

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.

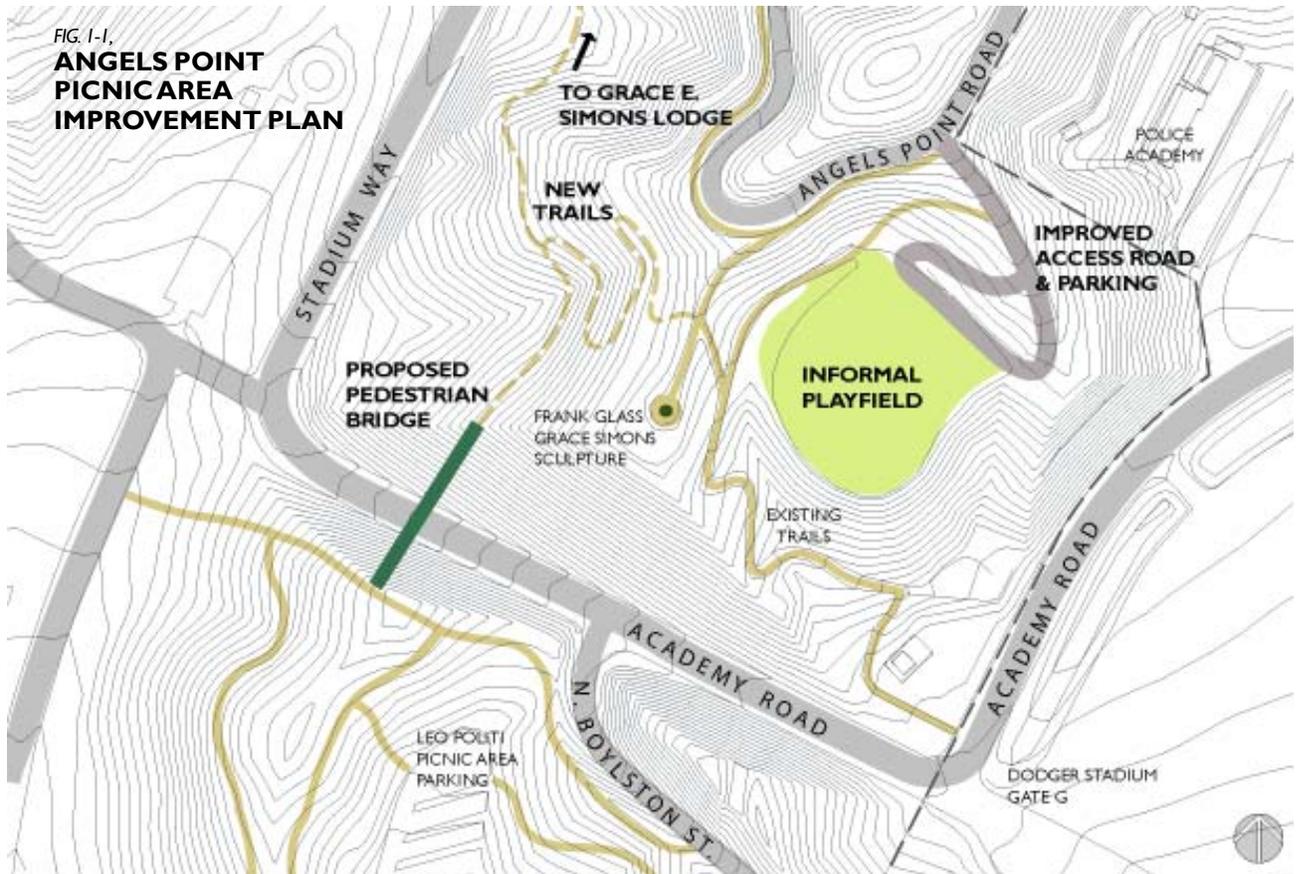
Use of the existing parking lot is limited due to the upper lot being used as the central trash collection point for the Maintenance District. Trash from other parks is being collected and temporarily stored at this location. With the compromised parking, the facility can only accommodate small groups 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.

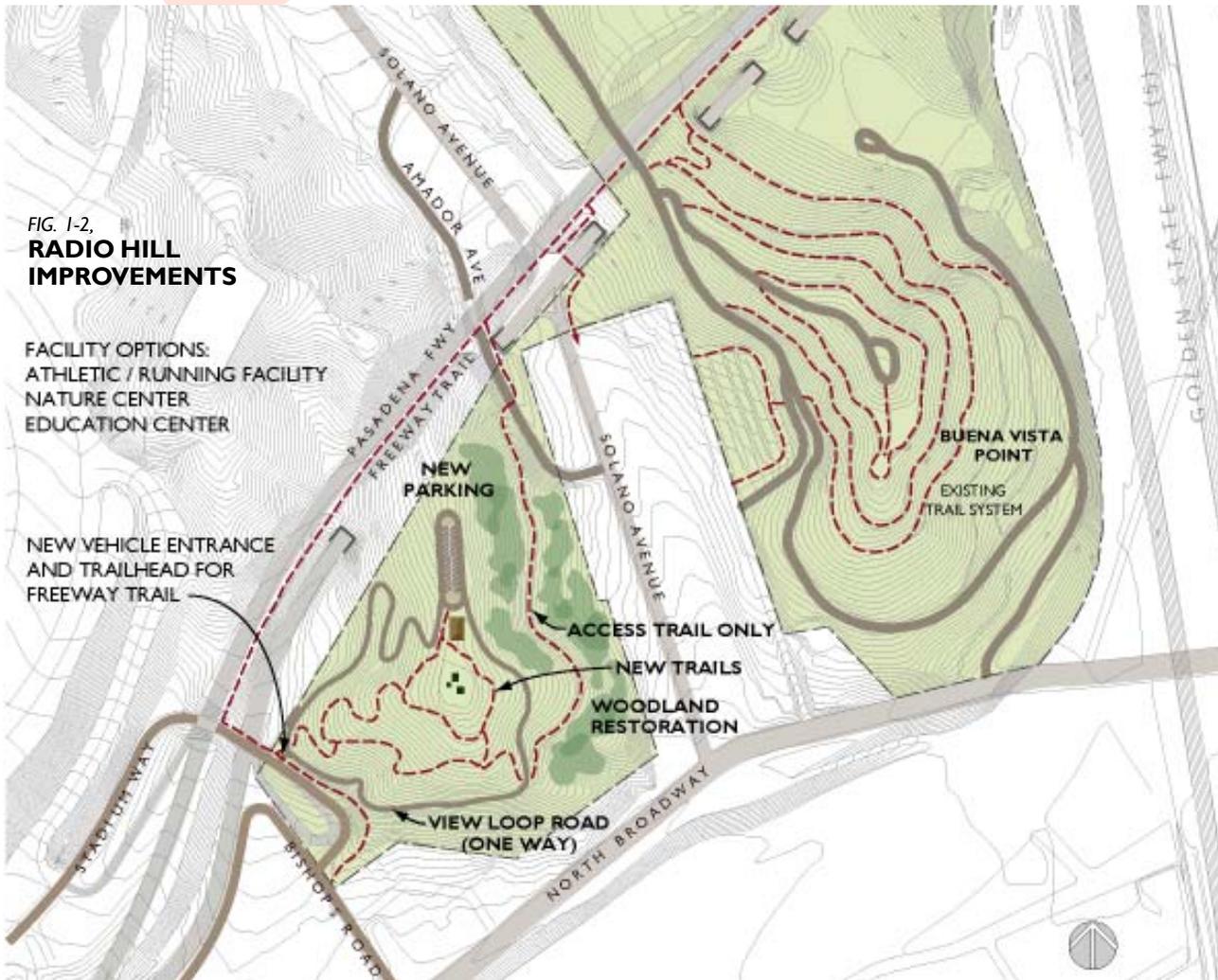
*Recommendations:*

- 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**

FACILITY OPTIONS:  
ATHLETIC / RUNNING FACILITY  
NATURE CENTER  
EDUCATION CENTER

NEW VEHICLE ENTRANCE  
AND TRAILHEAD FOR  
FREEWAY TRAIL



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

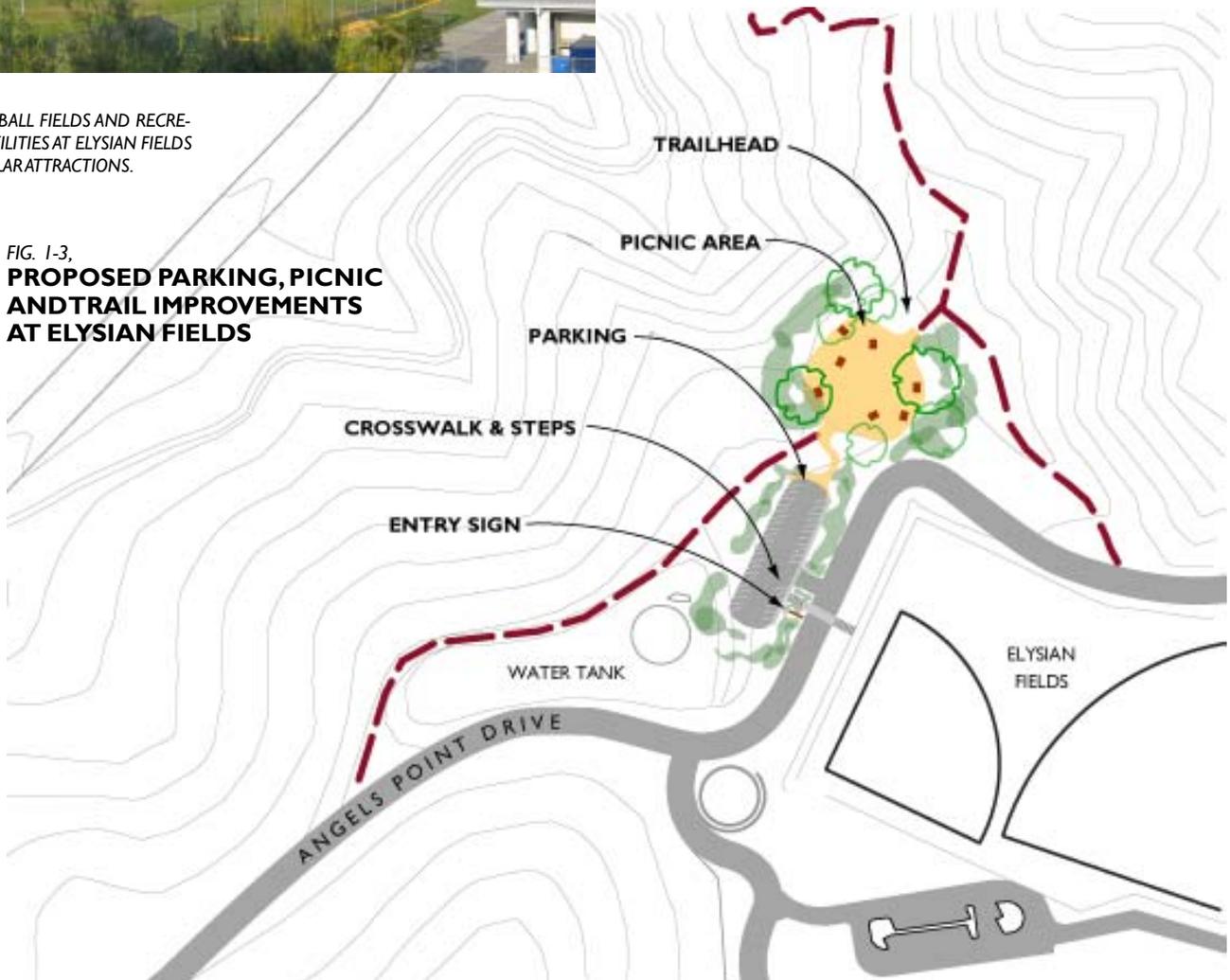
are spread throughout Elysian Park. Existing group picnic areas are located at Angels Point, Leo Politi, and Elysian Fields. The first two of these areas do not have sufficient parking for large groups. The Leo Politi area has an ample parking area, but shares the upper lot with numerous trash bins. 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. I-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.