



Agenda Report

Fullerton City Council

MEETING DATE: OCTOBER 21, 2025

TO: CITY COUNCIL / SUCCESSOR AGENCY

SUBMITTED BY: DAISY PEREZ, DEPUTY CITY MANAGER

PREPARED BY: EDGAR ROSALES, SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE ANALYST
RACHEL CASTANON, ADMINISTRATIVE ANALYST

SUBJECT: LEASE AGREEMENT WITH HIGHER GROUND YOUTH & FAMILY RESOURCES FOR ORANGETHORPE CENTER

SUMMARY

The City of Fullerton and Higher Ground propose a lease agreement for City-owned property at 1414 South Brookhurst Avenue, also known as the Orangethorpe Center. The agreement outlines community programming and services, with an initial five-year lease term and two optional five-year extensions.

PROPOSED MOTION

1. Approve Lease Agreement between the City of Fullerton and Higher Ground.
2. Authorize City Manager, or designee, to execute the agreement and related documents, in a form approved by City Attorney.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- Approve the Proposed Motion
- Continue to negotiate with Higher Ground
 - for a new lease agreement
- Decline agreement and seek alternative uses for the property
- Provide alternate direction to staff for the use of the facility
- Other options brought by City Council.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Proposed Motion.

CITY MANAGER REMARKS

None.

PRIORITY POLICY STATEMENT

This item matches the following Priority Policy Statement:

- Infrastructure and City Assets.

FISCAL IMPACT

The proposed lease agreement with Higher Ground would have a \$1 annual cost to the City. The lessee would assume full responsibility for building maintenance and custodial services, providing approximately \$12,000 financial relief and annual General Fund savings beginning FY 2026-27. In contrast, the estimated operating and maintenance costs for the City to resume center operations to provide community services would total approximately \$120,000 annually. The City would still maintain responsibility for all major capital repairs of the center.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Higher Ground Youth & Family Services is a California nonprofit organization with a strong presence in North Orange County providing youth, family and community-based programming. Higher Ground has operated its main campus in Anaheim adjacent to Lincoln Park since 2018 offering a broad range of services including after-school programs, a food pantry, mentorship opportunities, family engagement events and university internship programs for counseling, case management and resource referrals.

Higher Ground partnered with the Fullerton School District in 2023 to operate an after-school program at Orangethorpe Elementary School, located adjacent to the Orangethorpe Neighborhood Center. The organization operates a similar program at Raymond Elementary School in Fullerton. Higher Ground expressed interest in leasing the Orangethorpe Neighborhood Center to further expand its programming and build upon the existing partnership and established track record in the community. Staff relayed this interest to City Council, highlighting the organization's relationship with Orangethorpe Elementary and demonstrated capacity to deliver community benefit. City Council directed staff to negotiate with Higher Ground for Orangethorpe Center use.

The proposed lease agreement between the City of Fullerton and Higher Ground Youth & Family Services has a five-year initial term commencing October 21, 2025 with options for two additional five-year extensions upon mutual agreement and sets rent at one dollar per year, consistent with City practice when supporting nonprofit service providers delivering public benefit. The lease terms align with those extended to other community partners, such as the YMCA at Maple Neighborhood Center and OC United at the Gilbert Center.

The agreement would allow Higher Ground to operate after-school enrichment and mentorship programs at the Orangethorpe Neighborhood Center in coordination with its partnership at Orangethorpe Elementary. Higher Ground would provide supportive services modeled after those at its Anaheim campus, including family workshops, community events, prevention and wellness programs and access to tangible goods such as food and clothing for residents.

The lease assigns day-to-day janitorial services, utilities and routine maintenance to Higher Ground, while the City retains responsibility for capital repairs and major building systems. Any alterations or improvements to the facility would require City approval and compliance with applicable permitting and labor requirements. The agreement includes provisions regarding insurance, indemnification, nondiscrimination, quarterly inspections and termination rights for both parties.

Staff finds the proposed lease consistent with City policy in leveraging community partnerships to provide social, educational and cultural services, while maintaining appropriate safeguards for City property interests. The Parks and Recreation Commission reviewed the proposal on October 13, 2025 and voted 4 – 0 to recommend City Council approve the lease agreement.

Attachments:

- Attachment 1 – Lease Agreement for Orangethorpe Neighborhood Center

cc: Interim City Manager Eddie Manfro