



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: May 4, 2011

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item XII: Consideration of resolution authorizing application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for grant funds for improvements to the Los Angeles River Center and Gardens.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for grant funds in the amount of \$750,000 for improvements to the Los Angeles River Center and Gardens.

Background: Since opening in March 2000, the Los Angeles River Center and Gardens has proved to be an extremely popular location for public meetings, special events, and leased space. The funds generated from special events and leases are a significant source of unrestricted revenue.

Before acquisition in 1998, the buildings and grounds had been vacant for over seven years, and many deferred maintenance problems developed. Since then, all funds available for capital improvements have been used for the most critical projects necessary to keep the property open to the public and operating. Decisions regarding which improvements can be made have often been based on emergency needs. In order to serve a greater number of users and maintain the current level of service, additional capital improvements are necessary to the buildings, grounds, and infrastructure.

Some of the improvements that are needed include new roofing for four buildings, replacement of aging and failing HVAC systems for at least two buildings, replacement of worn finishes, stabilization of courtyard elements, more efficient lighting systems, and accessibility improvements. Improved audio/visual systems in the meeting spaces are also desired to better serve the public. These proposed improvements will serve to protect the facilities so that they can continue to be used for public enjoyment.

In June 2003, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy granted Proposition 40

funds to MRCA for improvements to the River Center. Those funds were used for a number of improvements including upgraded irrigation, specimen plant care, additional site furnishings, fire monitoring systems, water feature care, and replacement of one roof and one HVAC system. In 2010 MRCA was granted Proposition A funds to make improvements to the Sierra Madre Building and Barbacoa Building for public uses, and make other improvements to the property's infrastructure.

As staff evaluated the facility and budgeted for the Proposition A funds, it became clear that those funds are not sufficient to complete all the renovations required to keep the River Center operating at an optimal level. It is evident that rehabilitation of the existing public areas and gardens must continue beyond what was previously done. An investment of additional capital funds at this time would allow the work funded by Proposition A to be most efficiently coordinated with these other projects at the facility.

Consideration: The application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy is for \$750,000 of Proposition 84 funds.