

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
September 14, 2023

GEYSERVILLE COMMUNITY PLAZA

Project No. 23-061-01
Project Manager: Morgan Wright

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$400,000 to Sonoma County on behalf of its Public Infrastructure Department to prepare designs, an environmental review document, and permit applications for the Geyserville Community Plaza Project, which consists of enhancing the 1.17-acre Park and Ride property in Geyserville, in Sonoma County.

LOCATION: Geyserville Park and Ride, Geyserville, Sonoma County

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)
 - Exhibit 2: [Project Concept Design](#)
 - Exhibit 3: [Project Letters](#)
 - Exhibit 4: [Project Photos](#)
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RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution and findings.

Resolution:

The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes a grant of an amount not to exceed four hundred thousand dollars (\$400,000) to Sonoma County on behalf of its Public Infrastructure Department (“the grantee”) to prepare designs, an environmental review document and permit applications for the Geyserville Community Plaza Project, consisting of enhancing the 1.17-acre Park and Ride property in Geyserville, Sonoma County.

Prior to commencement of the project, the grantee shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy (Executive Officer) the following:

1. A detailed work program, schedule, and budget.
2. Names and qualifications of any contractors to be retained in carrying out the project.

In addition, to the extent appropriate, the grantee shall incorporate the guidelines of the Conservancy's 'Coastal Access Project Standards'.

Findings:

Based on the accompanying staff recommendation and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed authorization is consistent with Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the San Francisco Bay Conservancy Program.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize a \$400,000 grant to Sonoma County on behalf of its Public Infrastructure Department (SPID) to prepare designs, an environmental review document, and permit applications (project or proposed project) for the Geyserville Community Plaza Project, consisting of enhancing the 1.17-acre Park and Ride property in the unincorporated community of Geyserville, Sonoma County, (see Exhibit 1, Project Location Map).

The proposed project consists of developing engineering designs, performing environmental review, and preparing permit applications for the improvement and enhancement of the 1.17-acre Park and Ride facility in Geyserville. The project includes designs for updating the site's parking area, and creating an outdoor recreation space that includes a future access point and waystation along the Great Redwood Trail. The environmental review of this planning phase will analyze any potential impacts that could result from improvements to the facility and will prepare an initial environmental study and environmental review document consistent with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), which is anticipated to be a mitigated negative declaration. A cultural resources survey and a botanical and wildfire study will be conducted to support CEQA analysis and project planning.

The project design goal will be to provide residents, visitors of Geyserville, and users of the Great Redwood Trail a safe, outdoor recreation space and a permanent location for community celebrations and festivals and an updated and safe parking area for the public. The project will include designs for an ADA accessible path and ramps, a picnic area, play area and exercise equipment, a stage, community gathering area, bike racks, a shade arbor, electric vehicle charging stations, and exterior lighting.

The design will include native plantings for habitat value, and informational and educational signage. The design will preserve the existing oak woodland on the site.

Paths will be constructed with natural materials and meet ADA requirements, improving the functionality of the park and creating an inclusive environment for park visitors. Drainage improvements with a berm with native plantings, an enhanced swale, and expanded ponding area will capture stormwater and mitigate flooding and erosion impacts. Exterior lighting will illuminate the project area in darker hours, improving safety for pedestrians. The grantee is working with a local Tribe to develop educational signage regarding Indigenous heritage.

Site Description: The project area is owned by the County of Sonoma and is a 1.17-acre lot that is a Park and Ride facility in Geyserville, Sonoma County. The Park and Ride is near the Geyserville Chamber of Commerce, restaurants, shops, and is a stop for the Sonoma County Public Transit. The Park and Ride facility was built on a vacant lot in 2008, making it the first parking area and community plaza in the vicinity.

Geyserville is an unincorporated town within Sonoma County with a population of 862 residents. The town is located within Alexander Valley and is a popular destination for artists, photographers, bicyclists, and tourists. The unique and charming town features wooden boardwalks, fine art and antique shops, and famous Sonoma County wines. There are no public open space facilities within 4 miles of the project area.

Grant Applicant Qualifications: The Sonoma Public Infrastructure Department (Department), formerly known as The Transportation and Public Works Department, focuses on planning, building, and maintaining quality services and infrastructure in Sonoma County, through stewardship and innovation. The applicant has managed over \$100 million in grant funds for County infrastructure projects. The Department works closely within its divisions to ensure that projects are completed in a timely manner and on budget. The Department's management analyst, administrative services manager, finance analyst, and special projects analyst monitor project progress and expenditures, and manage project cash flow. Further, the Department's competitive contractor selection and bid process ensures that they hire qualified contractors and require performance bonds to ensure that projects are completed on schedule and per plan specifications.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA:

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria, last updated on September 23, 2021, in the following respects:

Selection Criteria

1. Extent to which the project helps the Conservancy accomplish the objectives in the Strategic Plan.

See the "Consistency with Conservancy's Strategic Plan" section below.

2. Project is a good investment of state resources.

The project will complete designs for enhancement of an important open space for the local community. The project will design a safe and accessible park, while maintaining the site's habitat value. The budget is reasonable for the scope of work. The local community has

expressed strong support for the project. Residents and visitors will be able to enjoy the interpretive signs and native vegetation in its urban context.

3. Project includes a serious effort to engage tribes. Examples of tribal engagement include good faith, documented efforts to work with tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated to the project area.

The applicant will discuss the concept design with a local Tribe and will present the planning project to the Tribal council. There is potential to include interpretive signage at the site to showcase Tribal history and the importance of the site and surrounding areas.

4. Project benefits will be sustainable or resilient over the project lifespan.

The proposed improvement designs will build on the park's existing facilities to encourage public use. The construction of ramps, paths, gathering area, and other park amenities are durable solutions for the park's currently deteriorating landscape. The low impact plan maintains oak woodland and equips the park with low maintenance landscaping, and native plants that are resilient to drought and provide habitat. Sonoma County Transit will maintain the park and ride portion of the facility and a management plan for maintenance of the remainder of the park will be developed and further explored.

5. Project delivers multiple benefits and significant positive impact.

The project will design a much-needed urban park for residents and visitors in an active community. The park will provide recreational benefits through its ADA accessible trails and play area, and by serving as an access point to the Great Redwood Trail (GRT). It will provide educational benefits through interpretive signage. It will provide economic benefits by enhancing the experience of tourists and providing an access point for the GRT. It will build community by providing a location to host community events.

6. Project planned with meaningful community engagement and broad community support.

The grantee collected public input for the project via internet surveys in both English and Spanish. The need for a park was identified through community surveys by the Geyserville Planning Committee. Three concept designs were created and shared with the community at the Geyserville Town Meeting, Geyserville May Day Celebration, the Geyserville Drainage Meeting, and the Geyserville Fall Colors Festival. Concept and ideas for the Master Plan were posted in downtown Geyserville and on the Geyserville Alexander Valley Municipal Advisory Council (GAV MAC) website. The final concept design included community input and feedback.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$400,000
Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District	\$100,000
Project Total	\$500,000

Conservancy funds for this project are expected to come from the Fiscal Year 2022-2023 appropriation from the General Fund to the Conservancy for the purpose of environmental cleanup, water supply studies, and public access projects in the Eel and Russian River watersheds. (The Budget Act of 2022, SB 154, as amended by AB 179, Chapter 249 of the Statutes of 2022). The proposed project is consistent with these fund sources because it will provide engineering designs and environmental studies for a public access project within the Russian River Watershed.

The grantee is recommended for an additional \$100,000 in planning funds from the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District.

Unless specifically identified as “Required Match,” the other sources of funding and in-kind contributions described above are estimates. The Conservancy does not typically require matching funds or in-kind services, nor does it require documentation of expenditures from other funders or of in-kind services. Typical grant conditions require grantees to provide any funds needed to complete a project.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project is consistent with Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31160-31165), regarding the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program. Consistent with Section 31162(d), the project will provide the planning work (designs, environmental review, and permit applications) necessary to provide an open space and a natural area that is accessible to the urban populations of Sonoma County and the public for recreational and educational purposes. Consistent with Section 31163(c), the project is a priority for the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program because the project serves rural and urban populations of Sonoma County, can be implemented in a timely way, and includes matching funds from other sources.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S [2023-2027 STRATEGIC PLAN](#):

Consistent with **Goal 2.3, Expand Accessibility**, the proposed project will include the planning of accessible paths, ramps, and other recreational amenities.

Consistent with **Goal 2.5, Recreation Facilities & Amenities**, the proposed project will plan enhancement of recreation facilities including picnic areas, play area and exercise equipment, restrooms, a stage and gathering area.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The proposed project consists of preparing engineering designs, environmental studies, and permit applications for possible future actions, which the Conservancy has not approved, adopted, or funded. As such, the proposed project is exempt from review under CEQA pursuant to 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15262, Feasibility and Planning Studies.

As required by section 15262, the proposed authorization will involve review and consideration of environmental factors associated with the project.

The proposed project is categorically exempt from CEQA review pursuant to CCR Section 15306, since it consists of basic data collection, research and evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource and which will be undertaken as part of a study leading to an action which the Conservancy has not yet approved, adopted, or funded.

Upon approval of the project, Conservancy staff will file a Notice of Exemption.