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Title: RESOLUTION - Approve the filing of a Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program grant application to develop a Farmland Preservation Program and authorize the Director of the Development and Resource Management or designee to accept a grant award up to \$100,000 and conduct all negotiations and execute and submit all related documents, contracts, agreements, and amendments which may be necessary for the development of the program

Sponsors: Planning and Development Department

Indexes:

Code sections:

Attachments: 1. 15-365 Resolution.pdf, 2. 15-365 Grant Application.pdf, 3. 15- 365 Letter of Support from Ag Leaders.pdf, 4. Supplement Letter File IDs 15-365 and 15-381.pdf

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
5/14/2015	1	City Council	rejected	Pass

REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

May 14, 2015

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SUBJECT

RESOLUTION - Approve the filing of a Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program grant application to develop a Farmland Preservation Program and authorize the Director of the Development and Resource Management or designee to accept a grant award up to \$100,000 and conduct all negotiations and execute and submit all related documents, contracts, agreements, and amendments which may be necessary for the development of the program

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that City Council:

1. Approve the resolution to approve the filing of a Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program grant application for the purpose of developing a Farmland Preservation Program; and to
2. Authorize the Director of Development and Resource Management, or their designee, to accept a grant award up to \$100,000 and conduct all negotiations and execute and submit all related grant documents, contracts, agreements, and amendments which may be necessary for the development of the Program.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

General Plan Table 12-2: Summary of Implementation Actions for Plan Policies identifies the Department of Development and Resource Management (DARM) and the City Council as responsible parties for the implementation of Policy RC-9-c, which directs the City to develop a Farmland Preservation Program.

DARM is requesting that the Council approve the resolution to support the filing of the grant application, the purpose of which is to receive funding to provide assistance to DARM to develop the Program.

BACKGROUND

The San Joaquin Valley (and Fresno County in particular) has a wealth of high quality farmland and is the most productive agricultural region in the United States, contributing billions of dollars to the economy annually. Yet, the Valley also experiences greater pressure to convert farmland into urban uses due to population growth.

A report authored by the American Farmland Trust found that, in Fresno County, the amount of acreage of farmland held under conservation easements was among the lowest in the Valley, while the amount of acreage of farmland converted to urban uses between 1990 and 2008 was among the highest.

General Plan Policy RC-9-c directs the City to address this conversion by requiring the development of a Farmland Preservation Program. The Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program grant offers an opportunity to fund the development of this Preservation Program utilizing grant dollars instead of General Fund dollars. With this funding the City may hire a consultant to work alongside staff to leverage existing resources, perform new research, and coordinate with the agriculture community and other invested partners to develop a comprehensive and model program for the City.

The selection of a consultant and development of scope of work will include feedback from the agricultural community, development industry and other invested partners. Execution of the consultant contract will be subject to council approval.

Policy RC-9-c states:

Farmland Preservation Program. *In coordination with regional partners or independently, establish a Farmland Preservation Program. When Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of State Importance is converted to urban uses, this program would require that the developer of such a project permanently protect an equal amount of similar farmland*

elsewhere through easement.

In addition to fulfilling this General Plan policy, the development of a Farmland Preservation Program is contributive to the implementation of other General Plan policies and has numerous other benefits, which are articulated in the attached grant application.

The Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALCP) is implemented through a partnership of the Strategic Growth Council, the Department of Conservation, and the Natural Resources Agency. The SALCP focuses on protecting agricultural land for long-term productivity and as a means to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. DARM is pursuing the Program's Agricultural Land Strategies Grant, which is a short-term grant "to inventory and evaluate which agricultural lands are most highly productive and critically threatened and develop locally appropriate strategies, programs and actions that ensure the long term protection of those lands."

ENVIRONMENTAL FINDINGS

By the definition in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15378, the applying for grant funds does not qualify as a "project" as defined by CEQA.

LOCAL PREFERENCE

Local preference was not considered because this resolution does not include a bid or award of a construction or services contract.

FISCAL IMPACT

DARM has requested an allocation of \$100,000. A ten percent match is required, five percent of which may be an in-kind contribution. Staff time will fulfill the in-kind contribution and the remaining \$5,000 will be appropriated through the Department's budget (General Fund) to be used for expenses such as printing and public notices.

Attachments:

Resolution

Grant Application

Letter of Support