

**COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT**

DATE: January 22, 2014

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Planning Staff

SUBJECT: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Consideration of a request by the County's Real Property Services Division to determine if County acquisition of six (6) parcels, adjacent to Memorial Park in unincorporated Loma Mar, currently owned by the San Mateo County Office of Education, for use as park, recreation, nature preserve, and open space, conforms to the County General Plan.

County File Number: PLN 2014-00015

PROPOSAL

A request by the County's Real Property Services Division to determine if County acquisition of six (6) parcels, adjacent to Memorial Park in unincorporated Loma Mar, currently owned by the San Mateo County Office of Education, for use as park, recreation, nature preserve, and open space, conforms to the County General Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Planning Commission find that the County acquisition of six (6) parcels for use as park, recreation, nature preserve, and open space conforms to the County General Plan.

SUMMARY

The parcels in question, known collectively as the "Loma Mar property," have been owned by the San Mateo County Office of Education for some time. The original intended use of the properties was to create outdoor education facilities, but the Office of Education has determined that such use is infeasible, and has declared the properties surplus. San Mateo County is working in partnership with the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) to acquire the Loma Mar property. POST has committed to provide the purchase funding for the property at a cost of approximately \$4 million, in support of POST's Heart of the Redwoods Campaign, as a critical area for redwood forest to be preserved for habitat and recreational purposes. The County intends to add the property to its Park System for natural resource, watershed, historical, scenic, cultural, recreational, and ecological functions. This property is connected to Memorial

Park and will provide added recreational opportunities including trails and dispersed camping. The San Mateo County Office of Education will use the funds from the sale of the property to enhance its outdoor environmental program and facilities in the Jones Gulch area.

The subject properties are a mix of heavily forested land, some grass and scrub covered open space areas, and some riparian areas surrounding Pescadero Creek and its tributaries. The properties contain vegetative and wildlife resources, and provide potential habitat for various flora and fauna native to rural areas, as well as flora and fauna native to riparian habitats associated with the stream segments that cross the properties.

The acquisition of the properties by the County, with the intent to use the properties as park space, open space, recreational space, and ecological preservation areas, is consistent with the Vegetative, Water, Fish and Wildlife Resources Policies of the General Plan, which require the County to minimize adverse impacts on such resources, to prioritize managed use and protection of such resources, and to protect these resources; the Soil Resources Policies, which require the County to minimize soil erosion, grading, and land clearing; and the Park and Recreation Resource Policies, which encourage provision of passive park and recreation facilities in rural areas in order to protect and preserve environmentally sensitive open space, and to design sites that accommodate recreation that minimizes adverse impacts on natural environments. The proposed acquisition is consistent with the County's General Plan.

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RECOMMENDATION

That the Planning Commission find that the County acquisition of six (6) parcels for use as park, recreation, nature preserve, and open space conforms to the County General Plan, by making the findings shown in Attachment A.

BACKGROUND

Report Prepared By: William Gibson, Project Planner, Telephone 650/363-1816

Applicant: San Mateo County Real Property Services Division

Owner: San Mateo County Office of Education

Location: Unincorporated Loma Mar, adjacent to Memorial Park to the south and west, near Loma Mar Avenue

APNs: 084-101-010, 084-101-020, 084-102-010, 084-102-020, 084-102-030, and 084-102-040

Size: 173.6 acres in total

Existing Zoning: R-1/S-10 (APNs 084-101-010, and 084-101-020), RM (APNs 084-102-010, 084-102-020, 084-102-030, and 084-102-040)

General Plan Designation: Low Density Residential (APNs 084-101-010, and 084-101-020), Open Space (APNs 084-102-010, 084-102-020, 084-102-030, and 084-102-040)

Sphere-of-Influence: N/A

Existing Land Use: Open space used by the Office of Education as an outdoor school/camp

Water Supply: The properties have no current water supply

Sewage Disposal: None of the parcels have sewage facilities

Flood Zone: Zone X (APNs 084-102-010, 084-102-020, 084-102-030, and 084-102-040) and Zone A (APNs 084-101-010, and 084-101-020). Zone X is an area of low flooding. The two parcels in Zone A are in the flood path of Pescadero Creek, and potentially subject to flooding (FEMA Community Panel Numbers 06081C0395E and 06081C0390E).

Environmental Evaluation: A request for General Plan Conformity analysis is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and is not subject to environmental evaluation. The purchase of property is also exempt under Section 15316, Transfer of Ownership of Land in Order to Create Parks. Any future development proposed on the properties would need to address relevant CEQA requirements.

Setting: The properties are undeveloped with primarily hilly land with a mix of redwood and other tree cover, scrub, grass, and other varied vegetation.

DISCUSSION

A. KEY ISSUES

1. Basis for Acquisition

The parcels in question, known collectively as the “Loma Mar property,” have been owned by the San Mateo County Office of Education for some time. The original intended use of the properties was to create outdoor education facilities, but the Office of Education has determined that such use is infeasible, and has declared the properties surplus. San Mateo County is working in partnership with the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) to acquire the Loma Mar property. POST has committed to provide the purchase funding for the property at a cost of approximately \$4 million, in support of POST’s Heart of the Redwoods Campaign, as a critical area

for redwood forest to be preserved for habitat and recreational purposes. The County intends to add the property to its Park System for natural resource, watershed, historical, scenic, cultural, recreational, and ecological functions. This property is connected to Memorial Park and will provide added recreational opportunities including trails and dispersed camping. The San Mateo County Office of Education will use the funds from the sale of the property to enhance its outdoor environmental program and facilities in the Jones Gulch area.

2. Reason for General Plan Conformity Determination

Per California Government Code Section 65402, prior to any acquisition of property for public purpose, the County must request a determination of the acquisition's consistency with the adopted General Plan.

3. Conformance with San Mateo County General Plan

The proposed acquisition potentially involves the following General Plan Policies, which are addressed herein.

a. Vegetative, Water, Fish and Wildlife Resources Policies

- (1) Policy 1.22.a of the County General Plan requires that the County regulate land uses and development activities to prevent, and if infeasible mitigate to the extent possible, significant adverse impacts on vegetative, water, fish and wildlife resources.
- (2) Policy 1.22.b places a priority on the managed use and protection of vegetative, water, fish and wildlife resources in rural areas of the County.
- (3) Policy 1.23 requires the County to regulate the location, density and design of development to minimize significant adverse impacts and encourage enhancement of vegetative, water, fish and wildlife resources.
- (4) Policy 1.24 requires that the County ensure that development will (1) minimize the removal of vegetative resources; and/or (2) protect vegetation which enhances microclimate, stabilizes slopes or reduces surface water runoff, erosion or sedimentation; and/or (3) protect historic and scenic trees.

Discussion: The subject properties are a mix of heavily forested land, some grass and scrub covered open space areas, and some riparian areas surrounding Pescadero Creek and its tributaries. The properties contain vegetative and wildlife resources, and provide potential habitat

for various flora and fauna native to rural areas, as well as flora and fauna native to riparian habitats associated with the stream segments that cross the properties.

The County has not proposed any development(s) on the properties proposed for acquisition, or any changes to the conditions or uses of the properties at this time. The proposal is limited to the acquisition of the property, and any subsequent changes in use would be determined through a planning process, consistent with applicable County regulations. The acquisition in itself does not conflict with the General Plan's vegetative, water, fish and wildlife resources. In addition, the County has indicated its intent to maintain these areas for open space, recreation, natural resource preservation, and other low-intensity uses. Such future uses are also unlikely to conflict with these General Plan Policies.

b. Soil Resources Policies

- (1) Policy 2.17 calls for the County to regulate development to minimize soil erosion and sedimentation.
- (2) Policy 2.23 calls for the County to regulate excavation, grading, filling and land clearing activities to protect against accelerated soil erosion and sedimentation.
- (3) Policy 4.25.a calls for minimizing grading or earth-moving operations.
- (4) Policy 4.25.b requires blending graded areas with adjacent landforms through the use of contour grading rather than harsh cutting or terracing of the site.

Discussion: The proposed acquisition does not conflict with the General Plan Soil Resources Policies. The County is not proposing any land disturbance at this time. Any proposed future development would be subject to the County Grading Ordinance, which incorporates measures to minimize soil erosion and sedimentation.

c. Park and Recreation Resource Policies

- (1) Policy 6.10 generally encourages park providers to locate passive park and recreation facilities in rural areas in order to protect and preserve environmentally sensitive open space lands. This policy considers the following activities to be generally compatible with passive park and recreation facilities: camping, hiking, picnicking, horseback riding and nature study.

Discussion: The subject properties are in the County's rural zone. The County has expressed intent to join the subject parcels to the existing Memorial Park, for use as park, low-intensity recreation, open space, and ecological preservation. These uses are entirely consistent with Policy 6.10.

- (2) Policy 6.14 calls for the County to encourage all providers to design sites to accommodate recreation uses that minimize adverse effects on the natural environment and adjoining private ownership.

Discussion: While the County has not formulated any specific development proposals, the general intended uses of the acquired properties are entirely consistent with Policy 6.14 of the General Plan.

B. ALTERNATIVES

The alternative to the project is for the County to forego purchase of the properties.

C. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

A request for General Plan Conformity analysis is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and is not subject to environmental evaluation. The purchase of properties is also exempt under Section 15316, Transfer of Ownership of Land in Order to Create Parks. Any future development proposed on the properties would need to address relevant CEQA requirements.

D. REVIEWING AGENCY

San Mateo County Real Property Services Division

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Recommended Finding
- B. Vicinity Map

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County of San Mateo
Planning and Building Department

RECOMMENDED FINDING

Permit or Project File Number: PLN 2014-00015 Hearing Date: January 22, 2014

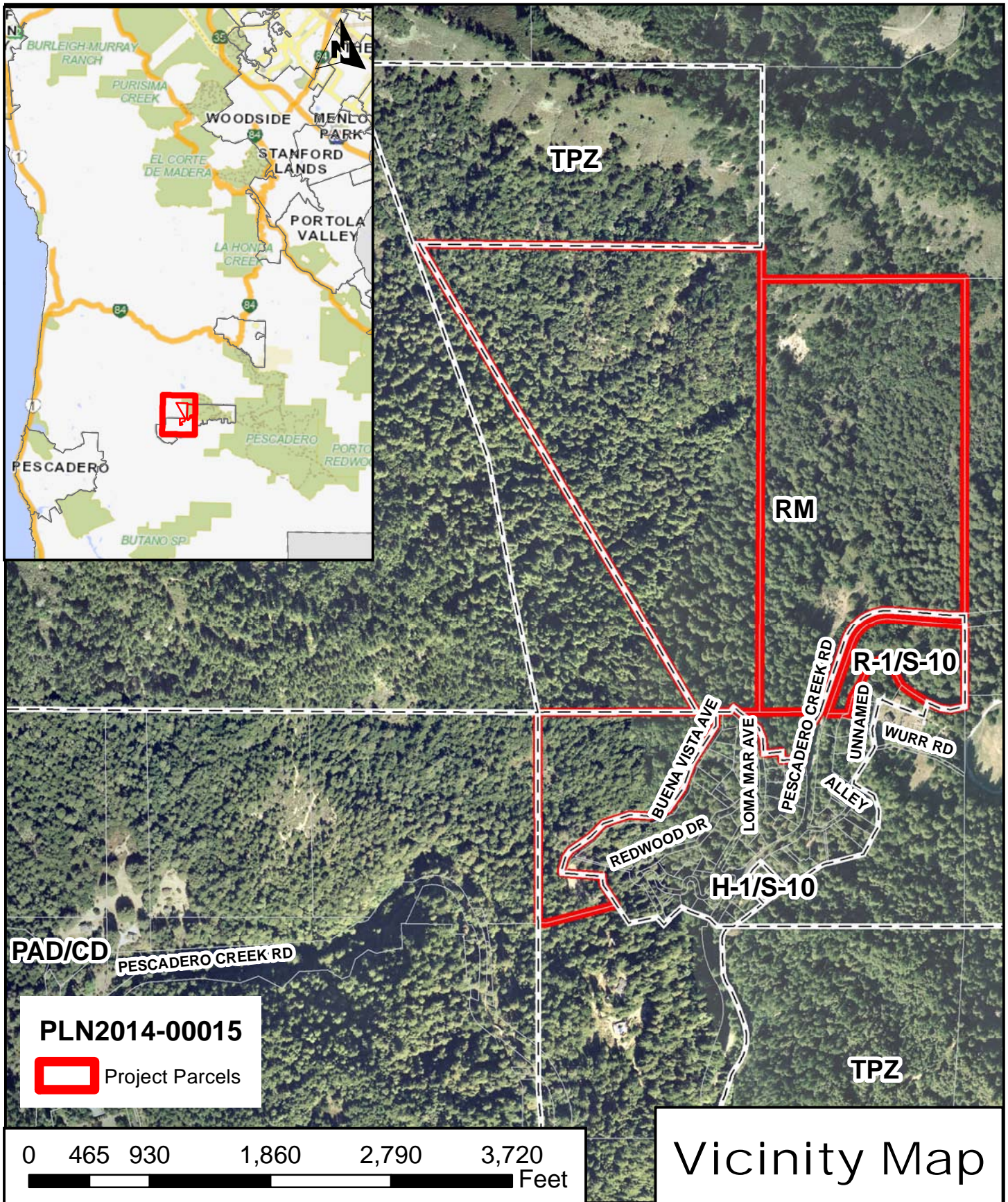
Prepared By: William Gibson
Project Planner

For Adoption By: Planning Commission

RECOMMENDED FINDING

1. Find that the proposed acquisition by the County of parcels 084-101-010, 084-101-020, 084-102-010, 084-102-020, 084-102-030, and 084-102-040 for use as park, recreation, nature preserve, and open space use conforms to the General Plan Vegetative, Water, Fish and Wildlife Resources Policies, Soil Resources Policies, and Park and Recreation Resource Policies, and is consistent with the County's General Plan.

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Vicinity Map

San Mateo County Planning Commission Meeting

Owner/Applicant: _____

Attachment: _____

File Numbers: _____