

LOS ANGELES - Representative Xavier Becerra (CA - 30) joined First Lady Sharon Davis; Senator Richard Polanco; Assemblymember Jackie Goldberg; Councilman Ed Reyes; John Flicker, President of the National Audubon Society; and Richard T. Schlosberg, President of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation; to break ground for the Debs Park Audubon Center by planting an oak tree at the future site. Rep. Becerra, the only member from Southern California that sits on the powerful House Committee on Ways and Means, secured \$350,000 in federal funds for the construction of the Center.

Located near Montecito Heights and Monterey Hills, the Debs Park Audubon Center will provide recreational and educational resources to thousands of children and their families who live in the northeast, east and downtown Los Angeles neighborhoods. In addition, Debs Park and the Audubon Center will protect the natural habitat of a wide variety of migratory bird, mammal and insect species. Debs Park is home to one of the last, largest undisturbed patches of walnut trees, which are only available in Southern California.

Rep. Becerra noted that children and families living in urban and inner city areas rarely have opportunities to experience nature. "When our children look around, they see mostly concrete and congestion," Rep. Becerra said. "The new Debs Park Audubon Center provides an oasis where children and families can play and learn in a safe neighborhood park - away from the chaos of city life and away from the streets."

Located just five miles from downtown Los Angeles, the Debs Park Audubon Center is expected to complete its construction in late 2003.