



City of Morgan Hill

Legislation Text

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CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT **MEETING DATE: AUGUST 24, 2016**

PREPARED BY: Anthony Eulo, Program Administrator/Community Services
APPROVED BY: City Manager

COMMUNITY GARDEN EXPANSION AND RELOCATION

RECOMMENDATION(S)

Adopt resolution authorizing the submission of a grant application to the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority and the execution of grant documents if the grant application is successful.

COUNCIL PRIORITIES, GOALS & STRATEGIES:

Ongoing Priorities

Protecting the environment
Maintaining fiscal responsibility
Supporting youth

2016 Focus Areas

Enhancing Our Services

REPORT NARRATIVE:

The Morgan Hill Community Garden (MHCG) organization has developed and operated a community garden on the land formally owned by the Redevelopment Agency directly north of the County Courthouse. This land was secured for the future development of the long-envisioned fire station in the redevelopment dissolution process.

The community garden has been a tremendous success and has consistently maintained a waiting list of community members interested in obtaining additional plots. As the garden's interest has outgrown its current location and the City has identified the parcel as a future home for a fire station, City staff has begun working with MHCG to identify a new garden location. After considering suitable land available for a community garden, MHCG and staff are currently working on two locations with an eye toward potentially developing both of them.

The first is a plot of land owned by Union Pacific directly west of the County Courthouse's detention pond. This location keeps the garden in the desired downtown area and is close to multifamily homes that don't have room for gardens of their own. This land is substantially wider than the railroad's normal right-of-way and may be available for lease or purchase. The very beginnings of the

conversation with the railroad regarding this parcel are now underway.

The second location is the City-owned parcel on Railroad Ave. just north of the Butterfield overpass. This property was secured to build the overpass and is not currently in use. This parcel is large enough to allow MHCG to expand and be creative in serving new needs and new members.

The Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority is currently accepting grant applications in a number of program areas including:

- Preserving open space through acquisition of fee title or conservation easements
- Establishing or improving parks, trails, or other recreational facilities that connect people to nature
- Enhancing and restoring habitat, natural resources, and water resources
- Enhancing access to healthy food through urban farms and gardens
- Developing environmental education programs or facilities

The City is cooperating with MHCG to develop a grant application that will squarely address these last two areas and tangentially touch on several more. The purpose of this staff report is to request the Council's authorization to submit a grant application to the Authority before its August 26 deadline.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: Collaborate

MHCG is a prime example of a community group coalescing around an issue and need in the community, and then working collaboratively with the City to address the need. The City's involvement has largely been limited to providing the land for the garden with MHCG operating the facility on a day-to-day basis.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS:

The Council could choose to not authorize the submission of the application and to forego the opportunity for the grant or to direct staff to apply for a different grant amount.

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL AND COMMISSION ACTIONS:

The Council has previously taken actions annually to authorize the agreement allowing the MHCG to operate on land owned by the City.

FISCAL AND RESOURCE IMPACT:

Staff estimates that the expansion and relocation project will cost a total of \$400,000. Of this amount, \$250,000 is projected to be covered by the grant from the Open Space Authority. The City's matching funds will be provided primarily from dedicating the funds that the City has already spent for the property proposed to be occupied by the garden plus in-kind matching funds from the staff and volunteer hours that will go toward the expansion. A budget amendment would be recommended to City Council upon award of the grant.

CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act):

Not a Project

The submission of a grant application is an administrative action and does not constitute a project under CEQA.

LINKS/ATTACHMENTS:

Resolution