

APPROVED
MAY 20 2009

REPORT OF GENERAL MANAGER

NO. 09-125

DATE May 20, 2009

BOARD OF RECREATION
and PARK COMMISSIONERS

C.D. 11

BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

SUBJECT: 3503 VIA DOLCE - TRANSFER OF JURISDICTION AND CONCEPTUAL SITE DEVELOPMENT

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

[Signature]
General Manager

Approved _____ Disapproved _____ Withdrawn _____

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board:

1. Adopt the Resolution, substantially in the form on file in the Board Office, authorizing staff, per Charter Section 594 (a) and (b), to request the assistance of the Department of General Services to complete a non-financial transfer of jurisdiction of a vacant, City-owned parcel of 0.14 acre with the address of 3503 Via Dolce;
2. Authorize the Chief Accounting Employee to cash flow up to \$5,000 from Fund 205, Dept. 88, Account 901H (RAP Pre-Development Costs) for the Phase I site assessment, that sum to be transferred to another account, TBD, within Fund 205, Dept. 88, and to be reimbursed from the Venice Area Surplus Real Property Fund, Fund 434, Dept. 50, Account S214 "Grand Canal Rehabilitation";
3. Declare that upon completion of the jurisdictional transfer, the site is to be set apart and dedicated as park property in perpetuity;
4. Direct staff to request that Public Works personnel involved with the restoration of the Grand Canal identify a source of the approximately \$30,000 needed to construct a perimeter fence with gate in order to secure the site, pending plans for future development; and,
5. Direct staff to request that these personnel keep the Department informed about plans, time frames and funding for the restoration project.

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SUMMARY:

The Office of Council District Eleven has requested that the Department accept a non-financial transfer of jurisdiction of a vacant Venice parcel of 0.14 acre south of Washington Boulevard and next to the eastern bank of the Grand Canal. Directly across the canal on the west is the intersection of Driftwood Street and Strongs Drive; to the north is a facility of the Los Angeles County Housing Authority. The parcel's address is 3503 Via Dolce, and the Assessor Parcel Number is 4225-013-901. The property was listed in the 2004 Citywide list of potentially surplus property compiled by the Department of General Services. On February 24, 2009, the City Council adopted a motion, subsequently approved by the Mayor that seeks completion of the transfer and allocates funds for an environmental site assessment (Council File No. 07-0439-S1).

The Council Office wants the parcel to become part of the Grand Canal Restoration Project. The canal is two blocks from the beach, a third of a mile long and 50-75 feet wide. It is the westernmost of the six canals remaining from Abbot Kinney's amusement park, "Venice of America", which opened in 1905. All the canals except the southern half of the Grand Canal form a rectangle between Venice and Washington Boulevards. This other half of the Grand Canal extends south of Washington Boulevard and merges with the Ballona Lagoon Marine Preserve, a 16-acre saltwater estuary that connects to the Marina del Rey Entrance Channel and the ocean. The entire area was historically the northern end of a large marsh and lagoon ecosystem created by the confluence of four regional waterways.

During the 1990s, the City refurbished the canals north of Washington Boulevard at a cost of \$6 million. One aim was to improve tidal flushing. Another was to restore the surrounding banks in order to reduce erosion and increase public access to walkways and pedestrian bridges.

The recently proposed restoration of the Grand Canal involves the southern segment that was not part of the earlier project. In January 2008, the firm of Psomas prepared a predesign or concept report for the Bureau of Engineering. The report includes the results of community outreach and outlines two scenarios with respective "pros" and "cons". Total estimated costs range from \$5.5 to \$7 million. Some of the proposed work extends the earlier canal improvements to the new site. Additional work includes designing areas to be set aside for nature study and more extensive strategies for stormwater management and habitat improvement to complement the ongoing restoration of the Marine Preserve to the south.

The concept report cites the potential for the vacant parcel on Via Dolce to become a "gateway" park since it is at the midpoint of the restoration project. As such, the park might have interpretive signage about the project and local wetlands together with a footbridge to facilitate access to the walkways along the canal banks.

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Draft results of a Phase I environmental assessment disclosed no recognized environmental concern with respect to the Via Dolce site. There is no environmental impediment to the Department's acquiring the property for public recreational use. Future site development will need to take into account its location within a Methane Zone as designated by the City of Los Angeles, Department of Building and Safety (B&S). There is also an underground, plugged oil well abandoned in the 1960s. Depending on plans for site development, B&S may require that the Public Works project team perform additional work concerning the well.

As for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), staff determined that the project now under consideration by the Board consists of the acquisition of property with the intent to establish a passive park having a limited number of accessory amenities. Therefore, the project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to Article III, Section 1(c), Class 3(6) and Section 1(y), Class 25(5) of the City CEQA Guidelines.

In addition to the Office of Council District Eleven, the Assistant General Manager of Operations West and the Superintendent of West Region concur with staff's recommendations.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT:

The only anticipated acquisition cost is the Phase I assessment. The estimated cost, \$3,850.50, does not affect the Department's General Fund. Site development depends on the funding and design of the restoration project, which will be managed by Public Works. In the meantime, approximately 300 feet of tubular fencing with a double gate will be needed to enclose the site, the cost of which is approximately \$30,000. This report includes a recommendation seeking Public Works funding for the expense since their project is the reason the Department was asked to acquire the site.

Until the restoration project nears completion, Department staff will be responsible for minimal upkeep. West Region staff estimate that annual maintenance costs will be \$17,000, which can be requested as a mid-year adjustment for Fiscal Year 2009-2010 or in the budget cycle for Fiscal Year 2010-2011.

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