



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Howard S. Lazarus, P.E., Director, Public Works Department
Gregory I. Guernsey, AICP, Director, Planning and Development Review Department

DATE: September 20, 2013

SUBJECT: Resolution No. 20130321-040 - Downtown Alley Master Plan

On March 21, 2013, Council passed Resolution No. 20130321-040 directing the City Manager to work with staff to explore options to conduct a Downtown Alley Master Plan, as well as to propose a timeframe for the plan. In response to this directive, staff from Public Works (PW) and Planning and Development Review (PDR) has conferred to explore options.

Staff recommends that a consultant team be hired to complete the proposed master plan under coordinated direction from five departments: Public Works, Austin Transportation, Planning and Development Review, Austin Resource Recovery and Watershed Protection. The consultant team should include expertise in civil engineering, green infrastructure, transportation, urban design and best practices for alley transformation.

In addition to engagement with City staff, stakeholders, and the general public, the process for developing the master plan would include:

- A thorough inventory of all Downtown alleys, including:
 - Legal status - ownership, easements and license agreements
 - Physical condition - paving, grading, drainage, lighting, etc.
 - Current uses - including garage access, loading/unloading, transportation, etc.
 - Existing obstructions
 - Existing utilities/infrastructure - both within the alley and available to support potential alley activation
- An evaluation and assessment of the positive and negative effects of prior alley vacations and easements
- Research and summary of best practices
- A consideration of special needs that alleys could serve including stormwater management, open space, special events, and pedestrian/bicycle access

- Analysis of potential positive and negative impacts of alleys on developability of adjacent parcels

The master plan would consider best practices from around the country and the world, build upon the framework developed in the Downtown Austin Plan, and incorporate findings from the “20ft WIDE” case study that was conducted in April 2013. The process and final deliverables would include:

- Inventory of existing conditions
- Recommendations for infrastructure upgrades
- Best practice “manual” for design and management of above and below grade infrastructure, including drainage, materials and landscape design
- Design and preliminary engineering for pilot projects in one or more specific locations to allow testing of different approaches
- Recommendations for regulatory and policy changes for alley vacations, easements and license agreements, maintenance, and temporary usage
- Recommendations for changes to alley function, including the potential for permanent activation
- Recommendations related to built elements outside the alleys (e.g., buildings, roadways, other infrastructure) that would improve the utility of alleys and enhance the community’s use and enjoyment of alleys
- A “how-to” manual for private and non-profit groups interested in alley activation projects and events
- Implementation plan including schedule and estimated budget

We estimate that the consultant services required to produce the master plan will cost approximately \$250,000 and take approximately 18 months from the time funding is identified. An additional staff person would also be needed to manage the consultant contract and facilitate the cross departmental team. While university and other community resources could be included in the process, this assistance would not avert the need for a consultant and an additional staff person. A dedicated funding source does not currently exist for the consultant costs or the additional staff person. If additional information is needed, please do not hesitate to contact us.

cc: Marc A. Ott, Sue Edwards, Robert D. Goode