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# CITY OF POMONA

## COUNCIL REPORT

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September 18, 2023

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: James Makshanoff, City Manager

Submitted By: Rene Guerrero, Public Works Director

**SUBJECT: DISCUSSION REGARDING PHILLIPS RANCH RIPARIAN GREENBELT**

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### **RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the City Council discuss and advise on the conversion of the Phillips Ranch Riparian Greenbelt to a City Park.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

On April 3, 2023, property owners in the Phillips Ranch Maintenance Assessment District Zone A and B (District) issued a majority protest vote against the formation of a new Landscaping and Lighting Maintenance Assessment District which would have increased the Single-Family assessment from \$277.81 annually to \$511.58, and would have also increased Commercial assessments in order to sufficiently fund landscaping and lighting maintenance services in the District. Without sufficient funding, the Phillips Ranch Assessment District Oversight Committee is discussing alternatives, and one such alternative is the conversion of the Riparian Greenbelt (Greenbelt) to a City Park to provide for its sufficient maintenance.

### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

The District receives annual revenues of approximately \$950,000 from property owners that pay their assessment. This annual assessment has not increased since 1993 while maintenance costs have continued to increase. Over the last several years, costs to maintain the District have exceeded the budget while deferred maintenance needs continue to accumulate. With the various priorities the District faces, and not enough funding to address basic safety needs, one potential cost savings to the District would be to convert the Greenbelt to a City park and the City would assume the maintenance of the Greenbelt. If the Greenbelt was to be maintained by the City as a Level A park, the estimated costs are presented below:

**Annual Estimated Costs to General Fund – Converting Greenbelt to City Park at Level A Maintenance Frequency**

<b>Task</b>	
Estimated Annual Landscaping Maintenance – Greenbelt and Paseos	~\$150,000
Estimated Water Costs	~\$50,000
Estimated Tree Maintenance	~\$30,000
Repairs to Paseo Paths (one-time cost)	~\$100,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>~\$330,000</b>

Most of the District’s current landscape maintenance budget has been focused on maintaining the Greenbelt and the rest of Phillips Ranch at a significantly reduced level based on the current contract. If the City decides to convert the Greenbelt to a City park, the District could realize a savings of approximately \$100,000 per year. These savings could be used to address more urgent health and safety needs, such as fire mitigation measures in the hillsides. The \$100,000 approximate savings is based on recent bids received for the landscape maintenance of the District at a lesser frequency than the City typically maintains its City parks. Converting the Greenbelt to a park could potentially cost the General Fund approximately \$230,000 annually, plus the one-time costs of repairing the paseo walkways (\$100,000).

**PREVIOUS RELATED ACTION:**

On July 20, 2009, City Council adopted a resolution confirming the zone boundaries and assessment levy for the City of Pomona Landscaping and Lighting District for FY 2009-10. In the associated Engineer’s Report, it was noted that Country Crossings Park and Phillips Ranch Park will be removed from the Assessment District’s responsibility for maintenance and would be funded through the General Fund.

On November 21, 2022, City Council received the FY 2022-23 First Quarter Budget Report, which outlined cuts of \$410,000 to the Phillips Ranch Maintenance Assessment District due to the severe budget deficit the District had realized for several years.

On April 3, 2023, City Council adopted Resolution No. 2023-50 declaring the result of the Phillips Ranch Landscaping and Lighting Maintenance Assessment District Ballot Proceedings and Abandoning Proceedings to form the District.

**DISCUSSION:**

For many years, the Phillips Ranch Maintenance Assessment District has been operating at a deficit resulting in the depletion of its fund balance. With the depletion of the fund balance, certain line items in the District Budget (Fund 256) had to be cut significantly. On November 21, 2022, in the City’s First Quarter Budget Report, Staff outlined proposed cuts to Water, Tree, and Landscape Maintenance line items in order for the fund to stay within budget. As expected, the resultant cuts and service reductions are creating health and safety concerns with the lack of fuel modification and tree maintenance.

City staff meets quarterly with the Phillips Ranch Assessment District Oversight Committee (Committee). The Committee advises and provides recommendations to City staff regarding priorities for the expending of the limited funding the District receives. Health and safety issues related to fire danger have been identified by the Committee as a top priority to address most urgently. In order to provide additional funding for fire mitigation, one idea proposed by the Committee, and agreed upon unanimously, is the conversion of the Greenbelt to a City park. This would free up approximately \$100,000 of the Phillips Ranch annual budget which could then be used for fire mitigation and also to address dangers posed by dead and dying trees. On July 20, 2023, the Committee presented their idea to the Parks and Recreation Commission, and received unanimous support (6-0, 1 absent).

As discussed above in the Fiscal Impact, converting the Greenbelt to a park could potentially cost the General Fund approximately \$230,000 annually, plus the one-time costs of repairing the paseo walkways (\$100,000). The true cost is unknown at this time as the Greenbelt would be bid as a park along with other City parks as part of the City's park maintenance contract. Public accessibility would not be affected by a conversion to a park as the Greenbelt is already open to the public to enjoy. However, if the City were to provide a higher level of maintenance to the Greenbelt, and maintain it at the same level of frequency as other City parks, it could become a more utilized space and destination for all of the City, potentially providing an improved health benefit for all residents in the City. Further, it is a goal of the City's General Plan to increase park acreage to 3 acres per 1,000 residents. Conversion of the Greenbelt to a City Park would help towards achieving this goal. Conversion to a City Park would also make the Greenbelt area more eligible for potential park grant funding. For example, annual Measure A allocations could be used to create new amenities in the park, if so desired by the City Council.

The City Council is being asked to discuss and advise on the Committee's request to convert the Phillips Ranch Riparian Greenbelt to a City Park. Should it be determined that the Greenbelt is to become a park, maintenance of the Greenbelt would fall under the new landscape maintenance services agreement that will be recommended for award at the October 2, 2023 City Council Meeting. This agreement was bid out with a lower level of service than the City's current parks maintenance agreement due to the limited funding in Phillips Ranch. Upon expiration of the City's current parks maintenance contract (March 31, 2024), and rebid of a new contract, maintenance of the Greenbelt would be included in the new contract should the Greenbelt become a City park.

Prepared by:

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