



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT CREEKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

AGENDA DATE: August 19, 2015

TO: Parks and Recreation Commission
Creeks Advisory Committee

FROM: Creeks Division, Parks and Recreation Department
Administration Division, Parks and Recreation Department

SUBJECT: Potential Acquisition Of Vacant Land Along Lower Arroyo Burro
(Former Veronica Meadows Development Site) – FOR ACTION

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission and Committee:

- A. Hear presentations from The Trust For Public Land (TPL) and City staff on the potential acquisition of vacant land along lower Arroyo Burro;
- B. Recommend that City Council appropriate up to \$2.7 million from the Creeks Fund Reserve to pay for a portion of the \$4 million purchase price; and
- C. Recommend that City Council accept title to the property from TPL for future creek restoration and open space park purposes.

DISCUSSION:

The Trust for Public Land (TPL), a non-profit land conservation organization, is working to acquire a 14.73 acre parcel of undeveloped land in the lower Arroyo Burro watershed. The subject property was the site of the proposed "Veronica Meadows" development project. TPL is planning to purchase the parcel and turn it over to the City for creek restoration and open space park purposes. TPL provided a report to the City Council on the status of the acquisition on April 7, 2015.

The property includes valuable and environmentally sensitive riparian, aquatic and avian habitat, and acquisition offers a significant opportunity for creek restoration and water quality improvement as well as public open space. The property, which includes approximately 1,600 linear feet of creek frontage on lower Arroyo Burro, fits very well into City and County efforts to protect open space and natural resources in the Las Positas Valley and the Arroyo Burro watershed. It is directly adjacent to a six-acre open space parcel owned by the City, across from Elings Park, and just upstream of

the Arroyo Burro Estuary restoration project, Douglas Family Preserve, Arroyo Burro County Beach Park, and the Watershed Resource Center.

BUDGET/FINANCIAL INFORMATION:

In 2014, TPL hired an independent appraiser to determine the fair market value of the property. The appraisal determined the value to be \$4 million, and TPL entered into an option agreement to purchase the property for that price by the end of 2015.

TPL thoroughly explored all potential opportunities for grant funding to raise funds for the purchase. TPL received grant awards from the California Coastal Conservancy (\$500,000), the California Natural Resources Agency (\$500,000), and Santa Barbara County's Coastal Resource Enhancement Fund (\$300,000). The total grants awarded for the acquisition equal \$1.3 million.

TPL still needs \$2.7 million to close the funding gap. In the past, Measure B Reserve funds have been used to acquire key creekside properties. This property's location, connectivity to other publicly owned open space parcels, and opportunity for significant restoration and water quality improvement, are unique within the City of Santa Barbara. Acquisition of this property is consistent with the Measure B Funding Guidelines and there are sufficient Measure B Reserve funds available to purchase the property.

PREPARED BY: Cameron Benson, Creek Restoration/Clean Water Manager

APPROVED BY: Jill E. Zachary, Acting Parks and Recreation Director