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\$70M Magic Johnson Park Renovation Breaks Ground

Surrounded by hundreds of cheering South Los Angeles residents, Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas and Earvin “Magic” Johnson kicked off a \$70-million renovation of the park bearing the basketball legend’s name in the community of Willowbrook.

The project represents the largest investment in a park improvement ever by the County of Los Angeles, and is the first phase of a master plan that is slated to dramatically transform Magic Johnson Park over the next two decades.

“We are making magic at Magic Johnson Park, and the result is going to be visionary,” Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said. “Besides providing amenities that currently don’t exist in this community, we are enhancing the beauty of this space and creating opportunities to strengthen the bonds of this community. These improvements will be nothing short of transformative.”

“What a slam dunk for the community of Willowbrook!” said Johnson, after whom the park was named in 1994, just a few years after his retirement from the NBA. “People make memories in this park every day, celebrating everything from children’s birthdays to game-winning soccer goals. I can’t wait to see it further enhanced, thanks to an unprecedented \$70-million public investment.”

The project, slated for completion in Fall 2020, includes a 20,000-square foot state-of-the-art community events center for holding weddings, conferences and other

large gatherings; an outdoor wedding pavilion; a splash pad and children's play areas; improved walking paths with security lighting; and acres upon acres of new landscaping that will give the park an entirely fresh look.

The lake that is currently the centerpiece of the park will be getting an innovative feature that will help address both water conservation and water quality goals. It will divert storm runoff from surrounding neighborhoods and nearby Compton Creek, clean it and then use it to fill the lower lake and irrigate 30 acres of the park, creating a wetland experience for park goers.

Another benefit is that the renovation will create hundreds of jobs. The County hired contractor S.J. Amoroso Construction Company to build the project and required that 30 percent of all construction hours be rendered by local residents living within 5 miles of the park, or in zip codes countywide that have high poverty rates.

County Parks and Recreation Director John Wicker ensured that there was a comprehensive and community-driven process to prioritize new amenities for Magic Johnson Park. "We are grateful to Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas and partners that are committed to developing and investing in this new, state-of-the-art and LEED Gold facility," he said. "As a collective, we will build a park for the Willowbrook community to be active and participate in the year-round programs, as well as come together to make memories that will last a lifetime."

The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) is considering opening a satellite location within Magic Johnson Park while its main campus on Wilshire Boulevard is undergoing its own massive renovation. "Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas has long been a tireless advocate for enhancing County residents' quality of life," said LACMA CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director Michael Govan. "The upcoming renovation of Magic Johnson Park is an exciting milestone for all of us in Los Angeles. Parks are important community gathering places, and these wonderful amenities will no doubt draw even more people here. I hope that LACMA will be able to play a role in further transforming the park in the coming years."

The Magic Johnson Park renovation is only the latest of many investments that have transformed the community of Willowbrook. Over the last several years, Supervisor Ridley-Thomas has championed a building boom that included the Martin Luther King Medical Campus, Willowbrook Library and Senior Center, AC Bilbrew Park, the development of hundreds of units of affordable housing, and upgrades to Metro's Rosa Parks Station.

Longtime resident and community leader “Sweet” Alice Harris said, “This investment in Magic Johnson Park, and the greater community, is nothing short of a blessing.”

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