



Agenda Report

City Council

Date: April 30, 2024
To: Brian Saeki, City Manager
From: Kyle Cason, Public Works Director
Subject: Greenleaf Promenade

RECOMMENDATION

Receive and file the report and provide direction as necessary.

BACKGROUND

In November 2008, the City Council approved the Uptown Whittier Specific Plan (UWSP) to assist in revitalizing the 185-acre, 35-block Uptown area through adoption of a form-based code. The goal of the Specific Plan is to implement the following eight principles for design and future development: 1) Pedestrian orientation, 2) Mix of land uses, 3) Infill development, 4) Interconnected street system, 5) Quality of the public realm, 6) Distinct character, 7) Housing choice, and 8) Smart transportation and parking.

On February 26, 2019, the 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 the City Council discussion, the project costs were estimated at \$3.8M.

On May 28, 2019, the 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, and adopted the Uptown Whittier Streetscape Beautification Plan encompassing all 35 City blocks in Uptown.

In June 2020, due to the COVID-19 public health crisis, the City Council approved a temporary three-block closure of Greenleaf Avenue to facilitate the Greenleaf Promenade Outdoor Dine & Shop program. The closure, commonly referred to as the Greenleaf Promenade, has allowed 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.

Agenda Item No. 10.A.

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. 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 August 10, 2021, the City Council received the results of the Greenleaf Promenade community survey indicating support for the Promenade concept and feedback in alignment with the prior Streetscape Plan outreach process, including: 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 the construction of a future hybrid or permanent Greenleaf Promenade.

On October 26, 2021, the 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.

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 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.

On September 27, 2022, the City Council was presented with a 30% design progress report.

On November 8, 2022, the City Council received and filed the progress report on the 30% design for Greenleaf Promenade Streetscape Project and authorized the City Manager to execute Amendment No. 1 with SWA for the Greenleaf Promenade Projected Professional Service Agreement A22-039, adding \$675,200 to the project.

At a study session held on February 14, 2023, the City Council directed staff to proceed with 4 x 4 pre-cast unit pavers, a running bond pattern with a gradient color blend, and a pillowed finished for skate deterrence; pre-cast concrete unit pavers with central concrete panels for the intersection crosswalks and midblock crosswalks; primary overhead structures at Hadley and Wardman reviewed and approved by LA County Fire and secondary column structures at Bailey and Philadelphia; either a metal canopy option or a cantilevered umbrella option for businesses along Greenleaf Avenue; a paseo plaza in front of the Multideck Parking Structure that would be open space and to close the side driveway to the parking structure between the alley and Greenleaf Avenue; and the creation of a pocket park with open space at 7018 Greenleaf Avenue.

On March 21, 2023, the City Council directed Staff to work with the consultant to design a blend of sign options and then obtain input from the Uptown Association and the Business Improvement Area; to move forward with an open space design; and to explore design options similar to the lights in East Whittier.

As of May 1, 2023, all businesses removed their outdoor enclosures and Greenleaf Avenue was reopened to traffic.

On May 9, 2023, the City Council directed staff to move forward with streetlight options, modular tenant structures in consultation with the branding team, and removable bollards. The City Council also directed staff to move forward with a small pocket park at the City-owned property located at 7018 Greenleaf Avenue.

On August 22, 2023, the City Council authorized the City Manager to execute Amendment No. 2 with SWA for the Greenleaf Promenade Project Professional Services Agreement (A22-039). The amendment expanded the work limits to include designing and rehabilitating street, sidewalk, and alley approaches for an additional cost of \$84,500.

On September 12, 2023, the City Council discussed design options related to the new, small pocket park at the City-owned property located at 7018 Greenleaf Avenue and directed staff to move forward with the Weevos + Evos option manufactured by Landscape Structures.

On December 12, 2023, the City Council approved the final design documents for the Greenleaf Promenade and adopted Resolution No. 2023-87 approving an addendum to the approved Negative Declaration under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the Uptown Whittier Streetscape plan along with an amendment to the Uptown Whittier Streetscape Plan.

On January 23, 2024, the City Council directed Staff to gather the public's questions and agendize a Special Study Session to further address those questions related to the Greenleaf Promenade. City Council requested public comments be addressed in a robust presentation.

By consensus, at the February 20, 2024, Study Session Special Meeting, the City Council directed Staff to take back questions and comments and work with the consulting team on mitigation options, along with tree irrigation and maintenance.

DISCUSSION

Staff received several general and specific questions regarding tree removal, phasing, retention, carbon sequestration, rain events, streetlights, liability, project size, environmental documentation, and project design. Staff will provide a presentation detailing the good faith efforts made to complete additional tasks to provide answers to these questions. These good faith efforts include the evaluation of potential tree preservation by certified arborists at West Coast Arborists, air spading of six Ficus tree roots on Greenleaf Avenue as selected by West Coast Arborists, analysis of the carbon sequestration, discussions with staff at other tree cities, exhibits to visualize findings, and further analysis of additional concerns.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

STRATEGIC PLANNING GOAL

- Transparent & Open Government

ATTACHMENTS

None.