




Agenda Item No: 7.a
Meeting Date: December 19, 2022

SAN RAFAEL CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

Department: Digital Service and Open Government

Prepared by: Vinh Pham,
Digital Infrastructure Manager

City Manager Approval: 

TOPIC: LOCAL AGENCY TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (“LATA”) GRANT

SUBJECT: RESOLUTION APPROVING THE ACCEPTANCE AND APPROPRIATION OF CALIFORNIA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION (“CPUC”) GRANT FUNDING FOR THE SAN RAFAEL CANAL QUALIFIED OPPORTUNITY ZONE PROJECT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$258,620 FOR THE LATA PROJECT, AND AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO EXECUTE A GRANT AGREEMENT AND OTHER DOCUMENTS RELATED TO THE GRANT

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends City Council adopt the resolution approving the acceptance and appropriation of CPUC grant funds in the amount of \$258,620 for the Local Agency Technical Assistance (LATA) grant and authorizing the City Manager to execute a grant agreement and other documents related to the grant.

BACKGROUND:

In 2020, the City of San Rafael, County of Marin, San Rafael School District, and Canal Alliance collaborated on installing a neighborhood-wide, free Wi-Fi network in San Rafael’s Canal neighborhood. Prior to the installation of the free Wi-Fi network, nearly half (44%) of Canal residents reported difficulties connecting to the internet. This made remote learning exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, for the estimated 3,400 school-age children living within the 0.1 square mile Canal Qualified Opportunity Zone. While the Canal Wi-Fi network has successfully supplied students and households with access to basic Wi-Fi, a longer-term approach is required to guarantee broadband infrastructure access to our Canal community.

The California Public Utilities Commission has established Local Agency Technical Assistance (LATA) grants to “support tribes and local agencies in their efforts to expand broadband service to unserved and underserved Californians.” Funding from LATA grants is intended for planning

FOR CITY CLERK ONLY

Council Meeting: _____

Disposition: _____

work that will facilitate high-speed broadband infrastructure projects. The City of San Rafael applied for a LATA grant in September 2022 and was awarded funds in October 2022.

ANALYSIS:

The Canal neighborhood in San Rafael has significantly lower household incomes than surrounding neighborhoods. The Canal Qualified Opportunity Zone (Census Tracts 1122.03 and 1122.04), which is 89% Hispanic, has a median household income of \$49,000 while the median household income for Marin County is \$121,700. Federal and state broadband maps indicate that the Canal Qualified Opportunity Zone is “served” by incumbent providers Comcast and AT&T. However, area speed tests and availability analysis along with information provided by the San Rafael School District indicate residents face challenges with access and reliability. Further study and analysis is needed to determine if residents are adequately served at the 25/3 Mbps minimum speed requirement. The City and County have received reports that service is not available in every living unit in the neighborhood highlighting that further study is needed. Additionally, funding this discovery work is important due to the high density of units and residents in these multi-unit dwellings.

In July 2021, California established SB 156 as a commitment to bridging the digital divide and providing equitable access to affordable broadband internet service. The bill included a \$2 billion “Last Mile” grant program to build last mile infrastructure for low-income customers (defined as a household size of four earning less than \$55,500 between June 1, 2022 to May 31, 2023). Last mile in this context refers to the gap between broadband service provider infrastructure and customer’s home or business.

The LATA grant would be used to fund a feasibility study for building last mile broadband infrastructure (interconnecting with the SB 156 middle-mile open access network) in the Canal neighborhood in collaboration with the County of Marin’s regional leadership on parallel, Digital Marin, initiatives. The funds will support feasibility studies, market analysis, and high-level network designs to analyze the current market, identify needs, quantify demand, calculate costs, estimate fees, and provide recommended project parameters and strategies to support projects in the Canal neighborhood. By performing these activities, the City will better understand where and how to address the needs created by gaps in service, lack of reliability, and speeds below minimum requirements. If these studies prove there is a need for dedicated broadband infrastructure to service this neighborhood, the City of San Rafael would seek additional Federal and State funding for network infrastructure planning and broadband infrastructure construction.

Project Area – San Rafael Qualified Opportunity Zone

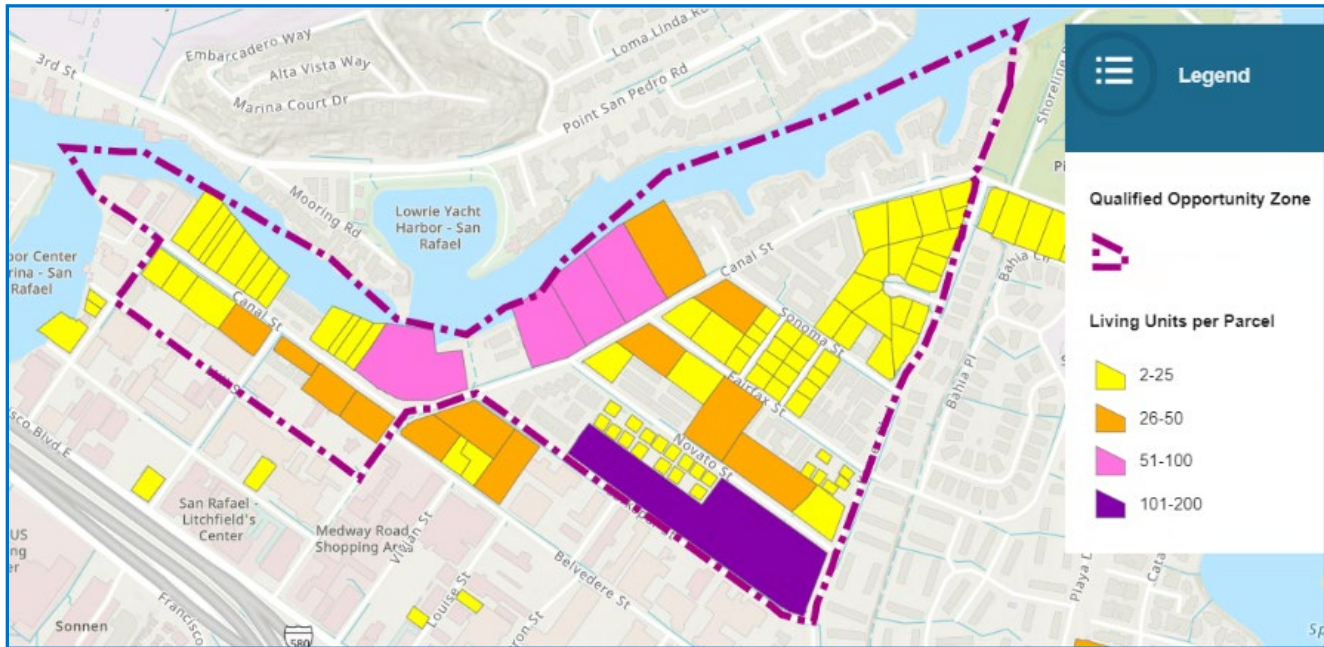


Figure 1 San Rafael Qualified Opportunity Zone

The City has one designated **Opportunity Zone** comprised of Census Tracts 1122.03 and 1122.04, formerly consolidated in Census Tract 1122.01. In total, this Opportunity Zone has a Census population of **8,024**, representing **13.6%** of the city’s total population of **59,000**. The unofficial population is estimated to be 8,000 - 10,000, and the median household income is approximately **\$49,000**.

Summary Demographics – Census Tracts 1122.03 and 1122.04

Project Area: Canal Qualified Opportunity Zone (QOZ) *

\$49,333 Canal QOZ median household income	43.2% Canal residents without a computer**	33.4% Canal households without broadband internet subscription**
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Marin County*

\$121,671 Marin County median household income	3.9% Households without a computer**	6.9% Households without a broadband internet subscription**
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*2020 US Census

** 2020 [Digital Equity California – US Census, BroadbandNow](#)

FISCAL IMPACT:

The grant funds of \$258,620 will be accepted and appropriated for Project #283. There is no additional fiscal impact associated with this action.

OPTIONS:

The City Council has the following options to consider on this matter:

1. Adopt the resolution approving acceptance and appropriation of the \$258,620 Local Agency Technical Assistance grant and authorizing the City Manager to execute a grant agreement and other documents related to the grant.
2. Do not adopt the resolution.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Adopt the resolution approving the acceptance and appropriation of California Public Utilities Commission grant funds in the amount \$258,620 for the "Local Agency Technical Assistance" ("LATA")

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution

RESOLUTION NO.

RESOLUTION APPROVING THE ACCEPTANCE AND APPROPRIATION OF CALIFORNIA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION (“CPUC”) GRANT FUNDING FOR THE SAN RAFAEL CANAL QUALIFIED OPPORTUNITY ZONE PROJECT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$258,620 FOR THE LATA PROJECT, AND AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO EXECUTE A GRANT AGREEMENT AND OTHER DOCUMENTS RELATED TO THE GRANT

WHEREAS, the State of California has allocated funds to the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to establish Local Agency Technical Assistance (LATA) grants to support local agencies in their efforts to expand broadband service to unserved and underserved Californians; and

WHEREAS, the California Public Utilities Commission has approved a grant to the City of San Rafael in the amount of \$258,620 in grant funds; and

WHEREAS, the LATA grant will be used to fund a feasibility study for building “Last-Mile” broadband infrastructure (interconnecting with the SB-156 Middle-Mile open access network) in the Canal neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, the funds will support feasibility studies, market analysis, and high-level network designs to analyze the current market, identify needs, quantify demand, calculate costs, estimate fees, and provide recommended project parameters and strategies to support projects in the Canal neighborhood;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council approves the acceptance and appropriation of \$258,620 in California Public Utilities Commission grant funds for the “Local Agency Technical Assistance” (“LATA”); and authorizes the City Manager to execute a Grant Agreement in a form approved by the City Attorney and any other documents related to the grant.

I, Lindsay Lara, Clerk of the City of San Rafael, hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was duly and regularly introduced and adopted at a regular meeting of the San Rafael City Council held on Monday, the 19th day of December 2022, by the following vote:

AYES: COUNCILMEMBERS:

NOES: COUNCILMEMBERS:

ABSENT: COUNCILMEMBERS:

LINDSAY LARA, City Clerk