



AGENDA REPORT

TO: Jestin D. Johnson
City Administrator

FROM: Liam Garland
Director, Oakland Public Works

SUBJECT: Measure DD Grant Agreement for Sogorea Te' Land Trust Watershed Acquisition

DATE: December 30, 2025

City Administrator Approval


Jestin Johnson (Jan 27, 2026 20:45:36 PST)

Date: Jan 27, 2026

RECOMMENDATION

Staff Recommends That The City Council Adopt A Resolution Awarding A Grant Of Measure DD Bond Funds In An Amount Not To Exceed \$843,875.00 To The Sogorea Te' Land Trust For The Purpose Of Acquiring Property For The Conservation And Restoration Of Portions Of Sausal Creek; And Making Appropriate California Environmental Quality Act Findings.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The recommended action would authorize the City Administrator to grant an amount not-to-exceed \$843,875.00 from the Series C Measure DD Fund to the Sogorea Te' Land Trust (Land Trust) to purchase an approximately 16-acre undeveloped property at 2 Blachford Court, Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) 48D-7268-1-12 (Property) to protect and maintain an undeveloped part of the Sausal Creek Watershed in accordance with the intent of the Measure DD bond measure. The use of the Property would be restricted in perpetuity to watershed conservation and restoration. This land acquisition will permanently protect the forest and creeks within an Oakland hills canyon at the headwaters of Cobble Dick Creek, a tributary to Sausal Creek in the City of Oakland (City).

BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

In 2002, Oakland voters passed Measure DD, authorizing \$198,250,000 in bonds to create the Oakland Trust for Clean Water and Safe Parks. Measure DD's purpose is to "improve water quality, provide educational and recreational facilities for children, clean up Lake Merritt, restore Oakland's creeks, waterfront, and Estuary, preserve and acquire open space, renovate parks, provide safe public spaces, and provide matching funds to qualify for state and federal funding for these projects." Of the authorized bonds, \$4,500,000 is intended for the acquisition of watershed protection easements (property and conservation easements) on Oakland's ecologically valuable lands and waterways. To date, \$2,275,481 of Measure DD funds have been spent to acquire conservation property easements in Oakland, including properties at

Butters Canyon, Dimond Canyon, Beaconsfield Canyon, Glen Echo Creek, Dimond Park, and in the San Leandro Creek watershed above Dunsmuir House.

Bond sales have proceeded in tranches. The City is spending down the third tranche, Series C. A total of \$857,686 in Series C Measure DD Acquisitions funds are unspent. Due to staffing shortages and the difficulty and complexity of identifying and acquiring conservation properties, the City is behind schedule in spending these 2017 funds.

Watershed and Stormwater Management Division (WSMD) of Oakland Public Works identified a high priority conservation property with a willing seller and seeks authorization to spend the remaining Series C Measure DD Acquisition funds to enable the purchase and perpetual protection of the Property.

WSMD identified and prioritized properties for conservation in the following way. WSMD worked with an environmental consultant to analyze every property in the City for its conservation value. The analysis overlayed map layers for conservation and equity factors and scored each property based on the presence of the target map layers. The analysis focused on undeveloped or minimally developed properties. The analysis prioritized properties with creeks and/or wetlands, endangered/threatened/rare plant and/or animal habitat, adjacency to existing protected conservation lands, and properties within the Conservation Lands Network (the Bay Area's regional conservation plan), Associated Bay Area Governments Priority Conservation Areas, and Oakland's Priority Equity Neighborhoods. WSMD also reviewed historical conservation acquisition prioritizations, reviewed County Assessor tax-defaulted auction properties, and consulted with partners such as Friends of Sausal Creek, Butters Canyon Land Trust, and East Bay Regional Parks District.

WSMD contacted owners of high priority conservation properties and identified parcels with landowner(s) willing to sell to the City for no more than fair market value, and for no more than the amount of Series C Measure DD Acquisition funds. Within that smaller set of candidate properties, WSMD conducted site visits to assess their condition and suitability for conservation acquisition.

WSMD identified the privately-owned property located at 2 Blanchford Court (Property), with Assessor Parcel Number 48D-7268-1-12, as the highest priority for acquisition. The Property is approximately 16 acres, undeveloped, forested with native plants, and contains headwaters reaches of Cobble Dick Creek, a tributary to Sausal Creek. See **Attachment A** for a map of the property, and **Attachment B** for overview photos of the property.

Intact forested Creekside properties of this large size and good condition are increasingly rare in the City, due to the historic parcelization and development of property.

The Property owners obtained a Comparative Market Analysis (CMA) in August 2024, which estimated the land to be valued at \$1,295,000. Though Series C Measure DD Acquisition funds are less than the CMA, the owners' interest in the long-term conservation of the Property have motivated them to sell the Property at below market value with the understanding that the Property's natural resources will be conserved in perpetuity.

The Sogorea Te Land Trust (Land Trust) is a local, Indigenous- and women-led nonprofit organization that facilitates the return of Indigenous land to Indigenous people. It includes

members of the Confederated Villages of Lisjan. The Chochenyo-speaking Lisjan Ohlone people have lived on the land in Huchiun, or what is now known as the East Bay, for thousands of years, and continue to live here today. The Lisjan are made up of the six nations that were directly enslaved at Mission San Jose in Fremont and Mission Dolores in San Francisco. In January 2023, the City returned stewardship over an approximately 5-acre portion of Joaquin Miller Park to the Land Trust pursuant to [Ordinance No. 13712 C.M.S.](#)

The recommended action would authorize a grant of \$843,875, or the remaining balance of the Series C Measure DD Acquisition funds, less \$13,811 for City staff costs, to the Land Trust to acquire and protect the Property in perpetuity. This would cover the anticipated purchase price for the Property as well as qualifying transaction costs including an appraisal, environmental site assessment, title insurance, escrow fees and related costs. At the close of escrow, a restriction would be recorded against the Property's title that would restrict its use to watershed conservation and restoration in perpetuity, consistent with Measure DD.

ANALYSIS AND POLICY ALTERNATIVES

The recommended action would meet the intent and purpose of the Measure DD Watershed Acquisitions Program and would efficiently expend the remaining Series C Measure DD Acquisition funds in one transaction.

WSMD identified the Property as a top priority for conservation through a rigorous, analytical process that included consultation with local and regional stakeholders. The Property is an unusually large, undeveloped property with significant natural resource value, including native plants, wildlife, and year-round creeks, and its development would compromise the Sausal Creek watershed.

Given the Property's conservation value, its acquisition would align with various policies and objectives of the City's Open Space Conservation and Recreation (OSCAR) Element of the City's 1996 General Plan: Policies OS1.2 Open Space Protection Priorities for Private Land; CO-5.1: Protection of groundwater recharge; C0-6.1: Creek management; C0-11.1: Protection from urbanization; and C0-11.2: Migratory corridors, Objectives C0-7: Protection of native plant communities and C0-11: Wildlife.

In addition, the recommended action will prevent development in the Oakland hills, an area mapped as a very high fire hazard severity zone. Preventing more human-built infrastructure will reduce the burden on road networks, evacuation routes, and emergency responders in the event of fire in this area.

Risk to downstream creeks and the City's storm drainage system will also be reduced. Large and cumulative development impacts within this area have the potential to damage creeks at the site of development and downstream. Development adds impervious surface to the landscape, which increases the volume and velocity of stormwater flows and prevents rain from soaking into the ground. This can increase creek erosion and storm drainage issues downstream.

The purchase and conservation of this property also aligns with the stated purpose and intent of [the City's Creek Protection Ordinance, OMC 13.16](#) which is to "protect and enhance the water

quality of our Watercourses, water bodies, and wetlands in a manner pursuant to and consistent with the federal Clean Water Act," and to "ensure the future health, safety, and general welfare of City citizens by D. Safeguarding and preserving Creeks and Riparian Corridors in a natural state; E. Preserving and enhancing Creekside vegetation and wildlife; F. Preventing activities that would contribute significantly to flooding, erosion or sedimentation, or that would destroy riparian areas or would inhibit their restoration; G. Enhancing recreational and beneficial uses of Creeks."

Funding the Land Trust's purchase of the Property offers both short- and long-term efficiencies to the City. In the short term, the Land Trust would assume the administrative logistics of the land sale, such as negotiations with the Property owners, conducting site investigations and other due diligence, and coordinating the close of escrow. In the long term, the Land Trust will own, maintain, and steward the land in perpetuity, managing it for fire fuel maintenance, managing against encroachments, and managing it for the natural resource value of the land through habitat restoration. The long-term maintenance of the land would be especially challenging for the City, which eliminated its open-space maintenance staffing in 2008.

At closing, a restriction would be recorded against the title to ensure that the Property can only be used for watershed conservation and restoration. The restriction would ensure the City has the right to monitor the property and enforce the restriction, which could include the right for the City to transfer the Property to another qualified non-profit or take title to the Property in cases of unresolved violations. This would ensure consistency with Measure DD.

The Land Trust is one of the few local non-profits that are qualified to acquire and hold the Property for these purposes. The Property is too small for larger regional or national conservation organizations. And other local organizations, such as the Butters Canyon Conservancy, are focused on other areas or are otherwise not sufficiently equipped to expand their footprint. Friends of Sausal Creek is very supportive of this project, though not functioning as a land trust and not holding any property. The proposed grant to the Sogorea Te' Land Trust aligns with the City's equity goals by facilitating the return of Indigenous land to Indigenous people, and it would continue a partnership that began with the City's return of public land in Joaquin Miller Park to the Land Trust in 2022.

Approval of the recommended actions would advance the Citywide priorities of ***holistic community safety and housing, economic, and cultural security.***

Alternatively, the City could seek to purchase the Property itself, although this would introduce new costs and liabilities associated with the City owning and maintaining a large new open space in a very high fire hazard severity Zone. The City could also not seek to acquire or support the acquisition of the Property, although that would jeopardize the feasibility of using Series C Measure DD Acquisition funds since they were authorized nearly ten years ago.

FISCAL IMPACT

The grant agreement would be for \$843,875, of which \$800,000 is anticipated to be the Property purchase price and the remainder for the Land Trust's transaction costs. At close of escrow, \$800,000 would be transferred from Measure DD: 2017C Clean Water, Safe Parks & Open Space Trust for Oakland Fund (5322), Engineer Design: Project Management (90270) and

Watershed and Stormwater Program Organization (30245), Watershed Acquisition-B Project (1000827), and Storm Drain Management and Maintenance Program (IN14) to the Land Trust for the purchase of the Property. Up to \$43,875 would be paid to the Land Trust to reimburse transaction-related costs and/or additional purchase costs. Up to \$13,811 for staff time spent working on this project would be charged to the same coding block above.

PUBLIC OUTREACH / INTEREST

Given the sensitive and sometimes confidential nature of property sales, there has not been widespread public outreach for this project. However, there has been widespread public outreach for Measure DD and its Acquisitions Program, and key partners are engaged on this project.

In 2002, City voters passed Measure DD, authorizing \$198,250,000 in bonds to create the Oakland Trust for Clean Water and Safe Parks. Of the authorized bonds, \$4,500,000 intended for the acquisition of properties and conservation easements of Oakland's ecologically valuable lands and waterways.

The Measure DD Community Coalition (Coalition) was authorized by the Oakland City Council in 2003 as "an inclusive coalition of Oaklanders and organizations interested in the implementation of Measure DD." The Coalition provides oversight, input, feedback, and recommendations to project staff on organizing, prioritizing, and spending for DD projects. The Coalition has been briefed on the progress of the Acquisitions program and this specific project since 2021 at bi-monthly meetings open to the public. The Coalition is supportive of the acquisition and approach to conservation with the remaining Series C Measure DD Acquisition funds.

Staff at the East Bay Regional Park District's Land Acquisition Program recommended that the City consider acquisition of the Property based on its size, forest cover, and creeks.

With the small set of properties recommended for City acquisition by The Friends of Sausal Creek, the Property, APN 48D-7268-1-12, was one of their top priorities. After touring the Property with WSMD staff and the landowners, Friends of Sausal Creek board member Tim Vendlinski reported that purchasing the Property for conservation "would be one of the single most important actions ever taken toward protecting Sausal Creek." Friends of Sausal Creek board members have independently suggested to WSMD staff that the City partner with Sogorea Te' Land Trust on the long-term stewardship of the land, and/or transfer the land directly to Sogorea Te' Land Trust. Friends of Sausal Creek board members, staff, and volunteers are collaborating with Sogorea Te' on other projects, and have indicated that they are standing by and ready to help if Sogorea Te' requests it with the Property.

COORDINATION

The project is led by the WSMD in Oakland Public Works with close participation from the Economic and Workforce Development Department's Real Estate Division, City Attorney's Office, and Budget Bureau. This report and resolution have been reviewed by the Office of the City Attorney and the Budget Bureau.

PAST PERFORMANCE, EVALUATION, AND FOLLOW-UP

Sogorea Te' Land Trust organized, worked, and had their office in the City since 2016. They have active project sites in [East](#) and [West](#) Oakland and the [Oakland hills](#). [In 2022, the City granted a Cultural Conservation Easement to Sogorea Te' Land Trust](#) in perpetuity over an approximate 3.8-acre portion of Joaquin Miller Park now known as Rinihamu Pulte'irekne (previously known as Sequoia Point). Sogorea Te' has engaged hundreds of volunteers at Rinihamu Pulte'irekne and has also established a fire fuels reduction partnership there with CalFire staff.

Sogorea Te' Land Trust also has a growing portfolio of lands and projects in other East Bay cities, such as a [project in the City of Richmond](#) through a collaboration with Richmond's City government, a [three acre creekside property in Castro Valley](#), this [site in the City of Berkeley](#), and this high profile site obtained through long-term partnership with the City of Berkeley.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Economic: The proposed action would expend \$855,681 in Series C Measure DD Acquisitions bond funds. This would help protect the City's bond rating and bond interest rates. This will save City funds from being paid on higher interest bonds. Once the Series C Measure DD bonds are expended, additional Measure DD bond sales will become available for additional projects. Additionally, the proposed project will provide a land base to support the cohesion, resilience, and growth of the Indigenous community.

Environmental: The proposed action would protect an undeveloped forested creekside canyon, keeping it from being sold, subdivided, and developed. Protecting the ecosystem of the canyon would preserve water quality and quantity in these reaches of Cobblestick Creek, preserve the area's hydrology and flood control function, and preserve habitat for native wildlife species that reside and/or pass through the canyon. Keeping the canyon in a natural state will also prevent development in an area known to be at risk for wildfires and other natural disasters – reducing pressure on the environment, evacuation routes during a fire, and on emergency responders.

Race & Equity: The OMC directs City departments to "intentionally integrate, the principle of "fair and just" in their work to achieve equitable opportunities for all people and communities OMC 2.29.170.1. In addition section 2.29.170.1.9 and 13 directs City departments to build healthy and natural environments for all people that include mixes of land use that support: jobs, housing, amenities and services; trees and forest canopy; and clean air, water, soil and sediment; and to support parks and natural resources that provide access for all people to safe, clean and quality outdoor spaces, facilities and activities that appeal to the interests of all communities.

In alignment with the OMC cited above, [in 2022, the City granted a Cultural Conservation Easement to Sogorea Te' Land Trust](#) in perpetuity over an approximate 3.8-acre portion of Joaquin Miller Park now known as Rinihamu Pulte'irekne (previously known as Sequoia Point). Sogorea Te' has engaged hundreds of volunteers at Rinihamu Pulte'irekne and has also established a fire fuels reduction partnership there with CalFire staff. The cultural easement

granted to Sogorea Te' Land Trust in 2022 by the City, Corrina Gould, Sogorea Te' Land Trust co-founder, and Lisjan Tribal Chairwoman, underlined the importance of the agreement. In her words: ["This agreement with the City of Oakland will restore our access to this important area, allowing a return of our sacred relationship with our ancestral lands in the Oakland hills. The easement allows us to begin to heal the land and heal the scars that have been created by colonization for the next seven generations."](#)

In January 2023, the City returned stewardship over an approximately 5-acre portion of Joaquin Miller Park to the Land Trust pursuant to [Ordinance No. 13712 C.M.S.](#) With this act, the City became the first local government in the country to re-matriate land to a local indigenous organization, marking a significant step in returning land to Indigenous stewardship and fostering Ohlone cultural revitalization in the Bay Area.

The Sogorea Te' Land Trust facilitates the return of Indigenous land to Indigenous people and includes members of the Confederated Villages of Lisjan. The proposed action would convey land ownership back to the indigenous Chochenyo-speaking Lisjan Ohlone, who have lived on the land in Huchin, or what is now known as the East Bay, for thousands of years and continue to live here today. The Lisjan are made up of the six nations that were directly enslaved at Mission San Jose in Fremont and Mission Dolores in San Francisco.

According to the U.S. Census, the Indigenous population in the Bay Area is 18,500 strong and projected to grow over the next few decades.

This project recognizes the grievous historic injustices inflicted by the Mission system and western settlers who stole land from and enslaved and terrorized indigenous people in what became the City. This project will offer critical needed recognition to the Bay Area's Indigenous populations, past and present. By re-matriating this land, the City recognizes that Native communities persist today and are active in efforts to preserve the land and cultures.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA)

This project is categorically exempt from CEQA based on the following state of California codes:

15307. Actions by regulatory agencies for the protection of natural resources as authorized by state law or local ordinance to assure the maintenance, restoration, or enhancement of a natural resource where the regulatory process involves procedures for protection of the environment. Construction activities are not included in this exemption.

Authority cited: Section 21083, Public Resources Code; Reference: Section 21084, Public Resources Code.

15308. Actions by regulatory agencies for protection of the environment, as authorized by state or local ordinance, to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of the environment, where the regulatory process involves procedures for protection of the environment.

Authority cited: Section 21083, Public Resources Code; Reference: Section 21084, Public Resources Code; International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union v. Board of Supervisors, (1981) 116 Cal. App. 3d 265.

15313. Acquisition of lands for wildlife conservation purposes, including (a) preservation of fish and wildlife habitat, (b) establishing ecological reserves under Fish and Game Code Section 1580, and (c) preserving access to public lands and waters where the purpose of the acquisition is to preserve the land in its natural condition.

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21087, Public Resources Code; Reference: Section 21084, Public Resources Code.

15325. Transfer of ownership of interest in land to preserve existing natural conditions and historical resources. Examples include but are not limited to:

- (a) Acquisition, sale, or other transfer of areas to preserve the existing natural conditions, including plant or animal habitats.
- (c) Acquisition, sale, or other transfer to allow restoration of natural conditions, including plant or animal habitats.
- (d) Acquisition, sale, or other transfer to prevent encroachment of development into flood plains.
- (e) Acquisition, sale, or other transfer to preserve historical resources.
- (f) Acquisition, sale, or other transfer to preserve open space or lands for park purposes.

Authority cited: Section 21083, Public Resources Code; Reference: Section 21084, Public Resources Code.

ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Staff Recommends That The City Council Approve A Resolution Awarding A Grant Of Measure DD Bond Funds In An Amount Not To Exceed \$843,875.00 To The Sogorea Te' Land Trust For The Purpose Of Acquiring Property For The Conservation And Restoration Of Portions Of Sausal Creek; And Making Appropriate California Environmental Quality Act Findings.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Terri Fashing, Watershed and Stormwater Management Division, and DD Bond Manager, at (510) 238-7276.

Respectfully submitted,



Liam Garland (Jan 21, 2026 14:20:04 PST)

Liam Garland
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Attachments (2):

A: Maps

B: Photos