



Agenda Report

TO: CITY COUNCIL
FROM: CITY MANAGER
SUBJECT: SENSITIVE LANDS INVENTORY

DATE: AUGUST 4, 2003

RECOMMENDATION:

This item is for information only.

RECREATION AND PARKS COMMISSION:

Staff presented the findings of the Sensitive Lands Inventory to the Recreation and Parks Commission on May 6, 2003. The Commission voted to recommend that the City Council receive and endorse the results of the Sensitive Lands Inventory.

PLANNING COMMISSION:

Staff presented the findings of the Sensitive Lands Inventory to the Planning Commission on May 14, 2003 for their information.

SUMMARY:

The purpose of the Sensitive Lands Inventory is to assist the City with identification of vacant parcels citywide that have the potential to add to the City's open space resources.

The Inventory has identified three geographic areas (Arroyo, Western Boundary, and Eaton Canyon) within the City with vacant properties and has collected information regarding those vacant parcels corresponding to three themes of information: biological resources, land use, and access.

This inventory will not result in any change to current zoning, nor will it affect the development potential of any identified properties. It is not the intent of this study to block or obstruct current or future development proposals on any of these sites.

BACKGROUND:

In December 2001, the City Council directed staff to prepare a study of undeveloped and vacant properties within the City to identify potential opportunities for open space preservation and small parks. The 'Sensitive Lands Inventory' examined vacant properties to identify those that have unique characteristics, may also be susceptible to development pressure, and therefore could be considered for preservation. The 'Pocket Parks Inventory' analyzed vacant properties in order to gauge their potential for development as small parks. The Sensitive Lands Inventory has been completed, while the results of the Pocket Parks Inventory are forthcoming.

The information gathered as a part of the Inventory implements Objective 1 and Policy 105.0 of the Open Space Element of the City's General Plan that call for pursuing opportunities to provide adequate open space to meet current and future needs. The Inventory also promotes

Objectives 2 and 9 and Policy 9.1 of the Land Use Element of the General Plan, that call for the preservation of open space in order to enhance the quality of Pasadena life.

According to state law (Section 65560 of the California Government Code), the Open Space Element addresses the preservation of natural resources including areas required for the preservation of plant and animal life such as wildlife habitat, outdoor recreation, including areas of scenic, historic and cultural value; and public health and safety, including areas which require special management or regulation because of conditions such as areas with high fire risks. To this end, the Inventory provides necessary information to assist in this process.

Methodology

In order to identify properties for the Sensitive Lands Inventory, data from the Los Angeles County Assessor was utilized, resulting in a list of approximately 1,200 properties designated as 'vacant'. Recognizing the unique characteristics and development pressures on vacant properties in the western and eastern hillsides of Pasadena, these areas became the primary focus of the study. The western hillsides are bordered by the City of Glendale, Interstate 210, the Arroyo Seco, and State Highway 134, while the eastern hillsides include the area northeast of Eaton Canyon Wash and New York Drive. Within these two areas 249 properties were identified. Site visits were conducted at each of the 249 properties identified and several sources of information were utilized to create a database of information specific to the Inventory. Characteristics such as vegetation, access, adjacent land use, and zoning were identified.

In late 2002, staff recommended criteria to the Recreation and Parks Commission and the City Council to use in the selection of properties worth further study. The criteria adopted were: existing habitat, adjacent land uses, development potential, and ease of access. Using the criteria the focus of the study narrowed the pool of 249 properties examined in the first (Tier 1) to 93. This subset of properties was advanced to the second phase (Tier 2) of analysis. This phase included additional site visits to further examine and prepare a brief written summary for each of the 93 properties.

The Tier 2 detailed analysis examined the candidate properties for characteristics in the following areas:

- **Biological Resources** – Presence and quality of biological and ecological resources on site;
- **Land Use** – Current and proposed land uses on site and in surrounding areas, potential recreational uses, available utilities, and potential seismic constraints; and
- **Access** – Ease of access to a site from public roads and trails.

FINDINGS:

At the conclusion of the Tier 2 analysis, three groups of parcels (Attachment 2) were identified based upon location, similar ecology, ownership, and other significant conditions. Following is a description of each area and a brief summary of their Biological Resources, Land Use, and Access characteristics.

- **Western Boundary area (83 parcels)** – a combination of properties located along the Pasadena/Glendale boundary north of Patrician Way and west of Glen Oaks Boulevard and others to the north, following the curve of the Pasadena/Glendale and Pasadena/La Cañada-Flintridge boundary north to the Interstate 210 freeway.

Generally speaking, the properties in this area combine suitable high quality chaparral and riparian habitats with high ecological resources. There exists foraging, nesting, and breeding grounds for large mammals, small mammals, and birds, as well as travel routes for wildlife along ridgelines and in vegetated riparian valley bottoms. All of the properties are zoned for single-family residential and are adjacent to residential uses except for the southern properties that are adjacent to public utilities to the west and south. Many parcels in the southern portion

of the area are currently accessible from public streets and have a potential for recreational (hiking trails, etc.) and residential development. The properties in the northern portion of the area are not as accessible, although excellent quality views are available from these parcels.

- **Arroyo area** (6 parcels) – located south of the Interstate 210 freeway, just west of the northernmost part of the Upper Arroyo Park and Brookside Golf Course.

Though suitable wildlife habitat exists on these properties, evidence of large mammals on the properties was inconclusive. The properties are adjacent to a wildlife crossing under Interstate 210 as well as to riparian communities along the Arroyo Seco. All Arroyo area properties are zoned for single-family residential and are surrounded by residential uses to the west and south and open space/recreation to the east and north. The properties are directly accessible from Linda Vista Avenue and by foot from Brookside Golf Course.

- **Eaton Canyon area** (4 parcels) – located near the Eaton Canyon Golf Course, west of Sierra Madre Villa Avenue and north of New York Drive.

The habitat on the Eaton Canyon properties caters to birds and small mammals. The properties are relatively small in size and do not connect to larger undeveloped areas. All properties are zoned for single-family residential and residential developments immediately surround the properties, while further south is a business park development. Private streets limit access to the properties.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Sensitive Lands Inventory has no direct fiscal impact on the City.

Respectfully submitted,


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Approved by:


Richard J. Bruckner, Director
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Attachments:

1. Executive Summary of Sensitive Lands Inventory
2. Tier 2 Sensitive Lands Inventory Parcel Groups (map)