



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item

14-0933

Agenda Date: 1/30/2015

2015 COUNCIL STUDY ISSUE

NUMBER

CDD 15-09

TITLE Exploring Opportunities to Improve the Appearance of Public and Private Property along the 100 Block of Murphy Avenue

BACKGROUND

Lead Department: Community Development

Support Department(s): Office of the City Manager

Sponsor(s):

Board/Commission: Heritage Preservation Commission

History:

1 year ago: N/A

2 years ago: N/A

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

What are the key elements of the study?

The first Murphy Avenue design guidelines were created in 1980 (and updated in 1994) and included a development plan which proposed significant public improvements to the street, as well as design guidelines to encourage thoughtful and attractive renovations by private business owners. By the summer of 1994, 31 of the 36 buildings in the 100 block of South Murphy Avenue had been renovated or newly constructed. Also, in 2009 the City made major improvements to the Murphy Ave streetscape, including adding outdoor eating areas, street furniture, road improvements, etc.

Many of the tenants on Murphy Avenue have been on the street for many years and the Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) feels some of the building facades, awnings and other building features are looking dated. While the HPC sometimes includes general maintenance conditions on new projects that come before them (update awnings every five years, maintain paint colors, etc.), the turnover on Murphy Avenue is minimal and some of the older tenants and property owners may not have effectively maintained their buildings.

The study could include:

- Exploration of outside funds that could be used to help tenants/property owners improve their buildings, awnings and signage.
- Work with the Sunnyvale Downtown Business Improvement District to see if there are opportunities for business/property owners to make self-improvements without providing any City funding.
- Survey of improvement districts for other historic downtown areas in the County.

- Community outreach to businesses and property owners.

What precipitated this study?

The Heritage Preservation Commission feels that there are many property upgrades and building facade and public improvements that could be made to Murphy Avenue to make it a more prominent street in Sunnyvale. The HPC is proud of the City's cultural heritage and wants to see Murphy Avenue look as nice as other downtowns in nearby cities.

Planned Completion Year: 2015

FISCAL IMPACT**Cost to Conduct Study**

Level of staff effort required (opportunity cost): Moderate

Explanation of Cost: N/A

Cost to Implement Study Results

Unknown. Study would include assessment of potential costs.

Explanation of Cost: It is unlikely that the City could obtain any public sector or charitable funds for private property improvements on Murphy Avenue, because such funding is generally only available for blighted areas or areas with significant long-term economic challenges, such as high commercial property vacancies, high tenant turnover, high crime, inadequate patronage of businesses, or high unemployment rates. None of these conditions exist in downtown Sunnyvale at this time.

EXPECTED PARTICIPATION IN THE PROCESS

Council-approved work plan: No

Council Study Session: No

Reviewed by Boards/Commissions: Heritage Preservation Commission, Planning Commission

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Position: Drop

Explanation: Improvement of private buildings on Murphy Avenue may be more attractive; however, in 2010, the City Council approved a \$120,000 Façade Improvement Program that was funded with CDBG funds. The Façade Improvement Program was created to provide low-interest rate loans to property owners interested in improving their storefronts. Economic Development and Housing staff conducted numerous forms of outreach to generate interest in this program, but none of the property owners completed an application. Staff believes that the CDBG facade program, which contains a number of federal requirements and can be time-consuming or add costs for applicants, was less attractive for potential applicants. Currently, staff is not aware of any other form of public funding available for private property improvements in Sunnyvale. Typically public financing for private improvements or business assistance is provided in local areas that are designated blighted or have very high unemployment rates, neither of which is the case in downtown Sunnyvale at this time. Also, staff has found that there are no active major code enforcement cases open on the properties located on this block of Murphy Avenue and the minor case that is active is under review and does not

pertain to items discussed in this study issue paper. In the recent past, the City spent over \$5 million dollars in City funds and grants upgrading the streetscape (street, sidewalk, utilities, etc.) on Murphy Avenue.

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