



Legislation Details (With Text)

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Title: Authorizing the Director of Development and Resource Management to enter into an agreement not to exceed \$500,000 with Ascent Environmental, Inc. to complete an Environmental Impact Report assessing a Priority Industrial Area Specific Plan.

Sponsors: Planning and Development Department

Indexes:

Code sections:

Attachments: 1. Agreement with Ascent Environmental, Inc., 2. South Industrial Priority Area Map, 3. Supplement - Letter from Leadership Counsel.pdf

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
11/29/2018	1	City Council	approved as amended	Pass

REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

November 15, 2018

FROM: JENNIFER CLARK, Director
Development and Resource Management Department

SUBJECT

Authorizing the Director of Development and Resource Management to enter into an agreement not to exceed \$500,000 with Ascent Environmental, Inc. to complete an Environmental Impact Report assessing a Priority Industrial Area Specific Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Council approve the contract with Ascent Environmental, Inc. to complete an Environmental Impact Report assessing a South Industrial Priority Area Specific Plan not to exceed \$500,000 and authorize the execution of related documents by the Director of Development and Resource Management Director or designee.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The proposed EIR will complete a programmatic assessment of the area identified in General Plan Figure IM-1: as the South Industrial Priority Area. The Specific Plan will clarify and refine existing policies in the plan area and determine a reasonable buildout condition associated with plan implementation. The scope of work will comply with Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines

including specific analysis of four development scenarios including existing conditions, anticipated buildout conditions, and cumulative conditions. At adoption, the Specific Plan and EIR will provide certainty to development within the South Industrial Priority Area.

BACKGROUND

On December 18, 2014, the City adopted the Fresno General Plan. The first objective reads, “Increase opportunity, economic development, business, and job creation.” Fresno’s economy plays a crucial role in the physical development of the planning area and the City’s ability to support implementation of General Plan policies and programs. The City is committed to economic development and fiscal sustainability. In fact, the outcome of many General Plan initiatives is tied to the city’s economic success. The City is committed to improving the business climate, retaining local businesses, developing a high-skilled labor force, attracting new industries, supporting the tax base, and sustaining the City’s ability to provide public services for current and future residents.

The City identified primary industries as key to increasing economic vitality. The City’s economic development plan includes strategies to support the expansion of primary industries within Fresno including prioritizing industrial land in the General Plan and supporting the private development of industrial parks. General Plan policy ED-1-d calls for the City to increase the amount of land properly zoned, consistent with the General Plan, and ready to be expeditiously developed, redeveloped and/or revitalized for economic development and job creation purposes. Figure IM-1: Priority Areas for Development Incentives identified the “South Industrial Priority Area” as a first step toward achieving policy ED-1-d.

The proposed EIR will complete a programmatic assessment of the area identified in General Plan Figure IM-1: as the South Industrial Priority Area. The Specific Plan will clarify and refine existing policies in the plan area and determine a reasonable buildout condition associated with plan implementation. The scope of work will comply with Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines including specific analysis of four development scenarios including existing conditions, anticipated buildout conditions, and cumulative conditions. At adoption, the Specific Plan and EIR will provide certainty to development within the South Industrial Priority Area.

Ascent has extensive experience with complex and controversial CEQA analyses. The firm has produced more than a dozen legally defensible documents that have withstood legal challenge and appeals through the California Supreme Court with a success rate of 87%. Additionally, Ascent has unique understanding of the complexities of industrial development in the City of Fresno and community concerns due to their completion of the Darling Relocation MND and the current undertaking of the Darling Relocation EIR. The proposed scope for the Priority Area Industrial Specific Plan EIR is projected to be completed within desired timelines and budget. Due to the existing relationship with Ascent, and their extensive background and knowledge of the City’s rules and procedures, we believe that they are uniquely qualified and recommend that the City enter into an agreement with Ascent Environmental, Inc.

ENVIRONMENTAL FINDINGS

This approval is not a project for the purposes of CEQA Guidelines Section 15378.

LOCAL PREFERENCE

Local preference was not implemented because Ascent Environmental, Inc. is uniquely qualified.

FISCAL IMPACT

As a component of the FY 2019 Budget Update Item, which is to be heard by the Council on November 15, 2018, funding of \$550,000 has been recommended for this project. Of the total, \$500,000 has been reserved for the Review outlined above. The remaining funding will go to cover internal staff and legal costs.

Attachments: Agreement with Ascent Environmental, Inc.
 South Industrial Priority Area Map