

## **Wilderness Park funding**

11 December 2015

Dear Editor:

A number of letters have been written addressing the Claremont Wilderness Park Master Plan, mostly relating to access, parking, usage, governance and vision. Underlying each of these concerns, however, is the issue of sustainable funding for the implementation and support of what should be a resource management plan for the next 20 years.

Speaking as a longtime member of the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy Board, a bit of history should be noted for the records. The last four parcels added to the park (excluding Johnson's Pasture) were purchased with grant money awarded to Claremont from county or state agencies.

Some of our board were in attendance and spoke at the session of the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy considering Claremont's proposal for our last addition to the park, the Cuevas/Gale Ranch parcel. A member of that funding agency's board spoke in favor of awarding Claremont's proposal, for he considered Claremont a community that assumed stewardship for its hillside parkland. We received the grant, and with it the responsibility for providing sustainable funding.

In addressing the issue of funding, the draft plan specifies that revenues for managing the park must come solely from the park's own parking fees and citations. Interesting to note, since approximately 83 percent of park visitors are not from Claremont, the vast majority of revenues supporting the park come from non-Claremonters.

To continue the stewardship of the Wilderness Park for which Claremont has been recognized (and rewarded), efforts to provide sustainable funding must be clearly defined, with flexibility and without restricting future city council decisions by denying any use of general funds for the park, as the current draft master plan proposes.

We urge the city to look at other sources of funding for maintenance, but also for new programs, projects and acquisition of available land. A potential source of funding for new improvements and land acquisition is available through a mandated Parkland Fee of \$4400 paid by developers for each unit within a development. Several hundred such units have been built recently in Claremont, many in the northern area of the city.

In the draft master plan this possible source of funding is not acknowledged, but shouldn't it be available for construction of composting toilets or other new improvements, or land acquisition, as the Parkland Fee is designed to support? We understand that such funds have been used recently and in the past for new improvements in urban parks, but not at the Wilderness Park.

We applaud the city for initiating the master plan for the wilderness park, but suggest it does not adequately address mechanisms for sustainable funding to allow proper stewardship now and over the next 20 years.

Georgeann Andrus