



# The City Project



## **How did we get into this situation, locking children out of schools and pools?**

Neighborhood children in Los Angeles in the most park-poor assembly district in California were locked out of this brand new \$168 million high school pool during the long, hot summer of 2007.

Neither the school district nor the city parks department would open the school and pool to the community during the summer.

The photograph is from the Los Angeles Times coverage of the struggle to open a local school and pool to the community during the summer of 2007.

See Bob Pool, School Pool or People's Plunge? L.A. Times, July 31, 2007.

## Defining an Obesity Agenda for the Next Administration

This presentation uses the campaign to enforce physical education laws in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), the second largest in the country, as a case study.

According to the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, obesity among LAUSD students has increased to over 1 in 4 children in 2006.

Schools do not enforce state physical education requirements. Los Angeles is park poor, and there are not enough places for physical activity. And there is not enough joint use of schools and parks.

# WHY P. E.?



# Just for the health of it

**UNITED TEACHERS LOS ANGELES P. E. CAMPAIGN**

The City Project is working with United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA -- the teachers' union) on the Physical Education Campaign "For the Health of It."

Our goals are to help students move more, eat well, stay healthy and do their best in school and life

1. The organizing campaign calls for:

- Enforcing state law requiring an average of 20 minutes of physical education in elementary schools every day,
- Providing qualified physical education teachers,
- Limiting physical education class sizes,
- Joint use of schools, pools, and parks, and
- Building public support through a strategic media campaign.

2. The LAUSD Board of Education passed a resolution to enforce physical education laws in response to the campaign.

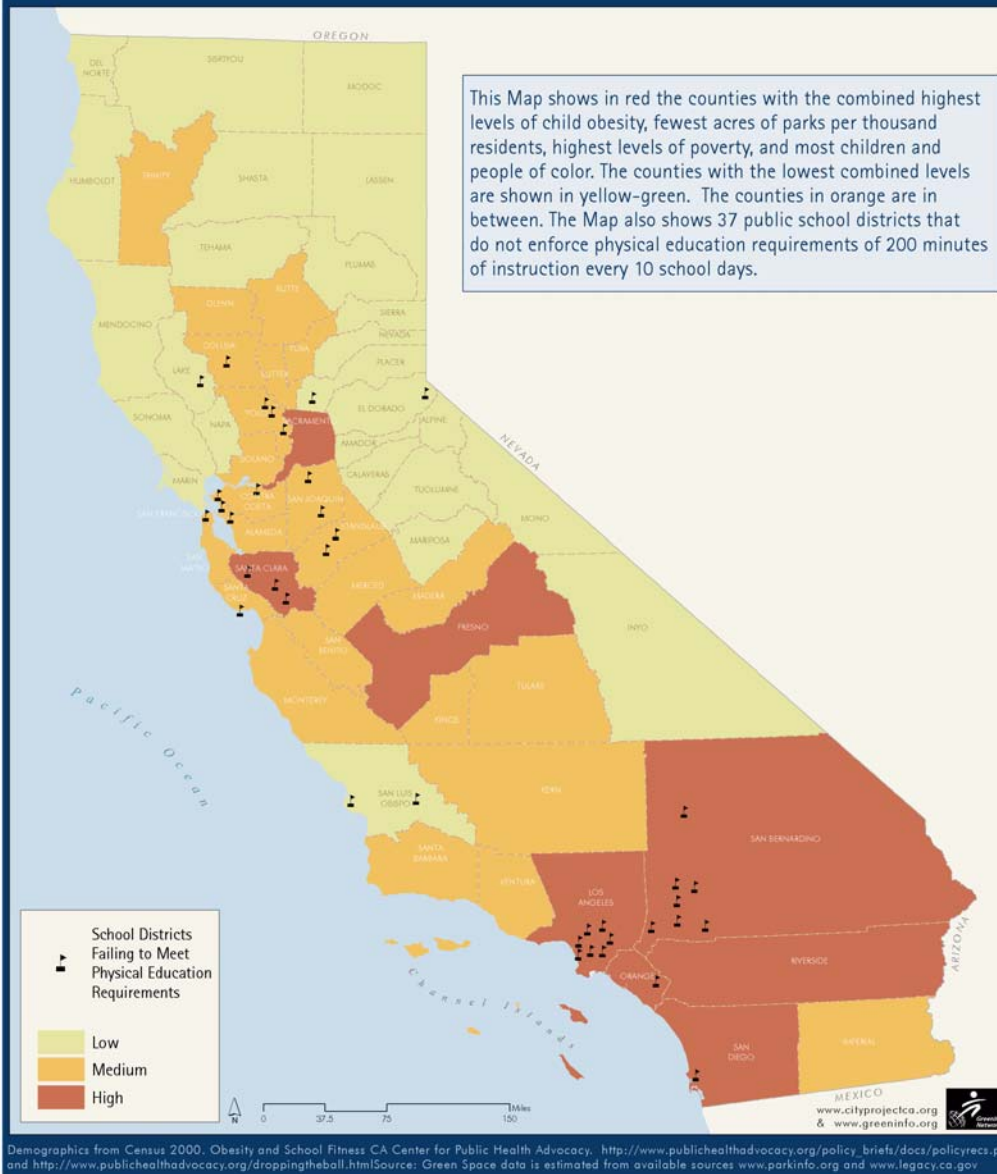
3. LAUSD, UTLA, and The City Project are developing a plan to implement the resolution and enforce physical education laws.

4. The City Project has filed an administrative complaint on civil rights and state law grounds to ensure LAUSD implements the resolution and enforces the law.



# Green Access and Equity for California

Child Obesity, Poverty, People of Color, and Green Space by County



The problems extend beyond Los Angeles, throughout California and across the nation.

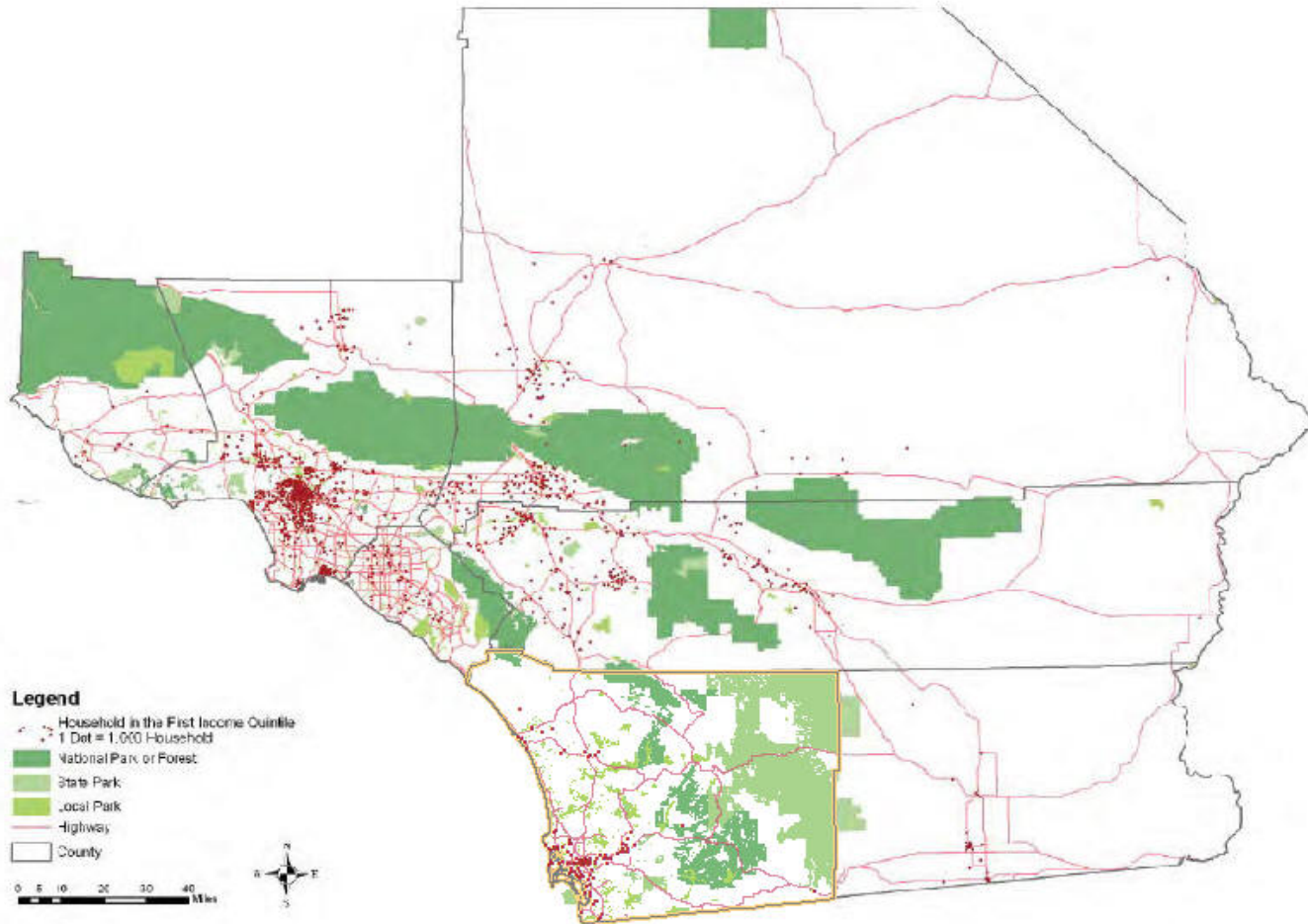
The City Project has done a preliminary study mapping and analyzing green access by county at the state level. This map shows in red the counties with greatest green access needs, measured in combined terms of the fewest acres of aprks per thousand residents and the highest levels of child obesity, youth, poverty, and people of color.

The counties with the lowest combined levels are shown in yellow-green. The counties in orange are in between.

The map also shows with black flags the 37 public school districts that do not enforce physical education requirements of 200 minutes of instruction every 10 school days in elementary school.



## MAP 1: DISTRIBUTION OF PARKS AND LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

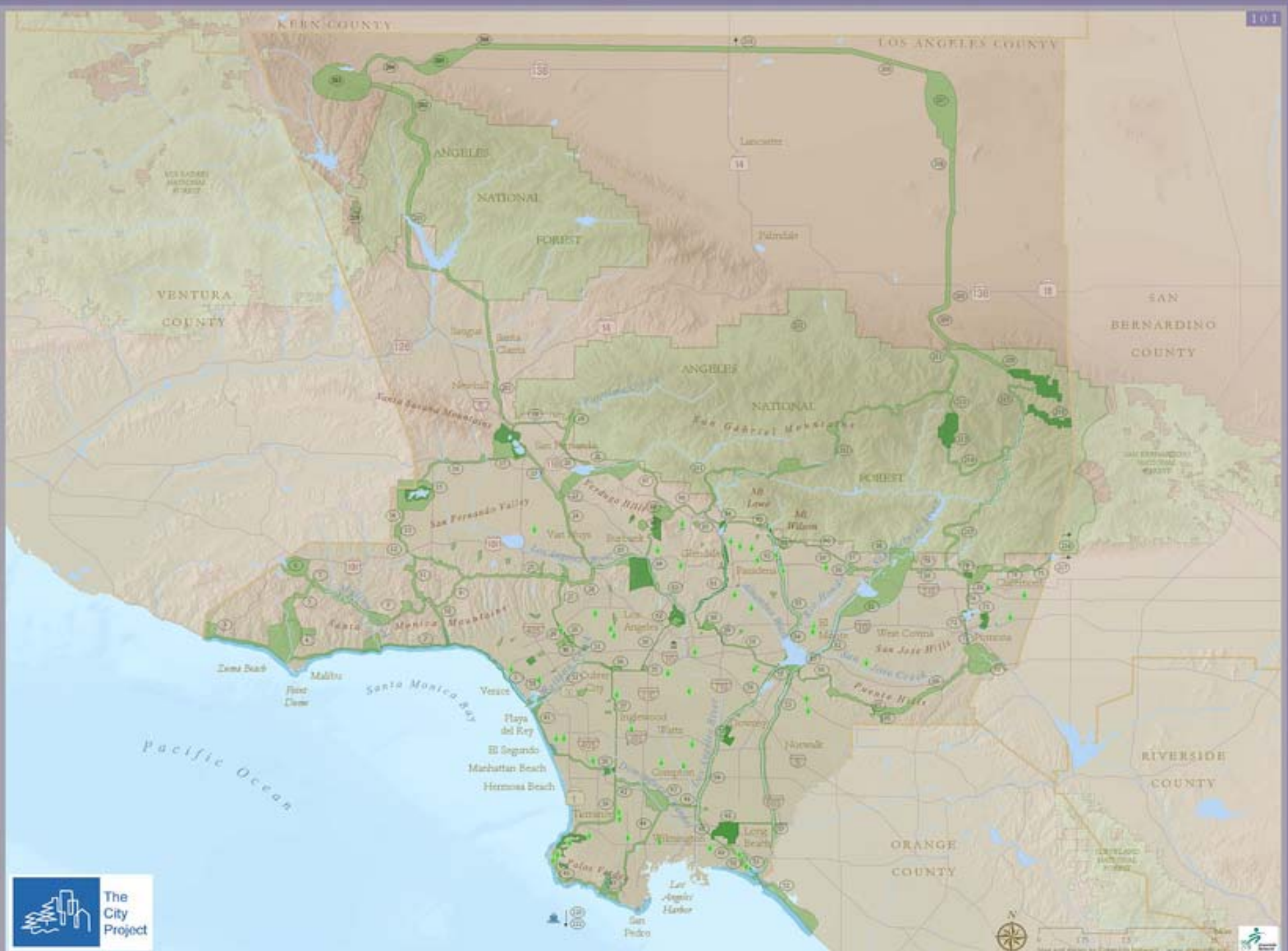


Source: Southern California Association of Government, ESRI StreetMapUSA, TeleAtlas Park and Income data for San Diego County added by The City Project and GreenInfo Network. The household income figure for San Diego County is \$19,999 or less, which is commonly available from the Census Bureau. The map and all other data are from the SCAG RTP Environmental Justice Report 11-14 (proposed final May 8, 2008). SCAG used a household income figure of \$19,360 for the counties besides San Diego.

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) calls for public transportation to improve access for all to parks throughout Southern California in the 2008 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

“Not all neighborhoods and people have equal access” to local, state and national parks. The SCAG map shows the unequal distribution of parks and low income neighborhoods in the five counties of Los Angeles, Ventura, San Bernardino, Riverside, Imperial, and San Diego. According to SCAG, “a multi-agency effort must be undertaken in order to further address and remedy the issue of inequity of park access.”

[Mapping and analyses for San Diego County added by The City Project and GreenInfo Network. The household income figure for San Diego County is \$19,999 or less, which is commonly available from the Census Bureau. SCAG used a household income figure of \$19,360 for the counties besides San Diego.]



In 1930, Olmsted Brothers and Bartholomew Associates published “Parks, Playgrounds, and Beaches for the Los Angeles Region.”

The Olmsted report proposed a comprehensive and coherent network of parks, playgrounds, schools, beaches, forests, and transportation to promote the social, economic, and environmental vitality of Los Angeles and the health of its people.

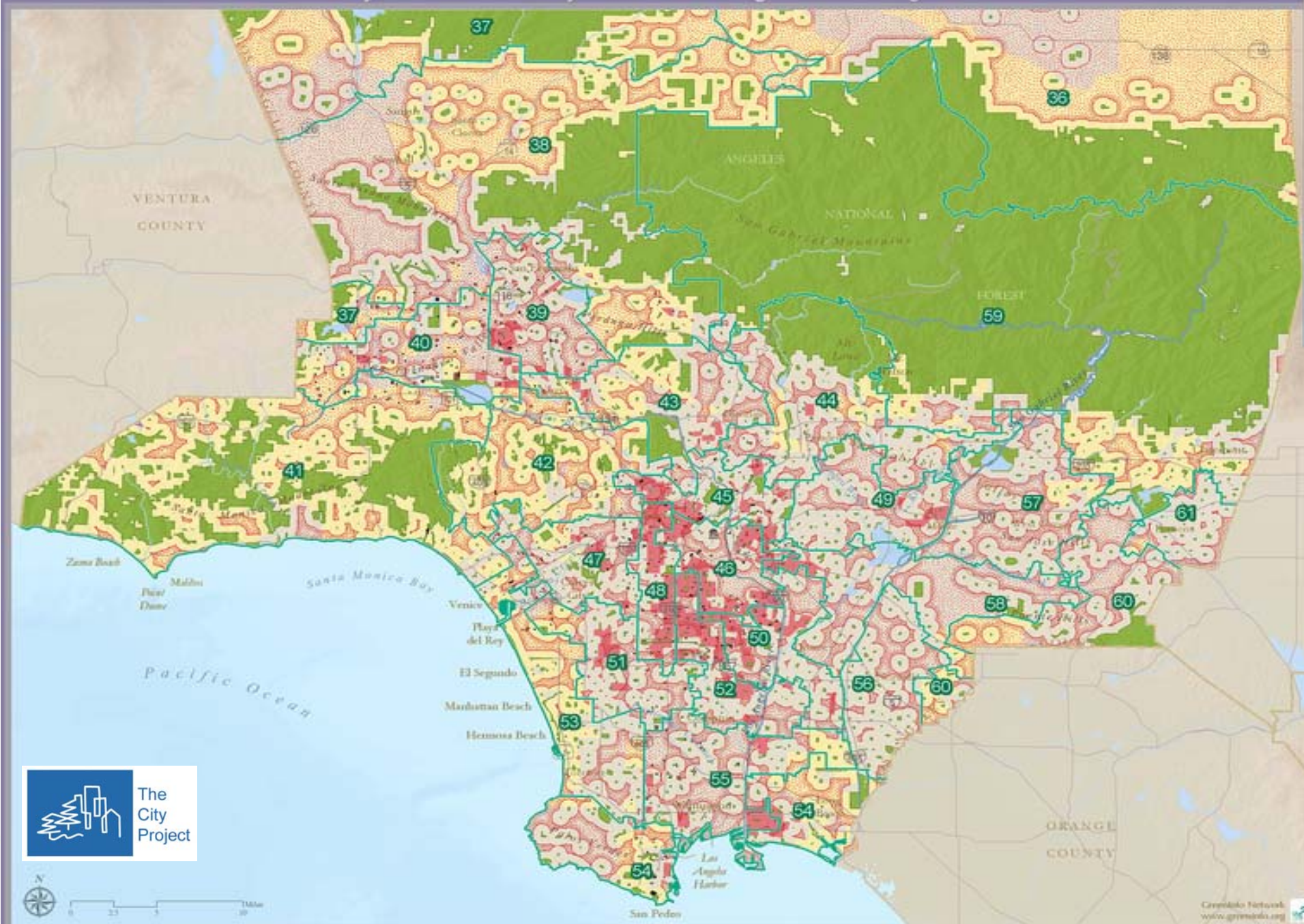
The report proposed:

- \*the shared use of parks and schools,
- \*greening the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers,
- \*doubling beach access
- \*using parks and school fields for clean water and flood control
- \*transportation to parks, schools, rivers, beaches, mountains, and forests.

(The Olmsted firm was started by the sons of the great landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, who designed Central Park in New York City and founded the field of landscape architecture.)

Implementing the Olmsted vision would have made Los Angeles one of the most beautiful and livable regions in the world. Civic leaders killed the Report because of politics, bureaucracy, and greed in a triumph of private power over public space and social democracy.

# Park Access and Schools for Children of Color Living in Poverty with No Access to a Car



Instead of the Olmsted vision, this is the stark reality of Los Angeles today. Los Angeles is park poor, and there are unfair park, school, and health disparities.

Children of color living in poverty lack access to parks, to school fields, to healthy food in grocery stores and restaurants, and to cars or transit to reach parks, schools, or healthy foods. They suffer from the highest levels of child obesity and diabetes. The red hot spots show those areas.

The green areas show where the green space is, and where the money is. Disproportionately white and wealthy people with fewer children than the county average have the greatest access to parks. Ironically, those who need the most have the least, and those who need less have the most.

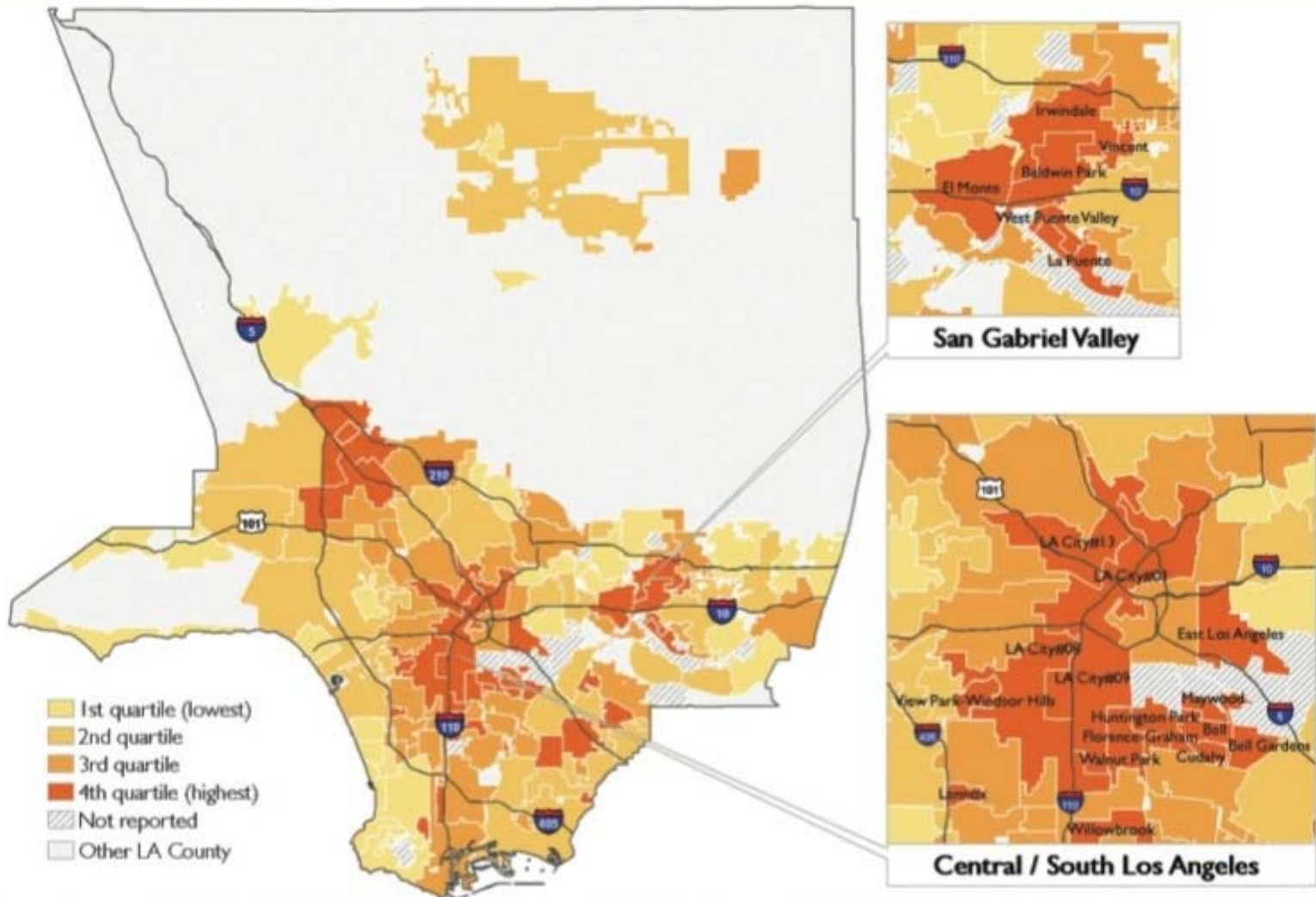


Levels of child obesity range from 23 to 39% in Los Angeles County. These red hot spots tend to be in the same areas with no parks or large school fields shown in the earlier map.

The health implications of the lack of places to play in parks and schools are profound. In California, 73% of fifth, seventh, and ninth graders did not achieve minimum physical fitness standards in 2004. In LAUSD, 87% of students were not physically fit.



Figure 1: Prevalence of Childhood Obesity, 2005



<sup>5</sup> Data drawn respectively from the California Nutrition Network and several law enforcement agencies – California Department of Justice, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, City of Los Angeles Police Department.

<sup>6</sup> Note that rankings for smaller cities and communities should be interpreted with caution as they are more subject to variation from small changes

<sup>7</sup> Correlation coefficient = 0.83; p-value < 0.001

<sup>8</sup> Correlation coefficient = -0.47; p-value < 0.001

The prevalence of childhood obesity for 128 cities and communities in Los Angeles County are presented in this map published by the County Health Department.

The prevalence of childhood obesity varied significantly among cities and communities, from a low of 4% in Manhattan Beach to a high of 37% in Maywood, and was found to be strongly associated with economic hardship. The County Health Department found a higher prevalence of obesity in cities or communities where the economic burden (higher poverty, lower educational attainment, more dependents, etc.) was greater compared to other cities and communities in the county of Los Angeles.

(Correlation coefficient = 0.83; p-value < 0.001.) Cities with less open area set aside as parks, recreational area, or wilderness area were more likely to have a higher prevalence of children who are obese. (Correlation coefficient = -0.47; p-value < 0.001.)

Source: Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Office of Health Assessment and Epidemiology, Preventing Childhood Obesity: the need to create healthy places. A Cities and Communities Health Report. October 2007.

The County ignores racial and ethnic health disparities. Why is that?

### Overweight and Unfit Children in California

Race/Ethnicity.....	Overweight....	Unfit
Latino.....	34%.....	45%
AfricanAmerican...29%.....		46%
N/H White.....	20%.....	34%
Asian.....	18%.....	36%

Source: California Center for Public Health Advocacy, An Epidemic: Overweight and Unfit Children in California Assembly Districts (Dec. 2002).

# Los Angeles parkland

The amount of park acreage available to L.A. residents varies widely from one part of the city to another. Nationally, some park planners recommend six to 10 acres of parks per 1,000 residents.

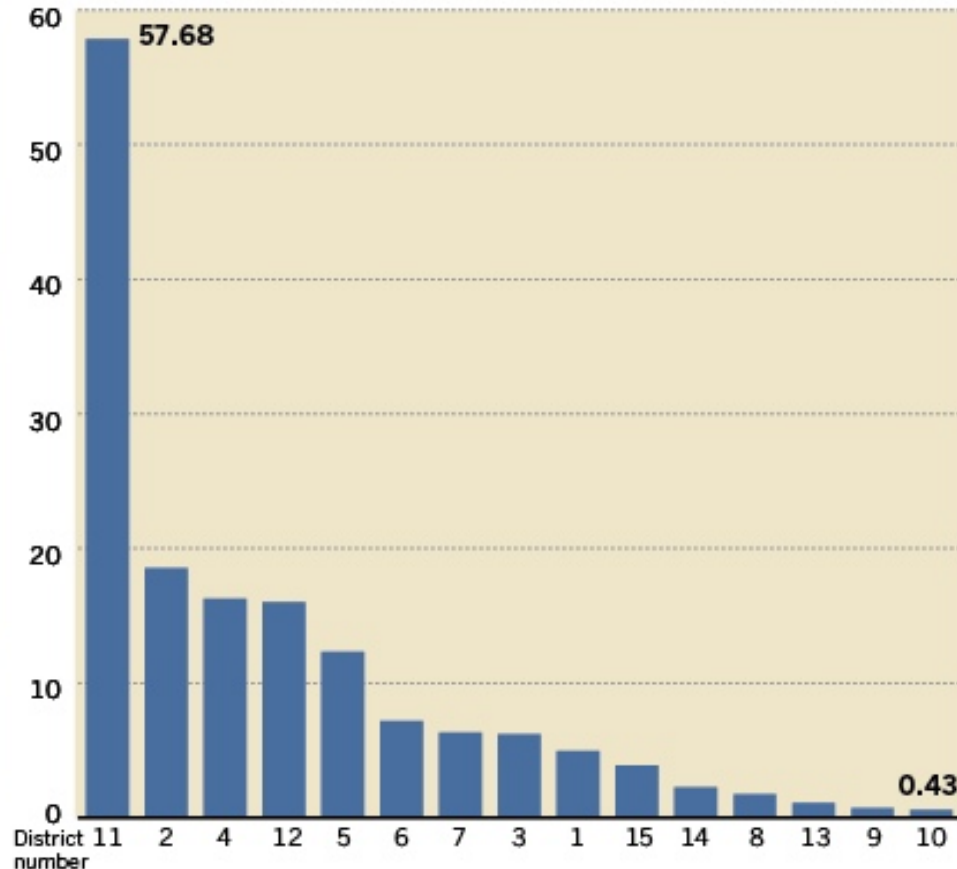
## City Council districts



*Note: Includes city parks, Angeles National Forest and Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.*

*Source: The City Project: "Healthy Parks, Schools and Communities," 2006*

## Acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, by council district



*Los Angeles Times*

The Los Angeles Times published this chart based on The City Project's work on how L.A. can create better places to play.

The chart shows disparities in acres of parkland per 1,000 residents by city council district.

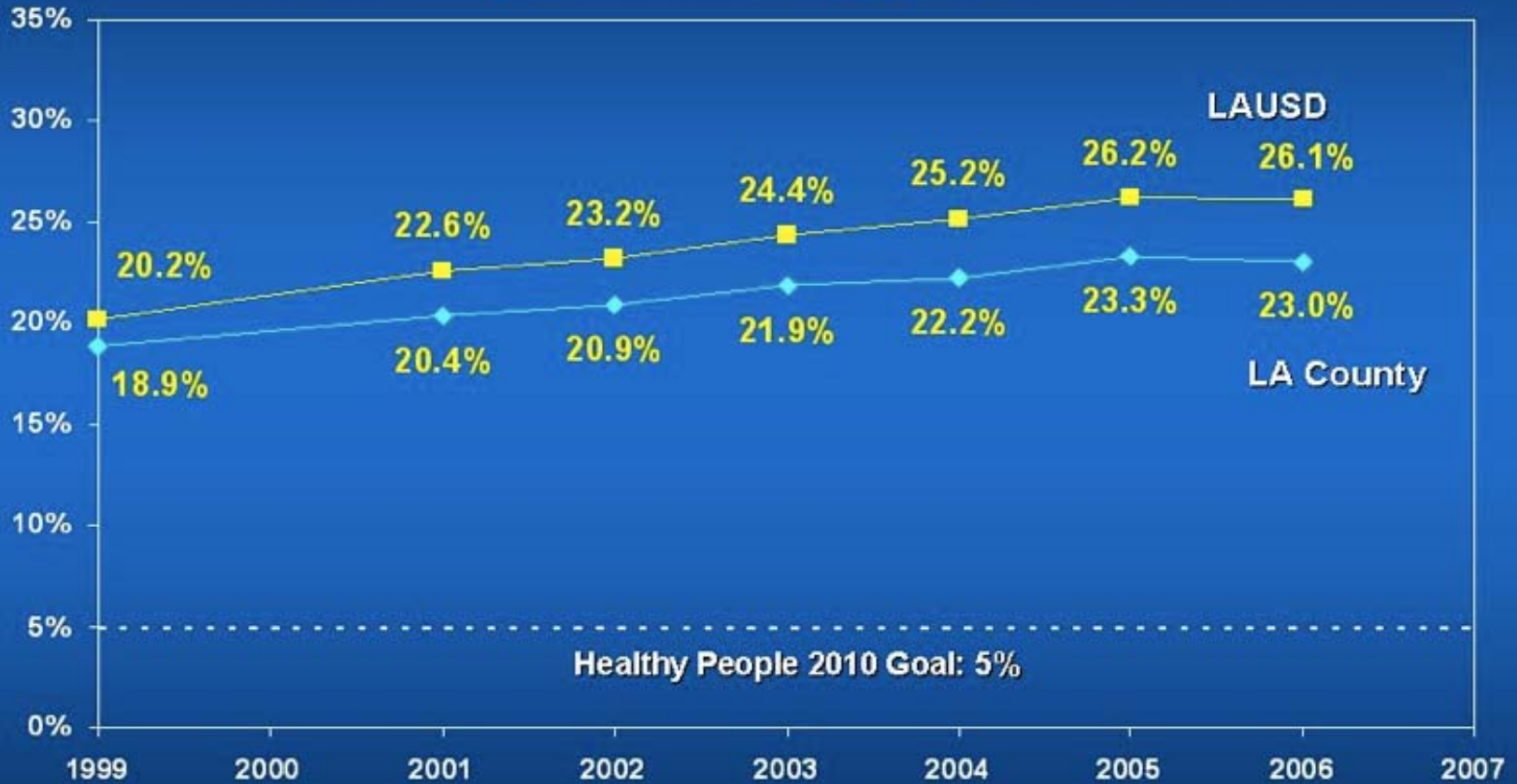
Thus, for example, there is less than half an acre of parks per thousand residents in District 10 in the inner city in South Los Angeles. There are almost 60 acres parks per thousand residents in District 11 in West Los Angeles.

South Los Angeles is disproportionately populated by people of color and low income people. West Los Angeles is disproportionately white and wealthy.

The chart shows total acres of parks, including large green spaces like the Santa Monica Mountains. The disparities are similar for net acres of parks -- urban parks.

Deborah Schoch, How can L.A. create better places to play? L.A. Times, June 1, 2007.

# Obesity Prevalence Among School Children in Los Angeles County, 1999-2006



Source: California Physical Fitness Testing Program, California Department of Education. Includes 5th, 7th, and 9th graders enrolled in Los Angeles County public schools.

According to the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, obesity among LAUSD students has increased from 20.2% in 1999 to 26.1% in 2006, going from 1 in 5 children being obese to over 1 in 4.

The percentage of overweight school children traditionally has increased at a faster rate at LAUSD than at other school districts in Los Angeles County.

The percentage of obese school children continues to be persistently higher at LAUSD compared to other schools in the County.

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Ballot Book, you can  
mark your choices  
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# OFFICIAL SAMPLE BALLOT

AND VOTER  
INFORMATION

**GENERAL ELECTION**  
**NOVEMBER 5**

CORRY B. MCCORMACK  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY  
REGISTRAR-RECORDER/COUNTY CLERK  
12400 SEPULCRAL BLVD #200, NORTH HOLLYWOOD, CA 91308

(818) 815-2666 OR (818) 486-1222

INTERNET - [www.lacounty.net](http://www.lacounty.net) OR <http://http://regrec.lacounty.ca>

- POLLS OPEN AT 7 A.M. AND CLOSE AT 8 P.M.
- MARK YOUR CHOICES IN THIS BOOKLET AND TAKE IT WITH YOU TO YOUR VOTING LOCATION.

FOR MORE  
VOTING INFORMATION  
SEE PAGE 2



In the past ten years California voters statewide have passed over \$20 billion for resource bonds including urban parks, and \$50 billion for school construction and modernization. Including local bonds there is even far more money available.

Low income voters and voters of color have been the biggest supporters of the resource bonds.

There are two important lessons here.

First, the resource bonds have demolished the myth that the environment is a luxury that people of color and low income people do not care about or are not willing to pay for.

Second, it is necessary that these communities get their fair share of the benefits of these public investments.



Los Angeles has \$20 billion to build and modernize public schools.

There are only 30 joint use agreements between schools and parks out of 600 schools.

LAUSD is putting a \$7.2 billion bond on the ballot in November 2008 -- with only \$50 million in joint use funds.

The City Project advocates the joint use of parks, schools, and pools to optimize the use of scarce land and public resources.



The City of Los Angeles and LAUSD were shamed into opening the Miguel Contreras High School Pool and signing joint use agreements for 15 schools and pools after a strategic media and community organizing campaign by The City Project and ACORN.

## **Defining an Obesity Agenda for the Next Administration**

**Issue:** Provide Quality Physical Education in Public Schools

Help Students Move More, Eat Well, Stay Healthy and Do Best in School and Life

**Recommendation: Require Physical Education Under Federal No Child Left Behind Law**

**Rationale:** Feds Have Money and National Clout

**Issue:** Provide Quality Physical Education in Public Schools

Help Students Move More, Eat Well, Stay Healthy and Do Best in School and Life

**Recommendation: Don't Depend on the Next Administration**

**Rationale:**

Engage, educate, and empower people to create healthy parks, schools, and communities

Specific ways to take action without depending on the next administration appear in the next slides

**Issue:** Provide Quality Physical Education in Public Schools

Help Students Move More, Eat Well, Stay Healthy and Do Best in School and Life

**Recommendation: Restore Federal Civil Rights Protections**

Provide a legislative fix for Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its regulations to prohibit not only intentional discrimination but also discriminatory impacts by recipients of federal funds

Codify the Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice to ensure enforcement

**Rationale:** Equal Justice for All with Taxpayers' Money

Alleviate Health, School, and Park Disparities Based on Race, Ethnicity, Income



**Issue:** Provide Quality Physical Education in Public Schools

Help Students Move More, Eat Well, Stay Healthy and Do Best in School and Life

**Recommendation: Enforce State Physical Education Laws**

**Rationale:** It's the Law. Use it or Lose it.

**Issue:** Provide Quality Physical Education in Public Schools

Help Students Move More, Eat Well, Stay Healthy and Do Best in School and Life

**Recommendation: Foundations Should Fund Lawyers and Litigation**

**Rationale:** Works.

Litigation is a profoundly democratic means of providing access to justice and the fair distribution of public resources, particularly for traditionally disempowered communities without access to the executive branch, legislature, and administrative bodies.

Brown v Board of Education was civil rights litigation against the defendant board of education.

There are no deep pockets to pay huge awards of attorneys fees, as there are in the tobacco litigation.

Lawyers for students, parents, and health advocates are acting as private attorneys general for the public good. Foundations should pitch in and help.

**Issue:** Provide Quality Physical Education in Public Schools

Help Students Move More, Eat Well, Stay Healthy and Do Best in School and Life

**Recommendation: Researchers and Lawyers Collaborate**

**Rationale:** Works. The ULTA Physical Education Campaign depends heavily on social science research published by the California Endowment and others on racial and ethnic health disparities

## Strategies

Collective Vision

Bring People Together based on the Diverse Values at Stake

Multidisciplinary Research and Analyses (like the analyses above)

Strategic Media Campaigns

Policy and Legal Advocacy Outside the Courts

Litigation

## Values at Stake

Simple Joys of Playing in Park and School Fields

Physical and Psychic Health, Fight Obesity

Academics, Youth Development

Positive Alternatives to Gangs, Drugs, Crime

Conservation Values

Air, Water, Land, Climate Justice

Culture, Heritage and Art

Spiritual Values of Protecting Earth and its People

Economic Vitality, Green Jobs, Affordable Housing

Social Justice

Regional Equity

Smart Growth

Healthy Parks, Schools and Communities  
Mapping Green Access and Equity

Policy Reports, Mapping, and Demographic Analyses  
available at

[www.cityprojectca.org](http://www.cityprojectca.org)

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Donations are Tax Deductible



# The City Project