



Legislation Text

File #: 24-538, **Version:** 1

Report Prepared by: Christopher Jensen, Director, Parks & Community Services

SUBJECT: Adoption of a Resolution to Apply for and Authorization to Accept if Awarded, the Environmental Enhancement & Mitigation (EE&M) Grant, not to Exceed \$750,000, from State of California Natural Resources Agency to Plant a Native, Drought Tolerant Urban Forest at General Vang Pao Park to Mitigate Environmental Impacts of the North Transit Hub, a Regional Transportation Facility (RTF)

REPORT IN BRIEF

Considers adopting a Resolution to apply for \$750,000 in grant funding from the State of California Natural Resources Agency for the development of an urban forest at General Vang Pao Park to mitigate environmental impacts to the area caused by the revised development of the North Transit Hub, a Regional Transportation Facility (RTF). Grant funds will be used to offset increased CO2 and required energy use in the area by establishing an urban forest made up of native, drought tolerant, trees at General Vang Pao Park. The grantor requires the adoption of a resolution in support of the City's grant application. Authorization is required by council to accept funding if awarded.

RECOMMENDATION

City Council - Adopt a motion:

A. Adopting **Resolution 2024-58**, a Resolution of the City Council of the City of Merced, California, Approving the Application for the Grant Funds for the Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation (EEM) Program; and,

If awarded, Adopt a motion:

B. Authorizing the acceptance of the Environmental Enhancement & Mitigation Grant Funds, increasing revenue in the amount of \$750,000; and appropriating the same in Fund 5000-Parks and Community Services CIP; and,

C. Authorizing the use of pooled cash to cover the expenditures until Grant Funds are reimbursed; and,

D. Authorizing the City Manager to execute all documents, including any amendments; and,

E. Authorizing the Finance Officer to make the necessary budget adjustments.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Approve, as recommended by staff; or,
2. Approve, subject to other than recommended by staff, identify specific findings; or,

3. Deny; or,
4. Continue to a future City Council Meeting (date and time to be specified in Council motion).

AUTHORITY

Charter of the City of Merced.

CITY COUNCIL PRIORITIES

This action is consistent with the City Council adopted FY 2023-2024 Goals and Priorities, and the Parks & Community Services Department Mission, Goals, and Objectives.

DISCUSSION

The original Bellevue Ranch development plan included a ride share parklet that was to be surrounded by open green space and urban canopy. This site plan was revised in recent years to address the developing traffic congestion in the area and the growing need to limit the amount of vehicles required to commute from Bellevue Ranch into UC Merced and from the UC across the City of Merced. Seen as a potential solution to increased traffic, the North Transit Hub site plan was revised, removing the open green space and urban forest initially planned for, to allow for additional layover parking and ride shares through multiple public transit services. This established the North Transit Hub as a Regional Transportation Facility or RTF.

What has proven to be a solution to traffic congestion and a reduction in the amount of cars driven to and from the UC Merced campus has also placed an environmental burden to the Bellevue Ranch neighborhood which is now absorbing additional CO2 emissions and localized heat magnification with limited green space or urban canopy to mitigate such effects typically seen with the development of a Regional Transportation Facility.

City staff have identified the Environmental Enhancement Mitigation grant through the State of California Natural Resources Agency as a potential solution to the unintended consequences experienced because of the Regional Transportation Facility, the North Transit Hub. Eligible grant funded projects include the development of urban forests within close proximity to a Regional Transportation Facility. Projects such as urban tree canopy and green spaces can be proposed to moderate urban heat islands, decreasing energy use, while also contributing to carbon sequestration caused by increased traffic caused by the RTF.

Merced City Council recently prioritized the development of General Vang Pao Park which is within 0.6 miles of the North Transit Hub. With the acceptance of grant funds from First 5 of Merced County and the allocation of park reserve and PFFP funding, the current funding level acquired for General Vang Pao Park's development is projected to cover the cost of a park site master plan, construction of Aletha June Playground, and some additional amenities to support the recharging of grey water and accentuate the parks proximity to nearby Fahrens Creek. However, not enough funding has been acquired to see the parks full potential, specifically the inclusion of water wise urban forestry and landscaping.

This grant affords the City of Merced Parks and Community Services Department the opportunity to add to the development of General Vang Pao Park with a second phase of development, prioritizing the use of native, drought tolerant treescape and irrigation.

IMPACT ON CITY RESOURCES

If grant is awarded funds will be used to fund the second phase of General Vang Pao Park with the planting of an urban forest. No Match is required by the City. Any appropriation of funds needed will be reimbursed by the EE&M grant funds.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Resolution with EEM Grant Guidelines