

# APPROVED

June 02 2022

## BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

**BOARD REPORT**

NO. 22-145

DATE June 02, 2022

C.D. ALL

### BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

SUBJECT: PLAN FOR THE PHASED EXPANSION OF THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL PARKS PROGRAM, 2022 - 2026

AP Diaz	_____	*M. Rudnick	<u>MR</u>
H. Fujita	_____	C. Santo Domingo	_____
J. Kim	_____	N. Williams	_____

*M. Slue*  
General Manager

Approved   X                        Disapproved \_\_\_\_\_                      Withdrawn \_\_\_\_\_

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Approve a Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP) Plan for the Phased Expansion of the Community School Parks Program for the years 2022 through 2026.
2. Direct Recreation and Parks Staff to implement Phase 1 of plan and to engage with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) toward a goal of adding five (5) new middle schools to the Community School Parks (CSP) Program by the end of the 2022-23 school year.
3. Direct Recreation and Parks Staff to report back to the Board for with a new, multi-year agreement with LAUSD for the CSP Program for its consideration and approval.

### SUMMARY

In alignment with RAP's Strategic Plan and the Mayor's Sustainable City pLAn / Green New Deal, in December 2017, RAP entered into an agreement (BR No.17-022) with LAUSD setting forth the terms and conditions of the City's operation of the CSP Program. Building upon long-standing collaboration with LAUSD, RAP developed the CSP Program in an effort to increase walkable park access by opening play yards for community use at LAUSD elementary and middle schools located in park deficient areas of the City.

The CSP Program is one important component of RAP's strategy toward making parks more accessible to more residents in accordance with its Strategic Plan. The initial Agreement with LAUSD provided RAP with the authorization to open specific school sites, and add additional school sites on a rolling basis, through the adoption of additional exhibits to the Initial Agreement.

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In April 2018, the program was launched at four school sites, which include Cahuenga E.S., Harvard E.S., Leo Politi E.S. and 75 th Street E.S. These four schools serve between 45,000 - 50,000 residents within ½ mile (10 minute walk) from their homes. In November 2019, the Board of Recreation and Parks (Board) approved (BR No.19-235) an extension of the existing LAUSD agreement to continue the program at those four schools and initiated a conversation with staff on ways to build on the CSP Program's successes.

In December 2021, recognizing the importance of parks and open space in the quality of life of Angelenos, Mayor Eric Garcetti issued **Executive Directive 31 - Achieving Park Equity**. This directive emphasizes the goal to achieve even greater park equity in the city to increase parkland in the communities that need it most. Specifically, the Executive Directive looks to RAP to continue to work with LAUSD to resolve and eliminate barriers to establishing community school parks, especially those in park-deficient communities.

In response to that Executive Directive and the Board's guidance, and now that LAUSD has reopened school campuses, which had been closed since March 2020 due to the pandemic, RAP staff would like to refocus on the program and set forth a plan for its phased expansion. As the impacts of the pandemic continue to ease, and as RAP rebuilds its workforce, staff have begun to re-engaged with LAUSD to re-initiate the CSP program.

To that end, the report requests the Board's approval of a RAP Plan for the Phased Expansion of the Community School Parks Program (Attachment 1). The report also recommends the Board direct staff to undertake the work to implement Phase 1 of the plan. It should be noted that a successor agreement between LAUSD and RAP will need to be adopted for the long-term continuation of the program, which staff will submit to the Board for consideration at a later date.

### FISCAL IMPACT

The approval of this report will not impact the RAP General Fund in Fiscal Year 2022-23 as sufficient funding is included in the Department's base budget. Future phases of the CSP expansion plan will require additional funding appropriations.

### STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVES AND GOALS

Approval of this Board Report advances RAP's Strategic Plan by supporting:

**Goal No. 1:** Provide Safe and Accessible Parks

**Outcome No. 2:** Every Angeleno has walkable access to a park in their neighborhood regardless of race, ethnicity, or socio-economic status

**Objective A)** Establish a new Community School Park Program with the LAUSD and other partners to increase access to playgrounds and open space for 200,000 Angelenos living in the highest park need areas

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This Report was prepared by Ryan Carpio, Director of Government Affairs, and reviewed by Matthew Rudnick, AGM of Special Operations Branch and Chief Sustainability Officer, and Jimmy Kim, AGM of Recreational Services Branch.

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS/EXHIBITS

1. CSP Program Phased Expansion Plan

**CITY OF LOS ANGELES DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION AND PARKS  
COMMUNITY SCHOOL PARKS PROGRAM  
PHASED EXPANSION PLAN  
JUNE 2, 2022**

**BACKGROUND**

Parks and open space are recognized as indispensable to our quality of life in Los Angeles as well as playing an important role in the health of the community. Well over a third of L.A. residents live in areas of high or very high park need as shown in the accompanying map. (See Appendix 1). Geographic disparities in park need exist throughout the city and reflect historic under-investment patterns. 347 Census Tracts identified as being deficient in parks and open space are in areas of the city that are fully developed and heavily populated where some of the only open spaces in the public domain are Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) school campuses, street medians and the city streets.

Despite progress made in the last few years toward increasing the percentage of L.A. residents living within a 10-minute walk (1/2 mile) from a park (currently 64%), significant park equity disparities persist across the City. According to the Trust for Public Land, parks that serve predominantly white neighborhoods tend to be five times larger than parks that serve neighborhoods of people of color, and they tend to serve five times fewer people. In contrast, parks in low-income neighborhoods are, on average, four times smaller than those in higher-income areas and are strained under the demand of quadruple the users.<sup>1</sup>

Based on studies by non-profit organizations such as the Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust and The City Project, these park disparities disproportionately impact low-income households and communities of color and have had disparate health morbidity outcomes. Children living in many of these neighborhoods do not have the same opportunity to attend summer camps; enjoy swimming lessons; to participate in the sports and cultural programs offered by the city; or to have the benefits of green open space that Recreation and Park (RAP) facilities provide in other neighborhoods. In recognition of this circumstance the Department of Recreation and Parks adopted the proposal for Community School Parks in its 2018- 2022 Strategic Plan.

**City of Los Angeles Park Equity Goals:**

- In 2015, the Mayor's Sustainable City pLAn sets a goal of increasing the percentage of Angelenos living within a one-half (1/2) mile from a park to sixty-five percent (65%) by 2025 and to seventy-five percent (75%) by 2035.
- In RAP's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the Department of Recreation and Parks, recognizing that gaps in park equity are directly linked to disparate health outcomes, further committed to closing these gaps by prioritizing investments in communities with the greatest park need.
- In 2019, The Mayor's Green New Deal set an additional goal of increasing park access: one hundred percent (100%) of Angelenos living within ½ mile from a park by 2050
- In 2021, Mayor of Los Angeles Issued Executive Directive 31 – Achieving Park Equity. To increase and Improve Park Access, Mayor directed Recreation and Parks to work with the City Attorney and the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) to examine and resolve the liability and other structural barriers to a master joint use policy applicable to all schools in the District to establish community school parks, especially those in park-deficient communities.

<sup>1</sup>The Trust for Public Land, "Green Schoolyards for Los Angeles: The smart policy solution for equity, health, and climate resilience" (2021)

CSP PROGRAM – PHASED EXPANSION PLAN  
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RAP has increasingly focused its attention and resources on park deficient areas of the City and has employed strategies intended to increase park access in these communities. To achieve park equity sites would need to be located within a walkable distance of a half-mile or within a 10-minute walk.

Park Equity and access to recreation services can be achieved by multi-tasking its public assets in these impacted areas to create Community School Parks (CSP) which can be accomplished by utilizing school campuses or other public space such as City streets closed to vehicle traffic in neighborhoods that do not have parks within walking distance.

COMMUNITY SCHOOL PARKS (CSP) PROGRAM - SHARED USE OF SCHOOLS

Creating more access to safe public space like parks and playgrounds increases physical activity levels and helps combat obesity. Access to open space can improve school attendance and positively impacts community health, well-being, and livability. Many cities and local jurisdictions have used joint or shared use as a strategy to improve walkable park and playground access such as the New York City and the City of San Francisco.

RAP and LAUSD have a long-standing partnership involving joint use of schools and parks, predominately focused on pool facilities and sports fields. However, the majority of LAUSD elementary school play yards are currently locked during weekends, holidays, and summer. Activation of elementary and middle school play yards by RAP on the weekends, holidays and summer provides an opportunity to serve communities in the most park deficient areas of the city.

RAP continues to acquire new property, especially in dense, park deficient areas of the City. Given limited funding it will be extremely difficult to meet City's aggressive park access goals through park acquisition alone. To increase park access in these communities, RAP is seeking to expand its relationship with LAUSD to establish new joint-use partnerships, also called Community School Parks (CSP).

In December 2017, RAP Board approved a new Agreement with LAUSD for the CSP Program and subsequently launched a pilot program that opened the initial four (4) Community School Parks in high park need areas of the City: 75th Street ES, Cahuenga ES, Harvard ES, Leo Politi ES. Collectively, these community school parks served approximately 40,000 - 50,000 residents within ½ mile of their home. In November 2019, the Board of Recreation and Parks (Board) approved an extension of the existing LAUSD agreement to continue the program at those four schools and initiated a conversation with staff on ways to build on the CSP Program's successes. However, as a result of the pandemic, the CSP Program was discontinued as schools closed.

CSP PROGRAM – SCHOOL SITE SELECTION

For the initial pilot program, RAP utilized GIS data to identify those elementary schools that had the potential to most significantly increase the number of residents living within a 10-minute walk (1/2 mile) from open space in areas of the City with the lowest park access. After identifying these potential high-impact school sites, RAP staff worked closely with LAUSD staff to determine site suitability and logistical factors such as restroom access, gate entrances,

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campus safety considerations, etc. Other factors were also explored such as availability of programmable green space or turf (as opposed to only asphalt play yards), strong community support, and strong support from LAUSD school administration, to name a few. It should be noted that the CSP Program excludes high-school campuses from consideration due to robust high-school athletics programs that typically encumber the sports fields and recreational amenities.

While the pandemic did interrupt the initial pilot phase described above, important information was gathered to help inform the continuation and expansion of the program. The aforementioned pilot school sites experienced a range of visitation and use during weekend public hours. Some school sites did incrementally see growth in visitation, however overall there was less school site visitation than desired. Based on feedback from assigned CSP staff, youth and community members, some of the primary challenges resulting in low visitation included a lack of awareness regarding CSPs being open for community use, the lack of green space and shade at existing school play yards, and the lack of structured recreational / cultural activities at the CSPs during times of public use.

Los Angeles Unified School District includes over 400 Elementary Schools and over 70 Middle Schools. Both elementary and middle school play yards and field space can provide multiple community benefits when open to the public during non-school hours. While most LAUSD elementary schools do not have large turf fields, many middle school campuses do have grass fields that are generally more conducive to structured recreational programs.

As RAP re-focuses on the CSP Program, at the direction of its General Manager and Board of Commissioners, RAP staff proposes to undertake new site selection due diligence process for both elementary and middle schools that will expand selection criteria to better account for disparities in park acreage per person in addition to its traditional focus on walkable park access. Preliminarily, RAP will evaluate additional elementary schools as well as focus on middle schools in high impact communities that have the potential to host significant recreational programs during non-school hours.

The CSP program envisions the LAUSD Middle school sites would serve in the same manner a Community Park and Recreation Center. This may include the use of the building facilities such as the special purpose facilities as the gymnasium, restrooms, music room, art studio, auditorium, etc. The interior of the building in such use could be separated by portable gates at the time of their use as CSP to control access to other areas of the building. PT Staff would be augmented by activity specialists to conduct the programs. A transportation arrangement could also be made available for special off campus events or programs.

The CSP program at Elementary Schools sites would serve in the same manner as a Neighborhood Parks, and could be enhanced by special transportation arrangements to allow for participants to partake in swimming instruction or recreational swimming, and other special programs or events at Community Parks in the area

Schools and the facilities within the schools identified for consideration will then be evaluated in close coordination with LAUSD staff to determine feasibility for inclusion in the CSP program.

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As it relates to middle schools, schools sites such as *Pio Pico, Sun Valley Magnet, Fulton College Prep, Northridge, and Sepulveda Middle School* would be examples of five middle schools RAP would further evaluate for consideration as CSPs because they have existing turf fields, they serve thousands of residents currently not having access to a park within 10-minute walk, and they currently do not have existing permits outside of school. A variety of other site conditions, school and community support considerations, and other factors would be evaluated with LAUSD staff, and subject to approval by LAUSD, for inclusion in the program.

CSP PROGRAM – PHASED EXPANSION PLAN

RAP operated four (4) CSPs under its Initial Agreement with LAUSD. In alignment with the Sustainable City pLAN and RAP's Five-Year Strategic Plan, RAP has been tasked with expanding the program to roughly 25-30 schools in the next three years to meet the goal of providing 200,000 residents with park access. To meet this directive, RAP has developed a four-phase CSP Expansion Plan, as diagrammed in Appendix 3.

**Phase I (Fiscal Year 2022-23)** – Phase I involves re-starting the CSP Program at five (5) schools beginning in the Fall and opening an additional five (5) in the Spring of 2023 (10 total school sites, with the goal of five middle schools). The CSP program would be supervised under the Senior Recreation Director (SRD) overseeing citywide programs including the LA Kids program and mobile recreation program, under the leadership of the Pacific Region Superintendent.

- Each CSP will have two (2) part-time staff assigned to the location that will report to the SRD of LA Kids.
  - 1 - PT Supervisor/Manager Level
  - 1 - PT Rec Assist/Instructor Level
- Each CSP will have site monitoring and enhanced recreational programming activities during hours of public use.
- In order to provide proper span of control, a supervisory structure would be introduced to include one full time Senior Recreation Facility Director assigned to five (5) CSPs, which would report to one full-time, Citywide Principal Recreation Supervisor I position.
- These full time positions would not only supervise the activities of part time staff and coordinate recreational programs, but would also assist with the opening of schools in their respective regions as well as support increased engagement with students, teachers and community members during the week to raise awareness of the CSP Program and attract participation in CSP recreational activities.
- Funding would also be allocated for landscape maintenance needs at each school site resulting from increased public use.

**Phase II (Fiscal Year 2023-24)** – Phase II involves expanding the number of CSPs in the program from ten (10) to twenty (20), comprised of four (4) clusters of five (5) schools with 1 cluster in each of RAP's four (4) geographic regions. Similar to Phase I, teams of part-time staff would provide site monitoring and recreational programming at each CSP. Three additional full-time Senior Recreation Directors would be added, such that each would oversee a cluster of five (5) schools. In addition, a Recreation Supervisor would be introduced to support Principal Recreation

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Supervisor I position with the management of the program on a Citywide basis. Additional resources would be allocated to address landscape maintenance needs at the additional CSPs.

**Phase III (Fiscal Year 2024-25)** – Phase III involves expanding the number of CSPs in the program from 20 to 30. Preliminarily, these 30 CSPs would comprise eight (8) to ten (10) schools in each of RAP’s four (4) geographic regions. Two (2) full-time Senior Recreation Director positions and one full-time Recreation Supervisor positions would be added such that there would be three Senior Recreation Directors overseen by one Recreation Supervisor reporting to Principal Recreation Supervisor I.. Additional resources would also be allocated to address landscape maintenance needs at the additional CSPs. It would be during this phase that RAP would plan to complete a group of initial school greening projects.

CSP PROGRAM – RECREATIONAL OFFERINGS AND HOURS

In the Summer of 2018, RAP staff provided a series of pop-up recreational programming at the four (4) pilot CSPs. While this pop-up programming did result in increased visitation to the CSPs by youth and local community members, it was determined that routine and consistent structured recreational activities at each school site would further strengthen visitation to each CSP.

CSPs provides an opportunity to provide recreational programs in areas of the City that lack parks and open space. Recognizing the need for increased activation of CSPs, RAP Recreation staff propose to provide

- Programmed activities much like classes that are offered in RAP’s traditional recreation facility setting and incorporate elements of the PLAYLA program for classes and clinics. Examples include activities such as sports clinics, games, arts and craft, dance.
- The Mobile Recreation units will be integrated into the CSP sites to bring specialized programming (ex: vehicles are being equipped with Wi-Fi to engage audio and video types of programming).
- Trained staff to introduce youth to various Olympic sports related activities leading up to Los Angeles hosting the 2028 Olympics Games.
- bBasic recreational supplies (ex: balls, simple art projects) for drop-in play.

It is proposed that CSPs will operate on weekends, schools holidays and during the summer, typically from 10am to 4pm. Where feasible, RAP proposes to expand hours of operation to the evening, such as opening from 6pm-10pm where facilities are able to accommodate evening use, subject to further collaboration and approval by LAUSD.

CSP PROGRAM BUDGET

An existing budget of \$948,974 for the program is included as part of RAP’s base-budget. It should be noted that while this budget amount includes \$500,000 for part time staffing costs allocated in the FY20-21 budget, funding and position authorities for full time staff was not provided.

It is estimated that each CSP can cost approximately \$40,000 to \$50,000 per year not including full time staff required for oversight in the proposed expansion phases. Full time staff that oversee the clusters would be an integral part of the operations. They will direct and supervise part-time supervisory staff in the delivery of the programs and operations at each of the CSP sites.

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Additional recreational programs at larger middle school sites may also require enhanced funding on a per site basis. As such, RAP has sufficient resources to carry out the proposed Phase 1 and will request additional staffing and financial resources for future phases.

### SCHOOL GREENING

LAUSD and a broad coalition of public and private partners are engaging on various efforts to green school campuses to provide multiple social and environmental benefits. Increased tree canopy coverage and green space on both elementary schools and middle schools would provide significantly expanded opportunities for community use and access through the proposed CSP Program.

Green school campuses can also combat the negative impacts of climate change on a neighborhood-wide scale. Typical features of green schoolyards include bioswales (channels designed to capture stormwater), pervious surface cover to aid in stormwater runoff and management systems, increased tree canopy and shade, and natural and native plantings.

RAP continues to participate in dialogue, collaboration and partnerships with groups like the Trust for Public Land, the Living School Yard Coalition and other stakeholders to proactively support school greening initiatives. Where feasible and appropriate, RAP will assist in identifying and supporting local, state and federal funding resources for school greening in coordination with partners and LAUSD. The acceleration and advancement of school greening is of critical importance in the context of the climate crisis at a local level.

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Ongoing feedback on community priorities and interests is essential for recreation and park programs to continually convey the value of the public and is important for the success and sustainability of the proposed CSP Program expansion phases. A formal process for input and feedback at local parks has been adopted for this purpose through the formation of Park Advisory Boards (PABs) composed of interested residents who reflect the interest and have the confidence of the constituencies being served, as outlined in the RAP PAB Manuals.

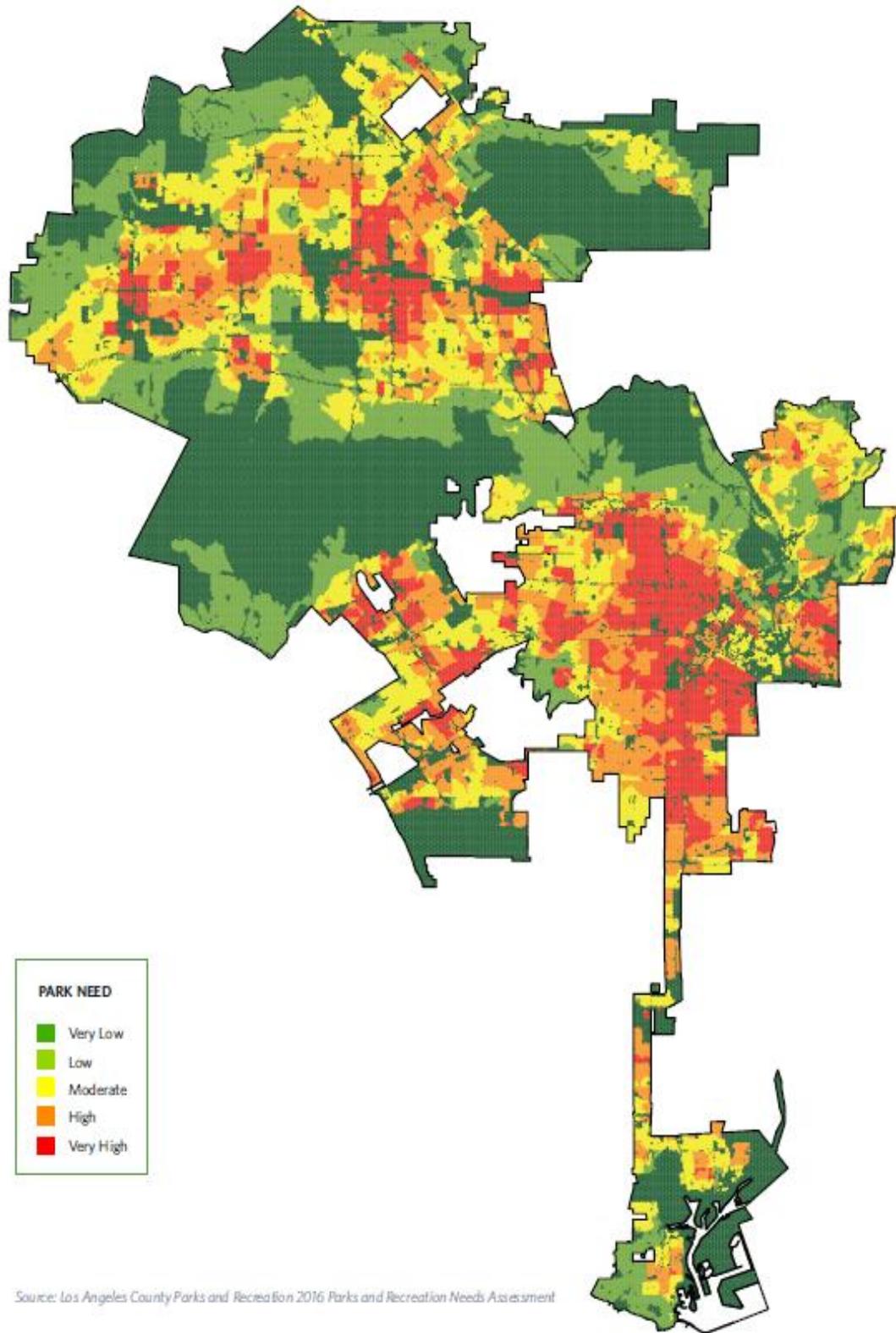
While some initial school (student/parent/teacher) and community engagement was conducted prior to the launching of the program in 2018, additional engagement and marketing to students, parents and community members would further assist RAP in activating the school play yards during community times of public use. In the past, RAP worked with a non-profit organization to help outreach to local neighborhoods through a door-to-door knocking campaign announcing the opening of the CSPs. With the new staffing model at CSP locations, the assigned staff will engage in outreach and promotion of programs offered through parent groups, school administration and teachers, local Neighborhood Councils, and Council Office social media. Establishing a Community School Park Advisory Board (CSPAB) similar to that of a PAB is recommended to ensure RAP and LAUSD are receiving regular feedback from stakeholders at each school site.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

1. Map of LA – Park Need
2. Green New Deal Park Access Goals
3. CSP Program Expansion Plan

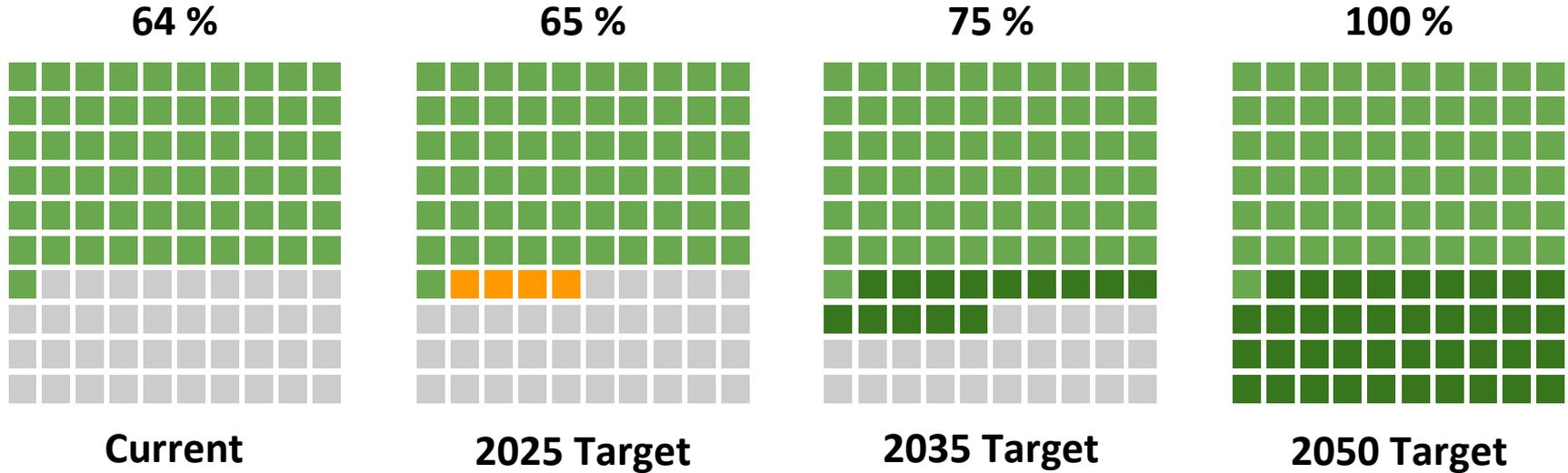
APPENDIX 1



Source: Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation 2016 Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment

# Green New Deal Park Access Goals

Percent of Angelenos Living within a ½ Mile (10 Minute Walk) from a Park



■ = Approx. 39,000 Angelenos



**APPENDIX 3**

Phase I  
FY 2022-23

10 CSPs



Pacific



Metro



Valley



West



**Legend**



Supervisor

Phase II  
FY 2023-24

20 CSPs



Sr. Director

Phase III  
FY 2024-25

30 CSPs



Part Time Instructor



CSP

Phase IV  
FY 2025-26

30 CSPs

SAME AS PHASE III

CSP  
Program  
4-Phase  
Expansion  
Plan

