The City Project believes that all people should have access to healthy, livable communities. Our multicultural, Latino-led team works with diverse allies to ensure equal access to (1) healthy green land use through planning by and for the community; (2) climate justice; (3) physical education and schools of hope as centers of their communities; (4) health equity and wellness; and (5) economic vitality for all, including jobs and avoiding displacement as communities become greener and more desirable. The mission of The City Project is to achieve equal justice, democracy, and livability for all. Visit our website and blog at www.cityprojectca.org.

“Too many children in L.A. County, especially children of color, don’t have access to parks where they can run free, breathe fresh air, experience nature, and learn about their environment,” as President Barack Obama recognized in designating the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument. “This is an issue of social justice. Because it’s not enough to have this awesome natural wonder within your sight—you have to be able to access it,” the President said. “Improving public access and recreational opportunities within the monument will help address the region’s public health challenges. Studies have shown that increasing recreational access to public lands translates to higher levels of youth activity and lower youth obesity rates. National monuments also play an important role in supporting local economies,” according to the White House.

1. Healthy Green Land Use and Community Planning

We promote healthy green land use and community planning in communities that are park poor, income poor, or of color. This includes joint use of parks, pools, and schools; complete green streets; safe routes to school; and new partners for smart growth.

We provide multidisciplinary consulting, research, and analyses to inform healthy, sustainable community planning for generations to come. Our major publication has been influential in planning reports and studies: Healthy Parks, Schools and Communities: Mapping Green Access and Equity for Southern California (The City Project Policy Report 2011), available at www.mapjustice.org. Projects underway with allies and agencies include:

- Greening the Los Angeles River
- Management of the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument
- Creation of the San Gabriels National Recreation Area
- Greening the San Gabriel River
- California Parks Forward Initiative
- Expanding the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

We work with diverse allies to create, preserve, and plan multibenefit green space for active living, climate justice, and clean air, water, and land. We implement lessons learned from our successful projects including:
President Barack Obama’s Declaration of the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument
Los Angeles State Historic Park
Río de Los Angeles State Park
Baldwin Hills Park, the largest urban park designed in the US in over a century
Clean water and park projects along the L.A. River
Kellogg Park in Ventura
National Parks Service Healthy Parks, Health People Community Engagement eGuide.

We work to ensure everyone has equal access to active living where they live, learn, work, play, and pray. Our best practices include:

- Transit to Trails to take inner city children on fun, educational, and healthy trips
- Ensuring public beach access up and down the coast
- Keeping public trails open in the Santa Monica and San Gabriel Mountains.

We ensure parks reflect the culture, history, and diversity of the community through public monuments and art. These include:

- The Great Wall of Los Angeles along the L.A. River
- Native American sacred site of Panhe and San Onofre State Beach
- Chicano Park in San Diego
- Bruce's Beach, the historic African American resort.

We bring nontraditional partners to the table, and build diverse support for park and water bond measures, with over $10 billion in state park and water bonds passed over the past decade. Voters of color and low-income voters make the difference in passing properly framed resource measures, and must receive their fair share of the benefits. Park poor, income poor standards work to measure progress and equity and hold public officials accountable.

We ensure compliance with clean water and environmental justice laws. Through a $2 billion agreement under the Clean Water Act between grassroots groups, US EPA, and the City of L.A., we are improving the sewer system city wide, eliminating offensive sewer odors that plagued African-American Los Angeles for decades, and investing in park and water projects.

2. Climate Justice

Climate is a civil rights issue, as well as a health, economic, and environmental issue. A successful climate movement will address the rights of communities of color and low-income communities directly.

Communities of color and low-income communities disproportionately live in areas most heavily burdened for pollution and vulnerability. Consistent poll findings demolish the myth that the environment is a luxury that people of color and low-income people do not care about and are not willing to pay for.

Responding to the climate challenge can create jobs, improve health, reduce heating and cooling bills, and reduce the damage caused by the production of fossil fuels. We can grow the economy and promote human health, the environment, and equal justice at the same time.

3. Physical Education and Schools of Hope

We work on compliance with physical education and civil rights laws with public officials statewide. Half the school districts audited by the state were not in compliance. Dr. Robert Ross, President of The California Endowment, has called our work in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) “a best practice example for districts across the state to provide a quality education for the children of California.”

We are implementing the Institute of Medicine’s recommendations to comply with physical education minutes, monitor compliance, alleviate disparities, improve teacher education, make physical education a core subject, and improve physical activity in the whole school environment. We work with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health to provide materials to help schools districts and community leaders ensure compliance with physical education and civil requirements and best practices.
We work on schools of hope as centers of their communities. LAUSD has raised $27 billion to build and modernize public schools. The City Project’s Robert Garcia served as Chair of the Citizens’ School Bond Oversight Committee from 2000 to 2005, overseeing planning and implementation, and signing ballot measures to raise local, state, and federal funds. The district has built 130 new schools and modernized hundreds more since 1998. Hundreds of acres of land were cleaned up through local green jobs. The future became brighter for generations of students.

4. Health Equity and Wellness in All Policies

We work on health equity and wellness in all policies, and alleviating health disparities. The Affordable Care Act’s section 1557 guards against health discrimination based on race, color, national origin, limited English proficiency, sex, disability, and age. The Act protects health and life itself through wellness, prevention, physical activity, and healthy land use, as well as health care. The Centers for Disease Control featured our work on health and civil rights. We serve on the Community Faculty at Charles Drew University of Medicine and Science on health impact assessments and health disparities. We build healthy, active communities through land use, parks, physical education, and other policies above.

5. Economic Vitality

We seek triple bottom line infrastructure solutions that promote equity, economics, and the environment. Park, water, and school bond measures provide billions of dollars for jobs and wealth creation. For example, each $50 million of the $27 billion in school bonds has created 935 annual jobs, $43 million in wages, and $130 million in local business revenue. Economic vitality includes local jobs, diverse government contracts for local workforce, and avoiding gentrification and displacement as communities become greener and more expensive.

The Values at Stake

- Fun, health, and human development. Children who are physically fit tend to do better academically, and parks can create community and drive out vandalism and crime.
- Conservation values including clean air, water, and land, complete green streets with transit, biking, hiking, and safe routes to schools, habitat protection, and climate justice.
- Economic values including local green jobs and wealth creation.
- Art, culture, history, and spiritual values, including Native American values.
- Equal justice, democracy, and livability for all. Ultimately, we can appeal to the values that we strive to achieve as a community and democracy and emphasize the inherent democratic nature of public spaces.
Demographics - American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year blockgroup estimates 2006-2010, US Census Bureau
census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/summary_file/
* $48,706 is 80% of the statewide average and is used to define a disadvantaged community in California, Cal. Pub. Res. Code §§ 5642(b), 7505(g).
Existing Park/Green Space - California Protected Areas Database (CPAD) v1.8 July 2012, GreenInfo Network, caloands.org. All parks and open space are used to calculate acres of parkland per 1000 people, including Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and large state/regional parks.
State Parks are defined as lands owned by the California Department of Parks and Recreation. This includes: state beaches, state recreation areas, state vehicular recreation areas, and state historical parks.
Map and analysis by The City Project and GreenInfo Network, September 2013, cityprojectca.org and greeninfo.org CC BY NC SA
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