

APPROVED
JUL 09 2008

REPORT OF GENERAL MANAGER

NO. 08-208

DATE July 9, 2008

**BOARD OF RECREATION
and PARK COMMISSIONERS**

C.D. 12

BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

SUBJECT: OAKRIDGE RESIDENCE - AUTHORIZATION TO ACQUIRE PROPERTY AT
18650 DEVONSHIRE STREET AND ALLOCATION OF
SUBDIVISION/QUIMBY FEES

R. Adams _____	J. Kolb _____
V. Israel _____	F. Mok _____
H. Fujita _____	K. Regan _____
S. Huntley _____	*M. Shull <u>SEE FOR M. SHULL</u>

[Signature]
General Manager

Approved _____

Disapproved _____

Withdrawn _____

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board:

1. Adopt the draft Resolution, substantially in the form on file in the Board Office, authorizing staff to seek assistance from the Department of General Services and other City entities with negotiations and related activity in order to acquire rectangular property totaling nearly two acres and having the address of 18650 Devonshire Street (Lot 29, a portion of APN 2729-011-002);
2. Authorize the Department's Chief Accounting Employee to establish a new Zone Change/Park Fees Account No. 460K-OA with "Oakridge Residence" as the Account Name;
3. Authorize the Department's Chief Accounting Employee to transfer \$1,514 in Subdivision/Quimby Fees collected in Fiscal Year (FY) 2003-2004 from Mason Recreation Center Account No. 460K-MA to the new Oakridge Residence Account No. 460K-OA;
4. Authorize the Department's Chief Accounting Employee to transfer \$39,914.41 in Subdivision/Quimby Fees collected in FY 2003-2004 from Vanalden Park Account No. 460K-VG to the new Oakridge Residence Account No. 460K-OA;

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5. Authorize the Department's Chief Accounting Employee to transfer \$10,218 in Subdivision/Quimby Fees collected in FY 2003-2004 from Northridge Recreation Center Account No. 460K-NT to the new Oakridge Residence Account No. 460K-OA;
6. Authorize the Department's Chief Accounting Employee to transfer the following sums in Subdivision/Quimby fees from Subdivision/Quimby Fees Account No. 460K-00 to the Oakridge Residence Account No. 460K-OA: \$338,379 collected in FY 2004-2005, \$1,030,103 collected in FY 2005-2006 and \$829,871.59 collected in FY 2006-2007;
7. Approve the allocation of \$2,250,000 in Subdivision/Quimby Fees from Oakridge Residence Account No. 460K-OA for the acquisition of the property at 18650 Devonshire and thereafter, for certain urgent, immediate repairs, for clean-up of the grounds and the installation of security equipment;
8. Direct the Board Secretary, upon the successful close of escrow, to accept the grant deed for Lot 29, which is to be set apart and dedicated as park property in perpetuity;
9. Request the assistance of other City entities in order to have a separate parcel created from Lot 29 of Vesting Tentative Tract 61332;
10. Authorize staff to hire a consultant to recommend a site treatment and management plan in keeping with its designation as a City Historic-Cultural Monument and its anticipated, future public use; and,
11. Authorize staff to seek funding opportunities and the assistance of the Bureau of Engineering in order to refurbish the residence and grounds to improve their usefulness to the community.

SUMMARY:

Since the spring of 2006, the Office of Council District Twelve has been in contact with the private developers who own 9.47 acres in the Northridge area west of the intersection of Devonshire Street and Reseda Boulevard and east of Wilbur Creek or Wash. The current owner, Trimark Pacific Homes, L.P., intends to build residences on a 28-lot subdivision (Vesting Tentative Tract 61332); the Council Office proposes that the City acquire for recreation and park purposes an adjacent 29th lot within this tract. The Thomas Guide (2007) reference is on page 500-H4.

The entire site had been owned by "Jack Oakie", born Lewis Delaney Offield. "Jack" was the name of his first stage character; the last name references his youth in Oklahoma. In the early 1920s, he appeared in New York musicals, comedies and vaudeville shows. After moving to southern California, he acted in over 80 films, mostly in the 1930s-40s. His most famous role was the character "Benzino Napaloni", a parody of the Italian fascist dictator Benito Mussolini, in Charlie

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Chaplain's 1940 film, "The Great Dictator".

At that time, semi-rural Northridge and the surrounding area were popular with stage and screen stars, producers, etc., who developed enclaves and ranches. One of these was the nine-acre site off Devonshire, on which an English manor-styled residence was built in 1937 for the film actress, Barbara Stanwyck. It had reportedly been designed by the local and highly regarded African-American architect, Paul R. Williams. Jack Oakie acquired the property circa 1940 and lived there until his death in 1978. By then, Northridge was becoming urbanized. In 1990, in recognition that the nine-acre site was one of the last of the area's landmarks, Jack Oakie's widow, Victoria, sought to have the house and grounds designated a City Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM). The site, called Oakridge, became HCM No. 484 (Council File No. 90-0029). Victoria died in 2003, and soon afterward the entire nine acres were bought for private development.

Lot 29 totals 1.95 acres consisting of a large, gently sloped knoll and the Oakridge Residence, sometimes called the "Oakie House". The two-story structure is nearly 6,000 square feet. The exterior walls are faced with field stone and stucco with some half-timbering detail. There are two patios and four fireplaces. Some of the interior, plastered walls have wooden wainscoting/molding and hand-painted murals; the den has redwood paneling. The grounds have a three-car garage, flagstone walks, mature trees and a swimming pool bordered with flagstones.

In October 2007, a Class "A" appraisal valued the lot and residence at \$1.15 million. In February 2008, a Class "C" estimate prepared by General Services gave \$1.6 million as the valuation. Because of the City's proposed acquisition of the lot, the Council Office agreed to the City's undertaking the improvements to the Devonshire Street frontage that had been a condition of the Tract's preliminary approval. The street and curb improvements are part of a larger Public Works project (Council File No. 06-0676 and S1); after factoring in the street-improvement credits, the agreed upon purchase price is \$1.15 million. Escrow and title fees are estimated to be less than \$25,000.

Upon adoption of the Resolution, Subdivision/Quimby fees totaling \$2,250,000 can be transferred to the new Oakridge Residence Account No. 460K-OA, to be available for the acquisition of Lot 29 and for certain repair and maintenance activity considered necessary by Department operations staff.

The funding sources are as follows: \$1,514 collected in Fiscal Year 2003-04 from Mason Recreation Center Account No. 460K-MA, \$39,914.41 collected in Fiscal Year 2003-04 from Vanalden Park Account No. 460K-VG, \$10,218 collected in FY 2003-04 from Northridge Recreation Center Account No. 460K-NT and three sums available in Subdivision/Quimby Fees Account No. 460K-00: \$338,379 collected in Fiscal Year 2004-05, \$1,030,103 collected in Fiscal Year 2005-06 and \$829,871.59 collected in Fiscal Year 2006-07. All of the fees were collected within two miles of the Oakridge Residence, which is the standard distance for their allocation for a community recreational facility. Based on a community meeting held June 16, 2008, staff anticipates that the site's history and special features will attract visitors from outside the immediate

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neighborhood, thus leading to the designation as a community park as defined by the Public Recreation Plan.

If the proposed acquisition is completed, staff will investigate the potential for grant funding for refurbishing the house and landscaping the grounds. The projects will be made more complex by the site's historic designation, hence the recommendation to hire a consultant specializing in this type of property. In the meantime, staff will consider how best to make the grounds suitable for passive recreational use. Staff will also investigate renting out the grounds for weddings and other celebrations, which occur at the Department's Orcutt Ranch Horticultural Center in Canoga Park; this site also has HCM status. By filling in the Oakridge swimming pool and topping it with flagstones to match those on the pool's perimeter, there would be a deck in the back yard for use in such celebrations, and the pool itself would not pose a public hazard.

A Phase I assessment conducted January 2007 determined that the site had no recognized environmental conditions. The report did disclose a small abandoned, underground fuel storage tank that had been installed for the benefit of the long-time private owners. It will need to be closed out in accordance with City Fire Department regulations. In 2002, a limited assessment disclosed that the residence has asbestos-containing material and lead-based paint. Abatement procedures will be implemented on the occasion of refurbishing the structure for public use. Environmental staff do not think that these conditions form an impediment to the City's acquiring the property.

Staff propose that this designated HCM be acquired for public park purposes in order to ensure its long-term preservation. Therefore, the project is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Article III, Section 1, Class 16 (2) of the City CEQA Guidelines.

The Assistant General Manager of Operations West, the Superintendent of the Valley Region and the Office of Council District Twelve concur with staff's recommendations.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT:

Valley Region staff estimate that if acquired by the City, the extensively overgrown site will need to be cleaned up with dead tree limbs removed; the estimated cost of this work is \$100,000. The main water line from the meter to the house needs repairing at a cost of \$10,000. Immediate repairs to the gabled, cedar-shake roof and dormers are also estimated at \$10,000. Thereafter, annual upkeep of the grounds will cost approximately \$12,000. These sums will be requested in the next budget cycle. The house is unoccupied, so there will be no relocation costs.

This report was prepared by Joan Reitzel, Senior Management Analyst in Real Estate and Asset Management, Planning and Development Division.