The Cornfield and the Flow of History: 
People, Place, and Culture

A Report on the Park in the Cornfield to the 
California Department of Parks and Recreation

*The Great Wall of Los Angeles © Judith Baca.
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Robert García  
Erica S. Flores  
Julie Ehrlich

The City Project  
Center for Law in the Public Interest

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The value of the Cornfield lies in its potential to slice through time, connecting these larger historical and social patterns to the personal stories relevant to the contemporary experience of Angelenos. It will serve as the touchstone through which all of us come to see how we fit into the greater Los Angeles story.

The Cornfield State Park Advisory Committee Recommendations Report, p. 9

I. Executive Summary

One of the broadest and most diverse alliances ever formed behind any issue in Los Angeles stopped warehouses to create a state park in the 32-acre Cornfield, a site of remarkable social, historical, and cultural significance to all Angelenos and the last vast open space in downtown Los Angeles. The Los Angeles Times called the Cornfield a “heroic monument” and a “symbol of hope.”

The Cornfield State Park Advisory Committee presented a vision for the Cornfield based on the essential themes of culture and history, connectivity, recreation, and transportation, stating that “a park at the Cornfield should be connected to the struggles, the histories, and the cultures of the rich and diverse communities that have surrounded it since the site was settled.” The Center for Law in the Public Interest (the Center) presents this report on the people of the Cornfield to the California Department of Park and Recreation to guide the general plan process. This Report addresses these themes, with a particular emphasis on the forgotten history of Los Angeles. From the time of the Tongvas, who built the village of Yangna near the Cornfield, the Cornfield and its surroundings have been a place imbued with the diverse history of Los Angeles.

Part II of this Report presents the vision for the Cornfield, as articulated by the Advisory Committee. Part III places the Cornfield in a geographic and historical context, and describes the demographics of the community surrounding the Cornfield today. Part IV addresses the struggle for parks in Los Angeles, linking the Cornfield to Chavez Ravine. The people struggled to create a sense of community and to fulfill their dreams in both situations, but triumphed only in the Cornfield. Part V of this Report describes the struggles, hopes, and triumphs of the people of the Cornfield and El Pueblo.

In Part VI, we address the theme of connectivity. Support is growing to create the Heritage Parkscape in the heart of Los Angeles. The Heritage Parkscape would link the Cornfield to El Pueblo, the Los Angeles River, Taylor Yard, and over 100 additional historical, cultural, recreational, and environmental resources that have been identified by the Advisory Committee. In Part VII, we make our recommendations for the Cornfield general plan before concluding our Report in Part VIII.
II. The Vision for the Cornfield

The Cornfield is “a heroic monument” and “a symbol of hope,” according to the Los Angeles Times. The Cornfield State Park Advisory Committee recognized in its Recommendations Report to the California Department of Parks and Recreation that urban parks play a unique role in fostering community. Since their inception, urban parks have celebrated history, provided venues for cultural events, supported wildlife habitat, and provided opportunities for active recreation. The park at the Cornfield should enhance the natural environment, celebrate the social, historical, and cultural environment, and enrich the lives of those who visit and reside or work nearby.

The Advisory Committee’s vision for the Cornfield is based on the essential themes of culture and history, connectivity, recreation, and transportation. With these themes in mind, the Committee believes that “a park at the Cornfield should be connected to the struggles, the histories, and the cultures of the rich and diverse communities that have surrounded it since the site was settled.”

The development of the Cornfield into a world-class park will be a “critical building block in an urban renaissance of the historic heart of the city,” the Advisory Committee notes. The Cornfield not only represents the “beginning in the rebirth of downtown Los Angeles,” it also serves as a “recognition of the richness of our past and the enormous possibilities of our collective future.”

The Cornfield is part of a collective vision for a comprehensive and coherent web of parks, playgrounds, schools, beaches, forests and open space, and transportation that serves the diverse needs of diverse users and reflects the cultural urban landscape, as discussed below.

III. The Cornfield

The Cornfield lies just south of the confluence of the 51-mile Los Angeles River and the 22-mile Arroyo Seco, in one of Los Angeles’s most culturally, historically, and ethnically diverse– and park-poor– communities.
The Cornfield, an abandoned rail yard for over 12 years, is located near downtown between Chinatown on the west and the River on the east, within walking distance of City Hall, and just down the hill from Dodger Stadium. A few blocks south is El Pueblo de Los Angeles, the Spanish birthplace of the City, lined with historic buildings. The Native American village of Yanga lay nearby. The William Mead Homes, one of the first public housing projects in Los Angeles, is located directly east of the Cornfield. Little Tokyo lies further south.

Remnants of the historic Zanja Madre, the “Mother Trench,” the lifeline that first brought water from the Los Angeles River to El Pueblo in 1781, run through the Cornfield.

Los Angeles became the most important city in Southern California in large part because of its water supply. The Zanja Madre provided water from the River to El Pueblo for residential, agricultural, and industrial use from 1781 until 1904. The Zanja system permitted early Los Angeles to develop an agricultural economy and vineyards, citrus groves, vegetable gardens, and later fields of flowers.
The Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail, which marks the trail that Spaniards and Catholic missionaries used to reach northern California, runs near the Cornfield. The Cornfield communities are crisscrossed by old Native American trails, railroads, trolley lines, and freeways. The nearby Native American Tongva or Gabrieleño village of Yangna was located near the confluence of several Native American trails.  

The people of the Cornfield today are disproportionately people of color who live in poverty, have no access to a car, have limited education, and lack access to parks and open space. Chinatown until now has had no park, and still has no middle school or high school with playgrounds, playing fields, or green space. The only elementary school there does not have a single blade of grass. The only playground in the William Mead Homes was long closed because of environmental contamination.  

The community within a five mile radius of the Cornfield is 68% Latino, 14% Asian, 11% non-Hispanic white, and 4% African-American. Thirty percent of the population lives in poverty, compared to 14% for the State of California as a whole, and 18% for Los Angeles County. The median household income is $28,908 – just 60% of the $47,493 median household income for the State.  

Today four freeways eviscerate the Cornfield communities, but fully 29% of households have no access to a car – an astonishing figure in Los Angeles, the car capital of the world. Only 9% of households in California and 13% of households in Los Angeles County are without cars. With the recent opening of the MTA Gold Line light rail and connecting bus service, the Cornfield is more accessible to surrounding communities and visitors.  

Fewer than half of the people of the Cornfield over age 25 (49%) have completed high school, and just 15% have a bachelor's degree. In contrast, 77% of Californians and 70% of County residents over age 25 have high-school diplomas; 27% of Californians and 25% of County residents have bachelor’s degrees.  

There are 993,047 people including 282,967 children (28%) within five miles of the Cornfield.  

Many public leaders see the revitalization of the Los Angeles River corridor as a key to the economic and environmental enhancement of Los Angeles, and a thread that could provide Los Angeles with a greater sense of community. Central to the River’s revitalization is the Cornfield, a site from which the history of Los Angeles flows.  

IV. The Struggle for Parks: the Cornfield and Chavez Ravine  

“On a deserted railroad yard north of Chinatown, one of Los Angeles’s most powerful and tenacious real estate developers, Ed Roski, Jr., of Majestic Realty Co., met his match,” according to a front page article in the Los Angeles Times. Members of the Chinatown Yard Alliance stopped federal subsidies for an $80 million warehouse project planned by Majestic and the City of Los Angeles without full environmental review, and secured state funding to create the park in the Cornfield.
The Alliance brought together an unprecedented group of over 35 community, civil rights, traditional environmental, environmental justice, religious, business, and civic organizations and leaders. The Alliance secured the support of the community, a Cardinal of the Catholic Church, Guatemalan Nobel Peace Laureate Rigoberta Menchú, a Cabinet member in the Clinton administration, Governor Gray Davis, and the state legislative leadership to make the dream of a park come true.

In addition to creating playing fields and open space in a neighborhood that have none, a park in the Cornfield will help improve the quality of life, create quality jobs, increase tourism, increase property values, promote economic revitalization of the community and preserve invaluable cultural and historic resources at the birthplace of Los Angeles.

The Cornfield and its environs exemplify the struggle by low-income people of color in Los Angeles for livable communities with parks, playgrounds, schools, and recreation. Chavez Ravine, just up the hill from the Cornfield, was a bucolic Latino community through the 1950s. The 1930 Report by the Olmsted Brothers & Bartholomew and Associates, Parks, Playgrounds and Beaches for the Los Angeles Region, stressed that the Cornfield vicinity was ideal for regional athletic fields: “The bottom of Chavez Ravine near the easterly end is easily accessible from the city and would make an ideal place for athletic fields of large size to serve large crowds.” The Report recommended that the City of Los Angeles acquire the area so that it could be “devoted to recreation and made a part of the park.”

The City instead forcibly evicted the residents of Chavez Ravine with promises to build affordable housing there. The City razed the community and destroyed their way of life, then broke its promises to the people and sold the land to the Dodgers baseball franchise. The Dodgers drowned Chavez Ravine in a sea of asphalt to build Dodger Stadium and a parking lot for 50,000 cars with not a single place for children to play.

Chavez Ravine, circa 1950s.

The City for Law in the Public Interest
Los Angeles County sheriffs forcibly evict Mrs. Aurora Vargas, 36, from her home at 1771 Malvina Avenue in Chavez Ravine on May 9, 1959.21

Los Desterrados – those who lost their land, their homes, and their community – still reunite once a year to commemorate the destruction of Chavez Ravine at the hands of City officials. Fittingly, Carol Jaques, one of Las Desterradas, is now a Commissioner for El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historic Monument.
V. The People of the Cornfield

A. The Tongvas and the Village of Yangna

The Tongva or Gabrieleño Native Americans who lived on and near the Cornfield for approximately three millennia were for the most part exterminated by succeeding onslaughts of Spaniards, Catholic missionaries, Mexicans, and Yankees beginning in the late 1700s. About
200 Tongvas lived in the village of Yangna, the largest of some 100 villages that were home to about 5,000 Native Americans in the Los Angeles region, when the Spaniards arrived in 1769. Eventually, the Tongvas were relocated to the east side of the River. In the mid-1800s, Yangna was destroyed. Today the village of Yangna is commemorated by nothing more than a center divider on the Hollywood freeway.24

According to Chief Anthony Morales and tribe member Mark Acuna, Tongva families played “shinny,” a game similar to soccer, and enjoyed other field sports along the Los Angeles River.

![Shinny Ball, Yokuts](image)

“California’s native games and toys are a reflection of the natural history of the state-its mountains, rivers, deserts, wetlands, woodlands, and seashore-and California’s first people.”26 Native Californians had a “passion for football-type games.”27 They “drove, tossed, or batted balls of mountain mahogany, braided buckskin, or polished stone, stuffed deerhide or seasoned laurel knots.”28 In most shinny- and soccer-like games, teams tried to score by getting the ball past the other team and through goal posts, or through a hole.”29 Soccer-like games involving balls and goal posts were river games-games played along river beds throughout California.30

Chief Morales supports active recreation for children in the Cornfield today, and has urged officials to “work together to ensure that the children of the Cornfields and [nearby] Taylor Yard are not displaced the way the Tongva people once were.”31

B. Latino Los Angeles

To the south of the Cornfield is El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historic Monument, which includes the Plaza built between 1818 and 1824; La Placita, the first Catholic Church in Los Angeles; the tourist attraction Olvera Street; and a total of 27 historic buildings.32
The original Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de Los Angeles was founded by a diverse group of settlers, Los Pobladores, along the Los Angeles River in 1781. Los Pobladores included 44 Spanish, Native American, Black, mestizo and mulatto settlers, and four Spanish soldiers. The original Pueblo covered about 28 square miles and included the area east across the River now known as Boyle Heights and Lincoln Heights. Mexico, including California, became independent of Spain in 1821.

For over 40 years after statehood in 1850, El Pueblo entered a period of vigilante justice and repeated assaults, murders, and lynchings against lower class Mexicans. Vigilante groups called the Los Angeles Rangers and the El Monte Rangers lynched 15 Mexicans in 1857, for example.

Through the 1930s, Mexicans disproportionately lived in the area now occupied by Chinatown and then known as Sonoratown because so many people from Sonora, Mexico, lived there.

During the Great Depression in the 1930s, 350,000 Mexican Americans including United States citizens were deported to Mexico from the train station in the Cornfield because of discrimination and competition for jobs.
The Zoot Suit riots broke out during World War II when Anglo sailors and soldiers stationed in Chavez Ravine drove to East L.A. and beat up Mexican Americans and Blacks just a few blocks northeast of the Cornfield across the North Main Street Bridge over the Los Angeles River. Rumors based on unfounded press accounts insinuated that Mexican American youths who dressed in “zoot suits” were avoiding military service and attacking white women. White sailors brutalized their victims and left them lying in the streets, while police officers and sheriffs arrested Mexican American men instead of the attackers.

C. Old and New Chinatown

The Chinese first arrived in California driven by dreams of opportunity beginning with the 1849 Gold Rush. Barred from the most lucrative gold mining work, they turned to the railroads and domestic work for a livelihood.
The Chinese were discriminated against, denied a decent livelihood, dehumanized, and lynched. They were not allowed to go to public schools. They were denied citizenship and the rights to vote and to own property. They could not testify in court. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 banned immigration by Chinese laborers into the United States for the next 60 years, and barred immigrants already here from becoming naturalized citizens or having their spouses join them.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the Chinese had been systematically squeezed into a small area southeast of the Cornfield on the south side of the Plaza towards the Los Angeles River through discriminatory enforcement of health regulations, arson, violence, and the destruction of buildings as a result of racial discrimination and fears that Chinese would lower property values. Until after World War II, most Chinese could not rent an apartment or buy a home in most parts of Los Angeles.

In 1871, a mob that included police officers committed the lynching murders of nineteen Chinese residents. The Chinatown Massacre first brought Los Angeles to national and international attention. The Massacre started on Calle de los Negros—called “Nigger Alley” at the time—within walking distance of the Cornfield and the present Union Station, across the street from the recently opened Chinese National Museum.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the railroads—Union Pacific, Southern Pacific, and the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe—planned to construct a terminal downtown. Old Chinatown was destroyed and residents were relocated to the present site of new Chinatown to make room for Union Station. The City Municipal Housing Commission did not even approve a plan to relocate Chinatown until weeks after the demolition started. New Chinatown was built on its present location on vacant Southern Pacific railroad land west of the Cornfield in the area of old Sonoratown. Today Union Station is listed in the National Register of Historic Places for its architectural, historical, and archeological values. An interpretive panel on a walking tour outside Union Station makes no mention of the destruction of Old Chinatown.
D. Little Tokyo

The first Japanese emigrant party to the mainland United States reached California in 1869. Japanese migration increased significantly in the 1880s, in part because of the demand for labor caused by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Since the 1910s, Los Angeles has been the home of more Japanese Americans than any other city in the United States. Little Tokyo, located just south of Old Chinatown, became the residential, business, and cultural center of the Japanese American community in Southern California.

Japanese Americans were forced to leave Little Tokyo by Executive Order 9066 and their mass relocation to concentration camps during World War II. The United States Supreme Court upheld the relocation in *Korematsu v. United States*. As the Japanese Americans left Little
Tokyo, African Americans lured from the South by the promise of defense jobs moved to the area that then became known as Bronzeville.46


After 1945 the Japanese returned and Little Tokyo began to rebuild, but on a much smaller scale. Today a public walking tour combined with public art interprets the social, political, and commercial history embodied there. A terrazzo and concrete sidewalk with bronze lettering carries quotations from residents, timelines for the historic buildings, drawings, and other historical artifacts.48 The Little Tokyo Historic District offers important lessons for developing the Cornfield as a historic park and as part of the Heritage Parkscape, as discussed below.

E. African American Los Angeles

The original settlers of El Pueblo, Los Pobladores, included Blacks and mulattos. A Black man, Francisco Reyes, served as alcalde (mayor) of El Pueblo in 1793, almost two hundred years before Tom Bradley, the first Black man elected mayor under statehood.49 The last Mexican governor of California before statehood, Pío Pico, was born of African, Native American, and European ancestry under a Spanish flag.50

Biddy Mason, one of the most prominent citizens of early Los Angeles, was born a slave in Mississippi. She walked behind her owner’s wagon first to Utah and then to Los Angeles. She gained her freedom in Los Angeles through a federal court order in 1856, just before the United States Supreme Court held in the *Dred Scott* case that slaves were chattel entitled to no constitutional protections because Blacks had “no rights which the white man was bound to respect.”51 With savings earned as a midwife, Biddy Mason bought a homestead a few blocks south of the Plaza on Spring Street between Third and Fourth. She helped found the First African Methodist Episcopal Church, one of the most influential and affluent African American
churches in the City today. The Biddy Mason wall and pocket park in the heart of downtown Los Angeles commemorate her contributions to the City.\textsuperscript{52}

Despite the prominent role of Blacks in early Los Angeles, Black residential and business patterns began to change in response to discriminatory housing and land use patterns in the twentieth century. Los Angeles pioneered the use of racially restrictive housing covenants. The California Supreme Court sanctioned restrictive covenants in 1919 and California courts continued to reaffirm them as late as 1947.\textsuperscript{53} The Federal Housing Authority not only sanctioned restrictions, but developed a recommended formula for their inclusion in subdivision contracts.\textsuperscript{54} Blacks increasingly were pushed out of the Plaza area and became concentrated a few miles away in South Central Los Angeles.

Restrictive city ordinances, housing covenants, and other racially discriminatory measures dramatically limited access by Black people to housing, jobs, schools, playgrounds, parks, beaches, restaurants, transportation, and other public accommodations. As a result, 95\% of the city’s housing stock was off limits to Blacks and Asians in the 1920s.
In the 1960s, as social and legal segregation began to fall, middle and upper class blacks disproportionately moved westward. White flight from advancing Blacks opened up opportunities to rent or buy housing. Urban renewal programs targeted ethnic areas and wiped out most nineteenth century buildings and neighborhoods. By the 1990s, the Baldwin Hills area including the Crenshaw District and Leimert Park had become the geographical focus of Black Los Angeles.
F. Solano Canyon

Solano Canyon, surrounded by the hills of Elysian Park near the Cornfield, has housed Irish, Italian, French, Chinese, and Latino immigrants for many generations. Captain Gaspar de Portolá and his men camped at what is now the intersection of Solano and North Broadway at the entrance to Elysian Park during their 1769 expedition. In the 1840s, many immigrants who arrived in Los Angeles and found no place to live sought shelter by camping in the Solano Canyon. Later, many of these families stayed and built their homes in the area, taking advantage of the fertile soil, planting vegetables and orchards. Some of these trees still bloom today. Italians and French immigrants who played an important part in the development of early Los Angeles later assimilated into the broader culture.

View of the Los Angeles River from Elysian Park, 1898.

Today Solano Canyon residents represent a range of socioeconomic and ethnic groups. Though Solano Canyon is divided by the Pasadena Freeway, the community remains unified. Houses built 100 years ago stand among new, modern apartments with vistas of the Elysian Hills.

G. A Place for Women

Women have played central roles in the development of Los Angeles on and off the Cornfield. Half of the original Pobladores were women. Biddy Mason is one of the most prominent women in the history of the City. Aurora Vargas struggled mightily to save Chavez Ravine. Mural artist Judith F. Baca has commemorated the history of Los Angeles from the perspective of people of color at the Great Wall of Los Angeles, which depicts many of the events that took place in El Pueblo near the Cornfield and along the Los Angeles River. The Women’s Building, which overlooks the Cornfield on Spring Street, was the center of feminist artistic activity and consciousness raising in Los Angeles from 1975 to 1981.
H. Recreation at the Cornfield

The Cornfield Advisory Committee called for space for recreation in the Cornfield. The Center has addressed the need for active recreation in the Cornfield in its report *Dreams of Fields: Soccer, Community, and Equal Justice*, submitted to the California Department of Parks and Recreation in December 2002. State Parks and Recreation Director Ruth Coleman has agreed that “[t]he Cornfield will have open space for multiple uses, which can include soccer, which is what happens at Will Rogers, for example.”

I. Honoring the Community

A plaque at Crissy Field in San Francisco honors the community that made possible the transformation of the site from an airfield to a 100-acre park. A similar plaque at the Cornfield should honor the community that stopped the warehouses in order to fulfill the dream of creating a park. The plaque at the Cornfield could say:
Dedicated to Those Who Made the Dream of Creating a Park on the Cornfield a Reality

This Park is a Testament to the Struggles, Hopes, and Triumphs of the Generations Who Have Entered Los Angeles Through the Cornfield and El Pueblo.

VI. Honoring the Struggles, Hopes, and Triumphs of the People of the Cornfield

The rich history of the Cornfield and surrounding communities along the Los Angeles River can connect the people of Los Angeles through space and time. “The location of the site at the city’s heart . . . presents a unique opportunity in Los Angeles to forge a connection of people, history, and place by opening a window to understanding the past and tracing the present into the future,” according to the Cornfield Advisory Committee. 65

A. Linking the Cornfield and El Pueblo

The historical and cultural value of the Cornfield lies largely in the fact that it was part of the original Pueblo de Los Angeles along the Los Angeles River, and in its close proximity to El Pueblo Historical Monument today. Linking the Cornfield to El Pueblo Historical Monument will fulfill in part the connectivity element of the vision for the Cornfield articulated by the Cornfield Advisory Committee. The Cornfield can provide open space for social gatherings, cultural events, public art, and recreation, while El Pueblo can provide museum and gallery space in its historic, but largely neglected, buildings. The Cornfield and El Pueblo Historical Monument can be linked to each other through interpretive panels, public art, and greenways, and more broadly to the Heritage Parkscape.
The General Plan for El Pueblo de Los Angeles State Historic Park offers a blueprint for a historic park linking El Pueblo and its historic buildings with the open space in the Cornfield. Originally adopted in 1980, the General Plan described in detail a joint project by the California Department of Parks and Recreation, the City of Los Angeles, and the County of Los Angeles. The State withdrew from the project in 1990, leaving the promise of El Pueblo Historic Park largely unfulfilled. Linking the Cornfield with El Pueblo presents an opportunity to fulfill that promise today. The Center has reissued the General Plan in a digital version that is available on the Center’s website at www.clipi.org in an effort to guide policy makers and advocates in making El Pueblo and the Cornfield a world class historic park.

The California Department of Parks and Recreation has also published a study based on the public's need to become more aware of California's cultural diversity and its tangible manifestations on the land. *Five Views: An Ethnic Sites Survey for California (1982)* can serve as a guide for planning the Cornfield, El Pueblo, and the Heritage Parkscape.66

B. The Heritage Parkscape

The Advisory Committee recommended developing linkages from the Cornfield to over 100 additional historical, cultural, recreational, and environmental resources in the heart of Los Angeles.67

Support in Los Angeles is growing to create the Heritage Parkscape —like the Freedom Trail in Boston or the Little Tokyo historic district—that will forge these links beginning with the Cornfield, El Pueblo, the Los Angeles River, and Taylor Yard.68 The Heritage Parkscape will help bring the City together and heal wounds of the past.69 The Heritage Parkscape addresses the call for connectivity articulated by the Cornfield Advisory Committee in its Recommendations Report to State Parks.

Center for Law in the Public Interest
Public art projects, including murals of scenes like those depicted in the Great Wall of Los Angeles, will revive the foregotten history of Los Angeles. Interpretive panels and displays, photography exhibitions, school art projects, oral histories, and theater will be part of this living legacy. Public transit will take children and their families and friends from the Heritage Parkscape to the beaches, forests, mountains, and other wilderness and recreation areas.70

The Heritage Parkscape will serve as a “family album” to commemorate the struggles, hopes and triumphs of the natives, settlers, and later immigrants who entered Los Angeles through this area, the Ellis Island of the region.

The Heritage Parkscape, like the Cornfield, illustrates the power of place: “the power of ordinary urban landscapes to nurture citizens' public memory, to encompass shared time in the form of shared territory . . . . And even bitter experiences and fights communities have lost need to be remembered – so as not to diminish their importance.”71

The footprint of the Heritage Parkscape coincides closely with the Olmsted vision of parks and greenspace for downtown and along the Los Angeles River. The Chinatown Cornfield is a key part of this vision. It is a space that must commemorate the flow of history and preserve one of last vast open spaces in the heart of Los Angeles as a world-class park.72 See inside back cover.

VII. Recommendations

The Center for Law in the Public Interest presents the following recommendations.

1. The state should adopt Alternative A, the “Minimal Build-Out” conceptual design for the Cornfield, because it maximizes open space for a balanced park that celebrates the struggles, hopes, and triumphs of the generations of people who have entered the region through the Cornfield and El Pueblo.

2. Open space at the Cornfield should be maximized to accommodate social gatherings, cultural events, and recreation. The Cornfield should include large open areas for soccer and other sports, integrated harmoniously with the natural setting and the cultural and historical values at stake, as recommended by the Cornfield Advisory Committee. Museums and other buildings should not be constructed on the site and open space should be made available for active recreation.

3. The Cornfield should include public art projects including murals with scenes like those depicted in the Great Wall of Los Angeles to revive the forgotten history of Los Angeles, and the struggles, hopes, and triumphs of the people along the Los Angeles River.

4. The Cornfield should include interpretive panels and displays to tell the story of the Cornfield, El Pueblo, the Los Angeles River, the people, and of how the community triumphed to create the park in the Cornfield.

5. The Cornfield should be connected to El Pueblo through a greenway with trees, art, and interpretive panels. The 1980 General Plan for El Pueblo provides a good blueprint for linking the Cornfield to El Pueblo.

6. The Cornfield, El Pueblo, Taylor Yard, and the Los Angeles River should be linked through the Heritage Parkscape with over 100 additional cultural, historical, recreational, and environmental resources to serve as a family album for the people of Los Angeles.
VIII. Conclusion

Los Angeles is park poor, with fewer acres of parks per resident than any major city in the country. All communities suffer from the lack of parks and recreation, but low-income people of color suffer first and worst. There are unfair disparities in access to parks, playgrounds, beaches, and recreation based on race, ethnicity, and class. Inspired by a collective vision for a comprehensive and coherent web of parks, playgrounds, schools, beaches, and transportation that serves the diverse needs of diverse users and reflects the cultural urban landscape, the urban park movement is addressing park and recreation inequities and greening Los Angeles. This is part of a broader vision for distributing the benefits and burdens of public resources in ways that are equitable, protect human health and the environment, promote economic vitality, and engage full and fair public participation in the decision making process.

Parks like the Cornfield and open space in school yards, beaches, and wilderness areas like national forests are important in themselves, but there is even more at stake. Parks bring people together to create the kind of community where they want to live and raise children.

The struggle for and triumph of the Cornfield demonstrates how the urban park movement is building community and diversifying democracy from the ground up and giving people a sense of their own power in deciding the future of their city, their lives, and their children’s lives. People who have not participated in government before are fighting city hall and wealthy developers— and winning. The urban park movement is making Los Angeles a greener, more just, and more sustainable community for all. The Cornfield is just the beginning.

Center for Law in the Public Interest
Robert García is Executive Director, Erica S. Flores is Assistant Director, and Julie Ehrlich is a Policy Analyst at the Center for Law in the Public Interest. This Report is made possible in part by the generous support of the Ford, Surdna, Packard, and Resources Legacy Fund Foundations.


Photo by Robbie LaBelle (2000).


Id.

Id. at 6.

Id. at 7.

Id.


Image courtesy of the Los Angeles Public Library.

These transportation elements fulfill the transportation theme identified by the Cornfield Advisory Committee. These elements can be articulated through interpretive panels and public art such as murals. Under no circumstances should the Cornfield be destroyed to create a transportation museum dedicated to the railroads with build-out eliminating much or all of the open space at the site, as some advocates maintain. These advocates played no role in stopping the warehouses or securing the funding for a park at the Cornfield. The community did not stop the warehouses in order to build 32 acres of museum space. Any museum or gallery space can be located in the historic buildings of El Pueblo Historic Park or in the Capitol Mills building, leaving maximum open space in the Cornfield. There are already other railroad museums in the state, and any other railroad museum can be placed in Union Station. There is no reason to privilege the history of the railroads, corporate history, and the history of the dominant class over the history of the people of the Cornfield.

The population of California is 32% Latino, 10% Asian, 47% non-Hispanic white, and 6% African-American. The population of Los Angeles County is 45% Latino, 12% Asian, 31% non-Hispanic white, and 10% African-American. (Source: 2000 census data).

Id.


Id.

Image courtesy of the Los Angeles Public Library.


Image courtesy of the Herald- Examiner Collection at the Los Angeles Public Library.

Image courtesy of the Ralph Morris Collection at the Los Angeles Public Library.

Photos of The Great Wall of Los Angeles on the front cover and on pages 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 16 were taken by Robert García (2004). The Great Wall of Los Angeles in the Tujunga Wash of the Los Angeles River is the longest mural in the world. It depicts the history of Los Angeles from prehistoric times through the 1960s. The
Center and SPARC are working to link The Great Wall to the Heritage Parkscape in the heart of Los Angeles, restore and extend the mural to include recent events, such as stopping the warehouses to create a park in the Cornfield, and build a park at the Great Wall site.


27 Id. at 17.

28 Id.

29 Id. at 23.

30 See id. at 20, 23, 25.

31 Chief Anthony Morales, Letter to Governor Gray Davis, Mayor James Hahn, and California State Parks Acting Director Ruth Coleman (February 2003).


33 The Pueblo included the area between what is today Exposition Boulevard on the south, Fountain Avenue on the north, Hoover Street on the west and Indiana Avenue on the east. Blake Gumprecht, supra, at 311 n.12.

34 Carey McWilliams, SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA: AN ISLAND ON THE LAND 60-61 (1973); Jean Bruce Poole and Tevvy Ball, supra, at 26-27.


36 See, e.g., Carey McWilliams, NORTH FROM MEXICO: THE SPANISH-SPEAKING PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES 176 (Matt S. Meir ed. 1990); David M. Kennedy, FREEDOM FROM FEAR 164-65 (1999).

37 See Carey McWilliams, supra, at 220-31.

38 Leonard Pitt and Dale Pitt, supra, at 571-72.


41 Image courtesy of the Los Angeles Public Library.


43 Id.

44 Image from Dolores Hayden, supra, at 25.


46 Dolores Hayden, supra, at 215.

47 Japanese American History at 111-12, 140.

48 Dolores Hayden, supra, at 210-25.

49 Jean Bruce Poole and Tevvy Ball, supra, at 11.

50 Id. at 30-31.


52 Dolores Hayden, supra, at 168-87.


54 For example, the Federal Housing Administration Manual of 1938 states: “If a neighborhood is to retain stability, it is necessary that properties shall continue to be occupied by the same racial classes. A change in social or racial occupancy generally contributes to instability and a decline in values.” See also Mike Davis, CITY OF QUARTZ 160-64 (1990); Mike Davis, How Eden Lost Its Garden, chapter in ECOLOGY OF FEAR (2000).


57 Changing Faces 16-20.

Center for Law in the Public Interest
See Leonard Pitt and Dale Pitt, supra, at 555.


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Photo by Robert Garcia (2002).

Photo by Robert Garcia (2003).


Five Views is available online at http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/5views/5views.htm.

Id. at 6 and Appendix of Cultural, Historical, and Recreational Links.


Parkscape: linked parks with distinguishing characteristics and features, esp. considered as a product of modifying or shaping processes and agents; a bird's-eye view, plan, sketch, or map of same. From OED, landscape.


Dolores Hayden, supra, at 9-10.


(Inside back cover) The Heritage Parkscape map was produced by the Center for Law in the Public Interest with Greeninfo Networks (2004).
The Cornfield is a critical component of the Heritage Parkscape that will link over 100 historical, cultural, recreational, and environmental resources in the heart of Los Angeles.