



DATE: October 23, 2012  
TO: Mayor and Councilmembers  
VIA: David E. Witt, City Manager *DEW*  
FROM: Gregory P. Humora, Director of Public Works/City Engineer *GPH*  
FROM: William B. Chopyk, Director of Community Development *WBC*  
SUBJECT: Downtown Village Streetscape Improvement Project – Status Update

BACKGROUND

At the request of the City Council this is an update on the Downtown Village Streetscape Improvement Project on activities taken place since the last report on June 26, 2012. The City of La Mesa initiated the Downtown Village Streetscape Improvement Project to revitalize the downtown village area, to enhance its sense of place as a central business district, and to improve public safety.

In 2008, as recommended by the Parking Commission, the Council authorized the expenditure of \$300,000 from the Downtown Parking Fund to pay for professional services to prepare design and engineering plans for the Project. In January 2009, the Council approved an agreement with RBF Consulting to prepare the plans following a request for qualification process. In April 2009, the Council authorized the use of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds in an amount of \$991,000 to fund a portion of the project construction.

Two public workshops were held on April 22, 2009 and June 29, 2009 at the Community Center to gather feedback on the concept plans from business owners, property owners, residents and stakeholder groups. The meetings were well-attended, with over 100 people providing meaningful input on the concept plans. The overall consensus at the workshops was that there was significant support for the project to move forward. Workshop results and the concept plans are posted on the project page on the City's web site.

STREETSCAPE DEVELOPMENT

The design engineer's scope of work has two major parts: 1) preparation of the concept plans; and 2) preparation of the construction plans. The construction plan area is a sub set of the concept plan area. The "Map of Program Area" is attached which shows the limits of the concept plans (turquoise color) and the limits of the construction plan area (referred to as Final Plans in yellow on the map). RBF has been contracted to prepare construction plans for the yellow area only. When the plans are complete, construction documents for the primary phase of the project will be ready for public bidding, subject to funding availability.

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The design plans are currently 95% complete. Staff has confirmed locations of electrical infrastructure with SDG&E and is continuing to work with AT&T on conflict resolution of underground utilities. Additional utility potholing was recently performed by AT&T to confirm conduit locations. It is the City's desire and intent to locate any new utility boxes on side streets and not La Mesa Boulevard. Environmental permits (CEQA and NEPA) are also being processed at this time in anticipation of construction. Construction phasing plans are being prepared showing how traffic and parking will be handled and how the work will proceed on a block by block basis. A construction information brochure has been developed to answer expected questions, provide information on construction phasing, and show conceptual street cross sections of the proposed improvements. A questionnaire has also been prepared in an effort to gather information from businesses in an attempt to minimize construction impacts. The brochure and questionnaire are both available on the City's project web page.

Staff has begun meeting with businesses and property owners to discuss the construction phasing. Letters were mailed to business and property owners in the Downtown Village on the west side of Spring Street on August 30, 2012. The letters included available meeting times and asked them to contact the City. Follow up letters were sent on September 27, 2012 and phone calls were also made to encourage participation. Letters will be sent out to the businesses on the east side of Spring street next. The intent of these meetings has been to provide information to businesses on what to expect during construction and to accommodate reasonable business needs so that all businesses can remain open during construction. Feedback from the stakeholders has been mostly positive so far. A consistent concern that has been raised is parking availability. To that end, staff plans to develop a downtown parking map to aid patrons in locating available parking resources during construction.

The construction phasing plan calls for work on only one side of the street, one block at a time. The sidewalks will remain open throughout the construction with the exception of a short time period when a portion of the old sidewalk is removed and new sidewalk is placed. There will be at least one lane of parking and one travel lane open at all times. The only exception to this will be La Mesa Boulevard west of Spring Street where there will be no on street parking when individual blocks are under construction because of the lack of available on street parking on the north side of the street. Traffic will be one way only for portions of the construction.

As discussed previously with the City Council, the scope of work for the project may be reduced if there is not a mechanism in place to fund adequate maintenance of the enhanced improvements. If all elements are constructed as proposed in the concept plans, the project would require an expanded level of baseline services. Some form of public/private partnership establishing an ongoing financial commitment will be necessary to pay for the maintenance of the betterments currently proposed in the concept plans. A preliminary list of betterments that could be eliminated from the project absent the establishment of a funding mechanism to defray maintenance costs includes:

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- String lights/Village gateway enhancements
- Brick crosswalks
- Enhanced paving at intersections
- Removable bollards
- Public restrooms
- Separately metered electrical circuit for special events
- Electrical plug-ins at tree wells and street lights
- Street trees (reduced)
- Street furnishings (reduced)
- Irrigation improvements (reduced)

Although the betterments listed above may be eliminated from the project scope, the future installation of these betterments would be accommodated by including the necessary infrastructure, such as underground conduit and expandable landscape areas in the project design, so the opportunity to install the betterments at a future date without significant disruption could occur, if and when a funding mechanism is put in place.

### PROJECT FUNDING

The estimated construction cost for the complete Final Plans identified by the yellow area on the “Map of Program Area” is currently \$5M. The project funding that has been programmed is:

- Downtown Parking Fund - \$300,000 for design services

The construction funding that has been secured so far is:

- American Recovery & Reinvestment Act: \$991,000
- Transportation Development Act: \$420,000

The funding that is anticipated to be available:

- SANDAG Smart Growth Incentive Grant: \$2,000,000
- Downtown Parking Fund: \$700,000
- La Mesa TransNet: \$900,000

There have been some recent updates to the project funding. Staff is attempting to secure an additional \$210,000 in Transportation Development Act Article 4 funds at this time for the project. At the September 18, 2012 La Mesa Community Parking Commission meeting, the Commission recommended making the Downtown Parking Fund Balance available for the project construction. The Available Fund Balance was reported as \$673,000 at that time. SANDAG just issued a call for projects for the Smart Growth Incentive Grant Program. Applications are due on January 18, 2013 and staff will prepare a resolution for City Council approval authorizing the submittal of a SANDAG grant application at a future meeting prior to the application deadline.

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Community support for the grant application is strongly encouraged by SANDAG, therefore staff will seek letters of support from La Mesa organizations.

### PROJECT SCHEDULE

With the SANDAG grant applications due in January, it is likely that awards will be made in April 2013. At that point, if the grant application is successful, sufficient funding would be in place to finalize the scope of work of the plans and specifications for advertising the project for public bidding. The time for issuing a bid to starting construction is typically around 3 months.

Attachment: Map of Program Area  
Construction Information Brochure

**MAP OF PROGRAM AREA - REVISED MAY 2009  
DOWNTOWN STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT**

