



REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL

Approved by:


Arnoldo Rodriguez, City Manager

Council Meeting of: September 4, 2024

Agenda Number: B-3

SUBJECT:

Letter of Support for Madera Community College Agave Distillery Program

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a Minute Order authorizing the Mayor to sign a Letter of Support for Madera Community College Agave Distillery Program (Program)

SUMMARY:

This staff report seeks the City Council's approval to formally endorse the Madera Community College Agave Distillery Program. The proposed letter of support highlights the Program's potential to contribute significantly to the region's economic growth and environmental sustainability by establishing Madera as a hub for agave cultivation and distillation.

DISCUSSION:

Madera Community College (MCC) is undertaking an innovative initiative to develop an Agave Distillery Program, aiming to establish the region as a leader in the cultivation and distillation of agave, a crop well-suited to the water-scarce conditions of Central California. This program is designed to not only cultivate agave plants but also to create a comprehensive process for producing agave-based products, including honey and distilled spirits. On August 22, 2024, Staff received a request from MCC to formally offer its endorsement for the Program by providing a Letter of Support.

Significance of Agave

Agave is a succulent plant native to arid regions, known for its resilience in environments with limited water availability. Its deep-root system allows it to tap into underground water sources, making it an ideal crop for regions facing water scarcity, such as Madera County. By integrating agave cultivation into the local agricultural landscape, MCC is addressing critical water

management challenges while also creating new economic opportunities. The Agave Distillery Program is expected to provide multiple benefits to the community:

1. *Economic Impact*: The Program promises to establish a new economic sector in Madera, positioning the city as a regional hub for agave cultivation and distillation. The introduction of culinary and tasting rooms, along with the incubation space, will foster local entrepreneurship, innovation, and job creation.
2. *Environmental Benefits*: Agave's adaptability to water-scarce conditions aligns with the city's ongoing efforts to manage water resources responsibly and achieve sustainable groundwater levels. Promoting agave cultivation can serve as a model for other regions facing similar water challenges.
3. *Cultural and Educational Exchange*: The proposed exchange program with experts from Mexico will not only elevate the quality and variety of agave-based products but also enrich the local community by fostering educational and cultural exchanges.

The letter of support, once approved by the City Council, will serve as a formal endorsement of the Program, demonstrating the City of Madera's commitment to innovative agricultural practices and sustainable economic development.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no direct financial impact to the City that would result from endorsing the Agave Distillery Program at Madera Community College.

ALTERNATIVES:

Council may deny the request to sign the Letter of Support or request additional information.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Letter of Support



September 4, 2024

Dr. Angel Reyna, President
Madera Community College
30277 Avenue 12
Madera, CA 93638

RE: Letter of Support – Madera Community College Agave Distillery Program, Madera, CA

Dear Dr. Reyna,

On behalf of the City of Madera, I am pleased to extend our enthusiastic support for the Madera Community College Agave Distillery Program (Program). This Program represents a significant and innovative step forward for Madera, one that promises substantial economic and environmental benefits.

Agave's adaptability to water-scarce conditions makes it an ideal crop for our region, especially as we confront the challenges of managing a critically overdrafted groundwater subbasin. The shift toward less water-intensive crops like agave aligns with our ongoing efforts to promote responsible water management, achieve sustainable groundwater levels, and enhance agricultural resilience.

Beyond its environmental benefits, the Program offers a unique opportunity to create a new economic sector in our region and establish Madera as a hub for agave cultivation and distillation. We are particularly excited about the inclusion of culinary and tasting rooms, which will provide a platform for showcasing the diverse products that can be derived from agave, including honey and distilled spirits. Furthermore, the planned incubation space for community members to distill agave will foster local entrepreneurship and innovation, and position Madera Community College as a leader in this emerging industry.

As part of this endeavor, Madera Community College intends to establish an exchange program with experts from Mexico, which will enhance local expertise in agave distillation and strengthen cultural and educational ties. This collaboration promises to elevate the quality and variety of agave-based products produced in our region.

The City of Madera is pleased to endorse this forward-thinking initiative, and we look forward to supporting the Madera Community College Agave Distillery Program as it grows and contributes to our community's economic and environmental vitality.

Sincerely,

Santos Garcia
Mayor
City of Madera