



City of Huntington Beach

File #: 23-187

MEETING DATE: 3/7/2023

REQUEST FOR CITY COUNCIL ACTION

SUBMITTED TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

SUBMITTED BY: Al Zelinka, City Manager

VIA: Ursula Luna-Reynosa, Director of Community Development

PREPARED BY: Kriss Casanova, Economic Development Manager

Subject:

Additional Community Feedback for the Main Street Redevelopment Project

Statement of Issue:

As part of the COVID-19 pandemic response, the City Council authorized a temporary closure of the second block of Main Street to vehicular traffic and allowed businesses to expand into the right-of-way. Council also directed staff to work with Studio One Eleven to study redesign options related to Main Street. Pursuant to City Council direction on December 20, 2022, additional community feedback has been solicited. Previous community engagement efforts saw low participation by directly affected businesses and property owners on the first three blocks of Main Street. Therefore, this additional outreach effort was made specifically to those businesses and property owners, and their feedback is summarized in this report.

Financial Impact:

There is no financial impact associated with this item.

Recommended Action:

A) Receive and file additional stakeholder feedback received for the Main Street Redevelopment Project; and,

B) Provide direction on next steps including which design option, if any, to pursue.

Alternative Action(s):

Do not direct staff to move forward and direct staff accordingly.

Analysis:

Background

On July 6, 2020 the City Council approved a temporary closure of the second block of Main Street to vehicular traffic to accommodate outdoor dining and retail in the public right of way as a pandemic

response. Urban design consultant, Studio One Eleven, was retained in March of 2021 to study permanent design options for Main Street and to further refine some connectivity strategies between Main Street and the resorts to the southeast.

On November 16, 2021, Studio One Eleven presented to the City Council two reconfigurations of Main Street (Attachment 1). Option one was a Plaza Scheme, and option two was a One-Way Flex Scheme. The City Council selected the Plaza Scheme and directed staff to move forward with preparing Schematic Design Drawings. On November 1, 2022, City Council received and filed the Main Street Streetscape Schematic Design and directed staff to proceed to Design Development Drawings (Attachment 2). On December 20, 2022, City Council paused the project to solicit additional community feedback (Attachment 3). On January 17, 2023, City Council ended the expanded outdoor dining downtown and reopened the second block of Main Street effective March 1, 2023.

Prior Community Engagement

Since the project inception, staff has conducted a series of outreach efforts with business owners, property owners, residents, Visit Huntington Beach, and the Downtown Huntington Beach Business Improvement District. Most recently in the summer of 2022, staff led four separate Downtown Dreamin' storytelling sessions where community members (residents, property and business owners) were invited to share their personal experiences and observations related to Huntington Beach's history, culture, heritage, and environment. These stories would be incorporated throughout the streetscape elements to create an authentic and unique downtown environment truly reflective of Huntington Beach. Additional input was solicited through a pop-up booth at Surf City Nights, two walk-about sessions along Main Street, and a follow-up recap meeting summarizing all of the input provided. Postcards were mailed to businesses and owners within 1,000 feet of the first three blocks of Main Street and placed at City facilities like City Hall, the libraries, and the Senior Center. Banners were hung on street corners throughout the City and on the second block of Main Street, and the events were also posted on social media and advertised through email. Over 200 residents and business/property owners participated and provided their input.

2023 Outreach

Per Council direction on December 20, 2022, staff solicited additional input specifically from business and property owners on the first three blocks of Main Street (between Pacific Coast Highway and Orange Avenue) that are most directly affected by the street's form and function. Approximately 24 property owners and 80 businesses were targeted via mail, email, and in-person visits. A short online survey was provided to these stakeholders to collect their feedback (Attachment 4). Staff from Economic Development, Police, and Public Works attempted to visit all of the businesses to invite them to a stakeholder meeting on February 10, 2023, encourage them to complete the online survey, and listen to their comments and answer their questions. The February 10 meeting at the Main Street Library hosted approximately 35 attendees and provided an overview of the design options being considered (Attachment 4).

Survey Results

There were 49 responses to the survey; however, three respondents were owners of businesses not located on Main Street so these responses are attached but have not been included in the aggregated data results (Attachment 5). Of the 46 Main Street stakeholders that took the survey, 36 are business owners (78%), six are property owners (13%), and four are both business and property

owners (9%). Seven are located on the 100 Block (15%), 24 on the 200 block (52%), and 15 on the 300 block (33%). It should be noted that there are more businesses on the 200 block than the 100 and 300 blocks. Approximately 40 businesses and 14 property owners did not participate in the survey despite invitations.

For those that did participate, when asked about whether Main Street should be re-envisioned, approximately 76% responded “Yes, Please! Some Enhancements are Desired” and 24% said “No, Thank you! Keep Main Street AS IS.” Some of the respondents who selected “no” provided comments, which included desired enhancements they would like to see; these comments are provided in Attachment 5. Of the 35 respondents who said “yes”, the following design options were selected:

1. **Plaza** (43% selected this option) - Increase sidewalk widths, enhanced pavement, lighting, landscaping, public art, and street furniture on first three blocks. Zero curb second block creates a public plaza space and provides ability to close the 200 block to vehicular travel to allow for a flexible public seating/gathering area.
2. **One Way Flex Street** (6% selected this option) - Increase sidewalk widths, enhanced pavement, lighting, landscaping, public art, and street furniture on first three blocks. Reconfigure all three blocks on Main Street to one-way traffic with a pedestrian promenade on the street’s northern side.
3. **Enhanced Streetscape** (37% selected this option) - Implement streetscape improvements identified in the Downtown Specific Plan (increase sidewalk widths, enhanced pavement, lighting, landscaping, public art, and street furniture).
4. **Other** (14% selected this option) - Comments here ranged from keep open but unify and beautify the streets, remain as-is but provide lighting, infrastructure, landscaping, and wayfinding improvements, concerns about future cost of maintenance, consideration of a curved sidewalk, enhanced outdoor dining patios, and an open walking plaza with art and musicians.

The survey included additional questions pertaining to Main Street closure and also invited respondents to provide general comments to be shared with the City Council. These comments are provided in Attachment 5. Overwhelmingly, the business and property owners that took the survey support City investment aimed at improving downtown’s perception of safety, cleanliness, lighting, connectivity, and beautification.

These comments are consistent with previous outreach efforts, which led to a list of suggested improvements and design ideas that included secure storage for surfboards and bikes, cleaner bathrooms, easier/safer/cleaner parking areas, Huntington Beach inspired art (murals, statues, crosswalks), a rideshare drop-off area, an extension of the surfing walk of fame, enhanced pedestrian lighting, maintenance and landscaping, a connector path to/from Pacific City, expanded outdoor dining with design guidelines, and a live sunset/surf feed screen on Main Street.

Additionally, Studio One Eleven in their 2021 research prepared a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis and RSM Design in 2019 prepared a concept plan for improving wayfinding and the pedestrian experience between Main Street, Pacific City, and the hotels

(Attachments 6 and 7). These documents provide additional information on the project's emerging vision and timeline. Also, over the course of this Main Street redesign project, staff became aware of prior City staff and Council efforts to consider and evaluate Main Street closure options over the past two decades. Copies of these reports are provided as Attachments 8 and 9. These reports along with this most recent effort reveal that reaching consensus among stakeholders for the future of Main Street has historically been very challenging. However, at this time there appears to be overwhelming consensus among Main Street business and property owners for improving safety, cleanliness, lighting, connectivity, and beautification.

Next Steps

Council is requested to consider the additional input received and direct staff to proceed with preferred next steps for Main Street.

Environmental Status:

Pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) and 15060(c)(3) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) guidelines, CEQA does not apply to this action because it will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment and it is not a "project" pursuant to Section 15378(b)(5) of the State CEQA Guidelines. A future project contemplating the reconfiguration of a portion of Main Street may be considered in the future. Environmental analysis will be conducted prior to awarding a construction contract to construct such improvements.

Strategic Plan Goal:

Economic Development & Housing

Attachment(s):

1. November 16, 2021 Staff Report - Consider 1) Directing Staff to Solicit Proposals to Prepare Construction Documents for a Redesign of Main Street and 2) an Extension of the Temporary Closure of the Second block of Main Street to Vehicular Traffic
2. November 1, 2022 Staff Report - Receive and File the Main Street Streetscape Schematic Design and Direct Staff to Proceed to Design Development Drawings
3. December 20, 2022 Staff Report - Request to Pause the Main Street Redevelopment Project and Solicit Additional Community Feedback prior to Reconsidering the Project
4. Downtown Main Street Stakeholder Survey
5. Survey Results
6. Studio One Eleven - DTHB SWOT Analysis
7. RSM Design - Wayfinding Concept Package
8. November 5, 2001 Staff Report - Accept Main Street Options Closure Evaluation
9. June 5, 2006 Staff Report - Form an Ad-Hoc Committee to Study the Closure of Downtown Main Street to Vehicular Traffic
10. PowerPoint Presentation - Additional Community Feedback for the Main Street Redevelopment Project