



Agenda Report

City Council

Date: September 27, 2022

To: Brian Saeki, City Manager

From: Kyle Cason, Public Works Director

Subject: Greenleaf Promenade – Streetscape Design Progress Report

RECOMMENDATION

Receive and file the progress report on the design for Greenleaf Promenade Streetscape Project.

BACKGROUND

On February 26, 2019, City Council selected a concept design from SWA Architects for the Uptown Whittier Streetscape Beautification project inclusive of improvements from “paseo to paseo” along Greenleaf Avenue. The project area was approximately midblock north of Wardman Street to midblock north of Philadelphia Street and improvements consisted of new parklets, curbs, gutters, paving, concrete, tree removal, tree preservation, and tree replacement. At the time of Council discussion, the project costs were estimated at \$3.8M.

On May 28, 2019, City Council was presented with a summary of public input gathered as part of the Uptown Streetscape Plan process referencing desired improvements including outdoor dining and parklets, gathering spaces, enhanced safety, cleanliness, and walkability, among others.

In June of 2020, due to the COVID-19 public health crisis, the City Council approved a temporary closure of Greenleaf Avenue to facilitate the Greenleaf Promenade Outdoor Dine & Shop program. The closure, commonly referred to as the Greenleaf Promenade, has allowed for retailers and restaurants to operate their businesses in the City-owned public right-of-way through approval of a temporary encroachment permit while adhering to indoor occupancy restrictions. The application process detailed equipment guidelines, current health order protocols, and notice of the City’s right to revoke the permit at any time should it be deemed necessary due to non-compliance or public safety.

As a result of evolving pandemic health orders, the City Council approved an extension of the street closure on October 13, 2020, through a minimum of 120 days after the point at which restaurants were permitted to serve indoors at 100% capacity again.

On March 23, 2021, the City Council received a presentation featuring a draft concept of a single-block closure of Greenleaf designed by SWA Architects (Attachment A). At that time, City Council directed staff to research traffic control alternatives and perform

further outreach to stakeholders in the impacted Uptown area, specifically businesses, property owners, and nearby residents.

On June 15, 2021, consistent with the Governor's executive orders, the Health Officer Order for Los Angeles County allowed for the full reopening of businesses and restaurants, setting the new deadline for removal of outdoor operations along the Promenade of October 15, 2021.

On August 10, 2021, the City Council received the results of the Greenleaf Promenade community survey. Feedback indicated that more than 1,600 of 1,800 community members supported a permanent Promenade. Of those respondents, 60 of 81 Uptown business owners supported the permanent closure, as well as 199 of 241 Uptown property owners. When asked to rank priorities within the Promenade, common responses aligned with feedback received during the prior Streetscape Plan outreach process and included outdoor dining, aesthetic uniformity, security, cleanliness, and diversification of businesses. Additional improvements including sidewalk repair, lighting, public art, and community gathering space were also noted. City Council action included approving an extension of encroachment permits through February 1, 2022 and directing staff to bring back a report containing further information regarding various options for construction of a future hybrid or permanent Greenleaf Promenade.

On October 26, 2021, City Council authorized a hybrid concept for the Greenleaf closure that would include the installation of bollards to facilitate expedited police and fire response, uniform build-outs for dining and outdoor gathering, and hosting of special events along Greenleaf Avenue.

In November of 2021, business owners were reminded of allowable outdoor dining operations and notified that the Greenleaf Promenade permit revocation process had been further refined to include multi-step notification of first and second violations.

On January 25, 2022, City Council authorized an extension of the current Greenleaf Promenade encroachment permits for an additional 90 days, with a tentative expiration date of May 1, 2022.

On March 8, 2022, the City Council authorized the City Manager to enter into an agreement with SWA Group for preliminary engineering and design services and directed staff to bring back an analysis of concerns brought forward by the Whittier Uptown Association (WUA), Uptown Whittier Improvement Association (UWIA) and Whittier Area Chamber of Commerce.

On March 22, 2022, the City Council approved \$84,545 in funding for the following interim improvements for the Greenleaf Promenade: special event lighting for City sponsored events, additional temporary lighting to improve safety and site aesthetics; increased trash service, and additional sidewalk and street cleaning. The City Council also extended the encroachment permits to February 1, 2023, and directed Staff to bring back a report on security, branding, and marketing for the Greenleaf Promenade.

Since the March 22, 2022 meeting, the City has continued with increased patrols from its security service provider, which is present in the Uptown area daily from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. Along Greenleaf Avenue, staff has replaced all 50W LED street lights with 100W LEDs. City staff has also met with the Whittier Uptown Association and Uptown Whittier Improvement Association to coordinate efforts regarding the branding of Uptown Whittier, as part of a larger City branding initiative set to begin early 2023, and is working collaboratively with both associations, as well as the Whittier Chamber of Commerce, to ensure that future events and activities are marketed and supported.

On June 14, 2022, the City Council directed staff to request a design option from SWA that details a “paseo to paseo” full closure from mid-block north of Philadelphia Street to mid-block south of Philadelphia Street along Greenleaf Avenue, with the remaining portions open to vehicular traffic.

On June 28, 2022, the City Council directed staff to proceed with the Open Street promenade design, with the understanding that traffic access will be temporarily closed at a minimum from Thursday through Saturday.

DISCUSSION

Per City Council’s direction, SWA developed a design for a Greenleaf Streetscape Project based upon both the 2019 adopted Uptown Whittier Streetscape Beautification Plan and the 2020 temporary encroachments authorized as the “Greenleaf Promenade”. The Greenleaf Streetscape design addresses community input and design principles from Uptown Streetscape plan such as:

- Greenleaf intersections and mid-block crossings
- Street furnishings, gathering spaces and outdoor dining
- Landscaping, lighting, and built environment enhancements

The Greenleaf Streetscape provides substantial flexibility in the construction of built-out spaces that can be used for restaurants, retail, or public uses, while maintaining a street with a width acceptable to Los Angeles County Fire. As with the Streetscape plan and per City Council’s direction for flexibility in temporary closures to vehicular traffic, bollards feature heavily in the design. There will be approximately 30 strategically placed parking stalls and adequate safety barriers to protect customers from vehicular traffic when the street is open to traffic. As SWA continues their first phase of work, the current plans highlighting roughly 15% of the initial design and provides an opportunity to report progress to the City Council, as well as to provide updates on the recommended improvements and solicit community input from Uptown stakeholders including the Whittier Uptown Association, Uptown Whittier Improvement Association, and Whittier Chamber of Commerce to further ensure compatibility with the formerly approved Uptown Streetscape Plan.

In November, staff anticipates bringing forward both a construction phasing plan and an amendment to the design agreement to that would allow SWA to carry forward streetscape plans to 100% construction documents.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

STRATEGIC PLANNING GOAL

- Maintain & Enhance Quality of Life
- Transparent & Open Government
- Promote a Strong Local Economic Base

ATTACHMENTS

None.