

# NEWS

FROM THE OFFICE OF COUNCILMEMBER  
**PAUL KORETZ**  
FIFTH DISTRICT



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **LA City Council Approves Own A Piece of LA Ordinance to Ensure Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Is Given First Right of Refusal On Future Sales of Hillside City-Owned Surplus Property**

**May 24, 2022 – LOS ANGELES, CA** – Today the Los Angeles City Council voted unanimously to approve an ordinance to codify that the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC) shall have the first right of refusal on hillside land sale offers for conservation at the City of Los Angeles' purchase price plus any administrative and management costs incurred by the City. After two years, SMMC will have an additional re-offer option if the land sale is not completed and is offered again to new buyers.

In 2008-9, LA Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa initiated the “Own A Piece of LA” program to itemize, account for, and offer undevelopable slivers of City surplus land and/or remnant parcels to adjoining neighbors since they are deemed incapable of independent development and can only be of use to adjacent property owners. However, with advanced engineering innovations in recent decades, development in sensitive ecological areas has increased, resulting in the fragmentation and degradation of essential remaining wildlife habitat connectivity and corridors, particularly in the Santa Monica Mountains Zone, home to the Southern California subpopulation of the Mountain Lion. Our local mountain lions are now a “candidate” species under consideration for listing as “threatened” under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) by the CA Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW).

“While I have been working with the City Planning Department for the better part of a decade to protect biodiversity and wildlife habitat connectivity in the Santa Monica Mountains, it is imperative that we be certain we are not at the same time inadvertently selling off parcels for development that could obstruct the very linkages we are working so hard to protect,” said **Councilmember Paul Koretz**. “Thank you to my colleagues for unanimously partnering with me today to protect our precious wildlife and habitats in our Santa Monica Mountains.”

Los Angeles is located in a global biodiversity hotspot called the California Floristic Province, which means that it includes more than 1,500 endemic plant species, that at least 70 percent of the area's original habitat has been lost, and that the rest is endangered by human activities. Much of the remaining biodiversity within Los Angeles is located in the mountains and hillsides. Plants and animals need these interconnected ecosystems to continue to exist and flourish within this urban context and this biodiversity hotspot is jeopardized by increased development and habitat fragmentation.

“Wildlife habitat connectivity is so essential to the survival of the cornerstone species we share our Santa Monica mountains with, and many areas are in serious danger of being blocked if we do not act urgently and consciously,” said **Paul Edelman, Deputy Director of Natural Resources and Planning, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and its chief biologist** “Today's action by the City Council is so important and affirms the State legislature's 1979 Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Act, but more steps need to be taken sooner rather than later.”

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Councilmember Paul Koretz  
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"Our parkland is precious and acknowledging the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy's right of first refusal at the original purchase price for surplus City land underscores our commitment and prevents any confusion," said **Councilmember Bob Blumenfield**. "When critical open space is lost, it's usually lost forever and the SMMC is the biggest protector of our wildlife corridors, open space, and indigenous plant species in the region."

"This motion allows the Santa Monica Conservancy to have the right of first refusal when the city disposes of public land in the Santa Monica Mountains. My district contains so much of the beautiful and unique Santa Monica Mountain range, and I am so proud to partner with Councilmember Koretz to ensure that we preserve as much of this land as possible and prevent it from being developed," said **Councilmember Nithya Raman**.

"The City Council has implemented future oversight by ensuring that the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, an esteemed agency, is well-positioned to preserve and conserve vulnerable properties in our hillsides. The eastern Santa Monica Mountains is a region of LA that is a wildlife corridor under threat **daily and every department and agency needs to work in a consort to help protect this area, said Tony Tucci, co-founder, and Chair of Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife (CLAW)**.

"Thanks to our Los Angeles City Councilmembers for ensuring the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy will have the opportunity to preserve our precious natural resources one surplus lot a sliver of land at a time," said **Wendy-Sue Rosen, Brentwood Alliance of Canyons & Hillsides**.