

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS about the Silver Lake Reservoir Meadow:

Just where is this "meadow?"

The meadow is the large, flat (5-6 acres) grassy area on the west side of Silver Lake Blvd., located south of Armstrong Ave. and north of Earl St. It is bounded on the east by Silver Lake Blvd. and on the west by the Reservoir.

Who owns it?

We, the people, do. The current steward of the Reservoir and the surrounding property is the City of LA, Department of Water & Power (LADWP), which has maintained the Reservoir and all of the surrounding acreage for over 70 years. William Mulholland actually stocked the reservoir with fish years ago and would declare the fishing season open. Water in this reservoir serves some of downtown and South Central LA. Silver Lake's drinking water comes from Eagle Rock Reservoir.

How did it get that name.....is it really a meadow?

While not a natural Meadow as you might find in a mountain wilderness, it is much like similar urban grassy expanses, and the Meadow name helps emphasize its very special nature. It is similar to the world-renowned and loved Sheep Meadow in New York's Central Park. Visit [Central Park Sheep Meadow - CentralPark.com](http://CentralPark.com) (The Silver Lake Meadow was formerly part of the Reservoir, but was filled in and landscaped many decades ago due to water quality concerns).

Why hasn't it been open before now?

The entire Reservoir property has been closed to public access for at least 60 years because the water itself is a part of the City's drinking water supply (it supplies homes and businesses in downtown and south L.A. (Silver Lake households are supplied by Eagle Rock reservoir). Also, the LADWP hadn't been asked before. This opportunity came about with the development of the Silver Lake Master Plan in connection with the LADWP's Water Quality Improvement Project at Silver Lake in about 1999.

Due to ever-more-stringent Federal & State clean water regulations, the LADWP is required to serve all drinking water from covered storage. For Silver Lake & Ivanhoe, the water will be stored in huge underground tanks to be built north of Griffith Park, and the Reservoir will be "decommissioned" and only used for emergencies.

What is the Silver Lake Master Plan?

In about 1998, after 10 years of formal mediation with the LADWP, the Silver Lake delegates requested that the LADWP develop a "master plan" for the reservoir which would be used as the mitigation for what was then to be a major construction project on site. About \$135,000 was allocated to this master plan by the LADWP. Mia Lehrer & Associates was awarded the contract to develop a phased Master Plan for the site. Since that time, an off site location was determined to be appropriate storage for the Silver Lake water (See www.LADWP.com). Based on the current project, the LADWP would not be required to implement the plan. Instead, implementation of the plan would be left to the community.

How was the decision-making done?

A comprehensive public planning process for the future use of the property has been ongoing since the development of the Silver Lake Master Plan in 1998. Three well-attended workshops were held at that time and since then, there have been

numerous other community meetings, forums, discussions and surveys taken. The first phase of the Master Plan was the separate walking/jogging path on W Silver Lake Drive that was completed nearly 3 years ago and has proven to be extremely popular. Phase 2 is the Silver Lake Blvd section of the path now under construction and scheduled for completion in June 2008. Discussions about the use of the entire reservoir property will continue until the entire reservoir property is taken out of service which is anticipated to be 2015.

Why is the meadow so special?

Visitors who enjoyed the open day in Spring of 2007 recognized how unique this expansive community lawn is, offering quiet respite from the busy boulevard, great views of the Lake and surrounding hills, and a rare opportunity for family oriented recreation and contemplation — with easy walkable access for many Silver Lake residents.

Los Angeles has less park space per person than just about every other large city in America, and unfortunately our neighborhood has one of the worst park ratios in the entire city. Most of the local park land is up in the hills and mountains and not easily accessible to many families and children.

In short, L.A. is “park poor.” Silver Lake has a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create sizable public open space at minimal cost (given the going cost of land in the Silver Lake area, it would cost the taxpayers over \$10 million to buy this much land), a cooperative partner with the LADWP and many involved neighbors in Silver Lake’s best tradition of commitment to improvement, respect and diversity. It’s an opportunity we cannot afford to miss.

What about organized sports and lights, bleachers, bathrooms, parking lots?

As determined by the workshops (and subsequent meetings) in connection with the development of the Master Plan, organized sports and other high-impact active recreational uses will be prohibited on the Meadow at all times. No public facilities will be developed, except for walking paths, the existing irrigation system, a few benches and the enclosing fence. There will be no new parking lots, helping encourage healthy pedestrian access and creating natural limits to the Meadow’s use.

Who will keep it clean and litter-free?

The property will be maintained by the LA City Department of Recreation & Parks. And, all of us need to take an active part in keeping our park clean and litter-free.

What will the rules and regulations be?

There will be a Meadow Advisory Board convened in conjunction with the LA City Department of Recreation & Parks to make these decisions. But, until then, as determined during the Master Plan process, the meadow will be designed for low-impact, passive recreational use---walking, bird watching, sun bathing, picnicking that does not involve cooking, etc. There will be no picnic tables, no barbeque pits, no baseball backstops---just grassy open space and a few benches upon which to rest the weary. It will be open dawn to dusk (daylight hours) only.

Could it be sold to developers?

Opening the Meadow to the public helps ensure that it will remain in public ownership forever. On the chance that the City’s leadership decided to change the zoning from OS (open space, the most restrictive zone designation) and sell or lease the land for development, and it passed environmental review, it could be used for that. However, it is extremely rare, if unheard of, for public open space to be

privately developed once it has been designated a community recreational resource. Needless to say, the neighborhood would likely vehemently oppose such a plan.

If it is opened, what will the impact on the wildlife be?

As part of the environmental documentation required by projects like this, it was determined through a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) that there will be "no significant" impact on the wildlife. This was echoed by the full Environmental Impact Report (EIR) that the LADWP prepared in conjunction with the project that will move the Silver Lake Water storage to the "Headworks" location, adjacent to Griffith Park and the LA River.

Just what does "no significant impact" mean?

All of the wildlife that live inside the fence of the reservoir property are urban dwellers and extremely adaptable to their environment. Coyotes, in particular, have had no problem finding enough to eat both inside and outside the fence. Many residents have lost precious pets to the coyotes. The coyotes den under cover and not out in the open. Residents with large yards and lots of places for coyotes to hide, have reported coyotes living nearly adjacent to homes.

(See http://www.laanimalservices.org/wildlife_coyotes.htm for tips on living with wildlife in Los Angeles)

What about the birds and nesting season?

As has been determined by the 2 recent environmental documents, there are no threatened species of birds that live in or on the meadow. Prior to September 11, the LADWP allowed the Audubon Christmas Bird counters on the reservoir property for over 25 years. Again, no threatened species were seen.

As another example of the adaptability of birds to their urban environment, observe the nesting Great Blue Herons that have been nesting for years high in the Eucalyptus trees on West Silver Lake Drive. There were herons on their nests when the LA County fire department repeatedly filled the helicopter water tanks not even 500' away from them during the Griffith Park fire in May, 2007.

Who will visit the Meadow?

With its limited use hours and lack of typical park and recreation developments, the Meadow is designed for pedestrian-friendly neighborhood use. Just like the New York Central Park Sheep Meadow, it is a special resource that appeals to those seeking peace, open space, light and quiet relaxation.

The solution to LA's park shortage is a program of neighborhood parks that answer local recreation needs. Various park projects are underway to create additional enhancements in the surrounding areas (such as the Taylor Yard, Elysian Valley and Cornfield parks). And creating small "pocket parks" from under utilized used land gives easy park access to families right in their neighborhood. By supporting park projects throughout the city, every neighborhood benefits.

If it is opened and there are problems develop, what can we do?

Using the various avenues at our disposal---our local elected officials, the various city agencies responsible for the property (including the LA City Dept. of Recreation & Parks and LA Police Dept.), and our voices, we could effect the change necessary to solve those problems. In addition, a Meadow Advisory Board is being formed to monitor the Meadow and its management. With good management from the start,

problems should be minimal---the park surrounding the Recreation Center has been open to the public 24/7 for decades with few problems.

What about organized sports?

Organized sports and other high-impact active recreational uses will be prohibited on the meadow at all times. The Master Plan process in 1999 and about 20 community meetings and surveys since then have over and over again repeated the desire to have the meadow be a place of respite and restoration. A tiny and precious oasis in the big, bustling and noisy city. There are many active recreation venues for organized sports nearby.

Will there be lights, bleachers, restrooms?

There will be no public facilities developed on the meadow, except for walking paths, the existing irrigation system, and a few benches. Unless and until the community participates in a similar open and transparent process that determined the current use....a sylvan setting. There are restrooms at the Rec Center.

Who will keep it clean and litter free?

The property will be maintained by the LA City Dept. of Recreation & Parks. Of course, everyone is responsible for putting their own litter in the bins and helping keep the area clean.

Isn't it a waste to water and mow 5 acres when we're in the middle of a drought? Why not replace with drought-tolerant native plants?

In an ideal world, it would make sense to remove the grass and replace it with drought-resistant plantings---and this is the long-term vision for the meadow. But that will cost hundreds of thousands, if not well over a million, dollars, so it will have to wait until funding is in place. Meanwhile, the grass will be maintained as is for current public use and enjoyment.

Also, to put this into perspective, many of the homes in Silver Lake have no lawn or flat play space. This "community lawn" might even be more efficient than thousands of individual lawns. So, it may not be as wasteful as it appears.

Why don't we call it a community lawn?

Good idea. It's no secret that a green grassy expanse is a much more enjoyable space for relaxation and enjoyment than the brown, bristly fire-prone native flora covering the nearby hills such as Griffith Park. Nonetheless, as soon as money becomes available, there is an opportunity to create attractive plantings at the Meadow's borders, featuring drought-tolerant demonstration landscaping, encouraging residents to create their own low-water use gardens. It is likely that some of the lawn will remain for community use.

Why wait?

Removing the grass and re-landscaping would cost at least hundreds of thousands of dollars with an even greater fundraising challenge — and destruction of a rare, beautiful resource and habitat for wildlife such as waterfowl that use the Meadow.

One of the best features of the Meadow plan is its extraordinary cost-effective opportunity for a beautiful, readymade place for neighborhood enjoyment.

Who is paying for this project, as well as the new walking path?

At the moment, the changes anticipated in the short-term have been included in the Phase 2 Silver Lake Blvd. walking path budget (which is money coming from the original \$1.3 million provided by the State and funds from the City). Phase 1 was the West Silver Lake Drive path. The LADWP will be installing their new fence to their standards and will be paying for that. No specific funding source has been identified as yet for any of the upgraded landscape design and paths. There are several sources that will be explored once the community has decided what they want exactly and when they want it. But, in the meantime, using the community lawn is an asset that could be enjoyed soon.

What about pedestrian safety? Silver Lake Blvd. is difficult & dangerous to cross.

Pedestrian safety has been a prime concern in the development of the Silver Lake walk/running paths and will continue to be one of the highest priorities. Planning efforts are underway to install a signalized pedestrian crossing at the Meadow, but there is need for more awareness and cooperation from the LA City Dept of Transportation (LADOT). Reducing speed through additional traffic calming measures will enhance the neighborhood's overall quality, with less pollution, congestion and safety concerns. Neighbors are strongly encouraged to communicate to their City Council Offices the vital importance of safe pedestrian access in the project area.

Click here for a LADOT Suggestion Form: [Bus Complaint Admin](#)

Won't there be an increase in traffic?

Probably not. The plan to have the meadow open from dawn to dusk means that people can include a visit on their walk during the course of the day. Since there won't be any attractions, few people will make a special trip in their car, but just drop in to enjoy this magical treasure.

Won't there be a parking problem like there is now at the Rec Center?

If the experience after the W Silver Lake Drive path opened is any indication, fear of parking problems was unfounded. In connection with the use of the existing path, there doesn't appear to be any additional cars parking on W Silver Lake Drive. The Rec Center has many organized activities and team sports which means that the neighborhood parking spaces are in great demand which sometimes causes problems. There are numerous spaces available on Silver Lake Blvd.

So what if the meadow stays closed forever?

The LADWP will continue to maintain the property in its present condition until another use is found. The LADWP is not in the park business and want to turn the property over to the appropriate steward for future use. As of this writing, the LADWP has promised to continue to keep the water level at the average operating level, which is 440' above sea level.

So, if the decision is made to keep the meadow closed to the public, the community will continue to wonder why this wonderful resource continues to be locked behind a fence.

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