



CITY COUNCIL

Darryl Moore

Councilmember District 2

CONSENT CALENDAR

November 14, 2006

To: Honorable Mayor and
Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Darryl Moore

Subject: Purchase of a Water Meter for the Berkeley Community Orchard

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Berkeley City Council refers the following to the budget process: A request for \$8,000 to be used to purchase a water meter for the Berkeley Community Orchard.

BACKGROUND:

The Berkeley Community Orchard is a community-led effort to address many of the issues that face many South and West Berkeley communities, ie. lack of green space, environmental issues, health concerns and issues of poverty. Through aggressive fundraising, the Berkeley Community Gardening Collaborative has raised a significant portion of the funding needs from the East Bay Community Foundation, the Bill Graham Foundation and through memberships and special events. They have also received a tremendous amount of in-kind support from a number of sources.

Attempts have been made to have the water meter donated from East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD), but due to accountability to ratepayers, EBMUD is unable to make this type of commitment. The small commitment of \$8,000 for a water meter will help provide an amenity to South and West Berkeley that has a much greater community benefit than the City's investment.

(See attachment 1 for additional background)

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

\$8,000

CONTACT PERSON:

Councilmember Darryl Moore, District Two

981-7120

Attachments:

1: The Berkeley Community Orchard: A Proposal from the Berkeley Community Gardening Collaborative

ATTACHMENT 1

THE BERKELEY COMMUNITY ORCHARD

A Proposal from the Berkeley Community Gardening Collaborative

Summary

The Berkeley Community Gardening Collaborative requests support for the Berkeley Community Orchard, a project of the Berkeley Community Gardening Collaborative. This ecological, educational, and charitable project promotes sustainable urban agriculture, access to organic food, and a healthy environment.

The Orchard is a natural solution to the problems experienced by the low-income, African American and Latino residents of South Berkeley. By developing an empty lot in a densely developed neighborhood into a public educational greenway, the Orchard will preserve some of the last remaining open space in Berkeley. It will feed poverty-stricken children and families in Berkeley, provide educational instruction in urban forestry and sustainable agriculture, and reduce Bay pollution. Designed by award-winning landscape architect David Meyer, the Orchard benefits from the efforts of sixty-five volunteers, including the chair of Merritt College's Landscape Horticulture Department, who will design the educational program. The Berkeley Community Gardening Collaborative will coordinate the delivery of Orchard fruit to school lunch programs and food pantries.

The project budget is \$275,417, of which we have secured \$104,137 in cash and in-kind contributions, including grants from the East Bay Community Foundation, the Rose Foundation, and the Bill Graham Foundation. The Ecology Center is acting as fiscal agent to the Berkeley Community Gardening Collaborative.

The Berkeley Community Gardening Collaborative promotes sustainable urban agriculture, access to organic food, and a healthy environment.

The Collaborative operates school gardens, youth training gardens, and community gardens. The Collaborative brings together diverse community members to increase local food production, improve nutrition for school children and low-income people, and improve the health of the watershed. By developing green space, we reduce pollution, provide opportunities for recreation, and promote neighborhood identity.

Fifteen school gardens, on-site at elementary, middle, and high schools, aim to integrate organic food production into the curricula. Through the Berkeley Food Systems Project, produce from the gardens is included in school breakfast, lunch, and after-school snack programs. Children are introduced to food production, nutrition, composting, and ecological stewardship, with an emphasis on the joys and wonders of nature. **Three youth training gardens** train and employ young people from high-risk neighborhoods. Mentors work closely with youth gardeners, sharing practical skills for future employment and enjoyment. The Collaborative recognizes that urban gardening offers

lifelong learning that can help prevent substance abuse and violence. Moreover, food production is an ecological and sustainable means of economic development that addresses both hunger and hopelessness. **Nine community gardens** make plots available to individuals, families, and groups for growing food, flowers, and herbs. Community gardeners use food to feed their families and share with neighbors. Some sell their surplus at the Farmers' Market for additional income.

Members of the Collaborative helped to write the City of Berkeley's Food Policy, which calls for fresh, organic, locally grown food in school cafeterias. Collaborative staff have served on the City's Child Nutrition Advisory Committee and on the Steering Committee of the Bay Area Coalition for Urban Agriculture. The Collaborative was also instrumental in advocating the inclusion of greenways—school and community gardens—in the City of Berkeley General Plan, and we are working to develop the last open spaces in Berkeley.

South Berkeley suffers from the usual problems of low-income, African American and Latino neighborhoods.

It is densely developed—each square mile is home to 10,800 people—with few parks, gardens, or landscaped open spaces. Dumping and drug dealing take place on the few remaining undeveloped lots. These lots, formerly a railroad right of way, contain soil contaminated with toxic heavy metals that leech into the Bay with every rainstorm, damaging the health of the ecosystem. The health of the neighborhood's residents is another pressing concern: health disparities, including low birth weight, are evident here because 67% of Berkeley's children living in poverty live in South and West Berkeley. Forty-seven percent of Berkeley households have incomes below 200% of the federal poverty index. With Berkeley's high rents—a two-bedroom house in South Berkeley rents for \$2,000 a month—little cash is left for nutritious food. Thirty-three percent of Berkeley's schoolchildren qualify for free and reduced lunches.

The Berkeley Community Orchard is a natural solution to these problems.

We are working with the City Parks and Waterfront Commission to turn an empty lot along the Santa Fe Railroad Right of Way into a dynamic, functional, urban greenway. It will build community, provide fruit to low-income families, improve ecosystem health, celebrate local history, and provide opportunities for education and recreation.

The Berkeley Community Orchard will be a beautifully planted oasis of fruit-bearing trees. The tree varieties will represent the various residents of Southwest Berkeley through history: apple for the Irishman Peter Mathews, first owner of the land; avocado for the Mexicans who have lived here since California was part of Mexico; cherry for the Japanese who lived here in large numbers until their internment in WWII; peach for the African Americans who lived here from early Berkeley days and who emigrated in large numbers in the mid-20th century.

Local residents are planning the orchard. Soil tests have been conducted and toxic heavy metals will be removed through soil remediation, reducing Bay pollution. Neighborhood volunteers will plant and tend the Orchard. The Collaborative will coordinate educational activities with local schools and community groups, teaching urban forestry and sustainable agriculture and their importance to watershed health. Fruit from the trees will be donated to local food pantries and school lunch programs. The City Parks and Waterfront Commission has arranged for the City to pay for the water.

The orchard design evokes a railway station. A central council ring is the heart of the space; it is a place for gatherings and teaching sessions, a place to pause and gather. The brick-paved central walkway is framed on either side by steel rails, suggesting the railroad line. The central council ring is circled with stone suitable for seating and hardwood decking calls to mind a railway station platform. Pathways of golden gravel radiate from the central walkway, allowing people to walk among the trees. Benches at the ends of some pathways will provide secluded spots to sit. Signage will describe the history of Berkeley and the symbolism of the trees. A maintenance station and compost bins will provide materials for upkeep. The Collaborative will deliver compost as needed, as it does to all the school, youth training, and community gardens.

Preserving the Santa Fe Right of Way as a public greenway is the only sure way to save the land from more infill development. Planting a Community Orchard will build neighborhood involvement and pride, feed local low-income residents, and improve the environment.

Award-winning landscape architect David Meyer has designed the orchard.

David Meyer is a partner in Berkeley-based Meyer + Silberberg Land Architects, whose work can be seen from New Zealand to France. Whether it's a large corporate campus or a temporary installation, the work conveys artistry, craftsmanship, an informed approach to interpreting context, and a passion for dealing with space and form. In his 20-year career as a licensed landscape architect, David has directed the design and execution of many prestigious, award-winning projects throughout the world. He is an adjunct professor at the University of California in Berkeley and is a frequent traveling lecturer and critic. Recent winner of the Rome Prize in landscape architecture, David has distinguished himself through his passion, character and ability to reveal "right" physicality. His designs are simple, deliberate marks on the land that speak to their surroundings and employ nature's palette judiciously. Among the many projects and parks he has designed are the Sony Center, Berlin; the Citadel Grand Allee, City of Commerce, California; Village of Yorkville Park, Toronto; and Munich Airport Center, Germany. He has won many awards, including the Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome and the Toronto Urban Design Award of Excellence.

Several other distinguished talents lend their expertise to the Orchard. Beebo Turman, founder and project director of the Berkeley Community Gardening Collaborative, has

demonstrated her commitment to Berkeley's gardening community for ten years. She co-founded the Edible Schoolyard with Alice Waters. Her leadership led the Berkeley Unified School District to form the Child Nutrition Advisory Committee in 1998. Her work on that committee put fresh, organic, locally grown food into school cafeterias. Continuing her work with the school district, she instituted recycling and composting programs in all city schools. She started the Berkeley Food Policy Council in 1999, working with the Berkeley Health Department and the Ecology Center to build a local food system that assures all people in Berkeley access to healthy and affordable food.

Tom Branca, chair of the Landscape Horticulture Department at Merritt College, is a member of the Orchard planning group. He teaches Introduction to Horticulture and Urban Community Gardening and will design the educational program in the Orchard.

Berkeley-based Wildwood Tree Service, and its certified arborists, will plant the trees, teach students how to plant and tend them, and perform routine trimming as needed.

Neighborhood residents have met monthly for more than two years to plan the Berkeley Community Orchard. They have gathered signatures of support from more than 100 neighbors, held fundraisers, and raised community awareness and involvement. A core group of ten people forms the steering committee, representing Caucasian, Latino, African American, and Asian members of the community. Orchard volunteers communicate daily through Yahoo! Groups, where 65 people are members of the `berkeley_community_orchard` group.

The Orchard Is Almost Ready To Plant

Laboratory tests conducted in 2005 found elevated levels of PCBs and lead in the soil. The topsoil is acidic, with excessive levels of zinc for woody plants like trees. The topsoil also contains elevated levels of copper and magnesium, and low potassium, nitrogen, and salts. The subsoil contains limestone; is low in salts, nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, iron, and manganese; and is high in boron and magnesium.

All of these conditions can be remediated with a large amount of blended compost and gypsum. The ideal time to apply this blend was just before the rainy season began and we almost arranged to purchase the minimum amount we need in time. Unfortunately, Mother Nature brought the rains just before we were able to take delivery and we decided to wait until next season for the main application. But we did plow the plot down to a depth of three feet and we took delivery of some compost, provided free by the City of Berkeley, in early November. A group of Orchard volunteers spread the compost on a work weekend that month. At the end of December, volunteers planted a cover crop of fava beans, clover, and vetch. When the rains stop, we will plow the cover crop back into the earth and add the blend of compost and gypsum before planting another cover crop to condition the soil.

The cover crops will improve the soil quality by breaking up soil clumps and by fixing nitrogen. They will also provide the Orchard's first crop of edible produce by summer.

The coming year will see the development of more detailed architectural plans and completed soil remediation. We also plan on installing the water meter and irrigation system and intend to plant the trees before the next rainy season.

Fundraising For the Orchard Continues

Fundraising for our project budget of \$275,417 has gone well. In our first year, we raised \$104,137: \$19,837 in cash and \$84,300 worth of in-kind donations, as detailed on the attached budget. We are especially pleased that the Urban Farmer has committed to donating the irrigation system, a major expense, and that local nurseries and volunteers have agreed to donate all the trees. We now need to raise another \$171,280 to complete our project.

The Berkeley Community Orchard's steering committee has appointed a treasurer to keep the books for the Orchard. The Ecology Center's chief financial officer will verify all accounting records. We will continue to raise as much cash and in-kind support as we can through special events and solicitations. We will begin construction and complete as much as available funding allows this year. We will continue a successful educational program through continued fundraising and the efforts of scores of committed volunteers.

Project Success Can Be Measured Several Ways

Completion of the Orchard's construction will be our primary measure of success. Another major measure is successful integration of the Orchard into the School District's curriculum. Eventually, the amount of fruit donated to food programs will constitute another measure; we aim to donate at least 100 pounds of fruit a year when the Orchard is mature. Finally, if the Orchard is successfully built and integrated into the school curriculum, the City of Berkeley will give an adjacent lot, south of the Orchard plot, to the Collaborative for further development. The Orchard could expand into this lot, creating a two-block-long park incorporating multiple uses. This land grant would represent a major achievement.