



City of Arts & Innovation

City Council Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL **DATE: APRIL 9, 2024**

FROM: OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER **WARD: 5**

SUBJECT: A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AN APPLICATION FOR FUNDING TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE JUSTICE COMMUNITY CHANGE GRANTS PROGRAM OFFERED BY THE U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY IN AN AMOUNT UP TO \$20,000,000 FOR CLEAN ENERGY, SUSTAINABILITY, SMART GROWTH, AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN-AND-AROUND THE CITY'S CASA BLANCA NEIGHBORHOOD AND AUTHORIZATION FOR THE CITY MANAGER TO SIGN ALL APPLICABLE GRANT APPLICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION DOCUMENTS IF AWARDED

ISSUE:

Approval of a Resolution (Exhibit A) that authorizes the City Manager or designee to sign a funding application and associated documents for an amount up to \$20,000,000 offered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Environmental and Climate Justice Community Change Grants Program ("Grant"), to fund clean energy, smart growth, sustainability, and workforce development projects in the greater Casa Blanca Neighborhood and authorization for the City Manager or designee to sign any and all applicable application and implementation documents if the Grant is awarded.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the City Council:

Approve the attached Resolution (Exhibit "A") authorizing the City Manager to sign an application and associated program documents for an application to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Environmental and Climate Justice Community Change Grants Program, for an amount up to \$20,000,000 to fund clean energy, smart growth, sustainability, and workforce development projects in the greater Casa Blanca Neighborhood and authorization for the City Manager or designee to sign any and all applicable application and implementation documents if the Grant is awarded.

BACKGROUND:

The Environmental and Climate Justice Community Change Grants Program offered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has the overall goals of producing public health and environmental benefits through the reduction of emissions from sources of air pollution; achieving health equity and improving public health; and by connecting and investing in project areas. The Grant also invests in ensuring healthy and active living by improving and increasing access to health-promoting systems and environments. Potential projects may include smart transit

projects, park improvements, urban greening, antipollution, and workforce development projects and programs.

The Grant will benefit disadvantaged communities through projects that reduce pollution, increase community climate resilience, and build community capacity to address environmental and climate justice challenges. These place-based investments will be focused on community-driven initiatives to be responsive to community and stakeholder input. They are designed to deliver on the transformative potential for communities most adversely and disproportionately impacted by climate change, legacy pollution, and historical disinvestments.

DISCUSSION:

Environmental and Climate Justice Community Change Grants are intended to fund activities in disadvantaged communities that suffer from disproportionate pollution. On November 21, 2023, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency released a Notice of Funding Availability and initial application materials for the Grant Program. The Environmental and Climate Justice Community Change Grants will award up to \$20,000,000 in implementation grants to fund community building and a wide range of projects that will make noticeable environmental and community health impacts. The Grant has a rolling application process offered through November of this year, with \$2 billion in overall funding. There is no match required for this application.

Given the challenges of the Casa Blanca Neighborhood with pollution and noise control linked to adjacency with the I-91 Freeways (192,000 cars passing each day) and BNSF Railroad (100+ trains weekly), the greater Neighborhood would make an ideal candidate for the Grant discussed in this report. This current effort follows a Casa Blanca application (not awarded) to the Transformative Climate Communities Planning Grant Program in 2023.

The Casa Blanca Neighborhood:

The Casa Blanca neighborhood features many single-family homes of early twentieth century architectural styles, particularly California Bungalow. The homes surround the neighborhood's central recreational feature, Villegas Park and the Ysmael Villegas Community Center. A mix of residential, institutional, and neighborhood serving commercial uses are located along Madison Street which runs through the middle of the neighborhood. Located along Indiana Avenue and Jefferson Street, at the edges of the neighborhood, is a mix of commercial and industrial development. The Casa Blanca Census Tract (6065031300) has about 3,200 people. Surrounding Census Tracts have approximately 23,000 people.

Casa Blanca is included in the federal Climate and Environmental Justice Screening Tool Map tool, a key metric used to qualify for a Grant. The Map is uses datasets that are indicators of burdens in eight categories: climate change, energy, health, housing, legacy pollution, transportation, water and wastewater, and workforce development.. Given the population density, freeway adjacency and pollution burden, the Casa Blanca Neighborhood and surrounding areas would make a strong candidate for investment by a Grant. The Casa Blanca Neighborhood also demonstrates many potential projects, and has established community groups that would be key to success of a higher implementation level Grant. A map taken from the federal Climate and Environmental Justice Screening Tool is presented as Exhibit B to demonstrate neighborhood characteristics.

The City intends to utilize assistance from its approved Grant Writer panel to complete this application, at an approximate cost of \$10,000.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This item aligns the Envision Riverside 2025 Strategic Plan as providing, “High Performing Government,” especially Goal 5.4 to maintain fiscal health by addressing gaps between revenues and expenditures.

This report also aligns with the five cross-cutting threads:

1. **Community Trust** – Utilizing a Grant to build community capacity will serve the public interest by potentially expanding programs and completing projects with external funding; benefiting the City’s diverse populations, and resulting in greater public good.
2. **Equity** – A potential major grant investment in Casa Blanca would result in a more equitable distribution of funding opportunity that serves populations citywide. The Grant is an example of City staff also seek grant funding to directly benefit disadvantaged communities and residents in need of aid.
3. **Fiscal Responsibility** – The City maximizes outcomes in usage of grant funds as a way to lessen pressure on the General fund for projects and services in greater Casa Blanca.
4. **Innovation** – This funding provides the City with the ability to create an innovative program for building capacity with the result in receiving greater external funding.
5. **Sustainability & Resiliency** – Riverside builds community capacity to allow Casa Blanca to apply for future sustainability grants and allows the City to adaptively address resident needs.

FISCAL IMPACT:

If the grant is awarded, the total fiscal impact of this grant application could be up to \$20,000,000. If awarded, staff will return to the City Council requesting the acceptance of grant funds, execution of contracts, and a breakdown of grant projects and programs.

Prepared by: Jeff McLaughlin, Grants Administrator
Certified as to
availability of funds: Kristie Thomas, Finance Director/Assistant Chief Financial Officer
Approved by: Rafael Guzman, Assistant City Manager
Approved as to form: Phaedra A. Norton, City Attorney

Exhibit A - Resolution
Exhibit B - Map

Exhibit B
Climate and Environmental Justice Screening Tool Map
Potential Greater Casa Blanca Neighborhood

