

APPROVED  
JUN 15 2011

REPORT OF GENERAL MANAGER

NO. 11-186

DATE June 15, 2011

BOARD OF RECREATION  
and PARK COMMISSIONERS

C.D. 14

BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

SUBJECT: ALHAMBRA AVENUE AND CONCORD AVENUE - COMMUNITY GARDEN/OPEN SPACE - APPROVAL OF LEASE AGREEMENT WITH THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (CALTRANS)

R. Adams \_\_\_\_\_  
H. Fujita \_\_\_\_\_  
V. Israel \_\_\_\_\_

K. Regan \_\_\_\_\_  
\*M. Shull *M. Shull*  
N. Williams \_\_\_\_\_

*[Signature]*  
General Manager

Approved *[Signature]*

Disapproved \_\_\_\_\_

Withdrawn \_\_\_\_\_

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Board:

1. Approve a proposed twenty five-year Lease Agreement, substantially in the form on file in the Board Office, between the State of California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the City of Los Angeles (City) for the leasing of Caltrans property, located at the corner of Concord Avenue, Lowell Avenue, and Alhambra Road in El Sereno, to be developed and maintained as a community garden and/or open space, subject to the approval of the Mayor, and the City Attorney as to form;
2. Direct the Board Secretary to transmit the proposed Agreement to the Mayor in accordance with Executive Directive No. 3 and concurrently to the City Attorney for review and approval as to form;
3. Authorize the Board President and Secretary to execute the proposed Agreement upon receipt of the necessary approvals; and,
4. Authorize staff to draft and issue (if necessary) a temporary Right of Entry Permit to the designated/authorized non-profit until the proposed operation/maintenance/partnership agreements are executed.

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### SUMMARY:

The City of Los Angeles' Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP), Caltrans, Council Office Fourteen and the El Sereno Community have been in discussions over the possibility of leasing a property from Caltrans located at 5520 Concord Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90032 and more commonly described as the real property at the corner of Concord Avenue, Lowell Avenue and Alhambra Road. The proposed plan is to lease the vacant site and develop the site into a community garden or open space area that can be enjoyed by the surrounding community. All parties involved in the discussions of the vacant site agree that the site's use would better serve the community if it was developed into an open space area that could add to the recreational enjoyment of the community.

The area in question is a low income area that lacks open space area that kids and adults can enjoy. The leasing of the site would add much needed open space and help meet the request of both the community and council office for additional recreational open space in the area. Caltrans also agrees that the site would better serve the States' interest and community's interest if the site was maintained as an open space area that can be enjoyed by the community's children.

Also, it is hoped that this continued cooperation between RAP and Caltrans will lead to the development and use of this and other potential sites as additional open space sites for recreational uses in the area. If this is accomplished, this will help address the shortage of open space available for use by the community and at the same time prevent the vacant sites from becoming blighted, and crime ridden areas within the community of El Sereno. The addition of this site and others as open space would help meet both the Mayor's goal and RAP's goal of providing more recreational open space in areas of low income, and in areas that lack park space.

As the Partnership Program evolves and grows, the plan is for a non-profit to maintain the lease site through a partnership agreement at no cost to RAP or to Caltrans. In the meantime a Right of Entry Permit would be issued to the non-profit that would allow for the maintenance of the site. The Los Angeles Conservation Corps (LACC) has been proposed as a possible entity that could maintain the site for RAP based on its expertise in managing these types of sites. LACC has and does maintain other Caltrans sites for RAP, and its experience and efficiency has proven to be a successful relationship and partnership for RAP; and a benefit to the communities that are served by this arrangement.

The current operator of the El Sereno Community Garden is LACC. LACC develops and trains a local community person to manage and maintain the garden. This lead person organizes a gardening council that governs the site. Technical and general education about gardening, horticulture and related subject matters are provided at the site by LACC to the community. LACC is also very successful in providing opportunities and training for the youth of the community. LACC oversees and enforces all rules and regulations governing the use of the site and has worked effectively with other government agencies such as the United States Department of Agriculture in ensuring the

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garden is in compliance. The LACC assumes liability and responsibility for maintaining and operating the community garden at its own expense. Funding provided by LACC, facilitates the development and maintenance of the community garden site. This project has proven to be a great example of inter-agency cooperation, and has demonstrated the potential for similar successful partnerships between government agencies and non-profits. LACC is also capable of maintaining the area as open space recreational area as it does with a portion of the El Sereno Community Garden. It should be noted that it has been suggested that the property could be developed as a dog park. At this time, no decision has been made other than to keep the property as open space.

The proposed lease between the RAP and Caltrans is for a term of twenty-five (25) years. RAP will be required to pay an annual fee of one hundred dollars (\$100) for the use the Caltrans Property. The proposed Lease will also allow for the development of an open space recreation facility/park which the surrounding community has been requesting for several years. Caltrans approves and supports the proposed project development and agrees with the City's efforts to enhance the quality of life for the surrounding community. Caltrans has indicated its willingness and support for this project by offering a lease for twenty-five (25) years, with the City of Los Angeles for the operation and maintenance of open space or a community garden at the same site. The term of this agreement will also make it possible for the site to be eligible for additional grant funding to develop the site.

The community project site, which will be open to the public, will continue to enhance the quality of life, beautify the surrounding community, and instill a strong sense of pride in the community and its youth through the development of the site into a park recreation, and/or open space. The Office of Council District Fourteen, Caltrans, and RAP strongly support this project, and wish to continue these successful partnerships that are providing much needed green open space in a low income neighborhood. It is the intent of RAP and the Council Office of District 14 that the vacant site in El Sereno will be developed and maintained as a community garden or open space recreation area by a non-profit at no expense or liability to RAP or the City of Los Angeles. The leasing of this site offers RAP another option for increasing park space for an annual lease cost of \$100 to RAP.

Staff has determined that the project will consist of the issuance of a lease agreement to allow minor alterations to land, water and vegetation in the development of the community garden or open space. Therefore, the project is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Article III, Section 1, Class 4 (3, 7) of the City CEQA Guidelines.

As stated above, this Project has very strong support from the Councilmember for the Fourteenth District, the Community of El Sereno, as well as support from Caltrans and RAP staff.

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FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT:

All costs and any liabilities associated with this Lease will be incurred by the approved non-profit. The annual lease cost of \$100 will be paid from Planning, Construction and Maintenance Leasing Account, Fund 302 Department 88 Account 6030.

This report was prepared by John Barraza, Management Analyst II of Real Estate and Asset Management Division.