

Capitola City Council

Agenda Report



Meeting: October 10, 2024

From: Community Development Department

Subject: RFQ for 41st Avenue Corridor Plan

Recommended Action: Authorize staff to issue a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for a 41st Avenue Corridor Plan.

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.

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 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 help establish a vision for a more vibrant, multimodal corridor within a thriving regional commercial district, a cohesive planning effort should take place to lay the framework for future investment. Staff recommends the City issue a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) from consultants rather than requesting specific project proposals. Staff is suggesting an RFQ process due to the City's overall goals and limited budget for this project. The RFQ allows the City to:

1. Gather Expert Input: Firms can provide valuable feedback and innovative ideas, helping to craft a cost-effective scope of work tailored to Capitola's needs.
2. Encourage Broader Participation: An RFQ minimizes the upfront investment for firms, making it more likely that experienced teams will submit proposals, even with a smaller budget.
3. Focus on Qualifications: The RFQ prioritizes selecting firms with the most relevant experience, ensuring the City works with experts capable of delivering the best outcomes.
4. Maintain Flexibility: The City can refine the project scope based on input from qualified firms, ensuring an adaptable and collaborative planning process.

This approach helps ensure the corridor plan scope of work is both innovative and aligned with the City's budget.

A corridor plan is a coordinated planning tool that lays the groundwork for future investment. It identifies key issues, addresses current conditions, provides a long-term vision for the future, and recommends improvements. Staff recommends issuing an RFQ to solicit input from qualified firms with expertise in corridor planning, focusing on mobility and placemaking improvements. The RFQ will outline the need for a multifaceted approach, including:

1. Multimodal streets designed for pedestrians, bicycles, cars, and public transit.
2. Greenspaces and public gathering areas to enhance livability.
3. Placemaking and branding through public art, lighting, landscaping, and street furniture.
4. Safety enhancements such as better crossings, lighting, and wayfinding.
5. Planning for future housing/increased population as identified in the Housing Element.

The 41st Avenue Corridor Plan marks the first step in establishing a foundation for future investment and planning along Capitola's busiest thoroughfare. This initial planning effort will develop a high-level concept for subsequent, more detailed projects aimed at transforming the corridor into a more attractive space for both businesses and residents. The resulting concept will serve as a blueprint for incremental changes over the next decade. Additionally, the City will use the final plan to pursue grant opportunities related to detailed design and implementation.

Timeline: Staff plans to publish the RFQ in October with a deadline for submittals in February 2025.

Fiscal Impact: Funding for this RFQ process is included in the City's budget for up to \$75,000 and REAP 2.0 Grant of \$35,000, for a total of \$105,000.

Attachments:

1. 41st Avenue Corridor Plan Request For Qualifications

Report Prepared By: Katie Herlihy, Community Development Director

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

Approved By: Jamie Goldstein, City Manager