



TAKING CARE OF THE PARK





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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 systems 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 capital 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 irregular 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 alley 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.

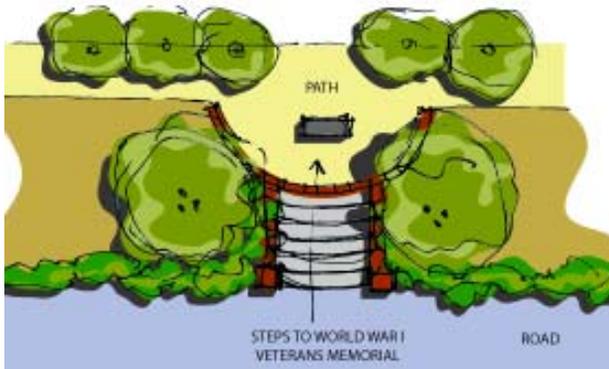


FIG. 4-2,

**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**

SUGGESTED 3' TALL PRE-CAST CONCRETE MARKERS IDENTIFY THE TRAILS WITHIN THE PARK.

SUGGESTED 5' TALL MARKERS AT ALL NEIGHBORHOOD ENTRANCES TO THE PARK HIGHLIGHT THE BOUNDARIES OF THE PARK.



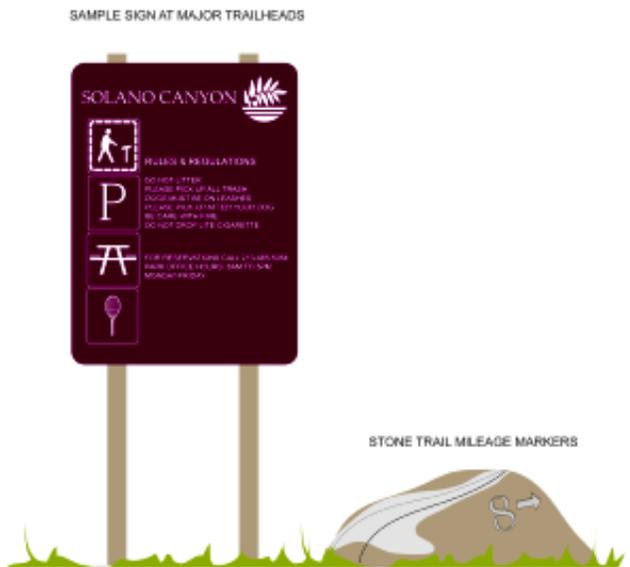
- Lettering to be compatible with approved Park signage. Scale, type, and legibility of letters is critical to the design.
- Incorporate existing Park Walnut-leaf logo.

*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 visible 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 Avenue 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,  
STREETTREE PLAN



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





*Recommendations:*

- Develop list of trees appropriate 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*

**ONETO FIVEYEARS**

- 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.

**FIVETO TENYEARS**

- 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.