



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: July 5, 2017

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item X: Consideration of resolution authorizing the use of Santa Monica Mountains Open Space Preservation Assessment District No. 2 funds to acquire all or part of APNs 2176-026-902 and 2176-026-904 from the City of Los Angeles as the assignee of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, Tarzana area.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing the use of up to \$550,000 Santa Monica Mountains Open Space Preservation Assessment District No. 2 funds to acquire all or part of APNs 2176-026-902 and 2176-026-904 and to add the subject parcels to the Final Engineer's Report.

Background: For multiple reasons staff has had difficulty acquiring a final ownership in Area G of the Santa Monica Mountains Open Space Preservation Assessment District No. 2 with the remaining balance of funds. Area G is bounded by the 405 freeway, a line one quarter mile south of Ventura Boulevard, Vanalden Avenue, and Mulholland Drive. Many of the remaining open space parcels are valued greater than the available funding, do not have willing sellers, have significant geological issues, or are too isolated or steep to provide substantial recreation or habitat value.

Earlier this year, the City of Los Angeles notified the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy that it was going to surplus and auction six contiguous lots on the north side of Edleen Drive. The six lots total 2.6 acres of contiguous land with full street access from Edleen Drive. The City obtained the lots after a comprehensive fix of a landslide that demolished some houses. The lots have approximately 450 feet of street frontage and over 90 feet of flat pad across that distance. An attractive, approximately four-foot-high wrought iron fence separates the property from a City sidewalk. The site is well maintained and supports scattered mature non-native trees. The site offers expansive 210 degree views of multiple mountain ranges. The Conservancy exercised its first right of refusal in April 2017.

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Further discussions with City staff revealed that the City had acquired the property from the private owners for considerable sums. The Conservancy's first right of refusal provides for the City to sell at its original acquisition amount plus administrative costs. Within those financial parameters the MRCA can only afford to acquire one whole lot and a fraction of another.

The most suitable future parkland lot is located adjacent to a Department of Water and Power power line corridor that runs from Caballero Creek in the Santa Monica Mountains to the Los Angeles River at the Aliso Creek confluence park. Between Caballero Creek and Ventura Boulevard only chain link fences, nursery plots and two-lane neighborhood streets impede a wildlife corridor or future public trail corridor. In short the property is not ecologically isolated and provides an accessible area with great views. The property is a prime local public resource in the Santa Monica Mountains Zone. The acquisition location will also help spread the special benefit in Area G into its northwest corner where no assessment money has been spent to date.

The City and Council office are supportive. The City will auction the parcels this fall and work with the MRCA and Conservancy to consummate a transaction in the near future.

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