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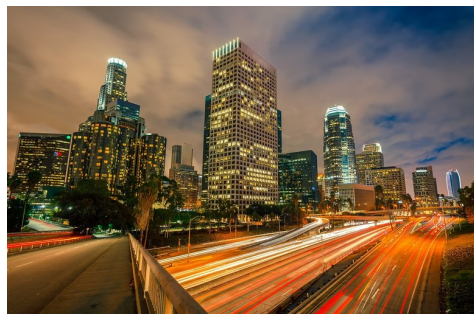


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LOCAL NEWS

Pacoima Stormwater Capture Project Model for a Green Los Angeles

BY TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE | AUGUST 10, 2015



Downtown L.A. / Shutterstock

By Dana Bartholomew, Daily News

When it once rained buckets in front of Anabel Olvera’s house, the floods grew so deep she drove her kids to school — across the street.

Now a new stormwater capture project may not only banish the polluted floodwaters during an

expected El Niño deluge. It will add new sidewalks, drought-friendly flower beds and natural filters to capture millions of gallons of water below ground for future use.

“I’m excited,” said Olvera, 40, of Pacoima, a single mother of three standing in front of her aging stucco and wood home across the street from Pacoima Middle School, where officials officially broke ground Thursday. “Because now it won’t get flooded anywhere.

“When it rains, sometimes the flood even takes our trash cans right down the street.”

The so-called Laurel Canyon Boulevard Green Street Project aims not



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only to transform a funky Pacoima neighborhood of dirt and broken asphalt parkways without sidewalks into a boulevard of new sidewalks, curbs and gutters lined with salvia, coyote brush and California goldfields

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Eleven homeowners gave up strips of lawn to make the green street possible.

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The \$3-million project aims to collect enough stormwater from the surrounding 123 acres to ultimately supply up to 120 homes — and serve as a model for new green streets across Los Angeles.

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“This project is going to be really, really fantastic,” Councilman Felipe Fuentes, whose district includes Pacoima, said during a news conference. “It makes it so this stretch of Pacoima ... becomes more sustainable. It becomes smarter about how water is captured, and how we can use it.”

As such, it will resemble a garden oasis in nearby Sun Valley. Begun five years ago, the Elmer Avenue project incorporated “swales” of California native plants in a neighborhood east of Tujunga Avenue to reduce notorious floods and divert 13 million gallons of stormwater below ground.

When it rains, rainwater flowing through Pacoima will also trickle down through parkway infiltration swales between new curbs and sidewalks. It will also enter openings in the curb leading into “dry wells” that contain filters leading into the below-ground aquifer.

The groundwater, far cheaper than imported water, is then treated and sent streaming into homes across the city.

Such green streets will be critical to satisfy a Los Angeles mandate to cut its use of imported water by half by 2024, said Public Works Commissioner Heather Repenning. Every time it rains, she said, 40 percent of the water now heads out to sea — after picking up street pollutants in its path.

“This not only lessens pollution,” she said, “but will replenish our water supply.”

Construction will begin in September and is expected to be completed by February 2016. Funding comes from a \$2-million state grant plus a combined \$1 million from the Los Angeles departments of Sanitation and Water and Power.

This year, the city approved guidelines for street stormwater management and is working on an ordinance to require new green infrastructure for all public streets.

“We will achieve the water requirements we have to have to ensure water quality and storm runoff is at the highest standard,” said Enrique Zaldivar, director of L.A. Sanitation. “Imagine if we do this across the city, how smart we’d become?”



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