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Community Groups Announce Support for Harvard-Westlake River Park in Studio City

Harvard-Westlake School today announced that a diverse array of community nonprofit organizations is supporting its ambitious River Park project in Studio City. The River Park will redevelop the facility now called Weddington Golf and Tennis into a multi-benefit recreational space that will be open for use by both the school community and Valley residents.

The groups announcing their support for the project include the Audubon Center at Debs Park, Angel City Sports, the Boys and Girls Club of Burbank and Greater East Valley, and the Valley Industry and Commerce Association (VICA).

“It is immensely gratifying to know that so many organizations in the community view our plans for the River Park as beneficial,” said Rick Commons, Harvard-Westlake’s President and Head of School. “We have strived to be a good neighbor and to ensure that the River Park is responsive to the needs of the community. The backing of these strong nonprofit partners shows that the River Park will be embraced as a community asset for students and residents to enjoy.”

The Audubon Center hailed the River Park for its significant environmental benefits for our waterways and communities.

“This project is ambitious as well as innovative. Audubon appreciates the attention Harvard-Westlake is giving to community involvement at all levels of the planning process. We see this process as an example of how institutions can take the initiative and create opportunities to engage in more meaningful projects throughout the city in a leadership role. This project not only benefits the students at Harvard-Westlake, but it will also benefit students from all over Los Angeles as well as the local birds and wildlife that require significant habitat pockets throughout the city,” said Marcos Trinidad, Director of the Audubon Center at Debs Park.

The mission of the Audubon Center is to inspire people to **experience, understand, and care for the local natural world**. In addition to restoring habitat for bird and other wildlife at Debs Park and along the L.A. River, the Center works to restore the connection between people and the land in Los Angeles. **Community engagement lies at the core of the Center’s values and programming**. In its people-focused approach to conservation work, the Audubon Center at Debs Park serves as a community hub for environmental justice and advocacy work in Los Angeles and across the Audubon network.

VICA noted how the River Park will have a beneficial impact far beyond the Studio City area.

“Harvard-Westlake understands this property has a long history in Studio City. That’s why the Harvard-Westlake River Park will be guided by key design principles and commitments, which will ensure that the site remains open, green, and publicly accessible,” said Stuart Waldman, VICA president. “This is a forward-thinking project that will have multiple benefits for not just the Studio City community but the entire San Fernando Valley.”

Widely considered one of the most influential business advocacy organizations in Southern California, VICA works to enhance the economic vitality of the greater San Fernando Valley region by advocating for a better business climate and quality of life.



Angel City Sports organizers praised Harvard-Westlake for its willingness to open the doors of the facility to the community.

“We know that Harvard-Westlake has thoughtfully prepared the River Park plan, listening to community concerns and investing in a host of features that make the project a big win for the community and the environment. Harvard-Westlake’s commitment to being a good neighbor is clear and they have continually emphasized accessibility and inclusion throughout this initiative,” said Clayton Frech, Founder and CEO of Angel City Sports.

Angel City Sports provides year-round free adaptive sports opportunities for kids, adults and veterans with physical disabilities or visual impairments. In addition to providing free equipment, coaching and competitive opportunities, the nonprofit organization helps individuals reach their full potential and unlock their dreams through music, art, higher education, and career opportunities.

The Boys and Girls Club of Burbank and Greater East Valley similarly thanked Harvard-Westlake for forging a strong working relationship well in advance of the facility’s debut.

“On behalf of the more than 4200 young Angelenos we serve, the Boys and Girls Club of Burbank and the East Valley is proud to partner with Harvard-Westlake and support their proposal for the River Park campus,” said Shanna Warren, Chief Executive Officer of the Boys and Girls Club of Burbank and Greater East Valley. “The River Park will be an extraordinary resource for the Valley community, providing high-quality recreational fields and facilities for children and families to enjoy. We look forward to developing new programs to use River Park once it is built and thank Harvard-Westlake School for its committing to use their property to benefit nonprofit organizations like ours and the public.”

Founded in 1995, the Boys and Girls Club of Burbank and Greater East Valley offers a host of afterschool enrichment programs focused on the arts, culture, athletics, and the sciences at two dozen sites.

Designed by Gensler and Studio-MLA, the Harvard-Westlake River Park will transform the 16-acre property on Whitsett Avenue into a community athletic center and public park. In addition to preserving and restoring the current Weddington clubhouse and café, putting green, and eight tennis courts, the project consists of a gymnasium, two soccer fields, a running track, and a swimming pool that will be available to students and local community residents, as well as six acres of park areas that will be publicly accessible from dawn to dusk.

The plans also include a system that will capture, clean, and reuse stormwater run-off from both the project site and the adjacent residential neighborhood to the north. As the first private system to treat public run-off at this scale in the City of Los Angeles, it is an example of the school’s commitment to developing an environmentally responsible project.

For more details on the project, please visit www.hwriverpark.com.

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