



City Council Report

Date: September 11, 2014
To: City Council
Through: Karolyn Kent, Deputy City Manager
From: Christine Zielonka, Development and Sustainability Director
Scott Bouchie, Deputy Director – Environmental and Sustainability
Subject: Grass-to-Xeriscape Rebates Grant
Citywide project

Strategic Initiatives



Purpose and Recommendation

The purpose of this report is to recommend that the City Council adopt the attached Resolution, which authorizes the City Manager, or his designated representative, to execute Grant Agreement No. R14AP00029 “Non Residential Grass-to-Xeriscape Rebates” and any related amendments or supplements thereto, between the Department of Interior - Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) and the City of Mesa (City), for assisting non-residential customers with converting grass into Xeriscape landscapes.

Background

In 2007, Mesa created a new program to incentivize converting grass to Xeriscape. The purpose of the *Grass-to-Xeriscape* program is to help single-family homeowner customers reduce their landscape water use by half or more by replacing their water-thirsty lawns with landscape plants appropriate to our Sonoran Desert climate. When customers remove 500 square feet or more of established grass and replace it with a water-thrifty landscape, the City of Mesa will provide a rebate. For the past two years, Mesa has received a grant from the Bureau of Reclamation to expand the residential *Grass-to-Xeriscape* program to non-residential customers. The program was a great success, and because it is unfunded at this point, there is a waiting list of non-single family customers hoping to receive help with their conversion projects. This current grant would allow Mesa to include commercial, multi-family, and homeowners associations to qualify for a rebate once again.

Discussion

Studies have shown that up to 70 percent of a household’s water use is for outdoor watering. In 2003, the Arizona Department of Water Resources released a study on landscape water use for Valley residential landscapes. The study showed that Xeriscape-style landscapes use 50-60 percent less water than turf-style landscapes.

These figures are more difficult to generalize in the business and non-residential sector, but they likely follow a similar trend.

One homeowners' association (HOA) that received the rebate from the recent grant is reducing their watering by 100 percent in the converted area because they hydroseeded native seeds and the plants will grow with rainwater. Another showed a nearly 30 percent reduction in water use at the entire property's landscape, even though only 20 percent of the property's grass was removed.

Alternatives

One alternative is to decline the BOR's offer. This would result in keeping the current rebate program limited to single family residential customers.

Fiscal Impact

The BOR grant will be in an amount of \$50,000 and will be used to directly rebate the non-residential customers. This grant requires a match, which will come from existing staff time and the residential rebate program.

Coordinated With

No other departments are involved in the operations or implementation of this program.