

REPORT OF GENERAL MANAGER

APPROVED
MAY 16 2012

NO. 12-148

DATE May 16, 2012

**BOARD OF RECREATION
& PARK COMMISSIONERS**

C.D. 9

BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

SUBJECT: 61ST STREET POCKET PARK – 139 AND 141 EAST 61ST STREET – INITIAL STUDY/NEGATIVE DECLARATION, ACCEPTANCE OF DONATION PARCEL, AND DEVELOPMENT OF PROJECT

R. Adams	_____	K. Regan	_____
H. Fujita	_____	*M. Shull	<u><i>MS</i></u>
V. Israel	_____	N. Williams	_____

[Signature]
General Manager

Approved _____ Disapproved _____ Withdrawn _____

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Board:

1. Review, consider, and adopt the Initial Study (IS) and Negative Declaration (ND), for 61st Street Pocket Park located at 139 and 141 East 61st Street, Los Angeles, California 90003, on file in the Board Office, finding that on the basis of the whole record of proceedings in the project, including any comments received and incorporated into the Initial Study/Negative Declaration (IS/ND), that there is no substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment, and that all potentially significant environmental effects of the project have been properly disclosed and evaluated in the IS/ND in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the State and City CEQA Guidelines and reflects the independent judgment and analysis of RAP;
2. Direct staff to file a Notice of Determination for the adopted IS/ND with the Los Angeles City Clerk and the Los Angeles County Clerk within five (5) days of the Board's approval;

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3. Adopt a Resolution, substantially in the form on file in the Board Office, authorizing staff to request the assistance from the Department of General Services (GSD) and other entities, and per Charter Section 594(a) and (b), to accept a parcel donation from the Restore Neighborhoods LA, Inc. (RNLA) via Grant Deed to a 0.12 acre or 5,227.2 square foot parcel (Assessor Parcel Number (APN) 6006-007-024), located at 139 and 141 East 61st Street, Los Angeles, California 90003, between Main Street to the west and Wall Street to the east, in the Southeast Los Angeles Community Plan Area (Exhibit A - Aerial Map);
4. Upon the completion of the preliminary acquisition activities, and satisfactory findings of all due diligence work including Title review, and Phase I and any necessary environmental investigations, direct staff to proceed with escrow instructions and related documents to acquire the donation property;
5. Acknowledge the Los Angeles Housing Department's (LAHD), RNLA's, and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) roles as facilitators on this donation;
6. Authorize the Board Secretary to execute the escrow instructions and accept the Grant Deed for the parcel identified by APN 6006-007-024 , subject to the review and approval of the City Attorney as to form, which property shall be set apart and dedicated as park property in perpetuity;
7. Authorize the General Manager or his designee to review and approve the development and construction design plans for the development of the donation parcel, located at 139 and 141 East 61st Street, Los Angeles, California 90003, upon the recommendation for approval from RAP's Planning, Construction and Maintenance (PC&M) Division, provided they are consistent with the general design elements as described in the summary of this Report and depicted in Exhibit "C" conditionally approved by this Board Report action and with all land use permits and entitlements necessary for the project;
8. Authorize the Department's Chief Accounting Employee to make technical corrections as necessary, to establish the necessary accounts to acquire the project site, and to accept and/or authorize transfer of the necessary monies to fund the acquisition to the appropriate City Department accounts or escrow company account in order to expeditiously complete the acquisition of the property, located at 139 and 141 East 61st Street, Los Angeles, California 90003;

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9. Authorize the Department's Chief Accounting Employee to transfer the necessary funds from the designated account for the development of the 61st Street Pocket Park; and,
10. Approve the allocation of necessary funds for the 61st Street Pocket Park – Park Acquisition and Development project, as described in the Summary of this Report.

SUMMARY:

50 Parks Initiative

RAP is proceeding with its coordinated long-term plan to meet the recreation needs of current and future residents of the City of Los Angeles (CITY), and at the same time meet the goals of the “The 50 Parks Initiative.” The primary goal of the initiative is to increase the number of parks and facilities across the City of Los Angeles (CITY) with a specific focus on densely populated neighborhoods and communities that lack sufficient open space and recreational services.

The development of 50 new public parks will provide innumerable physical, social, health, and environmental benefits for local communities. These new parks will help stabilize neighborhoods and property values by providing needed public infrastructure improvements, removing blight caused by abandoned buildings and empty lots, and beautifying underutilized public property.

The keys to the successful implementation of The Fifty Parks Initiative are (1) the establishment of local partnerships, (2) the use of a community driven design process, and (3) the strict use of low maintenance design standards.

LAHD/RNLA Park Donations

The ongoing cooperation with LAHD, through RNLA using HUD Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) funds, will enable RAP to acquire several properties that will be developed into parks. The parcel located at 139 and 141 East 61st Street, Los Angeles, California 90003, is the fifth project site that RAP will acquire from RNLA to develop into a park. There is a total of nine parcels that RNLA/LAHD plans to donate to RAP.

NSP was established to stabilize communities that have suffered from foreclosures and abandonment. NSP funds have been allocated to LAHD by HUD. In 2009, LAHD initiated the NSP with HUD grant funds to acquire and rehabilitate foreclosed or abandoned residential properties, or to develop new community parks and/or open spaces, in order to stabilize neighborhoods in the CITY. LAHD or its grant sub-recipient will continue to acquire dilapidated or foreclosed homes to stem the decline of home values.

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RNLA is focusing its efforts in the neighborhoods identified with the highest foreclosures. These neighborhoods include Central, East and South Los Angeles and North and South San Fernando Valley. RAP will benefit from the NSP program through the RNLA property donations by developing new pocket parks and/or open space uses on selected properties acquired by LAHD or its grant sub-recipient, RNLA. These selected sites are located in the San Fernando Valley and in South Los Angeles. RNLA will donate designated sites to RAP for the purpose of developing pocket parks.

Donation Parcel

As part of the effort to increase parks in the CITY, RNLA will donate to RAP the property located at 139 and 141 East 61st Street, Los Angeles, California 90003. The donation parcel is identified by APN: 6006-007-024 (Exhibit B). An independent appraisal of the 139 and 141 East 61st Street parcel was performed. As of October 19, 2009, the "AS IS" appraisal value was \$155,000. There will be no cost to RAP for the donation parcel itself; however, RAP will incur closing escrow costs.

The donation of this parcel will result in the conveyance of Real Property to the City of Los Angeles, under the control and jurisdiction of RAP, to be dedicated as park property in perpetuity. The subject parcel is in the south part of Los Angeles and will be acquired for the purpose of developing a pocket park for the community. The surrounding area is a blighted low income area that lacks parks, and would tremendously benefit from the additional park space in the area. This acquisition will also help stabilize the area from the economic downturn and the foreclosure crisis. The property consists of an unoccupied single family residence, which will be demolished for the development of the park. Based on Los Angeles County Assessor Property Information, said parcel is approximately a 0.12 acre or 5,227.2 square feet parcel.

The dedication/addition of this parcel to RAP's park inventory will allow for an increase in recreational activities in the area. The goal is for RAP to acquire this prospective parcel and develop it into a pocket park as part of the City's Fifty Parks Initiative. Council District (CD) 9 has expressed its strong support for this park dedication.

Development of Acquisition Parcel

RAP has prepared plans to develop the site into a pocket park. The existing single family residence will be demolished by RNLA, and in its place the following design elements are to be included in the development of this donation parcel/future park site: landscaping, (including water-saving smart irrigation system, planting, fencing, gate, hardscape, walkways), site furnishings including drinking fountain, equipment for playing and/or exercising and benches,

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with appropriate surface under equipment - decomposed granite or resilient surfacing (See Exhibit C). RAP is requesting approval of this development project as part of this acquisition.

Acquisition Cost and Funding

RAP will not incur a cost for the donation/acquisition of this parcel, but it will incur closing escrow costs as part of the proposed donation. RAP will use PC&M Division's Budgeted Accounts to pay for acquisition related costs and escrow closing costs. Escrow costs will be paid from Fund 302, Department 88, Account No. 003040. The escrow costs are not available at this time, but it is estimated that the costs will not exceed \$6,000. RAP will also incur development costs, which will be paid through awarded grant funds.

Acceptance of Donation Parcel and Approval of Development

RAP staff is requesting that the Board authorize the acceptance of approximately 0.12 acre or 5,227.2 square feet parcel of land that will be dedicated as park property in perpetuity and to be developed into a future new park. RAP staff has determined that the park development costs are estimated to be approximately \$265,808 which incorporates the design elements/improvements presented as part of this report. RNLA will complete the demolition of the existing home at no cost to RAP. All other development work for the proposed park development will be performed by in-house RAP staff.

This acquisition is a rare opportunity to continue the progress in acquiring urban parkland in the southern portion of Los Angeles which LAHD, RNLA and RAP continue to work together on. The acquisition will add to the open space in the area and bring more recreational opportunities to the entire City through expanded availability of recreational activities and facilities. GSD will review title and other related documents as part of its due diligence as the agent for RAP and will ensure that City receives the property for the City and conveys jurisdiction to RAP. Upon acceptance, said property will be set apart and dedicated as park property in perpetuity.

In accordance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), a Negative Declaration (ND) was prepared based on an Initial Study, which determined that all potentially significant environmental effects would be less than significant. The ND was circulated to all interested parties and responsible agencies, for a 20-day review and comment period from March 1 to March 20, 2012. No substantive comments were received on environmental issues. However, all comments have been incorporated into the final ND, copies of which have been provided to the Board for its review and consideration, and are on file in the Board Office.

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Two community meetings were held for this project and the majority of those who attended supported the project. This project also has the support from CD 9. In addition, the Assistant General Manager of Operations Branch and the Superintendent for the Metro Region have been consulted and concur with staff's recommendations.

Park Development Costs and Funding

RAP has estimated that the development of the proposed donation site into a park will cost RAP \$265,808. On August 3, 2011, the Department of Recreation and Parks Board of Commissioners (Board) approved Board Report No. 11-227 as it related to submittal of a Housing-Related Parks (HRP) Program grant application to fund RAP's park and recreation projects indentified by RAP's PC&M Division. On August 30, 2011, Los Angeles City Council (Council) (Council File #11-1378) adopted the recommendations to approve the Department of Housing and Community Development's HRP grant submittal and to take the necessary steps to complete the proposed projects.

RAP submitted the HRP grant application in July 2011 and, in January 2012 received notification of the award of \$1,594,850 to fund the development of six neighborhood pocket parks identified below:

- | | | |
|----|--|------|
| 1. | 139 and 141 East 61 st Street, Los Angeles 90003, | CD 9 |
| 2. | 609 West 105 th Street, Los Angeles 90044, | CD 8 |
| 3. | 4600 South Orchard Avenue, Los Angeles 90037, | CD 9 |
| 4. | 833 West 76 th Street, Los Angeles 90044, | CD 8 |
| 5. | 554 West 97 th Street, Los Angeles 90044, | CD 8 |
| 6. | 8620 Wall Street, Los Angeles 90003, | CD 9 |

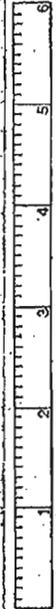
Funding for the development of 139 and 141 East 61st Street, Los Angeles, California 90003 will come from a portion of the HRP Program grant fund that was awarded to RAP.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT:

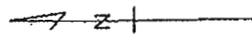
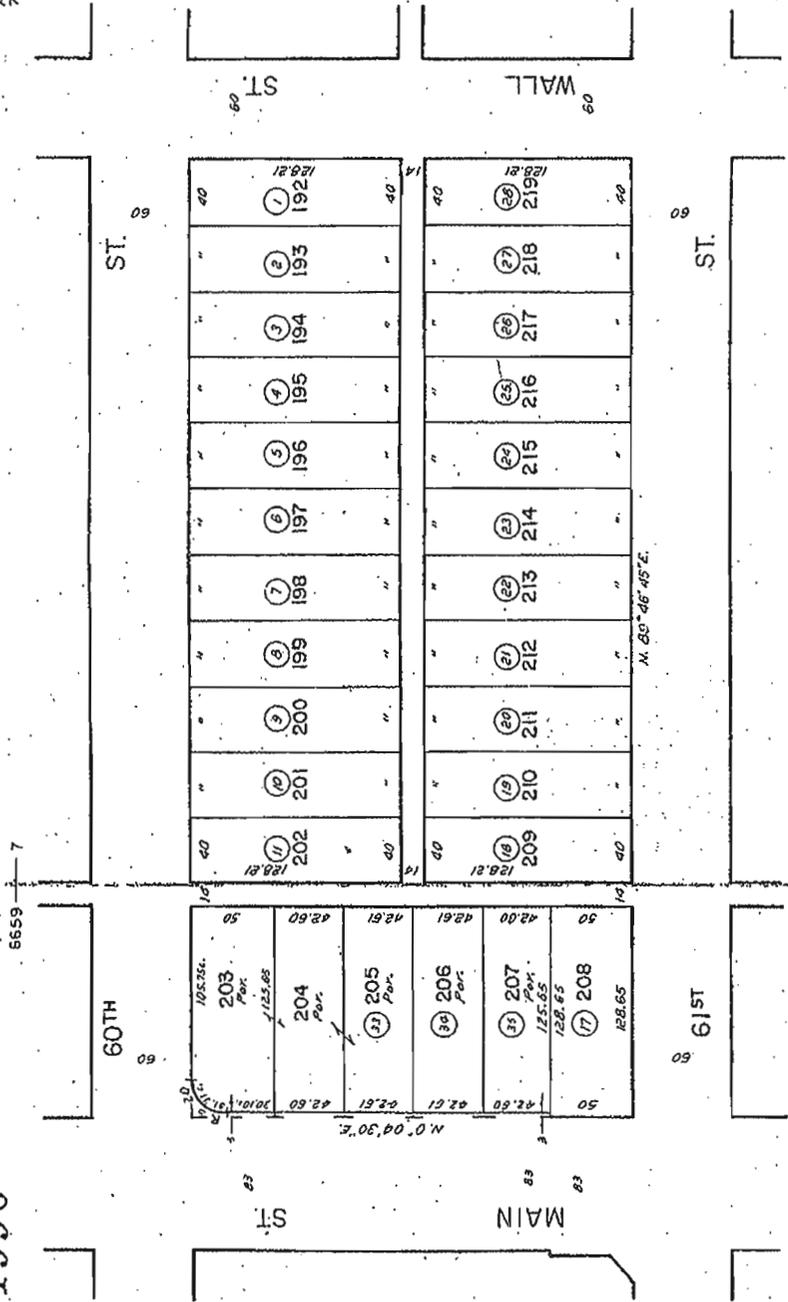
The costs identified below will impact RAP's General Fund which will be paid from PC&M Division's Budgeted Accounts. There is an approximate cost of up to \$6,000 in closing escrow costs. Escrow and related acquisition costs will be paid from Fund 302, Department 88, Account No. 003040.

6006 7 1996
SCALE 1" = 60'

SCALE IN 1/10 OF AN INCH



REVISED
11-15-54
4-30-62
7-7-65
7-10-23-28
8-21-51-84
3-22-71



METTLER'S MAIN ST.
SOUTH PARK TRACT

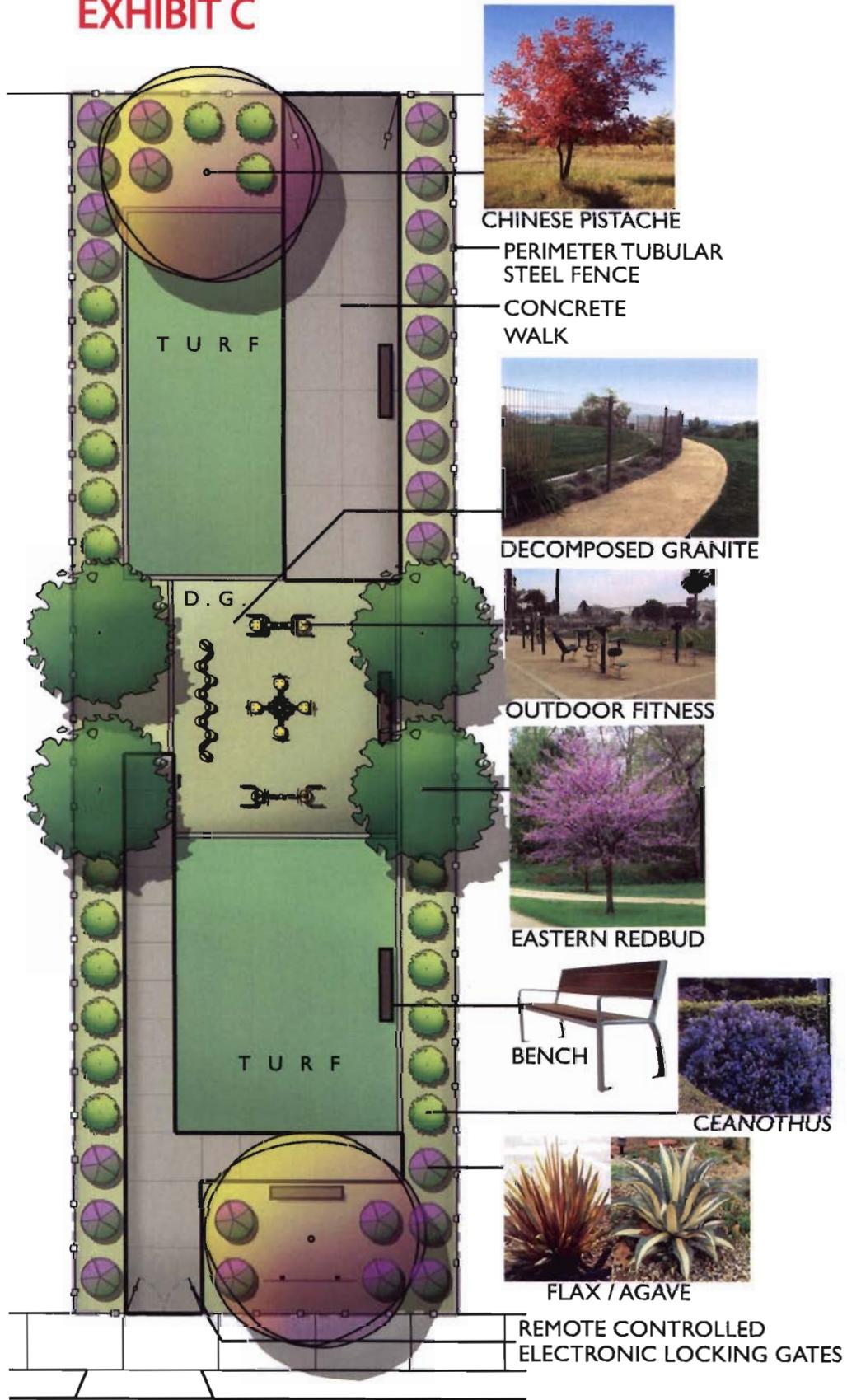
M. B. 8-194

CODE
7
6659

FOR PREV. ASSMT. SEE: 252-19

MAR 2 5 1996
ASSESSOR'S MAP
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, CALIF.

EXHIBIT C



139 & 141 E. 61st STREET
 DEPARTMENT of RECREATION & PARKS
 COUNCIL DISTRICT 9

