

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES AND CREATING LIVABLE PLACES:

A POLICY AGENDA FOR THE ARROYO

*Prepared for ArroyoFest
by the Urban and Environmental Policy Institute, Occidental College*

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Executive Summary

The Arroyo Seco is many things. It is a 22 mile stream stretching from the San Gabriel Mountains to just north of downtown Los Angeles where it feeds into the Los Angeles River. It is an historic parkway that is more commonly known as the 110 or Pasadena freeway. It includes several cities and diverse neighborhoods. It is an area blessed with a rich history, open spaces, and a core of activism and civic engagement. The Arroyo corridor, however, has also witnessed degraded landscapes, a congested and accident-prone freeway, major pockets of substandard housing or lack of housing, and a lack of planning and project integration among its multiple cities and jurisdictions. The Arroyo Seco is also the place where ArroyoFest, an imaginative and unprecedented event, will take place that will highlight both the richness and challenges facing the people and communities of the Arroyo.

This document, *Connecting Communities and Creating Livable Places: A Policy Agenda for the Arroyo*, presents a set of policy opportunities for Arroyo communities and state and federal agencies with various kinds of regulatory authority over the Arroyo. Its policy recommendations were inspired by the many exciting efforts underway to strengthen linkages and improve quality of life throughout the Arroyo. The document focuses on three issue areas that flow out of ArroyoFest's theme of connecting communities: transportation and transit-oriented development; community, culture, and history; and the environment, watershed restoration, and Parks. In each section, policy opportunities are paired with short case studies that illustrate success stories and remaining challenges facing Arroyo Communities.

Transportation and Transit-Oriented Development

- Make the Arroyo Seco Parkway a true historic, scenic parkway.
- Connect the new Gold Line light rail system with other modes of transportation.
- Pursue transit-oriented development near the new train stations.
- Improve and expand bus service.
- Promote walking and biking.

Community, Culture, and History

- Celebrate and recognize the Arroyo across jurisdictions.
- Recognize and document the diverse cultural histories of the Arroyo.
- Preserve and strengthen cultural institutions and historic sites.
- Support contemporary artists.
- Support art and cultural programs for youth.
- Promote place-based education within the schools of the Arroyo.

The Environment, Watershed Restoration, and Parks

- Restore the natural hydrological functions of the Arroyo watershed.
- Conserve and improve the quality of water resources.
- Protect, restore, and connect natural habitat.
- Increase, enhance, and connect parks and open space.

ArroyoFest

On Sunday morning June 15th, the Pasadena Freeway, officially known as the Historic Arroyo Seco Parkway, will empty of cars – and fill with people. The ArroyoFest Freeway Walk and Bike Ride will bring together the diverse communities of the Arroyo Seco area, and residents of the entire Southern California region, to bike and walk on the oldest freeway in the American West and enjoy a community festival, with events stretching throughout the Arroyo's scenic canyon.

Connecting the rugged San Gabriel Mountains with the Los Angeles River, the Arroyo Seco, a 22-mile stream and canyon, links together the communities of Altadena, Pasadena, South Pasadena and La Cañada-Flintridge with the northeast neighborhoods of the City of Los Angeles. Like the many signature bridges that grace the Arroyo, ArroyoFest is really about renewing and strengthening a sense of connection – connection to one another, to nature and to our past. It will do this first by celebrating those things that link the communities of the Arroyo Seco – the Historic Parkway, the stream and its watershed, and a rich history and artistic tradition rooted in many cultures.

ArroyoFest will also inspire residents to work together on initiatives to improve the Arroyo, such as:

- Restoring the Arroyo Seco stream and watershed,
- Re-habilitating the Historic Arroyo Seco Parkway to make it safer and more attractive,
- Linking bus, bike, car and the new Gold Line light rail to create the region's first multi-modal transportation corridor,
- Creating a green network of parks and open space from the mountains all the way to downtown Los Angeles,
- Preserving historic structures and connecting the region's artistic and cultural institutions,
- Integrating study of the Arroyo into the curriculum of local schools.

ArroyoFest, however, is more than just a local event. Because freeways are so symbolic of life throughout Southern California, the event will encourage people from across the Southland to think about the possibilities for creating more livable communities where they live, through abundant parks and open space, clean and convenient transportation, and a sense of place that is shared and enhanced by many cultures and which is passed on from one generation to the next.

The effort to organize ArroyoFest has already created connections and forged partnerships between a number of organizations, institutions and government agencies. For almost two years, a diverse coalition of community groups has worked to organize this event. The ArroyoFest Steering Committee consists of representatives from environmental, transportation, community and cultural groups from up and down the Arroyo and throughout the region. The Policy Agenda for the Arroyo Seco corridor is a product of that community mobilization around ArroyoFest as well as a long tradition of local community activism. It seeks to identify key policy recommendations for improving the quality of life of all Arroyo residents and highlight programs and initiatives that can serve as a model for Southern California and other regions around the country.

*** Map ***

The Communities of the Arroyo

For the purposes of this report we are assuming an expansive definition of Arroyo Seco communities. This includes communities that are located within the boundaries of the watershed, communities located along the transportation corridor between downtown Pasadena and downtown Los Angeles, and communities just outside these borders that have strong historic connections with the Arroyo.

The communities of the Upper Arroyo include the cities of Pasadena, South Pasadena, and La Cañada-Flintridge as well as Altadena (which is an unincorporated section of Los Angeles County). The Lower Arroyo lies within the City of Los Angeles and includes all or parts of the communities of Chinatown, Cypress Park, Eagle Rock, Garvanza, Glassell Park, Hermon, Highland Park, Lincoln Heights, Montecito Heights, Monterey Hills, and Mount Washington.

According to the 2000 Census, the combined population of the Arroyo Seco is just under six hundred eighty thousand. Arroyo residents mirror the diversity of the Southern California region. Approximately 47 percent of residents of Arroyo communities are Latino, 27 percent are White, 15.5 percent are Asian, and 7 percent are African American. The Arroyo continues to welcome new arrivals, as it has for more than a century. Forty two percent of Arroyo residents were born outside of the United States.

Arroyo Seco communities are also economically diverse. Per-capita income across the entire Arroyo was \$21,268 in 1999 – a few hundred dollars more than the average income of Los Angeles County as a whole. Income varies within the Arroyo, ranging from less than 10,000 in the least affluent zip code to more than 60,000 in the wealthiest.

Residents of the Arroyo are less likely to drive alone to work than residents of Los Angeles County as a whole, and more likely to take public transportation (even before the opening of the Gold Line light rail system), walk, or bike to work. Two-thirds (66 percent) of adults working outside the home drive themselves to work, another 14.4 percent carpool. 9.3 percent take buses or other forms of public transit, a figure that is as high as 21 percent in some zip codes in the Arroyo. Finally, just under 5 percent walk or bike to work (up to 20 percent in some zip codes).

I. Transportation and Transit-Oriented Development

The Arroyo Seco can become Southern California's first truly integrated transportation corridor.

Over the last hundred years, our transportation system has barely kept pace with Southern California's explosive growth. Road building has met some of our mobility needs but has contributed to traffic congestion, air pollution, visual blight, community fragmentation, and dangerous intersections. Sprawling development has left many older communities behind. For those who cannot afford private transportation, the options are more limited.

A good transportation system must do a better job of connecting people and places and spurring revitalization. To meet 21st century needs, we need more options than just cars and freeways. More buses, trains, and bike and pedestrian paths can create a multi-modal transportation system that reduces traffic congestion, brings people together, and responds to the needs of all sectors of our communities.

The Arroyo Seco Parkway (also known as the Pasadena 110 Freeway) has long served as the main route between Arroyo communities. The oldest freeway in the American West, its purpose when opened in 1940 was to create a safe and scenic road - a parkway - connecting Pasadena to downtown Los Angeles. More than half a century later, modern demands have overwhelmed the Parkway's original design. Motorists drive it like any other freeway in the Southland and, not surprisingly, struggle with its short ramps and winding curves. Today, the winding 110 slows to a halt during rush hour and its identity as a parkway has become worn around the edges.

The opening of the Metro Transit Authority's Gold Line light rail service in the summer of 2003 now offers a new chance to enhance the Parkway and other transportation options along the Arroyo. By coordinating bus service with light rail stations and bike facilities and extending a bike path from Pasadena to downtown Los Angeles, we will be able to reduce traffic, make streets safer, and lower the speed limit along the Parkway. Gold Line stations can become the center of pedestrian-friendly, transit-oriented villages connected by a network of bike paths and walking routes. Existing equestrian trails even offer the opportunity to take advantage of a different kind of horsepower. With creative planning, the Arroyo Seco can become Southern California's first truly integrated transportation corridor.

Policy Opportunities:

A. Make the Arroyo Seco Parkway a true Historic, Scenic Parkway.

The Arroyo Seco parkway was designed to blend into the surrounding areas and highlight the Arroyo Seco for its rich blend of parks, environmental amenities, and historical and cultural sites. Traffic and speed have undermined this vision. The road was built to carry 27,000 automobiles per day at 45mph. Today the freeway carries over 120,000 cars per day at speeds almost always exceeding the official limit of 55mph, except of course during commute times when traffic often slows to a crawl. Drivers complain about the parkway's limited capacity, congestion, and dangerous ramps. According to a UCLA/Occidental College study, there are more accidents per-driver and per-mile on the parkway than on any other freeway in metropolitan Los Angeles.¹

Fortunately, community leaders and government agencies have come to recognize that the Arroyo Seco Parkway is a special road, whose unique history can help us rethink transportation options for all of Southern California. During the 1990s, former State Senator Richard Polanco led the effort to have the freeway named a Historic California Parkway. Recently, this historic road was designated an American Civil Engineering Landmark. Now Caltrans is planning to give the Parkway a major facelift that will make it both safer and more attractive. The many efforts to improve the Parkway paid off in 2002 when the federal government declared this historic road a National Scenic Byway.

Sidebar:

Historic Designations and Corridor Management Plans: Looking to the Past to Shape the Future

“America's Byways are a distinctive collection of American roads, their stories and treasured places.”

U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration

National Scenic Byways are roads recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation for their archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities.² The Arroyo Seco Parkway's designation as a National Scenic Byway – the first road in Southern California to be so named – carries with it opportunities to enhance the parkway's scenic and historical qualities:

- *The Arroyo qualifies for federal highway funds to improve and beautify the areas visible from the Parkway. National Scenic Byway Discretionary Grants can be used to improve landscaping, signage, and adjacent parks, create visitors' centers, enhance biking and walking facilities, and make other improvements.*
- *The designation accelerated a process to create a Corridor Management Plan for the Parkway. Typically, roads designated as National Scenic Byways must already have Corridor Management Plans – plans for protecting the special qualities of the road – in place. But the Federal Department of Transportation made an exception for the Arroyo Seco Parkway, recognizing that informal plans and studies carried out by state and local transportation agencies and community groups over the past 15 years demonstrate a commitment to preserving and enhancing the Parkway. Now, in 2003, a formal Corridor Management Plan is being developed by Caltrans, with the National Trust for Historic Preservation as lead consultant.*

1. Slow Down and Enjoy the Drive

The key to restoring the original vision of a Parkway through the Arroyo is to reduce the speed limit. Arroyo Communities should work with the State Government to do one or more of the following:

- Support legislation in the California Assembly and Senate to amend the definition of Historic California Parkways to allow for reduced speed limits on these roads.
- Clarify the State Historical Building Code to mandate that historic roads may have lower speed limits and different design standards than other roads.
- Make the Arroyo Seco Parkway an actual park under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service or State or non-profit conservancy. In this case, the Parkway would become a park road with lower speed limits.
- Implement traffic calming strategies to help reduce traffic accidents, including at the most dangerous segments such as certain entrance and exit ramps.

2. Enhance the Parkway

Once the speed of the Parkway is lowered, other design, landscaping, and aesthetic changes will become more feasible. Drivers and visitors will then be able to enjoy the road as an historic, scenic parkway. Jurisdictions bordering the parkway should work with state agencies to:

- Improve landscaping, especially through increased use of native plants
- Create scenic turnoffs and a visitors center
- Remove sound walls and concrete medians and replace them with aesthetically pleasing, landscape-related options for noise abatement and safety

- Preserve and improve bridges over the parkway to reintegrate neighborhoods.
- Create linear parks alongside the road, especially on the south end of the Parkway, which is less served by parks. Increasing park space would enhance scenic and recreational options and provide buffers for residents living near the parkway.
- Clean up trash on a more regular basis, and remove chain link fences that catch wind-blown trash.
- Add and improve signs that identify historic and scenic sites along and adjacent to the Parkway. The Parkway should be the gateway to neighboring cities and communities.

Sidebar: The Arroyo Seco’s Historic Bridges

A number of historic bridges span the channel of the Arroyo or cross over the Arroyo Seco Parkway. The Colorado Street bridge, built in 1913, is one of Pasadena’s distinct landmarks and was a common image on early 20th century postcards. The Arroyo Seco Bridge, built by the Santa Fe railroad in 1895, is the oldest and highest standing railway bridge in Los Angeles County. Trains from the new Metro Gold Line will cross this refurbished bridge once the Gold Line opens in July 2003. Drivers on the parkway pass under the York Street, Avenue 60, and Ave 26 bridges, all of which predate the road, as well as several bridges built at the same time the road was constructed.³ Caltrans’ ongoing Corridor Management Plan provides an opportunity to list Arroyo bridges on the National Registry of Historic Places. Establishing the historic value of the Arroyo Seco’s bridges – and Parkway – are important steps to recognizing that roads, bridges, and other pieces of our built infrastructure can be just as worthy of preservation and celebration as historic houses and buildings.

3. Ensure Funding for Parkway Improvements

Of course, enhancing the Parkway will take resources. Improvements can be paid for by a combination of funds from local jurisdictions, MTA funds, state money from Caltrans and park, water, and transportation bonds, and federal transportation funds. The availability of federal dollars for the Parkway (and all the other transportation projects mentioned in this report) will depend on reauthorization of federal transportation programs. The debate over reauthorization of the nation’s major transportation bill, T-3, is ongoing in Congress. Elected officials from Arroyo communities should work with local members of Congress to ensure that the next federal transportation bill contains policies and funds to support scenic byways, transit, walking and biking projects, and other programs to connect communities, ensure equity, and enhance environmental quality.⁴

B. Make all Gold Line light rail stations transportation hubs and neighborhood assets.

1. Connect the Gold Line with other Modes of Transportation

If the Gold Line is closely integrated with other means of transportation, it can become more than just a commuter train. The new light rail line can be the backbone of a multi-modal transportation network serving northeast Los Angeles and surrounding cities. Arroyo communities should work with the MTA and other local transportation agencies to ensure that:

- Bus routes synchronize with train stations and schedules and passengers can easily transfer between trains and buses.
- Stations are easily and safely approachable on foot and bike
- Ticket prices are affordable to local residents
- Cyclists have safe places to store their bikes at each station, and can bring bikes onto trains during all hours of operation.
- State of the art safety infrastructure and procedures are in place where the train line passes through neighborhoods.

Sidebar: The long route to the Gold Line: How Community Involvement Improved Light Rail

The light rail line now called the Gold Line was first proposed more than 15 ago, and has a long and tangled history. In its earlier manifestations, the line was conceived of as a classic commuter train, designed to speed passengers from Pasadena to Union Station in downtown L.A. Some residents living near the planned route objected to the plans, fearing the train would be dangerous, noisy, and disruptive. The line was also imperiled more than once by funding delays. Elected officials from the Arroyo region managed to secure the state money needed to move forward. And transportation agencies, from the construction authority to the MTA, listened to residents' complaints and suggestions. As a result, the Gold Line is not only near completion, it has been significantly improved. The Line will have more stops serving more neighborhoods than originally planned. Trains will slow down when passing through dense residential neighborhoods. Crossings will have more safety devices. Gold Line stops will incorporate public art and reference in part the cultural heritage of surrounding communities. These positive developments highlight the need for public involvement in transportation planning. As the Gold Line opens and eventually expands east to Claremont, the MTA should continue to dialogue with local residents.

2. Pursue Transit-Oriented Development along the Arroyo corridor

The opening of the Gold Line can spur smart growth and community development in the Arroyo. Train stations can become hubs for new residential, commercial, and community development. This neighborhood revitalization should benefit all residents. It is important to avoid an extreme of gentrification that worsens the region's affordable housing crisis. To ensure maximum revitalization from the new transportation infrastructure, Arroyo communities should:

- Adopt general and specific planning and zoning policies that fully promote transit-oriented development, including creating denser, mixed-use zones and requiring pedestrian-friendly street design so people will want to stroll, mingle, and shop.
- Adopt or strengthen Inclusionary Zoning requirements so that all new residential developments near Gold Line stations include affordable housing units.
- Facilitate conversations between developers and community residents early in the development process so that residents can provide input on what kinds of projects their neighborhoods need; and developers can gain support for worthwhile projects.
- Design station as community places, reflecting community interests and cultural histories.
- Develop farmers' markets at or near Gold Line stations to serve communities with limited access to fresh food.

Sidebar: Transit Oriented What?

Like any field, urban development and planning have their own terminology. Here are some basic definitions:

- **Transit Oriented Development:** *At a minimum, Transit Oriented Development (TOD) is development located within an easy walk of a major transit stop. To truly live up its potential, a TOD should also be pedestrian friendly and include a mix of residential, employment, and shopping opportunities.*
- **Smart Growth** *can be thought of as the opposite of sprawl. Sprawling development replaces rural land and open space on the urban fringe with new tract homes, roads, and stores, and parking lots. Smart growth focuses new housing and businesses in established urban neighborhoods. Smart growth favors denser, mixed-use developments so that people can work and shop near where they live, and utilizes walkable, attractive urban designs that encourage residents to stroll and shop.*
- **Inclusionary Zoning** *requires all new housing developments (above a certain size) to include some housing units affordable to lower and/or middle- income residents.*
- **Mixed-Use:** *a building, real estate development, or district that includes more than one kind of use, such as residential **and** commercial space.*

Sidebar: Golden Opportunity: Transit Oriented Development Along the Gold Line

The opening of the Gold Line provides an opportunity for transit-oriented development around the line's new stations in Los Angeles, South Pasadena, and Pasadena. A proposed project near the 26th Avenue station in L.A. provides an example of how elected officials, City Planning agencies, developers (non-profit and for-profit), and communities can work together to seize this opportunity and revitalize neighborhoods.

Four local developers – AMCAL, O.N.E. Company, W.O.R.K.S and Livable Places – wanted to build a master planned community providing homeownership, rental, and senior housing opportunities on a six acre plot near the Gold Line station. The project would create 250 affordable apartments for seniors and families, and up to 200 condominiums, some affordable, some market rate, for sale. The site they chose, however, was zoned for light industrial uses. In order for the project to go forward, the City Planning Commission would have to rezone the land for residential use.

The project sponsors benefited from ongoing efforts by Councilman Ed Reyes of the 10th Council District to rezone a broader area around the new station for mixed-use development. Reyes' district office had held community meetings on the topic and presented the Planning Commission with a proposal to promote a mixed use, pedestrian-oriented zone near the 26th Avenue station. When Commissioners met to consider the specific proposal, they were well informed on the potential for transit-oriented development in the area. They were also impressed by the testimony in favor of the project, and approved the rezoning request.

*There are other transit-oriented developments completed or in the works up and down the Gold Line. Few have **all** the features of an ideal project (mixed used, compact and walkable design, and affordability), but they all show how transit can become the backbone of smart growth along the Arroyo.*

- *The Holly Street Village apartments in Old Town Pasadena are an example of foresight on the part of developers and planners. This complex was built a decade ago near train tracks in anticipation of a new light rail line. Today, the apartments sit right near the Gold Line's Memorial Park Station.*
- *A mixed-use development by Urban Partners is under construction near the Del Mar station. The development will mainly consist of high-end housing, but will have a small number of affordable units, and include commercial buildings on the ground floor.*
- *In South Pasadena, Creative Housing is building a mixed-use development less than a block from the Mission station. Although this development will not have affordable units, it is designed to fit with the architecture of Mission Street, and will integrate parking spaces for the light rail station.*

C. Improve Bus Service in the Arroyo

Buses are the most efficient way to transport large numbers of people in an urban region. Without an effective bus system, the Gold Line will not live up to its potential, roads and highways will become more congested, and pollution will get worse. People without cars and the working poor with limited access to cars need buses to get to their jobs and to attend to other basic needs of life.

Buses operated by the MTA, Foothill Transit Company, and the City of Pasadena should:

- Stop at Gold Line stations at times and locations that make it easy to transfer between buses and trains.
- Maintain or lower fares, especially for young people and the elderly.
- Expand express, limited stops, and rapid bus routes in Northeast Los Angeles and other Arroyo communities.
- Include bike racks on all buses.
- Introduce or expand bus and paratransit services to community sites such as child care centers, retail and food shopping places.

Sidebar: Bringing Rapid Bus Service to the Arroyo

A recent transit success story in the Los Angeles region has been the opening of the first Rapid Metro bus lines along major transportation corridors. These lines are the fastest routes in MTA's bus system thanks to the rapid buses' ability to signal ahead and keep stoplights green. The Arroyo Seco and Northeast L.A. are not yet served by Metro Rapid bus lines⁵. MTA plans to open two rapid bus lines in northeast Los Angeles county area by 2006. Both of these lines will terminate at their northern point in Pasadena. (The Fairfax/Colorado Metro Rapid, which will travel southeast from Pasadena to Culver City, and the Atlantic Metro Rapid, which will travel south from Pasadena to the Metro Blue Line at Artesia).⁶

D. Enhance opportunities for walking, biking, and riding.

One of the main goals of transportation policy should be creating communities where residents can, and will want to walk and bike more. Better-designed, safer streets and sidewalks can cut risks to

pedestrians. Making communities more walkable and bikeable is the best way to integrate increased physical activity into daily living and cut the health impacts of inactivity and increasing obesity. Encouraging walking and biking also cuts vehicular traffic and pollution. Finally, walkable neighborhoods are much more likely to have a sense of community and to enjoy vibrant civic and commercial life.

Sidebar: ArroyoWalk: Exploring the Arroyo on Foot

Walking is one of the best ways to experience the Arroyo corridor's wealth of cultural, scenic, and recreational opportunities. Linking these sites to an interpretive pedestrian route would encourage more residents and visitors to explore the Arroyo on foot and consider its history, evolution, and potential. This is the vision of a proposal for an ArroyoWalk. Inspired by the ArroyoFest, watershed restoration plans, and the National Scenic Byway designation of the Arroyo Parkway, UCLA graduate student Kari Fowler mapped out a potential first phase of an ArroyoWalk route. Starting at the Confluence of the Arroyo Seco and the Los Angeles River, the southern leg of the ArroyoWalk route would wind its way northeast to the Church of the Angels, past historic homes and bridges, museums, parks, and other culturally significant sites. Including possible side spurs, this proposed phase of the interpretive walk would include more than 20 stops.⁷

1. To promote walking, Arroyo communities should:

- Adopt traffic calming measures and other street design changes to ensure pedestrian safety, especially along routes to and from schools
- Increase pedestrian amenities, such as broader, better-landscaped sidewalks, and reduce street-side visual blights like abandoned lots and chain-link fences, to make walking more pleasant and convenient.
- Designate an interpretive ArroyoWalk route, complete with signage and tour maps, to inspire residents and visitors to explore the Arroyo's historic, cultural, and scenic sites on foot.

Sidebar: Traffic, Pedestrian Safety, and Quality of Life: Case Studies from Two Arroyo Neighborhoods

Too often, traffic plans for surface streets, especially roads designated as "arterial" routes to relieve traffic on freeways, fixate on speeding cars through without regard for pedestrian safety or quality of life in surrounding neighborhoods. Transportation agencies have been slow to reexamine traffic plans in areas where growing populations or economic revitalization efforts demand a more balanced approach. Communities near the Arroyo have started to organize and come up with their own plans to promote safer, livable streets.

At Luther Burbank Middle School in Highland Park, for example, the Parent group PADREES in Action recently conducted their own informal traffic assessment. Luther Burbank sits on busy Figueroa Street in North East Los Angeles. The school houses three times as many children as it was originally designed to hold. But when thousands of students walk to and from school, they have no cross walk attendants and few cross walks to help them cross Figueroa safely. (In Los Angeles, only elementary schools are assigned crossing guards.) As a result, children cross on red lights due to the short walk signals. Cars turning are stuck in intersections and often 'push' through lines of walking students. It shouldn't take a tragedy to improve safety at Luther Burbank and other schools.

Parents at Luther Burbank have recommended that the L.A. Department of Transportation and other responsible agencies:

- *Lengthen walk signals and/or install left turn signals at the major school crossing during crunch times.*
- *Hire a cross walk attendant for the school.*
- *Install additional stop signs and/or signalized crosswalks in front of the School.⁸*

Meanwhile, in northwest Pasadena, residents of the Lincoln Avenue corridor were fed up that traffic was contributing to blight along a commercial district ripe for revitalization. They formed the Lincoln Avenue Task Force to consider ways to manage traffic and improve the visual appearance of the Avenue to encourage shoppers to stop and stroll. The task force concluded it would be useful to:

- *install speed monitoring equipment, enforce speed limit, improve signage with posted speed limit*
- *repaint crosswalks and upgrade crosswalks;*
- *improve tree maintenance, landscaping, and trash pick up;*
- *work with property owners to improve appearance of buildings, enhance landscaping,⁹*

2. Increase Cycling Opportunities

Biking opportunities in the Arroyo Seco area are growing, but incomplete. Bike lanes have improved cycling options on some urban streets. Five miles of the Los Angeles River Bike Path are now open. The Arroyo Seco Bike Path parallels the Parkway for three miles, but it is unpaved, hard to find, and not safe for riders. Cyclists can take bikes onto most buses and onto trains at most hours.

To further promote biking, Arroyo Communities and responsible agencies should:

- *Develop and implement bike master plans with the overall goals of creating a physical network of safe, convenient bike path and bike lanes, and conduct public education to encourage residents to ride bikes more often. South Pasadena, La Canada-Flintridge, and Altadena still need to create bike plans. Pasadena and the City of L.A. should further implement and expand their plans.*
- *Add bike lanes to Fletcher Drive, Marmion Way, and Figueroa Street to create safer street routes.*
- *Ensure that all mass transit stops, stations, and vehicles are bike friendly, with secure bike racks and lockers. Specifically, the MTA should allow bikes on trains at all hours¹⁰ and complete the process of equipping all buses with bike racks.*
- *Continue to study the feasibility of a bike trail along the Arroyo to create a safe, direct route from Pasadena to downtown Los Angeles.*
- *Participate in Los Angeles County's forthcoming process to create a bike plan for the County (set to start in the fall of 2003).*

Sidebar: Pasadena to L.A. by bicycle: A Hundred-Year Dream

Bicycling thrived in Pasadena in the late 19th and early 20th century. The streets of old- Pasadena were designed for bikes, walkers, and streetcars and there were 15 bicycle shops in the city. In

1897, Pasadena mayor Horace Dobbins incorporated the California Cycleway Company with plans to build an elevated wooden bicycle turnpike from Pasadena to downtown Los Angeles. However, the cycleway was never completed, and the 20th century belonged to the automobile. By the turn of the 21st century, events have come full circle. Cyclists and city planners alike recognize the need for a commuter and recreational bike path linking Pasadena and downtown L.A. There are renewed proposals for extending the Arroyo Seco bike route and even an ambitious plan for a bike path elevated out of the flood channel for year round use.

These visions are on hold at least a little longer while cycle advocates and local cities answer a few lingering questions. How can existing bike paths along the Arroyo be connected to new paths along the L.A. River? Is a paved bike path in the Arroyo channel consistent with plans for restoring the stream's natural systems? Would the relatively high cost of an elevated bike route (\$10 million or more) drain too much of the limited funds available for bike projects in L.A. County? Two conclusions jump out. Transportation agencies on all levels need to commit more funding for cycling projects. And surely, one way or the other, cyclists won't have to wait another hundred years for a convenient, scenic way to bike from Pasadena to downtown Los Angeles! ¹¹

3. To promote continued Equestrian access, Arroyo communities should:

- Ensure equestrian access and trails in existing parks, and, in new parks where appropriate
- Ensure that new hillside development include provisions to all for equestrian access and that existing provisions protecting trail access are fully enforced.

II. Community, Culture, and History

The Arroyo Seco creates a sense of home and belonging to a place. It creates roots.

Southern California has grown rapidly, becoming a trendsetter for the 21st century world. But along with this legacy has come a talent for forgetting our history and destroying the landmarks that tell us who we are as a people.

The Arroyo Seco's storied past speaks to the entire region and today it remains one of the most important areas to the history and culture of Southern California. The Arroyo's banks were originally the home of native Tongva villages and Spanish ranchos. Settlers founded Los Angeles near the confluence of the Arroyo Seco and Los Angeles River. The Arroyo area quickly became both the first suburb of central Los Angeles and a favorite location for the region's burgeoning movie industry.

In the early 1900s, the Arroyo Seco was at the center of the Arts and Crafts Movement for all of California. Within its sycamore-shaded canyon, poets, painters, and photographers gathered to interpret life "in the Southland." Charles Lummis built his home El Alisal at the Arroyo's edge and founded Los Angeles' first museum, the Southwest Museum, overlooking the Arroyo's scenic canyon. Noted painters included Franz Bishoff, Guy Rose, Benjamin Brown, Elmer and Marion Wachtel, and William Lees Judson, who founded the USC School of Fine Arts on the banks of the

Arroyo in 1901. During the Great Hiking Era, the upper Arroyo was also one of most popular destinations for hikers and picnickers looking to escape city life.

Today, local groups and museums are working to preserve the Arroyo's cultural landscape, maintain its artistic tradition and honor the history of the diverse communities that call the area home. Thanks to local efforts, the Arroyo today contains the largest historic district, Highland Park, in the City of Los Angeles. Despite limited funding, arts groups run numerous youth programs and hold a variety of special events. Local galleries have become a vibrant part of community life and each spring cultural institutions in the area open their doors to the public for the special program Museums of the Arroyo Day.

In many ways, the measure of success for these initiatives will depend on how they are carried forward by the next generation. Toward this end, local educators have recently partnered with the Urban and Environmental Policy Institute at Occidental College, the Southwest Museum and others for a series of teacher workshops that will help bring the Arroyo into the classroom and ensure that the Arroyo remains an artistic and cultural center for all of Southern California.

A. Celebrate and Preserve the Arroyo's Identity and Legacy

1. Work Across Jurisdictions to Recognize and Celebrate the Arroyo Seco

The watershed of the Arroyo Seco includes several cities, parts of unincorporated Los Angeles County, and up into the Angeles National Forest. Like the physical Arroyo, many of the cultural and historic identities of the Arroyo Seco cross these borders, connecting the diverse communities of the corridor. The various jurisdictions that contain the Arroyo Seco should work together to recognize the Arroyo as a special place with a shared history and identity. These communities should:

- Strengthen links between each jurisdiction's agencies to promote coordinated and collaborative planning and programs through the Arroyo.
- Develop a consistent visual and verbal vocabulary that highlights the Arroyo through signs, markers, and design elements.
- Co-sponsor joint projects and celebrations that draw attention to the Arroyo as a shared asset.

2. Work to Recognize and Document the Many Cultural Histories of the Area

Cultural diversity has been a hallmark of the Arroyo for centuries. At the top of the Arroyo Seco watershed at Red Box the Haramanana Native American Cultural Center runs classes and workshops to teach about Native American culture. Northwest Pasadena and Altadena has one of the largest African-American communities in Southern California. Strong and diverse Latino communities exist throughout the region and there is also a Pacific Islander and Asian-American presence emerging in northeast Los Angeles. This cultural diversity needs to be recognized, documented, and celebrated by all the communities in the Arroyo area. The Arroyo communities should.

- Commit to document and gather resources on the distant and recent history of different cultural groups within the Arroyo Seco region.
- Express their support for the continued use of the Haramanana facility in Angeles National Forest for Native American gatherings and workshops.

Sidebar: ArroyoFest Strengthens Awareness of Arroyo

The ArroyoFest: Freeway Walk and Bike Ride is itself evidence of government support for joint projects celebrating the Arroyo Seco. While ArroyoFest was inspired and planned by local organizations and residents, the cities of the Arroyo and regional and state agencies played a crucial role in making ArroyoFest a reality. The Cities of South Pasadena, La Cañada-Flintridge, Pasadena, and Los Angeles gave regulatory approval, sponsorship, in-kind donations, or other forms of support for the event. The Metropolitan Transportation Authority provided free advertising on its buses and trains. The National Park Service facilitated connections between ArroyoFest and ongoing efforts to restore the Arroyo's watershed and improve the Parkway. ArroyoFest's Freeway Walk and Bike Ride would not have been possible without Caltrans' cooperation in closing the Parkway on the morning of June 15th. Hopefully, the success of ArroyoFest will inspire more collaboration between decision-makers with power to improve the quality of life in Arroyo communities.

Sidebar: Council of Arroyo Seco Agencies

The Arroyo Seco Foundation and North East Trees has been facilitating the formation of a council of Arroyo Seco agencies. This forum provides an opportunity for stakeholder agencies to share information about their efforts in the Arroyo and to explore opportunities for inter-agency coordination to better provide services to the affected communities and to enhance the Arroyo. By collaborating on a regular basis, participating stakeholder agencies are able to identify partnership opportunities to more effectively meet their respective goals.

2. Preserve and Strengthen Significant Cultural Institution and Historic Sites in the Arroyo Seco

The Arroyo Seco was and is among the most significant cultural corridors in Southern California. The Arroyo Culture of the early 20th century helped define the entire region's intellectual, artistic, and environmental life. It expressed attitudes and motifs that still resonate in visions of a more livable Los Angeles. A wealth of important cultural institutions and historic sites along the Arroyo help preserve and breathe new life into the Arroyo's history and cultural contributions. To allow these institutions to strengthen their services to Arroyo residents and visitors, Arroyo communities should:

- A. Identify funding sources to help all Arroyo museums and cultural institutions attract low and moderate-income visitors and to enable these institutions to get out into the communities as well.

Each year, five museums located in Highland Park and Pasadena (The Gamble House, Heritage Square Museum, Lummis Home and Garden, Pasadena Museum of History, and Southwest Museum) participate in Museums of the Arroyo Day by opening free of charge and providing special programs and historic demonstrations for local residents. Thousands of locals who might not otherwise visit these museums attend to take advantage of the free admission. To help support Museums of the Arroyo Day and other efforts to attract a wide range of Arroyo residents to area cultural institutions, Arroyo communities should:

- Commit or help leverage funds from local, state, federal, and private sources to promote outreach efforts and reduced fees at Arroyo cultural institutions.

B. Maintain and Strengthen the Southwest Museum

The Southwest Museum is the oldest museum in the City of Los Angeles. Founded in 1907 by Charles Lummis and other members of the Southwest Society, the Museum holds hundreds of thousands of items important to the history and culture of the Southwestern United States and important collections of Native American cultural artifacts from across North and South America. The Southwest Museum was recently acquired by the nearby Autry Museum of Western Heritage. When news of this merger first reached Arroyo residents and cultural groups, there was concern that the merger might lead to a downgrading of the Southwest Museum as an independent institution or dispersal of part of its collection. According to the Friends of the Southwest Museum Coalition, the Autry has agreed to “work towards preserving the Southwest Museum’s world-renowned collection, its historic buildings and its status as a premiere public destination at the current Mount Washington site.”¹² Local jurisdictions, cultural organizations, and residents should work together to ensure that:

- The Southwest Museum stays open to the Public.
- The Museum building and Casa de Adobe building are placed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- The opening of a new Gold Line station near the Museum becomes an opportunity to draw more visitors.
- Improvements are made to surface streets leading to the Museum so it is more accessible to visitors driving by.

C. Chart a Wise Course for the Rose Bowl

The Rose Bowl is one of the nation’s oldest and best-known sport venues. Built in the early 1920s and expanded several times since, the oval stadium is the most recognizable monument in the Arroyo Seco. The Rose Bowl is the home field of the UCLA Bruins football team, and, each New Year’s day, hosts the annual NCAA bowl game that bears its name. Now, in 2003, the Rose Bowl Operating Company (a non-profit entity established by the City of Pasadena) has developed a proposal to significantly revamp the stadium and attempt to bring a NFL team to Pasadena. The initial plans for the stadium, released April 22, 2003, would preserve most of the Rose Bowl’s external shell and distinctive features while altering seating arrangements and some of the surrounding grounds. The NFL has not yet committed to moving a team to Pasadena, so the projected changes may not happen. But before any final decisions are made, Pasadena should conduct a full environmental assessment. Among the goals of any upgrades to the Rose Bowl should be:

- Preserving as much as possible of the Rose Bowl’s historic structure.
- Reducing paved area around the stadium and otherwise greening the stadium grounds and ensuring that changes and upgrades to the stadium are in line with watershed restoration and recreation goals.
- Working with neighbors to minimize disruptions from additional events.
- Minimizing parking on site and transporting as many visitors as possible via shuttles from nearby Gold Line stations.
- Not committing public funds to stadium construction.

Sidebar: The Tournament of Roses and Rose Bowl: A Pasadena Tradition

Every year, the Rose Bowl is preceded by the Tournament of Roses. The Rose Bowl is actually an offshoot of this parade, famed for its flower-bedecked floats. The Valley Hunt Club founded the Tournament of Roses back in 1890. In 1902 the Tournament invited Stanford and the University of Michigan to put on a football game. Stanford was beaten so badly that the Tournament dropped its experiment with football, replacing it with Roman-style chariot races. But by 1916 football was back as part of the Tournament of Roses festivities. The annual game soon outgrew its space, and in 1920 the Tournament decided to build a new stadium, which was inaugurated on January 1st, 1923. In line with Los Angeles's growth as a hub of the entertainment industry, the first college football games to be televised locally and nationally were played in the Rose Bowl.¹³

D. Preserve other historical districts and buildings

The Arroyo Seco is home to a number of historic districts and important historic buildings. The jurisdictions in which these historic sites are located should ensure that the physical legacy of the Arroyo is preserved by:

- Updating and enforcing historic preservation ordinances.
- Providing and helping leverage state, federal, and private funds for preservation projects.

Sidebar: The Lummis House

Charles Fletcher Lummis was one of the leading lights of Arroyo Culture, a writer, booster of Southern California, and scholar and collector of Native American art. Lummis built his house El Alisal (the sycamore grove) on the banks of the Arroyo between 1898 and 1910. Everything about the home, from its materials (local granite boulders), to its décor (Indian artifacts and paintings by California artists), to its construction (Lummis and Native American artisans built the place by hand) was a tangible statement of the Arroyo Culture Lummis helped promote. During the early 20th century, El Alisal was a home, salon, and museum in one. A little over a decade after his death the Arroyo Seco Parkway opened to traffic. In a striking juxtaposition, the road, hailed as the first freeway in the West, passed less than 50 yards from the house Lummis had built to celebrate the Arroyo's past. Today, Lummis' house still serves as a center of Arroyo Heritage. Owned by the City of Los Angeles, the Lummis House and Gardens is open to visitors and houses the Historical Society of Southern California. It is also one of many historic structures within the Arroyo that could benefit from additional preservation.

Sidebar: What was Arroyo Culture?

Arroyo Culture was a loose grouping of artist, artisans, and intellectuals who lived in or near the Arroyo Seco in the late 19th and early 20th century, forming a sort of bohemian set on the edges of Los Angeles and Pasadena. Inspired by the natural setting, mild climate, and the history of Spanish and Indian inhabitation that surrounded them in the Arroyo and greater Los Angeles, these figures developed a common approach to art and life. Part practical adaptation to life in the region and part myth-making, the Arroyo Culture stressed living simply and close to nature, a return to craftsmanship in architecture and design, and adaptation of Spanish and Native styles. Of course,

those who shaped Arroyo Culture were women and men of their time. Many viewed the region through the lens of Manifest Destiny, promoting Southern California as a Mediterranean idyll for new, white arrivals. But still, by recognizing the contributions of earlier cultures and the significance of climate and nature, the artists and thinkers of the Arroyo Culture developed a forward-looking view of the good life. Their vision of multi-cultural creativity and indoor/outdoor living under the Southern California sunshine resonates to this day.¹⁴

B. Support the Arroyo's Contemporary Arts and Culture scene

Contemporary artists continue to reinterpret the Arroyo Seco and sustain a dynamic cultural life in Arroyo communities. Artist's galleries, small theaters, arts agencies, and other local cultural spaces and organizations provide many venues to create, learn, and enjoy. These creative spaces help neighborhoods thrive, adding energy and attracting visitors. While the creativity of its residents is the Arroyo's chief cultural asset, local communities and major cultural institutions can help create a supportive environment in which the arts and culture will thrive. Arroyo communities should:

- Provide and leverage funding to local artists, art collectives, and cultural organizations.
- Work to keep housing and commercial rents affordable so that artists and venues – indeed all residents and small businesses – are not forced out of the neighborhoods they help revitalize.
- Display the works of local artists in public buildings and parks.
- Link cultural tourism and economic development by promoting the Arroyo as a corridor rich in museums, galleries, and other cultural attractions.

Sidebar: Art in the Community

A number of artists and artists' groups in the Arroyo Seco identify with the Arroyo as a region with a rich cultural history. They are reasserting art as a force that can help provide identities for places and communities. For example:

- *The Arroyo Arts Collective is an organization of artists, writers, and performers based in northeast Los Angeles. The organization has held cultural tours of northeast L.A., exhibited visual art that references the cultural diversity of the region, sponsored installations celebrating the Los Angeles River, and displayed poems in shop windows in Highland Park. <http://www.arroyoartscollective.org/>*
- *New Town is a Pasadena based artists consortium dedicated to taking art outside the gallery and museum walls. New Town artists have held events and pageants out in public spaces in Arroyo Communities, including in the heart of the Arroyo canyon itself. http://www.calarts.edu/~ramromin/about_us_/about_us.html*

C. Ensure Cultural Opportunities for the Next Generation of Arroyo Residents

Ultimately, the Arroyo Seco's legacy rests in the hands of the next generation of Arroyo residents: our children and youth. For the Arroyo to remain a connective thread through the region, young people need opportunities to learn about the Arroyo, and to create their own "Arroyo Cultures." School districts, cultural agencies, and other decision-makers can help expose youth to the Arroyo's history and the wealth of cultural institutions and resources available along the Arroyo Seco. Arroyo communities can also help nurture the next generation of Arroyo artists by making sure young people have the opportunity to express their own visions through art and culture.

1. Support Artistic and Cultural Programs for Youth

Every child deserves the chance to create, to explore the visual arts and creative writing, drama and photography, music and dance. Unfortunately, arts education is not always well supported in schools and in the broader community, especially in times of lean budgets. This is short-sighted. Programs in the arts can be among the most inspiring for youth. And artistic and cultural programs can help keep children engaged and provide an alternative to gangs or despair. To enhance artistic and cultural programs for youth, Arroyo Communities should:

- Expand art and cultural programs for youth in schools, after schools, and in the community.
- Support these programs through a combination of local cultural funds, state and federal funds, and private funds.
- Work with youth to identify issues that are important to the next generation of Arroyo residents.

The Armory Center for the Arts in Pasadena has been providing arts education to youth and community members for over 50 years. Its programs were launched in 1947 as the education department of the Pasadena Art Museum. When the museum closed in 1974, the education component morphed into the Pasadena Arts Workshops, which continued to link professional artists and children and community members. Fifteen years later, in 1989, the organization moved into a renovated National Guard Armory building, providing space for art exhibitions, classes, and cultural organizations. Today the Armory Center provides art education on site and also travels out to surrounding schools and community locations to spread the joys of visual arts.

<http://www.armoryarts.org/>

Sidebar: Murals and Youth Build Community

The Los Angeles region is known for its vibrant murals. Northeast L.A. and the Arroyo have their share of striking murals from the Arroyo Culture, Work Projects Administration, and the Latino Muralista era, not to mention a thriving contemporary mural scene. Murals inject art, opinion, symbolism, and beauty into city streets. As a form of public art, murals are also an ideal tool for engaging youth in community beautification and identity. When veteran muralists involve young people in the process of designing and painting murals, the youths don't just learn artistic techniques, they learn about their community's history and culture. In Highland Park, for example, students teamed up with a local muralist and local community groups to design and paint a mural near San Pascual elementary school. To prepare for the mural, which depicts wildlife from the Arroyo Seco, the young people hiked in Debs Park to learn more about the Arroyo's natural inhabitants and toured murals in other parts of L.A. to learn how murals can improve communities.¹⁵

2. Promote place-based education within both public and private schools of the Arroyo.

Place based education uses the local environment, history, and community life as touchstones for teaching and learning. Its premise is that education that relates to the direct, everyday experiences of young people enhances learning by making education both more relevant and more engaging. Through place-based education, young people learn to become active citizens who feel empowered to contribute to their community.

Place-based education also helps give young people an important sense of belonging. By teaching students where they are from, they will be better prepared to understand their place in the world, where they fit in, be it as part of a future Arroyo or some other place and community. This is especially important in Southern California where historical patterns, a saturated media market, and a mobile lifestyle make it different for young people to develop an understanding or attachment to their community or landscape.

Implementing place-based education within the Arroyo in an era of shrinking school budgets and standardized testing means calling on the creativity and passion of teachers to connect study of the Arroyo to the educational standards of the State of California. More importantly, it means convincing school administrators and district officials that a place-based approach will improve performance on tests and other accountability measures.

The Arroyo Seco is an ideal subject for study in local schools. Learning about the Arroyo helps students understand the place they live in, and their connections to nearby communities, the past, and the natural world. Nature and environmental sciences, geology, art, archeology, and history can all be viewed through the lens of the Arroyo. Study of the Arroyo complements 3rd and 4th grade state standards relating to “Knowing Your Community” and “California History.” The Arroyo can also be integrated into the curriculum of other grade levels.

The key to implementing place-based education in the Arroyo is to get students out into the community. Young people should have the opportunity to visit the Arroyo and its cultural institutions and natural and historic sites. Fieldtrips to parks and other sites along the Arroyo allow for observations, fieldwork, and cultural programs on specific subjects. On a more basic level, children, especially those from urbanized neighborhoods, need to experience nature on a more frequent, first hand basis. The Arroyo, a wild spot within the city, is perfect for familiarizing children with the joys and beauties of the natural world. To promote place-based education within the Arroyo, school districts and communities in and around the Arroyo should:

- Provide transportation that allows students to experience the Arroyo first hand through field trips and outdoors learning.
- Document and provide recognition for teachers and administrators that are already working to connect their classrooms to the community.
- Establish an Arroyo Teachers’ Network supported by regular workshops, meetings, and web-based resources that allow teachers and administrators pursuing place-based education to share resources, ideas, and strategies. Enlist the help of administrators and district staff on how to advance place-based education within the current state framework for public education.
- Establish partnerships with local organizations, universities, and businesses to create, support, and document place-based Arroyo programs and materials that improve student performance.
- Encourage teachers to pursue continued educational credits on subjects related to the Arroyo.

Sidebar: Teacher Training on the Arroyo: A River Runs Through It.

In 1999, teachers Carmela Gomes and Janice Rodriguez, from Nightingale and Luther Burbank Middle Schools, with help from the Southwest Museum, initiated “A River Runs Through It” – a special teacher training on the ethnobotany of the Arroyo Seco. After several successful workshops, the Urban and Environmental Policy Institute at Occidental College provided the support necessary to expand the training. During the 2002-03 academic year, over 50 teachers participated in “A River Runs Through It,” visiting natural and creative sites up and down the Arroyo, sharing their

own knowledge and expertise, and hearing from local experts on the environment, history, and cultural life of the Arroyo. Teachers also received a special resource guide with documents, activity ideas, and background information to help them integrate study of the Arroyo into their classroom while also fulfilling state standards.¹⁶

III. The Environment, Watershed Restoration, and Parks

“The Arroyo Seco is one of Southern California’s greatest natural treasures.”¹⁷

In 1911, Theodore Roosevelt said the Arroyo would make a great park. It’s easy to see why. The Arroyo’s 22-mile canyon runs from near Mt. Wilson in the San Gabriel Mountains to the Los Angeles River near downtown. For thousands of years, this scenic canyon has served as a wildlife corridor connecting the San Gabriel and Santa Monica Mountains and, through the river, joining these mountains with the sea. Today the area still contains important habitat for several threatened and endangered species. Because of its unique blend of natural and urban characteristics and current watershed planning efforts, the California Resources Agency recently declared the Arroyo one of ten model watersheds for the state.

While across the region parkland is scarce, almost all of the land along the Arroyo is in public ownership. This enhances the feasibility of creating a continuous network of public parks and open space from the mountains to downtown Los Angeles. All along the Arroyo there are exciting new plans to transform and restore this scenic canyon. The City of Pasadena is in the process of completing a master plan for its portion of the Arroyo that includes the restoration of several areas. In Montecito Heights, the National Audubon Society is constructing a new nature center to connect people with the outdoors at Debs Park. And where the Arroyo joins with the Los Angeles River, Confluence Park will provide a vital link to new parks along the River.

At the center of these new and enhanced parks could be a revitalized living stream. The Arroyo Seco Foundation and North East Trees, in conjunction with a number of other agencies, released a study of ways to restore the natural flow of the Arroyo stream, while at the same time improving flood management and enhancing our area’s water resources. This study has attracted the interest of the Army Corps of Engineers and Los Angeles County Department of Public Works and both are now developing partnerships with local agencies to explore watershed approaches to reviving the Arroyo and its tributaries. Returning a living stream to the Arroyo’s canyon can serve as a model for restoring the Los Angeles River and other watersheds across the region in ways that serve the needs of both wildlife and people.

A. Restore the Arroyo Seco Watershed

The Arroyo Seco, a 46.6 square mile watershed tributary to the Los Angeles River, is one of Southern California’s greatest natural resources. Prior to its channelization, the Arroyo’s waters flowed with trout. Willow and sycamore trees grew along its banks providing habitat for aquatic life and birds. Generations of Tongva Indians and European settlers were inspired by its beauty, and lived partly off its bounty. Arroyo Seco means “dry gulch,” but the stream could swell tremendously during winter storms. Following damaging floods along the Arroyo and the greater Los Angeles River system in the early part of the 20th century, the region’s leaders and federal engineers took the dramatic decision to “channelize” the river. The stream bed of the lower Arroyo

was lined with concrete. Tributaries were encapsulated or diverted into buried pipes. These changes, combined with the dams of the Upper Arroyo, altered the hydrology and ecosystems of the Arroyo watershed.

The natural Arroyo wasn't forgotten. In recent years, residents, organizations, and agencies have begun to explore ways to restore the Arroyo's stream, while enhancing wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities for everyone in the area. These leaders are moving past the visioning stage to the practical work of assessing, planning and testing pilot projects. Slowly, the restoration of the Arroyo's watershed is progressing. Arroyo communities should contribute to watershed restoration:

1. Commit to Restore the Natural Hydrological Functions of the Watershed

- Widen and lengthen the stream and tributaries as close as possible to their original flow.
- Naturalize the stream by removing the concrete channel where feasible
- Where possible, daylight buried stream tributaries.
- Maintain current levels of public safety and flood control throughout the Arroyo and downstream.
- Explore alternatives to the existing debris dams in the mountain portion of the Arroyo Seco watershed, which continue to alter the hydrology of the channel and provide a foothold for exotic species.
- Document the historic path of the Arroyo Seco stream, its tributaries and flow levels over the course of the year to use as a guide for future restoration efforts.
- Establish a citizen water quality monitoring program along the Arroyo to evaluate the health of the stream over time.

Sidebar: Guides to Arroyo Restoration

If there is a roadmap for restoring the Arroyo Seco watershed, it can be found in the pages of the Arroyo Seco Watershed Restoration Feasibility Study. This study, released in 2002, is the result of a collaborative study process led by North East Trees and the Arroyo Seco Foundation. Drawing upon the expertise of fifteen government agencies and many local organizations, the study provides a wealth of recommendations tailored to specific restoration goals and to different locations and jurisdictions along the Arroyo. The environment section of the ArroyoFest policy paper that you are reading draws heavily from the Feasibility Study.

- *The full report is available online at <http://www.arroyoseco.org/Watershedstudy.htm>*
- *A chart containing the study's numerous recommendations is available at <http://www.arroyoseco.org/WatershedGoalsProjects.htm>*

One strong sign that watershed restoration is an idea whose time has come is that the Army Corps of Engineers – which built the concrete channel 60 years ago – is launching its own cost shared feasibility study of restoration options for the Arroyo Seco in partnership with local agencies and partners. The Army Corps study will provide further information on the complex hydrology of the Arroyo and help identify techniques and projects that balance flood control and naturalization goals. The completion of the study within a few years could also qualify Arroyo Restoration projects for federal funding as part of the Corp's annual budget. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Works is the primary local partner agency.

Sidebar: Alternatives to Concrete

*The Arroyo's concrete lining was designed to speed heavy rain to the L.A. River and the Pacific. But the concrete channel is unsightly. This linear, storm drain approach is the opposite of the historic Arroyo, which was an ever-changing, braided river with multiple sandbars and ribbons fed by a series of local springs. Fortunately, there are ways to control floods – without sacrificing safety – that work more closely with the Arroyo's natural system. Water can be retained where it falls on the ground by providing pervious surfaces that allow the water to percolate into the ground, rather than running off into the channels. Water can be diverted at points along the stream into constructed wetlands and retention areas. This reduces the amount of water flowing through the Arroyo in heavy storms. With a lower peak flow, it will be possible to remove the concrete at points along the Arroyo where there is open space along the side of the stream. When heavy waters do overflow the banks at these points, the water will pool in these temporary "floodplains," then soak into the ground after the rains end. Removing concrete will not be practical in all spots along the Arroyo, especially where there are structures close to the stream. But where the channel **can** be naturalized, the Arroyo can experience rebirth as a more natural canyon and stream*

2. Conserve Water Resources and Improve Water Quality

Another drawback of a channelized Arroyo Seco is that a share of rainfall from the San Gabriel Mountains, one of the region's main sources of local fresh water, is lost to the ocean rather than spread over the ecosystems along the Arroyo and L.A. River or saved for human use. This valuable water resource can be better managed, which would allow communities along the Arroyo to reduce their dependence on imported water. Water resources can also be made cleaner to protect aquatic life and make the Arroyo stream safer for human contact. Communities along the Arroyo should:

- Develop groundwater management plans to ensure that more water is available for Arroyo ecosystems and human uses.
- Meet mandates for zero trash in the Arroyo stream and work towards a clean stream that is safe for human contact.
- Decrease the amount of impermeable ground cover (concrete and asphalt) in the Arroyo Seco watershed. Adding rows of planters and green spaces to parking lots, using paving stones with gaps in between, etc. can reduce the amount of contaminated storm runoff that enters the Arroyo channel.
- Identify and clean sources of groundwater contamination along the Arroyo.
- Seek information to determine the safety of urban runoff infiltration into aquifers that supply potable water.

B. Protect, Restore and Connect Natural Habitat

Southern California is one of the world's centers of biodiversity, a diversity of life that is under constant pressure from sprawl and habitat destruction. In the Arroyo, there is great potential for restoring parts of the natural ecosystems. While habitat loss and the introduction of invasive species have transformed and degraded the Arroyo's natural state, the canyon and its watershed still provide important habitat for a diversity of plants and animals, including several threatened and endangered species. The upper half of the Arroyo is part of the Angeles National Forest. In the lower half of the Arroyo, existing parks and botanic gardens have preserved significant green space. Hillside habitats have not been completely developed, and the banks of the stream are less built up than other area

rivers and tributaries. To restore the Arroyo's ecosystems and habitat, Arroyo communities and agencies should:

- Restore terrestrial and aquatic habitats by removing non-native plants and reintroducing native species.
- Preserve remaining open space and habitat by acquiring and protecting undeveloped land on hillsides and along stream channel.
- Manage watershed restoration and flood control (including decisions on dam operation, design, and removal) to maximize the mobility of fish native to the Arroyo.
- Use fire and flood control management techniques that mimic natural processes and enhance habitat.
- Complete research on the historic composition of flora and fauna at specific locations along the Arroyo to serve as a guide for restoration and management decisions.
- Identify indicator species (e.g. the Arroyo toad) for measuring the health of different habitat types within the Arroyo Seco.
- Connect with broader conservation efforts in the region so that the Arroyo becomes a key component of a regional green infrastructure network that includes wildlife corridors linking the Santa Monica and San Gabriel mountains.

Sidebar: Debs Park: Nature in the City

Ernest E. Debs Park is a 280-acre natural oasis in the Montecito heights area of the City of Los Angeles. More than half of Debs Park is native walnut and oak woodlands, grasslands, and coastal sage scrub, a rare intact slice of Southern California's native habitat that attracts dozens of bird species. This remaining natural spot is situated close to the densely populated neighborhoods of downtown, northeast, and east Los Angeles. An estimated 25,000 children live within two miles of the park. The National Audubon Society is constructing an environmental education and ecological monitoring center there so visitors will have even more reasons to explore and take advantage of the park. Debs Park's multiple values as a native habitat, place to walk, relax, or bird watch, and soon, as a top-notch environmental education center, demonstrate how important it is to maintain and expand wild places in urban areas.¹⁸

C. Increase, Enhance, and Connect Parks and Open Space

The Los Angeles region is blessed with mild weather, mountains, beaches, and forests to enjoy and explore. But many neighborhoods lack local parks to which residents, especially children, can easily walk. According to some studies, the City of L.A. is the most park-poor large city in the nation.¹⁹ The Arroyo Seco area has more parks and open space than some other parts of the region. This is a legacy to build upon by expanding and enhancing parks, open space, and recreational opportunities. Arroyo communities should:

- Create new, linear parks along the Arroyo Seco Parkway and channel to connect existing park and open space resources. New parks lying alongside the Parkway and stream will create new opportunities for recreation, habitat, and channel naturalization, create a pleasing buffer between the Parkway and nearby residents, and begin to link existing parks to create a continuous greenway stretching from the Mountain to the Los Angeles River.

- Continue to develop Confluence Park at the joining of the Arroyo Seco and the Los Angeles River. Work to connect this park to the new state parks at Taylor Yards and China town Yards.
- Create new pocket parks and playing fields in neighborhoods without adequate open space. One immediate step that local cities can do is identifying vacant lots and other potential locations for new, neighborhood parks.
- Improve safety and maintenance in underused parks.
- Increase use of native landscaping and adopt integrated pest management strategies to reduce pesticide and fertilizer use in parks.
- Connect the network of trails that run through the National Forest and the Arroyo's parks so that walkers (and, in some cases equestrians and cyclists) can experience more of the open space and natural areas in the Arroyo Seco.

Sidebar: Fixing the Small Flaws that Keep Some Parks Underutilized

A preliminary Occidental College survey of Arroyo Seco Park revealed a patchwork of heavily visited and underutilized areas. No surprise: the sections of the park that attracted the most visitors, Avenue 57 and Avenue 64, had the best maintained facilities and the most amenities, including tennis courts, play equipment, public art, sports fields, and grills. Sections of Arroyo Seco Park that were isolated and had limited access to the park that were more likely to sit empty were less well kept up, and were considered unsafe by locals. Residents saw gangs as a problem at some sites, and at other locations the park is separated from the fast-paced freeway by nothing more than a chain link fence. The lesson is that parks, like any public facility, need to be maintained and policed so that communities can feel comfortable visiting and enjoying them, and that by connecting parks and improving access several problems and challenges can be avoided.²⁰

Sidebar: Community Gardens as Landscapes and Community-Building Places

Community gardens are an often overlooked, but crucial component of urban open space. Gardens allow city dwellers to connect with the land and the food they eat. They are places where a diverse population can grow culturally relevant food not often found in supermarkets. At the same time, community gardens are open space areas that beautify neighborhoods. By bringing people together, gardens build community and provide recreation in a safe environment. Despite the many benefits of community gardens, they can be difficult to develop. Because open space is scarce in Los Angeles County, park advocates are often competing for the same small piece of land that community gardeners hope to use. Gardeners, planners, and park officials should work together to ensure that more community gardens can join these existing sites in the Arroyo: Solano Canyon and La Tierra La Culebra in N.E. Los Angeles, Summit and Oakland in Pasadena, and Altadena community garden in Altadena.

Conclusion

The Arroyo corridor is blessed with a rich history, diverse cultures and communities, open spaces and a living stream, and a core of activism and civic engagement. The corridor, however, has also witnessed degrading landscapes, a congested and accident-prone freeway, major pockets of substandard housing or lack of housing, and a lack of planning and project integration among its multiple cities and jurisdictions.

The opportunities for a new Arroyo vision and to implement practical plans for change are available. ArroyoFest, as an event, suggests how communities can come together and be connected. As a form of community mobilization and through the development of its major themes, it suggests a road map for that envisioning and implementation process. Ultimately, the Arroyo today, similar to its historical role, can become the place that points the way for a renewed and more livable southern California.

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¹ Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris and Robert Gottlieb, *Putting Back the Pleasure in the Drive: Reclaiming Urban Parkways for the 21st Century*, University of California Transportation Center, January, 2003.

² Information on the National Scenic Byways program is available at a website operated by the U.S. Department of transportation: www.byways.org

³ Sources on Arroyo bridges include Caltrans and the Los Angeles Almanac, Historic Highway bridges of Southern California, online at www.losangelesalmanac.com/topics/Structure/st05.htm

⁴ The Surface Transportation Policy Project's 2003 Policy Platform "Stay the Course: How to Make T-21 Even Better," contains a range of ideas from community groups, planners, and transit advocates on what a successful federal transportation bill would look like. On line at www.transact.org/report.asp?id=203

⁵ The Arroyo is served by MTA express bus line 401 linking Pasadena and downtown Los Angeles. A new limited stop route (line 81) along Figueroa street parallel to the Arroyo Seco Parkway has improved transportation options north to Eagle Rock and south to Downtown L.A. and beyond. Source:

http://www.mta.net/metro_transit/riders_guide/bus_overview.htm

⁶ Conversation with Rex Gephart, Director, Regional Transit Planning, MTA.

⁷ Kari Michele Fowler, ArroyoWalk: A proposal for and Interpretive Pedestrian Route Through the Arroyo Seco, 2002.

⁸ Jan 7, 2003 letter from PADREES in Action to Councilman Nick Pacheco requesting formal traffic assessment at intersection of Figueroa Street and Meridian Street.

⁹ Summary of Lincoln Avenue Task Force, 11/9/02 (prepared by Judy Wheeler.)

¹⁰ Under current MTA policy, bikes will not be allowed on Gold Line trains going towards Los Angeles from 6:30 to 8:30 am and towards Pasadena from 4:30 to 6:30 pm.

¹¹ On biking in early Pasadena, see the City of Pasadena Bicycle Plan: www.geocities.com/Yosemite/3340/fbi/pas-bike-plan-99/pas-bike-plan-01.html; a proposal for a modern day elevated (and toll-charging) bikeway along the Arroyo Seco is available at <http://www.pasonline.com/cc/ASB.proposal.html>.

¹² Date of letter?

¹³ Source: Pasadena Tournament of Roses, "Rose Bowl Game History,"

<http://www.tournamentofroses.com/history/bowlhistory.htm>

¹⁴ A good source on the Arroyo Culture and its key figures is Kevin Starr, *Inventing the Dream: California Through the Progressive Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), especially chapters 3 and 4.

¹⁵ <http://www.nelanet.org/sanpascualmural/>

¹⁶ <http://www.arroyofest.org/workshop.html>

¹⁷ Northeast Trees and Arroyo Seco Foundation, Arroyo Seco Watershed Restoration Feasibility Study, Volume 1, Project Report, May 2002, p. 11.

¹⁸ Information on the future Audubon center available at: http://www.audubon-ca.org/debs_park.htm

¹⁹ Urban Land Trust Task Force, *Walking to the Park: Recommendations for the Formation of a Urban Land Trust to Serve the City of Los Angeles*, August 13, 2002.

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