



City of Arts & Innovation

Park and Recreation Commission

TO: HONORABLE COMMISSIONERS

DATE: NOVEMBER 9, 2015

FROM: COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: CASA BLANCA EDUCATION GARDEN CONCEPT

ISSUE:

Consideration of an education garden concept in the Casa Blanca community to be located at a 1.46 acre vacant parcel adjacent to the Casa Blanca Library.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Commission:

1. Provide input regarding the Casa Blanca Education Garden Concept; and
2. Receive and file this report.

BACKGROUND:

The Casa Blanca Neighborhood is a strong-knit, family-oriented, and largely residential neighborhood. Homes surround the neighborhood's central recreational feature, Ysmael Villegas Community Center and Villegas Park. A mix of uses are along Casa Blanca's Madison Street corridor.

The Casa Blanca Library serves the historic Casa Blanca neighborhood offering the Family Learning Center that doubles as a Riverside City College extension campus. The library site includes the Kathleen Gonzales Memorial Water Wise Garden. The Riverside Public Utilities Resource Center is also conveniently located on Madison Street.

Adjacent to the Casa Blanca Library is a 1.46 acre vacant parcel, owned by the City of Riverside. The property is land locked but offers a significant opportunity to create a public space and community amenity. A variety of uses have been proposed for the site including a pre-school and soccer fields amongst others. A new concept for the use of the same site has surfaced.

The Community and Economic Development Department has undertaken a very preliminary review of an interactive education garden concept for the vacant 1.46 acre parcel. Initial ideas for an interactive education garden include: telling the story of urban agriculture and the joys of gardening; exploring the basis of farming and gardening through interesting and engaging exhibits; incorporating an open air outdoor kitchen, classroom and pavilion space to hold community workshops and events; presentation of historic exhibits telling Riverside's agricultural heritage; examples of alternative growing methods; demonstration of small scale row crops; and many other education opportunities.

The image below offers a visual of a potential interactive education garden including areas for a nutrition garden, bug exhibit, farm pond, music garden, and a seasonal flower exhibit.



Staff seeks input and collaboration with the Casa Blanca community and the Park and Recreation Commission.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

Prepared by: Emilio Ramirez, Community and Economic Development Deputy Director
Approved by: Adolfo Cruz, Parks, Recreation and Community Services Director
Approved by: Alexander T. Nguyen, Assistant City Manager

Attachment: Presentation