

Greater Los Angeles County WaterTalks: 52nd St. Elementary School Greening Project (Healthy Pocket Parks & Schools)

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From Sketch to Concept

Respondents of the community wide WaterTalks Strengths and Needs Assessment identified the lack of parks and open space as one of the top community concerns in the South Bay region. The Los Angeles Parks Needs Assessment (2016) has also identified a very high need for parks in this area.

Based on the community-collected data around park shortages, the WaterTalks Consultant Team (Team) developed a project sketch (Healthy Pocket Parks and Schools) to address these disparities, specifically in the City of Inglewood. The project sketch proposed several strategies to address these concerns and increase access to parks and open space, such as introducing pocket parks and greening school sites. The project sketch also used GIS to identify priority areas for parks based on Trust for Public Land's (TPL) ParkServe data, which is an interactive database that tracks urban park access. The mapping exercise also included identifying vacant lots and existing schools to highlight opportunity sites for park development or greening.

Several Water Talks Leadership Group (LG) organizations, including Social Justice Learning Institute (SJLI), Koreatown Youth + Community Center (KYCC), and Ultimate Restoration Unlimited (URU) expressed interest in the project concept, and took part in several siting workshops with the Team to narrow down opportunities for park development and shared-use agreements, including churches, schools, and vacant parcels. The Team also engaged with TPL, City of Los Angeles and LA Neighborhood Land Trust (LANLT) as potential project proponents. TPL and City of Los Angeles were not able to commit as project proponents due to concerns around preexisting workloads and plans, liability and the challenges of site acquisition. However, LANLT at the time was pursuing school park projects with LAUSD at 52nd Street Elementary School and Esperanza Elementary School and voiced interest in working with WaterTalks to further develop these project concepts. LANLT had also applied for a Strategic Growth Council (SGC) Transformative Climate Communities (TCC) grant to fund greening efforts at 52nd Street Elementary and noted that the project could benefit from additional funding through WaterTalks.

After LANLT agreed to serve as the project proponent, the Team submitted a TAPPED form to the DACIP Task Force, to determine if the project would be eligible to move forward through Prop 1 IRWM Round 2 funding. The LG also prioritized the 52nd Street Elementary School greening project as one of the project concepts in the South Bay IRWM subregion to be further developed through WaterTalks. Since this project was eligible for IRWM funding, the Team worked with LANLT to scope the project into an IRWM proposal, which included a workplan, budget, and schedule. The Team also set up meetings between LANLT and the LGs to discuss what community engagement and ongoing partnerships for 52nd Street

Elementary would look like, such as supporting tree planting/workshops, engaging student volunteers, and connecting with neighborhood councils.

Presentation was made to the South Bay IRWM Steering Committee for inclusion in the IRWM Plan, and entered into the GLAC IRWM Region OPTI database. Following application submittal, the DACIP Task Force recommended and the GLAC IRWM Leadership Committee approved the project in November 2022. LANLT received \$900,000 from the Round 2 IRWM Implementation Grant DAC funds.

Reflecting on and Addressing Barriers

The lesson learned from this work is that often community members and the organizations that serve them are eager to see change but are not always aware of all the activity that is already happening. The work of community organizers, technical consultants, political leaders and their staff can prioritize connecting community members who are passionate about supporting projects that meet their needs and strengthen the likelihood of the project's success.

Deliverable Documents

- Summary Memo
- OPTI Database Information Form – Los Angeles IRWM Plan
- August 2022 Presentation to the South Bay IRWM Steering Committee



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