



PSOMAS

Los Angeles River Way, San Fernando Valley Completion Project (Vanalden to Balboa) Awarded Envision Gold



November 7, 2023 — A transformational bicycle path and greenway project along the Los Angeles River corridor has earned an Envision Gold award. The path links up with the existing active transportation network to enhance connections to transit, residential neighborhoods, schools, employment, parks, and other community amenities.

The Los Angeles River Way, San Fernando Valley Completion (Vanalden to Balboa) Project repurposes a maintenance road beside the Los Angeles River channel and adds:

- Nearly 3 miles of bicycle and pedestrian pathways to the LA River Bikeway;
- Undercrossings of bridges and river parks; and
- On-street improvements to increase access and improve connectivity to adjacent communities in the Encino-Tarzana Community Planning Area.

The project supports the revitalization of the LA River ecosystem and species habitats. During the planning stages, the project team conducted a detailed study to identify existing flora and fauna species. The completed project will avoid impacts and restore natural habitats to create opportunities for pollinator species and birds to flourish.

The project supports the goals of the City's 2007 Los Angeles River Revitalization Plan, which sets out a comprehensive vision for the development of the shared use path and restoration of the channel to enhance ecological and hydrologic functions.

Project team members noted they were excited to be working with the City on filling in this much-needed portion of LA River Bikeway.

Dean Howell, Principal Associate Landscape Architect, Gruen Associates, observed:

"This project marks a significant step towards creating a safe, scenic, and sustainable route for both commuters and recreational riders. It will have views of the river, California native vegetation, and a separated pedestrian path. The project will not only promote active transportation, but also encourage community engagement and the continued ecological restoration of the river."

Andrew Nickerson, Vice President and Principal at Psomas, added: "The Envision rating system has provided our team and the community a framework to measure, modify, and confirm the project design, resulting in a most well-balanced, beneficial project."

Kristi Wamstad, ISI Verification Director, said: "ISI congratulates the City of Los Angeles and all of the project partners who contributed to the success of the Los Angeles River Way, San Fernando Valley Completion (Vanalden to Balboa) Project. This project is a remarkable example of using a multi-use path and greenway project to maximize benefits for residents, commuters and the environment."

VERIFIED SUSTAINABILITY ACHIEVEMENTS

Quality of life – In the past, access to the LA River was limited to maintenance activities via a rough asphalt path which was not open to the public. The completed project opens this area to active transportation networks and restores native plant communities that thrived along the river's edge before channelization. Safety and wayfinding are improved, views and local character are preserved, and public space is enhanced.

Mobility – The City of Los Angeles Mobility Plan 2035 calls for enhancing bicycle and pedestrian facilities and decreasing vehicle traffic. The project team estimates there will be approximately 458,000 fewer vehicle miles travelled per year due to this project. This decrease in vehicle use will help reduce congestion and improve air quality.

Addressing habitat fragmentation – The project removes existing barriers to the movement of species along the river channel and adds new habitat throughout. Landscaped areas include native plants, many new trees, and unique pollinator houses.

Preparing for long-term adaptability – A detailed climate change impact assessment and adaptation plan considers sea level rise, higher annual average temperature, extreme heat days, drought, extreme precipitation, wildfires, and other climate risks. The project team also anticipated the future energy needs of the project. Here are some ways this project seeks to prioritize adaptability and resiliency:

- *Extreme heat days.* Maximizing shade zones with full canopy trees at the street end ingress and egress points and screened areas at the undercrossing of bridges. In addition, plants were selected to be low-maintenance and heat-/drought-tolerant with bioswales to capture stormwater.
- *Extreme Precipitation.* Incorporating numerous safety-focused access routes to support rescue and escape in the event of a major flood event. Also, concrete surfaces in undercrossings and near abutments (rather than asphalt). This choice was made for durability and resilience in these areas most likely to be submerged in high water conditions.
- *Use of a resin-bonded DG instead of loose DG on walking surfaces:* not vulnerable to being washed away by stormwater runoff.
- *Energy:* Lighting along the bike path and at street ends will solar-powered LED. Of the 223 luminaires in the completed project, 215 will be solar-powered.

Infrastructure integration. The completed project will integrate infrastructure systems within the project and across community infrastructure assets. Furthermore, the completed project is notable for integrating a new sustainable active transportation facility into a corridor previously used only for hydrology, storm water conveyance and flood management.

Project Details At-a-Glance

Envision-verified project:	Los Angeles River Way, San Fernando Valley Completion Project (Vanalden to Balboa)
Location:	Los Angeles, Calif.
Lead Envision Firm:	Psomas
Envision Rating:	Gold
Award Date:	November 7, 2023
Total Cost of Project	\$26 million
Project Owner(s):	City of Los Angeles
Project Partners	Gruen Associates, KOA MARRS, Land Econ Group Studio-MLA, TAHA Environmental Planners Construction
Project Phase	Design completed with expected construction start in 2024
Project Delivery Method:	Design-Bid-Build