COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
September 8, 2005

PACIFICA ESPLANADE ACQUISITION

File No. 05-056
Project Manager: Marina Cazorla

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to $250,000 to the City of Pacifica for acquisition of the property at 400 Esplanade Drive, Pacifica, San Mateo County for open space, natural resource protection and public access.

LOCATION: 400 Esplanade Drive, northern Pacifica, San Mateo County Coast

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Public Access

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: Regional location map

Exhibit 2: Site and parcel map

Exhibit 3: Site photographs

Exhibit 4: Letters of Support

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Section 31400 *et seq.* of the Public Resources Code:

"The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes disbursement of an amount not to exceed two hundred and fifty thousand dollars ($250,000) to the City of Pacifica for acquisition of property located at 400 Esplanade Drive, Pacifica, San Mateo County (Assessor Parcel No. 009-131-030), as more particularly described on Exhibits 1 and 2 to the accompanying staff recommendation, subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to the disbursement of funds, the City of Pacifica shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy all relevant acquisition documents, including but not limited to appraisals, agreement of purchase and sale, environmental assessments, escrow instructions, documents of title and the offer to dedicate an easement over the property for the California Coastal Trail.

2. The City of Pacifica shall pay no more than fair market value for the property, as established in an appraisal approved by the Executive Officer of the Conservancy.

3. Conservancy funding shall be acknowledged by erecting and maintaining a sign on the property, the design and location of which shall be reviewed and approved by the Executive Officer.

4. The City of Pacifica shall permanently dedicate the property for the preservation of open space land, natural resource protection and public access in an instrument(s) approved by the Executive Officer, in accordance with Public Resources Code Section 31116(b). No use of the property inconsistent with these purposes is permitted, although the City of Pacifica may install underground utilities on the property if such installation is not inconsistent with the above-named purposes.

5. The City shall dedicate an easement over the property in favor of the Conservancy for the purposes of the California Coastal Trail.

6. If funding is obtained for trail construction, the City shall construct and maintain coastal public access trails on the property, including the California Coastal Trail. Any trails constructed on the property shall be designed and constructed consistent with the California Coastal Trail easement over the property, and with the Conservancy's "Standards and Recommendations for Design and Location of Accessways."

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

"Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed project is consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, specifically Chapter 9 (31400-31400.3) regarding public access to the coast.

2. The proposed project is consistent with the Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted by the Conservancy on January 24, 2001.

3. The proposed project serves greater than local needs.

PROJECT SUMMARY:

The proposed project consists of a grant of up to $250,000 to the City of Pacifica to acquire 2.170 acres of ocean-front property, located at 400 Esplanade Drive in Pacifica (Exhibit 1). The City and the property owner have entered into a purchase and sale agreement for a bargain sale of the property to the City for $500,000.

The City of Pacifica would acquire this property and manage it for public use as the Esplanade Open Space project. This project will protect valuable coastal recreational and scenic resources

and provide a new segment of the California Coastal Trail. In addition to providing scenic ocean vistas, the property may be used to provide for beach stairway access in the future. The City will permanently dedicate the property for open space, recreation and public access and will offer to dedicate an easement over the property for a segment of the California Coastal Trail. A well-planned, safe Coastal Trail would be of great public benefit. Completion of the Coastal Trail is a major goal of a number of state agencies, including the Conservancy, Department of Parks and Recreation and the California Coastal Commission.

Site Description: The property is located within a beachfront corridor in a neighborhood known as West Edgemar-Pacific Manor. Across Esplanade Drive from the property are mostly apartments built in 1958-59. The property is bordered by commercial and multi-residential buildings on the east, a vacant parcel to the north, single-family homes to the south, and the ocean on the west. The subject property and the vacant lot parcel to the north are the only undeveloped vacant parcels in the neighborhood along the west side of Esplanade Drive, between Manor and Aura Vista Drives. The 2.17-acre property is roughly trapezoidal in shape with approximately 597 feet of frontage along the coastal bluff. The north and south property boundaries are approximately 190 feet and 100 feet, respectively. The bluff-top provides panoramic views of the Pacific Ocean. The site varies from generally level to slightly sloping downward in a westerly direction from Esplanade Drive toward the bluffs, with a near vertical 60-80 foot drop to the beach below. The bluffs consist predominately of dunes covered with foredune vegetation and north coastal bluff scrub.

The property is not and has never been developed. However, the property is zoned R-3 by the City of Pacifica. Examples of permitted uses include duplexes and multi-family dwelling such as apartments or condominiums, child care for 12 children or fewer, and special care facilities for six or fewer persons. Conditional uses include single-family dwellings, rooming houses, lodges, clubs and coastal access. The zoning allows a maximum of 21 units per acre; however, given the bluff-top location and City policies, the likely density permitted would be 10 to 15 units per acre.

Project History: In July 2005, the City entered into a purchase and sale agreement to carry out a bargain sale of the property for $500,000, well below the $2.9 million appraised value.

PROJECT FINANCING:

Coastal Conservancy	$250,000
City of Pacifica	$250,000
Total Project Cost	**$500,000**

The expected source of Conservancy funds for this project is the FY 2004/05 appropriation to the Conservancy from Proposition 40 (California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhoods and Coastal Protection Act of 2002), which gives priority to projects funded with matching funds from other sources. The Conservancy's grant of $250,000 will be combined with $50,000 from the City's general fund and $200,000 from funds given to the City of Pacifica by the Regional Water Quality Control Board for a Supplemental Environmental Project.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

This project would be undertaken pursuant to Chapter 9 (Sections 31400-31409) of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding public access.

Under Chapter 9, the Conservancy is authorized in Section 31400 to have a principal role in the implementation of a system of public accessways to and along the state's coastline. Section 31400.1 authorizes the Conservancy to award grants to a public agency to acquire land, and develop and manage it for public access purposes to and along the coast. Section 31400.2 authorizes the Conservancy to provide up to the total cost of the acquisition of interests in lands and the initial development of public accessways to and along the state's coastline by a public agency. Lastly, Section 31408(a) provides for the Conservancy to coordinate the development of a California Coastal Trail. The proposed project is consistent with all of these sections, in that the proposed Conservancy grant will enable the City of Pacifica to acquire a property that will provide approximately 600 feet of potential coastal trail segment where no legal public access currently exists. Through this grant, the Conservancy would be facilitating in the establishment and development of new coastal accessways and the Coastal Trail.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S STANDARDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACCESSWAY LOCATION AND DEVELOPMENT:

Consistent with Standard No. 1, the Pacifica Esplanade segment of the Coastal Trail would be designed to minimize alteration of natural landforms and be subordinate to the setting's character. The trail planning process will assure that the trail is designed in a way that prevents hazards to the land and to public safety (Standard Nos. 1 and 2), ensures the privacy of private landowners (Standard Nos. 1 and 4), and protects environmentally sensitive habitats (Standard Nos. 1 and 5).

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):

Consistent with **Goal 1 Objective C** of the Conservancy's Strategic Plan, the proposed project would result in the construction of approximately 600 feet of the Coastal Trail on the Pacifica Esplanade property.

Consistent with **Goal 1 Objective D**, the proposed acquisition would provide a new approximately 600 foot long right-of-way for a Coastal Trail segment on the property.

Consistent with **Goal 2 Objective A**, the proposed project would result in the acquisition and improvement of a property to increase coastal public access and protect open space and views.

Consistent with **Goal 2 Objective B**, the proposed project would open an area that is currently inaccessible and closed to public use while respecting the rights of nearby landowners.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted January 24, 2001, in the following respects:

Required Criteria

1. **Promotion of the Conservancy's statutory programs and purposes:** See the "Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation" section above.
2. **Consistency with purposes of the funding source:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
3. **Support of the public:** The proposed project is supported by State Senator Jackie Speier, State Assemblymember Gene Mullin, San Mateo County Supervisor Rich Gordon, and City of Pacifica Mayor Julie Lancelle. Letters of support are attached as Exhibit 4.
4. **Location:** The proposed project would be located within the coastal zone of the County of San Mateo.
5. **Need:** If this property were not acquired by the City of Pacifica, development would likely occur, impacting coastal habitat and reducing the potential for Coastal Trail access.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** As discussed in greater detail in the "Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation" section above, the acquisition of the Pacifica Esplanade property will provide another segment of the Coastal Trail. Completion of the Coastal Trail is a major goal of a number of state agencies, including the Department of Parks and Recreation and the California Coastal Commission.

Additional Criteria

7. **Resolution of more than one issue:** The project would develop the Coastal Trail, protect coastal resources, preserve scenic views and open space and preclude development.
8. **Leverage:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
9. **Readiness:** As discussed above, the City of Pacifica has entered into a purchase agreement with the sellers of the property, and will initiate planning and design of the Coastal Trail segment after the property is acquired.

CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:

The proposed project would further many policies of the June 1998 County of San Mateo Local Coastal Plan. Some of the most directly relevant are listed below:

Visual Resources Component

8.15 Prevent development from substantially blocking views to or along the shoreline from coastal roads, roadside rests and vista points, recreation areas, trails, coastal accessways, and beaches.

8.4 Prohibit development on bluff faces except public access stairways where deemed necessary and erosion control structures which are in conformity with coastal policies on access and erosion.

Shoreline Access Component

10.9 Provide safe access to shoreline destinations; discourage public use of hazardous trails; protect sensitive habitat.

10.12 Locate shoreline access within existing or new residential areas in the least disruptive manner. In all areas where topography permits, provide shoreline access for the disabled without altering major landforms.

Recreation/Visitor-Serving Facilities Component

11.9 Protect suitable oceanfront land for public recreation.

11.13 Establish a trails program for the Coastal Zone with the objective of connecting major shoreline to inland park and recreation facilities and trails, and linking existing and proposed recreation facilities along the coast.

The proposed project will protect scenic views and public access to the shoreline for recreation.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

Under 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15313, projects are exempted from the California Environmental Quality Act for "acquisition of land for fish and wildlife conservation purposes…and preserving access to public lands and waters where the purpose of the acquisition is to preserve the land in its natural condition." Section 15325 exempts projects that consist of "transfers of ownership in interests in land in order to preserve open space, habitat, or historical resources." The proposed project is exempt under both sections because it is a transfer of ownership in land to preserve open space and habitat and is an acquisition of lands for conservation purposes. A Notice of Exemption for the project was filed by City of Pacifica Planning staff on August 2, 2005.