

# LINCOLN HEIGHTS NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

CALIFORNIA

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

SARA CLENDENING  
PRESIDENT

BEN WADSWORTH  
VICE PRESIDENT

VINCENT "CHENTE" MONTALVO  
TREASURER

FERNANDA SANCHEZ  
SECRETARY



"WE ARE ONE"

LINCOLN HEIGHTS EST. 1871

CERTIFIED COUNCIL  
2002

3516 N. BROADWAY  
LOS ANGELES, CA 90031

LINCOLNHEIGHTSNC.ORG

September 16, 2021

Recreation and Parks  
CD1 Gilbert Cedillo

## **RE: REINSTALLATION OF CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT AT ELA PARK 2500 N EASTLAKE AVE LOS ANGELES, CA 90031**

Dear RAP and Councilman Gilbert Cedillo and staff,

The Lincoln Heights Neighborhood Council is writing to express the need for the timely reinstallation of children's playground equipment that was removed from historic ELA Park without community consent.

We were contacted by community members who, since 2016 have been writing emails to CD1 in a fruitless pursuit. Our investigations have failed to yield any documented city action authorizing the removal of these public assets. This issue is just a link in the chain of land justice issues that our community has had to investigate because of the lack of transparency.

ELA Park is one of the oldest Parks in LA. In 1877, H.M. Johnston attempted to rebrand East Lost Angeles as "ELA". The site was graded by a Chain Gang who created a race track with a central oasis. Wm. Lacy then subdivided the surrounding parcels-advertising "ELA Tract: High Elevation! No Malaria!". ELA never took off. The park fell into disrepair and was acquired by the city 1904 and has remained municipal parkland ever since.

ELA Park has always been the peoples park. A gate was not introduced until mid century. The park had children's playground equipment in the 1970s up until the past decade. Most recently, there has been a push from new residents to turn ELA Park into an exclusive dog park. We found that in 2019, certain entities were corresponding with CD1 and the LHNC to get the ball rolling. Around that time is when the playground equipment was removed. The cause for alarm is this: In a park - poor community, where most of our open space is managed by a city department, there are negotiations being made where public park land is being made exclusive. Any conversion of Lincoln Heights parkland to a dog park is theft.

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ELA Park has a turbulent history. In 1994, 14 year old Antonio Gutierrez was shot in the back four times by Hollenbeck LAPD on the corner of George st. and Eastlake at ELA Park. Officer Michael Falvo said that Tony pointed a TEC 9 at him. However the gun had no fingerprints. Lincoln Heights parents were sick of the LAPD abuse of power. Even the youth throwing a car wash fundraiser for the victims family were harassed by police. The FBI investigated and discovered Michael Falvo was a killer cop with a record of abuse of power. The community wanted justice and fought back, a riot ensued in 1995 on Broadway and Eastlake. In the end, the offending officer was relocated and 27 years later is still on the LAPD in the Harbor division as a detective.

In 1996, Councilman Mike Hernandez responded by taking over what he called "eastlake's gangster hideout"- a dilapidated vacant victorian home with a 4 plex apt on Eastlake/ Altura walk. The goal was to turn the front house into a community center for 3 years called "UNITY HOUSE" with programming by a GYRD nonprofit. He chose this property for symbolic reasons/ nuisance abatement because it is at the gateway to ELA Park. A property that becomes "Gatekeeper" on a dead end street.

Festivities ensued with an ELA Park rededication in 1996, the playground equipment was spruced up and there was a street closure and block party. This all had to do with the murder of a child by LAPD at that site. Never during that time did they remove playground equipment from ELA Park. They did the opposite and enhanced it.

Why now do we have theft of publicly owned resources by city agencies? We call on the City Attorney, City Controller and Ethics commission to open an investigation as to why about half of the Lincoln Heights RAP Parks are perpetually chained up and off limits to our community. According to the EPA's CalEnviroScreen ranking of California's most environmentally burdened/ vulnerable communities, Lincoln Heights ranks in the 100th percentile. We demand that RAP reinstall the playground equipment at ELA Park.

Sincerely,

*Lincoln Heights Neighborhood Council*

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