

environment for the public; it should support the distinctiveness of the locality and region as well as the special characteristics of the existing fabric of the site's immediate surroundings.”

Actions:

1. Receive the attached Final Report for the East Washington Boulevard Design Improvements and Facade Improvement Program;
2. Approve the Design Concept for the proposed design improvements;
3. Adopt by Resolution the Design Guidelines for use in implementing a proposed facade improvement program; and
4. Waive construction tax for three years for participating projects, as an inducement for property and business owners to participate in a facade improvement program; and
5. Acknowledge that the Capital Improvement Program includes a budget item for an East Washington Boulevard Strategic Plan Project; and
6. Direct the City Manager to return to Council within one year with a progress report on proposed funding and a schedule for implementation measures.

SUMMARY:

The final report for the Design Improvements for East Washington Boulevard recommends that:

1. Specific streetscape design improvements be designed and constructed in accordance with a Design Concept that is provided in the final report; and
2. A facade improvement program be instituted for East Washington Boulevard in accordance with an implementation strategy that is outlined in the final report; and
3. Design Guidelines, as illustrated in the final report, be utilized on a mandatory basis for those projects seeking funding under the facade improvement program or that otherwise would fall under current design review requirements and on a voluntary basis elsewhere along the boulevard.

These recommendations are the outgrowth of a study prepared by Gruen Associates which was facilitated through a series of community meetings. They would implement portions of the adopted Strategic Plan for East Washington Boulevard.

On March 9, 1998 the Design Commission reviewed the final report and recommended submittal to the City Planning Commission and the City Council.

On May 13, 1998 the Planning Commission reviewed the final report and also recommended submittal to the City Council.

BACKGROUND

In 1990 the City Council adopted a strategic plan for East Washington Boulevard. The recommendations in this strategic plan included: the upgrading of existing storefronts; the preparation of design guidelines, and design of streetscape improvements for this area. The area targeted for this planning effort is approximately 1 mile in length (seven blocks), extending west-to-east from the mid-block area between North Holliston and North Hill Avenues to the intersection with North Allen Avenue (just west of the city boundary). Because this study concentrates on the major commercial area of the boulevard, the targeted area is smaller and more localized in size than the larger area identified in the 1990 Strategic Plan.

The 1996 workplan for the Planning & Permitting Department initiated the design of the streetscape improvements to implementation of these recommendations. The Department contracted with the firm of Gruen Associates to prepare a concept for the streetscape improvements; and recommend design guidelines for a proposed facade improvement program. The purposes of the study were to produce the following:

1. **Specific designs for streetscape amenities**, such as trees, street lights, benches, trash receptacles, and sidewalk crossings; and the **costs to fabricate and install** these items. Proposals for these streetscape amenities should aim to enhance pedestrian activity along the boulevard and improve the aesthetic image of the area.
2. An illustrated, highly legible **brochure, adapted from the written guidelines in the strategic plan**, to assist business owners and property owners with improvements to their storefronts and building facades. These guidelines would also illustrate recommendations in the plan-and other City-wide design guidelines-for the site design and architectural design of future new construction.
3. **Proposals to accomplish the recommendations in the plan for “access to design services,” a “package of financial incentives,” and a publicity program** and educational campaign to encourage property owners and businesses to upgrade the appearance of their storefronts.

Community Participation

The work conducted by Gruen Associates was facilitated through four community meetings at which local area residents and business owners expressed their needs and recommended design treatments.

The initial community meetings focused on soliciting expressions of local concerns and ideas for community improvement from attendees. The recommendations established in the 1990 strategic plan were examined and specific priorities were affirmed. As an example, the need for specific streetscape improvements was indicated as an area of significant concern. The need for traffic mitigations was indicated as an area of lesser concern.

At the later meetings, various alternatives for improvement were presented for discussion. Prior to the presentation of these alternatives, examples of similar project solutions, from other municipalities, were also presented. Alternatives presented included: landscape improvements in the public way (e.g., street trees, landscaped street medians, parkway landscaping, etc.), street furniture (e.g., benches, transit shelters, street lighting, bicycle racks, signs and banners, etc.), traffic improvements (e.g., restriping, diagonal parking, etc.), and facade improvements. The discussions resulted in a consensus among the attendees. That consensus resulted in the recommendations, which are included in the attached final report. These recommendations include:

1. A design concept for streetscape improvements (including estimated costs to implement;
2. Institution of a facade improvement program with an implementation strategy that includes waiving fees for a limited period of time; and
3. Design guidelines for adoption in conjunction with the recommended facade improvement program.

Upon approval, the design concept will be provided to the Department of Public Works and Transportation for final design and the preparation of construction documents. The City's capital improvement program includes an East Washington Boulevard Strategic Plan Project. This project, as described in the CIP would implement various public improvements, including: gateway sign, street trees, tree grates, crosswalks, bicycle racks, waste receptacles, banners, benches, transit shelters, pedestrian lights, pop outs at crosswalks, decorative paving at intersections, and artwork.

The implementation strategy for the recommended facade improvement program has been provided to the Housing and Development Department. That department has already received approval from the Community Development Committee relative to providing funding for facade improvements programs in various areas, including East Washington Boulevard. As an inducement to participate in the program, it is proposed to waive construction taxes for those projects that participate in the program. Other fees, including: permit and inspection fees; plan check fees, etc. would continue to apply.

The design guidelines are intended as a companion to the facade improvement program and would apply as requirements only to those projects that seek funding. All other applications of the guidelines would be voluntary, except for City-sponsored projects (which requires review by the Design Commission) and new construction over 25,000 square feet (which also requires design review everywhere in the City).

DESIGN COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

On March 9, 1998 the Design Commission voted to approve the Design Concept, with the exception that the proposed crosswalk specialty paving should be further studied to

provide facilities that are not maintenance intensive; to approve the recommended Design Guidelines for implementation of a proposed Facade Improvement program; and to recommend approval of the streetscape plan and design guidelines by the City Council. The Design Commission had previously recommended amendment of the Master Street Tree Plan to incorporate the recommended street trees.

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

On May 13, 1998 the Planning Commission: recommended approval of a Negative Declaration for the project; found that the recommendations of the report implement key goals and recommended actions of the Strategic Plan for East Washington Boulevard and was consistent with the General Plan; and recommended approval of the planning study by the City Council.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

An initial study for the proposed project was completed and circulated for public comment on April 20, 1998. That initial study indicated that the project would not have a significant adverse impact on the environment. The Planning Commission recommended approval of a negative declaration for the study during its review on May 13, 1998.

HOUSING IMPACT

The recommended actions will not affect housing.

WORKLOAD IMPACT

The recommended actions will result in various City department instituting projects and programs that will require the dedication of City staff. At this time it is not anticipated that this staff commitment will be significant. The magnitude of this staff commitment will be estimated and examined during the budget review process. Much of the preliminary staff work on the streetscapes improvement project has already occurred, in both the Planning and Permitting Department and the Public Works & Transportation Department.

IMPACT ON DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS

The recommended actions will not significantly impact the City's development review and approval process. If instituted, the proposed facade improvement program may result in additional projects being submitted for design review and approval by City staff. However, because the nature of these projects will be limited and small in scale, the impact is expected to not be significant.

FISCAL IMPACT

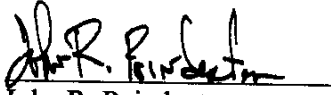
The cost of constructing phase I of the streetscape improvements is estimated to be \$404,690. The cost of constructing phase II of the streetscape improvements is estimated to be \$1,427,310 for a total estimated cost of all phases of \$1,832,000. The recommended FY 1999 - 2004 Capital Improvement Program would provide \$50,000 in FY 1999 and an additional \$100,000 in FY 2000. The balance will need to be addressed in future CIP budgets.

The facade improvement program would be funded through the Community Development Commission budget on an annual basis. The amount of construction tax that would be waived, for those projects that participate in a facade improvement, will vary based on funding levels and the number of projects that participate in the program. It is estimated that approximately \$1,496 per year in taxes will be waived (based on the participation of 4 projects per year averaging \$20,000 in valuation each).

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED


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Attachments:

1. Draft Resolution Adopting Design Guidelines for East Washington Boulevard
2. Final Report for East Washington Boulevard Design Improvements