



# CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT



**July 16, 2024**

## **ITEM TITLE**

Agreement: Approve an Agreement with Carrier Johnson for a University-Innovation District Initial Phase Feasibility Study

**Report Number:** 24-0190

**Location:** University-Innovation District

**Department:** City Manager

**G.C. § 84308:** No

**Environmental Notice:** The activity is not a “Project” as defined under Section 15378 of the California Environmental Quality Act State Guidelines. Therefore, pursuant to State Guidelines Section 15060(c)(3) no environmental review is required.

## **Recommended Action**

Adopt a resolution and enter into a two-party agreement with Carrier Johnson to provide a University-Innovation District Initial Phase Feasibility Study.

## **SUMMARY**

Since 1993, through the adoption of the Otay Ranch General Development Plan, the City of Chula Vista has pursued a vision of locating a university within eastern Chula Vista. From 2001 through 2014, through a combination of land offer agreements, land exchanges, and other agreements with developers, the City acquired 383 acres of land subject to restrictive covenants for University-Innovation District (UID) purposes. In 2018, the City certified Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR-14-001/SCH 2014121097) and adopted the University-Innovation District Sectional Planning Area Plan (SPA) approving the entitlements for a UID.

To continue the City’s university planning efforts, staff recommends entering into an agreement with Carrier Johnson to provide a feasibility study, including conceptual planning and estimating for an initial phase of the Chula Vista UID.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The Director of Development Services has reviewed the proposed activity for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and has determined that the activity is not a “Project” as defined under Section 15378 of the State CEQA Guidelines because the proposed activity consists of a governmental

fiscal/administrative activity which does not result in a physical change in the environment. Therefore, pursuant to Section 15060(c)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines, the activity is not subject to CEQA.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Project was adequately covered in previously adopted Final Environmental Impact Report FEIR-14-001/SCH 2014121097.

## **BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION**

Not applicable.

## **DISCUSSION**

Since 1993, through the adoption of the Otay Ranch General Development Plan, the City of Chula Vista has pursued a vision of locating a university within eastern Chula Vista. The City has taken actionable steps to make this vision a reality. From 2001 through 2014, through a combination of land offer agreements, land exchanges, and other agreements with developers, the City acquired 383 acres of land subject to restrictive covenants for University-Innovation District (UID) purposes. In 2018, the City certified Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR-14-001/SCH 2014121097) and adopted the University-Innovation District Sectional Planning Area Plan (SPA) approving the entitlements for a UID.

Under the adopted planning documents that govern the development of the site, the UID entitlements provide the ability to accommodate up to 20,000 students with an innovation district that will include approximately 10 million square feet of mixed-use development, 4.4 million square feet of academic space, 2 million square feet of commercial space for business innovation uses and 3.6 million square feet available for development of market rate and student/faculty housing. The City's goals for the UID are as follows:

- Develop a university campus offering four-year degrees consistent with the City's binational and multi-institutional university vision;
- Establish a business environment within the Innovation District that embraces the technology and/or higher education sectors to serve as a talent pipeline for the University(ies);
- Create an on-going income stream and/or one-time capital event;
- Support increases in tax revenue;
- Support equitable access to higher education;
- Foster additional economic development and education opportunities for the community at large; and
- Develop a financial model that allows development to occur with as little out-of-pocket cost to the City as possible.

Additionally, over the years, the City has engaged in several studies to determine the type of university(ies) that would best fit the UID from a land use and economic development perspective. These studies resulted in the vision of the City Council to develop a binational, multi-institutional university that leverages the border as a laboratory to attract students from both the United States and Mexico, offers baccalaureate and graduate level degrees and academic studies for the binational region, and serves as a catalyst for growth and economic development.

Currently, through a partnership with Southwestern College, an academic planning study is underway which will identify instructional programs that support the region's current and future workforce needs by way of

intentional engagement/inclusion with regional educational systems serving South County students and ensuring that instructional programming and university partnerships meet the needs of students and families. An additional outcome of this study is a white paper that uses the project's findings to inform specific legislative and funding actions needed for successful university recruitment.

To continue the City's university planning efforts, on May 3, 2024, the City issued Request for Proposals (RFP) P29-2024 seeking a consultant to provide feasibility study services including conceptual planning and infrastructure cost estimating for an initial phase, approximately 20 acres, within the 383-acre Chula Vista UID. The RFP was posted and made available on PlanetBids. The RFP closed on May 20, 2024. Six (6) proposals were received from the following firms: Bjarke Ingels, Carrier Johnson, Citythinkers, Gensler, RDC, and Steinberg Hart. An evaluation committee assessed, scored, and ranked the responses based on experience, personnel, qualification, and cost. After a comprehensive assessment, staff recommends approving the agreement with Carrier Johnson.

The agreement provides compensation per deliverable and has a one-year term with a not-to-exceed amount of \$195,000. The concept developed will include building square footage, floor plates, parking strategies, building heights, hard/ landscape, parks & open space, active residential open space, other public use (including public trails), education, public mass transit elements, vehicular and pedestrian circulation and any other pertinent characteristics. The Feasibility Study Report will include finalized architectural concept drawings including a 3D model and records, photo realistic renderings, conceptual infrastructure pricing, technical studies, and financial modeling.

### **About Carrier Johnson**

Carrier Johnson is a world-renowned planning, architecture, interiors, and landscape design firm with offices in San Diego, Los Angeles, Seattle, and Atlanta. They are known for their unique approach to design challenges set in diverse communities. The firm has extensive experience working with municipalities and local jurisdictions throughout California; the 200+ awards their projects have earned for their design excellence and positive community and environmental impacts stand as testament to the pride they take in not only beautiful design, but artful placemaking and neighborhood enhancement.

Headquartered in San Diego for 47 years, Carrier Johnson has been professionally and personally vested in this region since its inception. They have successfully executed projects of similar size and scope for clients such as San Diego State University, University of California San Diego, University of San Diego, National University, Point Loma Nazarene University, Pitzer College, and Claremont College.

### **DECISION-MAKER CONFLICT**

Staff has reviewed the property holdings of the City Council members and has found no property holdings within 1,000 feet of the boundaries of the property which is the subject of this action. Consequently, this item does not present a disqualifying real property-related financial conflict of interest under California Code of Regulations Title 2, section 18702.2(a)(7) or (8), for purposes of the Political Reform Act (Cal. Gov't Code §87100, et seq.).

Staff is not independently aware and has not been informed by any City Council member, of any other fact that may constitute a basis for a decision-maker conflict of interest in this matter.

## **CURRENT-YEAR FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no current-year budgetary impact as a result of this action, as \$200,000 in American Rescue Plan Act interest earnings were previously appropriated for this purpose via City Council Resolution No. 2024-051. Adopting the resolution approves an agreement with Carrier Johnson with a not-to-exceed amount of \$195,000. The remaining \$5,000 in previous appropriations will be available to fund other study related expenses (printing, etc.).

## **ONGOING FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no ongoing fiscal impact as a result of this action.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Agreement with Carrier Johnson
2. RFP P29-2024 UID Feasibility Study

*Staff Contact: Tiffany Allen, Assistant City Manager*