

# Los Feliz

SPECIAL EDITION

Organized in 1916 for the betterment and protection of the Los Feliz District

# Observer



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## A Bill of Rights for Griffith Park

by Donna Zenor/LFIA President

Other articles in this special edition of the *Observer* will acquaint you with the seriously flawed process which led to the current draft Master Plan and the degree to which the current draft actively promotes future commercial development in Griffith Park. However, we also recognize the need to focus upon what we believe a master plan for Griffith Park should encompass and promote that vision as vigorously as we oppose that which has been proffered.

The master plan ultimately adopted for Griffith Park will have a potential shelf life of decades. It will be a standalone document and will inevitably assumed to be reflective of the consensus of all who participated in its production. In its present form, it is hard to imagine a single development project – commercial, recreational and otherwise – for which support could not be drawn from language in the plan. This something-for-everyone approach is the antithesis of that which should be adopted in the development of a master plan for a public asset such as the Park.

We believe that developing a “master plan” for Griffith Park should more appropriately be considered as the development of a “master policy.” A “plan” is a more or less fixed blueprint for change. A “policy” establishes the parameters under which future proposals for change will be assessed and shaped. As the tent stakes are laid, so will the tent be raised.

Perhaps the most significant “master plan” affecting those of us who live in the United States of America is our own constitution. That document, although quite succinct, established certain fundamental principles and core values, such as a structural system of checks and balances, which have provided guidance throughout our nation’s most difficult periods and, at least to date, have kept this nation true to the vision under which it was founded.

The Master Plan for Griffith Park should serve as the constitution for the Park and articulate the fundamental principles and

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# Why all This Fuss About the Griffith Park Master Plan and Why a Special Edition of the *Observer*?

by Chuck Soter/LFIA Board Member and Chair/Parks Committee

Well, it's a long story.

In summer 2003, the Recreation and Parks Department held three meetings at Friendship Auditorium. The public was invited to provide input that would be incorporated into the new Griffith Park Master Plan. About 450 people attended, and despite some differences of opinion on minor items, one thing became perfectly clear: almost unanimously the participants agreed that there should be no new development in Griffith Park.

At those meetings we were told that by the end of the year the "draft" master plan would be published. After that there would be one more public meeting to gather input and reaction, and then the plan would be finalized.

Twenty months passed. The public, the LFIA, and many other organizations asked, "Where's the Griffith Park Master Plan? What's in it?" We were told that it was taking longer than expected. Councilman LaBonge – unhappy with the "first" draft – had asked for some changes. When the "second" draft was completed, we would "like it."

Finally, in late March, 2005, the Master Plan draft was posted on the City's web site. At 170 pages long, the draft was nearly impossible to download and read, much less comprehend. What was apparent, however, was that only about one-tenth of the plan – 18 pages to be exact – addressed Griffith Park's "natural" aspects and their preservation. More than 108 pages were devoted to proposals for adding and expanding "man-made" developments: more hardscape, more new structures, and more large-scale projects.

## *Among the Master Plan's proposals:*

- six multi-level parking structures
- two aerial tramways
- destination restaurant(s)
- an eco-hotel
- a "pleasure pier" over the L.A. River at Los Feliz Boulevard
- a 119-foot wide promenade on Crystal Springs Drive
- a lighted platform to "view" the Hollywood Sign
- golf course expansion requiring the elimination of the Zoo Magnet School

On March 30, when the master plan draft was presented at the one and only promised public meeting, the Recreation and Parks Department as well as Councilman LaBonge were confronted about these issues. Their responses were little more than attempts to placate: "Don't worry. None of these things are funded." "This is just a map, a dream for the future." "We can't do any of these things without careful consideration and environmental impact reports." We asked: "If that's the case, then why are these proposals in the draft?" We received more meaningless non-answers.

Given that very few citizens seemed aware of the new master plan draft, the LFIA planned a general meeting to present what we thought were the draft's positives and negatives. We were frankly surprised that the Recreation and Parks Department as well as the 4th District council office were incredibly defensive regarding our meeting, telling us that we were, among other things, "irresponsible." To the contrary, we felt we were following the city's directive to increase public awareness and to generate informed public response. Why was the City afraid of a free exchange of ideas? We still don't know.

The results of the general meeting have been gratifying. Most who attended, as we guessed, had not known that a new master plan was in the works, nor of its Byzantine formulation process. When they heard direct quotes from the draft of what was planned for the park, they were shocked and galvanized into action. After the meeting we received a number of suggestions and many offers to volunteer. Friends and neighbors were informed, and the master plan is now becoming citywide news. Residents' organizations, neighborhood councils, and other citizens' groups are now contacting us asking for similar presentations. From as far away as the north end of the San Fernando Valley they have told us, "If they can do that to Griffith Park, they can do that to our park, too."

At the meeting, we also initiated a petition campaign to declare the undeveloped, interior portion of Griffith Park an Urban Wilderness – as has been done at Debs Park – and to have that designation included in the final draft of the master plan. I recently spent a Sunday morning petitioning. The response was very interesting. Of the 150 people who signed, only three were aware of the Griffith Park Master Plan. Most people asked incredulously, "They plan to do what?" Most asked who could be against protecting Griffith Park. Now that's the multi-million dollar question.

*How does the Master Plan draft justify the increased development of Griffith Park? The dubious claim that there is not enough there.*

In fact, Griffith Park offers hundreds of things to do and enjoy. It is bursting with cultural and family attractions, active recreation venues and meeting facilities. You can kick or catch a ball there, visit a museum, see an exotic animal, view a planet, hear a concert, ride a bike, get married, throw a birthday party, play golf, take a train ride, go to camp, take a class, learn to swim, dine out or go shopping. In addition to its permanent man-made facilities, it is the staging ground for scores of major events each year: long-distance runs and walks benefiting non-profits, food festivals, fitness jamborees, outdoor concerts, public information fairs and carnivals, and the Annual DWP Festival of Lights. Griffith Park is already filled beyond capacity. Additional development will come at the expense of the park itself.

This is a partial list of Griffith Park's manmade facilities & attractions:

### MAJOR FAMILY FUN & CULTURAL VENUES

Greater Los Angeles Zoo  
Griffith Observatory  
Autry National Center & Museum of the West  
Travel Town Museum and Train Ride  
Greek Theatre  
Los Angeles Equestrian Center  
Live Steamers Train Ride  
Griffith Southern Railroad Train Ride  
Riverside Drive Pony Rides  
Griffith Park Merry-Go-Round

### SPORTS FACILITIES

Wilson Golf Course  
Harding Golf Course  
Roosevelt Golf Course  
Los Feliz Golf Course  
Marty Tregnan Golf Academy  
Griffith Park Driving Range  
John Ferraro Soccer Complex  
Griffith Park Rec Center Soccer Fields  
Pote Field Baseball Diamond  
Lake Hollywood Baseball Diamond  
Vermont Canyon Tennis Complex  
Griffith Park Rec Center Tennis Courts  
Crystal Springs Tennis Courts  
Crystal Springs Sand Volleyball Court  
Griffith Park Rec Center Municipal Pool

#### WHEELED RECREATION

Griffith Park Northern Bike Route  
Los Angeles River Bikeway

#### EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

L.A. Zoo Magnet School  
Griffith Park Rec Center Pre-School  
Traditional Equitation School

#### MEETING ROOMS & BANQUET HALLS

Griffith Park Ranger Station  
Community Room  
Friendship Auditorium  
Travel Town Meeting Car  
Los Angeles Zoo Meeting Rooms  
& Event Venues  
Camp Hollywoodland Meeting  
& Banquet Facility  
Griffith Park Boys Camp Meeting  
& Banquet Facility  
Los Angeles Equestrian Center  
Meeting & Banquet Rooms  
Autry National Center  
& Museum of the West

#### BIRTHDAY PARTY VENUES

Greater Los Angeles  
Zoo Birthday Party Facilities  
Travel Town Birthday Car

#### POINTS OF INTEREST

Fern Dell  
Hollywood Sign  
Mulholland Fountain  
Walt Disney's Barn

#### PICNICKING AND PLAY AREAS

12 Dedicated Picnic Regions  
5 Group Picnic Areas  
8 Developed Playgrounds

#### CHILDREN'S CAMPS

Griffith Park Boys Camp  
Hollywoodland Girls Camp

#### RENTALS

Griffith Park Horse Rental  
Crystal Springs Bike & Skate Rental

#### FOOD & BEVERAGE SERVICE

Autry National Center Cafeteria  
Greater Los Angeles Zoo  
Food Concessions  
Wilson/Harding Golf Course  
Coffee Shop  
Roosevelt Golf Course Café  
EatZ Coffee Shop  
Griffith Observatory Food Service  
Travel Town Snack Stand  
Pony Ride Snack Stand  
Western Canyon Cappuccino  
& Snack Stand  
Greek Theatre Concessions

#### SHOPPING

Autry National Center Gift Shop  
& Bookstore  
Greater Los Angeles Zoo Shops  
Griffith Observatory Gift Shop  
& Bookstore  
Los Angeles Equestrian  
Center Shops  
Wilson/Harding Golf Course  
Pro Shop  
Travel Town Souvenir Stand  
Pony Rides Souvenir Stand

#### OTHER

Martinez Public Equestrian Arena  
Old Zoo Concert Pavilion  
Griffith Park Dog Park

# Suddenly it's 1968... AGAIN!

by Chris Laib/LFIA Parks Committee

**I**t seems a long time ago, yet not at Los Angeles' Department of Recreation and Parks, which has published its "déjà vu" vision of Griffith Park in the current draft Master Plan.

The last time we visited this process was back in 1968. That year Recreation and Parks floated a proposal for Griffith Park that included private sector construction of aerial tramways, a commercial complex, a restaurant, and up to 20% of the usable park space paved for parking lots. This was followed by a master plan from Recreation and Parks delivered without the benefit of public hearings or a citizens' oversight committee. After several years of intense protest from an extraordinary coalition of preservationists, homeowners associations, PTAs, the League of Women Voters, etc., the process finally resulted in a public meeting and an eventual citizens' advisory panel. Many years later, the 1968 master plan was replaced by one that, as espoused by John Horan, Executive Officer of Recreation and Parks, was "basically a philosophical statement that can serve as a guideline." The *Los Angeles Times* reported that the Park "would remain much as it is."

For those who have read the 2005 master plan, it is eerily familiar... again, aerial tramways, fancy restaurants, multi-level parking garages, a cantilevered Los Angeles River viewing pier and more; all dumbfounding and all destructive of natural spaces in the park.

**1968.**

This plan raises several fundamental questions for all citizens of Los Angeles.

**LBJ,**

To start, why did our city (with choking transportation challenges, police and safety issues, as well as bewildering public education problems) pay a consulting firm \$400,000 to repackage the rejected 1968 master plan?

**Viet Nam,**

Any rational Angelino would consider our vital challenges to be beyond viewing piers, tramways and eco-hotels in Griffith Park.

**& Haight**

**Ashbury.**

Another compelling, and frankly disheartening question is why do Council District Four and Tom LaBonge continue to advocate and drive this plan and its most outrageous components?

Many of us have taken Tom's seasonal wilderness hikes and been witness to his ruminations and speeches about his joyful experiences in the natural beauty of the park.

In the 1968 process, both Councilmen Marvin Braude and Art Snyder led the preservation effort. Snyder referred to aerial tramways as "carnival rides to nowhere" and said that "the development (of Griffith Park) would deface the skyline of the city for blatantly commercial purposes." Braude urged the Recreation and Parks Commission to reject such "garish commercial developments," stating that while they may make the city money, it would be "at the expense of future generations who will be denied the opportunity to see what this beautiful land was like before we poured concrete all over it."

Are present day pressures to increase city revenues so overwhelming that our elected representatives would sell our park to commercial interests? We need to demand an explanation as to why they want to develop our park, when every other city in the US – and the world – struggle to ban automobiles, commercialization and mechanized devices from their parks, so that they may be utilized, as Colonel Griffith told the city fathers on the day he gifted the park to the city, "for the recreation and rest of the masses."

Let the past be our guide. As in 1968, we must activate and instruct our elected representatives to keep commercial development out of our park. Let's give this master plan the boot and tell its promoters to take a hike – ideally in the unspoiled beauty of Griffith Park!

*To receive more information,  
contact the LFIA at:*

P.O. Box 29395, Los Angeles, CA 90029  
323.660.1914 phone/fax

# Griffith Park Master Plan "Working Group"

by Valerie Vanaman/LFIA Representative  
Master Plan Working Group

tion of the public comments obtained in pre-draft stakeholder meetings and "interviews" of park users, various organizations and individuals pressed the Department of Recreation and Parks and Council District Four to develop a process by which the draft Master Plan could be fully reviewed by the public before a "final" draft was completed.

As a result of that effort, Council District Four, working with Recreation and Parks, agreed to establish the "Griffith Park Master Plan Working Group." Although not a true advisory board selected by the community, but rather a panel selected by CD4 and RAP, the working group includes representatives from:

*Los Feliz Improvement Association*  
*Greater Griffith Park Neighborhood Council*  
*Hollywood United Neighborhood Council*  
*Atwater Village Neighborhood Council*  
*Los Feliz Oaks Homeowners Association*  
*Franklin Hills Residents Association*  
*Sierra Club*

In addition, the working group panel contains representatives of golfing, baseball and soccer interests.

Prior to the first meeting of the Working Group, Councilmember Tom LaBonge gave its members a two-hour tour of Griffith Park on a double-decker bus while he shared his vision and goals for the future of the park.

The Working Group is currently holding a series of meetings to discuss each chapter of the draft Master Plan. The public is invited to attend the meetings and may offer comments during the final thirty minutes. Summaries of the meetings will be posted on the Internet.

The next meeting of the Working Group will be Sept. 12th at 6:30 p.m., at the Ranger Station in Griffith Park. Dates for future meetings will be determined. That information will be posted as it becomes available at [www.saveGriffithPark.org](http://www.saveGriffithPark.org)

Given the draft Master Plan's strong orientation toward sacrificing valuable green space for development in Griffith Park and its notable lack of men-

## Ball Fields in Griffith Park: Need or Whim? by Rulon Openshaw/LFIA Parks Committee

In the August 2005 issue of the *Los Feliz Ledger*, 4th District Councilmember Tom LaBonge writes: "One of the greatest needs is to develop more active recreation areas for our city's youth, such as sports fields. A master plan allows us to view the park in a comprehensive manner thus leading us to identify such areas where ball fields are most appropriate, which I believe is along Crystal Springs Road. When the Golden State Freeway was built in the late 1950s, a number of ball fields were destroyed and never rebuilt. As we all know, children and young adults need a better place to play and what better place than Griffith Park?"

We respectfully suggest to the councilmember that the answer to his question is "Taylor Yard."

Taylor Yard is a 200-acre former railroad freight yard adjacent to the Los Angeles River just south of the Glendale Freeway. A joint venture of State and City Departments of Parks and Recreation, the Taylor Yard Project accomplishes three worthy goals: first, revitalization of a long-neglected, some might say "blighted" area; second, preservation and protection of valuable natural resources and native habitats; and third, creation of high-quality outdoor recreational venues.

*Those high-quality outdoor recreational facilities include:*

- 1 regulation soccer field
- 3 junior soccer fields
- 1 multi-purpose sports field (360' X 180')
- 2 baseball fields
- 1 cross-country running trail with distance markers
- 1 running track (.2 mile)
- 4 regulation basketball courts
- 2 regulation tennis courts
- 2 children's play areas (1 formal & 1 natural)
- 1 children's water play – splash pad

Taylor Yard, with its 13 sports fields plus other active recreational areas, lies a mere three miles from the Crystal Springs Picnic Area where Councilmember LaBonge proposes to build his baseball diamonds. Rather than advocate for the destruction of existing picnic areas in Griffith Park – some of which actually produce revenue for the city due to a paid reservations program – we would like to see the councilmember embrace a remarkable nearby recreational and environmental facility, albeit one that lies just outside the boundaries of his council district.

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core values governing its future. We believe such principals and values must include the following:

- Expansion of existing facilities in the Park should not be undertaken without a thorough assessment of the actual need for those facilities within an area-wide context.
- Expansion and renovation of existing facilities in the Park should be planned so as not to exacerbate pressures on roads, parking and overall Park capacity.
- Roadways within the Park should not be expanded other than for maintenance and for fire and other emergency response purposes.
- No parking structures should be constructed within the Park environs. Instead, a long range, overall transportation plan should be

*developed utilizing off site parking, shuttle services and other forms of mass transportation to accommodate visitors to specific Park venues such as the Greek Theatre and the Observatory, similar in concept to the plan utilized by the Hollywood Bowl.*

- Revenue enhancement is not a part of the Park's function and further commercial development for the sake of revenue production should be rejected.
- The existing undeveloped portion of the Park should be given some form of designated status, such as the "Urban Wilderness" status recently accorded Debs Park, to preclude further attempts to develop that area of the Park.

We are gratified to have found reflected in the current draft Master Plan numerous statements of principals and

values consistent with those enumerated above. It is the overlay of pork barrel projects which are grossly inconsistent with the enumerated principals and values which are so insidious.

We urge, and encourage each of you to urge the Department of Recreation and Parks and your political representatives throughout the City to strip the current draft of all components which are inconsistent with these avowed principals and values and to produce an overriding policy statement regarding the future of Griffith Park which will provide the type of guidance to its official stewards that will be needed over the years to assure that the essence of what Griffith Park is, and is meant to be, is not lost.