



Agenda Report

19-847

Agenda Date: 10/22/2019

REPORT TO COUNCIL

SUBJECT

Action on Direction to Proceed with Placemaking Activities for the Mission Branch Library and City Plaza Park

BACKGROUND

On February 7, 2017, the City Council directed staff to enter into an agreement with Project for Public Spaces, Inc. (PPS), to conduct various community engagement activities focused around a city-wide vision for community "Placemaking", as well as to conduct a visioning workshop for the 90 North Winchester "Agrihood" affordable housing project. The scope of services provided by PPS under this Agreement included presentations and public workshops, stakeholder interviews and follow-up reports and presentations. The initial agreement had a budget of \$120,000 and a termination date of December 31, 2017, which was later extended until April 30, 2019. PPS completed the work described under the approved budget and scope of services in March of 2019.

For one of the community workshops (the Power of 10+ Workshop) facilitated by PPS in June 2017, the Mission Branch Library and City Plaza Park were identified as good candidate sites for a "Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper" (LQC) placemaking pilot project. On October 19 and 20, 2018, PPS conducted a two-day Stakeholder Meeting and Community Workshop LQC event focused on a placemaking vision for the Mission Branch Library and adjoining City Plaza Park. PPS prepared a draft report summarizing the workshop and their recommendations (Attachment 1).

DISCUSSION

The PPS report for the October 2018 Mission Branch Library LQC workshop provides specific recommendations to support placemaking at that location based on ideas generated by the community members, City officials and City staff that participated in the meeting and workshop. The recommendations emphasize activities and physical improvements that support activities within the park and adjacent to the library so to encourage the two to operate together as one active place attractive as a community gathering destination. The report recommends building on existing assets at five key outdoor sites, designated in the report as Library Plaza, Gazebo Zone, Free Play, Flex Lawn and Intersection. The report contains recommended programs and amenities for each subarea, including furniture, games, and classes. The report also advises focusing on the Library Plaza and Free Play areas before expanding to other parts of the site.

The draft report was reviewed by the Parks & Recreation Commission (Attachment 2) and the Board of Library Trustees (Attachment 3) in March and April of 2019 respectively. Both the Parks & Recreation Commission and the Board of Library Trustees discussed the report recommendations positively and provided minor comments. Most notably, the Parks & Recreation Commission recommended approval of the schematic design for the gazebo and programming of special events at the park.

In the spirit of the LQC approach, many of the recommendations require minimal cost and effort to implement. Accordingly, Library staff have already started to implement some of the easier recommendations utilizing existing Departmental resources, such as providing outdoor seating, play equipment, and outdoor programming. Other recommendations, notably physical improvements which require design work to verify building code, ADA and Measure R compliance, etc., will require additional action by the City to invest the needed resources.

While the City's General Plan, adopted in 2010, doesn't extensively address place-making, it does include some policies and related discussion about the importance of designing and utilizing public spaces to support community gathering and cultural activity. In particular, the Downtown Focus Area, which abuts the Mission Branch Library site, is identified as an important area for placemaking. The proposed investment in placemaking for the Mission Branch Library could advance or support the following General Plan policies:

Policy 5.3.1 P19 Maximize opportunities for the use and development of publicly owned land to achieve the City's economic development objectives and to provide public services and amenities. -

The Downtown Focus Area offers opportunities for placemaking and for a unique destination in the City to serve both local and regional interests.

Policy 5.4.2 G1 A Downtown that serves as a primary, pedestrian oriented commercial and cultural destination. -

Policy 5.4.2 P6 Encourage public spaces and art throughout Downtown to support pedestrian activity and gathering places. -

Policy 5.9.2 P1 Provide a diverse range of community, art, cultural and recreational facilities to meet the varying needs of residents in the City, including youth and seniors. -

Policy 5.9.2 P2 Periodically evaluate library services and facilities in order to respond to changing community demands. -

While the PPS exercise for the Mission Branch Library was identified as "Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper" it does require an investment of City resources to implement. Physical improvements identified in the PPS Report will require resources within the Department of Parks and Recreation as well as compliance with Measure R in design and construction, and some added maintenance cost. Similarly, participation by the Library staff will require resources within the Library Department. Allocation of these resources would require their diversion from other programmed uses, but given the relatively modest scope of those improvements, the strong community interest in placemaking and the potential to significantly increase the community's use of the Mission Branch library site, staff recommends that the City Council direct staff to proceed with design activity and programming of staff resources within the Departments of Parks and Recreation and Library to move forward with

implementation of the PPS recommendations.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The action being considered does not constitute a “project” within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15378(b)(4) in that it is a fiscal activity that does not involve any commitment to any specific project which may result in a potential significant impact on the environment.

FISCAL IMPACT

The estimated costs for the LQC ideas and more permanent park facility enhancements in the Draft Report have not been estimated at this time. LQC program ideas in the report that include consumable and shorter-term materials, supplies and services would be presented to the City Council for consideration as part of future budget development processes in order to be included in the City’s Departmental Operating Budget(s). Projects over \$25,000 and having an intended lifecycle of 5 or more years would be considered a Capital Improvement Project (CIP).

COORDINATION

This report was coordinated with the Parks and Recreation, Library and Finance departments and City Attorney’s Office.

PUBLIC CONTACT

Public contact was made by posting the Council agenda on the City’s official-notice bulletin board outside City Hall Council Chambers. A complete agenda packet is available on the City’s website and in the City Clerk’s Office at least 72 hours prior to a Regular Meeting and 24 hours prior to a Special Meeting. A hard copy of any agenda report may be requested by contacting the City Clerk’s Office at (408) 615-2220, email clerk@santaclaraca.gov <<mailto:clerk@santaclaraca.gov>> or at the public information desk at any City of Santa Clara public library.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Accept the recommendations in the Mission Branch Library City Plaza Park: Placemaking Pilot Project Analysis and Recommendations Draft Report and direct staff to work with PPS to finalize the report and return to the City Council with next steps to implement the report as part of the upcoming City budget process.
2. Do not accept the recommendations in the Mission Branch Library City Plaza Park: Placemaking Pilot Project Analysis and Recommendations Draft Report and direct staff to work with PPS to modify the report.

RECOMMENDATION

Alternative 1:

Accept the recommendations in the Mission Branch Library City Plaza Park: Placemaking Pilot Project Analysis and Recommendations Draft Report and direct staff to work with PPS to finalize the report.

Reviewed by: Andrew Crabtree, Director of Community Development

Approved by: Deanna J. Santana, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

1. Mission Branch Library City Plaza Park: Placemaking Pilot Project Analysis and Recommendations Draft Report, March 2019
2. Parks & Recreation Commission Report, March 19, 2019
3. Board of Library Trustees Report, April 1, 2019