



Press Release

Riverpark Coalition Reaches \$1.7 million-Value Lawsuit Settlement Providing for Enhanced Community Park Space & Equestrian Benefits, Greater Environmental Standards for Home Construction, and Recognition of Indigenous Peoples

LONG BEACH, CA, September 19, 2023

The Riverpark Coalition has reached a settlement with Integral Communities LLC, developer of 712 Baker Street (see diagram at the end), to dismiss litigation which we initiated last December (see [previous press release](#)).

While this development project is not in accord with the City of Long Beach's stated park equity goals and vision for a river greenbelt of connected and revitalized open spaces set out in 2007 (the RiverLink Plan, readopted by the Long Beach City Council in 2015), we believe the terms of this settlement are a major achievement. They represent a significant mitigation of what has been lost for all time—namely the once-promised Wrigley Heights River Park South (promised not only in Long Beach's RiverLink Plan, but also in the Lower LA River Revitalization Plan of 2015 and decades of LA River Master Plans)—while also allowing for an addition to Long Beach's housing stock.

This settlement contains the following wins for the community, which in total (inclusive of payment of our legal fees) represents a commitment of approximately \$1.7 million dollars by the developer:

- Developer shall record a covenant for the 5-acre extension of the existing Baker Street Park to remain as "open space/park space" with public access in perpetuity, despite being on private property. Such covenant shall also recognize that Developer shall not install or use synthetic turf within the newly built park space.
- Developer shall construct a soundwall to make the Baker Street Park extension feasible for community enjoyment, given that this new publicly accessible park space asset will be located in close proximity to the 405 Freeway.
- Developer shall construct a Public Equestrian Rest Area ("PERA") on the north portion of the adjacent county parcel, equivalent in size and scope to the prior PERA constructed in Wrigley North between Spring Street and 31st Street. The equestrian legacy is an essential part of the Wrigley community, and this enhancement will go a long way toward preserving its equestrian character for future generations.
- Developer shall develop a Signage Plan and install trail signage at each access, crossing, merger, and intersecting point in relation to the adjacent river hiking and equestrian bridle trail, up to the standards of the National Parks Service.

- Developer shall, in coordination with Long Beach tribal leaders, design and install a land acknowledgment monument of the First Peoples, to be located in the new park extension, in honor of the Tongva and San Gabrieleño communities. The monument shall be conceptually in accord with other similar monuments (such as that in Morro Bay, California). The required Monument Plan shall be prepared and presented to Riverpark Coalition and tribal leaders for review and approval.
- Developer shall design and install educational signage (such as that of Heritage Park in Santa Fe Springs) within the extension of Baker Street Park acknowledging biological resources, First People's relationship to the land, historic colonization and equestrian use, Los Angeles River channelization, and prior oil operations use amid the post-war boom. An Educational Signage Plan shall be subject to approval by Riverpark Coalition.
- Developer shall contribute funding to Riverpark Coalition's mission of expanded western Long Beach parks and open space and park equity. Potential uses of the funding may include support for community education and outreach, direct support for park acquisition efforts, and support for enforcement of environmental protections.
- Developer shall include the following environmental construction enhancements: Every unit shall come with high efficiency solar panels and there shall be no use of natural gas, with units built to accommodate installation of all-electrical appliances. Air filters shall be installed at each unit to the highest standard commercially available for residential use.

This settlement came about as a result of the failure of two decades of Long Beach elected leaders to seek available grant funding and prioritize acquisition of the last two major remaining tracts of undeveloped land along the Los Angeles River in our city. Riverpark Coalition was formed to correct that legacy and promote added greenspace in park-poor western Long Beach.

This parcel has been one of the last two major remaining tracts of undeveloped land along the Los Angeles River in our city. We urge members of the community to join our fight for greenspace by connecting with the Riverpark Coalition and supporting the campaign for more recreation space and cleaner air in the western tier of the city. We continue to work toward the dream of a *Wrigley Heights River Park - North* in the area of 3701 Pacific Place and for enhanced park and open space throughout the LA River-proximate portions of Long Beach.

Juan Ovalle, Riverpark Coalition president, has provided the following statement:

"This settlement is a remarkable achievement for a group of unpaid grassroots community volunteers. But it also says a lot that we had to struggle so hard just to get this result. The neighboring communities will get a little, but ultimately not much closer, to the goal of park equity and the goal of meeting national standards, which our leaders say they embrace. That means that our fight must go on.

Today, East Long Beach enjoys a decent 17 acres of park space per thousand residents, while sections of western Long Beach range from just 1 to 2 acres per thousand residents. On top of that, most of these western sections are the densest, lowest income, least served parts of the city. They deserve better and to have their own regional park. That can still be achieved at the site of the former golf driving range, between the 405, the river, and the Metro line, which would

connect under the freeway to the extension of the Baker Street Park. This settlement greatly enhances that extension project and ensures that it will be maximized to the benefit of the public in perpetuity.

Importantly, we have also, through this victory, sent a powerful message that developers do not rule this city, the people matter, open space matters, quality of life matters, and the future for our kids in Long Beach is worth fighting for. The broader struggle for open space continues on.”

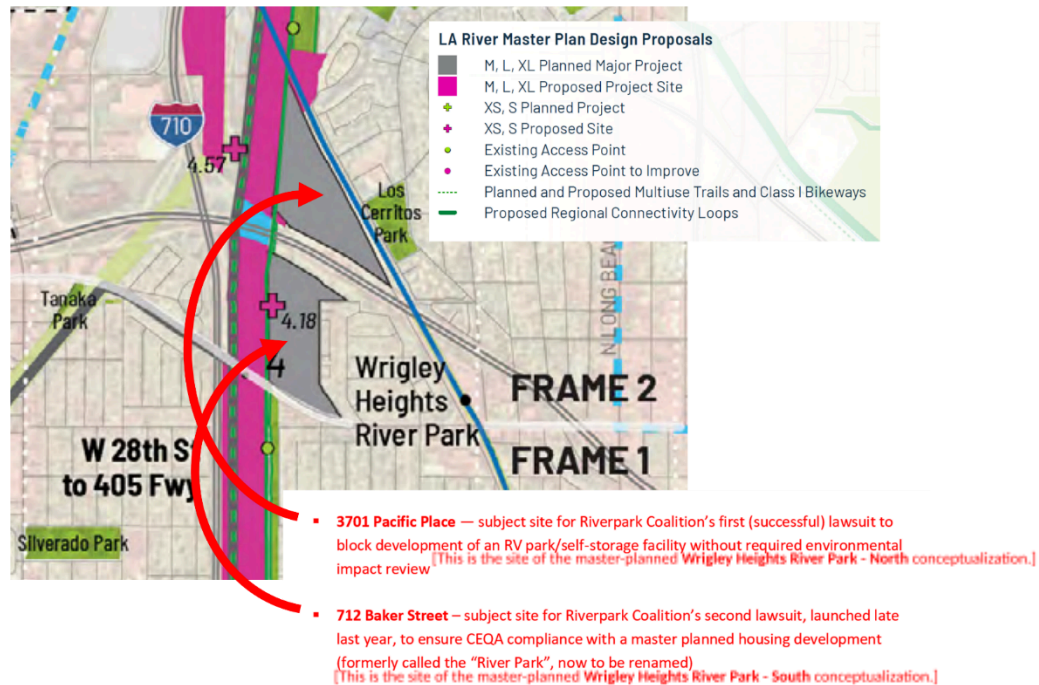


Diagram from the 2020 Los Angeles River Master Plan, p. 407, red arrows and text added.

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