



Report to City Council

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Brian Mohan, Assistant City Manager

AGENDA DATE: December 7, 2021

TITLE: AUTHORIZE THE EXPANSION OF THE WI-FI GARDEN PROGRAM UTILIZING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT CORONAVIRUS (CDBG-CV) FUNDS

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Recommendations:

1. Approve the expansion of the Wi-Fi Garden Program to provide free Wi-Fi in locations throughout the City.
2. Approve the use of CDBG-CV funds for this program as outlined in the Fiscal Impact section of this report.

SUMMARY

This report recommends the City Council authorize the Technology Services Division to expand the Wi-Fi Garden Program for an estimated cost of \$349,992. The cost includes the following:

- Wi-Fi throughout Sunnymead Park
- Wi-Fi throughout Community Park
- New Private LTE backhaul network
- Extending a fiber optic connection into Community Park
- Miscellaneous equipment, which includes but is not limited to wireless access points, network switches, radios, antennas, cabling, Private LTE servers and licenses, and electrical modifications in the parks

The Wi-Fi Garden program strives to overcome the “digital divide” in our city by making free Wi-Fi available in as many public locations as possible. The City currently has 25 Wi-Fi Garden locations throughout the City. These new locations are grant-funded and will focus on low-to-moderate income areas as defined by HUD (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development). Wi-Fi Gardens are part of the City’s efforts to combat inequity in access to adequate Internet connections; the City also advertises free technology training on its CLiC (Computer Learning and Internet Connectivity) web page, and partners with Community Action Partnership (CAP) of Riverside County to distribute free computers to residents.

DISCUSSION

As the Coronavirus Pandemic began to seriously affect residents in 2020, the City quickly recognized that equal access to the Internet was of paramount importance for its residents to participate in basic societal functions like searching for doctor appointments, finding food and supply donation sites, completing school work, etc. Therefore, it began investing in services to provide free Internet access, free computers, and free technology training for its residents. The network of free Internet locations is known as the City’s Wi-Fi Garden.

The Wi-Fi Garden is blooming in twenty-five locations throughout the City and there is activity and funding to grow to even more locations. HUD’s CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) program has committed approximately \$350,000 to expand the Wi-Fi Garden.

With the current funding, the City will establish a Private LTE (Long-Term Evolution) network that broadcasts radio waves over long distances (relative to Wi-Fi signals) and converts those signals to Wi-Fi in public locations, thereby extending high-speed fiber Internet connections to Wi-Fi locations. This will enable Wi-Fi Gardens to reach difficult locations and locations that are not close to fiber infrastructure in a cost-effective way.

The City also continues to address other aspects of the digital divide that were made difficult during the Coronavirus Pandemic. They will continue to make technology and Internet safety training freely available through the CLiC website at <https://www.moval.org/CLiC>. Additionally, the partnership with CAP has benefitted over 150 Moreno Valley resident families since its inception in 2020, by giving them a free computer and monitor.

ALTERNATIVES

The Council has the following alternatives:

1. Approve the recommendation for the expansion of the Wi-Fi Garden program with the use of CDBG funding. ***Staff recommends this alternative as it will promote increased public well-being and quality of life by freely making Internet connections available in public locations.***

- Decline the expansion of the Wi-Fi Garden program as outlined in the Fiscal Impact section of this report. **Staff does not recommend this alternative as it will prevent expanded Internet access to the residents of the city.**

FISCAL IMPACT

The Technology Services Division is requesting the City Council to approve already accepted CDBG funds to pay for the supplies, materials, and subcontractors to expand the Wi-Fi Garden program. The use of grant funds eliminates all costs to the City’s General Fund. An estimated summary of the expenses are as follows:

- Supplies and Materials \$ 304,800
- Boring Contractors \$ 26,250
- Electrical Contractors \$ 9,500
- Staff time reimbursed \$ 9,442

Total Expenses: \$ 349,992

Revenue/Expenditure Appropriation

Description	Fund	GL Account No.	Type (Rev/Exp)	FY 2020/2021 Proposed Budget Amendment
CDBG (Community Development Block Grant)	2512	30-39-80010-630910	Exp	\$ 349,992

PREPARATION OF STAFF REPORT

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CITY COUNCIL GOALS

Positive Environment. Create a positive environment for the development of Moreno Valley’s future.

Community Image, Neighborhood Pride and Cleanliness. Promote a sense of community pride and foster an excellent image about our City by developing and executing programs which will result in quality development, enhanced neighborhood preservation efforts, including home rehabilitation and neighborhood restoration.

CITY COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. Economic Development
2. Public Safety
3. Library
4. Infrastructure
5. Beautification, Community Engagement, and Quality of Life
6. Youth Programs

ATTACHMENTS

None

APPROVALS