



# ***Agenda Report***

## ***Fullerton City Council***

**MEETING DATE:** APRIL 6, 2021

**TO:** CITY COUNCIL / SUCCESSOR AGENCY

**SUBMITTED BY:** KENNETH A. DOMER, CITY MANAGER

**PREPARED BY:** MATT FOULKES, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**SUBJECT:** UNION PACIFIC PARK IMPROVEMENTS UPDATE – RENEWABLE FARMS PROJECT

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### **SUMMARY**

Update on the City's progress with development of the former Union Pacific (UP) Park site with a non-profit aquaponic farm and event center (Renewable Farms). This update also includes information on a Specific Plan development which encompasses the UP Park site and surrounding 35-acres between Harbor Boulevard (east), Liberty Walk residential development (west), rail-road right-of-way (north) and Truslow / Valencia (south).

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Receive and file.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

No fiscal impact.

### **PRIORITY POLICY STATEMENT**

This item matches the following Priority Policy Statements:

- Fiscal and Organizational Stability
- Infrastructure and City Assets.

## DISCUSSION

### Background

UP Park consists of 1.7-acres located near the downtown area just south of the SOCO District. The City established the park in 2003 after purchasing the land from Union Pacific Railroad in 1998. In 2004, the City partially closed the park due to soil contamination from prior railroad industry operations. In 2009, the City closed the remaining areas of the park due to issues with illicit uses. Beginning in 2012, soil remediation was conducted under the authority of the Department of Toxic Substance Control, leaving the park ready for unrestricted uses as of February 2014.

### Renewable Farms and Specific Plan Development

The City received grants from the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) and State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) for the preparation of a Specific Plan and accompanying CEQA analysis for a 35-acre area between Harbor Boulevard and Richman Avenue south of the railroad tracks which includes the UP Park property and the former spur-rail line that runs the length of the specific plan area. The development of the Specific Plan will include collaboration with property owners, residents and businesses in and around the project area to develop a plan which will include adaptive reuse of historic packing houses and opportunities for new mixed-use developments. A key feature and catalyst project within the Specific Plan is the revitalization of UP Park for use as a community gathering space and event center in partnership with Renewable Farms.

Renewable Farms is a non-profit organization established in 2008 with locations in Anaheim and Aliso Viejo. Its mission is to enhance communities through events, agriculture and education. At their location in Anaheim, they educate and mentor school children, provide internship opportunities for college students, job training, educational workshops, event space, special needs programs and considerable amounts of free food for local families. The plan for the Renewable Farms at Union Pacific Park would be similar to their operations in Anaheim and would include recreation, education / internship opportunities, public and private event spaces, public art opportunities, festivals and open public space for passive uses. At the western edge of the renewable farm site is the historic Elephant Packing House, a privately owned historic building which could be adaptively reused for retail and/or food uses to complement the renewable farms event space and future mixed-use developments envisioned in the Specific Plan.

The City is working closely with the Renewable Farm's architecture team on a site layout (Attachment 1) to incorporate into the Specific Plan. Earlier this year, St. Jude Medical Center awarded Renewable Farms a \$10,000 grant to assist in applying for construction funding and grants to kick-start the construction phase of the project which is estimated one-million dollars. Lastly, the City sent a draft lease agreement to Renewable Farms on February 25, 2021 outlining responsibilities, terms and agreements with the City for use of the park.

### Next Steps

Originally, the SCAG Grant funding that the City received for development of the Specific Plan expired in February 2021 but SCAG extended the expiration through June 2021

because COVID-19 delayed the project start. Community and Economic Development is reviewing the first draft of the Specific Plan completed in early March. Once the draft Specific Plan is ready, the next step will be to start the required environmental review (CEQA) for the plan prior to consideration by the Planning Commission and City Council for Specific Plan adoption.

The ENA with Renewable Farms expires on May 4, 2021. Substantial progress has been made on the development of the Specific Plan and preliminary site planning efforts for Renewable Farms over the last nine months. Prior to ENA expiration, staff will bring forward an extension request to ensure no lapse in the exclusive negotiating period.

Attachments:

- Attachment 1 – Draft Site Plan for Project Site