



SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 10/21/2025

To: Board of Directors of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District
Department or Agency Name(s): Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District
Staff Name and Phone Number: Misti Arias, 565-7264; Pamela Swan, 565-7348; Oliva Fiori, 565-7349
Vote Requirement: Majority
Supervisory District(s): Fourth

Title:

Approval of Mark West Area Community Park Phase 2 Community Spaces Matching Grant Project (Property No. 0661)

Recommended Action:

Adopt a Resolution of the Board of Directors of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District ("Ag + Open Space") to:

- A) Award \$300,000 in Matching Grant Program funding to the Mark West Area Community Fund towards its development and improvement of the Mark West Area Community Park;
- B) Approve and authorize the General Manager to execute a Matching Grant Agreement between Ag + Open Space and the Mark West Area Community Fund;
- C) Make certain determinations pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act and direct the filing of a Notice of Exemption;
- D) Authorize the General Manager to take all other actions necessary to complete this transaction, in consultation with County Counsel.

(Fourth)

Executive Summary:

Mark West Area Community Park Phase 2 is a Community Spaces Matching Grant Program ("MGP") project, which will provide \$300,000 to the property owner, Mark West Area Community Fund ("MWACF"), a non-profit organization, for the development of essential infrastructure, landscaping, pathways, and other recreational improvements to create a 1-acre public community park. The site is currently vacant land located at 4614 Old Redwood Highway in an unincorporated part of Sonoma County known as Larkfield ("Property"), that was significantly impacted by the 2017 Tubbs Fire. The Property will be developed into a public park by MWACF with the use of this Community Spaces MGP improvement grant. The primary objectives of the park are to create a community healing and gathering space, offer public recreation and conservation education opportunities, and to enhance climate resilience and carbon sequestration.

This improvement grant builds upon the recent Mark West Area Community Park Phase 1 Community Spaces MGP acquisition grant awarded by the Board of Directors on February 25, 2025, towards MWACF's acquisition of the Property for the park. As a condition of the Phase 1 funding, Ag + Open Space already acquired a Conservation Easement, Recreation Conservation Covenant, and Offer to Dedicate over the Property.

Discussion:

Mark West Area Community Park Phase 2 Matching Grant

The Mark West Area Community Park Phase 2 is a Community Spaces Matching Grant Program (“MGP”) project, which will provide a \$300,000 grant to the property owner, MWACF, towards improvements needed to develop and open the Mark West Area Community Park, including essential infrastructure, landscaping, pathways, and recreational improvements.

The MWACF and Sonoma Land Trust (SLT) submitted the Mark West Area Community Park Phase 2 application for the 2024 Community Spaces MGP cycle. The application was accepted by Ag + Open Space’s Board of Directors on December 10, 2024, for a \$300,000 improvement grant. Since that time, MWACF has secured its non-profit status and acquired the Property and will be the sole grantee of this project going forward.

As a newly incorporated 501(c)3 non-profit, the MWACF intends to develop the Property as a public park with such amenities as a playground, picnic areas, gardens, and a small ADA-accessible parking area. MWACF’s primary objectives for the park are to create a community healing and gathering space, increase public recreation and conservation education opportunities, and to enhance climate resilience and carbon sequestration. MWACF’s use permit has been granted by Permit Sonoma.

Historically, the Property was a day-care center with a small parking area, building and playground. The 1-acre Property burned in the 2017 Tubbs fire, along with much of the surrounding community, and is now vacant with a remnant parking area, flagpole and limited vegetation. Single family homes, the vast majority of which are post fire rebuilds, abut the Property to the east and south, and a commercial property abuts the Property to the North. Old Redwood Highway runs along the western frontage of the Property.

This second phase of the Mark West Area Community Park project builds upon the successful completion of the first phase of the project, where Sonoma Land Trust (SLT), on behalf of MWACF, submitted an application for funding to acquire the Property. The application was accepted by the Board on August 22, 2023, and on February 25, 2025, SLT was awarded the Phase 1 project acquisition grant funding. As a condition of this funding, Ag + Open Space acquired a Conservation Easement, Recreation Conservation Covenant, and Offer to Dedicate over the Property. SLT had originally acquired the Property on January 31, 2024, on behalf of MWACF, and subsequently transferred the Property to MWACF. The grant funds have since reimbursed SLT for acquisition of the Property in the amount of \$1,169,500.

Conservation values identified in the Conservation Easement include urban open space, scenic resources, and recreation and educational resources. Improvement of the Property for a community open space has strong community support. Residents of the Mark West area came together and established MWACF to create and manage this new park property. In addition, the project is supported by the Mark West Citizens Advisory Council, a group that advises Sonoma County on local planning and management decisions, as well as the Mark West Chamber of Commerce, and Unity Church.

Project Structure

The Conservation Easement over the Property previously acquired by Ag + Open Space as part of the Phase 1

project, allows the entire parcel to be used for active public recreation. The Conservation Easement protects the open space and scenic values while allowing for recreational and educational uses on the Property. The provisions of the Recreation Conservation Covenant previously acquired by Ag + Open Space require the Property to remain open to the public for recreational and educational purposes in perpetuity. The public access requirements take effect on April 3, 2028; however, the park can open sooner. The Conservation Easement restricts structures and improvements to no more than 35% or 15,246 square feet of the Property. Allowed structures and improvements include improvements needed for recreational and educational use and enjoyment.

Matching Grant Agreement

Funding for this \$300,000 improvement grant will be administered through a Matching Grant Agreement between Ag + Open Space and the Mark West Area Community Fund. The grant funds will provide essential infrastructure, park elements including water and power hook ups, irrigation, drinking fountain, fencing, pathways, trees and plants, signage, picnic tables and benches.

As the match, MWACF will contribute secured funds totaling \$160,500, which represents a 54% match to the granted funds. The match is secured and comes from the Saba Foundation and American Water Charitable Foundation.

Vital Lands Initiative

This Project meets multiple objectives described in the Vital Lands Initiative:

- Protect open space and publicly accessible lands in and near cities and communities and connect people with protected lands.
- Pursue partnerships for future acquisitions that expand, create, or connect new parks and open space preserves and trails.
- Protect open lands that surround and differentiate the County's urban areas and contribute to the unique scenic character of the County.

Sonoma County General Plan 2020

This Project furthers several goals and policies in Sonoma County's General Plan 2020, specifically in the Land Use, Open Space and Resource Conservation, and Water Resources

Elements as noted in, but not limited to, the following below:

- Preserve the visual identities of communities by maintaining open space areas between cities and communities. (Goal OSRC-1)
- Protect existing groundwater recharge areas (Objective WR-2.3)
- Promote a sustainable future where residents can enjoy a high quality of life for the long term, including a clean and beautiful environment and a balance of employment, housing, infrastructure, and services. (Goal LU-11)

Ag + Open Space's Expenditure Plan

This project is consistent with Ag + Open Space's Expenditure Plan, because it will offer opportunities for public recreation and access, and urban open space through the Community Spaces Matching Grant Program.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

Agenda Date: 10/21/2025

The Project is exempt from the requirements of CEQA pursuant to Sections 15301 (Existing Facilities), 15303 (Small Structures) and 15304 (Minor Alterations) of title 14 of the California Code of Regulations. The property was previously developed with a preschool, playground, and garden, and the project involves negligible expansion of the former use. The development of the park is also limited to minor alterations to land and small structures. No exceptions listed under Section 15300.2 apply. The Project is also exempt because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the Project would have a significant effect on the environment pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3).

Racial Equity:

NA

Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?

Not required on consent items.

Prior Board Actions:

On February 25, 2025, Sonoma Land Trust was awarded the MWACF Phase 1 project acquisition grant by the Board of Directors. As a condition of this funding, Ag + Open Space was granted a Conservation Easement, Recreation Conservation Covenant, and Offer to Dedicate.

On August 22, 2023, the Board of Directors approved the recommendation from staff to accept the SLT's Matching Grant Program application for the project described in this document.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 25-26 Adopted	FY 26-27 Projected	FY 27-28 Projected
Budgeted Expenses	\$300,000		
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures	\$300,000		
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other	\$300,000		
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources	\$300,000		

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

Ag + Open Space has adequate appropriations in its FY 25-26 budget for the \$300,000 contribution to this improvement grant, which is funded by Sonoma County voter approved Measure F.

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

NA

Attachments:

1. Resolution
2. General Plan Map 2020
3. Location Map
4. Site Plan
5. Notice of Exemption
6. Matching Grant Agreement

Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:

1. Conservation Easement
2. Exhibit B Project Structure Map
3. Recreation Conservation Easement
4. Offer to Dedicate