

STAFF REPORT

IN CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION NO. 24-5445, FOR THE PURPOSE OF APPROVING A SECOND ROUND OF FUNDING FOR THE PARKS AND NATURE BOND LARGE SCALE COMMUNITY VISIONS PROGRAM

Date: November 25, 2024

Department: Parks and Nature

Meeting Date: December 12, 2024

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Presenters: Jon Blasher, he/him, Parks and Nature Director, Linda Bartolini Venegas she/her, large scale community visions program coordinator

Length: 20 minutes

ISSUE STATEMENT

On November 5, 2019, voters in greater Portland overwhelmingly approved a \$475 million parks and nature bond, creating the large scale community visions program to support large-scale projects that uplift communities by leveraging nature to achieve benefits such as job opportunities, affordable housing, and safe reliable transportation.

In 2024, the Metro Council approved updates to the program handbook to govern a second solicitation of up to \$10 million for projects that meet the bond and program criteria and goals. Three letters of interest met the minimum eligibility requirements established by Council and were invited to submit a full application by October 1.

Staff compiled information and evaluation from the following three applications submitted for Council consideration and review.

- **East Portland Nature Center** – submitted Bird Alliance of Oregon for \$6.9million for site acquisition and restoration in east Portland
- **Foodways Corridor Project** – submitted by Rockwood Community Development Corporation of Oregon and East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District for \$3.6 million for site acquisition in Gresham
- **Kellogg Creek Restoration and Community Enhancement Project** – submitted by North Clackamas Watersheds Council, ODOT, City of Milwaukie, American Rivers for \$10 million for restoration and improved fish passage of Kellogg Creek

Approval of Resolution No. 24-5445 allows staff to advance Council direction to award funding for a second round of the large scale community visions program.

ACTION REQUESTED

Council consideration and approval of Resolution No. 24-5445.

IDENTIFIED POLICY OUTCOMES

Council direction shapes the large scale community visions program to deliver on policy outcomes identified in the 2019 parks and nature bond to protect land and water and align with regional conservation goals, strengthen our region's climate resilience and benefit communities who haven't benefitted equitably from past investments.

DEMONSTRATING IMPACTS AND TRANSFORMATION ON AGENCY PRIORITIES

The unique focus of this program on the intersection of nature and greening with existing or planned housing and transportation developments allows the agency to advance investments that strengthen climate resilience in communities across the region and leverage regional outcomes in housing, community and economic development and transportation

When evaluating and prioritizing applications, staff uses the following Council directed criteria and factors:

Eligibility: bond legal requirements

Projects awarded under this program must meet bond legal requirements to result in a publicly owned capital asset and consideration for funding is contingent on a letter of support from a state or local government entity expressing a commitment to owning and capitalizing the bond-funded asset.

Eligibility: program criteria

The large scale community visions program is intended to fund transformative nature projects that have significant investments in habitat restoration. The nature uplift components of the project must improve access to nature for people while preserving and protecting natural areas in a way that improves climate resiliency. These projects must also demonstrate complimentary investments in either housing, transportation, or workforce development. Projects that best meet the criteria and vision of Council will catalyze and knit together advances in regional priority outcomes of housing, transportation, climate resilience and workforce.

Driven by community voice

The Metro Council has directed that the large scale community visions program be driven by community voice in innovative ways. Staff have been meeting with park providers, conservation and community partners on an ongoing basis to understand interest in and barriers to utilizing large scale community visions funding for priority projects.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

After reviewing the proposals and staff evaluations, the Metro Council has signaled that two projects, the East Portland Nature Center and Kellogg Creek Restoration, have the potential to fully address the bond measure and program requirements. Of these two projects, the Kellogg Creek Restoration project is currently positioned for an opportunity to

use large scale community vision funding to unlock federal funding in order to implement a Tribal supported project decades in the making.

Based on the evaluation of projects' ability to meet the bond requirements and advance desired bond and program outcomes, staff recommends that the Metro Council approve Resolution No. 24-5445 to select the Kellogg Creek Restoration and Community Enhancement project as a large scale community visions project to receive the full requested funding amount and not exceeding the \$10 million threshold.

Considerations for funding allocation

In order to be responsive to Council direction, Parks and Nature staff will continue to support productive conversations with the Bird Alliance of Oregon and explore relevant funding opportunities across the entire parks and nature bond that may be better matched.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT AND FRAMING COUNCIL DISCUSSION

The six programs in the parks and nature bond provide a range of strategies to preserve priority habitat and to bring nature closer to communities across the region.

Given the aspirations of the program and the scale required of projects for program eligibility, staff continue to maintain ongoing conversations with potential applicants and collaborate internally with other grant teams in Parks and Nature and Planning in order to best match projects to the right funding sources. Additionally, the legal requirements of the general obligation bond stipulate that any bond funded project must result in a capital asset in public ownership.

LEGAL ANTECEDENTS

Metro Council approved the criteria, processes and desired outcomes described in the program handbook through approval of Resolution 22-5269 on June 23, 2022 and directed the Chief Operating Officer to implement the first cycle of funding for the program generally in accordance with the framework described in the program handbook.

Approval of Resolution 23-5322 in May 2023 "For the purpose of selecting three Parks and Nature bond Large-scale community visions projects and awarding funding for the initial program cycle" designated three projects for funding and authorizes the COO to negotiate and execute individual funding agreements for each project, not to exceed \$10 million in large scale community visions pilot funding, when program conditions have been met.

In March 2024, Metro Council approved Resolution No. 24-5391, which advanced a set of adjustments to program criteria that is intended to better meet the landscape of project opportunities on the ground and create program accessibility across the region, as well as allowed for a notice of funding availability to begin in spring 2024.

COMMUNITY VOICE SHAPING PROJECTS AND PROCESS

During the solicitation for letters of interest, Parks and Nature staff hosted an in-person and virtual open house with approximately 35 attendees. Staff continue to meet with the

region’s park providers, jurisdictions and community-based organizations to understand potential project opportunities that may be eligible for program funding.

Staff plans to continue a robust outreach strategy to ensure follow up with those entities as well as partners who are identified as a potential good fit for program funding through other Parks and Nature and Metro grant programs and other partners across the region.

BACKGROUND

An overview of the program and key updates:

- In June 2022, Metro initiated a pilot project solicitation of up to \$10 million.
- In Spring 2023, Metro Council designated the following projects with conditional funding in the pilot round of the program.
 - Trust for Public Lands/Oregon State University – acquisition of private timber site in the Tualatin Mountains area, \$3.5 million
 - OMSI/CRTFIC – Waterfront Education Park and OMSI district catalyst on the Willamette River, \$7 million
 - Albina Vision Trust – Site acquisition adjunct to Willamette River, \$5 million
- After the completion of the pilot round, Council updated the program handbook based on lessons learned from the pilot round to ensure a successful and productive second round of solicitation.
- Solicitation for up to \$10 million in funding kicked off in April 2024.

Staff shared this opportunity through Metro’s website, with hundreds of former and current Parks and Nature grant recipients and with housing and community development focused organizations through collaboration with the Planning, Development and Research team.

- The program has received six letters of interest (LOI) since solicitation for the program opened on April 15, 2024. The current total request for the six LOIs is \$38M, which exceeds the \$10M available in this funding cycle.
- Five of the six LOIs have been reviewed by an internal staff review committee composed of staff from Parks and Nature and the Planning and Research departments based on compliance with Council approved bond and program criteria and bond requirements. Of the five LOIs submitted, three will be invited to submit a full application for the 2024 round of funding. Summary details of the LOIs submitted to date are available in the table below.
- Applications for the 2024 round of funding were due by October 1, and high level overview of the applications was presented at a work session on October 15. Detailed project evaluations were shared with Councilors for their review.

ATTACHMENTS

- Is legislation required for Council action? Yes No
- If yes, is draft legislation attached? Yes No
- What other materials are you presenting today?