

Capitola City Council

Agenda Report



Meeting: March 27, 2025

From: Community Development Department

Subject: Consultant Contract - 41st Avenue Corridor Plan

Recommended Action: Authorize the City Manager to execute an agreement with SWA Group for preparation of a 41st Avenue Corridor Plan in an amount not to exceed \$105,000, subject to City Attorney review and approval.

Background: The 41st Avenue corridor is a vital commercial area within Capitola. Over the years, the City has conducted multiple studies to explore its potential for revitalization. The 2009 "41st Avenue Corridor Economic Development/Mixed Use Revitalization Study" and the 2011 "41st Avenue/Capitola Mall Re-Visioning Plan" provided valuable insights into economic growth and redevelopment challenges. These plans are linked in the Attachments as Attachment 2 and 3, respectively.

The 2009 Study focused on strategies for economic development and mixed-use projects to improve the corridor's appeal and functionality. Building on this, the 2011 Plan proposed a comprehensive vision to integrate 41st Avenue with the Capitola Mall, and touched on economic development, land use, urban design, parking, and traffic and circulation issues. Many of the recommendations from these studies have been incorporated into the City's General Plan and Zoning Code to guide property owners and local businesses.

Since the studies were completed, the City has made several key updates to its Municipal Code that affect economic development on the 41st Avenue corridor, including:

1. Allowing vertical and horizontal mixed-use in all commercial and mixed-use districts.
2. Reducing parking requirements.
3. Enabling low-impact commercial uses without the need for a planning permit.
4. Offering incentives for increased building height and floor area in exchange for community benefits.
5. Updating the sign code to allow administrative approval of signs that comply with standards.
6. Raising the threshold for when a conditional use permit is required.
7. Updating development review criteria to be objective and quantifiable.

While some of the studies' recommendations have been implemented, due to feasibility, cost, and staffing resources, some action items have not been implemented, including:

1. Establish a unified design theme and brand identity.
2. Improve infrastructure to attract desired retailers.
3. Develop "complete streets," connecting the corridor with nearby neighborhoods.
4. Enhance pedestrian and bicycle access.
5. Relocate the Metro Transit Center.
6. Develop urban amenities to attract residential and mixed-use developments.
7. Assess the feasibility of a public facility and parking structure.
8. Implement short-term improvements such as enhanced wayfinding, landscaping, and public spaces.
9. Adopt placemaking strategies to integrate retail, dining, and entertainment, making the corridor more appealing for locals and visitors.

On August 22, 2024, the City Council adopted Resolution No. 4392, adopting the 6th Cycle Capitola Housing Element which identifies the 41st Avenue, including the Capitola Mall, as a significant site for future housing development. This designation underscores the need to transform the corridor to accommodate higher-density residential development while improving its overall appeal and functionality.

Discussion: To support a long-term vision for a multimodal corridor within a regional commercial district, the City issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to select a consultant for the development of the 41st Avenue Corridor Plan. This type of plan focuses on identifying potential changes to public spaces to help create the type of spaces that facilitate the City's long-term vision for the corridor. The RFQ process was used to obtain expert input and ensure the selection of a firm with the necessary experience and technical expertise.

Five consultants submitted proposals. Following a comprehensive evaluation, the City staff is recommending SWA Group for the contract award. SWA Group was selected based on the proposed scope of work and the qualifications of their interdisciplinary team, which includes planners, graphic designers, and civil engineers. Their experience in corridor planning, urban design, and infrastructure improvements aligns with the City's objectives for the 41st Avenue corridor. The proposed scope of work includes several phases, with deliverables outlined for each phase.

Phase 1: Project Initiation and Background Analysis

- Kickoff meeting with City staff
- Identify stakeholders
- Identify needed data, resources, and existing documents
- Site visit with SWA and staff to walk, bike, and drive the corridor
- Inventory (photos)
- Develop base maps
- Review history, identify cultural conditions/influences, and economic context
- Identify opportunities and constraints
- Other deliverables: initial stakeholder outreach, revise schedule, visioning principles, bi-weekly team calls

Phase 2: Visioning and Concept Development

- Visioning and concept development
- Community meetings/engagements
- Preliminary corridor improvement concepts
- Integrated street design, placemaking, and greenspaces
- Infrastructure assessment – housing, safety, utilities
- Stakeholder meetings – transit, regulatory agencies, advocacy groups
- Other deliverables: completed conceptual design, narrative document of theme, opportunities/constraints, core values, bi-weekly team calls

Phase 3: Concept Design Refinement

- Refine concepts and consider alternatives
- Second community outreach meetings
- Right of way improvements feasibility analysis
- Visual exploration and mood board to identify colors, typography, and imagery
- Present concepts to City Council
- Other deliverables: renderings of improvements, bi-weekly team calls

Phase 4: Finalization and Phasing Strategy

- Development of priorities – Phasing Plan
- Comprehensive final document – Corridor Plan
- Finalize maps, renderings, exhibits
- Community engagement summary
- Presentation to City Council outlining next steps
- Other deliverables: estimate of probable cost, menu of improvements

The 41st Avenue Corridor Plan will serve as a strategic planning document that identifies key issues, assesses current conditions, and establishes a long-term vision with recommended improvements. The plan will inform subsequent, detailed projects aimed at improving the corridor's function and appearance. Additionally, the City will use the final plan to pursue grant opportunities for design and implementation phases.

Timeline: Staff anticipates work with SWA Group to commence in April 2025, with public outreach and stakeholder engagement scheduled throughout the year. The final plan is expected to be completed by early 2026.

Fiscal Impact: Funding for this contract is included in the City's budget, with up to \$75,000 allocated in the FY 2024-25 budget and an additional \$35,000 from the REAP 2.0 Grant, for a total of \$105,000.

Attachments:

1. Contract with Scope as Appendix One – SWA Group
2. 2009 Study^{**}:
https://www.cityofcapitola.org/sites/default/files/fileattachments/community_development/page/15411/2009_41st_avenue_corridor_economic_development_mixed_use_revitalization_study.pdf
3. 2011 Plan:
https://www.cityofcapitola.org/sites/default/files/fileattachments/community_development/page/1463/41st_ave_revisioning_plan.pdf

*** This report was revised on March 25th at 9:30 AM to correct the link for Attachment 2.*

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Reviewed By: Julia Gautho, City Clerk, and Samantha Zutler, City Attorney

Approved By: Jamie Goldstein, City Manager