

Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: June 1, 2020

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

Subject: **Agenda Item 9: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 1 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for project planning and design for the Taylor Yard Paseo del Río G2 Project, City of Los Angeles.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 1 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for project planning and design for the Taylor Yard Paseo del Río G2 Project adjacent to the Los Angeles River, in the amount of \$1,360,000, Glassell Park neighborhood, City of Los Angeles.

Legislative Authority: Sections 33204.2 and 33204.27 of the Public Resources Code; and Section 79735(a) of the Water Code.

Background: Taylor Yard is a critical site for restoration of the Los Angeles River watershed, and the G2 Parcel was acquired by the City of Los Angeles (City) in March 2017. The 42-acre site includes nearly one-mile of river frontage along the soft-bottom portion of the River. In April 2019, the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) acquired a permanent multipurpose easement over 12.5 acres of the G2 Parcel. Immediately adjacent to the north lies the 18-acre G1 Bowtie Parcel (Bowtie) that was acquired by the Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) in 2003 and remains undeveloped and increases the expanse of river frontage to over a mile. This large area has the potential to treat regional stormwater flows and therefore can impact the long-term water quality of the River. Its proximity to existing open space, natural soft bottom habitat, recreational resources, and interpretive resources, including the 40-acre Rio de Los Angeles State Park, Elysian Park, numerous parks along the opposite bank of the River, and the Los Angeles River Sonia Sotomayor High School means that the publicly-owned open space at Taylor Yard is a singularly unique opportunity to create a regional multiple-benefit park, enhance habitat connectivity, provide recreation and interpretation, improve the water quality of the Los Angeles River watershed, and promote public access to the Los Angeles River.

The MRCA is actively coordinating with the City and State Parks, and the three landowners have signed a Letter of Intent to form the “100-Acre Partnership at Taylor Yard” (Partnership) to formally work together to collaboratively plan the largest continuous open space along the River. All three organizations have submitted grant applications to the Conservancy for consideration (refer to items 10 and 11 on this agenda). The signed Letter of Intent is included within each of the partner’s grant applications. The idea of the Partnership and its inception

is due to community and stakeholder meetings which voiced the critical need for a coordinated planning and improvement approach at Taylor Yard.

Partnership goals include to: create a cooperative agreement that supports a collaborative approach for the Partnership to work together; develop a common vision for the 100-acre area that is ecologically focused and community driven; and coordinated communications and outreach. Planning efforts for an early activation river-edge access project, currently called Paseo del Río, would stretch along both the G2 and Bowtie Parcels at Taylor Yard, and will be the opening activity to showcase the Partnership working collaboratively together. This integrated Project is planned to be approximately 8 acres (approximately six acres on G2 and two acres on Bowtie) to implement over one mile of contiguous riverfront public access.

The proposed improvements for Paseo del Río include trails, native habitat, water quality improvement features, green spaces, trail recreational opportunities, kayak launch and landing, gathering spaces or outdoor classrooms, restorative elements, amenities such as parking, access points, restrooms, gates, lighting, interpretive/educational signage, and access to a water quality improvement project on the Bowtie Parcel. Prior to construction, remedial cleanup activities will be performed where needed to ensure that the public can safely utilize the improvements. Remedial activities funded within this grant only include planning, design, and outreach; all cleanup work will be performed with non-Conservancy funding sources. The subject grants include project planning and design as well as implementation.

The MRCA's project planning and design project will be implemented in a joint partnership with the City and State Parks, who have also submitted grant applications to the Conservancy for Proposition 1 funding, in order to allow the development of a coordinated early access river edge Project. A combined Project budget is attached that shows the tasks within the Project by applicant (including those tasks that are being completed on behalf of another grantee), matching funds, and the total Project cost.

MRCA's scope includes: project planning and design, with a focus on leading the community outreach and engagement efforts for the G2 parcel, and coordination of outreach with those which will take place at Paseo del Río on the State Parks site. Construction of the Project within the MRCA's easement is included within the City's Construction budget line item. Additionally, funding for planning tasks at the G2 parcel, to be led by the City, is included within the City's grant application on behalf of MRCA, and evidence of the Partnership's coordinated planning efforts.

Analysis - General Obligation Bond Law

The General Obligation Bond Law provides that bond funds may be used for the construction and acquisition of "capital assets." Capital assets include major maintenance, reconstruction,

demolition for purposes of reconstruction of facilities, and retrofitting work that is ordinarily done no more often than once every 5 to 15 years or expenditures that continue or enhance the useful life of the capital asset (Government Code Section 16727 (a)). Capital assets also includes equipment with an expected useful life of two years or more, and tangible physical property with an expected useful life of 10 to 15 years. Section 16727 (a) also allows bond funds to be used for costs that are incidentally but directly related to construction or acquisition including costs for planning, engineering and other design work.

The activities that MRCA proposes to fund with this grant constitute planning and design of a land improvement project to protect land and water resources, protect and restore rivers, lakes and streams, their watersheds and associated land, water and other natural resources. Thus, the proposed activities fall within the definition of “capital assets” or are incidentally but directly related to acquisition or construction, and therefore are proper under the General Obligation Bond Law.

Scoring - Competitive Grant Program

Please see the attached Proposition 1 grant application from the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for a detailed description and maps. Scoring under the Conservancy’s Proposition 1 Guidelines, Project Planning and Design category results in the Project receiving 86 points (out of a possible 86; 61 minimum required), plus 4 out of 4 climate change value points, plus 20 out of 25 possible points under Additional Criteria. **Total points: 110** (out of possible 115).

Consideration: The application from the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority is for \$1,360,000 of Proposition 1 funds.