

Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: April 27, 2015

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

Subject: **Agenda Item 17: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 40 funds to the City Project to research and complete an analysis of Conservancy funded education and interpretation programs serving disadvantaged communities.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 40 funds to the City Project to research and complete an analysis of Conservancy funded education and interpretation programs serving disadvantaged communities.

Legislative Authority: Sections 33204.2 of the Public Resources Code.

Background: The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (the Conservancy) has funded the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) to develop and operate programs to increase public access to public parkland and serve disadvantaged communities, through programming at both urban and open space parks. The MRCA has developed such programming using best practices of interpretation and environmental education found in current social science research to strategically address the barriers to park and program use that face urban, under represented and disadvantaged communities.

While the MRCA staff does regular internal program evaluation, that evaluation has primarily focused on goals, objectives and outcomes of education and interpretation. This grant proposes that the City Project act as an external evaluator which will review and analyze MRCA programs through an environmental justice lens. The City Project is a leading advocate for environmental justice in Los Angeles and is uniquely qualified for this work as it has extensive knowledge of issues facing urban people of color in regards to access and equity issues related to parks.

The deliverables for this project include a literature review of current academic and practitioner research on barriers to parks and nature for urban, under represented people of color; a memorandum advancing best practices based on that research; an analysis of MRCA state funded programs and recommendations regarding changes or additions to programming based on that research; and a presentation at a national conference on findings.

Analysis–Proposition 40

The “California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Act of 2002” (Proposition 40) allocated \$40 million to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for the acquisition, development, rehabilitation, restoration, and protection of land and water resources in accordance with the Conservancy Act. The California Attorney General has previously advised the Conservancy that Proposition 40 bond proceeds may be used for preservation which, as defined in the bond act, includes interpretation, protection, rehabilitation, restoration, evaluation, documentation, stabilization, development or reconstruction or any combination of those activities. Proposition 40 also defines “development” to include “improvement, rehabilitation, restoration, enhancement, preservation, protection, and interpretation.”

In the General Provisions of the Proposition, the Legislature declares that “to maintain a high quality of life for California’s growing population requires a continuing investment in parks, recreation facilities, and in the protection of the state’s natural and historical resources.”

As outlined in the application, the proposed project is consistent with Proposition 40. The activity proposed is both evaluation and documentation which is found in the preservation definition.. This project will ensure that the MRCA continues to provide interpretive programming that is relevant and meaningful to under served and under represented disadvantaged communities throughout Los Angeles.

Analysis–Consistency with Plans

The proposed grant is consistent with all applicable plans, including the *Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Strategic Plan* and the *Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Plan*.

Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Strategic Plan

The *Santa Monica Mountains Strategic Plan*, adopted in 1997, identifies the Conservancy's goals. The requested grant meets the following goals of the *Strategic Plan*.

Implement the Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Plan: The project is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan as described below.

Expand Efforts to Integrate Nature into the Urban Environment by linking and integrating new natural parks into existing park system—literally via transportation and physical linkages, thematically via programs and events. The deliverables from this grant will ensure that such efforts utilize best practice in reaching disadvantaged communities.

Expand Education, Public Access, and Resource Stewardship Components by increasing resource stewardship and educational/interpretative capabilities within the Zone. The best practices document that is a deliverable from this report will aide grantees in ensuring that programming is addressing barriers to access and participation from disadvantaged communities.

Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Plan, 1979

The project achieves the following Plan objectives:

- Provide for public parks and facilities in the Santa Monica Mountains that offer a variety of recreation opportunities accessible to all income groups;
- Emphasize the value of open space, conservation, and recreation compatible with the resources of the Santa Monica Mountains;
- Develop innovative public transportation alternatives within the frame-work of existing roadways for access to the Santa Monica Mountains in ways that will protect the environment, maintain air quality, efficiently deliver public services, and assure maximum access to the recreation areas for all the public.

Consideration: The application from the City Project is for \$75, 000 of Proposition 40 funds.