



**DATE:** February 2, 2021

**TO:** Mayor and City Council

**FROM:** Fire Chief

**SUBJECT:** Adopt a Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Accept and Appropriate \$21,132 in Grant Funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program for the creation of defensible space in the Hayward Hills Project (Defensible Space Project).

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That Council adopts a resolution (Attachment II) authorizing the City Manager to accept and appropriate \$21,132 in grant funding from Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program for the creation of defensible space in the Hayward Hills Project (Defensible Space Project).

## **SUMMARY**

The Hayward Fire Department (HFD) was awarded \$21,132 by FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) to prepare for and implement a large-scale Defensible Space Project in the Hayward Hills. The scope of work for the project consists of creating a full-scale outreach campaign to educate the Hayward and Fairview communities on wildfire behavior, and the importance of defensible space for wildfire mitigation, as well as to demonstrate how to create defensible space. The project is focused on the Ward Creek Drainage area, and demonstrations will be visible in a high-trafficked area.

## **BACKGROUND**

HMGP funds are awarded to local agencies that have identified plans and projects that reduce the effects of future natural disasters. Program goals include improving the resiliency of communities and implementing effective mitigation strategies in high-risk areas. The Ward Creek Drainage area is a large canyon that originates at Walpert Ridge (elevation 1300 feet) and terminates at Mission Boulevard (elevation 300 feet). It is approximately 1,200 acres. The site includes a mix of grassland and heavy brush and sits on top of south/southwest-facing slopes. The riparian zone and north-facing slopes are oak woodland with scattered stands of eucalyptus. Heavy ladder fuels with brush, down-dead, litter, and duff are found throughout the hills, where 1,184 residential properties are situated. The Ward Creek Canyon extends along the boundaries between the City of Hayward, unincorporated Fairview, and private properties.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Defensible Space Project consists of an education campaign and demonstration that aims to both provide defensible space education and to promote participation by the community that live within a two-mile radius of the Ward Creek Drainage area to create their own defensible space. Staff will conduct a full-scale outreach and education plan to increase knowledge about wildfires, reiterate the importance of mitigation strategies for property owners, and address general safety concerns. The Defensible Space Project is based on a previously delivered and successful educational campaign on defensible space creation. HFD designed this year's campaign by evaluating past program designs and making strategy adjustments to promote even more resident buy-in and maintenance.

The City of Hayward's Fire, Utilities, and Maintenance Department staff will work in partnership with the Hayward Area Recreation District (HARD) and Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) to conduct a large-scale demonstration project visible in a high-trafficked area around the Ward Creek Drainage area. The Ward Creek Drainage area is a large canyon that originates at Walpert Ridge (elevation 1,300 feet) and terminates at Mission Boulevard (elevation 300 feet). It is approximately 1,200 acres. The site includes a mix of grassland and heavy brush and sits on the top of south/southwest-facing slopes. The riparian zone and north-facing slopes are oak woodland with some scattered stands of eucalyptus. Heavy ladder fuels with brush, down-dead wood, litter, and duff are found throughout the hills, where 1,184 residential properties are situated. The Ward Creek Canyon extends along the boundaries between the City of Hayward, unincorporated Fairview, and private properties.

In preparation, HFD will work with campaign partners including the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD), HARD, and PG&E, to deliver messages to the community on the Defensible Space Project campaign. HFD will conduct educational workshops and produce educational materials and various media releases to the public.

This project also includes the HFD Chipping Program, which incentivizes residents to maintain the pruning of lower limbs trees and removal of dead materials and aged shrubs. Residents may "apply" and select a week for chipping between the beginning of fire season (spring) and in the late summer-fall, when wildfire awareness is heightened. Residents are expected to cut and stack the materials along their driveways or curb for the contractor(s) to collect weekly. Chips will be hauled and disposed of offsite as green waste. If a resident cannot perform their maintenance, they can apply to HFD's Resident Assistance Program. This program is grant-funded and assists residents with limited physical abilities or who need economic assistance to participate in the Chipping Program.

## **ECONOMIC IMPACT**

This project has no direct economic impact.

## **STRATEGIC ROADMAP**

This agenda item supports the Strategic Priority to Preserve, Protect & Produce Housing. This item is not directly tied to a project identified in the Strategic Roadmap; however, creating defensible space for the purpose of mitigating wildfire risk and property loss will benefit all members of the Hayward community.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

By accepting this grant, the City would receive \$21,132 in revenue to offset the expense of the work that would otherwise be funded using the General Fund. The City will meet the matching requirement with effort from current staff. No additional staff will be required to complete the work for this project.

### **SUSTAINABILITY FEATURES**

This project is an educational campaign and does not go above and beyond minimum code requirements, as identified by the Fire Chief, to maintain and protect the wildland-urban interface.

### **NEXT STEPS**

With Council approval, staff will accept the grant funds and start planning for community outreach and large-scale demonstrations.

*Prepared by:* Shanalee Gallagher, Management Analyst

*Recommended by:* Garrett Contreras, Fire Chief

*Approved by:*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. McAdoo', is written over a horizontal line.

Kelly McAdoo, City Manager