

Agenda Report

JANUARY 25, 2016

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Office of the City Manager, Economic Development Division

SUBJECT: COLORADO BOULEVARD INITIATIVE - ROAD DIET AND PILOT PARKLET PROPOSAL

RECOMMENDATION:

Direct staff to proceed with the development and analysis of the Colorado Boulevard Initiative - Road Diet and Pilot Parklet Proposal, to include:

- Completion of the road diet street design;
- The development of an approval procedure for parklets; and
- The completion of any required CEQA analysis of the initiative.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report presents the City Council with a proposal that suggests changes to Colorado Boulevard aimed at enhancing the pedestrian experience, increasing parking, and slowing traffic speeds. Overall, the plan seeks to increase economic activity, improve walkability, and livability as the Playhouse District grows to become the core of the City's urban village. This proposal was developed by an ad hoc committee consisting of business owners, residents, and commercial property owners from within the Playhouse District working with City staff providing technical support.

This concept was first presented to Council as an information item on March 24, 2014 as the Playhouse District Colorado Boulevard Initiative. Since that time, a Parklet Steering committee was formed to focus on refining the proposal to respond to comments and concerns, solicit input, secure financial commitments, and further study the material presented herein, notably, the concept of the road diet, reverse angled parking, the pedestrian street crossing enhancements, and parklets.

The purpose of this report is to articulate the proposal and request City Council direction as to whether to proceed further with the initiative.

BACKGROUND:

In 2012 stakeholders from within the Playhouse District working with City staff began discussions on a concept to reenvision Colorado Boulevard to improve livability and increase economic activity. The concept included changes to Colorado Boulevard thorough a road diet, the reorientation of on-street parking, and installation of parklets along Colorado Boulevard in order to create a stronger sense of place, and make Colorado Boulevard more hospitable to consumers, residents, and pedestrians.

The notion of rethinking the public rights of way as a place for more than just cars is a tool that communities across the Nation have begun to implement - especially as people re-inhabit downtowns in urban and mixed-use housing – where the commercial sidewalk becomes the “community-oriented open space” for urban residents.

The steering committee proposal is one in which each of the elements work with one another to achieve the goals of enhancing the Playhouse District – for residents, shoppers, employees, and visitors. Despite having experienced the greatest amount of growth and change with regards to development, the Playhouse District has been slow to grow in terms of retail sales as compared to Old Pasadena or South Lake. The reasons for this are multiple, but as the Playhouse District emerges as the residential core of the urban district, as the area is becoming more active, it is becoming more evident that the area could benefit from improvements that would enhance the usability, livability, and quality of life to the benefit of all of Pasadena helping fill what had been dubbed by Playhouse District Stakeholders as “the economic donut hole in the Central District.”

ELEMENTS OF THE PLAN

As stated, this proposal seeks to enhance the stretch of Colorado Boulevard between Hudson Avenue on the east to Los Robles on the west. The means by which this proposal is achieved is through the following:

- Road Diet – a reduction from two to one in travel lanes to decrease traffic speeds to maintain posted limit of 25 mph;
- Pedestrian Bulb-Outs – a protected area that would reduce the crossing distance across Colorado Boulevard;
- Reverse-angled Parking – an arrangement where drivers back-in to park, and head-out to exit, that could increase parking per block face; and
- Parklet Program – one that would lace the area from one end to the other, expanding the sidewalk for the purposes of providing enhanced pedestrian amenities.

More detail on each component is provided for further consideration as well as information on the license agreement to document the arrangement.

Road Diet

The Road Diet as proposed for the Colorado Boulevard Initiative, would seek to improve driver and pedestrian visibility, reducing traffic lanes and speeds on Colorado Boulevard, and at all times, shifting some through-traffic to the parallel one-way streets that bracket Colorado Boulevard for that purpose. These changes result in a number of tangible benefits – aside from the reduced speed and reduced potential for accidents, reduced traffic speeds contribute to enhanced sales tax through greater business exposure. The Road Diet also provides a platform upon which all other components are supported contributing to a strong complete streets approach.

As for traffic flow, it is estimated that current traffic levels could be supported on the new configuration, but if needed, drivers could also rely on Union and Green Streets that run parallel to Colorado and currently provide superior through-traffic service. Access along Union and Green Street would continue to serve as access to parking amenities for business along Colorado Boulevard as parking is predominately located along these streets, and not Colorado Boulevard. These components would be fully studied through CEQA analysis, and findings presented, should Council support continued study.

Reverse-Angled Parking

Reverse-angled parking is a relatively new tool that has been successfully implemented in cities to improve safety conditions in that it allows for better visibility when exiting a parking stall. As opposed to conventional angled parking which require the driver to reverse into oncoming traffic, or rely on mirrors or parallel parking that requires the driver turn over one's left shoulder to ensure there is no oncoming traffic, reverse angled parking easily allows the driver a full view of oncoming traffic. The "back-in, head-out" parking action makes merging with traffic safer due to enhanced visibility. Entry to the reverse-angled stall is equivalent to the entry to a parallel parking space and, as such, does not introduce additional safety exposure to what is already in place on Colorado Boulevard.

In addition to the safety considerations, it is possible that the angled configuration will accommodate additional parking per block face as opposed to parallel parking. This is an important consideration as stakeholders attempt to grow the economic activity within the District.

As mentioned, each of these elements work to support one another. Whereas the road diet reduces space dedicated to travel lanes, the area accommodates the reverse-angled parking. The parking reconfiguration then, creates the field within which enhanced pedestrian crossing and Parklets can be installed.

It should be noted that Vista Street in East Pasadena, between Foothill and Walnut has operated with reverse angled parking for some time with little to no conflict and that an installation is in process for Garfield Avenue adjacent to the Police Department.

Enhanced Pedestrian Crossing

As this project is targeted towards enhancing the use of the right of way – or space between the buildings – for the benefit of all users, shortening the distance from one side of Colorado Boulevard to another is a component that improves pedestrian connections. Unlike Old Pasadena where Colorado Boulevard is narrower from side to side and there exist diagonal crosswalks to aid in pedestrian access, the span in the Playhouse District is wider, and vehicular traffic moves faster. The addition of the pedestrian bulb outs accomplish a number of factors – already mentioned, they shorten the walking distance improving walkability; they create a buffer that would permit a protected, dedicated right turn pocket; and depending on configuration, they may allow for the placement of bicycle amenities while preserving transit service. All of these elements enhance the complete street management of the various travel modes furthering Council's policy for Pasadena to become a City where one can navigate without a car.

Parklet Program

The final component is the Parklet Program, a revitalization tool that has been implemented in cities throughout the world to provide extensions of the sidewalk within the parking field adding more space and amenities for people using the street. This space can be used for a variety of purposes –programming by cultural organizations, or as passive space for people to stop, eat, and visit, as one would a park bench.

This open space is an important feature in urban areas and areas void of parks. In the Playhouse District where there is a growing population, and the closest park space is over one mile away. While the parklets can contribute to a quality of life for residents in need of open space, they are also a catalyst to economic vitality. This proposal envisions installing two parklets at the start, and would establish a procedure to accommodate future parklets along Colorado Boulevard between Hudson Avenue and Los Robles Avenue.

PROPOSAL EVALUATION:

Thus far, staff and stakeholders have explored multiple options on how best to devise a program that would achieve the above stated goals, all based on the City's existing vehicular infrastructure, with consideration to increase safety, minimize travel time impacts, while at the same time, potentially increase parking along Colorado Boulevard. Explored have been proposals ranging from a conventional parklet program- eliminating one or two parking spaces while leaving Colorado Boulevard as-is; a more forward-thinking, comprehensive approach; and a proposal that would limit the total concept to a single block; as well as many other configurations. The following is a narrative of the preferred model with brief descriptions of the options dismissed thus far.

Proposal – Comprehensive Approach, Preferred – 5 Blocks

The first option is the most comprehensive model, thoughtful of all users of the street, implementing a program that provides the greatest potential for positive change. This proposal would implement a road diet along Colorado Boulevard from Hudson to Los

Robles, configure on-street parking as reverse-angled parking along the same stretch, adopt a parklet procedure to approve and install parklets starting with two parklets nested within the parking field, and install pedestrian bulb-outs at intersections to shorten the walking distance across Colorado Boulevard.

The resulting improvements are superior to the others as they would enhance driver visibility by reducing traffic speeds, enhance driver visibility for those on the road, and those existing parking stalls, allow for better pedestrian connections to amenities, allow for continued transit service, allow for continued higher volume traffic flow along parallel streets, accommodate a dedicated left hand turn lane, and a right turn buffer created by the wide pedestrian bulb out improvement. In addition, the full implementation would represent a systemic change across a larger, more definitive stretch of Colorado Boulevard than other options, thereby facilitating user awareness.

Alternative 1 – Limited – 1 Block

Alternative 1 is identical in configuration as the first, except that the proposal is limited to the single block between Oak Knoll and El Molino Avenues. While minimally invasive, this option could be perceived more as congestion inducing, may create more confusion amongst users, would reduce parking, and would fall short of the catalytic change stakeholders look to achieve.

Alternative 2 – No Road Diet – Parklet Only

Least preferred, Alternative 2 does little to create the pedestrian and parking benefits, but does allow for maximum traffic flow – the two concepts being at odds with one another. This proposal will remove one or two parking spaces to accommodate a shallow parklet. While this option does little to impact traffic, Colorado Boulevard volumes and speeds would make the parklets inhospitable establishing a program that is unlikely to be considered very successful. Most notable is the absolute loss of parking – a notion that stakeholders from within the District would not support.

PROPOSED REVIEW PROCESS AND APPROVAL REQUIREMENTS

This being the first of its kind for Pasadena and recognizing the importance to allow for public input prior to the proposal's return to Council for formal consideration, staff is proposing a procedure to solicit input through the Transportation Advisory Commission and Design Commission to collect comments for Council consideration.

In addition to the opportunity for input, it is important the road diet, parking, and parklets are safe. Should Council support the effort, the various components will be subject to staff review, and a CEQA analysis be completed to understand any potential environmental impacts. It should be noted that the parklet design thus far has been done in concert with Public Works, Transportation, and Planning staff to ensure the public's safety. Staff and stakeholders have reviewed parklets in jurisdictions such as Los Angeles, Long Beach, Oakland, San Francisco, and Livermore for best practices, and the structural components have been designed by a licensed architects/ engineers to account for structural suitability as well as protection against an errant driver. The

consideration of the proposal would therefore follow a multi-step process in order to allow for comprehensive comment and input, defined as follows:

Transportation Advisory Commission Review

It is expected that the parklets would be reviewed first by the Transportation Advisory Commission as the most significant component involves the alteration of Colorado Boulevard for the sake of the road diet, the reverse angled parking, and pedestrian bulb outs. TAC would consider and make a recommendation to City Council.

Design Commission Review

The second input opportunity would be the Design Commission, where the design of the Parklet "Kit-of-Parts" (a catalogue of predesigned and adopted parklet elements) could be vetted. As this project is proposed for the public right of way, the Design Commission could comment on the parklet components in an advisory capacity.

Council Consideration

At the conclusion of this process, staff would return to Council with a formal proposal, mindful of the comments made at each Commission. During this meeting, staff would seek to accomplish a number of items:

1. Adopt the required CEQA analysis, inclusive of a traffic study;
2. Authorize staff to implement the road diet and reverse angled parking;
3. Authorize the City Manager to negotiate and authorize a license agreement for the operations and maintenance of the parklets; and
4. Authorize any financial participation, should Council find it desirable.

Should Council approve, the individual parklets would be reviewed by the Department of Public Works staff prior to installation, inspected during installation, and again during an annual removal and reinstallation surrounding the Rose Parade activities. The review submittals would require plans certified by a civil engineer to ensure that vehicular and pedestrian safety standards are adhered to.

In terms of timing and as this is a pilot program, it is proposed that the pilot program be coterminous with the renewed Playhouse District Association Property-based Business Improvement District renewal, which is scheduled to run through 2021. As for construction, the parklet sponsors are prepared to construct and operate the parklets as early as third quarter 2016. It is anticipated that with Council support, staff would seek to present the parklets proposal at the various Commissions in coming months returning to Council for formal consideration in April.

LICENSING

Given the nature of this project- the potential alterations to Colorado Boulevard, and high investment on the part of the private project sponsors, it is expected that a license agreement would be executed between the Playhouse District Association and the City to document the rights and responsibilities over the operations and management of the parklets. The license agreement would establish roles, responsibilities, liabilities, as well as mandate that the parklet be removed to accommodate the annual Tournament of Roses Parade. During this time, the parklets would be disassembled and stored offsite to allow for a thorough street cleaning, and be replaced once the annual festivities have ended. The license agreement would also formally document the Kit of Parts and establish the review procedure, fees associated with the proposal, and certainty that the parklets be used for public benefit, not as an individual business or property owner's benefit.

FISCAL IMPACTS:

As the components of the Colorado Boulevard Initiative to enhance the urban environment grow in popularity and use throughout the nation; the one component that remains consistent is that funding for construction, maintenance, and operation of the parklets themselves remain the responsibility of the private sector. The same is true in this regard except for the fundamental components that establish the area in which the parklets would be installed and operated – the road diet, parking reorientation, and pedestrian bulb outs.

At this point, the parklets component has received written funding commitments from a number of businesses and property owners in the area, including Laemmle Theater, Blaze Pizza, Vroman's Bookstore. The dusitD2 (Constance Hotel), Abel Ramirez of El Portal, Kaiser Permanente, Arcade Lane, Jones Coffee Roasters and La Victoria Salsa are also actively considering sponsorship.

The final costs associated with the construction of the road diet have yet to be determined as staff is hereby requesting Council authorization to complete the road design. It is expected that if supported the restriping would return to Council for formal approval along with any CIP amendment, if necessary.

The City and stakeholders had discussed a concept where the City could also become a parklet sponsor. That consideration would also be presented to Council when the proposal returns for formal approval. The resulting support may fund a single parklet, or aid in the construction of multiple parklets. Again, that detail has yet to be determined.

Should the comprehensive proposal be supported, there are a variety of components that would require funding, as listed below with their respective sponsors:

Element	Cost	Sponsor	Source
Road Diet/ Parking Restriping	\$75,000		Parking Fund
Pedestrian Bulb-out	\$60,000	City of	Parking Fund
CEQA	\$15,000	Pasadena	General Fund
Sponsorship	\$75,000		General Fund
	<u>\$225,000</u>		
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Parklet Construction (each)	\$120,000	Sponsors	
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Parklet Operation, Maintenance, Removal and replacement	\$50,000	Playhouse District	

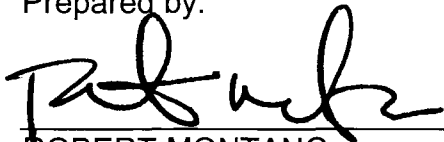
It is anticipated that the Playhouse Parking Meter fund and the Off-street Parking fund could cover the costs associated with the road diet while the General Fund could fund the parklet sponsorship and CEQA, if required. Should Council adopt staff's recommendation, the budget line items would return for budget appropriation at a future date.

Respectfully submitted,



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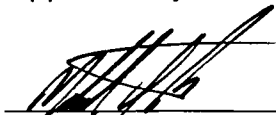
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