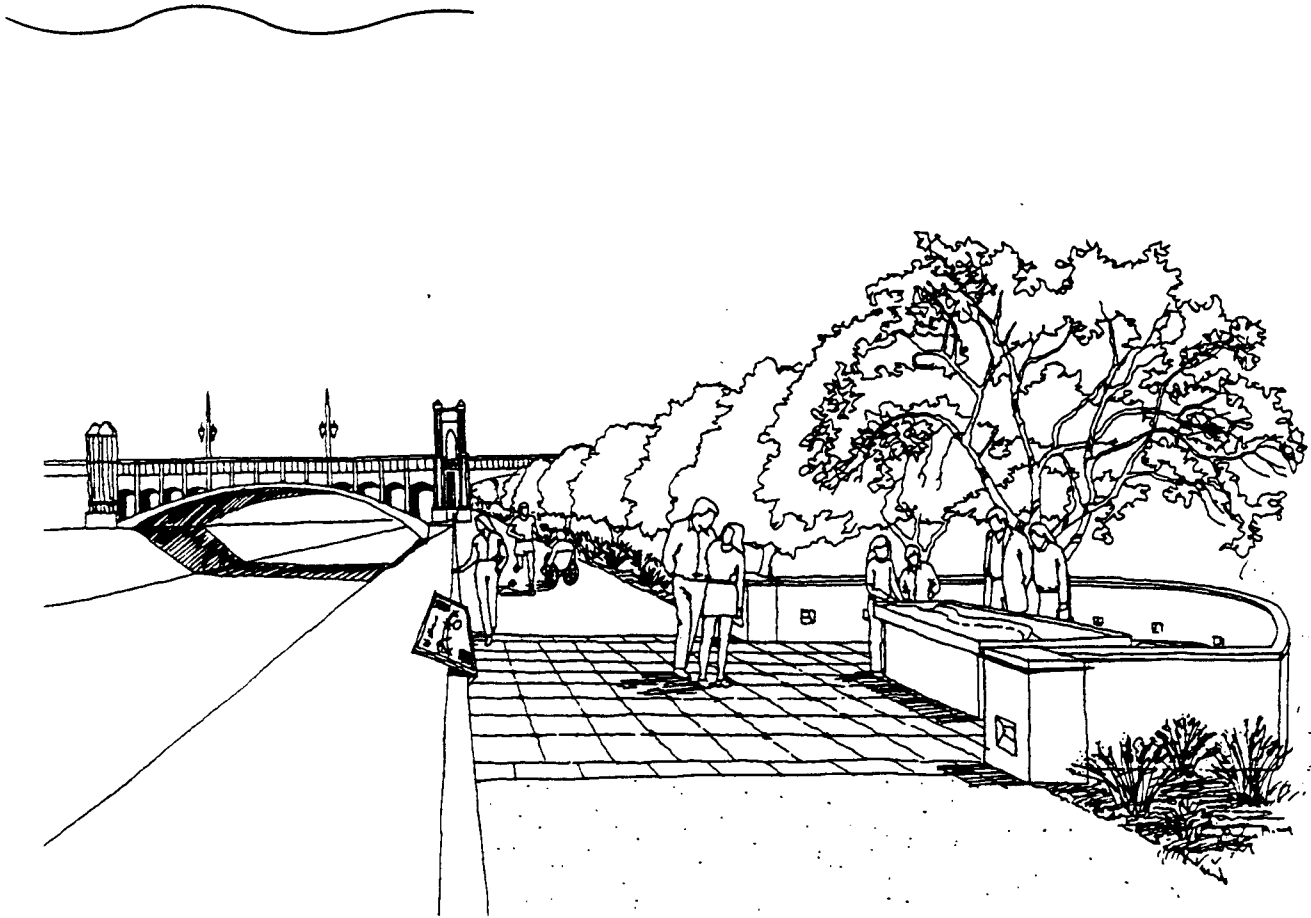


AESTHETICS

The goal and objectives developed by the Advisory Committee for Aesthetics are:

Improve the appearance of the river and the pride of the local communities in it.

- Improve appearance of the river, encourage river cleanup and promote beautification.
 - Increase community pride and promote identity of the river.
 - Provide interconnection between communities and recreation facilities.
 - Develop a greenbelt along the river.
 - Encourage development of a riverfront.



A. EXISTING CONDITIONS

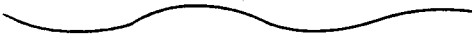
A variety of very different communities—each with its own unique visual character—line the river. Each reach of the Master Plan study area exhibits a different visual character.

Natural areas occur within the river where a “soft bottom” still exists, such as within Sepulveda Basin and the portion from Burbank/Western Channel to near Arroyo Seco. In the southern reaches, the river is bordered by mixed uses and thus has a varied visual character. Along Valleyheart Drive in the San Fernando Valley, the river meanders and is bordered by large shrubs that provide cool shaded walkways. In contrast, a wide barren easement borders the Tujunga Wash, and in downtown Los Angeles there is only limited access to an intensely urban and industrial riverfront.



As the river was channelized and communities developed adjacent to it, differences in neighborhood orientation, configuration of the channel or levees and visual and physical access evolved. For instance, in the San Fernando Valley the river is entrenched and neighborhoods are level with the top of the channel. In the southern reaches, neighborhoods lie below the top of the levees by as much as 25 feet. This determines what a person sees when walking on nearby streets, either they look “over” and possibly “into” the river, or they look up “at” the levee.

In addition to this visual difference, the actual layout of the streets or lots adjacent to the river varies. Perpendicular neighborhood streets often “dead end” into the river, thus providing easy visibility and access to the river and/or trails. Streets that run parallel usually result in one of two conditions. Either the street is developed on the riverfront side, isolating the river behind private property; or, where development has not



occurred, parallel streets provide open views and easier access to the river. This orientation to the river influences how individual homeowners and often entire neighborhoods use the river. Community uses reflect this diversity, as can be seen in many locations along the river.

In areas where there is an adjacent tree canopy, people have planted flower beds at the edge of their yards facing the river. These riverside gardens looking onto the channel often sport lawn chairs and hammocks. On the Tujunga Wash, an open style fencing is used, and several backyard plantings extend into the easement. Murals adorn walls of commercial buildings facing the channel, and in some areas, the channel walls themselves have been used as canvases. From Interstate 5 adjacent to Griffith Park and above Los Feliz Boulevard, well-known paintings of cat faces are visible on several storm drain outlet flapgates.


In the San Fernando Valley numerous pedestrian bridges cross the channel. These link neighborhoods and often have associated community plantings. A large community garden is planted along the confluence of Aliso Creek and the river.

In North Long Beach, along De Forest Avenue, the community has planted young trees in an easement at the base of the levee covering an entire block.

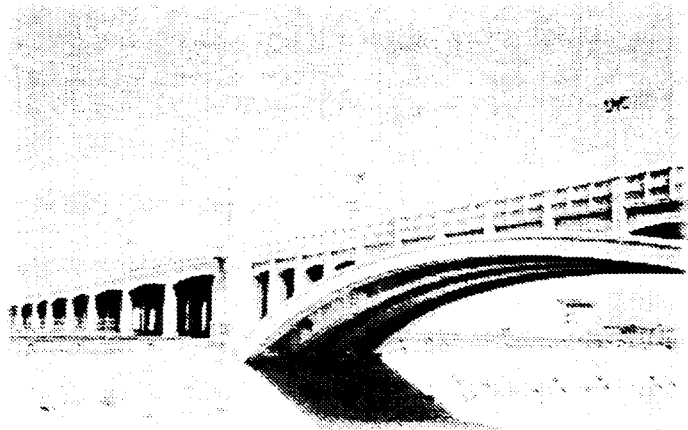
Near the Tujunga Wash confluence, property owners have enhanced the value of their residential riverfront property by planting trees on the opposite bank to screen views of the commercial development there, while preserving their own clear view of the river.

The condition of maintenance roads, the channel sides, and easement landscaping vary a great deal along the river. In some areas of the San Fernando Valley where the channel is entrenched, the access road is unpaved with dense plantings of pine or oleander trees lining it. This is in stark contrast to the unplanted paved surface of the levees in the southern reaches.

In the “soft bottom” area near Griffith Park and in other sections, “weep” holes along the interior levee walls are aligned in a regular pattern. Tall grasses have naturalized in these holes, creating a beautiful edge of swaying vegetation along the river.



Architectural landmarks also contribute significantly to the aesthetic quality of the river. In downtown Los Angeles, a series of art deco and classical revival style bridges span the river. Several are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.



These include:

- Fletcher Drive • Glendale Boulevard
- North Broadway • North Spring Street • North Main Street
- Cesar E. Chavez Avenue (formerly Macy Street) • First Street
- Seventh Street • Washington Boulevard • 110 Freeway

Other buildings and sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places near the river add to the richness of the urban environment here. The following Historic Places are located within one mile of the river:

- Bradbury Building, Los Angeles • Huntly-Evans Building, Glendale
- Little Tokyo Historic District, Los Angeles • Los Angeles Plaza Historic District
- Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal • Los Cerritos Ranch House, Long Beach
- Million Dollar Theater, Los Angeles • Plaza Substation, Los Angeles
- Puvanga Indian Village Sites, Long Beach • RMS Queen Mary, Long Beach
- Rancho El Encino, Encino • Jennie A. Reeve House, Long Beach
- San Fernando Building, Los Angeles • San Raphael Rancho, Glendale
- Spring Street Financial District, Los Angeles
- Title Guarantee and Trust Company Building, Los Angeles
- U.S. Post Office (Main), Glendale • U.S. Post Office (Main), Long Beach
- U.S. Post Office (Terminal Annex), Los Angeles • YMCA, Glendale

Some cities have also identified locally significant cultural landmarks within their boundaries, many of which are in the vicinity of the river. Many of these significant features were mapped as a part of the Master Plan process. Refer to Appendix G - Community Resource Map.



PLANNED AND EXISTING IMPROVEMENTS AND PROJECTS:

- MTA Urban Greenway Plan prepared by the Mountains Conservancy Foundation, proposes three greenways along the river (refer to “Other Project” listings at end of the Reach Characteristic Sections).
- NorthEast Trees has planned and developed several tree planting programs at various locations.
- Friends of the Los Angeles River (FoLAR) hold annual river clean-ups.
- City of Los Angeles has placed river signs on bridges.
- Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority has begun a program to develop riverside parks and “River Walks” to promote public awareness of the river.
- At Los Angeles Valley College, a quarter-mile long greenway along Tujunga Wash contains shade trees, ornamental shrubs and lawns and a mural on the channel walls.
- The Los Angeles County Department of Public Works has screened some of their spreading basins near the river and Tujunga Wash with eucalyptus, oleander and other drought tolerant plants.
- In the residential Valleyheart area of San Fernando Valley, the City of Los Angeles has planted oleanders and other drought tolerant, low maintenance plants along the river.
- Where cities maintain parklands adjacent to the river, vegetation is visible from the river levees. In most areas, park vegetation ends at the right-of-way fence or at the bottom of the levee.
- De Forest Park in Long Beach, initiated by local residents and developed by the city, is divided into a “nature park” and recreational areas.
- Wrigley neighborhood, also in Long Beach, has improved its riverfront with landscaping.
- “Ernie’s Walk” in San Fernando Valley reflects one man’s landscaping efforts to improve the river setting (with occasional help from City of Los Angeles maintenance crews).
- Some elementary and high schools study the river in science classes and with environmental education projects. Area colleges often confer with county planners and engineers on classes to develop conceptual projects they are conducting on the river.

It is intended that the Master Plan coordinate various types of improvements in the future to create a more beautiful and meaningful river’s edge.






DEFINITIONS OF AESTHETIC IMPROVEMENTS

Through meetings and site visits, a focused subcommittee developed the following definitions of aesthetic improvements, both of which promote a sense of pride and connection to the river:

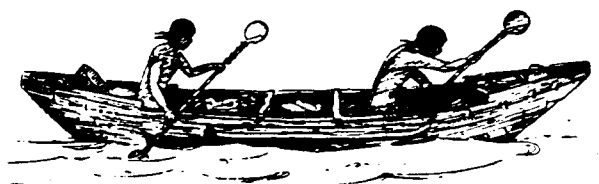
- River beautification: projects that improve the appearance of the river.
- River awareness: projects which enrich public perception of the river by creating greater awareness of the river's role in the history and development of the Los Angeles basin.

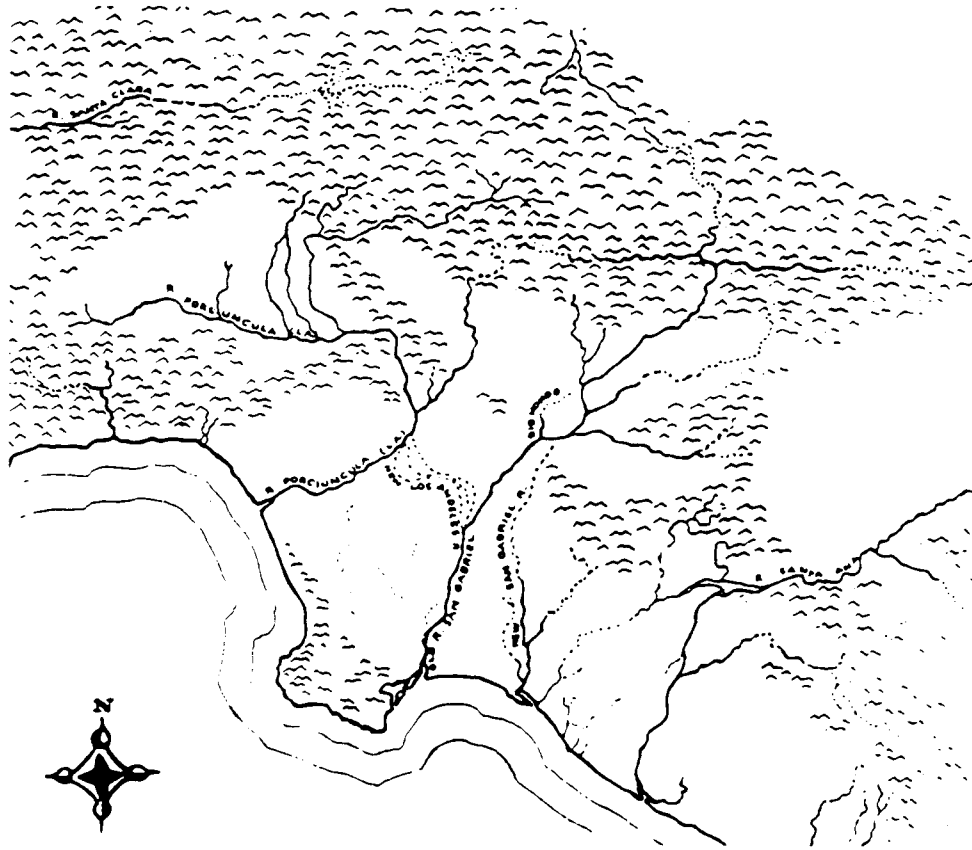
B. RECOMMENDATIONS

- For regional identity, and to provide inter-connection between communities and recreational facilities, create a **uniform regional mapping and sign system** with a recognizable river logo to be placed at major trail entrances and interpretation sites. The system would give “you are here” information, identify the local community and describe the overall regional river-trail system.
 - Tree plantings and aesthetic **enhancement programs of trail entrances** should be undertaken first at bridges and major access locations. Each would be designed to both complement the local area and to identify the regional trail system.
 - Through the downtown Los Angeles area, from Broadway Avenue south to Olympic, a **native-wild flower planting program** should be implemented. This area has little access and limited potential for tree planting because of the existing rail lines. A wildflower planting program would provide color and life to a harsh and denuded environment. Maintenance program information can be obtained from other agencies, such as Caltrans, that have experience in implementing these types of improvements. (Additional programs for increasing vegetation along the river are addressed in the Environmental Quality Section of this report).
 - **On outside levee slopes**, where tree planting is not possible, non-invasive grasses, native grasses, shrubs and wildflowers may be used to **provide visual enhancement**.
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- A semi-annual “**Celebrate the River**” event could be sponsored by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Los Angeles County Department of Public Works and cities adjoining the river. This could be a day- or week-long celebration with events in each community along the river. Celebrations could be held in spring (around Earth Day), and again in fall to celebrate the seasons. Events at these celebrations could cover many subjects. In the fall, river education would focus on safety and dangers of the channel. In the spring, education would focus on personal responsibility for water quality and debris.
- A **variety of artistic works** could be incorporated along the river in several ways:
 - An “unfolding of the river” would include a week-long media program on the beauty of the river. Each day, the program would move down the river to explore a new dimension.
 - Scenic enhancement from roadways could be improved by emphasizing views to historic bridges, designing new bridges with historic elements and—for special events—flying banners at river crossings.
 - School “paint-outs” and run/walks for education and appreciation.
 - Portraits or scenes of plants and animals that live or have lived in the area could be painted on the channel walls.
 - A sculpture program could be instituted along the entire river length. This could serve as a river-long museum to express the engineering of the river, reflect surroundings and depict historical and cultural events.
- To increase community pride and promote a sense of identity with the river, a **series of interpretive** sites should be developed. These sites could be visited independently or experienced as a progression. Together, they would tell the story of development along the entire river.

Each interpretive site would offer a unique experience, providing either an indoor or open space setting. And each would focus on a particular subject, such as history, culture, environment, river engineering or industrial development.





Two such sites are proposed as Demonstration Projects within the Master Plan. The first environmental restoration and interpretive site will be developed at the Dominguez Gap Spreading Grounds in Long Beach. At the top of Hansen Dam, looking south toward downtown Los Angeles, signs will interpret the environment of Tujunga Wash and explain the wash's relationship to the Los Angeles River watershed.

Additional sites could be developed in conjunction with the recommended overall economic re-development plan for the area. (See Economic Development Section).



C. CHANGES IN POLICY AND PRACTICES TO SUPPORT AESTHETIC GOALS

- Governing agencies and jurisdictions should adopt policies to assist groups wishing to do projects to help ensure that projects and programs are compatible with, and enhance, the river environment. Assistance would include such elements as funding or in-kind services, offers of technical assistance or compatible use of rights-of-way.
 - Working with schools, libraries and other public facilities and agencies, city councils should adopt policies to promote river awareness and anti-graffiti programs. These could include programs such as “Trail Rangers” with youth groups, neighborhood sponsored clean-up days and education and mentor programs for river topics.
 - The Los Angeles County Department of Public Works and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in cooperation with affected cities, should pursue funding to develop river graphics, signs and art projects within the Los Angeles River and Tujunga Wash rights-of-way.
 - Governing agencies and jurisdictions should develop design and implementation standards and guidelines for projects. These guidelines would include such things as:
 - Types of materials (for murals, fencing, tree plantings, trails, etc.) that can be used, and where each is acceptable.
 - Times of year when projects can be worked on.
 - “Ownership” guidelines for artwork.
 - Jurisdictions should consider incorporating aesthetic improvements in projects whenever possible to improve the appearance of the river.
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