

**STAFF REPORT**  
**City of Lancaster**

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Date: January 10, 2017

To: Mayor Parris and City Council Members

From: Toi Chisom, Assistant to the City Manager

Subject: **Acquisition of Real Property Adjacent to the City's Prime Desert Woodland Preserve**

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**Recommendations:**

- a. Approve the acquisition of 20+/- acres and the purchase price of \$1,000,000 from Shayan Capital LLC et al; Alni LLC, Assessor's Parcel Nos. 3110-013-026, 3110-013-027, 3110-013-028, 3110-013-039, and 3110-013-001.
- b. Appropriate \$1,000,000 from Biological Impact Fund Balance (Fund 224) to Expenditure Account No. 224-4200-912, for the purchase of the real property.
- c. In anticipation of receiving Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space Grant Funds, recognize revenue in the amount of \$750,000 in revenue Account No. 261-3405-100. Additionally, appropriate up to \$750,000 to expenditure Account No. 261-4999-224, to reimburse the Biological Impact Fund for a portion of the acquisition cost.
- d. Authorize the City Manager or his designee to execute all documents, subject to City Attorney approval.

**Fiscal Impact:**

Sufficient fund balance exists in the Biological Impact Fund Balance account to finance the entire \$1,000,000 purchase cost of the land. Upon receipt of the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space Grant Funds, the Biological Impact Fund will be reimbursed up to \$750,000.

**Background:**

The subject parcels (property) are part of Tract Map No. 60291, which was approved by the City Council in January 2007. This property is adjacent to the City's Prime Desert Woodland Preserve (Preserve). Over the last decade, residents have expressed their concern with Tract Map 60291, with an emphasis on preserving the natural habitat.

At the April 26, 2016 City Council meeting, community members once again expressed their concerns stating that having the City of Lancaster (City) purchase the land would allow for the protection and enhancement of the Preserve. In response, City Council charged residents, organizations, and staff to create a “community group” to provide a solution to acquiring the land.

Promptly, staff began discussions with Royal Investors, Inc. about property acquisition, while the community group took action seeking grant opportunities to secure funding, including making contact with the 5<sup>th</sup> District Supervisors Office of the County of Los Angeles.

In partnership with the community group and the Los Angeles County Fifth Supervisorial District, an official request was submitted to the Board of Supervisors utilizing grant funds from the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District Prop A Excess Funds.

On November 15, 2016, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved \$750,000 in grant funding for the Prime Desert Woodland Expansion project.

On December 13, 2016, City Council approved the application for Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space Grant Fund, the first necessary step in the grant award, acceptance, and administrative process.

Throughout, regular discussions regarding acquisition between City staff and the property owner remained ongoing and constructive. Discussions resulted in a negotiation and agreed upon purchase price of \$1,000,000. To facilitate the acquisition, staff proposes to fund the purchase in total with available funds from the Biological Mitigation Fund. Upon receipt of the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space Grant Funds, the Biological Impact Fund will be reimbursed accordingly.

Acquisition of the 20.32-acre parcels would allow for expansion of the Preserve, ensuring the protection of Joshua Trees, California Junipers, and habitat for endangered or sensitive species, and other natural areas of regional significance; as well as ensure Antelope Valley communities and those beyond our borders have expanded access to thriving park systems and biological, educational presentations and programs.

This acquisition will complete the area designated as a priority by the City Council in 1989, in accordance with the Prime Desert Woodland Sites Study and the philosophy of the City Council’s integrated approach to acquiring such land for the establishment of the Prime Desert Woodland Natural Park.

This acquisition has been reviewed pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and is within certain classes of projects that have been categorically exempt, under Section 15325 (a) of the State CEQA guidelines and Class 25 (a) of the County’s Environmental Document Reporting Procedures and Guidelines, Appendix G, because the project involves acquisition of land to preserve the existing natural conditions, including plant and animal habitat.

**Attachment:**  
Subject Property Map