

**Quality and Productivity Commission  
30<sup>th</sup> Annual Productivity and Quality Awards Program  
"Heritage of Excellence"**

**2016 APPLICATION**

Title of Project (Limited to 50 characters, including spaces, using Arial 12 point font):

**NAME OF PROJECT: Los Angeles River – Valleyheart Riverwalk**

**DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION/ADOPTION:** SEPT 1, 2014  
(Must have been implemented at least one year - on or before July 1, 2015)

**PROJECT STATUS:**                     X  Ongoing    \_\_\_ One-time only

**HAS YOUR DEPARTMENT PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED THIS PROJECT?**                    \_\_\_ Yes                     X  No

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** Describe the project in 15 lines or less using Arial 12 point font. State clearly and concisely what difference the project has made.

1 The Los Angeles River located along Valleyheart Drive North was transformed from a  
2 dirt road into an environmental oasis through this project. Faced with the problem of  
3 finding solutions to the conflicting demands of environmental stewardship, public safety,  
4 public access, and maintenance costs for public right of way projects, the County  
5 sought out these solutions in a holistic approach that identified multiple benefits and  
6 relied on low-tech strategies. Instrumental in achieving these solutions is relying on  
7 direct and indirect community engagement and involvement. With community  
8 involvement, the community is invested in the project which benefits the County by  
9 providing maintenance assistance and pedestrian traffic that discourages abuse of the  
10 project's location. The community benefits by having recreation and volunteer  
11 opportunities and a well-maintained asset.  
12  
13  
14  
15

**BENEFITS TO THE COUNTY**

(1) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED ANNUAL COST AVOIDANCE	(2) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED ANNUAL COST SAVINGS	(3) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED ANNUAL REVENUE	(1) + (2) + (3) = TOTAL ANNUAL ACTUAL/ESTIMATED BENEFIT	SERVICE ENHANCEMENT PROJECT
\$	\$	\$	\$	<input type="checkbox"/>

**ANNUAL = 12 MONTHS ONLY**

<b>SUBMITTING DEPARTMENT NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS</b> County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works Architectural Engineering Division 900 S. Fremont Ave., Alhambra CA 91803		<b>TELEPHONE NUMBER</b> (626) 458-2546
<b>PROGRAM MANAGER'S NAME</b> Jim Bazinet Landscape Architect		<b>TELEPHONE NUMBER</b> 626-458-2546  <b>EMAIL</b> jbazinet@dpw.lacounty.gov
<b>PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b> (PLEASE CALL (213) 893-0322 IF YOU DO NOT KNOW YOUR PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME) Kimberly Y. Lyman <i>Kimberly Y. Lyman</i>	<b>DATE</b> <i>7/5/16</i>	<b>TELEPHONE NUMBER</b> (626) 458-5975 <b>EMAIL</b> klyman@dpw.lacounty.gov
<b>DEPARTMENT HEAD'S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b> Gail Farber <i>Gail Farber</i>		<b>TELEPHONE NUMBER</b> (626) 458-4002  <b>DATE</b> <i>7-5-16</i>

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**1<sup>st</sup> FACT SHEET – LIMITED TO 3 PAGES ONLY:** Describe the **Challenge, Solution, and Benefits** of the project. State clearly and concisely what difference the project has made. Use Arial 12 point font

Valleyheart Riverwalk is a half mile stretch of right-of-way wedged between the north side of the Los Angeles River (River) and Valleyheart Drive North, located between Fulton Avenue and Coldwater Canyon Avenue within the City of Los Angeles community of Studio City. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Works (Public Works) has jurisdiction over most right-of-way properties adjacent to the River to provide maintenance access for river channels. Public Works developed and implements the LA River Master Plan which includes goals toward creating river identity, providing recreational amenities, and establishing interface between the city and river.

As the public became more aware of the potential of the River right-of-way for alternative uses, greater demand has been placed on the agencies to provide additional amenities. In 2004, the Village Gardeners, a local advocacy group, approached Public Works and requested that landscape and access improvements be made along the River right-of-way. Public Works was faced with the challenge of creating the requested improvements, while addressing the need for long-term maintenance as well as implementing the goals of the LA River Master Plan.

For the project, Public Works sought to institute a policy of sustainability to achieve goals toward water conservation, erosion control, creating recreational opportunities, creating habitat, improving quality of life, protecting open space, and providing linkage, while addressing the need for long-term maintenance. In this number of lofty goals lies a common problem to many projects of this sort. How does a public agency achieve this seemingly overwhelming number of disparate goals?

To achieve the goals, the project team looked for holistic solutions that would achieve multiple benefits. Traditionally, solutions from Public Works, especially relating to water conservation and erosion, would be “engineered”, but for this project we sought out low-tech solutions where feasible. To decrease run-off and help mitigate erosion and increase water conservation, slopes were resculpted with the use of gabion walls as well as more traditional retaining walls. The gabion walls were filled with recycled concrete to help remove the material from the waste stream. Assisting the gabions and walls in mitigating run-off and slope retention, plant species were selected to knit the soil together.

Plant selection played additional important roles. Drought tolerant plants of diverse species were selected which helps achieve the goal of water conservation.

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To meet the sustainability goals of creating recreational opportunities, improving quality of life, protecting open space, and providing linkage, the project team addressed the need to engage the community into the project. We feel that the best means of insuring success of a project is to make it an amenity that people find attractive and to which they will return. The first objective was to make it accessible. Ramps and trails were constructed at street intersections, where formerly there was no connection, to encourage pedestrian traffic throughout the entire length of the site. This enhanced recreation and linkage by allowing people to walk a full circuit. Retaining walls provided an anchorage for benches to provide plenty of resting spots. Because of the added pedestrian activity, the trail is undesirable for loitering and there are very few incidents of graffiti along this stretch of the River.

The project also strives to illustrate the themes of linkage to the greater environment with the use of interpretive signage themed on concepts illustrating the River's place in the flyways of greater migration movements and the many animal species that benefit from Oak trees. To connect the trail to the river system, the bench backs are covered in simple abstract tile mosaics inspired by the River.

To further engage the community, permission was granted to the community to construct a mosaic on an unattractive spillway. Their chosen art, the Steelhead Trout, an endangered species native to the River, reinforces the environmental and connectivity themes of the project. Allowing construction of the mosaic gives the community a sense of ownership to the project and a sense of pride about the location. This sense of ownership has manifested into what may be the primary success of the project. The local Village Gardeners organization provides volunteer labor and stewardship to assist in the day-to-day maintenance of the site and periodic clean-ups, and garden activities. Their obligation is similar to an adopt-a-highway program.

If the community and the Village Gardeners did not play a role with beautification and maintenance requirements, the project would require significantly more County resources. As it is, it is mutually beneficial to the community and County. The County has assistance in achieving its goals for this stretch within the L.A. River Master Plan, and the community has an asset providing them opportunities to engage in a multitude of activities, whether they are recreational, an appreciation of nature, or volunteer work.

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**LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN (DETAIL IS REQUIRED FOR COUNTY DEPARTMENTS):** Use Arial 12 point font

The project and its interrelation with the community support the Strategic Plan Goals for Operational Effectiveness/Fiscal Sustainability and for Community Support and Responsiveness.

By teaming with the community and making them part of the solution, Operational Effectiveness is improved since the community acts on the behalf of Public Works as the "eyes on the project" and can provide timely information should any issues arise that needs Public Works' attention.

The community helps Public Works achieve Fiscal Sustainability by providing much needed and attentive labor, which frees up resources that can be dedicated to serve other areas. Additionally, the community is experienced and familiar with horticultural and irrigation practices. They are at the forefront of the project in reducing water waste, which saves Public Works money that would be spent on unnecessary irrigation.

Due to the benefits in having the community take on some of the maintenance tasks, Public Works was better able to provide Community Support and Responsiveness and provide the desired landscape enhancements along the River.



View of the Valleyheart Riverwalk and mosaic mural of the Steelhead Trout

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**COST AVOIDANCE, COST SAVINGS, AND REVENUE GENERATED (ESTIMATED BENEFITS TO THE COUNTY):** If you are claiming cost benefits, include a calculation on this page. You must include an explanation of the County cost savings, cost avoidance or new revenue that matches the numbers in the box. Remember to keep your supporting documentation. Use Arial 12 point font

**Cost Avoidance:** Costs that are eliminated or not incurred as a result of program outcomes.

**Cost Savings:** A reduction or lessening of expenditures as a result of program outcomes.

**Revenue:** Increases in existing revenue streams or new revenue sources to the County as a result of program outcomes.

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