



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: May 2, 2012

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item XI: Consideration of resolution authorizing an application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for a project planning and design grant for Elephant Hill Open Space, El Sereno.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing an application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for a project planning and design grant for Elephant Hill Open Space, El Sereno, City of Los Angeles.

Background: Elephant Hill is a long-embattled island of relict habitat in the northeast Los Angeles hills. Proposed for residential development multiple times over the years, the City acquired 20 acres in 2009 as part of a legal settlement with a would-be developer. The MRCA previously sought and was awarded funding from the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (Conservancy) to acquire five of the 20 acres from the City. The MRCA has since identified Proposition A as a potential funding source for additional acquisition at Elephant Hill. The proposed project area includes mostly small, privately-owned parcels, which comprise the majority of Elephant Hill. Due to this complex ownership pattern, a project planning and design grant is needed to identify, prioritize, and acquire numerous individual parcels from many different potential sellers. This grant would serve as matching funds for the MRCA's pending Proposition A grant.

Community support for preservation of Elephant Hill has been the driving force behind acquisition efforts. A coalition of over 60 community leaders representing diverse organizations was instrumental in blocking the last attempt to develop the site. This group hopes to see the area preserved as open space and opened to the public as soon as possible. The subject planning grant would be the first time public investment has proactively targeted private parcels at Elephant Hill for preservation.

The subject project planning and design grant application is attached.