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July 24, 2023

Honorable Eunisses Hernandez, Chair
Neighborhoods and Community Enrichment Committee
City Clerk, Room 395, City Hall
Attention: Eric Villanueva, Legislative Assistant

**RESPONSE TO COUNCIL FILE 23-0129 RELATIVE TO STRATEGIES TO PRESERVE
SENDEROS CANYON**

Background:

On February 17, 2023, Council adopted a motion directing the Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP) to report on available strategies to preserve Senderos Canyon and to work with the City Administrative Officer (CAO) to identify various options to fund the purchase of the property, including potential County, State, and Federal funding sources.

RAP has successfully acquired large parcels of undeveloped land for the purposes of preserving wildlife, open space, and recreational uses. Although every transaction will have its nuances, the overall strategy to acquire the sites are similar.

1. Mandeville Canyon Property – This 234-acre site was acquired in 2001 as a collaborative effort between RAP, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC), and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA). The ownership of the site was split on a pro-rata share based on the funds invested by each party, with the City's portion being approximately 140 acres. Funding from the City consisted of Proposition K, County Proposition A-II funds, and bond matching funds from the MRCA. Rap subsequently entered into an agreement with MRCA for the purposes of maintenance on the site.
2. Cahuenga Peak Property – This 138-acre property was acquired in 2010, also as a collaborative effort between RAP, MRCA, and SMMC. Funding consisted of Proposition K, Quimby, and other state and county funding. Private donations also provided approximately 50% of the acquisition costs. The Trust for Public Lands (TPL), a non-profit organization, acted as the buying agent to acquire the park and ultimately convey the site to RAP.



Analysis/Findings

As demonstrated in the examples above, RAP has participated in and successfully acquired several large parcels for the purposes of preserving open space for wildlife or recreational purposes. Although these previous transactions utilized varying funding sources, the overall approach was the same. The City partnered with state, county, and local agencies to strategize, finance, and implement the acquisition efforts. It should be noted that these collaborative efforts originated with the state agencies as they are a major source of funding and dedicated to the acquisition, preservation, and protection of large open spaces. Their participation is critical to assess and determine the value such an acquisition may provide. These agencies have a much better understanding of the Senderos Canyon as well as the experience and capacity to operate and maintain such an expansive site. The SMMC is aware of the site as evidenced by Resolution No. 22-07 adopted on February 27, 2023 "Recognizing the significant natural resource values of HOAG Canyon in the Eastern Santa Monica Mountains". The Resolution made numerous findings, including 1) the City's action on February 17, 2023 is consistent with the Santa Monica Mountain Comprehensive Plan and 2) the proposed actions are consistent with the SMMCs Strategic Objectives.

Recommendations

If Council desires to further the efforts to acquire the Senderos Canyon property, RAP recommends that discussions begin at the between the City and the SMMC on a potential partnership. As noted above, agencies such as the SMMC and MRCA will have the experience, knowledge, and financial capabilities that the City does not. If the state demonstrates their interest in partnering with the City and moving forward with the acquisition, RAP will work with the CAO to explore potential partnerships and funding sources, including the County of Los Angeles. RAP will also engage with the state on a partnership agreement to lay out the ground work for the acquisition as well as the operation and maintenance of the site.

Sincerely,



JIMMY KIM

General Manager

CC: Councilmember Heather Hutt, Council District 10
Councilmember John Lee, Council District 12
Councilmember Katy Young Yaroslavsky, Council District 5