



City of Arts & Innovation

City Council Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL **DATE: MAY 24, 2016**

FROM: COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT **WARDS: ALL**

SUBJECT: GROWRIVERSIDE INITIATIVE UPDATE

ISSUE:

The issue before the City Council is to receive an update on the GrowRIVERSIDE local food movement, and to be apprised of outcomes and results of the GrowRIVERSIDE programming including Community Gatherings, Growers Forum, Farm-to-Fork Dinners, Farms Tour, and the Annual Conference.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the City Council receive and file this update.

BACKGROUND:

Since 2014, the City of Riverside has been responding to the community's interest to create the GrowRIVERSIDE initiative. GrowRIVERSIDE seeks to develop and localize the food system and in doing so create opportunities for economic and community development while also preserving agricultural resources in a sustainable manner. GrowRIVERSIDE is no longer just a conference; rather it has become a much broader and more robust initiative and movement - an innovative catalyst for the City, farmers, businesses, institutions, advocacy groups and community members to more fully realize Riverside's food and agricultural potential and related prosperity.

Fiscal year 2015/16 marks Year 3 of the GrowRIVERSIDE initiative and the implementation of several programs, including Community Gatherings, farm-to-fork dinners, Growers Forum, an annual conference, and a city-wide farms tour. Outreach events through free Community Gatherings provided opportunities for participants to network, learn, engage and support efforts to localize and grow Riverside's food system. Two farm-to-fork dinners were organized by the City and served by highlighting local chefs and farmers. These dinners also provided a venue to promote and demonstrate how the Riverside Unified School District and University of California Riverside (UCR) are supporting the local food system. The Growers Forum delivered educational workshops for farmers and property owners who are interested in growing food crops; workshop topics included microloans from the United States Department of Food and Agriculture (USDA), local irrigation resources and agricultural land leasing, as well as types of specialty crops that can be grown in the greenbelt. More than five hundred attendees participated in the dinners, Community Gatherings, and the Growers Forum workshop.

On March 21st and 22nd, 2016, the City hosted the Third Annual GrowRIVERSIDE Conference at UCR. The event consisted of a one-day conference culminating in the Citrus Circle Farm-to-

Fork Dinner. The second day was comprised of a tour of agricultural assets across the City. Over 435 participants attended the conference, dinner and tour. Keynote speakers included California Secretary of Agriculture Karen Ross, local economic development expert and author Michael Shuman, University of California Vice President of Agriculture and Natural Resources Dr. Glenda Humiston, and Southern California urban farmer and former California Secretary of Agriculture A.G. Kawamura. The conference offered fourteen breakout sessions presented by thirty speakers. New to the conference in 2016 was a student program that witnessed students from UCR and Cal Poly Pomona presenting their research in food and agriculture. The top three undergraduate and graduate presentations were recognized at the conference.

March 22, 2016, conference attendees participated in a tour visiting the Arlington Heights greenbelt which included a walking tour of Gage Canal, four farms across the City, UCR's agricultural operations, and the Eastside HEAL Zone project. The tour provided a hands-on venue to showcase the City's agricultural assets and help tell the story of food and agricultural opportunities in Riverside.

GrowRIVERSIDE Community & Economic Impacts

Year 3 of the GrowRIVERSIDE initiative is a transformative year as the initiative became self-sustaining and is marked by in a number of community and economic impacts. The following are top ten highlights:

1. In FY 2015/16, the GrowRIVERSIDE initiative was brought in-house and managed by City staff. Consequently, significant efficiencies and savings were observed resulting in a 50% reduction in program expenditures compared to the prior year. The total GrowRIVERSIDE program expenditures as of April 28, 2016, were \$78,009.
2. The GrowRIVERSIDE initiative generated \$90,162 in revenues from cash sponsorships and ticket sales from multiple events. In addition, an estimated \$10,000 of in-kind support was contributed in the form of food and drink sponsorships, venue space and services. Sponsorships came from more than 75 sponsors, including healthcare organizations, financial institutions, local universities and a school district, local businesses, farmers, restaurants, grocery stores, agribusinesses, real estate and law firms, government entities, distributors, non-profit advocacy groups, and community members.
3. The 2016 GrowRIVERSIDE conference was very successful and energizing with more than 435 participants attending conference events over the course of two days. Attendees stayed engaged by attending breakout sessions and actively participating in synthesis workshops. Much learning, sharing and networking occurred as a result of the conference. One of the most significant outcomes of the third conference is the recognition for the need of a regional food hub to support local food system development. Post-conference conversations are taking place to explore the feasibility of a local food hub in Riverside.
4. Since mid-2015 more than 40 volunteers working on various GrowRIVERSIDE initiatives have logged over 4,300 volunteer hours, valued at over \$115,000 (calculated at a rate of \$26.87 per hour; hourly rate based on 2014 estimates by Independent Sector; Source: http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time).
5. Forty-five underutilized acres in the greenbelt have transitioned into avocado groves. Another 7.5 acres are in the process of transitioning to avocado groves. Many other

property owners are considering similar options. The average cost to plant one acre of avocados is estimated at \$3,500.

6. Executive Chef Lali, of the new farm-to-fork steakhouse restaurant at San Manuel Indian Bingo & Casino, began purchasing produce from Riverside farmers after attending the January 2016 GrowRIVERSIDE Community Gathering event.
7. The Riverside Food Co-op was selected as the local entity to provide fresh produce for the Eastside HEAL Zone program, a Kaiser grant funded initiative to promote, improve, and sustain social and physical environments for healthy eating and active lifestyles. Since inception of the program in September 2015, the Riverside Food Co-op has invested over \$18,000 procuring produce from Riverside farmers and created seven new jobs.
8. A local micro food hub was established in late 2015 with funds sourced from a crowd funding campaign promoted by the Riverside Food Systems Alliance. Funds were used to construct a cold storage facility at Fox Farm and have enabled Riverside farmers to increase their production capacity to supply fresh produce to local restaurants, the Riverside Food Co-op and Riverside Unified School District.
9. In the past six months, staff and stakeholders actively engaged credit unions and “impact investment entities” (e.g. ACCION, Barnraiser, KIVA Zip, Slow Money Southern California, American Ag Credit, and Altura Credit Union). As a result, these lenders are working on originating microloans in the City of Riverside. ACCION has hired a business development officer who will be working from a new satellite branch located at the downtown Small Business Development Center location. The business development officer will be available to help local farmers and food entrepreneurs beginning June 6, 2016.
10. Local hospitals, including Kaiser Permanente-Riverside, have reached out to City staff to learn more about the GrowRIVERSIDE initiative and are interest in developing locally-sourced menus to serve patients, visitors and staff – expanding the local demand for locally grown food.

City staff continues to cultivate partnerships with local, regional and national non-governmental organizations and government entities. These partnerships bring financial and non-financial resources to reduce barriers for food system stakeholders and to facilitate economic and social outcomes that can result by localizing Riverside’s food system.

GrowRIVERSIDE Financial Impacts

In addition to facilitating community and economic development activities, the GrowRIVERSIDE initiative became self-sustaining in Year 3, advancing Riverside’s long-term strategy to localize the food system. As of April 28, 2016, total revenues generated from the GrowRIVERSIDE program are expected to:

1. fully recover costs associated with current fiscal year GrowRIVERSIDE program expenditures; and
2. contribute a positive return on investment with a net gain of \$12,153 to the General Fund, offsetting some of the in-kind General Fund expenditures.

Continued investment is required in order for the City and community to sustain the GrowRIVERSIDE initiative momentum and further community and economic development opportunities around localizing the food and agricultural system. Moving forward, staff will continue to foster connections between property owners and farmers to increase acreages placed into food production as well as work with community organizations to address food security needs. Additionally, staff will continue to expand programming such as farm-to-fork dinners, Growers Forum workshops, Community Gatherings, and other creative venues to bring resources, education and opportunities to grow Riverside's food system. Staff will soon begin planning for the fourth annual conference scheduled for April 2017.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact to the General Fund associated with receiving this update.

Prepared by:	Rafael Guzman, Community & Economic Development Director
Certified as to availability of funds:	Scott Miller, Interim Finance Director/Treasurer
Approved by:	Al Zelinka, FAICP, Assistant City Manager
Approved as to form:	Gary G. Geuss, City Attorney

Attached:	Presentation
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