

**1. Describe the RTF construction or modification or planned construction or modification.**

The City of Merced is the responsible agency for the existing RTF at M Street Circle. The RTF was completed in 2023 and serves as a parking lot for regional transit for the community, specifically students traveling to and from UC Merced and throughout the rest of the City. The RTF was originally designed to be dedicated open green space with a two-lane bus stop for transit commuters from the immediate neighborhood. However, the overflow of student body across the community in 2021, led to the decision to convert the originally planned green space into a large layover parking lot to mitigate the on-street parking in the Bellevue Ranch community for students and staff traveling to and from UC Merced and various destinations across the City. The loss of the open green space originally planned for was not adjusted for in the immediate area and will continue to contribute to increased levels of heat exposure in the immediate neighborhood and the concentration of carbon dioxide in the area.

**2. What is the location of the RTF?**

The RTF is located just 0.14 of a mile south of Bellevue Road on M Street. It is a circular plot of land surrounding a section of M Street, one of three main arterials that run across the City. It is approximately 0.66 miles northeast of the Environmental Enhancement Mitigation (EEM) site, General Vang Pao Park.

**3. When did the RTF construction or modification begin? When was it completed?**

Construction began on the RTF on September 15, 2022, and the project was completed on May 11, 2023.

**4. What type of Environmental Review was required?**

An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was completed for the Bellevue Ranch Master Development Plan in 1995. In January of 2021, as plans changed for the site and the RTF was considered, a Preliminary Environmental Document Classification (National Environmental Policy Act - NEPA) determined the project to warrant a Mitigated Negative Declaration. There was no State Clearinghouse Number applicable to this NEPA determination. Although mitigation was not required, the city recognizes that taking away the intended park space has negative implications for the community including but not limited to heat magnification and carbon dioxide concentration.

**5. When was the Environmental Review completed?**

12/8/2021

**6. Provide State Clearinghouse Number of the completed Environmental Review, if applicable.**

N/A

**7. Was mitigation required? If so, please describe the type of habitat impacted and list the required mitigation.**

Although mitigation was not required, paving the area for motor vehicle usage creates a heat island increasing temperatures and concentrating carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons, and carbon

dioxide in the area. The EEM project will help to mitigate the negative effects of the of the RTF by sequestering carbon and providing much needed shade to the area.

**8. Have the environmental mitigation measures been started or completed?**

N/A

**9. If the RTF is planned, what is the projected construction start date? Completion date?**

The project was completed on May 11, 2023.

**10. What is the funding source for the RTF? Is the RTF fully funded?**

The project was funded by a combination of a Cal Trans, Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) grant, and the local, Measure V, match funds.

**11. What is the location of the required mitigation?**

The location of the EEM is 4325 Freemark Avenue. It is 0.66 miles south west from the RTF within the Bellevue Ranch neighborhood.

Provide the following information about the proposed EEM Project:

**12. Name of the EEM Project.**

General Vang Pao Park

**13. Is the EEM Project the required mitigation for the RTF? If yes, please describe how the project mitigates the impacts of the RTF?**

Although not a required mitigation measure, the investment in an urban forest increases the health and utility that can be expected from residents, commuters, and other visitors to the area.

**14. If applicant is applying under Mitigation Projects Beyond the Scope of the Lead Agency Category, please provide a statement of concurrence explaining how the ability to effectuate the mitigation or enhancement measures are beyond the scope of the lead agency responsible for assessing the environmental impact of the proposed transportation improvement.**

N/A.

**15. Is the proposed EEM project incompatible with the RTF? If so, does it interfere with the operation or safety of the RTF? (Please explain.)**

The EEM project will not interfere with the purpose and operation of the RTF. The project will help mitigate unintended consequences of the RTF, bringing the RTF back inline with its intended purpose of taking more cars off the road and decreasing pollution. The EEM project will maximize the investment of the RTF by minimizing its carbon impact to the immediate area.

**16. Does the proposed EEM project limit or interfere with planned or anticipated future improvements to the RTF? (If it interferes, please explain.)**

No.

**17. Describe any concerns about the proposed EEM project (e.g., design, safety, tree density, other.)**

There are no concerns about the proposed EEM project, the City of Merced and its residents are committed to the project and are ready to begin construction in Winter 2024. The project will be overseen by the Department of Parks and Recreation.

**18. Are you aware of another EEM project previously undertaken to mitigate the impact of this RTF? (If you have knowledge of the project, please explain.)**

No.

**19. Do you have any knowledge why the applicant would not be able to complete this project?**

The City has substantial experience in managing grant funds of various types including funding which seeks to improve youth access to natural and cultural resources. Recently the City was awarded the Youth Community Access Grant through Prop 64, has applied for the Outdoor Equity Grant and now the EEM Grant. The City is keenly aware of the importance the environment plays in the health and vitality of the community and continues its efforts to address climate change, public land conservation, and open space activation at the local level. The EEM grant would increase the City's opportunity to connect youth with natural resources at the local level, educate the community on conservation initiatives, while simultaneously mitigating the unintended consequences of the RTF. The City seeks to leverage funding from this grant, should they be successfully awarded, with other City funding sources to create a beautiful, shaded, inclusive park that highlights our natural landscape, culture, and conservation efforts for the enjoyment of the whole community, especially those most effected by the RTF in their neighborhood. The City is committed to the completion of this project.