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Chief Executive Office.

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES


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ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Joseph M. Nicchitta

March 17, 2026

To: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair
Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell, Chair Pro Tem
Supervisor Lindsey P. Horvath
Supervisor Janice Hahn
Supervisor Kathryn Barger

From: Joseph M. Nicchitta 
Acting Chief Executive Officer

REPORT BACK ON PROVIDING A COUNTYWIDE ADVOCACY STRATEGY TO MAXIMIZE FUNDING FOR URBAN NATUREWAYS (ITEM NO. 21, AGENDA OF SEPTEMBER 30, 2025)

On September 30, 2025, the Board of Supervisors (Board) adopted a [motion](#) directing the Chief Executive Office - Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations Branch (CEO-LAIR), in coordination with relevant departments, to develop a Countywide legislative strategy to identify and advocate for State and federal funding for Urban Natureways, including targeted engagement efforts such as site tours, briefings, and meetings with State and federal delegation members to build support and demonstrate impact, and report back to the Board in 180 days with a status update on the progress of these initiatives.

Definition and Guidelines

The motion outlines that Urban Natureways are multi-benefit, corridor-based parks with significance to the environment, culture, economy, and region, situated particularly in communities that have been most affected by environmental injustice and disinvestment. CEO-LAIR is conducting directed advocacy actions using the definitions and guidelines for Urban Natureways outlined in the Board-adopted motion. The Department of Parks and Recreation (LA County Parks) is concurrently implementing the motion and preparing a separate report. LA County Parks' report will shape CEO-LAIR's ongoing advocacy action.



Department Identified Needs for Urban Natureways

CEO-LAIR solicited from affected departments a list of expected needs and timing of planning and implementing actions related to Urban Natureways. CEO-LAIR updated this list with further input during the first working group meeting and site visits conducted in January 2026. This list helps inform potential needs applicable to all Urban Natureways and informs the external funding sources for which the County may apply. The list of potential needs includes one-time and ongoing resources for project planning, construction, maintenance, management, security, on-site activation (e.g., workforce development, the Marketplace Initiative, community engagement and programming), and State and federal regulatory compliance. Department feedback showed local, State, and federal permitting requirements as significant barriers to implementation.

A significant constraint to Urban Natureways is the necessity for sites that utilize Los Angeles County Flood Control District facilities to meet the primary purposes of flood risk management and water conservation and requirements imposed by site-specific engineering needs, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers mandates, National Flood Insurance Program regulations, and other State and local regulatory reviews.

Departments also provided intra-county actions that will support Urban Natureways. CEO-LAIR uses the list of intra-county actions to support advocacy strategies applicable to all Urban Natureway sites. The actions include, among other things, a General Plan amendment, pre-approved improvements for expedited permitting to the extent possible, project implementation sequencing, a plan for economic and workforce development across Urban Natureways, and a working group for start-to-finish project implementation.

Advocacy Strategy

CEO-LAIR recognizes that site-specific needs and goals will inform advocacy strategies and that general Urban Natureways planning will require sustained education and advocacy with our State and federal partners prior to pursuing site-specific funding, one-time and capital funds, and permitting and regulatory changes. CEO-LAIR will collaborate with LA County Parks and partner agencies through the working group to identify implementation needs and plans. CEO-LAIR will incorporate government relations opportunities into LA County Parks plans to educate legislators, State and federal agencies, and local municipalities and will help to secure their support for Urban Natureways projects and activities. CEO-LAIR will advocate in support of legislation that could expand funding or resources for Urban Natureways and their ongoing maintenance, including funding opportunities related to infrastructure financing, bikeways and trails, urban greening, outdoor recreation, and place-based workforce development. CEO-LAIR

will work with LA County Parks and affected departments to determine if there are opportunities to sponsor legislation in future years to secure resources for or remove barriers to implementing Urban Natureways. Advocacy efforts may also incorporate lifecycle cost considerations, including long-term operations and maintenance funding.

CEO-LAIR, with LA County Parks subject-matter experts, will tailor targeted outreach and education opportunities based on various factors, such as site-specific metrics regarding socio-economic benefits and community activation, linkages to regional assets, and alignment with Board-adopted plans, including the OurCounty Sustainability Plan, the Parks Needs Assessment Plus, LA River Master Plan, among others. Starting with members of the Los Angeles County Delegation, CEO-LAIR will support LA County Parks to develop and provide awareness meetings, individual officeholder briefings, site tours, site fact sheets, and advocacy messaging.

CEO-LAIR will advise on State and federal funding strategies for specific sites based on project scope, community benefits, local support for a project, level of funding need, alignment with guidelines for agency grants and legislatively directed spending, department-provided cost of compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act and/or National Environmental Policy Act, and federal and State regulatory requirements. As Urban Natureways constitute a new typology, significant education of federal and State legislators and agencies may be required to advance resources for and remove barriers to implementation. CEO-LAIR will highlight precedents and similar initiatives, such as the City of Atlanta Beltline and the City of Houston Bayou Greenways.

In alignment with the January 7, 2025, Board-adopted [motion](#) directing CEO-LAIR to advocate on Proposition 4 (2024) (Prop 4) implementation and grant guidelines, CEO-LAIR will educate State agencies and legislators on the eligibility of Urban Natureways for Prop 4 funding. CEO-LAIR will identify and support State budget proposals that could maintain, establish, or expand funding sources for Urban Natureways. CEO-LAIR will engage with State agencies, legislators who represent the various Urban Natureway sites, and legislators serving on the State Senate Committees on Natural Resources and Water; and Transportation, and the State Assembly Committees on Water, Parks, and Wildlife; Natural Resources; and Transportation.

CEO-LAIR, with LA County Parks subject-matter experts, will conduct similar efforts with federal legislators and agencies, including seeking guidance on the eligibility of Urban Natureways for funding from existing federal grants. CEO-LAIR will engage with the United States Army Corps of Engineers for guidance and advisement on specific site projects, regulatory barriers, Title 33 Code of Federal Regulations Sections 404 and 408 permitting, Title 44 Code of Federal Regulation requirements,

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and multi-jurisdiction coordination. CEO-LAIR will also engage with federal legislators on the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works for additional education and awareness regarding the needs and value proposition of Urban Natureways. CEO-LAIR is working with LA County Parks, and other affected departments, to develop and submit Community Funding and Congressionally Directed Spending (appropriation) requests to secure capital funding for near-complete Urban Natureway projects. As of March 3, 2026, CEO-LAIR is submitting the following three appropriations requests for Federal Fiscal Year 2027: \$1 million for the Compton Creek Trail Safety and Access Improvements Project; \$1.5 million for the Lower LA River Safety & Access Lighting Project; and \$1.25 million for the Pacoima Wash Phase 1b Greenway Project. These appropriation requests would improve recreational routes, safety, and usability at three Urban Natureway sites.

Should you have any questions concerning this matter, please contact me or Angela C. Ovalle, Acting Branch Manager, CEO-LAIR, at (213) 974-1348 or aovalle@ceo.lacounty.gov.

JMN:JG:ACO
CMG:dr

c: Executive Office, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel
Economic Opportunity
Parks and Recreation
Public Works



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

"Parks Make Life Better!"

Norma E. García-González, Director

Alina Bokde, Chief Deputy Director

April 14, 2026

TO: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair
Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell, Chair Pro Tem
Supervisor Lindsey P. Horvath
Supervisor Janice Hahn
Supervisor Kathryn Barger

FROM: Norma E. García-González 
Director

SUBJECT: **CREATING A NEW PARK TYPOLOGY FOR URBAN NATUREWAYS IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY (ITEM 21 BOARD AGENCY FOR SEPTEMBER 30, 2025 — MOTION BY SUPERVISOR LINDSEY P. HORVATH)**

On September 30, 2025, the Board of Supervisors adopted a motion to create the new Urban Natureways park typology and direct the County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation (LA County Parks), in coordination with multiple County departments and external partners, to establish a framework for corridor-based greenways across Los Angeles County. Urban Natureways leverage existing public infrastructure such as flood control channels and utility corridors to create regional, multi-benefit greenways providing recreation, trails, habitat restoration, climate resilience, and equitable access to open space in communities with the greatest need. Since adoption of the motion, LA County Parks has advanced implementation through coordination with County departments, regional agencies, and community partners to establish the foundational planning, policy, and partnership framework necessary to move priority corridors from planning to action. Early progress includes advancing General Plan amendments, designating priority corridors within the County's Regional Trail Network, forming an interagency working group, initiating permitting coordination with the Department of Public Works, and beginning development of a Countywide Urban Natureways Marketplace initiative.

BACKGROUND

Los Angeles County (County) enjoys one of the nation's largest and most diverse park systems. Despite this, access to nature-rich environments, including arboretums and botanical gardens, remains unevenly distributed with many underserved communities experiencing high park need, extreme heat exposure, and environmental burdens.

Relatedly, the County oversees extensive flood control and utility corridors that, in certain contexts, present opportunities to function as living infrastructure and regional public assets.

The Urban Natureways initiative establishes a Countywide framework to transform these underutilized corridors into inclusive, resilient public spaces delivering recreational, environmental, mobility, and economic benefits, while maintaining infrastructure functions. This effort directly responds to the Parks Needs Assessment Plus (PNA+) and Climate Vulnerability Assessment, which highlight disparities in access to nature, shade, and safe active transportation.

The Urban Natureways initiative also positions Los Angeles County to compete for emerging State and federal funding opportunities, including investments made available through California Proposition 4, that prioritize climate resilience, nature-based infrastructure, habitat restoration, and equitable access to parks and green space.

ACTIONS TAKEN

1. General Plan Amendment – Urban Natureways Parkland Classification

LA County Parks has coordinated with the Department of Regional Planning (LA County Planning) to amend the Parks and Recreation Element of the General Plan to establish a new Urban Natureways parkland classification. The proposed classification defines Urban Natureways as corridor-based parks of regional significance focused on ecological restoration, biodiversity, climate resilience, connectivity to nearby parks and key community destinations, and equitable access to open space. This work aligns with the PNA+, LA River Master Plan, and San Gabriel Valley Greenway Network Strategic Implementation Plan and has been incorporated into the General Plan Tune-Up 001 Project anticipated for Regional Planning Commission consideration in Spring 2025 and Board consideration in late 2026 or early 2027.

2. Adoption of Priority Corridors into the Regional Trail Network

LA County Parks coordinated with LA County Planning to update the County's Regional Trail Network in the General Plan to adopt the priority corridors: Compton Creek, Emerald Necklace, Lower Los Angeles River, and Pacoima Wash. The modifications to the Regional Trail Network are depicted in an updated map exhibit that is included as a figure in the General Plan Tune-Up 001 Project that is anticipated for Regional Planning Commission consideration in Spring 2025 and Board consideration in late 2026 or early 2027.

3. Designation of LA County Parks as County Lead

LA County Parks has become the County lead for coordination and delivery of Urban Natureways. The Department has focused on developing a flexible framework for project intake, interdepartmental collaboration, and clear point of contacts, while outlining broad

responsibilities for planning, permitting, implementation, and maintenance. This approach is intended to provide consistent oversight and support to promote Urban Natureways, while allowing the Department to develop specific processes and tools as the program evolves.

4. Streamlined Permitting and Pre-Approved Improvements

Urban Natureways projects are anticipated to be implemented within flood-control corridors and other highly regulated environments that require coordination across multiple County departments and, in some locations, cities as well as state and federal agencies. While these review processes are essential to protect public safety, infrastructure integrity, and environmental resources, they can be time-intensive and difficult to navigate, particularly for community-based organizations and non-profit partners. For smaller, low-impact improvements, providing a clearer and more predictable permitting pathway can reduce delays, control costs, and encourage broader participation when projects align with County goals and adhere to established design standards.

To address these challenges, LA County Parks and the Department of Public Works (DPW) have initiated early coordination to establish a planning framework and identify the key staff who will support advancement of a future streamlined permitting approach for Urban Natureways. The goal of this initial phase is to develop a shared understanding of the types of repeatable, low-impact improvements that may be appropriate for these corridors, such as tree planting, native landscaping, lighting, signage, seating, and access enhancements; while ensuring compliance with local, state and federal standards. This work is being informed by the interagency Urban Natureways Working Group and the Permitting & Regulatory Coordination Sub-Workgroup, with a focus on clarifying expectations, improving interdepartmental coordination, identifying implementation barriers, and advancing efficiencies while maintaining safety, environmental compliance, and operational requirements.

As a next step, the County is exploring the development of standardized Urban Natureways project typologies to translate this coordination into a predictable review where possible. These typologies would establish pre-vetted characteristics, such as design parameters, materials, disturbance limits, and maintenance responsibilities, for common improvement types. Projects that meet these criteria could be treated as non-novel, reducing review times while preserving appropriate regulatory oversight.

Additionally, opportunities for early and proactive engagement with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will also be explored as part of this process to better align review expectations for low-impact Urban Natureways improvements. Potential approaches include coordination on typical design elements or review frameworks that could reduce uncertainty and timelines while continuing to meet federal requirements.

Together, these actions are intended to improve predictability, reduce barriers to implementation, and support timely and cost-effective delivery of safe, high-quality Urban Natureways improvements across the County.

5. Urban Natureways Marketplace Initiative

The Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO), in coordination with LA County Parks, is leading the development of a Countywide Urban Natureways Marketplace initiative. The efforts aim to promote place-based economic development, workforce pathways, and community stewardship, while also generating resources for long-term operations and maintenance. Early coordination has focused on understanding the priority corridors, including their characteristics, challenges, and opportunities, through interagency meetings and site visits. DEO is designing a phased implementation framework, in collaboration with the Interagency Working Group, drawing on lessons from other jurisdictions such as the Atlanta Beltline Marketplace and Local Developer Incentive Fund. The framework is designed to be replicable and calibrated to each site's readiness to host vendors and the public.

6. Interagency Working Group

LA County Parks has formed the Urban Natureways Interagency Working Group to coordinate planning, permitting, implementation, and stewardship across County departments, regional agencies, local jurisdictions, community-based organizations, Conservation Corps, and workforce partners. A project charter was established to guide the group, focusing on streamlining permitting, advancing trail and bikeway connectivity, supporting habitat restoration, climate resilience, and shade equity, exploring sustainable funding and maintenance models, integrating workforce development, and fostering community-centered stewardship while mitigating displacement pressures.

The group has held two meetings to date (January 14 and February 12, 2026), with quarterly meetings planned.

7. Conservancy Engagement

A briefing was conducted with the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC) and the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC) to review the Urban Natureways initiative and explore potential partnership and funding opportunities. It was determined that a briefing with the Baldwin Hills and Urban Watersheds Conservancy (BHUWC) was not applicable at this time, as the priority focus corridors are not located within their jurisdictional territory.

8. Measure A Grant Awards Demonstrating Early Implementation

LA County Parks successfully secured four competitive Measure A grants totaling \$10.5 million that directly advance implementation of priority greenway corridors aligned with the Urban Natureways initiative. These awards were part of a historic funding cycle administered by the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District, which awarded more than \$78 million for park planning and construction projects across Los Angeles County.

The LA County Parks awards include two projects supporting implementation of the Lower LA River Gateway Greenway Park Project totaling \$6 million, \$4 million for the Compton Creek Phase III Trail Project, and \$500,000 to plan and design a new trail along the western bank of the Rio Hondo River between Valley Boulevard and Rosemead Boulevard as part of the Emerald Necklace vision.

In addition to securing County awards, LA County Parks supported community-based partners advancing complementary corridor initiatives by providing letters of support for their grant applications. These efforts also resulted in successful awards, including planning and design grants to Active San Gabriel Valley supporting the Emerald Necklace and to Pacoima Beautiful supporting planning efforts along the Pacoima Wash. Amigos de los Rios was also awarded approximately \$2.3 million to advance the Emerald Necklace San Gabriel River Phase III Project.

Together, these investments represent significant early implementation milestones for the Urban Natureways initiative and demonstrate the County's ability to successfully compete for funding that advances corridor-based greenways in high-need communities.

9. Legislative and Funding Strategy

LA County Parks has coordinated with the Chief Executive Office – Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations (CEO-LAIR) to initiate development of a Countywide legislative strategy to pursue State and federal funding for Urban Natureways. Early efforts include identification of priority programs and preparation of engagement materials. Input from the Urban Natureways Interagency Working Group, particularly the Permitting & Regulatory Coordination and Funding & Legislative Strategy sub-workgroups, will continue to inform this work by identifying barriers to project mobilization and potential funding approaches. CEO-LAIR will provide a separate report with additional details on legislative and funding efforts.

NEXT STEPS

Building on the foundational work completed to date, LA County Parks will continue advancing the Urban Natureways program through coordinated planning, launch of a formal pilot initiative, and strengthened interdepartmental collaboration. Key next steps include:

1. Advance General Plan and Policy Framework

LA County Parks will continue working LA County Planning to support adoption of the Urban Natureways parkland classification and focus corridors through the General Plan Tune-Up 001 Project that is anticipated for Regional Planning Commission consideration in spring 2025 and for Board consideration in late 2026 or early 2027.

2. Refine County Lead and Coordination Framework

LA County Parks will continue refining its role as County lead for Urban Natureways by strengthening internal coordination, clarifying interdepartmental workflows, and identifying opportunities to streamline project intake and delivery. These efforts will remain adaptive to program needs and evolving partnerships.

3. Advance Permitting and Design Alignment

Through the Interagency Working Group and relevant sub-workgroups, LA County Parks and DPW will continue exploring opportunities to improve alignment between planning, design, and permitting processes. This includes further evaluation of repeatable improvements, safety standards, and environmental requirements to support efficient project delivery.

4. Develop and Test Pilot Corridor Approaches

In coordination with DPW and partner agencies, LA County Parks will identify potential pilot corridors to test planning, permitting, design, and implementation approaches. Pilot efforts will help evaluate feasibility, costs, maintenance needs, and community impacts, and will inform future program expansion.

5. Advance Urban Natureways Marketplace Coordination (DEO Lead)

DEO will continue advancing the initiative through a phased approach, beginning with temporary pop-up activations at commerce-ready sites, supported by contractor-led operations, marketing, and community programming. Successful pop-ups will transition to semi-permanent modular markets, leveraging targeted County investments in site preparation, utilities, and marketing. Ultimately, permanent commercial hubs will be established with full infrastructure, vendor leasing options, and opportunities for economic development, workforce pathways, and social enterprise. Throughout all phases, DEO will assess feasibility across priority corridors, identify strategies to generate resources, and ensure long-term operations, maintenance, and community activation, creating a sustainable, replicable model for the County.

6. Strengthen Stewardship, Operations, and Maintenance Models

LA County Parks will continue collaborating with County departments, community-based organizations, and workforce partners to develop sustainable stewardship and operations models. These efforts will focus on defining roles, identifying funding mechanisms, and aligning maintenance practices with the park-level level of service required for Urban Natureways.

7. Expand Funding and Legislative Engagement

In coordination with CEO-LAIR, LA County Parks will continue pursuing State and federal grants, potential congressional earmarks, and other funding opportunities to strategically leverage Measure A investments and advance priority Urban Natureway projects towards full funding, design completion and construction. Input from the Interagency Working Group will continue to inform funding priorities and advocacy efforts.

8. Continue Stakeholder and Community Engagement

LA County Parks will sustain engagement with community stakeholders, regional partners, and local jurisdictions to ensure Urban Natureways reflect local priorities and deliver equitable benefits. Future efforts will include corridor-specific outreach, pilot activations, and ongoing feedback mechanisms.

9. Ongoing Reporting and Program Evaluation

LA County Parks will continue monitoring program progress and outcomes. Lessons learned from early coordination and pilot projects will inform future policy and operational decisions.