

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: JASON NUTT, DIRECTOR
TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC WORKS
COLLEEN FERGUSON, DEPUTY DIRECTOR – CAPITAL
PROJECTS ENGINEERING
SUBJECT: MASTER PLAN FOR THE COURTHOUSE SQUARE
REUNIFICATION PROJECT
AGENDA ACTION: RESOLUTION

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Transportation and Public Works Department that Council, by resolution, select an option and approve the Master Plan for the Courthouse Square Reunification Project.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City Council approved basic design guidelines and the public outreach process for the Reunification of Courthouse Square at the November 3, 2015 meeting. Since that Council meeting, two public outreach meetings have been held. The design team has developed two draft master plan options for the Reunification of Courthouse Square utilizing the basic design guidelines, feedback from a City online survey, input from the public outreach meetings and other comments provided to the City. The draft master plan options for the reunification of Courthouse Square are being presented for Council consideration and approval.

BACKGROUND

At the meeting on November 3, 2015, City Council approved basic design guidelines for Courthouse Square (Attachment 1), approved the public outreach process for the interior of the square, and delegated authority to the City Manager to select a consultant team to design the improvements associated with the reunification of Courthouse Square.

City staff worked with the Chamber of Commerce to develop and implement a public outreach process for the design of the interior of the square. The City's online survey regarding the reunification of Courthouse Square received over 2,000 comments. The first public outreach meeting was held on December 12, 2015. The project designer,

Carlile Macy, used the comments from the public meeting, other comments provided to the City, and the online survey as well as the basic design guidelines to develop alternative conceptual plans for Courthouse Square. The alternative conceptual plans were presented at a second public meeting on January 9, 2016. Public comments received from members of the public who attended the community meetings have been posted on the project website srcity.org/CHS. In response to public input, the alternative plans were refined into two draft master plan options. An addendum to the Final Tiered Environmental Impact Report (FTEIR) has also been prepared to document the consistency of each master plan option with the FTEIR.

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

1. In 2004, the City Council adopted goals which included reunification of Courthouse Square. In May 2006, the City Council established a steering committee including members of City boards and commissions to help develop a future design for Courthouse Square. In its November 2006 report to the City Council, the committee recommended a design competition for the design of the square. Key principles of design stressed by the committee included that Courthouse Square be
 - Beautiful
 - An active space, with interface with adjacent uses;
 - A community gathering space
 - Flexible in use
 - A safe place, visible from the street
2. In October 2007, the City Council amended the General Plan and adopted the Downtown Station Area Plan illustrating a reunified Courthouse Square in Santa Rosa's planning documents. Based on the prior work, the specific plan assumed reunification of Courthouse Square.
3. In 2007, the Council conducted a design competition, and accepted the recommendation from the Courthouse Square Design Jury to select the SWA Group. In 2008, the Council hired SWA Group to complete the design development drawings for the reunification of Courthouse Square. In 2009, SWA Group completed its design development work.
4. Given General Plan and Downtown Station Area Specific Plan policy requiring activity generating uses on the ground floor of downtown buildings, the City Council studied what appropriate pedestrian friendly uses should be allowed adjacent to Courthouse Square. Zoning was adopted in 2008 specifying these uses.
5. On February 25, 2014, the City Council by Resolution No. 28437 certified the Final Tiered Environmental Impact Report (FTEIR) for the Reunification of Courthouse Square. The Mitigation Monitoring Program from the certified FTEIR includes various mitigation measures that would be implemented before, during and post-construction to ensure that the Courthouse Square reunification project

does not have a significant effect on the environment.

6. On October 14, 2014, the City Council by Resolution No. 28568 approved the preferred alternative which includes the two peripheral streets and may include architectural features and pavilions; adopted the mitigation measures and directed staff to implement and complete the Mitigation Monitoring Program as part of the approved project.
7. On November 3, 2015, the City Council by Resolution No. 28706 authorized the City Manager to appropriate any private donations received for the project as well as up to \$500,000 from the General Fund unassigned fund balance to the project account in order to proceed with project design.

ANALYSIS

1. Each of the draft master plan options incorporates the basic design guidelines approved by Council at their November 3, 2015 meeting and responds to public comments from the online survey and two public meetings, including:
 - Lighting
 - Sustainable Landscaping
 - Flexible and Open
 - Bike Parking
 - Public WiFi
 - Ability to close off streets
 - Public Art
 - Children Friendly
 - Car Parking, balanced with redwood tree preservation
 - Educational and Historical Elements
2. In response to public comments regarding the importance of preserving existing redwood trees, both master plan options narrow the sidewalk and eliminate parking spaces to preserve three redwood trees at 50 Courthouse Square.
3. The master plan for Option 1 (Attachment 2) is based on urban design principles with clear lines of sight, a straight alignment of Hinton Street and well-spaced deciduous trees in the eastern section of the square. Twenty-two coast redwoods and the Bunya bunya are proposed to be retained in Option 1. Three coast redwoods, initially indicated to be saved in the FTEIR, would need to be removed to accommodate the new design features. An addendum to the FTEIR has determined that the removal of three additional trees is not a new significant impact because the trees will be replaced in accordance with the City of Santa Rosa Tree Ordinance and consistent with the mitigation monitoring and reporting program.
4. The master plan for Option 2 (Attachment 3) includes a curved alignment of Hinton Street near Third Street and retaining walls around a large knoll. These design features allow two redwood trees to be preserved and also obstruct lines

of sight. A third redwood tree would be preserved in the northeastern area of the square. Twenty-five coast redwoods and the Bunya bunya are proposed to be retained in Option 2, consistent with the EIR.

5. Both master plan options would preserve and relocate the Asawa art panels.
6. Following selection and approval of a master plan option, it is anticipated that there would be additional design of interior improvements and associated revisions to the master plan.
7. After selection and approval of the master plan for the Reunification of Courthouse Square, tree salvage and removal will commence. The trees are being removed at this time in order to minimize the possibility that nesting birds could be disturbed during construction, in accordance with the EIR. Root wads and logs from redwood and cedar trees will be salvaged for use on Colgan Creek Restoration project in 2017. Some trees deemed to have low nesting potential will remain for the time being, and will be removed when construction of the project begins.
8. Upon selection and approval of the master plan for the reunification of Courthouse Square, construction documents will be finalized and the project will be put out to bid in the end of February, with a target construction start the end of May 2016.

FISCAL IMPACT

The Council has authorized staff to utilize local funds in combination with Certificates of Participation up to a total of \$10 million to pay for this project. The Council has also authorized the City Manager to utilize up to \$500,000 of General Fund unassigned fund balance as a financial bridge to cover the initial design costs until a final financing plan is approved by the Council. The Coalition to Restore Courthouse Square has indicated that they are intending to invest in the completion of the construction drawings through a financial donation to the City.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Council certified the Final Tiered Environmental Impact Report on February 25, 2014. An Addendum to the FTEIR has been prepared (Attachment 4) pursuant to Section 15164 of the California Environmental Quality Act for the updated plan options, and documents that the project involves only minor technical changes and additions. It further documents that none of the conditions described in Section 15162, which would require a subsequent EIR, have occurred because neither Courthouse Square Reunification Master Plan involves substantial changes to the project or the circumstances under which the project has been undertaken. Based on this analysis, staff finds that it is appropriate to rely on the FTEIR.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Downtown Subcommittee provided feedback on the basic design guidelines at their October 6, 2015 meeting, and directed staff to make a presentation to the full Council for additional direction and approval. The Downtown Subcommittee also reviewed alternative conceptual plans and provided input to the project designer at their January 5, 2016 meeting.

An item to discuss the project has been added to the agenda for the following meetings:

- Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board - January 21, 2016
- Art in Public Places Committee – January 25, 2016
- Board of Community Services – January 27, 2016

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 - Basic Design Guidelines
- Attachment 2 - Courthouse Square Master Plan Option 1
- Attachment 3 - Courthouse Square Master Plan Option 2
- Attachment 4 - Addendum to the Final Tiered Environmental Impact Report for the Reunification of Courthouse Square Revised Project
- Resolution

CONTACT

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