



DTSC Grant Helps Bring Communal Garden to South Central Los Angeles

At only .18 acres in size, the property in the Willowbrook section of Los Angeles is small. But the [Department of Toxic Substances Control](#) (DTSC) knows from experience that big things often come in small packages, and was committed to helping turn the rectangular-shaped plot of vacant land into one of Los Angeles' communal gardens.

An \$86,230 sub grant from DTSC helped the non-profit [Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust](#) create the Fellowship Garden of Love at Holmes, consisting of a garden and park. The sub grant came through a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund Grant. Los Angeles County donated the land, and First 5 LA contributed \$110,000.

More than 3,000 people within a half-mile from the park live below the poverty line. "The site is an important fresh food development hub," said Mark Glasscock, director of special projects at the Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust. "Unlike other community gardens that are open to members, fresh fruits and vegetables may be planted and harvested by anyone in the community."

The garden also hosts a unique partnership with Martin Luther King Jr. Community Health Center across the street. Its public health nurses will use the garden for nutrition counseling. A volunteer committee of residents maintains the garden and park.

DTSC provided the sub grant after elevated levels of lead were found at shallow depth in three places during the land-acquisition process. Given that people were going to eat food from the garden, the Trust replaced the top layer of soil – as much as three feet in some places – and installed elevated planter boxes.

This is another example of DTSC fulfilling its mission – reducing toxic substances and turning unproductive land into a community asset.

At the Fellowship Garden of Love at Holmes in Willowbrook (below), community members tend to vegetables in raised beds (right).

