



Office of the City Manager

CONSENT CALENDAR

January 31, 2023

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager

Submitted by: David Sprague, Interim Chief, Fire Department

Subject: Grant Application: Funding from California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) Wildfire Prevention Grant to Implement an Incentive Program for Residents of Berkeley's Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution authorizing the City Manager to apply for and accept a grant, and any amendments, from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) for up to \$5 Million to implement a vegetation management program for residents of Berkeley's Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ). Grant funds will be used to develop and deliver public education materials explaining the inspection process and the importance of creating defensible space, assist residents in need of financial assistance to remove vegetation to meet state and local codes, enhance the chipper program, and fund a 3rd party administrator to manage applications and contractor pay schedules.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

There is no requirement for matching funds for this grant. The Fire Department (Department) is applying for the full amount available.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The Department is preparing to launch an educational campaign targeting residents in the VHFHSZ to increase awareness of the importance of defensible space and the impending Zone 0 state regulations that go in to effect for all new construction January of 2023 and all existing properties in January of 2024. The community will benefit from additional programs, staffing, and resident defensible space assistance programs.

This grant supports the City's Strategic Plan's goals and objectives as follows:

Goal 1: Create a resilient, safe, connected, and prepared City

3.23 Fire Prevention: Increase fire/life safety capacity and resources to effectively maintain community safety.

Goal 2: Be a customer-focused organization that provides excellent, timely, easily-accessible service and information to the community.

9.10 Increase and improve communications from the Fire Department

Goal 3: Champion and demonstrate social and racial equity.

No specific objective: however, this program does address the socioeconomic equity of Berkeley's residents.

Program Objectives

In addition to Goals 1-3 listed above, this program provides Berkeley residents with the following expanded services:

- a public education program that will educate residents about defensible space,
- an enhanced chipping program,
- a resident assistance program for vegetation treatment performed from 0-100 ft for those who cannot do the work due to physical or financial hardship,
- a resident assistance program for vegetation treatment performed past 100ft.

BACKGROUND

The science around wildfire prevention is novel and is driving changes to best practices, regulations, and fire codes. The California State Board of Forestry passed legislation that mandates intense vegetation management within a five-foot radius around homes. This will go into effect in January 2023 for new homes and January of 2024 for existing homes. Berkeley residents voted to implement Measure FF in November 2020 to help fund operational changes and improve the community's resistance to wildfire. If awarded, the grant funds, coupled with the existing budget will allow the Department to make significant improvements in the overall defensible space in the VHFHSZ.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Ensuring Berkeley is complying with state and local wildfire prevention standards will help sustain the local environment and mitigate the potential of fire, mudslides, and other catastrophic impacts associated with the overgrowth of vegetation and loss of habitat post-wildfire.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

The challenges faced in the VHFHSZ present a citywide threat from wildfire that must be aggressively mitigated by a partnership between residents and the City. The education provided to the VHFHSZ residents and the creation of defensible space will help prevent a wildfire that has the potential to impact the entire City of Berkeley and adjacent communities.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

None.

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Wildfire Prevention Grant to Implement an Incentive Program for Residents of
Berkeley's Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone

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CONTACT PERSON

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Dan Green, WUI Division Chief, 510-981-3473

Attachments:

1: Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

GRANT APPLICATION: FUNDING FROM CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION (CAL FIRE) WILDFIRE PREVENTION GRANT TO IMPLEMENT AN INCENTIVE PROGRAM FOR RESIDENTS OF BERKELEY'S VERY HIGH FIRE HAZARD SEVERITY ZONE

WHEREAS, the science around wildfire prevention is novel and is driving changes to best practices, regulations, and fire codes, and

WHEREAS, the California State Board of Forestry has passed legislation that mandates intense vegetation management within a five-foot radius around homes, and

WHEREAS, these grant funds will be coupled with the existing budget to make significant improvements in defensible space within the VHFHSZ, and

WHEREAS, grant funds may be used to support public education around the inspection program and the need to create defensible space, assist residents in need with the costs of removing vegetation to meet state and local codes, enhance the chipper program, and fund a 3rd party administrator to manage applications and reimbursement.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that the City Manager or her designee is authorized to apply for and accept a grant, and any amendments, from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) for up to \$5,000,000 to implement a vegetation management program for residents of Berkeley's Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ).