

REPORT

To the Honorable Mayor and City Council
From the City Manager

September 24, 2018

SUBJECT

Downtown Parks Site Assessment and Feasibility Study

RECOMMENDATION

1. Receive update on the Downtown Parks Site Assessment and Feasibility Study and
2. By motion, provide direction to staff on which City-owned parcels will continue to the Downtown Park design phase

BACKGROUND

In 2017, the City Council held a Study Session regarding implementation of the Downtown Precise Plan (DTPP). A key element of the DTPP is to create “a network of great public open spaces.” Following Council’s discussion at the Study Session, staff conducted a Request for Proposal process to select a firm to conduct a *Downtown Parks Site Assessment and Feasibility Study*. SERA Design and Architecture, Inc. was selected to complete the study.

The purpose of the study was to conduct site assessment and feasibility of converting existing City-owned land and its adjacent right-of-way into parks, and to provide recommendations for park development and potential green urban recreation corridors that connect the City’s existing and future public open spaces.

The first phase of the study, Site Assessment & Ranking, summarized the opportunities and constraints of six prospective locations for Downtown Parks in the general downtown area based on criteria such as safety and vibrancy, circulation and connectivity, and potential to host activities and programs. The sites, in no particular order, were:

Site 01: Winslow Street Lot

Site 02: Library Campus/Roselli Park

Site 03: Main Street Lot/City Hall Lot

Site 04: Marshall Street Garage (top floor)

Site 05: Spring Street Lot

Site 06: Redwood Creek (Bradford Street to Convention Way)

The site assessment also included research of existing conditions, such as underground utilities and culverts, and provided findings for each site and a recommended site ranking for Council to consider. In addition, the analysis preliminarily examined the potential costs of repurposing the existing parcels.

During this process, City staff presented the site maps, the evaluation criteria and draft findings to the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Commission, the Planning Commission and the Complete Streets Advisory Committee (joint study session) and to the business community including the Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Business Group (DBG) and the Redwood City Improvement Association (RCIA). These stakeholders provided substantial feedback that shaped the ranking of the sites. Many of the participants recommended improvements to Redwood Creek, particularly, development of a creek-side trail that would connect the segments built per the North Main Street Precise Plan. Furthermore, stakeholders expressed significant interest in the creek site as an investment towards a strategic connection to the City's waterfront.

Based on the feedback received and analysis conducted, staff recommended that the following sites be studied further in Phase 2:

Site 02: Library Lot A/Roselli Park (excludes Lot B)

Site 03: City Hall/Main Street Lot

Site 06: Bradford Street/Redwood Creek

The City Council supported this recommendation.

ANALYSIS

As with Phase 1, staff from the Parks, Recreation and Community Services (PRCS) Department, the Community Development Department (CDD), the Library Services Department, the City Attorney's Office and the City Manager's Office participated in Phase 2. This phase focused on the feasibility of building a park on the selected sites. The team further reviewed title reports and deeds, continued to research parking agreements, collected topographic surveys, confirmed property lines and easements, and ultimately determined suitable, buildable areas for a future park(s) and urban recreational corridors.

Community Engagement

Staff also conducted community engagement and outreach through public surveys (see Community Engagement Summary in Appendix III of the report), a meeting with tenants at 830 Main, and a one-day community event hosted by the PRCS and Library. Because the proposed park locations are active parking lots, survey questions assessed the use of downtown parking facilities.

During the community outreach effort, including at the Pop-up Park event, City staff and team spoke with concerned residents regarding the many aspects of converting the existing use of the City-owned sites, specifically the loss of parking, the high cost of building the project and its maintenance, and problematic behavior in existing parks. The City Council and staff received correspondence from concerned residents who live at 830 Main Street, adjacent to the Main Street lot, and who park at that lot. The apartment building at 830 Main has a 59-stall parking garage. The size of the parking garage was intentionally reduced from 207 parking stalls in light of the fact that the building provides market-rate and affordable units for seniors. At the time of approval, it was expected that relatively few tenants would drive cars due to their age and the downtown location. Some tenants stated they prefer to park onsite or at the Main Street lot due to poor health conditions. According to City records, over twenty tenants purchase monthly parking permits allowing them to park at the Main Street lot. Up to 100 permits may be issued to downtown residents and workers and for most of 2018 fewer than 50 monthly permits were issued.

City staff offered a meeting at 830 Main to provide information and address tenants' concerns. Twelve residents attended this meeting on Monday, September 17. Tenants expressed appreciation for this opportunity to learn more and to express their concerns and interests. Tenants expressed support for both the preferred option and the alternate option for the conversion of the Main Street/City Hall Lot. Many were pleased that a large number of parking spaces could still remain onsite.

The Pop-Up Park, held at the two proposed sites in the downtown on Saturday, June 9 from 11 a.m. - 3 p.m., was developed by staff with support from the Parks and Arts Foundation (PAF) and the Library staff and volunteers. With the exception of Roselli Garden, the event location simulated the shape and size of a single linear park that extended from Broadway to the corner of Middlefield Road and Main Street. A survey booth, managed by English- and Spanish-speaking staff and a Planning Commissioner, was set up; people could look at a map of the proposed locations, view a copy of the preliminary report, take the survey, ask questions about the study, and express their concerns or support for the proposed locations for a future park. Moreover, the event

offered participants an opportunity to see and feel the potential size and scale of a future linear park in that location.

Downtown Parking

To assess the impact of reducing parking spaces in order to provide for downtown parks, staff considered current parking usage and planned changes to downtown parking. As noted in Attachment 1, there is sufficient parking throughout downtown to accommodate the proposed park(s), though some locations are heavily parked during specific times of the week and there are unique uses on the Main Street Lot that need to be considered. Increasing the use of shared use parking, implementing transportation demand management programs, and completing the installation of a dynamic parking guidance system will help to manage parking needs and direct drivers to available parking more efficiently.

Additionally, more public parking may be available in the future: the County of San Mateo is constructing a new parking structure which could include public parking, and staff also are assessing adjustments to parking policies to keep storefront parking available for business patrons while shifting long term parkers into City lots and garages.

Finally, staff anticipate proposing modifications to parking permit rates, developing an employee parking program, and exploring weekday permit parking in private garages.

Study Findings

The study was conducted to identify the challenges and the prospects of transforming existing City-owned land into a future park(s). While the study was not intended to resolve the numerous issues from the conversion of the existing use of City-owned land to parkland, it was aimed at disclosing them and offering the City Council a summary of observations that can inform the decision of site selection for a park and the future design of the spaces. In addition to the feedback received at the Pop Up event and multiple meetings, the public surveys captured the community's preferences for amenities and programming. Most indicated a preference for a large, green linear park that provided a soft visual and tactile respite from the hard surfaces of the downtown streets. This input can inform the design of the public spaces.

Attachment 2 provides the comprehensive findings of the previous tasks and provides recommendations for park development in the downtown. The recommendations are meant to illustrate the various options for developing a park, or a collection of parks,

located in the downtown area. The report recommends the implementation of an urban recreational corridor, including the proposed corridor stretching from the Downtown Library to the Highway 101 Undercrossing.

After considering existing conditions studies, community input and public opinion, analysis of downtown parking usage and future plans described in Attachment 1, and land surveys, SERA developed high-level site plan diagrams that reflect community-informed programming and amenities.

Staff recommends that the City Council proceed to a detailed design phase of the three selected sites to create a large, linear park. If the three sites were to develop in accordance with the diagrams in the report, concurrently with the development of the 101 undercrossing and a version of the proposed bicycle network in the City-wide Transportation Plan, the City would capture an opportunity to create a new urban recreation corridor that would greatly contribute to the existing and future network of great public open spaces.

Staff is requesting that the City Council provide direction on the City-owned site or sites that should proceed to the Design Phase for a Downtown Park. The Design Phase would require the assembly and release of a Request for Proposal (RFP) for professional design services for the design of an urban park(s) and recreation corridors, including a comprehensive and inclusive public engagement strategy.

ALTERNATIVES

The City Council could direct staff to assess other parcels, consider an extension of the study, or choose not to consider a park in the Downtown area at this time.

FISCAL IMPACT

The report in Attachment 2 includes cost estimates for site improvements at each location:

1. Library Lot A, Recommended and Alternate Options (both are same estimates):
\$1.7M - \$2.5M for construction
2. City Hall/Main Street Lot, Recommended Option: \$2.6M - \$3.4M for construction
City Hall/Main Street Lot, Alternate Option: \$1.9M - \$2.0M for construction

3. Redwood Creek/Bradford Street: Unknown at this time due to the need for environmental review (CEQA requirements) and approach the City would ultimately choose (options are listed within the Report).

Total construction costs for the Library and City/Hall Main Street Lot could be \$5.9M; as noted, additional work is required to develop construction cost estimates for Redwood Creek/Bradford Street.

Multiple funding sources would be required to fund construction. Two million dollars is allocated in the current Capital Improvement Program to fund planning expenses and a portion of construction costs for a Downtown park. Additionally, \$1.4M in unencumbered Park Impact Fees and \$3.0M in unencumbered Quimby Act Fees could be allocated to this project if the City Council desires.

Ongoing maintenance costs will vary greatly depending on the individual site, the amenities, and type of materials used. Preliminary estimates range from \$80,000 to \$120,000 annually based on square footage. Though additional analysis would need to be completed, some maintenance responsibilities could be assumed by existing Park staff dedicated to the Downtown. Park maintenance costs are typically funded by the General Fund.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

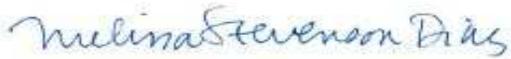
The feasibility study is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as defined in CEQA Guidelines, section 15378, because it has no potential for resulting in either a direct or foreseeable physical change in the environment. The study has determined that future improvements along Redwood Creek would trigger CEQA requirements.



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ATTACHMENTS

1. MEMO REGARDING PARKING USAGE
2. DOWNTOWN PARKS SITE ASSESSMENT AND FEASIBILITY STUDY