

November 19, 2020

MEMBERS OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

City of Long Beach
California

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file the Hamilton Loop Vision Plan (Council District 9).

DISCUSSION:

On Tuesday, July 24, 2018 the Uptown Open Space Vision Plan was adopted by the City Council, which identifies new and innovative opportunities to fill the need for publicly-accessible open space and recreation facilities in North Long Beach's Ninth City Council District. One such project called the Hamilton Loop, a greenbelt connector and walking loop around the 91 Freeway was prototyped as the final community celebration activity of the Uptown Open Space Vision Plan during the Color Block Walk. Since that time, the Hamilton Loop Vision Plan has further developed the concept for this project.

The Hamilton Loop is a greenbelt connector that will transform freeway embankments, streets, sidewalks, underpasses, and intersections in the Hamilton Neighborhood in North Long Beach, re-envisioning the freeway's infrastructure that has long divided and isolated this community. The Hamilton Loop proposes to use the existing embankment on Caltrans property on both the north and south sides of the 91 Freeway from Atlantic to Cherry as a greenbelt with a walking path and small park amenities including seating, shade, fitness and play equipment, dog runs and garden space.

The Hamilton Loop Vision Plan (Vision Plan), included as Attachment A, serves as a visionary document to guide potential future development of Hamilton Loop. The Vision Plan includes an existing conditions analysis, examination of opportunity types, summary of the public outreach process, and community-driven vision and implementation strategies. The Vision Plan is a plan for future open space investment along the 91 Freeway, anticipated over a long-term horizon, which will be implemented incrementally over time as productive sponsorships or partnerships can be established or as capital, maintenance, and operating resources allow.

The Project Team coordinated with the Hamilton Neighborhood Association and the Ninth District Council Office to host a series of community workshops and design charrettes over the course of nine months that empowered community members to examine and reimagine their seemingly limited park environment with creativity and imagination, while setting expectations in reality through a series of forced-choice decision making workshops. Given the large and diverse population, the public outreach targeted those who have been historically been left out of the planning process, including disadvantaged

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communities of color, Spanish primary speakers, and youth and families. This involved hosting public workshops at widely- accessible locations and platforms throughout the Hamilton neighborhood, including several park and neighborhood events that attract diverse populations, ensuring that materials were available in various languages, consistent with the City's Language Access Policy. The public outreach activities were highly visually engaging so that community members of all ages would gain an increased awareness of the open space, active transportation, and land use planning process.

The first workshop series involved analyzing the freeway embankment existing conditions and gathering information from the community about their observations and evaluated potential amenities and roadway configurations to potentially maximize the amount of area for the greenbelt open space. Information collected through in-person surveys and a prioritization exercise on what guiding principles future improvements to the freeway embankment should reflect. The survey was made available in-person at public workshops and was promoted through social media and by postcards that were sent each household in the Hamilton neighborhood. Participants also engaged in a forced-choice open space activity that allowed participants to evaluate the tradeoffs of different street configurations with additional park space, traffic patterns, bike lanes and parking. The outcome of the first workshop series was a community-proposed roadway configuration that included extending open space into the roadway, adding a bike lane, keeping one lane of parking and turning the street into a one-way road. The second workshop series focused on refining the landscape and urban design of the proposed new open space through public design charrettes. Through a Design Your Park activities players broke out into small groups with an illustrative map of the proposed Hamilton Loop project and within a limited budget and games pieces that depicted park amenities, matched desired amenities to areas where they could physically fit. The final design concept was presented at a design reveal celebration event at Michelle Obama Library.

After the design reveal celebration, a final draft of the final Hamilton Loop Vision Plan was prepared and presented to staff at California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), as the proposed project would require permitted use of the freeway embankment, which they own. Caltrans was concurrently planning for a freeway widening project in the same area proposed for the Hamilton Loop, and after several meetings and negotiation, they have agreed to incorporate changes to the freeway and associated retaining walls so that the Hamilton Loop project can fit on the embankment land as proposed. City staff will be pursuing a use permit from Caltrans for the area, so work can continue on the Hamilton Loop project concurrent with the Metro freeway widening project.

The Hamilton Loop Vision Plan was produced in partnership with Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Parks, Recreation and Marine, Council District Nine, and the Hamilton Neighborhood Association. The total cost of the Vision Plan was \$50,000, which was funded by a Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) Zone grant from Kaiser Permanente, funded through the Department of Health & Human Services.



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Parks and Recreation Commission approval is requested to allow the Vision Plan to be submitted to the City Manager and City Council for approval in a timely manner.

FISCAL IMPACT

The total cost of the Vision Plan was \$50,000, which was funded by a Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) Zone grant from Kaiser Permanente, funded through the Department of Health & Human Services. There is no fiscal or local job impact associated with this recommendation as the Vision Plan is intended to be the framework for future investment. The Vision Plan provides initial cost estimates for the Hamilton Loop project phases, although funding for all phases have not yet been identified and further detailed cost estimates will need to be created when implementation resources are identified. The work done throughout the Vision Plan process will become the basis for future grant funding requests as the City seeks grants for these and other citywide priorities. As municipal resources for maintaining and programming existing park facilities are already strained, the Vision Plan is long-term, intended to be phased in over time, as projects, operations, and maintenance funding becomes available, or as greater stewardship from community and corporate partners is identified.

SUGGESTED ACTION:

Approve recommendation.

Respectfully Submitted,



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APPROVED:



BRENT DENNIS
DIRECTOR

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Attachment A: Hamilton Loop Vision Plan

