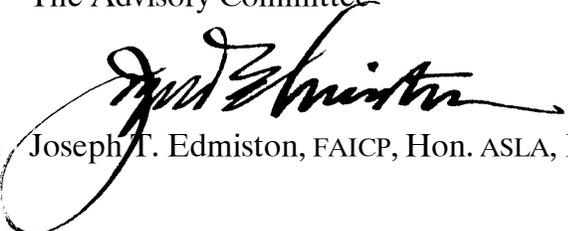


Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: March 24, 2008

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

Subject: **Agenda Item 14: Consideration of resolution authorizing (a) entering into a contract with Caltrans to acquire Director's Deed Nos. DD48060-01-01, DD48067-01-01, DD48068-01-01 and DD1505-02-01, located at the 101 Freeway and Valley Circle interchange, (b) using Conservancy Fund and other public and private funding sources, including City of Los Angeles Quimby funds, for said acquisition, and (c) authorizing transfer of properties to the City of Los Angeles, Woodland Hills.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing (a) entering into a contract with Caltrans to acquire Director's Deed Nos. DD48060-01-01, DD48067-01-01, DD48068-01-01 and DD1505-02-01, located at the 101 Freeway and Valley Circle interchange, (b) using Conservancy Fund in an amount not to exceed \$14,100 and other public and private funding sources, including City of Los Angeles Quimby funds, for said acquisition, and (c) transfer of properties to the City of Los Angeles.

Legislative Authority: Sections 33203.5, 33207(b), 33215, 33211 (c) of the Public Resources Code

Background: The subject Caltrans-owned surplus parcels offer scenic viewshed along the 101 Freeway, Valley Circle Boulevard, and Ventura Boulevard. The over two acres of land, divided amongst four parcels, provides an unparalleled opportunity on low cost public lands for a scenic natural landscape that cleans storm runoff and provides a pocket of habitat along a two tributaries of the Los Angeles River (Dry Canyon and Calabasas Creeks). The attached aerial photograph shows the parcels. The other attached figures show detailed conceptual plans prepared by Community Development by Design (CDBD) several years ago when the Conservancy and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority staff's were developing projects for Chapter 8 (stormwater cleaning) funding through Proposition 50. Those grants were not successful because neither agency had land tenure. Community grants to landscape the parcels were also not awarded because of the lack of land tenure. The sum of this project area was added to both the Conservancy Acquisition and Park Improvement Workprograms in April 2005.

Staff wrote a letter to Caltrans in August 2005 exercising the Conservancy's first right of refusal on the properties. One of the parcels at that time was under contract for sale to a private party and the remainder had been declared excess and were being prepared for auction. Staff has

worked cooperatively with Caltrans to negotiate a price for the properties that were acquired over 45 years ago. At its May 22, 2006 meeting, the Conservancy adopted a resolution confirming its exercise of first refusal on the properties following an official letter from Caltrans.. That action also designated authority to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) to improve the properties.

At the beginning of this month Caltrans sent staff a purchase agreement (attached) to acquire all four parcels for \$140,100. The price is advantageous but Caltrans insists on receiving a down payment by April 10, 2008.

The proposed action would authorize entering into a contract with Caltrans to acquire the four Director's Deeds, authorize the use of up to \$14,010 from the Conservancy Fund for the ten percent down payment, authorize the use of other funding sources to acquire the property including City of Los Angeles Quimby funds, and the transfer of all or a portion of the properties to the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks. Staff is working with the 3rd Council District to obtain Quimby funds. Business and community members are also expected to contribute to a substantial portion of the acquisition cost. The staff report for agenda item 15 elaborates more on the proposed total project funding.

If and until the City of Los Angeles controls the property, the land would have to be added to management agreements with the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority. There is no heavy brush or trash on the properties. A Woodland Hills Property Owners group has committed to maintaining the largest and most visible parcel that abuts Valley Circle Boulevard. According to them, the City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power has committed to providing a water meter at no cost. Currently there are no known dumping or crime issues on the properties because of their great visibility and numerous curbs. A Caltrans building and parking lot used by survey crews is located next to the northernmost parcel. As long as long-term plans to capture and clean storm water runoff are not compromised, neighborhood groups would be encouraged to plant and maintain native vegetation. Recent newspaper articles about Caltrans settling litigation over mitigating storm water runoff pollution from freeways into the Santa Monica Bay points to the value of the subject property for such purposes.