

REPORT OF GENERAL MANAGER

NO. 04-141

DATE May 5, 2004

C.D. 06

BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

SUBJECT: SUN VALLEY PARK AND RECREATION CENTER: APPROVAL OF THE DEPARTMENT'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SUN VALLEY WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PROJECT

* K. Chan	<u>[Signature]</u>	J. Combs	_____
H. Fujita	_____	J. Kolb	_____
M. Mariscal	_____	F. Mok	_____
K. Regan	_____	G. Stigile	_____

[Signature]
General Manager

Approved _____ Disapproved _____ Withdrawn _____

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board:

1. Approve the participation of the Department in the Sun Valley Watershed Management Project involving both the Department of Public Works of the City of Los Angeles and the Department of Public Works of Los Angeles County, acting on behalf of the County Flood Control District, which is intended to reduce flooding, recharge groundwater and provide enhancements at the Sun Valley Park and Recreation Center, located at 8133 Vineland Avenue in the northeast San Fernando Valley; and
2. Direct the Board Secretary to transmit the draft Agreement, substantially in the form on file in the Board Office, to the Mayor for review in accordance with Executive Directive No. 16 and to the City Attorney for review as to form and upon their approval, for the draft Agreement to be forwarded to the City Council for approval; and
3. Authorize the Board President and Secretary to execute the Agreement on behalf of the Department upon receipt of the necessary approvals; and,
4. Authorize the General Manager to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding, if needed, with the City Department of Public Works in order to implement the provisions of the executed Agreement.

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SUMMARY:

This pilot or demonstration project is formally called the "Sun Valley Watershed/Sun Valley Park Drain and Infiltration System" (County Project No. FCC0000803). The project is the result of three years of innovative planning for the collection of stormwater runoff and other watershed management issues for the area immediately surrounding Sun Valley Park. Parts of the Sun Valley community lack the traditional storm drain system that exists elsewhere in the City; the terrain also causes major streets and other sites to be flooded during storms. Even so, the City's traditional stormwater systems are relatively inefficient and channel the urban runoff to the ocean. None of the flows are treated, and the volume is large. For example, during a "standard" storm, the area upstream from Sun Valley Park generates approximately 15,000 gallons/minute of stormwater runoff, which currently flows through the middle of the park, harming turf and creating muddy conditions there, and flooding streets downstream.

In response to these conditions, a consortium of public, non-profit and business entities formed the Sun Valley Watershed Stakeholders Group in November 1998. The members have identified eleven watershed management projects that combine the maximum range of benefits with feasibility of completion. The Group seeks to implement the projects over the next ten years. This Report concerns the first of the Sun Valley projects to be fully funded and ready for construction. It is a joint effort between the City's Department of Public Works and the County Department of Public Works, acting on behalf of the County Flood Control District. The project has vital elements involving part of Sun Valley Park.

After installation, the project will accomplish the following: Stormwater flows generated upstream of the park will run into a system of new catch basins and drains extending beneath Cantara Street, outside the northern edge of the park; the drainage system will convey the flows to underground sediment treatment units at the park. Together, these underground units cover approximately a quarter acre. Suspended solids and pollutants such as oil and grease will be extracted and the initial, most polluted part of the runoff will receive further treatment. The runoff will then be conveyed to two underground infiltration (or absorption) basins, covering a total of 1.5 acres; the water will percolate downward and recharge the aquifer, thereby contributing to water conservation. Finally, narrow native-plant patches of a vegetative or bio-swale will be developed at the southern end of the park next to Lorne Street. This feature will allow additional runoff water to be absorbed into the ground. Department staff determined that the bio-swale's design will not harm the native oaks at Sun Valley Park.

The Sun Valley project is not the only example of innovative stormwater management at a Department facility. Three other examples are at Pan Pacific Park and at the Hansen Dam and

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Sepulveda Basin Recreation Areas. Parts of these sites serve as retention basins during heavy rainfall. At other times they provide open space and recreation use. However, the Sun Valley watershed project is the first of its kind in the nation and will be a demonstration project for integrating this degree of stormwater collection with subsequent treatment and groundwater recharge. The project will also serve as a model for several other watershed management projects planned for Sun Valley. As such, this initial project is expected to achieve widespread, even national recognition. The County project plans also include interpretive signage that will illustrate and explain the various components of the project.

After installation of the components, the park will greatly benefit during the rainy season from reduced turf destruction and muddy conditions and will therefore be more usable by the public. Park enhancements are also integrated into the project. The areas of the park excavated for the two underground basins will be restored with a new, fully automated irrigation system, which will replace less efficient equipment that is over twenty years old. In response to needs expressed in community meetings and by the Park Advisory Board, the ground surface above the infiltration basin on the west side of the park will be developed into a new, full-size and lighted soccer/football field. Two other existing and heavily used baseball fields will be upgraded after the second infiltration basin is installed beneath them; the restoration of the fields will include turf and infield-soil renovation and there will be new, replacement bleachers. Because the closest of these underground structures will be 225 feet from the recreation center building, the structures can be repaired and monitored without disrupting the center's programs.

All project construction and restoration of park surfaces will be completed using funds already appropriated to the Los Angeles County Flood Control District. The non-profit group, TreePeople, who already have a long-term lease for Coldwater Canyon Park, are giving \$400,000 from a Proposition 40 (Murray-Hayden) grant to finance portions of the landscaping and recreation improvements. These improvements are part of the County's scope of work for the project's contractor. The total estimated cost of the project is \$4.5 million, including the funds provided by TreePeople. There is an urgent need to obtain prompt approval of the project. The County funds are budgeted for this fiscal year only. If a contract is not awarded and funds encumbered by June 30, 2004, they will be lost to the project. There are no budgeted funds for this project for Fiscal Year 2004-05. Construction of the project could begin by August 2004. The anticipated completion date for the entire project is eight months after the start date.

The County will manage and oversee all development aspects of the project including all clearances or permits, design specifications and final inspections, including the ground-level park improvements. Staff of the Planning and Construction Division and of Operations West have reviewed and approved the County's design specifications as they pertain to the landscape and recreation components.

The County completed a Categorical Exemption for the Sun Valley Watershed Management project,

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determining that it is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Classes 3, 4 and 6 of the State CEQA Guidelines; the Guidelines cited provide for the construction of a limited number of new, small structures, for minor alterations to land and for the collection of data. The County filed a Notice of Exemption on May 30, 2003.

As for the draft Agreement, the County is self-insured and accepts the standard, hold-harmless terms used in Department agreements with other self-insured, non-City entities. The proposed initial term of 25 years is sufficient to provide the length of recreational use required by the Proposition 40 grant.

The draft Agreement states that upon completion of the construction, the City's Department of Public Works will take possession of the stormwater equipment beneath the park and will periodically inspect and maintain it as well as any associated ground-level monitoring device. They will also coordinate any monitoring needed by the County Department of Public Works. Staff of the Department of Recreation and Parks will perform the maintenance of the ground-level recreation improvements and of the bio-swale as part of their normal maintenance duties. However, in order for County personnel to be able to monitor and maintain project equipment, the draft Agreement provides the County a 25-year right-of-entry to the areas of the park having the underground and ground-level equipment.

This pilot project has the strong support of the Assistant General Manager and Superintendent of Operations West as well as the Sun Valley Watershed Stakeholders Group and other community members. While Sun Valley Park and Recreation Center is in Council District Six, the watershed also affects parts of Council Districts Two, Four and Seven. The project is strongly supported by the Councilmembers of all four Districts as well as by the Supervisor of the Fourth Los Angeles County District and by Assemblywoman Cindy Montañez.

This Report was prepared by Louis Loomis, Management Analyst II with Operations West Administration and by Joan Reitzel, Senior Management Analyst I in Real Estate and Asset Management.