



City of Palo Alto City Council Staff Report

(ID # 6588)

Report Type: Consent Calendar

Meeting Date: 2/1/2016

Summary Title: Cool Block Small Pilot Program

Title: Agreement with Empowerment Institute on Cool Block Small Pilot Program (Continued From January 25, 2016)

From: City Manager

Lead Department: City Manager

Recommendation

Authorize the City Manager to sign the attached Cool Block Pilot Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Palo Alto and Empowerment Institute.

Background

In 2012 the Council authorized the City Manager to sign a Letter of Intent (LOI) to participate in the Cool Cities Challenge being organized in implemented by David Gershon, the Empowerment Institute, and its partner organizations (Attachment A).

That “Challenge” has been modified slightly to the Cool Block Pilot Program, which is the subject of the attached MOU (Attachment B). While one interpretation would be that the City Manager could sign this new MOU on his own authority, based upon that prior direction, Council re-authorization is being sought because:

- The Cool Block Pilot is in a slightly different form than the earlier proposal, although the concept is similar.
- The Pilot involves a process of neighborhood engagement of between 10-30 city blocks and this Consent Item informs the Council and community of that intention.
- The earlier LOI included the following language: *If the Council approves the LOI, and as staff learns of EI’s success in fundraising, staff will return to Council with a process to test community interest through targeted outreach to key stakeholders and some method of surveying household interest.*

The Cool Block Pilot is a program that will require relatively little staff time over the next 12-14 months but will secure enough assistance from the Empowerment Institute to test the effectiveness of this block-based engagement effort to accelerate household and neighborhood action on climate change, resiliency, social connectedness and growing the green economy. As

the details below lay out, the results of the pilot will shape the formal competitive RFP to later be issued by The Empowerment Institute, which will provide significant funding and support for a broader city-wide Cool Cities Challenge (still using the block as an organizing basis). We may again decide to participate in that competition, as The Empowerment Institute has now secured funding to advance that program. Again, participation in this pilot program in no way obligates the City to further participation nor does it guarantee our automatic selection.

In any case, the City may independently learn some important lessons from this pilot. The core component of our role will lie in the identification of the pilot blocks and helping to identify and recruit block leaders, in up to 30 blocks.

Further Detail from the Attached MOU

The Cool Block grows out of a vision to reinvent our cities from the bottom up in the age of climate change to help people adopt low carbon and environmentally sustainable lifestyles, disaster resilient and livable neighborhoods and collaborate together as neighbors and citizens. It builds upon David Gershon and his Empowerment Institute's decades of experience furthering pro-social behavior change and community engagement throughout America and the world. It does this through a nine-meeting, 4 1/2-month program co-led by a group of neighbors living on a block or in a building. Participants in the program select from a menu of 112 action recipes. Some actions are done as individuals and others are

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Staff Report October 2012 (DOC)
- Attachment B: TCB MOU Between CoPA and EI (DOC)



City of Palo Alto

City Council Staff Report

(ID # 3170)

Report Type: Action Items

Meeting Date: 10/22/2012

Council Priority: Environmental Sustainability

Summary Title: Cool Cities Challenge

Title: Approval of Letter of Intent to Participate in Cool Cities Challenge

From: City Manager

Lead Department: Public Works

Recommendation

Staff recommends that Council authorize the City Manager or his designee to sign the Letter of Intent to participate in the Cool Cities Challenge (Attachment A) being organized and implemented by David Gershon, the Empowerment Institute and its partner organizations.

Background

David Gershon, author of the Low Carbon Diet, co-founder of the Empowerment Institute (EI), and a leading social change practitioner, has visited Palo Alto on several occasions in preceding months to invite our participation in the ambitious Cool City Challenge (CCC) community engagement program. This has led to the current invitation to Palo Alto to formalize this potential working partnership through a Letter of Intent (LOI).

The purpose of the CCC is to scale up a proven community-based social innovation to achieve dramatic greenhouse gas emission reductions in three early adopter American cities and three neighborhoods in San Paolo, Brazil of comparable size to the American cities, and then disseminate this model worldwide. The ultimate goal of the CCC is to develop a scalable social innovation capable of making a dramatic change to retard climate change.

With international climate change legislation failing to get traction in adoption or

implementation, and the long timeframe required to scale up technological solutions, there is a need now for viable and scalable strategies for addressing global warming. Cities represent 70% of the planet's CO₂ emissions and in developed countries citizens' daily lifestyle choices represent at least 50% of these emissions with huge opportunities for efficiency. This provides the potential for a high leverage opportunity to address global warming if cities can achieve substantial behavior change among its citizens by taking individual behavior change to a communitywide scale. Further, this could serve as a demand-side driver for local green economic development.

The Empowerment Institute—a leader in environmental behavior change and community engagement—over the past two decades has developed a methodology to help cities empower citizens to reduce their carbon footprint by 25% through the Low Carbon Diet EcoTeam program and a strategy to achieve between 25% and 75% household participation. This methodology has been tested on a smaller scale in over 300 US cities and 6 countries including China. The CCC is designed to bring this potentially transformative social innovation to scale (community-wide) first in the three California demonstration cities and Sao Paulo and then to the wider world based on the experience and lessons learned in the demonstration cities.

The Empowerment Institute (EI) will provide each of the cities deep technical assistance in its implementation. This Institute has a successful track record in designing and implementing successful behavior change programs and community engagement strategies for cities both in the United States and Europe. The content of these behavior change programs include Low Carbon Lifestyles, Green Living, Livable Neighborhoods, and Disaster-resilient Communities. In particular, their Low Carbon Diet Program has been disseminated to over 300 US cities with 46 of those cities in California.

To enable this project to be most effectively disseminated after this prototype phase, EI has enlisted the commitment of major research institutions to study, evaluate, and assist in the analytics. EI reports that these partners are Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, UC Berkeley, UC Davis and Stanford.

EI assumes that cities do not have resources to implement this type of social innovation, and has committed to raising the funds for the cities. One of the

purposes of the Letters of Intent with potential demonstration cities is to indicate potential participation by cities that will aid in the Empowerment Institute's fund raising goals. If EI is successful in raising the funds to provide the support and staffing in the demonstration cities over the three year program period, then EI will issue Requests for Proposals from cities for evaluation and final selection of the demonstration cities to participate in the program. That proposal process is expected to occur sometime later in 2013.

Discussion

The Cool Cities Challenge gives Palo Alto a chance to contribute to developing a potentially game changing local solution to climate change. Palo Alto is already a leader in climate protection in many ways, so this is an opportunity to achieve the next level and advance our climate action and energy efficiency goals.

CCC potentially provides the City with a platform that allows for integration of its many sustainability programs and which can be applied literally block by block across our community. Neighborhood groups would allow Palo Alto to get better take up in these programs; it also allows for efficiency in the financial investments that will create and distribute these programs.

The CCC provides Palo Alto an opportunity to more tightly knit together the social fabric of the community. It also allows for the integration of sustainable community outreach efforts.

Resource Impact

No significant direct costs to the City are associated with the staff recommendation to sign the LOI. Staff will continue to work with EI, and other partners (Cool Davis, California Air Resources Board, Lawrence Berkeley National Labs), to advance the City's community engagement goals and our efforts to reduce GHG emissions.

As indicated in the attached LOI, fiscal impacts associated with long-term participation in this ambitious program will be offset by funding secured by EI; as mentioned earlier in this report, the Cool Cities Challenge program will only occur if EI is able to secure adequate funding. Indirect fiscal impacts associated with the implementation of a household based demand-side carbon reduction program are undetermined. While this initiative is based on EI providing new funding to

support this effort, a program as ambitious and as far reaching as this in its intent and design will certainly draw on existing city staff, Council, and community capacity. On the other hand, staff anticipates that local businesses and entrepreneurs could respond as local demand for carbon reduction products and services emerge as one outcome of this program.

While submission of a LOI by the City signals our serious interest in this initiative, it commits to no binding obligation. The City will again need to carefully review the results this initiative may produce and the investment that this initiative will require, if and when EI issues the formal Request for Proposals later in 2013. By that point, the City should be able to have a clearer understanding of the costs of participation that may occur beyond the funding EI provides and a better sense of our citizens' interest in participating.

If the Council approves the LOI, and as staff learns of EI's success in fundraising, staff will return to Council with a process to test community interest through targeted outreach to key stakeholders and some method of surveying household interest.

A good understanding of the receptivity of our citizens to participating in a multi-year high touch outreach and behavior change program such as this would be important as a prelude to our submission of any formal proposal to EI when they issue their Request for Proposals in 2013.

Policy Implications

Participation in the Cool Cities Challenge would assist Palo Alto in implementing its Climate Protection Plan and is fully consistent with the Greenhouse Gas reduction goals of that plan.

Environmental Review

Submitting a LOI to participate in the Cool Cities Challenge does not constitute a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Attachments:

- Cool City Challenge Letter of Intent (DOCX)

THE COOL BLOCK PILOT MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
BETWEEN THE CITY OF PALO ALTO AND EMPOWERMENT INSTITUTE

OVERVIEW

The Cool Block grows out of a vision to reinvent our cities from the bottom up in the age of climate change to help people adopt low carbon and environmentally sustainable lifestyles, disaster resilient and livable neighborhoods and collaborate together as neighbors and citizens. It builds upon David Gershon and his Empowerment Institute's decades of experience furthering pro-social behavior change and community engagement throughout America and the world. It does this through a nine-meeting, 4 1/2-month program co-led by a group of neighbors living on a block or in a building. Participants in the program select from a menu of 112 action recipes. Some actions are done as individuals and others are collective and carried out by The Cool Block team.

The pilot phase of *The Cool Block* program will take place in three cities: Palo Alto, San Francisco and Los Angeles. *The Cool Block* program will then be integrated into the Cool City Challenge – a three-year campaign to achieve a minimum of 25% carbon reduction among a minimum of 25% of the households in a community along with creating disaster resilient neighborhoods and green economic development. *The Cool Block* pilot program provides an advantage to participating cities to being favorably considered for the statewide competitive RFP process to receive a 3-year grant of \$2.5 million to participate in the Cool City Challenge. This is because of the social infrastructure, program knowledge and integration into city services that will have been created. That said, participation in Cool City Challenge is not guaranteed.

This MOU below describes *The Cool Block* two-phase pilot in the City of Palo Alto from January 2016 to March 2017. What follows are roles, responsibilities, deliverables and a timeline for Empowerment Institute and the City of Palo Alto.

EMPOWERMENT INSTITUTE DELIVERABLES

1. Recruit, train and coach 30 Cool Block leaders and deliver the program on 30 blocks in two phases.
 - Phase 1: Pilot *The Cool Block* program independently, or if ready, with the alpha tech platform on 10 blocks.
 - Phase 2: Pilot the beta version on *The Cool Block* program and tech platform on an additional 20 blocks with support of community groups.
2. Build The Cool Block technology platform, a web and smartphone platform to track results, share best practices, and integrate city agency, non-profit and local business services into the program's actions.

3. Work with the City of Palo Alto to integrate city programs and services into *The Cool Block* tech platform around the relevant actions.
4. Research and integrate into *The Cool Block* tech platform local business, community organization and state services and programs around the relevant actions.
5. Produce a report on pilot outcomes that includes carbon reduction per household, household and block level actions taken, participation rate per block and feedback on various aspects of the program.

CITY OF PALO ALTO DELIVERABLES

1. Participation of City Manager to frame, communicate, and execute The Cool Block program internally with city staff and externally in the community.
2. Participate with the Office of Sustainability and other city staff to integrate The Cool Block program into the S/CAP strategy and encourage the participation of the S/CAP Advisory Board.
3. Assist in creating The Cool Block strategy including identification of blocks and potential block leaders.
4. Assist in the recruitment of community organization leaders around the four core pillars of The Cool Block program and respective actions: carbon reduction, disaster resiliency, water conservation/quality and livability/social cohesion.
5. Participate on the design team of the Cool City Challenge to accelerate bold climate action toward carbon neutrality in up to 20 California cities through the use of this platform and funding.
6. Participate in communication and events at the local and state level.

PILOT TIMELINE: JANUARY 2016 TO JUNE 2017

- Recruit and train of Cool Block leaders: January to March 2016
- The Cool Block pilot phase 1 (10 blocks): April to August 2016
- The Cool Block pilot phase 2 (20 blocks): October 2016 to February 2017

COOL CITY CHALLENGE TIMELINE: MAY 2017 TO DECEMBER 2020

- Cool City Challenge RFP announcement: May 2017
- Cool City Challenge RFP due: July 2017

- Cool City Challenge awards to cities: September 2017
- Cool City Challenge Deployment: January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2020

David Gershon,
CEO, Empowerment Institute

Date

Jim Keene, City Manager, City of Palo Alto

Date