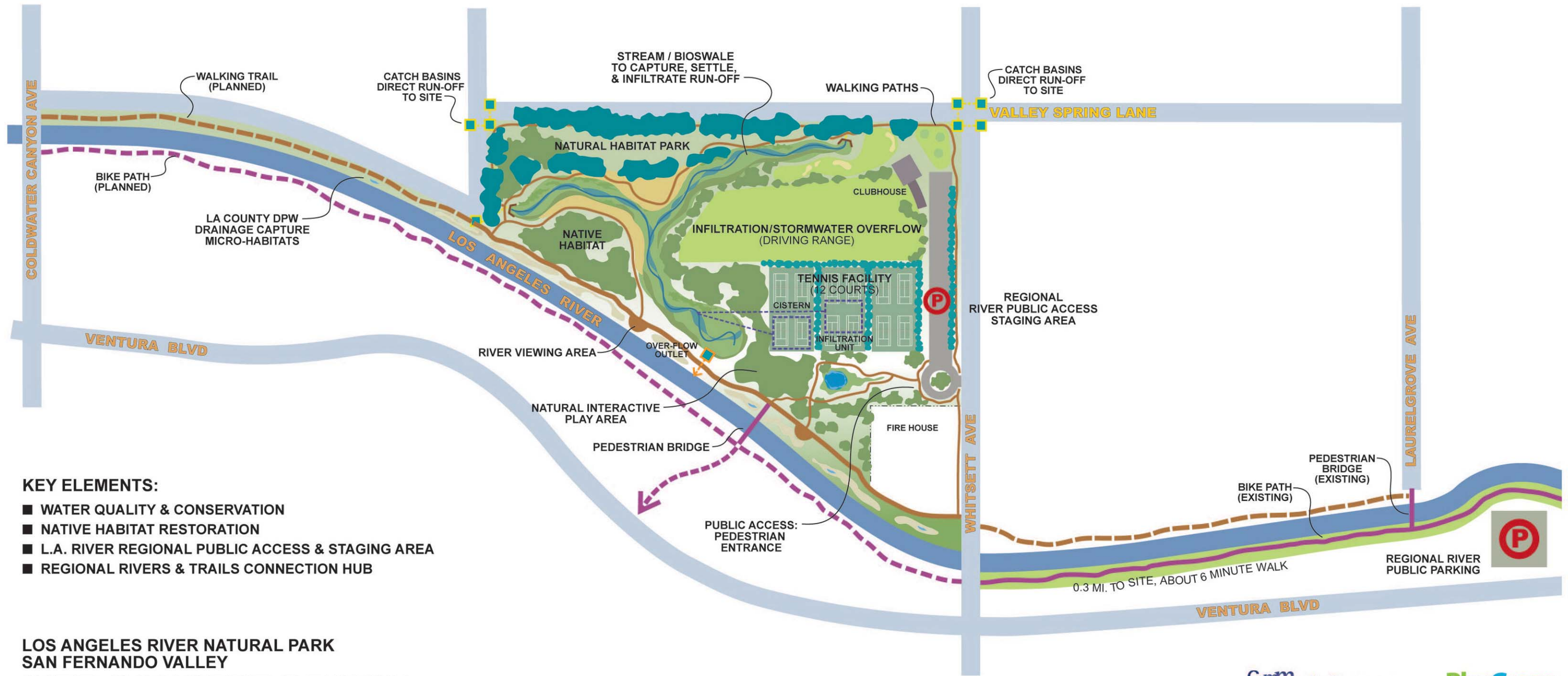
The Los Angeles River Natural Park will connect to and be integrated with the ½-mile long county easement/right-of-way along the river from Whitsett Avenue to Coldwater Canyon Avenue, providing both a walking trail along the river, native habitat restoration and small-scale water catchment and filtration sites as part of the overall water quality improvement components. A new pedestrian bridge over the Los Angeles River, located at the project site, is envisioned to provide easy walking access to the bicycle trail on the south bank of the river and to Ventura Boulevard.

The existing golf and tennis amenities will be reconfigured and redesigned to maximize water quality improvements, natural habitats and other environmental benefits.

Los Angeles River Natural Park Components include:

- Regional Los Angeles River public access trailhead and staging area
- Water quality improvement using natural treatment of runoff
- Naturalized stream bioswale
- Restored native riparian habitat
- River viewing area
- Connections to other Los Angeles River improvements
- Connections to regional river greenways
- Walking trail, habitat along county river right-of-way
- Off-site parking in existing 391-space structure on Los Angeles River
- Natural interactive play area
- Historic clubhouse
- Driving range and other golf practice facilities
- Tennis courts
- Picnic areas
- Contemplation pond
- Pedestrian bridge to connect to Los Angeles River bicycle trail and Ventura Blvd.

**FIG. 8**  
*(facing page)*  
*Preliminary Site*  
*Concept Plan for the*  
*Los Angeles River*  
*Natural Park*



**KEY ELEMENTS:**

- WATER QUALITY & CONSERVATION
- NATIVE HABITAT RESTORATION
- L.A. RIVER REGIONAL PUBLIC ACCESS & STAGING AREA
- REGIONAL RIVERS & TRAILS CONNECTION HUB

**LOS ANGELES RIVER NATURAL PARK  
SAN FERNANDO VALLEY  
SITE CONCEPT DESIGN**



## Overall Goal and Objectives

*Preserve and Enhance Connection to the Los Angeles River and Riverfront Open Space*

- Provide regional public access to Los Angeles River
- Connect to upstream and downstream river parks and trails
- Connect to other regional river greenways
- Maximize the site's riverfront location
- Compatibility with LA City's River Revitalization Plans and other regional plans

## Project Goals

- Goal One*      Improve Water Quality: Integrate natural treatment of urban and stormwater runoff
- Goal Two*      Develop Regional Access to Los Angeles River Greenway
- Goal Three*    Restore Native Riparian Habitat and Preserve Open Space
- Goal Four*     Integrate Historic Recreational Uses with Green Approach

### GOAL ONE

#### **Improve Water Quality: Integrate natural treatment of urban and stormwater runoff**

##### *Objectives*

- Green approaches for capturing and naturally treating polluted urban and stormwater runoff from surrounding areas
- Assist in improving water quality in the Los Angeles River and at beaches and coastal waters
- Incorporate water recycling through storage and reuse

Water quality improvements will focus on capturing and using natural "Green Solution" processes to treat urban and stormwater runoff pollutants from up to 149 acres of surrounding local drainage area, the majority of which can be diverted onto the site for treatment. Holistic design improvements in this local sub-watershed should include green streets and green districts which will add to improved water quality and enhance the community.

The Los Angeles River Natural Park would function as a treatment train that sequentially removes pollutants such as trash, suspended solids, bacteria, heavy metals, and nutrients from urban and stormwa-

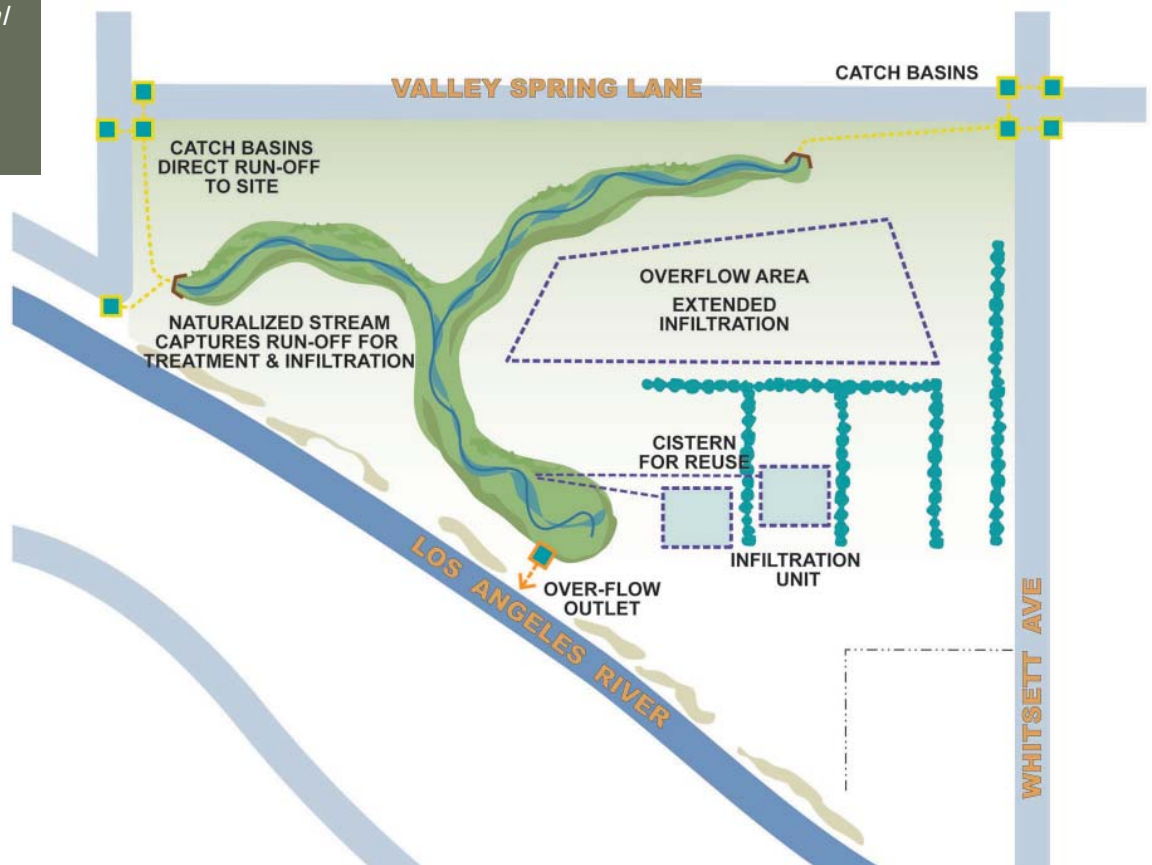
ter runoff and creates a multitude of benefits. Detaining stormwater on-site will act to reduce flood peaks in the Los Angeles River. Infiltration will contribute to water conservation by recharging groundwater and preventing the water from entering the ocean untreated. Most of these functions would not be visible to the casual observer.

Because all of the Los Angeles River is in violation of the U.S. Clean Water Act, this natural treatment and cleaning of runoff from up to 149 acres of highly urbanized drainage area will be very important in assisting L.A. County and the City of Los Angeles in meeting regional water quality improvement goals set by the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board for the Los Angeles River, coastal waters and county beaches. This site is large enough to provide significant reductions in pollutant loading in the Los Angeles from the surrounding drainage area, which will also assist in improving water quality in coastal waters and at beaches.

Once captured, water would naturally sustain native plants and habitat throughout the Los Angeles River Natural Park property. Water can be captured in underground cistern or vaults to be re-used for irrigation throughout the park property. Increased plant uptake, evaporation, and shading through plant foliage will act to reduce

**FIG. 9**  
**WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENTS**

*The Los Angeles River Natural Park can integrate natural treatment of urban and stormwater runoff.*



summer peak temperatures in the surrounding neighborhood, reduce energy consumption, and counteract the “urban heat island” effect. In addition, the newly created park space will provide public open space for enjoyment and opportunities for active recreation to combat obesity and health issues related to human inactivity, particularly in children.

As Fig. 9 shows, the system will capture urban and stormwater runoff at selected sites along surrounding streets and utilize structural best management practices (BMPs) to screen and remove trash and solids from the runoff before passing it on to a naturalized bioswale. This stream is a restored stream that would naturally act to reduce remaining pollutants through infiltration, extended exposure to sunlight and natural microbial and chemical processes inherent to the natural soil environment.

Clean treated water at the end of the bioswale would continue into an underground cistern that would store water for future park irrigation purposes. Once filled to capacity, water would bypass the cistern and continue into an underground infiltration system to recharge groundwater. During larger storms the system would overflow into the Los Angeles River.

Even during dry weather, the system would capture and treat “nuisance runoff” from local car-washing activities and over-irrigation of lawns in the neighborhood. This will effectively reduce common dry-weather pollutants such as fertilizers, pesticides, and bacteria. A source for permanent clean surface water for wildlife will be incorporated and design strategies to reduce the presence of water-borne vectors will be utilized throughout the Los Angeles River Natural Park.

Micro-basins and vegetation installed along the ½-mile long county right-of-way adjacent to the Los Angeles River from Whitsett to Coldwater Canyon will help infiltrate runoff and reduce existing erosion problems along the slope between Valleyheart Drive and the county right-of-way.

## GOAL TWO

### Develop Regional Public Access to Los Angeles River Greenway

#### Objectives

- Create regional trailhead/staging area for public access to Los Angeles River Greenway
- Connect to 51-mile Los Angeles River Greenway and other river parks and trails
- Connect to public transit
- Connect to upstream and downstream Los Angeles River improvements
- Experience natural environment
- River interpretation

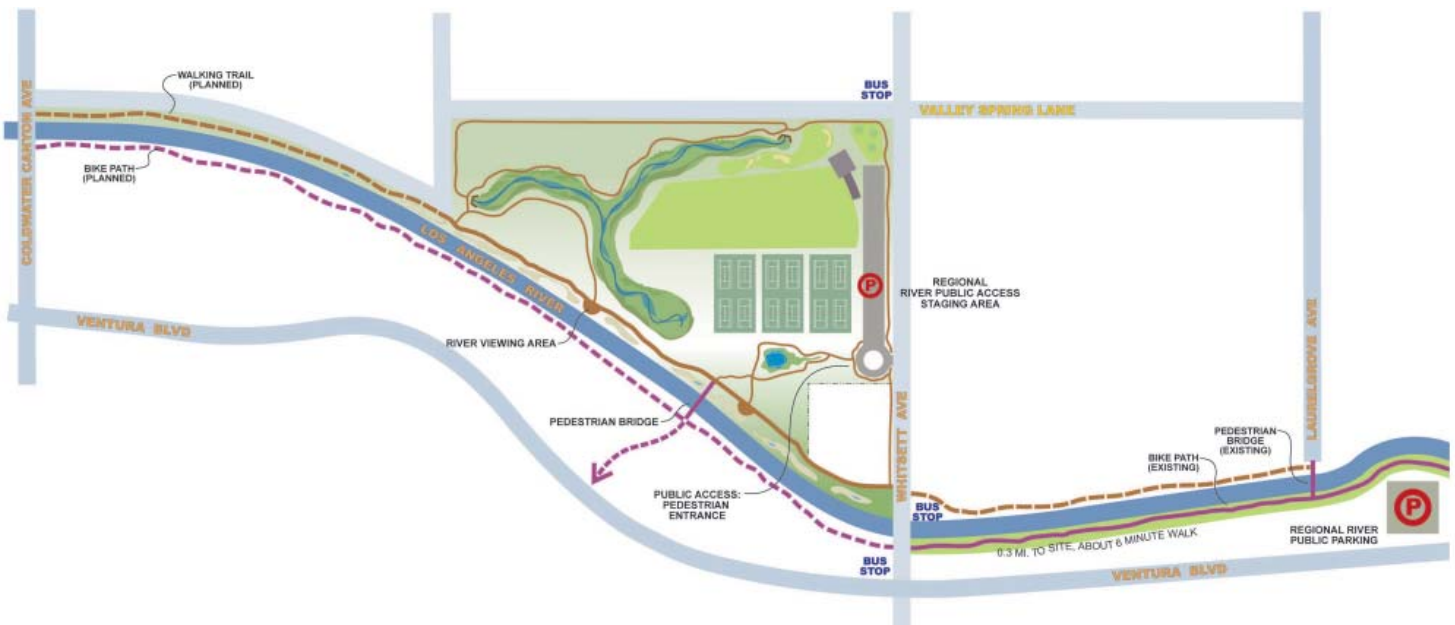
#### Regional Los Angeles River Access Concept

The new Los Angeles River Natural Park will serve as a unique “key-stone” regional river trailhead, staging area and access hub for both the Los Angeles River greenway trail system and river greenways being developed along the Arroyo Seco, Tujunga Wash and Pacoima Wash. This regional river and trailhead hub will serve the entire San Fernando Valley. The site is easily accessible to public transit and to a multi-level 391-space public parking structure, which makes possible the development of this regional trailhead with minimal impact to the site itself, as the emphasis will be on walking and bicycles as primary means of access.

FIG. 10

#### REGIONAL PUBLIC ACCESS

Parking garage, pedestrian bridges, paths, and bicycle trails provide access to the Los Angeles River.



The parking structure, located within 500 yards of the site, provides an opportunity to provide off-site parking, trailhead staging and related services such as bicycle rentals that can serve not just this site but much of the Los Angeles River bicycle trail system throughout the San Fernando Valley. From the Los Angeles River Natural Park, connections can be made downstream to destinations along fifteen miles of the Los Angeles River to the Rio de Los Angeles State Park, and upstream to destinations along five miles of the river to the Sepulveda Basin. Connections can also be made to the Santa Monica Mountains, which are a little over a mile from the site. The parking structure is situated immediately adjacent to the Los Angeles River with access off of Ventura Boulevard, is just east of the Valley Spring pedestrian bridge, and connects to the 1.5 mile-long Los Angeles River walking and bicycle trail developed by the City of Los Angeles just downstream from the project site. Existing on-site parking spaces will remain. A visitor drop-off, bus and ADA parking will be incorporated.

Neighborhood walk-ability and way-finding will benefit both local neighborhoods and regional visitors. The Los Angeles River Natural Park will serve as a hub linking neighborhoods to Ventura Boulevard's "Coldwater Curve" shopping district and to regional parks and open spaces via the Los Angeles River Greenway trail system. The location of the parking structure will make it easy for park and river visitors to access the many eateries and other shops in the Ventura Boulevard corridor.

A new pedestrian bridge over the Los Angeles River is envisioned located at the project site to provide easy walking access to the bicycle trail on the south bank of the river and to Ventura Boulevard.

Community issues concerning security and public safety will be addressed through the CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) approach. Perimeter fencing will allow for the Los Angeles River Natural Park to be secured at night. Screening activity areas with evergreen will buffer views and protect the privacy of neighbors in close proximity.

## GOAL THREE

### Restore Native Riparian Habitat and Preserve Open Space

#### Objectives

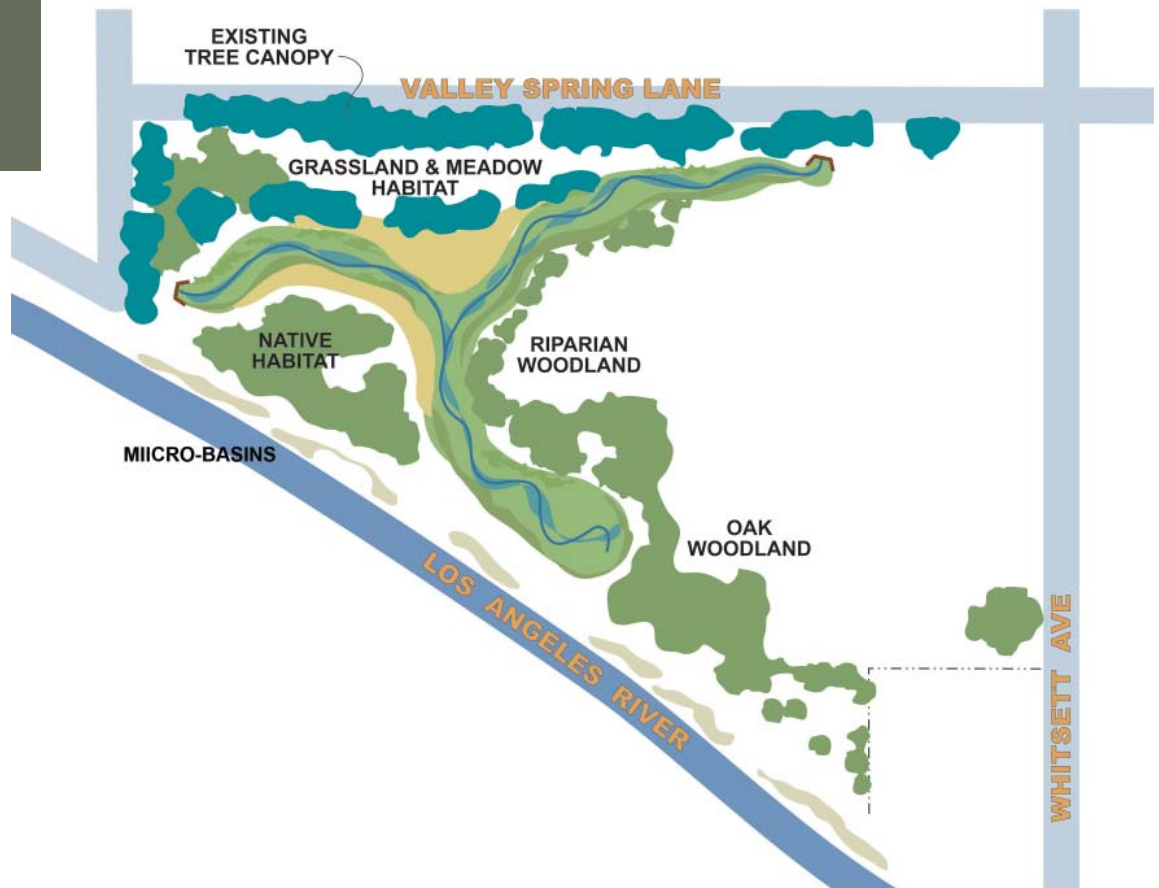
- Emphasize riparian habitat
- Create micro-habitats
- Provide native bird-friendly habitat: food, water, shelter, nesting sites
- Restore habitat linkage to Pacific Flyway for migrating birds
- Provide interpretive and viewing opportunities
- Preserve large canopy trees

#### Habitat Restoration and Open Space Concept

The Los Angeles River Natural Park will demonstrate the integration of habitat restoration, water quality and regional and community park benefits and inspire visitors to connect with nature in the City. This urban, natural Los Angeles River Natural Park will encourage imagination, tree climbing, rock hopping, observation and quiet contemplation. Habitat connections to the Santa Monica Mountains, to other river restoration efforts and to the Pacific Flyway will be emphasized.

#### FIG. 11 NATIVE HABITAT & OPEN SPACE

The Site Concept Plan proposes a mosaic of native habitats and preservation of existing open space.



Native trees and open water are crucial for attracting and sustaining birds and other wildlife. The benefits of surface water to humans provides a calming experience and the opportunity for quiet reflection.

The Los Angeles River Natural Park will feature native habitat, with an emphasis on riparian habitat consistent with the site's riverfront location. Riparian habitats support high diversity and density of both plants and animals, and provide important breeding areas for many obligate riparian species and critical stopover habitats for migrant birds (Knopf and Samson 1994, Knopf et al. 1988).

Willow thickets will attract yellow warblers and native plants that produce bird-attracting fruit, seeds and nectar, and will be utilized throughout to sustain resident and migratory birds. Problematic non-native species will be replaced with natives. Where appropriate, the existing large trees which provide nesting sites and buffer the community will be preserved.

The water quality bioswale will be densely planted with riparian vegetation forming a layered habitat structure. Habitat structure is an important factor affecting bird species diversity and density and can influence nest site selection and reproductive success. In some areas of dense habitat plantings the public may be restricted to provide quiet refuges for wildlife.

Adjacent to and running upstream of the Los Angeles River Natural Park, native vegetation will be restored along parts of the ½-mile long and up to 40 foot wide county flood control easement that runs along the bank of the Los Angeles River to Coldwater Canyon Avenue. Micro-basins installed along this easement will help infiltrate runoff, reduce existing erosion problems and provide micro-habitat niches for local species. The county's road easement will be preserved and a walking trail and viewing areas will be incorporated. The edges will be "softened" with habitat plantings to provide a natural feel.

The area surrounding the park should be enhanced with tree plantings and "Green Street" retrofits.

The Santa Monica Mountains are in close proximity to the site and run parallel to the river in Studio City. Although the commercial development along Ventura Boulevard prevents a "Nature Trail" linkage, pedestrian routes along surface streets can provide opportunities for

trail connections to open spaces which may ultimately connect to the Santa Monica Mountains Backbone Trail system. Willacre Park, a Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy natural area, is an easy 1.2-mile walk from the project site.

Park signage should be small, subtle and limited. An interpretive/educational site-specific program should be developed featuring naturalist information about local flora and fauna. An outdoor classroom/nature center can be utilized for public gatherings, ranger/docent programs and volunteer activities.

#### GOAL FOUR

### Integrate Historic Recreational Uses with Green Approach

#### Objectives

- Incorporate driving range, putting green, practice area
- Incorporate tennis courts
- Preserve historic clubhouse

#### FIG. 12 HISTORIC RECREATIONAL USE

*The historic recreational uses of the site will be integrated into the sustainable park design.*



### *Sustainable Recreation Concept*

For generations, this site has provided golf and tennis facilities for regional and community use. The site generates revenue through user fees, lessons and a small clubhouse café. Most heavily used is the driving range, which generates lucrative user fees.

A redesign and retrofit of the site will “green” the facilities by reducing the area of the golf facility and locating cisterns and infiltration units below tennis courts.

The nine-hole, three par course will be eliminated. The driving range and the practice putting greens will be redesigned to maximize environmental benefits. New practice areas for public use will be added. Design techniques to increase habitat and water quality benefits include: minimize mowed areas; increase biological structure of perimeter plantings; minimize use of pesticides and herbicides and utilize landform grading for watershed management.

Tennis facilities will be retrofitted to provide environmental benefits. Design solutions include: Vegetated drainage swales between paved courts; light color surface lowers air temperature; large hedge rows along fence lines for shade; cover for cistern storage and infiltration units; large shade trees in parking areas; limit lighting and shield lighting from neighbors and habitat areas.

## SECTION FOUR

### **Additional Suggestions by Workshop Participants**

#### *Overall Themes*

- Make this landscape part of the region's “lifescape”
- Include in Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy work plan
- Pay attention to diverse regional needs (for access, bikes, use of site)
- Provide a place where people can integrate with nature
- Incorporating water quality improvement is vital
- Use site to link to other river and mountain areas
- Encourage imagination

### *Improving Water Quality*

- Site is an excellent “Green Solution” choice, with lots of multiple benefits
- Address history of flooding in area
- Increasing permeability can allow groundwater re-charge and infiltration
- Site should showcase all the best “green” water quality technology
- Add to IRWMP project list
- Funding may be available through Proposition 84 and water bonds
- Emphasize connections between beaches, water quality and public health

### *Emphasize Regional Connectivity and Public Access*

- Transit connections for Northeast and other parts of San Fernando Valley
- Connection to Santa Monica Mountains parks (transit, walking)
- Connections to other LA River tributaries (Tujunga, Pacoima, Arroyo Seco)
- Cultural connections to communities throughout San Fernando Valley
- Wayfinding and signage
- Pedestrian connections to Ventura Blvd. shopping and restaurants
- Bike, pedestrian connection along Whitsett, extend to Santa Monica Mountains
- Build new pedestrian bridge across river from site
- Green streets connections to surrounding communities
- Provide river and nature public-serving programs
- Tie to design for crossings at intersections (under-crossings preferred)
- Look for transportation funding to encourage bicycle use
- Connections to schools throughout Valley

### *Bicycle Use*

- Bicycle rental on site or at public parking garage
- Integrate with regional bike path system and master plan
- Incorporate bicycle path rest stops, water, restrooms at site
- Bike connection along Whitsett to Santa Monica Mountains

### *Los Angeles River Improvements*

- Address River trail crossings at boulevards
- Step down Los Angeles River channel wall
- Stair steps to the river
- Tujunga Wash low-flow bypass model
- Incorporate planting along the river’s banks and edges
- Extend natural habitat to river
- Make this a Los Angeles River demonstration project
- Mural on channel wall

### *Native Habitat Restoration*

- Emphasize native habitat restoration
- Need above-ground year-round water-critical for wildlife/birds
- Restoring riparian habitat is key
- Need to tie into the river banks, edges, upstream and downstream: linear habitat
- Need shade, plants supplying insects, nectar, fruit, seeds, nest material
- Need to get rid of non-native plants
- Site important for migratory birds
- Coordinate with US Army Corps habitat restoration plan for Los Angeles River
- Real nature
- Add interpretive signs after plant establishment

### *Overall Site Design*

- Picnic areas
- Children's area
- Places for kids/people to integrate with nature (rocks, water, trees)
- Body of water to look at (aesthetics as well as habitat)
- Walking trail through site
- Perimeter fencing, night security
- On-site maintenance

### *Los Angeles River Natural Park Programs & Nature Education*

- Programs with wildlife/bird focus
- Audubon at-home program
- Social cultural functions related to rivers
- Events, films other programs
- Nature/water conservation center for community learning
- Signage re: water, rivers, watershed, Santa Monica Mountains, water quality, migratory and year-round birds, native habitat
- Connectivity to other river parks, Santa Monica Mountains
- Water quality for SF Valley: "wet lab" for community education about water quality monitoring for neighborhoods throughout the Valley
- Water conservation; effect of upstream changes on downstream, beach, ocean

### *Public Transportation*

- Enhance access to Mass transit
- Clean van service from Orange Line
- Dash bus service
- Transportation to trails – shuttle to Santa Monica Mountains

### *Funding*

- Integrated Regional Water Management Plan current call for projects
  - State water bond
  - Potential county water quality funding
  - MTA transit funding for bike paths
  - Other transit funding
- Use income from on-site recreation (driving range, putting areas, chipping, tennis)
- Need funding to acquire lands and funding to create a plan like this.

### *Miscellaneous Comments*

- Prevent trash from collecting in street or visible areas
- Visitor use pavilion for rental revenue
- \$10K revenue per month desirable for park maintenance
- Porous pavement for tennis
- Consider cost issues
- Wet lab for monitoring water quality data
- Nature Center

## SECTION FIVE

## List of Workshop Participants by Organization

Audubon California  
Audubon, San Fernando Valley Chapter  
City of L.A. Bureau of Engineering  
Friends of the Los Angeles River  
Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council  
Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust  
Los Angeles Conservation Corps  
Pacoima Beautiful  
Studio City Residence Association  
Sierra Club, Los Angeles Chapter  
Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy  
Southern California Tennis Association  
Urban Semillas  
Assemblymember Mike Feuer  
Office of Congressman Howard Berman  
Office of Councilmember Wendy Greuel  
Office of Senator Sheila Keuhl

## THE PROJECT TEAM



### **Community Conservancy International PROJECT DIRECTOR**

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(310) 398-8584

Community Conservancy International (CCI) specializes in tackling complex and challenging problems created by the interaction of people and nature. CCI develops innovative, practical solutions that combine the protection and restoration of natural lands and waters with compatible community uses and permanent public benefits. CCI works in areas with exceptional unmet needs: where natural habitats are threatened or have been degraded; where communities have been neglected; and where recreation, education, cultural and economic opportunities are significantly lacking.

CCI's projects include the Green Solution Project, which identifies on a large scale land suitable for naturally treating polluted runoff while creating parks, habitat and open space; creation of the Baldwin Hills Park in the heart of urban L.A. County; Big Canyon Creek Restoration in Upper Newport Bay; Los Angeles Conservation Corps' Spring Street Center; the San Gabriel Valley Transit Village; and conservation efforts in the Owens Valley and Eastern Sierra Nevada.

CCI excels at combining long-range vision with the focused planning needed to transform ideas into reality. By bringing a broad diversity of skills, experience and expertise to each project, CCI is able to implement strategic and practical programs to realize far-reaching visions.

For more information, visit us at [www.ccint.org](http://www.ccint.org) or contact us at 310-398-8584.



### **BlueGreen Consulting**

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(323) 221-9500

#### *Principals*

Lynne Dwyer, ASLA  
Martin Kammerer Ph.D.

*Open Space Planning & Design* ■ Planning and design of multi-objective open space corridors including rivers, trails, parks and natural habitat restoration.

*Landscape Architecture* ■ Thoughtful and creative full-service landscape architectural design from concept and design development to construction documentation and implementation.

*Watershed Planning & Stream Restoration* ■ Restored and naturalized stream courses in the urban context. Urban hydrology, BMP selection, design of complex BMP treatment trains appropriate for public access parks.

*Education and Interpretation* ■ Design and development of educational/interpretive materials for communication and park elements.

*Mapping and GIS* ■ Development of informational databases utilizing ArcView/GIS for resource planning.



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