



2021 CSAC Challenge Awards Entry
Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation
Earvin "Magic" Johnson Park Renovation

Executive Summary

Overview – Do you believe in Magic? With a little magic and loads of commitment and innovation, LA County Parks completely transformed the Earvin "Magic" Johnson Park.

Challenge – The Park's location, previously a blight to its community with a troubled past, was an ExxonMobil oil storage facility in the 1960s, then a HUD housing project geared as a path to home ownership for working-class Black families in the 1970s. In the 1990s, in complete disrepair with soil still contaminated, ownership was transferred to LA County. In 2008, after Exxon was ordered to clean up the site, residents were relocated and the development was razed. After many years of environmental remediation, the site was approved to be used as parkland. This underserved, densely populated community in South Central Los Angeles was in desperate need of green space for health and gathering.

Solution – Per the [Los Angeles County Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment](#), this community is rated as "Very High Park Need", giving it priority for LA County Parks' resources. In 2018, LA County approved the master plan, which included feedback from hundreds of residents, to transform the site into a beautiful 104-acre park for this underserved community, complete with a state-of-the-art events center and gymnasium, upgraded walking paths, aquatics center, a fishing lake and more.

Innovation – Some of the magic is in what you don't see. Landscape design and water engineering strategies were employed to capture water from nearby Compton creek, clean, store and then recycle it to fill the lakes, irrigate 30-acres of wetlands and park vegetation and then release the excess water back into the LA River system. The project includes other state-of-the-art recreational facilities that don't exist in this community or nearby areas, like an interactive lobby display.



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Results – This magical park, with 300 new shade trees and over 30,000 native and drought-tolerant plants combines beauty and function. Sparkling lakes with waterfalls encircle the handsome centerpiece, a 20,000 square foot community center that houses beautiful interior murals. The transformed Magic Johnson Park serves thousands of community residents weekly, including over 250,000 children who live within 5 miles. The grounds include meandering walking paths that access the community events center, gymnasium, aquatic center, multi-purpose stadium, wedding pavilion, skate park, picnic area, amphitheater, outdoor basketball courts, water features, exercise amenities, children's play area, dog park, sculpture garden and civic plaza, splash pads, reflecting pool, and more. The transformation of Earvin "Magic" Johnson Park is a well-deserved investment in public space and the revitalization has generated economic, physical, and social benefits, in addition to creating stronger community ties.

Replicability – The LA County Parks Needs Assessment is designed to identify high park need and serves as the north star for LA County Parks, and will inform park projects for years to come and is also a tool other parks agencies can implement. The project employed replicable water engineering strategies and partnerships with other agencies, including the partnership with LA County Public Works and its \$28-million investment in water resiliency, including biofiltration gardens and engineered-treatment wetlands that will clean neighborhood runoff using nature-based solutions. LA County Parks also worked with the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy, which is committed to moving projects forward, especially during these unprecedented times, to continue to allocate State bond funds to bring parks and open space to underserved communities throughout the region.

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Additional Materials – [Earvin "Magic" Johnson Park Webpage](#)