



CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: March 27, 2023

ITEM TITLE: Adopt a Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Sign the Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) Streamlining Pilot Agreement with the Association of Bay Area Governments for a Two-Year License for Symbium Plancheck Software at No Cost to the City of San Carlos.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council adopt a Resolution authorizing the City Manager to sign the Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) Streamlining Pilot Agreement with Association of Bay Area Governments and Metropolitan Transportation Commission, for a Residential Streamlining Pilot Agreement for Symbium Plancheck software.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

If the City Council authorizes the City Manager to sign the agreement, a two-year license for Symbium Plancheck software will be provided at no cost to the City of San Carlos. Should the City decide to continue the software license after the two-year pilot period, the cost is estimated to be \$50,000 per year. This cost could be higher depending on integration costs with other software platforms.

BACKGROUND:

The Association of Bay Area Governments and Metropolitan Transportation Commission (ABAG/MTC) is the regional planning and transportation agency for the nine-county Bay Area, including San Mateo County. Through a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) provided by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), ABAG/MTC received Regional Early Area Planning (REAP) funds, a portion of which have been allocated for ABAG/MTC's Regional Housing Technical Assistance Program, which exists to assist member jurisdictions in furthering their housing policy.

To this end, ABAG/MTC announced the opportunity for cities to participate in a Residential Permit Streamlining Pilot Program. Utilizing the REAP funds, ABAG/MTC is contracting with Symbium Corp to provide selected ABAG/MTC jurisdictions with free licenses for a software called Symbium Plancheck, that streamlines review of single-family residential applications.

City staff expressed interest in this opportunity and interviewed with ABAG/MTC and Symbium Corp on January 18, 2023. On March 10, 2023 staff received notice that the City of San Carlos was selected as one of the participants for the pilot program and is eligible to receive implementation of the Symbium Plancheck program, digitization and integration of the Zoning Code, GIS, and application checklists, testing, and staff training. There is also the option for a public facing portal if the City so chooses. In addition to these services, ABAG/MTC is providing a two-year license for this program with a value of \$50,000 per year, or \$100,000 total, for the

duration of the pilot program.

ANALYSIS:

Local governments in California are tasked with accommodating substantial numbers of housing units to address the statewide housing supply shortage, requiring significant analysis and detailed tracking by planning departments. There have also been state laws aiming to increase and streamline residential development entitlements, which has resulted in a greater volume of residential development applications and additional restrictions on the length of time that staff and the various hearing bodies have to review applications.

In an effort to assist jurisdictions with the practical difficulties of limited planning staff reviewing a growing number of applications within State-mandated timeframes, ABAG/MTC has partnered with Symbium Corp to create a Residential Permit Streamlining Pilot Program and provide a two-year, no-cost, Symbium Plancheck software license.

Symbium Plancheck utilizes GIS parcel data and the local zoning ordinance to automate application completeness and planning reviews, cutting down on staff time and creating a more standardized and clear application process for the public. The software will streamline basic elements of residential site plan review, draft comment letters with code citations, and help applicants submit more complete and compliant applications. These interactive tools would not replace personalized planning and zoning assistance in person, via email, or telephone. Rather, these services will enhance customer service by adding a visual element to help City staff communicate more effectively with customers and provide clear feedback and instructions.

If the City chooses the public-facing component of this project, applicants would be able to use Symbium Plancheck to perform an initial assessment of their residential construction project against San Carlos zoning regulations and will be more likely to submit a complete set of applications to the Planning Division, which would minimize redundancies and potential delays to the entitlement process. Entering a project scope into the tool will allow the applicant to view a checklist of the specific zoning regulations that impact the project. Plancheck verifies whether regulations are complied with and provides metrics, notes, and direct links to the zoning code.

Utilization of Symbium Plancheck to streamline residential development applications will also support San Carlos Housing Element Goal HOU-3: "Assist in the Development of New Housing that is Affordable at All Income Levels."

Improving review turnaround and standardizing the review process for single-family residential projects will facilitate faster turnaround. Additionally, standardization will result in an overall higher quality of service for applicants seeking to develop additional housing.

Planning staff would be required to work with Symbium during initial configuration of the software for an estimated 12 hours over a 3-month period, as well as provide GIS data, zoning links, and other information to Symbium. One planning staff member will be assigned to carry out all required functions and serve as the contact for San Carlos to fulfill this agreement.

At the end of the two-year agreement, Symbium Corp will provide ABAG/MTC with a detailed report of results of the pilot in San Carlos as well as the other jurisdictions that were selected for the pilot program.

Prior to entering into an agreement with ABAG/MTC, the City Manager must sign the "Final

Agreement" (Attachment 2) by April 9, 2023.

ALTERNATIVES:

The alternatives available to the City Council include:

1. Adopt a Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Sign the Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) Streamlining Pilot Agreement with the Association of Bay Area Governments and Metropolitan Transportation Commission for a two-year license for Symbium Plancheck at no cost to the City; or
2. Do not adopt the proposed Resolution; or
3. Provide staff with alternative direction.

Respectfully submitted by:

Al Savay, Community & Economic Development Director

Approved for submission by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Maltbie', is written over a horizontal line.

Jeff Maltbie, City Manager

ATTACHMENT(S):

1. Resolution
2. Final Agreement