

Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: June 3, 2013

From :  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Hon. ASLA, Executive Director

Subject: **Agenda Item 22: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for improvements to the Los Angeles River Center and Gardens, Los Angeles.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for improvements to the Los Angeles River Center and Gardens in the amount of \$750,000, Los Angeles.

Legislative Authority: Sections 33204.2 and 33204.27 of the Public Resources Code.

Consideration: The application from the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority is for \$750,000 of Proposition 84 funds.

I. BACKGROUND

The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) has submitted an application for grant funds for improvements to the Los Angeles River Center and Gardens (River Center). The project will achieve watershed protection by interpreting the resources of the Los Angeles River through exhibits, activities and public service. Prolonging the life of the site's facilities will ensure that these watershed protection activities may continue.

A. Current Facility

Since opening in March 2000, the River Center has proved to be an extremely popular location for a variety of activities ranging from Los Angeles River educational programs, public and private special events, and non-profit and community meetings. The River Center has established itself as a hub for environmental activism related to implementation of river revitalization, education and interpretation about water resources and conservation, and sustainable development—all of these issues correlate with the MRCA's mission to preserve and manage local open space and parkland, watershed lands, trails, and wildlife habitat, and provide educational and leadership programs for youth. Several non-profit community groups dedicated to these issues maintain offices at the River Center, and MRCA constantly has to turn down requests from community groups for office space.

The River Center is a well-utilized venue that needs facility upgrades to keep up with public use demand and extend the lifespan of the facility. With access from two interstate highways, Metro Gold Line and Rapid busses, and only 3 miles east of downtown Los Angeles, the River Center's indoor and outdoor spaces are utilized year-round by a wide range of constituents. In addition to housing organizations dedicated to conservation issues, the meeting rooms and grounds are frequently used by other community groups, elected officials, and many government agencies for public meetings and trainings on all kinds of topics. The River Center's central location, free parking, and attractive grounds makes it an ideal, non-intimidating venue for members of the public who may be attending a meeting for the first time. All of these visitors are exposed to the educational exhibits about the Los Angeles River and the property's natural resources, helping to foster stewardship in the community for the environment. MRCA staff also host interpretive programs at the River Center, and it is the base of operations for MRCA's Ranger Explorers youth program.

MRCA has a long history of providing relevant and meaningful interpretation and education programs that not only enhance the visitor experience but promote stewardship and protection of the Los Angeles River Watershed. The Los Angeles River Center and Gardens is a key location for these efforts. School field trips, junior ranger programs, public programs and community forums addressing stewardship and protection of the watershed occur on site. Additionally, the interpretive displays, which interpret the ecology and history of the Los Angeles River, educate thousands of visitors who come to the River Center. It should be noted that, in addition to the programs and materials developed for the general public, specific programs have been developed which serve disadvantaged communities. The Proposition 84 measure defines a disadvantaged community to be a community with a median household income less than 80% of the statewide average. A "Severely disadvantaged community" means a community with a median household income less than 60% of the statewide average. (Public Resources Code Section 75005(g)). The River Center also serves as an important gateway to the greater watershed area by being a pick up point for the MRCA transit program which brings local people to other park sites within the watershed. These trips are enhanced by the interpretive displays at the starting point.

Situated less than a half-mile from the banks of the Los Angeles River and its confluence with the Arroyo Seco, the River Center is a centrally located facility that demonstrates efficient use of public land and promotes environmental consciousness. The River Center is located on the National Park Service's Juan Bautista de Anza National Historical Trail, and anchors the Los Angeles River Greenway/Bikeway in Elysian Valley, offering bicyclists and strollers amenities such as restrooms, water fountains, educational exhibits about the Los Angeles River, a youth Futsal court, and beautiful gardens within to take respite. These amenities are crucial also for the disadvantaged local community which is considered park-poor by the State Department of Parks and Recreation. Many community members visit the River Center's grounds on daily

walks or to enjoy their lunches in the park.

In addition to the public uses, the River Center also has value for urban wildlife, particularly for bird habitat. As can be clearly seen on an aerial photo, the River Center's mature trees provide an island of habitat in close proximity to the river and Elysian Park. The River Garden Park on the grounds, added in 2000, provides a demonstration of native trees, shrubs, and grasses in addition to augmenting the tree canopy.

Capital improvements are necessary to the buildings, grounds, and infrastructure to provide continued safe and enjoyable public use of the River Center facility and expose more people to the interpretive opportunities. Before acquisition in 1998, the buildings and grounds had been vacant for over seven years, and many deferred maintenance problems developed. Since then, all funds available for capital improvements were used for the most critical projects necessary to keep the property open for public enjoyment. Adequate funding for all of the facility work required has not been available, and decisions regarding which improvements can be made have often been based on emergency needs.

B. Project Scope and Proposed Improvements

Objectives of the Los Angeles River Center & Gardens Improvements project are to protect, restore, preserve and develop the park's resources to allow the continued use and enjoyment of the facility, increase the capacity to serve park visitors, and provide new and innovative interpretive opportunities throughout the facility. Park visitors will have access to indoor and outdoor public meeting spaces, educational and interpretive exhibits about the Los Angeles River Watershed, visitor-serving amenities including restrooms, drinking fountains, and bicycle parking, and outdoor recreational areas. These objectives will be achieved by improvements to building systems including HVAC, lighting and A/V, accessibility, energy efficiency, and weather proofing, and improvements to outdoor landscaped areas including lighting, accessibility, and plantings. Signage and other elucidative materials will highlight the new sustainable features and promote increased environmental stewardship.

Project Components: In 2010 MRCA was granted Proposition A funds from Los Angeles County for improvements to portions of the Sierra Madre Building and Barbacoa Building for public uses. MRCA was recently awarded a Proposition A Tree-Planting grant from Los Angeles County for the River Center of approximately \$50,000. Additional work on the property, far beyond the means of the Prop A grants, is necessary to make it available for all manner of public programs and special uses. Rehabilitation of the existing public areas and gardens must also be included when upgrading the Sierra Madre and Barbacoa buildings due to the interconnection of utility infrastructure and to promote the highest level of efficiency upgrades.

Some of the improvements that are needed include new roofing for at least four buildings, replacement of aging and failing HVAC systems for at least two buildings, replacement of worn finishes, stabilization of courtyard elements, more efficient lighting systems, and accessibility improvements. Improved audio/visual systems in the meeting spaces are also desired to better serve the public. These proposed improvements will serve to protect the facilities so that they can continue to be used for public enjoyment and educational programs.

MRCA staff will do much of the planning work in house, and consult with specialists as needed. Some consultants will be needed to efficiently manage the workflow of specialty sub-contractors required for the construction. The most critical items, such as roofing, will be undertaken first. Major work will be scheduled around planned events, and implementation may extend over multiple years. An investment of additional capital funds at this time would allow the work funded by Proposition A to be most efficiently coordinated with these other projects at the facility.

California Building: The Atrium in the California Building, commonly used for public meetings and educational programs, needs to be markedly improved with efficient and well-planned lighting, audio/visual capabilities, and noise attenuation. Similar upgrades are needed for the Los Feliz Room to improve its use for smaller groups. All of the restrooms in the facility could be upgraded with more efficient fixtures and easier-to-maintain finishes. The existing Los Angeles River Visitor Center displays were installed more than a decade ago and describe the state of the Los Angeles River at that time. Under this grant, some new exhibits will be added to address the many exciting new developments along the River and protection goals for the entire Los Angeles River Watershed.

Sierra Madre Building: The roof of the Sierra Madre Building was replaced in 2011, allowing interior renovations to occur. A portion of HVAC work was completed at the same time as the roof. This building has an accessible elevator, making the second floor appropriate for public use. The second floor of the Sierra Madre Building will be converted into public meeting space, with one large room and two smaller areas appropriate for break-out sessions. In order for this space to function effectively, a number of sound attenuation upgrades are necessary, and partitions must be constructed, in addition to adequate lighting, new audio-visual capacity and clean interior finishes. Deteriorated flooring and ceiling tiles will be replaced, and some built-in shelving and dated wood paneling will be removed to make the space more versatile. Currently, the MRCA's Ranger Explorers youth program utilizes space within this building for training and educational sessions. These improvements will allow the space to function more effectively for this and other MRCA educational programs.

Barbacoa Building: This building contains a dining room that would be appropriate for meetings and special events if convenient restrooms were available. In 2003, restrooms for this

building were partially constructed, but the funding available at that time was insufficient and they were not completed. The remaining work includes finishes, fixtures, and completion of utility services. These new accessible restrooms would serve the new meeting room in the Sierra Madre Building as well as the Barbacoa and main courtyard. The Barbacoa dining room requires minor lighting additions and finishes to function for meetings. Removal of non-functioning equipment from the former kitchen would make that space usable for storage of meeting tables and chairs and educational program supplies.

Grounds: The main courtyards contain pavement that has been uplifted by tree roots and requires replacement, and many of the trees are at the end of their life cycle. This replacement will provide an opportunity to improve the drainage system and plant trees that will provide additional tree canopy for shade and bird habitat. At the River Garden Park, moving the fountain pump to grade would ameliorate the problems of failing motors and clogging caused by its current underground location. Throughout the grounds, there are opportunities to educate the public about natural resources in the Los Angeles River Watershed. New signage will be designed for the grounds to accomplish this goal.

California Building Annex: In 2011 the roof of the annex was replaced. Now that it is stabilized, the interior of the building could be modified for public use. Restrooms located off the main courtyard have never been open to the public due to their deteriorated condition. Renovating these restrooms would facilitate expanded use of the courtyards.

MRCA Building: The roof of the MRCA Building has exceeded its useful life span and requires replacement. New HVAC for several areas is required but cannot be installed until roofing is completed. Flooring on the second floor requires stabilization.

II. Analysis–Proposition 84 and the Common Ground Plan

Section 75050 of the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006 (Proposition 84), allocates funds to various entities “for the protection and restoration of rivers, lakes and streams, their watersheds and associated land, water, and other natural resources.”

Section 75050 (g)(2) of the Act specifically allocates funding to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy “for implementation of watershed protection activities throughout the watershed of the Upper Los Angeles River pursuant to Section 79508 of the Water Code.” The section of the Water Code referenced therein states that watershed protection activities in the Los Angeles River shall be consistent with the *San Gabriel and Los Angeles Rivers Watershed and Open Space Plan*.

A. The Los Angeles River Center and Gardens Improvements Project Constitutes Watershed Protection Activities Throughout the Watershed of the Upper Los Angeles River, as Required by Section 75050(g)(2)

The Los Angeles River Center and Gardens Improvements project lies within the Los Angeles River watershed, the property and its facilities are resources for public recreational use, and interpretation on the property occurs through exhibits, activities and public service. As outlined in the application, the proposed project is consistent with Proposition 84's policy to promote the access to and enjoyment of land and water resources. MRCA is requesting a grant to interpret, rehabilitate, restore, protect and improve the facilities.¹

All elements of the project fit within the definitions of eligible activities (interpretation, development, preservation, protection and restoration) because the funds will be spent to physically improve the park, enhance its passive and active recreation uses and increase its interpretive opportunities. The scope of work includes rehabilitation and stabilization of the building roofs, HVAC systems, and courtyards, upgrades to interior lighting and audio/visual systems, improvements to the site and buildings for increased accessibility and public use, and the installation of new interpretive exhibits and signage. The project includes visitor-serving amenities that educate and communicate the significance and value of natural resources. These activities qualify as "development", "preservation", "protection", "restoration", and/or

¹Chapter 1, Section 75005 of Proposition 84 defines the following terms:

(f) "Development" includes, but is not limited to, the physical improvement of real property including the construction of facilities or structures.

(j) "Interpretation" includes, but is not limited to, a visitor serving amenity that educates and communicates the significance and value of natural, historical, and cultural resources in a way that increases the understanding and enjoyment of these resources and that may utilize the expertise of a naturalist or other specialist skilled at educational interpretation.

(l) "Preservation" means rehabilitation, stabilization, restoration, development and reconstruction, or any combination of those activities.

(m) "Protection" means those actions necessary to prevent harm or damage to persons, property or natural resources or those actions necessary to allow the continued use and enjoyment of property or natural resources and includes acquisition, development, restoration, preservation and interpretation.

(n) "Restoration" means the improvement of physical structures or facilities. Restoration projects shall include the planning, monitoring and reporting necessary to ensure successful implementation of the project objectives.

"interpretation" :

1. Interpretation: The existing property provides interpretation and education opportunities to promote restoration of the Los Angeles River watershed. With the funding, the MRCA will develop and protect visitor-serving amenities that educate and communicates the significance and value of the Los Angeles River and its resources.
2. Development: Real property in the Los Angeles River watershed will be physically improved for public use. The River Center's grounds and buildings are currently open to the public, including opportunities for recreation in the River Garden Park and Futsal court, meeting rooms, access to the Los Angeles River Greenway/Bikeway. Funding for development on the site will create more space for recreation and community meetings. The funds will also contribute to the development of rainwater capture technologies, more efficient water systems in the buildings, and upgrades to facilities that tie the public to the Los Angeles River and watershed area.
3. Preservation: With the funding, real property and other fixtures on the site will be stabilized, rehabilitated, restored, developed and reconstructed. Many of the existing structures at the River Center are old and maintenance work is needed for their continued use. Prolonging the life of the site will ensure that watershed protection activities may continue.
4. Protection: All of the proposed work is necessary to allow the continued use and enjoyment of the property and facilities, and will prevent the property and facilities from being harmed or damaged. The existing property provides interpretation and education opportunities to promote restoration of the Los Angeles River watershed. Increased funding will allow the River Center and Gardens to continue to meet the public's needs by providing a gathering place for recreation and meeting, and act as a focal point for watershed protection activities.
5. Restoration: With the funding, the MRCA will plan, monitor, and improve the physical structures and facilities at the River Center and Gardens.

These activities directly tie into the watershed area because of the River Center and Gardens' physical proximity to the River, and its function as the host of a variety of key partners who engage in watershed and River protection and educational activities. These issues are discussed further in Part B, below.

B. The Los Angeles River Center and Gardens Improvements Project is Consistent with

**the *San Gabriel and Los Angeles Rivers Watershed and Open Space Plan* as Required by
Section 79508 of the Water Code**

The *San Gabriel and Los Angeles Rivers Watershed and Open Space Plan*,² also known as and hereinafter referred to as the "Common Ground" plan, was jointly developed by the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy, or Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC), and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC). The purpose of the plan is to “articulate a vision for the future of the San Gabriel and Los Angeles Rivers Watersheds” and “provide a framework for future watershed and open space planning.” The plan outlines a holistic approach to watershed protection and development, organized by a set of Guiding Principles.³ These broad principles, referenced further below, are designed to accommodate the varying priorities and needs of projects in the region.

To help guide decision making in watershed planning and project selection, the Common Ground plan includes a set of Project Evaluation Criteria (Appendix F), developed to help the agencies determine “regionally significant” park, trail, and restoration projects. The Evaluation Criteria identify a diverse set of values that a site might have, such as Open Space, Recreational Resources, Wildlife Resources, Access, *et cetera*. Within those values, a project receives a rating on a 1-4 scale based on the degree to which the project meets specified criteria.

The Los Angeles River Center and Gardens Improvements Project scores highly when tested using the Common Ground Plan’s Project Evaluation Criteria. The Project scores a three or a four in at least eight of the applicable value areas.⁴ Specifically, the Project contributes the following values under the Common Ground Plan:

- 1. Environmental Education/Interpretation Value (4 points):** The Los Angeles River Center and Gardens promotes environmental education/interpretation through the provision of exhibits about the Los Angeles River and the natural systems of Los Angeles. These displays enhance appreciation of the river’s natural resources and promote stewardship. Many groups touring the Los Angeles River begin their visits at

²A copy of the Common Ground Plan can be accessed online at http://www.rmc.ca.gov/plans/common_ground.html

³The Guiding Principles are outlined in Page 2 of the Executive Summary, or discussed with greater depth on Page 47 of the Plan.

⁴We are excluding the “Economic Opportunity Value,” since that factor applies to bargain or opportunity sale conditions, and in this case the property is already owned by the MRCA. However, the River Center is considered a valuable capital asset of the Agency, and enhancing its infrastructure will only increase its economic value.

the River Center and learn this overview of the watershed. Additionally, the MRCA and other organizations use the River Center as a venue for workshops and training sessions about a wide-variety of environmental topics including habitat restoration, watershed planning, and conservation.

2. Recreational Resource Value (4 points): The Project promotes and accommodates active and passive recreational uses. The River Center's facilities are open to the public, including opportunities for passive recreation in the River Garden Park, and a Futsal court used for youth active recreation. Meeting rooms are available for public meetings at no charge. The River Center needs infrastructure improvements and additional space in order to continue to adequately meet the demand for its services. The proposed improvements would increase public access by creating more space for public meetings and activities related to the watershed and other recreational and community purposes.

3. Trail Resource Value (4 points): The site meets this value criteria and furthers the Common Ground plan's Guiding Principle of connecting open space with a network of trails. The River Center is located along continuous bike trail that was developed to complement the Los Angeles River Greenway/Bikeway and serve commuters traveling to the Metro Gold Line station 0.1 miles away. Eight different MTA bus lines stop within 1-2 blocks of the property. More public use of the property will correlate to more use of the urban public trails.

4. Access Value (4 points): The River Center and Gardens is easily accessible from urban communities and provides adequate and free parking. The site is within walking distance from public transportation as described above. Additional funding will result in increased capacity for meeting spaces and recreation areas that are accessible to the public. The second floor renovations of the Sierra Madre building will increase ADA accessible spaces.

5. Partnership Value (4 points): The site is of great significance to multiple partner agencies and non-profits that work cooperatively in the watershed area and in the greater Los Angeles area. The Guiding Principles encourage multi-objective planning and projects, as well as coordinating planning across jurisdictions and boundaries. The River Center and Gardens creates a vital nexus for various groups to work, meet, and cooperate in their conservation efforts. The River Center was originally acquired and opened to the public through a partnership of local and state agencies and funding sources. Several Los Angeles River related non-profit organizations are housed at the River Center, creating a convenient center for restoration and other efforts on the river. By performing work necessary to allow for the continued (and increased) use of

the property and facilities, the proposed improvements will allow these partnerships to continue.

6. Urban Resource Value (4 points): The Los Angeles River Center and Gardens promotes urban resource value due to its location in a dense urban development and proximity to disadvantaged populations. The area around the River Center is considered park-poor and presents opportunities for passive and active recreation. The funding will help strengthen an existing park which is centrally located on the National Park Service's Juan Bautista de Anza National Historical Trail and along the Los Angeles River Greenway/Bikeway in Elysian Valley. Creating more space for community gatherings, meetings, and social events will only expand the reach of the River Center into the community.

In addition, the site promotes the Guiding Principle of “preserv[ing] major open spaces and limit urban sprawl.” The site is on land previously developed and located well within the metro area of Los Angeles. No aspects of the project will encourage sprawl or development of open space. It also furthers the goal of “improv[ing] and expand[ing] existing facilities.” While River Center is well-utilized, there are spaces that are underutilized. Once rehabilitated and made safe for public use, the public enjoyment and community purposes of the River Center will be optimized.

7. Watershed Resource Value (3 points): The site contributes to a continuous network of parks along the Los Angeles River and connects communities to the waterways by extended greenways and parks. The River Center is an anchor for the Los Angeles River Greenway/Bikeway and provides access to and along the river. The project will also create watershed value through the creation of new water capture practices, including rain water retention for irrigation on-site; installation of water-efficient plumbing and fixtures; and promoting community awareness about the Los Angeles River and water systems generally. The River Center and Gardens’ proximity to the Los Angeles River and high water table means that groundwater recharge capabilities at the center are high. The grounds contain open space for the cleansing of water and a cistern for water conservation, and efforts to capture and recycle water shall increase with the grant funding.

Further, the River Center and Gardens contributes significant value to the Watershed area because it serves as a hub of government and non-profit entities that seek to enrich the local community and revitalize the Upper Los Angeles River. The MRCA and other entities at the River Center utilize its strategic location near the river, in a park-poor location of east Los Angeles, to catalyze change in the region by holding community meetings on-site and building nearby parks and facilities in the area, such

as Marsh Park, Vista Hermosa, Confluence, and other pocket parks.

8. Floristic Resource Value (3 points): The River Center and Gardens contains a high proportion of mature tree canopy, supporting avian wildlife. The gardens contain a variety of plant species and provide a quiet reprieve that visitors can access for free. The amount and diversity of vegetation is uncommon in the surrounding neighborhood. The floristic resource value of the site will only continue to improve with funding to maintain fauna and fix fountains and other outdoor features.

9. Wildlife Resource Value (2-3 points): The Los Angeles River serves as a wildlife corridor through the Los Angeles area. The River Center is located near the Los Angeles River, Elysian Park, and Griffith Park, and the property contains a high proportion of mature tree canopy, supporting avian and other wildlife. Increased funding will help to maintain and enhance the natural areas of the gardens.

10. Scenic Resource Value (2-3 points): The site contains unique scenic elements because of its historic roots as the Lawry's California Center as well as its vivid gardens. The scenic qualities of the site are not commonly found in the surrounding industrial and commercial districts.

11. Archaeological or Historic Resource Value (1 point): While not a registered archaeological or historic resource, the Project supports the principle of promoting stewardship of the archeologic, historic, and cultural landscape because the project will preserve and restore portions of the Los Angeles River Center and Gardens, formerly the Lawry's California Center. Lawry's was a familiar institution to long-time Angelinos and has been called a cultural landmark by the *Los Angeles Times*.

Based upon its high scores in the majority of the selection criteria, as well as its consistency with the Guiding Principles, the River Center and Gardens Project is consistent with the Common Ground Plan as required by Section 79508 of the Water Code.

III. Analysis - General Obligation Bond Law

The General Obligation Bond Law provides that bond funds may be used for the construction and acquisition of "capital assets." Capital assets include major maintenance, reconstruction, demolition for purposes of reconstruction of facilities, and retrofitting work that is ordinarily done no more often than once every 5 to 15 years or expenditures that continue or enhance the useful life of the capital asset (Government code Section 16727 (a)). Capital assets also includes equipment with an expected useful life of two years or more. Section 16727 (a) also allows bond funds to be used for costs that are incidentally but directly related to

construction including costs for planning, engineering and other design work.

This project is for the development, preservation, protection and restoration of a capital asset, that is, a land and water resource in the Los Angeles River watershed. As such, it is a proper expenditure of bond funds. In addition, the activities that this grant will fund will enhance the useful life of the facilities and on that basis as well qualify as capital assets for purposes of the General Obligation Bond Law.

IV. Analysis–Consistency with Plans

In addition to the Common Ground Plan, the proposed improvements to the Los Angeles River Center and Gardens are consistent with all other applicable plans, including the following:

- Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Strategic Plan
- Los Angeles River Center and Gardens Project Plan
- Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor Master Plan
- Juan Bautista de Anza National Historical Trail
- City of Los Angeles, Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan
- County of Los Angeles, Los Angeles River Master Plan
- City of Los Angeles, Cornfield Arroyo Specific Plan
- County of Los Angeles General Plan

A. Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Strategic Plan

Section VI(3) of the *Santa Monica Mountains Strategic Plan*, adopted in 1997, identifies the Conservancy's goals for the Los Angeles River. The improvements to the River Center property meet the following goals of the *Strategic Plan*.

- Create 51 miles of continuous river parkway and greenbelt: The River Center has been included as a major stopping point/feature on the Los Angeles River Greenway/Bikeway since it opened in 2000, and is part of a river access loop trail that connects to Confluence Park, the Bikeway, and the Metro Gold Line Cypress Park station.
- Develop recreation, park, trail and habitat restoration opportunities: The River Center's facilities are open to the public, including opportunities for passive recreation in the River Garden Park, and a Futsal court used for youth active recreation. Meeting rooms are available for public meetings at no charge. The proposed improvements

would increase public access.

- Increase community involvement: Staff have worked with members of the local community to assist in developing the vision for the River Center which includes recreational and passive open space. Meeting facilities at the River Center are available for public programs at no or nominal charge. By performing work necessary to allow for the continued (and increased) use of the property and facilities, the proposed improvements will allow this to continue.
- Cooperate with local government and non-profit partners and maximize acquisition dollars by leveraging funds where appropriate: The River Center was originally acquired and opened to the public through a partnership of local and state agencies and funding sources. Several Los Angeles River related non-profit organizations are housed at the River Center, creating a convenient center for restoration and other efforts on the river. By performing work necessary to allow for the continued (and increased) use of the property and facilities, the proposed improvements will allow these partnerships to continue.

B. Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor Master Plan, 1990

The project is within the Rim of the Valley (ROV) trail corridor. As an island of tree canopy separated from the river by industrial land, the River Center supports the ROV Master Plan's priority to provide connections between wildlife habitat areas. As part of the river access loop trail, the site supports the priority to protect the continuity and accessibility of the ROV trail.

C. Los Angeles River Center and Gardens Project Plan, Adopted September 14, 1998, amended October 28, 1999, February 26, 2001, and October 20, 2008

Per Section 33209 of the Public Resources Code, every project submitted for funding to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy shall have an adopted project plan. The Los Angeles River Center and Gardens Project Plan was adopted by the Conservancy October 20, 2008. All of the improvements support the uses described in the Project Plan.

D. Juan Bautista de Anza National Historical Trail

The National Park Service has a Congressionally-mandated plan to develop the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historical Trail. The River Center is located on the Anza Trail and contains an educational panel about the trail. Increased use of the River Center will expose more visitors to this resource.

E. Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan

The *Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan* was adopted by the City Council of the City of Los Angeles in 2007. The River Center lies within the plan's "Opportunity Area 10-Arroyo Seco Confluence" and will support the plan's recommendations by taking advantage of publicly-owned facilities and strong civic and environmental organizational support.

The proposed improvements are consistent with the plan's overall goals to:

- Create a continuous river greenway: The River Center has been included as a major stopping point/feature on the Los Angeles River Greenway/Bikeway since it opened in 2000, and is part of a river access loop trail that connects to Confluence Park, the Bikeway, and the Metro Gold Line Cypress Park station.
- Connect neighborhoods to the river: As part of the river access loop path, the project complies with recommendation 5.5 to create non-motorized routes between the river and cultural institutions and parks.
- Extend open space, recreation, and water quality features into neighborhoods: Recommendation 5.8 recommends creating a system of jointly used parks and outdoor classrooms. The River Center's multiple meeting spaces meet this function. The educational exhibits about the Los Angeles River include educational information about the river's natural resources.
- Provide opportunities for educational and public facilities: The River Center's multiple meeting spaces meet this function. The educational exhibits about the Los Angeles River include educational information about the river's natural resources.
- Focus attention on underused areas and disadvantaged communities: The River Center is located within a disadvantaged community. The California Department of Parks and Recreation's Community Fact Finder indicates that median household income of census tracts in proximity to the project is \$39,911, lower than the threshold of \$47,331 that DPR used to define a disadvantaged community.

F. Los Angeles River Master Plan

Adopted by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors in 1996, the Los Angeles River Master Plan was the first adopted planning document focused on the river corridor and the creation of a continuous greenway.

The project also implements and is compatible with the guiding principles of the Los Angeles

River Master Plan. The following goals of the Plan are met by the proposed project:

- Improve recreational opportunities along the river
- Improve community pride in the river

The improvements will result in increased public use of the River Center and its recreational resources. Increased community use of the River Center will expose more visitors to the educational exhibits about the Los Angeles River and create more exposure for the river-related non-profit organizations housed there.

G. Cornfield Arroyo Specific Plan, City of Los Angeles

The October 2012 draft *Cornfield Arroyo Specific Plan (CASP)* includes the River Center property as part of a new "Greenway Zone". The River Center's uses are consistent with those permitted for this zone, including Conservation, Environmental and Social Service Organizations.

H. County of Los Angeles General Plan

The improvements to the River Center are compatible with the County of Los Angeles' *General Plan*, Conservation and Open Space Element by achieving the goal of preserving and protecting sites of scenic value. The plan also encourages high quality design in all development projects, compatible with and sensitive to the natural and manmade environment, and all of the work will achieve this.