

**CANDIDATE STATEMENT:
GGPNC COMMUNITY INTERESTS REPRESENTATIVE: RECREATION**

Regarding organized recreation, Los Feliz (and “Greater Griffith Park”) has a bit of a blessing and a curse happening. The general misconception is all’s well in the world. How could it not be with Griffith Park in our “backyard?” And therein lies the rub.

We have four golf courses, 27 tennis courts and an archery range, but we are embarrassingly bereft of facilities and programs fostering traditional “stick and ball” sports, especially for kids. Our Little League fields?.. Wiped out by the construction of the 5 Freeway and never replaced. Youth basketball?.. Silver Lake’s program terms out when 8 year olds grow too big for the gym, and then their parents are handed off to places like Glassell Park, where attrition cuts participation in half. “Pop Warner” football: Non-existent. It’s a problem. Why?..

Well, our neighborhood doesn’t have a Recreation Center staffed and maintained by L.A.’s Department of Recreation and Parks. Without a full time group tasked with developing recreation, we’ve gotten short shrift. Compounding the problem is the “baby boom” that came part and parcel with the housing boom across L.A. has yet to be statistically recognized.

I’ve heard stakeholders say things like: “When are *they* going build more playgrounds we can walk to?” Or, “When are *they* going to start a little league program here?” After some digging, I came to the conclusion WE ARE THE THEY in *they*, and waiting for some city agency to swoop in and make it happen is a forlorn hope. Either *we* make it happen or it doesn’t.

Nearly three years ago, I was elected to the GGPNC Board as a write-in candidate; a long shot. I specifically addressed the lack of recreation programs, and was energized to get working. But I found there weren’t any compelling desires to develop traditional recreation by our council at that time. With a Representative: Recreational Interests appointed since the council’s inception, after eight years, I could find little or no record of any recreation initiatives being contemplated. Eight years? Up until a few months ago, our council didn’t even have a dedicated “Recreation” Committee. Now it does. And it was a hard-fought battle to make that happen. But it did. And worth every ounce of effort invested in to make it a reality.

As this new committee’s founding Chairman, I put together a team of volunteers with mad skills, including two L.A. Recreation and Parks staff members. Our first project: Upgrading the gymnasium at T.S. King Middle School to support a youth basketball program; let’s try to keep neighborhood kids (and their parents) right here playing ball. GGPNC Sports & Recreation operates more like task force than a committee; we have our work cut out for us.

There’s no reason we shouldn’t have the same recreational programs places like Mar Vista, Venice, Toluca Lake, or Fairfax enjoy. And it’s truly do-able. Three years ago, Los Feliz didn’t have AYSO Soccer because at the time all the fields were “taken.” I helped change that. And our AYSO has nearly doubled each year since its launch. I’m proud to be part of these kinds of projects. I would like to continue to do so as the GGPNC Board Member tasked with developing Recreation. I’m **Mark Mauceri**, and I appreciate your consideration and taking the time to read down this far.

As requested: I do not have now, nor have I ever had any business or employment interests through the City of Los Angeles, nor its “affiliates.”

