



Legislation Text

File #: 20-0036, **Version:** 1

TO:

Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

THROUGH:

Bruce Moe, City Manager

FROM:

Stephanie Katsouleas, Public Works Director

SUBJECT:

Consider Downtown Manhattan Beach and North Manhattan Beach Business Improvement District Beautification Measures (Public Works Director Katsouleas).

DISCUSS AND PROVIDE DIRECTION

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that City Council discuss and provide direction on various measures that can be taken to enhance the Downtown Manhattan Beach and North Manhattan Beach (NMB) Business Improvement Districts (BIDs).

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

The total fiscal implications are unknown at this time and will depend on direction given by City Council. However, staff estimates that up to \$150,000 will be spent on the North Manhattan Beach BID to replace 21 trees and install 28 cast iron grates using available money from the NMB BID assessment fund.

BACKGROUND:

Downtown Manhattan Beach

The downtown area of Manhattan Beach is generally described as located between 8th Street and 15th Street, from Valley Drive to the Strand. It has undergone periodic transformations over the years, including sidewalk and crosswalk replacements, landscaping refreshment, parking enhancements, replacement of trash receptacles, development of the Metlox complex, and other infrastructure upgrades-the most recent being the upcoming replacement of traffic signals at five intersections.

This past year, both City Council and the Downtown Business Professional Association (DBPA) began discussing how the downtown area could be refreshed and enhanced within the public right-of-way, and asked staff to evaluate what measures could be implemented in the near and midterm. Several ideas were proposed, and a few actions have already been taken toward this goal, which include:

1. Thermoplastic stencils were created and installed on four sidewalk panels in front of City Hall

as a demonstration project to showcase how decorative and patterned thermoplastic could be used to cover the gray tiles sidewalks. Although the specific patterns installed were only examples, they provided City Council and the community the opportunity to experience the concept and decide whether it should be further explored. Two types of installations were completed - one in which the tiles were removed and replaced with concrete before installing the stencils, and one in which the stencil was installed directly over the gray tiles.

2. Staff met with DBPA representatives on September 18, 2019, to discuss downtown improvements and better understand their priorities. The DBPA expressed a desire to explore:
 - Replacing all landscaping in planter beds to match the palette recently installed in front of Starbucks Coffee at the northwest corner of Highland Avenue and Manhattan Beach Boulevard;
 - Replacing trees, installing new tree grates, and upgrading irrigation;
 - Installing lighting in planter beds and on trees;
 - Installing more benches throughout the downtown area;
 - Installing new and updated wayfinding signage; and
 - Adding one more big-belly solar trash can on Highland Avenue just west of Jamba Juice.
3. City Council recommended exploring the feasibility of installing string lighting over roadways and intersections, scrambled crosswalks, sidewalk and crosswalk replacements; and installing an intelligent parking occupancy system at Metlox and Lot 3. City Council approved the purchase and installation of new parking meters citywide and a new meter kiosk in Metlox on November 5, 2019. The new meters will have parking finder app capabilities, which will be rolled out in 2020.
4. Internally, several actions have either already been implemented or are in the works toward improving the downtown area, which include:
 - In 2018, seven big-belly solar trash cans were installed in strategic places where the most trash was being generated. They have been very effective in controlling overflowing trash in high traffic areas.
 - A pilot demonstration project using drought tolerant and native landscaping was installed in front of Starbucks on Highland Avenue and Manhattan Beach Boulevard, showcasing colorful yet durable plants.
 - A bench was installed in front of Starbucks on Highland Avenue and Manhattan Beach Boulevard.
 - New bike racks were installed throughout the downtown area in 2017/18.
 - Several dying trees have been replaced, with more scheduled in 2020.
 - The Wayfinding Master Plan was adopted on November 17, 2019, which includes new guidelines for parking and pedestrian signage in the downtown area.
 - Power washing of the crosswalks was increased from annually to four times per year.
 - A gated trash enclosure was installed at the base of Lot 3.
 - Five traffic signals are scheduled to be replaced in early 2020.
 - Scrambled crosswalks are under review for implementation in spring 2020.

North Manhattan Beach

Staff met with the North Manhattan Beach Business Improvement District (NMB BID) several times throughout 2019 to discuss what type of improvements could be undertaken in the commercial area, which is primarily located along Highland Avenue between 33rd Street and 41st Street, and on Rosecrans Avenue, between Highland Avenue and Alma Avenue. Some of the key ideas discussed included replacing trees that were distressed and dying, installing tree grates, enhancing neighborhood ambiance with lighting and hanging banners. Staff attended the NMB BID meeting on January 8, 2020, where the newly elected Board concurred with the previous Board's recommendation to proceed with replacing 21 trees with King palms and 28 cast iron grates.

Also, in early 2019, City staff removed the aluminum banners that had been installed years ago along the Highland Avenue corridor. They were replaced with canvas banners this past spring and with holiday banners in December. No other enhancements have yet been undertaken in the NMB BID.

DISCUSSION:

There are a variety of Downtown and North Manhattan Beach enhancements that could be implemented, some with corresponding budgets that have yet to be fully identified. Those opportunities are listed below, along with an estimate of the staff resources and funds that would need to be allocated to implement them. They are ranked in order of easiest and least expensive to implement, to most resource-intensive and expensive to implement.

DOWNTOWN MANHATTAN BEACH

- 1. Painting Refresh:** This action includes refreshing all of the existing red, white, yellow and green curbs in the downtown area, which can be accomplished with existing staff resources. Target completion date: May 2020.
- 2. Scrambled Crosswalks:** This action can be implemented on Manhattan Beach Boulevard at the intersections of Highland Avenue and Manhattan Avenue. Modifications to the street markings and signal timing can be incorporated into the Signal Replacement Project currently underway, at a cost yet to be determined. This project would be completed by May 2020, if City Council approves the design concept presented in the attachment and staff is given direction to proceed. The project would meet the required pedestrian marking standards for scrambled crosswalks and could incorporate the new City logo as the centerpiece of art at the Manhattan Beach Boulevard and Manhattan Avenue intersection (see attached rendering). A second art image would need to be selected for the centerpiece of art at the Manhattan Beach Boulevard and Highland Avenue intersection.
- 3. Wayfinding Signage:** On November 19, 2019, City Council approved the Wayfinding Master Plan and allocated \$347,184 from the Parking Fund for Phase I implementation, which includes pedestrian and parking wayfinding signage in the downtown area. Staff will be working on this effort throughout 2020. No additional funding or resources are necessary at this time.
- 4. One Additional Big Belly Solar Trash Can:** There is a need for one additional Big Belly solar trash can on the south side of Manhattan Beach Boulevard, between Morningside Drive and Highland Avenue where the existing trash can often overflows, particularly in the morning. This

action can be easily implemented in July 2020 by incorporating an additional \$2,800 into the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020-2021 budget.

5. **Street Furniture:** The DBPA has expressed a desire to install new street furniture (e.g., benches) in the downtown area. The furniture type and specific locations have yet to be selected, and no funds have been identified for purchasing products. The estimated cost to implement this action will depend type of street furniture selected and whether any infrastructure needs to be altered to accommodate installations. The action can be easily implemented pending resolution of these issues.
6. **Trash Can Replacements:** In addition to the Big Belly solar trash cans, consideration should be given to replacing all the static trash cans throughout the Downtown BID. New containers could be fabricated that prominently display the City's logo and other wayfinding elements. The approximate cost for each of the 87 existing trash and recycling container is about \$1,000. This action would take some time to implement due the outreach and involvement of City Council, DBPA and North Manhattan Beach representatives in the container selection and design process. Ordering and installation would be carried out with internal resources. No budget had been identified for this purchase; the amount needed would depend on the containers ultimately selected.
7. **String Lighting and Tree Up-lighting:** The DBPA has expressed an interest in installing ambient lighting in the downtown area, such as tree up-lighting or wrapping trees with string lighting. There are electrical power sources in virtually every planted bed in the downtown area, making string lighting around trees and ambient up-lighting easy to implement in these areas.

Additionally, City Council has expressed an interest in installing aerial string lights across intersections and possibly across roadways in the downtown area. Installation of crossed string lighting across Manhattan Beach Boulevard at the intersections of Highland Avenue and Manhattan Avenue is possible and could be incorporated into the traffic signal project underway pending confirmation that the lateral tension load requirements on the signal poles would be met. However, installing string lights across roadways would be more challenging to implement for two primary reasons. First, based on the recent street light structural analysis completed, the existing street light poles cannot meet lateral tension load code requirements for installing string lights. Secondly, the street light poles were installed in a staggered formation, thus limiting the ability to crisscross string lighting unless additional poles were installed. No budget has been identified for the lighting initiatives in the downtown area.

8. **Updated Landscaping:** This past summer, staff replaced landscaping in the planter bed in front of Starbucks, located at the corner of Manhattan Beach Boulevard and Highland Avenue, with drought-tolerant, native species. This effort was completed as a demonstration project to evaluate the plant selection, color palette, growth, durability, and community reaction before considering area-wide implementation Downtown. The results and responses have been very positive overall, and the City has received multiple requests from Downtown businesses to refresh their adjacent planter beds with the same plant materials. In total, there are 71 planter beds within the Downtown BID, ranging from small corner areas to larger parkway areas. Staff estimates that a complete landscaping replacement project would cost approximately

\$200,000 at \$13 per square foot, inclusive of planter bed preparation, plant material, mulch, and labor. No funding has yet been identified for this action. City Council may wish to consider installing new landscaping in phases over several years, or alternatively, create a partnership with the DBPA to implement this action as a single project.

- 9. Street Tree and Tree Grate Replacements:** Funding for tree replacements was incorporated into the new West Coast Arborist contract approved by City Council on December 17, 2019. As planned, approximately 20% of the trees in the downtown area that are in decline, diseased, and dying will be replaced each year over the next five years with an annual budget allocation of approximately \$35,000. Existing palms species will be replaced with King Palms, and other species will be replaced in-kind or with a similar species unless an alternative tree palette is selected and approved by City Council. No additional funding is needed to complete this task unless City Council wishes to accelerate the proposed replacement schedule.

Tree grates throughout Downtown should also be replaced in the near future. Currently, there is a combination of intact, cracked, deteriorated and missing concrete grates. Staff will recommend an allocation of \$260,000 to replace 327 tree grates Downtown with 3x3 cast iron tree grates as a single project as part of the FY 2020-21 budget.

- 10. Crosswalk Replacement:** The blue stamped, asphalt crosswalks were installed Downtown in late 2015 to replace the deteriorated blue granite tile crosswalks installed in the late 80s. The project's objective was to achieve the same blue tiled look using colored asphalt in lieu of more expensive tiles, matching the blue tiles that remain on the portion of sidewalks adjacent to the intersections. Overall, the asphalt replacement has held up well and is a fairly durable product. However, because asphalt is inherently porous, oil drippings from cars and tire marks have stained the crosswalks, a problem that was not as prevalent with the granite tiles. All of the crosswalks Downtown are power washed quarterly for approximately \$16,000, which removes many but not all of the stained markings. Staff has not yet obtained a cost estimate to remove and replace the blue asphalt crosswalks. Such costs would depend on the material to be installed, for which there is wide variability in pricing and associated labor requirements. Additionally, this action would take some time to implement due to the outreach and involvement of City Council, DBPA and community in the material selection and design process.

- 11. Sidewalk Replacement:** There are approximately 1.5 miles of sidewalks in the downtown area, most of which have a gray tile inlay that was installed in the late 1980s. The remaining areas have either stamped concrete mimicking the gray tiles or smooth concrete. In preparation for a discussion about possible replacement of Downtown sidewalks, earlier this year, staff had several custom thermoplastic stencils installed on the sidewalk in front of City Hall. This installation was intended to spark ideas about the types of sidewalk treatments and images that could be considered to either cover or replace the gray tiled areas. Staff notified the DBPA Executive Director of the installation and asked her to encourage DBPA members to take a look at it and provide their feedback. The feedback we received is best described as "lukewarm." Exploring and demonstrating other types of sidewalk treatments would require more significant staff time, planning, and a budget. Other sidewalk treatments could include embedded crushed glass (e.g., similar to the crosswalk between City Hall and Metlox), geometric tiles, and concrete etchings (see attached photos). Based on the most recent bids

received by the City for removing and replacing sidewalk concrete, it would cost approximately \$1.5 million to remove the gray tiles and install smooth concrete throughout Downtown. Any decorative features added would increase this estimate, perhaps significantly based on the feature chosen. Additionally, any areas that do not currently comply with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines would need to be corrected, further raising the cost of the project.

Please note that undertaking a complete sidewalk replacement project Downtown is a significant capital improvement project, inclusive of extensive public meetings, design brainstorming and approval, detailed design services, ADA compliance, construction and inspection activities and intensive business notification due to its impact on business operations. Because Public Works already has plans to start construction on four major capital projects 2020, each expected to last from 12 to 18 months, staff could not realistically commence a downtown sidewalk project until 2022 unless some of the current CIP priorities were shifted or additional resources were provided. In all, staff will be actively working on more than 30 CIPs in 2020, with many of them considered high priorities (e.g., Sepulveda Bridge, Peck Reservoir, street resurfacing, pump station replacements, security enhancements, HVAC replacement, pier railings, and utility undergrounding).

NORTH MANHATTAN BEACH BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

- 1. Street Trees and Tree Grate Replacements:** The City's Urban Forester, Ernest Area, has worked closely with the NMB BID in selecting which trees should be replaced and which replacement species should be installed. As mentioned above, at the January 8, 2020, the NMB BID confirmed that they would like the City to proceed with replacing 21 trees with King palms. That work will begin immediately and is estimated to cost approximately \$100,000 to remove the trees, hand dig out the tree roots, complete necessary concrete repairs and purchase and install new trees (approximately \$4,700 per location for labor and new trees).

Ernest also presented to the NMB BID tree grate designs made out of cast iron. Unfortunately, because the City's tree wells are only 3' x 3' in size, no companies manufacture tree grate products this small using materials other than cast iron. Cast iron grates cost about \$767 each, and frame supports, if needed, are about \$300 each. There are approximately 28 grates needed in the NMB BID, at an estimated cost up to \$35,000, plus installation and prep work for the frames that will support the grates, estimated at \$13,000. Staff will proceed with purchasing and installing the new grates over the next several months. Funds are available from North Manhattan Beach assessment funds for the tree replacements and new cast iron grates.

- 2. String Lighting:** Staff evaluated whether string lighting could be installed on street light poles across Highland Avenue between 33rd Street and Rosecrans Avenue. Unfortunately, they cannot be installed on the existing street lights because the marbelite poles do not meet the code's requirement for the lateral tension that the string lights would place on the poles. Although new poles and foundations could be installed, the secondary problem is that it is not

possible to install additional marbelite poles in any balanced fashion that would achieve the desired crisscross look. There are simply too many obstacles when considering store front entries, garages, pedestrian ramps, alley ways, T-intersections, scenic views and existing subsurface infrastructure. However, consideration could be given to crossed lighting at the intersection of Highland Avenue and Rosecrans Avenue, as well as “lighted pole art” on the street lights in lieu of banners (see attached sample art).

String lighting around the trees along Highland Avenue could also be considered. Although there is currently no power source for the string lights, solar powered lights may be an option worth exploring. As a “proof of concept” project, City staff purchased two different brands of solar string lighting and installed them on two palm trees at the Public Works yard (see attached photo). They light up nicely and stay lit all night, do not require any electricity, and could be fairly easily deployed. However, these particular products were only 200’ in length and did not have “extension” capabilities. Staff was unable to find any solar string lights manufactured in longer lengths, suggesting that this approach may have limited application. An alternative would be to install electricity to each tree well. This would be very expensive considering that Highland Avenue is located within several utility underground districts. Thus, extensive trench work on both sides of the street would be required.

Staff will continue to work with the new Board Members of the NMB BID on these lighting initiatives to further explore which projects are both feasible and desirable for implementation given existing structural constraints. Staff will also be working with NMB BID Board Members on the final tree and grate replacement program this coming spring.

Please note that several of the initiatives under consideration in the downtown area are either not applicable or of interest to the NMB BID. For example, there has been no request for bench seating, other street furniture or big belly solar trash cans. There are almost no landscaped areas along Highland Avenue and Rosecrans Avenue. Finally, the NMB BID already has decorative crosswalks and has not requested exploring installation of decorative sidewalks.

CONCLUSION:

Based on the discussion points above, staff recommends that City Council discuss and provide direction regarding the following Downtown opportunities:

- 1. Painting Refresh:** No action or additional budget needed. This project is already planned.
- 2. Scrambled Crosswalks:** Direct staff to incorporate scrambled crosswalks at two intersections as part of the signal replacement CIP. Confirm the art work desired in the intersections so that staff can move forward with quotes for the images. Funding for this work will be based on the thermoplastic quotes received, and could potentially come from the existing project budget.
- 3. Wayfinding Signage:** No action or additional budget is needed. Direction was previously provided by City Council. Final designs will come back to City Council for approval.
- 4. One Additional Big Belly Solar Trash Can:** Direct staff to incorporate an additional \$2,800 into the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020-2021 budget in July 2020 for this effort.
- 5. Street Furniture:** Direct staff to work with the DBPA to explore bench types and locations for

installation and other possible street furniture initiatives. This action would come back to City Council for final approval and identification of funding.

6. **Area Wide Trash Can Replacements:** Confirm whether staff should explore this initiative and provide further direction.
7. **String Lighting, Tree Up-lighting and Aerial Intersection and Roadway Lights:** Discuss and provide direction. Staff has not yet explored this initiative in terms of cost, source of funding and staff implementation effort.
8. **Updated Landscaping:** Discuss and provide direction. Staff estimates that a complete landscaping replacement project would cost approximately \$200,000. No funding has been identified for this action.
9. **Street Tree and Tree Grate Replacements:** A five-year street tree replacement schedule has already been developed and incorporated into the budget. Complete tree grate replacements will be incorporated into the budget process for FY 2020-21 for consideration. If an alternative schedule is desired, direct staff to amend the proposed implementation plan.
10. **Crosswalk Replacement:** Discuss and provide direction. The level of effort provided by staff and implementation costs will depend heavily on the materials selection and direction given by City Council.
11. **Sidewalk Replacement:** Discuss and provide direction. The level of effort provided by staff and implementation costs will depend heavily on the materials selection and direction given by City Council.

The North Manhattan Beach BID efforts are still in the early planning stages. However, City Council may wish to discuss and provide direction regarding the types of trees to be installed, the pole light art under consideration, street tree up-lighting and string lighting, and intersection cross lighting.

PUBLIC OUTREACH:

Staff has met with DBPA and NMB BID representatives on several occasions regarding possible improvements to these business improvement districts. Staff will continue to meet with the DBPA and NMB BID for all of the proposed projects listed above as they progress through various approval and implementation phases.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

The City has reviewed the proposed activity for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and has determined that the activity is not a "Project" as defined under Section 15378 of the State CEQA Guidelines; therefore, pursuant to Section 15060(c)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines the activity is not subject to CEQA. Thus, no environmental review is necessary.

LEGAL REVIEW:

No legal review was required for this staff report.

ATTACHMENT:

1. Photos