

**City of Culver City, California
Agenda Item Report**

Meeting Date: 3/23/15		Item Number: <u>A-1</u>	
AGENDA ITEM: Approval of the Washington National Transit Oriented Development District Streetscape Plan			
Contact Person/Dept.: Elaine Warner/CDD Sol Blumenfeld/CDD		Phone Number: (310) 253-5777 (310) 253-5702	
Fiscal Impact: Yes ☒ No ☐		General Fund: Yes ☐ No ☒	
Public Hearing: ☐		Action Item: ☒ Attachments: ☒	
Commission Action Required: Yes ☐ No ☐		Date: _____	
Public Notification: (E-Mail) Meetings and Agendas – City Council (03/18/15); Postcards Sent to Residents, Businesses and Owners within and Surrounding 500' of District Boundaries; Culver City News on February 27 and March 12. Notice Posted on City Public Notification Page on February 26. Distribution via Gov-Delivery on February 26 and March 11.			
Department Approval: Sol Blumenfeld (03/13/15)		City Attorney: Carol Schwab (by H. Baker) (03/17/15)	
Chief Financial Officer Approval: Jeff Muir (03/18/15)		City Manager Approval: John Nachbar (03/18/15)	

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the City Council approve the Washington National Transit Oriented Development District Streetscape Plan.

BACKGROUND

In March 2014, the City Council approved an agreement with AHBE Landscape Architects for the development of the Washington National Transit Oriented Development Streetscape Plan (Plan) for the Washington National Transit Oriented Development District (District). The purpose of the Plan is to guide the development of an attractive, pedestrian environment with sustainable, low impact project that encourages multi-mobility, complements current and future transit oriented development (TOD) projects, and serves as a gateway to Culver City from the Culver City Light Rail Station (LRT Station). (Attachment 1).

AHBE conducted a number of studies, including a street survey, existing conditions assessment, percolation and infiltration testing, and Low Impact Development (LID) feasibility analyses in order to determine the opportunities and constraints within the District relative to sustainable streetscape enhancements. The Community Development, Public Works, and Parks, Recreation and Community Services Departments have worked collaboratively with AHBE on the Plan which has applicability for streetscape improvements throughout the City.

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The Plan was presented to District stakeholders in February and the community at large in March. The Plan has been well received with the majority of the comments focused on connectivity between the District and Downtown, the Hayden Tract, and the Arts District via streetscape enhancements and shuttle service. There was also discussion relative to the proposed District identity color scheme, maintenance of trees and ground cover planting, and timing and implementation of the Plan.

DISCUSSION

The Plan is comprised of design recommendations to beautify the area, and promote sustainability, storm water management, and connectivity within and to the District.

Diverse Street Trees/Urban Forest

The Plan proposes the utilization of seven deciduous tree species to highlight and distinguish the main commercial corridors within the District with canopy shade trees to create attractive view corridors.

The recommended species are as follows:

- Bloodgood London Plane Tree – Washington Boulevard
- Ginkgo and Natchez Crepe Myrtle – National and Robertson Boulevards
- Mexican Sycamore – Venice Boulevard Purple Orchid Tree, Natchez Crape Myrtle, Desert Museum Palo Verde, and African Tulip Tree – Wesley Street

Where feasible, these canopy trees will be planted every 30 feet to provide adequate shade during the warmer seasons and create a distinct District identity. By incorporating several different tree species along various streets, the Plan promotes the goal of supporting a diverse Urban Forest consistent with the Urban Forest Management Plan currently being prepared by the Public Works Department.

Common Design Elements/Street Furniture and Details

The Plan recommends the use of consistent street furnishings (benches, trash/recycling receptacles, bike racks) and provides product details and specifications. Special paving materials and distinctive paving patterns are recommended for crosswalks and around tree wells. The Plan includes the use of cast iron tree grates, in-ground planters, and permeable paving bands to distinguish the District and enhance the pedestrian environment while allowing ground water recharge.

The Plan's proposed street furnishings and landscaping are consistent with the off-site improvements required for two TOD project previously entitled and under construction (Platform and Access Culver City). The Plan also includes three bike

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rack alternatives (“Bike Garden,” “Olympia,” and “FLO” per the City Council’s discussion relative to design options).

Low Impact Development

Several LID features are proposed in the Plan, including concrete filtration planters and structural soil systems to filter storm water prior to discharge into the City’s storm water system. The new National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System Permit Order No. R4-2012-0175 became effective in December 2012 and requires that the City develop LID ordinances that will handle storm water runoff. The Plan advances the City’s compliance with Federal and State law.

In-Ground Planters and Bioswale

In-ground planters are recommended throughout the District to provide vegetation, buffer pedestrians from vehicular traffic, and capture storm water. On Washington Boulevard, a series of 2’6” in-ground planters, filled with Breeze Lomandra, are proposed adjacent to street benches and bike storage. Along National and Robertson Boulevards – which have sidewalks varying between 7’– 8’, planted parkways are recommended near the curb edge. Planting in these parkways include *Carex alma* (Sturdy Sedge), *Festuca glauca* (Blue Fescue) and *Muhlenbergia capillaris*. A similar treatment is also proposed along Wesley Street.

A wide bioswale, varying between 14’ and 25’, is proposed along the Venice Boulevard right-of-way which has an extra-wide sidewalk. Ground planting proposed in the bioswale includes native species such as *Muhlenbergia rigens* (Deer Grass) and *Carex alma* (Sturdy sedge).

Deeproot “Silva Cell” Soil Systems

Deeproot Silva Cells are an integrated tree, soil, and storm water “shoring” system which maintains soil health, allows for greater tree root growth underneath sidewalks and streets, and filters storm water before it enters the City’s discharge system. It is recommended that these systems be installed under the sidewalk, adjacent to street trees, to foster root growth (and associated canopy growth) as well as aid in bio retention. Silva Cell systems are indicated along portions of Washington, National and Robertson Boulevards where feasible due to sidewalk width and infiltration data.

Crosswalks and Concrete Finish

Special pavers are recommended for crosswalks in seven locations throughout the District to unify and connect the area. The Plan proposes pavers in shades of charcoal and gray (similar to the City standard used on Sepulveda and Washington Boulevards). The pavers are proposed in a linear running bond pattern. Natural gray

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concrete with a Top-Cast (aggregate) finish is recommended for general sidewalk areas.

Graphics and Street Banners

A graphic identity program and way finding signs are proposed to highlight the District and give it a special identity as a TOD and a vibrant mixed-used neighborhood. Though still in a conceptual stage, District markers, street banners, and directories are recommended for installation on existing street light poles throughout the District. The preliminary design includes a "C" logo, consisting of 15 sun rays, one for each of Culver City's 15 neighborhoods. The Plan also recommends utilizing the existing Expo Line logo "blue" color to connect the LRT Station to the District and promote way finding between the LRT Station and the surrounding area. The concepts presented this evening are subject to further refinement. Should the City Council like to provide input this evening, such input is welcome. It is recommended that the design created is representative of all the uses present in the emerging District (creative office, retail, residential, and boutique hotel).

Potential Gateway Treatment

The District also presents the opportunity for a unique gateway treatment. The gateway design could include a public art piece, special landscape, and/or special lighting design. The Plan also recommends that special lighting to illuminate the train platform with color or "gobos" (shapes/patterns projected on the light) and/or special lighting at the intersection (four corners) at Washington Boulevard and National Boulevard. This concept would need to be further refined and receive the approval of METRO.

Implementation

The District is an evolving mixed-use, transit oriented neighborhood with five projects planned or in construction (Attachment 2). Implementation of the Plan will be a private and public effort. Privately entitled projects in the District are required, pursuant to conditions of approval, to comply with the Plan and fund the capital costs for improvements abutting such private projects.

In order to accommodate the two projects currently under construction, the off-site improvements contained in the Platform and Culver City Access Comprehensive Plans (both of which were considered and approved by the Planning Commission and City Council) are being implemented to avoid construction delays. The City has been working with these developers to ensure that tree species, ground planting, and common design elements (including street furniture and tree grates) remain consistent with the Plan where possible. Moving forward, all newly entitled projects in the District will conform to the approved Plan and will incorporate the guidelines in their offsite improvement construction drawings. It is proposed that the City

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implement the District-wide improvements (generally located in the public right-of-way) such as the special paved crosswalks and graphic identity programs as funding allows.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

The City has allocated approximately \$461,000 of pre-2011 bond funds to implement area wide improvements throughout the District. Given current construction bids on similar work, it is estimated that these funds will allow for the construction of the seven paved crosswalks as well as the graphic street banner program. Costs for the District markers and way-finding elements are estimated at \$169,000. Implementation of these items may be possible if the construction bid for the crosswalks is lower than expected, an additional funding source is identified, and/or an assessment district or BID is eventually formed to fund ongoing marketing in the District. The City is also exploring grant funding opportunities to implement these elements of the Plan. The Cultural Trust Fund may also be utilized to fund public art for a gateway design.

The chart below highlights the Plan components and the funding source:

Plan Element	Funding Entity/Mechanism
Tree/Ground Planting (offsite improvements)	Private - TOD Developer
Street Furnishings and Details (off-site improvements)	Private - TOD Developer
Low Impact Development (Silva Cells, structured soil, concrete infiltration planter) (off-site improvements)	Private - TOD Developer (where feasible given appropriate soil conditions)
Concrete Improvements (off-site improvements)	Private - TOD Developer
Graphic Identity – District markers and directories (District wide)	Public – City (funding to be determined)
Updated Pedestrian Way-Finding Signage (District wide)	Public – City (funding to be determined)
Street Banners (design pending – District wide)	Public - City/Pre-2011 Bond Proceeds
Paved Crosswalks (seven – District wide)	Public - City/Pre-2011 Bond Proceeds
Gateway Treatment (design pending)	Public – City (funding to be determined)

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Draft Washington National Streetscape Plan

Attachment 2 – Current/Anticipated TOD Projects

MOTION

That the City Council:

1. Provide input as deemed appropriate; and,
2. Approve the Washington National Transit Oriented Development District Streetscape Plan.