



# MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

Los Angeles River Center & Gardens  
570 West Avenue Twenty-six, Suite 100  
Los Angeles, California 90065  
Phone (323) 221-9944

## MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: March 1, 2017

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item VIII: Consideration of resolution authorizing acceptance of assignment of acquisition agreement for APN 5562-006-020, acceptance of acquisition funds from public and private entities, and acquisition of APN 5562-006-020 approximately 17.38 acres; Laurel Canyon, City of Los Angeles.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing acceptance of assignment of acquisition agreement for APN 5562-006-020, acceptance of acquisition funds from public and private entities, and acquisition of APN 5562-006-020 approximately 17.38 acres in Laurel Canyon.

Background: At its November 4, 2015 meeting, the Governing Board adopted a resolution (attached) to assist the Laurel Canyon Association and Fourth District City Councilmember David Ryu in steering \$15,000 of City of Los Angeles funding towards a down payment on a 17.38-acre property in Laurel Canyon. Through one of its officers, the Laurel Canyon Association successfully optioned the subject property. The private and non-profit campaign to fund the acquisition is called Let's Buy a Mountain. The campaign received notable media coverage as it met the obligation of an approximately \$48,000 payment. The 2015 MRCA resolution also expressed intent to accept assignment of the option rights and to take title to the parcel with permanent management obligations. An aerial photograph of the property and its habitat connectivity is attached.

The proposed actions include authorizing acceptance of the option assignment rights, acceptance of funding for the acquisition, and eventual fee simple acquisition of the property. At its February 1, 2017 meeting the Governing Board authorized submission of a Proposition 1 grant application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for less than \$1,000,000. The remainder of the \$1,600,000 total acquisition price will be met by a combination of a \$100,000 Proposition A grant to Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife (CLAW), additional private donations, other potential public funding sources. Acceptance of the proposed assignment would not put any public funds at risk or create a substantial drain on MRCA staff resources.

The habitat, viewshed, and watershed attributes of the property and the surrounding private natural land are exceptional. One house and its resulting permanent brush clearance scars located on the existing prominent ridgeline building pad areas would be a significant detriment to the Laurel Canyon watershed's contribution to the Eastern Santa Monica Mountains habitat linkage system.

The views from the property span from the Palos Verde Peninsula to Griffith Park with clear views of the Santa Ana Mountains, Mount San Jacinto, San Geronimo Mountain, Mount Baldy, San Gabriel Mountains, Verdugo Mountains, the Griffith Observatory and the Hollywood sign. The property--with a maximum elevation greater than 1300 feet--is visible from several sections along Mulholland Drive.

It is the largest remaining private parcel in the Laurel Canyon watershed and the third largest private parcel between the 405 freeway and 101 freeway. It is the central property in a greater than 50-acre habitat block. A cluster of three MRCA-held conservation easements connect the property to the northeast to a long habitat block that abuts Laurel Canyon Boulevard. Two other wildlife corridors connect the subject 50 acre habitat block to other habitat blocks in both the upper Laurel Canyon watershed and above the Sunset Plaza area. The north-facing slopes of the property support mixed coast live oak and scrub oak woodland. Various City of Los Angeles-owned properties and Wonderland Avenue Elementary School are in close proximity to the subject property. The primary access road is Appian Way which abuts the parcel. An extension of Kress Street also leads to the property where there is an onsite turnaround.