



November 1, 2000

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Purpose

The Silver Lake and Ivanhoe Reservoirs Master Plan (Master Plan) is intended as a long range planning tool for the Silver Lake community and the Department of Water and Power (DWP). The Master Plan examines opportunities for expanded recreation opportunities and improved pedestrian safety while preserving water quality and maintaining current and future DWP operation needs.

The Master Plan identifies future improvements to the Silver Lake Reservoir Complex (SLRC) and adjoining property for water quality and operation purposes and for community enhancements and public uses that are mutually supported and accepted by DWP, Committee to Save Silver Lake's Reservoirs (CSSLR) and Silver Lake Residents Association (SLRA) (collectively referred to as advisory groups or community groups).

The Master Plan provides the community with a better understanding of DWP facilities, operations and both anticipated and potential water quality improvement needs.

The Master Plan defines specific public uses for the SLRC and adjoining property desired by the Silver Lake community.

The Master Plan provides a menu of possible mitigation measures to be used by DWP when and if any water quality improvement projects are needed at the site.

The Master Plan serves as a guide to ensure that all future physical improvements identified for public use are compatible with DWP's need to comply with federal and state water quality standards in a manner that is safe and cost effective.

The Master Plan documents concepts necessary to seek non-DWP funding for design and construction of the identified community enhancements.

The Master Plan memorializes the problem-solving process and spirit of cooperation that has developed between DWP and the Silver Lake community with respect to communication and collaboration regarding non-routine facility operations and major future projects at the SLRC.

The Master Plan sites public uses with an attempt to minimize interference with future water quality improvements should they be necessary. Additionally, the Master Plan offers assurances that if DWP projects are constructed on site, all reasonable efforts will be made to minimize interference with public uses during construction and to accommodate restoration of public uses after construction.

Context

In 1988 the DWP publicized an “Open Reservoir Water Quality Improvement Plan” that included a proposal to cover all smaller reservoirs. Larger reservoirs would require a water treatment facility. The ten open-reservoir communities expressed support for water quality improvements but strongly opposed covering the reservoirs or building a treatment facility at the SLRC. A process of formal mediation was initiated with DWP and through improved communication between DWP and ten open-reservoir community groups, the idea for this Master Plan was born.

Land Use and Zoning

The 127-acre Silver Lake Reservoir property is owned by DWP. At the SLRC are 96 acres of open water and paved roads identified as the Silver Lake and Ivanhoe Reservoirs. An additional five acres of SLRC property is used by DWP for operational purposes. Of the remaining 26 acres, two are leased to the Department of Recreation and Parks and one to the Neighborhood Nursery. For the first time ever, the DWP has agreed to consider public access to and additional recreational opportunities on portions of the remaining 23 acres. Unlike other urban locations considered for recreational uses, these sites have been off limits to the public since at least the 1940’s. Consequently the property is in an undeveloped natural state. Primary locations include a six acre grassy meadow, an adjoining heavily wooded knoll and an extensive eucalyptus grove.

The DWP property is zoned as OS (Open Space) by the City of Los Angeles. The reservoirs and minor ancillary facilities are permitted uses in the OS zone. Other existing DWP facilities and accessories are considered a legal nonconforming existing use. The recreation and urban trail concepts proposed in this Master Plan are generally permitted in the OS zone “by right” as described in LAMC Section 12.04.05B1(a)(1). The addition of a water treatment facility would require a conditional use permit from the City of Los Angeles. The application for the conditional use permit requires an environmental assessment as called for in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), as well as a public hearing with notification of all property owners and occupants within a 500-foot radius, and approval by the Planning Commission.

The community will continue to be consulted on the design of future facilities on the property. In the wooded knoll area they would prefer that new construction use building materials that blend into the character of the area. Another issue of concern is the use of this site as a vehicle storage and dispatch point for crews working on other DWP or General Services facilities. The community would prefer to limit facilities and activities to those directly necessary for this facility.

Water Quality

Both Silver Lake and Ivanhoe Reservoirs hold drinking water from the Los Angeles Aqueduct and other sources. The water is consumed in areas of Los Angeles to the south and east of Silver Lake. These reservoirs are classified as open reservoirs and are a part of the citywide distribution system of the DWP. The DWP must meet water quality regulations established by federal and state agencies including the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the California Department of Health Services (DHS); construction in the reservoir areas is controlled by the California Division of Safety of Dams.

The reservoir water is treated with chlorine and other chemicals to control algae and other possible contaminants. Measures are taken to protect the reservoirs from surface water runoff, insect populations and other potentially harmful substances including those generated by humans and animals.

Water quality regulations continue to become more restrictive. At other locations, these regulations have resulted in the covering of some open reservoirs and/or the construction of treatment and storage facilities. Although the Silver Lake and Ivanhoe Reservoirs meet the current water quality regulations and do not require additional water quality measures at this time, stricter regulations requiring future improvements may be mandated. The Master Plan team studied location options for a treatment facility should one be required. The community's first and overwhelming preference is to locate all treatment and storage facilities off-site. The DWP is committed to pursuing off-site options and will evaluate those options along with on-site options. If on-site treatment and storage are deemed necessary, this Master Plan provides conceptual guidelines on possible locations that have the least visual impact on the community and offer the greatest flexibility for continued recreational uses.

Landscape Recreation and Open Space

ML+A presented a variety of recreational alternatives, both passive (walking, jogging, meditation and nature viewing) as well as active (soccer, softball, par-course and picnicking) at the well-attended workshops. After extensive discussion, an overwhelming consensus emerged at the workshops in support of passive recreational uses and in opposition to all forms of active recreational uses in the areas of reservoir property to be opened to the public.

The most important public element of the Master Plan is the creation of an accessible, continuous pathway for walkers and joggers around the entire reservoir that is separated from vehicular traffic. The Master Plan envisions a continuous 8-foot-wide paved pathway for walkers and joggers. In all areas, the proposed path will be separated and raised above the level of the adjacent streets. In larger open areas like the meadow and the knoll, secondary trails can branch off the main path to provide varied experiences. Access to these trails would be limited to day-light hours.

Water quality protection is an important factor in determining future recreation uses. Areas adjacent to the reservoir are especially susceptible to potential contamination, with possible water quality impacts. Organized recreation at the Silver Lake Reservoir is expected to remain limited to the existing Recreation and Parks facilities at the south end of the SLRC. Other recreation, including walking, wildlife viewing, seating, interpretive areas and meditation, is proposed for the accessible open areas.

Pedestrian Safety and Traffic

Pedestrian safety in the Silver Lake neighborhood was one of the most important issues raised by the community. Residents expressed great concern about speeding traffic and the dangerous conditions walkers and joggers face and cited a high accident rate, including two deaths, attributed to unsafe pedestrian conditions on reservoir-adjacent streets.

In order to promote traffic calming, restore a more residential feel and reduce the potential for accidents, a wide range of improvements were identified for inclusion in the Master Plan. These include street-width reductions, additional traffic control devices and enhanced pedestrian crosswalks. In addition, introducing a DASH neighborhood shuttle service is recommended to further reduce vehicular traffic in the Silver Lake area. These proposals were presented in community workshops and discussed with the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT).

Community Context, Cultural Resources and Urban Design

Silver Lake's sense of community is strengthened by many factors that include its topography, the vitality and diversity of its residents, its close proximity to downtown and its geographic isolation from adjacent neighborhoods. This Master Plan established an objective to explore concepts to further enhance or strengthen this sense of identity.

Gateways and streetscapes are important facets of a community signaling entry and identity. For example, the Gateway to Silver Lake 2000 project at Silver Lake Boulevard and the Hollywood Freeway includes murals, tree planting and median landscaping. The bridge at Sunset Boulevard and Silver Lake Boulevard provides further opportunities to enhance community identity by highlighting this architectural element through signage and dramatic lighting. Additionally, the medians at Fletcher Drive and Ripple Street at the Los Angeles River bikeway access gate are to be landscaped. Streetscapes composed of coordinated tree plantings, paving surfaces, street furniture, banner programs and light fixtures can unify and transform streets.

Community Involvement Process

From the outset, this project has been conducted with close ties to the Silver Lake community. The community process for the project had multiple goals. The first was to work closely with board members of CSSLR, SLRA, Silver Lake Improvement Association and the Silver Lake Chamber of Commerce to reflect community desires as broadly as possible. The second was to involve as many residents as possible in the general community meetings. The third goal was to maintain a stream of information to the local council district office, obtain their feedback and utilize them as a tool to gain access to other local agencies or city offices that would have jurisdiction over the area. Lastly, all of the local representatives to state and city government were invited to all of the workshops. Los Angeles City Councilmember Jackie Goldberg of the 13th Council District and State Assemblymember Scott Wildman of the 43rd District both attended community workshops.

Funding and Implementation

Although funding to develop this Master Plan was provided by DWP, no funding has been committed for the implementation of the concepts proposed in this Master Plan. Potential funding for various components of the Silver Lake and Ivanhoe Reservoirs Master Plan is available both from governmental and private sources.

The Los Angeles City Planning Department has recommended that the City Council offices for the area, District 13 and District 4, make a motion to the full City Council to request that the Planning Department incorporate as much of the content of this Master Plan as possible into the current Silver Lake Echo Park Community Plan update. Some of the concepts in the Master Plan may be more specific than the policy-level discussions in the Community Plan.

All of the plans, diagrams and concepts described in this Master Plan are conceptual ideas and need to be further developed in detail in order to be implemented.

Part of the purpose of this Master Plan is to assist DWP in understanding the desires of the community regarding its property. As a result of this Master Plan, if a construction project requiring mitigation is proposed, DWP has a better understanding of the community's concerns and desires.

For any project at the site, DWP, as owner of the property, will be the lead agency in terms of project approval for CEQA documents and will cooperate with other agencies and other organizations during their development of all environmental and construction documents for approved projects. However, DWP will develop the required environmental and construction documents for community enhancements when they are used as mitigation for a DWP project.

In the meantime, DWP is committed to providing ongoing upkeep and maintenance on its property as is the Department of Recreation and Parks for the areas it currently leases. When funding becomes available, improvements may be developed and managed by the Department of Recreation and Parks either through additional leases or other agreements.

As part of this Master Plan, cost estimates for the improvements were developed from industry standards totaling approximately \$12 million. Phasing options have also been developed to address opportunities for development of portions of the plan as funding becomes available.