



### **Unique identifier**

*LA: Chinatown Yard*

### **Clip**

Was it the developers who killed the river? They had plenty of motive, thousands of acres of motive.

### **Voice Over**

The dreams of river activists to revive a dead river and revitalise communities with open green space have led to epic political battles over the fate of two abandoned railroad yards on opposite sides of the river near downtown LA. On the east side is Taylor Yard with over two hundred acres of old tracks and rusting train engines.

### **Melanie Winter, The River Project**

This is the largest undeveloped piece of land on the Los Angeles River. It was the busiest rail yard for downtown.

### **Voice Over**

On the west side of the river is a former Union Pacific rail yard, touches the river at one end and runs inland for about a mile. It's next door to Chinatown and is known locally as the Cornfield.

### **Lewis MacAdams, Friends Of The LA River**

The only thing that was historical flood plains of the Los Angeles River, such as the Cornfields, we are interested in to create parks.

### **Voice Over**

They are the last vast open spaces near the heart of downtown LA. Both sides were targeted by the city and developers for huge industrial parks. High-stake battles over the future of these yards would pit river activists and their allies against some of the most powerful political forces in LA. Chi Mui is a long-time Chinatown activist and was working with river activists on a mixed-use plan for the Cornfield when he discovered that a developer named Majestic had other ideas.

### **Chi Mui, Chinatown Yard Alliance**

Many surrounding community leaders thought that we should have green space, open space; we should have a middle school here. We had a vision to turn this into something great, a downtown central park for LA. We have no room to develop. This Cornfield, 32 acres, is the last possibility for Chinatown to develop.

### **John Semcken, Majestic Realty**

You know it's not like any of these beautiful office buildings behind us, but they were attractive industrial buildings.

### **Voice Over**

Majestic is one of the largest developers in Southern California. The Staple Centre, the world-class sports' stadium in downtown LA, is the crown jewel in their property empire. It's home to the LA Lakers.

### **John Semcken, Majestic Realty**

Chinatown doesn't need any particular use, Chinatown needs jobs.

**Voice Over**

For Majestic the Cornfield would be an eighty million dollar investment to construct more than a quarter of a million square metres of industrial space, and it had the backing of City Hall.

**Chi Mui, Chinatown Yard Alliance**

In terms of jobs I think we would have better jobs with teachers and workers that would work in a middle school, also park rangers that would work in a state park, also there are other kinds of jobs that are, that will conflict with the pollution of our environment, with the warehouses.

**John Semcken, Majestic Realty**

The economic engines which were the jobs relating Chinatown and going elsewhere. Like any other project we do, we had significant community support, politically the support was, you know, politically supported by all of the city council people, voted on by the Mayor.

**Richard Riordan, LA Mayor 1993-2001**

I stop and say as a Mayor, every day, what is in the best interest of children, particularly poor children – and that's education, and access to quality jobs, and you can't in those circumstances have the perfect environment that a lot of people would like to have, I mean we are an urban area with millions upon millions of people and you just, unfortunately, can't have the environment that we'd all like.

**Voice Over**

City Hall helped to promote development of the Cornfield and Taylor Yard by not requiring a full environmental impact report prior to the start of construction. River activists and the developer both argued that their plans were vital to the economic health of Chinatown.

**Chi Mui, Chinatown Yard Alliance**

Our green space basically is somebody's back yard, the size of a postage stamp.

**Clip**

Tai Chi classes, basketball game.

**Voice Over**

For a community of thirty thousand, this patch of grass in front of a community centre is all the open green space there is.

**Chi Mui, Chinatown Yard Alliance**

In that little green space they have people doing tai chi, we have people doing other forms of exercise, that all come together in a little low area that's jam-packed. There's consulates left and right where some of them will be doing tai chi, a senior citizen, and someone playing basketball and ball be rolling to the feet of the one doing tai chi. Conflicts like that should not exist at a community, or any community in LA City.