



Park and Recreation Commission

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: HONORABLE COMMISSIONERS

DATE: JULY 13, 2015

**FROM: PARKS, RECREATION AND COMMUNITY
SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

ITEM NO:

**SUBJECT: CALIFORNIA RIVER PARKWAYS GRANT PROGRAM – SUBMITTAL OF
GRANT APPLICATION IN AN AMOUNT UP TO \$500,000 TO RESTORE
HABITAT AND CONSTRUCT AN INTERPRETIVE NATURE TRAIL AT
FAIRMOUNT PARK**

ISSUE:

The issue before the Park and Recreation Commission is the submission of a grant application in an amount up to \$500,000 to the State of California Natural Resources Agency under the California River Parkways Grant Program for construction of a “classroom without walls” at Fairmount Park.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Commission receive this report, provide input as appropriate, and refer the “classroom without walls” project at Fairmount Park to the Community Services and Youth Committee for review and input.

BACKGROUND:

In 2003, the Santa Ana River Task Force (“Task Force”) comprised of 25 members from the local environmental, business, non-profit, and governmental communities, convened to develop a long-term vision for the protection and enhancement of the Santa Ana River, and to create a plan and recommendations for developing recreational opportunities along the river within the City of Riverside city limits. The Santa Ana River Task Force recommended the creation of a nature center and boardwalk overlooking a restored wetlands/riparian habitat area at Fairmount Park. In late 2009, the Task Force reconvened to review their 2003 recommendations, assess progress made along the river, revise recommendations where necessary, and reaffirm the vision for a nature center and boardwalk at Fairmount Park.

The Santa Ana River and associated trail run along the westerly side of Fairmount Park. A levee separates the river from the park, and there is a natural riparian area separating the developed core of the park from the levee and river. Two small creeks flow from Lake Evans through the riparian area spilling into the Santa Ana River, providing habitat for local wildlife. This natural environment is an appropriate location to provide in-situ opportunities for nature education and recreation.

In conjunction with several partners, the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department, proposes to use the riparian woodlands as a “classroom without walls.”

Anchoring the “classroom” would be two small creeks and the riparian woodlands. Primary components of the current project concept include: an interpretive nature trail/boardwalk, an outdoor group gathering space such as a gazebo or small outdoor amphitheater, and parking. However, the project could be enhanced with the creation of an interpretive arroyo, a nature play area (hills and dales, sticks, mud, leaves), a Native American culture demonstration venue, and a renovated youth/family camp in the historic Boy Scout Camp Evans location.

The California River Parkways Grant can be used to fund some components of the conceptualized project. The interpretive nature trail, boardwalk, interpretive panels, and a small parking area to support these uses are eligible under the grant. Future grant opportunities will be sought in an effort to fund additional project components.

The grant application is due on September 1, 2015.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report. The grant program does not require matching funds; however, grant applications including matching funds will score higher. Over the next couple of months, until the grant application is due, project partners will work together to seek matching funds to help the grant application be more competitive.

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