

Urban Greening Concept Proposal Form

Agenda Item 13 SMMC 8/29/11
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APPLICANT (Agency and Address-including zip)

Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority
 570 West Avenue 26, Suite 100

Total Proposed Grant Request: \$810,000.00

Other Sources of Funds: \$636,500.00

Total Estimated Cost of Project: \$1,446,500.00

Los Angeles CA 90065

Proj. County: Los Angeles

Project Title: Elephant Hill Open Space Restoration and Public Access Project

Proj. City: Los Angeles

Agency Type: Joint Powers Authority Is the project proposed in a disadvantaged community?: TRUE <i>Non-profits must be a 501 (c) 3 and be in good standing with the Secretary of State</i>

<p>Project Scope/Proposed Activities using Requested Grant Funds</p> <p>MRCAs proposes an urban greening project that will provide public access to five acres of previously unprotected hillside open space, construct a new system of walking trails in an underserved community, and correct longstanding drainage problems with natural best management practices. The project will include restoration of native vegetation, trail construction, installation of interpretive signage, and other park amenities. Vegetated swales and other best management practices for drainage that maximize infiltration and habitat benefits will detain storm water and local artesian well water while providing riparian habitat benefits. Well-placed trees and other native vegetation will serve as a natural sponge for water and aide in infiltration. These drainage improvements will all but eliminate the existing condition of regular flooding on Pullman Street and alleviate pressure on the City's storm drain system. // The proposed project is located in El Sereno, a dense, economically disadvantaged Los Angeles community. The project will permanently protect a strategic portion of 110-acre Elephant Hill, one of the largest undeveloped natural areas remaining in Northeast Los Angeles. The trail system will be accessible via public transportation (Metro Route 257) and provide public access from both sides of the hill, via Pullman Avenue and Lathrop Street. Hundreds of local residents regularly use adjacent Collins Avenue as an informal walking/running track, demonstrating a strong demand for outdoor walking opportunities in the community. Partnerships with local charter schools and environmental education programs will facilitate on-site restoration, interpretation and fitness activities, and encourage stewardship by local residents and students. // The project would directly address multiple environmental and environmental justice issues in the community. By precluding development on the site in perpetuity, the community will be spared the severe grading impacts that would have occurred in conjunction with residential development. The proposed large single-family homes were out of scale with the rest of the community and would have required stripping Elephant Hill down to the bedrock—a tremendous expense of energy and natural resources for a small number of residential units. The grading would have eliminated the on-site artesian well and exacerbated air and water quality issues with dust and erosion. Instead, the proposed park project will provide a community asset that reduces air and water pollution through enhancement of natural systems. Capturing and detaining both the local well water and stormwater will reduce volumes discharged into the Los Angeles River and increase local water supplies through infiltration. Increasing tree cover and protecting open space reduces the urban heat island effect, thereby increasing the community's resilience against the effects of climate change. Fixing the drainage problems with best management practices for stormwater will protect the neighborhood from future less predictable precipitation patterns. Restoring and enhancing native habitat also reduces the stresses on local ecosystems coping with climate change.</p>

What is the estimated number of dwelling units within the qualifying urban area (existing or planned for)?
(minimum threshold = 3,500 dwelling units within approximate 500 acre area. Indicate the estimated dwelling units AND the approximate acreage)

3,848 existing DU in 504-acre qualifying ar

<p>**Applicants will be required to submit a location map, together with evidence of existing or planned-for density with the full application.**</p>
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Use natural systems, or systems that mimic natural systems: TRUE Create, enhance or expand community green spaces: TRUE
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Decreases Air and Water Pollution: TRUE Reduces Consumption of Natural Resources and Energy: TRUE Increases the Reliability of Local Water Supplies: TRUE Increases Adaptability to Climate Change: TRUE Other: Preserves open space in dense community
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Enhances native biota

Proposed Funds Requested for Grant

Pre-construction costs (capped at 25% of grant; e.g., planning, design, permitting, CEQA Compliance)	\$200,000.00
Grading/Site Preparation	\$25,000.00
Trail Construction (approx. 1 mile): ~\$15 per linear foot	\$75,000.00
Restoration (approx. 2 acres): Includes planting walnut grassland, oak-walnut-toyon woodland, and coastal sage scrub; Includes temporary irrigation system (plants will not require irrigation after establishment period)	\$300,000.00
BMP Drainage Feature: On-site capture, detention, and infiltration of local artesian well water and stormwater runoff from Pullman Street drainage; Hardscape and drainage element to be designed	\$100,000.00
Site Amenities, including: Interpretive Signs; Park Signs; Seating; Water Meters; Vehicle Gates (to prevent unauthorized access)	\$100,000.00
	\$0.00
Total Grant Request:	\$800,000.00

If proposed grant request does not cover entire cost of project, please provide list of other funding sources and amount requested and/or secured -

Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (Acquisition & Expenses)	\$586,500.00
Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (Park Development)	\$50,000.00
	\$0.00
Total Other Sources of Funds:	\$636,500.00
Total Of All Sources of Funds:	\$1,436,500.00

(Total must tie to the Total Cost Estimate)

What plants/trees (including tree size) are proposed for the site? If planting palette includes non-natives or exotics, please explain.

The restoration and expansion of the site's woodland habitat will provide multiple ecological and hydrological benefits. The plants chosen for restoration will closely mirror the existing biota at ecologically similar Debs Park. Walnut savannah will be cultivated on south-facing slopes, with large walnut trees growing in dense clumps surrounded by restored native grasses. Oak-walnut-toyon woodland will be clustered on north-facing slopes and in the BMP drainage area, with large native shrubs in the understory. Coastal sage scrub will be enhanced and expanded on the site's steeper slopes. For the most part, trees planted will be 5- and 15-gallon size. Native shrubs will be cultivated from both seedlings and seed according to the expertise of staff restoration specialists. For more information on specific native species to be used, please visit: http://ca.audubon.org/debs_plants.php

What steps will you take or have you taken to ensure community support and, as applicable, collaboration with the local governmental entity with jurisdiction over the project?

The community has fought development attempts on Elephant Hill for decades due to the site's unsuitability for residential development and the severe lack of accessible park space in El Sereno. City ownership of 20 acres of Elephant Hill is the product of a legal settlement with a would-be developer in 2009. MRCA purchase of city-owned land is to partially restore temporarily diverted City funds used to acquire the property in settlement. The specific City funding source does not permit use of the property for recreation, which will be remedied by MRCA ownership. Construction of the proposed improvements would open public access to the embattled open space, a longstanding community goal. The City and Council District are fully supportive of the project. The coalition that fought earlier development attempts and encouraged City acquisition of this land is comprised of over 60 leaders representing environmental and community-based organizations throughout the City of Los Angeles. The coalition is committed to permanent protection of this land for parks and open purposes. The proposed partnerships would further community involvement through the design, construction, and operation of the park.

List all partnerships established to ensure successful completion of this project:

Audubon Center at Debs Park – interpretive ecology programming; El Sereno Organizing Committee – planning, outreach, and community organizing; Latino Urban Forum – planning and outreach; Semillas Community Schools – ecology curriculum integration at two charter

schools; restoration and stewardship activities

Who owns the property to be developed? List ALL owners (e.g., private owner, CalTrans, PUC, county, city, etc.). You will be required to submit documentation of ownership with full application. If owned by other than the applicant, does the applicant have permission from the owner to develop and maintain the project?

The MRCA, with funding from the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, will acquire from the City of Los Angeles all parcels to be improved by the proposed project. The full application will include documentation of legal ownership or an executed purchase agreement. MRCA will attain site control prior to constructing any improvements.

What is the status of agreements to develop, operate and maintain the property with EACH landowner?

The MRCA is in the process of acquiring City-owned parcels for the project. Appraisals have been completed for the subject parcels. MRCA will own, operate, and maintain the improved parkland.

Who will be the Lead Agency for CEQA?

MRCA

Briefly describe your experience carrying out similar projects, and other expertise and resources you have available to successfully complete this project.

The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), a joint powers entity established in 1985, is comprised of two local park districts and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. The mission of the MRCA is to complement the work of other agencies in protecting land and developing natural parks in Southern California mountains and rivers. The MRCA currently manages over 65,000 acres of parkland and holds fee title to approximately 10,000 acres. // Since its inception, the MRCA has constructed scores of small and large natural park projects. Our dedicated construction staff has constructed six riverfront parks, which are now owned and maintained by the MRCA. The ten-acre Vista Hermosa Natural Park near downtown Los Angeles is one of the finest urban natural parks ever constructed. Also, in partnership with the County of Los Angeles Watershed Management Division, the MRCA has constructed one mile of River Parkway along Tujunga Wash in the San Fernando Valley. The proposed project would utilize both the agency's urban park construction experience and our natural resource restoration expertise. // The MRCA has been responsible for the protection of open space for parkland, trail building, restoration and development of parkland along Los Angeles River, creating public and private partnerships, and directing nationally acclaimed educational programs that target inner-city youth. The MRCA has a proven track record of working with communities, elected officials, agency representatives and project stakeholders. Public input on park design is an integral part of our planning process.

What is the current status of and anticipated next steps envisioned (should you be awarded funding) for your design plans, CEQA compliance, permits, other funding sources and, for acquisitions, appraisals?

Acquisition will be completed prior to full application, or shortly thereafter, using Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy funding. CEQA compliance for project construction will begin immediately thereafter. A negative declaration for trail construction and native plant restoration is expected. Design plans will be finalized with a final project budget upon award of grant funds and community outreach through MRCA partners. Appropriate permits will be obtained prior to construction.

Note: All statements made in this Pre-Concept Form will require verification and documentation in a subsequent Application Package, if invited to submit. An invitation to apply for funding does not guarantee that a project will compete successfully for grant.

CONTACT PERSON:

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Application: QBGE3D1S

Voter: 5128