

**CITY OF OAKLAND**  
**AGENDA REPORT**

OFFICE OF THE CITY ADMINISTRATOR

2007 JUL 10 11 8:00

TO: Office of the City Administrator  
ATTN: Deborah A. Edgerly  
FROM: Office of Parks and Recreation  
DATE: July 10, 2007

**RE: Action on a Report and Resolution Authorizing the Office of Parks and Recreation to Discuss and Develop an Agreement with City Slicker Farms for the Alternative/ Nontraditional Use of City Property as a Community Market Farm at Two Triangle-Shaped Plots of City-Owned Land Located Within the Area Formed by the Intersections of Haven, Fitzgerald, and Peralta Streets, at 34th Street**

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**SUMMARY**

Staff has prepared a resolution authorizing the Office of Parks and Recreation to discuss and develop an agreement with City Slicker Farms (CSF), a 501(c)(3) California nonprofit organization, for the purpose of creating a community market farm in West Oakland. Staff is requesting approval of the community market farm concept so that CSF may raise funds for a project to develop two triangle-shaped plots of underutilized City-owned land located within the area formed by the intersections of Haven, Fitzgerald, and Peralta Streets with 34<sup>th</sup> Street, and to subsequently negotiate and execute an Agreement with the City.

CSF, a West Oakland based non-profit organization, is proposing to convert two plots of City-owned land from a City park to a community farm. The new urban farm thus developed would provide nutritious food for low-income residents and homeless people living near the site. Preliminary design concepts for the project include fenced-in raised planter beds, wheelchair accessible paths, an open gathering space for community events, and green open space for residents. Once built, the community market farm would be open year-round Tuesday through Saturday, and CSF staff would be present during open hours to manage the farm, work with community members, and maintain safety.

Approval of this resolution supports the concept of using City property for the purpose of an urban farm and authorizes the City to proceed with discussions to develop the project. The proposed resolution will not authorize the building and development of the farm at the site. Staff will return to Council with a full report once funds have been raised and a full project developed, at which time Council approval will be sought to execute the project and authorize an Agreement with CSF.

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## **FISCAL IMPACT**

Action on this report has no immediate fiscal impact. Approval of the proposed resolution will allow CSF to raise and leverage the funds needed to develop the project. If staff, in discussions with CSF, discovers that there may be a fiscal impact to the City, staff will return to Council to inform them of the impact.

CSF is seeking foundation grants, individual donations, government funding and other financial support to specifically fund the first two years of operations for a new Community Market Farm at the Fitzgerald/Union Plaza site before entering into an Operating Agreement with the City of Oakland. CSF will retain responsibility for funding the annual operating budget of the farm.

## **BACKGROUND**

Fitzgerald and Union Plaza Parks have a history of being frequented by transient people who bring materials to the recycling center on Peralta Street. Over the years, there have been reports of illegal activity such as drug use and prostitution, and there are often people with shopping carts in the park. The City has received numerous complaints from neighbors about illegal activities and the trash and waste left by the park users. City departments including the Office of Parks and Recreation, Public Works Agency, Department of Human Services, and the Police Department are all aware of the issues in the parks and have made efforts to address them by providing increased monitoring, regular park maintenance, mobile homeless outreach, and increased police and park ranger patrols.

In the summer of 2006, Oakland City Councilmember Nancy Nadel approached CSF with the idea of converting the blighted Fitzgerald/Union Plaza Park into a productive urban farm. Community members, organized through West Oakland Neighbors, had been meeting to develop a plan for better community use of the park and wanted to explore the idea of working with CSF. CSF staff attended two West Oakland Neighbors meetings in August and September 2006 to present the community farm idea and solicit input and feedback from residents. Members of West Oakland Neighbors were highly supportive of the plan.

CSF staff took preliminary soil samples to determine if contaminants are present in the soil of the park. After receiving preliminary results indicating safe soil, CSF staff began meeting with Josh Amaris, the Office of Parks and Recreation Community Gardening Program Coordinator, to discuss the possibility of converting the park to an urban farm. CSF then submitted a preliminary proposal to the City's Office of Parks and Recreation for consideration along with a preliminary design drawing and timeline.

At its November 8, 2006 meeting, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission endorsed the project in concept and moved to authorize issuance of a Conditional Use Permit for the project.

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## **KEY ISSUES AND IMPACTS**

Fitzgerald and Union Parks are small, triangular plots of land that are mostly undeveloped. Union Park has a long (approximately 20-foot), curved, L-shaped concrete structure that functions as both a wall and a bench with an adjacent concrete pad. Both parks have lawns and there are a number of mature sycamore trees in each park. The proposed project for the site would remove the existing structures and convert the lawn space to garden space. CSF intends to keep all of the trees that are currently in the parks if possible, but the trees would have to be trimmed and shaped to maximize sunlight for the gardens.

The CSF project has the potential to provide much-needed relief from blight issues at the park by utilizing the area for productive uses, making meaningful programs available, and providing staffing to oversee daily activities. CSF will structure its activities to establish relationships with park users in a context of mutual respect and will encourage homeless people in the area to participate in gardening programs. CSF will also cultivate a relationship with the City's Department of Human Services to provide a link to available services and programs for people who may want and need them.

### **Project Funding**

Approval of this resolution supports the project in concept and authorizes the City to proceed with discussions to develop the project. The proposed resolution will not authorize the building and development of the farm at the site. Staff will return to Council with a full report once funds have been raised and a full project developed, at which time Council approval will be sought to execute the project.

The projected budget for the Fitzgerald/Union Plaza Community Market Farm includes estimated one-time capital expenditures of approximately \$100,000 for building the farm as well as a projected annual operating budget of approximately \$65,000.

CSF currently has a strong base of program funding provided through individual donations, in-kind donations, grants from foundations such as The East Bay Community Foundation, The California Endowment and The San Francisco Foundation among others, and a well-developed base of volunteers and supporters.

CSF is seeking foundation grants, individual donations, government funding and other financial support to specifically fund the first two years of operations for a new community market farm at the Fitzgerald/Union Plaza site before entering into an Operating Agreement with the City of Oakland. CSF will retain responsibility for funding the annual operating budget of the farm.

### **Program Description**

If approved by Council, the community market farm to be located on the site of Fitzgerald and Union Plaza parks would be managed by CSF from construction through implementation. The Fitzgerald/Union Plaza Community Market Farm would be created and operated as an urban market farm producing organically grown fruits and vegetables for the community surrounding

the park through a weekly farm stand where produce will be made available for a voluntary donation. (No one will be denied produce for lack of funds.) Produce will also be available to low-income and homeless residents through work-trade opportunities. Surplus produce will be donated to emergency food kitchens and food distribution programs with the goal of specifically serving the local homeless population.

CSF plans to staff the farm five days a week, Tuesday through Saturday. When the farm is closed, the surrounding fence will be securely locked. Activities coordinated by CSF staff will engage volunteers and local children and youth in organic farming, harvesting and distributing of produce, workshops and demonstrations, and community events and harvest celebrations.

In addition to producing healthy organically-grown food for neighboring residents, the Fitzgerald/Union Plaza Community Market Farm will supply produce to local emergency meal programs; provide school-group visits to K-college students; hold community events; host free gardening, nutrition, and cooking workshops; and provide volunteer opportunities and internships to local residents and students. Outcomes from these activities will be tracked and an annual report will be made to the City of Oakland, the community, and funders.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

At this time the construction project exists in concept only. Preliminary plans are for the farm to have the following components:

- Attractive wood and 4-gauge wire mesh perimeter fencing that provides security and beauty while allowing for maximum visibility,
- raised planter-box garden beds with trellises constructed of cinder block or other non-rottable material,
- espalier-trained fruit trees along the perimeter fences,
- vermiculture worm composting bins for recycling neighborhood food scraps and yielding worm castings for farm fertilizer,
- drip irrigation for water conservation and farm productivity,
- an outdoor shaded seating area where neighbors and community members may gather,
- decomposed gravel pathways that allow disability access,
- a covered outdoor classroom/farm work area for group work,
- a secure tool storage shed.

The construction phase will involve removing the existing seating structure, lawn and blacktop areas, installing perimeter fencing and gates, building the garden beds, trellises, vermiculture beds, and storage and work sheds, and installing the irrigation system. Construction is estimated to take approximately 8-10 months.

The new community farm will reach full production capacity on produce and waste diversion in year two and on fruit production in year five. The community market farm has the potential to improve the health of hundreds of community members through the availability of high-quality organic produce.

### **SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES**

Economic: CSF is a local nonprofit agency whose employees are primarily Oakland residents. If approved, the Fitzgerald/Union Parks project would support the opportunity for growth for a local small business, and would provide meaningful employment opportunities.

Environmental: If approved, this project would provide the City with an opportunity to implement green practices at the parks, increasing the efficiency with which the site uses energy, water, and materials, as well as increasing positive impacts on human health and the environment through design, construction, operation, and maintenance of the parks.

Social Equity: CSF programs provide healthy, organic produce to underserved communities and offer a space in which diverse members of the surrounding community may participate together in a productive purpose.

### **DISABILITY AND SENIOR CITIZEN ACCESS**

Any improvements to Fitzgerald and Union Parks would conform to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Older American Act, and other applicable laws.

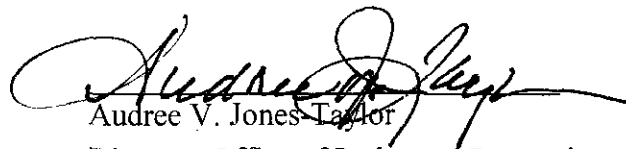
### **RECOMMENDATION(S) AND RATIONALE**

Staff recommends that Council authorize the Office of Parks and Recreation to discuss and develop an Agreement with City Slicker Farms for the alternative/nontraditional use of City property as a community market farm at two triangle-shaped plots of City-owned land located within the area formed by the intersections of Haven, Fitzgerald, and Peralta Streets, at 34th Street.

**ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

Staff requests that Council approve a resolution authorizing the Office of Parks and Recreation to discuss and develop an Agreement with City Slicker Farms for the alternative/nontraditional use of City property as a community market farm at two triangle-shaped plots of City-owned land located within the area formed by the intersections of Haven, Fitzgerald, and Peralta Streets, at 34th Street.

Respectfully submitted,



Audree V. Jones-Taylor  
Director, Office of Parks and Recreation

Prepared by:  
Kip Walsh, Assistant to the Director  
Office of Parks and Recreation

APPROVED AND FORWARDED TO THE  
LIFE ENRICHMENT COMMITTEE:



Office of the City Administrator

Item: \_\_\_\_\_  
Life Enrichment Committee  
July 10, 2007

2007 JUN 20 PM 8:01

# OAKLAND CITY COUNCIL

RESOLUTION No. \_\_\_\_\_ C.M.S.

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE OFFICE OF PARKS AND RECREATION TO DISCUSS AND DEVELOP AN AGREEMENT WITH CITY SLICKER FARMS FOR THE ALTERNATIVE/ NONTRADITIONAL USE OF CITY PROPERTY AS A COMMUNITY MARKET FARM AT TWO TRIANGLE-SHAPED PLOTS OF CITY-OWNED LAND LOCATED WITHIN THE AREA FORMED BY THE INTERSECTIONS OF HAVEN, FITZGERALD, AND PERALTA STREETS, AT 34TH STREET**

**WHEREAS**, Fitzgerald and Union Parks, located within the area formed by the intersections of Haven, Fitzgerald, and Peralta Streets, at 34th Street do not currently meet community needs for safe, clean, and useful green space; and

**WHEREAS**, the West Oakland neighborhood where Fitzgerald and Union Parks are located is home to more than 40 liquor stores, but not one traditional grocery store so that residents must either travel some distance, or rely on fast food restaurants and highly processed frozen or canned foods to meet their nutritional needs; and

**WHEREAS**, City Slicker Farms ("CSF"), a West Oakland based non-profit organization, seeks to create the Fitzgerald/Union Plaza Community Market Farm to be run as an urban market farm producing organically grown fruits and vegetables for the community surrounding the parks through a weekly farm stand where produce will be made available for a voluntary donation; and

**WHEREAS**, the new urban farm would provide nutritious food for low-income residents and homeless people living near the site; and

**WHEREAS**, preliminary design concepts for the project include fenced-in raised planter beds, wheelchair accessible paths, an open gathering space for community events, and green open space for residents which would be of benefit to the community; and

**WHEREAS**, authorizing staff to develop details of an urban farm project at Fitzgerald has no immediate fiscal impact on the City, but will allow CSF to raise and leverage the funds needed to develop the project; and

**WHEREAS**, at its November 8, 2006 meeting, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission endorsed the project in concept and moved to authorize issuance of a Conditional Use Permit for the project; and

**WHEREAS**, an urban farm at Fitzgerald and Union Parks will leverage existing City resources for additional services to the community with no increased costs to the City's budget; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**: That the City Council authorizes the Office of Parks and Recreation to discuss and develop an Agreement with City Slicker Farms for the alternative/ nontraditional use

of City property as a community market farm at two triangle-shaped plots of City-owned land located within the area formed by the intersections of Haven, Fitzgerald, and Peralta Streets, at 34th Street; and be it

**FUTHER RESOLVED:** That the Office of the City Attorney has approved this resolution as to form and legality and a copy will be on file in the Office of the City Clerk.

IN COUNCIL, OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA, JULY 10, 2007

PASSED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES- BROOKS, BRUNNER, CHANG, KERNIGHAN, NADEL, QUAN, REID AND  
PRESIDENT DE LA FUENTE

NOES-

ABSENT-

ABSTENTION-

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
LaTonda Simmons  
City Clerk and Clerk of the Council  
of the City of Oakland, California