



Legislation Text

File #: 19-1229, **Version:** 1

Recommendation to receive supporting documentation into the record, conclude the public hearing, and approve an Interim Park Use (IPU) permit (IPU19-001) with Long Beach Organic, Inc., a local nonprofit organization, to establish a community garden at 914 Redondo Avenue in the Neighborhood Commercial and Residential (CNR) Zoning District; and

Accept Categorical Exemption CE19-239. (District 3)

City Council approval is requested to approve an Interim Park Use (IPU) permit (IPU19-001) to establish a community garden at 914 Redondo Avenue (Project Site). The Project Site is a 6,200-square-foot vacant lot located on the east side of Redondo Avenue between 10th Street to the north and 8th Street to the south, in the Neighborhood Commercial and Residential (CNR) Zoning District (Attachment A). The Project Site is surrounded by residences to the north and east, and offices to the west and south. The proposed community garden will consist of 22 ground-level planter beds, two raised planter beds, one 8-foot tall arbor for grapes, one storage shed 6 feet in height, and eight spigots accompanied with a hose to provide water to each of the plots. The pathways throughout the Project Site will be improved with decomposed granite and mulch (Attachment B).

Pursuant to the Zoning Code of the Long Beach Municipal Code (LBMC), community gardens in the CNR Zoning District are subject to compliance with special conditions (LBMC Section 21.52.260) and require approval of an IPU permit by the City Council subject to specific findings including its compatibility with the surrounding uses (Attachment C). The proposed community garden has been conditioned to ensure that it operates in a manner that will be compatible with the neighborhood. The conditions of approval and special development standards for community gardens includes limiting the types of allowable structures, setbacks, hours of operation, trash collection, and restricting the use of herbicides and pesticides (Attachment D).

Vacant lots have the potential to attract nuisance activities such as illegal dumping, lack of maintenance, visual blight, and create criminal activity disruptive to neighborhoods. In addition, vacant lots may negatively affect the value of adjacent properties. In 2017, in recognition of the problems associated with vacant lots, the City Council amended the LBMC to discourage vacant lots through a vacant lot registry requirement to facilitate positive uses such as urban agriculture. The Project Site has been vacant since May 12, 2015, and this is the first application received by the City of Long Beach (City) for a community garden pursuant to these provisions.

Activating vacant lots with local food production uses not only reduces blight, but also

increases perceptions of neighborhood safety and helps further the City's sustainability goals. For this reason, the Long Beach General Plan Land Use Element and the draft Climate Action and Adaptation Plan both contain policies that support projects to activate vacant lots with local food production uses. On average, produce purchased in Los Angeles County travels 1,500 miles before consumption, so localizing food sources can help reduce vehicle miles traveled while increasing community resilience to climate impacts. As an example, local food sources increase community resilience to major weather events such as an earthquake or storm that could hinder transportation networks currently relied upon for food supply. More generally, activating vacant lots with community-serving destinations such as community gardens in local neighborhoods increases perceptions of neighborhood safety, helping residents feel comfortable walking or biking, while providing new local destinations accessible by non-motorized transportation.

The applicant, Long Beach Organic, Inc., is a local nonprofit organization founded in 1994 and currently operates nine community garden locations in the City. The proposed community garden will establish a use beneficial to both the individual gardeners and people living and working nearby by improving a blighted vacant lot with a temporary agricultural use. Staff recommends approval of the IPU permit for the community garden, subject to conditions of approval designed to minimize potential impacts to the neighborhood and ensure ongoing maintenance.

Staff sent out a Notice of Received Application to the nearby neighborhood groups, including the Willard Neighborhood Organization and Greenbelt Heights Neighborhood Association, describing the project on October 30, 2019. Additionally, public hearing notices were distributed on November 21, 2019, in accordance with the requirements of Chapter 21.21 of the LBMC. Since preparation of this report, no public comments were received.

This matter was reviewed by Assistant City Attorney Michael J. Mais and by Budget Analysis Officer Julissa José-Murray on November 20, 2019,

In accordance with the Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act, the project is exempt per Section 15304 of the LBMC - Minor Alterations to Land, as the project consists of establishing a community garden with new landscaping and minor accessory structures (CE19-239).

On October 3, 2019, an application was submitted by Long Beach Organic, Inc., for an IPU permit for the purpose of establishing a Community Garden at the Project Site. Chapter 21.25, Division XII of the City's Zoning Code requires that an IPU permit be heard before the City Council. Per section 21.25.1209 of the LBMC, the matter must be set for public hearing within 60 days of receiving a completed application. Additionally, this application is being made in tandem with an Urban Agriculture Incentive Zone (UAIZ) application with the Office of Sustainability, for it to qualify for the tax exemption in 2020, it must be heard by the City Council in December.

This recommendation has no staffing impact beyond the budgeted scope of duties and is consistent with existing City Council priorities. There is no fiscal or local job impact associated with this recommendation.

Approve recommendation.

LINDA F. TATUM, FAICP
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

APPROVED:

THOMAS B. MODICA
ACTING CITY MANAGER