THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

STAFF REPORT

Council Meeting Date: December 13, 2022

Subject: Golden Leaf Foundation Grant Funds for the Swannanoa River Road Flood Mitigation and Damage Reduction Feasibility Study

Staff Resource(s): Ken Putnam, PE, Director of Transportation
Greg Shuler, Director of Public Works

Action Requested: Adoption of a resolution authorizing the City Manager to accept $150,000 in grant funds from the Golden Leaf Foundation for the Swannanoa River Road Flood Mitigation and Damage Reduction Feasibility Study to support preliminary engineering findings for the Swannanoa Transportation Corridor Resiliency Plan and to execute all necessary grant agreements; and the associated budget amendment in the amount of $150,000.

Background:

- The Swannanoa River Road corridor (between Biltmore Avenue and South Tunnel Road) is one of the City's major east-west corridors that serves as an important commercial, recreation, transportation, and emergency access corridor.
- There is also a City plan to add a greenway/multi-use path within this corridor that would link to the larger city/county greenway system and serve as a key connector in the regional Hellbender Trail as well as extend the state's Fonta Flora Trail.
- The existing corridor, however, routinely floods during large rain events because of its proximity to the Swannanoa River floodplain.
- The frequency of flood events has also increased over the last 10 years, leaving Swannanoa River Road and surrounding roadways (including Thompson Street, and portions of Biltmore Avenue) inaccessible until flood waters recede.
- Buildings in the area also are frequently flooded and damaged.
- Swannanoa River Road and Thompson Street are located within feet of the riverbank and are vulnerable to being undermined by the river.
- Swannanoa River Road is owned and operated by the N.C. Dept. of Transportation (NCDOT) and is designated NC 81.
- A future project to reconstruct Swannanoa River Road is currently programmed in the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP #EB-5832).
- The NCDOT is currently considering alignment scenarios to improve the corridor's flood resiliency.
- Staff in the Transportation, Public Works, Planning and Urban Design (PUD), and Development Services Department (DSD) have taken this opportunity to discuss how best to incorporate the greenway while also aiming to provide some flood mitigation, flood damage reductions, and stream enhancements in this area.
- The Transportation Department applied for funding from the Golden Leaf Foundation in April 2022 and received confirmation of the award in October 2022.
    - Land of Sky Regional Council's (LOSRC) watershed and climate resilience specialist also assisted with the grant application.
    - The City was awarded $150,000 and no match is required.
- The Golden Leaf Foundation is a non-profit organization whose mission is to increase economic opportunity in North Carolina through various types of community grants.
- The feasibility study, and the included flood study will:
    - Identify flood patterns
    - Identify flood impacts on public infrastructure and private properties
    - Evaluate and make recommendations for conceptual plan options of a re-envisioned

Swannanoa River Road corridor that provides for a resilient transportation corridor, a greenway, additional public open space, and potential flood mitigation and damage reductions
    - Provide a planning-level cost estimate to implement the plan
    - Inform ongoing City and NCDOT planning efforts related to the future reconstruction of Swannanoa River Road, as well as the Swannanoa Greenway.
- The Transportation Department intends to contract with the LOSRC (using existing budgeted funds) to manage the project and grant in an effort to minimize impacts to limited City staff resources.
- The Public Works Department will assist with technical support.

Council Goal(s):
- Expand Core Services
- Neighborhood Resilience

Committee(s):
- Multi-Modal Transportation Committee - June 24, 2020 - Informational presentation
- Asheville Area Riverfront Redevelopment Commission - February 10, 2022 - Informational presentation

Pro(s):
- Outcomes of the study will include data on patterns and impacts of recurring flooding, as well as recommendations for potential flood reduction, mitigation, and increased climate resiliency.
- The study will benefit the City and NCDOT in ongoing planning efforts related to the future reconstruction of Swannanoa River Road and the Swannanoa Greenway.
- The LOSRC will manage the project, thereby reducing the strain on limited City staff resources.

Con(s):
- Completion of the study will require some City staff time, primarily from the Transportation and Public Works Department, to coordinate with LOSRC, provide data as necessary, and review deliverables.
- The study may recommend future actions, work program items, and capital improvements that could impact City resources.

Fiscal Impact:
- While matching funds are not required for this grant, an additional $25,000 will be used to contract with LOSRC for management of the project.
- Funding for this contract is available in the Transportation Department operating budget.

Suggested Motion:
- Motion to adopt a resolution authorizing the City Manager to accept $150,000 in grant funds from the Golden Leaf Foundation for the Swannanoa River Road Flood Mitigation and Damage Reduction Feasibility Study to support preliminary engineering findings for the Swannanoa Transportation Corridor Resiliency Plan, and to execute all necessary grant agreements; and the associated budget amendment.

Attachment(s):
- Resolution
- Budget Amendment
- Project Area Map

RESOLUTION NO. 22-____

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO ACCEPT FUNDS FROM THE GOLDEN LEAF FOUNDATION TO CONDUCT FLOOD STUDIES TO SUPPORT FLOOD MITIGATION EFFORTS IN THE SWANNANOA RIVER CORRIDOR

WHEREAS, The city has the authority, pursuant to N.C.G.S.160a-17 to apply and receive funds from other governmental entities and to enter into contracts for the admission of said grants; and

WHEREAS, the City of Asheville recognizes the Swannanoa River corridor between Biltmore Avenue and S. Tunnel Road is an environmentally sensitive area and experiences frequent flooding causing damage to existing buildings and infrastructure, and

WHEREAS, Swannanoa River Road and Thompson Street are roads that run parallel to the river and are being undermined with erosion and scouring: and

WHEREAS, the City applied for Golden Leaf Foundation funds to conduct a flood study as part of the the Swannanoa River Road Flood Mitigation and Damage Reduction Feasibility Study to support preliminary engineering findings for the Swannanoa Transportation Corridor Resiliency Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Asheville City Council considers the the Swannanoa River Greenway a priority and this study supports the feasibility of the greenway location; and

WHEREAS, Council goals include improved and expanded core services; resilient neighborhoods and reimagined public safety;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE THAT:

The City Manager is authorized to accept $150,000 in grant funds from the Golden Leaf Foundation for the Swannanoa River Road Flood Mitigation and Damage Reduction Feasibility Study to support preliminary engineering findings for the Swannanoa Transportation Corridor Resiliency Plan, and to execute all necessary grant agreements including a budget amendment.

Read, approved, and adopted on the 13th day of December 2022.

_____ _____

City Clerk Mayor

Approved as to form:

_____

City Attorney

ORDINANCE NO. _____

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

That Section 2 of the City of Asheville Annual Operating Budget Ordinance be amended to provide an appropriation of $150,000 to accept funding from the Golden Leaf Foundation and transfer $25,000 from the General Fund for contract management for the Swannanoa River Road Flood Mitigation and Damage Reduction Feasibility Study as follows:

SPECIAL REVENUE FUND

Revenues:	
Intergovernmental County Participation	$150,000
Transfer from General Fund	$25,000
Total Revenues	$175,000
Appropriations:	
Contracted Services	$175,000

That this ordinance shall be in full force and effect upon the date of final passage.

Read, approved and adopted this 13th day of December, 2022.

_____ _____

City Clerk Mayor

Approved as to form:

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City Attorney

PROJECT AREA MAP

