

**CITY OF ALBANY  
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA  
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda Date: 04/18/05

Reviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_

SUBJECT: Resolution No. 05-19 authorizing negotiations to acquire the 4.5-acre property on Pierce Street from Caltrans for purposes of a park at the appraised value, as determined by Smith & Associates, in the appraisal dated June 30, 2004, not to exceed \$580,000

REPORT BY: Beth Pollard, City Administrator

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Approve Resolution #05-19.

**BACKGROUND**

The City of Albany and the California Department of Transportation have been in discussions and negotiations for several years for the City's acquisition of property formerly used for freeway access located on Pierce Street. Resolution #05-19 summarizes the history of the property, and the City's pursuit of its acquisition for a public park.

Over the past two years, the focus of the negotiations between the City and Caltrans has been over the cost of acquisition. Last year, Council authorized the funding of an appraisal to be performed by one of the appraisers selected by Caltrans, pursuant to instructions issued by Caltrans.

**DISCUSSION**

An appraisal was completed by Smith & Associates, one of the Caltrans-approved appraisers. The appraisal concluded that the value of the 4.5 acre parcel is \$580,000.

To assist in both the administrative and legislative approaches for reasonable acquisition of the property for use as a park, as well as a bicycle and pedestrian trail as part of the Cerrito Creek trail, what is needed now is written authorization from the City of Albany stating its willingness and readiness to purchase the property at the appraised value.

## **ANALYSIS**

There is a significant amount of history regarding the acquisition of the property going back to the 1990's, when the neighborhood agreed to forego a sound-wall in exchange for acquiring the property for use as a public park. In addition, the 2004 Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan recommends the creation of a new neighborhood park in the Albany Hill area so that all Albany residents have a neighborhood park within a half a mile of their homes. The Pierce Street park property is noted in the Master Plan as one of two sites that could serve that neighborhood (Vista School being the other potential site). Specifically, the Master Plan recommendation is to:

*Continue to explore the feasibility of acquiring former freeway right-of-way for neighborhood park development including a part of a pedestrian bike trail linkage with the Bay Trail community gardens, a natural open space area, or other possibilities.*

A specific plan for a park at this location has yet to be developed. Previous discussions have included locating a sports field, a passive meditation site, and a pedestrian/bicycle trail to help connect the Cerrito Creek trail to the waterfront. If the property were acquired, the Parks & Recreation Commission and staff would be charged with the development of a use and design plan for the park, with public participation, that would consider environmental issues and impacts.

Because of the City's commitment to the neighborhood, the recommendation in the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan for a park in this neighborhood, the desire for a pedestrian and bike trail through this property, the uniqueness of this opportunity to acquire more than four acres for \$580,000, and the investment of time, funds, and political efforts to acquire this property, staff recommends that Council approve the resolution authorizing the acquisition of the property for the appraised value.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

The Council set aside \$745,000 of Measure F funds as a contingency for Pierce Street Park and for a local match for grant funds to improve safety along the Ohlone Greenway. The estimated cost in the Master Plan to develop the park with a multi-use playfield is \$1.6 million, with \$405,593 to be funded from Measure R Ballfields funds. The maintenance costs for the park are estimated at \$33,120 per year.

While staff does not typically recommend acquisition of property without sufficient development, operations, and maintenance funds, we see this as a time-sensitive and unique opportunity. If the City were to acquire the property, at the minimum it could be fenced as it is now until funds are available.

Attachment: Resolution #05-19

