



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item-No Attachments (PDF)

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REPORT TO PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

SUBJECT

Recommendation on Conceptual Park Design for the Plaza del Sol Phase II Project

BACKGROUND

In May 2003 the City Council approved a phased project approach for construction of a downtown plaza at 200 West Evelyn Ave at the southwest corner of West Evelyn Avenue and South Frances Street. The urban park was designed and constructed on top of the underground parking structure of the Mozart Development (Mathilda Place). Construction of Phase I was completed in 2004 and opened to the public as the Plaza del Sol.

A City project to design and construct Plaza del Sol Phase II was originally scheduled for 2012-2014, but funding has been moved multiple times to coordinate with developments in the downtown area or due to competing priorities. Phase II is intended to include design features left out of the initial project because of budget constraints, add features to the initial project based on the current user needs, and create a landmark focal point on Plaza del Sol that will attract public attention and encourage Sunnyvale residents and guests to visit.

As a significant amount of time since the original Phase II was envisioned, and the usage of Downtown has evolved over time, Plaza del Sol Phase II is being reevaluated. Possible improvements may include: additional landscaping, walkways, water features, restrooms, roofing for one of the two garage ramps, a memorial dedicated to Sunnyvale residents and employees who have given their lives in service to the City and country, shading over specified areas, game facilities, information/food/educational kiosks, and artwork. Recognizing that public input was a critical component of developing the new vision for Phase II, the first task of work for a consultant was to hold public input meetings to select improvements to be made and to finalize the preferred conceptual plan.

In June of 2019 the City issued a request for proposals (RFP) to design firms to conduct public outreach and prepare a preferred conceptual plan, design the proposed improvements, prepare the construction documents and provide bid and construction support services. One proposal was received from Callander Associates Landscape Architecture, Inc. (CALA), a landscape architecture firm. CALA's proposal only covered the first stage of the RFP consisting of public outreach and preparation of a preferred conceptual plan. Due to the uncertainty about the final improvements that would be included in the project upon completion of the public outreach and the complexities of construction above a parking structure, they were unable to prepare a fee proposal fair to both parties for design, bid and construction support services. Their proposal was deemed non-responsive since it did not address all aspects of the RFP. The City then executed a contract with them for the first stage services. Council approval of a preferred conceptual design will finalize the first stage and a contract for the remaining design and construction support will be needed to continue the project.

Once a design contract is in place, development will begin of the detailed design and construction documents that will be used as part of the invitation to bid process for construction of the project. It is likely that some features of the final project may vary slightly from the selected concept as the project evolves through the detailed design process.

An extensive community outreach process for the project was performed to review the objectives of the project and receive input on desired design features. In late 2019 and early 2020, two community outreach meetings, an online survey, and an online Community Update were done to gather community input. City staff and CALA jointly hosted the open house style public meetings. The preferred conceptual design presented for approval (See Attachment 6 - Preferred Concept) is based on a combination of feedback from the community, input from City staff that will operate and maintain the facility, and the goals of the City Council-approved Capital Project.

The City Council is scheduled to consider this item on August 11, 2020.

EXISTING POLICY

General Plan, Chapter 3, *Land Use and Transportation - Open Space, Goal LT-8*

The City strives to provide and maintain adequate and balanced open space and recreation facilities for the benefit of maintaining a healthy community based on community needs and the ability of the City to finance, construct, maintain, and operate these facilities now and in the future.

General Plan, Chapter 4, *Community Character - Recreation, Goal CC-11*

Prioritization for Recreation Programming: The City strives to ensure equal opportunities for participation and to provide for a range of structured and unstructured uses, and a variety of general and special interest uses in parks and facilities. The City also provides a wide range of program choices, open space, amenities and facility offerings to meet the recreational needs of a diverse and changing population, including identified subgroups and special populations. Policies related to acquiring and/or developing open space facilities and amenities are also included here. Competing interests and finite resources, however, require the City to set some priorities (*Previously Open Space and Recreation Goal 2.2.D./ Adopted in 2006*).

- **Policy CC-11.1** Give priority to the following services, facilities and amenities that (*Previously Open Space and Recreation Policies 2.2.D.1. through D.5, D.7*):
 1. Are not readily available through other providers within or near Sunnyvale.
 2. Benefiting under-served populations as identified in the US Census and through community input.
 3. Fulfill a basic need or teach basic skills (e.g., non-competitive, developmental sports instruction such as learn to swim given priority over competitive sports programming).
 4. In which the community demonstrates interest.
 5. Benefit a greater number of residents.
 6. Can be used by multiple users or serve multiple purposes.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The conceptual park design being considered is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15061(b)(3) in that it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity may have a significant effect on the environment

If a conceptual design for the Plaza del Sol Phase II Project is approved, the full scope of the project and any potential impacts will need to be reviewed in accordance with CEQA Guidelines section 15004. It is anticipated that the project will be considered categorically exempt pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15301 and a Notice of Exemption will be filed for CEQA compliance for this project. The CEQA determination will be brought to the City Council for approval concurrent with the award of the construction contract for the project.

DISCUSSION

The architect and City staff hosted two public meetings to gather input on desired design features and to select a preferred plan. Additionally, an online survey was conducted, and a Community Update was shared on the City website on June 8, 2020. Notice about the Community Update was sent to the community notification list for the project on June 24, 2020. The information from the meetings and survey was used to create the preferred plan.

The first public meeting was held on Thursday, December 12, 2019 at the Sunnyvale Senior Center and was attended by only one member of the community. The goal of the meeting was to inform the public of the project background and downtown context, including a review of existing opportunities and challenges at the site. The intent was also to show different amenities and gauge community preferences and to receive public input about the existing plaza.

To solicit more community input following low attendance at the first public meeting, an on-line survey was created and available for public comment from December 24, 2019 through January 12, 2020. Over 200 responses to the on-line survey were submitted. The input received from Community Meeting #1 and the on-line survey were consolidated into a one page graphic, included as Attachment 2 - Community Outreach Meeting #1 Report Summary.

The second public meeting was held on February 12, 2020 at the Washington Park Community Building and was attended by approximately 15 people. Results from the first public meeting as well as results from the online survey were discussed. The architect presented three conceptual designs that were developed based on feedback from the previous outreach. The three conceptual designs each had a distinct theme and incorporated a range of enhancements and improvements into the existing plaza (Attachment 5 - Design Options). Concept A "Classic" sought to retain the existing character and aesthetic of the plaza. Enhancements included a fountain, play area, veteran's memorial, lighting, and game facilities to match the tones and textures of the current plaza. Concept B "Plaza Green" enhanced the plaza through expansion of the existing vegetated spaces to soften the plaza and provide additional recreational space. Listed enhancements included walkable/usable mound over the garage, vine trellis behind the stage, play mounds, seatwalls, raised planters and leaf shaped shade structures. Concept C "Contemporary" included misters, a garage ramp roof with colorful glass panels, light columns, a stage structure, color-changing lights on existing trellis and art installations. The open house style meeting was held prior to the scheduled Parks and Recreation Commission meeting. Each participant was provided 10 dot stickers to vote on the amenities they most preferred. Based on the input received, the preferred concept would have a lot of the elements from Plaza Green, but also would pull in preferred amenities from the other two concepts such as overhead lighting, enhanced labyrinth, and misters. The summary for this meeting is included as Attachment 3 - Community Outreach Meeting #2 Report Summary.

A third public meeting to present the preferred conceptual plan to the community for discussion was

part of the outreach plan, but in light of COVID-19 the meeting has been canceled. As an alternative, the preferred concept was shared as a Community Update on the City website. The Community Update presentation describing the features of the preferred concept is included as Attachment 4.

Following the public meetings and utilizing all the public input received to date, the architect prepared a preferred design that addresses most of the public's requests. The plan also meets the needs of the City from an operations, programming and maintenance standpoint. Improvements in the preferred concept include some main themes of public input. Some elements include: Covering the garage ramp to create more usable space and provide a public art opportunity, a play area to provide a place for kids, cooling misters integrated with the existing trellis to encourage more use on hot days, overhead lighting to take advantage of the ground-floor retail and encourage comfortable evening use, cladding on seatwalls and planters to introduce warmer materials to the plaza, and enhancing the existing labyrinth to encourage use of this memorable plaza feature.

The conceptual design presented for approval is based on a combination of feedback from the community, input from City staff that will operate and maintain the facility, and the goals of the City Council approved Capital Project.

FISCAL IMPACT

Council previously approved a budget of \$2,497,418.68 for design and construction of the Plaza del Sol Phase II Project (project number 830510).

A contract with a 10% contingency in the amount of \$76,288 was executed with CALA on August 22, 2019. This contract was to conduct community outreach and prepare a preferred site plan. Approximately \$225,000 is available for a landscape architect to complete detailed design, prepare bid and construction documents, and to provide bid and construction support. The estimated construction cost of the preferred concept is \$2 million.

Based on conceptual level estimates, there is adequate funding budgeted for the project, including construction contingency and other soft costs. As the project progresses further into design and estimates are refined to reflect the current economic conditions for construction activity, modifications may be necessary to keep within the project budget. A future Report to Council will be presented requesting award of a construction contract after the project is competitively bid. Operating costs and revenues will be adjusted during the next operating budget review cycle.

PUBLIC CONTACT

Public contact was made through posting of the Parks and Recreation Commission agenda on the City's official-notice bulletin board, on the City's website, and the availability of the agenda and report in the Office of the City Clerk.

Two public meetings for the project were conducted by City staff and CALA at the Senior Center on December 12, 2019, and at the Washington Park Building in February 2020. Notification of these meetings was provided through mail delivery to neighbors that live within 1,000 feet of the project and advertising via the City's Facebook page, and the City website. Those that attended any of the meetings and provided contact information received additional notification of scheduled meetings on this subject. An online survey for the project was also created and was available from December 24, 2019 through January 12, 2020. Two hundred seventeen responses were received.

As an alternative to a third public meeting, a Community Update was provided by posting the preferred concept on the City website.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Recommend that City Council Approve the Preferred Concept as shown on Attachment 6.
2. Provide other direction to staff as the Commission deems appropriate.

RECOMMENDATION

Alternative 1: Recommend that City Council Approve the Preferred Concept as shown on Attachment 6 of the report.

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Reviewed by: Chip Taylor, Director, Public Works

Reviewed by: Teri Silva, Assistant City Manager

Approved by: Kent Steffens, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

1. Reserved for Report to Council
2. Community Outreach Meeting #1 Report Summary
3. Community Outreach Meeting #2 Report Summary
4. Community Update #3
5. Design Options
6. Preferred Concept