



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION  
**FROM:** ARA MIHRANIAN - COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR   
**DATE:** APRIL 11, 2017  
**SUBJECT:** THE WESTERN AVENUE CORRIDOR STREET ENHANCEMENT STRATEGY STATUS UPDATE REPORT

Staff Coordinator: Leza Mikhail, Senior Planner

### RECOMMENDATION

Receive and file a Status Report on the Western Avenue Corridor Street Enhancement Strategy.

### DISCUSSION

At the March 14, 2017 meeting, the Planning Commission requested that Staff provide a Status Report on the *Western Avenue Corridor Street Enhancement Strategy* (the *Strategy*), which was approved by the City Council in December 2015. Given that it has been over a year since the Strategy was last discussed in a public forum, Staff is providing a more comprehensive report on the background that occurred in this process, as described below. Additionally, a detailed background, copies of documents, and related staff reports can be found on the City's website at: <http://www.rpvca.gov/403/Western-Avenue-Vision-Plan>

Western Avenue is a State Highway with jurisdictional boundaries that are shared between the City of Rancho Palos Verdes (RPV) and the City of Los Angeles (LA). The Strategy derives from the Western Avenue Vision Plan (Vision Plan) which is a document that creates a long-term visionary framework to create aesthetic improvements, transit improvements and alternative methods of mobility along Western Avenue. The Planning Commission reviewed the Vision Plan at its May 28, 2013 meeting, and forwarded its input to the City Council. The City Council, after considering testimony from the public, community stakeholders, and the Planning Commission, approved the *Vision Plan*, with certain amendments, on July 16, 2013.

The Strategy was developed in collaboration with the City of Los Angeles as a document that provides direction for street corridor improvements along Western Avenue that are consistent with the Vision Plan. To assist the City's planning consultant, AECOM, in creating the Strategy, a Steering Committee was formed comprised of representatives from CalTrans, the Cities of Rancho Palos Verdes (including Vice-Chair Cruikshank and Chairman Tomblin), and Los Angeles and local business stakeholders. The Strategy was presented to the community at a public open house on March 14, 2015, and then presented to the Planning Commission and the

Traffic Safety Committee for its review, as summarized below:

#### Planning Commission Review No. 1

On April 28, 2015, the Draft Western Avenue Design Guidelines were presented to the Planning Commission, whereby Staff requested that the Planning Commission identify a "preferred street option." At that meeting, the Planning Commission forwarded a recommendation to the City Council to reject Street Design Options A, B and C in the document, and that an alternative Option D be prepared that would: 1) seize the current unique opportunity to work with the City of Los Angeles and CalTrans to improve the Western Avenue corridor; 2) designate Western Avenue as a thoroughfare first; 3) first focus on easing the traffic for vehicles; 4) embark on a short-term plan to improve signage, landscaping in the medians, and find ways to fund that; and 5) include a longer term vision for the future of the corridor.

In response, AECOM created an Option "D" which removed the private development aspect of the concepts and focused solely on the public right-of-way. It also included a two-way bike lane on one side of the road. The purpose of this option was to provide the City Council an alternative they could possibly support if they shared the same concerns as the Planning Commission with the initial three options (Options A, B and C).

#### Traffic Safety Committee Review

On July 27, 2015, the Draft document was presented to the RPV Traffic Safety Committee (TSC) to provide feedback on the Draft document and identify a "Preferred Option." The TSC was asked to focus on the public right-of-way street improvements and not on the private property aspect of the Draft document. The TSC recommended Option "A" as a preferred option because it did not include any bike lanes, although the Committee noted that the use of "sharrow lanes" (i.e. bike and car shared lanes) would be a more appropriate application for the type of cyclists that would be travelling on this thoroughfare. The TSC did note that if a Complete Streets option with a designated bike lane was ultimately desired by the City Council, then Option "B" would be their second preferred option.

#### Planning Commission Review #2

On August 11, 2015, the Draft Design Guidelines document was presented to the Planning Commission to provide the Commission with an additional opportunity to review the document in light of feedback from the TSC, as well as the City of LA Neighborhood Councils and Harbor Area Planning Commission (HAPC) who was reviewing the document concurrently with the RPV. That evening, the Planning Commission recommended that the City Council pursue a modified street improvement Option "B" for Western Avenue that involves the following: 1) the application of "Street Option B North Segment" as identified in the proposed guidelines on the entirety of the corridor except in portions of the corridor that are wide enough to allow the application of "Street Option B Middle Segment," thereby ensuring that traffic lane widths are maintained at 12 feet; 2) a limitation on the amount of curb cuts along the corridor; 3) the undergrounding of existing utility lines; and 4) that appropriate traffic/bike studies are conducted that demonstrate that the proposed improvements will not decrease existing traffic flow or capacity.

On December 15, 2015, the City Council reviewed the Strategy document that was revised in response to the Planning Commission's August 11, 2015 recommendations and input from the public throughout the public review process. It should be noted that while the original document presented to the Planning Commission was referred to as the Western Avenue Design Guidelines, given comments received from Commissioners and the public at the August 11, 2015 Planning Commission meeting, City of RPV and LA Staff agreed to rename the document the *Western Avenue Corridor Street Enhancement Strategy* (the "*Strategy*"), better reflecting that the document functions more as a strategic plan, as opposed to a set of specific guidelines. Furthermore, the text of the document was modified to clarify that the purpose of the *Strategy* is to create a consistent and cohesive implementation tool for design, appearance and functionality of Western Avenue across both Cities moving into the future. The *Strategy* provides an agreed upon framework that assists both jurisdictions, their decision makers, as well as developers with a uniform approach to work with, as well as an adopted plan, that allows both Cities to apply for future grant opportunities to bring the portions of the plan in the public right-of-way to fruition. The final Strategy was adopted by the RPV City Council on December 15, 2015.

As a result of the City of LA's collaboration with RPV on the *Strategy* and RPV's adoption of the *Strategy* in December 2015, the City of LA folded the *Strategy* into its larger San Pedro New Community Plan. The San Pedro New Community Plan was approved by the City of LA Planning Commission in October 2016. In speaking with City of LA Staff, there were some delays after the October 2016 LA Planning Commission meeting, however LA is back on track and are working to adopt in spring/summer of this year the San Pedro New Community Plan which included the *Western Avenue Corridor Street Enhancement Strategy*. Thus, at this time, the City of RPV is waiting for the City of LA to finalize their version of the *Strategy* before moving forward with technical studies and implementation of improvements within the right-of-way, which is owned by CalTrans.

In December 2015, the RPV City Council relayed the importance of improving traffic flow first and foremost. In order to address this, the City's Public Works Department will be implementing portions of the City's Western Avenue Traffic Improvement Plan (TIP) as identified in the City's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The improvements will be funded by Measure R funding granted from the South Bay Highway Program, administered by the South Bay Cities Council of Governments. Specifically, the City is scheduled to receive \$200,000 in Fiscal Year 2017/18 to fund the preliminary engineering costs for the project, which includes, data collection and plan preparation. Once the studies and plans are completed and approved, the City will receive \$3 million in Measure R funds to construct the traffic-related improvements.

Once these improvements are completed, and with the City Council's direction, the City will look to develop a streetscape plan for the public right-of-way and develop guidelines/regulations for new/private development to complement the streetscape plan. Ultimately, the timeline for creating these documents is dependent on priorities set out for the City by the City Council.