



Office of the City Manager

CONSENT CALENDAR
September 24, 2024

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
 From: LaTanya Bellow, Interim City Manager
 Submitted by: Scott Ferris, Director, Parks Recreation & Waterfront
 Subject: Grant Application: Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Discretionary Grant Program for the Santa Fe Railroad Trackbed to Park Conversion Project

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution authorizing the City Manager or their designee to: submit a grant application in the amount of up to \$5 million to the U.S. Department of Transportation for the Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Discretionary Grant Program (second round) for the Santa Fe Railroad Trackbed to Park Conversion Project; accept any grants; execute any resulting grant agreements and any amendments; and that Council authorize the implementation of the project and appropriation of funding for related expenses, subject to securing the grant.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The RCP Grant requires a 50% match of non-federal funds. In 2022, the City received a \$5 million dollar grant from the Proposition 68 Statewide Parks Program (SPP), which will be used as the non-federal match for the RCP grant application.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

In July of 2024, the Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Discretionary Grant Program announced a second Notice of Funding Opportunity DOT-RCP-FY24-01, due September 30, 2024. This grant program was established in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) to advance community-centered transportation connection projects, with a priority for projects that benefit disadvantaged communities by improving access to daily needs such as jobs, education, healthcare, food, nature, and recreation, and foster equitable development and restoration, and provide technical assistance to further these goals. This grant is for projects that reconnect communities by removing, retrofitting, or mitigating transportation facilities that create barriers to community connectivity, such as the former Santa Fe Railroad land that sits vacant with soils that need to be remediated.

The City's Parks, Recreation & Waterfront Department applied to the RCN (first round) in September 2023 and did not receive a grant award, but was encouraged to re-apply.

Grant Application: the federal Reconnecting Communities
Pilot Grant Program (RCP) for the Santa Fe Railroad
Trackbed to Park Conversion Project

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During the design phase, the City contracted with a professional environmental consultant to conduct soil sampling needed to understand the extent of soil remediation required. The sampling results found that additional remediation is needed over and above the initial cost estimate, and new grant funds are needed to complete the project.

BACKGROUND

On April 20, 2021, Council authorized staff to submit a California Proposition 68 Statewide Parks Program grant application for the Santa Fe Railroad Trackbed to Park Conversion Project and execute the project upon securing the grant. In early 2022, the City was notified of a grant award of \$5 million and on March 14, 2022 the grant contract was executed. The City is currently in the design phase of the project, which included the preparation of a CEQA environmental review document. On July 6, 2021, the City filed a CEQA Notice of Exemption for the project at the Alameda County Clerk-Recorders Office.

The Santa Fe Railroad Trackbed to Park Conversion Project is located at the four former railroad parcels between Blake Street and Ward Street, along Acton Street. The Project will remediate the contaminated soil left behind by one hundred years of railroad activity and convert four vacant parcels into a community garden, separate dog park, children's playground and tot cycle track, and a teaching garden and outdoor classroom.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

This project will help the City promote two goals contained in the City's Climate Action Plan: Goal 2 of Chapter 3 involves increasing access to parks and plazas; and Goal 1 of Chapter 6 involves making Berkeley resilient to the impacts of climate change by designing public improvements such as parks for retention and infiltration of stormwater.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

These grant funds will allow the City to complete this project to create new parkland in Southwest Berkeley. The allocation of existing funds for parks improvement projects allows the City to apply for grant opportunities that require significant matching funds.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

None

CONTACT PERSON

Scott Ferris, Director of Parks, Recreation & Waterfront, 981-6703
Evelyn Chan, Supervising Civil Engineer, PRW, 981-6430

Attachments
1: Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. -N.S

GRANT APPLICATION: THE RECONNECTING COMMUNITIES PILOT (RCP)
DISCRETIONARY GRANT PROGRAM FOR THE SANTA FE RAILROAD TRACKBED
TO PARK CONVERSION PROJECT

WHEREAS, in July of 2024, the Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Discretionary Grant Program announced a second Notice of Funding Opportunity DOT-RCP-FY24-01, due September 30, 2024; and

WHEREAS, the RCP Grant requires a 50% match of non-federal funds; and

WHEREAS, in 2022, the City received a \$5 million dollar grant from the Proposition 68 Statewide Parks Program (SPP), which will be used as the non-federal match for the RCP grant application; and

WHEREAS, during the design phase, the City discovered that additional soil remediation is needed over and above the initial cost estimate, and new grant funds are needed to complete the project; and

WHEREAS, the Santa Fe Railroad Trackbed to Park Conversion Project is located at the four former railroad parcels between Blake Street and Ward Street, along Acton Street. The Project will remediate the contaminated soil left behind by one hundred years of railroad activity and convert four vacant parcels into a community garden, separate dog park, children's playground and tot cycle track, and a teaching garden and outdoor classroom.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that the City Manager or their designee is authorized to: submit an application to the Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Discretionary Grant Program for the Santa Fe Railroad Trackbed to Park Conversion Project in the amount of up to \$5 million; to accept any grants; to execute any resulting grant agreements and any amendments; and that Council authorize the implementation of the project and appropriation of funding for related expenses, subject to securing the grant. A record signature copy of said agreements and any amendments to be on file in the Office of the City Clerk.

