

Memorandum

To: The Upper Los Angeles River and Tributaries Working Group Date: September 26, 2019

From:  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Hon. ASLA, Executive Director

Subject: **Agenda Item 8: Consideration of resolution recommending additional elements for the Upper Los Angeles River and Tributaries Revitalization Plan.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Working Group adopt the attached resolution authorizing additional elements for the Upper Los Angeles River and Tributaries Revitalization Plan.

Legislative Authority: Public Resources Code Sections 33220, 21083, 21102, and 21150.

Background: The legislation establishing the Upper Los Angeles River and Tributaries (ULART) Working Group, Assembly Bill 466 (AB 466), Chapter 347 of the Statutes of 2017, requires a master planning process for a Revitalization Plan (Plan). Legislation also requires that the Plan address the unique and diverse needs of the Upper Los Angeles River, Pacoima Wash, Tujunga Wash, Verdugo Wash, Arroyo Seco and any additional tributary waterway that the working group determines to be necessary, which prompted the addition of the Aliso Canyon Wash and the Burbank Western Channel, as determined by the working group. The plan shall be consistent with and enhance, and may be incorporated into plans that include, but are not limited to, the County of Los Angeles' Master Plan. The revitalization plan shall require a master planning process that includes community engagement and a prioritization of disadvantaged communities.

As this project has progressed, the parameters established by the Working Group to complete the Plan have become more defined through extensive discussion and review of opportunities. On multiple occasions this has led to further study, additional work products, and adjustments to the project timeline. During the committee meetings of the Working Group in August 2019, it was noted that there are still elements that could be more robustly envisioned, or added to the scope, to better achieve the project's goals. These include exploration of channel modifications, potential diversions, and creation of new open space for habitat and recreation. Furthermore, if the region's critical needs for housing were incorporated into analysis, it could make the final Plan more relevant and applicable.

At this time the Working Group should consider formally adding the following components to the Plan to make it more visionary, relevant, and comprehensive:

- **Deeper Analysis of Opportunity Areas:** In opportunity areas where conceptual design has already begun, the designs shall explore more options for habitat enhancement, feasibility of river restoration, channel expansion, infrastructure modifications, water infiltration and storm water capture. The concepts should also consider community needs for housing and open space, and benefits for optimal results. Illustrations shall be added if needed to communicate design ideas.

- **New Assessment of Publicly Owned Properties:** The Plan shall assess publicly owned lands which are underutilized and potentially could be converted to new uses for public benefit and to achieve the Plan's goals. Revising or consolidating current uses among said lands shall also be studied to maximize land potential for both industry and public needs.

- **New Assessment of Privately Owned Properties:** The Plan shall evaluate large parcels of privately-owned land which are proximate to waterways and in the immediate vicinity of opportunity areas. These lands shall be assessed for their potential for restoration or conversion to and depending on their current uses, proximity to waterways and potential for restoration propose revitalization enhancements.

- **Add Climate Change Analysis for Open Space Benefits:** The Plan shall quantify and apply greenhouse gas reduction impacts to the acreage of open space created, and study habitat and biodiversity metrics for land under public land ownership.

- **Public Engagement for Plan Implementation:** A comprehensive public information strategy shall be developed to distribute the final Plan and education to a wider audience about the Plan's goals and recommendations. This shall include additional outreach methods and development of an easily accessible document for mass distribution (AKA a Reader's Guide). Once the Plan is finalized, staff shall explore options for community advisory stewards and focus groups to advocate for individual projects, moving them forward for implementation and developing public support. This may entail extended efforts related to incorporation into other ongoing planning efforts.

- **Multilingual Communication:** In addition to a Spanish version of the summary document, all chapters of the ULART Plan and all new content distributed in its appendices should also be translated. Simultaneous translation shall be utilized for the draft Plan listening session, and any additional meetings that are a product of ongoing engagement. The comprehensive public information strategy shall incorporate multilingual materials and targeted materials for linguistically isolated populations.

- **Project Management:** Any added analysis, scope, meetings, and/or work products will also increase the project management needs for the project. Previously added Plan elements, meetings, extended timelines, online services, and illustrations have already maximized the available resources.

Staff recommends the elements listed above, in order to provide maximum benefits throughout the ULART study area.

Analysis–Consistency with Plans

The proposed Plan is consistent with Public Resources Code Sections 21083, 21102, and 21150, which exempt this planning study from the requirements to prepare an environmental impacts report. Nevertheless, this study thoroughly considers environmental factors throughout the study area. The Plan is also fully consistent with applicable plans, including the Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Plan, Strategic Plan, Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor Master Plan, Los Angeles River Master Plan, and Common Ground.