



# MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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## MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

FROM:  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Hon. ASLA, Executive Officer

DATE: July 6, 2011

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item IX: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant application to Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for acquisition and improvements at Elephant Hill, El Sereno, City of Los Angeles.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant application to Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for acquisition and improvements at Elephant Hill, El Sereno, City of Los Angeles.

Background: Elephant Hill is a long-embattled island of relict habitat in the northeast Los Angeles hills. Proposed for residential development multiple times over the years, the City acquired 20 acres in 2009 as part of a legal settlement with a would-be developer. MRCA acquisition of five of the 20 acres would defray the City's expense and prepare the site for public access. The funding source used by the City to pay for the settlement prohibits public access, therefore MRCA ownership is required before park improvements can be constructed.

Community support for preservation of Elephant Hill is strong. A coalition of over 60 community leaders representing diverse organizations was instrumental in blocking the last attempt to develop the site. This group hopes to see the area preserved as open space and opened to the public as soon as possible.

MRCA acquisition of the 5-acre site is a necessary prerequisite to applying for funding for later improvements. Sixteen parcels totaling five acres were appraised at \$495,000. An additional two parcels on Pullman Street may be acquired if funding for drainage improvements is awarded, subject to the City's agreement. This grant would include up to \$50,000 for minimal park improvements necessary to provide public access. This would also constitute a local match for potential grant funding opportunities. Due to these variables, the grant application to Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy is for an amount not to exceed \$636,500.