

Los Angeles Open Space Element of the General Plan

2026
Preliminary Draft

The purpose of this preliminary draft is to solicit feedback on the goals, objectives and policies listed in Chapter 3. Portions of other chapters have been included to provide additional context. However, please note that they will be further expanded upon in future drafts of this document for additional public review. Please visit the project website for additional updates and information on next steps.

To provide feedback on this preliminary draft, please visit
<https://planning.lacity.gov/plans-policies/environmental-justice#open-space>
or email planning.openspace@lacity.org.

Land Acknowledgement

The City of Los Angeles recognizes that we occupy land originally and still inhabited and cared for by the Kizh, Tongva, Tataviam, and Chumash Peoples. We honor and pay respect to their elders and descendants — past, present, and emerging — as they continue their stewardship of these lands and waters. We acknowledge that settler colonization resulted in land seizure, disease, subjugation, slavery, relocation, broken promises, genocide, multigenerational trauma, disruption of cultural practices, trade, and tribal relations. This acknowledgment demonstrates our responsibility and commitment to truth, healing, and reconciliation and to elevating the stories, culture, and community of the original inhabitants of the City of Los Angeles. We are grateful to have the opportunity to live and work on these ancestral lands. We also honor the self-attestation of current mission-based Tribes confirming their connection to the ancestral lands on which we live and work today:

Gabrieleno San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians led by the Gabrieleno Tongva Tribal Council
Gabrieleño Band of Mission Indians - Kizh Nation
Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians
Northern Chumash Tribal Council

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Introduction

Open spaces play a vital role in enhancing quality of life in Los Angeles. Scenic mountain views, world famous beaches, an intricate network of waterways and trails, thousands of acres of parklands, and an expansive urban forest, all serve as a home to an expansive ecosystem with a diverse array of flora and fauna. Ensuring that we have equitable distribution of, access to, and meaningful connections between sufficient and well managed open spaces, while balancing sustainable growth and development, continues to be elevated as a priority in the City's General Plan.

The City of Los Angeles' Open Space Element was first adopted in 1973 as a guide for the identification, preservation, conservation and acquisition of open space in the City. The Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles (Health Element), which was first adopted in 2015 and updated in 2021, included a strong emphasis on the role of open space as a fundamental component of healthy neighborhoods. Community Plans, which comprise the Land Use Element, highlight local open space priorities to serve neighborhood needs while expanding the City's open space network. A multitude of additional efforts have also advanced the importance of leveraging the abundant environmental, social, and economic benefits offered by open space. Climate resilience, environmental justice, and the restoration of ecosystems, referred to as rewilding, have also emerged as newer priorities that acknowledge the need to repair past harms and confront current challenges.

This Element addresses six key open space topics: adequate and equitable distribution, inclusive planning and management, equitable access, climate resilience, healthy ecosystems, and the preservation of historic and cultural practices. These topics collectively reflect the vision for an equitable, sustainable, and greener Los Angeles that has long been stewarded since time immemorial by the original caretakers of this land.

Chapter 1: Background

The Open Space Element of the Los Angeles General Plan has long provided an important framework for the expansion and preservation of open space. Since its adoption in 1973, open space policies have been expanded upon across other sections of the City's General Plan. The Framework Element, which was last adopted in 2001, serves as the City's growth strategy and set forth a citywide context for open space and conservation that elevated the concept of a greenways network. The Conservation Element of 2001 also considered the preservation, conservation, protection and enhancement of natural resources. First adopted in 2015 and refreshed in 2021, the Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles (Health Element) established a visionary framework for creating healthier, more equitable communities by linking land use to health, including the role of access to outdoor spaces. In addition, many of the Community Plans that make up the Land Use Element have included neighborhood-level policies to address open space priorities for each community. Since then, many efforts throughout the City, new requirements at the State level, and sustained advocacy by the public, have called for a renewed emphasis on the role of open space as a critical component in addressing newer priorities, including health, equity, climate resilience and rewilding.

General Plan Requirements

The General Plan is a comprehensive policy document that informs the future growth and development of a city. State law requires certain topics, or elements, be covered within a General Plan. These topics include land use, circulation (transportation, or mobility), housing, conservation, open space, noise, safety, and for some cities like Los Angeles, environmental justice and air quality. Cities may customize and contextualize their General Plan content and structure to address local needs and conditions, so long as all relevant statutory issues are addressed. Moreover, the General Plan serves as a guiding framework to shape public policy, inform funding and services decisions, and support community-based initiatives.

The Open Space Element guides the comprehensive and long-range preservation of open space. Open space is defined as any parcel or area of land or water that is substantially unimproved and devoted to open space use (Gov. Code § 56059) which may provide value related to public and environmental health, climate change mitigation and adaptation, protection from hazardous conditions, preservation of natural and cultural resources, among other benefits (Gov. Code § 65560(h)).

Several recent State bills amended General Plan requirements to emphasize the role of open space. Senate Bill (SB) 1425 (2022) requires that Open Space elements be updated with new requirements that consider topics related to environmental justice such as social, economic, and racial equity, climate resilience and other cobenefits of open space, and rewilding opportunities that can support the preservation, enhancement, and/or expansion of a connected network of open space (Gov. Code § 65565.5).

Prior to SB 1425, SB 1000 (2016) required jurisdictions to integrate environmental justice throughout their General Plans. Targeted updates to the Health Element completed in 2021 satisfied SB 1000 requirements. In particular, policies addressing open space access and recreational opportunities within the Health Element supported the requirement to promote physical activity in disadvantaged communities (Gov. Code § 65302 (h)).

Another state law that amended General Plan requirements related to open space is SB 379 (2015) which required Safety Elements to incorporate climate adaptation and resilience strategies (Gov. Code § 65302 (g)). The Safety Element provides a contextual framework for understanding the relationship between hazard mitigation, response to a disaster, and initial recovery from a disaster. The City's first Climate Vulnerability Assessment (2024) further expands on recommendations that consider climate hazard-related vulnerability, including exposure and sensitivity factors that can be mitigated in part by uplifting the role of open space. The updated Open Space Element aims to complement policies from the Safety Element and incorporate the insights from the Climate Vulnerability Assessment to advance a resilient framework to address the impacts of climate change in Los Angeles.

Requirements related to ecological preservation continue to be elevated at the state level, including expanding resilience planning strategies within the Safety Element. In addition, Conservation Element requirements were updated in 2024 through AB 1889 to consider the impacts of development and barriers caused by development to wildlife and habitat connectivity, and to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts and barriers to wildlife movement (Gov. Code § 65302 (d)).

California continues to expand its direction on the role of open space in protecting biodiversity, advancing equitable access to nature, and combating climate change. In partnership with global partners, the State has committed to the goal of conserving 30% of land and coastal waters by 2030 (30x30, Executive Order N-82-20). The update to the Open Space Element presents an opportunity for the General Plan to memorialize these priorities as part of the City's long-range planning framework.

Previous Version

First adopted in 1973, the City's Open Space Element was established to guide the identification, preservation, conservation, and acquisition of open space, including for the purposes of recreation, natural resource conservation and public safety. The plan included goals, objectives, and policies related to publicly and privately owned open space, and for desirable open space. It also focused on the preservation of scenic, cultural, historic, coastal and ecologically important open space amenities. The plan provided general recommendations related to scenic corridors as well as density and development in open spaces. The plan also recognized the lack of parks in certain areas of the City and the need for improved distribution.

Since its adoption over five decades ago, open space policy priorities have undergone significant transitions, including a shift towards a more dynamic approach to needs

assessments and a greater emphasis on the multiple, holistic benefits of a healthy and connected open space network. While the original plan provided important goals and policies, it required modernization and alignment with the City's current and future open space planning priorities. The update to the Open Space Element presents an opportunity to address additional priorities for a new century, while preserving some long-standing values originally envisioned within the City's first Open Space Element.

Related Efforts and Additional Coordination

Updates to the Open Space Element reflect and build upon several decades of progress since its adoption and complement related efforts throughout the City. The constellation of related efforts at the local, state, and federal levels that help contextualize the content of the Open Space Element is diverse and intersectional. This section elevates programs that most directly align with the Open Space Element but is not a comprehensive list of all open space related planning and programming initiatives. Further insight into this network will be expanded upon in Chapter 4 of this Element by identifying additional implementation programs.

The Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks led the 2025 **City of Los Angeles Park Needs Assessment (PNA)** that examined approximately 500 park sites that cover over 16,000 acres across the City. The PNA will guide future investment in park infrastructure and amenities that is reflective of current needs and projected population growth. Several related planning efforts are reinforced in the PNA, including the 2016 and 2022 Los Angeles County Park Needs Assessments which respectively provide a regional understanding of where park needs are highest and provide additional context for environmental conservation and restoration, regional recreation, and rural recreation.

The Department of City Planning has embarked on several interrelated efforts that support the goals of the Open Space Element, including those that elevate sustainability and address the urgency of addressing the impacts of climate change. In partnership with the Climate Emergency Mobilization Office (CEMO) and Emergency Management Department (EMD), the Department of City Planning conducted a **Climate Vulnerability Assessment (CVA)**. A CVA looks at physical and social vulnerability to expected climate change impacts. The impacts examined included extreme heat, extreme precipitation and flooding, drought, wildfire, sea level rise, and climate-related public health. Recommendations for reducing the impacts of climate hazards, referred to as mitigation strategies, were developed with input from community-based organizations (CBOs) and engagement with vulnerable communities. Many of the CVA's findings and recommended strategies highlight the importance of nature based approaches and open space strategies that can combat climate change and contribute to adaptation efforts. These approaches offer multiple benefits such as flood control, carbon sequestration, urban heat island effect mitigation, improved air quality, biodiversity and natural habitat preservation, and community benefits.

Additional efforts by the Department of City Planning have either been adopted or are underway to continue advancing the preservation of natural resources. The **Hillside Construction**

Regulations Ordinance, originally adopted in March 2017, was later expanded to include additional communities in order to continue providing protections against construction related impacts. The revisions made to the ordinance included standards to support the protection of ecologically and biologically sensitive resources through sustainable land use practices for residential hillside projects that exceed a set square footage threshold. The draft **Wildlife Ordinance**, developed between 2016 and 2024, proposes zoning regulations that are intended to balance development with wildlife habitat and connectivity within ecologically significant areas in the City starting with a pilot area in the hillside neighborhoods adjacent to the Santa Monica Mountains. Additionally, the **Landscape and Site Design Ordinance** presents objective design standards for multi-family and mixed-use housing projects and non-residential projects, including commercial, civic and industrial projects that advance site design principles that support healthy communities and provide spaces for nature and biodiversity to flourish. Upon adoption, the Ordinance will also support the provision of additional on-site open space and establish Urban Forest Equity Priority Areas, which are areas most in need of urban forest interventions such as tree canopy expansion and Significant Tree preservation. The **Protected Tree and Shrub Ordinance** adopted in December 2020 added protections for additional species of native shrub, updating the 2006 Protected Tree and Shrub Ordinance that expanded the original Native Oak protections of 1980.

The City's Office of Forest Management (OFM), formerly under the Board of Public Works and now within the Department of City Planning, is responsible for comprehensive oversight of the City's long-range planning for the urban forest and providing technical leadership and advisement. The urban forest encompasses all trees within the City's boundary, including those directly managed by the City, such as street and park trees, and those on land owned privately or managed by non-City government or nonprofit entities, such as trees around homes, institutions, school campuses, freeway easements, and other spaces. Currently under development, an **Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP)** prepared by OFM will supplement the policies in this document by providing guidance on how the City plans for and manages its urban forest, which includes considering the role of trees in terms of public health and climate resilience, biodiversity, and ecosystem functions, as well as their role in enhancing the walkability and livability of neighborhoods.

The City of Los Angeles' **Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan (LARRMP)**, completed in 2007, represents a vision for the 32 miles of the Los Angeles River that flow within the City. The LARRMP featured four core strategies to revitalize the River. These include the restoration of the River's ecological and hydrological function, greening of adjacent neighborhoods, and the creation of opportunities for sustainable economic reinvestment. The 2022 Los Angeles River Master Plan leveraged this work to provide an organizing framework that incorporated similar plans for other segments of the River throughout Los Angeles County.

The Los Angeles Department of Public Works, Bureau of Sanitation (LASAN) led the City's **Biodiversity Program** tasked with developing the City's first Biodiversity Index and subsequent benchmarks and assessments. The topics covered in the Index span over 25 metrics which cut across three themes including native species protection and enhancement, social equity

considerations, and governance and management. The Biodiversity Program supported the City's larger goal to effectively protect and enhance biodiversity and take appropriate action to halt biodiversity loss. Future endeavors could potentially include the development of a local biodiversity strategy and action plan, which would guide the City's efforts to protect and enhance biodiversity across multiple departments.

PRELIMINARY DRAFT

Chapter 2: Existing Conditions

Los Angeles is composed of nearly 500 square miles of land area, with over 200 of those composed of hills and mountains. Los Angeles' open space network is as diverse as its people. It includes the scenic treasures provided by its mountains and globally recognized beaches, an intricate network of rivers and trails, 36,000 acres of parklands (See Appendix 1: *Parks Resource Map*), a vast urban forest, and the linkages that connect them. Along with an expansive ecosystem that although highly modified remains extraordinarily rich, open space in Los Angeles is also essential to the health, equity, and resilience of communities. Much, but not all, of the existing open space in the City is already formally designated for open space use in the Community Plans that make up the Land Use Element of the General Plan. Generally, the designation limits the use of unimproved land or water for preservation of natural resources or outdoor recreation opportunities. However, as the Community Plans get updated, those designations may change depending on community needs (See Appendix 2: *Open Space General Plan Land Use Map*). Expanding open space is also possible without formal designation by maximizing opportunities in conjunction with other uses.

The City of Los Angeles currently occupies land originally and still inhabited and cared for by the Kizh, Tongva, Tataviam, and Chumash ancestral groups. Their stewardship of these lands and waters is an integral component of the City's ecological context and therefore a critical component of future efforts to achieve environmental justice, foster climate resilience, and continue rewilding initiatives that are informed by traditional ecological knowledge. Additionally, Tribal access to open space is vital for cultural and spiritual well-being, economic development, and sovereignty.

Tribes and indigenous groups have foremost expertise in environmental management. For millennia, their traditional practices and deep place-based knowledge maintained ecological balance and managed natural resources. Tribal stewardship encompasses the care and management of specific lands, watersheds, plant and animal communities, and natural resources, serving both cultural and ecological objectives. This enduring wisdom is essential and can help guide how we address today's environmental challenges.

Geographic and Ecological Context Overview

Los Angeles is a complex and dynamic patchwork of natural and built environments shaped by a Mediterranean climate, varied topography, and centuries of human alteration and development. Situated on the southwestern edge of California between the Pacific Ocean and desert, and bounded and shaped by a number of mountain ranges, the City spans one of the most biologically diverse regions in North America and world, while facing some of the most severe ecological pressures of any major metropolis.

The City is uniquely surrounded by extensive undeveloped open space and natural lands. Its Mediterranean climate (which is characterized by mild, wet winters and dry, warm to hot summers), topographic complexity, and dynamic climatic and geological history have

contributed to the high diversity of flora and fauna that exist in the region. Specifically situated within the California Floristic Province, which is one of 36 Global Biodiversity Hotspots, Los Angeles' plants, animals, and ecosystems are extremely important to protect and enhance. To qualify as a Biodiversity Hotspot, a region must have at least 1,500 plant species that occur in that particular location and nowhere else (known as endemic species) but also must have lost at least 70% of its original natural vegetation. Most of the loss of vegetation and endemic species stems from human development and is exacerbated by the impacts of climate change. Thoughtful consideration of how to retain or create space in areas that are within the natural range, preferred growing conditions, and historic occurrence of original natural vegetation and native tree species is particularly important for supporting local wildlife and preventing further biodiversity loss.

The City lies on an active tectonic region, with frequent seismic activity. Mountain ranges have been uplifted by faulting, and the landscape is shaped by this underlying geology and also shaped by erosion, sediment transport, and natural hazards such as mudslides, landslides, floods, and fires. Los Angeles is the only city in the United States with a major mountain range running through it—the Santa Monica Mountains—which are a part of the Transverse Ranges (which include the San Gabriel Mountains and San Bernardino Mountains). Elevation and conditions vary from sea level (coastal plains) to over 5,000 feet within city limits, creating a wide variety of microclimates that can support a diverse array of flora and fauna.

Existing within the mountains, as well as within the foothills, coastal plains, and valleys (notably the San Fernando and San Gabriel Valleys) that also make up LA, are a diversity of plants and animals that call Los Angeles home. Natural communities and habitat types such as coastal sage scrub, chaparral, grasslands, oak woodlands, wetlands, riparian areas, and coastal and marine ecosystems still persist in fragments across the region, especially in areas like the Santa Monica Mountains, Sepulveda Basin, Baldwin Hills, Ballona Wetlands, and along the Los Angeles River, tributaries, and coast. A diverse presence of waterbodies and waterways is also a major component of the unique ecological context of Los Angeles. The Los Angeles River flows approximately 51 miles from its origin in the San Fernando Valley region to Long Beach Harbor and the Pacific Ocean. The City's shoreline intermittently extends north from San Pedro to Venice Beach to the Pacific Palisades.

Aside from naturally-occurring plant communities, a significant addition to the Los Angeles urban ecosystem is the presence of a mostly human-planted urban forest, which consists of all the trees within the City. The urban forest exists throughout the City, even in areas that did not historically support trees, due to the importance of the benefits and services that trees provide for human communities living in Los Angeles, particularly in addressing urban issues like heat island and air quality. While not considered part of the urban forest in terms of management, medium- and low-lying plantings such as shrubs and other landscaping support the ecological function of the urban forest and urban ecosystem as a whole.

These ecosystems are composed of a diversity of plants that support a wide range of wildlife including numerous birds, amphibians, reptiles, invertebrates, fish, and mammals such as mule deer, bobcats, coyotes, and even mountain lions despite being surrounded by dense urban

development. Each species plays a particular role in the greater ecosystem, helping to maintain ecological function and contribute to the well-being of the environment for nature and for humans.

Los Angeles' ecosystems reflect both the extraordinary richness of its natural heritage and the deep impacts of urbanization, which has substantially fragmented and reduced the abundance and diversity of biological resources. While much has been lost or degraded, significant opportunities remain to protect and restore ecological health. The geographic variety of coastal to mountain, dry to wetter zones, flat valley floors to high ridges provides significant potential for ecological health and climate resilience.

Environmental Justice

Bountiful parks and open space can serve as a foundation for creating healthier communities and connecting people with nature, especially for those long burdened by pollution and disinvestment. Access to open space and parks is strongly linked to positive individual and community well-being by offering opportunities for recreation, food production, cultural expression, and economic vitality. When planned adequately, these highly valued community assets may also offer access to on-site basic amenities like drinking fountains and restrooms, playgrounds, fitness equipment, shaded walking paths, and comfortable seating, making them inviting and functional for a wide range of users. Additionally, in times of crisis, open spaces can become gathering points and places for community recovery.

All age groups greatly benefit from access to open space and parks. Older adults often experience stronger social engagement and sense of well-being through regular park visits, while children and teens see positive gains in physical and mental health, emotional growth, learning, and behavioral development. Spending time in open spaces has been linked to enhanced mental health with improved concentration, greater emotional balance, reduced stress, and reduced risk of chronic illnesses. These mental health benefits tend to be significant for youth in underserved communities, who often face greater challenges and fewer support systems.

Historical injustices and systemic inequities in Los Angeles have led to unequal outcomes, disproportionately affecting certain areas of the City. Many disadvantaged communities, predominantly low-income communities of color, have experienced discriminatory land use practices and insufficient public investment in essential resources like parks and open space. As a result, these communities continue to lack access to open spaces that support their well-being and quality of life. According to the Trust for Public Land 2025 ParkScore Index, which is a national comparison of park systems across the 100 most populated cities in the United States, Los Angeles is ranked 90th. The Index found that about 62% of residents in Los Angeles live within a walkable half-mile of a park, lower than the national average of 76%. In terms of distribution of park space within the City, communities of color have about 72% less park space than those in white neighborhoods, with that number dropping to 79% less park space when comparing low-income neighborhoods to high-income neighborhoods.

The 2025 City of Los Angeles Park Needs Assessment (PNA), prepared by the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks, further examined indicators that included social and environmental equity, resilience, and alignment with other City and County initiatives. A critical component of the PNA was the process identifying needs and opportunities reflective of diverse cultures and communities, including those that have been traditionally excluded from civic engagement efforts centered on planning and design. Regional snapshots that documented how needs vary in different neighborhoods highlighted different neighborhood level priorities.

Environmental justice means ensuring that communities most affected by inequities have a voice in how open spaces are planned, stewarded, and programmed. It means recognizing the history of displacement and exclusion tied to many park systems, the lack of open space opportunities in developed areas, and the poor environmental quality that has burdened communities, and committing to a future where these open spaces serve as safe spaces for health, justice, and empowerment moving forward.

To contextualize the metrics used to measure the importance of parks and open space, two additional resources inform how additional compounding factors can exacerbate existing conditions, making access to open space a critical component of environmental justice. CalEnviroScreen is a screening tool that identifies communities in California that are most affected by sources of pollution and where people are most vulnerable to the effects of pollution. According to CalEnviroScreen, over 50% of census tracts in the City of Los Angeles are among the highest-scoring 25% of California census tracts that experience disproportionate environmental pollution, health burdens, and socioeconomic vulnerabilities. Furthermore, the Los Angeles Health Atlas, developed as a supporting document of the Health Element of the General Plan, cataloged and mapped environmental and socioeconomic variables for the City of Los Angeles that also included health, food, land use, and transportation considerations. The results are illustrated in the *Community Health and Equity Index 2021* Map (See Appendix 3); the top quintile (top 20%) of the communities mapped in the Index have a strong overlap with those highlighted by CalEnviroScreen. The *Parks Resources & Community Health and Equity Index - Top Quintile Areas 2021* Map (See Appendix 4) illustrates the top quintile juxtaposed with park resources, demonstrating the areas experiencing the highest levels of environmental injustice also experience the least proximity and access to existing park resources. Similarly, tree canopy cover is inequitably distributed throughout the City, with the lowest tree canopy percentages aligning with areas in the top quintile (See Appendix 5: *Tree Canopy Cover 2020* Map).

The inequities that exist with respect to access and the distribution of parks and open space across Los Angeles deepens existing disparities with deep challenges related to investment and maintenance. Ensuring broader access to quality parks and open space across the City is a powerful step toward reducing inequities and building stronger, healthier neighborhoods for all.

Climate Resilience

The impacts of climate change have become more extreme and pose growing threats to communities and ecosystems. Open spaces can serve as vital buffers against climate impacts. They help cool neighborhoods by decreasing local temperatures and help improve air quality by reducing greenhouse gas emissions through biological carbon sequestration. Sustainably designed parks and open spaces also improve water quality, acting as biological sponges that capture stormwater, reduce runoff, and recharge groundwater, providing flood management and supporting healthy ecosystems. Open space also supports biodiversity by providing healthy habitats. Moreover, access to parks and open spaces enhances public health by fostering stronger personal connections to nature and helping to encourage public support for environmental protection particularly in underserved communities most impacted by climate risks and pollution exposure. Serving as natural infrastructure, they provide immeasurable benefits that are not only cost-effective, but enduring.

The City’s first Climate Vulnerability Assessment (CVA) in 2024 documented and analyzed the physical and social vulnerability to expected climate change impacts in Los Angeles, including extreme heat, extreme precipitation and flooding, drought, wildfire, sea level rise, and climate-related public health. Across the board, recommendations on equitable climate adaptation strategies and implementation actions to prioritize vulnerable communities included a strong role for parks and open spaces (Table 1).

Table 1: Climate Vulnerability Assessment Summary of Recommended Mitigation Strategies	
Climate Impact	Recommended Mitigation Strategies Involving Open Space
Extreme Heat	<p>Increase the amount of green space and tree canopy in areas impacted by the urban heat island effect.</p> <p>Enhance tree care through expanding tree maintenance programs and public education campaigns around valuing trees and maintenance.</p> <p>Upgrade facilities used for play and cooling off by adding shade, updated hydration stations, and cooler surfaces to replace pavement.</p>
Extreme Precipitation and Flooding	<p>Make improvements to stormwater systems to mitigate urban flooding and major rainfall events.</p> <p>Use natural and upgrade existing and newly constructed infrastructure to reduce the amount of flooding in densely populated urban areas.</p> <p>Use types of surfaces and paving that allow water to</p>

	drain into the soil and reduce runoff.
Drought	<p>Upgrade water collection and stormwater infrastructure to replenish groundwater and recycle water.</p> <p>Provide education and support for water conservation and landscaping techniques that retain water.</p>
Wildfire	<p>Help people connect with information to reduce exposure to harmful air from natural and human caused sources of air pollution.</p> <p>Use indigenous and natural land management and fire prevention practices to reduce fire risk.</p>
Sea Level Rise	Additional nature-based solutions are needed to mitigate sea level rise.
Climate-Related Public Health	<p>Reduce air quality issues through use of community tools such as localized air quality monitoring, nature-based mitigation solutions, and community-based enforcement.</p> <p>Increase the overall amount of community green space to be more equitable when compared to other neighborhoods across the city.</p>
Cross-Cutting Issues	<p>Increase the amount of permeable surfaces on public and private lands.</p> <p>Work with communities to add more resilience hubs where needed.</p> <p>Update or create city plans and procedures to prepare city operations and facilities for expected climate hazards impacts.</p>
<p><i>For additional recommended mitigation strategies presented in the Climate Vulnerability Assessment please visit the Department of City Planning website.</i></p>	

Rewilding

Rewilding is the process of enhancing biodiversity and restoring ecological function by reintroducing species, rebuilding habitat, and allowing nature to reclaim space that has been altered or degraded by human activity to resemble the condition prior to disturbance as much as possible. Originally associated with vast wilderness areas and the reintroduction of animal species, rewilding has evolved to include urban environments, where the goal is to reintroduce elements of wild nature into the built landscape to repair ecological function and enhance biodiversity at a variety of scales. Critical to the rewilding process is acknowledging biocultural

significance and addressing the priorities of California Native American tribes, indigenous groups and traditional cultural practitioners.

Within the context of the urban environment of Los Angeles, rewilding has the opportunity to benefit wildlife, plant life, and human health. Rewilding can help restore balance and bring nature back into the City for the benefit of the environment that both humans and wildlife depend on to survive. Even small-scale or partial ecological restoration can substantially expand or improve ecosystem processes and services. Rewilding strategies can include converting vacant lots into community gardens; creating green roofs that support pollinators; restoring and actively managing rivers and streamways; channelized networks with riparian vegetation, or removing concrete.

Open space provides essential rewilding opportunities by creating linkages between areas critical to maintaining healthy populations of many species and providing opportunities for wildlife to shift in response to climate change, urbanization, or other disturbances. Whether it is a park, trail, remediated site, or landscaped median, rewilding also contributes to climate resilience by helping mitigate the impacts of climate hazards such as flooding and extreme heat while delivering multiple socio-economic benefits that improve the health and well-being of communities. The Open Space Element strives to incorporate emerging best practices and strategies to ensure that rewilding is incorporated into its long range planning efforts.

Chapter 3: Goals, Objectives, Policies

The Open Space Element goals, objectives, and policies reflect a broad and comprehensive range of statements to provide context and guide decision-making for actions that the City can take to designate, expand, preserve, and conserve a cohesive and interconnected system of diverse open spaces to provide services and benefits that equitably increase quality of life.

Implementation of goals, objectives, and policies is addressed in Chapter 4 with a specific list of implementation programs that correspond to the content of this chapter.

What is a Goal, Objective, and Policy?

Goal: A goal is a broad statement that describes the future condition or “end state”. Goals are aspirational and outcome oriented.

Objective: An objective is a specific statement that guides goal attainment. Multiple objectives can be associated with each individual goal.

Policy: A policy guides a course of action that aligns with each goal and objectives.

Goal 1

Open space that is composed of equitably distributed and connected land and water.

In Los Angeles, open space is both abundant and scarce. While some neighborhoods are adjacent to vast wilderness or coastal areas, other neighborhoods are surrounded by densely populated urban landscapes with few parks or open spaces to serve the needs of their communities. This is both the result of the natural topography of the region and decades of land use decisions that inequitably benefited some neighborhoods over others. As the City evolves and continues to grow, it has become increasingly important to find and create opportunities to protect, expand, and strategically connect open spaces in a way that advances equitable access for future generations and contributes to the overall environmental health of the City. This can be achieved by maximizing opportunities where they exist and reimagining where and how open space can expand.

Though public parks, both managed by the City and other agencies, are the most familiar open spaces, they are only part of the overall picture. Areas devoted to or designated as open space may be privately or publicly owned, exist in conjunction with other uses, such as a courtyard in a residential development, and vary in scale and purpose. Furthermore, open space may not always be publicly accessible or formally designated but can still be an essential component of the open space system.

Once lost to development, open space is rarely recovered. Prioritizing protecting existing open space, especially in neighborhoods with the highest park need, is an essential first step toward preventing further inequities. However, available vacant or undeveloped land to expand open space is limited, especially in neighborhoods that need it the most. The limitations are further exacerbated by competing needs for land that can serve other purposes, particularly residential use. Connecting open spaces into cohesive networks throughout the City is equally important. Fragmented and isolated open space cannot adequately support biodiversity nor offer safe, continuous paths for people to walk, bike, or enjoy nature. Connecting open spaces creates larger, more resilient ecosystems and increases opportunities for people to access recreation and natural areas.

Objective

- 1.1 Maintain and expand public and private open space throughout the city, to enhance ecological health and improve access to open space for neighborhoods, prioritizing socially vulnerable communities with highest park needs.

Policies

- 1.1.1 **No Net Loss of Open Space.** Consider equitable compensatory mitigation strategies to avoid, minimize, or compensate for the loss of open space land, including through

the restoration, creation, enhancement, or preservation of open space, as a means to achieve no net loss of open space.

- 1.1.2 **Highest Park Need.** Prioritize pursuing new and maintaining existing park and open space to increase the number and size of neighborhood and community parks in neighborhoods with highest park need.
- 1.1.3 **Publicly Accessible Open Space.** Incentivize, encourage and facilitate opportunities for new development to provide publicly accessible open space such as pocket parks, courtyards, small plazas, community gardens, orchards, rooftops, privately owned public spaces, and other multi-beneficial outdoor spaces.
- 1.1.4 **Common Outdoor Spaces.** Encourage and facilitate opportunities for new development to provide usable, well-designed open space for occupants such as courtyards, small plazas, community gardens, terraces, rooftops and other multi-beneficial outdoor spaces.
- 1.1.5 **Prevent Onsite Open Space Reduction.** Discourage requests to reduce the provision of common open space as part of the development approval process, prioritizing neighborhoods with the highest park need.
- 1.1.6 **Surplus Public Properties for Public Use.** Coordinate with City departments responsible for managing public land to comprehensively review and evaluate surplus property as potential sites to expand open space.
- 1.1.7 **Surplus Public Properties for Rewilding.** Coordinate with City departments responsible for managing public land to comprehensively review and evaluate surplus property as potential sites for rewilding opportunities to expand and restore natural environments to enhance ecological health.
- 1.1.8 **Private Property Conversion.** Incentivize, encourage, and facilitate opportunities and processes for private property owners to convert undeveloped and underused lots or a portion of a lot to open space use.
- 1.1.9 **Land Banking.** Explore and pursue land banking strategies to protect remaining open spaces and resources from development, prevent loss of open space in neighborhoods with highest park need, mitigate environmental hazards, and conserve ecologically significant areas.
- 1.1.10 **Large-Scale Use Transition.** Support opportunities to transition large-scale land that is underutilized, vacant, and/or with minimal building footprint (such as decommissioned airports, golf courses, military uses) into public open spaces through remediation, restoration and preservation to improve the environment and increase public access.
- 1.1.11 **Identify Opportunities.** Identify and pursue opportunities to remediate and convert land primarily in an undeveloped, vacant, or natural state to open space.
- 1.1.12 **Waterways and Waterbodies.** Support new and existing waterway and waterbody enhancement efforts to expand and connect open space, increase access to recreational opportunities and enhance ecological health.

- 1.1.13 **Coastal Expansion.** Maintain and expand coastal open space to provide equitable, local and regional enjoyment and access to the City’s unique coastal resources in balance with habitat restoration and protection needs.

Objective

- 1.2 Create and sustain a network of corridors that connect and reconnect existing and future open spaces, to enhance ecological health and improve access.

Policies

- 1.2.1 **Linear Infrastructure.** Identify opportunities to repurpose and transform existing linear infrastructure, such as flood control channels, channelized waterways, utility easements, decommissioned railroad rights-of-way, discontinued streets, and select alleys for open space use, prioritizing restoring ecological functions and connecting neighborhoods with highest park need to open spaces.
- 1.2.2 **Public Rights-of-Way.** Identify, repurpose or transform public rights-of-way, such as streets and alleys, into high-quality public spaces that promote gathering, social connections, and recreational opportunities for temporary, seasonal, or permanent use.
- 1.2.3 **Cap Parks.** Identify potential subterranean freeway segments for purposes of creating new cap parks and open space to reconnect communities and habitat by removing, retrofitting, or mitigating barriers to connectivity.
- 1.2.4 **Regional Coordination.** In coordination with the County, identify open space containing significant ecological resources essential for habitat and wildlife connectivity for potential preservation and protection within state reserves, state coastal trails, preserves, parks, or natural wildlife refuges.
- 1.2.5 **Wildlife Crossings.** Identify potential roadway segments where grade-separated crossings (such as wildlife bridges) could be built to remove, retrofit, or mitigate barriers to ecological connectivity.
- 1.2.6 **Easements.** Support and facilitate easements for open space use, such as ongoing use and rezoning of paper streets, decommissioned or undergrounded utility easements, and other properties to connect trails, link habitats, and increase access for multiple users.
- 1.2.7 **Retain Medians and Parkways.** Retain medians, parkways, and all other potential greening opportunities as much as possible within the public right of way to enhance ecological connectivity and provide vegetated, shaded active transportation connections to parks, trails and open spaces.
- 1.2.8 **Urban Forest as Vital Infrastructure.** In alignment with citywide urban forestry goals, develop, implement, and monitor policies, programs, and procedures for tree planting, maintenance, preservation, and community engagement that recognize trees as vital

components of city infrastructure and as integral components of the open space network.

- 1.2.9 **Trail Network Connections.** Support trail acquisition, development, and extensions, prioritizing trail improvements that increase access for historically underserved communities, support ecological connectivity, and bridge critical gaps in the trail network.

PRELIMINARY DRAFT

Goal 2

Open space with coordinated and inclusive planning, management, and stewardship.

Planning for and managing public open space in Los Angeles requires persistent coordination and collaboration among various City departments, related agencies and across jurisdictions. Alignment is essential to move toward a shared vision, reduce duplicated efforts, maximize funding opportunities, and prevent further inequities. To provide a higher quality open space system in the future, the City must also continually leverage expertise from different disciplines and pursue strategic partnerships to proactively apply the best available knowledge, adopt best practices, and develop innovative solutions.

In order for historically underserved communities with highest park needs to more equitably experience the benefits of open space, their participation must be prioritized in open space decision-making processes. Uplifting underrepresented populations to take part in the planning, design, programming, and management of open space is essential to create a system that serves their needs. Furthermore, centering the voices and contributions of people who have been historically and systemically excluded is not enough. Long-term equitable outcomes also require ensuring that improvements do not lead to displacement or contribute to neighborhood instability for socially vulnerable communities.

Objective

- 2.1 Design and implement public outreach and engagement processes, partnerships, and practices that provide inclusive, timely and culturally appropriate opportunities for all persons to participate in public open space planning, particularly socially vulnerable communities with highest park needs.

Policies

- 2.1.1 **Community Empowerment.** Provide technical or financial assistance, when available and appropriate, to the public to build capacity to enable meaningful involvement of open space planning. Infuse educational opportunities whenever feasible to create a broader understanding of the relationship between open space and land use.
- 2.1.2 **Collaboration.** Develop intentional strategic partnerships between Tribal, nonprofit, community-based, and/or government agencies to leverage capacity, resources and programs around mutually beneficial activities to implement an inclusive open space planning and design process.
- 2.1.3 **Innovation.** Invest in and incorporate emerging best practices, research, and technology to deliver high quality open space services and programs.

- 2.1.4 **Compensation.** Prioritize City partnerships that compensate community members for their time, valuable knowledge, and involvement for informing the open space planning process, particularly in communities with low public participation.
- 2.1.5 **External Partnerships.** Pursue opportunities to establish new or enhance existing open space, such as parks and community gardens, through partnerships with relevant Tribal, nonprofit, community-based, educational institutions, private and/or government agencies
- 2.1.6 **Tribal Partnerships.** Foster meaningful collaboration with local Tribes for the planning, management, maintenance, and operations of open spaces and elevated stewardship opportunities that support Tribal leadership and priorities.
- 2.1.7 **Green Gentrification.** Encourage establishing localized anti-displacement strategies prior to pursuing or in tandem with new transformative, large-scale open space infrastructure investments to reduce or mitigate the impacts of green gentrification and to maximize benefits for historically underserved communities.
- 2.1.8 **Community Benefits.** Identify enduring community benefits derived from transformative open space investments and those associated with large scale development and major events to accelerate economic growth, social prosperity, and positive health outcomes in an inclusive and equitable manner and by prioritizing historically underserved communities.

Objective

- 2.2 Coordinate across agencies and jurisdictions to integrate comprehensive, adaptive, and responsive open space management, monitoring, and evaluation methods to support a cohesive open space system for both people and the environment.

Policies

- 2.2.1 **Public Facility Joint-Use.** Encourage and facilitate joint-use agreements between organizations, and/or government agencies that own and/or operate public facilities to expand open space.
- 2.2.2 **Educational Facilities Joint Use.** Encourage and facilitate joint-use agreements between educational institutions, community-based organizations and/or government agencies to increase public access to school open spaces and recreational facilities outside of school hours for multi-benefit use prioritizing the health and safety of students.
- 2.2.3 **Comprehensive Management.** Develop and implement plans for open space management in coordination with Tribal, nonprofit, community-based, educational institutions, private, and/or government agencies that support a holistic, system-wide approach to ecological conservation, ecosystem health, climate resilience, and equitable outcomes.

- 2.2.4 **Soil Health.** In alignment with citywide soil management goals, encourage collaboration and partnerships to implement a comprehensive healthy soil strategy that balances site-specific needs and opportunities.
- 2.2.5 **Integrated Water Management.** In alignment with citywide integrated water management goals, regularly monitor, assess, and implement approaches to improve quality, supply, and safety of waterways and waterbodies by integrating multi-benefit strategies and infrastructure design in open spaces that benefits both people and the environment.
- 2.2.6 **Coastal Collaboration.** Partner with Tribal, non-profit, community-based, and/or government agencies to protect, manage, and enhance coastal resources (including beaches, wetlands, bluffs, dunes, and associated cultural, recreational and scenic assets) through coordinated restoration, monitoring, and regulation efforts that promote ecosystem health, climate resilience, and equitable public access.
- 2.2.7 **Trees and Native Vegetation.** Promote and support proactive interagency coordination, research, planning, and implementation efforts that improve tree and native vegetation management in open spaces to advance ecosystem health, climate resilience and equitable distribution of resources.
- 2.2.8 **Maintenance Prioritization.** Prioritize the equitable maintenance, repair, and reinvestment of parks and open spaces by implementing tailored maintenance strategies that maximize maintenance capacity, particularly in socially vulnerable communities with highest park need, to ensure high quality and safe operations.
- 2.2.9 **Monitoring and Evaluation.** Increase coordination across departments and agencies responsible for developing comprehensive and project specific assessments and inventories related to open space facilities, and/or services to consistently collect, archive, and share relevant data to support improvements that benefit both people and the environment.
- 2.2.10 **Sustainable Debris Management.** Integrate natural resource management strategies to proactively implement timely and sustainable debris management following a disaster in a manner that complements recovery efforts and diverts properly treated organic waste away from landfills to suitable open space sites for local use such as composting and soil enrichment.
- 2.2.11 **Waste and Litter Prevention.** Coordinate with, nonprofit, community-based, educational institutions, private and/or government agencies to monitor illegal dumping, litter and blight in parks and open space, expanding enforcement and supporting proactive community-centered strategies with the support of the public such as restorative clean up programs, waste reduction initiatives and community beautification efforts to maintain clean, healthy and safe open space conditions.
- 2.2.12 **Air Quality Monitoring.** Increase air quality monitoring within open space areas in coordination with community members and Tribal, nonprofit, community-based, educational institutions, private and/or government agencies, adjacent municipalities (when applicable), and other relevant agencies to identify data gaps, track conditions, raise awareness, and inform pollution reduction efforts that aim to achieve the highest standards of air quality in pollution-burdened communities.

Goal 3

Open space that provides equitable access to safe, high quality environments, facilities and programs that serve diverse needs.

Equitable open space access must address more than physical distribution to serve the diverse needs of the people of Los Angeles. Regional parks, beaches, hiking trails and other high quality open spaces require mobility solutions to serve people who have been historically excluded from living near these natural areas. It is also just as important to design and program open space facilities to be high quality and welcoming to all, including people of all races, cultures, incomes, national origins, ages, and abilities to equitably maximize benefits.

Not all open spaces can provide facilities or services for every type of purpose, user or activity at once nor is that always desired. However, whenever possible, designing open spaces to be multi-use, multi-benefit, and flexible can also help meet and balance needs as they evolve. To create an equitable open space system, prioritizing serving people who have the highest barriers to access must take precedence.

Objective

- 3.1 Ensure safe, high quality, and affordable recreational programming opportunities that reflect community needs, celebrate cultural diversity, and provide equitable access to open spaces.

Policies

- 3.1.1 **High Quality and Safe Programming.** Promote high quality recreational opportunities for all ages and abilities that reflect local needs and priorities and enhance public health and safety.
- 3.1.2 **Affordable Programming.** Protect and expand affordable recreational programming to ensure equitable access for all visitors.
- 3.1.3 **Responsive Programming.** Encourage periodic evaluation of recreational programming and facilities to ensure these reflect and adapt to the evolving needs, priorities and identities of local communities.
- 3.1.4 **Arts and Cultural Programming.** Support and facilitate open space programming that integrates arts, culture, traditions, and customs that enhance social connectedness and environmental stewardship.
- 3.1.5 **Coastal Programming.** Promote programming activities, including recreational and stewardship initiatives, that increase education and public enjoyment of coastal areas such as beaches, lagoons, marinas, canals, boardwalks, and piers.

- 3.1.6 **Emergency Preparedness and Response Programming.** In alignment with the Safety Element, integrate emergency preparedness and response programming to strengthen the role of parks and open spaces in supporting communities during climate related, public health, and other emergencies.
- 3.1.7 **Inclusive Programming.** Support inclusive programming at parks and open spaces, to accommodate diverse uses that promote well-being, such as, economic, social, cultural, civic and educational events, for all users including older adults, people with disabilities, young people, and other underserved populations.
- 3.1.8 **Community Care and Safety.** Support efforts that improve public safety outcomes in parks and open space through community-based strategies that promote trust and partnership such as civilian first responders and capacity-building programs for service providers to address community safety while creating a welcoming, safe and enjoyable user experience.
- 3.1.9 **Workforce Development.** Harness local knowledge and expertise and support a range of educational, training, and employment opportunities to promote labor participation at parks and open spaces for older adults, people with disabilities, young people, and other underserved populations.
- 3.1.10 **Education and Stewardship.** Foster inclusive community participation between Tribal, nonprofit, community-based, educational institutions, private and/or government agencies in the care and stewardship of open spaces, parks, watersheds, and ecological corridors through educational programming, community science, collaborative partnerships, and volunteer activities that foster cultural connection, shared responsibility, and a sense of belonging in the natural environment.

Objective

- 3.2 Advance a well connected and accessible open space network that leverages multi-modal infrastructure and prioritizes access for historically underserved communities.

Policies

- 3.2.1 **Active Transportation Access.** Retain public access to streets, alleys, stairways, boardwalks, and other paths by discouraging the vacation of public rights-of-way to promote open space connectivity and access via walking, biking, or other active transportation methods.
- 3.2.2 **Trail Access.** In alignment with community priorities and in balance with ecological needs, enhance and expand trails, prioritizing connections to parks and open spaces that support diverse uses and activities (such as biking, hiking, equestrian).
- 3.2.3 **Universal Access.** Support the expansion of transportation programs and universally accessible services aimed at enhancing mobility and access to open space areas for older adults, persons with disabilities, young people, and transit-dependent populations.

- 3.2.4 **Equitable Coastal Access.** Strengthen equitable access to coastal areas by improving connectivity to and along beaches, marinas, lagoons, canals, waterfronts, and any other coastal waterbodies, to maintain and enhance, safe, inclusive, and high quality public access from communities historically excluded and/or displaced from the coastal zones, while balancing environmental protection and private property rights.

Objective

- 3.3 Promote high quality planning and design of parks, recreational facilities, and other open spaces that reflect community needs and priorities and support public health and safety.

Policies

- 3.3.1 **Park Needs Assessment.** In alignment with citywide park needs and related assessments, support the implementation and adherence to classification guidelines to meet the purpose and function of each type of park including for neighborhood, community, and regional parks that ensure equitable access and maximize public benefits and amenities.
- 3.3.2 **Identity and Interpretive Design and Signage.** Incorporate clear, multi-lingual signage and design features in publicly accessible open spaces to affirm public access, reflect cultural identity, and highlight the site feature and significance through storytelling and interactive elements.
- 3.3.3 **Environmental Design.** Integrate environmental design principles (e.g. natural surveillance, natural access control) with safety measures such as adequate visibility, activation, and signage to enhance a sense of safety and ensure a welcoming visitor experience in balance with the natural features and benefits of the parks, open spaces, and related facilities.
- 3.3.4 **Mobility Safety.** Ensure parks, open spaces and facilities offering public space and services are designed to reduce physical barriers to entry and navigation by integrating features that support safe multi-modal access, clearly designated at-grade entryways, paths that support diverse abilities, and multi-lingual wayfinding signage.
- 3.3.5 **Universal Design.** Ensure that scale, siting, materials and other design features integrate universal design best practices, including accessible ingress and egress elements, routes, parking, furniture, fixtures, and equipment, to support the needs of all park users, including older adults, persons with disabilities, and young people.
- 3.3.6 **Ecologically Appropriate Design.** Support and implement guidelines and standards for open spaces that are responsive to ecological features (including topography, hydrology, vegetation, and other site specific conditions), and that promote biodiversity and landscape connectivity.

- 3.3.7 **Basic Amenities.** Ensure that parks, open spaces, and recreation facilities provide comfort facilities and well-functioning basic amenities such as restrooms, water fountains, electricity, and Wi-Fi where feasible to support equitable and active use, recognizing that appropriate amenities may vary by park or facility type.
- 3.3.8 **Notification Systems.** Elevate the role of open space within the City's emergency infrastructure by integrating enhancements, such as sirens, lights, geo-targeted text messages, beacons, signage, and other notification systems to strengthen emergency preparedness, response, and equitable access to timely information and alerts regarding emergencies, hazards and events.
- 3.3.9 **Emergency Services.** Promote the expansion of infrastructure, facilities, services, and systems within open spaces to prevent or prepare for emergencies, and to offer disaster and emergency relief services prioritizing the needs of vulnerable communities.

PRELIMINARY DRAFT

Goal 4

Open space that strengthens climate resilience and provides environmental and public health benefits.

As Los Angeles confronts the growing impacts of climate change such as extreme heat, precipitation, and flooding, drought, wildfire, sea level rise and associated public health impacts, open space has emerged as one of the most effective and adaptable tools for building climate resilience. Thoughtfully designed and managed open spaces serve as living infrastructure that can protect people and the environment from climate related hazards. Increasing the City's resilience to climate hazards also includes aligning with Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and seeking nature-based solutions.

The vegetation in open spaces help cool cities during periods of extreme heat. For instance, the layered canopy of leaves and branches from trees can be more effective at cooling than hard installations, like shade sails, because in addition to providing shade they also release moisture into the atmosphere through evapotranspiration. In times of heavy rain or storms, open spaces such as wetlands, bioswales, and permeable landscapes act like sponges, absorbing and slowing floodwaters, preventing damage to homes, streets, and infrastructure. Unlike concrete solutions, these natural systems adapt over time and often improve with age.

Open space also plays a critical role in carbon sequestration. Trees, soil, and vegetation capture and store carbon dioxide, helping to reduce greenhouse gas levels. At the same time, these green areas support biodiversity, strengthen ecosystem health, and make cities more self-sustaining in the face of environmental stress.

The City's first Climate Vulnerability Assessment was an important step that examined the anticipated impacts of climate change across the City with the goal of identifying the areas and communities most vulnerable to those impacts. One critical factor that can leave some neighborhoods more susceptible to the impacts of climate hazards is the unequal distribution of open space. Therefore, prioritizing communities that are the highest park need also supports addressing communities that are disproportionately vulnerable, exposed, and sensitive to the impacts of climate hazards.

Objective

- 4.1 Increase the City's resilience to climate hazard-related risks by implementing climate hazard mitigation and adaptation strategies and best practices, plans and programs for open space that align with Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and elevate nature-based solutions, prioritizing communities with existing public health burdens, limited access to resources, and the highest risk of severe impacts.

Policies

- 4.1.1 **Safety Hazard Land Use.** Maintain existing and identify new open space parcel designations within and adjacent to Fire Hazard Severity Zones, landslide areas, flood zones and in other areas with limited adaptive capacity to mitigate the impact of environmental and climate hazards.
- 4.1.2 **Resilient Design.** Support climate adapted park and open space infrastructure design interventions that enhance opportunities to derive multiple public health and environmental benefits, including the integration of innovative, cost-effective, low-impact nature-based solutions that reduce climate hazard risks.
- 4.1.3 **Resilient Infrastructure.** Perform and expand the regular maintenance and inspection of park and open space infrastructure systems and take proactive, preventative measures to reduce and/or prevent exacerbated impacts of climate hazards with the most sustainable/efficient technology available, prioritizing investments in areas where vulnerable, exposed, or sensitive populations reside.
- 4.1.4 **Resilient Public Facilities.** Establish or expand the maintenance and operation of safe and accessible public facilities or installations in parks and public open space, including integrated delivery of services with the most sustainable/efficient technology available that support the needs of vulnerable, exposed, and sensitive populations impacted by climate hazards and climate emergencies, particularly in underresourced areas.
- 4.1.5 **Irrigation.** Explore and continually invest in emerging irrigation systems and watering methods to improve water conservation in open spaces and to minimize the impact of drought on urban agriculture, vegetation and trees while reducing water use demand.
- 4.1.6 **Stormwater Retention and Reuse.** Develop comprehensive onsite water collection systems in parks and open space to capture and retain rainwater and urban runoff during storm events, prioritizing local, onsite and emergency response use.
- 4.1.7 **Flood Risk Reduction.** Advance citywide stormwater management and flood risk reduction by integrating green living and nature-based solutions or methods, such as permeable surfaces, bioswales, and stream daylighting to increase infiltration, reduce peak flows, and improve water quality in parks and open spaces, prioritizing neighborhoods disproportionately impacted by flooding.
- 4.1.8 **Resource Recovery.** Promote on-site opportunities to reduce the volume of resource and organic waste sent to landfills by supporting resource recovery and maximizing on-site and/or local reuse within eligible open space areas such as parks, composting sites, agricultural sites, vacant lots, public easements, rights-of-way and schoolyards.
- 4.1.9 **Carbon Sequestration.** Enhance and expand opportunities for natural and biological carbon sequestration via the ocean, plants, and soils in open spaces to improve air quality and mitigate the impacts of climate hazards.
- 4.1.10 **Wildfire Risk Management.** Manage terrestrial habitats and vegetation in open spaces, and undeveloped ridgelines in a manner that reduces wildfire risk and

balances ecological integrity, reduces the spread of invasive plant species, preserves and restores native plant species, and incorporates indigenous stewardship and traditional ecological knowledge.

- 4.1.11 **Sea Level Rise and Coastal Hazards.** Support coastal restoration and sea level rise adaptation along shoreline open spaces, and undeveloped ridgelines in a manner that reduces flood risk, buffer storm urges, contribute to carbon sequestration, while incorporating nature-based adaptation strategies, discouraging hard shoreline armoring and preserving space for natural shoreline migration.
- 4.1.12 **Climate-Resilient Urban Forestry.** Retain and select native, climate adaptive, drought resilient, and/or high shade value tree species in all open spaces to reduce extreme heat impacts, support citywide water management strategies, contribute to carbon sequestration, improve air quality, and provide ecosystem services.

Objective

- 4.2 Expand services and amenities in parks and open space to enhance community resilience to climate hazard-related risks, prioritizing neighborhoods disproportionately impacted by climate hazards and access to environmental justice communities with vulnerable, exposed, and sensitive populations.

Policies

- 4.2.1 **Resilience Hubs.** Continuously establish, enhance, maintain, and operate community climate resilience hubs in parks and open spaces where residents can access resources to prevent, mitigate, and adapt to the impacts of climate change.
- 4.2.2 **Heat Relief Facilities.** Increase and maintain the installation of heat relief facilities, such as cooling and hydration stations in parks and public open space to provide relief from extreme heat events prioritizing access to environmental justice communities and neighborhoods disproportionately impacted by extreme heat.
- 4.2.3 **Shade.** Increase and maintain the installation of shade structures, planting of large stature tree species, and enhancements to shade areas prioritizing access to environmental justice communities and neighborhoods disproportionately impacted by extreme heat.
- 4.2.4 **Wildfire Education.** Enhance education, community engagement and outreach services regarding wildfire risks, prevention, and evacuation, prioritizing communities within and adjacent to Fire Hazard Severity Zones.

Goal 5

Open space that supports healthy ecosystems and healthy people.

Healthy ecosystems are essential for the City's environmental quality, climate resilience and public health. Over time, urban development has caused significant disruption to ecological functions, often altering essential natural cycles and fragmenting habitats. Open space can play a critical role in repairing ecosystem harm and reducing human vulnerability, especially in historically underserved areas that continue to experience the cumulative effects of pollution and environmental hazards.

Addressing ecological degradation and biodiversity loss is complex with interconnected challenges that transcend jurisdictional boundaries and require coordinated, multi-benefit approaches to comprehensively restore ecological functions, support biodiversity, and strengthen connections across broader ecological networks. Further, ecological restoration is a long-term, multi-step process. Addressing environmental degradation often starts with identifying the type of harm and applying appropriate remediation strategies to reestablish natural cycles and restore habitats to create clean, safe, and functional open space. Conservation and preservation approaches provide the long-term structure for sustaining protected and newly restored open space. Conservation efforts can integrate proactive and adaptive management strategies to create a more sustainable open space system. Preservation can protect the City's most sensitive aquatic, terrestrial, and wildland-urban interface habitats by preventing or minimizing further encroachment and degradation. Together these integrated land management approaches can respond to the City's environmental justice and climate resilience priorities by responding to past harms, addressing current challenges and needs, and safeguarding natural resources for the future.

Objective

- 5.1 Allocate timely and sufficient City resources that promote the use of open spaces as safe and restorative environments that prevent, reduce, and remediate pollution, prioritizing environmentally overburdened communities.

Policies

- 5.1.1 **Living Buffers.** Encourage the strategic location, design, and long-term maintenance of vegetation and landscape adjacent to heavy commercial and industrial uses, freeways, or other potentially noxious uses or activities, in close proximity to sensitive receptors or uses, recognizing their critical role as part of the open space system to reduce community exposure to toxic pollutants.
- 5.1.2 **Ecological Maintenance Practices.** In alignment with citywide healthy soil strategies, eliminate or minimize exposure to harmful chemicals by reducing and phasing-out chemicals harmful to public and environmental health, such as synthetic pesticides,

herbicides, and fertilizers, and prioritizing ecological maintenance practices (such as integrated pest management strategies) in parks, rights-of-way, and public and private landscapes.

- 5.1.3 **Oil and Petroleum Uses in Open Space.** Prioritize the remediation and clean-up of orphaned, idle, and unplugged wells, particularly in areas where public health and safety is at risk within or adjacent to open spaces.
- 5.1.4 **Bioremediation.** Promote cleanup and remediation efforts in existing and future open spaces that consist of low-impact, natural and biological processes, such as phytoremediation or mycoremediation, to remove pollutants from soil, water, and air.
- 5.1.5 **Land Recycling.** In alignment with community needs and priorities, support remediation and safe transition of underused, abandoned, or vacant sites containing hazardous substances and other toxins (brownfields) to transform them into parks and other resilient open spaces that advance public and environmental health.

Objective

- 5.2 Advance citywide rewilding efforts by rehabilitating and reconnecting habitats, enhancing ecological functions and restoring native biodiversity.

Policies

- 5.2.1 **Habitat Connectivity.** Identify, protect, enhance, and create opportunities to improve wildlife corridors and habitat linkages within and between open spaces via greenways, easements, crossings, and other similar approaches to reduce habitat fragmentation and enhance landscape-scale ecological flow across jurisdictional boundaries.
- 5.2.2 **Living Infrastructure.** Pursue nature-based and other bioengineering techniques such as removing or retrofitting grey infrastructure, synthetic turf, and structural barriers to strengthen the long-term health of ecological processes, increase urban permeability, reestablish native vegetation, and enhance aquatic and terrestrial habitat functions.
- 5.2.3 **Science-Based and Culturally-Informed Species Reintroduction.** In alignment with citywide biodiversity guidelines, support the reintroduction monitoring, and adaptive management of native and climate-resilient species into open space to restore ecological functions and natural processes, enhance biodiversity, and build long-term ecosystem resilience and equitable access to nature and ecosystem services, ensuring reintroduction efforts comply with science, cultural knowledge, environmental regulations, and best practices.
- 5.2.4 **Traditional Ecological Knowledge.** Partner with Tribes to incorporate traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) in rewilding efforts, recognizing the interconnected relationship of indigenous peoples and cultures to open space and stewardship practices that create and sustain healthy ecosystems and communities.

- 5.2.5 **Local Rewilding.** Encourage neighborhood-scale rewilding efforts that expand native habitat and corridors for pollinators and other species, and enhance overall health of communities by leveraging the use of vacant lots, utility corridors and easements, medians, private open space, flood control channels, right-of-way landscape buffers, and other similar areas, particularly in environmentally overburdened communities to advance climate resilience, public health, access to nature, and ecosystem services.
- 5.2.6 **Climate Resilient Rewilding.** Pursue rewilding strategies that restore ecological functions and build climate resilience in open spaces, by implementing nature-based solutions, that mitigate the impacts of climate-related hazards, particularly in disproportionately impacted communities with vulnerable, exposed, and sensitive populations.

Objective

- 5.3 Utilize, comprehensive, integrated, adaptive, regenerative management and monitoring practices to conserve natural resources, enhance biodiversity, and improve ecosystem health and services.

Policies

- 5.3.1 **Pathways and Habitat Conservation.** Encourage the identification, protection and management of ecologically significant areas , prioritizing habitats that support endangered, sensitive, threatened or species of special concern strategically increasing the proportion of open space that is durably protected and managed.
- 5.3.2 **Natural Resource Management.** Support efficient management of open space lands used for the production, enhancement, or maintenance of natural resources that reflects state and local evolving priorities, including slowing the depletion of non-renewable resources by phasing out their extraction in alignment with environmental justice and just transition citywide priorities.
- 5.3.3 **Ecosystem Management.** Support holistic ecosystem-based management approaches informed by traditional ecological knowledge, science, and best practices to maximize and equally distribute ecosystem services (provisioning, regulating, cultural, and supporting services).
- 5.3.4 **Managed Aquifer Recharge.** Identify opportunities for natural infiltration and engineered recharge strategies (such as spreading grounds, stormwater capture basins, treated water injection) to sustain local water supply, support ecosystem function in appropriate open space areas and in coordination with water agencies
- 5.3.5 **No Net Loss of Biodiversity.** In alignment with citywide biodiversity guidelines , support no net loss of biodiversity to achieve net ecological gain by protecting native species, managing invasive species, restoring habitats and ecological functions and processes, to maintain or enhance biodiversity over time.
- 5.3.6 **No Net Loss of Tree Canopy.** Support no net loss of tree canopy by balancing permitted tree removals in all open spaces with tree planting and identifying locations

in each ecotope for mitigation banking and restoration activities, prioritizing resources and sites for tree planting in neighborhoods disproportionately impacted by extreme heat and lower levels of tree canopy cover.

- 5.3.7 **Appropriate Tree Selection and Maintenance.** Select and adequately maintain regionally appropriate native tree species in open spaces that enhance urban biodiversity, ecological connectivity and provide ecosystem services while preventing and/or minimizing conflicts with infrastructure to support long-term climate resilience and environmental health.
- 5.3.8 **Tribal Stewardship.** Center Tribal sovereignty and stewardship to inform and guide conservation efforts and long-term management of open space, by supporting pathways for land return, co-stewardship and management agreements that restore Tribal leadership and care of land and water.

Objective

- 5.1 Protect areas of preservation and sustain ecosystem functions and processes by ensuring that growth supports the long-term health of natural resources, biodiversity, and ecological resilience while avoiding, limiting and/or mitigating development impacts.

Policies

- 5.4.1 **Protective Land Use and Zoning.** Develop and implement protective land use and zoning strategies such as easements and buffers to protect and preserve the ecological integrity of aquatic and terrestrial habitats in and adjacent to open spaces, including wildland-urban interface areas and areas identified as ecologically significant.
- 5.4.2 **Retention and Protection of Existing Trees.** Prevent the unnecessary damage to or removal of mature, healthy trees, prioritizing the preservation of large stature, protected, and heritage trees in all open spaces by enhancing assessments, monitoring, maintenance and preservation.
- 5.4.3 **Resource Buffers and Greenbelts.** Support the establishment and designation of resource buffers and greenbelts that integrate setbacks and other types of protective strategies and natural defense systems to protect biological and ecological resources while delivering multiple co-benefits.
- 5.4.4 **Watershed Protection.** Encourage the application of low impact development (LID) strategies for projects in and adjacent to open space areas to infiltrate, filter, store, evaporate, and detain stormwater runoff and to avoid or minimize impacts on biodiversity, habitats, and natural resources.
- 5.4.5 **Limit Landform Disturbance.** Encourage the application of best management practices (BMPs) for grading, construction, and other ground disturbing activities in or adjacent to open space areas to reduce pollutants from urban runoff and to avoid or

minimize soil erosion, slope instability, sedimentation, and loss of natural contours, drainage patterns, natural impervious surfaces, and habitats.

- 5.4.6 **Light Pollution.** Balance public safety and visibility needs while minimizing unnecessary or excessive artificial light in or adjacent to open spaces to reduce the impacts to wildlife (such as disorientation of nocturnal species and the disruption of mating, feeding, migrating, and the predator-prey balance) by encouraging context sensitive lighting that supports local ecosystem needs, particularly in wildlife-urban interface areas.
- 5.4.7 **Noise Pollution.** Prevent, reduce, or mitigate noise pollution that disrupts natural soundscapes in open space, particularly during sensitive periods for wildlife such as during mating, nesting and migration.

PRELIMINARY DRAFT

Goal 6

Open space that preserves historic resources and supports cultural practices.

Open spaces are not just recreational spaces, they also provide boundless scenic, historic and cultural value that enables us to foster and maintain meaningful connection to place. Preserving culturally and historically significant features of open spaces, such as cultural landscapes or historic structures, adds interest and preserves experiences that are rare or unique. These features become destinations that attract visitors and provide opportunities to both learn about and appreciate Los Angeles' rich history, helping to transmit our understanding of the past to future generations.

While preservation can involve celebrating history that we are proud of, it also involves recognizing moments in our history that can be painful and uncomfortable. Due to colonization, occupation, genocide, erasure, relocation, and slavery before, during, and after the founding of the City of Los Angeles in 1781, the story of indigenous communities, the First Peoples of Los Angeles, has been obscured, distorted, or diluted over time. The continuous identification, protection and restoration of ancestral and culturally significant open space lands should honor indigenous perspectives that view land not just as a physical space, commodity or resource, but as a living relative that supports cultural, spiritual and social relationships. Tribal stewardship policies are integrated in this and other goals of the Open Space Element, in order to elevate tribal leadership and wisdom that for millennia has supported the ecological balance of our open space lands and waters.

Objective

- 6.1 Open space that preserves historic resources and supports cultural practices.

Policies

- 6.1.1 **Significant Open Spaces.** Identify, recognize, and designate open spaces of scenic, historic, and cultural value through a transparent community-driven process and periodically reassess to respond to evolving community identity and connections to significant events, persons, traditions, or social movements, including the recognition of historically underrepresented communities, places, features, and objects.
- 6.1.2 **Preservation of Unique Sites and Features.** Support the preservation and/or restoration of rare or unique characteristics of parks and open spaces, such as distinctive landforms, natural features and vistas in alignment with local and regional needs and priorities.
- 6.1.3 **Cultural Landscapes.** Identify and promote strategies that acknowledge and safeguard the integrity of cultural landscapes that balances the preservation of their defining features while allowing for compatible and adaptive changes that support evolving community identity.

Objective

- 6.2 Engage and center Indigenous leadership and priorities in open space planning, design, and stewardship through culturally grounded practices and sustained partnerships that honor Tribal sovereignty, foster respect, and reciprocity.

Policies

- 6.2.1 **Traditional Knowledge Systems.** Recognize Traditional Knowledge Systems (TKS), which include observations, oral and written knowledge, innovations, practices, and beliefs developed, maintained, and transmitted by indigenous tribes and groups, as valid and foundational to support the development of indigenous stewardship and ecological restoration policies and programs.
- 6.2.2 **Prioritize Indigenous Priorities and Stewardship.** Prioritize the open space needs and priorities of Indigenous Tribes and groups to support land management efforts that promote ecological and cultural restoration, preservation, management and/or acquisition, including stewardship models that formalize cooperation and collaboration between local Tribes, government, cultural institutions, educational institutions, and surrounding communities.
- 6.2.3 **Tribal Consultation.** In alignment with and beyond state and local requirements, consult with local Tribes to accurately identify, preserve, or mitigate the impacts to public land containing Tribal resources.
- 6.2.4 **Protect Cultural and Tribal Resources.** Partner with Tribes and local communities to identify, protect and restore ancestral and culturally significant open space lands, including access for traditional and cultural uses and practices.

Chapter 4: Implementation Programs

What is an Implementation Program?

An implementation program is a coordinated series of actions that are intended to advance the General Plan’s goals, objectives, and policies. Decisions to implement specific programs are discretionary and governed by program cost, available funding, staffing, feasibility and similar considerations. Because the City’s priorities and perspectives continually evolve, new techniques and superior methods to achieve the General Plan’s aspirations may be identified. Therefore, programs the City may pursue can change, retaining the discretion to make adjustments and modifications in its approach without formally amending the General Plan. Ultimately, the aspirations of the Open Space Element will be implemented in a manner that best serves the open space needs of Los Angeles.

The following list of implementation programs include a brief description of the program, corresponding policies supporting the program, and the timeframe proposed for the program to launch. Programs in some cases may be synthesized and generalized from among many actions in order to holistically and comprehensively address a particular issue. Generally, short term goals describe programs recommended to launch within 0-5 years, medium term goals are 5-10 years, and long term goals are 10-15 years and beyond. In addition, some programs are described as ongoing, meaning that they may already be operational, but are captured in the list to reflect a community priority for its continued operation.

Some programs are assigned to the Department of City Planning, however, the large majority of programs are intended to be carried out over time by multiple departments and agencies. Therefore, each program is assigned a particular department to lead its implementation, but it is possible that additional agencies and departments may also be involved.

Implementation Programs

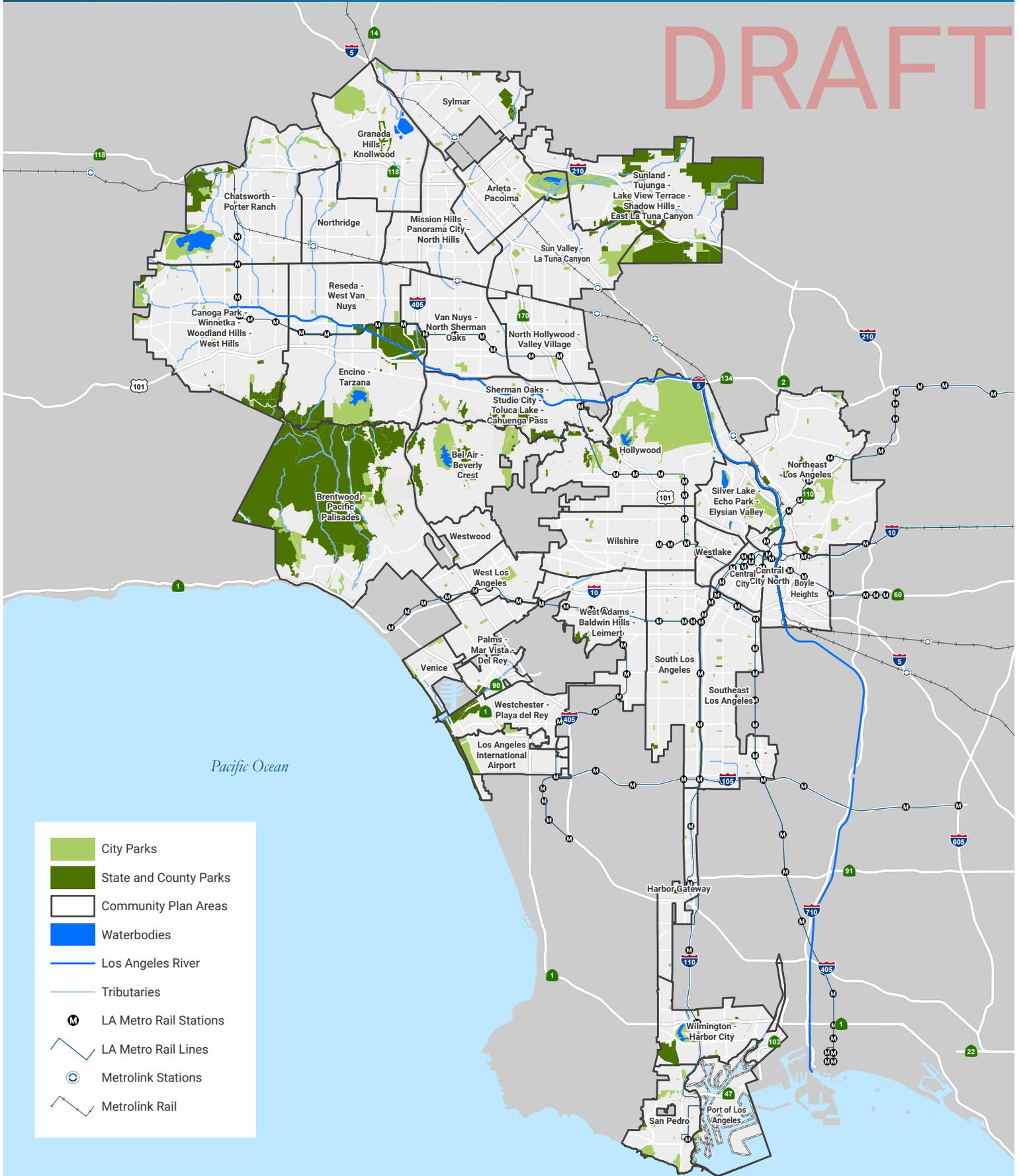
[Placeholder for implementation programs table]

Appendix 1: Parks Resources

City of Los Angeles



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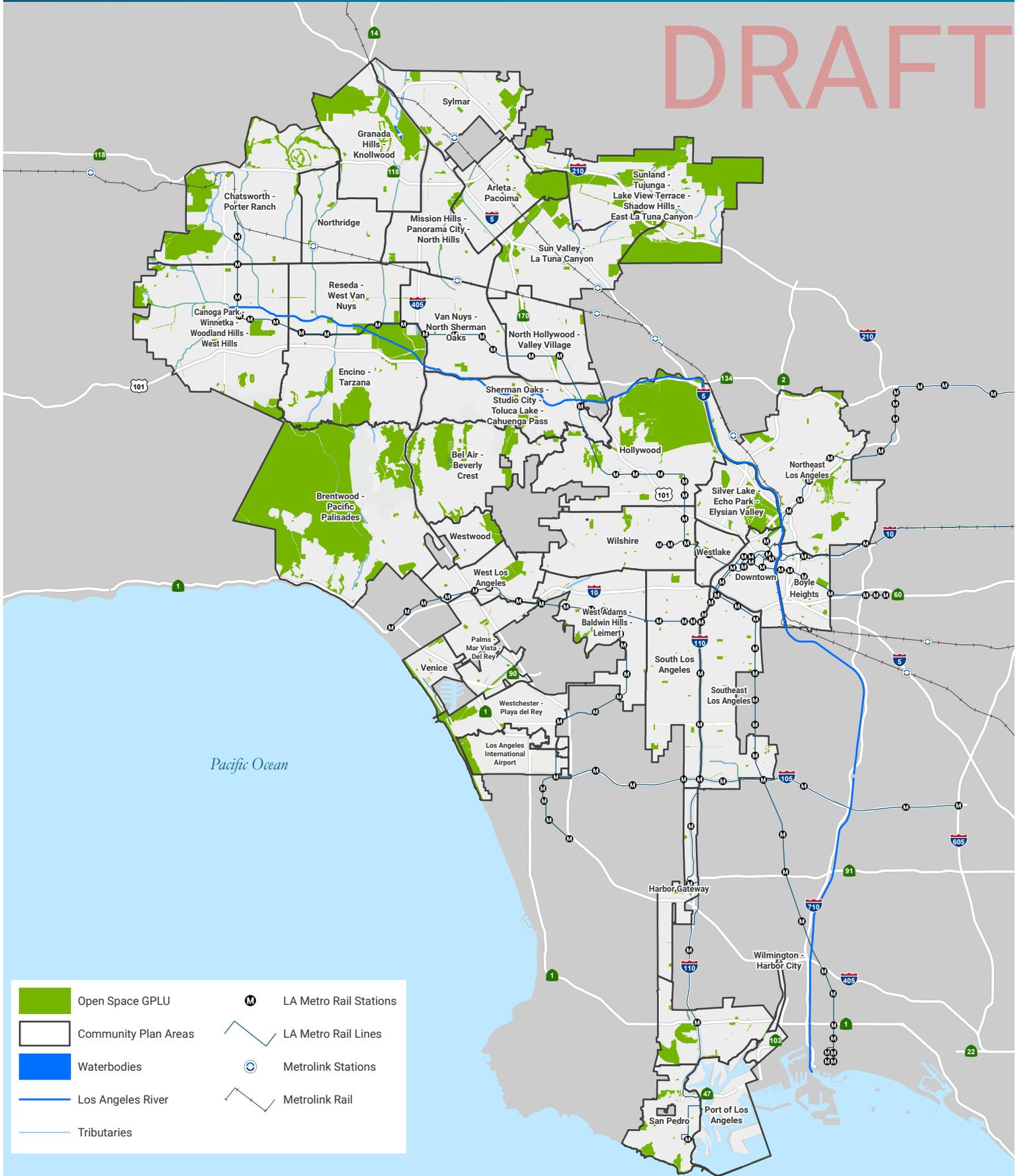
- City Parks
- State and County Parks
- Community Plan Areas
- Waterbodies
- Los Angeles River
- Tributaries
- M LA Metro Rail Stations
- LA Metro Rail Lines
- Metrolink Stations
- Metrolink Rail

Appendix 2: Open Space General Plan Land Use

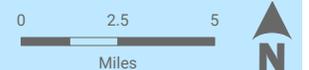
City of Los Angeles



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	Open Space GPLU		LA Metro Rail Stations
	Community Plan Areas		LA Metro Rail Lines
	Waterbodies		Metrolink Stations
	Los Angeles River		Metrolink Rail
	Tributaries		

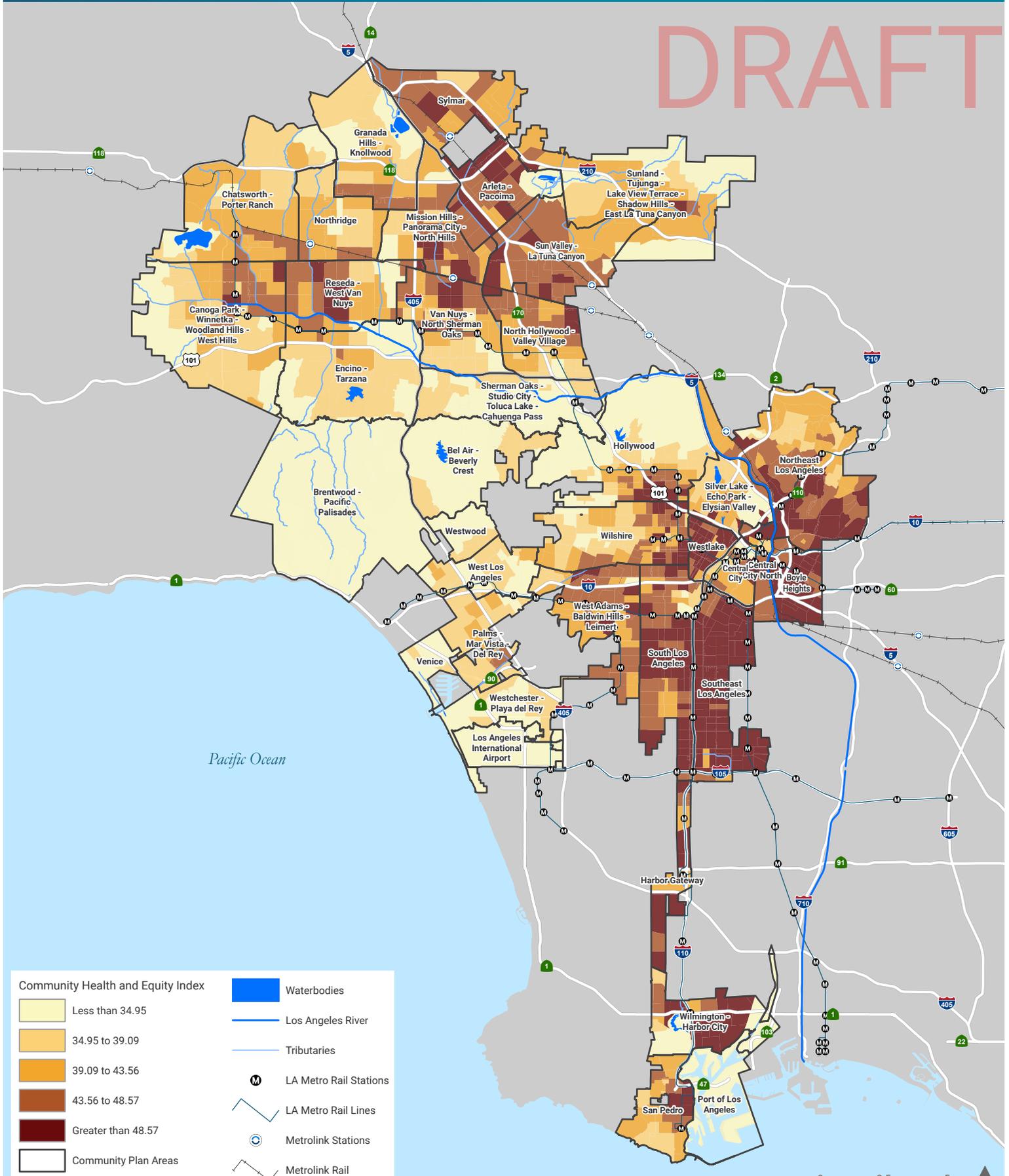


Appendix 3: Community Health and Equity Index (2021)

City of Los Angeles



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Community Health and Equity Index	
	Less than 34.95
	34.95 to 39.09
	39.09 to 43.56
	43.56 to 48.57
	Greater than 48.57
	Waterbodies
	Los Angeles River
	Tributaries
	LA Metro Rail Stations
	LA Metro Rail Lines
	MetroLink Stations
	MetroLink Rail
	Community Plan Areas

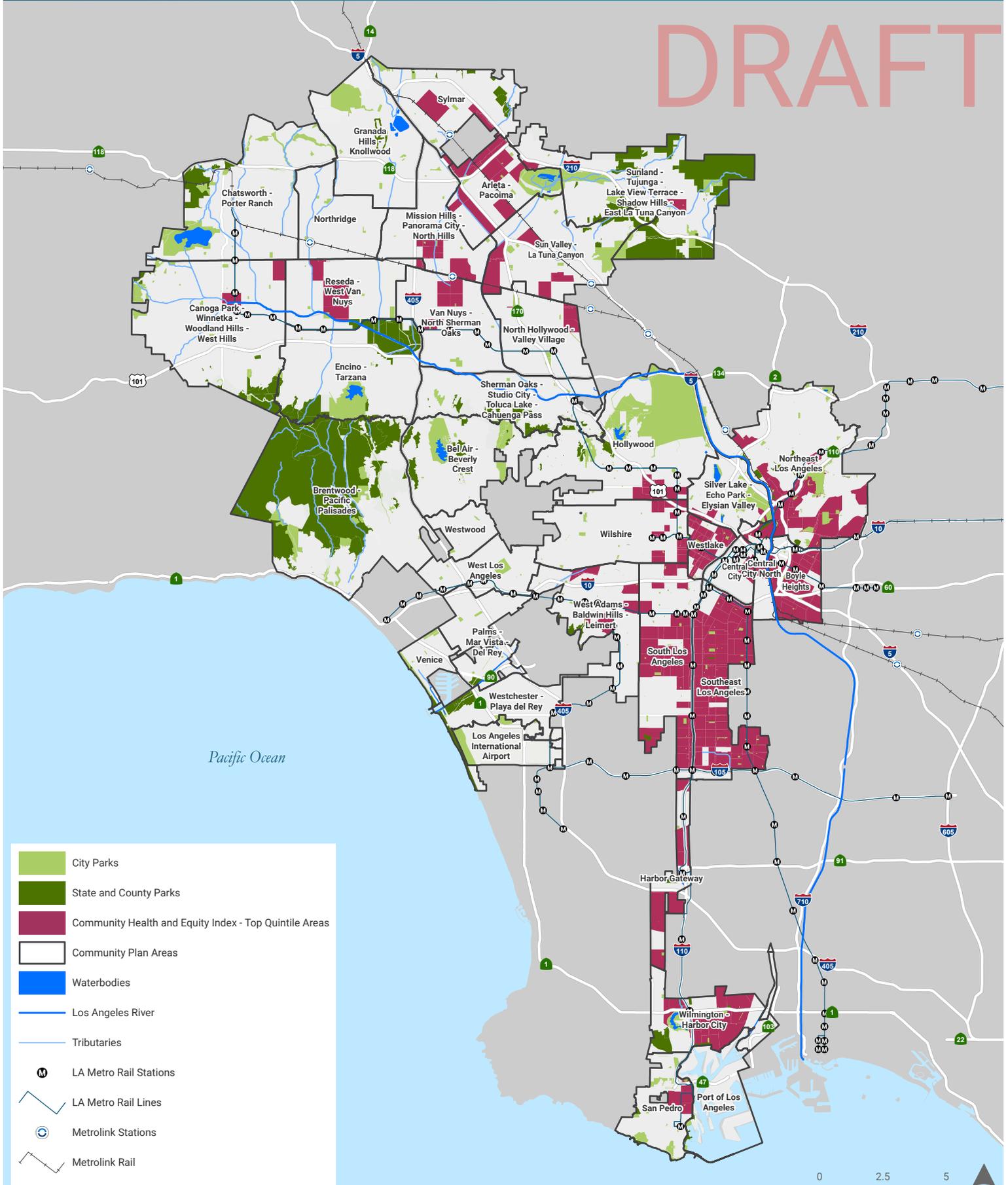


Appendix 4: Parks Resources & Community Health and Equity Index - Top Quintile Areas (2021)

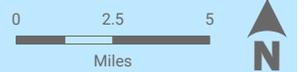
City of Los Angeles



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- City Parks
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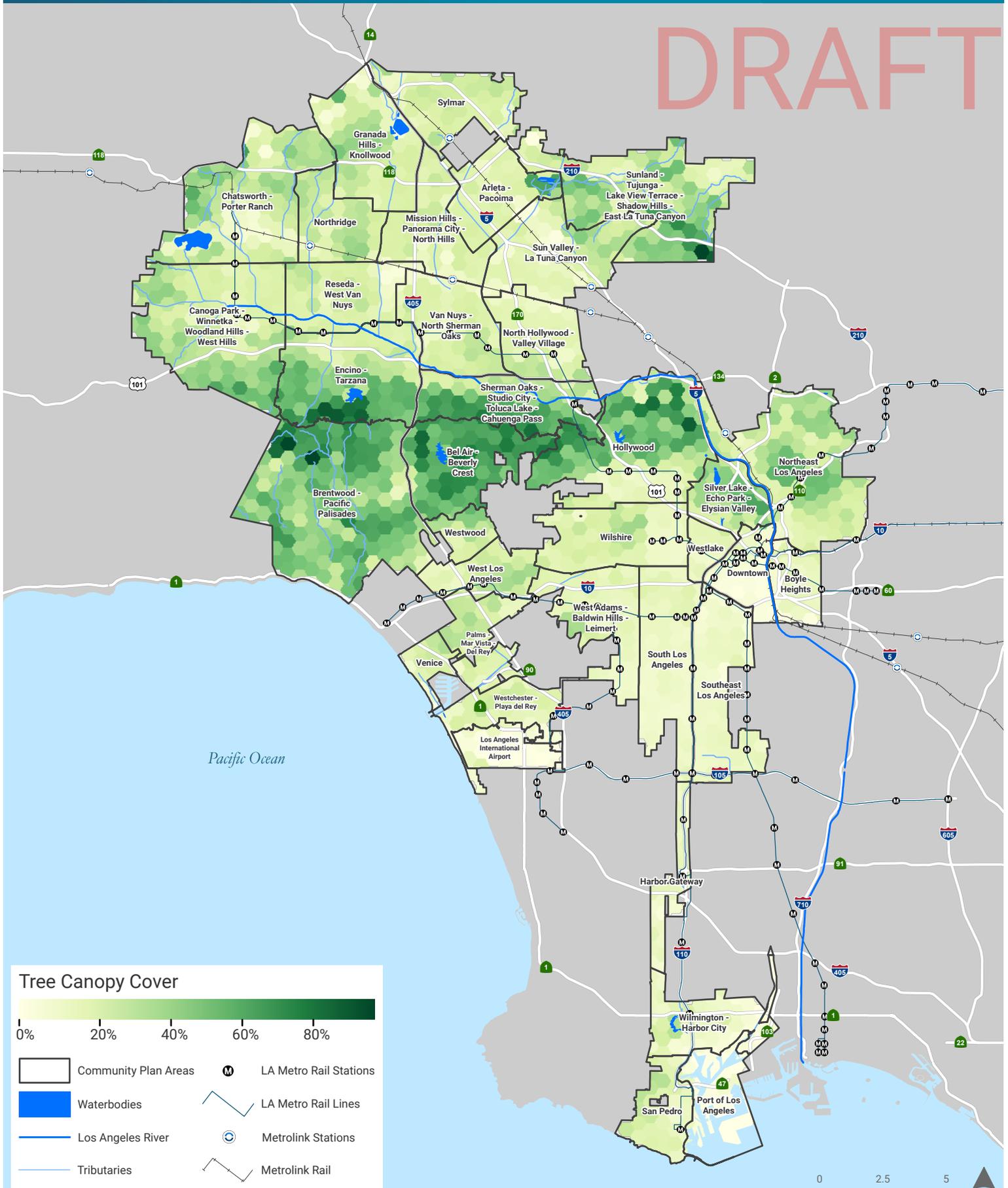


Appendix 5: Tree Canopy Cover (2020)

City of Los Angeles



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Tree Canopy Cover

0% 20% 40% 60% 80%

Community Plan Areas LA Metro Rail Stations

Waterbodies LA Metro Rail Lines

Los Angeles River Metrolink Stations

Tributaries Metrolink Rail

