

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: CHUCK REGALIA, ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER
CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE

SUBJECT: AUTHORIZING SUBMITTAL OF A GRANT APPLICATION FOR
THE SOUTHEAST GREENWAY PROJECT AND AUTHORIZING
THE CITY MANAGER TO ACCEPT DONATIONS TOWARDS THE
GREENWAY PROJECT ON BEHALF OF THE CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ACTION: RESOLUTION

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the City Manager's Office that the Council, by resolution, authorize the submittal of an application to the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District for the 2016 matching grant program - Santa Rosa Southeast Greenway; and authorize the City Manager to accept donations toward the Southeast Greenway Project on behalf of the City Council.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Santa Rosa Southeast Greenway Project is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to establish an expansive greenway park (Greenway) in the heart of Santa Rosa that would include:

- Needed open space for several diverse urban neighborhoods;
- Restored creeks, wetlands and other natural habitat for local wildlife;
- A non-motorized transportation corridor for walking and biking between Spring Lake and downtown Santa Rosa, Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit, the Prince Memorial Greenway, West County trails and the Sonoma Valley;
- Safe routes to school, work and shopping for local residents;
- Community gardens, playgrounds, and opportunities for outdoor education; and
- There is also an opportunity to consider other potentially compatible land uses such as higher density residential and retail uses.

Council authorization of an application for \$1,000,000 in grant funding from the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District to help fund acquisition of this land is proposed through adoption of a resolution.

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BACKGROUND

This project is a community-driven effort to acquire and transform what is now a 2.2-mile vacant right-of-way owned by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). There is a limited window of opportunity to acquire this property so that it can be used to expand access to open spaces and parks for the diverse urban population of Santa Rosa.

The Greenway will connect Santa Rosa's three-park complex (Spring Lake Regional Park, Howarth City Park, and Annadel State Park) to nearby communities as well as connect these parks with the SMART rail line in downtown Santa Rosa, the Prince Memorial Greenway, West County trails and the Sonoma Valley.

The expanded access provided by the Greenway will particularly benefit diverse and low-income communities by providing car-free and safe access to open space and parks, local schools and stores, and public transit. Many school-aged children (grades 1-12) living in the residential area surrounding the Greenway attend one of the seven schools that are within walking distance of the Greenway. The Greenway would allow them to walk to school using safer, car-free routes. These students and their teachers would also have new access to walkable areas for both outdoor play and environmental education.

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

On July 7, 2015, the Council adopted Resolution No. 28666 approving a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Caltrans, Sonoma Land Trust, and the Southeast Greenway Community Partnership. The MOU documents how the Partnership, Sonoma Land Trust, and Caltrans will collaborate and work together toward development of an agreement that will transfer the highway land to public ownership.

On October 6, 2015, the City Council by resolution, initiated a General Plan Amendment & Rezoning, a public engagement process and preparation of an environmental impact report of the approximately 57 acre site comprised of undeveloped Highway 12 right of way between Farmers Lane and Spring Lake Regional Park in southeast Santa Rosa.

ANALYSIS

There is widespread support for this project as community residents and local leaders recognize the unique and transformative opportunity for the City of Santa Rosa and surrounding communities. While the project does not yet have a fully developed blueprint and management plan, a team of national experts selected by American Institute of Architects engaged several hundred residents in a community-driven

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planning process that resulted in a concept plan for the project, "Imagine a Greenway to Spring Lake and Beyond."

Agency/Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Partners and Roles - This project is being advanced by a strategic alliance of local government agencies and non-profits (Greenway Partners) that are committed to working together to make the Greenway a reality. In July 2014, the City of Santa Rosa, the Sonoma County Water Agency, the Sonoma County Regional Parks, LandPaths, and the Southeast Greenway Campaign Committee signed a Mutual Letter of Intent, which outlines each organization's role and responsibilities in creating and managing the Southeast Greenway. Along with the City, Sonoma Land Trust is facilitating the property acquisition and funding processes, including title review, appraisals, legal counsel, environmental and site assessments, negotiations with Caltrans and fundraising.

Process and Next Steps - Caltrans agreed to give the Greenway Partners and Sonoma Land Trust first right of refusal on the property's purchase in advance of Caltrans' typical surplus sale process. These parties entered into a Memorandum of Understanding in August 2015 that sets forth the process for establishing the value for the property, negotiating the purchase price, gaining the approval of elected officials and the California Transportation Commission, and transferring the property to the City of Santa Rosa and the Sonoma County Water Agency.

The City has launched the general plan amendment, public engagement, California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and rezoning processes necessary for the repurposing of this property. This process will begin in mid-2016 and conclude by mid-2017. In coordination with Caltrans and the partnership, the appraisal process will be initiated in early 2017 and be ready to negotiate the purchase contract between the City of Santa Rosa and Caltrans in mid-2017, with closing in 2018 or 2019.

Project Cost and Grant Request - There is not yet a completed appraisal of the property. City staff completed a report documenting existing conditions on the property, titled "Southeast Greenway Existing Conditions, Opportunities, and Constraints."

\$1,000,000 is being requested from the Sonoma County Agricultural and Open Space District toward what is anticipated will be a multi-million dollar purchase price. The Sonoma Land Trust and the City of Santa Rosa are co-applicants on this grant and, if awarded, District funds would be deposited directly into escrow.

Matching Funding - Collectively, the partnership has secured the required match amount in commitments and funding. Sonoma Land Trust will lead the fundraising to provide the funding needed to purchase the property.

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Timeline:

2015 (Completed Tasks)

Existing Conditions Report (City of Santa Rosa)
Title and Historical Research
Analysis of habitat mitigation potential for Caltrans
Fundraising for land acquisition

2016

Initiate General Plan Amendment and CEQA
Public engagement process
Fundraising for land acquisition

2017

Complete General Plan Amendment and CEQA
Complete appraisals, negotiate purchase agreement with Caltrans
Enter into purchase contract (City of Santa Rosa, Sonoma County Water Agency, and Caltrans)
Fundraising for land acquisition

2018-2019

Closing

FISCAL IMPACT

Fund raising activities, grants and sources yet to be determined will be the sources for purchase of the right-of-way.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The filing of this grant application is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to Section 15378.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not applicable.

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable.

ATTACHMENTS

None.

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