

APPROVED
AUG 09 2006

REPORT OF GENERAL MANAGER

NO. 06-244

DATE August 9, 2006

**BOARD OF RECREATION
and PARK COMMISSIONERS**

C.D. 2

BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

SUBJECT: VERDUGO MOUNTAIN PARK – SECOND EXPANSION: PRELIMINARY AUTHORIZATION TO ACQUIRE PROPERTY AT 9999 EDMORE PLACE (TERMINUS OF EDMORE PLACE AND ROSCOE BOULEVARD)

J. Combs _____
H. Fujita _____
S. Huntley _____
B. Jensen _____

J. Kolb _____
F. Mok _____
K. Regan _____
*M. Shull _____

CM for M.S.

Robert H. Jensen (for)
General Manager

Approved _____

Disapproved _____

Withdrawn _____

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board:

1. Preliminarily approve the acquisition of 80.58 acres of privately owned, vacant property located 9999 Edmore Place, at the terminus of Edmore Place and Roscoe Boulevard in the community of Sun Valley-La Tuna Canyon (APN 2403-001-003), for the purpose of preserving open space; and,
2. Authorize staff to assist the Department of General Services with negotiations with the property owner and other related activity needed for the purchase of said property; and,
3. Direct staff to return to the Board for final authorization to acquire said property.

SUMMARY:

Verdugo Mountain Park provides for passive recreation and the preservation of vegetative and wildlife habitats. In May 2005, the Department acquired 145 acres of vacant, privately owned land that enlarged the narrow northern connection between the two halves of the park. If current negotiations are successful for the acquisition of an additional 80.58 acres, this second expansion will extend the City's acreage to the west so that it will become the City's sixth largest park, totaling 565.58 acres. This second parcel is surrounded on three sides by undeveloped land and on the south by the undeveloped terminus of Edmore Place and the terminus of Roscoe Boulevard, which has single-family homes. The parcel has the address, given by the City Planning Department, of 9999

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Edmore Place. The reference to the Thomas Brothers Guide is page 533-C 1, 2. The proposed acquisition and the existing Verdugo Mountain Park are south of La Tuna Canyon Road and east of both Glenoaks Boulevard and the Golden State (5) Freeway.

The Verdugo Mountains, covering 14 square miles in the upper watershed of the Los Angeles River, are tenuously connected to the Angeles National Forest via Big Tujunga Wash. The Mountains were designated a "Significant Ecological Area" by Los Angeles County because of the natural springs and coast live oaks, sycamores, big-leaf maples, bay laurels and other indigenous trees. The Mountains also provide large, contiguous access and migration corridors for regional wildlife.

The topography of Verdugo Mountain Park, including the proposed second expansion, consists of hillsides and canyons, many having prominent ridgelines and vistas. The second expansion will enable staff to provide new park access to adjacent communities, to develop or enhance hiking and equestrian trails and later perhaps create interpretive or outdoor "classrooms". These amenities will enhance the park as a regional attraction. Staff can also study strategies for managing and reducing stormwater runoff. The proposed acquisition will enable the City to participate further in a multi-agency effort to preserve strategic parts of the Verdugo Mountains as urban-adjacent open space. Other nearby cities are involved with acquisition and preservation efforts, as are local environmental groups, the state and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. This informal consortium has already acquired 244 acres and created the Verdugo Mountains Open Space Preserve, which is not far from the City's Verdugo Mountain Park.

The Office of Council District Two supports the City entering into negotiations with the property owner, who is willing to sell to the City. A Phase I site assessment was completed in September 2005 as part of the application for the fifth competitive cycle of the Proposition K grant program. The Phase I report made no recommendation for further study, so there is no environmental impediment to the acquisition. Environmental staff determined that the acquisition and anticipated use as a natural park are exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Article III, Class 16, Section 1 (p) of the City CEQA Guidelines.

The Assistant General Manager of Operations West and the Superintendent of Valley Region concur with staff's recommendations.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT:

Since this is only preliminary approval of the acquisition, the final purchase price, including closing costs, will depend upon the outcome of negotiations with the owner of the property. If the property is acquired, the Department would be responsible for ongoing maintenance costs, which are not known at this time.

Report prepared by Joan Reitzel, Senior Management Analyst in Real Estate and Asset Management.

