



# CC Regular Meeting

## AGENDA ITEM REPORT

ITEM NO. CC 9

**Meeting:** June 3, 2025  
**Title:** Royal Oak Middle School Greening and Forestry Plan Update and Resolution CC 2025-41; Finding the Royal Oak Middle School Greening and Forestry Plan Exempt from CEQA  
**Presented by:** Brian K. Lee, AICP, Deputy City Manager/Director of Community Development  
Daniella Andrade, Sr. Management Analyst  
**Recommendation:** Adopt Resolution CC 2025-41.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In 2022, the City of Covina ("City") and Charter Oak Unified School District ("District") entered into a memorandum of understanding to jointly apply for competitive grant funding for enhancements at the Royal Oak Middle School ("ROMS") District Field. Subsequently, in early 2024, the City/District received a competitive grant award from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's ("CalFire") Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program for community engagement activities, planning, and conceptual design work to develop greening and forestry enhancements at the property. The primary focus of this grant is to demonstrate the potential for stormwater infiltration improvements, increase the property's tree canopy, reduce the heat island effect and create outdoor learning environments (or OLEs) in non-athletic field areas. The grant award was for \$198,000 with a \$50,000 local match requirement, split evenly between the District and City.

Following a robust community engagement effort and review by the City Council/School Board in fall 2024, it is recommended that design plans be approved for submission as required under the grant agreement with CalFire. Following submission to CalFire, it is the City/District's intention to pursue other grant opportunities for the construction of these improvements and other active recreation spaces at the property.

### BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

As part of the CalFire grant award, extensive community outreach was completed to better understand existing uses and priority needs for any future renovation of the property. The engagement phase consisted of a variety of in-person events, notification mailers and electronic communications, including:

- Royal Oak Middle School Open House on March 6, 2024
- March Madness Basketball Tournament on March 7, 2024
- School Staff Meeting on March 13, 2024
- Mailers sent to a .5-mile radius of the project location to notify the community of the grant program and invite survey participation (two sets of mailers)
- Development of the online/paper survey
- Project Fact Sheet (Circulated in person)
- Canvassing. Active SGV canvassed homes within a .25-mile radius
- Text Message Alerts
- Social Media Posts and boosts (advertisement)
- Back to School Night on September 5, 2024

Following the community engagement phase, participant feedback was compiled and used to help shape the future vision, conceptual plan designs and project renderings for the property. These conceptual plans and project renderings were shared with the City Council and School Board at a joint meeting in October 2024 to receive additional direction and feedback.

Over the last several months, the Project team has worked to refine conceptual plans into construction documents. As anticipated, these construction documents will be “shovel-ready” and position the City/District well for future grant opportunities for construction work. Of note, the construction documents include all of the CalFire grant-eligible amenities – stormwater capture improvements, greening and tree amenities, and the creation of outdoor learning environments. Design plans for the active recreational space amenities (soccer fields, baseball fields, etc.) will need to be designed, and as planned, the City/District will continue to actively explore other funding opportunities for this purpose. The progress package includes the addition of the amenities listed below.

- Accessible paths of travel between existing and proposed spaces;
- Proposed outdoor learning environment spaces;
- Proposed bioswales to help infiltrate stormwater and recharge local groundwater sources;
- Proposed new, ¾ mile rubberized walking trail;
- The installation of 440 trees, including a mixture of native/non-native species and fruiting species to help reduce the heat island effect and the City’s carbon footprint; and
- The installation of drip irrigation and native plant materials to reduce water usage onsite.

Under the terms of the grant agreement with CalFire, on May 15, 2025, the District board (Lead Agency) adopted Resolution #06-24-25, finding the planning activities exempt from CEQA, and subsequently filed a Notice of Exemption with the State Clearinghouse. It is recommended that the City Council adopt a separate resolution finding the planning activities exempt from CEQA due to the collaborative effort between both agencies on the project and the intent to develop a joint-use agreement for the facilities between both agencies. Because the City of Covina is not the lead agency, the city is not required to file a notice of exemption with the State Clearinghouse. City staff will submit both agency resolutions and the Notice of Exemption as part of the grant closeout requirements.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

The action, finding the planning activities as exempt from CEQA, has no fiscal impact.

#### **CEQA (CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT):**

##### ***Finding of Exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 (b)(3)***


The Royal Oak Middle School Greening and Forestry Plan is covered by the general rule that CEQA only applies to projects that have the potential to cause a significant effect on the environment. The project consists of community outreach, concept design, and the preparation of a conceptual design package for consideration of potential future action only subject to additional community outreach and design for sports-related facilities. Additional CEQA review will be conducted at that time.

##### ***Finding of Exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15262***

The eligible activities under the grant program are limited to planning and feasibility activities and do not involve actionable or implementation activities such as project approval, bid preparation, or construction. As such, the activities under the project were limited to planning activities up to the development of the conceptual design package, which can be further updated to include the areas that were not eligible under the grant scope, before returning to the item to the joint bodies for further consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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