



CITY OF GLENDALE, CALIFORNIA REPORT TO THE SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM

Report: Update on the Verdugo Wash Visioning Process

1. Motion to provide input and feedback to staff regarding the current stage of the visioning process for the Verdugo Wash Project, and to note and file the report.

COUNCIL ACTION

Item Type: Action Item

Approved for December 14, 2021 **calendar**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report will provide an update on the Verdugo Wash Visioning process. To date, the city has conducted surveys through the project website, conducted community meetings, engaged with essential stakeholders, and begun the process of developing early concepts and ideas of what could be possible within the Verdugo Wash flood control channel. The concepts that will be presented during the Council session reflect feedback received from residents, Los Angeles County Flood Control, and the United States Army Corps of Engineers. A working stakeholder group has also been assembled to provide feedback on the project and concepts.

The concepts presented will include opportunities to create pedestrian and cyclist trails within the wash, as well as introduce vegetation and other amenities. Following the Council session, staff will re-engage with neighborhoods, organizations, and stakeholders to discuss the concepts. Refinements and modifications will continue to evolve, as these concepts represent very early opportunities with many other issues to be addressed based on design, engineering, flood control performance, and public safety.

COUNCIL PRIORITIES

- **Economic Vibrancy** – The project could create an iconic place that could be an attraction for locals, visitors, and businesses alike.
- **Safe & Healthy Community** – The project could create recreational space that contributes to the well-being and health of the city.
- **Community Services & Facilities** – The project would create a significant new open space as a citywide asset.
- **Sustainability** – The project could improve air quality and stormwater management.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council provide feedback to staff on the early concepts for the Verdugo Wash project and to note and file the report.

BACKGROUND

As part of the budget process, Council allocated funding to execute the Verdugo Wash Visioning process. The process, catalyzed by community and Council interest, will seek to identify opportunities for the Wash to potentially serve as an amenity and defining feature of the city, in addition to serving in its primary capacity as a flood control channel. These additional opportunities can include bicycle paths, pedestrian routes, open space, restoration of natural habitat, public art, and socially engaging spaces. It is important to note that the current phase of work, at this time, is visioning. This process does not commit a final design to any particular location along the route, but rather identifies what is possible when working within the constraints of the Wash's need to remain a flood control channel, and incorporating input from neighborhoods and stakeholders. The results of the visioning process will ultimately require further refinement, feasibility, and environmental analysis.

In the fall of 2020 Council approved the selection of the urban design and landscape architecture firm Imelk, to lead the visioning process. They are further supported by the engineering and transportation consultant team of Buro Happold, providing local context and assistance in the development of the project vision.

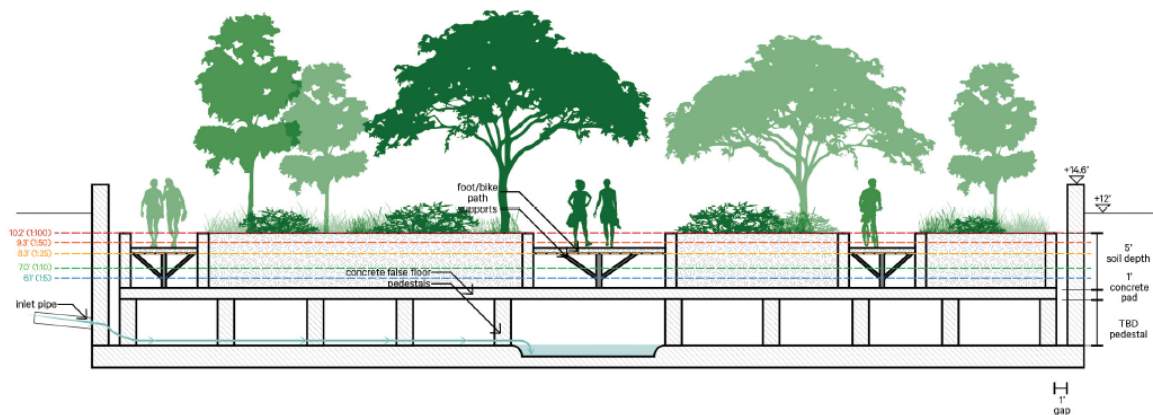
As part of the visioning process, a pre-design report (Exhibit 2) was completed to better understand the history of the Verdugo Wash and the potential opportunities and challenges that exist with improvements. The pre-design report establishes a foundation and framework for engineering, design, and historical context.

ANALYSIS

The early design concepts that will be presented to Council will include possibilities of building an elevated floor within the wash, that would serve opportunities for pedestrian and cyclist activities, as well as open and gathering spaces. A section drawing and an initial rendering are included below, and staff will provide additional graphics and information during the Council session presentation.

The concept of a raised floor assists in addressing the needs of the Wash to remain a

flood control channel, but also recognizes that there may be flexibility of the uses within the Wash. The raised floor would allow for water to pass underneath, and not impact the use of the cyclist and pedestrian paths. Deep planting wells could be incorporated to provide new vegetation and planting areas for open space and enhanced habitat. While still early in the design process, this would also be designed in a manner that would allow for the materials and pathways to flood without significant damage.



Section illustrating a potential raised floor within the wash.



Rendering showing potential conditions within the wash.

In locations where the Wash is wide enough, there are opportunities to create distinct

paths for pedestrians and cyclists, delineated by different materials and treatments. Significant moments could occur in the southern and western portions of the route that would create social and gathering spaces. These significant moments could be punctuated by iconic and visual indicators that become a vernacular for the entire Wash. As one of the primary goals of the project, each neighborhood segment would be designed in response to local conditions and neighborhood preferences. As the Wash moves north, the focus would be on creating connectivity between neighborhoods and creating a more bucolic environment that respects and represents the surrounding neighborhoods.

As noted, the project is still in early stages of visioning, leaving many elements to be addressed and resolved. As highlighted below, staff has established an internal working group to address elements such as fire safety, public safety, opening and closure of the facility, and overall maintenance. While all of these issues may not be incorporated in these very early stage concepts, they will be factored into, designed, and planned for as the project continues to advance and evolve.

STAKEHOLDERS/OUTREACH

Given the broad reaching impacts of the Verdugo Wash, the project is incorporating a multi-faceted engagement process to solicit input from neighborhoods and stakeholders, while involving subject matter experts at appropriate points. The project also incorporates a project specific website (www.verdugowash.com) where public surveys have offered initial touch points with the public. The original survey attracted 726 total responses, with 82% living within the City of Glendale. Staff used the designated neighborhoods identified by the Neighborhood Services Division to identify respondent's location and to be able to utilize that feedback to ensure that each neighborhood is treated uniquely and distinctly. The most popular neighborhoods to provide responses included Crescenta Highlands (12%), Whiting Woods (11%), and Montrose (9%). When asked which attributes of a re-imagined wash were most important, the highest ranked responses were public safety, habitat restoration, new pedestrian and cyclist routes, and additional public open space. Respondents were also asked how supportive they were of improving the Wash, on a scale of one to five, with five being the most supportive. Across all respondents the average score was 4.0 out of 5.0.

Staff also released a second survey, aimed at understanding the aesthetic qualities desired by each community, as well as priority of uses along the wash. This survey is still currently active, with approximately 400 responses to date. Staff will include the summary results of this survey in the presentation.

Staff has also conducted neighborhood meetings including West Glendale, Whiting Woods, and Sycamore Woods neighborhoods to obtain feedback and input in the visioning process. Staff is also currently in progress of establishing neighborhood meetings with Downtown, Verdugo Woodlands, Pelanconi, and Adams Hill. Staff is also working with other stakeholders to conduct input meetings such as Glendale Community College, Rotary Club, Friends of the Los Angeles River, Oakmont Country Club and other vital business and stakeholder interests. Staff will provide a summary of comments,

questions, and concerns raised at these meetings, during the Council session. The project has also received articles and stories within the Crescenta Valley Weekly and the Northwest Glendale Homeowners Association Newsletter.

A stakeholder working group was established to assist in guiding the vision of the project. This working group is made of several different stakeholders that can lend their professional expertise. Representatives from the working stakeholder group include:

- Arroyo and Foothills Conservancy
- Friends of the Los Angeles River
- Glendale Chamber of Commerce
- Glendale Environmental Coalition
- Glendale Homeowners Coordinating Council
- Glendale Parks and Open Space Foundation
- GoGlendale
- Los Angeles River Works
- Northeast Trees
- Southern California Association of Governments
- Walk/Bike Glendale
- Representatives from the City of Glendale departments

The stakeholder working group has conducted two meetings thus far. The first meeting included an introduction to the project, as well as exercises and surveys to understand priorities, opportunities, and challenges. The second meeting included providing information related to public engagement feedback, as well as early design concepts. The working group's feedback regarding the early concepts included:

- Enthusiasm for the pedestrian and cyclist routes.
- A desire to see more natural vegetation opportunities incorporated.
- A desire to see a soft river bottom incorporated into the wash.
- Opportunities for wildlife passage and use of the space.
- Considerations on how the design will respond to flooding conditions, such as preventing damage or the need to close the wash during significant rain events.

Concurrently with an external stakeholder working group, staff convened an internal working group that will address other technical aspects of the project. This group includes fire and police to address public safety, such as crime and fire prevention, and develop solutions and alternatives to incorporate into the design. The group also includes sustainability, parks, and engineering to address constructability, maintenance and operations, and the ability for the project to improve overall environmental performance. This input will be reflected in future iterations of the design concepts, and also address concerns and comments heard during public engagement meetings with stakeholders

and neighborhoods. These solutions will address attributes and elements that were raised during meetings with Los Angeles County Flood Control and the United States Army Corps of Engineers. This includes the ability to create a resilient structure, trapping of debris address maintenance, and address public safety.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The request for feedback on the Verdugo Wash Visioning involves an examination of feasibility and is a planning study for a possible future action of the City, and as such is statutorily exempt from California Environmental Quality Act review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15262 (“Feasibility and Planning Studies”).

CAMPAIGN DISCLOSURE

This item is exempt from campaign disclosure requirements.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1: Provide input and feedback to staff regarding the current stage of the visioning process, and not and file the report.

Alternative 2: The city council may consider any other alternative not proposed by staff.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

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EXHIBITS / ATTACHMENTS

1. Map of the Verdugo Wash Route
2. Pre-Design Report