

A G E N D A



Recommendation for Committee Action

Audit & Finance	Item ID		Agenda Number	
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Meeting Date:	5/27/15	Department:	Planning and Zoning
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Subject

Staff briefing on the South Central Waterfront Initiative.

Amount and Source of Funding

Fiscal Note

Purchasing Language:	
Prior Council Action:	
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Council Committee, Boards and Commission Action:	
MBE / WBE:	
Related Items:	

Additional Backup Information

In August of 2013 the Austin City Council passed a resolution (# 20130808-053) to initiate a comprehensive small-area planning process for an area that is being called the South Central Waterfront (SCW). The planning process now underway is known as the South Central Waterfront Initiative.

In early 2014, leveraging grant opportunities and community partnerships, Staff led a community planning process which engaged over 600 Austin citizens, as well as the area's largest property owners. Based on this work, in September, 2014, Staff delivered the South Central Waterfront (SCW) Interim Vision Framework Report to the City Council. This Report outlines a vision for how private investments, forecast to exceed \$1.2 billion of redevelopment in the next 20 years, can be coordinated with City investments and strategic partnerships, to yield positive change and community benefits, including significant affordable housing opportunities.

The SCW Interim Vision Framework Report outlined three components which are critical for success:

- A district-wide physical framework of connected refurbished and new “green” streets, pedestrian connections, and open spaces.
- A district-wide financial framework to capture the area’s value of investments, both public and private, in order to fund the physical improvements and to support affordable housing.
- Strategic City involvement to catalyze public/private partnerships required to achieve the vision.

The SCW Interim Vision Framework Report set a firm foundation for moving forward, with the help of consultant services, to complete the comprehensive small-area plan and implementation plan (master plan) by early 2016. The FY '15 budget included \$200K to procure consultant services (financial and economic, civil engineering, urban design) to assist Staff with completion of the master plan. Additionally, the City secured a federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) award to receive consultation services to be applied for design development of the green infrastructure elements of the SCW Plan, to further enrich the plan and implementation strategies.

The EPA has hired a nationally acclaimed firm, CMG Landscape Architecture (a finalist in the Waller Creek Competition), to begin work in Austin this summer. The initial site visit to Austin with the CMG team will take place in July, 2015, and their work will be completed by the end of the year. This work will complement and amplify the work of the final SCW master plan. In addition, the EPA involvement will position the City for future federal grant opportunities to aid with implementation.

To complete the master plan’s “financial framework,” the critical element to make implementation possible, the City has successfully completed a Request for Proposals for a financial/economic consultant. The Council is scheduled to consider approval of a contract with the financial/economic consultant at their June 18th meeting.

Action on the financial/economic consultant contract at the June 18th meeting is critical to the success of the SCW effort in the following ways:

- Will allow the financial/economic consultant to begin work in July, 2015, and to complete work by the end of 2015;
- Will allow the financial/economic consultant to work in tandem with the EPA team, which is critical to take full advantage of the federal grant opportunity; and
- Will ensure that the planning underway will move forward with a financially feasible, implementable strategy to fund community amenities and affordable housing.