



MEMORANDUM

Date: October 18, 2024

To: Joint Advisory Committee and Fiscal Oversight Commission

From: Pamela Swan, Grants Coordinator
Amy Ricard, Community Resources Manager

Subject: 2024 Community Spaces Matching Grant Program Project Summaries & Funding Recommendations

SUMMARY

Since 1994, Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (Ag + Open Space) has offered a competitive Matching Grant Program (MGP) for urban open space, agriculture, restoration, and recreation projects located in incorporated cities and other residential communities throughout the county. With an ongoing commitment to program improvement, increasing equity, and expanding transparency to best serve all Sonoma County communities, on March 5, 2024, our Board of Directors approved a significant revision to the MGP and launched the Community Spaces Matching Grant Program (Community Spaces MGP), a two-year pilot program incorporating inclusive grant making best practices with annual funding of \$3 million.

In 2024, the first funding cycle of the two-year pilot, seven highly competitive projects submitted full applications requesting \$6,844,426 in funding. The Staff Community Spaces MGP Committee engaged in a thorough application review process and made an initial funding recommendation of six projects for a total of \$4,063,000, which exceeds the \$3 million funding authorization by \$1,063,000. Staff makes this recommendation contingent on supplementing the authorized \$3 million for the 2024 funding cycle by borrowing from the 2025 funding cycle, thereby reducing the 2025 funding from \$3 million to \$1,937,000. Staff initial funding recommendations are included in Table 1.

The Community Spaces MGP Project Evaluation Committee, which is composed of representatives from the Advisory Committee and the Fiscal Oversight Committee, reviewed Staff's initial funding recommendations at their October 16, 2024, meeting. The Advisory Committee representatives developed a recommendation of six projects for a total of \$3,623,000, which exceeds the initial \$3 million for the 2024 funding cycle and would borrow the balance from the \$3 million 2025 cycle, reducing it to \$2,377,000, see Table 2. The Fiscal Oversight Commission representatives developed a recommendation of six projects for a total of \$3 million to stay within the authorized 2024 annual funding allocation, see Table 3.

Staff is requesting the Advisory Committee and Fiscal Oversight Commission to:

- Review the 2024 project evaluation summaries and initial funding recommendations; and
- Provide feedback to staff by either:
 - Supporting the Staff, AC, or FOC initial funding recommendations; or
 - Developing an alternative funding recommendation.

As the Board of Directors makes the determining decision of projects accepted into the Community Spaces MGP, the funding recommendations resulting from the Joint Advisory Committee/Fiscal Oversight Commission meeting will be considered when staff make recommendations to our Board of Directors at a future board meeting.

Approval of the funding recommendations by the Board of Directors will signify acceptance of the projects into Community Spaces MGP and project implementation will occur in accordance with the Program Guidelines. Funding disbursement for projects is contingent upon future approvals by both the Fiscal Oversight Commission (for acquisition projects) and the Board of Directors, including execution of a Matching Grant Agreement, Conservation Easement, and in some cases a Recreation Covenant.

2024 Community Spaces Matching Grant Program Funding Recommendations

Background

Through the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District's Expenditure Plan, Sonoma County voters authorized Ag + Open Space to provide funding to public agencies, nonprofits, and federally recognized tribes for the protection of community open space for local agriculture, recreation and public access, and natural resource restoration through a matching grant program.

Since 1994, Ag + Open Space has accepted over 68 projects into the Community Spaces MGP in each of the county's nine incorporated cities and numerous unincorporated areas, awarding over \$50 million to community-based organizations, Cities, County departments, and other public agencies. Generally located in areas lacking open space, this funding has enabled the development and implementation of innovative projects that reflect the needs of Sonoma County's unique and diverse communities. To date, the Program has protected over 560 acres of urban open space, created 28 new public parks, and allowed for the restoration and enhancement of over 400 acres of natural habitats including urban creeks, marshes and wetlands. See the *Community Spaces Matching Grant Projects Map* at www.SonomaOpenSpace.org/MGP for a list of all projects to date.

As a condition of Community Spaces MGP funding, Ag + Open Space, and thereby Sonoma County residents, achieve permanent protection of lands through a conservation easement, or in some cases long-term access via a trail easement. As the majority of Community Spaces MGP projects include a public recreation component, Ag + Open Space may also receive a recreation covenant which permanently protects public open space and recreational uses.

Ag + Open Space staff coordinates the Program with support from a Community Spaces Staff Committee and the Community Spaces Project Evaluation Committee comprised of representatives from the Ag + Open Space Advisory Committee and Fiscal Oversight Commission. Each funding cycle, these committees assist staff in developing initial funding recommendations. While the staff make funding recommendations informed by its advisory bodies, the Board of Directors provides the final determination of projects accepted into the Program, along with associated funding amounts.

2024 Community Spaces Matching Grant Program Funding Cycle

The 2024 Community Spaces MGP funding cycle launched on March 5, 2024, with program eligibility pre-applications due on June 24, 2024, and full applications due on August 16, 2024. Ag + Open Space received 11 pre-applications and 7 full applications for funding consideration. Of the applicants that did not submit full applications, one was deemed ineligible, two decided their projects were not ready to apply, and one was guided to a funding source that better met their project's needs.

Application Review and Evaluation

Projects were considered individually to determine how well they met the Community Spaces MGP goals and evaluation criteria. During the application review process, an inter-disciplinary committee of Ag + Open Space staff reviewed and evaluated applications using the Evaluation Matrix, which utilizes applicant responses to score each project in the following categories: Program Intent, Community Need, County Strategic Priorities, Planning & Design, and Readiness. The staff team conducted site visits, met five times to assess projects, utilized a robust scoring rubric reflecting the revised MGP Guidelines and Evaluation Matrix, and developed preliminary funding recommendations. Find the Evaluation Matrix at www.SonomaOpenSpace.org/MGP.

Funding Recommendations

In over 30 years of administering the Community Spaces MGP, the 2024 funding cycle was one of the most competitive. In this cycle, Ag + Open Space received a diverse field of eligible applications that embodied the goals and intent of the program and represented unique community-based projects in previously underserved areas.

The 2024 cycle's seven applicants requested a total of \$6,844,426, exceeding the stated budget of \$3 million by \$3,844,426. The strength of the applicant pool and limited funds made the funding recommendations especially challenging. In light of this tension, the Community Spaces Staff Committee carefully reviewed project applications, scored, and developed recommendations based on the projects' alignment with program guidelines and funding availability.

The Community Spaces Staff Committee recommended funding six of the seven projects for a total of \$4,063,000 (Table 1, pg. 21 and see **Attachment B. 2024 Initial Funding Recommendations Spreadsheet** for more detail on scoring and project proposed budgets). The 2024 Project Application Summaries and Funding Recommendations Summary is outlined on pages 4-20.

To review the Full Applications, please follow this link: <https://share.sonoma-county.org/link/DrE77NbAkel/>

Justification for the Community Spaces Staff Committee funding recommendations exceeding the \$3 million budget includes:

1. The Community Spaces MGP proposed projects were extremely competitive and well-aligned with program guidelines. The Committee found that the community and environmental benefits of these projects merit allocation of additional resources.
2. Ag + Open Space has the ability to borrow from the \$3 million 2025 funding cycle to supplement the funding recommendations for the 2024 cycle.

The Community Spaces MGP Project Evaluation Committee, which is composed of representatives from the Advisory Committee and the Fiscal Oversight Committee, reviewed Staff initial funding recommendations and heard related public comments at their meeting of October 16, 2024.

Following these discussions, the Advisory Committee representatives developed a recommendation of six projects for a total of \$3,623,000. The Advisory Committee representatives' initial funding recommendations are included in Table 2.

The Fiscal Oversight Commission representatives developed a recommendation of six projects for a total of \$3 million, which aligns with the authorized 2024 annual funding recommendation. The Fiscal Oversight Commission's initial funding recommendations are included in Table 3.

2024 Community Spaces MGP Project Summaries and STAFF Funding Recommendations

Projects are listed in scoring order as reflected in Table 1. Pg. 21.

1. GRATON TOWN SQUARE

MATRIX SCORE:	84
APPLICANT:	Graton Community Services District
PROJECT TYPE:	Acquisition/Improvement
LOCATION:	Graton
SUP DISTRICT:	5
ACREAGE:	.59 acres
CSMGP REQUEST:	\$750,000
MATCH:	\$750,000
MATCH %:	100%

PROPOSED PROJECT: Acquisition and improvement (in match) by the Graton Community Services District (GCSD) to develop the Graton Town Square, a transformative project aimed at converting a vacant 0.59-acre lot (former gas station) at 9155 Graton Road into the town's first central, public park. This initiative seeks to address the community's long-standing need for a central gathering place that fosters social cohesion, promotes regenerative ecology, and stimulates local cultural and economic life.

STATED GOALS:

1. **Public Access to Open Space:** Create outdoor recreation opportunities for residents, including accessible paths and picnic areas, space for classes and meetups, and a venue for markets and cultural events.
2. **Environmental Education & Urban Farming:** Implement regenerative landscaping with native plantings to enhance biodiversity, improve stormwater management, and serve as a model for regenerative practices (including outdoor classroom, children's ecology learning area, food forest, and community herbal gardens).
3. **Community Cohesion:** Establish a central hub that facilitates social interactions across diverse demographics, emphasizing inclusivity for marginalized residents including low-income, elderly and day labor communities. Our location on the West County Regional Trail will serve as an important linkage in the wider community.

BACKGROUND:

Graton has long lacked a central public space that caters to its diverse population, including a significant number of older adults and the Spanish-speaking Day Laborer community. Through over 100 survey responses and numerous town hall meetings drawing nearly 10% of the town's population, the community has expressed strong support for this initiative. The project is particularly important given Graton's significant upzoning in the most recent housing element, with more density increasing the need for public green space and community infrastructure.

The project is currently in the advanced planning and early development phase. Land acquisition was successfully completed in February 2024, facilitated by a \$285,000 community infrastructure investment from Sonoma County Infrastructure Funds. A phased project plan has been developed (including survey work, initial grading plan and design renderings) with extensive community input, and has begun "Phase 1" site cleanup, safety, and initial beautification.

PROJECT ATTRIBUTES:

Program Intent:

- **New Open Space:** Acquisition and improvement of new protected public open space.
- **Linking Communities to Open Space:** Project is strategically located adjacent to the West County Regional Trail. A trail "rest stop" will increase accessibility of the Russian River and other points north for trail users coming from Sebastopol and Santa Rosa.

- **Restoration and Enhancement of Natural and Native Habitats:** The project incorporates regenerative landscaping techniques of native habitats on this former gas station site. Native plant and pollinator species will be utilized extensively to support local biodiversity, improve soil health, and manage stormwater naturally.
- **Constructing Outdoor Public Community Gathering Spaces:** The Town Square will fill this gap by providing a well-designed outdoor space that fosters community interaction in a natural setting.
- **Developing New, Nature-Based Recreational Opportunities:** The “Kid’s Ecology and Play Area” will encourage outdoor engagement with the natural world in an area currently underserved in outdoor public spaces.
- **Public Education about the Natural World and Local Agriculture:** The project is designed to educate the public about local ecology and agriculture with a demonstration area, including a Native Pollinator Garden alongside an outdoor stage/classroom for events.
- **Climate Resilience and Environmental Protection:** The project will include drought-resistant native plants and sustainable water management systems, as well as shade structures for extreme heat and a space for the community to gather and support each other in the event of climate-related challenges.
- **Protection and Enhancement of Local Waterways:** The Town Square is several hundred yards east of the Atascadero Creek, and the project design will positively impact the local waterway through improved stormwater management and reduced runoff.
- **Protection of Native Species:** The Town Square’s landscaping plan prioritizes the protection and propagation of native plant species, which in turn supports local wildlife and pollinators.

Need:

- **Community Based:** Significant community support, including ~10% (200) Graton residents’ engagement in project conception and design, including: town hall meetings, co-design workshops and survey, donations, volunteer clean up days, and letters of support.
- **Public Sector:** Project advances high priority need as identified in the Sonoma County General Plan, Open Space & Resource Conservation Element, Sonoma County Regional Parks Strategic Priorities, and Sonoma County Housing Element, including:
 - The preservation of open spaces, enhancement of natural habitats, and the development of recreational opportunities in scenic landscapes.
 - Equitable access to parks, investing in climate-adapted infrastructure, and creating new outdoor recreational opportunities.
 - Graton was identified as a prime location for high-density infill housing under the recently approved housing elements due to its existing sewer service infrastructure and is slated for one of the larger percentage increases in total housing units in the Bay Area. This growth will necessitate enhanced infrastructure and open space.
- **Community Spaces MGP Past Funding:** The Graton census tract has not received MGP funding in the last three funding cycles.
- **Parks Gap Analysis:** The Parks Analysis Tool identified Graton Green in proximity to a park, thus it is not considered a park gap area.

County Strategic Priorities:

- **Environmentally Vulnerable Community:** Moderate/low level of pollution impact in census tract.
- **Portrait of Sonoma County Priority Community:** Project is in census tract with a Human Development Index (HDI) score lower than the County average 6.19.
- **Economically Disadvantaged Community:** Project census tract area median income is greater or equal to 80% of county’s median income.
- **Climate Resiliency Target Area:** Project is in area sensitive to climate change impacts.

Planning & Design:

- **Understanding of permitting:** Applicant demonstrated active engagement and alignment with relevant local, state, and federal permitting entities and regulations.
- **Design 25% or less of developed area:** ~10-20% of the property will be covered with impervious surfaces.

- **Understanding of potential impediments:** Applicant acknowledges potential CEQA review related impediments and related contingency plans in place to address as needed.
- **Accessibility:** Project location in central Graton along bus route, planned and existing trails, and public roads.
- **Design incorporates natural elements:** Project is centered around natural elements including protection of existing native trees and adds expansive new grassy areas, native plantings, and drought-resistant vegetation.

Readiness:

- **Eligible Activities:** Proposed activities are eligible uses of Community Spaces MGP funding.
- **Schedule:** Project schedule informed by necessary project development steps.
- **Budget:** Proposed budget appears reasonable to complete proposed costs, and costs were supported with documentation. Match is >50%, ~50% secure.
- **Long Term Stewardship:** Applicant demonstrated organizational stewardship plan, including funding plan.

RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY: Project is recommended for full funding up to requested \$750,000, based on project evaluation above, noting:

- Highest scoring project
- 2024 funding cycle projects over 70 points are recommended for 100% funding
- Acquisition projects add protected open space to county, a MGP priority
- Demonstrated strong project Intent, Planning & Design, and Readiness

2. COLGAN CREEK NEIGHBORHOOD PARK PH 5

MATRIX SCORE:	76
APPLICANT:	City of Santa Rosa
PROJECT TYPE:	Improvement
LOCATION:	Southwest Santa Rosa
SUP DISTRICT:	3
ACREAGE:	3.8 acres
CSMGP REQUEST:	\$1,555,000
MATCH:	\$4,301,269
MATCH %:	278%

PROPOSED PROJECT: The Colgan Creek Neighborhood Park Ph 5 improvement project proposes to create a much anticipated, new 3.8-acre neighborhood park for residents in Southwest Santa Rosa, adjacent to the final segment of a multi-phase creek restoration and shared use path project, and in the direct vicinity of existing and planned residential developments. The Phase 5 Park project proposes to use Community Spaces MGP improvement funding to engage in an updated community master plan with community input, permanent public access improvements, passive and active recreation features, utility infrastructure, and contract labor to build the park improvements.

STATED GOALS:

1. To create a neighborhood park for residents in Southwest Santa Rosa. Lower Colgan Creek Neighborhood Park will be centrally located along the restored reach of Colgan Creek, and in direct vicinity of existing and planned residential developments with easy bicycle and pedestrian access for this underserved neighborhood.
2. Include a variety of nature and recreation based active and passive opportunities with potential amenities including play and picnic areas, bicycle and pedestrian paths, and areas for a variety of active recreational activities.

BACKGROUND:

The Colgan Creek Project has received four previous Community Spaces MGP awards for phases 1-4, totaling \$4,454,650. Most recently, Colgan Creek Phase 4, an acquisition grant request, was accepted in 2022 with a \$1,500,000 funding recommendation. All stages of the Colgan Creek Restoration Project are in good standing, with Phases 1-3

completed, and the City of Santa Rosa currently implementing Phase 4. In 2014, the City was accepted into the Community Spaces MGP for Phase 2 of the Lower Colgan Creek Restoration Project. The funding was directed toward creek restoration and included restoring the creek to a more natural meander, installing a series of pools and riffles, removing invasive species, revegetating the area with native plants, and creating a creek-side public pathway.

PROJECT ATTRIBUTES:

Program Intent:

- **Linking Communities to Open Space:** Lower Colgan Creek Park will connect the neighborhood and the greater Southwest Santa Rosa community to the current and proposed shared-use path along Colgan Creek, and Regional Parks' Colgan Creek Trail to the west.
- **Restoration and Enhancement of Natural and Native Habitats:** Planting areas throughout the park will use a palette of native, upland shrubs, groundcover, and trees to complement the riparian species in the creek restoration area, with an emphasis on plants with value for wildlife habitat, and on protecting existing native trees and plants.
- **Constructing Outdoor Public Community Gathering Spaces:** The project will develop outdoor gathering spaces such as picnic areas, playgrounds, and small play fields and courts serving as areas for small groups, and meet-up locations for bike rides, jogs, and stroller walks.
- **Develop new, outdoor, nature-based recreational opportunities:** The park will include passive, nature-based elements along with active park amenities, and connect to the shared-use path along the creek, with overlooks, and a pedestrian bridge will provide a variety of walking loops, and ample wildlife viewing opportunities.
- **Construct Amenities to Provide Opportunities for Public Education:** The future park will span both banks of Colgan Creek making it the ideal location to provide informational, interpretive, and wayfinding signage. Interpretive topics will communicate the benefits of creek restoration, and native flora and fauna that inhabit the watershed.
- **Protects, creates, or enhances public access to waterways:** Paths will connect users to a restored section of Colgan Creek, including creek viewing points and educational signage, enhancing passive recreational opportunities.
- **Protects native plant and/or animal species:** The park site consists of largely non-native grassland with some native oak trees, along with two small areas containing rare plant species, which will be incorporated into protected areas, and new plantings will enhance habitat value.

Need:

- **Community Based:** Significant community support, beginning in 2000 including resident outreach, engagement tours, public meetings, regarding the Master Plan, resulting in a preferred concept plan. As years have passed with preliminary phases moving forward, the City plans to facilitate renewed outreach and engagement to ensure the Master Plan responds to community need in project conception and design. Letters of support include the Bellevue School District.
- **Public Sector:** Project advances high priority need as identified in the Sonoma County General Plan, Open Space & Resource Conservation Element, Sonoma County Regional Parks Strategic Design and development of a neighborhood park along Colgan Creek is supported by the City's 2035 General Plan, the Santa Rosa Citywide Creek Master Plan, the Roseland Area/Sebastopol Road Specific Plan, and the Southwest Area Plan.
- **Community Spaces MGP Past Funding:** The Colgan Creek project census tract received MGP funding in the last 3 funding cycles.
- **Parks Gap Analysis:** The Parks Gap Analysis tool found the Colgan Creek Park, Ph 5 census tract to be in a park gap area (upon data correction).

County Strategic Priorities:

- **Environmentally Vulnerable Community:** Project is in a Sonoma County community/census tract considered highly vulnerable community to pollution impacts.
- **Portrait of Sonoma County Priority Community:** Project is in census tract with a Human Development Index (HDI) score lower than the County average 6.19.
- **Economically Disadvantaged Community:** Project census tract area median income is greater or equal to 80% of county's median income.
- **Climate Resiliency Target Area:** Project is in census tract sensitive to climate change impacts.

Planning & Design:

- **Understanding of permitting:** Applicant demonstrated active engagement and alignment with relevant local, state, and federal permitting entities and regulations. Existing Master Plan, CEQA Negative Declaration and Conservation Easements in place, but require updating.
- **Design 25% or less of developed area:** ~20% of the property will be covered with impervious surfaces.
- **Understanding of potential impediments:** Applicant did not cite potential challenges.
- **Accessibility:** Project location is on primary neighborhood road, adjacent to county/city bus lines, and adjacent to existing and planned ADA compliant multi-use paths.
- **Design incorporates natural elements:** Drawing from the adjacent creek restoration, the Project landscape areas and required bio-filtration zones will include predominately native tree, shrub, and groundcover species. Existing native trees will be preserved when possible and new trees will provide cooling and shade.

Readiness:

- **Eligible Activities:** Proposed activities are eligible uses of Community Spaces MGP funding.
- **Schedule:** Project schedule is informed by necessary project development steps.
- **Budget:** Proposed budget appears reasonable to complete proposed costs, and match 50%+, secure %TBD
- **Long Term Stewardship:** Applicant demonstrated city based long term stewardship plan, including funding plan.

RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY: Project is recommended for 50% funding, or \$750,000 of \$1,555,000 of requested funding, based on project evaluation above, noting:

- Second highest scoring project
- Note: Exception to projects over 70 points are recommended for 100% funding
 - Due to significant and successive Community Spaces MGP funding of over \$4 million over four phases, recommendation is for 50% funding, \$750,000
 - If Ph 5 is accepted into the program by the Board of Directors, funding dedicated to this project will total \$5,204,560
- Project demonstrated strong project Intent, Strategic Priorities, and Readiness

3. MARK WEST AREA COMMUNITY PARK PH 2

MATRIX SCORE:	73
APPLICANT:	Sonoma Land Trust, in partnership with Mark West Area Community Foundation
PROJECT TYPE:	Improvement
LOCATION:	Mark West Area
SUP DISTRICT:	4
ACREAGE:	1 acre
MGP REQUEST:	\$300,000
MATCH:	\$165,000
MATCH %:	53%

PROPOSED PROJECT:

The Mark West Area Community Park Phase 2 Improvement Project is part of a multi-phased project with the aim of creating the area's first central public park and place for healing in a neighborhood still recovering from the 2017 Tubbs Fire. The Mark West Area Community Park Ph 2 project, builds upon the recent acquisition of the property, Mark West Area Community Park Ph 1, funded in large part by Community Spaces MGP funds. Mark West Area Community Park Ph 2 proposes to utilize Community Spaces MGP funds for planning, design tasks and implementation of the basic infrastructure needed to fully develop the park, including an ADA pathway and ADA parking space upgrade, safety features such as swing-arm gates and 3-foot high fencing, water and power hook ups, tree and vegetation plantings, a lawn, benches and picnic tables, an irrigation system, decommissioning of two septic tanks, drinking fountain, picnic tables, benches and the design and installation of interpretive signage.

STATED GOALS:

1. Create an outdoor, public, community gathering space in a natural setting
2. Develop new, outdoor, nature-based recreational opportunities
3. Implement restoration techniques to restore or enhance natural and native habitats.

BACKGROUND:

The Sonoma Land Trust (SLT), with support from Ag + Open Space, the Mark West Area Community Fund (MWACF), and the community, has taken the lead on the acquisition of a one-acre property in the Mark West area of unincorporated Sonoma County to create a much-needed community park and playground. Mark West Area Community Park Ph 1 was accepted into the 2022, Round 2 funding cycle with recommended acquisition funding of \$1,169,500. SLT has completed the acquisition and is working with Ag + Open Space to draft the Conservation Easement, Recreation Covenant and Matching Grant Agreement. SLT currently holds title to the property, and once these documents are completed and approved, title will be transferred to the MWACF, which will assume long-term management and stewardship responsibilities.

PROJECT ATTRIBUTES:

Program Intent:

- **Implement restoration techniques to restore or enhance natural and native habitats:** A pollinator garden and combination of native and drought tolerant trees and plants will be planted throughout the park, which will provide habitat for wildlife.
- **Construct Outdoor Public Community Gathering Space:** The new park will feature a children's playground, picnic area, lawn area, and gazebo gathering space and an ADA-accessible walkway, all facilitating community gathering.
- **Develop New Outdoor, Nature-Based Recreational Opportunities:** The project will create new outdoor, nature-based recreational opportunities, including a nature-based playground, gardening, and ADA-accessible walking paths.
- **Construct Amenities to Provide Opportunities for Public Education:** There will be interactive educational signage for the public to enjoy and learn about topics such as urban ecology, and the history of the Mark West area. The site will also be used to hold public educational events, such as workshops and nature walks.
- **Improve Open Space in a Significantly Impacted Fire Community:** The project site itself was devastated by the Tubbs Fire in 2017 and proposes to restore natural and native and drought tolerant habitat to the renewed park space.
- **Protects and/or improves climate resilience:** Plantings will also provide climate resilience benefits such as carbon sequestration, filtration of air pollutants, and water capture and storage. The MWACF will consult with UC Cooperative Extension to select plants that are "Sonoma County Superstars."

Need:

- **Community Based:** Applicant demonstrated that the project is community-driven and enjoys widespread support for the new park. The Mark West Area Municipal Advisory Committee (MAC), in partnership with the MWACF, has conducted monthly community meetings to gather input on the park and shape its design, and held several on-site events. Letters of support include businesses, the school district, a local church.
- **Public Sector:** Project advances high priority need as identified in Ag + Open Space's *Vital Lands Initiative*, including the goal to "protect open space and publicly accessible lands in and near cities and communities." It also supports the *Sonoma County General Plan's Open Space and Resource Conservation Element* objective to provide for adequate parklands primarily in locations that are convenient to urban areas to meet the outdoor recreation needs of the population.
- **MGP Past Funding:** The Mark West Area Community Park census tract received Community Spaces MGP funding in the last 3 funding cycles.
- **Parks Gap Analysis:** The Parks Gap Analysis tool has identified the Mark West Area Community Park project in a census tract considered a park gap area.

County Strategic Priorities:

- **Environmentally Vulnerable Community:** Project is in a Sonoma County community/census tract considered highly vulnerable community to pollution impacts.
- **Portrait of Sonoma County Priority Community:** Project is in census tract with a Human Development Index (HDI) score lower than the County average 6.19.
- **Economically Disadvantaged Community:** Project census tract area median income is equal or greater than 80% of county's median income.
- **Climate Resiliency Target Area:** Project is in census tract highly sensitive to climate change impacts.

Planning & Design:

- **Understanding of permitting:** Applicant demonstrated active engagement and alignment with relevant local, state, and federal permitting entities and regulations. Project is developing a community responsive Master Plan, anticipates preparing CEQA Negative Declaration.
- **Design 25% or less of developed area:** ~20% of the property will be covered with impervious surfaces.
- **Understanding of potential impediments:** Applicant has engaged in permitting due diligence and states that the community has shown no opposition to the project. The only possible delays noted are those that might come from permitting and supply chain issues.
- **Accessibility:** Project location is on primary neighborhood road, near county/city bus lines and a bicycle lane.
- **Design incorporates natural elements:** Natural habitat areas with native and drought tolerant trees and plants are incorporated into the design, as well as a pollinator garden.

Readiness:

- **Eligible Activities:** Proposed activities are eligible uses of Community Spaces MGP funding.
- **Schedule:** Project schedule is informed by necessary project development steps, assuming a new CEQA process is not initiated.
- **Budget:** Proposed budget appears reasonable to complete proposed costs and match is clearly stated. Match is >50%, and 100% secure.
- **Long Term Stewardship:** The MWACF will assume responsibility for the long-term sustainability of the project. One year of maintenance will be covered by matching funds from District 4 funding. The MWACF will continue to raise funds for maintenance and has requested a \$5,000 annual contribution from the Mark West MAC to pay a portion of the on-going park maintenance expenses. The strategy for long-term sustainability includes on-going fundraising. In addition, volunteers will provide support for projects at the park.

RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY: Project is recommended for 100% funding, or up to \$300,000 of this Community Spaces MGP Improvement funding request, based on project evaluation above, noting:

- Tied for 3rd highest scoring project (tied with Tom Schopflin Fields Ph 2)
- 2024 MGP Application projects over 70 points receive 100% funding
- Project demonstrated strong project County Strategic Priorities, Planning & Design and Readiness

4. TOM SCHOPFLIN FIELDS PH 2

MATRIX SCORE:	73
APPLICANT:	Atlético Santa Rosa Soccer Team
PROJECT TYPE:	Improvement
LOCATION:	Mark West Area
SUP DISTRICT:	4
ACREAGE:	21 acres
CSMGP REQUEST:	\$993,342
MATCH:	\$506,658
MATCH %:	50%

PROPOSED PROJECT:

The proposed Tom Schopflin Fields Ph 2 project will develop a planned new all-weather soccer field for underrepresented minority youth in Santa Rosa, thereby addressing the significant shortage of accessible sports facilities and providing a vital outdoor open space for physical activity and community building. The requested Community Spaces MGP improvement funding will go towards the final design, permitting, and installation of one new all-weather soccer field for Atlético Santa Rosa at Tom Schopflin Fields that includes drainage, the base of field, and turf field.

STATED GOALS:

1. Provide a dedicated soccer field to expand access to open space playing fields for the county's largest underrepresented minority youth community.
2. Promote diversity and inclusivity within the Santa Rosa soccer club community.
3. Enhance outdoor open space public recreation opportunities at Tom Schopflin Fields.

BACKGROUND:

Tom Schopflin Fields Ph 1 was purchased by Ag + Open Space in 1996 and conveyed to Sonoma County Regional Parks in 2000, along with funds for park developments to implement the Master Plan. Ag + Open Space holds a conservation easement over the property, which was amended in 2021 to approve the updated project Master Plan. The park currently hosts soccer fields, a baseball field, restrooms, a parking lot, a paved walking path, and restored wetlands. The property's two existing soccer fields, Trione Fields, are leased through a Sonoma County Regional Parks operating contract to Santa Rosa United Soccer Club.

The Tom Schopflin Fields Ph 2 project would improve an empty adjacent field by developing an additional soccer field, fulfilling the vision of the *Tom Schopflin Fields Master Plan* for that site. In August of 2024, Atlético was awarded the Regional Park's contract to develop and manage the Tom Schopflin proposed third soccer field, ensuring this will be a dedicated space for public use and recreation that provides increased access to opportunities for physical activity and social engagement. Atlético SR Soccer Club is currently in the project planning phase and seeks Community Spaces MGP funding to complete the planning, design, permitting, and installation of the field. Future enhancements to the complex may include fencing, landscaping, tree planting, installation of irrigation, expansion of the parking lot, and environmental interpretive signage.

PROJECT ATTRIBUTES:

Program Intent:

- **Constructing Outdoor Public Community Gathering Spaces:** The new soccer field will serve as a crucial outdoor public gathering space. It will host sports events, community activities, and various outdoor functions, acting as a central hub for social interaction and community engagement.
- **Develop New, Outdoor, Nature-Based Recreational Opportunities:** A soccer field adds new outdoor recreational opportunities in an area underserved by such facilities. This expansion provides a safe, accessible space for physical activity, encouraging active lifestyles, contributing to community health and well-being.
- **Protect and/or Improve Open Space in Fire or Flood Communities:** In line with the project's master plan and conservation easement, the project adopts a proactive approach to protecting and improving open space in a fire prone community (which was deeply impacted by the Tubbs Fire in 2017). The project ensures a safe recreational environment that can also serve as a refuge during emergencies and support community resilience.
- **Protect and/or Design Climate Resilience:** The project features climate-resilient design elements, utilizing turf rather than grass, which conserves energy, is more resilient, and is more effective at water management. This will ensure the long-term viability and environmental sustainability of the field.
- **Protects, Creates, and/or Enhances Public Access to Green Spaces:** The project develops an empty, dusty field, thus enhancing public access to green, open spaces.

Need:

- **Community Based:** The project application demonstrated significant community support, including the endorsement of several organizations and individuals advocating for open space field access to underserved youth disproportionately impacted by a lack of facilities, overcrowded rental fields, and limited training and

playing time. Letters of community support include representatives from 100 Black Men of Sonoma County and Black Oak Soccer Club.

- **Public Sector:** Project advances high priority need as identified in Ag + Open Space's *Vital Land Initiative* to ensure all communities have open space for recreation, the Sonoma County General Plan Open Space and Resource Conservation Element to provide adequate parklands in location convenient to urban areas to meet outdoor recreation needs of the population, and the County's Public Facilities and Services Element, which includes the object to provide safe physical activities for youth.
- **Community Spaces MGP Past Funding:** While the Mark West Area Community Park was awarded funding in the 2022, that is in a separate census tract area, thus this project area has not received Community Spaces MGP funding in the three most recent funding cycles.
- **Parks Gap Analysis:** The Parks Gap Analysis tool has identified the project is not in a park gap area.

County Strategic Priorities:

- **Environmentally Vulnerable Community:** Project is in a Sonoma County census tract considered highly vulnerable to pollution impacts.
- **Portrait of Sonoma County Priority Community:** Project is in census tract with a Human Development Index (HDI) slightly higher than the County average 6.19.
- **Economically Disadvantaged Community:** Project census tract area median income is marginally above 80% of county's median income, but serves a population according to the applicant, that is below the county's median.
- **Climate Resiliency Target Area:** Project is in census tract considered highly sensitive to climate change impacts.

Planning & Design:

- **Understanding of permitting:** Applicant demonstrated active engagement and alignment with relevant local permitting entities and regulations. Project site has an approved Conditional Use Permit (CUP), Master Plan, CEQA Mitigated Negative Declaration, and Conservation Easements.
- **Design 25% or less of developed area:** Applicant states less than 25% of the property will be covered with impervious surfaces.
- **Understanding of potential impediments:** Applicant noted many potential impediments are identified and addressed in the updated project master plan.
- **Accessibility:** Project location is on primary neighborhood road, adjacent to county/city bus lines, and adjacent to existing bicycle paths.
- **Design incorporates natural elements:** Applicant's use of sand fill and water conserving turf cited as incorporating natural design elements.

Readiness:

- **Eligible Activities:** Proposed activities are eligible uses of Community Spaces MGP funding.
- **Schedule:** Project schedule is informed by necessary project development steps. As noted above, site has an approved Conditional Use Permit (CUP), Master Plan, CEQA Mitigated Negative Declaration and Conservation Easement, thus is well poised to launch.
- **Budget:** Proposed budget appears reasonable to complete proposed costs. Match is >50%, and 100% secure.
- **Long Term Stewardship:** Applicant has strong track record in volunteer playing field stewardship as is evidenced by their selection by Regional Parks as the field's operator.

RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY: Project is recommended for 100% funding, or up to \$993,342 of the funding request, based on project evaluation above, noting:

- Tied for 3rd highest scoring project (tied with Mark West Area Community Park Ph 2)
- 2024 MGP Application projects over 70 points are recommended for 100% funding
- Project demonstrated strong project Need, County Strategic Priorities, Planning & Design and Readiness

5. LOS GUILICOS MASTER GARDENERS' DEMONSTRATION GARDEN

MATRIX SCORE: 69
APPLICANT: UC Regents
PROJECT TYPE: Improvement

LOCATION:	Oakmont
SUP DISTRICT:	1
ACREAGE:	4.5 acres
CSMGP REQUEST:	\$1,046,084
MATCH:	\$523,042
MATCH %:	50%

PROPOSED PROJECT:

The 4.5-acre Los Guilicos Demonstration Garden (LG Garden), located on a parcel devastated by the 2020 Glass Wildfire in Sonoma County's Los Guilicos campus, is a project of the University of California Master Gardeners of Sonoma County (UCMGSC). The UCMGSC are proposing to convert this unused and fire damaged 4.5-acre parcel into a demonstration garden that will show Sonoma County residents how they can create gardens that are in keeping with the native environment, wildlife friendly, address food insecurity, and are climate resilient. The fully accessible themed demonstration gardens and a state-of-the-art greenhouse classroom will provide hands-on opportunities for Master Gardeners to share their expertise with visitors.

The UCMGSC are requesting a \$ 1,046,084 Improvement grant for the \$1,569,126 Phase One construction costs of their Los Guilicos Demonstration Garden project that includes several elements, such as an oak arbor picnic area, children's garden expansion, native plants garden, outdoor classroom, fire resiliency garden, greenhouse, shade house, orchard expansion and outdoor nature classroom.

STATED GOALS:

1. Educate Sonoma County residents and visitors on the variety of sustainable, waterwise, climate resilient, and firewise gardening practices that work well in Sonoma County.
2. Provide an inclusive gardening experience accessible to all residents, regardless of age or ability.
3. Provide hands-on environmental education for Sonoma County children and young adults.

BACKGROUND:

Beginning in February 2023, UCMGSC has created the Children's Garden, cleaned the site, replaced water lines and irrigation damaged in the Glass Fire, removed damaged trees, and installed ADA accessible paths. Preliminary designs and budget have been completed. UCMGSC has a five-year license agreement with the County of Sonoma Public Infrastructure to develop the 4.5-acre garden and are in discussions with the County of Sonoma Public Infrastructure Department for long term site control.

The Los Guilicos Demonstration Garden three-phase project should take 10 years to complete. Phase 1 is the first of three phases of the \$5 million project and is expected to be completed within three to five years. Nine of the fifteen planned garden elements will be completed in Phase 1, covering about 50% of the four-acre garden.

PROJECT ATTRIBUTES:

Program Intent:

- **Construct Outdoor Public Community Gathering Space:** The demonstration garden will include an Oak Arbor Picnic Area, available to visitors and Los Guilicos residents, including Valley of the Moon Children's Center, residents in the new housing for previously unhoused persons, and youth probation residents.
- **Develop New Outdoor, Nature-Based Recreational Opportunities:** The Children's Garden expansion, Outdoor Classroom, Orchard, and Outdoor Nature Classroom will create new outdoor nature-based recreation activities.
- **Construct Amenities to Provide Opportunities for Public Education:** Garden settings for education events including workshops, children's activities and gardening demonstrations will occur in the Children's Garden Expansion, and Outdoor and Indoor Classrooms.
- **Improve Open Space in a Significantly Impacted Fire Community:** The Demonstration Garden will restore 4.5 acres destroyed by fire to natural, urban garden setting. One of the themed gardens, "The Fire Resilient

Garden,” will demonstrate practices homeowners can apply to adapt their gardens to reduce and endure fire.

- **Protects and/or improves climate resilience:** Climate resilience will be demonstrated throughout the entire garden, including the use of UC Cooperative Extension “Sonoma County Superstars,” plants acclimated to the area and known for their capacity to endure heat, drought, and other severe weather impacts.
- **Protects native plant and/or animal species:** Designed to be habitat and wildlife friendly, the Master Gardeners employ sustainable gardening practices supporting diverse habitats, and two of the garden elements will demonstrate CA native plants, the Native Plants Garden and Fire Resilience Garden.
- **Protects farmland that provides urban green space and access to locally grown food and opportunities for the public to experience food production:** Food gardens will include the Children’s Expansion Garden, Greenhouse Indoor Classroom, and Orchard.

Need:

- **Community Based:** Applicant demonstrated that the project is a community-driven, with 14 partners ranging from the Sonoma Ecology Center, La Familia Sana, the Graton Rancheria to the Valley of the Moon Children’s Home. UC Master Gardeners have held numerous workshops, field trips, and have 15 letters of support.
- **Public Sector:** The LG Demonstration Garden advances the policies of three local and regional plans including:
 - **Sonoma County General Plan 2020, Open Space and Resource Conservation Element.** The garden is in one of the plan’s **Scenic Landscape Units, the Sonoma Valley/ Mayacamas Mountains.** The LG Demonstration Garden advances the goals for maintaining the integrity of these scenic units.
 - **Sonoma County Five-Year Strategic Plan 2021-2026** the Demonstration Garden’s Fire Resiliency Garden advances Goal 1 for Climate Action and Resiliency: Continue to invest in wildfire preparedness and resiliency strategies.
 - **Santa Rosa General Plan 2035** The LG Demonstration Garden is within the City of Santa Rosa limits and advances the **7-7 GOALS AND POLICIES for Open Space and Conservation:** These policies encourage collaboration with the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District and the preservation of agricultural resources and environmental quality.
- **Community Spaces MGP Past Funding:** The Los Guilicos Demonstration Garden census tract has not received MGP funding in the last three funding cycles.
- **Parks Gap Analysis:** The Parks Gap Analysis tool has identified the Los Guilicos Demonstration Garden project is in a census tract considered a park gap area.

County Strategic Priorities:

- **Environmentally Vulnerable Community:** Project is not in a Sonoma County community/census tract considered highly vulnerable community to pollution impacts.
- **Portrait of Sonoma County Priority Community:** Project is in census tract with a Human Development Index (HDI) score lower than the County average 6.19.
- **Economically Disadvantaged Community:** Project census tract area median income is less than 80% of county’s median income.
- **Climate Resiliency Target Area:** Project is in census tract highly sensitive to climate change impacts.

Planning & Design:

- **Understanding of permitting:** Applicant demonstrated understanding of relevant local, state, and federal permitting entities and regulations, including working with Permit Sonoma and ensuring ADA compliance.
- **Design 25% or less of developed area:** ~7% of the property will be covered with impervious surfaces.
- **Understanding of potential impediments:** Applicant is collaborating with Public Infrastructure and has engaged in permitting due diligence and states that the community has shown no opposition to the project.
- **Accessibility:** Project location is on Hwy 12 corridor, near county/city bus lines and a bicycle lane.
- **Design incorporates natural elements:** The Demonstration Garden is designed as a series of natural elements that will inspire and educate Sonoma County residents in adapting their own gardens to a more natural and

sustainable style, resilient to the threats posed by the changing climate.

Readiness:

- **Eligible Activities:** Most activities are eligible uses of Community Spaces MGP funding.
- **Schedule:** Project schedule is informed by necessary project development steps
- **Budget:** Proposed budget is a significant ask for garden development, and some budget items appeared high. Match is 50%, partially secure.
- **Long Term Stewardship:** Project has yet to secure long term lease. The applicant plans to maintain and operate the project long term, with maintenance costs currently budgeted at \$2,000 for FY 2025. With expansion of developed areas within the garden these will increase as each new garden element is completed and visitor traffic increases. Much of the cost will be covered by volunteer hours and the applicant is exploring other sources of income including major gifts and grants.

RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY: Project is recommended for 50% funding, \$523,042 of requested improvement grant funding request, based on project evaluation above, noting:

- Scored 5th out of 7 applicants
- 2024 MGP Application projects between 60-69 are recommended for 50% funding
- Project demonstrated strong Intent and Need, scored lower in Readiness

6. RUSSIAN RIVER COMMUNITY PARK

MATRIX SCORE:	68
APPLICANT:	Sonoma County Public Infrastructure
PROJECT TYPE:	Improvement
LOCATION:	Guerneville
SUP DISTRICT:	5
ACREAGE:	3.8 acres
CSMGP REQUEST:	\$1,500,000
MATCH:	\$500,000
MATCH %:	33%

PROPOSED PROJECT:

The Sonoma County Public Infrastructure Department is proposing the creation of a community park in the underserved Guerneville community. This 3.8-acre site is a rare flat and relatively clear project area near center Guerneville, adjacent to the Guerneville County Park and Ride lot, which is presently not in use. The site is in the floodplain, with Liverau Creek running through its western edge and includes significant riparian habitat. Sonoma County Public Infrastructure Department is requesting a \$1,500,000 improvement grant to support passive and active recreation uses including creek restoration, a storm water treatment swale, open grass multi use field, natural play structure, community garden, picnic area, dog parks, amphitheater, nature trail, restrooms, and permeable parking.

STATED GOALS:

To provide public community spaces for passive and active recreation uses as well as areas for community gatherings and events.

BACKGROUND:

The Russian River Community Park is currently in the conceptual stage. The Russian River Area Resources and Advocates (RRARA) community coalition lead the community to envision this park project as part of a larger phased development that will ultimately include a Community Center building to act as a replacement for the existing Veterans Hall. The Veterans Hall was converted to a temporary homeless shelter in 2020 and as such left the community without a gathering facility since that time. The future Community Center is to be constructed over the existing County Park and Ride parcel immediately adjacent to the parcel earmarked for the new community park. The new Guerneville Community

Center is planned to occur in a future phase and will act as a complimentary offering to promote additional indoor gathering facilities and support amenities to augment park facilities.

PROJECT ATTRIBUTES:

Program Intent:

- **Link communities to open space:** The parcel fronts the alignment of the future Lower Russian River Trail that is currently being planned by Sonoma County Regional Parks.
- **Implements restoration:** The project proposes to restore approximately 500 lineal feet of Liverau Creek following the western property line of the parcel. The project will also restore, enhance and incorporate a small wetland into the overall park improvement plan.
- **Construct outdoor public gathering space:** The vision for the project has been focused on establishing a new public gathering area that includes group picnic areas, non-programmed open recreation field, an outdoor open amphitheater and open area for a seasonal farmers' market.
- **Develop nature-based recreational opportunities:** The property is low lying in a flood plain and a minor portion of the property includes wetland. The project proposes to compliment the wetland and creek habitat with permittable natural play areas and accessible permeable trails.
- **Construct amenities to provide public education:** The project plans to highlight the ecological function of the flood plain and managing storm water by linking them with an on-site trail system fitted with interpretative and educational signage.
- **Improve open space in flood prone community:** The entire property is below the Base Flood Elevation (BFE), and like many such local park facilities the seasonal use of the property will provide much needed open park land for the underserved community of Guerneville.
- **Protect climate resilience:** Per the Sonoma County Climate Resilient Lands Strategy of 2022 the project is "interspersed within developed areas are a variety of natural communities and habitats, creating a mosaic of built environment and natural spaces, strengthening landscape resilience".
- **Protect native plant/animal species:** The project scope will include the removal of non-native invasive plants and replace with native species to expand native habitats.

Need:

- **Community Based:** Significant public engagement includes community surveys and public and student-centered workshops, planning and support including 10 project endorsement letters from organizations including Raizes Collective, West County Community Services, and the Guerneville Unified School District.
- **Public Sector:** The Russian River Community Park advances the policies of the Sonoma County General Plan: Policy PF-2a: Plan, design, and construct park and recreation, in accordance with projected growth. Policy PF-2c: Use the following standards for determination of park needs: Twenty acres of regional parks per 1,000 residents countywide and five acres of local and community parks per 1,000 residents in unincorporated areas. Russian River Recreation and Park District is currently underserving the local population based on General Plan metrics. The local population of the Guerneville and Rio Nido area is approximately 5,000 people and the local district has approximately 5 acres of park land. Policy PF-2j: Where there is an unmet need for local park facilities, encourage the formation of County service areas or other special districts to meet the need, if economically feasible.
- **Community Spaces MGP Past Funding:** The project census area has not received Community Spaces MGP funding in the last three funding cycles.
- **Parks Gap Analysis:** The Parks Gap Analysis tool identified a park within 10 minutes walking distance from project site.

County Strategic Priorities:

- **Environmentally Vulnerable Community:** Project is in a Sonoma County community/census tract considered a vulnerable community to pollution impacts.
- **Portrait of Sonoma County Priority Community:** Project is in census tract with a Human Development Index (HDI) score lower than the County average 6.19.

- **Economically Disadvantaged Community:** Project census tract area median income is less than 80% of county's median income.
- **Climate Resiliency Target Area:** Project is in a Sonoma County census tract highly sensitive to climate change impacts.

Planning & Design:

- **Understanding of permitting:** While in the conceptual design stage, applicant demonstrated understanding and is in initial discussion stages with the relevant local, state, and federal permitting entities and regulations, including the complex wetland related requirements and working with the Regional Water Quality Board, CA Dept of Fish and Wildlife and Permit Sonoma to ensure compliance.
- **Design 25% or less of developed area:** Proposal states less than 25% of the property will be covered with impervious surfaces.
- **Understanding of potential impediments:** Concerns about the park location below the base flood elevation and subject to inundation is being addressed through project low impact design techniques, storm water management practices and appropriate material selections to withstand high water events. Applicant cited many local and county park facilities located below the Base Flood Elevation (BFE).
- **Accessibility:** Project is located near central Guerneville and is on public Sonoma County Transit bus route served by routes 20 & 28 including a westbound bus stop located on the associated Park & Ride parcel at 16468 River Road, Guerneville.
- **Design incorporates natural elements:** The play, picnic areas and community garden will incorporate natural features, grassy areas and native and ornamental perimeter plantings, including trees along the eastern property line as a visual and acoustic separation with the adjacent developed parcels.

Readiness:

- **Eligible Activities:** Project is currently in the conceptual design phase. Activities appear to be generally eligible uses of Community Spaces MGP funding as aligned with guideline scale and funding requirements given site floodplain constraints.
- **Schedule:** Project schedule appears overall reasonable, noting potential delays given possible site constraints and related permitting.
- **Budget:** Appears reasonable to complete proposed project given current project status and understanding, yet not much detail was provided. Noted that all implementation tasks have same budget amount. Match <50%, ~50% secure.
- **Long Term Stewardship:** The Russian River Recreation and Parks District is currently in discussion with the County of Sonoma regarding long-term maintenance and operations of the proposed park. A determination would be made by their board if Community Spaces MGP funding is awarded and negotiations are complete with the County on what this partnership would look like.

RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY: Project is recommended for 50%, \$750,000 of requested improvement grant funding request, based on project evaluation above, noting:

- Scored 6th out of 7 applicants
- 2024 MGP Application projects between 60-69 are recommended for 50% funding
- Project demonstrated strong program Intent, Strategic Priorities, scoring lower in Planning & Design and Readiness

7. OCCIDENTAL COMMUNITY PLAZA

MATRIX SCORE:	53
APPLICANT:	Sonoma County Public Infrastructure
PROJECT TYPE:	Improvement
LOCATION:	Occidental
SUP DISTRICT:	5
ACREAGE:	.7 acres

CSMGP REQUEST:	\$700,000
MATCH:	\$300,000
MATCH %:	43%

PROPOSED PROJECT:

The Sonoma County Public Infrastructure (SoCoPi) Department is proposing the transformation of an underused .7-acre lot in Occidental's central corridor into the town's first public community open space to facilitate gatherings and recreation. SoCoPi is requesting Community Spaces MGP improvement funding for conceptual plans, construction documents, County and Regulatory permits, bicycle racks, interpretive signage, railings and landscaped vegetated swales, and grading and fill that will elevate and open the proposed park to the height of the current public parking lot, making the area accessible to all.

STATED GOALS:

The primary goals of the project include providing public community space for passive and active recreation uses for all age groups, as well as areas for community gatherings and events. It is also intended that the improved park area will include a new natural playground and interpretive signage.

BACKGROUND:

The need for the project was established through a community outreach process that identified areas of improvements needed to enhance community connections and infrastructure for the Occidental community. Following an extensive community planning process, a community survey completed by more than 200 local residents identified "*Creating Gathering Spaces*" as the top-ranking priority for downtown Occidental in the Community Survey. A Downtown Design subcommittee continues to advance the public gathering space concept and has contracted with PRAXIS Architects determine community priority programming and a conceptual design which is included in the project application.

PROJECT ATTRIBUTES:

Program Intent:

- **Construct outdoor public gathering space:** The primary focus of the project is to create a new public gathering space for the community in an area of under used public land. The intent is to provide a casual gathering environment for non-programmed use as well as special events. The area is currently a narrow path with minor amenities flanking a busy street.
- **Construct amenities to provide public education:** The perimeter of the elevated gathering space will be flanked with a guard rail designed to accept interpretative educational signage describing the rich history of the Northwest Pacific Railroad and the development of the historic downtown Occidental district. The natural playground will also be fitted with signage illustrating local flora and fauna as an educational tool.
- **Protect or design climate resilience:** The project will be constructed of entirely non-combustible materials and as such will be resistant to the impacts of wildfire. The ground surface will also be constructed to be pervious and as such resistant to the increasing impacts of heavy storm and rainwater events.
- **Develop new, nature-based recreational opportunities:** The project proposes a nature-based children's playground.
- **Protects creates or enhances public waterways:** In addition to acting as a storm water filter protecting and cleaning runoff entering Dutch Bill and Salmon Creeks, it is the intention to utilize some of the interpretative signage area surrounding the gathering space to educate users about the importance of both waterways known to have special status salmonid species and the role these creeks play in the overall environment.

Need:

- **Community Based:** Significant public engagement included community outreach and a Community Action Plan (CAP) process was led by the local non-profit, Occidental Community Council, which assessed the enhancement of community connections and infrastructure, establishing the need for the Occidental Community Plaza project. The CAP community survey was completed by more than 200 residents, and "*Creating Gathering Spaces*" was the top-ranking priority. More than half of all survey respondents said they would use an outdoor Gathering

Space to socialize with family and friends. The application includes 16 letters of support from local businesses, long term residents, service providers and children.

- **Public Sector:** The Occidental Community Plaza advances the policies of the Sonoma County General Plan: Policy PF-2a: Plan, design, and construct park and recreation...in accordance with projected growth/ Policy PF-2c: Use the following standards for determination of park needs: Twenty acres of regional parks per 1,000 residents countywide and five acres of local and community parks per 1,000 residents in unincorporated areas. Occidental Community Services District is currently underserving the local population based on General Plan metrics. Policy PF-2j: Where there is an unmet need for local park facilities, encourage the formation of County service areas or other special districts to meet the need, if economically feasible.
- **Community Spaces MGP Past Funding:** The project census area has not received Community Spaces MGP funding in the last three funding cycles.
- **Parks Gap Analysis:** The Parks Gap Analysis tool identified the project census area as an area lacking publicly accessible open space.

County Strategic Priorities:

- **Environmentally Vulnerable Community:** Project is in a Sonoma County community/census tract with a relatively low rate of vulnerability to pollution impacts.
- **Portrait of Sonoma County Priority Community:** Project is in a census tract with a Human Development Index (HDI) score higher than the County average 6.19.
- **Economically Disadvantaged Community:** Project is in census tract area with a median income greater than 80% of the county's median income.
- **Climate Resiliency Target Area:** Project is in a County census tract moderately sensitive to climate change impacts.

Planning & Design:

- **Understanding of permitting:** Project is in conceptual design phase. Applicant demonstrated understanding and is in initial discussion stages with the relevant local, state, and federal permitting entities and regulations, to ensure compliance. Once the general concept is firmly established, a project consultant team will be retained to prepare application materials for the encroachment and any building permit applications. Permit Sonoma will establish conditions of approval including CEQA and ADA compliance and identify any required mitigation measures. It is anticipated that no permits will be required from other resource agencies. All park elements will be fully ADA compliant as established through the permit review process.
- **Design 25% or less of developed area:** Proposal states less than 25% of the property will be covered with impervious surfaces. Permeable pavers may require review.
- **Understanding of potential impediments:** A letter stating opposition was received, but applicant believes this opposition won't impede project completion.
- **Accessibility:** The project is located in the center of town at a busy vehicular intersection of Bohemian Highway and Hill Street, and adjacent to a regional bus stop.
- **Design incorporates natural elements:** The children's play area includes repurposed logs/trees and large boulders as climbing structures. A small, vegetated mound will be constructed to provide climbing opportunities on one side and a natural slide on the other. The majority of the mature trees will remain on site, and native trees will replace exotics that are not thriving.

Readiness:

- **Eligible Activities:** Project is currently in the conceptual design phase. Activities appear to be generally eligible uses of Community Spaces MGP funding as aligned with guideline scale and funding requirements.
- **Schedule:** Project schedule did not include dates in all sections, thus hard to assess.
- **Budget:** Appears overall reasonable to complete proposed project given current project status and understanding but lacked detail. Noted that all implementation tasks have same budget amount. Match <50%, 75% secure.
- **Long Term Stewardship:** The Occidental Community Council is in discussion with the Occidental Community Services District (OCSD) regarding long-term maintenance and operation. A determination would be made by the OCSD board if Community Spaces MGP funding is awarded. The OCSD has within their budget funds for

community investment, and that fund is currently underspent. The OCC has agreed to provide supplemental funding for long-term maintenance and operation if necessary.

RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY: Project is recommended for 0%, \$0 of requested improvement grant funding request, based on project evaluation above, noting:

- Scored 7th out of 7 applicants
- 2024 MGP Application projects scoring 59 or less are not recommended for funding.
- Project demonstrated strong program Need, but scored relatively low in Program Intent, County Strategic Priorities, and Readiness
- 2024 Community Spaces Matching Grant Program was extremely competitive, and funding is limited

TABLE 1. STAFF COMMITTEE 2024 COMMUNITY SPACES MGP INITIAL FUNDING RECOMMENDATION

	PROJECT	APPLICANT	DISTRICT	TYPE	SCORE MAX = 100	REQUEST	MATCH	TOTAL PROJECT COSTS	STAFF RECOM- MENDATION	%
1	GRATON TOWN SQUARE	Graton Community Services District	5	Acquisition & Improvement (Combination)	84	\$ 750,000	\$ 750,000	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 750,000	100%
2	COLGAN CREEK NEIGHBORHOOD PARK PH 5	City of Santa Rosa	3	Improvement	76	\$ 1,555,000	\$ 4,301,269	\$ 5,856,269	\$ 750,000	48%
3	MARK WEST COMMUNITY PARK PH 2	Sonoma Land Trust	4	Improvement	73	\$ 300,000	\$ 160,500	\$ 460,500	\$ 300,000	100%
4	TOM SCHOPFLIN FIELDS PH 2 EXPANSION	Atlético Santa Rosa Soccer Club	4	Improvement	73	\$ 993,342	\$ 506,658	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 990,000	100%
5	LOS GUILICOS MASTER GARDENERS' DEMONSTRATION GARDEN	UC Regents	1	Improvement	69	\$ 1,046,084	\$ 523,042	\$ 1,569,126	\$ 523,000	50%
6	RUSSIAN RIVER COMMUNITY PARK	Sonoma County PI	5	Improvement	68	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 500,000	\$ 2,000,000	\$ 750,000	50%
7	OCCIDENTAL COMMUNITY PLAZA	Sonoma County PI	5	Improvement	53	\$ 700,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 1,000,000	\$ -	0%
					TOTAL REQUESTED	\$ 6,844,426			\$ 4,063,000	
Initial Budget						\$ 3,000,000			\$ 3,000,000	
Difference						\$ 3,844,426			1,063,000	

The justifications for Staff's funding recommendation are included in the 2024 Community Spaces MGP Project Summaries and Staff Funding Recommendations above and in *Attachment B. 2024 Initial Funding Recommendations Spreadsheet* with detail on scoring and project proposed budgets.

TABLE 2. ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMUNITY SPACES MGP PROJECT EVALUATION COMMITTEE INITIAL FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

	PROJECT	APPLICANT	DISTRICT	TYPE	SCORE MAX = 100	REQUEST	MATCH	TOTAL PROJECT COSTS	PROJECT EVAL COMMITTEE ADVISORY COMMITTEE	%
1	GRATON TOWN SQUARE	Graton Community Services District	5	Acquisition & Improvement (Combination)	84	\$ 750,000	\$ 750,000	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 750,000	100%
2	COLGAN CREEK NEIGHBORHOOD PARK PH 5	City of Santa Rosa	3	Improvement	76	\$ 1,555,000	\$ 4,301,269	\$ 5,856,269	\$ 750,000	48%
3	MARK WEST COMMUNITY PARK PH 2	Sonoma Land Trust	4	Improvement	73	\$ 300,000	\$ 160,500	\$ 460,500	\$ 300,000	100%
4	TOM SCHOPFLIN FIELDS PH 2 EXPANSION	Atlético Santa Rosa Soccer Club	4	Improvement	73	\$ 993,342	\$ 506,658	\$ 1,500,000	\$ -	0%
5	LOS GUILICOS MASTER GARDENERS' DEMONSTRATION GARDEN	UC Regents	1	Improvement	69	\$ 1,046,084	\$ 523,042	\$ 1,569,126	\$ 523,000	50%
6	RUSSIAN RIVER COMMUNITY PARK	Sonoma County PI	5	Improvement	68	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 500,000	\$ 2,000,000	\$ 1,000,000	67%
7	OCCIDENTAL COMMUNITY PLAZA	Sonoma County PI	5	Improvement	53	\$ 700,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 300,000	43%
					TOTAL REQUESTED	\$ 6,844,426			\$ 3,623,000	
						Initial Budget	\$ 3,000,000			
						Difference	\$ 3,844,426			
									\$ 623,000	

The Advisory Committee members on the Community Spaces MGP Project Evaluation Committee accepted four of Staff's funding recommendations and made changes to three. They recommended no funding for Tom Schopflin Fields Expansion Ph 2, a project supported by the Atlético Santa Rosa Soccer Club, citing environmental and health concerns regarding artificial turf, but stated a willingness to consider the project if the applicant was open to using natural turf. However, they recommended increasing funding for the Sonoma County Public Infrastructure's Russian River Community Park to \$1 million, a \$250,000 increase over Staff's \$750,000 recommendation given the underserved nature of the Guerneville community. Additionally, they recommended \$300,000 in funding for Sonoma County Public Infrastructure's Occidental Community Plaza project given the need for open space and a central gathering place in a community currently struggling with a lack of infrastructure and the resulting impacts.

TABLE 3. FISCAL OVERSIGHT COMMISSION COMMUNITY SPACES PROJECT EVALUATION COMMITTEE INITIAL FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

	PROJECT	APPLICANT	DISTRICT	TYPE	SCORE MAX = 100	REQUEST	MATCH	TOTAL PROJECT COSTS	PROJECT EVAL COMM FOC	%
1	GRATON TOWN SQUARE	Graton Community Services District	5	Acquisition & Improvement (Combination)	84	\$ 750,000	\$ 750,000	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 750,000	100%
2	COLGAN CREEK NEIGHBORHOOD PARK PH 5	City of Santa Rosa	3	Improvement	76	\$ 1,555,000	\$ 4,301,269	\$ 5,856,269	\$ 127,000	8%
3	MARK WEST COMMUNITY PARK PH 2	Sonoma Land Trust	4	Improvement	73	\$ 300,000	\$ 160,500	\$ 460,500	\$ 300,000	100%
4	TOM SCHOPFLIN FIELDS PH 2 EXPANSION	Atlético Santa Rosa Soccer Club	4	Improvement	73	\$ 993,342	\$ 506,658	\$ 1,500,000	\$ -	0%
5	LOS GUILICOS MASTER GARDENERS' DEMONSTRATION GARDEN	UC Regents	1	Improvement	69	\$ 1,046,084	\$ 523,042	\$ 1,569,126	\$ 523,000	50%
6	RUSSIAN RIVER COMMUNITY PARK	Sonoma County PI	5	Improvement	68	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 500,000	\$ 2,000,000	\$ 1,000,000	67%
7	OCCIDENTAL COMMUNITY PLAZA	Sonoma County PI	5	Improvement	53	\$ 700,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 300,000	43%
					TOTAL REQUESTED	\$ 6,844,426			\$ 3,000,000	
Initial Budget						\$ 3,000,000		\$ 3,000,000		
Difference						\$ 3,844,426				0

The Fiscal Oversight Commission (FOC) Community Spaces Project Evaluation Committee members accepted four of the Staff Committee's initial funding recommendations and made changes to three. The FOC encouraged an overall funding recommendation that adhered to the authorized \$3 million budget. Changes made to Staff recommendations included reducing funding to the City of Santa Rosa's Colgan Creek Neighborhood Park Ph 5 project to \$127,000, a decrease of \$623,000, citing the project's four previous rounds of Community Spaces MGP funding totaling over \$4.4 million. The FOC aligned with the AC and diverged from Staff by not recommending funding for Atlético Santa Rosa Soccer Club's Tom Schopflin Fields Ph 2 project, citing environmental and health concerns regarding artificial turf, but stated a willingness to consider the project if the applicant was willing to use natural turf. Similarly, the FOC recommended \$1 million to Russian River Community Park given the need in Guerneville and \$300,000 for the Occidental Community Plaza, given the need for open space and a central gathering place in a community currently struggling with a lack of infrastructure and the resulting impacts. in a community currently experiencing hardship.