

Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: December 5, 2011

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

Subject: **Agenda Item No.15: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 84 funds to the Los Angeles River Revitalization Corporation, a non-profit organization, for project planning and design of the Piggyback Yard site, Upper Los Angeles River Watershed.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution recommending the authorization of a grant of Proposition 84 funds to the Los Angeles River Revitalization Corporation, a non-profit organization, for project planning and design of the Piggyback Yard site, Upper Los Angeles River Watershed in the amount of \$150,000.

Legislative Authority: Public Resources Code Section 33204.2(a) provides that the Conservancy may award grants to non-profit organizations.

Background: The Los Angeles River Revitalization Corporation (LARRC) has submitted a grant application for planning and design of the Piggyback parcel located in downtown Los Angeles on the east bank of the Los Angeles River. The project is a unique opportunity to have the LARRC and the Friends of the Los Angeles River (FOLAR) work together to craft a solution for a critical site. The project site and adjacent properties will be studied to explore the feasibility to provide water quality improvements and flood protection. The site is also known as Mission Road Rail Yards and was named as an opportunity area for riverfront open space with water quality treatment, and mixed-use and rail development in the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan. LARRC and FOLAR will oversee a diverse team of professionals including Mia Lehrer and Associates, Geosyntec, Urban Land Institute, Estolano LeSar Perez Advisors LLC and others.

The Piggyback Planning and Design project will focus on the Piggyback Yard and adjacent properties to develop three to five scenarios for the site that analyze the cost and benefits to achieving both water quality, open space, connectivity, community revitalization and other potential uses, as well as developing strategies for acquisition. The deliverables will include an Analysis of Hydraulic and Hyrdology, Analysis of Acquisition Alternatives and a Final Report - Scenarios and Synthesis of Cost/Benefits. See attached grant application for further details.

Founded in 1986, FOLAR is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization founded in 1986, whose mission is to protect and restore the natural and historic heritage of the Los Angeles River and its

riparian habitat through inclusive planning, education and wise stewardship. FOLAR was founded on the belief that effective advocacy, education, collaboration and imagination can accomplish great things. FOLAR has seen remarkable victories, reminding us of what is possible. They include fighting the Los Angeles County Drainage Area (LACDA), assisting in the creation of the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council, a principal forum for discussion of the Rivers' future) and creating a park at the Cornfield Yards.

The LARRC was established in 2009 as a result of the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan (LARRMP) to promote responsible development, redevelopment, and revitalization of properties along the LA River corridor in accordance with the LARRMP. This includes parks, open space, mixed-use buildings, retail opportunities, housing, and business space. The LARRC has strong ties to government agencies because it was established by the city of Los Angeles, but is a non-profit developer working independently on sustainable river development along the LA River corridor. The LARRC is uniquely positioned in alliance with government to negotiate an acquisition strategy that prioritizes the goals of a river revitalization above all else.

Public Resources Code Section 75050(g)(2) allocated the sum of \$36,000,000 to the Conservancy for implementation of watershed protection activities throughout the Upper Los Angeles River pursuant to Section 79508 of the Water Code. The subject study area is within the Upper Los Angeles River Watershed. Section 79508 provides that watershed protection activities shall be consistent with the *San Gabriel and Los Angeles River Watershed and Open Space Plan (Common Ground)*. The proposed project would provide opportunities to implement planning principles in *Common Ground* including: Coordinate targeted land acquisition with regional and local land use planning; Acquire land for flood management, wetlands, cleansing of water, and compatible uses; and, Coordinate watershed planning across jurisdictions and boundaries. This project is also consistent with the Conservancy's Strategic Objectives: Further Cooperation with Local Governments in the Region to Secure Open Space and Parkland and Expand Efforts to Integrate Nature into the Urban Environment.