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Healthy Fails to Wealthy Trails: Revitalization Opportunities For Underused Spaces Alongside Residential Areas In Arleta, California

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HEALTHY FAILS TO WEALTHY TRAILS: REVITALIZATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR UNDERUSED SPACES ALONGSIDE RESIDENTIAL AREAS IN ARLETA, CALIFORNIA

by JORGE MARTINEZ
May 2016

Healthy Fails to Wealthy Trails:
Revitalization Opportunities For Underused
Spaces Alongside Residential Areas In Arleta, California

A Planning Report
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of
Urban and Regional Planning

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Urban Planning

By

Jorge Martinez
May 2016

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

The Arleta neighborhood is located in the San Fernando Valley in the City of Los Angeles. Demographically, Arleta is majority Latino at 71.7%. 13.2% of residents are white, 11.0% are Asian and 2.2% are African American.¹ Geographically, Arleta's surrounding neighborhoods are, Pacoima to the east, Mission Hills/San Fernando to the north, North Hills to the west, and Sun Valley/Panorama City to the south. Additionally, Interstate 5 runs from north to south (at an oblique angle) on the east side of Arleta, with the freeway serving as a de facto boundary between Arleta and neighboring Pacoima.

1.1 Study Area: The “Nursery Strip” - 30 Network of Parcels under Utility Power Line Corridor

This study explores the “nursery strip” in Arleta, a string of 30 adjacent parcels that form a 2.5 mile line through the middle of the Arleta Neighborhood. All 30 parcels are owned by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) who run large power transmission lines throughout the corridor.

¹ FactFinder, A. (2013). Population, 2009-2013 *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*. Retrieved September 10, 2015, from http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_13_5YR_B01001F&prodType=table

The LADWP leases 30 parcels to independent nursery companies (tenants). The independent nursery companies, along with LADWP, are the only parties who have access to the parcels. The nursery companies participate in wholesale of plants, trees, and other landscaping goods. LADWP offers their property for lease for the following secondary land uses: nursery purposes, landscaping purposes, construction staging, trucking operations, vehicle parking, recreational vehicles parking, telecommunications, and any other use that the LADWP determines to be compatible and acceptable under its secondary land use program.² The 30 parcels leased to nursery companies are zoned “Public Facility” by the Los Angeles Department of City Planning with the exception of one parcel. A single parcel, located in the middle of the strip, is designated Residential but homes and structures may not be built. Instead, the parcel is used by the adjacent residential property for different purposes (see Figure 1).

² “Los Angeles Department of Water and Power”. *Real Estate, Secondary Land Use*. https://www.ladwp.com/ladwp/faces/ladwp/partners/p-realestate/p-re-secondarylanduse?_afLoop=86721656568499&_afWindowMode=0&_afWindowId=120ddh8cqp_1#%40%3F_afWindowId%3D120ddh8cqp_1%26_afLoop%3D86721656568499%26_afWindowMode%3D0%26_adf.ctrl-state%3Drhws5y3cr_4

Figure 1 Residential land use under LADWP power lines.

With the LADWP parcels essentially being used for storage, there is not much activity taking place on the parcels. With few people coming and going, it is not uncommon to see trash accumulate on the parcels (see Figure 2). Additionally, many parcels are surrounded by chain-lined fencing to protect the nursery supplies stored there. This has impacts on the conditions of aesthetics.

Figure 2 Trash accumulating outside LADWP property.

1.2 Purpose of the Report/Research Question

The utilization of the nursery strip for nursery-related storage shows there is a demand for such uses. Additionally, the presence of power lines running through the strip limits many other uses in the corridor. That said, the prominent location of the strip in the middle of the Arleta neighborhood raises the question of whether nursery storage is the best use for these parcels? Are these other uses compatible with this location that could benefit the community?

In particular, this reports looks at how the nursery strip could provide recreational/park/open space for the residents of Arleta. How could the nursery strip be transformed into a recreational facility the community values, and what elements should be included? Conceptually, what would recreational spaces in a converted nursery strip look like?

1.3 General Methodology/Outline of Report

This report utilizes four different methods to explore potential conversion of the nursery strip to recreational uses:

Study area and neighborhood site analysis (Chapter 2)

Chapter 2 examines existing conditions in Arleta including stakeholders, current land uses, parking, circulation, and activity centers in and around the study area.

Review of existing plans (Chapter 3)

Chapter 3 takes an in depth look at existing relevant plans that have a direct impact on the Arleta neighborhood and/or on the utility corridor network of parcels. Plans include the city of Los Angeles' General Plan, Arleta-Pacoima Open Space Vision Plan, and the Arleta-Pacoima Community Plan.

Review of literature (Chapter 4)

Chapter 4, similarly to chapter 3, reviews existing literature which focuses on the benefits of parks and open spaces. Three themes have been highlighted which can influence potential recreational space as a secondary land use under the utility corridor power lines. The three themes include health and accessibility, open space and social capital, and the importance of design.

Interviews (Chapter 5)

Chapter 5 discusses findings from interviews of residents who currently live in the Arleta community on their thoughts about the community, the nursery strip as it is currently used, and potential upgrades to the strip.

The information from all four of these methods inform recommended steps and a conceptual plan that redesigns the nursery strip and can help the plan come to a reality. These recommendations are synthesized in Chapter 6.

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CHAPTER 2: SITE ANALYSIS OF THE PUBLIC FACILITY PARCELS IN ARLETA

As previously mentioned, this study is exploring the Arleta “nursery strip” – a 2.5 mile strip of 30 parcels located directly underneath a utility corridor (transmission lines right-of-way). As Figure 4 displays, the strip runs at an oblique angle parallel to Canterbury Avenue. This chapter discusses the findings from the site analysis which was conducted via in-person observations.

2.1 Nursery Strip, Surrounding Land Uses and Activity Centers

The study area is bordered to the east and west by single-family, low-density residential uses. Many residents take advantage of the low level of noise and vehicular traffic to participate in walks (many with their families or dog[s]), jogging, bicycle rides, skateboarding and other recreational activities as seen in Figure 3

Figure 3 *Woman at the southern side of the study area.*

There is no street between the nursery strip and residences to the east. Most of the adjacent properties on the eastern side have walls that separate their backyards to study area. Canterbury Avenue runs on the western side of the strip. For most of the strip, Canterbury Avenue lacks sidewalks adjacent to the strip (see Figure 6 provides an example).

Figure 4 Context map of the study area.

Figure 5 *Man and child utilize the sidewalk adjacent to the LADWP owned property.*

There is no street between the nursery strip and residences to the east. Most of the adjacent properties on the eastern side have walls that separate their backyards to study area. Canterbury Avenue runs on the western side of the strip. For most of the strip, Canterbury Avenue lacks sidewalks adjacent to the strip (see Figure 8).

Figure 6 *Portion of Canterbury Avenue with no sidewalk.*

To the north is the Pacoima spreading grounds to the North (Filmore Street), and the Tujunga Wells Chlorination Station (Tonopah Street) to the south. The Pacoima spreading grounds are solely used to recharge groundwater supplies. The Tujunga Wells Chlorination Station is a groundwater well field and pumping station complex.

In addition, there are a number of activity centers adjacent to the corridor. Aside from the independent nursery companies, there are multiple structures located near the site (see Figure 9):

- The Arleta Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) at the corner of Van Nuys Boulevard and Canterbury Avenue. Employees of the DMV may want to utilize recreational space during lunch breaks located across the street. The DMV creates a large demand for parking, which spills over into the surrounding neighborhoods causing for both vehicular and pedestrian activity. Streets vendors often sell foods and goodies across the street that cater to DMV customers (see Figure 7).

Figure 7 (From Canterbury Avenue facing Van Nuys Boulevard)
Street vendors sell goods during the day and cater to DMV customers.

- The Exceptional Children's Foundation Early Start Program (ECF) at the corner of Terra Bella Street and Canterbury Avenue, is a recognized innovator of services for young children, students, and adults with developmental, learning, and emotional disabilities. The ECF may be influenced to allow their students to participate in physical activities and outdoor play in the potential recreational spaces.
- Han Yang Presbyterian Church & Korean School at the corner of Brandford Street and Canterbury Avenue. The Church & School employs approximately 5 people and the school caters to elementary school students (1st to 5th grade).
- Arleta High School, located on Van Nuys Boulevard and Beachy Avenue, just a block east of the study area. There are approximately 1,800 students, grades 9-12. Students generally live in the surrounding neighborhoods and use different modes of transportation to get to school. Arleta High School students will benefit from a redesign on the site because it can provide a convenient route to school.

Additionally, the school's physical education classes and sports teams may utilize the area for training purposes.

- Beachy Avenue Elementary School, located on Beachy Avenue and Pierce Street is one of 3 elementary schools in Arleta. There are approximately 700 students that are enrolled in the school. Much like Canterbury Elementary School, the potential recreational space may offer an opportunity for a 'Safe Routes to School' program for the students who bike or walk to school.
- Canterbury Avenue Elementary School, located between Montague Street and Chase Street, is one of 3 elementary schools in Arleta. There are approximately 900 students that are enrolled in the school. The potential recreational space may cater to a safe routes to school program for the students who walk or bike to school.
- Of the 30 parcels of the nursery strip itself, as previously mentioned 28 are zoned public facility and two are residential. In terms of building heights, five contain height regulations of "1XL" which is "extra

low" height. The remaining two parcels hold a height district of "VL" which is "very low". The height districts designate allowable heights of each parcel. In this case, Public Facilities parcels are allowed a maximum height of 450 feet for electrical towers, and 30feet/2stories for any other building structures.³ Figure 9 displays the land uses in the community of Arleta.

Figure 8 *Large parcel owned by LADWP, on Pierce Street facing Van Nuys Boulevard.*

³ City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning, General Plan.
<http://planning.lacity.org/cwd/framwk/chapters/00/00.html>

Figure 9 Activity centers surrounding the study area.

2.2 Parking and Circulation

Canterbury Avenue is a two lane vehicular thoroughfare with two way traffic plus two parallel parking lanes. The speed limit is 25 miles per hour. Some areas also include speeds humps regulated at 5 miles per hour. The study area crosses four arterial streets (Van Nuys Boulevard, Terra Bella Street, Osborne Street, and Brandford Street), six alley ways, and more than twenty residential streets. Residential streets cutting the study area also have parking on both sides of the street.

Four bus routes cut across the strip on Van Nuys Boulevard, Osborne Street, and Brandford Street, including a Bus Rapid Transit service. Approximately one mile to the east is the Golden State Freeway (Interstate 5). With the exception of Terra Bella Street, all arterial street intersections cutting perpendicularly through the study area corridor have 2 bus stops for buses running east and west. If converted to recreational uses, individuals can access the strip by transit from any of the six bus stops nearby.

2.3 Stakeholders

Given the existing conditions of the nursery strip and the surrounding land uses present, the following are important

stakeholders that could be impacted by the city's government decision (to act, or not) regarding the study area and whose interests deserve consideration:

- *Home owners*
Home owners may be concerned if their property values will be affected by any new development.
- *Property owners*
Property owners may be concerned if their property will be affected by any new development.
- *Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP)*
LADWP is the owner of the land and any new development must meet its guidelines in addition to paying to lease or buy the land.
- *Nursery Companies*
Owners and employees might be concerned if they will lose their jobs or monetary value from a new development.
- *Arleta residents*
Residents may be concerned with changes of land uses, secondary land uses, noise, or externalities that a new development may bring to their neighborhood.

- *City government*

The city government, specifically the Planning department, must be aware of any land use change in addition to a new development compatible with the General Plan.

- *People who work in Arleta*

Employees in Arleta may want to express their opinions on what type of development should be implemented in order to meet their needs, if any.

- *Arleta Department of Motor Vehicles*

The DMV may express support or opposition to a new development depending if traffic levels increase in close proximity to their building.

- *Canterbury Avenue Elementary School*

Parents, teachers, staff may be concerned with the safety or needs of the children of the community as well as the students.

- *Beachy Avenue Elementary School*

Parents, teachers, staff may be concerned with the safety or needs of the children of the community as well as the students.

- *Neighborhood groups*

Neighborhood groups may express their support or opposition for a specific potential plan that may help improve or threaten their community's quality of life.

- *Arleta High School*

Parents, teachers, staff and students may express their desire for a certain type of development that will be accessible for the high school students during after school hours.

- *Renters in Arleta*

Renters may be concerned with the effect of the new development on their monthly rents.

- *Brandford Park Recreational Center*

Brandford Park staff may express their support for a development that complements their open park space and increased open space within Arleta and the surrounding communities.

- *Han Yang Presbyterian Church*

Church staff and church attendees may express concern of the noise level of any new development being implemented. In addition, the church may partner with

local neighborhood groups to support or oppose a project.

- *Exceptional Children's Foundation Early Start Program*
Parents and staff may express concern of traffic safety for children and may also support a development which the children can utilize during the day.

- *Arleta Garden Club*

The Arleta Garden Club members administer the community garden inside of the study area. Members may support or oppose any development that may be implemented in the study area.

Figure 10 *Parcel used for gardening purposes.*

Figure 11 Land uses in Arleta.

2.3 Opportunities and Constraints

Existing characteristics of the nursery strip are important to take into account when considering a potential re-design of the area. Some characteristics place challenges on re-use and others could be advantageous for a re-designed strip. After conducting the in-person observations and from interviewing local residents (Chapter 5), the following opportunities and constraints are apparent.

2.3.1 Site Constraints

Figure 12 Chain-lined fencing serves as the boundary for all the parcels.

- *Fences*

Chain-lined fencing blocks all entrances to the site and

contributes to the isolation from the rest of the surrounding built environment.

- *Pollution of Trash*

An abundance of trash along the nursery strip can be seen along the boundaries of the site. Most of the trash includes; old pizza boxes, bag of chips, paper, and more, which then builds and sticks to the chain-lined fencing, as figures 12 and 13 display. Hammer nails, broken glass, and empty alcoholic beverages were found along Canterbury Avenue.

Figure 13 Trash surrounding the LADWP parcels.

- *Lighting and Visibility*

The study area receives plenty of natural sunlight

during the day but has little visibility during the night time. There are street lights present along Canterbury Avenue, however they do not project enough light to have a clear view of the study area during the night time. Lack of visibility during after-hours may play a factor for crime, unwanted activities, and dumping of trash.

- *Graffiti*

Although residents did not state crime activity to be of a concern to the study area (see Chapter 5), graffiti can be seen in some areas that are paved on the network of parcels (see Figure 14 and 15).

Figure 14 *Graffiti on a residential street perpendicular to the study area.*

Figure 15 *Evidence of graffiti within the study area.*

- *Electrical Towers*

Thirty 450 feet tall electrical towers, running in a corridor-like network, are located on the study area. The electrical towers have a quadrilateral base and rise in a triangular form and essentially serve as LADWP's utility corridor in Arleta. The bases are approximately 576 square feet in size and are present approximately every 1,000 feet (as pairs). The presence and exposure of the electrical towers may prevent certain types of activities due to health hazards. The location of the electrical towers may influence potential redesign

elements to improve the study area to public accessible spaces.

Figure 16 Bulky items are common throughout the residential streets cutting throughout the nursery strip.

- *Bulky Items*

In addition to small pieces of trash mentioned above, the dumping of bulky items around the network of parcels is a reality and big concern (see figures 16, 17, and 18). Although some were found along Canterbury Avenue, most bulky items were found in the residential streets cutting through the network of parcels. Bulky items found included; shopping carts, indoor and outdoor furniture, cardboard boxes, mattresses, and broken television sets.

Figure 17 Dumping of bulky items along the LADWP parcels is common.

Figure 18 Dumping of bulky items can often blend in to the built environment.

Figure 19 Context of sidewalks along Canterbury Avenue.

2.3.2 Site Opportunities

- *Connecting sidewalk network*

All residential streets cutting through the study area have sidewalks. Along the street on Canterbury Street, sidewalks are not present on the adjacent side of the nursery strip, but 5-foot sidewalks are present on the opposite side of the street (see Figure 19).

- *Narrow Sidewalk Separated from Wide Path*

The 2.5 mile stretch of the study area contains a small portion where the 5 foot wide sidewalk is separated from a 12-foot wide path (see Figure 20). Although this stretch of separation from sidewalk and path is relatively small (473ft long – one block), it offers a potential alternative design that the rest of the study area may adopt. This design element can serve as a safety measure by allowing slower-mobile populations, such as children and senior citizens, to be separate from fast traveling bicyclists, joggers/runners, and/or equestrian users.

Figure 20 *Separated trail and sidewalk across Canterbury Elementary School.*

- *Eyes on the Street*

Although there are a number of activity centers opened during the day hours and homes on the eastern side of the nursery strip which have back fences that creates a barrier between properties, resulting in no direct visual access, homes on the west side of the strip are designed with their front yards facing directly to the study area. This design essentially creates a higher level of surveillance throughout the day in comparison to other land uses and the homes on the eastern side of the nursery strip. This important design standard that most

of the homes have, may be an important factor to reduce vandalism or graffiti to any potential recreational development implemented.

- *Large Size*

At approximately 2.5 miles long and 150 feet-wide, the combined nursery strip is made up 1,631,097 square feet of potentially land that may be redeveloped.

- *Topography*

The topography of the neighborhood and the nursery strip is flat.

- *Existing Greenery*

Although there is a poor quality of fencing, pollution of trash, and dry dirt in many parcels of the study area, the plants, trees, and flowers that are stored by nursery companies in the study area (see Figure 21) can be visually appealing spaces. Redevelopment of the nursery strip potentially need not remove nursery storage entirely, as it could be an aesthetic asset.

Figure 21 View of an abundance of greenery in the study area.

- *Community Ownership*

Because this corridor extends through various residential blocks and neighborhoods, the community as whole, may feel a sense of pride and ownership to a development that is accessible to the public, clean, and in close proximity to their homes. Ownership may be something communal that residents can feel proud of and thus, maintenance of a recreational development would lead to a collaborative effort.

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CHAPTER 3: EXISTING RELEVANT PLANS

The following section analyzes exiting plans that are applicable to the district of Arleta and the study area, particularly related to open space and recreation.

3.1 City of Los Angeles General Plan

Adopted by the Planning Commission and approved by the City Council and the Mayor, the City of Los Angeles' General Plan serves as a basis for decisions that affect all aspects of the City from housing, the economy, and transportation. It is both a strategic and long term document, broad in scope and specific in nature.⁴ Due to the immediate relation to the study area, policies from two General Plan elements (chapters) were analyzed in assumption that it may affect the current study area in one way or another:

3.1.1 Open Space Policies

The purpose of this General Plan element is to provide guidance to the City Planning Commission, the Mayor, the City Council, other governmental agencies and citizens that are interested for the identification, preservation, conservation and

⁴ City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning, General Plan. <http://planning.lacity.org/cwd/framwk/chapters/00/00.htm>

acquisition of open space in the City.⁵ Important policies that may have an effect on the current study area are listed below.

- *Scenic corridors should be established where designated. Each corridor should be specifically “tailored” to the needs of the area and the scenic values to be preserved. Specific studies including implementing ordinances should be prepared for each scenic corridor.*
- *Open space areas shall be provided or developed to serve the needs as appropriate to their location, size and intended use of the communities in which they are located, as well as the City and region as a whole.*
- *Small parks, public and private, should be located throughout the City. Not only should recreation activities be provided but an emphasis shall be placed on greenery and openness.*
- *Federally funded programs such as Urban Renewal, Neighborhood Development and Model Cities should*

⁵ City of Los Angeles Planning Department. General Plan, Open Space Element. http://planning.lacity.org/Code_Studies/GeneralElement/openspaceelement.pdf

be reviewed to assure adequate provision and consideration of open space.

- *Private development should be encouraged to provide ample landscaped spaces, malls, fountains, rooftop green areas and other aesthetic features which emphasize open space values through incentive zoning practices or other practicable means.*
- *Private development which occurs in proximity to desirable open space areas should include roads and trails adequate to serve both that development and the immediately adjacent creation and open space area.*
- *The City should concentrate its efforts on providing open space lands of City, community or neighborhood significance.*
- *Lands subject to natural or man-made hazards, detrimental to life and property should be left in their natural state, where feasible, and considered as open space.*
- *The City should encourage the County and State to adopt taxing procedures and laws which encourage owners of land to maintain their properties in open space use.*

- *Open Areas either in recreational use or with a potential for creation use should be considered open space.*
- *Open space area serving to shape or improve urban development by separating communities, preventing urban sprawl, encouraging more desirable urban development or preventing urban blight may be considered open space.*

Overall, the policies recommend that land for open space should be prioritized for various benefits to the City and its residents. Wherever feasible and manageable, the element suggests that open/recreational space, public and private, should be maintained by property owners in order to increase quality of life and reduce sprawl-like inaccessible open spaces.

3.1.2 Health and Wellness Policies

This element of the General Plan provides high-level policy vision, along with measurable objectives and implementation programs, to elevate health as a priority for the City's future growth and development. Through a new focus on public health from the perspective of the built environment and City

services, the City of Los Angeles is aiming to strive to achieve better health and social equity through its programs, policies, plans, budgeting, and community engagement.⁶ Important policies that may have an effect on the current study area are listed below.

- *Develop intentional strategic partnerships with public, private, and nonprofit entities to improve health outcomes by leveraging capacity, resources, and programs around mutually beneficial initiatives that promote health, equity, and sustainability.*
- *Mobilize and support a life-long process of active aging by making Los Angeles an “age-friendly” city that strives to create a positive, socially inclusive, and supportive environment, that encourages barrier-free buildings and streets, enhanced mobility and independence of people with disabilities, safe neighborhoods, and opportunities for volunteer and paid work.*

⁶ City of Los Angeles Planning Department. General Plan, Health and Wellness Element.
http://planning.lacity.org/Code_Studies/GeneralElement/openspaceelement.pdf

- *Promote a healthy built environment by encouraging the design and rehabilitation of buildings and sites for healthy living and working conditions, including promoting enhanced pedestrian-oriented circulation, lighting, attractive and open stairs, healthy building materials and universal accessibility using existing tools, practices, and programs.*
- *Support strategies that make schools centers of health and well-being by creating economic, environmental, social, and physical conditions in and around local schools that are safe, abundant in healthy goods and services, and offer opportunities for physical activity and recreation.*
- *Work proactively with residents to identify and remove barriers to leverage and repurpose vacant and underutilized spaces as a strategy to improve community health.*
- *Proactively work with residents and public, private, and nonprofit partners to develop, execute, and maintain civic stewardship over community beautification efforts to promote neighborhoods that are clean, healthy, and safe.*

- *Improve Angelenos' mental and physical health by striving to equitably increase their access to parks, increasing both their number and type throughout the city; prioritize implementation in most park-poor areas of the city.*
- *Strive for the equitable distribution of park space in every Los Angeles neighborhood by focusing public funds and other resources on the most underserved areas.*
- *Engage communities and public, private, and nonprofit partners in park stewardship by working collectively to develop, program, and maintain parks and open spaces: target communities with the lowest combination of park access and park standard criteria.*
- *Support public, private, and nonprofit partners in the ongoing development of new and innovative active spaces and strategies to increase the number of Angelenos who engage in physical activity across ages and level of abilities.*
- *Continue to promote trust and partnerships between the Los Angeles Police Department and local stakeholders to improve real and perceived health and safety*

concerns in the communities most impacted by crime and violence through strategies like community policing and neighborhood watch programs.

Overall, the policies promote a built environment in the city that should meet the needs for a healthy city in terms of mobility, open space, the economy, and socially. Community engagement and partnerships with different sectors for development projects is also highlighted as a key priority, thus the city is inclusive of the various communities that exists.

3.2 Arleta-Pacoima Community Plan

The San Fernando Valley of the City of Los Angeles contains 29 different neighborhoods including Arleta.⁷ The City of Los Angeles has engaged in some neighborhood-level planning in the San Fernando Valley. In 1996, the City adopted the Arleta-Pacoima Community Plan covering Arleta and the neighboring Pacoima neighborhood.

⁷ "Arleta-Pacoima" Community Plan Area. Los Angeles Department of City Planning. Accessed December 3, 2015. <http://planning.lacity.org/complan/pdf/arlcptxt.pdf>.

The community plan was composed with the partnerships of the City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning, the Planning Commission, City Council, and citizens of the Arleta neighborhood. The initial formation of Arleta-Pacoima Community Plan involved members of the community who helped to identify and define the needs, desires, resources and the unique nature of the community. Subsequent changes in the plan have served to broaden community participation that took place with the formation of the original plan. Community participation through open houses and subsequent public hearings, helped to update this community plan.⁸

The Community Plan is intended to promote an arrangement of land uses, streets, and services which would encourage and contribute to the economic, social and physical health, safety, welfare, and convenience of the people who live and work in the community. Although open space was a section, the study area was not a particular focus in the plan.

3.2.1 Key Objectives of the Plan

The objectives of the plan highlight various important elements in terms to open spaces and recreational activities which is

something that this report analyzes and advocates for. Below is a list of significant objectives:⁹

- *To designate lands at appropriate locations for the various private uses and public facilities in the quantities and at densities required to accommodate population and activities.*
- *To encourage the preservation and enhancement of the varied and distinctive residential character of the community, and to preserve the stable single-family residential neighborhoods.*
- *To provide a basis for the location and programming of public facilities services and utilities and to coordinate the phasing of public facilities with private development by:*
 - *Providing neighborhood parks and recreational facilities, including bicycle paths that utilize rights-of-way and other public lands where feasible.*
 - *Improving street lighting throughout the area.*

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

- *To encourage open space for recreational uses for the enjoyment of both local residents and persons throughout the Los Angeles region.*
- *To improve the visual environment of the community and, in particular, to strengthen and enhance its image and identity.*

3.2.2 Summary of Findings of the Arleta-Pacoima Community Plan

In relation to the study area examined in this report, the Arleta-Pacoima community plan discusses residential character and its importance. The plan states that the character of single-family homes should be protected while also preserving and enhancing the positive characteristics of the existing residential neighborhoods. Neighborhood character was also taken into account in stating that the preservation and enhancement of the positive characteristics of existing uses which provide the foundation for the identity of the community is a priority.

The plan continues to recommend and underline the importance of recreational activities including bikeways, open space and public facilities, recreation and parks. The plan advises that there should be a system of bikeways that is suggested for the community in anticipation that it would serve

as both transportation and recreational purposes. The objectives directly impact the study area as it provides a number of alternative plans for development that is accessible the community, offers a space for physical activity, and a space that can potentially connect to other open spaces in the City.

3.3 Arleta-Pacoima Open Space Vision Plan

In the fall of 2014, the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP) along with the Creative Open Space Los Angeles (COSLA) project produced the Arleta-Pacoima Open Space Vision Plan. COSLA is a collaborative effort with various non-profit and community organizations, in partnership with RAP, to help increase the health and livability of communities across the city of Los Angeles. Overall, the vision plan highlights the potential open spaces and examines the historical, physical and social factors that make open space development a priority in the Arleta and Pacoima communities. Below is a list of significant recommendations that can have an effect on the study area:

3.3.1 Key Recommendations of Arleta-Pacoima Open Space Vision Plan

The following list offers recommendations as to how multiple interested agencies can help improve open spaces:

- *Prioritize the creation of open spaces close to residential areas where homes lack yards or recreational areas.*
- *Increase the range of facilities available for active living.*
- *Explore installing trails and recreational facilities along utility corridors, Spreading Grounds and in underutilized areas of Hansen Dam.*
- *Advocate for the development of plazas, green alleys, etc. in the entitlement process for major development opportunity sites. Consider including these considerations citywide in the Re: Code LA project.*

3.3.2 Summary of Findings of the Arleta-Pacoima Open Space Vision Plan

The vision plan discussed two different potential spaces to be converted into open space located in Arleta. Both the Canterbury Avenue utility corridor and the Pacoima Diversion Channel, just 1/3 of a mile east from the study area, offer potential linear open space connections south of the Pacoima spreading grounds. In addition, there were various areas and spaces that offer recreational opportunities in both communities. Health was a determining factor that was strongly advocated for due to the barriers from the built environment that does not encourage physical activity. The current study area, if converted to a recreational area, would offer an alternative to connect recreational spaces with the surrounding communities as well as the City as a whole.

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CHAPTER 4: REVIEW OF EXISTING LITERATURE

This chapter looks at existing research on parks and open space. In particular, this section explores literature on the benefits of parks, including health and social benefits. Additionally, this section discusses literature on design considerations for parks/open space that would be important if recreational spaces were to be implemented in the study area.

4.1 Health Benefits and Accessibility

Several researchers have found that green spaces (parks, natural environments, open spaces) play a significant role in supporting both the physical and mental health of nearby residents. Koohsari et al. (2013) find that the built environment and proximity to open spaces directly are above all, the most important factors that define the physical health of residents.¹⁰ A study by Maas, Verheij, Groenewegen, de Vriesm and Spreeuwenberg (2006) surveyed resident perception of health and found that people living near natural or green space environments have better self-perceived health than people

¹⁰ Mohammad Javad Koohsari, Hannah Badland, Billie Giles-Corti, “(Re)Designing the built environment to support physical activity, Bringing public health back into urban design and planning” *City: International Journal of Urban Policy and Planning* 35 (2013): 294-298.

living in a less green environment.¹¹ Brown and Grant (2015) also support the idea of open spaces contributing positively to health. Their study states that the presence of nature not only has a profound physical benefit for humans, but also a psychological and physiological affect, which essentially affects healing, heart rate, concentration, levels of stress, blood pressure and mental well-being.¹²

Close proximity to green spaces was a key finding by Sander-Regier and Etowa (2014), which found that residents who live close to a wildlife garden in Ottawa, Canada benefited mentally from the space. The wildlife garden (a natural environment) offered opportunities for social interaction among other users as well as personal mental wellness (serenity, sanctuary, enrichment, and satisfaction) when residents used the space.¹³

¹¹ Jolanda Maas, Verheij Robert, Groenewegen Peter P, de Vries Sjerp, Spreeuwenberg Peter, “Green space, urbanity, and health: How strong is the relation?” *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 60, no. 7 (2006): 587-592.

¹² Caroline Brown and Marcus Grant, “Biodiversity and Human Health: What Role for Nature in Healthy Urban Planning?” *Planning Healthy Towns and Cities* 31, no. 4 (2005): 326-338.

¹³ Renate Sandar-Regier, Etowa Josephine, “Urban Green Space as a Public Health Resource: Lessons from Ottawa’s Fletcher Wildlife Garden.” *The International Journal of Health, Wellness, and Society* 5 (2014): 1-12.

Similarly, research done by Bedimo-Rung, Mowen, and Cohen supports the fact that people who utilize green spaces live healthier lives. Getting regular physical activity usage in green spaces can result in the reduction of morbidity and mortality by decreasing diabetes, high blood pressure, colon cancer, and anxiety all while maintaining healthy muscles and bones.¹⁴ According to another study by Vojnovic (2006), proximity to green spaces addresses the extent to which motorized and non-motorized modes of transportation are used to reach such areas.¹⁵ Hence the importance of the relationship of proximity and access to green spaces, is heavily determined by the built environment. This is something important to consider about Arleta given its lack of proximity to recreational spaces.

Branas et al (2011) studied the greening of vacant lots in Philadelphia over a 10-year period and found it reduced certain crimes and promoted some aspects of health to residents

¹⁴ Ariane L. Bedimo-Rung, Mowen Andrew J., Cohen Deborah A., "The Significance of Parks to Physical Activity and Public Health." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 282, no. 28 (2005):159-168.

¹⁵ Igor Vojnovic, "Building Communities to Promote Physical Activity: A Multi-Scale Geographical Analysis." *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 88, no. 1(2006): 67-90.

surrounding the improved lots.¹⁶ Further supporting the need for public open space, especially in urban environments, Maas et al. (2009) indicates that the amount of green space in the living environment is not only related to people's health condition but is also positively related to people's feelings of loneliness and shortage of social support, especially for children, elderly, and people with a lower economic status, a big mental health remedy.¹⁷

Another example of positive physical and health impacts when living in close proximity to green spaces is evidenced by Gearin and Kahle (2006) who found that teenagers in Los Angeles want to utilize open green spaces for recreational, physical, and mental benefits.¹⁸ Teenagers utilize such spaces to "just relax, watch other people, have family barbeques, or

¹⁶ Charles C. Branas, Rosa A. Cheney, John M. MacDonald, Vicky W. Tam, Tara D. Jackson, and Thomas R. Ten Have "A Difference-in-Difference Analysis of Health, Safety, and Greening Vacant Urban Space" *American Journal of Epidemiology* 174, no. 11 (2011) 1296-1306.

¹⁷ Jolanda Maas, Sonja M.E. van Dillen, Robert A. Verheji, Peter P. Groenewegen, "Social contacts as possible mechanism behind the relation between green space and health" *Health & Place* 15 (2009):586-598.

¹⁸ Elizabeth Gearin, Kahle Chris, "Teen and Adult Perception of Urban Green Space Los Angeles." *Children, Youth Environments* 60, no. 1 (2006): 25-48.

just enjoy a nature walk”.¹⁹ Gearin and Kahle’s assessment is conducted via a focus group from a local high school in downtown Los Angeles.

Similarly structured with a focus group, Takano, Nakamura, and Watanabe (2002) explored the needs of a different age group, senior citizens. The study found the five-year survival probability increased with walkability, such as the presence of parks, and tree lined streets near the residence, and their desire to age in their current community was also an important factor to them.²⁰ Living in areas with walkable green spaces positively influenced the longevity of urban senior citizens independent of their sex, age, marital status, functional status, and socioeconomic status.²¹

These findings, in conjunction with those that suggest the positive impacts of living in close proximity to green spaces, help to paint a more holistic framework of the physical and mental health aspect of accessing crucial spaces in our

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ T. Takano, Nakamura K., Watanabe M., “Urban Residential Environments and Senior Citizens’ Longevity in Megacity Areas: The Importance of Walkable Green Spaces.” *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 56, no. 12 (2002):913-918.

²¹ Ibid.

communities. Physical and mental health remedies can coexist in residential areas, however, in order to cater to residents of surrounding communities and influence to utilize these spaces, it is important to have access by multiple transportation modes such as walking and bicycling for all populations such as the youth, children, and the elderly. Arleta residents of all ages and abilities can benefit and may even be encouraged to participate in healthy activities if recreational spaces are in close proximity and accessible from their homes.

4.2 Open Spaces and Social Capital

Social capital can be interpreted into many ways for different purposes. For the purposes of this report though, social capital is defined as the networks of relationships among residents who live and possibly work in a particular neighborhood or community, thus enabling to communicate and live together effectively.

Several studies suggest that public open spaces provide a sense of community and/or high levels of social capital. Prior and Blessi (2012) investigated culture-led urban regeneration processes, a process that shifts a space for a use that will benefit people in the future, using a mixed-methods analysis of

published studies and in-depth interviews.²² They found using aculture-led urban regeneration process for converting unused land shifting into a potential local park generated a lot of public interest, public input on plans for the site, and also ideas of effective usage of the site.²³

Sawnwick et al. (2003) looked at case studies and found that urban green spaces can be the catalysts for generating wide community networks and high social capital in ways that other neighborhood facilities or buildings are unable to achieve.²⁴

Parks and open space can attract social interaction and invite people of all backgrounds to participate in outdoor activities. Some may argue that these type of events have a more welcoming trait than indoor events. Similarly, Bedimo-Rung et

²² Jason Prior, Giorgio Tavano Blessi, "Social Capital, Local Communities and Culture-led Urban Regeneration Processes: The Sydney Olympic Park Experience" *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Journal* 4, no. 3 (2012):78-99.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Carys Swanwick, Nigel Dunnet, Helen Woolley, "Nature, Role and Value of Green Space In Towns and Cities: An overview" *Journal of the Built Environment* 29, no.2 (2003):94-106.

al. (2005) found that parks facilitate social interactions that are critical in maintaining community cohesion, pride, and social capital. In addition, the study found that parks play a role in increasing social capital by providing a meeting place where people can develop social ties and a setting where healthy behavior is modeled. Interestingly, the study also found that exposure to green common spaces among elderly inner-city individuals is significantly positively correlated with social integration.²⁵

In the same lines, Bedimi-Rung, Mowen, and Cohen (2005) analyzed geographical data in Los Angeles and found that certain environmental features like trees and vegetation may set the stage for neighborhood social interactions, thus serving as a foundation for underlying health and well-being. Altering these environmental features may have a greater than expected impact on health of residents and the built environment around open space.²⁶

²⁵ Ariane L. Bedimo-Rung, Andrew Mowen, Deborah A. Cohen, "The Significance of Parks to Physical Activity and Public Health" *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 282, no. 28 (2005):159-170.

²⁶ Ibid.

Using questionnaires and focus group discussions in the United Kingdom, Kazmierczak (2013) found the development of social ties was considerably affected by the characteristics of the individuals and their respective neighborhood but ultimately affected by how welcoming or non-welcoming open space is.²⁷ Kazmierczak also found that greater social ties can be created at parks rather than other facilities due to the unlimited duration a resident can engage in an open space setting.²⁸

Briggs-Marsh and Warren (2000) studied a previously high crime urban park in Oakland, California. The park has been converted to a park used by children and families as well as young adults to sit down and enjoy the surroundings for leisure purposes.²⁹ This revitalized park has come to life again thanks

²⁷ Aleksandra Kazmierczak, "The contribution of local parks to neighborhood social ties" *Landscape and Urban Planning* 109 (2013):31-44.

²⁸ Aleksandra Kazmierczak, "The contribution of local parks to neighborhood social ties" *Landscape and Urban Planning* 109 (2013):31-44.

²⁹ Judith Briggs-Marsh, Jackque Warren, "A Park for All the People" *Public Health Reports* 115, No. 2/3 (2000): 253-256.

to a partnership with the city, the community, and the planning department. Such partners can create spaces designed for community members to access regardless of age, race, gender, or socio-economic status.³⁰

Utilizing the nursery strip for recreational purposes could be a particularly positive use for the parcels as the Arleta neighborhood is currently lacking in park space. According to the Creative Open Space Los Angeles project, Arleta is a community with an underserved community and lacks a traditional 10-20 acre park.³¹ Creating more in open space could help make the neighborhood a more vibrant community. The American Planning Association defines "public spaces" as gathering areas that can be utilized by neighboring residents which may promote increases in recreational activities and may provide a sense of community.³²

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Arleta-Pacoima Open Space Vision Plan. *City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning*. <http://www.chc-inc.org/downloads/Arleta-Pacoima-Open-Space-Vision-Plan-Final-lo-res2.pdf>

³² "American Planning Association, "Great Places in America: Public Spaces," Planning.org, <https://www.planning.org/greatplaces/spaces/characteristics.htm>. (September 10, 2015)

4.3 Importance of Design to Open Spaces

As the previous two sections of this chapter display, the built environment plays a vital role in determining how well an open space is inviting for use, if the space is safe, and if the space is accessible by different modes of transportation as well as all individuals of all physical abilities.

Coming et al. (2012) interviewed that resident's and property owners and stated that benefits from trails or open spaces outweigh any concerns.³³ Concerns including crime, violence, and trash pollution can be tackled by benefits of community members who utilizing the trail or open space and engage as park care-takers.³⁴ This finding was supported by Giles-Corti et al. (2005) who found that 29% of interview respondents reported using open spaces for physical activity in addition to making an effort of maintaining the open space.³⁵

³³ Sara E. Coming, Rasul A. Mowatt, Charles H. Chancellor, "Multiuse Trails: Benefits and Concerns of Residents and Property Owners" *Journal of Urban Planning and Development* (2012):277-285.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Billie Giles-Corti, Melissa Broomhall, Matthew Knuiman, Catherine Collines, Kate Douglas, Kevin Ng, Andrea Lange, Robert J. Donovan, "Increasing Walking: How Important is Distance To, Attractiveness, and Size of Public Open Space?" *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 282, no. 28(2005):169-176.

McCormick's et al. (2012) suggests that using policies, incentives and infrastructure levies to facilitate the early introduction of recreational and transport-related destinations into major housing projects, like new housing developments, are important to reduce inequalities in access to open spaces. Additionally, the study reveals that safety and access are two important factors to people who relocate rather than the size or proximity to open spaces.³⁶ Likewise, Brownson et al. (2004) found the survey respondents find safety and access are more important than the size of open spaces.³⁷

Vojnovic (2006) reveals that variables such as design, size, and proximity are overlapped by local culture. Crime, safety, and other variables important to open spaces are secondary when

³⁶ Gavin McCormack, Fiona Bull, Matthew Knuiman, Billie Giles-Corti, Kimberley Van Niel, Anna Timperio, Hayley Christian, Sara Foster, Mark Divitini, Nick Middleton, Bryan Boruff, "The influence of Urban Design on neighborhood walking following residential relocation" *Social Science & Medicine* 77 (2013):20-30.

³⁷ Ross C. Brownson, Jen Change, Amy A. Eyler, Barbara E. Ainsworth, Karen A. Kirtland, Brian E. Saelens, James, F. Sallis, "Measuring the Environment for Friendliness Toward Physical Activity" *American Journal of Public Health* 94, no. 3 (2004): 473-483.

analyzing the culture of a neighborhood or region.³⁸ Vojnovic states culture refers to the city and its behaviors (auto-centric, low pedestrian activity, etc.). Residents may have various influential variables but if an auto-dominated culture has been in effect for many years, residents will not engage in physical activities regardless of low crime, close proximity and access to open spaces.³⁹

Kaczynski et al. (2008) had research subjects fill out seven-day physical activity logs. The results of the logs suggest that parks with more features were more likely to be used for physical activity, size and distance nor crime were significant predictors.⁴⁰

Wesely and Gaarder (2004) study in Phoenix reveals that although many women face social and physical barriers when interacting alone in open spaces, when alternatives to crime or

fear and safety measures like visibility of all park users are implemented, women utilize open spaces even when alone.⁴¹ Design standards such as high visibility from the street and bright lights can encourage women from using open spaces, especially after sunset hours. Visibility and lighting prove to be a safety measure as it enables the community nearby to have direct visual access of open spaces rather than a physical barrier separating visibility.

Brown and Grant (2005) ultimately suggest that surveillance from the local neighborhood in open spaces will help mitigate crime and violence to be at a minimum while maintaining health at a maximum.⁴² Surveillance of the nearby residents adds a sense of safety to park users because one can visualize any wrong doing that occurs.

Overall, the conclusions determine that different factors such as visibility, lighting, and level of park users, all affect

³⁸ Igor Vojnovic, "Building Communities to Promote Physical Activity: A Multi-Scale Geographical Analysis" *Journal Compilation, Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography* 88, no. 1 (2006): 67-90.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Andrew T. Kaczynski, Luke R. Potwarka, Brian E. Saelens, "Association of Park Size, Distance, and Features With Physical Activity in Neighborhood Parks" *American Journal of Public Health* 98, no. 8 (2008): 1451-1456.

⁴¹ Jennifer K. Wesely, Emily Gaarder, "The Gendered 'Nature' of the Urban Outdoors: Women Negotiating Fear of Violence" *Gender and Society* 18, no. 5 (2004):645-663.

⁴² Caroline Brown and Marcus Grant, "Biodiversity and Human Health: What Role for Nature in Healthy Urban Planning?" *Planning Healthy Towns and Cities* 31, no. 4 (2005):326-338.

concerns of safety. Similarly, it is important to understand how planning can provide recreational spaces for residents of various socio-economic backgrounds. Design standards can allow or discourage women, an important population to consider when planning, from using open spaces, especially after sunset hours. Wesely and Gaarder's 2004 study in Phoenix reveals that although many women face social and physiological barriers such as fear and isolation, many women find different ways to combat negative barriers of poor design or low visibility from the surrounding environment by building relationships with other female user of the open space as well as park administration and staff.⁴³

This is important to consider when designing a potential recreational space in any community. The potential redesign of the utility corridor parcels in Arleta, should consider the sense of safety of not only women, but of all users. Community members are at the heart of public health. Whether it is access, proximity, safety, crime, or any other variable important to open space usage, design standards must consider people of all backgrounds, ages, and physical abilities using the space at different times of the day.

⁴³ Ibid.

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CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY INPUT

This chapter presents the perceptions and desires of six Arleta residents. Outreach to residents was done via social media, contacting neighborhood groups, and speaking at neighborhood meetings. Three of the six residents interviewed were or are currently in neighborhood groups: Neighbors In Action or the Arleta Neighborhood Council. Conversations with the interviewees occurred in person at their residences. At each interview, 11 different open-ended questions were asked. Visual aids were also provided during the interviews including existing conditions of the nursery strip and a map of the area.

Appendix B provides the list of questions asked during each interview and Appendix C provides the map and figures given prior to the commencement of each interview.

5.1 Focus of Resident Interviews

Overall, the 11 questions asked interviews about four principle themes:

- Walking in Arleta
 - The type of elements and activities desired for the study area.
 - Concerns for potential open space in the study area,

- Perceptions of potential recreational spaces in the study area.

5.2 Opinions of Open Space and Health

Residents were asked to share their opinion regarding access to open space/parks in relation to their health. All six residents expressed that having spaces for recreational use is important to their health. All six residents also stated that they don't feel like they can walk to an open space either because of the proximity or lack of access. Two residents, however, stated that perhaps they can bike to such a space if they were up for it. A resident of Arleta for more than 23 years stated, "Access to open space is important. But I usually see people jogging around Beachy Elementary school. At night too. I would rather jog or bike in a space close to me, like along Canterbury, rather than going to a 24 hour fitness that is not even close to where I live" said another resident who was involved with one of the neighborhood groups. In addition to physical activity, a community member expressed that access to open space is important for him because "it important for my mental health so I can go and relax".

In addition to physical and mental health, two residents expressed that healthy foods are important as well for their health. “Sometimes I don’t want to have to keep driving a lot of miles. Sometimes I don’t want to even get in my car. It would be nice to have a local farmer’s market” stated a community member. A resident of nearly 30 years stated, “There is an Arleta Garden Club...But I have never seen them have a farmer’s market...Why? Because they are not allowed.” It is evident that the Arleta residents interviewed value their health in terms of food, exercise, and for leisure related purposes. Health can be offered to the Arleta community in various forms such as a farmer’s market, access to open space, and a potential greenway along Canterbury Avenue.

5.3 Current Concerns About the Nursery Strip

Although residents expressed that crime is not relatively high, a major existing concern in the study area is the lack of lighting. Residents stated that there are numerous areas that are not lit well enough, thus walking during the night time is a fearsome reality. Additionally, residents stated that lack of lighting is the most significant concern for any potential new recreational spaces because it can influence crime.

Similarly to the site analysis, residents stated that dumping of trash and bulky items was also a significant concern that is attracted by the nursery strip. Lighting and trash seem to have an affect with one another. The poor lighting seems to have a direct influence on little to no surveillance in the areas surrounding the nursery strip whether on Canterbury Avenue or in the residential streets. Therefore, four residents claimed that currently, and even with potential recreation space being implemented, there has to be eyes on the street at all times. In this case, three residents claimed that this nursery strip has an advantage to many other plans in the city, solely because there are residential buffers with many homes facing directly onto the study area.

Concerns

- A lot of trash
- Dumping of bulky items
- Lack of lighting
- Utility corridor isolated from the rest of the community
- Not a lot of recreational areas close by
- Lack of places to “hang out”
- Lack of surveillance

5.4 Potential Trail: Would You Use It?

The residents interviewed were asked if a trail were to be provided on the entire study area, from north to south, would they use it. Particularly, the question included the trail having amenities for non-motorized modes of transportation such as walking, bicycling, jogging, and running. All six residents agreed that they would indeed use it. “I would definitely use it. Who wouldn’t want to? It would obviously have to be well designed though” stated a resident who has been living in Arleta for more than 20 years. Another community member stated, “Yes, I would personally use it. It would allow for people to have a trail for jogging in the community other than the options that we have now which are around the schools and Brandford Park. But Brandford Park is a bit too far from here if I am walking.” A trail is evidently heavily supported by resident interviewed and it can be a place to offer more opportunities than the current state of the strip.

5.5. Desired Design Elements for Potential Trail

Understanding community preferences can help prioritize available funding, which may be limited, to transform the nursery strip of parcels. In comparison to the observed site opportunities and the desired design elements expressed by the

residents interviewed, there are several overlapping observations. First, the residents expressed their interest in utilizing the strip of nursery parcels for a more productive use for recreational purposes. This strip has the potential to be used for walking, relaxing, jogging, and running purposes.

Second, the residents identified the homes located western portion of the strip to offer a sense of “eyes on the street” for any new development that would be implemented. Several of the residents expressed that a trail would definitely be used by the surrounding community and that it is already occurring informally. Moreover, some residents expressed that a separation of sidewalk and a trail is already present by Canterbury Avenue Elementary and it is something that can be adopted throughout the rest of the nursery strip.

Third, the topic of gathering spaces was brought up as a positive characteristic for the site. The existing garden, located across Canterbury Avenue Elementary, and the surrounding parcels can potentially host a farmer’s market. This can serve as a way to make the spaces more productive, something that the residents expressed heavily. Similarly, a resident expressed that some of the space on the strip of the nursery parcels should

be utilized as a gathering space for community events. This desire may prove to be highly beneficial to the surrounding community as it may encourage families to participate in outdoor, healthy, and informative events.

Desires

- Exercise equipment
- Garden
- Place to read
- Pocket park
- Paved trail
- Paved bicycle path
- Connection of Tujunga Wash and Pacoima Spreading Grounds open space in the future
- Place to relax
- Community events in potential recreational areas
- “Eyes on the street”
- Farmer’s market (Arleta Garden Club as potential host)

5.6 Summary of Findings

From the resident interviews, it is clear that the community members want a recreational space under the electrical LADWP power lines or at least a change. All six residents agreed that this space is underutilized and can offer a better alternative for the surrounding community. All residents agreed that any recreational space should be passive in order to avoid health hazards under the utility corridor. Safety was the biggest concern that came out of the interviews because of the low lighting that there currently is in and around the nursery strip. On the other hand, a space that is accessible by the community was the biggest opportunity and desire for the current strip of nursery parcels. Additional notable quotes from each of the interviewees on several key topics discussed in the interviews are shown in the following table:

Table 1 Resident opinions regarding Arleta and the study area.

Interview with Arleta Residents				
Resident	Walking in Arleta	Types of Elements/Activities Desired for Study Area	Concerns For Potential Open Space In The Study Area	Perception Of Potential Recreational Spaces In The Study Area
Resident 1	“I feel comfortable walking during the daytime. I feel it is 100% safe to walk with my family and young child. But during the night time it is different. Particularly my street, it needs more lighting so I can see all around me clearly.”	“I would like to see a pocket park but I think it might not be good for kids to use it because of the electricity wires above. I would like to see a garden so I can go and read a book and relax. It should be oriented for adults to relax.”	“Most people care about their city but I would be very concerned with who would be maintaining that area and keeping it clean. Other people won’t care about keeping it clean. But there has to be lighting for safety reasons. Maybe solar power lights. ”	“I think families will enjoy being there and even using spaces with recreational stuff. Crime will always exist but if there are eyes on the street it will help reduce any crimes.”
Resident 2	“I feel comfortable walking before dark, but there is not enough lighting on certain blocks.”	“I would maybe like to see a small park or place where the community can connect to nature or have exercise equipment.”	“I would be very concerned with safety because there is not a lot of lights around those area. Especially in the street that run east to west.”	“The community would benefit from a path or trail for exercising reasons and will offer time to relax and have a small getaway from our busy lives. The community will also be happy and proud to live in a great neighborhood where you can be able to do many things.”

Resident	Walking in Arleta	Types of Elements/Activities Desired for Study Area	Concerns For Potential Open Space In The Study Area	Perception Of Potential Recreational Spaces In The Study Area
Resident 3	"I think probably because I am a young adult, I feel comfortable walking both during the night and day."	"Yes, a park would increase community involvement in activities that are hosed by neighborhood council leaders."	"As far as a path or trail, the only concern I would have is safety of night time joggers or cyclist. It would have to be a good reflection of the path."	"I feel that Arleta would benefit if a trail would be implemented in the empty spaces under the electricity towers."
Resident 4	"I do not feel safe walking. Crime has gone up here. I drive to most places."	"Passive space and open space recreation can be present at those spaces. It would a win-win to have an open recreational space rather than in an isolated area."	"There are certain groups that want a designated bicycle path along the diversion channel. But that doesn't offer a sense of safety like a potential open space recreation here along Canterbury Avenue."	"Arleta would most certainly benefit from such an open recreational space in comparison to other areas. It will be much safer. It would be perfect for the joggers I see a lot."
Resident 5	"I know I can walk around Arleta during the day. It is nice being away from cars in main streets."	"I would to see a path where I can bike or jog. I would also like to walk to a small farmer's market-like event on Sundays to pick up my produce for the week. Maybe the Arleta Garden Club could host it."	"Not really because people outside the neighborhood wouldn't come to use it. Maybe Panorama City and Pacoima but it will cater to Arleta folks. Crime will exist but we deal with that already."	"Since you have the residential buffer, I would love a greenbelt space along Canterbury. I know so many people would use it. It would command respect."
Resident 6	"Yes definitely I feel I can walk around the neighborhood. I like jogging during the day. But at night it's a different story."	"Yes I think it has potential to become a space where different activities for exercise can be. The parcels are so close, but yet they seem so isolated from the community."	"I think it would only cater to the residents around the spaces. I don't really see any big concerns from such a space being put in. But the only challenge would be the properties zoned for residential. Some eminent domain would have to occur."	"You can definitely connect the Tujunga wash and the Pacoima spreading grounds. And the space will probably help from people dumping stuff along these areas."

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CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Discussion of Findings

From physically observing the study area and interviewing residents, the nursery strip as it currently exists, has some undesirable characteristics. There are several problems including the accumulation of trash, the dumping of bulky items, and a lack of visibility during after hours, and graffiti. These issues create an overall negative perception of the nursery strip in the community.

Although there are many trees, flowers, and plants present, which can be aesthetically appealing, outside of the nursery strip chain-lined fences, there appears to be little or no concern by LADWP or the City of Los Angeles to maintain these spaces. The visual blight caused by the unmaintained spaces, disconnects the appealing greenery inside of the nursery companies' leased land, to the rest of the Arleta neighborhood. However, the size of nursery strip, the location of the nursery strip parcels, and resident acceptance for a change, all display opportunities for a more useful, cleaner, and visually appealing corridor.

Interviewees found the idea of redeveloping the nursery strip into a recreational area very positive. In fact, five of the six interviewees agreed that there are already people utilizing the nursery strip in an informal manner. People such as joggers, runners, bicyclists, and dog walkers are seen in these spaces and a development of recreational space would cater to these populations as well as new users from the surrounding neighborhoods. Without knowing what is allowed or not on the LADWP property, interviewees agreed that recreational uses and open space in the strip of nursery parcels would maximize its use.

The review of literature found that there are many physical health, mental health, and social benefits to adding recreational spaces in residential areas. Additionally, minority populations, like that seen in Arleta, often lack recreational resources. Providing recreational space on the nursery strip can thus have many positive health effects within the community.

Reviewing relevant existing plans found that the creation of open spaces that are accessible to communities is an issue of concern all over the City of Los Angeles. The City of Los

Angeles' General Plan discuss how implementing accessible open space, by all modes of transportation, is an important goal for the city. Funding, preservation, multi-use land, and partnerships are the highlighting factors that the study area can focus on to create a user friendly and accessible recreational area for residents of Arleta and communities beyond. The City not only focuses on partnership with the community and neighborhood groups, but it extends the network to private agencies, non-profit organizations, and other public entities to planning process. The Arleta-Pacoima Open Space Vision Plan also offers how partnerships can help access open space become a reality.

The plan discusses the utility corridor as well as a potential path along the Pacoima wash, which is about 1/3 of a mile east of the current study area. A resident expressed his disappointment in that many agencies are pushing to

implement the Pacoima Wash path over a potential Canterbury Avenue greenway. While any increase in open space is positive, the nursery strip has the added benefit of higher level of surveillance, due to the adjacent road and homes (as seen in chapter 2), than the Pacoima Wash.

6.2 Recommendations

The conceptual design recommendations provided in this section are just a few ideas of many viable and feasible ideas that can be implemented to enhance the nursery strip parcels along Canterbury Avenue in Arleta. The following models and sketches presented are not definitive but they are intended to visually display what a redesigned space(s) can potentially look like in the future. Recommendations and the conceptual plan are results from the methods used to analyze the study area: literature, the site analysis observations, the in residents' input, and the reviewing of both existing and relevant plans.

Figure 22 Conceptual design for nursery strip parcels.

6.2.1 Conceptual Design Recommendations

Figure 22 displays the overview of a potential redesign element that would essentially decrease the setback property boundary owned by LADWP. During the interviews, residents expressed the desire to keep the nursery companies as they are “one of the few industries that Arleta still has”. Thus, this design model presents revitalization of a portion of space for public use which is accessible at all times of the day without displacing the independent nursery companies.

Findings from both the review of literature and resident interviews discussed the importance of open space for leisure purposes and its immediate impact to one’s health. In particular, Takano, Nakamura, and Watanabe’s (2002) study found that a five-year survival probability of senior citizens increased with the presence (and usage) of parks near their residence. This specific age group had a strong desire to age in their current community, which was also an important factor.⁴⁴ Living in areas with walkable green spaces positively influenced the longevity of urban senior citizens independent

⁴⁴ T. Takano, Nakamura K., Watanabe M., “Urban Residential Environments and Senior Citizens’ Longevity in Megacity Areas: The Importance of Walkable Green Spaces.” *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 56, no. 12 (2002):913-918.

of their sex, age, marital status, functional status, and socioeconomic status.⁴⁵ Senior citizens in Arleta may use such a space as in Figure 23, where small parcels (frequently the ones that are completely vacant and underused) serve as a nearby walking destination where they can engage in leisure activities such as reading and enjoying surrounding greenery. In addition, a member of a neighborhood group expressed that he would like to walk to a place to “relax and read a book, maybe in a garden which would cater to adults”. Figure 23 not only offers a visual space for adults, but also for children, people walking their dogs, and especially a space that is family-friendly.

As seen in the existing conditions chapter and in figure 7, street vendors are present during the day time and especially in close proximity to the DMV. The redesign model offers access to street vendors to utilize such a space to sell goods where customers can take a seat on the grass or on a bench and enjoy a snack. DMV employees may potentially also want to utilize such a space that is separated from the street but within walking distance to their job during breaks, lunch, before, or after working hours.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Figure 23 *View of transformed small parcel facing*

Much like senior citizens, the youth and children are important population groups that need to be included in any type of development. In this case, the youth from Arleta High School, the children from both Beachy Avenue Elementary and Canterbury Avenue Elementary schools need to be taken into account. Arleta High School students are recommended to get involved in the dialogue and planning process as well since they are most likely to become the more frequent users of such spaces. At the very least, a few meetings should be held at Arleta High School in order to capture the voice of the youth and their opinions on alternative redesign elements.

The study conducted by Gearin and Kahle (2006), which was an assessment conducted via a focus group from a local high school in downtown Los Angeles, found that teenagers in Los Angeles want to utilize open green spaces for recreational, physical, and mental benefits.⁴⁶ Teenagers utilize such spaces to “just relax, watch other people, have family barbeques, or just enjoy a nature walk”.⁴⁷ Therefore, the redesign sketches

⁴⁶ Elizabeth Gearin, Kahle Chris, “Teen and Adult Perception of Urban Green Space Los Angeles.” *Children, Youth Environments* 60, no. 1 (2006): 25-48.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

and models displayed in figure 22, 23, and 24, offer a space for teens to interact within the community. The recommended greenway trail may also offer a space for Arleta High School’s sports teams and club to use, during, before, or after school hours, thus influencing physical activity.

Moreover, the redesign model in figure 23 can offer solutions to the needs and desires of certain residents interviewed. A space where a farmer’s market can occur to purchase healthy produce (and very likely create social capital) and may also be a place where various community events can take place. Residents expressed their interests in such spaces due to the lack of use that the nursery strip currently offers.

During the resident interviews, all residents supported the idea of a trail along Canterbury Avenue. “This has the potential for a beautiful greenway rather than the Pacoima wash” said a member of the community who has lived in Arleta for more than 30 years and is currently an active member of a local neighborhood group. Figure 24 displays a redesigned greenway trail that accommodates all non-motorized mobility users such as bicyclists, pedestrian, and handicapped individuals.

Figure 24 Conceptual design for large parcel on Carl Street facing towards Terra Bella Street.

It is also important to recognize that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) population. The greenway trail offers friendly and accessible spaces for such individuals, and this redesign sketch does just that. A separation of a trail and a sidewalk offers ADA individuals, in addition to all other users regardless of age, background, or socioeconomic status, options and accessibility to choose a preferred route of travel.

Much like Figure 22 this, Figure 23 also displays a wide setback of the LADWP fences from the street. The remaining space allows for the independent nursery companies to still operate in their daily work environment while offering a space for physically and mentally healthy activities to the community. Additionally, these spaces have the potential to

attract the surrounding community to engage in social interactions, even during the sunset hours. The recommended designs offer a sense of safety during the day and especially during the night hours, something that residents expressed as a concern. Light poles on both the greenway trail and the sidewalk are present frequently to create an efficient buffer of eyes on the street by passing vehicles and the homes across Canterbury Avenue. Investing in infrastructure that can potentially engage the community in social interaction and healthy activities is evidently needed. Some parcels provide visually appealing development (vegetation provided by the nursery companies), and with a recreational space being implemented on the adjacent side, as one resident stated, “It would command respect”.

Final Remarks

The nursery strip containing the 30 parcels under LADWP power lines can be more than it is today. Currently, the strip is perceived as neglected, unmaintained, and at night, it can be felt as dangerous by residents because of its low visibility. Additionally, pollution of trash, dumping bulky items and vandalism such as graffiti create urban blight in areas surrounding the nursery strip. However, despite these negatives, the site has the potential to support recreational space for a community that lacks such uses. Interviews show support for conversion of the nursery strip to recreational uses and much research shows how beneficial such space can be to a community.

The designs I have presented in the previous section show conceptually what a revitalized nursery strip can look like. As shown in the review of policies, there are planning goals in place that indicate designs like I have presented which are desired. Implementation is of course an issue for any plan. Future studies should examine how such a revitalization could be funded, such as through the creation of a tax assessment district. While funding any project can be challenging, if a revitalization of the nursery strip occurs, it has the opportunity to enhance mobility, uplift the neighborhood, the city, and can be an example that can be replicated in other places with similar conditions. Ultimately, the Canterbury Avenue Greenway Trail has the potential to be a pillar of the community of Arleta.

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Appendix A: Request for Participation In Research – Resident Interviews

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REQUEST FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

TITLE OF THE STUDY
Healthy Falls To Wealthy Trails: Revitalization Opportunities for Underused Space Alongside Residential Areas in Arleta, California.

NAME OF THE RESEARCHER
Jorge A. Martinez, Masters of Urban Planning Candidate

PURPOSE
The purpose of project is to conduct research regarding land-use and public spaces in relationship to the Arleta neighborhood. Over the course of my research and data collection regarding this topic, I will produce a conceptual plan of preferred uses for the spaces which will be presented as recommendations to be considered for the study area. These recommendations will be centered on land-use and opportunities that the residents of Arleta can utilize.

PROCEDURES
You have been asked to participate in a 20 - 45 minute interview that aims to ascertain your views regarding land-use, opportunities, suggestions and experiences regarding the 2.5 mile strip of Nursey stock alongside Canterbury Avenue (Filmore to Tonopah [North to South]) in Arleta, California.
To aid in the interview process an audio recording device will be used during the interview process. If you would not like to be recorded during the interview you have the right to opt out and the researcher will not use any recording device at all besides writing down notes by hand.

POTENTIAL RISKS
There is no anticipated risk to you from participating in this interview.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS
There is no anticipated direct benefit to you from participating in this interview other than the extent to which you value contributing your knowledge.

COMPENSATION
You will not be compensated in any way for your participation in this research.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Unless you request otherwise, your name and affiliation will only be included at the end of the final report as part of list of names who participated in the interview process. Individual names will not be attributed to specific data pieces in the text of the final report. The interviewer will assume that your comments are on-the-record and that you agree to being quoted, with a "community member", "a resident", or "Interviewee participant" title which will be utilized in the text for the final report. The final report will contain a list of the names of each individual interviewed under a dedicated section that thanks them for helping me compose this research. If you wish to share any comments "off-the-record," or not have your name stated in any text on the final report (text and list), simply notify the interviewer, me, and that information will be kept strictly confidential between you and the

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researcher/interviewer and will not be utilized for the purposes of the study available to the public.

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the entire study or any part of the study without any negative effect on your relations with San Jose State University.
You also have the right to skip any question you do not wish to answer. This consent form is not a contract. It is a written explanation of what will happen during the study if you decide to participate. You will not waive any rights if you choose not to participate, and there is no penalty for stopping your participation in the study.

QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS
For further information regarding this the study, please contact Jorge Martinez (██████████), Jorge.Martinez@sjsu.edu

Complaints or additional questions about the research may be presented to:

- Hilary Nixon, Ph.D. Chair and Graduate Adviser, Department of Urban & Regional Planning (408) 924-5852 or
- Roxanne Ezzet-lofstrom, Professor, Department of Urban and Regional Planning (408) 924-5852.

For questions about participants' rights or if you feel you have been harmed in any way by your participation in this study, please contact Pamela Stacks, Ph.D., Associate Vice President of The Office of Research: (408)924-2479.

SIGNATURES
Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to be a part of the study, that the details of the study have been explained to you, that you have been given time to read this document, and that your questions have been answered. You will receive a copy of this consent form for your records.

Participant Signature

Participant's Name (printed)	Participant's Signature	Date
☐	I agree to allow the use of audio recording device during the interview session.	

Researcher Statement
I certify that the participant has been given adequate time to learn about the study and ask questions. It is my opinion that the participant understands his/her rights and the purpose, risks, benefits, and procedures of the research and has voluntarily agreed to participate.

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Date

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Appendix B: Resident Interview Questions

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UNDERUSED SPACES IN ARLETA

- 1) How long have you lived in the Arleta neighborhood?
- 2) What do you like most about living in Arleta?
- 3) What do you like least about living in Arleta?
- 4) Do you feel comfortable walking around the neighborhood for leisure purposes? (Only during a specific time of day/night?)
- 5) Do you feel you live within walking/biking distance to open space/park?
- 6) Is having access to open spaces/park important to you and your health?
- 7) Do you feel the nursery stock parcels along Canterbury Avenue can offer more opportunities/activities for you and/or your family? If yes, what kind of opportunities/activities?
- 8) If a trail/path were built where people can walk, jog, run, and bicycle from Filmore Street to Tonopah Street, would you use it?
- 9) Would you have any concerns of such trails/path being implanted to the current Nursery stock parcels? If so, what are those concerns? (Safety, crime, noise pollution, etc)
- 10) Do you think the community of Arleta would benefit or lose from a path, greenbelt or a trail being implemented in the Nursery stock parcels along Canterbury Avenue?
- 11) Is there anything else you would like to add in regards to this topic?

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Appendix C: Maps and Figures for Resident Interviews

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MAPS AND FIGURES OF STUDY AREA

2.5 mile strip of Nursery stock alongside Canterbury Street (Filmore Street to Tonopah Street)

(Map of study area).

(Study area on Canterbury Avenue and Pierce Street).

(Study area on Canterbury Street and facing Kagel Canyon Street).

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(Study area on Canterbury Avenue and Garber Street).

(Study area on Canterbury Avenue and Kagel Canyon Street).

(Study area on Canterbury Avenue and Gruen Street).

(Study area on Carl Street and Canterbury Avenue to the right).

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