

Sunnyside Cemetery

1095 E. Willow Street



Long Beach City Council
August 20, 2019



Subject Property

- Located at 1095 East Willow Street.
- On Willow Street, between California Ave and Orange Ave.
- Measures approximately 13 Acres.



Background

- Established in 1906, 2nd oldest burial ground in the City of Long Beach.
- Resting place to about 16,000 people, including Union Soldiers and several pioneering Long Beach figures.
- Declining revenue resulting from the lack of space to sell new burial plots and increasing cost for maintaining aging infrastructure, necessitated the Friends of Sunnyside Cemetery (Board) to consider a different management model for the Subject Property.
- In June 13, 2019, the Board publicly reported that it was unable to continue maintenance and permanent closure was imminent.
- On June 27, 2019, the City received formal notification from the Board requesting to:
 - (a) transfer title to the City
 - (b) change the status from a private cemetery to a public (municipal) cemetery with the State of California
 - (c) transfer the endowment fund to the City





Obligations and Liabilities

Ongoing Operations and Maintenance Costs

- The Parks, Recreation and Marine Department (PRM) currently maintains the 4-acre Municipal Cemetery adjacent to the Subject Property.
- Annual operations budget of Municipal Cemetery is \$60,000.
- Subject Property is larger and includes approximately 16,000 burials, aging structures, deteriorated landscape, equipment and utilities.
- City researching short and long-term maintenance options for the Subject Property.
- Estimates for additional maintenance and operations at the Subject Property is \$230,000, for total site maintenance of \$290,000.



One-Time Capital Improvements

- Immediate one time needs to maintain basic public access and safety to the Subject Property is estimated to be \$1.0 million - \$1.5 million.
- Long-term capital improvements for structural stabilization, landscape conversion, utility infrastructure, building repair, and capital replacement are needed.
- Detailed assessments by outside engineering, safety and subject matter experts in process.
- Staff will work to complete assessments, develop a budget and timeline and bring back recommendations for Council review and approval.



Existing Contracts

- The Board has requested the following obligations to be recognized:
 - Private burials to continue for individuals with deeds on file (estimated at two times per year).
 - Long Beach Historical Society's Annual Historical Cemetery Tour in October 2019.
 - Long Beach Opera-hosted event at the Cemetery in May 2020.
 - Long Beach Historical Society's work with the Navy Historical Society grant to preserve cemetery records.
- Board has agreed to transfer all records to the City.



Legal Requirements

- Transfer and conversion of the historic cemetery regulated by the State of California, Department of Consumer Affairs, Cemetery & Funeral Bureau.
- No specific fees or cost, but will take significant staff work with due diligence and administration of the process.
- Board is current with all reporting requirements.
- Once property transferred to City, Bureau will record transfer of title and final report of assets.
- Board will return the original and renewal licenses to the Bureau.
- Subject Property will operate under same rules and regulations as Municipal Cemetery.



Potential Funding Sources

- Port of Long Beach assistance.
- Rivers and Mountains Conservancy grant for walking trails connecting Sunnyside Cemetery with Willow Springs Park
- Endowment Fund transfer from the Board of \$504,000.
- Long Beach Water Department partial funding for drought tolerant landscape conversion.
- Other Potential Grants, filming, special events.
- Possible creation of a Cemetery District.



Recommendations

In order to avoid default and transfer of property to the State of California and allow the City to obtain control of the Subject property, staff recommends acceptance of the Subject Property at 1095 East Willow Street.

Recommendations:

- Accept the transfer of real property at 1095 East Willow Street, Assessor Parcel Numbers 7212-009-903 and -908, also known as Sunnyside Cemetery (Subject Property);
- Accept the transfer of unrestricted funds associated with the Subject Property (estimated at \$540,000);
- Authorize the City Manager, or designee, to execute any and all documents necessary to effectuate the transfer, including the assumption of all contracts related to plots and burials; and,
- Accept Categorical Exemption CE-19-204. (District 7)

