

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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

*Promote the river as an economic asset to the surrounding communities.*

- Provide education, training, jobs and business opportunities to benefit communities.
- Establish long- and short-term funding sources.
  - Promote responsible development.
  - Preserve and enhance real estate values.
- Ensure maximum citizen involvement in all phases of economic development planning.
  - Balance local and regional benefits.





## A. EXISTING CONDITIONS


Urban development immediately adjacent to the river boomed after the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers built the flood control system in the 1940s and 1950s. Two notable aspects of this development are that almost every residential, commercial and industrial building “has its back turned” (is oriented away from) the river, and that development took place as close as possible to the river right-of-way. A field trip along the banks of the Los Angeles River reveals commercial parking garages built on the rear property lines, storage facilities displaying materials and equipment outdoors and vacant lots being used as dumping grounds. Businesses, such as those along the densely urban and commercial area of Ventura Boulevard between Whitsett Avenue and Coldwater Canyon, do not take advantage of proximity nor frontage on the river.


Generally speaking, properties along the river also seem to be neglected and not as well maintained as similar properties along nearby streets. Typical uses along the riverfront on private or public land include access roads, railroads, parking lots, dumping areas, excess storage and outdoor storage. Only here and there does a garden area provide a constructive “green” use of the riverfront.

Many of these areas, as well as the many vacant lands and empty buildings, offer excellent opportunities for economic development. With increased pedestrian connections to the river trail, businesses could be developed to support recreational uses.


## B. RECOMMENDATIONS

- In a number of locations, large tracts of riverfront property are vacant or underused. Where a segment of the river can be greened, **encourage joint economic development with riverfront parkland**. By treating the river as a desirable “front,” rather than an undesirable “back,” attractive new garden offices, residential complexes and other facilities can be created. Well-designed river frontage can significantly enhance land value. The following areas offer opportunities for economic development:

- In the **San Fernando Valley**, several blocks east of Tampa Boulevard along the river, numerous apartment complexes were damaged in the 1994 Northridge earthquake. The land
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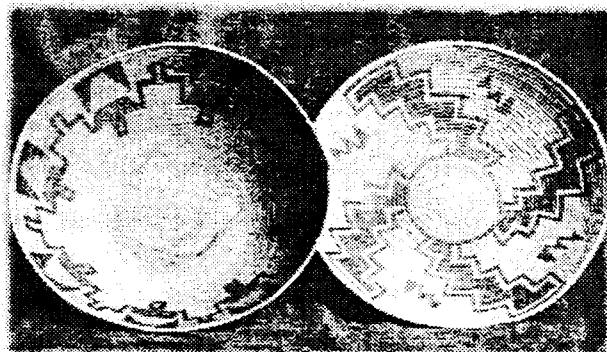


is now for sale and, when redeveloped, should be designed to offer recreational access to the river. New commercial lots or housing should incorporate their river frontage as a feature in their design.

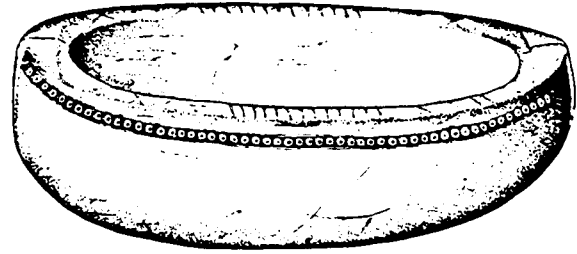
- At the **405 Freeway, below Sepulveda Dam**, a large vacant lot offers great visibility for commercial development. When developed, this lot could spearhead a “riverfront commercial park” encouraging adjacent properties (an existing fire station and miniature golf) to re-orient and become part of the river front park.
  - At **Studio City Golf Course**, opportunities exist to tie existing commercial, retail and sport shops to a “river walk” trail. This spot offers great potential because of the existing uses, available easement and location.
  - Along the **Tujunga Wash**, several areas could support small improvements for commercial ventures. A large parking lot on the wash at Roscoe Boulevard could easily accommodate a permanent open-air market. With minor aesthetic improvements, such as groundcover and trees, this area could be a pleasant neighborhood gathering spot.
  - At **Victory Boulevard**, the entrance road to an existing outdoor shopping center crosses the wash. Stores, including a health club and yogurt shop, face the wash and would benefit from development of a local trail and greenway within the easement. In addition, small enterprises like cart vendors and skate or bike rentals could be developed.
  - Previous studies on possibilities for developing **Taylor Yard** include both economic and river enhancement components.
  - In **Downtown Los Angeles**, an artist community with studios and galleries is developing near the new Metro Station (around Santa Fe Avenue and 4th Street). Across the river, several abandoned railroad spur tracks lie perpendicular to the river. Economic development could turn this into a “hub” with shops, restaurants, studios, etc., and link the Metro station with both sides of the river.
  - In **Long Beach**, both De Forest Park and the 7th Street area offer opportunities to create recreational-based small businesses along the trail.
- In addition to areas of economic development, a **series of major and minor gateways** along the river should be developed. The recommended gateways are mapped and described below.
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## MAJOR GATEWAYS

- **Where the River Begins** - A trail of sculptures could be developed beginning at the confluence of Bell Creek and Arroyo Calabasas and continuing on the south bank easement, connecting to outdoor markets in the existing adjacent retail area. A recreational trail with skate and bike rentals could also be developed.
- **Existing Universal and Warner Bros. Studios** at Barham Boulevard in Los Angeles and Burbank. The buildings sit with their backs to the river, but with simple changes could make use of the river frontage. For example, channel crossings currently used by employees could be enhanced, and commercial attractions such as the "City Walk" could be expanded to include the "River Walk".
- The City of Burbank has adopted a **Redevelopment Project Area for the Media District**, an area adjacent to the Los Angeles River at the southwestern corner of the city. The redevelopment plan calls for the establishment of policies which would direct development toward the river and provide development standards and design guidelines conducive for riverfront development.
- A **"Historic Riverfront"** could be developed in the downtown Los Angeles area north of the 101 Freeway to Taylor Yard. This stretch of the river has a rich history relating to Native Americans and to the early European explorers and settlers who founded the pueblo. Several large vacant areas and numerous small lots are currently for sale. In addition, a historic jail and a local landmark garden restaurant - both vacant - could be redeveloped. The Alameda District Plan is a joint planning effort to restore and revitalize this area of downtown. At the heart of the plan is preservation and improvement of the historic Union Station and U.S. Postal Service Terminal Annex Building. A new Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) building, constructed by MTA behind Union Station, is a significant component of this historic process. An enhanced Los Angeles River front could contribute to the revitalization of this area.



- The Rio Hondo/Los Angeles River confluence in South Gate offers a 17-acre site with freeway access and visibility. A commercial “**Sports Center**” outlet with associated retail stores, recreational rentals and restaurants could be located at the confluence of both the LARIO and Los Angeles River regional trails and support a local “loop” trail system along the washes in this area.



- **The Queensway Bay Plan** is a redevelopment project which will establish the City of Long Beach as an important and exciting waterfront destination in Southern California. This project, located at the outlet of the Los Angeles River, consists of 69 acres of dedicated parkland, 3.5 miles of waterfront esplanade, shops, restaurants and boating operations. Trails will tie this area to the Los Angeles River trail system. This development is expected to infuse thousands of jobs and millions of dollars into the local economy. The Coastal Commission approved the plan in May 1995.

## MINOR GATEWAYS

- The City of Glendale is proposing a “**Grand Central River Park**” as a potential redevelopment project along the Los Angeles River. This 13-acre citywide/regional park would offer recreational facilities and trails for biking and hiking. The trails would connect the river with the larger regional network of facilities such as Griffith Park.
- South of downtown, in the City of Vernon, **an active recreation based center** could be developed including a commercial driving range, public soccer fields and tennis courts with associated sports shops and restaurants. The city has proposed a redevelopment project which includes areas along the river. Their goals include stabilizing the economic base, addressing irregular lot size and providing capital improvements. This suggests the potential for coordinating site development with adjacent riverfront enhancements.
- A “**Garden Gateway**” comprised of parks, an environmental education center, river trails and a commercial nursery within a power transmission line corridor easement may be developed to bridge the river between the Cities of Cudahy and Bell Gardens.



## **C. CHANGES IN POLICY AND PRACTICES TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

### **GENERAL**

Cities and the county have individualized review processes for approving development projects within their jurisdictions. Both the county and local jurisdictions must take active roles in seeking opportunities for implementing Master Plan recommendations through their development and zoning review processes.

A Master Plan coordinator must be designated in a staff position within each city and appropriate county departments. As a project is circulated through the various departments for review and approvals, the Master Plan coordinator should be included in the review process to ensure implementation of the Master Plan.


The County Department of Public Works typically reviews proposed projects to determine the potential impacts on the flood control system. As part of this process the Department may also assess the opportunities for implementing recommendations for economic development identified in the Master Plan. This responsibility will be assigned to a Master Plan project manager, a County Public Works staff member who will be monitoring the implementation and progress of the Master Plan. The Project Manager will also maintain an updated list of long- and short-term funding sources.


### **ZONING AND BUILDING REVIEW PROCESS**

Individuals and businesses owning property along the river channel could enhance the riverfront in conjunction with the development of river trails. Enhancements could include landscaping, tree planting and lunch areas for employees. Once these facilities are in place, access points can be established to adjacent trails for employee use during lunch or at other hours. Improvements such as these offer benefits to both individuals and businesses and raise property values as well. Local jurisdictions may encourage these types of improvements for riverfront properties through their zoning and building review processes.

### **ENCOURAGE NEW BUSINESS**

Other economic development opportunities relate to the establishment of riverfront commercial and recreational uses. Local jurisdictions should encourage the establishment of restaurants, cafes, refreshment stands, recreational equipment sales and repair shops, nurseries and similar new businesses along the river.





Miles of power utility corridor easements line the river, especially through its middle and southern reaches. To allow economic development on these properties, local jurisdictions may institute policy changes for private easement holders without compromising the easement holders' rules and regulations and without compromising public safety or facility security. For example, commercial nurseries already in existence on utility easements abutting the river could be augmented with other kinds of outdoor business such as weekend farmers' markets, flea markets and bicycle rental shops.

### **ESTABLISH OR EXPAND THE CONCESSIONAIRE PROGRAM**

Concessionaires are recruited and usually bid for the right to provide a wide range of on-site visitor services when a public agency chooses not to operate those services. Typical examples are food services, recreation equipment rentals, lessons and the sale of convenience items. These services enhance the recreational experience of trail and greenway systems and boost local economies as well. The county and individual cities could establish or expand the concessionaire program to include businesses related to river recreation.

### **EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES**


These new businesses will generate new jobs. Each jurisdiction should make it a policy to seek people from local communities to fill these jobs.

### **RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS WITHIN GENERAL OR SPECIFIC PLANS OR ZONING ORDINANCES**

Local jurisdictions in other parts of the country have been proactive in formulating riverfront development standards and design guidelines. If developed and incorporated as part of each city's General Plan, Specific Plan or Zoning Ordinance, guidelines could also be created for the Los Angeles River. The purpose of these standards and guidelines would be to ensure that when development occurs along the Los Angeles River, consideration is given to the benefits and intrinsic economic value the river offers. As such, new developments should be oriented towards this open space corridor, and offer access to existing and future trails and development as a compatible land use.

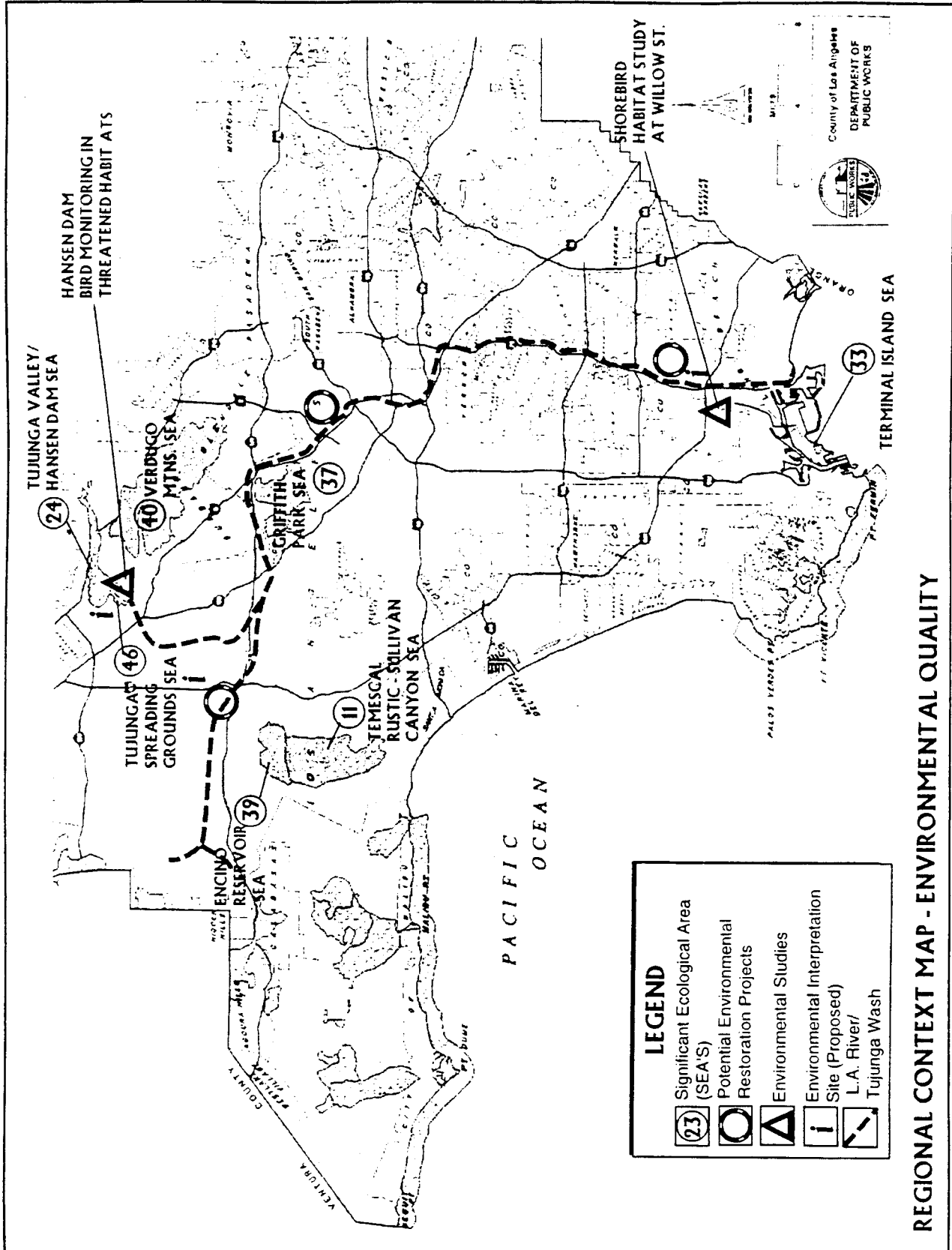
### **DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES**

Provide "credits" or other economic incentives (such as landscape credits for parking lots) to landowners and developers who include river-compatible enhancements in their design and construction projects.



# REGIONAL CONTEXT MAP

## ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY



**LEGEND**

- Significant Ecological Area (SEA'S)
- Potential Environmental Restoration Projects
- Environmental Studies
- Environmental Interpretation Site (Proposed)
- L.A. River/Tujiunga Wash

REGIONAL CONTEXT MAP - ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

