



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

DATE: 6/7/2018

AGENDA OF: 6/12/2018

DEPARTMENT: Economic Development

SUBJECT: Downtown Study Session and Santa Cruz Community Farmers' Market Recommendation (ED)

RECOMMENDATION: Receive a presentation and discuss initiatives in Downtown Santa Cruz for improved community spaces including the Downtown Library, public parking, housing development and the Downtown Farmers' Market.

Direct staff to pursue an agreement with the Santa Cruz Community Farmers' Market for development of a permanent downtown farmers' market on City-owned property facing Cathcart and Front Streets.

BACKGROUND: Our downtown is always changing, whether as a result of a natural disaster, like the fire of 1894 or the earthquake of 1989, or from rebuilding efforts or developments large and small. Numerous recent improvements, positive trends and critically needed housing development are changing Downtown Santa Cruz for the better. Changes like the opening of Abbott Square, new retail, restaurant and experiential retail venues, and expansion of second story and above office uses including the growth of the downtown tech community are contributing to a vibrant and reactivated downtown experience. Underway and upcoming physical changes include new and improved wayfinding signage, the launch of the City's Bike Share program, street beautification and substantial housing creation which are further contributing to a changing downtown landscape. One of the top Council Goals and Objectives included in the Council's Two Year Workplan is to provide long-term sustainability for our vibrant downtown. To that end, the following initiatives are recommended and supported by recent community outreach efforts, best practices in downtown revitalization and past Council direction:

1. creating and reinvesting in our community spaces, like a new, modern library with the space, technology and amenities requested by community members and library patrons during the facilities master planning process and the subsequent strategic planning process;
2. consolidating surface public parking lots to create more opportunities for higher and better uses including workforce and affordable housing development;
3. facilitating the Council Strategic Plan of entitling 500-600 new workforce, affordable and market rate housing units in the downtown; and
4. establishing a permanent, dedicated home for the Downtown Farmers' Market with four season functionality and appropriate amenities on a site best suited for its use.

The June 12th Study Session will touch on all of the above topics. This Staff Report is focused on the fourth initiative above; specifically to establish a permanent dedicated home for the Downtown Farmers' Market operated by the Santa Cruz Community Farmers' Markets (SCCFM).

The Downtown Farmers' Market is the largest and oldest in Santa Cruz, and currently takes place every Wednesday afternoon at parking lot #4 between Lincoln, Cedar, and Cathcart Streets. For more than 25 years, SCCFM, the non-profit responsible for operating the five area Farmers' Markets, has managed and operated the Downtown Farmers' Market. Each year, SCCFM has annually applied for a Major Special Event Permit to operate at its temporary location, which also requires notification to City Council per Council Policy 6.18 for any special event that will take place on six or more dates within a twelve-month period. In a recent statement released by SCCFM, the board affirmed their "longstanding intent to establish permanence for our markets. Our desire to create a dynamic space that will strengthen the relationship between the people of Santa Cruz and our agricultural partners is rooted in our mission to provide healthy food that supports local farms and the community of Santa Cruz."

DISCUSSION: The City has been in on-going discussions with SCCFM since late summer 2017, working to establish a permanent home for the Downtown Farmers' Market which would include facilities and amenities to meet their long-term needs and projected growth. In exploring the move to a new location, SCCFM wanted a permanent location that included enough space to accommodate the existing number of vendors, bathroom facilities, and an open air cover from the elements.

Parking lot #7 at the corner of Front Street and Cathcart Street was identified as a promising location for a permanent Downtown Farmers' Market. The shape and size of the lot is ideally suited for a single story multi-purpose venue anchored by the weekly farmers' market. Parking lot #7 is conveniently located adjacent to the Soquel parking structure and across the street from existing retail and a proposed residential development with a direct linkage through a planned public pedestrian corridor to the Riverwalk. Analysis conducted in 2015 identified the public parking surface lot as problematic for vertical development from a cost and efficiency perspective given the irregular shape and size of the lot. Expansion of the site into a single story multi-purpose public venue anchored by the Downtown Farmers' Market on Wednesday afternoons and providing public parking on non-market days, allows for higher and better use of the site and creates the opportunity for multiple downtown public venues, contributing to long term downtown vitality.

The existing market location covers roughly 50,000 square feet. The proposed location is a little over 40,000 square feet, but has the potential to be combined with a portion of the adjacent New Seasons parking lot on Wednesday afternoons to provide a comparable site roughly equivalent to the current site. This combined space would be sufficient to accommodate the existing 67 market vendors in a number of different layouts as well as their associated vendor trucks. Future efficiencies or offsite parking of vendor trucks could result in additional space for vendor growth as well as consideration of temporary street closures enabling future expansion. Preliminary design discussions have explored multiple open air cover possibilities that range from a more permanent roof structure to a more temporary and adaptable canvas cover. Discussions with SCCFM are on-going, but the board is "very excited and hopeful about the possibilities of the proposed Front Street site."

A potential agreement with SCCFM for development of a permanent farmers' market at parking lot #7 will be conditional on securing an agreement for use of the adjacent New Season parking lot during the summer season.

FISCAL IMPACT: \$1.3 million is included in the proposed FY 2019 Capital Improvements Budget from funds available in the Economic Development Trust Fund for use towards the development of the permanent Downtown Farmers' Market multi-purpose facility. There is no impact to the General Fund.

Prepared by:
Amanda Rotella

Economic Development
Coordinator

Submitted by:
Bonnie Lipscomb
Director of Economic
Development

Approved by:
Martin Bernal
City Manager

ATTACHMENTS:
None.