



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item

16-0986

Agenda Date: 2/17/2017

2017 COUNCIL STUDY ISSUE

NUMBER

DPW 17-11

TITLE Exploration of Creating Usable Open Space over Portions of Central Expressway

BACKGROUND

Lead Department: Department of Public Works
Support Department(s): N/A

Sponsor(s):

Board/Commission: Planning Commission

History:

1 year ago: N/A

2 years ago: N/A

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

What are the key elements of the study?

Usable open space is valuable to the community, but it can be difficult to acquire the land necessary to develop new usable open space in a built-out community. The concept of building usable open space over a below grade road is a concept discussed by the Planning Commission that has the potential to enhance the look of an existing neighborhood, connect spaces, and utilize land for multiple purposes.

Central Expressway, which is owned and maintained by the County of Santa Clara, spans through the City and has segments that are below grade. These grade separations create distances between streets that would otherwise be adjacent or part of the same neighborhood. Creating usable open space at grade levels above Central Expressway may have the potential to unite those neighborhoods, enhance the pedestrian or bicyclist experience and create usable open space for the community.

An effort like this is complex and extends well beyond the City of Sunnyvale to accomplish. In addition, the ultimate effort would not be subject to Planning Commission review or approval. If the Commission sponsors the study issue, staff recommends the initial effort be limited to a feasibility study of the potential for the improvements to be made.

The feasibility analysis may include:

- Discussion with the County of Santa Clara to determine interest in this concept;
- Consideration of locations along Central Expressway where this type of development may be appropriate;

- Feasibility studies on how this type of development over a roadway may be possible including review of the engineering opportunities and limitations within the expressway;
- Community outreach to determine if this is a desired outcome of the neighborhoods adjacent to Central Expressway; and
- Information on the cost and time-frame that a project of this nature would entail.

What precipitated this study?

The Planning Commission sponsored this study issue after discussions on the necessity of usable public open space and the lack of available land that may be used for public open space.

Planned Completion Year: 2019

FISCAL IMPACT**Cost to Conduct Study**

Level of staff effort required (opportunity cost): Major

Amount of funding above current budget required: \$750,000

Funding Source: Will seek budget supplement

Explanation of Cost:

The cost would be for consultant support services. The consultant would be responsible for reviewing the engineering feasibility of the project and develop conceptual cost estimates. Engineering feasibility would be complex as it would require an analysis of multiple elements including existing and future grades, utilities, roadway options and connections, and what changes would be required for the expressway to meet life and safety requirements to function as a covered roadway. The consultant would also be the lead in coordinating with the County and lead a community outreach process. Staff would manage the consultant contract, review all the engineering documents, participate in all outreach and coordination meetings, and determine overall feasibility.

Cost to Implement Study Results

Study would include assessment of potential costs

EXPECTED PARTICIPATION IN THE PROCESS

Council-approved work plan: No

Council Study Session: Yes

Reviewed by Boards/Commissions: BPAC and PRC

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Position: Drop

Explanation: Construction of usable land over an existing high-volume roadway may have positive effects, but it would be very complex and expensive to develop. Even though Central Expressway runs through the City of Sunnyvale, it is maintained and owned by the County of Santa Clara, and use of the areas above or around the roadway would require authorization and potential creation of

easements in order to grant Sunnyvale permission to construct open space in these areas. Even if a feasible alternative could be developed that was agreeable to the County and community, the cost at a minimum would be in the tens of millions, and there is no funding source that can be reasonably identified in the next 10-20 years.

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