

Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: June 24, 2019

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

Subject: **Agenda Item 9(c): Consideration of resolution authorizing an application to the Governor's Office of Emergency Services' Hazard Mitigation Grant Program for hazardous fuels reduction at Temescal Gateway Park, City of Los Angeles.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing an application to the Governor's Office of Emergency Services' Hazard Mitigation Grant Program for hazardous fuels reduction, in an amount not to exceed \$88,125, at Temescal Gateway Park, City of Los Angeles.

Legislative Authority: Section 33202 of the Public Resources Code.

Background: The State of California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CALOES) administers a Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) that funds hazard mitigation projects such as hazardous fuel reduction. The HMGP is funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) proportionally as part of any Presidential Disaster Declaration in California. Projects on land owned by the Conservancy are eligible, so long as they are consistent with the *California State Hazard Mitigation Plan*. CALOES is now accepting applications for HMGP projects funded by the 2018 wildfire emergency declaration, including the Woolsey Fire in the Santa Monica Mountains.

Staff have identified approximately 29 mature, non-native Eucalyptus trees in Temescal Gateway Park that pose an elevated risk during fire related events. The type of work to be completed includes both pruning to thin out and create clearance by raising canopies (approximately 15 trees) and full tree removal (approximately 14 trees). Dead, dry debris and branches will be removed. The potential risks these trees pose are due to their proximity to power lines, critical park structures, and trail infrastructure, or because they are located in areas where their ignition could easily spread to adjacent crowns.

Eradication of Eucalyptus from the park is not a goal of the project, and healthy trees that do not pose a risk to park facilities are not being targeted. Eucalyptus is an introduced species in the park's habitat. These trees have explosive and intense burning characteristics that are not otherwise found in local oak woodlands. The proposed strategic density reduction will limit the capacity for a wildfire to move horizontally from tree to tree and vertically up into treetops.

Fuel hazard reduction within this wildland-urban interface is consistent with the *California State Hazard Mitigation Plan*, and pruning or removal of these trees as a fire prevention measure is a good fit for this round of HMGP funds. Large equipment will be used for tree work where access allows. Other trees will be removed by arborist crews supported with small equipment.

Temescal Gateway Park is owned by the Conservancy but is managed by Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA). The MRCA Governing Board authorized an application for these funds on June 5, 2019, but subsequent to that meeting it was determined that the application must be made by the property owner, which is the Conservancy. A request for spending authority and matching funds will be submitted for the State's 2020-21 budget, and the Conservancy may make a subgrant to MRCA for implementation.

Consideration: The proposed action would approve a grant application to the CALOES Hazard Mitigation Grant Program in an amount not to exceed \$88,125. This amount is an estimated cost, including contingency, and may be reduced after staff individually assess each tree and contractor costs in preparation for the grant application. The application amount cannot be increased. The grant program requires a 25 percent match of \$29,375 for a total maximum project cost of \$117,500. Funding for the match will be requested in the State 2020-21 budget. If the requested match funds are not appropriated, funds granted to MRCA for fire resilience activities may be used to meet the match requirement.