

Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: January 28, 2008

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

MRCA
Agenda Item V(c)
02-06-08

Subject: **Agenda Item 13: Consideration of resolution confirming agreement with Caltrans to acquire Director's Deed 1074-01-01 located at Franklin and Ivar Avenues and authorizing acquisition of said approximately one-acre property using Conservancy Fund and other public and private funding sources, Hollywood.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution confirming agreement with Caltrans to acquire Director's Deed 1074-01-01 located at Franklin and Ivar Avenues and authorizing acquisition of said approximately one-acre property using Conservancy Fund and other public and private funding sources, Hollywood..

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

Background: The subject approximately one acre property in Hollywood within the Conservancy Zone provides a unique opportunity to provide urban green space, wildlife habitat, groundwater recharge, and a site to clean storm water runoff. The property was brought to the attention of staff by concerned citizens who saw a better public purpose than auctioning the property off to real estate developers. For the past year Caltrans has been working with the 4th and 13th City Council District offices and the offices of Assemblymember Feuer and State Senator Ridley-Thomas to protect the property. Those entities were not successful in consummating an agreement with Caltrans. When the value of the Conservancy's first right of refusal for excess public lands was brought into the equation, all entities deferred to the Conservancy and the City wrote Caltrans to formally withdraw its interest.

Staff sent a letter to Caltrans at the end of October 2007 to exercise the Conservancy's first right of refusal. Caltrans responded with a letter dated November 29, 2007 offering to sell the property to the Conservancy for its original acquisition cost plus the cost of maintaining the property for 50 years. The acquisition price is \$162,100. The property was as about to be auctioned with another batch of surplus Caltrans parcels and was expected to fetch over \$850,000 at public auction. For this timing reason Caltrans extended a contract requiring a 10 percent down payment (\$16,210) by January 31, 2008 and the remainder by March 17, 2008. The Chief Deputy Director signed the contract on December 13th.

The proposed action would confirm the Conservancy's exercise of first refusal pursuant to Section 33207(b) of the Public Resources Code for the subject parcel, confirm the Conservancy's purchase and sale agreement for real property with Caltrans, authorize acquisition of the subject parcel, authorize the use of up to \$16,210 from the Conservancy Fund, and authorize the use of other funding sources to acquire the property. Business and community members are expected to contribute to the acquisition cost. The staff report for agenda item 14 elaborates more on the proposed total project funding.

The property is currently fenced. The site is maintained both by Caltrans and volunteers. The California Highway Patrol occasionally provides assistance. The property would continue to be maintained by volunteers but would have to be added to management agreements with the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority. Staff has made a preliminary overture to the non-profit Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust to jointly manage the site. Staff would develop a landscaping and access plan in coordination with the neighbor groups, the offices of elected officials, and Caltrans. The recent newspaper articles about Caltrans settling litigation about mitigating storm water runoff pollution from freeways into the Santa Monica Bay points to the value of the subject property for such purposes. Landscaping will be designed to maximize tree cover which in turn provides elevated habitat for numerous resident and migrant bird species. The site provides a great template to demonstrate how much biodiversity can be coaxed into a one acre parcel. There is currently Caltrans irrigation on the site.