

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 interest 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 and 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