

MOTION

NEIGHBORHOOD & COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT

13

The Trust for Public Land's ParkScore ranks Los Angeles 78th out of the top 100 most populated American cities in terms of equitable access to parkspace. Less than two-thirds of Angelenos live within a ten-minute walk of a park, and the size and low income communities of color have disproportionately lower park acreage per capita. Los Angeles can quickly and more cost-effectively expand park space via Community School Parks (CSPs) that open school facilities like playgrounds, sports fields, and basketball courts to the general public during non-school hours. With over 6,400 acres of land, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) is the largest landowner in Los Angeles County. Opening school campuses to the public on weekends and holidays and in the summer would positively impact Angelenos in every neighborhood of the City, and could create safe, car-free play spaces for children and families.

In December of 2007, the City Council passed a motion (CF 07-2679) that instructed the Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP) to work with LAUSD, nonprofit groups, and community groups and report back on the feasibility of expanding CSPs. The LAUSD Board of Education passed a companion resolution two months later, and over the following year, a working group formed to create the Community School Parks Report. Among their final recommendations, the working group concluded that the City and LAUSD should negotiate a Master Joint Use Agreement that would enable the opening of an initial fifteen CSP sites (one per Council district).

Due to the 2009 recession and resulting funding reductions, plans for the creation of fifteen CSP sites were not implemented. In December 2017, an MOU agreement was reached, and in 2018, RAP launched four pilot sites at elementary schools in park-poor neighborhoods.

RAP continued to maintain these four sites until the COVID-19 pandemic shuttered access. When LAUSD campuses reopened in early 2022, the initial MOU with LAUSD had expired. LAUSD and RAP are currently in the process of developing a longer-term successor agreement for the CSP program. In the meantime, RAP has utilized civic-use permits with individual LAUSD campuses. One major challenge identified as part of the pilot program was the lack of greenspace on LAUSD elementary school campuses: most are completely covered in asphalt, with low tree-canopy coverage, making these play yards unappealing recreational spaces. In contrast, most LAUSD middle schools have sports fields, which RAP has therefore prioritized as the program has been reinitiated. The City currently operates three CSPs: at Barack Obama Middle School in CD8, and at Bethune Middle School in CD9, and at Northridge Middle School in CD12.

Joint-use parks on school campuses are popular in other cities. San Diego, Burbank, Pasadena, and Santa Monica have strong MOU agreements in Southern California, while San Francisco, Chicago, and New York can serve as models for successful expansion in other large cities. Currently program expansion in LA is limited by the need to negotiate with individual school principals, many of whom do not want the liability risk of opening their campuses to the public. Additionally, many school sites have existing civic use permits, so the City is competing with organizations and nonprofits for facility usage. A renewed Master Joint Use Agreement that incorporates lessons learned from other municipalities can alleviate the administrative burden on City of LA and LAUSD staff.

Relatedly, the Bureau of Engineering (BOE) just released their Request for Proposal (RFP) for the 11th cycle of Proposition K competitive grants. Upon its passage in 1996, Proposition K included \$143,650,000 of competitive grant funding, \$20 million of which was dedicated to Youth School Recreational Projects that could support CSPs. After ten RFP cycles, about half (\$10,650,619) of this earmark still hasn't been used, despite the City's need.

One of the primary deterrents to past and potential applicants for Proposition K schoolyard funding is the requirement that funded improvements remain in place without alteration and be maintained for 10, 15, or 20 years depending on the dollar value of the awarded grant. In addition, the Proposition K 11th Cycle Competitive RFP currently requires applicants to enter into a joint-use agreement with the City by December of 2023, prior to an award being given and with awarded

MAY 10 2023

projects being constructed as late as 2026. The need to enter into a joint-use agreement provisionally far in advance of seeing the potential benefits of a Proposition K application can prevent schools from applying in the first place.

While Angelenos should certainly benefit from greening investments made by the City, applicant requirements should not be so burdensome as to deter projects from being submitted. Prior year data on disbursement of Proposition K school yard funds suggests the City will not be able to disburse approximately 10 million in funds without a streamlining and simplification of existing requirements.

Former Mayor Garcetti's 2019 LA Green New Deal set the goal of opening 25 Community School Park sites by 2025. In order to open 23 additional sites over the next two years, the City must assess roadblocks to our current expansion plan, utilizing existing resources like Proposition K funding to create synergy between the two programs.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Council instruct the Department of Recreation and Parks to report back within 90 days on negotiating a new Master Joint Use Agreement with LAUSD with the aim of opening 25 Community School Parks by the end of 2025, with school sites selected in consultation with LAUSD.

I FURTHER MOVE that the City Council instruct the Department of Recreation and Parks to report back within 90 days on the status of their existing Community School Parks sites, including a comprehensive assessment of utilization, funding requirements, and administrative roadblocks, in addition to identifying any additional budgetary or staffing needs and structures that may be required to more successfully expand and administer the program, including the possibility of fully funding Community School Parks programming beyond an annual basis.

I FURTHER MOVE that the City Council instruct the Bureau of Engineering, with assistance from the Department of Recreation and Parks, to report back within 90 days with recommendations to utilize Proposition K funds for the expansion of the Community School Parks program. The report should include:

- An assessment of historic roadblocks to distributing the \$20,000,000 Proposition K earmarked for Youth Schools and recommended strategies to leverage these funds to more effectively support Community School Parks, incorporating the perspectives of prospective grant recipients such as LAUSD and other eligible stakeholders;
- An analysis of the type of joint-use agreements that qualify for Proposition K consideration, including frequency of public access, burden of administrative costs, and burden of liability; and
- A plan for utilizing the remaining \$10,650,619 in Proposition K funds earmarked for Youth Schools in support of the Community School Parks program, including a strategy for school outreach, minimizing administrative burdens on LAUSD staff, and providing support to applicants where needed.

I FURTHER MOVE that the City Council instruct the Bureau of Engineering, with assistance from the City Administrative Officer, to modify the current schedule of project awards responsive to the 11th Cycle RFP and provide an additional 180 days for LAUSD staff, nonprofits, and others to apply while the department streamlines the Proposition K application process, clarifies the issues discussed herein, and creates an outreach plan to ensure that enough applications are received to completely exhaust the rest of these earmarked funds.

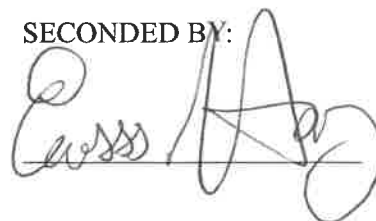
PRESENTED BY:

SECONDED BY:



NITHYA RAMAN

Councilmember, 4th District



ORIGINAL