



DATE: November 4, 2024

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council through City Manager

FROM: Patrick Carter, Assistant to the City Manager
Brian Cochran, Assistant City Manager

SUBJECT: Resolution Authorizing the City Manager or Designee to Submit an Application for an Amount Up to \$20,000,000 for the One Petaluma, Community Resilience Center (CRC) Community-Driven Investments for Change from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights, Environmental and Climate Justice Community Change Grants Program and Execute All Related Documents If Awarded

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Council adopt the attached Resolution Authorizing the City Manager or Designee to Submit an Application for an Amount Up to \$20,000,000 for the One Petaluma, Community Resilience Center (CRC) Community-Driven Investments for Change from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights, Environmental and Climate Justice Community Change Grants Program and Execute All Related Documents If Awarded.

BACKGROUND

The Petaluma Fairgrounds is a 55-acre property owned by the City of Petaluma, near the City's geographic center. Its proximity to Highway 101, East Washington Street, Petaluma Downtown SMART station, shopping centers, and its historic use for the Sonoma-Marin Fair and community resource during emergencies make the site an incredible resource.

In May of this year, staff applied for Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funding, requesting \$1.2 million to master plan the Fairgrounds site and begin preliminary work on the One Petaluma Community Resiliency Center (CRC). While we await an official announcement from California Department of Housing and Community Development staff is cautiously optimistic regarding that application and hope to share more information soon. Beyond the opportunity to plan the site through the CDBG-DR request, staff has identified the EPA Community Change Grant (CCG) as a potential method to fund the construction of a CRC at the Petaluma Fairgrounds and is working with an on-call grant assistance firm, LACO

Associates, to develop an application for the project. The EPA CCG program has been allocated \$2 billion dollars by the Inflation Reduction Act to fund projects which reduce pollution, increase community climate resilience, and build community capacity to address environmental and climate justice challenges, with a focus on community-driven initiatives responsive to community and stakeholder input. The EPA CCG program includes eight climate action strategies and associated project activities, as well as four pollution reduction strategies and associated project activities.

DISCUSSION

A successful application for EPA CCG funding will advance the development of the One Petaluma Community Resilience Center on the Fairgrounds site which presently contains structures ready for retrofit and use. In addition to the variety of community events that occur in this centrally located area, the fairgrounds function as an evacuation center for residents, animals, and livestock and are thus already seen as a means for local sheltering and emergency response/mitigation. The site needs to be developed further to maximize this capacity.

Extensive public input was received while conceptualizing this project. Through various feedback platforms, as well as a community advisory panel, using the site for community resilience was positively received, provided it is compatible with other uses such as an annual fair. In addition to compatibility with existing uses, the site is intended to be leased to local businesses and nonprofit tenants to establish year-round use outside of emergency purposes which will aid in financially sustaining the property and maintaining good repair.

Once implemented, this project will be key in building a more resilient community for the protection of both the residents of Petaluma and those of surrounding communities. The proposed project will ensure access to a CRC in an area that is currently lacking in this capacity and any construction that occurs as a result of this development project will be fortified to anticipate and adapt to changing climate conditions.

This project is consistent with the priorities of CA Gov. Code 65041.1 by rehabilitating and improving existing and underutilized land and infrastructure for a highly functional community use—for the purpose of safeguarding the community and assets in the face of emergencies such as weather, climate change, and public health threats. The project will also enable local organizations to lease commercial space on the property which will offset costs and result in a year-round economic benefit. Being in a centrally located area of the city, the proposed CRC will be accessible by all modes of transportation.

One Petaluma CRC will address a need for emergency shelter and resources, as well as year-round services and programming that strengthens disaster resiliency and community connections and increases emergency readiness. The proposed CRC has been a focus of the City's for years, and extensive public outreach has indicated that there is a desire and need to use the fairgrounds property for climate resiliency. Potential exposure to pollution during emergencies and environmental effects resulting from extreme weather due to climate change is a citywide issue that affects all residents, thus prompting the need to keep climate resiliency and supportive services for the community at the forefront.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

This agenda item appeared on the City’s tentative agenda document on October 21, 2024 which was a publicly-noticed meeting.

COUNCIL GOAL ALIGNMENT

Applying for the EPA CCG grant to fund construction of a Community Resiliency Center is aligned with the Council goals of A City the Works for Everyone, A Safe Community that Thrives, and Spaces and Places that Inspire.

CLIMATE ACTION/SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS

A key factor in Climate Action is emergency preparedness and building resilience to recovery from disasters. During emergencies, the One Petaluma CRC would function as a safe space for community members within Petaluma and from neighboring municipalities to seek refuge, gather information, and plan next steps. Outside of emergencies, it is envisioned that this space would be designed for flexibility to support other uses such as leased space to local businesses and nonprofits to aid in fiscal sustainability of the Petaluma Fairgrounds property.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b)(5), as submitting a grant application does not meet CEQA’s definition of a “Project” because the action does not have the potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment. The proposed Project will be subject to environmental review and approvals prior to any construction activities taking place. The environmental document(s) will be determined when the City receives funding for and initiates the planning, environmental review, and design phase.

FINANCIAL IMPACTS

This grant application effort is supported by LACO Associates, which has assisted the City applying for other grant funds related to a Community Resiliency Center and master planning at the Fairgrounds. The City’s agreement with LACO Associates has a not-to-exceed limit of \$45,000 (on a time and materials basis) to support this effort. If the application is successful, the City would have up to \$20 million to construct a Community Resiliency Center at the Petaluma Fairgrounds.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Resolution