

Audit says Long Beach has \$9.2 million to spend on park, environmental projects



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People fish and watch the sun set from a pier at Shoreline Aquatic Park in Long Beach Saturday, Jan. 27, 2023. Photo by Brandon Richardson.



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Long Beach has more than \$9 million it can spend on environmental projects after a city audit found that deposits paid by contractors and homeowners to incentivize recycling old building materials were not properly accounted for.

The findings were announced by the City Auditor's office Tuesday [in a report](#) that looked at 17 years of the city's Construction and Demolition Recycling Program. The program was created to keep the city compliant with a 1989 state law that requires diverting waste from landfills.

According to the audit, the program has taken in more than 7,300 deposits over the past decade totaling \$43.9 million.

The program requires developers, homeowners altering or adding onto their homes, and other projects requiring demolition to pay a deposit of 3% of the projected value of the project. If they can prove with receipts that concrete and other building materials were recycled at approved facilities, then those deposits are paid back after the completion of the project.

But if proof of recycling is not provided to the city's Community Development Department or the builders don't file a refund request in time, the deposits are forfeited and are eligible to be used by the city to pay for parks and other projects that could benefit the environment.



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JASON KUIZ HAS BEEN ON STRIKE FROM THE LONG BEACH POST SINCE MARCH 21, YET HE'S STILL COVERING CITY HALL WITHOUT PAY. THANK HIM FOR HIS REPORTING.

City Auditor Laura Doud said in a statement that the audit highlights the importance of independent investigations, with this one finding city money “sitting idle.”

“The city needs to ensure all city accounts are being monitored and funds are being used appropriately,” Doug said in a statement. “The \$9.2 million in one-time funds that we found will be instrumental in supporting the city’s upcoming environmental sustainability projects thereby enhancing the well-being of residents and protecting our wildlife.”

The city is projecting a \$23.5 million shortfall in the coming fiscal year and it’s unclear what kind of investments the city intends to make into parks and environmental projects in the coming year. The proposed budget is typically released in August.

Additional money found through the audit could allow the city to shift general fund spending from park projects to other areas of need as city leaders try to balance next year’s budget.

The city has looked outward for financial support for park investments and other projects. A [memo posted last week by the city](#) outlining some of the Congressional appropriation requests that have been submitted by Long Beach representatives shows more than \$10 million being requested by the city.

Those requests include \$3 million for a trash capture system in the Los Angeles River to prevent debris from entering the ocean, funding to subsidize the city’s unleaded aviation fuel program at Long Beach Airport and millions in improvements at Scherer, Houghton and Admiral Kidd Parks, among other projects.

The \$9.2 million would be available for one-time expenses and the audit made recommendations to help ensure that forfeited funds don’t accumulate like they have since 2007.

Long Beach’s ordinance that the program was created under requires that refunds be requested within 30 days of the final project inspection but the audit found that refunds are processed for projects that are filed within 90 days of the final inspection. The audit recommended updating that timeline but the implementation target date isn’t until June 2025.



The city has averaged about \$6 million in deposits through the program since 2019, according to the audit, but it has also refunded 76% of deposits over the past decade.

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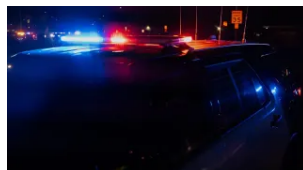
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