COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
September 6, 2018

San Fernando Green Streets

Project No. 16-054-02
Project Manager: Evyan Sloane

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to $1,100,000 to TreePeople to prepare final designs and permits for, and to construct, a green infrastructure project in the City of San Fernando, County of Los Angeles, CA.

LOCATION: City of San Fernando, Los Angeles County

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Integrated Coastal and Marine Resource Protection

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EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: Project Location Maps

Exhibit 2: February 2, 2017 Staff Recommendation

Exhibit 3: Example Photos of Project Design Elements

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31111 and 31220 of the Public Resources Code:

"The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of up to one million one hundred thousand dollars ($1,100,000) to TreePeople ("the grantee") to plan, prepare final designs and permits for, and construct, a green infrastructure project in the City of San Fernando, subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to commencement of the project, the grantee shall submit for the review and written approval of the Conservancy's Executive Officer a work program, including budget and schedule, and any contractors to be employed for these work program tasks.
2. Prior to commencement of construction, the grantee shall submit:
    a. Evidence that it has entered into an agreement with the landowner sufficient to enable the grantee to implement, operate, and maintain the project;
    b. Evidence that all permits and approvals required to implement the project have been obtained.

c. A plan for acknowledgement of Conservancy funding and Proposition 1 as the source of that funding."

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 authorization is consistent with Chapter 5.5 regarding reducing contamination of waters within the coastal zone (Section 31220).
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.
3. TreePeople is a nonprofit organization existing under section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code, and whose purposes are consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code.

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends that the Conservancy authorize disbursement of up to $1,100,000 to TreePeople to plan, prepare final designs and permit applications for, and construct: curb inlets, rain gardens, bioswales, permeable pavement, cool pavement, and tree plantings, on three streets and one parking lot in the city of San Fernando, California (the project) (See location in Exhibit 1). The project is known as the San Fernando Green Streets Project. During preparation of preliminary designs for the project, which was funded by a Conservancy grant authorized on February 2, 2017, TreePeople revised the scope of the project to expand the number of urban greening elements on three streets and one parking lot and eliminate greening of 4 streets and a city park. (See the February 2, 2017 Staff Recommendation - Exhibit 2). The revisions were due in part to input from the City of San Fernando (City), which owns the project sites.

The project will help the City advance climate change resilience, urban cooling, better air quality, water security, water self-reliance, and integrated water management, while also serving as a model for other urban centers facing similar climate change impacts. These multiple benefits will be realized in several ways. First, by expanding the urban forest and installing cool pavement on three city streets and a parking lot, the project will lower surface and air temperatures by providing shade and evapotranspiration and reflecting heat. Secondly, by increasing public green space and engaging community members, the project will encourage walking and biking thus improving public health and quality of life. Lastly, by removing asphalt, installing curb inlets, constructing rain gardens and bioswales, and planting trees and native vegetation, the project will improve the health and permeability of local soils thus increasing groundwater recharge and reducing storm water runoff.

Specifically, the proposed project consists of two main tasks: final design/permitting and construction. TreePeople will work with the established community-based, task force leadership team to finalize the 30% designs that were developed in the first phase of the San Fernando Green Streets Project (Exhibit 2). Example photos of the project elements can be found in

Exhibit 3. Once TreePeople reaches at least a 65% design level for the project, they will have enough information to begin permit applications. All permits will be secured before construction begins.

During final design, TreePeople will also continue the community work done in the first phase to increase local understanding and commitment to caring for the urban forest by engaging community members, training city leaders, and offering hands-on workshops. The project will involve TreePeople's core expertise inspiring and training community members to plant and care for the trees, native plants, and storm water features. Training will also be provided to City Public Works crews as needed in the care of vegetated swales and rain gardens.

Next, TreePeople will work with the City to implement the final design on the designated, City-owned, three streets and one parking lot. The urban greening elements that will be constructed include curb inlets, rain gardens, bioswales, permeable pavement, cool pavement, and tree plantings.

The City is a small 2.4 square mile working-class town with Latinos accounting for 93% of the total population and at least 18% living below the federal poverty line. The California Environmental Protection Agency's CalEnviroScreen has determined that the City is located in one of the most disadvantaged areas in the state in terms of poverty, unemployment, and exposure to environmental health hazards such as toxic sites, poor air quality, groundwater contamination, and other sources of pollution. The City now faces confounding threats in the face of global climate change. For instance, the past five years of drought has taken a heavy toll on the City's water supply, which is locally sourced from groundwater. The City is also experiencing detrimental impacts from the UHI effect. On average, the City experiences 54 extreme heat days per year (defined as 95º F or above) and studies predict that number will double by mid-century (Hall 2013).

The partnership between the City and TreePeople is ideal for completing a successful green infrastructure project. The City has been working to develop a greener, healthier, and more climate-resilient community by having an open government, engaging residents, working with community and other government partners, and prioritizing multi-benefit projects. For example, the City restored Heritage Park into a climate-appropriate, water-capturing park where children play, community groups gather, and classes are held. TreePeople has 43 years of experience being involved in fostering communities to plant and care for more than 2.5 million trees in the Greater Los Angeles area. They have also successfully implemented a Conservancy-funded green infrastructure project at the LaKretz Urban Watershed Garden. The Garden opened in 2008 and demonstrates multiple green infrastructure elements such as rain gardens, drought-tolerant trees and plants, curb cuts, swales, and permeable road surfaces.

Site Description: The City of San Fernando is located in the Northeast San Fernando Valley at the foot of the San Gabriel Mountains and is bounded by the Pacoima Wash, 118 Freeway, 5 Interstate Freeway, and the Southern Pacific Railroad. The City is located on top of one of Los Angeles' most important groundwater aquifers. The specific streets for the project include Brand Blvd, South Maclay Ave, and Carlisle St and the parking lot is located on Truman St and South Brand Blvd.

Project History: In 2016 TreePeople applied for a grant for the San Fernando Green Streets Project from the Conservancy as part of the Prop 1 Los Angeles Urban Greening grant round. At

its February 2, 2017 meeting, the Conservancy authorized a grant for developing plans and designs, conducting environmental analyses, and preparing permit applications for the project. (Exhibit 2). At that time, the project encompassed 7 streets, a parking lot and a city park. During work pursuant to the grant, TreePeople revised the project to reduce the number of streets to 3, although with more intensive green elements than initially intended for the 7 streets, and to exclude the city park from the project. Also, the project funded by the first grant was changed from preparation of designs, CEQA documentation and permit applications to preparation of 30% designs, baseline studies (i.e. urban heat island, tree canopy, and hydrology studies) and environmental analysis. The project funded by the first grant was successfully completed in July 2018. TreePeople has shifted the preparation of permit applications to the proposed project (i.e. to the final design phase).

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	$1,100,000
TreePeople & City (in-kind match)	$204,117
Others (unfunded)	$1,043,364
Project Total	**$2,347,481**

The anticipated source of funding for the proposed project is the Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (Proposition 1, Water Code § 79700 *et seq*). Funds appropriated to the Conservancy derive from Chapter 6 of the Act (commencing with § 79730) and may be used "for multi-benefit water quality, water supply, and watershed protection and restoration projects for the watersheds of the state" (Section 79731). More specifically, implementation of the project will help achieve three of the thirteen Chapter 6 purposes outlined in Section 79732(a), including:

- "Implement watershed adaptation projects in order to reduce the impacts of climate change on communities and ecosystems" by planning and designing green infrastructure elements to reduce impacts of climate change in the watershed;
- "Protect and restore rural and urban watershed health to improve watershed storage capacity, forest health, protection of life and property, storm water resource management, and greenhouse gas reduction" by planning and designing green infrastructure elements that will capture storm water in a more natural and efficient manner; and
- "Reduce pollution or contamination of rivers, lakes, streams, or coastal waters, prevent and remediate mercury contamination from legacy mines, and protect or restore natural system functions that contribute to water supply, water quality, or flood management" by naturally cleaning storm water and recharging the groundwater via soil infiltration.

The proposed project was reviewed and subsequently recommended for funding through a competitive grant process under the Conservancy's *Proposition 1 Grant Program Guidelines*

adopted in June 2015 ("Prop 1 Guidelines"). (See § 79706(a)). The project meets each of the evaluation criteria in the Prop 1 Guidelines as described in further detail in the following sections of this staff recommendation: "Project Financing" and "Project Summary" (sections above) and "Consistency with Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria & Guidelines" (section below).

TreePeople and the City will provide $204,117 as an in-kind contribution to the project for volunteer coordination and labor on the proposed project.

Although TreePeople has not yet secured cash matching funds for the proposed project, they anticipate receiving matching funding for construction of the project. The project complements funding received by the City of San Fernando through the California Transportation Authority's (Caltrans) *Safe Routes to School* program and the Los Angeles County Public Health Livable, Active Community Environments (PLACE) program to develop and implement an Active Transportation Plan exceeding the cash match requirement of $99,371. The City has also received funding from the Metropolitan Transit Authority (Metro) for a Transit-Oriented Development Specific Plan that will enable redevelopment towards a more sustainable community and prepare the City for greater investment from a proposed light-rail project and new housing. TreePeople also plans to leverage Conservancy funding to provide corporate support during the project period and beyond.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project will be undertaken pursuant to Chapter 3 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation, (Public Resource Code Section and 31113) and Chapter 5.5, integrated coastal and marine resources protection (Public Resources Code Sections 31220).

Section 31113 permits the Conservancy to address the existing and potential impacts of climate change on resources within its jurisdiction. Pursuant to this authorization, the proposed project will develop plans for a project that is a natural solution for resource adaptation to address the urban heat island effect (via vegetation and reflective pavement) and drought impacts (via various elements for storm water capture).

Section 31220 permits the Conservancy to provide grants for coastal watershed and coastal and marine habitat water quality, sediment management, and living marine resources protection and restoration projects. As required by Section 31220 staff has notified the State Water Resources Control Boards of the nature of the proposed project and provided the opportunity for comment, input and review. Pursuant to Sections 31220(b)(1) and (7), the Conservancy is authorized to undertake a project or award a grant for a project that reduces contamination of waters within the coastal zone or marine waters and that reduces the impact of population and economic pressures on coastal and marine resources. By preparing the project designs and installing green infrastructure in the Upper Los Angeles River watershed, the proposed project will help improve water quality of coastal waters and reduce the impacts of dense population along the Los Angeles coast.

Consistent with this section, the proposed authorization would award grants to nonprofit organizations and public agencies to undertake the projects listed above and described in the "Project Summary" section.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S 2018-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):

Consistent with **Goal 8, Objective B** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will provide the pre-implementation planning documentation necessary to implement tree and vegetation planting projects to reduce the urban heat island effect and provide multiple benefits such as enhanced storm water management and an improved quality of life.

Additionally, the proposed project is consistent with one of the major efforts outlined in the 2018-2022 Strategic Plan for the South Coast program including "complete the planning phase for several green infrastructure projects in LA County and begin implementation".

Consistent with **Goal 8, Objective C** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will implement a project to increase resilience to climate change impacts using nature-based solutions by constructing storm water capture infrastructure to enhance storm water management and by planting trees and building reflective surfaces to reduce urban heat island effect.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines, last updated on October 2, 2014, 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. **Promotion and implementation of state plans and policies:** The proposed project is consistent with the following state plans and policies promoting global climate change resilience and adaptation in watershed management:
    a. The proposed project will implement the *California Water Action Plan* (Governor's Office of Planning and Research, 2014) by preparing the documentation necessary to enhance water storage through storm water capture and improve water management by partnering with the City and leading integrated water management efforts at the local level.
    b. The proposed project will implement the *California @ 50 Million: The Environmental Goals and Policy Report* (Governor's Office of Planning and Research, 2013 Draft) by developing mechanisms to reduce storm water run-off and enhance groundwater recharge, promote climate change resilience, and develop healthy, equitable, and sustainable communities.

c. The proposed project will implement the *California Climate Adaptation Strategy/Safeguarding California: Reducing Climate Risk Plan* (CA Natural Resources Agency, July 2014*)* by promoting climate change resilience with its efforts to expand urban forestry.

d. The proposed project will implement the *California Wildlife Action Plan* (CA Department of Fish and Wildlife, 2015) by preparing the documentation necessary to facilitate planting native vegetation, enhancing groundwater recharge, and reducing storm water run-off.

4. **Support of the public:** The proposed project has support from local government, business, and community organizations including State Senator Bob Hertzberg, Los Angeles Unified School District Board Member Monica Tarliff, City of San Fernando Deputy City Manager and Public Work Director Chris Marcarello (see letter in the initial Staff Recommendation in Exhibit 2), Residents for a Better San Fernando, Providence Holy Cross Hospital, San Fernando Local Mothers/Madres Group, Kiwanis Club of San Fernando, Meet Each Need with Dignity, Saint Ferdinand Catholic School, Santa Rosa catholic School, and PUC Nueva Esperanza Charter Academy.

5. **Location:** The City of San Fernando is located in the Northeast San Fernando valley in Los Angeles County and is located on top of one of Los Angeles' most important groundwater aquifers. The City is a part of the Upper Los Angeles River Watershed, downstream from the San Gabriel Mountains, which eventually connects to the Tujunga Wash, the Los Angeles River, and finally the ocean. The proposed project will help increase the City's local water-reliability and climate change resiliency while also improving water quality for Upper Los Angeles River Watershed by greening and capturing storm water in urban streets and parks.

6. **Need:** The recent years of drought have taken a heavy toll on the City's water supply, which is locally sourced from groundwater. Similar drought effects are only projected to increase with global climate change not to mention the threats of water quality and supply present today. While TreePeople has established the strategic partnerships with local health providers, community-based organizations, and the City government to address these issues with the project, they are still lacking the investment needed to design, permit, and construct project elements. An investment from the Coastal Conservancy would support creating a more climate-resilient community in San Fernando and develop viable and scalable solutions that can be used in other communities throughout the state. A loss of funding to TreePeople would likely result in the City proceeding with their *Safe Routes* program to focus solely on making the City walkable without including the urban greening elements.

7. **Greater-than-local interest:** If other local jurisdictions throughout California had a successful urban greening model to reference and learn from, more projects advancing green infrastructure techniques could be implemented. The City of San Fernando is the ideal location to create such a model because of its small size (in terms of area and government) and its commitment to testing innovative strategies for climate-resilient, healthy communities.

8. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** The proposed project area is not vulnerable to sea level rise.

Additional Criteria

9. **Urgency:** Detrimental effects of climate change, like the urban heat island effect and the on-going drought impacts on groundwater, are only putting more stress on the City's public health and water quality and supply. Planning, permitting, and constructing the project now will ensure project success before the climate change effects are too severe to reverse.
10. **Resolution of more than one issue**: The proposed project will design, permit, and construct improvements that will increase climate change resiliency, improve public health and quality of life, and increase local water independence.
11. **Leverage**: See the "Project Financing" section above.
12. **Innovation**: Curb cuts, rain gardens, bioswales, cool pavement, and permeable pavement have been tested in multiple settings throughout Los Angeles, but are still uncommon in broad implementation, or in depth within a given community. In the City of San Fernando, they are highly innovative and new solutions.
13. **Readiness**: The project team is ready to begin working on specific tasks as soon as Conservancy funding is authorized.
14. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals**: See "Project History" above.
15. **Return to Conservancy**: See the "Project Financing" section above.
16. **Cooperation**: TreePeople, the City of San Fernando, and local community groups have coordinated and will work together in the carrying out the proposed project (see "Project Summary" section above).
17. **Vulnerability from climate change impacts other than sea level rise:** The proposed project will address the City's vulnerabilities to climate change mainly from the effects of increased temperature and drought conditions.

CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:

The City of San Fernando is not located within the coastal zone and does not have a Local Coastal Program. However, the project does align with the County of Los Angeles' Enhanced Watershed Management Plan (see below).

CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN/ STATE WATER QUALITY CONTROL PLAN:

The proposed project aligns with the Enhanced Watershed Management Plan for the Upper LA River Watershed by meeting the Plan's two major priorities: (1) Establishing and Meeting Water Quality Priorities; and (2) Implementing Watershed Control Measures. The proposed project aligns with water quality priorities by reducing pollution through storm water infiltration. The proposed project aligns with watershed control priorities by implementing green streets and,

consequently, contributing to related community improvements such as pedestrian safety, traffic calming, street canopy, and urban heat island mitigation.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

With completion of the 30% designs for the project, it is apparent that the project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to 14 Cal. Code Regs. Section 15304, which exempts minor alterations in the condition of land and vegetation that do not involve the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees. The project aligns with this Class 4 exemption as it is a minor alteration in the condition of several streets and a parking lot and does not involve the removal of trees. Further, the project is consistent with the examples identified in Section 15304 in that grading will only occur on land with a slope of less than 10 percent, new water efficient landscaping will be installed, excavated areas will be filled with material compatible with the natural features of the site, and trenching and backfilling will be minor and the surface will be restored. Upon approval, staff will file a Notice of Exemption.