ELYSIAN PARK MASTER PLAN

For
City of Los Angeles
Department of Recreation and Parks
Councilmember Eric Garcetti, CD #13
Councilmember Ed Reyes, CD #1

June 2006

ELYSIAN PARK MASTER PLAN

CITY OF LOS ANGELES

Mayor Antonio R. Villaraigosa

Councilmember Ed P. Reyes
Council District #1

Councilmember Eric Garcetti
Council District #13

DEPARTMENT OF
RECREATION & PARKS

Jon Kirk Mukri, *General Manager*

Prepared by:
Withers & Sandgren, Ltd.

June 2006

MASTER PLAN PARTICIPANTS

CITY OF LOS ANGELES BUREAU OF ENGINEERING
Stephen Davis, *Project Manager*

CITY OF LOS ANGELES DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION AND PARKS
Mark Mariscal, *Superintendent of Griffith-Metro Region*
Bill Lopez, *Senior Park Maintenance Supervisor*
Peggy Kelly, *Park Maintenance Supervisor*

OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES
Mike Fong and Monica Aleman, *Council District #1*
Glen Dake and Mitch O'Farrell, *Council District #13*

CITIZENS COMMITTEE TO SAVE ELYSIAN PARK (CCSEP)
Pamela Burgess
Scott Fajack
Sallie Neubauer

GREATER ECHO PARK ELYSIAN NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL
Christine Peters

ELYSIAN VALLEY RIVERSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL
Steve Zimmer

HISTORIC CULTURAL NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL
Alicia Brown

LOS ANGELES DODGERS
Susan Wong

Prepared by:

WITHERS & SANDGREN LTD.
Landscape Architecture & Planning

Lacey Withers, *Principal*
Jan Sandgren, *Principal*
Patty B. Nalle, *Project Manager*
Celesta Pappas, *Graphic Designer*

Prepared with the assistance from the following professionals:

Lynne Dwyer Landscape Architecture
Landscape Architecture & Biology

Verna Jigour Associates
Conservation Ecology & Design Services

Linscott, Law & Greenspan Engineers (LLG)
Transportation Planning

Erik Sandgren
Artist

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS, *cont.*

APPENDICES

FIGURES & ILLUSTRATIONS

INTRODUCTION TO THE PARK

INTRODUCTION TO THE MASTER PLAN

Elysian Park is a vibrant, living remnant of our City's historic fabric. When the Portola expedition arrived at the future site of the Pueblo de Los Angeles in 1769, they camped at the foot of Buena Vista Hill near Broadway in what is now Elysian Park. The original Spanish land grant from King Carlos of Spain to the Pueblo included part of the Park.

As Los Angeles has matured into the multi-cultural megalopolis it is today, Elysian Park, the city's oldest Park, has quietly persisted as a refuge where a crowded populous can experience nature within an urban environment.

Today, the significance of the Park's 604 green acres is greater than ever. Los Angeles has the lowest number of open space acres per resident compared to any other major American city. Conserving and enhancing City parks and open space is critical to providing an improved quality of life for millions. The urban trails, inspirational overlooks, picnic spots and green recreation areas provide an oasis for both downtown residents and the numerous neighborhoods surrounding Elysian Park.

In 1886 Elysian Park rode the wave of the American desire to maintain open space and officially became a park. Today, in the year 2005, the Park is still in the middle of the collision between nature and urbanization. The decisions made now will impact the citizens of Los Angles for generations to come.

THE MASTER PLAN FOR ELYSIAN PARK

This Master Plan is a working list of action items that were determined by the community and the City as critical to the on-going improvement of the Park and to the citizens of greater Los Angeles who use and enjoy the Park. The decision to develop a new master plan grew out of the desire of local citizens to preserve and protect this great resource called Elysian Park.

This document became a reality through the generous commitment of local elected officials and the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks. Extensive input from the public in three community meetings has been recorded and folded into the plan.

Previously written articles and documents have extensively detailed the history of Elysian Park and documented patterns of Park utilization. The previous Master Plan for Elysian Park was completed in 1971. Plant ecologies have changed since then; traffic has grown; and there is a greater need than ever before for recreation. The ever present question is "Where is the Park going?"

This Master Plan draws on historic information to form a list of recommendations to improve existing conditions in the Park and to solve persistent problems that continue to deter Park use. These recommendations in the form of action items serve to 're-weave' the fabric of Elysian Park; to strengthen the pieces in order to revitalize the whole.

Not one area is perceived as its own place in Elysian Park. All areas are connected by the communities, the network of trails, the precious natural areas, and the active and passive recreational uses set among them. Therefore the Park is not planned by area but by theme. After the preface that briefly outlines the existing conditions of the Park, there are four chapters to this Master Plan. These are:

- FUN AND RECREATION IN THE PARK
- GETTING AROUND THE PARK
- THE PARKLAND
- TAKING CARE OF THE PARK

New park and open space development in Los Angeles is occurring all around Elysian Park. In addition, future City plans of new community developments are positive opportunities to connect into the resources of Elysian Park. Revitalization of Elysian Park is a key component in the city's strategy to create and maintain a desirable quality of life in Los Angeles.

STUNNING VIEWS OF THE SURROUNDING URBAN LANDSCAPE ARE AVAILABLE AT EVERY TURN WITHIN THE PARK.

FUN AND RECREATION IN THE PARK

Discovering the many facilities offered at Elysian Park is a worthwhile process. Although picnicking is the popular Park activity in sunny Los Angeles, dozens of extraordinary recreational opportunities are available for public use.

Elysian Fields
Baseball fields (2)
Play structures (2)
Restrooms (2)
Group picnic areas
Individual picnic areas

Solano Canyon
Practice ball field
Tennis courts (2)
Play structures (2)
Restroom
Group picnic area*
Individual picnic areas

Leo Politi Picnic Area*
Practice ball field
Tennis court
Volleyball court
Group picnic area

Chavez Ravine Arboretum
Play structures (2)
Restrooms (2)
Horseshoe Pit
Group picnic area
Individual picnic areas

Grace E. Simons Lodge*
Community room
Restroom, interior & exterior
Group picnic area

Buena Vista Meadow
Volleyball courts (2)
Play structure (closed)
Port-a-potties
Individual picnic areas

Adaptive Recreation Center
Basketball court
Play structure
Restroom, interior
Group picnic area
Individual picnic areas

Angels Point
Individual picnic areas
Play structure

Casanova Terrace
Individual picnic areas
Play structure (Tot)

*Fee Reservation

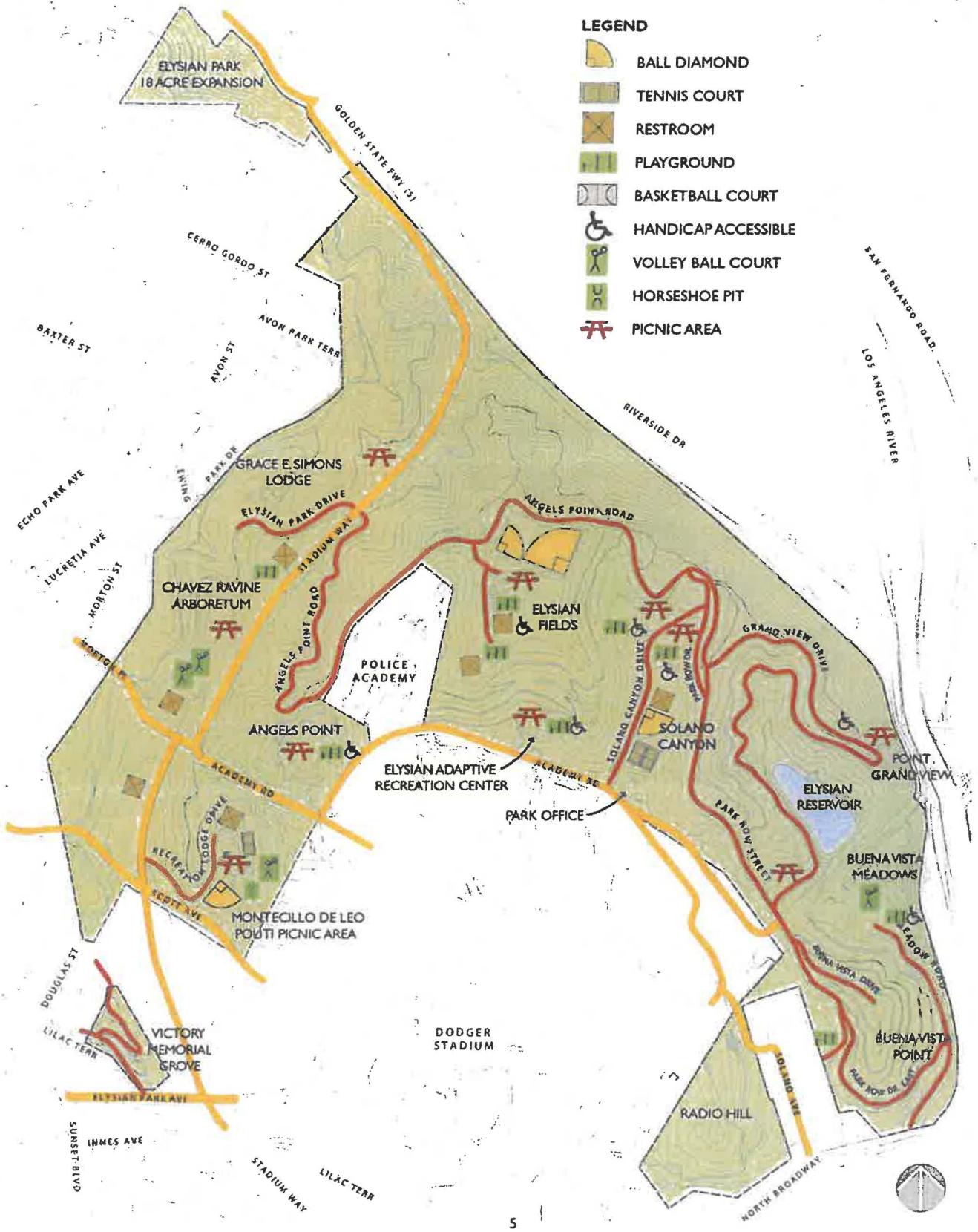
TOP, NEW ACCESSIBLE PLAY STRUCTURES HAVE RECENTLY BEEN INSTALLED IN CHAVEZ RAVINE ARBORETUM.

MIDDLE, REMOTE CONTROL GLIDERS SOAR ON THE UPDRAFTS OF THE BISHOPS CANYON LANDFILL RESTORATION AREA.

BOTTOM, AN EVENING PRACTICE GAME IN SOLANO CANYON.

FIG. 0-1,

EXISTING RECREATION FACILITIES



GETTING AROUND THE PARK

The roadways within Elysian Park have two distinct visual personalities. The first is comprised of the wide arterial streets and highway that bisect the Park; the second is the more intimate neighborhood and park roads.

Major Roadways
Stadium Way
Academy Road
Elysian Park Avenue

City Streets
Scott Avenue
Morton Place
Lilac Terrace

Adjacent City Streets
Park Drive
Lilac Terrace
Boylston Street
Solano Avenue
Amador Street
Casanova Street
North Broadway

Park Drives
Elysian Park Drive (*closed to traffic at Grace E. Simons Lodge*)
Angels Point Road
Recreation Lodge Drive
Solano Canyon Drive
Grand View Drive
Park Row Drive
Park Row Street
Park Row Drive East
Buena Vista Drive
Meadow Road

Park Entrances
Fremont Gate at North Broadway
Riverside Drive at Golden State Freeway, Stadium Way exit
Morton Place
Scott Avenue
Solano Canyon Drive
Elysian Park Drive at Lilac Terrace
Stadium Way at Scott Avenue
Lilac Terrace at Victory Memorial Grove

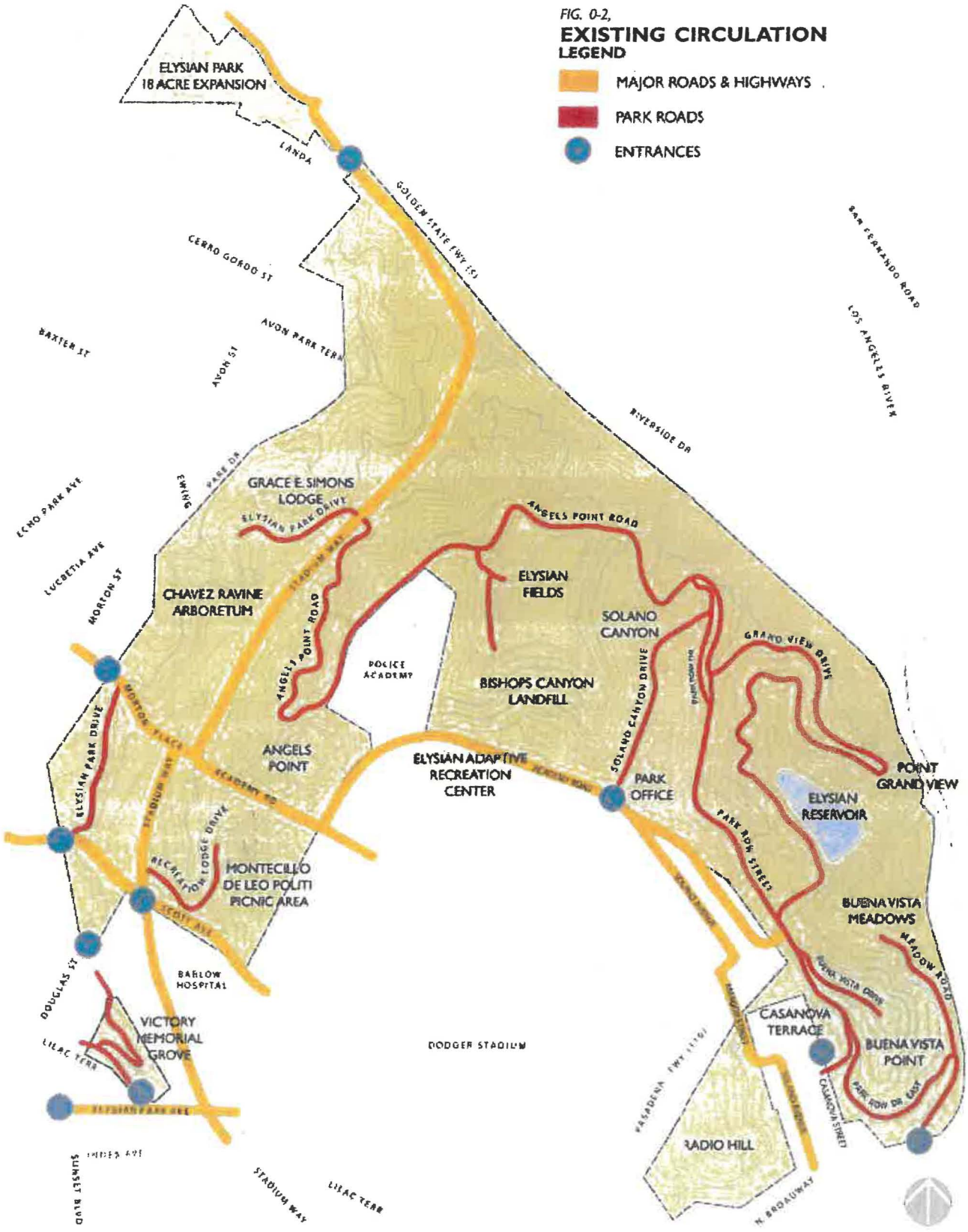
TOP: THE AWKWARD INTERSECTION OF STADIUM WAY AND ACADEMY ROAD.

ABOVE: ELYSIAN PARK DRIVE TRAILHEAD ON MORTON STREET.

RIGHT: A MAP OF THE PARK IN CHAVEZ RAVINE ARBORETUM.

FIG. 0-2,

EXISTING CIRCULATION



THE PARKLAND

"In 1982 the state legislature extended the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Zone to include the Park as it's eastern extremity. This beautiful region ... and magnificent vistas is a vital open space for the people of Los Angeles."

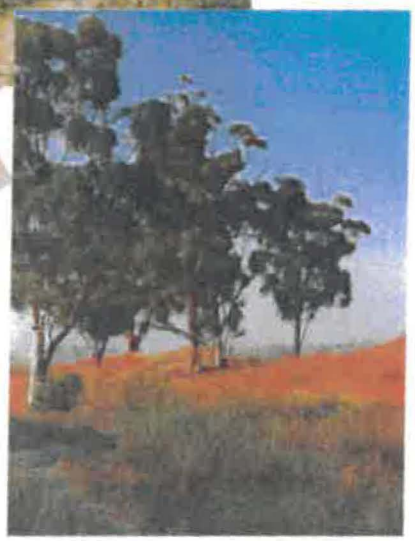
—from *Elysian Park History and Current Issues*, May 1990.

Overlooks
Grand View Point
Buena Vista Overlook
Angels Point
Bishops Canyon Landfill

Landfills
Bishops Canyon (*closed 1972*)
Angels Point

Native Plant Communities
Walnut Woodland
Oak Woodland
Coastal Sage Scrub

Non-Native Tree Plantings
Eucalyptus
Deodar Cedars
Canary Island Pines
Wild Date Palms
Carob
Fig



Invasive Pest Plants
The "Dirty Dozen"
Ailanthus altissima / Tree of Heaven
Tamarix romosissima / Salt Cedar
Schinus polygamus / Peruvian Pepper
Acacia longifolia / Sydney Golden Wattle
Toxicodendron diversilobum / Poison Oak
Solsola iberica / Russian Thistle
Brassica spp. / Wild Mustards
Pennisetum setaceum / Fountain Grass
Nicotania glauca / Tree Tobacco
Ricinus communis / Castor Bean
Conyza bonariensis / Hairy Fleabane
Chenopodium berlandieri / Netseed Lambsquarters

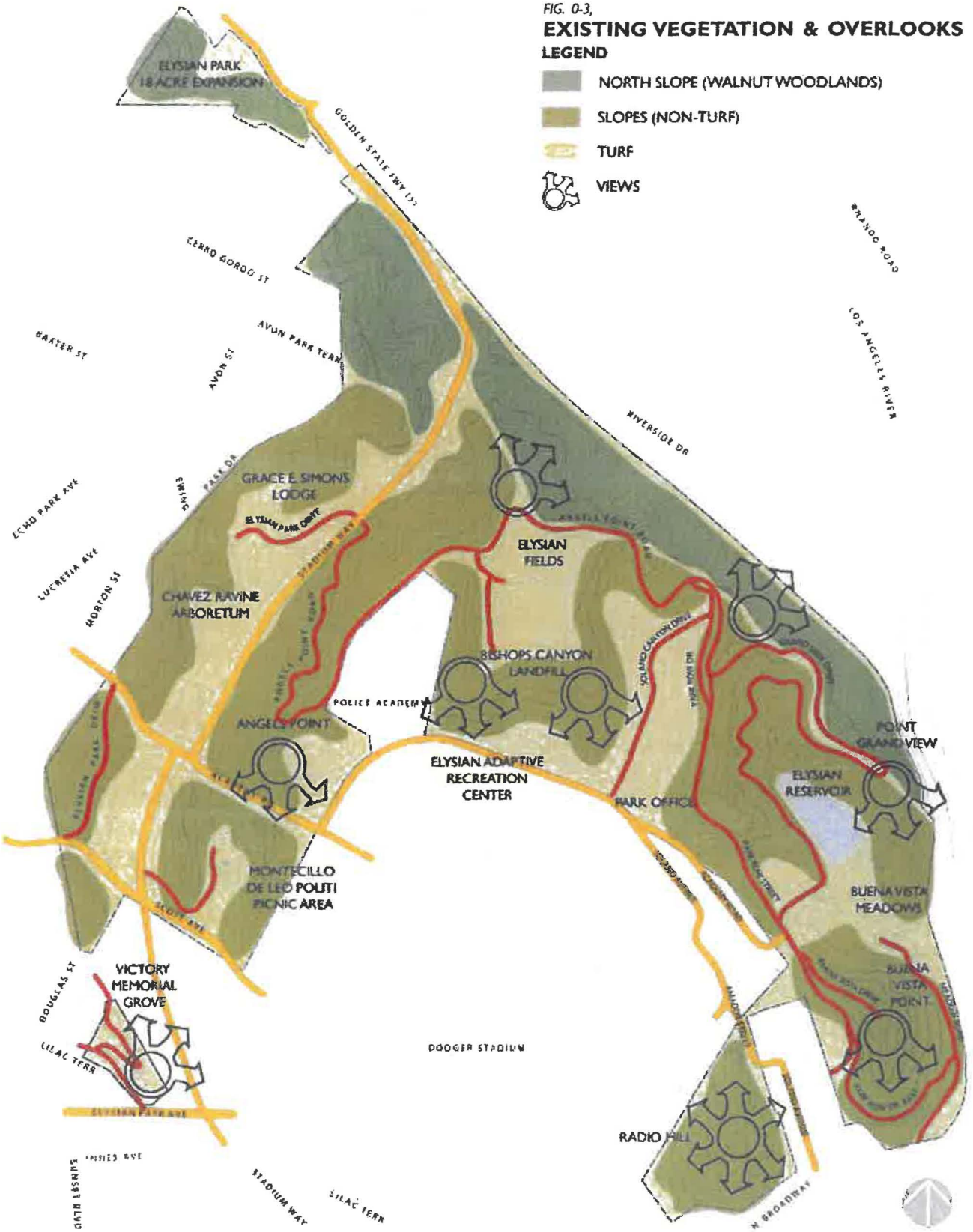
TOP: RADIO HILL LOOKING SOUTHEAST TO DOWNTOWN.

ABOVE: INVASIVE WILD MUSTARD ON THE NORTH SLOPE.

RIGHT: HEALTHY STAND OF EUCALYPTUS ON A RIDGELINE.

FIG. 0-3,

EXISTING VEGETATION & OVERLOOKS



TAKING CARE OF THE PARK

"Elysian Park is the city's first and oldest Park. It is also one of the last unbuilt parcels in central Los Angeles. The initial 550 acres were "...forever dedicated to the public..." in 1886."

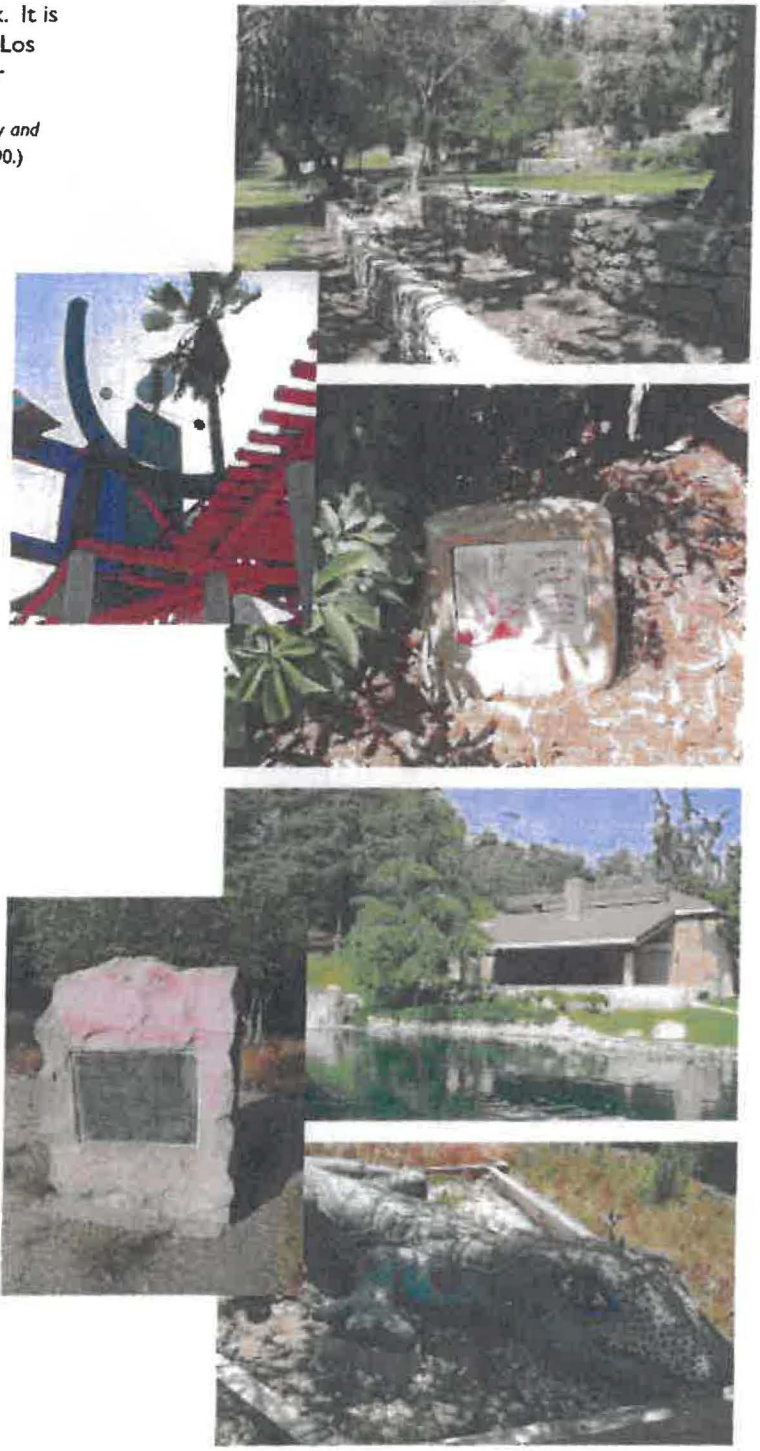
—from *Elysian Park History and Current Issues*, May 1990.)

Facilities

Chavez Ravine Arboretum
—Avenue of the Palms
—Ficus Grove
—Palm Hill
—Children's Garden
Grace E. Simons Lodge
Elysian Adaptive Recreation Center
Elysian Park Office
Solano Community Garden
Montecillo De Leo Politi Picnic Area

Memorials & Markers

Jones Memorial
Victory Memorial (WWI)
Frank Glass / Grace E. Simons Memorial Sculpture
Portola Trail Historical Marker
Marian Harlow Garden



FROM THE TOP:

THE RETAINING WALLS AT CASANOVA TERRACE

FRANK GLASS / GRACE E. SIMONS MEMORIAL SCULPTURE

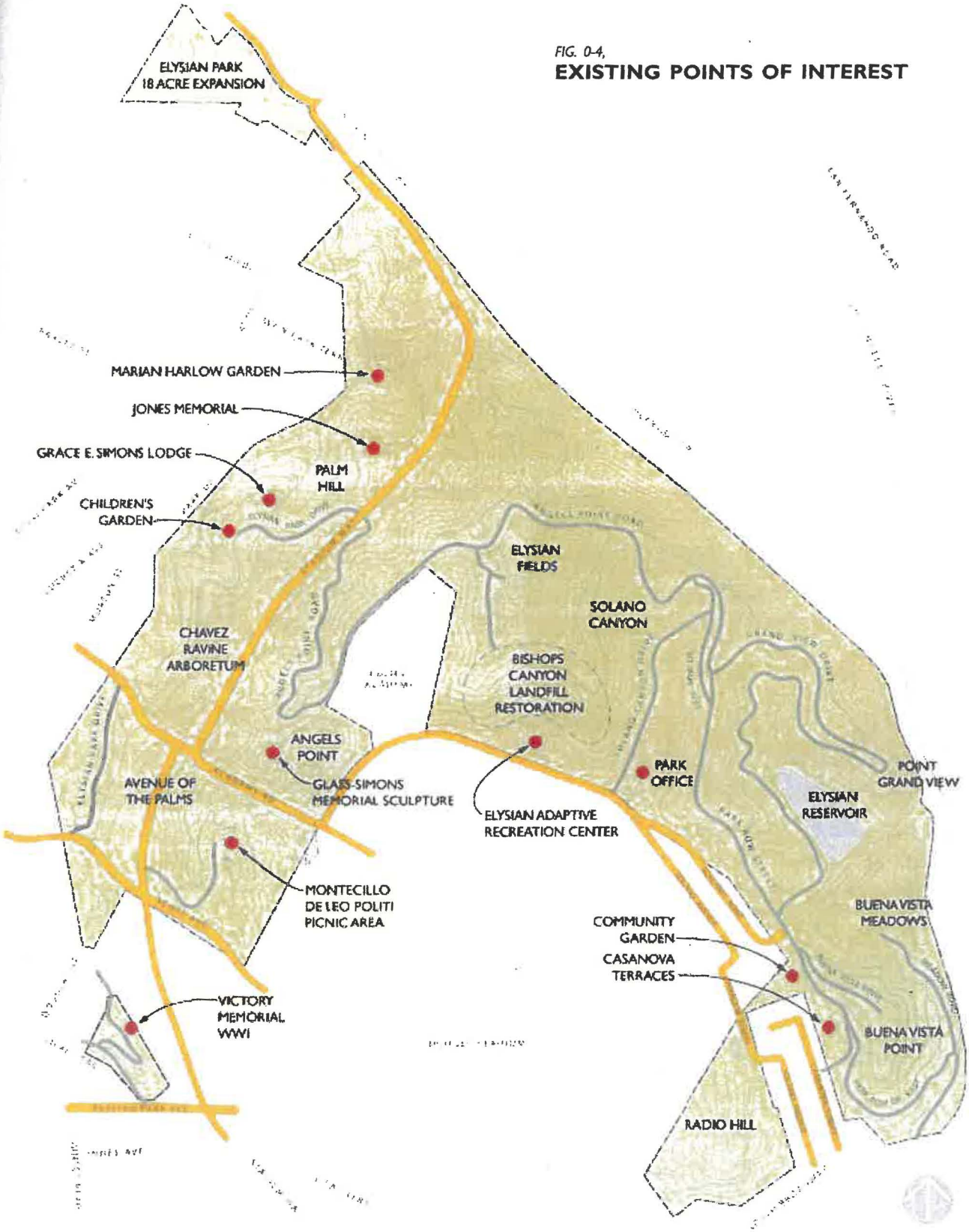
PLANT SIGNAGE IN THE CHILDREN'S ARBORETUM

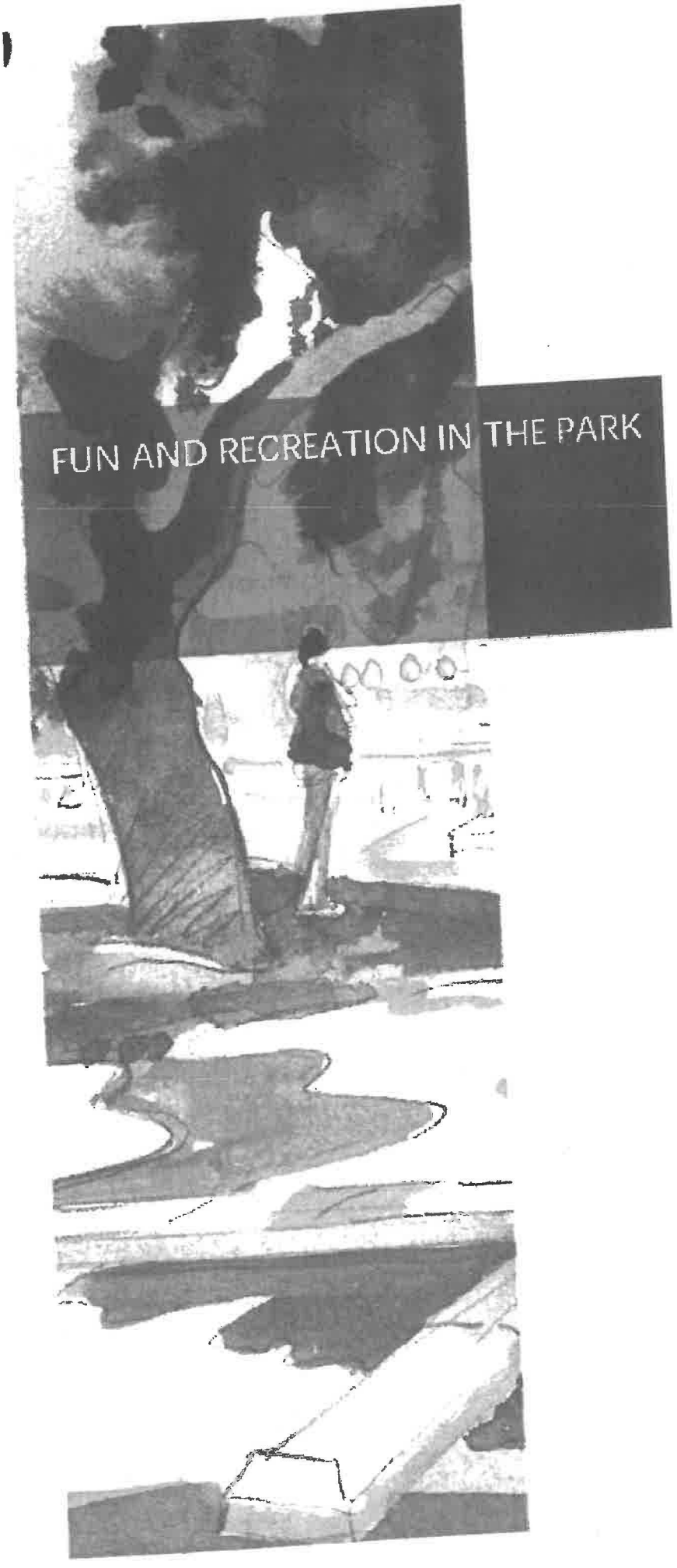
GRACE E. SIMONS LODGE

VICTORY MEMORIAL

MOSAIC LIZARD AT THE COMMUNITY GARDEN

FIG. 0-4,
EXISTING POINTS OF INTEREST




FUN AND RECREATION IN THE PARK

FUN AND RECREATION IN THE PARK

Elysian Park acts as a backyard to local neighborhoods, a regional park to surrounding communities and a tourist attraction for the City of Los Angeles. The complexity and variety of the Park's natural topography has led to the development of more passive play areas and fewer active ones. As it exists today, Elysian Park offers: four public ball fields, two of which are used primarily by Northeast Little League, one basketball court, three tennis courts, seven play equipment structures, numerous picnic areas and approximately eight miles of diverse trails.

Given that active recreation possibilities are limited within Elysian Park, it becomes critical that existing facilities are maintained and used to the fullest potential. This chapter reviews the Park's existing facilities, "pinpoints" areas of under use, and makes recommendations for future improvements for the following:

- UNDERUTILIZED AREAS
- SPORTS FIELDS
- PICNIC AREAS
- ADAPTIVE RECREATION CENTER
- VIEWPOINTS
- TRAILHEADS
- RUNNING/JOGGING TRAILS
- DOGS IN THE PARK
- PROGRAMMING

ACTION PLAN

The recommended actions to improve recreational facilities vary in response to Park needs. In general, an upgrade of most active and passive recreation facilities are needed. Upgrading includes providing the missing pieces that deter full utilization of the facility and connecting elements needed to provide access to the whole Park system.

In addition, the proposed actions also respond to the need for new facilities where possible. Plan diagrams and design concepts depict facilities implementation that is responsive to the site and to its context within the entire Park.

ACTION ITEMS ARE:

Underutilized Areas

- Apply improvements to increase Park usage of Leo Politi Picnic Area, Elysian Reservoir, Angels Point Picnic Area, and Radio Hill.

Sports Fields

- Renovate existing softball field at Leo Politi.
- Renovate existing softball field at Solano Canyon.

Picnic Areas

- Develop and implement a new picnic area above Elysian Fields.

Adaptive Recreation Center

- Construct a new exterior restroom.
- Reconstruct the existing arbor to accommodate program activities.

- Provide group picnic barbeque.

Viewpoints

- Design viewpoints to enhance the special and unique quality of each site.
- Re-design Point Grand View overlook.

Trailheads

- Establish trailhead locations. Add amenities at each trailhead.

Running/Jogging trails

- Create programs and events that utilize the trail system to the fullest extent possible.
- Create new trail loops and a variety of trail experiences (see *Getting Around the Park*).

Dogs in the Park

- Provide dog waste dispensers at established trailheads.

Programming

- Respond to community needs. Expand programs that will be supported by the existing facilities offered in Elysian Park.
- Implement public partnerships to establish new programs that would enhance the usage of existing facilities and trails.
- Acquire land to support expanded programming.

UNDERUTILIZED AREAS

The community workshop process revealed that several areas within Elysian Park were not being used to their maximum potential. These areas are:

- LEO POLITI PICNIC AREA
- ANGELS POINT PICNIC AREA
- RADIO HILL
- ELYSIAN RESERVOIR

THE LEO POLITI PICNIC AREA (TOP) AND THE UPPER PARKING LOT CURRENTLY USED FOR TRASH COLLECTION.

Leo Politi Picnic Area

The Leo Politi Group Picnic Area, including the ball field and tennis court, is a well cared for, attractive destination within the Park. The ball field and backstop, however, are in need of renovation.

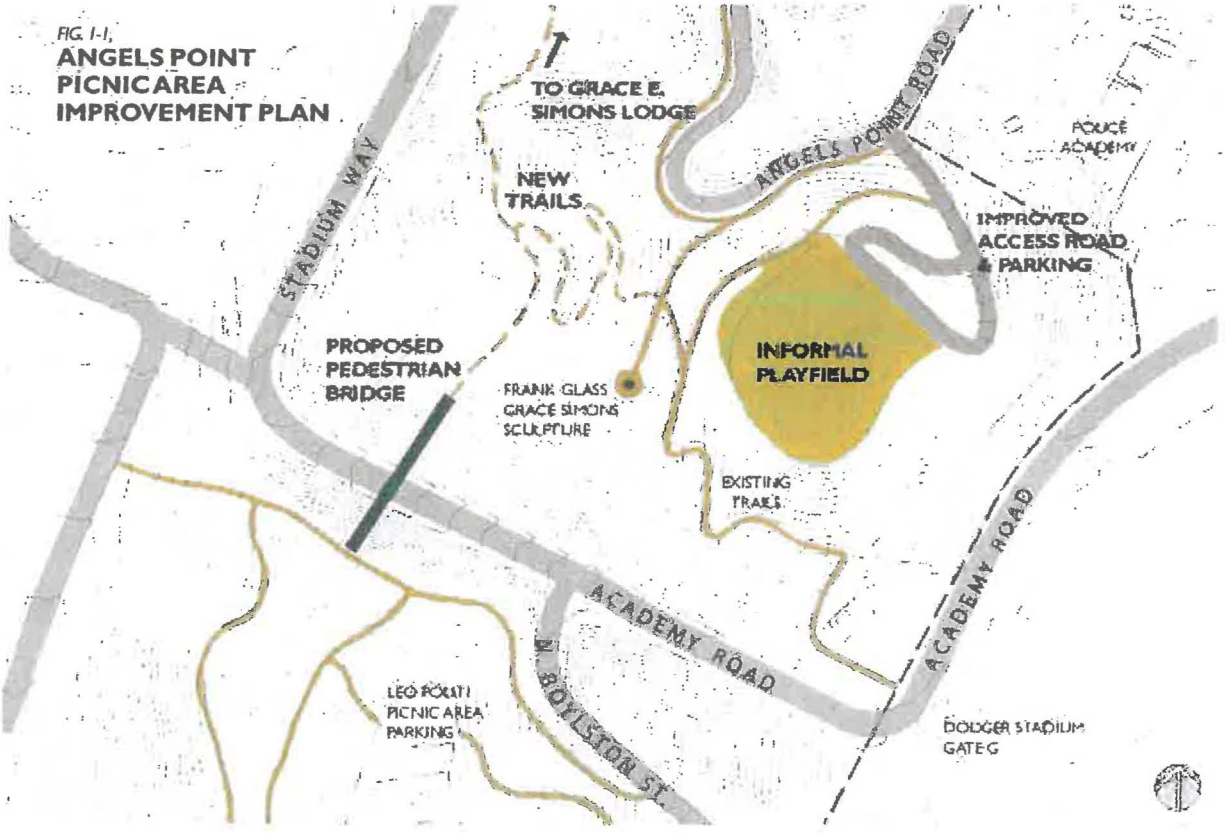
Use of the existing parking lot is limited due to the upper lot being used as the central trash collection point for the Maintenance District. Trash from other parks is being collected and temporarily stored at this location. With the compromised parking, the facility can only accommodate small groups or family picnickers. With full parking capacity the Leo Politi Picnic Area is an ideal location for income-generating events such as corporate picnics and wedding receptions. The access road is narrow which can make two way traffic flow awkward for large gatherings. (see *Getting Around the Park* for standardized Park road width).

Recommendations:

- Screen and organize existing trash bins and begin an incremental program to move some of the trash bins to alternate location(s) within Elysian Park. Consider land acquisition specifically for trash collection as part of an Elysian Park expansion.
- Improve ball field by replacing backstop, renovating turf field and grass infield.
- Add trail access to pedestrian bridge across Academy Road (see Fig. 1-1, Angel Point Picnic Area Improvement Plan).
- Improve access road width.

Angels Point

The Angels Point Picnic Area is a relatively flat meadow on top of a landfill with a large number of tables suitable for large group picnics. The fill soils capping the landfill have made plant establishment problematic. Efforts to maintain tree and meadow areas have been difficult and often unsuccessful.



The available parking is limited to the roadside, requiring visitors to lug heavy coolers, picnic baskets, and small children a long distance to use the amenity. Cars parked on the roadside above have been broken into or vandalized. These inherent challenges have kept Angels Point Picnic Area from being fully successful.

Recommendations:

- Improve access road and small parking lot adjacent to the picnic area (see Fig. 1-1, Angel Point Picnic Area Improvement Plan).
- Create informal playfield.
- Remediate disturbed landfill cap soil for improved restoration planting opportunity. Use Park green waste and any available Park topsoil from trail landslide repair to build new soil structure around new facilities.

Radio Hill

Adjacent to the Solano Canyon neighborhood is Radio Hill, the most isolated and underutilized piece of Elysian Park. A native plant garden, constructed with bond measure funds, struggles to survive beside the radio towers amongst the more aggressive grasses and invasive exotics. Maintenance to the native plant garden is poor and has become a low priority to an understaffed department.

Access to Radio Hill is limited and parking is not available on site. A Radio Hill visitor must park in the Solano Canyon neighborhood or adjacent to the Cathedral High School to the south. The lack of reasonable access has limited the number of Park users, which in turn has left the area susceptible to transient encampment and unsafe conditions.

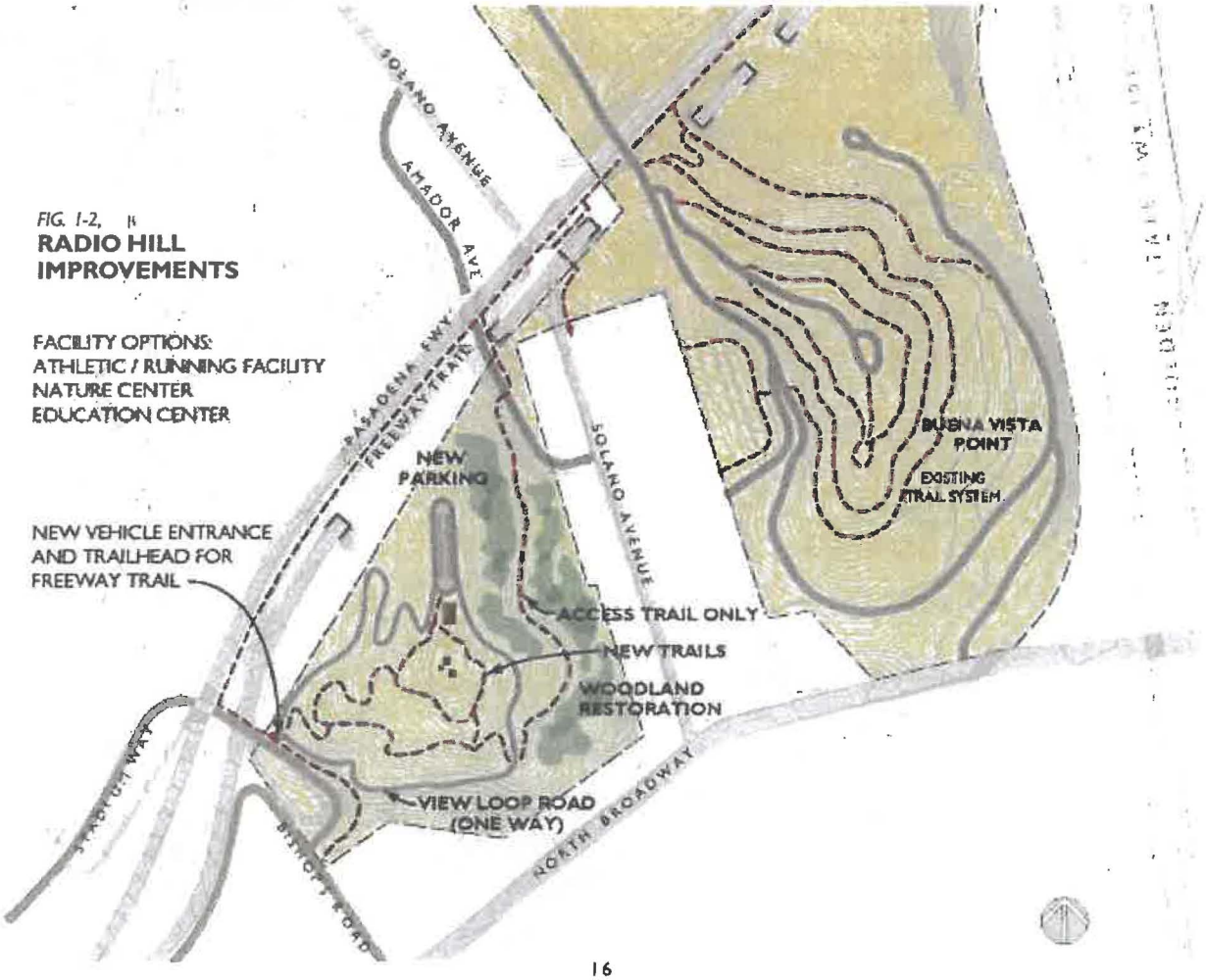


FIG. 1-2,
RADIO HILL IMPROVEMENTS

ELYSIAN RESERVOIR FROM POINT GRAND VIEW DRIVE

Recommendations:

- Increase visitor use by providing vehicular access and limited parking on site (see Fig 1-2, Radio Hill Improvements).
- Establish a facility at Radio Hill with an all season athletic/running, environmental, or educational program that will consistently attract park users.
- Create trail system for hiking or running that connects to main park system.
- Provide trailhead connecting to the existing 110 Freeway Access trail (see *Getting Around the Park*).
- Any City plans to upgrade/modify the radio tower facilities must first be coordinated and approved by Recreation and Parks so as not to conflict with future programming and development of Radio Hill.

Elysian Reservoir

The Elysian Reservoir and its surrounding forests are intriguing, remote, and degraded. Hiking trails and some picnic facilities in the vicinity of the reservoir offer spectacular views of the Los Angeles area. But access to the body of water is closed to the public at this time even though the reservoir takes Park land.

State law has mandated covering or filtering drinking water from all open reservoirs. For more than a decade the Department of Water and Power (DWP) has been participating in mediated meetings with members of the Coalition to Preserve Open Reservoirs (CPOR) to determine the fate of ten open reservoirs citywide in an environmentally sensitive manner.

This process includes the development of a master plan for the Elysian Reservoir. Several improvement alternatives considered by the DWP include some combination of active and passive recreation with associated parking.

Recommendations:

- Enhance recreation whenever possible. Keep parking to the minimum requirement for recreation activities.
- Implement a perimeter walking trail.
- Provide security through increased usage and patrol.
- Remove barbed wire and perimeter fencing.
- Implement native planting, and native habitat restoration. Provide year-round water source (created wetland) for habitat.
- Connect Elysian Reservoir to the Los Angeles River as a wildlife corridor and a contributor to the Pacific Flyway (see *Parklands*).

DOGS IN THE PARK

The Master Plan process has determined that opinion is divided on off-leash dog use of Elysian Park. Elysian Park currently does not have any designated off-leash dog park areas. Some dog owners seek green spaces for their pets to run freely. Some park users report problems with dog waste that is not removed and dog waste bag dispensers that are frequently empty. Both sides state their positions with equal conviction and strong arguments. This Master Plan is not making a specific recommendation for or against an off-leash area in Elysian Park at this time.

Recommendations:

- Secure funding for additional dog waste dispensers at trailhead locations.
- A separate facility specifically designed for dogs is an important part of the region's park system and should be addressed by the community and Recreation and Parks in the future.

SPORTS FIELDS

The natural topography of Elysian Park makes it difficult to offer large expanses of flat turf, which is required for multiple, continuous soccer and softball fields. The need for dedicated, maintained soccer fields in the City is well-known to Recreation and Parks (RAP). The new Elysian Park eighteen-acre Riverside Drive expansion site will provide a multi-purpose field within the next five years. In addition, within five miles of Elysian Park, the new Rio De Los Angeles State Park (Taylor Yard Park) will be providing four new, dedicated soccer fields and one large soccer/multi-use field.

Elysian Park's two existing softball fields are located in Solano Canyon and Leo Politi's picnic area. Both fields are in need of refurbishment.

Recommendations:

- Improve existing softball fields at Solano Canyon and Leo Politi. Replace backstops, renovate turf and irrigation.
- Construct new multi-use softball field at Angels Point (*optional*).

ELYSIAN FIELDS

The Elysian Fields baseball complex at Bishops Canyon Landfill is the newest facility improvement within Elysian Park. The rolling, water-wise landscape, and simple but elegant group picnic area is a model for future improvements.

The ball fields are exclusively maintained by the local little league. Because of this, the fields appear to be off limits to the general public. The exclusivity of these new facilities has generated ill will with local park users.

Regular irrigation line breaks and water runoff due to landfill settling will continue to plague park maintenance staff. The complexity of the landfill site requires additional maintenance to support the needs of this popular and heavily used facility.

Recommendations:

- Create overflow facility parking at existing informal location adjacent to proposed trailhead and picnic area (see Fig. 1-3, Proposed Parking, Picnic and Trail Improvements at Elysian Fields).
- The concept of security lighting and sports lighting at Bishops Canyon remains an open issue.

- Resolve irrigation electrical problems.
- Provide drinking fountains.
- Increase maintenance staff.
- Allow public use of Elysian Fields in off-season.

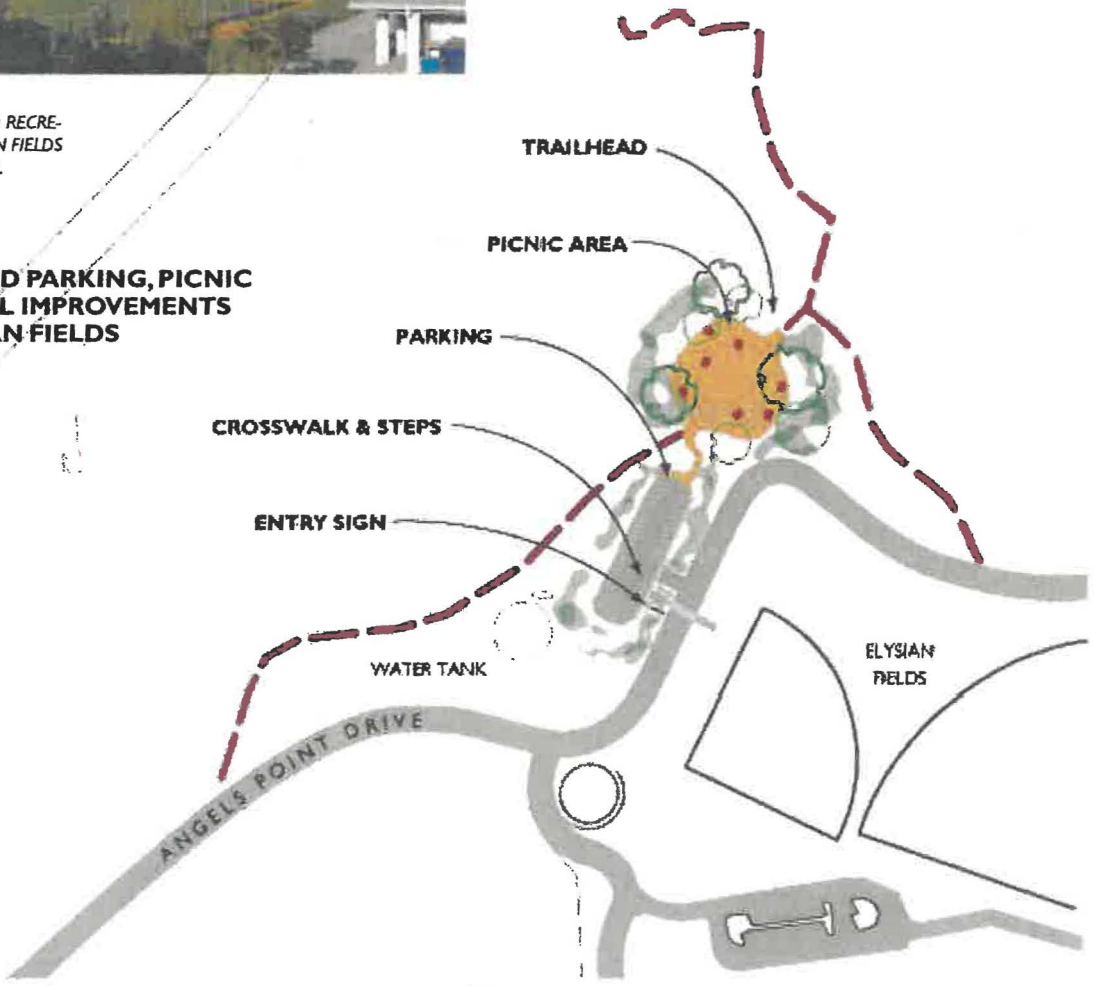
PICNIC AREAS

There are many diverse and beautiful areas to picnic within Elysian Park. The majority of traditional picnic areas are located within the Arboretum in Chavez Ravine and within Solano Canyon. Smaller picnic areas are spread throughout Elysian Park. Existing group picnic areas are located at Angels Point, Leo Politi, and Elysian Fields. The first two of these areas do not have sufficient parking for large groups. The Leo Politi area has an ample parking area, but shares the upper lot with numerous trash bins. Angels Point picnic area has no convenient vehicular access and no centralized parking (see section on Underutilized Areas).

The community process uncovered a potential picnic area that should be considered across Angels Point Road from Elysian Fields. The view of Elysian Valley

THE BASEBALL FIELDS AND RECREATION FACILITIES AT ELYSIAN FIELDS ARE POPULAR ATTRACTIONS.

FIG. 1-3.
PROPOSED PARKING, PICNIC AND TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS AT ELYSIAN FIELDS



THE ARBOR OUTSIDE THE ADAPTIVE RECREATION AREA IS USED FOR PROGRAM ACTIVITIES AND FOR GROUP PICNICS

from this area is spectacular and a short loop trail through walnut woodlands would provide family educational opportunities. Picnic tables, a trellis shade structure, and limited parking would also serve as overflow to the popular Elysian Fields picnic area. The new picnic area should remain rustic and seating should be located away from the edge of the slope.

Recommendations:

- Relocate trash bins to other location(s) in the Park. Consider land acquisition for this purpose as part of a Park expansion plan.
- Provide access road and parking lot for Angels Point Picnic Area.
- Provide a new picnic area, a trellis shade structure, and parking on the ridge opposite Elysian Fields.

ADAPTIVE RECREATION CENTER

The Adaptive Recreation Center provides inclusive after-school care and summer camp recreation programs as well as activities to community residents. The center offers programs that target those with disabilities and special needs. From pre-school daycare to teen and adult programs, all ages are served.

The exterior facilities are available for use to the general public. Picnickers heavily use the open turf areas adjacent to the Center. The arbor and picnic tables in front of the Recreation Center are used for outdoor activities and are available to the general public and for lease by private parties.

An extremely popular wading pool was once the centerpiece of the arbor area. It has been drained and no longer functions, and cannot be restored for liability reasons.

The Adaptive Recreation Center's location on the heavily used Academy Road has made it the natural stopping point for everyone's restroom needs. Runners, cyclists, police, mothers and children all come in regularly to use the Center's restroom facilities according to Park staff. The Center's hours are limited, making the interior public restroom often unavailable when the arbor and picnic area are leased.

Recommendations:

The Center's history of water play make it the obvious choice for the location of a new splash pad. The existing parking is sufficient for this proposed improvement, the site has easy access, and the Center is staffed.

The open area surrounding the Adaptive Recreation Center could be developed as a therapeutic pool facility that would extend the capability of the Center. This facility could be used during off hours by the general public.

- Construct exterior restroom facility to serve the group events after Center hours.
- Re-design and restore the arbor to facilitate program activities and group picnics, including a group barbeque.
- Construct therapeutic swimming pool with public use during off hours.
- Construct Splash Pad adjacent to Adaptive Recreation Center.

VIEWPOINTS

Scenic viewpoints abound at Elysian Park. Many sites are good examples of successful overlooks. Angels Point has been formalized and celebrated with public art and tree planting. The new Elysian Fields/Bishops Canyon picnic facilities overlook areas are expansive and inviting. Buena Vista overlook was the recipient of a NorthEast Trees grant-funded project that provided for native tree plantings, interpretive signage, a custom bench and rehabilitation of existing local trails.

Less successful viewpoints are located at turnouts along Park roads, at sites that are inaccessible by

vehicle, such as Radio Hill, and at Point Grand View. Point Grand View should be a premier destination point for the Park. This viewpoint, however, has been hardened with concrete and fencing to such an extent that it looks and feels like a highway turnout.

Recommendations:

- Re-design Point Grand View to compliment its spectacular location. Use materials, colors, and forms that blend with the surrounding rock formation. Replace fencing throughout the area. Blend fencing with boulders and planting.
- Establish a viewpoint at the proposed picnic area above Elysian Fields overlooking Elysian Valley.
- Implement Radio Hill loop road with scenic viewpoint turnout for vehicles.
- Develop pod parking at roadside viewpoints with signage.

TRAILHEADS

Well marked trailheads have not been developed in Elysian Park. Trails dead end at Park roads. Markers and/or signage that would connect one trail to another are missing, as are basic trail amenities.

Recommendations:

- Establish trailhead locations adjacent to pod parking or parking facilities wherever possible.
- Include amenities such as trash receptacle, drinking fountain, signage, trail name marker, and dog waste dispenser at significant trailhead locations to be determined by Recreation and Parks.
- Provide interpretive signage on the Arboretum trail specific to the history and plantings along the trail.

RUNNING/JOGGING TRAIL PROGRAMS

Elysian Park offers an incredible diversity and range of running and jogging experiences. The complex coupling of ridges, valleys and vistas make it a potential world-class training ground for professional runners and athletes, and a splendid experience for the weekend jogger. On any given day or time, firefighters from the Los Angeles City Fire Department Headquarters, officers and personnel from the Police Academy, Cathedral High School students and local residents can all be seen running individually or in groups throughout the Park.

Recommendations:

- Improve running conditions on designated running trails/track.
- Designate trails for various conditioning workouts through signs and markers.
- Promote Elysian Park as offering premier running opportunities, including the LA Marathon.
- Encourage programmed use of running trails for public fitness.
- Improve safety conditions through increased use and exposure.

PROGRAMMING

The surrounding neighborhoods of Elysian Park are rich with cultural and professional diversity. Artists, musicians, actors, tradesman and professionals make up the complex tapestry of park users. Within this rich community lie the talents and skills needed to create a partnership with the City of Los Angeles Recreation and Parks Department. Through the community workshops, a desire to have more variety in the recreation opportunities offered by parks staff became evident. Theater, dance, music, crafts, and ceramics were a few of the opportunities discussed. A large number of park users are willing to volunteer their time and talents to offer these programs. As opportunities arise to purchase lands and structures adjacent to Elysian Park, these buildings can be easily utilized for the additional programming desired by the public.

Recommendations:

- Respond to community needs. Expand programs that will be supported by the existing facilities offered in Elysian Park.
- Implement public partnerships to establish new programs that would enhance the usage of existing facilities and trails.
- Acquire land to support expanded programming.
- Partner with schools and other children's educational programs.

FIG. 1-4,
TRAILHEAD AMENITIES
NEW SIGNAGE AND A TRAIL MARKER WILL BE LOCATED AT THE BEGINNING OF ALL MAJOR TRAILS. STANDARD AMENITIES AT EACH TRAILHEAD INCLUDE A TRASH RECEPTACLE AND A DOG WASTE BAG DISPENSER.

TIMELINE FOR RECOMMENDATION IMPLEMENTATION

RECOMMENDATIONS IN ORDER OF PRIORITY

ONE TO FIVE YEARS

- Establish picnic area, trailhead, and parking above Elysian Fields.
- Modify Angels Point for road and parking. Select option for recreation facility or picnic area.
- Construct multi-purpose field at Elysian Park Eighteen-Acre Riverside Drive Expansion.
- Begin trail and trailhead system (see *Getting Around the Park*).
- Improve trash screening throughout the Park.
- Pedestrian Crossing from Elysian Park Drive to Angels Point Road.
- Acquire land for trash storage. Initiate phasing plan to remove trash collection from Leo Politi to another location.

FIVE TO TEN YEARS

- Establish a facility at Radio Hill.
- Develop vehicular entry to Radio Hill.
- Continue phasing of trash collection at Leo Politi to another site within Elysian Park.

TEN TO TWENTY YEARS

- Implement pool and splash pad facilities at the Adaptive Recreation Center.
- Finalize phasing to remove all trash collection activity out of Leo Politi parking lot.
- Complete all trail restoration, trail head development, and trail connections.

GETTING AROUND THE PARK

GETTING AROUND THE PARK

Finding one's way around Elysian Park is challenging, even to those who know the Park well. The reasons why are primarily due to the Park's location, the fragmentation of it's lands, and the tangle of freeways and railways that wrap the Park.

Each major entryway into Elysian Park has a completely different look and feel due to the complexity of the topography and the differing characters of the communities that border the Park. In addition, the road design, entrances and exits from the freeways, and their associated signage are geared to accessing Dodger Stadium rather than identifying the Park.

All these factors elevate the importance of Park circulation to both pedestrian and motorist. All visitors arriving at Elysian Park should be able to easily locate park facilities and access the natural environment. While in Elysian Park, people need to feel safe and be able to relax in the park surroundings. The process of getting around the Park should be an integral part of a great park experience.

Given that circulation is of primary concern to the local community and is the basic infrastructure that supports all Park activities, this chapter includes plans of actions and recommendations for:

- ROADS AND TRAFFIC
- PARKING
- TRAILS, CROSSINGS & STAIRWAYS
- SIGNS—WAYFINDING, LOCATION IDENTIFICATION AND TRAIL MARKERS
- GATEWAYS INTO THE PARK

ACTION PLAN

The primary focus and intent of recommendations for Park circulation and getting around the Park is to increase safety for all park users. Secondary to this is ease of park utilization so that the Park environment makes sense both from a wayfinding perspective and also how facilities are organized and designed. In addition, each recommended action will strengthen the aesthetic of the Park by providing a cohesiveness and some uniformity and rhythm to the Park road and trail experience, so that Elysian Park visitors can enjoy the unique features of the Park to the fullest.

ACTION ITEMS ARE:

Roads and Traffic

- Modify Stadium Way from the Riverside Drive to Academy Road to provide pedestrian access from Elysian Valley, increase park user safety, reduce speeds, and provide a park road aesthetic.
- Standardize park road lane width. Reduce roadside parking except at designated areas.

Pod Parking

- Develop small parking lots (pod parking) in designated areas along park roads adjacent to trailheads, picnic areas, and viewpoints.
- Develop parking opportunities throughout the park that will support full utilization of all park facilities (see *Recreation and Fun*).

Trails, Crossings & Stairways

- Develop a premier system of trails for a variety of experiences that utilizes the entire Park.
- Connect the existing trail system together within the Park with the addition of bridges, road crossings, walkways, stairways, and additional trails.
- Connect trails within the Park to existing or future trails and access points outside the Park (see *The Parkland*).

Signs–Wayfinding, Location Identification and Trail Markers

- Expand the existing wayfinding and interpretive signage plans approved by Los Angeles Recreation and Parks Department for Elysian Park.
- Provide trailhead signage and trail mileage markers throughout the Park trail system.

Gateways into the Park

- Provide entry signage at identified locations to Elysian Park.

ROADS AND TRAFFIC

Stadium Way

Unsafe conditions created by high traffic speeds along the Stadium Way through Elysian Park have been ranked by the community as the number one priority for modification. Although the road is using parkland, the six lane roadway serves as the main entry and exit route to Dodger Stadium from the I-5, and is utilized as a commuter route to downtown Los Angeles. The road is classified as a secondary highway and is designed to carry high traffic volumes at higher speeds than roads designated solely for park use. The rise in grade plus higher travel speeds creates hazardous conditions for Park users. Pedestrian crosswalks, sidewalks, and bicycle path(s) for Park users are non-existent.

The excessive width of the roadway was designed to facilitate high exiting traffic volumes from Dodger Stadium. Currently there are 6 lanes of traffic; 3 lanes in each direction. Department of Transportation standards require 2 lanes, not 3 lanes, in each direction be available at all times for regular weekday commuter traffic to downtown. Potentially, Stadium Way could be reduced by 2 lanes to accommodate bicycle lanes both ways and a pedestrian walkway.

FIG. 2-1,
PEDESTRIAN ACCESS ON STADIUM WAY

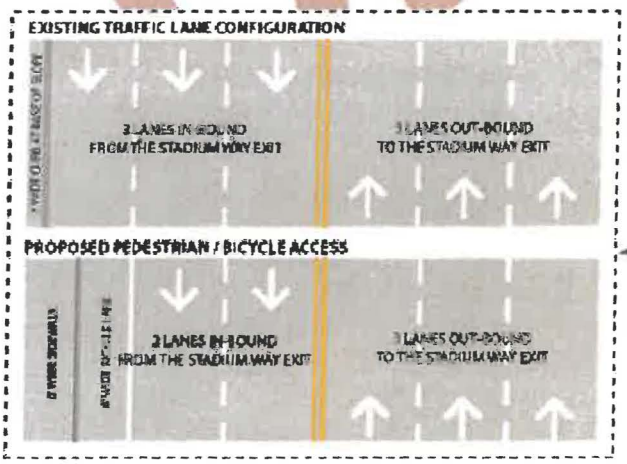
STADIUM WAY CURRENTLY HAS THREE LANES OF TRAFFIC IN EACH DIRECTION. THE PHOTO ABOVE WAS TAKEN NEAR THE STADIUM WAY EXIT FROM THE 5 FREEWAY, LOOKING SOUTH INTO THE PARK. SEE LANE DIAGRAM, FIG. 2-2.

ILLUSTRATED BELOW, ONE LANE HAS BEEN CLOSED TO ALLOW FOR PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE USE.

Recommendations:
Stadium Way must be transformed from a single-use highway for automobiles, to a multi-purpose transportation corridor that supports bicycles, pedestrians, Park users, shuttle buses, and other forms of transportation that allows the surrounding neighborhoods to easily access their nearby Park.

Permanent closure of one traffic lane is recommended. Due to adjacent vertical slopes and retaining walls at various locations along Stadium Way, further expansion of the highway corridor to make room for walkways and bicycle paths is neither feasible or desirable.

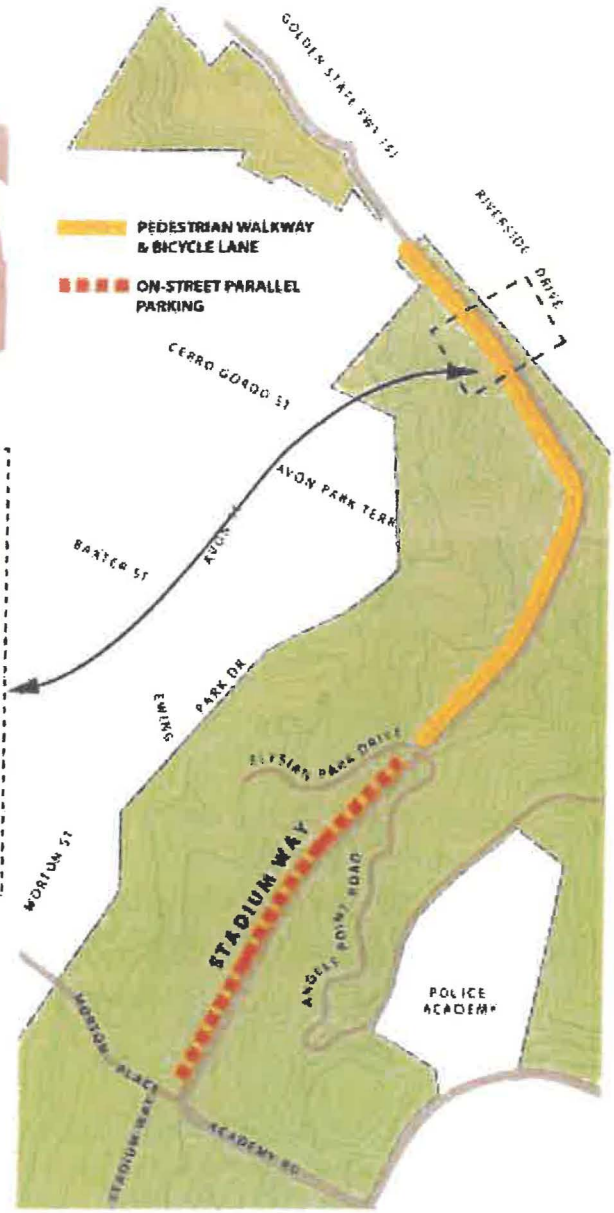
FIG.2-2,
STADIUM WAY LANE RECONFIGURATION DIAGRAM



The reconfiguration of Stadium Way from six lanes to five lanes allows for three lanes exiting Dodger Stadium during events and a minimum of two lanes each way for commuter traffic. Additional Park parking could be made available during non-event days by turning the extra exiting lane into a flexible lane that allows for parking.

The addition of a pedestrian walkway will connect the recently acquired Elysian Park 18 Acre Expansion site on Riverside Drive and continue up Stadium Way into the main body of the park to the proposed crosswalk at Elysian Park Drive. This walkway will also provide a critical pedestrian linkage to the Los Angeles River parkway corridor, Griffith Park, and to Rio De Los Angeles State Park (Taylor Yard Park) on the east side of the Los Angeles River.

FIG.2-3,
STADIUM WAY IMPROVEMENTS



THE PROPOSED LANE CLOSURE ON STADIUM WAY, FROM THE 5 FREEWAY EXIT TO ELYSIAN PARK DRIVE, WOULD ALLOW THE CONSTRUCTION OF A PEDESTRIAN WALKWAY AND A CLASS 2 BICYCLE LANE. SEE FIG. 2-2, LANE RECONFIGURATION DIAGRAM.

FROM ELYSIAN PARK DRIVE TO ACADEMY ROAD THE CLOSED LANE WOULD BE USED FOR ON-STREET PARALLEL PARKING.

A Class II bicycle lane as shown above will also provide alternative transportation opportunities into Elysian Park from this major entry point. Additional public transportation opportunities should be provided throughout the Park that will allow easy access to Park facilities and to Dodger Stadium.

- Reduce Stadium Way width by one vehicular lane. Permanently eliminate one southbound lane.
- Provide pedestrian walkway on Stadium Way connecting Riverside Drive to Elysian Park Drive, and connecting the new Park expansion area to the rest of the Park.
- Provide a Class II bicycle lane from Riverside Drive up Stadium Way to Academy Road.
- Provide parking opportunity from Elysian Park Drive to Academy Road with southbound lane closure.

FIG. 2-4,
PARK DRIVE IMPROVEMENTS
AN EXAMPLE OF PARK DRIVE RENOVATION NEAR THE RESERVOIR WITH A DEFINED TRAIL ALONG THE EDGE OF ROAD.

- Provide one lane northbound for flexible parallel parking except during Dodger Stadium events (option).
- Establish bus stops and bus routes through Elysian Park (see Fig. 2-9, Park Entrances and Gateways).

Standardize Park Road Lane Widths

Road widths vary throughout the Park, leaving room for vehicles to park along the side of the roadway in many locations. This situation allows vice to occur in the bushes and on non-legitimate trails in remote sections of the Park. These conditions act as a real deterrent for legitimate Park users and contributes to the underutilization of Park facilities.

Recommendations:
Using the renovated roadway to Buena Vista Point as an approved design standard, Elysian Park's deteriorating internal roadway system will be improved.

- Standardize Park road width to 11 foot lanes (one in each direction). Resurface deteriorated Park roads, define the roadway edge on one or both sides with large boulders.
- Provide a decomposed granite running trail adjacent to roadway where width allows. An interim solution would site boulders at the road edge, leaving the excess asphalt for the trail surface.
- Remove excess asphalt and restore areas with native planting and barrier plantings as necessary (see *The Parkland* and Appendix A for restoration plant lists).

POD PARKING

Large paved parking lots are currently located adjacent to the expanses of relatively flat turf areas of Elysian Park. These parking lots are heavily used due to the layout of the Park as active recreational facilities are bunched into these valley areas.

Passive recreational areas within Elysian Park rely on roadside parking, or pod parking. Pod parking is defined as a small grouping of 6 to 8 vehicle parking

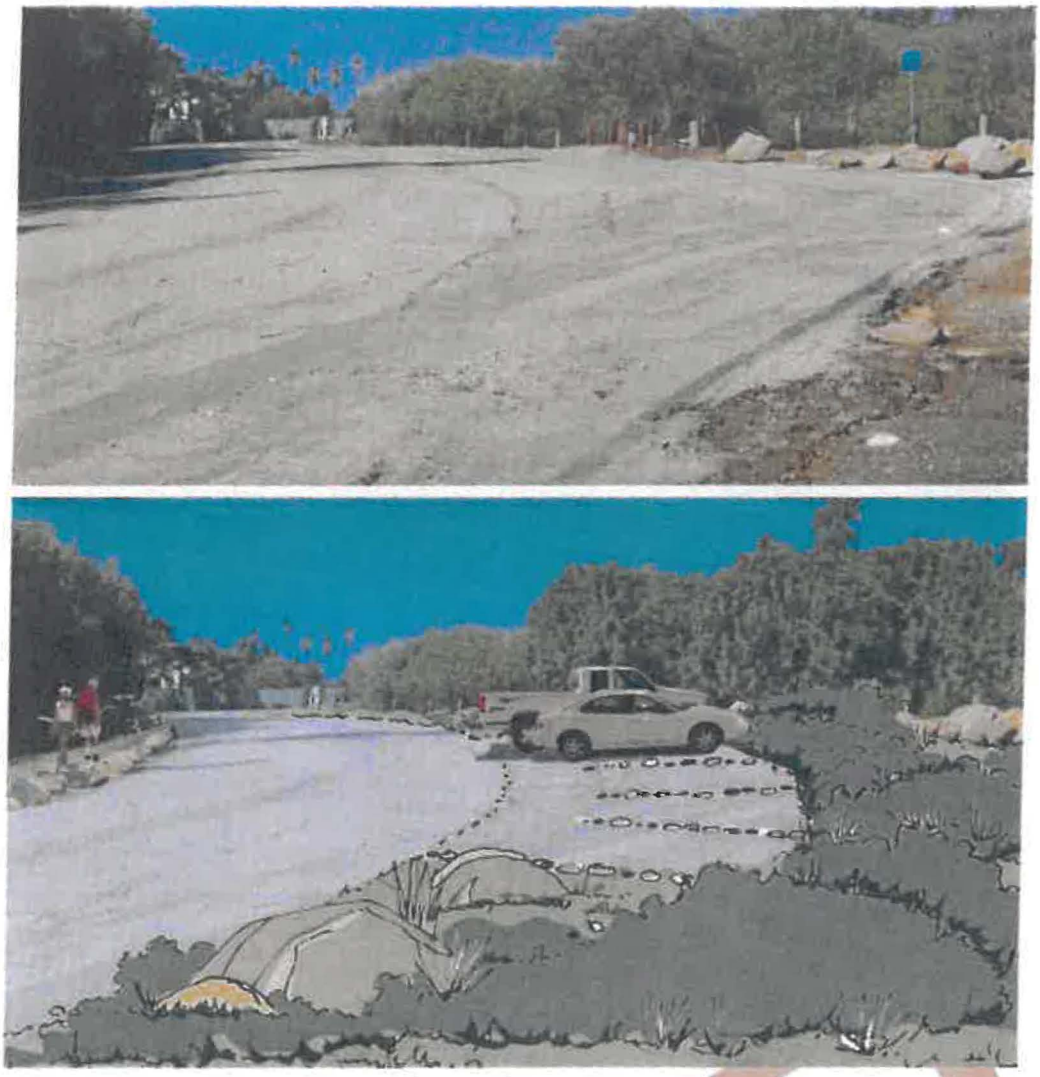


FIG. 2-5,
POD PARKING

TURNOUTS ALONG ANGELS POINT DRIVE ARE TYPICALLY WIDE, UNDEFINED AREAS OF ASPHALT. THESE WILL BE RENOVATED TO PROVIDE POD PARKING AT TRAIL HEADS WITH RESTORED NATIVE PLANTINGS.

spaces that can fit into a relatively small area at scenic viewpoints, or trailheads. An example of pod parking has already been developed and implemented at the Buena Vista viewpoint.

Recommendations:
The overuse of some parking areas and the underutilization of others can be balanced by developing small parking opportunities at more facilities throughout the Park.

- Develop pod parking adjacent to new facilities along Elysian Park roads (see *Recreation and Fun* for new facilities).
- Provide one lane along Stadium Way for flexible parallel parking except during Dodger Stadium events (option).
- Open the Leo Politi parking lot for general public use.

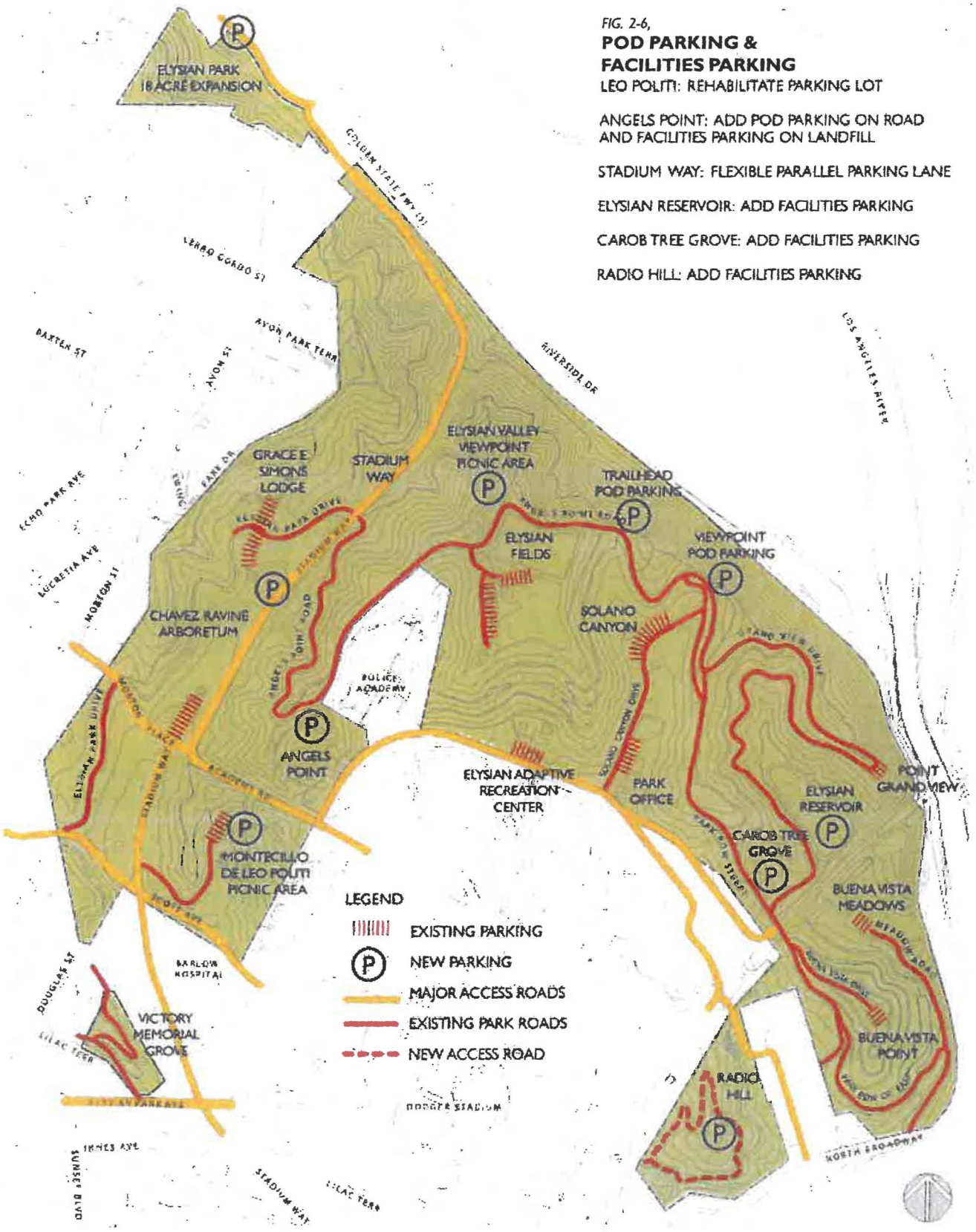


FIG. 2-6,

POD PARKING & FACILITIES PARKING

LEO POLITI: REHABILITATE PARKING LOT

ANGELS POINT: ADD POD PARKING ON ROAD AND FACILITIES PARKING ON LANDFILL

STADIUM WAY: FLEXIBLE PARALLEL PARKING LANE

ELYSIAN RESERVOIR: ADD FACILITIES PARKING

CAROB TREE GROVE: ADD FACILITIES PARKING

RADIO HILL: ADD FACILITIES PARKING

- Remove asphalt at Leo Politi parking lot and provide permeable decomposed granite and/or gravel with boulder edge spaced to delineate parking stalls.
- Install permeable material in future parking lots only in areas where drainage will not cause erosion problems.
- Eliminate red painted curbs throughout the Park as a design standard to signify a no parking zone. Provide parking signage "No Parking" instead as necessary.

BUENA VISTA OVERLOOK

TRAILS, CROSSINGS & STAIRWAYS

Trails

The existing trail system in Elysian Park is a highly valuable resource to the community. Local park visitors are using trails regularly as part of their recreational experience.

There is a history of equestrian use in Elysian Park and surrounding neighborhoods. Elysian Park will remain open to horses. There are also equestrian trails and facilities in Griffith Park and regional trail systems such as the Rim of the Valley Trail that should be linked wherever possible to Elysian Park. Refer to Fig. 3-2, Los Angeles River Regional Open Space.

Recreation and Parks has created a guide map for Elysian Park wildflower walks and other points of interest. Some of the trails have been named which should be expanded as part of a wayfinding tool for the Park (see Signs - Wayfinding below). Trails adjacent to the Chavez Ravine Arboretum are most utilized for on-leash dog walking. Recreation and Parks (RAP) mandates dogs are on-leash at all times, and no bicycles on dirt trails.

A perception that some trails, specifically the ridgeline trails on the north side of Elysian Park, are unsafe is exacerbated by poor trailbed conditions, trash dumping, and vice activity which has led to harassment of runners utilizing the trail.

Recommendations:

Topographic and scenic variety throughout the Park, plus the location of Elysian Park to downtown Los Angeles provides the setting to create a network of premier Park trail experiences that attract runners, hikers, and families from the greater Los Angeles region.

Elysian Park can capitalize on this magnificent diversity of scenic vistas, ridgelines, and valleys by expanding and upgrading the network of multi-use trails. Each trail may have a theme and a name, specifically designed to attract people seeking specific experiences.

Provide loop and ridgeline trails that are challenging and interesting, short loops for families with children, and trails that connect one side of the Park to the other, effectively creating a system that knits the fragments of Elysian Park together and gives visitors the means to utilize all areas of the Park.

- Inventory existing trails for repair and development. Implement repairs.
- Develop loop trails for hiking and viewing. Provide a variety of experiences for recreation and education to attract families with children, and sightseers.
- Develop a ridgeline trail for runners and hikers with an emphasis on scenic views.
- Provide trail systems throughout the entire Park with trailheads and parking development on each end of the trail.
- Utilize park roads to develop asphalt trails or walks by narrowing park roads.
- Connect multi-use trail system to the most recen acquired 18-Acre Expansion.

- Install amenities to support each trail. These include trailhead information, signage, mileage markers, guide brochures or maps, plastic bags or mutt mits for dog waste pickup, and trash cans.
- Develop Recreation and Park directed community volunteer trail maintenance program (see *Taking Care of the Park*).

Crossings: Signalized Pedestrian Crosswalk across Stadium Way

There are currently no pedestrian crossings on Stadium Way. This overly wide highway effectively separates and isolates visitors who come to the west side to use the Park's facilities and trails. To utilize the Park safely, Park visitors are forced to use their cars to drive from one side of Elysian Park to the other rather than walk across Stadium Way.

Recommendations:
A pedestrian activated, signalized crosswalk from Elysian Park Drive across to Angels Point Road is recommended. This crosswalk will connect trails on the west side of the Park with Angels Point and trails on the east side of Stadium Way (see Fig. 2-8, Proposed Trail System for crosswalk location).

Stadium Way should be reduced in width prior to the construction of the signalized crossing in order to reduce vehicle volume and speeds for maximum pedestrian safety while crossing.

- Implement signalized pedestrian activated road crossing across Stadium Way.

Crossings: Pedestrian Bridge across Academy Road from Angels Point to the Leo Politi Picnic Area

A pedestrian crossing at any location on Academy Road has been assessed by Department of Transportation as hazardous due to the existing configuration of the intersection of Academy Road and Stadium Way. A sidewalk on the right side of the arterial provides some pedestrian access from Chavez Ravine facilities to the rest of the park. However the arterials remain inhospitable to pedestrians and difficult to cross.

Recommendations:
A pedestrian bridge that connects Leo Politi to Angels Point would span Academy Road and provide the continuous trail system for runners, hikers, and park users who desire to walk from Chavez Ravine to other areas of the Park.

This bridge would contribute greatly to the aesthetics of Academy Road. Current conditions are bleak as Academy Road was placed through a sandstone hillside leaving no room for Park use. Overhead signage is an inappropriate scale in the Park, contributing to the uncomfortable feel of this road for a pedestrian Park user.

- Provide a pedestrian and running bridge across Academy Road that connects the proposed ridgeline trail from Angels Point to Leo Politi picnic area.
- Permanently remove overhead signage. Replace with approved Park signage system including street signs.

FIG. 2-7,
TRAIL CONNECTION OVER ACADEMY ROAD

A TRAIL BRIDGE OVER ACADEMY ROAD WILL CONNECT ANGELS POINT TO THE LEO POLITI PICNIC AREA, AVOIDING THE HAZARD OF CROSSING THIS BUSY ARTERIAL.

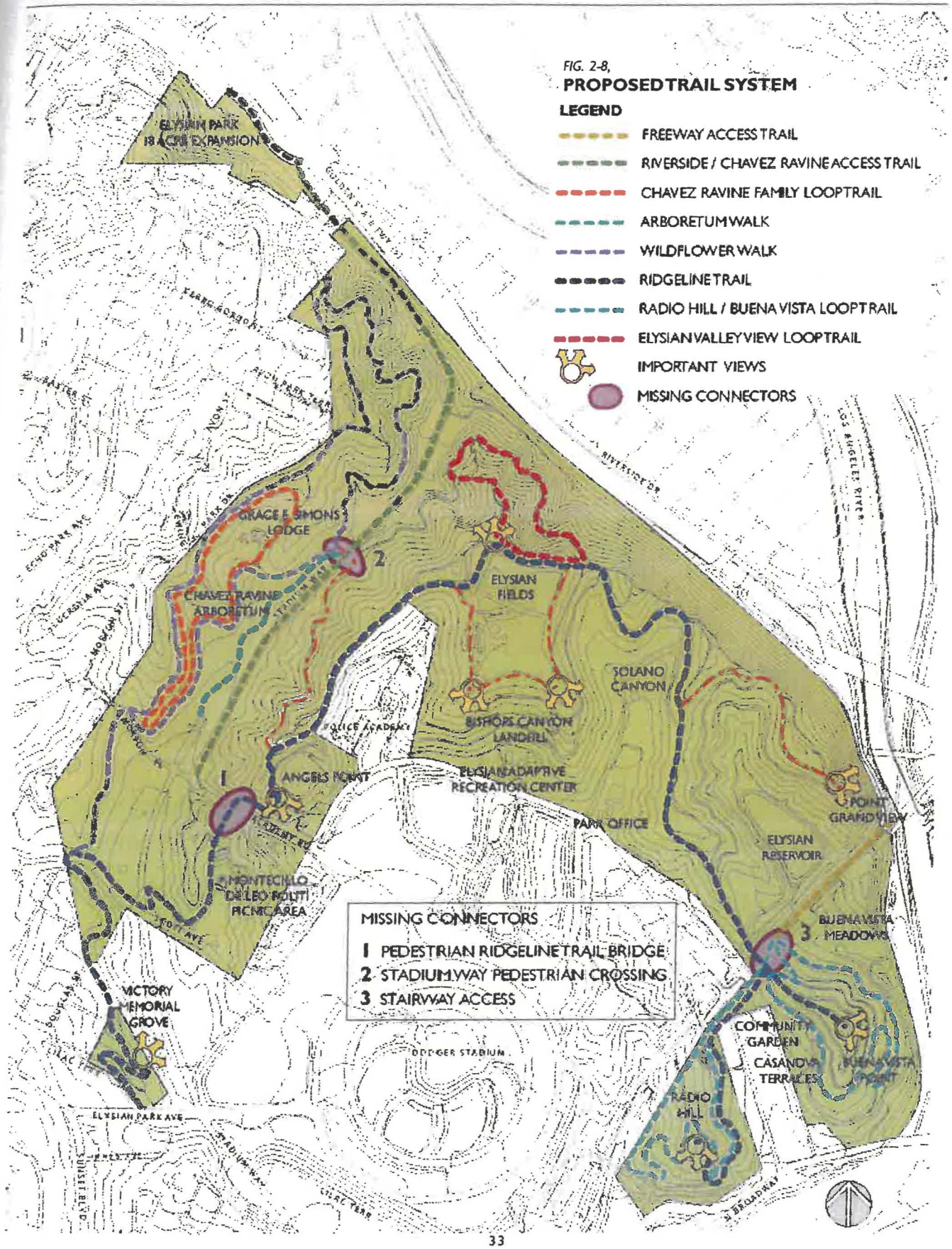


FIG. 2-8,
PROPOSED TRAIL SYSTEM

LEGEND

- FREEWAY ACCESS TRAIL
- RIVERSIDE / CHAVEZ RAVINE ACCESS TRAIL
- CHAVEZ RAVINE FAMILY LOOP TRAIL
- ARBORETUM WALK
- WILDFLOWER WALK
- RIDGELINE TRAIL
- RADIO HILL / BUENA VISTA LOOP TRAIL
- ELYSIAN VALLEY VIEW LOOP TRAIL
- IMPORTANT VIEWS
- MISSING CONNECTORS

Stairway: Park Stairway from the Freeway Access Trail to Buena Vista

An amazing access trail to Elysian Park that has been carefully preserved but rarely used is the Freeway Access Trail directly adjacent to the 110 Freeway. Its beginning point is a stairway along San Fernando Road. The trail then crosses the Los Angeles River to Elysian Park and continues all the way to Radio Hill to the edge of the Chinatown community.

Buena Vista Meadows is easily accessible from the Freeway Access Trail. The steep slope from the meadow area to Buena Vista Point requires a zigzag trail or stairway or both.

Recommendations:

- Provide a stairway from the existing Freeway Access Trail on the southwest side of Buena Vista Meadows up to Park Row Drive.
- Provide signs and trail markers at both ends, and at every trail crossing. Provide a 'You are Here' map sign at each trail entrance and at the Buena Vista Meadows parking area.
- Work with CalTrans to permanently remove homeless under the trail at Radio Hill near Chinatown and keep the area sanitary.

A SIMILAR STAIRWAY WILL CONNECT THE FREEWAY TRAIL DIRECTLY TO PARK DRIVE.

SIGNS—WAYFINDING, LOCATION IDENTIFICATION AND TRAIL MARKERS

A consistent, well defined system of wayfinding and location signage is a missing element in Elysian Park. It is difficult to identify what areas are parkland. This is exacerbated by the lack of identifying markers.

Recommendations:

Wayfinding is key to providing the fullest range of recreational opportunities to the Park user. A series of signs that are cohesive in design and intent will provide direction, location identification, and continuity for vehicular occupants and pedestrians.

A distinctive Park logo and a series of directional signs that are legible from a vehicle have already been developed by Recreation and Parks. Additional layers of signage that name each Park facility, and provide international symbols of the recreational activities to be found at each location are an additional step of wayfinding that increases the comfort level of Park users.

As the Elysian Park trails are highly valued, efforts should focus on the development of attractive trailheads, trail walks, and trail construction. Appropriate signage throughout the network of trails will encourage much greater usage, especially when accompanied by a trail guide map of the Park (see *Taking Care of the Park* for Signage Design Standards).

- Continue and expand the Recreation and Parks Signage Program.
- Place appropriate signage based on the developed hierarchy of wayfinding signs throughout the Park.
- Use international symbols for facilities signage under or adjacent to directional signage.
- Develop trail mileage markers. Develop trail maps with trailhead locations, recommended parking for each trail, mileage, and items of interest i.e. views, wildflowers, historic elements.
- Group signs and markers together. Consolidate sign information and remove signs that do not provide the cohesiveness of material, color, logo, and content.

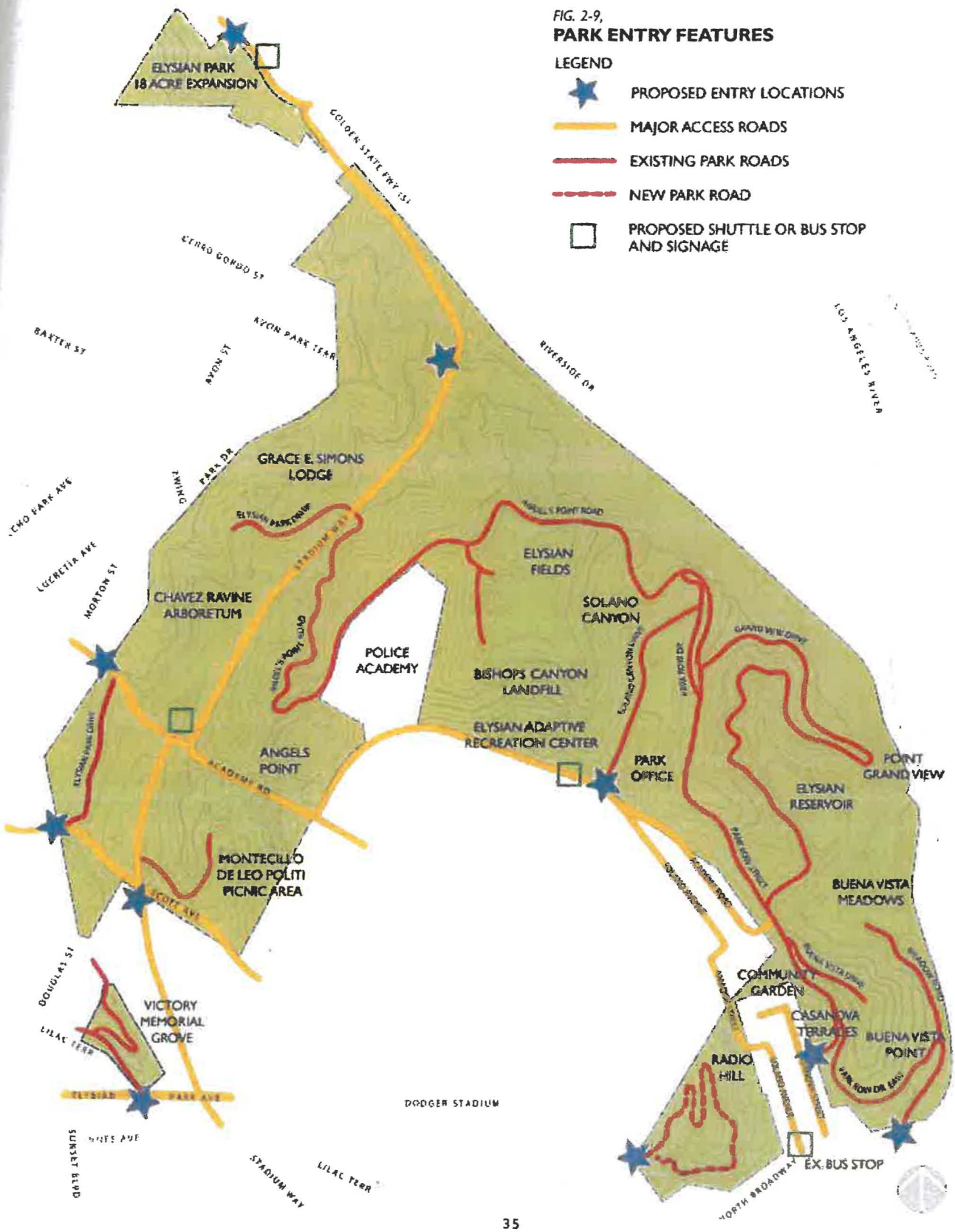


FIG. 2-9,
PARK ENTRY FEATURES

LEGEND

- PROPOSED ENTRY LOCATIONS
- MAJOR ACCESS ROADS
- EXISTING PARK ROADS
- NEW PARK ROAD
- PROPOSED SHUTTLE OR BUS STOP AND SIGNAGE

MAJOR ENTRIES INTO THE PARK

The major entries into Elysian Park include a north entry from Riverside Drive and Interstate 5, south entries at Elysian Park Avenue and at Scott Avenue, and an east entry off of North Broadway. These gateways provide easy access into the Park. However two of the entries have no significant signage indicating that people have arrived at Elysian Park.

In order for entry signage to be effective, the scale of the site and the surrounding elements must be considered. Two of the Park entries are adjacent to cliffs where the existing small, horizontal signage does not read well.

Recommendations:
Vertical or appropriately dimensioned entry features are necessary for the scale of Elysian Park and for the physical constraints of the entryway locations. These features should be placed at the Park entryways to aggressively mark Park territory. Placing such signage further into Park boundaries, as is the current condition along Stadium Way, is confusing. The entry features should also be easily identified from a vehicle as this is how they will be viewed. (See *Taking Care of the Park*).

- Design vertical entry features and install at significant locations. Include park logo and incorporate burgundy color into the monument.

- Ensure pedestrian access into Elysian Park from the main entrances into the Park.

TIMELINE FOR RECOMMENDATION IMPLEMENTATION

RECOMMENDATIONS IN ORDER OF PRIORITY

ONE TO FIVE YEARS

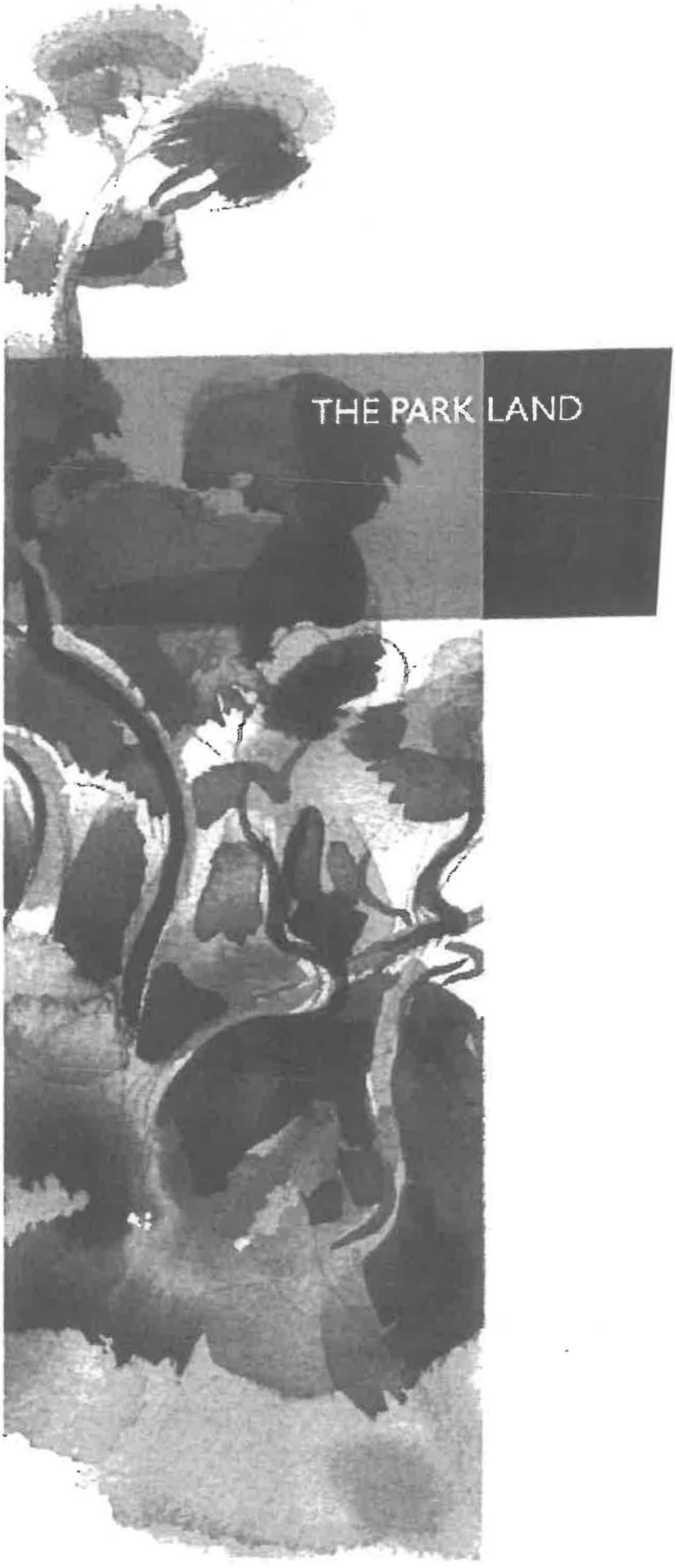
- Establish trail system.
- Begin signage design and implementation program for wayfinding and trails.
- Modify width and repave Park roads.
- Create pod parking along roads.
- Remove one lane of Stadium Way to provide pedestrian walkway up Stadium Way.
- Implement pedestrian crossing from Elysian Park Drive to Angels Point Road.
- Construct Entry Features.

FIVE TO TEN YEARS

- Implement Leo Politi to Angels Point Pedestrian Bridge.
- Implement stairs to Buena Vista Point from the Freeway Trail.
- Implement Bus (public transportation stops) through Elysian Park.

TEN TO TWENTY YEARS

- Complete signage program.
- Complete all trail restoration, trail head development, and trail connections.
- Acquire land to connect trails and provide access into Elysian Park from surrounding parklands and trails.


THE PARK LAND

THE PARKLAND

Based on the first written descriptions of native California landscapes, the slopes of Elysian Park must have been clothed in chaparral, coastal sage scrub, and Coast Live Oak and Walnut woodlands. In 1796 their distribution was determined by combinations of slope aspect, elevation, topography, and soil type.

A century later the influences of grazing and resource extraction had left the landscape bare and denuded. In 1886, once Elysian Park was dedicated as a Park for public enjoyment, beautification began with tree planting and the introduction of several thousand Eucalyptus trees (see bibliography for listing of documents detailing the history of Elysian Park).

The Los Angeles Horticultural Society established the first botanical garden in Southern California in Elysian Park in 1893. Among the original plantings in the Chavez Ravine Arboretum were a magnificent cape chestnut, several expansive Tipu trees and a grove of exotic Rubber trees. The double row of Palms along what has become known as the Avenue of the Palms, were planted sometime between 1895-1900. A gift from a foreign country, the Palms have only recently been identified as *Phoenix canariensis,* Canary Island Palms.

Over subsequent decades an array of other exotic species was planted throughout the Park, including groves of Deodar Cedars, Pines, Olives and more Eucalyptus. Most recently, fire has transformed the historic bank of Deodar Cedars above the Golden State Freeway. In the wake of the fire, remnants of the native landscape have re-emerged—most notably the California Walnuts (*Juglans californica*)—characteristic of such north-facing slopes.

Also re-emerging around Elysian Park are new open spaces reclaimed from railyards, new State and City parklands, new trails, and plans for a Los Angeles River corridor revitalization, developed in conjunction with the revitalization of adjacent communities. The sheer volume of park and open space planning surrounding Elysian Park necessitates that this Master Plan look at opportunities to connect Elysian Park to a greater regional context. This chapter addresses:

- PARK LANDSCAPES
- FLORA AND FAUNA, NATIVE PLANT COMMUNITIES AND RESTORATION
- LAND OUTSIDE ELYSIAN PARK
- CONNECTING PARK LANDS

ACTION PLAN

Some irony may be found in the fact that native vegetation has become more rare and desired in the Park than the exotic species imported there a century ago. The objective of the Plan is to establish a unified native plant parkland that will sustain itself over time, reducing maintenance costs while providing the context in which to show off the historic and iconic landscape features.

THE SILHOUETTE OF THE MEXICAN FAN PALMS AGAINST THE SKY ON GRAND VIEW DRIVE

Chavez Ravine Arboretum and the Avenue of the Palms constitute the most prominent and valuable historic vegetation resources in the Park. These resources are valuable not just for the impressive maturity of the trees, but for what they tell us about cultural perspectives at a time when the City of Los Angeles was emerging. Saving the best of exotic ornamentals and restoring and improving the native plant communities will strengthen the best of the Park's history.

ACTION ITEMS ARE:

- Enhance the biological value of the native plant communities in the Park.
- Include citizens in restoration knowledge and implementation.
- Create a self sustaining native landscape over time that supports habitat.
- Preserve and enhance historic groves of selected exotic trees.
- Link Elysian Park to other City parks and trails, and to the regional wildlife corridor of the Los Angeles River. Strengthen physical connections to Elysian Park from outside the Park.
- Support land acquisition to complete the Park function and aesthetic for optimum use and enjoyment.

PARK LANDSCAPES

Iconic Exotic Planting

Along with the vegetation resources of historic significance (see *Taking Care of the Park* for further discussion), other prominent vegetation features of the Park include the Mexican Fan Palms against the skyline; the century-old stands of Eucalyptus on the hillsides; and the forest of Deodar Cedar (*Cedrus deodar*) surrounding the Reservoir.

Straight lines of Mexican Fan Palms marking the grid of urban Los Angeles disappear when they enter the steep contours of the park—to re-emerge on the ridgeline as a whimsical, only-in-LA statement that triggers recognition of the Park. Unfortunately, the close proximity of the Park to the Los Angeles River renders it one of the nearest sources for invasive plant species such as the Fan Palms. If the tradition of Fan Palms is to be perpetuated, strategies must be developed to reduce their seeds from escaping from the Park.

The Eucalyptus have deteriorated under the combined stress of drought, fire and disease. A few stands still remain in good health, but in many instances, the dead and dying trees have created a fire hazard in the Park. Maintenance crews have focused their efforts primarily in the 200' wide corridor at the edge of the Park adjacent to residential properties.

Like the Eucalyptus, the Deodar Cedars forming a near monoculture around the Reservoir have suffered as access to irrigation water has been removed from the steeper slopes of the Park. "Dim" was the apt word used to describe the light quality in the Deodar plantings in a 1965 Sunset magazine article on the park. This dark, uniform planting loses impact in mass. Its proximity to the precious water in the reservoir represents a missed opportunity in terms of wildlife habitat, although it nevertheless hosts a diversity of resident and migratory bird species.

The failure of past plantings that now comprise the parklands landscape is that assumptions were made about the feasibility of long-term irrigation. As these plantings have matured, and in certain cases expanded, a few more drought-tolerant species have come to dominate the landscape in ways likely never intended, compromising public safety and aesthetic appeal.

Recommendations:

- Adopt an overall policy of gradually replacing declining tree plantings with more sustainable native plant associations that will eventually become self-sustaining. Begin establishing replacement trees long before the original tree plantings have succumbed.
- Maintain and replace dead and dying Mexican Fan Palms only on the ridgelines.
- Coordinate with City to provide stormwater filtration systems that will screen invasive Mexican Fan Palm seeds from entering the Los Angeles River. Retrofit storm drain catch basins to screen out not only large trash, but fine materials such as exotic plant seeds, using sand filters or other mechanisms to separate out fine-scale trash.
- Thin and remove declining Deodar Cedars, develop native Oak/Walnut woodland restoration and implementation plan that will ensure the sustainability of the existing California Quail population (see page 42 for specific restoration recommendations for the Elysian Reservoir slopes).
- Develop Elysian Park Landscaping Guidelines and Best Management Practices for the park maintenance staff that addresses Park specifics.

FLORA AND FAUNA, NATIVE PLANT COMMUNITIES AND RESTORATION

Existing Conditions

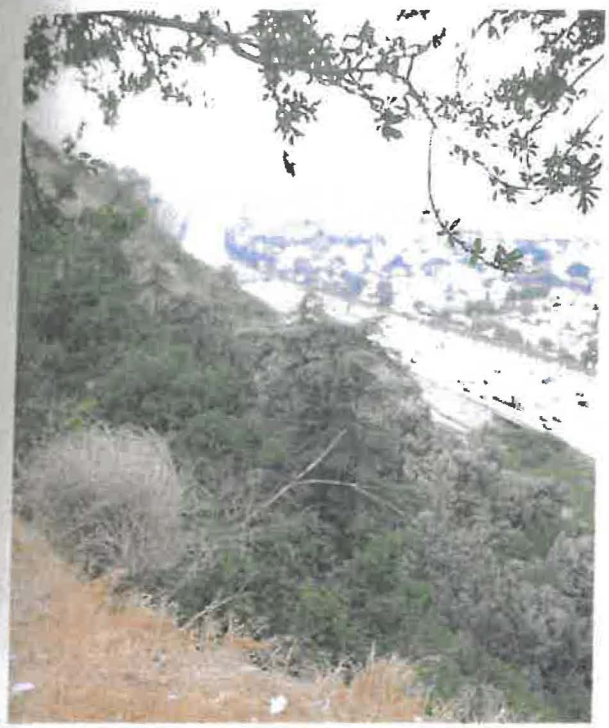
The most prominent native vegetation in the Park today is the re-emerging California Walnut woodlands on the burned northern slopes. Mexican Elderberries, Toyon, Sticky Monkeyflower, Fiesta Flower, wild Honeysuckle, Giant Wildrye and other native species occur only sporadically, with the majority of the understory dominated by non-native annual grasses, punctuated by an assortment of exotic trees and shrubs.

Elsewhere, native shrub species may be observed here and there, often poking out through the veil of exotic shrubs like the South American Shrub Pepper (*Schinus polygamus*) that has come to dominate many areas of the Park. The handsomely mature Coast Live Oaks on Buena Vista Point lose some visual prominence in proximity to an assemblage of exotic trees. But, with the exception of a couple of recent native plantings, few natives appear outside the north slope woodlands.

The Park supports an array of native mammal species, some not observed in recent years including coyote, gray fox, red fox, racoon, opossum, skunk, squirrels and rabbits. Resident and migratory bird species include red-tail hawks, coopers hawk, great horned owls, raven, annas and black chinned hummingbirds, black headed phoebes, phaenopeplas, american robin, cedar waxwing, bullocks and hooded orioles, brown towhees, scrub jays, and California quail. The quail's presence here is remarkable in that this species will disappear early following habitat fragmentation.

Ecological Restoration Approach

Ecological restoration is an important strategy that can render many areas of the park more self-sustaining over time. Additionally, restoration of indigenous wildlife habitats can enhance park visitors' recreational experience, while supporting regional and global ecosystems.



THE BRIGHT GREEN LEAVES OF THE WALNUT TREE STAND OUT ON THE NORTH SLOPE OF THE PARK.

Since so much of the Park's native biodiversity was eradicated over the past two centuries, it will need help to regain ecological stability. Along with targeting the major invasive plant species, the most challenging restoration issue will be the non-native annual grassland that has become the understory in open woodland areas.

In the case of the steep northern slopes above the Golden State Freeway (I-5), shallow-rooted, non-native annual grasses have rendered the slopes more susceptible to erosion and land slippage in those areas where they have supplanted the indigenous understory. In addition to posing safety issues for the freeway below, the safety of park users on the trail is acutely compromised. Furthermore, parklands are being incrementally lost to erosion.

A self-sustaining native woodland understory will reduce maintenance costs over time, while reducing dead fuel loads and re-establishing an ecosystem that will better support native and migratory wildlife.

Recommendations:

General Restoration Concepts

- A map of parkland soils is needed in order to complete a general restoration prescription for the entire Park.
- Commission certified arborists to re-evaluate the health of parkland trees at regular intervals, calling for removal of trees posing fire or other hazards, while maintaining snags in appropriate locations.
- Site replacement tree plantings to emulate natural tree distribution patterns. For example, the only trees that appear natural and, in fact, are sustainable along the ridgelines are Coast Live Oaks and California Walnuts. California Sycamores emerge down-slope from sun-soaked drainages in Coastal Sage Scrub.
- Initiate and house a collection of photos, color photocopies and/or pressed specimens of focal plants and animals found in the Park. Identify invasive pest plants as well as incipient natives to ensure that weed efforts are successful.
- Initiate and house log books and/or electronic logs for community members to record their observations of wildlife, transitioning park landscapes, repairs needed along trails or at picnic areas, etc. (see *Taking Care of the Park*).
- Control invasive plant species on parklands, beginning with those recognized as most invasive by inclusion on the California Invasive Plant Council (CalIPC), formerly known as the California Exotic Pest Plant Council (CalEPPC) or similar weed alert lists.

Recommendations:

Northern Slope Aspect Walnut/Oak Woodland

The goal is to establish a California Walnut/Coast Live Oak woodland with an understory of deep-rooted native shrubs and grasses. Develop and implement a restoration program for these areas including the following objectives:

- Inventory and stabilize acutely eroding slope faces and drainages with appropriate native species, using biotechnical stabilization measures where appropriate. Strategically implemented hydroseeding can address problem areas.

- Use bio-technical stabilization, in concert with engineered solutions to repair and stabilize Park trails. Implement water bars and other drainage devices to reduce erosion potential.
- Where access permits, initiate restoration of deep-rooted native understory species to reclaim the slopes from the exotic annual grasses and mustard. It is anticipated that once these natives become re-established in accessible areas they will eventually spread to other areas of the slopes (see *Appendix A* for plant lists).
- Strategic use of herbicides will be necessary to limit the effect on regenerating native species.
- Mycorrhizal (naturally occurring beneficial soil fungal species) inoculation will likely hasten the transformation from annual grassland to woodland understory. Inoculation will be less important in zones surrounding existing native shrub species.
- Document the locations of existing mature or young Coast Live Oaks in GIS. California Walnuts may be mapped as patches of vegetation, rather than individual trees.
- Initiate Coast Live Oak acorn planting in suitable locations that can be safely accessed, as discussed in the following section. California Walnuts are typically well distributed and planted by squirrels without additional effort. Mexican Elderberry are currently important colonizers of these slopes, but more can be planted.

Recommendations:
Coast Live Oak Woodland

The goal is to establish a Coast Live Oak woodland with an understory of native shrubs, herbs and grasses; with Oak density and topographic position dependant on slope aspect. Develop and implement a restoration program to transition suitable areas of the parkland matrix toward self-sustaining Oak woodlands, rich with native understory species.

Coast Live Oaks naturally occur on all slope aspects but reach their greatest density on northern exposures, where true Oak forests may develop in response to greater moisture. The spaces among the Oaks where an assortment of other trees, shrubs and grasses may access light and grow, enhance biodiversity. Nature spaces Oaks to ensure optimal soil water relations. Moving toward drier locations with southern and western exposures, the density of Oaks will decrease as shrub species dominate.

Growing Oaks from acorns is the most sustainable method, as it requires no irrigation.

- In the interest of restoring self-sustaining Oak woodlands, develop a general plan for Oak woodland restoration emulating natural Oak distribution patterns. Using GIS, define potential Oak woodland restoration areas, including the declining Eucalyptus woodlands. Determine naturalistic density and distribution patterns of Coast Live Oaks based on slope aspect, using the Guidelines for Planting Oaks in Los Angeles County.

REGENERATING OAK ON THE SOUTH EDGE OF BUENA VISTA MEADOWS

- Engage community stewards and school groups in the planting of Coast Live Oak acorns in suitable locations according to the general plan. Collect acorns from trees in the Santa Monica mountains including Griffith Park. Distribute the acorn plantings over space and time to avoid the appearance of a plantation. Protect the young oaks from encroachment by exotic annual grasses, mustard and other weeds. Ideally, stewards will monitor the success of the plantings over time, using GIS. The California Oak Foundation publishes the brochure, *How to Collect, Store and Plant Acorns* that may be downloaded at http:/www.californiaoaks.org/html/oak_tree_care.html.
- Plant suitable native plant associates to act as nurse crops for the young Oaks and help thwart weeds (see *Appendix A* for plant lists).
- Using a nucleus or island approach, convert patches of the exotic annual grass understory to native woodland understory. Work outward from these "secured" locations, which should coincide with areas where acorns have been planted.
- Utilize strategic use of herbicides and mycorrhizal inoculation.
- Erect temporary fencing in key locations as may be necessary to prevent trampling of young plants by people or dogs.
- Document the locations of any existing mature or young Coast Live Oaks in GIS.
- Continue to remove diseased and dead Eucalyptus as needed for fuel modification, but leave some dead trees/snags standing to serve as nesting habitat for cavity nesters like the Red-shafted Flicker. Site designated snags in locations where they will not impinge on public safety and buffer them with barrier plantings.
- As the Oak woodlands are maturing in areas now dominated by Eucalyptus, affect a gradual transition by maintaining some living and/or dead Eucalyptus trees to serve as roosting (possibly nesting) sites for hawks and owls. The transition will allow enough light to favor the incoming native species and a continuity of habitat for raptors through the transitional period.

Elysian Reservoir and Surroundings

The 1971 Master Plan called for thinning the Deodar Cedars. It appears this was never done. And while the ultimate disposition of the reservoir remains uncertain, it is appropriate for the current Park Master Plan to outline a vision for this area. If the Reservoir becomes covered it will allow opportunities for park visitors to access lands currently off-limits, as well as potential creation of functional wetlands to enhance wildlife habitat diversity.

The goal for the Reservoir area is to enhance the structural and biological diversity of vegetation to better support native and migratory wildlife, while providing opportunities for human visitors to view and access water features in an aesthetically pleasing environment that will become primarily self-sustaining over time.

- Employ certified arborists to evaluate the Deodars; select the best to conserve that will serve as habitat while the Oak and Walnut woodlands and Coastal Sage Scrub regenerate.
- Plan and implement phasing that will ensure the sustainability of existing California Quail populations through the thinning and restoration process. Quail require patches of brush/scrub and daily access to fresh water through the dry summer season.
- Conserve select Deodars in groups, within which some trees should be girdled to serve as snags for wildlife and help admit light into the transitioning understory. Conserve Deodar patches on each of the slope aspects around the Reservoir, allowing for trees to remain at stratified elevations. Establish fenced buffers around the root zones of the trees to ensure minimal disturbance during land management activities.
- Recycle the harvested Deodars for construction of park benches, fences, art and other amenities, as well as for mulch to be used throughout the Park.

- A restoration ecologist should consider testing soils on representative slope aspects to determine how their character may have been affected by the tenure of the overgrown Deodars.
- A restoration ecologist should examine and potentially test the duff left by the Deodars to help determine its potential role in the restoration process. Cedars foster endomycorrhizal fungi, which may help facilitate the establishment of many native shrub and grass species. The duff may play an important restoration role in ensuring the mycorrhiza are there.
- Inoculation of the soil with ectomycorrhizal fungi may help support regenerating Coast Live Oaks.
- Establish barrier plantings around conserved Deodar patches containing snags to keep the public excluded.

A NATIVE TOYON WOODLAND IS DEVELOPING UNDERNEATH THE THINNING STANDS OF EXOTIC DEODAR CEDARS ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE RESERVOIR.

- Develop a general plan for re-establishing Oak and Walnut woodlands, including native understory species, according to slope aspect around the Reservoir. Plant Walnut/Oak woodlands on the most protected north-to-east-facing slopes. Oak woodland should transition to scrub on east-to-west-facing slopes. California Sycamore riparian woodland should emerge mid-slope from the drainage at the north end of the reservoir.
- Plant Coast Live Oak acorns and California Walnut seeds at suitable locations around the slopes of the Reservoir, as indicated in the previous section. Plant some container-grown Coast Live Oaks in focal areas. Remove staking as soon as feasible to allow the trunks to develop stronger structures.
- Plant suitable woodland understory species to serve as nurse crops for the young Oaks and as habitat for existing and desired wildlife species.
- If the Reservoir is to be capped and retrofitted to allow other uses, design and construct a system of cells that will alternately hold wetland soils or circulating treated water that can be partially self-sustaining, suitable for public enjoyment. Design and establish complementary cells that will allow visitors access to treated water. The design team should include expertise in engineering, restoration ecology and landscape architecture.
- Include in the design, areas of wetland removed and buffered from public interface to serve as optimal wildlife habitats. Provide opportunities for birdwatching and general enjoyment of views from key areas on the slopes, with trails established accordingly.
- Extend the drainage flanked by California Sycamores into a Willow-riparian woodland that will continue around the edge of the covered Reservoir as drainage concerns and visitor features permit.

Scrub Associations

Native scrub associations can provide valuable understory for re-establishing woodlands, but can also stand alone on the sunnier, drier southern and especially western exposures. Native scrub areas can attract an array of native scrub birds that may not currently reside in the Park. The goal is to establish self-sustaining, drought-tolerant native scrub associations in suitable locations of the park to help stabilize slopes and support native scrub wildlife species.

- Hydroseeding and incorporation of mycorrhizal inoculum are recommended to facilitate an efficient restoration process.
- Include a diversity of appropriate herbaceous species–wildflowers and native grasses—typical of Coastal Sage Scrub.

Turf and Landscape Relationships

While certain areas of the Park have received landscape treatments to enhance their usability by Park visitors, these stand out as individual elements, separate from the surrounding jumble of wild vegetation. And while the surrounding vegetation has gone wild, most of it is dominated by well-adapted non-native species that have apparently spread from their original plantings, as well as other invasive weedy species. Probably the best example of this disharmony is the broad lawn area at the head of Chavez Ravine, where the manicured landscape bumps uneasily into a wall of wild shrubs.

Recommendations:

Well-designed transition zones will enhance the character of the manicured spaces, as well as park visitors' sense of safety while using those areas.

- Establish native plant landscape transition zones.
- Remove non-native understory shrubs and replace them with low-growing sustainable native plant species. Drought tolerant native trees should be planted adjacent to open lawns, transitioning to native riparian trees within the irrigated turf.
- Apply this same strategy to fuel modification zones, favoring low-growing plant species beneath raised canopies of drought tolerant native trees.
- The landscape transition zones are an appropriate place to use California native plant cultivars, in addition to wild genotypes. Contingent upon increased staffing levels, these transition zones should receive regular maintenance.

EUCALYPTUS AND NON-NATIVE GRASSES DOMINATE THE RIDGELINES AND SOUTH AND WEST FACING SLOPES

Restoration Priorities

Elysian Park is a mix of native trees and shrubs, ornamental plantings, and undesireable ornamental exotics that have established and spread throughout the Park. A visual assessment of the existing vegetation clearly reveals those areas of the Park where restoration and enhancement activities are needed. Fig. 3-1, Restoration Priorities, highlights the priority restoration areas currently dominated by non-native invasive species.

Parkland areas dominated by non-native species are considered high priority for restoration and enhancement activities as they provide little habitat, are seed sources for adjacent areas, and will require the most

FINAL DRAFT

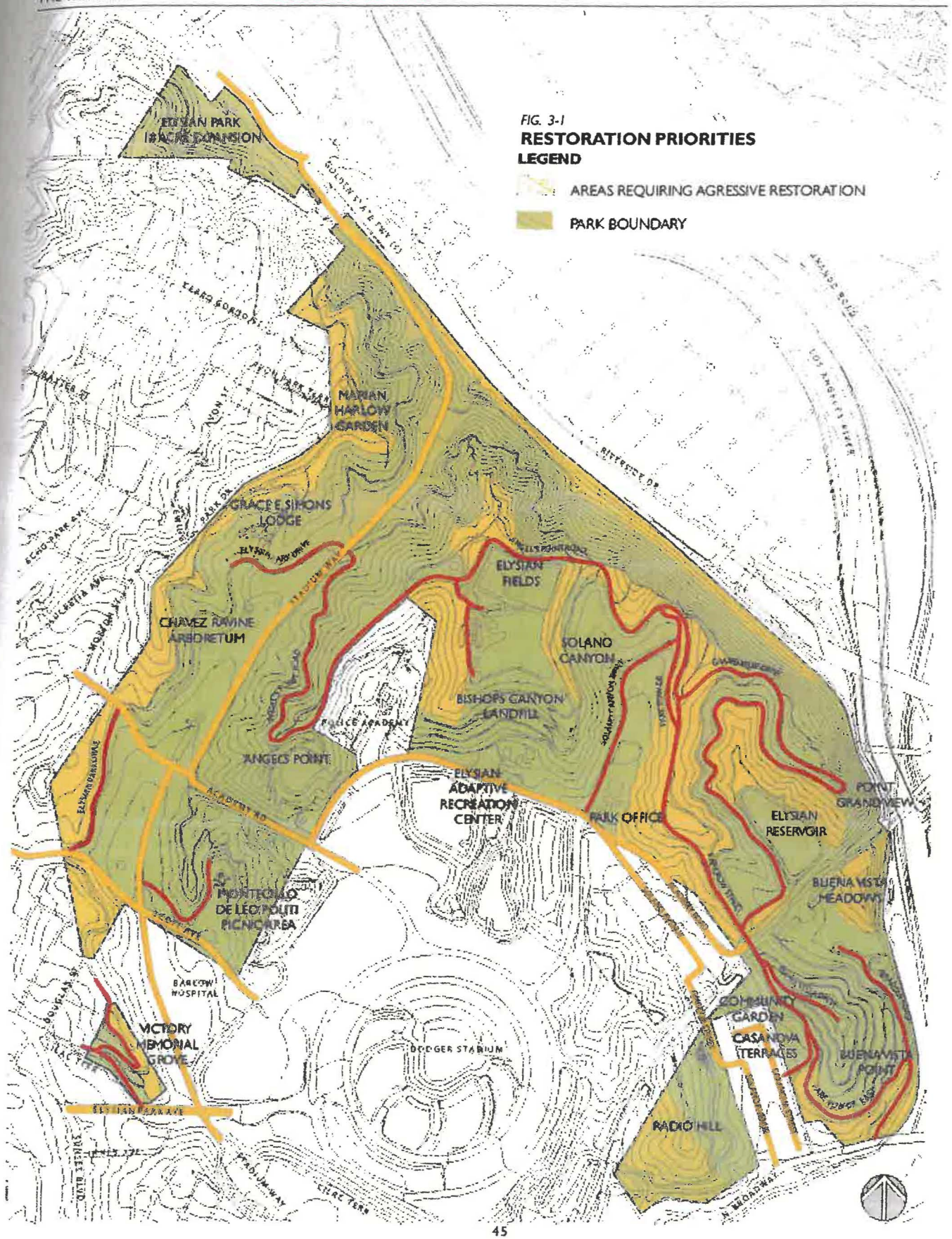


FIG. 3-1

RESTORATION PRIORITIES

LEGEND

AREAS REQUIRING AGRESSIVE RESTORATION

PARK BOUNDARY

effort in time and resources. Typically these restoration priority areas are located on ridge lines and on south or west facing slopes. They are dominated by the Eucalyptus species, non-native grasses, and highly invasive non-natives. Removal of invasive plants along the Park ridgelines should take priority.

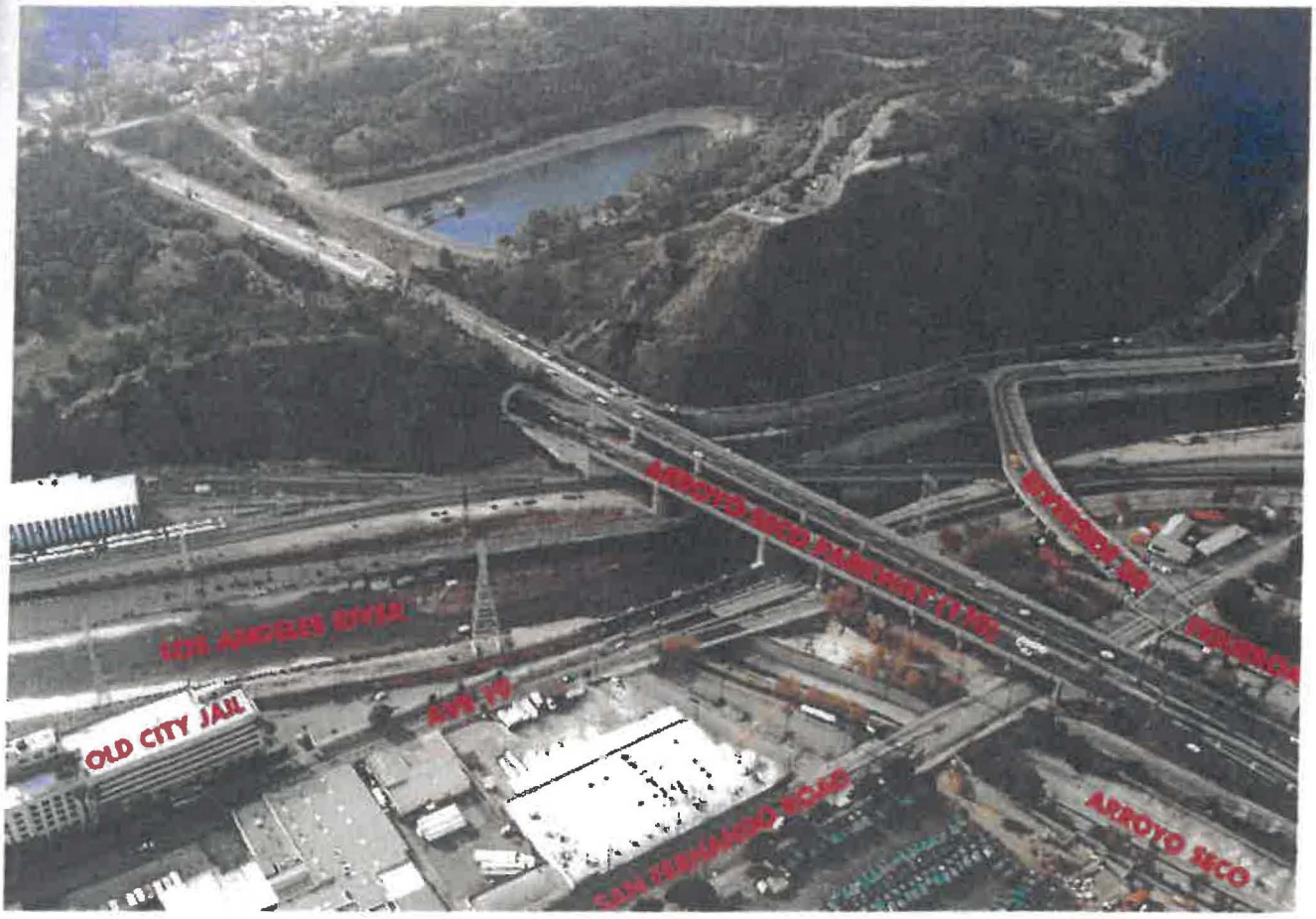
Areas that are dominated by native species may also have a non-native component but were not considered top priority for restoration and enhancement activities. These areas include north facing slopes of the Park and west facing slopes above Chavez Ravine Arboretum. In these areas fire has created places where natives are regenerating without assisted management. This does not imply that enhancement efforts should not be undertaken, since selective removal of invasive non-native species such as the Eucalyptus species would be beneficial.

Additional areas that exhibit natural unassisted regeneration of native species are the Deodar plantings adjacent to the Reservoir which has a regenerated understory of native shrubs, primarily Toyon, the north facing slopes adjacent to the I-5 Freeway, and the south side of Buena Vista Meadows where Coast Live Oak seedlings are sprouting. Continuous monitoring of these areas is recommended to ensure that the regeneration process is successful.

LAND OUTSIDE ELYSIAN PARK

The purchase and development of new parks and open spaces by the State of California and by the City are occurring along the Los Angeles River and the Arroyo Seco. In addition, the proximity of the Park to the soft-bottom section of the Los Angeles River places it in a key position to enhance the function of this area as a stop on the Pacific Flyway.

THE MAINTENANCE SHED AT MIDWAY YARD IS SEEN AT THE LEFT EDGE OF THE PHOTO.



Recommendations:

- Provide a viable landscape linkage from Elysian Park out to the Los Angeles River. Restore wildlife habitats on parklands in close proximity to the river and confluence.
- Control invasive plant species.
- Establish a riparian drainage system linking the Elysian Reservoir vicinity to the Los Angeles River.
- Approve a Master Plan for Elysian Reservoir that includes wetland habitat to support the Pacific Flyway. Implement native plants and seasonal water flow to the Los Angeles River.
- Develop a site specific plan for Midway Yard that provides open green space linking Elysian Park to the Los Angeles River.
- Provide trail linkages to Griffith Park, the Los Angeles River, and the Arroyo Seco, as part of the Rim of the Valley Trail system.

CONNECTING PARK LANDS

Viable pedestrian, bicycle, trail, and shuttle connections must be planned and implemented to fully utilize the regional necklace of parks and open spaces underway in Los Angeles. Connections from Elysian Park to Griffith Park, Rio De Los Angeles State Park (Taylor Yard Park), Midway Yard, and the Los Angeles State Historic Park (Cornfields) are dependent on trails connecting to the Los Angeles River, and pedestrian activated crossings on arterial streets.

The community has consistently asked for more parkland. The City has responded accordingly by acquiring the parcel of land now called the Elysian Park 18-acre Riverside Drive Expansion which is currently in the planning stage of park development. As this parcel is not contiguous to the rest of Elysian

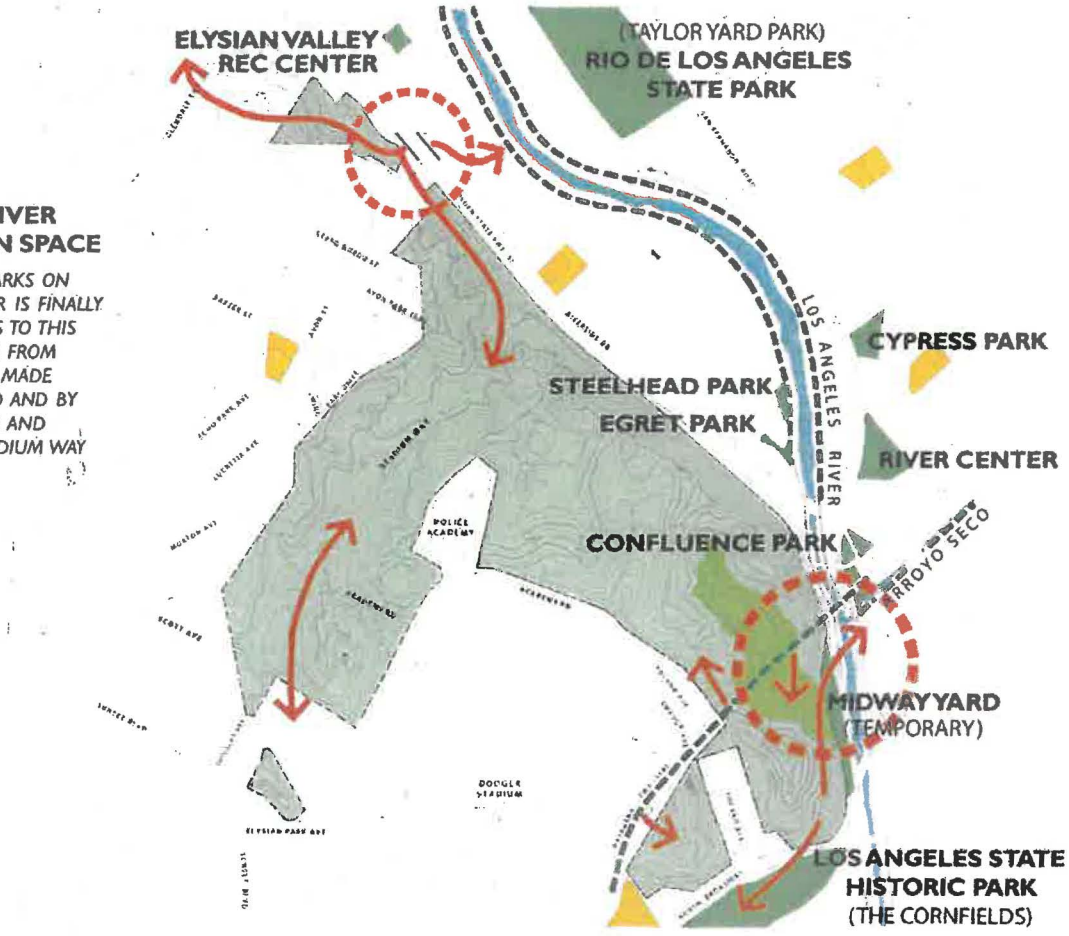


FIG. 3-2,
LOS ANGELES RIVER REGIONAL OPEN SPACE
A RIBBON OF LINKED PARKS ON THE LOS ANGELES RIVER IS FINALLY BEING REALIZED. ACCESS TO THIS SYSTEM OF OPEN SPACE FROM ELYSIAN PARK MUST BE MADE THROUGH MIDWAY YARD AND BY PROVIDING PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE ACCESS ON STADIUM WAY

Park, land acquisition must continue as a priority in order to link fragmented pieces of the Park together. In addition, the City must exercise due diligence in investigating encroachments onto Elysian Park property.

Recommendations:

- Continue land acquisition to connect park fragments to expand recreational, natural environment and scenic opportunities.
- Return to the Park land that was once dedicated parkland when opportunity arises.
- Add those connective elements within Elysian Park such as trails, stairways, gateways, and crossings to support the regional parkland development.

TIMELINE FOR RECOMMENDATION IMPLEMENTATION

RECOMMENDATIONS IN ORDER OF PRIORITY

ONE TO FIVE YEARS

- Begin native tree planting in restoration areas.
- Establish annual acorn planting program.
- Initiate restoration efforts throughout the Park.
- Initiate volunteer stewardship.
- Continue coordination efforts with DWP regarding Elysian Reservoir.
- Acquire land to facilitate pedestrian, bicycle, equestrian and shuttle linkages with adjacent parklands and open space.
- Acquire parkland.

FIVE TO TEN YEARS

- Establish transition zones from turf to native.
- Eliminate invasives in restoration areas.
- Implement Elysian Reservoir Restoration in coordination with DWP plans.

TEN TO TWENTY YEARS

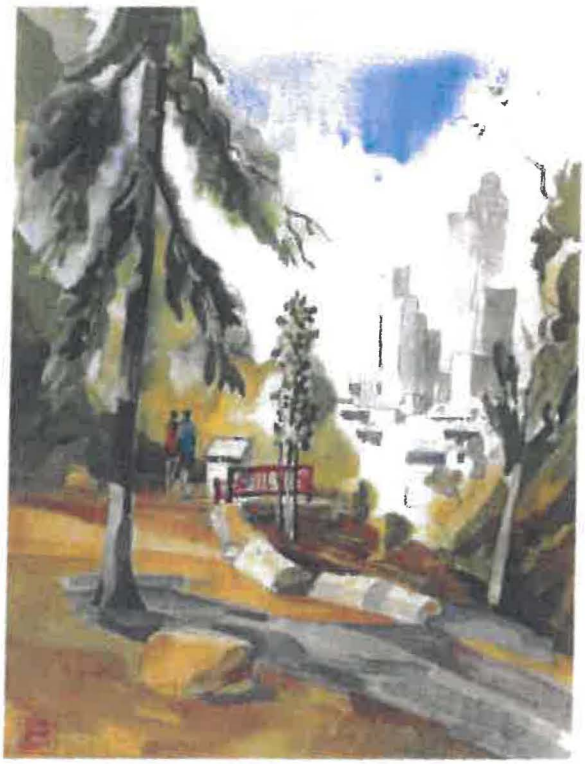
- Complete restoration planting.
- Complete riparian habitat connections from Elysian Reservoir to the Los Angeles River.

TAKING CARE OF THE PARK

TAKING CARE OF THE PARK

Elysian Park provides a very large and very diverse open space directly adjacent to downtown Los Angeles. Greater demands on the Park for relaxation and recreation are inevitable as more people choose to live and work in the near vicinity. As usage increases the need for Park upkeep and systems that can be automated such as irrigation should be fully implemented. Park staff will then be better positioned to handle the maintenance of a premier Park.

Taking care of the Park also means taking care of the history that is so valuable to Los Angeles residents. The Arboretum, Casanova Terrace, and the Leo Politi Picnic Area provide graceful remnants of past history. Scenic viewpoints provide prime locations for interpretive signage as many overlook the urban patterns of greater Los Angeles.



NEW INTERPRETIVE OVERLOOK AT BUENA VISTA POINT

Examples of old walls, benches, and structures provide the impetus for future design and implementation of those same elements to be applied throughout the Park.

Protection of existing Park land is more important than ever as Elysian Park gets 're-discovered' and its value increases along with the lands around it. Taking care of the Park is about the future. This chapter addresses:

- MAINTAINING THE PARK
- SAVING PLACES WITH HISTORY
- SETTING DESIGN STANDARDS

ACTION PLAN

The upgrade of basic systems such as irrigation and stormwater drainage that maintain the Park environment are critical. Native plant restoration projects completed over time will reduce water consumption. The limited resources of Park staff also must not be consumed by constant irrigation system issues.

Improvements to the Park also include appropriately designed and placed Park elements such as signage, gates, benches, and street trees. The best of both historic and recently installed Park elements should be used as inspiration to further the overall function, aesthetics, and cohesiveness of Elysian Park.

ACTION ITEMS ARE:

Maintaining the Park

- Construct a new water distribution system for Park use.
- Build a new automated irrigation system that takes advantage of new technologies.
- Maintain a clean, well-managed park.
- Secure resources to support the desired improvements.

Saving Places with History

- Emphasize the historic features and unique assets of the Park.
- Continue to develop interpretive opportunities at scenic viewpoints.
- Provide resources to support the Arboretum.

Setting Design Standards

- Expand tree lined arterials to extend Park aesthetics and habitat to Park boundaries.
- Expand sign program including interpretive elements.
- Maintain a "dark Park" for the benefit of wildlife. Lighting should be primarily for security.
- Apply historic design and materials where appropriate.

MAINTAINING THE PARK

Irrigation System

At one time the entire Park was irrigated. With increased interest in the preservation of sustainable habitats and native plant communities, and with recognition of the limited water resources in Southern California, a potable water system blanketing the Park is no longer desirable or possible. The use of recycled water from the Glendale water treatment plant for irrigation in Griffith Park, Rio de Los Angeles Park (Taylor Yard), Los Angeles State Historic Park (the Cornfields) and for Elysian Park will become a priority.

Recommendations:
Distinction between those areas of preserved and restored native plant communities and turf areas should be reflected in irrigation design.

- Plan and implement a new water distribution system for Elysian Park.
- Design the Park water distribution system to accommodate recycled water for irrigation in the future.
- Install automatic irrigation systems with sophisticated water management sytems throughout turf sections of the Park to eliminate the need to hand water.
- Replace 4" mainline to Victory Memorial Park.
- Replace all mainlines on the west side of the Park.
- Develop a backup system for emergencies and to allow maintenance on the Dorris Place mainline.
- Repair irrigation drainage through south parking lot in Chavez Arboretum.
- Remove asbestos from the Dorris Place mainline.
- Create a hotline that allows Park users to report broken irrigation lines and equipment.

Park Management and Maintenance

Elysian Park is managed by the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP). Maintenance management is handled by district rather than by the individual park. Management decisions are made based on the priorities of the district.

Park needs cannot easily be addressed when funds for all parks in a district comes from the general funding pool. When City funds are not available, specific Park projects are typically funded with the submittal of a list of capitol improvement projects to State or Federal funding sources. When City staff positions are eliminated, potential funding opportunities are lost as there is no one to create and shepherd the desired project through to implementation.

The Park Office, located at the intersection of Academy and Solano Canyon Roads, serves as a storage facility as well as a Park maintenance facility. The yard has limited space for supply storage. Closed park roads often serve as storage areas for mulch, gravel, and brush. This Park-generated clutter contributes to a general sense of poor Park maintenance and lack of care.

The Forestry Department's staff tends to the Park on an irregualr basis. 262 dead and dying Eucalyptus were removed in 2002, and 343 trees were pruned in the following three years. But the current level of available service is not sufficient to provide adequate tree care. A dedicated tree crew must be provided to keep up with the work. Additionally, brush clearance projects in areas that attract the homeless and on sightlines along the trails are backlogged.

A list of Elysian Park capital improvement projects needs to be developed by the City from the approved Master Plan, ready to be submitted when funding sources become available. The City must also approve the focused pursuit of all appropriate grant funding opportunities for Elysian Park each fiscal year.

Visitors to Elysian Park should be able to pick up brochures and maps from the main Park Office. Expansion of the Park Office and maintenance yard would allow more visitor interaction, and would better meet maintenance demands for better trails, vegetation management, and stockpiling needs.

Recommendations:

- Expand the Park Office and maintenance area without impacting existing tennis courts.
- Establish stockpile locations and construct storage bins that are neat in appearance, and can be utilized by Park supervised volunteers for maintenance projects.
- Develop tree maintenance/removal and brush maintenance/removal plans for all sections of the Park.

Management Tools

A Geographic Information System (GIS) can be a valuable tool for keeping track of restoration efforts over time. In addition to the mapping capabilities, other records, including photos, may be kept in the system, linked to mapped land attributes. The GIS can be made accessible to the public, especially community stewards and docents, via the internet.

Recommendations:

- Partner with a local academic department to develop an interactive GIS of the Park that may be accessed by the public via the internet.
- Coordinate efforts with the City of Los Angeles website and Navigate LA.

Community Sustainability

The proximity of several dense urban neighborhoods to the Park presents opportunities for community stewardship and interpretative activities that can profoundly help sustain the parklands, as well as build community spirit.

Recommendations:

Utilization of skilled volunteers for everything from trail construction, grant writing, habitat restoration projects to annual acorn plantings is imperative. Park management must include this existing resource. Outreach efforts indicated that there was a desire to volunteer on the part of the community. However, there is no mechanism in place within the Recreation and Parks Department to tap into this desire.

The Citizens Committee to Save Elysian Park (CCSEP) is a group of volunteer Park advocates with whom the City has worked and who have overseen this Master Plan process. A volunteer program could be established with the assistance of this group.

- Provide space and resources to facilitate community stewardship and docent programs for the park, including space to store park historical, horticultural and natural history documents, as well as stewardship tools and resources. Documentation of all new plantings in the Park should be stored in this centrally accessible location.
- Designate one or more point person(s) within the City administration to serve as contacts for the stewardship and docent programs, but generally the community should organize themselves for these purposes, with the full support of the City as needed. If affiliated with the CCSEP or a similar non-profit, these Park support groups can pursue grant funding for projects in the Park, in cooperation with City administration.
- The stewardship group should seek funding to develop a manual of stewardship activities, hiring professionals as appropriate to help define stewardship goals, approaches and methodologies, as may be applicable to each activity.
- Similarly, the docent group should seek local funding to develop a structure and manual for that program. Areas of docent concentration could be: 1) arboretum and special trees/plants of the park, 2) history/culture, and 3) natural history.
- Improve opportunities for volunteering. Develop an approved list of volunteer project, tasks, and timeframes.

TRASH BINS PARKED ON THE ROADWAY IN VICTORY MEMORIAL GROVE

- Expand City Park staff to include a volunteer coordinator position who works closely with CCSEP.
- Engage community stewards and school groups in the planting of Coast Live Oak acorns in pre-established restoration locations.

Trash Collection

Weekend and holiday use of the Chavez Arboretum picnic areas strains the maintenance resources of the Park. The community recognizes the Herculean task this presents every Monday and consistently praises the efforts of the Park staff, but trash removal remains a constant complaint.

Trash collected throughout the Park is consolidated in bins for City trash collection. Since access within the Park is limited, the bins have been clustered along the roads and in parking lots for the convenience of trash collection and to the detriment of the Park.

At the present time, the Maintenance District uses the upper parking lot at the Leo Politi Picnic Area for consolidating trash collection. Elysian Park with its greater acreage, serves as the central trash collection point for the District. Trash generated at events such as the Lotus Festival in Echo Park is hauled to the Leo Politi parking lot to await removal by the City.

In more remote sections along Angels Point Drive, illegal dumping occurs where the road is wide enough to stop. Trash collection is also needed along the trails and in areas where dog walking is popular. Animal waste disposal means are in short supply.

Recommendations:

- Provide more trash cans in picnic areas and at trail heads.
- Provide coal receptacles in every picnic area to prevent fires and injury to both humans and trees.
- Construct trash enclosures in each facility size parking area.
- Relocate District trash collection facility to an appropriate non-parkland site.
- Develop a multi-language educational brochure that encourages trash pick-up, trash carry-out, and recycling opportunities for distribution to Park users on heavy use weekends and on the Recreation and Parks (RAP) web site.
- Install animal waste bag dispensers. Install at all trailheads.
- Eliminate turnouts along Park Drive that are persistent trash dumping sites (see *Getting Around the Park*).

SAVING PLACES WITH HISTORY

The rich legacy of the Park, known to many local history buffs, is not evident to many Park users. Park land fragmentation combined with a lack of overall design continuity and appropriate signage have greatly reduced the visitor's ability to grasp the truly wonderful historic aspects of Elysian Park.

CONCRETE DRAINAGE SWALE IN THE CENTER OF THE ARBORETUM

Chavez Ravine Arboretum

The Arboretum and the Wild Date Palms along the Avenue of the Palms constitute the most prominent historic vegetation resource in the park. These resources are valuable not just for the impressive maturity of the trees, but as a representation of the cultural perspective at a time when the City of Los Angeles was just emerging. They are a reminder of the fresh delight our predecessors found in a growing climate that could support plant species from the tropics of the world.

The context of the Arboretum is left up to whim. There are no designated footpaths and certainly no ADA accessible routes. The one feature that provides some unintentional access for wheeled transport is the linear concrete drainage swale coursing down the lawn to the parking lot. This prominent feature bears no relationship to the trees, is an eyesore, and is out of context with the historical significance of the Arboretum.

Recommendations:

- Commission an interdisciplinary design team including horticulturists, landscape architects and ecologists to develop a retrofit master plan that will protect the resource, enhance visitor access, and refine the design of the Arboretum.
- Develop an interpretive walking trail with appropriate signage.
- Remove the concrete swale and underground drainage.
- Expand on the existing Arboretum Brochure.
- Develop opportunities for memorial plantings that fit the larger goals of a Arboretum master plan.

Avenue of the Palms

In contrast to the Arboretum the allee of Date Palms (*Phoenix canariensis*) benefits from a strong design, but in the absence of prominent interpretive features its true significance is lost on Park visitors. These stately trees were a gift from a foreign country.

On weekends and holidays throngs of visitors looking for parking choose to pack together under the trees. Significant impacts to the roots and the base of trunks have occurred.

FIG. 4-1,
PROTECTION FOR THE AVENUE OF THE PALMS
A DEFINED DECOMPOSED PATHWAY WILL PROVIDE PEDESTRIAN ACCESS AND PROTECT THE ROOTS OF THE DATE PALMS.

Recommendations:

- Commission a certified arborist to evaluate the health of the trees and the measures needed to sustain them.
- Define designated parking a safe distance from the root zones (see Fig. 4-1, Protection for the Avenue of the Palms).
- Design and implement interpretive features that will highlight the significance of these trees and their history.
- Replace missing trees and extend the allee along Stadium Way to reinforce the identity of the Park.
- Plant new row of Date Palms to start next generation of trees.

War Memorials and Casanova Terrace

Existing war monuments are hidden behind overgrown plantings or sited in areas without strong sightlines that draw visitors to them. Remnants of historic Park structures are slowly being covered with brush and allowed to disappear from view and memory.

The net effect is that years of deferred maintenance have created a park with few distinguishing features and diminished public awareness.

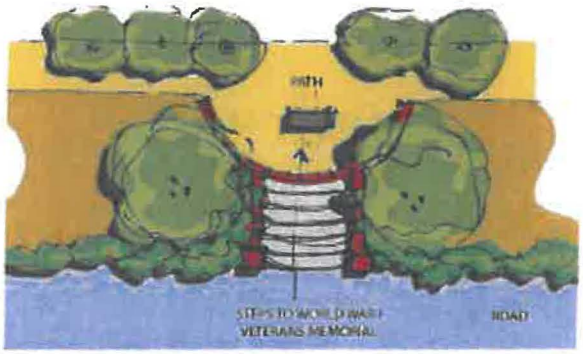


FIG. 4-2,

VICTORY MEMORIAL IMPROVEMENTS

AN ACCESS AND PLANTING PLAN THAT REVEALS AND HIGHLIGHTS THE WWI MEMORIAL.

Recommendations:

- Develop site plans for existing monuments and park features that will give them more prominence:
  - — Redesign Victory Memorial site layout to better celebrate the monument (see Fig. 4-2, Victory Memorial Improvements).
  - — Construct a pathway to Jones Memorial and provide seating.
  - — Restore the retaining walls of Casanova Terrace.
  - — Provide interpretive signage at Casanova Terrace.
- Increase the prominence of Elysian Park's history:
  - — Improve way-finding signage to vista points.
  - — Install interpretive signage, view tubes, and/or non-text interpretive elements at vista points that highlight the history of Los Angeles, observe or explain the view, and/or observe the attractions in the Park such as the Avenue of the Palms.

SETTING DESIGN STANDARDS

Signage

A clear, consistent hierarchy of signage to guide visitors to Park facilities has been initiated with new directional signs installed at major roadway intersections. These existing signs are burgundy colored and feature the Park Walnut-leaf logo. Expanding on the approved design, additional types of signs will be developed that include gateway markers, neighborhood entry markers, facility, location, and trailhead signage and markers.

THE DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE SYSTEM WITH THE WALNUT LEAF LOGO IS BEING IMPLEMENTED.

Gateway Monument Signage
At each major entry to the Park a unique gateway marker will increase awareness of the Park boundaries. Four gateways have been identified: Elysian Park Drive at Lilac Terrace, Scott Avenue at Stadium Way, Stadium Way across from the exit ramp off the Golden State (5) Freeway, and the Fremont Gate at North Broadway (see Fig. 2-9, Park Gateways & Entrances on page 35).

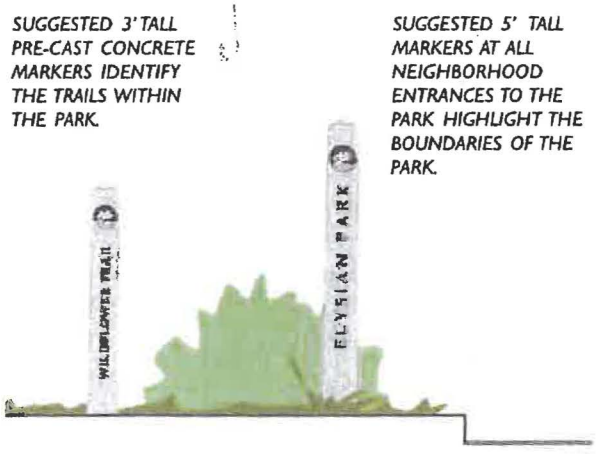
Each of these gateway sites are unique and present design challenges that require thoughtful design solutions. Therefore all the gateway signage must have a cohesive design for the differing locations. At the North Broadway entry the new gateway marker must reconcile with the Portola Trail marker and the classic piers of the North Broadway Bridge.

Design guidelines for these monuments are as follows:

- Use of natural materials (steel may be applicable).
- An appropriate scale to the site, legible from an automobile, but in scale to existing features.
- Subtle in size and color, appropriate to the natural setting of the Park.
- No lighting will be allowed.
- The materials selected should be easy to maintain with the ability to remove graffiti.

FIG. 4-3,

ENTRY & TRAIL MARKERS



- Lettering to be compatible with approved Park signage. Scale, type, and legibility of letters is critical to the design.
- Incorporate existing Park Walnut-leaf logo.

Entry Signage
At each neighborhood entry there will be a marker with the name of the Park and the Park logo. These signs are of a scale that is visibile from a moving car. A smaller version will identify and mark the trails within the Park (see Fig 4-3, Entry and Trail Markers).

FIG. 4-4,

LOCATION SIGNS

Location Signage
This type of information sign highlights the available facilities at a specific location both in written form and using international symbols. It also posts the rules and regulations of the Park and provides other pertinent information such as reservation numbers (see Fig 4-4, Location Signs).

Facility Signage
Elysian Park is home to a number of major facilities including the Grace E. Simons Lodge, the Elysian Adaptive Recreation Center, the Elysian Reservoir, and various picnic and recreation facilities. All facilities in the Park should be identified with signage that is a part of the Elysian Park Signage System and includes the Walnut-leaf logo and the burgundy color as appropriate.

Benches, Picnic Tables and Trash Receptacles

There are several types of benches and picnic tables that exist within Elysian Park today. Future improvements should reflect the historic character of Elysian Park through a standardizing of furnishings. Natural or recycled materials and natural colored concrete are preferred. Continuity of park bench and picnic table style will increase awareness of park boundaries and enhance the park user experience. Vandalism, transient use and ongoing maintenance must be considered when selecting these park elements. Locating benches and picnic tables on decomposed granite pads with concrete mow strips rather than in turf reduces maintenance costs and prolongs the life of the furnishings. Trash receptacles should be consistent with the character of adjacent benches.

Recommendations:

- Traditional park bench styles made from powder coated metal with a center arm for developed areas.
- Concrete benches for natural or remote areas with a higher vandalism risk.
- Traditional style concrete picnic tables on decomposed granite pad with concrete mow strip surround is recommended throughout the park.

Park Street Trees

Street trees are valuable to Elysian Park in many ways. Park boundaries can be defined and connected by improving the streets with tree planting. An abundance of trees may assist in slowing traffic speeds, increasing the safety of Park users. Trees will reduce the heat island effect of pavement and cool the Park, promote walking, and will increase Park aesthetics throughout.

Lush cool tree canopies shading the major Park roadways are missing. The northwest end of Stadium Way does not appear to be a Park road yet it is within the Elysian Park boundary. Academy Road also looks more like a service road to Dodger Stadium than a Park road.

Recommendations:

Reclaim the roads as parkways to increase the aesthetic qualities of Elysian Park. Provide rhythm and continuity through numerous tree plantings and spacing on both sides of the street that will identify them as Park roads.

Keep the tree lined street concept simple and repetitive. The native Coast Live Oak currently planted along one leg of Academy Road is an appropriate street tree as it is evergreen, native, drought tolerant, and long lived. Enhance existing Coast Live Oak plantings along Academy Road with additional Oaks to create a shaded Park road ambiance. Select one or two theme trees to provide the necessary continuity of planting from the outer most Park boundary into the center of the Park (see Fig. 4-5, Street Tree Plan).

- Plant theme trees in irregular groupings starting at Stadium Way north side slope then both sides of the highway to Elysian Park Drive then beyond on the west side of Stadium Way.
- Continue Park theme trees as City of Los Angeles street trees outside of Park boundaries along Stadium Way from Scott Aveue to Elysian Park Avenue, and up Elysian Park Avenue to the Elysian Park Gateway Monument Signage.
- Continue Coast Live Oak plantings on both sides of Academy Road past the Park office building to the edge of the Park boundary.

Memorial Trees

An annual ritual of memorial tree planting has been established by the CCSEP and Recreation and Parks for the community. The act of planting trees in Elysian Park by volunteers is an important component in the sustainability of the Park over time. However the placement of memorial trees should be in areas of the Park that will have little disturbance so as to minimize conflicts with memorial trees and future improvements.

FIG. 4-5,
STREET TREE PLAN

THE SHADE AND SCALE OF MATURE OAKS ENHANCES THE PARK SETTING ON A WIDE ROAD.

Recommendations:

- Develop list of trees approporiate for memorial tree planting that supports the Arboretum, the approved street tree list, or the approved native restoration tree and plant list.
- Develop site plans that place future memorial trees in pre-determined areas of the Park.
- Provide annual planting opportunities for each type of planting.

TIMELINE FOR RECOMMENDATION IMPLEMENTATION

RECOMMENDATIONS IN ORDER OF PRIORITY

ONE TO FIVE YEARS

- Design and implement water distribution system for Elysian Park.
- Replace irrigation system. Add irrigation to Victory Memorial and other areas requiring irrigation.
- Begin signage design and implementation program.
- Begin establishment of street trees along Academy Road and South Stadium Way.
- Begin memorial tree program for native tree restoration areas.

FIVE TO TEN YEARS

- Address stormwater issues on North slope.
- Install stormwater catchment of seeds and sediment (see *The Parklands*).
- Continue street tree plantings after Stadium Way lane closure all the way to the I-5 off ramp.
- Implement all Gateway Monument Signage.
- Implement Access Plan at Victory Memorial.

TEN TO TWENTY YEARS

- Complete signage program.
- Complete all amenities implementation.
- Complete restoration plantings, street tree plantings.
- Continue Arboretum plantings.