



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: September 5, 2018

SUBJECT: Agenda Item VIII: Consideration of resolution authorizing (a) the application for grant funds from the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District for the first Supervisorial District excess funding for the Elephant Hill Open Space project and, (b) adoption of a Youth Employment Plan, City of Los Angeles.

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing (a) the application for grant funds from the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District for the first Supervisorial District excess funding for the Elephant Hill Open Space project, in the amount of \$700,000 and, (b) adoption of a Youth Employment Plan, City of Los Angeles.

Background: Elephant Hill is an island of habitat in the northeast Los Angeles hills which has been proposed for residential development multiple times over the years. In 2009, the City acquired 20-acres as part of a legal settlement with a would-be developer. The MRCA was previously awarded funding from the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (Conservancy) to acquire 5 of the 20-acres from the City due to the fact that the funding source used by the City to pay for the settlement prohibits public access. Therefore, MRCA ownership was required before park improvements could be constructed. The MRCA has since identified other funding sources, including this Proposition A funding from the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District's first Supervisorial District excess funding for additional acquisition and public access improvements at Elephant Hill.

Community support for preservation of Elephant Hill has been the driving force behind acquisition and public access improvement 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 acquisition and improvement grant would be in the amount of \$700,000 to help MRCA staff to fulfill the community's desires and continue to protect Elephant Hill and provide much needed and desired public access.

Since the Elephant Hill area has a complex ownership pattern (mostly comprised of small, privately-owned parcels) staff has identified and prioritized the acquisition of numerous parcels from many different land owners. If acquired, these parcels will both facilitate the construction of a trail and implement a larger plan for Elephant Hill preservation. Attached is a map of the Elephant Hill Open Space that illustrates the parcels which are currently publicly-owned and those that are privately-owned and could be identified for acquisition.

The Proposition A grant could fund both acquisition and public access improvements. Based on the Feasibility Study, developed by Alta Planning and Design in 2016, improvements could include trail construction, wayfinding installation, plant restoration, and site amenities. An existing Conservancy grant could supplement other acquisition and access improvement costs.

As required by Proposition A, a Youth Employment Plan was developed in conjunction with the application for funding and is attached. Upon confirmation with Open Space District staff, MRCA staff has established that the requirement is to only develop and adopt a Youth Employment Plan. There is no requirement to specifically employ youth if it's not feasible or appropriate. As the MRCA has already met its agency-wide youth employment goals and this is anticipated to be primarily an acquisition grant, with some public access improvements integrated, the use of at-risk youth is not applicable. Therefore, no youth will be used for this project.

Consideration: The proposed action would authorize a grant application to the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District for the first Supervisorial District excess funding in an amount not to exceed \$700,000.

Fiscal Impact: If the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District Proposition A grant is awarded, funding for the acquisition and trail improvements will be paid for with a combination of an existing Conservancy grant and the Proposition A grant. Staff time and Professional Consultant costs to plan and coordinate the work will be paid for in the same way. Future annual maintenance cost has not been estimated.