



City of Culver City

Mike Balkman
Council Chambers
9770 Culver Blvd.
Culver City, CA 90232
(310) 253-5851

Staff Report

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Item #: A-1.

CC - 1) Presentation on the Ballona Creek Revitalization Project (BCRP); and 2) Direction on the Development of an Action Plan and Implementation Strategy.

Meeting Date: November 18, 2019

Contact Person/Dept: Elaine Gerety-Warner/ CDD-Economic Development
Ashley Hefner/CDD-Advance Planning

Phone Number: (310) 253-5777 / 5744

Fiscal Impact: Yes ☐ No ☒

General Fund: Yes ☐ No ☒

Public Hearing: ☐ **Action Item:** ☒ **Attachments:** ☒

Commission Action Required: Yes ☐ No ☒ **Date:**

Public Notification: (E-Mail) Meetings and Agendas - City Council (11/13/19);
Jackson Gate Petition List (11/07/19)

Department Approval: Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director (10/31/19)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the City Council 1) receive a presentation regarding the Ballona Creek Revitalization Project (BCRP); and 2) provide direction on the development of an Action Plan and Implementation Strategy.

BACKGROUND

The City Council's 2016-2020 Strategic Plan Includes the goal to enhance Ballona Creek as a more sustainable, walkable and bikeable recreational amenity for the City. In 2017, the City's Ballona Creek Revitalization Project (BCRP) was developed to address the Strategic Plan goal, with the objective of exploring opportunities to create an active transportation corridor for mobility and wellness, support storm water management and habitat enhancement, increase open space and landscaped areas, and provide an attractive connection to and thru Culver City. The City Council renewed its commitment to revitalize the creek, improve multi-modal mobility, and identify funding opportunities in the 2018 - 2023 Strategic Plan and the Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Budget.

CivicSpark Fellowship

In 2017, the City was awarded a CivicSpark Fellowship grant by the Local Government Commission in partnership with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research to help fulfill the Strategic Plan goal. CivicSpark is an AmeriCorps program that provides staffing resources and capacity to local agencies for projects that address climate change. CivicSpark Fellows (Fellows) serve for 11 months and receive hands-on training while the City benefits from added staffing. The third cycle of Fellows began work in September 2019. The Fellows have been instrumental in advancing the project over the last few years by:

- Conducting an extensive review of previous plans related to Ballona Creek (including the Ballona Creek Greenway Plan and Ballona Creek Greenway Projects) and researched a variety of creek enhancement projects, stormwater interventions, and funding opportunities that may assist in the development and implementation of revitalization efforts.
- Developing a land use atlas that identifies jurisdiction, property ownership, land use, and easements in and adjacent to the creek to identify potential improvement areas and required agency partnerships.
- Facilitating and implementing stakeholder meetings in May 2018 and January 2019 with more than 60 regional stakeholders to discuss creek revitalization, enhancement, and resiliency.
- Initiating discussions with Tongva Native American leaders to start a dialogue early in the process.
- Conducting a Hayden Tract business outreach event in July 2019 to build awareness of the Creek, solicit feedback on potential enhancements, and assist the Baldwin Hills Conservancy and California Greenworks with their efforts to assess potential stormwater interventions.
- Informing the community about the project via community festivals, a Chamber Expo event, creek clean-ups, social media, a bi-lingual handout, and a City webpage (culvercity.org/ballonacreek).

Currently, the Fellows are researching accessibility options to connect the Ballona Creek to business centers, entitlement/assessment processes, programs to help fund and maintain creek improvements, and continued outreach efforts to progress regional partnerships and community awareness. Current Planning Division staff are also drafting new development conditions to guide the redevelopment of creek fronting properties along Jefferson Boulevard to ensure that they contribute to the creek environment and address recreational and mobility concerns.

Greenway Plan and Projects Documents

One of the objectives of the BCRP is to build upon previous creek plans and studies, especially the Ballona Creek Greenway Plan and Projects documents (Attachments 2 through 4). Developed by Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission (SMBRC) in 2010, the Greenway Plan describes opportunities to reconnect residents with the creek, create access points and trails, enhance habitat, mitigate stormwater runoff, redevelop land for improved watershed health, and increase health and sustainability of the region. The Plan highlights improvements to four areas or "reaches" of the creek, including the Ballona Wetlands, Mar Vista/Sepulveda Channel, Culver City/Adams Channel, and Mid-

City east of Fairfax.

Within the Culver City portion (Reach 3), the Projects document was prepared in 2011 and provides a high-level conceptual plan for the development of a trail and wildlife corridor along the Adams Channel that connects to the existing path, identifies more access along both sides of the creek to reduce isolation, and promotes naturalization of the creek bed.

The Greenway Plan and Projects documents were never developed into construction-ready plans. SMBRC is an advisory agency, so the intent of preparing these plans was to get the ball rolling and show what was possible to the various agencies with jurisdiction. The cities of Culver City and Los Angeles were involved in the efforts, but never adopted or otherwise incorporated the plans into their work plans. Efforts were largely dampened by the LA County Flood Control District's strict regulations as well as pressure from advocates to expand the plan to address the entire watershed.

Path Extension and Environmental Impact Bond (EIB)

Building on concepts from the Greenway Plan and Projects documents, the City has proposed a potential path extension from the current endpoint at Syd Kronenthal Park eastward to Cochran Avenue in Los Angeles, subject to grant and bond funding (Attachment 5). The objective would be to add a fully protected and separated non-vehicular multi-use path with green open spaces and increase access to transit, business centers, and regional amenities. The extension would enhance the natural environment, preserve native and endemic species, and improve air and water quality for surrounding neighborhoods by creating access to active mobility options and providing increased open space for health and wellness.

The cities of Culver City and Los Angeles have discussed potential funding through the Rockefeller Foundation's EIB Challenge for green infrastructure and resiliency projects. Projects must be design-developed and shovel-ready to be eligible for EIB funding. The City submitted a grant request in October 2019 to the Caltrans Sustainable Communities Transportation Program to conduct a feasibility analysis and plan development to get the extension project poised for EIB funding eligibility. The grant awards announcement is anticipated for Spring 2020.

Task Force Meetings

In September 2018, the City engaged SWA Group to help plan and facilitate the January 2019 Task Force meeting. Reflecting on the Greenway Plan and Projects, stakeholders brainstormed on actionable interventions for different typologies (physical environments) along the creek through the lenses of mobility, wildlife/nature, open space, programming/arts/culture, water/flooding, and resiliency. Many of the concepts are similar to those in the Greenway Plan and Projects but reflect current development and transportation conditions. Based on the Task Force recommendations, SWA Group created a conceptual "kit-of-parts" approach to implementing improvements so that the City can implement projects, with a unified design theme, as funding becomes available (Attachment 6).

DISCUSSION

Staff recommends the City Council consider moving forward with the development of an Action Plan and Implementation Strategy to implement revitalization projects along Ballona Creek. This strategy

could identify short, medium and long-term improvements, to establish funding, permitting, technical reviews and multi-agency coordination requirements. Short-term improvements could include art installations, interpretive and wayfinding signage, lighting, homeless assistance, repaving, developing additional access points to the existing multi-use path (mainly in non-residential areas), safety patrols, and education campaigns. Medium to long-term improvements could include pocket parks, the path extension, terracing/reconfiguration, water capture, and mobility hubs. The City could implement improvements as funding allows ensuring that conditions and processes are current and actionable.

Retaining a consultant to prepare a Ballona Creek Action Plan has been in the Community Development Department work plan for the last two fiscal years. If City Council wishes to pursue the development of an Action Plan and Implementation Strategy, staff will prepare a Request for Proposals (RFP) for review and comment at a future meeting date.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

There is no cost related to discussion of the BCRP or to prepare an RFP for an Action Plan and Implementation Strategy.

ATTACHMENTS

1. 2019-11-18_ATT - Ballona Creek Revitalization Project Update
2. 2019-11-18_ATT - Ballona Creek Greenway Plan and Projects Summary
3. 2019-11-18_ATT - Ballona Creek Greenway Plan
4. 2019-11-18_ATT - Ballona Creek Greenway Projects
5. 2019-11-18_ATT - Ballona Creek Environmental Impact Bond Presentation
6. 2019-11-18_ATT - Ballona Creek Kit-of-Parts Concept

MOTIONS

That the City Council:

Direct staff on how to move forward concerning a Ballona Creek Action Plan and Implementation Strategy.