



City of Arts & Innovation

Board of Library Trustees

TO: BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES **DATE: JULY 25, 2016**

FROM: COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: COLLABORATION WITH THE COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT OF A PROPOSED EDUCATIONAL GARDEN ON VACANT LAND BEHIND THE CASA BLANCA LIBRARY

ISSUE:

Collaborate with the Community & Economic Development Department in the development of a Casa Blanca Educational Garden on the City-owned vacant land behind the Casa Blanca Library Assessor's Parcel Number 230-351-016.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board of Library Trustees direct Library staff to collaborate with the Community & Economic Development Department on the planning and subsequent development of a Casa Blanca Educational Garden on the City-owned vacant land behind the Casa Blanca Library between Emerald Street and Freda Avenue. This proposed project is in alignment with the Riverside Public Library's mission and vision of "sparking curiosity and providing tools for discovery."

BACKGROUND:

The Community & Economic Development Department (CEDD) is reviewing an educational garden concept for the 1.46 acres of vacant City owned land for Assessor's Parcel Number 230-351-016, located behind the Casa Blanca Library. At present, the property may only be accessed through the parking lot serving the Casa Blanca Library, Riverside Public Utilities Payment Center, or a fifteen foot wide alley off Freda Avenue.

In November 2015, CEDD presented the potential development of a Casa Blanca Educational Garden to both the Villegas Park Advisory Committee (PAC) and the Casa Blanca Community Action Group (CAG), with reference to Orange County's Farm + Food Lab, located at the Irvine Great Park, as a model.

DISCUSSION:

The Farm + Food Lab is a unique and interactive outdoor classroom for visitors of all ages, featuring themed raised-bed gardens, fruit trees, vertical gardening, a chicken coop, a worm compost bin and solar and wind-powered lights. It is a working and dynamic organic horticulture area with a mission to educate visitors about gardening, inspire innovative and unique ideas for growing food and facilitate a thriving community of people working in partnership.

CEDD organized a tour with four residents of the Casa Blanca neighborhood to visit the Food + Farm Lab. During the tour, the group learned about different planting methods, classes offered, sponsors, activities for children and the many different fruits, vegetables, herbs and flowers planted throughout the facility. This experience also gave us the opportunity to discuss how to incorporate those ideas to represent the Casa Blanca neighborhood and its diverse community.

CEDD has reached out and met with various entities to gauge interest on building potential partnerships with a variety of potential stakeholders including the Riverside Public Library, PAC, CAG, Riverside Public Utilities, Park, Recreation and Community Services, Riverside Unified School District, County of Riverside, UCR Cooperative Extension and UCR Master Gardeners, as well as corporate and non-profit sponsors.

During a meeting with the City departments, Riverside Public Library Director Kennon recommended that CEDD present the concept of a Casa Blanca Educational Garden to the Board of Library Trustees for consideration. Through this partnership, the Casa Blanca Education Garden can add many elements of lifelong learning, discovery and cultural diversity. A partnership with the Riverside Public Library and other entities will ensure a thriving, sustainable and successful project for the community.

FISCAL IMPACT:

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

Prepared by:	Rafael Guzman, Director Community & Economic Development
Approved by:	Tonya Kennon, Library Director
Approved by:	Alexander T. Nguyen, Assistant City Manager
Attachment:	Presentation