



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

Los Angeles River Center & Gardens
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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

FROM:  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Hon. ASLA, Executive Officer

DATE: November 5, 2008

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item VII: Consideration of resolution (a) approving the application for grant funds for the California River Parkways Grant Program under the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006 (Proposition 84); (b) authorizing entering into a grant agreement; and (c) authorizing acceptance of said funds for the Aliso Creek and Los Angeles River Confluence Park project.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution (a) approving the application for grant funds for the California River Parkways Grant Program under the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006 (Proposition 84); (b) authorizing entering into a grant agreement; and (c) authorizing acceptance of said funds for the Aliso Creek and Los Angeles River Confluence Park project.

Background: The Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006 (Proposition 84) authorized \$62 million to the State of California Resources Agency for the acquisition, protection and development of river parkways in accordance with the California River Parkways Act of 2004. Program goals for River Parkways are (1) protecting and restoring riparian and riverine habitat; and (2) directly improving the quality of life in California by providing important recreational, open space, wildlife, flood management, water quality, and urban waterfront revitalization benefits to communities in the State.

The Resources Agency is administering the River Parkway grants Program. The "Grant Guidelines" require that applicants submit an Authorizing Resolution from the applicant's governing body. Applications for the funding are due November 12, 2008. MRCA staff is preparing the application for the Aliso Creek and Los Angeles River Confluence Park Project, described below.

Aliso Creek and Los Angeles River Confluence Park Project

This Aliso Creek and Los Angeles River Confluence Park Project will result in an approximately 3-acre multi-purpose open space parkland with unique up- and downstream vistas of both Aliso Creek and the Los Angeles River. The project site, owned by the City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, is located just east of the intersection of Wilbur Avenue and Kittridge Street in the community of Reseda (Assessor's parcel numbers 2126-029-901 and 2127-001-902). The project would also include a portion of the Kittridge Street public right-of-way. The project will create a much-needed wildlife habitat node in a regional trail/bikeway network.

The project will transform an underutilized, largely vacant site consisting of non-native vegetation by restoring native woodland, riparian, and grass habitats to support terrestrial and avian wildlife species. The park will provide an important passive recreational amenity in a dense, urban area that will offer psychological respite and physical exercise to residents in the surrounding, mixed-income residential communities. A stormwater detention basin, bioswales, and other best management practices, will result in water quality improvements, if infiltration and the use of recycled water for irrigation prove feasible.

The project will provide important green linkages to existing open spaces at West Valley Park and eventually along the River greenway to Reseda Park. The proposed half-mile of trail as part of this project would connect Vanowen Street along the Creek and River to Wilbur Avenue. The new park would be accessed from Wilbur Avenue, through Kittridge Street. Another connection would be to West Valley Park via Archwood Street. Our partner, the Jewish Home of for the Aging, has expressed interest in creating a River Loop trail for its elderly residents to walk from the Home at the intersection of Wilbur Avenue and Victory Boulevard to the confluence. The first phase of the project would make the park accessible to them via Wilbur Avenue, through the Kittridge Street entrance.

The park will eventually act as a node in a network of greenways and parks along the planned Los Angeles River Bikeway, providing access to walkers and cyclists outside of the immediate community. Significant easement space exists that could be used to make a future River Loop in later phases of the project. Future phases of the project will include a bridge across Aliso Creek and a trail to Yolanda Avenue and eventually to Reseda Park along the River. Nearby streets, including Vanowen Street, the Kittridge alley, Wilbur Avenue, Yolanda Avenue, Amigo Avenue, and Reseda Boulevard are exceptional possibilities for future green street connections, linking the park to local schools and open spaces. The Jewish Home for the Aging owns a neighboring property and its residents will be important project stakeholders. The Jewish Home's parcel has the potential for future acquisition in a later phase of the project for an additional 1/3-acre of habitat and recreation space.

The Aliso Creek confluence is a unique site along the River, where a vertical-walled channel section meets a trapezoidal-walled section, offering an opportunity to include educational amenities regarding the history of River channelization, related engineering, flood management, and the relationship of the River and Creek to the larger watershed. The project includes an interpretative displays highlighting these elements.

The City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power has leased portions of the property to local gardeners for a long-standing community garden. The vibrant, active and diverse community garden provides an opportunity to build upon existing community energy and environmental stewardship by enhancing the neighboring areas with a new park and greenway.

The project offers the opportunity to simultaneously meet the objectives of the City of Los Angeles 2007 LA River Revitalization Master Plan, 1996 County of Los Angeles River Master Plan, the Resources Agency's 2001 Common Ground: From the Mountains to the Sea Open Space Plan for the San Gabriel and Los Angeles Rivers, and 2008 Sister River Agreement between the Yarqon River Authority in Tel Aviv, Israel and the City of Los Angeles.