

# Agenda Report

**TO:** CITY COUNCIL **DATE:** DECEMBER 16, 2002  
**FROM:** CITY MANAGER  
**SUBJECT:** SELECTION CRITERIA FOR TIER 2 ANALYSIS OF SENSITIVE LANDS  
SURVEY / POCKET PARKS INVENTORY

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the City Council approve the proposed selection criteria (Attachments 1 and 2) to identify properties for an in-depth analysis (Tier 2) as part of the Sensitive Lands Survey and / Pocket Park Inventory.

## **RECREATION AND PARKS COMMISSION:**

Staff met with the Recreation and Parks Commission on October 1 and November 5 and with its Master Plan ad-hoc sub-committee on October 10 to discuss the Tier 2 selection criteria. The selection criteria presented in Attachments 1 and 2 are the result of these discussions. The commission voted to recommend approval of the Tier 2 selection criteria. The Commission further recommended that if the proposed selection criteria does not yield the desired number of properties, minor modifications be made to the selection criteria and further iterations be conducted.

## **PLANNING COMMISSION:**

Staff presented the Sensitive Lands Survey / Pocket Parks Inventory and the Tier 2 selection criteria to the Planning Commission on November 13 as an information item. The Commission briefly addressed the types of amenities (park benches, swing-sets, etc) that might be in a pocket park and generally supported the intent of the studies.

## **BACKGROUND:**

In December 2001, the City Council directed staff to prepare a study of undeveloped and vacant properties within the City to identify opportunities for open space preservation and small-scale "pocket" parks. On April 29, 2002, the City Council approved entering into a contract with Cotton/Bridge/Associates (CBA) to assist the City in undertaking this effort. A detailed description of the purpose and scope of work follows:

### *Sensitive Lands Survey*

Within the City of Pasadena there are areas of undeveloped land that are being increasingly subject to development pressures. Many of these lands can be termed “sensitive” to development because of a variety of biological and natural resources these areas provide. These resources include wildlife and vegetative habitat and views to and from these areas. Additionally, hillside lands are typically in high fire hazard areas and there is an increased risk of erosion and seismic hazards due to the extensive grading that is often needed to develop in these areas.

### *“Pocket” Parks Inventory*

There has been identified a need for neighborhood recreational opportunities within the City. A portion of this need may be satisfied by small-scale “pocket” parks. While not large enough for organized activities such as baseball or soccer, these small parks can provide more passive open space activities for community enjoyment.

A preliminary inventory of vacant properties citywide has shown that there are many possible sites. However, an in-depth inventory and analysis is necessary to identify properties for potential park development. This work will assist decision-makers when considering sites for purchase and park development.

### *Use of Studies*

Results of the studies will be utilized in the forthcoming update to the Open Space Element of the General Plan. Additionally, some of the sites identified through the Sensitive Lands Survey would be considered for land purchase and preservation with the Santa Monica Mountains and San Gabriel River and Streams Conservancies and others that fund land acquisition.

## **PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY:**

Using data from the Los Angeles County Assessor’s Office, staff identified approximately 1,200 properties that had been deemed ‘vacant.’ Site visits have been conducted as a part of the first phase (Tier 1) of analysis, and characteristics such as slope, access, vegetation, and habitat have been identified and entered into a database. The second phase (Tier 2) of analysis will consist of a more detailed examination of a sub-set of the original 1,200 properties. This Tier 2 analysis will allow staff to focus on a smaller number of properties whose characteristics show higher potential as a “Sensitive Land” or “Pocket Park”. After the Tier 2 analysis is complete the “best” candidates will be able to be identified.

### *Tier 2 Selection Criteria*

The proposed selection criteria will identify the candidates for “Sensitive Lands” and “Pocket Parks” that warrant further analysis in Tier 2. The goal is to identify approximately 250 properties. The candidate properties will be identified by ‘filtering’ the properties visited in Tier 1 through “Sensitive Lands” and “Pocket Parks” selection criteria (Attachments 1 and 2).

The “Sensitive Lands” selection criteria is intended to identify properties which have native habitats and have a high potential for development and therefore are the most ‘at-risk’ from development pressures. The “Pocket Parks” selection criteria are based on specific site characteristics, location, and park-suitable characteristics.

After properties are identified for Tier 2 review, visits to each site will be conducted by experts in the fields of biology, economics, and park planning to identify additional site characteristics and re-examine other characteristics in more detail.

**CONCLUSION:**

After the Tier 2 analysis is complete, staff will use the results from both the Tier 1 and Tier 2 analyses to assist in creating a list of "best candidate" properties for each study. These results are expected to be presented to the Recreation and Parks Commission, Planning Commission, and City Council in March/April 2003. These final properties will be the "best" candidates as determined by these studies. In addition to the final report, the City will have site information on 1,200 properties. This will be an invaluable resource not only for this project, but for other site analyses that may be undertaken in the future.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

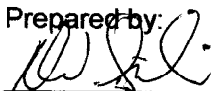
The current studies have been funded and no additional funding for their completion is anticipated.

Respectfully submitted,

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Cynthia J. Kurtz  
City Manager

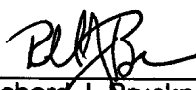
Prepared by:



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David Sinclair  
Assistant Planner

Approved by:



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Richard J. Bruckner, Director  
Planning and Development Department

Attachments:

1. Proposed "Sensitive Lands" Tier 2 Selection Criteria
2. Proposed "Pocket Parks" Tier 2 Selection Criteria