



CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION AGENDA

In-Person

APRIL 9, 2024

5:30 p.m.

SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

PARTICIPATION: Members of the public may participate by being present at the Los Altos Council Chamber at Los Altos City Hall located at 1 N. San Antonio Rd, Los Altos, CA during the meeting. Public comment is accepted in person at the physical meeting location, or via email to PublicComment@losaltosca.gov.

RULES FOR CONDUCT: Pursuant to Los Altos Municipal Code, Section 2.05.010 "Interruptions and rules for conduct": Understanding that the purpose of the city council meetings is to conduct the people's business for the benefit of all the people, in the event that any meeting of the city council is willfully interrupted by a person or group of persons so as to render the orderly conduct of the meeting impossible, the mayor, mayor pro tem, or any other member of the city council acting as the chair may order the removal of the person or persons responsible for the disruption and bar them from further attendance at the council meeting, or otherwise proceed pursuant to Government Code Section 54957.0 or any applicable penal statute or city ordinance.

REMOTE MEETING OBSERVATION: Members of the public may view the meeting via the link below, but will not be permitted to provide public comment via Zoom or telephone. Public comment will be taken in-person, and members of the public may provide written public comment by following the instructions below.

<https://losaltosca-gov.zoom.us/j/87477676054?pwd=NbVaGbG0RTUVuE9Su1bTTiSlzKr1uf.1>

Telephone: 1-669-444-9171 / Webinar ID: 874 7767 6054 / Passcode: 852914

SUBMIT WRITTEN COMMENTS: Prior to the meeting, comments on matters listed on the agenda may be emailed to PublicComment@losaltosca.gov. Emails sent to this email address are sent to/received immediately by the City Council. Emails sent directly to the City Council as a whole or individually, and not sent to PublicComment@losaltosca.gov will not be included as a public comment in the Council packet.

Please note: Personal information, such as e-mail addresses, telephone numbers, home addresses, and other contact information are not required to be included with your comments. If this information is included in your written comments, they will become part of the public

record. Redactions and/or edits will not be made to public comments, and the comments will be posted as they are submitted. Please do not include any information in your communication that you do not want to be made public.

Correspondence submitted in hard copy/paper format must be received by 2:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting to ensure distribution prior to the meeting. Comments provided in hard copy/paper format after 2:00 p.m. will be distributed the following day and included with public comment in the Council packet.

The Mayor will open public comment and will announce the length of time provided for comments during each item.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

CONFIRM QUORUM

DISCUSSION ITEM(S)

1. Receive report from staff exploring the possibility of a Downtown Park through design and community outreach and provide further direction, if necessary

ADJOURNMENT

SPECIAL NOTICES TO THE PUBLIC

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the City of Los Altos will make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting. If you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the City Clerk 72 hours prior to the meeting at (650) 947-2610.



City Council Agenda Report

Meeting Date: April 9, 2024

Initiated By: City Council

Prepared By: Anthony Carnesecca

Approved By: Gabriel Engeland

Subject:
Downtown Park

COUNCIL PRIORITY AREA

- Business Communities
- Circulation Safety and Efficiency
- Environmental Sustainability
- Housing
- Neighborhood Safety Infrastructure
- General Government

RECOMMENDATION

Direct City staff to continue exploring the possibility of a Downtown Park through design and community outreach.

POLICY QUESTION(S) FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

Does the City Council wish to direct staff to continue exploring the possibility of a proposed downtown park with underground parking on Plazas 1 and 2 through community outreach and design?

FISCAL IMPACT

City staff will determine the total project costs as part of the next phase that will return to City Council for consideration.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The City Council action authorizing the review of the proposed project is exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3). Subsequent action taken during the review of the proposed project will be analyzed separately under CEQA.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

January 9, 2024

SUMMARY

- City Council directed City staff to explore the possibility of a downtown park with underground parking in the City-owned parking plazas.

- City staff has completed an initial analysis of the downtown parking plazas and created initial renderings of the identified location.
- City staff will continue engaging with the community in order to solicit feedback while working on a formal design.

PURPOSE

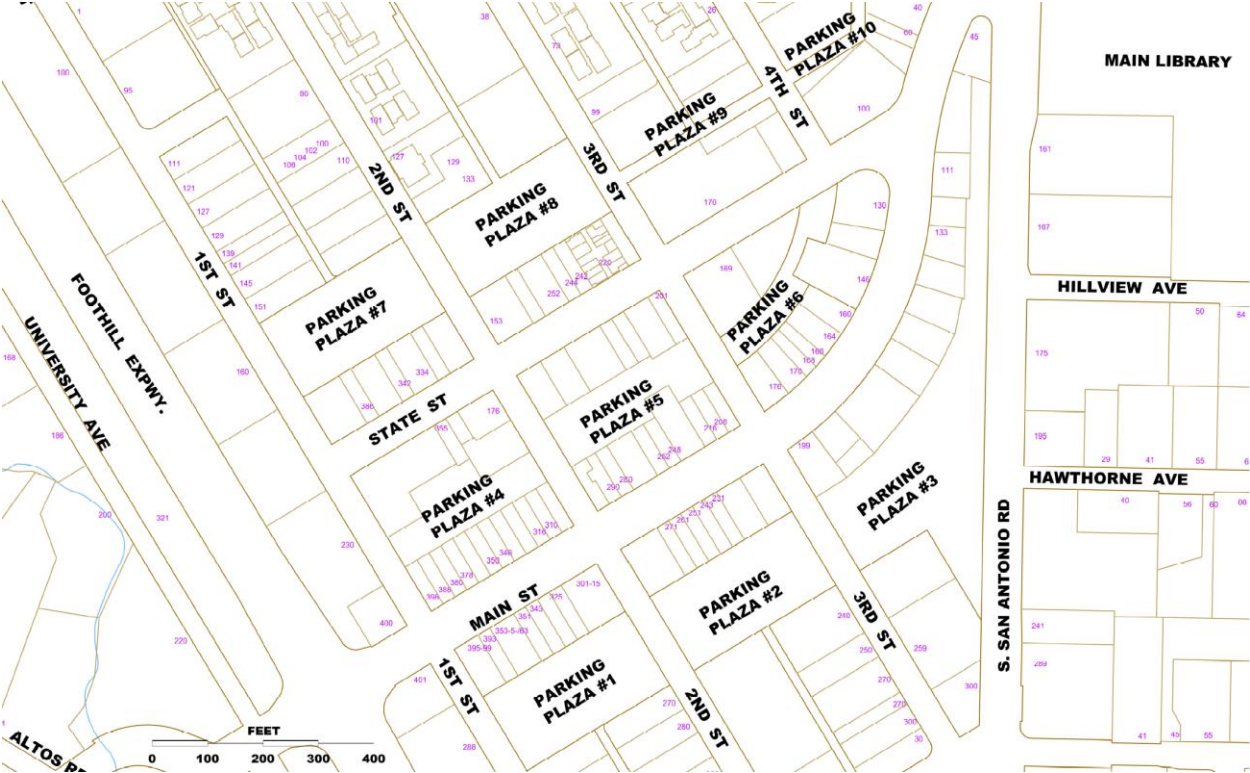
Explore the possibility of a downtown park with underground parking in the City-owned parking plazas.

BACKGROUND

As part of their Annual Retreat, the City Council directed City staff to explore the possibility of a downtown park with underground parking in the City-owned parking plazas. City staff initiated the exploratory research process to identify which parking plazas have the desirable characteristics and initial feasibility for the necessary project components.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

The map below illustrates the name for each of the downtown parking plazas for ease of conversation.



The map below is an aerial view of the same map as above.



Plaza #1 and Plaza #2 are one-acre rectangular parcels that would provide a clean development space for underground parking and park space which would meet all ideal criteria for both elements of the project. A portion of Plaza #2 has been designated as a potential site for the Downtown Theater through a non-binding Memorandum of Understanding while they continue to work through their capital campaign analysis.

Plaza #3 is an irregularly-shaped plaza that presents unique challenges for underground parking due to the long narrow entryway and its adjacency to a major corridor in San Antonio which could provide unsafe conditions for the park space.

The Central Plazas (Plaza #4, Plaza #5, and Plaza #6) are all ideal for a central paseo space that would allow pedestrians to meander through our central downtown core. However, these parcel shapes are less than ideal for underground parking because it would be difficult to build enough underground parking that would offset the lost at-grade parking.

Plaza #7 and Plaza #8 have been identified as housing sites in the Housing Element that may be converted into housing.

The City only owns one-quarter of the parcel that is Plaza #9 with three-quarters of the parcel owned by a private property owner.

Plaza #10 is an irregularly-shaped plaza that is directly adjacent to Village Park across Edith.

Due to the conditions mentioned above in the parking plazas, City staff recommends that Plaza #1 and a portion of Plaza #2 may provide the best conditions for an at-grade park space with two levels of underground parking for three major reasons.

First, these plazas are the only remaining rectangular-shaped parking plazas that have not been assigned another purpose that would provide ideal underground parking. The other parking plazas are less than ideal for underground parking due to the irregular shapes.

Second, these plazas provide a large enough space that would allow for an alley behind the existing parcels along Main Street and yield a quality green space. The Central Plazas would become very tiny or need to be entirely paved over in order to meet existing requirements for emergency vehicle access to the parcels along Main and State Street.

Finally, a park in this location would potentially provide high-quality parking for downtown employees on the second level of underground parking that would allow vehicles to remain protected from the elements and keep these vehicles out of the main parking corridors for visitors and residents along Main Street, State Street, and in the Central Plazas.

There would be a number of benefits provided by a beautiful new park space with underground parking as compared to the existing at-grade parking in Parking Plazas #1 and #2. This project would further the City Council Strategic Goals #1 through #4:

- Business Communities – Provide a benefit to the downtown business community through a new community space that will allow new visitors to spend their time and money in our main commercial district. It will provide high quality park space and parking spaces along with protected, secure underground parking for employee vehicles.
- Circulation Safety and Efficiency – Improve circulation safety of the downtown by calming this portion of the downtown parking plazas from solely vehicular traffic in at-grade parking. Parking plaza efficiency will significantly increase with a new flow of traffic that is oriented to maximum benefit.
- Environmental Sustainability – Enhance from the existing asphalt parking to green space with state-of-the-art sustainable amenities in addition to the new trash enclosures that will ensure trash is well-maintained and not entering the public right-of-way.
- Housing – Utilize portions of the Housing Element which identify integration of public park facilities with or nearby multi-family housing.

This is what Parking Plaza #1 looks like on a normal Tuesday afternoon as of March 2024.



Below are draft renderings that were created in order to help facilitate the conversation with both the City Council and community surrounding this initiative. These renderings illustrate what a downtown park space would look like with underground parking that run from 1st to 3rd Street.

This rendering shows what the space would look like on an ordinary day with a new Downtown Park and passive use of the green space and activity nodes.



This additional rendering shows what the space would look like when activated for an event with many residents and visitors gathered on the green space.



City staff plans to take these renderings and map to a number of community engagement events in order to educate the community about this Council priority and solicit feedback while working through a design.

City staff has presented this concept in theory to several community stakeholder groups with initial positive feedback. These included a Bagels & Business Presentation to the Los Altos Village Association on February 27 and a Presentation to the Los Altos Community Coalition on March 22.

Furthermore, staff plans to present to the Los Altos Chamber of Commerce Government Affairs Committee and Los Altos Property Owners Downtown. City staff will coordinate a Community Meeting co-sponsored by various organizations and is exploring the possibility of hosting educational booths at downtown special events, such as First Friday and the Los Altos Farmers Market.

Moving forward, City staff is presenting these renderings in order to confirm that staff is proceeding in the correct direction based upon initial Council direction and should continue to facilitate community feedback on this project while exploring the financial feasibility for the project.

City staff will present this item as a Capital Improvement Project in the FY25 budget to expend Park-in-Lieu funds on a Design that will allow staff to explore the formal layout of the space, true cost of this project, and potential funding sources. Initially, City staff believes that the costs for the park space and replacement parking for the park space could be covered by Park-in-Lieu fees, the costs for sewer improvements could be covered by Sewer Funds, and the remaining costs could be covered by grants or General Fund.

At this point in time, the total cost and funding sources will need to be formalized through the next steps that would return to City Council for review.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Presentation

Downtown Park

City Council Meeting
April 7, 2024



Background

- City Council directed staff to evaluate the potential for at-grade park space with parking located underground within downtown as a priority for 2024







Parking Plaza #1 and #2



Parking Plaza #3

Central Parking Plazas: Parking Plaza #4, #5 & #6





North Parking Plazas:
Parking Plaza #7, #8, #9 & #10

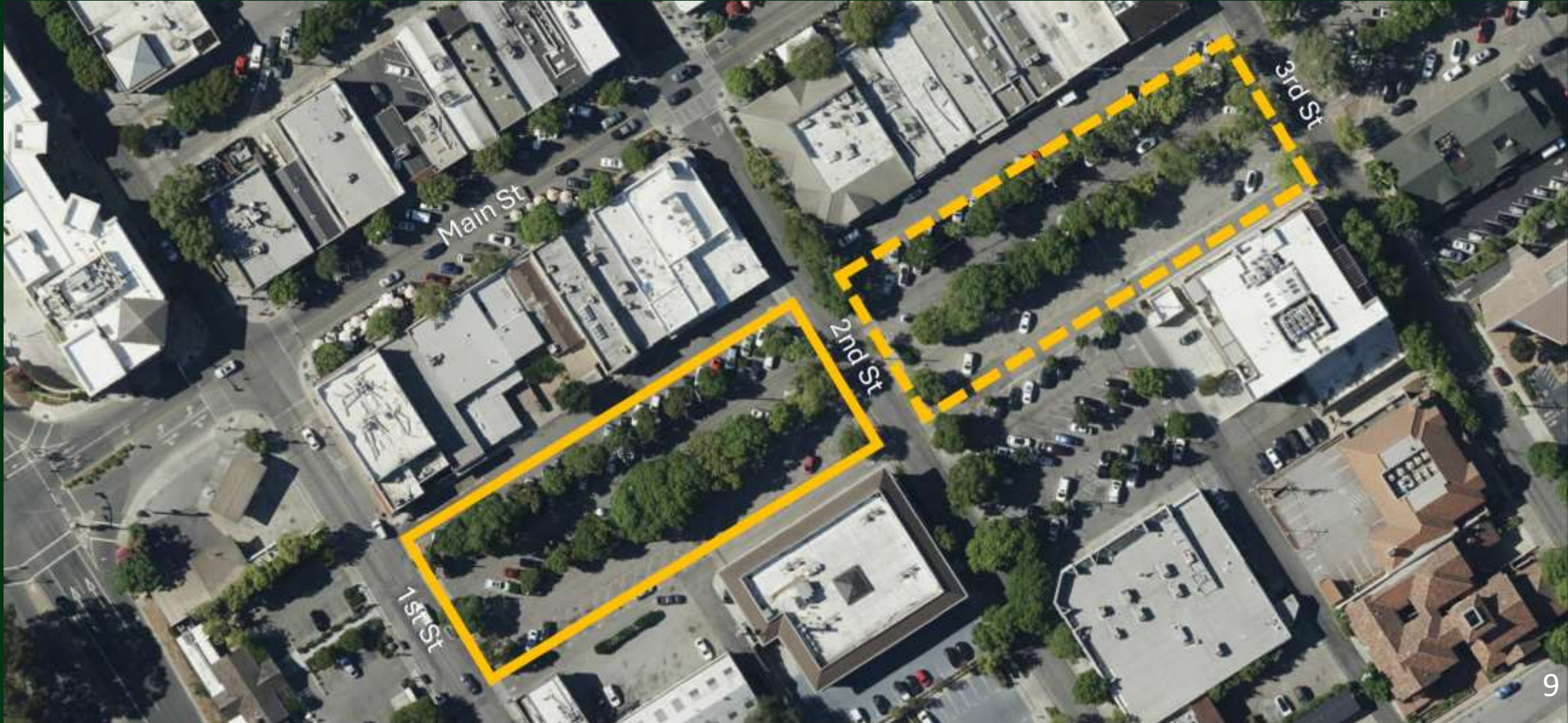
Preferred Location: Parking Plaza #1 and #2



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Existing Conditions



Parking Stalls

Location	Standard	ADA	Total
Plaza 1	127	4	131
Plaza 2	126	6	132
Total	253	10	263

Note: No current bicycle parking in either plaza



Parking Stalls



Overhead Utilities



Overhead Utilities



Trash Receptacles



Landscaping



Signage

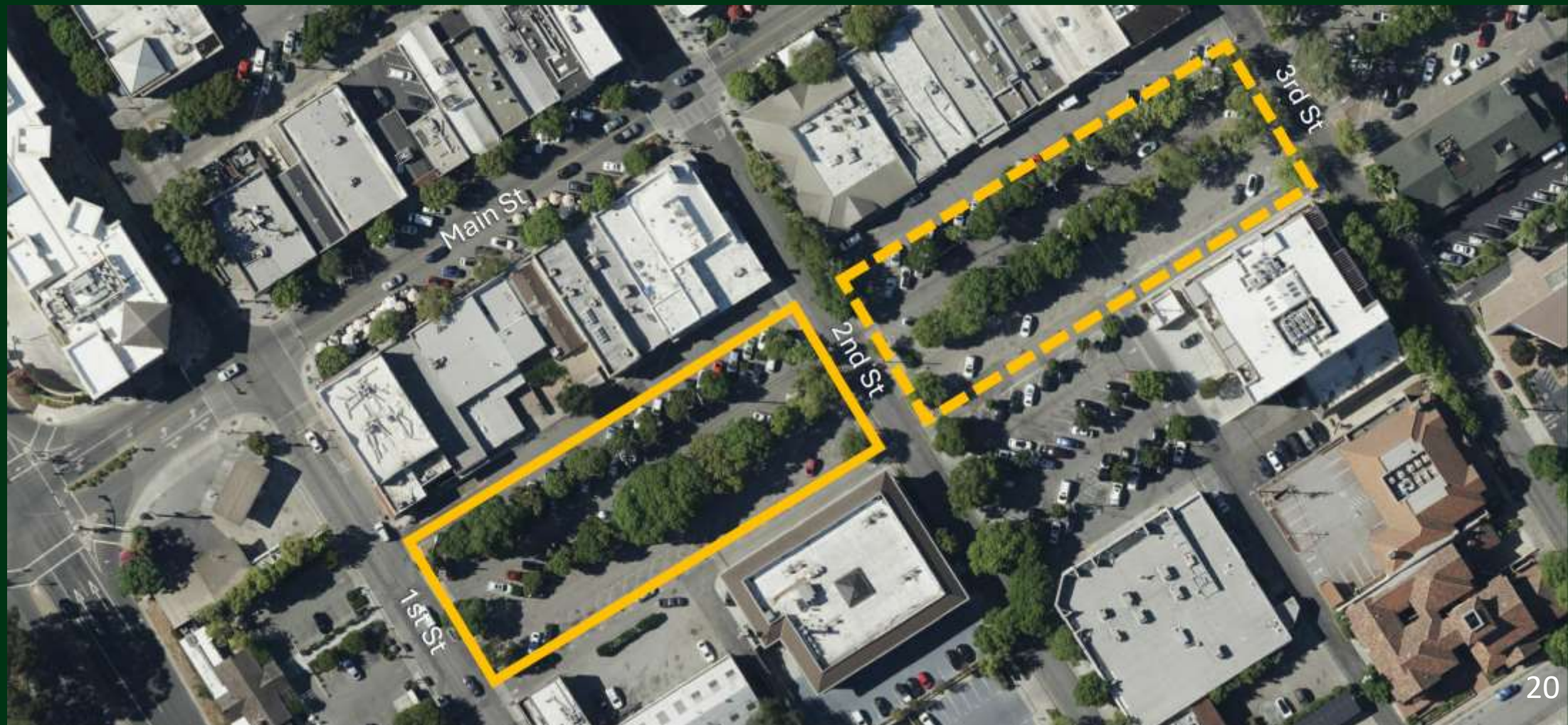








Existing Conditions



Proposed Park



Design Features



- 1 **Central green** with sloped sides for seating, potential space for small events
- 2 **Play area** for children
- 3 Central paved area and pedestrian connection
- 4 Trees and landscaping with seating
- 5 Amenity buildings (elevators from parking garage, restrooms, trash collection, etc.)
- 6 **Plaza** fronting new theatre
- 7 Ramp to underground parking structure
- 8 **Raised crosswalk** for traffic calming and pedestrian access
- 9 **"Slow" streets** for multimodal use and servicing





Next Steps

- Community Outreach
- Design

Melissa Thurman

From: Roberta Phillips <robertaphillips1@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, April 7, 2024 12:20 PM
To: Public Comment; City Council
Subject: Study Session Public Comment April 9,2024 Downtown Park
Attachments: City Council Study Session April 9.docx

Dear Council Members

Please see the attached letter to public Comments for the April 9th Council Study Session on a Downtown Park.

Sincerely

Roberta Phillips

City Council Study Session April 9,2024 Downtown Park

Dear Council Members,

Staff is proposing a downtown Park with underground parking for lots 1 and 2.

Please refrain from moving forward with this project for the following reasons:

1. Los Altos already has two parks downtown. They are Lincoln Park and Village Park at SanAntonio Rd.

Additional Park space is needed in other parts of town such as El Camino.

2. Underground parking is extremely expensive. In Nick Zorns presentation to LACC he said each spot costs approximately \$80,000. Although costs are not provided in this Staff report, a project of this magnitude will cost at minimum of \$25,000,000.

3. Most people do not feel safe in underground parking as we live in an earthquake prone area. In addition, safety is sketchy after dark. Underground Parking attracts the homeless, crime, fires and is a threat to public safety.

4. It is clear that this project is considering a new theater on lot #2. Most residents do not think the Bus Barn theater should move from its current location where there is a lot of available parking.

5. Park-In-Lieu fees should be used for upgrades to the parks and playground equipment, which are at their end of life. It does not make sense that millions of dollars in Park-In -Lieu fees can be used for underground parking and not for above ground parking

6. The City should not start any new projects until they fix the outstanding issues such as the lack of hot running water and needed upgrades to electrical panels at Grant Park to provide even a window air conditioner.

7. The new LACI project will include a new kitchen for employees, while the kitchen at Grant Park remains closed by the Health Department.

8. Staff time should be used to repair and maintain existing public facilities, roads, sidewalks and parks. Our town is covered in weeds. We need to be stewards of our town, before we move on to aspirational ideas. There is limited staff time.

9. This project shows bias towards downtown land owners and the hand full of favorite people with influence in town. It sends a message that regular residents don't matter and only the chosen few are listened to. Jonathan Weinberg already said he is ready to cut the ribbon for a new theater even before any money was raised for the project. Neysa Fligor said Vicky Reeder is her close friend. Are you looking for community input or just going through the motions to do favors and provide financial gain for the "in crowd" Is there a predetermined outcome? Do you respect the needs of Los Altos Residents?

10. We need a new Police Department and a new roof on the fire house. Isn't public safety a top priority?

Melissa Thurman

From: Pat Marriott <patmarriott@sbcglobal.net>
Sent: Sunday, April 7, 2024 5:24 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT STUDY SESSION APRIL 9, 2024 coment 1 of 2

Council Members:

When considering a park and underground garage downtown, the first question I ask myself – and one you should be asking yourselves – is this: “Why is Staff spending time on this wishful thinking future project when the Grant Park community center has been ignored for years?”

The latest budget, dated 9-6-23, says the status of the Grant Park Facility Project # : CF-01034 is “Design.” Is that true? Since I’m not aware of any schedule, it’s hard to know. However, there’s a staff report from April 24, 2028 with the following information:

Subject: Professional Services Agreement: Grant Park Center Commercial Kitchen Design

Attachment:

1. Grant Park Kitchen Assessment, Strata Architecture, dated November 2, 2017

Initiated by:

City Council – CIP Project CF - 01008

Previous Council Consideration:

November 14, 2017

Fiscal Impact:

\$124,500 – Utilizing Park in Lieu Funds, included in the Capital Improvement Program.

Policy Questions for Council Consideration:

-Does Council desire to continue with the Grant Park Commercial Kitchen CIP CF-0100817 as originally scoped at an anticipated cost increase?

-Does Council desire to reduce the possible scope of the proposed kitchen improvements to adhere to the approved \$521,400 project budget?

And there’s a campaign email from Vice Mayor Pete Dailey:

On Tuesday, November 1, 2022, 10:51 PM, Pete Dailey for Los Altos City Council <progress@pete4losaltos.com> wrote:

... Los Altos has invested heavily in the beautiful new community center downtown. I supported that investment and I believe it is a great asset for the community. But we have a senior center at Grant Park that is lacking and needs attention and investment too. Here's a little video I recently shot at Grant Park.

https://url.avanan.click/v2/___https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUyCoYY93Vs___YXAzOmxvc2FsdG9zY2E6YTpvOjE3ZjkzZWVjNWE5MDc0MGQ0OGJjZjRIOGJjZGYyMDhkOjY6ZGNmYzo1MDY3MzkzOTI1NmQ5OWM3ZmViZTAxMzU2NDc1M2NhOWZjYzI5N2E5ZGExOThjYTIIOWEwZmMxYzE2YTUzZGU4OnQ6VA

As the Chair of the Los Altos Parks and Recreation Commission, I worked hard to send recommendations to council to reopen the kitchen at Grant Park and get the Senior Center back to full operation.

When I try to come up with an answer to my question, the only one I can think of is this: "Council prioritizes the aspirations of downtown business and property owners over the needs of its seniors."

I would be interested in your answers.

Thank you,

Pat Marriott

Melissa Thurman

From: Freddie ParkWheeler <freddiep99@yahoo.com>
Sent: Sunday, April 7, 2024 7:34 PM
To: Public Comment
Cc: Freddie Wheeler
Subject: Park/Parking Garage Community Outreach

Dear Mayor Weinberg, Vice Mayor Dailey, and Council Members Meadows, Fligor, and Lee Eng,

Is there any way we can find more effective ways to inform community members about projects that the City is contemplating and solicit feedback from them? The recent Downtown Parking Strategy 3 Community Outreach events are examples of city-organized events where turnout was much less than what an informed Council needs to know in order to determine if the community supports the parking strategies being explored. This poor turnout was in spite of the City putting ads in the Town Crier publicizing the 3 outreach events and in spite of a notice in the City Manager Weekly Update. The City has also sponsored a Survey to get feedback from residents (it would be interesting to know the number of respondents). There was also an article in the Town Crier about the proposed Park/Underground Parking Garage.

On March 12, the City sponsored a virtual workshop with a small turnout. However, there were technical difficulties when the attendees were supposed to go to “break out” rooms.

On March 19, the City hosted an in person workshop. How many people attended? Did the organizers feel it was a success?

On April 5, the City had two consultants (Brian Canepa with W-Trans and Dave Javid with Plan to Place) man a table at Veterans Plaza from 4:00pm to 5:55pm to solicit feedback about the park/underground parking garage being proposed to replace surface parking in Parking Plazas 1 and 2. In that almost 2 hour time period exactly 10 people visited the table and of those, 3 spent less than 2 minutes. Another 2 had their dogs with them and did not look at the map of the downtown triangle that was on the table so may not have discussed it. The consultants only had 1 table with them and it only had one map of the downtown triangle, a QR code for the survey, and a blank piece of white paper for residents to jot down their comments. There were no signs on the table identifying its purpose or signs/banners of any kind alerting passersby that a pop up workshop was being conducted or what the workshop was about. And the consultants did not reach out to passersby to try to engage them in a discussion (yes I watched them for the entire 2 hours). So at best, 4 maybe 6 people provided the consultants with feedback on the proposed park on top of an underground parking garage in Parking Plazas 1 and 2.

I know that it’s frustrating that no one pays attention until whatever change is in the works affects them personally. But perhaps we can improve on some aspects of our outreach efforts. For one thing, signs and banners letting people know what was happening at the table in Veterans Plaza on April 5 might have garnered a lot more interest and hopefully more people would have been willing to share their thoughts with the two consultants.

The consultants could learn from watching a booth at a trade convention. The sales teams know that if they want people to come into their booth and see what theyre selling, they have to attract the attention

of people walking past their booth. Generally sales people will speak to passersby and try to inform them in what they're selling. There's usually candy or free tchotchkes to entice people to come to the booth. I'm sure the City spent a lot of money paying the two consultants to stand there for 2 hours - paying a few dollars more for some candy or tchotchkes to get people to come talk to them might have caught the attention of some but certainly asking the people who walked by if they were aware of plans to replace surface parking with a park and underground garage would surely have interested many Los Altans. It was First Friday, there were people in Veterans Plaza and walking by.

What can we do to do a better job informing residents and getting their feedback? Would you consider hiring a consultant to provide ideas and implement a few of the ideas? Could we please try some banners across Main Street? We advertise the Art & Wine Festival and other events using banners. It can't hurt and might just help.

I am not writing to criticize Staff. I know they have tried to implement every means of advertising these 3 events. I'm just asking for some research being conducted to figure out how to improve outreach so that the City gets better feedback. I would really like residents to know what's being contemplated in our city with city funds. We need to have better, more effective **two-way** communication.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best,

Freddie Wheeler



Melissa Thurman

From: Pat Marriott <patmarriott@sbcglobal.net>
Sent: Monday, April 8, 2024 11:22 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT STUDY SESSION APRIL 9, 2024 comment 2 of 2

Council Members:

The park rendering is attractive. No doubt this proposed park would add charm to the downtown triangle. However,

- The underground garage would be hugely expensive. By the time it could be built, the cost would probably be more than currently assumed. Counting on park-in-lieu fees of the future is not prudent. “Don’t count your chickens before they hatch.”
- Residents along El Camino don’t have a neighborhood park. More residents will eventually live in the Distel Drive building and they should have green space nearby.
- I’m not the only person who doesn’t feel safe in underground garages, regardless of security cameras or key card access.

Beyond those specific project issues, I’m bothered by the fact that Staff gave their presentation to LACC before it came before Council and residents.

At the LACC meeting, Mr. Carnesecca said, “We’re excited to take this to city council and get the next steps under way, which will include community outreach. By the time we present to city council we will have the rendering ready to share with Council in the community.”

I expressed my concerns to City Manager Engeland. He replied that Staff has given several similar presentations. Mr. Carnesecca “provided the same information to various groups around town, some large, some small, and some individuals. ... Any resident or group can ask about an idea/concept and what is going on in that space.”

How would a resident know what’s going on if it hasn’t been discussed in a publicized city meeting? I only became aware of a potential park/garage downtown through a blurb in the Town Crier (below) about the LACC meeting.

Many independent groups seem to have an inside track on projects discussed at City Hall. Apparently Kim Cranston isn’t the only one who knew about the park/garage concept in order to ask Nick Zornes for a presentation.

It’s also obvious that the focus of the project is to benefit businesses. In his presentation, Mr. Carnesecca said, “This could be a beautiful amenity that could draw a number of individuals into our town and hopefully provide a ton of benefits for our business Community.”

We all want a thriving business district, but how about at least professing an interest in current future downtown residents by providing a park for them? Children were only mentioned once during the presentation. Residents were mentioned only twice, as shoppers being directed to businesses.

I'm not criticizing Staff. This is a Council policy issue regarding transparency and Council's role as elected representatives of all residents.

Private groups should not get preferential treatment to discuss future scenarios before the general public is informed.

Respectfully,

Pat Marriott