

For Immediate Release

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## **Friends of the LA River (FoLAR) to Host River Education Program at Harvard-Westlake River Park**

*Proposed Harvard-Westlake River Park to serve as FoLAR's "Valley Home" for educational and cultural programs promoting nature, sustainability, and access to the LA River.*

*Studio City, California* – Harvard-Westlake (HW) School and Friends of the LA River (FoLAR) have announced a wide-ranging education partnership that will be based at the upcoming River Park, creating more equitable access to environmental education in the area. FoLAR is a non-profit whose mission is to build capacity for communities, students, and future leaders to advocate for nature, climate, and equity on the Los Angeles River. They join the ranks of River Park partners including Fernandefio Tataviam Band of Mission Indians, the Special Olympics, and Angel City Sports.

The HW-FoLAR partnership includes public community programs and educational experiences for students from local K-12 public schools, as well as hardscape and landscape features that will enhance learning opportunities in River Park. When fully operational, the River Park campus will become the "Valley Home" of FoLAR, offering access to River education and meaningful connections to the River for students in the valley. FoLAR primarily serves students who meet the California Department of Education's LCAP metrics to identify schools of high need. Over 90% of FoLAR's student base also has access to free or reduced lunch – an indicator for students living below the poverty line.

"FoLAR is excited to expand the footprint of our K-12 River education programs to more students in the greater San Fernando Valley. Our mission is centered on building capacity for communities to advocate for the LA River, and connecting students to the River that runs through their city is one of the most important building blocks of that mission. Particularly students who have not historically had access to the River or its resources," said Candice Dickens-Russell, FoLAR's President and CEO.

River Park will be a multi-benefit recreational and open space that will be available daily for public use by both local students and Angelenos, with significant improvements in the sustainability standards of the space. River Park will feature the largest stormwater capture and reuse system of its kind in Los Angeles, with the goal of saving several million gallons of potable water per year, and includes plans for solar panels that generate over 300,000 kWh per year. It will also incorporate 100% native trees and landscaping that meet established sustainable guidelines including the LA River Improvement Overlay, with plans for over 1:1 tree replanting ratios and plans to protect California brittlebush as well as other native plants.

"Like Harvard-Westlake, FoLAR is committed to providing exceptional educational opportunities to benefit our community, and we are truly excited to collaborate with them to deliver programming at the River Park," said Rick Commons, Harvard-Westlake School's President and Head of School. "FoLAR has been one of LA's greatest champions for climate resilience, park

equity, and environmental justice, and we're proud to host them at the River Park and support their invaluable work to restore and reclaim the Los Angeles River.”

Designed by Gensler and Studio-MLA, a certified women and minority-owned design studio known for connecting urban and natural environments, the Harvard-Westlake River Park will transform the 16-acre property on Whitsett Avenue into a student and community athletic center and public park. In addition to preserving the historic 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, Angelenos, and community groups free of cost. Six acres will serve as public 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](http://www.hwriverpark.com).

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