

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST GREENWAY MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
STAFF PRESENTER: ERIN MORRIS, SENIOR PLANNER
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
AGENDA ACTION: RESOLUTION

ISSUE

Shall the Council adopt a resolution approving a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the California Department of Transportation, Sonoma Land Trust, and the Southeast Greenway Community Partnership (City of Santa Rosa, Sonoma County Water Agency and Regional Parks, Southeast Greenway Campaign, and Landpaths)?



COUNCIL GOALS/STRATEGIES

The proposed MOU relates to Council Goal #4, Maintain and Enhance Our City's Cultural, Historic, and Recreational Assets by supporting the efforts of the Southeast Greenway Campaign.

BACKGROUND

1. On October 18, 2011, the Santa Rosa City Council adopted Resolution No. 27995 which included Council Goal #4, Strategic Objective #4: "Acknowledge Southeast Greenway community planning projects."
2. The Southeast Greenway Campaign is a community group established to develop an urban greenway on the approximately 52-acres of land acquired for State highway purposes over a twenty year period spanning the 1950s to the 1970s. The land is owned by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). An attached map depicts the location of the land.
3. On April 16, 2013, the Council adopted Resolution No. 28266 reaffirming Council Goal #4, Strategic Objective #3: "Support Efforts of Southeast Greenway Campaign by Monitoring and Providing Information."

4. On June 17, 2014, the City of Santa Rosa joined the Southeast Greenway Community Partnership by executing a Mutual Letter of Intent. The Partnership consists of the following partners:

- City of Santa Rosa
- Sonoma County Water Agency
- Sonoma County Regional Parks
- Southeast Greenway Campaign
- LandPaths

In late 2014, the Sonoma Land Trust joined the group and has been contributing expertise and effort to the Partnership.

5. The Mutual Letter of Intent outlines how the partners will work together to facilitate the future transfer of the Caltrans land to public ownership. The letter is attached to this report.
6. As outlined in the Mutual Letter of Intent, the initial vision is that the highway land between Summerfield Road and Spring Lake Park would be transferred to the Sonoma County Water Agency and operated/maintained by Sonoma County Regional Parks. The remaining land would be transferred to the City of Santa Rosa and would be operated and maintained by Recreation and Parks with support from community members and nonprofits including LandPaths.
7. Community Development staff have been attending monthly meetings with the Partnership since June 2014.
8. On August 20, 2014, the California Transportation Commission adopted a resolution to rescind the freeway adoption due to lack of operational need, local support, and funding. This means that the land may be transferred or sold.
9. The Partnership and Sonoma Land Trust have met with Caltrans staff several times in the past year. In November 2014, Caltrans staff toured the highway site with members of the Partnership. Meetings in early 2015 led to the development of the draft MOU.
10. 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. The draft Memorandum of Understanding is attached.

ANALYSIS

1. Site Description

The subject site is owned by Caltrans and comprised of approximately 52 acres of mostly-vacant land beginning at Farmers Lane and continuing eastward, generally parallel to Hoen Avenue, to connect with Spring Lake Park. Land between Farmers Lane and Summerfield Road is generally undeveloped and flat, with a few elevated areas. There is a storm drain (Spring Creek Diversion) along the southern boundary.

The land between Summerfield Road and Spring Lake Park slopes upward. An area of the land is leased to private individuals who graze and shelter horses on the property.

The land does not have a General Plan land use designation on Santa Rosa's land use diagram. A Class 1 bicycle facility is called for in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, and the Citywide Creek Master Plan depicts the planned bicycle and pedestrian facility and envisions enhancement and restoration of the three creeks that traverse the site: Matanzas, Sierra Park, and Spring.

2. Purpose of the MOU

The purpose of the MOU is to document a shared understanding about how Caltrans, City of Santa Rosa, Sonoma County Water Agency, Sonoma County Regional Parks, Southeast Greenway Campaign, LandPaths, and the Sonoma Land Trust will work together to facilitate the transfer of the undeveloped highway land to public ownership.

3. Roles

The roles of each partner related to land management are outlined in the Letter of Mutual Intent and referenced in the MOU. The MOU is expected to be executed by the Sonoma County Water Agency and Regional Parks on June 23, 2015.

4. Expected Outcomes

The main purpose of the MOU is to develop an agreement to transfer the Southeast Greenway property to public ownership. Caltrans would offer the City of Santa Rosa and Sonoma County Water Agency first right of refusal to acquire the property prior to the land being offered on the open market.

The following tasks are envisioned to be accomplished by the parties:

- Determine the potential for environmental mitigation sites on the property.

- Identify and agree on a process for establishing the property's value.
- Due diligence: Title review, environmental assessment, environmental review, and appraisals of the property.
- Retention of the property in its current and intact condition while the parties collaborate.
- Consideration of the following public uses:
 - Bicycle and pedestrian paths as part of a regional trail network
 - Restored and protected open space and natural habitat
 - Parks and community gardens
 - Water Agency water reliability pipeline
 - Groundwater development and recharge

Opportunities and Constraints Analysis

The MOU states that the City of Santa Rosa will prepare a Current Conditions, Opportunities, and Constraints Analysis of the property. With permission from Caltrans, City staff completed field work including a preliminary biological survey in late 2014 and early 2015. The report is underway and a public draft of the document is expected to be considered by the Council in August 2015.

Fundraising

The MOU states that Caltrans will provide adequate time for the Partnership and Sonoma Land Trust to complete the fundraising necessary to transfer the property to public ownership. The Southeast Greenway Campaign and Sonoma Land Trust are leading fundraising activities.

5. Next Steps

The Opportunity and Constraints Analysis will be presented to the Council in August 2015.

The MOU outlines the main next steps to be undertaken by the partners, particularly additional due diligence and the appraisal process.

A key future step for the City of Santa Rosa is to establish a General Plan land use designation for the land, which will identify future land uses. Staff is currently evaluating how this effort might proceed. It will involve significant community outreach, analysis, and environmental review.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Community Development Department that Council, by resolution, approve a Memorandum of Understanding between the California Department of Transportation, Sonoma Land Trust, and the Southeast Greenway Community Partnership including the City of Santa Rosa.

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Attachments:

- Attachment 1 – Location Map
- Attachment 2 – Draft Memorandum of Understanding
- Attachment 3 – Mutual Letter of Intent