



**STAFF REPORT
CITY OF IMPERIAL BEACH**

TO: DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

FROM: GREG WADE, ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER/COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

MEETING DATE: MAY 15, 2014

SUBJECT: PALM AVENUE MIXED USE & COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR MASTER PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Staff and its consultant team, headed by Project Design Consultants (PDC) recently initiated the next phase of the Palm Avenue Mixed Use & Commercial Corridor Master Plan (Master Plan) which is being funded primarily by a San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) Smart Growth Incentive Grant. A key component of this project includes a significant public outreach effort. On April 16th, staff provided the first City Council briefing for this phase of the Master Plan project which focused on the community outreach and engagement efforts. On April 29, 2014, the first community workshop was held in the Community Room at City Hall. The intent of this report to the Design Review Board (DRB) is to reaffirm and validate the recommendations from the approved Master Plan Study and to seek additional comments from the DRB as part of the outreach effort.

BACKGROUND:

In April 2004, the City Council directed staff to proceed with the development of the Palm Avenue Mixed Use & Commercial Corridor Master Plan (Master Plan) Study. In October 2005, staff submitted an application for a California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Community-Based Transportation Planning Grant and in May 2006, the City of Imperial Beach was notified that Caltrans approved the application and also allocated \$50,000 towards preparation of the Master Plan Study. In May 2007, a request for proposals/qualifications was issued for a consultant team to carry out the Master Plan Study and in September 2007, the City entered into an Agreement with Moore Iacofano Goltsman, Incorporated (MIG) for the project.

The project study area encompassed the entire length of the Palm Avenue/State Route (SR) 75 corridor, as well as the one block area north and south of Palm Avenue/SR 75. The purpose of the Master Plan Study was to propose streetscape improvements and urban design strategies that support the common goal of creating a vibrant, safe, pedestrian-friendly and bicycle-friendly commercial hub along Palm Avenue. Priorities of this effort include transforming the six-lane highway to a "Main Street" environment based on Caltrans' Main Street Design Guidelines, creating a desirable environment in which to promote new

mixed-use and transit oriented developments providing amenities and services to the community, improving connections to surrounding residential neighborhoods and enhancing alternative transit opportunities while reinforcing the small-scale, beach-town feel of the area. To accomplish this, modifications were proposed to existing motor vehicle travel lanes, parking areas, medians, landscaping, sidewalks, crosswalks, curbs and gutters, and traffic signalization.

On February 19, 2009, the City Council approved the Master Plan Study which proposed right-of-way improvements for the Palm Avenue/SR 75 corridor focused on improving pedestrian safety and walkability, enhancing the corridor's overall aesthetics and appearance, and improving functionality of the vehicular corridor while maintaining acceptable traffic levels of service all in an effort to create a "main street" environment. The final draft of the Master Plan Study included suggested revisions in response to comments and recommendations from the City Council and Design Review Board from a meeting held on October 8, 2008. The final draft of the Master Plan Study also included a Traffic Impact Analysis of the proposed improvements within the Palm Avenue/SR 75 Corridor.

Smart Growth Incentive Program Grant Funding

On January 18, 2013, staff submitted an application to the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) for Fiscal Year 2013 Smart Growth Incentive Program (SGIP) funding which allocated funding for local transportation-related infrastructure and planning efforts that support smart growth development in the region. The funding was available for two types of projects: capital and planning. On January 23, 2013, the City Council adopted Resolution Number 2013-7294, authorizing and supporting the submittal of a SGIP planning grant application in the amount of \$400,000. The City Council also authorized City matching funds in the amount of \$50,000 and up to \$45,000 in in-kind contributions (staff expenses).

On June 28, 2013, the SANDAG Board of Directors approved the SGIP Fiscal Year 2013 projects for funding. Among the projects awarded full funding was Imperial Beach's Palm Avenue Mixed Use & Commercial Corridor Master Plan. On July 15, 2013, the City received a Notice of Award from SANDAG for \$400,000 of SGIP planning grant funding. On August 21, 2013, the City Council authorized issuance of the RFQ/P to solicit civil engineering, landscape architecture, urban design and environmental planning consultant services, with the City intending to utilize its on-call traffic engineering consultant, KOA Corporation, for this effort.

The purpose of the SGIP grant will be to develop the prior Master Plan concepts into engineering drawings sufficient to also prepare and process the corresponding environmental review document. In order to carry out this project, City staff prepared a Request for Qualifications and Proposals (RFQ/P) to select a consultant team with the required expertise to prepare the drawings and environmental review document with a key component of this effort to include public outreach and engagement to ensure that community input continues to be included in the project. On December 18, 2013, after a competitive RFQ/P process, the City Council authorized the execution of a professional services agreement with Project Design Consultants (PDC) as the lead civil engineering consultant of the consultant team including MIG (urban design, landscape architecture & lighting), Katz & Associates (public engagement & outreach), RECON (environmental review), SCS Engineers (environmental site assessment), and GEOCON (geotechnical engineering).

On January 24, 2014, a fully executed copy of the SGIP Grant Agreement between the City and SANDAG was delivered to staff along with a Notice to Proceed with the project.

ANALYSIS:

Since the issuance of the Notice to Proceed, City staff and the consultant team have carefully reviewed the Master Plan Study and have prepared concept drawings based on the Master Plan recommendations as a key component of the project will be to reaffirm the Master Plan Study recommendations and to fully assess them for application and implementation within the Palm Avenue/SR 75 corridor. Another key component of this next phase of the Master Plan, as mandated by the grant program and also a practice of the City's for all such efforts, is the implementation of a comprehensive Community Engagement effort to obtain public input and participation in the development and implementation of the Master Plan. To that end, the consultant team's Outreach & Engagement Consultant, Katz & Associates (Katz), has prepared a detailed Community Engagement Strategy (see Attachment 1). Specific objectives of this strategy are to:

- Increase the community's knowledge and understanding of the project's needs and benefits
- Share project information and studies
- Report on the team's work-in-progress and decisions made throughout the project
- Solicit feedback, questions, and comments to inform and shape the design process
- Respond to stakeholder questions and concerns
- Fully implement public involvement requirements per CEQA

To date, a dedicated webpage has been established on the City's website (www.ImperialBeachCA.gov/PalmMasterPlan) and a contact email address has been established (PalmMasterPlan@imperialbeachca.gov) to receive comments from interested parties and to request inclusion on email correspondence on the project. The webpage will be routinely updated with project information, key milestones and announcements on engagement opportunities. The first community workshop was held on Tuesday, April 29th at 7:00 PM in the Community Room at City Hall. The Workshop was well-attended and the information presented during the DRB meeting is the same information provided at the Workshop. Those in attendance were generally supportive of the concepts and proposals presented but also expressed some concerns. The Consultant Team is currently assembling the information gathered at the Workshop which included, written comments, oral comments and marked up drawings.

Staff has also scheduled a similar presentation to the Chamber of Commerce on May 22, 2014, at their regular Chamber breakfast meeting and is attempting to schedule a presentation to the Business Improvement District (BID) either at their meeting on May 27, 2014, or at another date and time.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:

The prior phase of the Master Plan was exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15262 and 15306. This phase of the Palm Avenue Mixed Use and Commercial Corridor Master Plan will include the preparation of the required environmental documents to analyze the proposed project. This may result in an amendment to the City's General Plan/Local Coastal Plan along with a coastal development permit, site plan review, and design review for the proposed capital improvements.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The City has been awarded \$400,000 in Smart Growth Incentive Program planning grant funding. The City has authorized a City match of \$50,000 and up to \$45,000 in in-kind City services. It is expected that the City's \$50,000 matching funds will come from one-time general fund reserves. However, 2010 Tax Allocation Bond Proceeds may also be available for this purpose pursuant to the issuance of a Finding of Completion from the State Department of Finance.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Design Review Board receives this report supports and provides comment and input on the proposed recommendations.

Attachments:

1. Community Engagement Strategy



Katz & Associates, Inc.
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 San Diego, CA 92037
 Phone: (858) 452-0031

Date: April 2, 2014
To: Greg Wade, City of Imperial Beach
 Greg Shields, PDC
From: Joan Isaacson and Natalia Clark Hentschel, Katz & Associates
Subject: Palm Ave Streetscape Design and CEQA Review
 Community Engagement Strategy Memo

I. Objectives for Community Engagement

The Community Engagement Strategy establishes a program for engaging stakeholders, community members, and the general public in the Palm Avenue Mixed Use and Commercial Corridor Master Plan Project. The project includes the preparation of civil engineering and landscape design plans along with the preparation of environmental documentation per the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to advance implementation of the streetscape improvements identified in the February 2009 Palm Avenue Commercial Corridor Master Plan Study. The vision established as part of the study reflects the outcome of a well-vetted consensus process; therefore, this strategy centers on a community engagement process that builds on that vision and sets the stage for project implementation.

Specific objectives for the community engagement strategy are to:

- Increase the community's knowledge and understanding of the project's needs and benefits
- Share project information and studies
- Report on the team's work-in-progress and decisions made throughout the project
- Solicit feedback, questions, and comments to inform and shape the design process
- Respond to stakeholder questions and concerns
- Fully implement public involvement requirements per CEQA

II. Stakeholders and Participants

Area stakeholders, including residents, property owners, business owners, civic organizations, and other community members were successfully involved in formulating the vision for the Palm Avenue street improvements. Outreach efforts to these stakeholder groups will continue to extend into the design and implementation phase and expand to include, residents of adjacent neighborhoods, local transit agencies, commuters, project area developers, and civic groups.

A stakeholder contact database will be developed using existing contact databases developed by the City for similar projects. Background documents from the recent commercial and mixed-use zoning project will be reviewed to identify additional stakeholders and individuals with a potential interest in the project. The database will serve as a tool for distributing project information and announcements, including e-blasts, a project fact sheet, and public workshop

invitations. The database will be periodically updated and expanded as additional stakeholders and interested members of the public are identified throughout the project.

III. Important Points to Communicate

- For many years the City of Imperial Beach has worked on plans to transform Palm Avenue into a vibrant, mixed-use “Main Street” that is attractive and pedestrian-friendly and promote and enhances Imperial Beach as “Classic Southern California.”
- The intent is to facilitate development of a commercial corridor that generates new economic development, creates a safe pedestrian and bicycling environment, more effectively manages traffic, and improves the overall appearance and urban design of the area.
- This vision for the Palm Avenue corridor was formulated by Imperial Beach residents, business owners, and other stakeholders in both the 2000 “Imperial Beach: The Big Picture” and the 2009 Palm Avenue Commercial Corridor Master Plan Study.
- The current work program underway by the City and a consultant team focuses on the roadway improvements identified in the 2009 Master Plan Study and includes the engineering, landscape design, urban design and environmental review tasks that must be completed before construction of the roadway improvements can occur.
- For environmental review per CEQA, an Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) will be prepared to identify potential environmental impacts and mitigation measures.
- Throughout the design and CEQA process, a variety of community engagement opportunities will be available to the public, allowing for increased public knowledge and the collection of community feedback on potential design concepts.
- The project is primarily funded by a SANDAG Smart Growth Incentive Grant.

IV. Community Engagement Overview

The overall process for conducting the Palm Avenue Mixed Use and Commercial Corridor Master Plan Project is shown in Figure 1. The community engagement process is synchronized with the design process, allowing for each phase to be meaningfully informed and shaped by the community’s input.

Figure 1. Community Engagement Process and Timeline

		2014										2015	
		MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	
		PHASE I <i>Project Launch</i>				PHASE II <i>30% Design</i>			PHASE III <i>MND Public Review</i>		PHASE IV <i>MND Public Hearing</i>		
Project Activities		Research & Data Collection Mapping Landscape Concept Plans				Preliminary 30% Civil Design Plan			Design Concept Review Draft IS/MND		Design Concept Review Final IS/MND		
Community Engagement Activities		Website Launch Project Info Sheet Stakeholder Database Development Initial Email Update *Community Organization Briefing City Council Briefing 1 Workshop 1 Notification Email Update *Outreach to Corridor Businesses Workshop 1 City Council Briefing 2 City Council Briefing 3				Website Updates Workshop 2 Notification Email Update *Community Event Information Booth *Community Organization Briefing *Outreach to Corridor Businesses City Council Briefing 4 Workshop 2 City Council Presentation 1			Website Updates Email Update Draft IS/MND Public Comment Period *Community Event Information Booth *Community Organization Briefing City Council Briefing (as needed)		Website Updates Email Update City Council Briefing (as needed) City Council Hearing		

*Optional outreach item to be completed by City staff

V. Activities

Notifications and Project Updates

Timing: Phase I Project Launch, Phase II 30% Design, Phase III Draft IS/MND Public Review, and Phase IV Final MND Public Hearing

Primary Responsibility: City of Imperial Beach

Description: Prior to the launch of outreach activities, the following alerts may be used to inform the community about engagement opportunities, project milestones, and availability of draft documents for review:

- **Media: Media advisories targeting both regional and local print and online publications as well a radio and television outlets**
Media outreach is important for information dissemination to the general public. Regional and local print and online publications include, but are not limited to, the Union Tribune, Eagle & Times, Imperial Beach Patch, and eCoronado. Media advisories will be distributed to identified media outlets prior to all community workshops and at project milestones.
- **Social Media: Postings on City of Imperial Beach Facebook and Twitter accounts**
Social media can serve to reach additional members of the public who follow the City's Facebook and Twitter account feeds. Notifications will be posted to the City's accounts to invite the public to outreach activities and provide project updates. Social media posts will also encourage the public to review the project webpage to obtain additional information.
- **Project Webpage: Postings on the project webpage including copies of meeting materials and draft documents**
A project website will serve as an introduction to the project and an online library of project information, project documents, and information on community involvement opportunities. The project website will be updated periodically to report on the team's work-in-progress and post workshop and pop-up outreach event details.
- **Electronic Project Updates: Email updates distributed to the stakeholder contact database**
Email updates will be distributed at project milestones using the stakeholder contact database to keep people informed about community engagement opportunities, project milestones, and the availability of draft documents for public review.
All community members and stakeholders interested in participating in the project can register their contact information on the stakeholder contact database via the project website at www.ImperialBeachCA.gov/PalmMasterPlan or contact Greg Wade at PalmMasterPlan@imperialbeachca.gov in order to receive project alerts. All project notifications will be made available in Spanish upon request.

Project Information Sheet

Timing: Phase I Project Launch

Primary Responsibility: Project Design Consultants

Description: An information sheet will be prepared to supply the public with an overview of the project. The document will include information necessary to respond to frequently asked questions and address topic areas of interest.

Suggested topics to cover in the project info sheet include:

- Background on the Palm Avenue Commercial Corridor Master Plan Study, including vision and goals
- Project description, including needs and benefits
- Reference to the City of Imperial Beach vision plan and how the project relates
- Process and timeline
- Community engagement opportunities
- Project web page and project team contact information
- CEQA Review/MND information

The project information sheet will be posted on the project webpage, emailed to the contact database and distributed at the community workshops and pop-up outreach events. The project information sheet will be available in Spanish upon request.

Community Workshops

Timing: Phase I Project Launch and Phase II 30% Design

Primary Responsibility: Katz & Associates

Description: Community workshops will offer the public an opportunity to learn about the project, speak one-on-one with project team members, discuss ideas with fellow community members, and provide input. A total of two community workshops are planned. The community workshops will be professionally facilitated and will follow the sequencing provided below.

- The first workshop will take place early in the process to update the community about the project, explain the work plan for the current phase and its relationship to the established vision. As part of this meeting, project team members will share a variety of streetscape/landscape design concept considerations with participants and request their feedback.
- The second workshop will serve as an opportunity for the design team to share the proposed design concept and hear community feedback before advancing concepts into more detailed stages of design and environmental review.

For each workshop, a one-page logistics memo will be drafted to include details about the venue, as well as the meeting format, agenda, and necessary staffing and materials. The logistics plan will also include an outline for publicizing the workshops, including methods and schedule. A workshop summary will be developed after each meeting and posted on the project webpage along with all workshop materials.

Spanish interpretation will be available at the workshops, as needed.

Focused Stakeholder Outreach and/or Pop-up Outreach

Timing: Phase I Project Launch, Phase II 30% Design, and Phase III Draft IS/MND Public Review

Primary Responsibility: City of Imperial Beach

Description: Focused stakeholder and pop-up outreach will serve to expand community outreach opportunities and inform the public about the project and invite them to participate in the two community workshops and public hearing.

Suggested outreach activities include:

- **Project Information Booths:** Information booths are set up at area community events. The booths feature a family-friendly interactive activity to attract participants to the booth where they are able to obtain project information and speak one-one-one with project team members.
 - Potential community events include:
 - Imperial Beach Farmers Market (Fridays, 12 – 7:30 p.m.)
 - Sun and Sea festival (July 19, 2014)
 - St. Charles Catholic Church Bazaar (May – June, 2014)
 - Family Movie Night at the library or other library events
 - Surf Town Triathlon and Decathlon (August 24, 2014)
 - Potential interactive activities include:
 - “I Love Palm Avenue” photo booth – Participants write what they love about the Palm Avenue corridor on a white board and have their photo taken holding up the board
 - Interactive Game
 - Coloring station for kids – provide a black and white version of a potential design concept for a street segment in the corridor for children to color
- **Outreach to Corridor Businesses:** Project information and workshop fliers are distributed in person to businesses located in the corridor allowing project members to provide an in-person invitation to the workshops and the opportunity to respond to any questions or concerns.
- **Briefings with Community Organizations:** Project team members provide briefings and workshop announcements at pre-scheduled community organization meetings. Target community organizations may include the Chamber of Commerce, the Business Improvement District, bike and pedestrian advocacy groups, and youth community clubs or school organizations (i.e. student clubs, parent associations). Names and contact information for community organizations will be provided in the project contact database.

City Council Briefings

Timing: Phase I Project Launch, Phase II 30% Design, Phase III Draft IS/MND Public Review, and Phase IV Final MND Public Hearing

Primary Responsibility: City of Imperial Beach

Description: City Council briefings will give City officials an opportunity to provide feedback incrementally during the process. The briefings will cover both project and community engagement updates. The briefings are also another opportunity for the public to stay informed about project progress and make comments.

Briefings are planned for the following project milestones:

- Before the first community workshop (scheduled for April 16, 2014)
- After each community workshop
- Beginning of draft IS/MND review period

In addition, the City Council will conduct a public hearing when considering certification of the Final MND.

Environmental Review

Timing: Phase III Draft IS/MND Public Review and Phase IV Final MND Public Hearing

Primary Responsibility: RECON/City of Imperial Beach

Notice of Intent to Adopt and Public Review Period: A Notice of Intent to adopt the draft IS/MND and the draft IS/MND will be circulated for a public review period of 30 days, providing an opportunity for the public to comment on the impact conclusions and mitigation. All public noticing requirements per CEQA will be followed. Though not required under CEQA, the City will send an eBlast reminder to project stakeholders in advance of the close of the comment period.

Public Hearing: The City Council will consider adoption of the final MND in a public hearing. Members of the public will have the opportunity to provide comments before the Council takes action. All public noticing requirements per CEQA will be followed. The public will also be informed of the hearing by various means such as eBlast, media advisory, social media posts on Facebook and Twitter, as well as announcements posted on the project web page.