



## CITY OF GLENDALE, CALIFORNIA REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

### AGENDA ITEM

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Report: Verdugo Wash Master Plan

1. Motion authorizing the City Manager or his designee to execute a Professional Service Agreement with Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Inc. in the amount of \$5,762,370, using grant funds, for the preparation of the Verdugo Wash Master Plan.

### COUNCIL ACTION

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**Item Type:** Action

**Approved for** September 10, 2024 **calendar**

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Verdugo Wash is being evaluated as a potential linear park that would serve as a multi-dimensional connection that links the region physically, hydrologically, and ecologically, while ensuring that the channel continues to serve its primary function as flood control infrastructure. The Verdugo Wash Visioning Study was completed in 2022, and preparation of the Verdugo Wash Master Plan document is the next phase in assessing the Verdugo Wash corridor project. The purpose of the Verdugo Wash Master Plan is to establish a guiding framework that provides technical direction, design details and phasing flexibility for the Verdugo Wash linear park. Development of the Master Plan document does not include any physical build-out of the Wash.

Staff issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to obtain the services of a well-qualified firm to prepare the Verdugo Wash Master Plan. The RFP sought firms with experience in urban design, landscape architecture, and placemaking with a project team that can adeptly address the transportation, sustainability, engineering, and outreach needs of the project. After an extensive review of proposals received, culminating in interviews with multiple consultant teams, staff is now recommending that the City enter into a Professional Service Agreement with Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Inc. for the Verdugo Wash Master Plan.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

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Approve the attached Motion awarding a contract to Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Inc. (MVVA) and authorize the City Manager or his designee to execute a Professional Service Agreement (PSA) with MVVA in the amount of \$5,762,370 for preparation of the Verdugo Wash Master Plan.

## **ANALYSIS/BACKGROUND**

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The Verdugo Wash Master Plan is the next step in studying the feasibility of transforming the channel into an active transportation corridor and linear park, with opportunities to enhance the natural environment within and along the Wash, including habitat restoration, and stormwater capture and water recharge. The Verdugo Wash has been identified in various City planning documents over the past decade as a potential project to enhance mobility and provide access to open space. However, ensuring the safety of future users and maintaining the primary flood control functions of the Wash are of the utmost importance. Additionally, the extensive coordination needed amongst numerous governmental agencies (i.e., Army Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles County Flood Control, California Fish and Wildlife, etc.) will require meticulous planning. As such, significant resources are needed to thoroughly evaluate the project. The opportunity now exists to fully study the potential implications of developing this linear park project utilizing \$6 million of State grant funds.

In November of 2022, staff presented to Council the Verdugo Wash Visioning Study, which was completed by the renown urban design firm, Imelk. The Visioning Study is a high-level conceptual document that explores the potential for bike and pedestrian movement along the Wash and connectivity to recreation areas, businesses, and schools. The Visioning Study also includes background information on the history of the Wash and an analysis of the flood control performance of the channel, including hydrology analysis. Additionally, it identifies opportunities for interventions that would increase environmental sustainability and resilience. Finally, the Visioning Study cites multiple challenges that warrant additional consideration, such as the physical constraints of the Wash, the limited ability to widen or deepen the channel, and the proximity of the Verdugo Wash to homes and residents in certain areas.

The Visioning Study serves as the base layer of analysis that is needed to understand the parameters and feasibility of the Verdugo Wash linear park endeavor. The Visioning Study organizes the complex project into a number of topic areas and divides the 9.4 mile channel into multiple “wash segments,” each with different physical and contextual considerations. Lastly, the Visioning Study served as the foundation upon which \$6 million in State funds were obtained by the City for use in preparing a master plan.

During the City Council meeting on November 15, 2022, significant conversation was generated regarding safety and quality of life concerns for residents who live directly adjacent to or in close proximity of the Wash. The Council noted these concerns and ascertained that neither the Visioning Study nor the Master Plan would result in immediate alteration of the Wash and that any future build-out would have to be reviewed and approved by the City Council before any work is done. Ultimately, the Council

directed staff to proceed with issuing an RFP for the Master Plan to study the entire 9.4 mile length of the channel. This approach leverages the \$6 million in State funding, allow the environmental impacts of the project alternatives to be studied in total, and results in design possibilities consisting of multiple options that can be applied throughout the flood control channel in a context-sensitive manner (or not applied to some segments at all).

## **OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT**

The Master Plan will build upon the work of the Visioning Study by thoroughly evaluating the Wash's existing conditions including its configuration, performance as flood control infrastructure, and the built and natural environmental surroundings of each Wash segment in preparation of design concepts. Because the Wash takes on different physical characteristics and neighborhood contexts throughout its course, the Master Plan will identify up to three different, context-appropriate interventions for each Wash segment and will include appropriate phases for implementation. Additionally, the Master Plan will establish a brand identity for the project that references the historic and cultural significance of the Wash, identify educational opportunities related to the channel, and develop a public art plan that will be unique to the Verdugo Wash. Finally, the Master Plan will include a financial evaluation that will assess the costs for construction as well as ongoing maintenance and operations costs and will identify both short-term and long-term funding opportunities so that the City can prepare for and prioritize implementation.

Public outreach and community feedback will be of vital importance to the preparation of the Master Plan. While the Visioning Study employed a creative outreach strategy, the efforts were geared toward finding safe ways to interact with the public during the peak of the Covid-19 social distancing health orders. The Master Plan process will expand on those efforts and will include a robust outreach campaign including stakeholder interviews, workshops held in different neighborhoods, site tours, informational sessions on topics such as stormwater and ecology, pop-up booths at City events, social media notifications, direct mailers, a dedicated website, and possibly the formation of a resident focus group. Community feedback from the extensive public outreach will be used to direct the design of the Verdugo Wash.

It is also important to note that the Verdugo Wash Master Plan will not result in immediate construction and development of the linear park space. Moreover, the Master Plan will not require that the entire channel be built to its maximum potential. Rather, it will be a guiding document that will give the City a toolkit of options that can be utilized to prioritize the activation and programming of different Wash segments.

## **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)**

The [Verdugo Wash Master Plan RFP](#) was originally issued and posted on the City and the American Planning Association websites on November 14, 2023, with three addenda issued on January 11, 2024, February 28, 2024, and March 15, 2024. The deadline for proposals was April 15, 2024.

The RFP asked respondents to address the following major objectives and focus areas:

- **Existing Conditions Evaluation** including baseline hydrology, connectivity and access, spatial character, ecology, existing operations, and maintenance, including a market study and cost benefit analysis. This task will also include an evaluation of the planning context and history; vision; design alternatives; mobility and connectivity; placemaking; the environment (ecology and sustainability); and cost and phasing analysis.
- **Community Engagement and Outreach** culminating in a multilingual outreach plan to engage residents, property owners, and other stakeholders both in-person and virtually.
- **Draft Verdugo Wash Master Plan** including a transportation study, construction plan with construction ready design alternatives, a proposed operations and maintenance plan including programming and funding opportunities, and a signage and wayfinding kit that will be unique to the wash.
- **Environmental Review** of all potential environmental impacts, as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).
- **Public Art Master Plan** that enhances the Verdugo Wash through art, historical and cultural educational opportunities, and exploration of ecological topics.

Verdugo Wash Master Plan RFP and Addendums online at:

<https://www.glendaleca.gov/Home/Components/RFP/RFP/3304/2961>

## **RESPONSE TO RFP**

The City's RFP successfully attracted nine well-qualified consultant teams, each with firsthand practical knowledge of how to create a Master Plan that will guide the City in safely transforming Wash segments into functional and attractive public open spaces. The firms represent a wide breadth of experience both nationally and internationally and the proposals demonstrate that all of the project teams have the ability to plan for and build multi-benefit projects that include open space and waterway improvements, urban design and engineering for active transportation, and ecological sustainability.

## **CONSULTANT SELECTION PROCESS**

A six-member selection committee composed of representatives from Community Development's planning and mobility divisions, Community Services & Parks, and Public Works Engineering scored the nine proposals based on the following review criteria as outlined in the RFP:

- Demonstrated project understanding, thoroughness in addressing the RFP requirements, and clarity of the proposal
- Creativity in the approach
- Experience of firm and team members working on similar projects
- Experience of firm and team on complex projects with involvement of multiple stakeholders and governmental agencies
- Project management including expertise of key personnel (prime and sub-consultants)
- Fee proposal demonstrating maximum value for services

Each member of the selection committee scored the proposals individually and the scores were tallied to determine which consultant teams would be invited to interview with the panel. While the proposals received all met the review criteria and demonstrated a variety of creative approaches from highly regarded consultant teams, there was a numerical break in the scores between the fifth and sixth ranked teams. Based on this break in the scores, the five top-scoring teams were invited to interview with the panel.

## **THE FIRM INTERVIEWS**

The five shortlisted firms were:

- HargreavesJones
- Imelk
- MVVA
- Sasaki
- SWA

Each of these five firms and their subconsultant teams have substantial experience in complex open space planning and boast a portfolio of work with projects that illustrate outstanding interagency and multidisciplinary coordination to achieve significant public spaces with multiple community benefits. The five teams were asked to prepare a short presentation highlighting what makes their team uniquely qualified for the project; the creative, place-based approach they would take to implement the “Vision” for the Verdugo Wash; and the integration of active transportation mobility goals, ecological concerns, historical/cultural aspects, and technical requirements of the flood control channel during the interview. The interviews were conducted on June 27, 2024, and scored based on the following review criteria:

- Presentation
- Organization
- Clarity and Communication Skills
- Technical Understanding
- Responses to Questions

At the conclusion of the interviews and the calculation of the panel scores, the firm with the highest ranking was MVVA. MVVA’s presentation stood out with their use of a dynamic polystyrene model of the Verdugo Wash that illustrated how the channel could be adapted at various points throughout its length. The model demonstrated multiple interventions, such as capping the channel without adding heavy pillars that would block water flow, connecting the Wash to existing open spaces and City facilities, and cutting back concrete walls in more natural areas to slow water flow and increase groundwater recharge. The use of the physical model demonstrated an impressive strategy for communicating the project in a tactile, tangible way to the interview panel, and potentially to the Glendale community and stakeholders in the future. The panel noted that the MVVA team was highly creative, with excellent communication skills and an impressive team dynamic. The MVVA team also demonstrated that they have the ability to plan and execute iconic public open spaces with a project list that includes:

- Brooklyn Bridge Park

- The Chicago 606
- Waterloo Greenway in Austin, Texas
- St. Louis CityArchRiver Project
- Allegheny Riverfront Park Pittsburgh, PA

The MVVA team will be joined by several qualified subconsultants for the project, including Kimley Horn for transportation planning, civil engineering and environmental review, HR&A for market analysis and funding opportunities, Dyson and Womack for development of a public art master plan, and Consensus for an extensive and creative public outreach campaign. The MVVA proposal also included specific subconsultants for wildlife corridor planning (Rock Design Associates), ecological design (Stratify X), and geomorphology and bioengineering analysis (Inter-Fluve) to ensure enhancement of the natural environmental features of the Wash.

The MVVA project team will consist of local, Los Angeles based project managers, designers, and public outreach experts, with additional support from partners in their New York and Cambridge offices. This local presence is invaluable, providing the hands-on involvement and familiarity essential for a project of such complexity and high visibility.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Development of the Master Plan including the requisite environmental review is anticipated to take approximately three years to complete. Staff will work with the consultant team to prepare an existing conditions report that will organize areas of further study and will be used as the basis for up to three design alternatives per Wash segment. Staff and the consultant team will undertake an extensive public outreach campaign to gather community and stakeholder feedback. The design alternatives and community feedback will form the basis of the first draft of the Verdugo Wash Master Plan. Once the draft is in sufficiently final form to provide a stable project description for purposes of CEQA review, the appropriate environmental review document will be prepared, which will be available for public review and comment before the final documents are drafted. There will be multiple status updates and check-ins with City Council as project milestones are reached.

## **STAKEHOLDERS/OUTREACH**

Extensive public outreach will be conducted as part of the Project, including but not limited to, online engagement, advisory committee meetings, community events, surveys, and other activities, including providing the public with a timeline for all public meetings.

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

The Verdugo Wash Master Plan Professional Services Agreement sets a not-to-exceed amount of \$5,762,370, which was included as part of the annual budget, as outlined below. No new appropriation is being requested at this time.

The City Council approved funding is outlined below:

| <b>Existing Appropriation</b> |   |                       |
|-------------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| <b>Amount</b>                 | <b>Account String</b>                     | <b>Funding Source</b> |
| \$5,000,000                   | GL: 43110-2160-CDD-0020<br>PL: CDD00993BG | Grant Fund            |
| \$762,370                     | GL: 43110-2160-CDD-0020<br>PL: CDD00993AG | Grant Fund            |

### **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (CEQA/NEPA)**

No environmental review is required at this time. Environmental review in compliance with State and Local CEQA Guidelines will be conducted as part of the Project once the Verdugo Wash Master Plan is in sufficiently final form.

### **CAMPAIGN DISCLOSURE**

In accordance with the City Campaign Finance Ordinance, Exhibit 3 shows the names and business addresses of the members of the board of directors, the chairperson, CEO, COO, CFO, Subcontractors and any person or entity with 10% interest or more in the company proposed for professional services agreement in this Agenda Item Report.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

1. Approve the attached Motion awarding a contract to MVVA and authorizing the City Manager or his designee to execute a Professional Service Agreement with MVVA in the amount of \$5,762,370, using grant funding, to prepare for the Verdugo Wash Master Plan.
2. The City Council may choose not to approve the attached Motion awarding a contract to MVVA and not authorizing the City Manager or his designee to execute a Professional Services Agreement with that company and select another firm from the list.
3. The City Council may choose not to approve the attached Motion awarding a contract to MVVA and not authorizing the City Manager or his designee to execute a Professional Services Agreement with any company, ending any further progress on the project. If this alternative is selected, the \$6,000,000 of grant funding dedicated to the project will be returned to Caltrans and Cal OES.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION**

#### **Submitted by:**

Bradley Calvert, Director of Community Development

#### **Prepared by:**

Teresa Santilena, AICP, Principal Planner, Long Range Planning

Vilia Zemaitaitis, AICP, Deputy Director of Community Development, Long Range Planning

#### **Approved by:**

Roubik R. Golanian, P.E., City Manager

## **EXHIBITS/ATTACHMENTS**

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1. Proposed Schedule and Scope of Work
2. Campaign Finance Disclosure