



## CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

DATE: October 21, 2016

AGENDA OF: October 24, 2016

ITEM: Riverwalk Safety Plan Update and Recommendations (CM)

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**RECOMMENDATION:** Receive the staff report and direct staff to prepare a recommendation to the City Council regarding environmental design improvements, staffing and public engagement along the Riverwalk.

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**BACKGROUND:** At the September 26, 2016 Public Safety Committee (Committee) meeting, staff presented the Committee with an update of short-term efforts underway to improve safety on the San Lorenzo Riverwalk (commonly referred to as the “Levee”). Staff further discussed several options to pursue that could help sustain improved Riverwalk safety and cleanliness conditions across multiple areas: environmental design, staffing and public engagement. The Committee directed staff to provide greater detail on the options and propose a list of priority actions, timeline and budget and return to the Committee with recommendations by October 24, 2016.

### **Riverwalk Issues and City’s Immediate Response (August 2016)**

Responding to increased drug activity, community complaints about illegal and troubling behavior and the August 2016 homicide on the Riverwalk, the Neighborhood Safety Team (NST) developed an immediate course of action to remedy the situation short-term. With direction from the City Manager, Parks and Recreation and Police increased their Park Ranger and Park Unit patrols on the Riverwalk and adjacent San Lorenzo Park. The City Manager further authorized the Parks and Recreation Department to temporarily restrict access to the inner and outer banks of the levee and directed the Public Works Department to post signs notifying the public of this closure. Additionally, the staff reached out to community partners to encourage positive activity on the Riverwalk.

Those efforts resulted in some immediate improvements to the Riverwalk, with the City receiving compliments from community members for the enhanced safety measures. By limiting public access to the Riverwalk pathway only, there are far fewer individuals loitering on the pathway all day, which was a frequent occurrence and source of illegal activity and community complaint prior to the changes. Commenting community members noted that they felt safer using the pathway once these safety efforts were implemented.

The enhanced public safety presence on the Riverwalk has come at a cost to the rest of the City Park system, however. In order to carry out the patrol enhancements, Park Rangers and the Police Park Unit were redeployed from other City parks and open space assignments to assist. As patrols have moved from other hot spots to cover the Riverwalk, illegal activity, to include camping and drug use, have increased across the City's Park system. Anticipating this would be a likely outcome, the City Manager has asked the Parks and Recreation and Police Department to provide options to maintain the enhanced level of effort at the Riverwalk without negatively impacting other park areas. In order to provide increased Riverwalk patrols, while maintaining a consistent presence throughout the Park system the City would need to increase personnel at an on-going cost of \$750,000 annually. The City Manager intends to engage the full City Council on public safety staffing during the FY 2018 Budget hearings.

The NST also developed options for one-time environmental design investments that would help reduce vandalism, littering, loitering and human waste around buildings on Front Street between Soquel Avenue and Laurel Street. Those design options include constructing fences and installing security cameras in targeted locations that experienced higher level of service calls. Initial estimated fencing costs were at \$180,000 and establishing security camera system for the entire west side of the Riverwalk exceeded \$175,000. These one-time investments are preventive in nature and may also assist as investigative tools in the case crimes are committed in the area. The City recently placed rocks in concrete behind one of the buildings on Front Street with the highest incidents of vandalism and human waste. There was no impact to the budget for this action.

Lastly, the NST discussed generally the areas in which public engagement efforts could be enhanced (staff did not provide a cost estimate). Public engagement opportunities are key in giving the community additional reasons and resources to utilize the Riverwalk and further limit illegal and nuisance activities.

Staff presented this Riverwalk update and a brief overview of potential investments to the Committee at its September 26, 2016 meeting. The Committee also heard from members of the public, including the Coastal Watershed Council representatives, regarding options to assist the City in its public engagement efforts on the Riverwalk. The Committee discussed the various options at length and determined more information was needed in order to develop an informed recommendation for City Council. The Committee unanimously directed staff to further refine the environmental design and staffing proposals and work with a broad set of community partners to further develop potential engagement efforts.

## DISCUSSION:

### **Environmental Design Proposal**

The NST met shortly after the Committee meeting to refine the environmental design proposal. Staff found efficiencies and cost-savings opportunities in the fencing design and camera plan without much loss of impact. Staff strongly recommends fencing the area between Front Street businesses (between Soquel and Laurel) and the outer levee embankment (as depicted in the

attached map). Staff estimate the fencing cost to be \$150,000. Staff is working with property owners on Front Street to assess their interest in contributing funds to the effort, as they will benefit from the fencing by keeping loiterers off their properties (thus, limiting trash and human waste). Conversations continue with several interested Front Street property owners. Once approved, fencing installation would take several months to complete. The process for completion includes the project bidding process, consultation with the Army Corps, planning and installation.

In regards to security cameras, staff recommends a small scale approach for several reasons. One, it limits the cost. Two, the City is currently developing a security camera plan, and proceeding with a massive investment on the Riverwalk may not make sense. Finally, staff can test the effectiveness of the cameras by placing a limited number of cameras only in the most problematic areas on the Riverwalk without overcommitting resources to areas that may in fact not require cameras.

This option includes installation of three separate camera enclosures placed in impacted areas and signage warning the public about the presence of security cameras. By leveraging existing infrastructure, the estimated cost for networking, storage and camera and signage installation is approximately \$50,000. The City could add cameras should they prove effective at a later date. Each subsequently added camera enclosure would cost the City \$7,500. If approved by Council, the project would take 4 to 6 weeks to complete (connecting the IT infrastructure and camera and sign installation).

Staff is also investigating options for enhanced lighting around the Front Street businesses, through a public-private partnership with the property owners (similar to the fencing initiative). However, more time is needed to explore this option before returning to the Committee or City Council with a proposal.

### **Public Safety Staffing**

As noted above, the City Manager intends to engage the full City Council on public safety staffing during the FY 2018 Budget hearings. In the meantime, the City Manager will authorize the Parks and Recreation Director to hire additional temporary Rangers to help fill in existing staffing gaps in the interim. This will allow temporary Rangers to be hired and placed in the field within a month (depending upon the Parks and Recreation ability to successfully hire qualified applicants). This does not require City Council approval at this time, as staff does not anticipate that additional hiring will exceed the Parks and Recreation Department FY 2017 temporary employee budget. Staff will monitor the budget throughout the year and should the costs approach budget limit, staff will prepare an adjustment for City Council consideration.

Staff are also currently considering the option to convert temporary Park Ranger positions into full time permanent positions. Staff will update the City Council after the option is considered more fully and more information is available.

### **Riverwalk Engagement/Positive Use**

Positive community engagement rounds out the plan for improving the Riverwalk. Bringing

more people to the Riverwalk and San Lorenzo Park will help sustain the improvements and encourage further positive changes. Following Committee direction, Staff contacted several interested parties about Riverwalk engagement, to include the Coastal Watershed Council, Arts Council, Downtown representatives, members of the Parks and Recreation Commission, City staff from multiple departments, mobile food truck vendors and others to gauge their interest in supporting engagement, to understand the opportunities and develop a plan that builds upon the various strengths of the partners. Staff amalgamated the input from these partners and determined that more a focused and intentional dialogue between these partners is required prior to developing and implementing an ambitious engagement effort.

Staff believes the best way to weave all the partners strengths together is through a Riverwalk Engagement Summit, hosted by the City. Staff proposes a Summit with participation from key partners to be professionally facilitated by a third-party. Staff anticipates participation from the following key stakeholders: CWC, Arts Council, City staff, Parks and Recreation Commission, Downtown Association, Museum of Natural History, Leveelies, and bird enthusiasts, among other groups.

The Summit is designed to be collaborative and explorative to ensure that the Engagement Plan is comprehensive and representative of the community's desires. The Summit will explore and develop shared goals, identify the various participants' areas of expertise and current efforts, and highlight current areas of overlap and gaps. This process should lead to a prioritized list of engagement opportunities to pursue and a feasible work plan that will lead to a truly engaging Riverwalk. Should the Committee support this approach, staff will arrange for the Summit to take place by December and bring recommendations back to City Council either in early January 2017.

### **Next Steps and Options**

The Committee has two options in terms of referring the matter to City Council.

Option 1: The Committee can direct staff to bring the various components together as one package to Council in January 2017. This would mean bringing the environmental design and elements and recommendations from the Engagement Summit to Council together in January 2017.

Option 2: The Committee can direct Staff to bring the recommendations on action items earlier to City Council in order to maintain momentum on the items that are ready to move forward. That means bringing the fencing and cameras recommendations to Council in November with a fiscal impact of \$200,000. Staff would then bring public engagement recommendations to Council in January as a separate item.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** Approval of either option 1 or 2 could result in an eventual fiscal impact of up to \$205,000 in FY 2017 (depending upon which elements of the environmental design recommendations City Council approves). The attached budget provides an overview of the proposal costs for FY 2017. City Council would need to authorize an appropriation of fund balance from the General Fund to accommodate the environmental design components. Please

note that the Summit facilitation costs will not exceed \$5,000, and the City has existing FY 2017 budget to support this effort.

Prepared by:	Approved by:
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Attachments:  
Riverwalk Fencing Map (Front Street)  
Riverwalk Safety Enhancement Budget