



# Agenda Report

**MEETING DATE:** Tuesday, April 12, 2022

**TO:** City Council

**FROM:** CITY MANAGER PRO TEMPORE VIDES

**SUBJECT:** Support Starlight Elementary School Culinary Garden and Teaching Kitchen Project

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## **STATEMENT OF ISSUES:**

The Emeril Lagasse Foundation funds programs that integrate culinary gardens and teaching kitchens in schools to create interactive learning environments centered on food. In August 2019, the Board of Trustees of the Pajaro Valley Unified School District (PVUSD) applied and received a grant for \$500,000 to partially fund the construction of the Starlight Elementary School Emeril's Culinary Garden and Teaching Kitchen. Since then PVUSD has been actively seeking donors to raise the remaining funds for the \$2.5 million project.

## **RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

It is recommended that the City Council adopt a resolution to select a donor category and naming opportunity, and authorize the corresponding one-time contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to the Pajaro Valley Unified School District to partially fund the construction of Emeril's Culinary Garden and Teaching Kitchen at Starlight Elementary School.

## **DISCUSSION:**

In August 2019, the Emeril Lagasse Foundation announced that Starlight Elementary School has been selected as the newest school site for its national education program, Emeril's Culinary Garden & Teaching Kitchen. Starlight School is one of only five school sites funded nationwide.

Starlight Elementary School, led by Principal Jaclyne Medina, is a transitional Kindergarten through fifth-grade public school in the Pajaro Valley Unified School District (PVUSD). Serving more than 550 students with diverse backgrounds, the school seeks to ensure educational equity for students and their families, many of whom are connected to agriculture as both a way of life and a source of income.

A five-year grant from the Emeril Lagasse Foundation will allow Starlight Elementary to grow its garden and cooking program through the addition of a permanent, fully equipped 30-student 1,543 square foot teaching kitchen. Adjacent will be a new 7,900 square foot organic garden and community gathering space designed to accommodate larger numbers of

students along with the integration of more complex culinary, nutrition and gardening instruction.

Many students at Starlight Elementary, and indeed across PVUSD, are the children of farmworkers who sow, harvest, and package the food that feeds our community, region, and nation. The significance of having an Emeril's Culinary Garden and Teaching Kitchen in our midst would expand the opportunity to provide experiential learning for students in the area of cooking, nutrition, and science.

Garden education is not new to PVUSD, but the expanded opportunity to learn to cook and experience the creativity and the taste of the produce cultivated in the garden will be new at Starlight School and only possible thanks to the Emeril Lagasse Foundation and many other local donors. It is also worth noting that this kitchen project at Starlight School will help expand and improve the long-term existing partnership between the District and Life Lab Program. Life Lab is dedicated to cultivating children's love of learning, healthy food, and nature through garden-based education. Their curriculum and trained instructors will be part of this exciting program in Watsonville.

By integrating gardening and cooking concepts in school curriculums, PVUSD will offer an engaging experience that connects kids to the world of food and nurtures skills that benefit them not only in the kitchen but also throughout life. This garden/kitchen idea is aligned with the Council's goal to help develop skills and provide positive opportunities for youth in our community that help develop resilient and engaged young adults.

This project is relevant in our community as it also helps to honor the work of many of our local families who work in the field of agriculture. The Emeril's Culinary Garden and Teaching Kitchen Project is expected to be transformative providing a unique opportunity to enhance and expand the well-established garden and cooking education programs, and help to make powerful cultural connections for the students to their home lives, family backgrounds, and life experiences.

The impact of this project is far-reaching and it expands beyond the Starlight School grounds and those children that attend this school. Emeril's Culinary Garden and Teaching Kitchen will also serve as a community resource open to others in our community who desire to learn about garden education, healthy nutrition, or cooking classes. The space created at Starlight will allow groups and members of our community to learn and attend special weekend and after-school hour programs.

The overall cost of building this kitchen/garden learning space exceeds \$2.5 million. PVUSD has been actively seeking donations to fully fund the construction of this ambitious project in our local school and to date has raised \$750,000 of the goal of \$1,000,000 in donations.

PVUSD has established naming opportunities for major gifts and donation tiers in support of the project. Based on the contribution to the project, the City would have the opportunity to name one of the gardens and/or instructional areas. The City Council may consider one of

the following donation tiers: Heroes - \$100,000 plus; Champion - \$40,000; Grower- \$25,000 and obtain naming rights afforded in the naming opportunities outlined by PVUSD.

**STRATEGIC PLAN:**

This one-time budget allocation to help fund the Emeril Lagasse Culinary Garden and Teaching Kitchen Project at Starlight School is consistent with the Council's strategic goals 4-Economic Development and 5-Community Engagement & Well-Being

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

This is a one-time budget contribution of the chosen amount. There should not be any additional financial impacts on the City for funding this project. The funding used for this activity will be the already appropriated ARPA funds (0262-109-7361-XXXXX) allocated to job training.

**ALTERNATIVE ACTION:**

The Council may choose to fund this project at any of the three tiers mentioned above: Heroes with a contribution of at least \$100,000, Champion with a contribution of at least \$40,000, Grower category with a contribution of at least \$25,000, or any other amount as outlined in the donation tiers provided by the district.

**ATTACHMENTS AND/OR REFERENCES (If any):**

- 1) List of Donors to date (3/15/22)
- 2) Naming Opportunities for Major Gifts