

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION AND PARKS

2009 CITYWIDE COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

While there are many individuals who have participated in the Needs Assessment outreach process, as well as a greater number of individuals who are reflected in the findings of the 2009 Citywide Community Needs Assessment, the following people are gratefully acknowledged for their efforts toward the completion of the final report:

THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES

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VERY SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Department of Recreation and Parks regional superintendents, supervisors and center staff. Great appreciation to all workshop attendees and staff, focus group participants and key person interviewees, as well as members of the Department Working Group, Interdepartmental Committee and Advisory Council.

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BACKGROUND

The Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks manages and maintains parks, playgrounds, recreation centers, pools, monuments, museums, cultural venues, wilderness areas, beaches, child care centers, meal programs, youth sports programs and golf courses. Along with these facilities and park land, the Department has substantial assets in equipment, programs and staff. The Department goes well beyond the operation of recreation facilities based on its role as a provider of after school and school vacation child care and youth camp programs, senior activities and meal programs. The Department contributes to public health as the public agency outside of the school system with the greatest potential to impact children in establishing life-long fitness habits by providing opportunities for individual and organized sports and recreation programs. As the steward of over 15,000 acres of parklands spread throughout the City, the agency has the ability to act as a model of sustainable development.

It is relevant to compare Los Angeles to other major cities in the United States to assess what the City has, and may be lacking. In terms of population and park acreage, a Trust for Public Lands 2006 study found that of the three largest cities in the country, Los Angeles with 4.0 acres of parks per 1,000 residents actually has more park acreage than either New York or Chicago who have 3.6 and 2.8 acres per 1,000 residents respectively. Interestingly the next largest city, Houston has 9.9 acres for every 1,000 residents. The issue for Los Angeles is only partially the amount of land dedicated to public open space. Although the published park acreage for City parks is 4.0 acres per 1,000 residents, when one includes other parks and open spaces such as Los Angeles County, State of California, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and the National Forest the average acreage increases to approximately 9.7 acres per 1,000 persons which provides a truer picture of available open space resources within a region where residents are accustomed to travelling for work, play and entertainment. When one looks beyond the limits of the City of Los Angeles to the County level the acreage dramatically increases to 84 acres per 1,000.

A regional open space planning effort should be undertaken due to the overlap of other open space and recreation service providers adjacent to the project area. In addition to Los Angeles City park acreage there are many other service providers within the area. Figures A and B show the City of Los Angeles in white with the colored areas representing other cities that also provide parkland and services. The acreages used for calculating recommended service levels were Recreation and Park owned land as well as County land within the City limits.



Figure A: Los Angeles County (Map courtesy of Given Place Media and LAAlmanac.com)

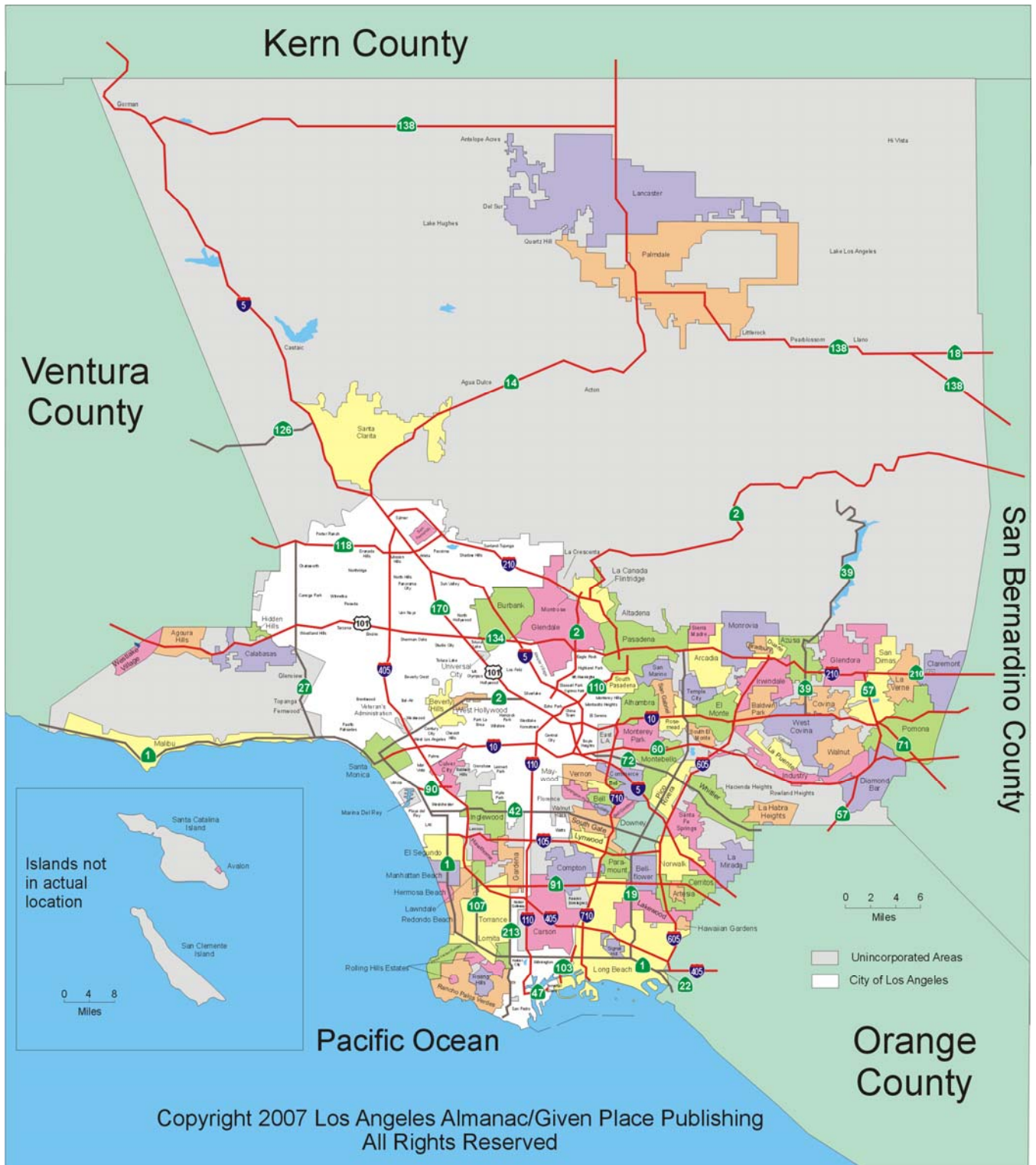


Figure B

Acres of Recreational Lands in Los Angeles County

Acres (Using 2008 Thomas Brothers Map)	Park	Open Space	Beach	Ecological Preserve / Estuary	Fairground	Historical Park	Historical Point of Interest	Recreation Area	Wilderness Area	Wildlife Refuge	Zoo	Forest	Golf Course	TOTAL ACRES
City of Los Angeles	11,906		166	518			46	1,123		177	103		1,523	15,562
Other Cities in Los Angeles County	15,991	2,822		214		18	1	2,274	1,177	137			5,123	27,757
Los Angeles County	6,233	58	2,000	134		1,361		1,106		2,019			1,093	14,441
State of California	33,833			37	470			24,150						58,727
Private	57		0					3,271					5,486	8,964
Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy	17,519	4,993		870	170			4,366	35,410			645,496		23,362
Federal Government	1,516		0											686,788
Unknown	225												116	341
TOTAL ACRES	87,280	7,873	2,873	1,773	640	1,346	47	36,290	36,587	2,333	103	645,496	13,341	
ACRES PER 1000 PEOPLE IN THE CITY (Using 2006 Census Est. 9,948,081)														
City of Los Angeles	1.197	0.000	0.017	0.052	0.000	0.000	0.005	0.113	0.000	0.018	0.010	0.000	0.153	1,564
Other Cities in Los Angeles County	1.607	0.284	0.000	0.022	0.000	0.002	0.000	0.229	0.118	0.014	0.000	0.000	0.515	2,790
Los Angeles County	0.627	0.006	0.201	0.013	0.047	0.133	0.000	0.111	0.000	0.203	0.000	0.000	0.110	1,462
State of California	3.401	0.000	0.071	0.004	0.000	0.000	0.000	2.428	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	5,903
Private	0.006	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.329	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.551	0,903
Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy	1.761	0.502	0.000	0.087	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	2,360
Federal Government	0.152	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.439	3.559	0.000	0.000	64.886	0.000	69,037
Unknown	0.023	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.012	0,034
TOTAL ACRES	8.774	0.791	0.289	0.178	0.064	0.136	0.005	3.648	3.678	0.235	0.010	64.886	1.341	84,034

Notes:

Population 2006 US Census estimate: 9,948,081 (2000 census: 9,519,338)

Data Source: Thomas Brothers 2008 GIS map Layer TBM_LACO_OWNA

Processing:

Data layer contained many types of areas. Areas NOT used: Airport, Museum Park, Cemetery, Civic Center, College/University, Hospital, Military, Miscellaneous, Movie Studio, Oil Refinery, Prison, Racetrack, Shopping Mall, Stadium/Arena. Data layer lacked jurisdiction. Data was compared to TBM's City Boundaries layer, LARAP's own Parks layer, property names were inspected, web sites were consulted. Best effort was made to classify ownership of properties, as shown in tables above. Processed by Daniel Elroi, NorthSouth GIS, 9/10/08.

LARAP's Data

LARAP's own parks layers was NOT used, to help keep this analysis consistent, i.e. To use a single data source. However, the total acres derive from Thomas Brothers match LARAP's own total acres. Acres per LARAP Parks layer: 15,565

Figure B-1

Acres of Recreational Lands in Los Angeles City

Acres (Using 2008 Thomas Brothers Map)	Park	Open Space	Beach	Ecological Preserve / Estuary	Fairground	Historical Park	Historical Point of Interest	Recreation Area	Wilderness Area	Wildlife Refuge	Zoo	Forest	Golf Course	TOTAL ACRES
	11,852		186	518			46	1,122		177	103		1,523	15,607
	203	68	84					88					217	562
	9,031		369			918							1,981	10,406
	55													2,036
	4,488	573		40				15				3,795		5,101
	55													3,810
	25,684	631	619	568	0	918	46	1,225	0	177	103	3,795	3,721	37,477
ACRES PER 1000 PEOPLE IN THE CITY (Using 2006 Census Est. 9,948,061)														
	3.079	0.000	0.043	0.135	0.000	0.000	0.012	0.291	0.000	0.046	0.027	0.000	0.398	4.028
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	0.053	0.015	0.022	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.056	0.146
	2.346	0.000	0.086	0.000	0.000	0.236	0.000	0.023	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	2.703
	0.014	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.515	0.529
	1.166	0.148	0.000	0.010	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.325
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.004	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.888	0.000	0.890
	0.014	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.014
	6.672	0.164	0.161	0.145	0.000	0.238	0.012	0.318	0.000	0.046	0.027	0.985	0.967	9.735

Notes:

Population: 3,849,378(2000 census: 3,684,920)
2006 US Census estimate:

Data Source: Thomas Brothers 2008 GIS map Layer TBM_LACO_OWMA

Processing:

Data layer contained many types of areas. Areas NOT used: Airport, Museum Park, Cemetery, Civic Center, College/University, Hospital, Military, Miscellaneous, Movie Studio, Oil Refinery, Prison, Racetrack, Shopping Mall, Stadium/Arena. Data layer lacked jurisdiction. Data was compared to TBM's City Boundaries layer. LARAP's own Parks layer, property names were inspected. web sites were consulted. Best effort was made to classify ownership of properties, as shown in tables above. Processed by: Daniel Elroi, NorthSouth GIS, 8/10/08.

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Figure B-2

There are many other service providers within Los Angeles County whose parks and facilities are used by the residents of the City of Los Angeles. Figures B-1 and B-2 provide an outline of these acreages. These acreages should be taken into consideration when looking at recommended guidelines. A regional open space plan would provide the ability to look at the entire region as a whole.

Because of the many challenges facing the City of Los Angeles, its Department of Recreation and Parks (Department) identified the need to develop a citywide park master plan and a five-year capital improvement plan. The first step in preparing these planning tools is to conduct a Community Needs Assessment (Needs Assessment) to help identify, quantify, and preliminarily prioritize the tremendous needs for recreation and open space. A high level review was also performed of Recreation and Park Department facility and recreation program assessment findings in an attempt to address the various facilities needing improvements to meet current and future needs, prevent future maintenance problems, and offer positive alternatives to an increasingly dense and urbanized population. A sampling of recreation program assessments was also conducted. It is recommended that a more detailed assessment be performed in the master/strategic planning process. The last Recreation and Parks Needs Assessment was completed in 1999 and was dependent upon a limited number of public workshops and a random mailed survey as outreach tools. Advances in technology have vastly expanded the outreach and analysis tools available for this type of study. This Needs Assessment utilized email, interactive web pages, blog postings and other web based tools in addition to traditional methods of communication. Extensive GIS mapping based on US Census data was utilized to study demographics which was then combined with the Department's facilities inventory to create service area mapping.

The team of Mia Lehrer + Associates with PROS Consulting, LLC (MLA/PROS Team) was retained to work closely with the Department to conduct the Needs Assessment. The MLA/PROS Team was also joined by The Robert Group to assist in identifying stakeholders and implementing the public participation program. The Needs Assessment was designed to gather and analyze information regarding what the current and future recreational needs are and establish a preliminary prioritization process to help direct subsequent physical planning and cost estimating. The entire document prepared by the MLA/PROS Team, including appendices, may be found online at www.laparks.org.

PURPOSE AND PROCESS

The City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks retained the team of Mia Lehrer + Associates and PROS Consulting (Project Team) to conduct the Community Needs Assessment. The objectives of the overall planning process are: to preliminarily prioritize and address the tremendous needs for additional recreation and park land, to identify existing facilities needing improvements to meet current and future community needs, to identify recreation program needs, to perform demographic analysis, to prevent future maintenance problems, and to offer positive alternatives to an increasingly dense and urbanized population.

The objective of this Needs Assessment and the subsequent master planning process is to develop strategies to help prioritize and address the tremendous challenges the Department faces, such as:

- Acquiring additional recreation and park land and finding opportunities for the reuse of land already in the public domain

- Updating of existing recreation facilities requiring improvements
- Preventing future maintenance problems through effective asset management of public amenities
- Offer positive recreational alternatives to an increasingly dense and urbanized population
- Identify key issues for the Department

The Needs Assessment project is a critical step in the Department of Recreation and Parks development of a Citywide Recreation and Parks Master Plan and a Five-year Capital Improvement Plan supporting a new vision for the City of Los Angeles' Recreation and Parks Department. The Needs Assessment will also serve as the foundation for other long range planning initiatives.

The Needs Assessment included a comprehensive community outreach and input process that engaged community leaders, stakeholders and the public across the City through a series of one-on-one interviews, focus groups and community forums followed by a statistically valid, citywide household survey. The overall Needs Assessment process included six data assessment phases targeted at gaining the critical input to identify and prioritize the various facilities, programming, operational and maintenance needs based on the principles and values of a very diverse community, resulting in the framework for a comprehensive and defensible Needs Assessment to serve as a "living document" and decision-making tool for the Department to follow. One of the mechanisms we put in place to receive ongoing input is via an Advisory Group made up of a cross section of key leaders in the City. This Advisory Group met various times throughout the process to offer input and guidance to the MLA/PROS Team.

A major element of the Needs Assessment is the development of the PROS Community Values Model framework. This model is used to synthesize and organize the community values and principles from the collected information. The Community Values Model framework can ultimately be translated into a "balanced scorecard" that will serve as the detailed action plan and implementation tool with prioritized goals and objectives along with supporting strategies, actions, priorities and timelines, and implementation teams.

The Los Angeles Parks Foundation, established in the spring of 2008, is a not-for-profit organization that will support the objectives of the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks. The mission of the Foundation is to enhance, preserve and expand the recreational opportunities and facilities of the over 400 city parks that serve the people of Los Angeles. In addition, the Foundation is seeking to enhance the departments' public visibility allowing residents to take full advantage of programs and facilities.

The Foundation provides aid where the City of Los Angeles cannot to raise funds to improve park facilities, and purchase property for future parkland. The Foundation is developing various support programs including Friend of the Parks, Adopt-A-Park, and Donate-A-Bench as well as corporate and foundation support. As of the spring of 2009, the Foundation has made over \$200,000 in grants to the departments for Mounted Horse Patrol for Griffith Park, Bark for the Cure, swimsuits for children at the 109th Street Pool, major infrastructure improvements to Westwood Recreation Center and a series of Plug Into Your Park electronic recycling events. More information on the Foundation can be found at its website at www.laparksfoundation.org.

COMMUNITY INPUT

A successful planning process must incorporate a comprehensive community input process, to gauge the residents and users of the system desires and usage characteristics, and ultimately need, for park and recreation facilities and programs. This Needs Assessment was developed through a robust and varied community input process. This process ensured that recommendations and strategies developed in this process can be translated into an action plan developed in a future Recreation and Park Master Plan.

A four ringed process for community input was utilized as the foundation for the Needs Assessment by the Department of Recreation and Parks and the MLA/PROS Team. The Team conducted twenty-six (26) Key Leadership Interviews, twenty-four (24) Focus Groups, twenty-three (23) Community Workshops/Public Forums, a city-wide, statistically valid survey, an on-line survey, infrastructure and recreation program analysis as well as demographic analysis.



Key Leadership Interviews provided input from a broad cross-section of interest groups and individuals representing a wide range of social, economic, and environmental groups. The interviews solicited the opinions of local leaders who might otherwise not have been able to commit their time to this lengthy process.

Each of the twenty-four (24) Focus Groups were held to identify visions, values, and key issues relating to the Needs Assessment Study and to provide insight into facility and program needs. Focus Groups targeted the public with two distinct strategies in order to bring together similar groups to explore common goals. Groups were designed to reflect unique geographic locations and specific topics or interests.

COMMUNITY SURVEY FINDINGS

The Needs Assessment included a Community Attitude and Interest Survey during the summer of 2008 to establish priorities for the future improvement of parks and recreation facilities, programs and services within the community. The survey was designed to obtain statistically valid results from households throughout the City of Los Angeles. The survey was administered by a combination of mail and phone.

Leisure Vision worked extensively with City of Los Angeles officials, as well as members of the MLA/PROS project team, in the development of the survey questionnaire. This work allowed the survey to be tailored to issues of strategic importance in order to effectively gauge the current community needs and plan for the future system.

Leisure Vision mailed surveys to a random sample of 14,000 households in the City of Los Angeles. Approximately three days after the surveys were mailed, each household that received a survey also received an electronic voice message encouraging them to complete the survey. In addition,

approximately two weeks after the surveys were mailed, Leisure Vision began contacting households via telephone. Those who indicated they had not returned the survey were given the option of completing the questionnaire by phone.

The survey response goal was to obtain a minimum of 2,800 completed surveys. This goal was exceeded with a total of 2,925 completed and returned surveys. The results of the random sample of 2,925 households produced a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least +/- 1.8%.

SURVEY FINDINGS: NEED FOR PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS

Unmet citizen needs exist for a wide range of parks, trails, outdoor and indoor facilities and programs. Respondents were presented a list of 30 various parks and recreation facilities and were asked to indicate which ones they and members of their household experienced a need for. The parks and recreation facilities with the highest percentage of need from respondent households are: walking and biking trails (63%), small neighborhood parks (60%), large community and regional parks (53%), shelters and picnic areas (50%) and nature trails (46%).

Programs were analyzed from a list of 23 potential recreation programs. Respondents were asked to indicate all of the programs for which they and members of their household have a need.

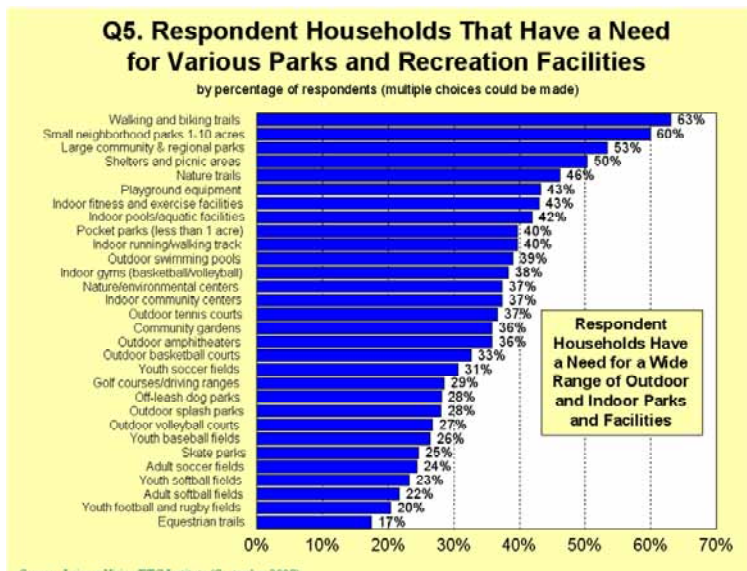


Figure C

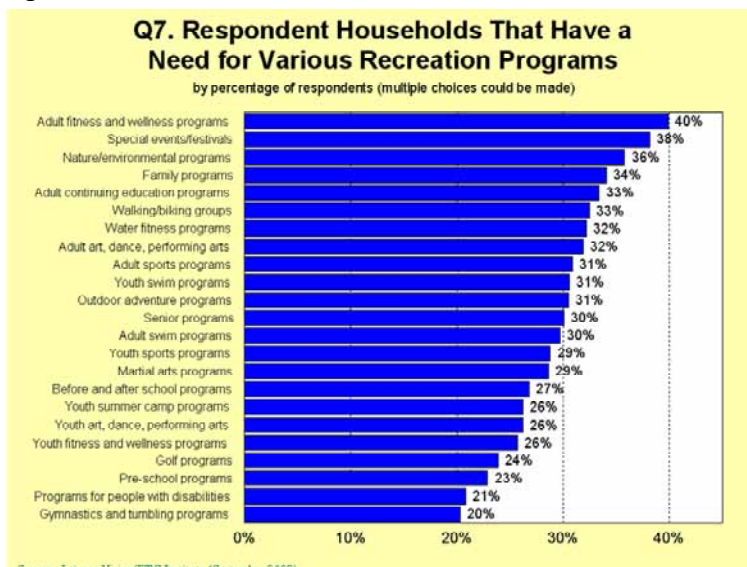


Figure D

DEMOGRAPHIC AND TRENDS ANALYSIS

The Demographic Analysis provides an understanding of the population characteristics of the potential Los Angeles Recreation and Park participatory base. This analysis demonstrates the overall size of the total population by specific age segment, race and ethnicity, and economic status and spending power of the residents through household income statistics.

METHODOLOGY

Demographic data used for the analysis was obtained from Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (ESRI), the largest research and development organization dedicated to Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and specializing in population projections and market trends. All data was acquired in August 2008 and reflects actual numbers as reported in the 2000 Census and demographic projections for 2008 and 2013 as estimated by ESRI. Straight line linear regression was utilized for projected 2018 and 2023 demographics.

DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

In terms of population growth, the City of Los Angeles has grown at a relatively flat steady annual rate since the 2000 Census (where the City population was slightly less than 3,695,000 persons). Currently, the City has an estimated population of 3,966,799 persons. This slight increase indicates that the typical population movement from the urban core to suburban areas (which many large cities across the nation have experienced) was most likely offset by a migration of persons to the city. When considering age distribution, the population of persons aged 55 and above is over 5% less than the national average. In contrast, the largest single age group in the City is persons aged less than 20 years (nearly 30% of the total population).

Gender distribution throughout the City parallels national trends and holds at nearly equal. Men still outnumber women in gender participatory trends but the gap has decreased with 63.7% of women participating in an activity at least once per year compared to 64.2% of men.

The City of Los Angeles remains one of the most diverse urban centers in the nation. A majority of 57% of the populace is classified as non-white. Each of the four major racial categories tracked by the U.S. government is represented by at least 10% of the total population. Since the 2000 Census, the percentage of persons classified as Asian, "Some Other Race" or "Two or More Races" increase exponentially when compared to all other races (including white, black/African American and American Indian).

Currently, the City has an estimated 1,331,498 households, equating to an average household size of 2.92 persons. Family households account for nearly 63% of all households. The estimated median and average household incomes for 2008 are \$47,852 and \$76,770 respectively. Both figures imply that the purchasing power of the average Los Angeles resident is lower than his or her counterpart elsewhere, especially given the high cost of living in the state of California.

RECREATION AND SPORTS TRENDS

Information released by American Sports Data, Inc.'s (ASD) *2008 Superstudy of Sports Participation* reveals that most of the popular sport and recreational activities include swimming, walking, jogging, bicycling, and weight training. Most of these activities appeal to both young and old alike, can be done in most environments, can be enjoyed regardless of level of skill, have minimal economic barriers to entry and have appeal because of the associated social aspects. Swimming and walking have remained two of the most popular activities of the past decade (with 87.2 million Americans swimming and 87.3 million American walking at least once during 2007).

Non-traditional recreation and fitness activities that have gained in popularity in recent years include wakeboarding, paintball, wall climbing, mountain biking, BMX biking, and snowboarding, all of which are part of the "extreme sports" category. Typically, these activities are targeted towards and participated in by the younger generation. Nationwide trends and the sheer number of events held demonstrate the high growth of endurance running events like the marathons, half-marathons, biathlons, triathlons and ironmen races.

From a traditional team sport standpoint, basketball ranks highest among all sports in terms of participatory base with 32.3 million persons reportedly participating in 2007. Ice hockey has shown a slight decline in popularity in 2007 following an all time high in participation in 2006. Racquetball, lacrosse and tackle football are currently experiencing resurgences in participation and have seen double digit growth in recent years.

Culturally, recreation trends vary by race and ethnicity throughout the City. This may be due to a lack of access or proximity to certain recreation facilities in addition to cultural characteristics. For instance, participation data illustrates that the white population has a stronger affinity for outdoor non-traditional sports while the black/African American population has historically participated in active team sports, most notably football, basketball and baseball. Hispanic/Latino Americans have strong cultural and community traditions with an emphasis placed on the extended family, often gathering in large recreational groups where multiple activities geared towards all age segments of the group may participate. Previous studies have found that the Asian American population prefers family activities and facilities and is especially interested in children's programs that are geared toward academic achievement. Given that different ethnic groups have different needs in terms of recreational activities, the unique recreational needs of a diverse population will be an important consideration of any future plans for improvements to the recreation and parks system.

PARK, FACILITY, AND PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

A tour of representative parks throughout the City was performed by the team and City staff. During this tour general observations included:

- General state and condition of buildings and facilities
- Compatibility with user groups
- Aesthetics and design
- Safety and security
- Public access

- Connectivity
- Program balance

SUMMARY FINDINGS

The following is a summary of key findings from the on-site assessments:

- In general all of the parks visited were very well used. While many of the parks and facilities were older and showed signs of age, the level of maintenance was good, especially considering how heavily the parks are used. Most of the facilities could be described as being in a mature to declining lifecycle stage as opposed to being in the introduction or growth stage. This is partly a reflection of the particular parks visited which included very few newly constructed parks.
- Although a variety of parks types were visited, most exhibited an overbearing similarity in the design of the facilities. It appears that during the most active period of park development a series of standard designs were utilized for buildings and site facilities. More recently developed parks diverged with a welcome sense of originality. Parks developed in earlier periods exhibited buildings designed with attention to detail, context and scale, intended to fit into their neighborhood. Some buildings contained significant architectural elements such as fireplaces, terrazzo floors and other detailing suffering from lack of upkeep. The need for 'bulletproof' buildings, athletic facilities and site furnishings has sapped most signs of personality from the parks. Reluctance or inability to invest in relatively expensive retaining walls and terracing of hillside sites has reduced the useable area in some parks. Efforts to reduce maintenance costs in landscaped areas has produced a monotonous vocabulary of canopy trees and grass which further reduces the personality of the parks and does little to provide any benefits from natural areas.
- Ball and soccer fields were the most heavily used year round with swimming pools being heavily used during the summer months. Many of the recreational fields observed were in poor condition due to heavy use. Fields in better condition had the benefit of scheduled rest periods where other facilities were available nearby.
- Most park offices had limited visibility of the park, making it difficult to observe goings on in the park and contributing to security issues. The hidden offices also make visual contact with park staff more infrequent, contributing to the sense that the parks are poorly staffed.
- Among the parks toured, some parks appeared to have insufficient on-site parking. Most of these parks did have adjacent on-street parking.
- Some parks had portions enclosed by chain link field fencing making pedestrian access difficult, and reducing the quality of the appearance.
- Entrances to the parks and the recreation centers were poorly identified. Little if any information about the park programs and facilities was posted outside the park buildings.
- Facility age and quality was variable within the system. All park buildings and facilities appeared to be heavily and efficiently used; in most cases every spare inch was utilized. This was most apparent during the summer months when summer camp adds full day programs and exponential growth to the daily schedule.

- Donated computer labs were available at some facilities. The supply of computers for afterschool programs, seniors or others who would like to do research is extremely inequitable throughout the system.
- Most of the parks observed had some picnic areas which are heavily used on the weekends. A number of the parks had extremely large picnic areas where reservations are required.
- Most parks had irrigation systems which needed repair which resulted in poor field conditions or other maintenance issues. The department has been working to upgrade outdated irrigation systems and install new weather smart irrigation controllers in order to reduce the amount of potable water used to irrigate the City's parks and facilities.
- The existing signage system is haphazard and should be expanded to include systematic directional, regulatory, information and interpretive signage.
- Infrastructure evaluations have been done by the Department for each facility. As a whole the department's facilities are older, overused and in need of updating. The department is addressing these needs as funding and staffing permit.

COMMUNITY VALUES MODEL FRAMEWORK

The Community Values Model™ synthesizes the value and merit expressed by the various mediums of community involvement. This model is adapted from the balanced scorecard concept; the accumulated information will provide the framework which can be translated into a Strategy Matrix that will ultimately serve as the detailed action plan and implementation tool in the eventual Master/Strategic Plan, including goals, objectives, strategies, actions, priorities/timelines, and stakeholders.

This framework of principles is categorized into six integral operational components, including:

- Community Mandates/Priorities – overarching principles of community and mandatory elements for facilities, programs, and services
- Standards – guidelines associated with land, open space, facilities, programs, and potential correlating maintenance requirements
- Levels of Service – levels of service delivery of core services/programs and role of Department in delivery versus other service providers
- Financial and Revenue – funding mechanisms to support operations and capital
- Partnerships – potential for public/public, public/not-for-profit, and public/private partnering for facility and program delivery
- Governance and Organizational – design/alignment of the organization to effectively and efficiently support the vision and values of community

The bulleted framework is presented by category in the body of this report. Framework bullets are not presented in order of importance; each is randomly listed. It is the intent of the Project Team that the framework will be refined into a strategy matrix representative of the community values during the detailed master/strategic planning process.

PRIORITIZED NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The purpose of the Draft Facility and Program Needs Assessment is to provide a prioritized list of facility/amenity needs and recreation program needs for the residents of the City of Los Angeles. The Needs Assessment evaluated both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data included the statistically valid Community Survey, which asked 2,925 Los Angeles residents to identify unmet needs and rank their importance. Qualitative data included resident and stakeholder feedback obtained in Focus Group meetings, Key Leader Interviews, and Public Forums.

A weighted scoring system was utilized to determine the priorities for park and recreation facilities/amenities and recreation programs. This scoring system considers the following:

- Community survey – measurement of unmet needs and importance placed on assets and amenities by the community for facilities and recreation programs
 - Unmet need analysis
 - A factor from the total number of households mentioning their need for facilities and recreation programs
 - Survey participants were asked to identify the need for 30 different facilities and 23 recreation programs
 - Need was defined as being met on a scale of 100%, 75%, 50%, 25%, or 0%
 - Unmet need was given a weighted factor of four (4)
 - Importance ranking for facilities
 - Normalized factor, converted from the percent ranking of programs to a base number
 - Survey participants were asked to identify the top 4 facility needs and top 4 recreation program needs - in terms of importance to their households
 - Importance of asset/amenity was given a weighted factor of three (3)
- Consultant evaluation
 - Factor derived from the consultant’s evaluation of program and facility importance based on demographics, trends, and the balance of the community input process
 - Professional evaluation was given a weighted factor of three (3)

These weighted scores were then summed to provide an overall score and priority ranking for the system as a whole. The results of the priority ranking were tabulated into three categories: High Priority, Medium Priority, and Low Priority.

The combined total of the weighted scores for Community Unmet Needs, Community Priority and Consultant Evaluation is the total score based on which the Facility/Amenity and Program Priority is determined. The figures below present an overall picture for the City of Los Angeles.

Figure E shows that walking and biking trails, small neighborhood parks and indoor fitness/exercise facilities were the top three facilities/amenities.

Figure F identifies Adult Fitness and Wellness Programs, Special Events/Festivals and Nature/environmental programs as the three core program areas that merited the highest priority.

Los Angeles Facility / Amenity Priority Rankings	
	Overall Ranking
Walking and biking trails	1
Small Neighborhood Parks	2
Indoor Fitness and Exercise Facilities	3
Indoor Pools / Aquatic Facilities	4
Nature Trails	5
Shelters and Picnic Areas	6
Indoor Running / Walking Tracks	7
Outdoor Swimming Pools	8
Indoor Gyms	9
Large community parks and regional parks	10
Playground Equipment	11
Community Gardens	12
Pocket Parks	13
Nature / Environmental Center	14
Indoor Community Centers	15
Off-leash dog park	16
Outdoor Tennis Courts	17
Outdoor Amphitheater	18
Outdoor Basketball courts	19
Youth Soccer Fields	20
Golf Courses / Driving Ranges	21
Outdoor Splash Parks	22
Skate Parks	23
Outdoor Volleyball courts	24
Adult Soccer Fields	25
Youth Baseball Fields	26
Youth softball fields	27
Adult Softball Fields	28
Youth Football and Rugby Fields	29
Equestrian Trails	30

Figure E

Los Angeles Program Priority Rankings	
	Overall Ranking
Adult fitness & wellness programs	1
Special events/festivals	2
Nature/environmental programs	3
Walking/biking groups	4
Family programs	5
Adult continuing education programs	6
Adult art, dance, performing arts	7
Youth swim programs	8
Water fitness programs	9
Senior programs	10
Adult swim programs	11
Adult sports programs	12
Outdoor adventure programs	13
Youth sports programs	14
Youth fitness & wellness programs	15
Martial arts programs	16
Before & after school programs	17
Youth art, dance, performing arts	18
Youth summer camp programs	19
Pre-school programs	20
Golf programs	21
Programs for people with disabilities	22
Gymnastics & tumbling programs	23

Figure F

SERVICE AREA ANALYSIS

The service area population of an asset represents the market size or pool of potential users that a specific asset can potentially support. Graphically mapping service areas demonstrates the equity distribution of assets based on population density by census tract of the City. Service area maps illustrate gaps or overlaps among like assets and amenities within the system as a whole.

Service area guidelines are utilized to accurately gauge the distribution and coverage of a park systems major assets and amenities devoid of any discriminatory actions. This graphical depiction of asset distribution assists in identifying where assets may be needed or where an assemblage of assets saturates an area. This preliminary analysis is a tool to use in planning appropriate capital improvement needs to deliver the highest level of service in an equitable manner. However, these service areas should only serve as a guide in decision making. The factors utilized and corresponding maps must be coupled with conventional wisdom and judgment related to the particular situation and needs of the community.

A service area is defined as the area that encompasses a park, asset, or amenity whose radius encompasses the corresponding population associated with the guidelines established for an individual asset. The standard approach in GIS equity/service area mapping is to take the centroid of the site

(center of the park polygon) and define how far out from the centroid a circle or ring must “travel” to equal the service area population. Preliminary service area guidelines are based on the population that an asset can serve, not on accessibility. Accessibility is based on available transportation routes, local traffic patterns, willingness of local users to travel a certain distance to access amenities (this varies from community to community; Census average commute times can be used for a basis), willingness to travel to other communities, etc.

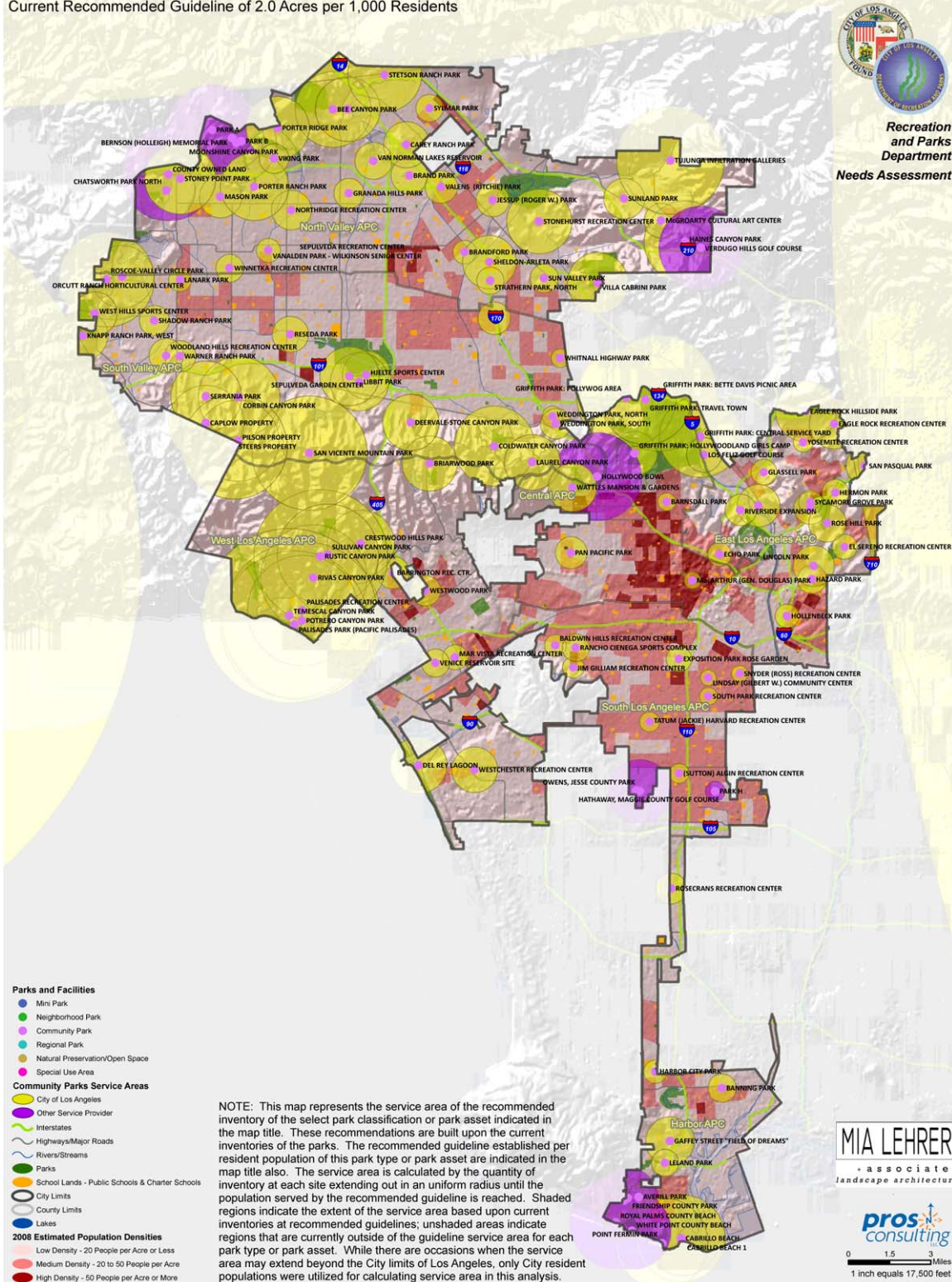
Population density also plays a role in the size of the service area. The more densely populated an area is surrounding a site the smaller the service ring will be. This is due to the service population theoretically being encompassed in a shorter radius from their homes – an example would be multi-family housing or large scale zero-lot-line neighborhood located next to a park, as opposed to a traditional lot-sized single family neighborhood – the multi-family and compacted neighborhood developments are assumed to be denser. However, mobility factors may affect access options. These factors need additional research and analysis during the strategic master planning process.

There are certain assets, for example, playgrounds and picnic areas that meet the guidelines for current and projected populations. In such cases, the City would be well served by focusing their efforts on planning and developing assets that have a higher deficit per the Facility/Amenity Guidelines matrix and rank high on the Prioritized Needs Assessment matrix. However, a periodic assessment of the condition and maintenance levels for assets and amenities should be undertaken to ensure that lifecycles meet the required maintenance standards and are in a condition to be used by the community. The following images provide a sampling of the service area maps compiled during the course of the Community-Wide Needs Assessment:



Community Parks Service Area Map
Current Recommended Guideline of 2.0 Acres per 1,000 Residents

City of Los Angeles, California



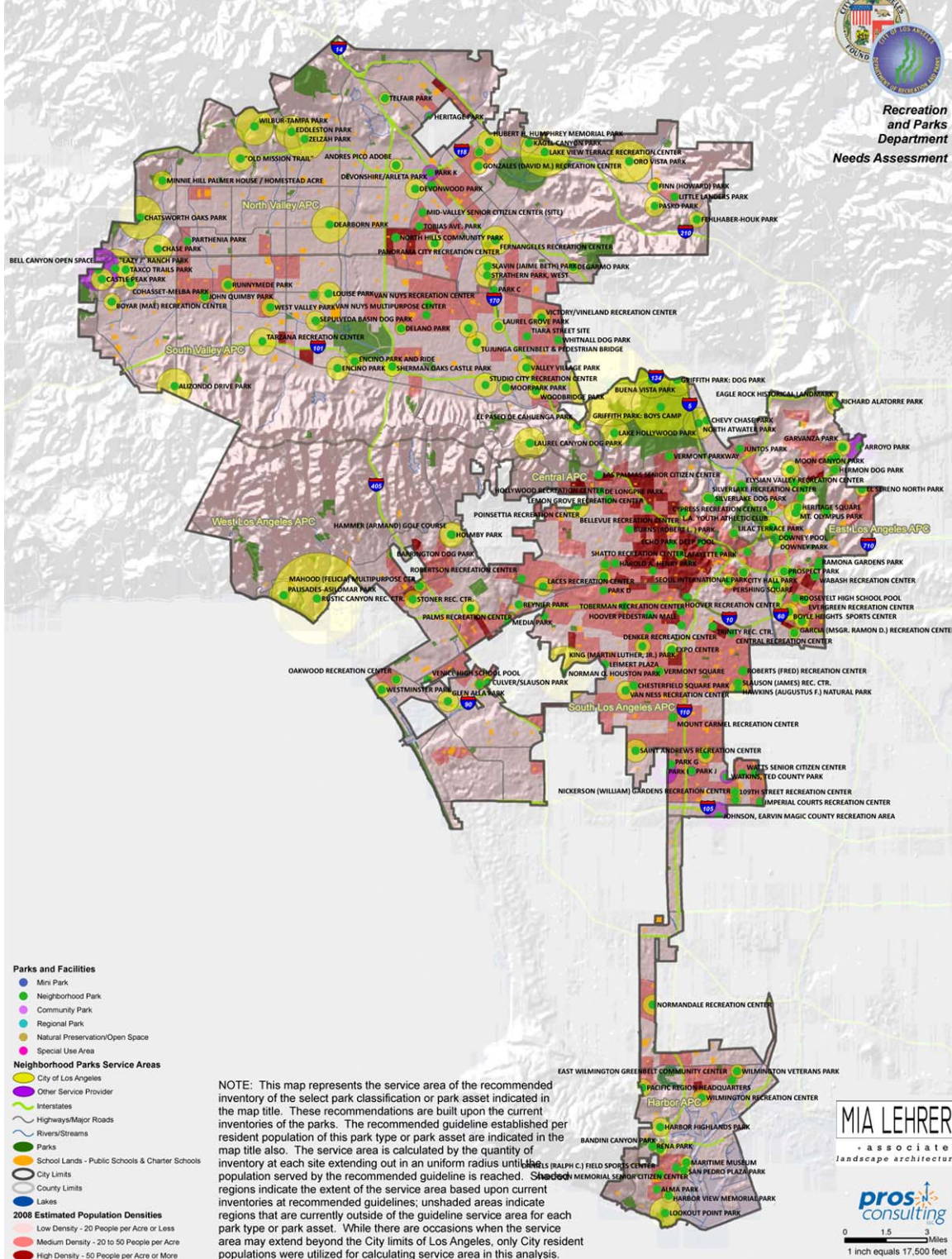


Neighborhood Parks Service Area Map
Current Recommended Guideline of 1.5 Acres per 1,000 Residents

City of Los Angeles, California



Recreation and Parks
Department
Needs Assessment



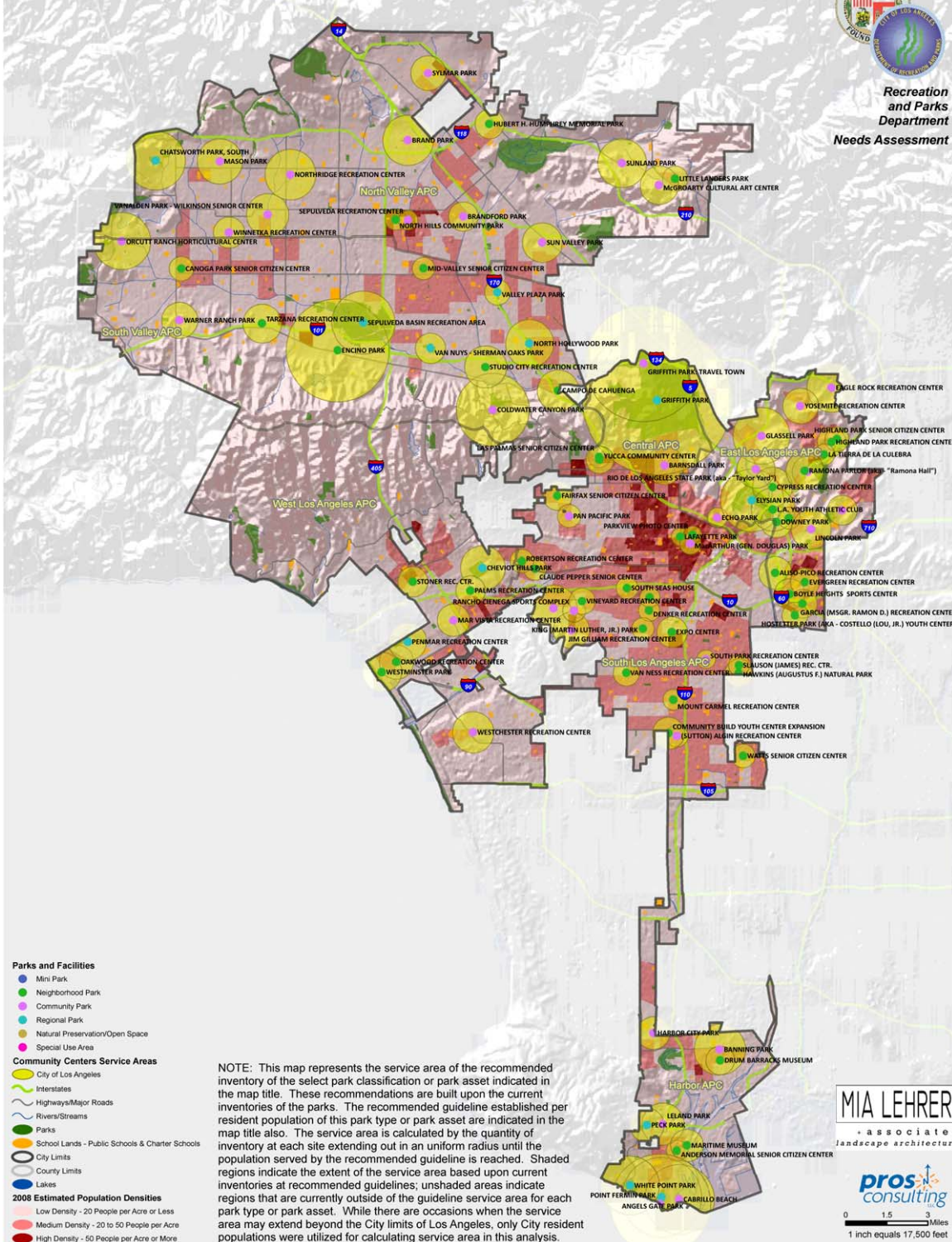


Community Centers Service Area Map
Current Recommended Guideline of 1 Square Foot per Resident
Community Centers Include Museums and Childcare, Community, Cultural, Senior, Teen/Youth and Therapeutic Centers

City of Los Angeles, California



Recreation and Parks Department
Needs Assessment



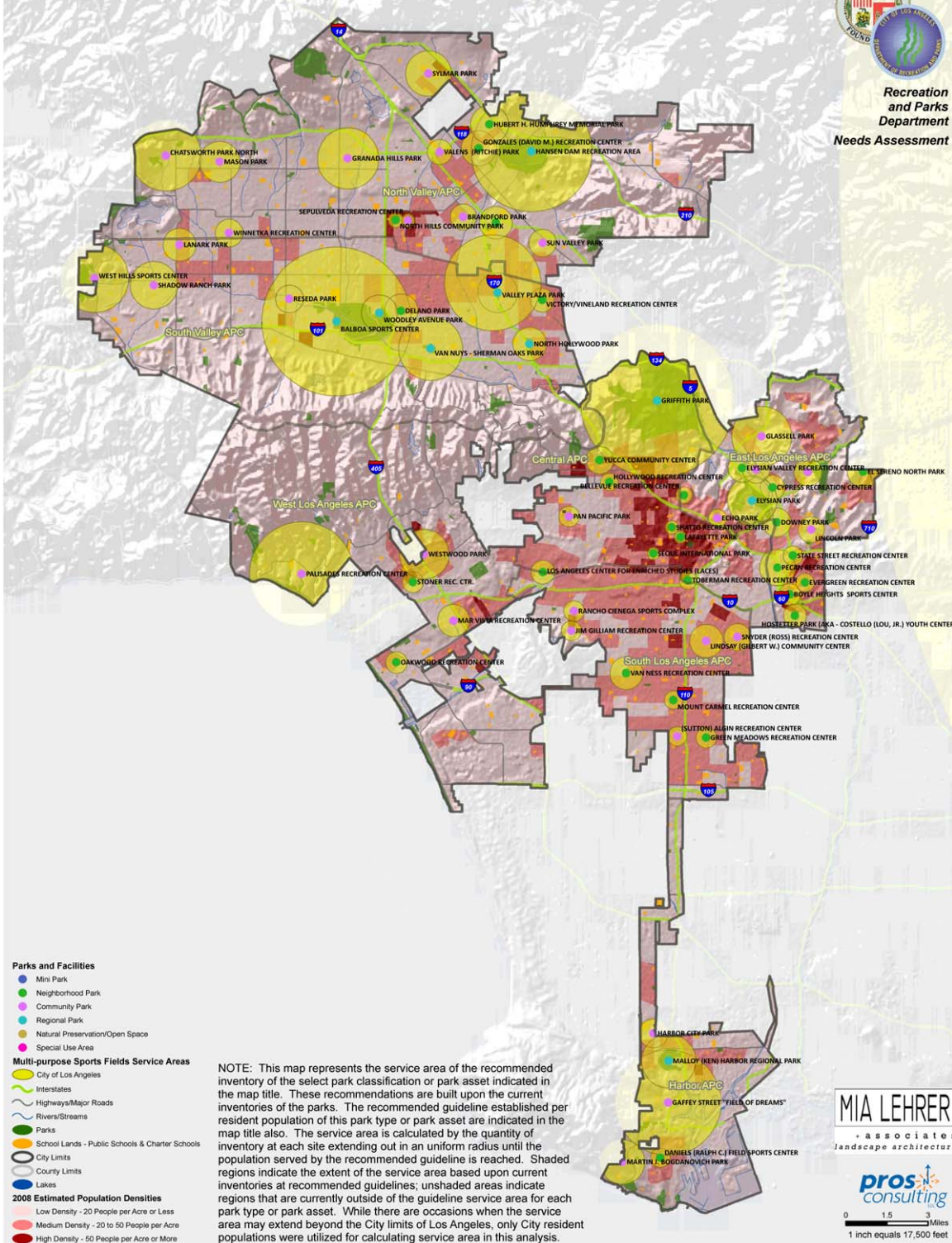


Multi-purpose Sports Fields Service Area Map
Current Recommended Guideline of 1 Field per 8,000 Residents
Multi-purpose Sports Fields Include Multi-purpose Sports Fields and Soccer Fields

City of Los Angeles, California



Recreation and Parks Department
Needs Assessment



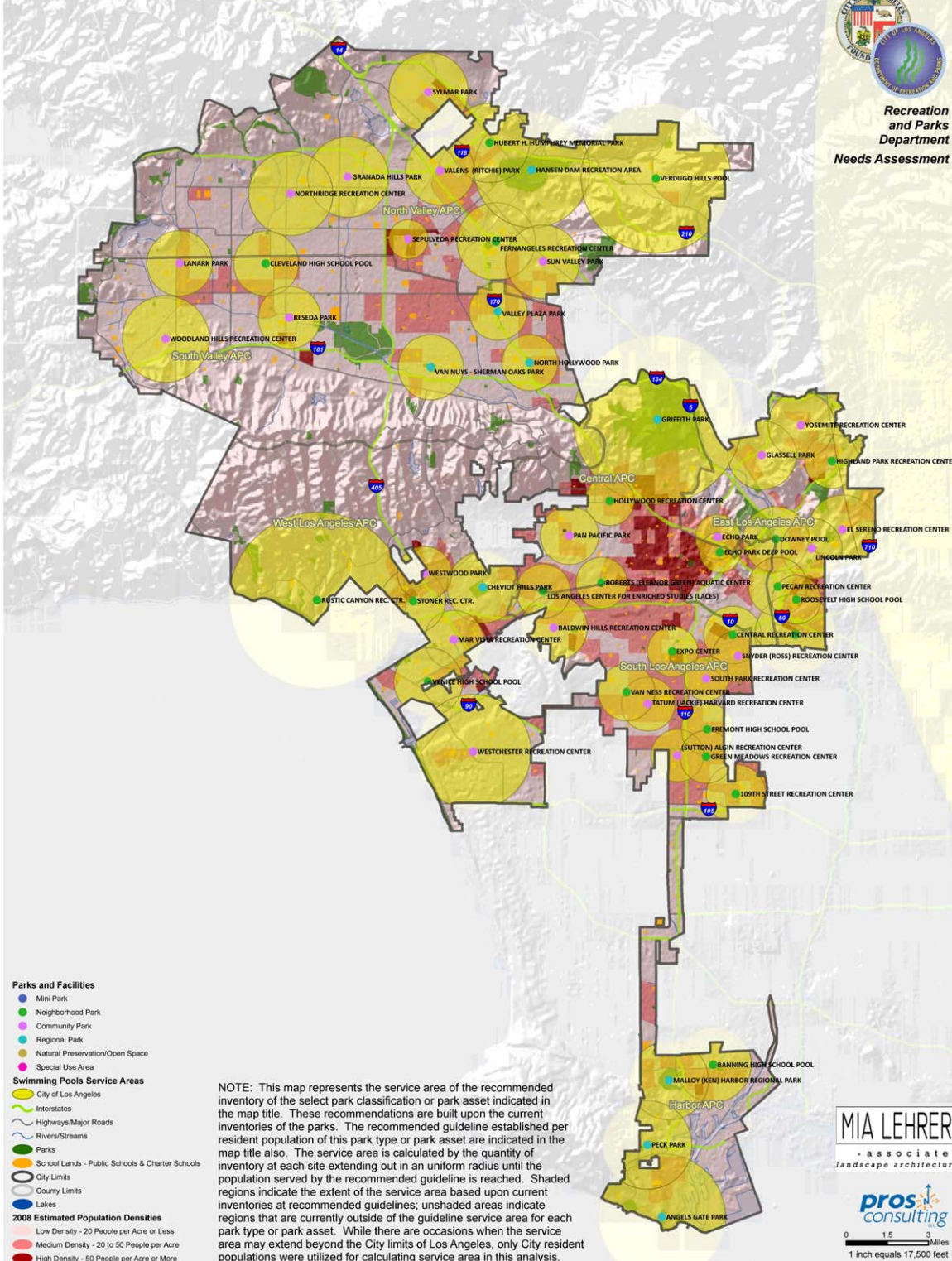


Swimming Pools Service Area Map
Current Recommended Guideline of 1 Site per 50,000 Residents

City of Los Angeles, California



Recreation and Parks Department
Needs Assessment



LOS ANGELES RECREATION AND PARK PRELIMINARY FACILITY/AMENITY GUIDELINES

Preliminary facility guidelines define the service areas based on market structure which support investment decisions related to facilities and amenities. Preliminary facility and amenity guidelines are the result of a static measurement of a very dynamic relationship. Preliminary guidelines can and will change over time as the program lifecycles change and demographics of a community change.

Detailed inventory data from which the guidelines were derived was approved and accepted by the Recreation and Parks Department.

PARK AND OPEN SPACE GUIDELINES

Park classifications utilized for the Community Needs Assessment are defined as follows:

- Mini parks – based on acreage totals for parks which are less than 1 acre in size
- Neighborhood parks – based on acreage totals for parks which are 1 – 10 acres in size
- Community parks – based on acreage totals for parks which are 10 – 50 acres in size
- Regional and large urban parks – based on acreage totals for parks which are 50+ acres in size; includes sport parks

Current inventories for all public parks and open space – general park land in terms of acreage totals – exceed 36,000 acres. These include Recreation and Park lands and County land within the city-limits. Private holdings providing a public, merit, or private good to the community were not inventoried for this project due to the magnitude of such undertaking. It is recommended that these assets be inventoried prior to any master/strategic planning process.

Total acreages by category are:

- Mini parks – 50.76 total acres; 94.7% of total mini park acreage inventoried is City owned
- Neighborhood parks – 773.72 total acres; 94.0% of total neighborhood park acreage inventoried is City owned
- Community parks – 2,763 total acres; 87.3% of total community park acreage inventoried is City owned
- Regional and large urban parks – 33,889 total acres; 38.3% of total regional/large urban park acreage inventoried is City owned
 - Regional/large urban park land is the only category of which the City does not own the gross majority of total acreage; much of the non-City owned acreage is attributable to the Santa Monica Mountain Conservancy, the Angeles National Forest, Topanga State Park, and Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park
- Total park acreage studied - 37,477 total acres; 43.6% of total inventoried acreage is City owned

Based on these inventories, current service level for all park land is 9.231 acres per 1,000 persons; however, this number is drastically skewed by the large number of regional/large urban park land (89.5% of all acreage falls into the regional/large urban park classification). Current service levels for all four park classifications utilized for this study are:

- Mini parks – 0.013 acres per 1,000 persons
- Neighborhood parks – 0.198 acres per 1,000 persons
- Community parks – 0.759 acres per 1,000 persons
- Regional and large urban parks – 8.261 acres per 1,000 persons
- Total parks – 9.231 acres per 1,000 persons

Typically, legacy systems – park and/or recreation systems that have evolved with the market and population base over decades – face multiple challenges when addressing the need for additional development. Lack of available undeveloped land, cost of land acquisition, and the ramifications of removing private land from the tax base are some of the challenges. Preliminary recommended service levels considered these potential challenges associated with the acquisition of park land, including acquisition costs and/or opportunity costs, in developing realistic guidelines for the Department. Preliminary recommended service level guidelines are:

- Mini parks – 0.10 acres per 1,000 persons;
- Neighborhood parks – 1.50 acres per 1,000 persons;
- Community parks – 2.00 acres per 1,000 persons;
- Regional and large urban parks – 6.00 acres per 1,000 persons; current inventories meet and/or exceed the service level for the recommended guideline, therefore, no additional regional/large urban park land is required over the next 5-years (2008 to 2013)
- Total parks – 9.60 acres per 1,000 persons;

It is recommended that prior to any development considerations, a comprehensive master planning process should occur to ensure that capital and operational ramifications are properly understood.

Asset/Amenity Guidelines

Major assets and amenities were also analyzed for the purpose of guideline development. Current service levels are based on inventories for all public recreational assets and amenities; as with the general park lands, inventories include only those assets/amenities owned by the Recreation and Park Department and the County. Private assets/amenities located within the community were not inventoried for this project due to the magnitude of such undertaking. Current inventories and service levels are:

- Playgrounds – 383 total; 1 structure per 10,205 persons
- Swimming Pools – 58 total; 1 site per 67,388 persons
- Splashpad – 9 total; 1 site per 434,280 persons
- Picnic Areas – 286 total; 1 site per 13,666 persons
- Baseball Fields/Softball Fields – 253 total; 1 field per 15,449 persons
- Rectangular Fields (Football, Soccer, Lacrosse, et al.) – 170 total; 1 field per 22,991 persons
- Basketball Courts – 212 total; 1 court per 18,436 persons
- Tennis Courts – 321 total; 1 court per 12,176 persons
- Volleyball Courts – 32 total; 1 court per 122,141 persons
- Dog Parks – 9 total; 1 site per 434,280 persons
- Skate parks – 9 total; 1 site per 434,280 persons
- Community/Cultural Center Space (Square Feet) – 1,502,000 square feet; 0.38 square feet per person
- Recreation/Fitness Center Space (Square Feet) – 2,101,000 square feet; 0.54 square feet per person

Assets/amenities in a legacy system generally have a direct relationship with park lands in terms of inventories and needs. As could be expected, if there is a shortage of park land, typically, assets and

amenities are lacking as well. Although a need exists for all asset/amenities studied, unlike park land, acquisition and/or development of individual asset categories require less capital investment and most assets/amenities can be clustered. This allows asset/amenity service levels to be met much quicker and with modest planning and investment.

It is recommended that all acquisition be done from a comprehensive approach utilizing the guidelines as a decision making tool. The intent of planning and maintaining with guidelines is to avoid acquisition of non-planned assets/amenities that could lead to increased obligations of operations and maintenance of the Department's inventories as a whole. Any preliminary recommended guidelines need additional research and analysis during the strategic master planning process to determine final guidelines, goals and objectives.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following are the main key issues brought forward from input components by the community. The issues listed are not in order of priority, nor are they the only issues mentioned throughout the process; however, these were the issues most often mentioned that need to be addressed.

Key land issues related to parks and recreation that were expressed as important elements for the Department are as follows:

Parks and Facilities Needs

- The City lacks the appropriate levels of neighborhood and community parks that are close to home and parks are not equitably distributed
- The amount of park land available in the City is low for the level of density in the City and would like more land for mini-parks, neighborhood parks, community parks and downtown parks. Need more parks in redevelopment areas and should look to use brownfields that could be restored for public parks
- Concern that some parks are unsafe and controlled by gangs and lack significant security, keeping people away from using the park in a productive manner
- Parks are in need of infrastructure improvements to restrooms, parking areas, playgrounds, picnic facilities, sports courts, security lighting, irrigation systems, sports fields and general site conditions which encourages vandalism and keeps the community away from using the parks in a positive manner
- Lack of sports fields is a needed amenity the community desires and felt the Department has not addressed. The needs are great for sports facilities for both youth and adults
- Sustainable landscapes in parks are an important design element that the Department should incorporate into design standards
- Some existing parks are outdated in design. The Department needs to develop new design standards for parks in the future and customize the parks to the people living in the area that will be using the park

- Walkability of the City and the ability to walk in City parks. Loop and park perimeter trails are an amenity the community feels needs to be addressed by the Department to discourage obesity and promote health and wellness. Recreation programs can be added to promote health and fitness, such as nutrition, cooking and physical activity classes
- The Department must create a balance of park types and manage by park and amenity standards that promote equal access
- Many citizens feel that parks are overused on weekends
- Los Angeles River improvements were brought forward as an issue that should be developed and improved for parks and recreation purposes

Department/Organization Issues

- The Department needs to improve maintenance standards for parks as it applies to cleaning, restroom care, graffiti removal, security lighting, trash removal, general painting, signage, and security in the parks
- Natural areas are not being maintained to the level the community expects to support conservation and wildlife in the City
- Park maintenance is an important issue that needs to be addressed. There is perceived to be a wide disparity level of care between how parks are maintained from poorer neighborhoods to more wealthy neighborhoods. Lack of staff presence in parks during the day and rangers and police at night for security purposes is an important issue
- Develop a Communications Plan to communicate the guidelines and priorities to the residents and within the Department
- Establish staff performance procedures to hold staff accountable for meeting the community desired standards recommended in this report
- Maintain and update the existing park inventory data on a yearly basis and account for the true asset value of the parks and recreation system. Invest a minimum of three to four percent of total system asset value in facilities identified to be in good condition to preserve what the Department already owns
- Develop and implement maintenance standards for all the parks and recreation facilities and fund them to the level the community expects and desires based on direct and indirect operational costs

Funding and Partnerships

- Partnering with other agencies and the school district on use of public property for parks that can serve each other's users is an important issue that needs to be addressed as a priority for the Department
- Almost all citizens recognize that The Department of Recreation and Parks is an underfunded agency and the community would like to see the City implement a new funding strategy as the existing funding strategy for recreation and parks is not working
- Available funding is not adequate for sufficient park land, facilities and program operations. Innovative solutions, including financing and partnerships, are options which should be explored to provide a better system to serve all residents both now and in the future

- Use of Quimby funds by the Department to acquire and upgrade parks is an issue the Department must address. The Department should address needs utilizing many options for funding, including bonds, joint use, additional fees, sales tax, etc. People are not clear on the Quimby decision making process

KEY PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

As a result of the Needs Assessment process, key preliminary recommendations which the Team considers significant are presented in the following list. However, the strategies and actions required for implementation will require a detailed master/strategic planning process. These comprehensive planning steps initiated by the Needs Assessment are only the beginning – the Project Team solicited the community’s input to determine what was needed. Preliminary guidelines were developed to assist in determining how to meet those needs at a broad scale. The following strategies and recommendations will assist in bridging the Needs Assessment with the future Master/Strategic Plan:

Department/Organization Issues

- Develop a Communications Plan to communicate the guidelines and priorities to the residents and within the Department
- Establish staff performance procedures to help staff meet the community desired standards recommended in this report
- Maintain and update the existing park inventory data on a yearly basis and account for the true asset value of the parks and recreation system. Invest a minimum of three to four percent of total system asset value in facilities identified to be in good condition to preserve what the Department already owns
- Revise maintenance standards for the parks and recreation facilities and funds them based on direct and indirect operational costs

Parks and Facilities Planning and Design

- Customize a strategy for each planning area to implement the preliminary guidelines recommended for parks, open space, recreation facilities and amenities based on the public’s desired priorities outlined in this report
- Remove amenities that are not well used or are in disrepair and replace with amenities the community desires
- Design parks and recreation facilities to earn revenue to offset operational costs. Increase concession areas
- Develop land acquisition strategies to include:
 - Outright purchases
 - Partnerships with other agencies
 - Land leases from other government or not for profit agencies, or others
 - Developer impact agreements based on the standards for open space desired

Funding and Partnerships

- Develop an updated pricing and revenue plan for the Department to offset capital and operational costs
- Establish funding strategies to meet the needs assessment recommendations including:
 - Land acquisition
 - Capital improvements for existing parks, facilities and amenities
 - New parks, facilities and amenities
 - Operations and maintenance to meet established standards and to meet community expectations
 - Recreation Programs
- Promote a major bond issue to improve existing parks and recreation facilities and amenities and add new amenities in underserved areas of the city based on the needs assessment. Seek outside infrastructure dollars from state and federal grants
- Work with appropriate agencies to modify the Quimby Code to allow funds to be used where and how they are truly needed in the City as a whole
- Develop integrated planning and design criteria and processes so that park planning becomes a highly valued and integral part of the City's General Plan and Community Plan updates. The job of managing City assets and coordinating between departments is a very complex task. It is important to insure that project planning is well integrated with other public agency initiatives and efforts including water quality, public safety, education, childcare, culture, job training and public health as parks provide a vital role in addressing these issues in addition to traditional benefits of recreation
- Partner with other open space districts, cities, and non-for-profit agencies to help in the delivery of open space needs, recreation facilities, and amenities to meet the standards and needs the community expects and desires
- Explore all possible ways to publicize the new Park Foundation and solicit support from Parks Friends Groups, Private Corporations, and other organizations