



CITY OF PACIFICA  
COUNCIL AGENDA SUMMARY REPORT

8/8/2016

**SUBJECT:**

Palmetto Streetscape Design Recommendations

**STAFF CONTACT:**

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**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

Move to approve the proposed revisions to the original (2013) Palmetto streetscape plan as recommended by staff and the Economic Development Committee (EDC), authorize the City Manager to enter into engineering services agreements to revise the plans for an amount not to exceed \$150,000, and to proceed with the advertisement of the project for bid.

**BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION:**

**Palmetto Streetscape: Direction, Commitment and Volunteers to Deliver Phase I**

**Current Status:** Phase I of Palmetto Streetscape is on schedule to go out for bid in October 2016 when the \$1M One Bay Area Grant (OBAG) funds are available. Staff anticipates construction will begin during the first quarter 2017 depending on the weather. The length of the construction and the sequence of construction activities are expected to be jointly developed by the contractor and the city in the first quarter 2017. Staff will inform Palmetto businesses, property owners, and the residents promptly.

**Council Priority and Direction:** In February 2015 Council made the Palmetto streetscape a high priority for action. Council recognized the several-year time lapse between the initial development of the Palmetto streetscape plan and Council's renewed priority. Therefore, in March 2015, Council assigned responsibility to the Economic Development Committee (EDC) for updating the Palmetto streetscape project. The assignment could include holding public meetings and refining the project phases to be within the City's funding ability, and returning to the Council with a proposal to move the project forward.

***EDC Launches Palmetto Business Visits; Makes Design Recommendation to Council:***

The EDC began Palmetto business visits in February 2016. As of August 1 the EDC and staff have reached 34 of the 52 businesses on the street, and made a total of over 54 visits. (The EDC visited businesses on an ongoing basis to listen to their concerns, and build working

relationships.) The EDC members have heard businesses voice concern about the Palmetto project delays, and eagerness to have this project move forward to completion. At its meeting of June 22, the EDC reviewed and unanimously approved the Palmetto streetscape recommendations included in this report.

**Staff Outreach to Other Stakeholders:** In addition to Palmetto businesses, staff met with: 12 property owners and will continue to reach property owners in the weeks ahead; 7 West Sharp Park Advisory Committee (WSPAC) members; 22 Sharp Park residents; and, 55 members of the public through outreach at Earthday, April 23 and Pacifica Democrats Club, May 21. Staff found support for the project, and often comments to make it even better.

**Pacificans, Pacifica Rotary International, Pacifica Chamber of Commerce and San Mateo SBDC Join EDC to Volunteer Support for Palmetto:** Several individuals and entities have reached City staff to volunteer support for the Palmetto Streetscape! They are listed here:

1. Two business owners have volunteered to reestablish the block captain network to get information to merchants during construction, and to advocate for the streetscape. They have been instrumental in informing current staff of merchant concerns and goals for the project.
2. The Pacifica Chapter of Rotary International has voted to adopt Palmetto as a multi-year project. After the City Council action on this staff report, staff will meet with Rotary representatives to identify the best ways to move forward with this generous commitment.
3. Pacifica's Recology office has volunteered to support the beautification and maintenance of the landscaped seating area just south of Montecito on Palmetto next to the southbound bus stop. Recology wishes to continue this activity until the site is redeveloped as proposed with the hotel and library.
4. Two businesses have expressed interest in helping to launch the banner program based on their experience and expertise, and one business has expressed interest in helping to create the Phase III arch across Palmetto.
5. The EDC's Palmetto Outreach Subcommittee has begun its multi-year effort to open and maintain communication with Palmetto businesses. This effort has been coordinated with the Pacifica Chamber of Commerce CEO Vickie Flores and the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Director Robert Shoffner. These individuals have gone door-to-door together to provide businesses information on Palmetto streetscape plans, Chamber benefits and activities, and the training and consulting services offered free by the Small Business Administration –funded SBDC. Each organization recognizes that businesses thrive when business basics are improved: increased foot traffic and patronage, up-to-date business information, state of the art business practices. The collective goal is to support the Palmetto businesses in a comprehensive, multi-faceted manner.

***Economic Development Committee and Staff Recommendation:***

The City Council is now asked to review the recommendations and provide the final design guidance to staff to carry out the project. The recommendations in this report focus on ensuring project goals within budget. Immediately below is project background and history explaining the

need for the design recommendations (pages 2 - 5), followed by the design recommendations themselves (pages 5 - 9).

### **Background and History of Palmetto Streetscape Project**

The City began the redevelopment plans for Palmetto Avenue from Paloma to Clarendon as far back as 2006. The effort was broadly based on the 1980 General Plan provision that Palmetto would become Pacifica's "Main Street." In late 2005, Council appointed community members to the West Sharp Park Advisory Committee (WSPAC). The committee met regularly over a four-year period to create ideas and offer direction for the future of Palmetto. The WSPAC members were: Co-Chairs Deborah Nagle-Burks and Gilbert Anda, Members Bridget Bane, John Burks, Mark Claussen, Shirlee Gibbs, Mathew Hungate, Kathleen Manning, Luis Martinez, Mylene Carol, Mary Ann Nihart, Robine Runneals, Trish Sholl, and City staff liaison Lee Diaz.

As a result of the General Plan direction, WSPAC's contributions and community input, the Council envisions this section of Palmetto as Pacifica's main street, a destination for visitors and residents, authentic and unique to Pacifica and the Sharp Park district.

Much work has already been done, including undergrounding utilities (completed), designing Phase I of the streetscape (described in the following section), and development of a set of draft design guidelines (currently under revision) to help local businesses and property owners understand and contribute to the areas' transformation.

The City-owned property at Palmetto and Montecito is proposed for two projects to anchor Palmetto main street: a hotel and restaurant, and a new library. The City expects to complete developer selection for the hotel/restaurant in September 2016. The library architect is under contract and working, and the financing measure to fund the \$33M library is approved for the November 2016 ballot.

In addition, to help make the Palmetto streetscape project a reality, the City/County Association of Governments (known as C/CAG) awarded a \$1M grant, with two requirements-- a small matching amount of \$114,500 and the City must demonstrate progress toward construction within six (6) months of receiving funds, i.e., March 2017. Both requirements will be met.

### **Streetscape Costs Require Construction Phasing**

Even with the C/CAG grant, funding was inadequate to complete the Palmetto streetscape project so the work was divided into several phases:

- Phase I included improvements to sidewalks including corner bulbs, new pedestrian scale streetlights, asphalt patches, new crosswalks.
- A future Phase II would include additional amenities such as signage, benches, planters and an asphalt overlay, etc., with an added price tag of approximately \$550,000.
- Phase III would include even more amenities such as drinking fountains, public art and a gateway arch for an additional \$1.2M.
- The costs cited for Phases II and III are in 2012 dollars and based on 2012 costs. They are provided here to suggest an order of magnitude.

The Council appropriated additional funds over and above the C/CAG required match to fund Phase I. As recently as March 14, 2016, City Council added funding from the ERAF allocation to cover the cost estimates of the original plan. The funding authorized by C/CAG and the City Council to date is:

C/CAG One Bay Area Grant (OBAG)	\$1.000 M
Sale proceeds from Certificates of Participation	1.500 M
Excess ERAF (Fund 30)	<u>.375 M</u>
<b>TOTAL FUNDING Palmetto Streetscape - Phase I</b>	<b>\$2.875 M</b>

### **Construction Cost Challenges and Grant Funding Realities**

The Council is aware of rising project costs because of the demand throughout the Bay Area for contractors and construction materials. In April, only weeks after the City Council added ERAF funds to bolster the project budget, the cities of Belmont and Redwood City received public works project bids ranging 25% to 30% over the City Engineer's estimates. They were forced to stop these projects. This information renewed staff concern to closely assess the project components and costs.

No additional grant funds are anticipated in the near term. Grants funds are competitive and 70% of transportation grants are allotted for Priority Development Areas (PDA's). It may be hard for Pacifica to compete for new grants until a PDA is approved here.

Given these funding realities, the community and City of Pacifica appear best-served to get as much of the Palmetto streetscape completed with budgeted Phase I funds as possible.

### **Staff Work: Prepare for Implementation / Formulate Recommendations**

Since the fall of 2015 staff has reviewed the original streetscape plan and the existing Palmetto conditions. This review is important prior to soliciting the construction bids in October 2016 for several reasons. Staff needed to be fully familiar with the plans and the existing conditions, and new city staff brings main street revitalization expertise to Pacifica that has not been represented here before.

With the goal of accomplishing project goals in spite of rising costs, staff examined the original plan, and assessed its value and benefit in comparison with existing on-site conditions for the following factors:

- Sidewalk and drainage
- Pedestrian and bicycle-rider safety
- Construction impacts on Palmetto businesses
- Landscaping
- The Palmetto "Main Street" direction in Pacifica's General Plan
- Updates on Bay Area costs

Staff reached out to colleagues in other cities, in construction and in main street development, as well as doing its own survey and analysis of existing conditions. This review brings new information that was not known earlier, in terms construction risk to businesses, what is important to a main street, "bang for the buck."

Staff's review clearly showed need for strategic, effective changes to several components of the original plan. The next few sections of this staff report present nine (9) key components of the streetscape project, numbered in the bold-type headings. Under each heading information is discussed with reference to the original plan, the best practices for main streets, and recommendations for change or acceptance of the original plan. The components have to fit together functionally and aesthetically for customers, businesses, property owners, as well as safety, engineering, traffic and maintenance professionals.

### **Recommendations: Tailor Plans to Achieve Phase I Goals within Budget**

The nine components reviewed in these recommendations are listed here, and described below:

1. Keep Existing Sidewalks: New concrete is costly with little added value
2. Keep Proposed Corner Bulbs - Proven to Increase Safety and Slow Traffic
3. Maximize On-Street Parking - Critical for Retail Success
4. Landscaping - Choose Plants Suited to Climate, Winds and Store Front Visibility
5. Restore Bike Paths to the Streetscape for Safety
6. Keep Decorative Street Lights with Mounts for Banners and Power for Festival Lights
7. Upgrade Driveways to meet ADA Standards; Ultimately Phase Out
8. Include Asphalt Overlay in Phase I
9. Use Parklets, Temporary Curbside Areas for Cafés and Activities, Instead of Mid-Block Bulbs

### **1. Keep Existing Sidewalks. New Concrete is costly with little added value.**

***The Original Plan Discussed.*** The proposed original plan requires removing the entire existing sidewalk (typically 8' width), replacing it, and adding an additional 4' band of pavers and street trees. Realigning the curb beyond the new 4' band requires removal and reinstallation of the curb and gutter and a new storm drainage system (drain inlets, pipes and related excavation). The major construction for sidewalk width is almost certainly detrimental to Palmetto businesses and the increased width offers little bang for the buck.

Three key reasons explain this. (1) Jackhammering, removal and replacement of all the sidewalks from Paloma to Clarendon creates a long construction period and a very serious challenge to single-site, independent businesses. The disruption will discourage customers during the entire construction period. Such extensive construction is unwise for this reason. (2) The sidewalk available for walking is almost as wide today as it will be in the original plan. The new 4' band is surfaced with pavers set in sand, and primarily devoted to trees, streetlights, bike racks, rather than walking. Further, the existing sidewalks are usable and expected to last several more decades. (3) Concrete and drainage construction are the most expensive items in the proposed streetscape – very likely to be infeasible given the rising construction costs. In other words, the extensive sidewalk reconstruction proposed in the original plan results in disruption to businesses, little new sidewalk when completed, and it is the most expensive part of the original streetscape plan.

***Best Practices for “Main Streets”.*** Main Street businesses across the nation have learned from experience that expensive concrete paving does not transform a street into a stronger retail destination. Human behavior explains why this is true. Shoppers look at features that draw the eye and attention: shop windows, signage, outdoor cafes, landscape and lighting, and other shoppers. Rarely do customers focus on pavement. Instead, carefully selected streetlights (already in the City's possession), landscape choices and signage are critical areas that contribute directly to the ambience and character of the street. Money spent replacing usable sidewalks is not typically recommended. In fact, San Bruno completed a streetscape along San Mateo Avenue that did not replace sidewalk.

Part of the allure of main street is people filling the sidewalks and cafes. Street designers realize that if sidewalks are overwide, they will feel empty. At this point in Palmetto's evolution it is building a customer base, and the existing sidewalks are a good choice.

**Recommended Changes.** Keep the existing sidewalk to the greatest extent possible. They are an acceptable width for a walkable main street.

## 2. Keep Proposed Corner Bulbs - Proven to Increase Safety and Slow Traffic

**The Original Plan Discussed.** Corner bulbs in the original plan are appropriate and are recommended for construction because of their benefits. They are known to increase safety and visibility for pedestrians, motorists and bicyclists, and they include new wheelchair ramps to meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards.

The corner bulbs will require jackhammering and replacing concrete at every corner. This will be disruptive to businesses, but far less than if the entire sidewalk was being demolished and replaced. Since few businesses have access right at the corner, the contractor is expected to maintain access to businesses throughout the sidewalk construction.

**Best Practices for “Main Streets”.** Bulbs achieve traffic calming (reducing vehicle speed) and pedestrian safety at street crossings (increasing visibility and protection).

**Recommended Changes.** Corner bulbs with new wheelchair ramps are recommended.

## 3. Maximize On-Street Parking - Critical for Retail Success

**The Original Plan Discussed.** The original plan removes existing on-Palmetto parking by adding mid-block bulbs in five (5) places and recommending very long corner bulbs in some cases. In each case this removes valuable on-Palmetto parking. Bulbs or bulb size that significantly reduces parking is an expensive tradeoff and therefore not recommended.

**Best Practices for “Main Streets”.** On-street parking is critical for an emerging retail street because retail traffic is convenience driven. Customers often decide to stop at a store on impulse. If they can't find easy nearby parking, they often leave.

These facts are important because Palmetto is not a mature retail street and it does not yet have enough customer traffic to support the retail main street envisioned in the General Plan. Public and private sector stakeholders will have to build that reality with careful planning, including as much on-Palmetto customer parking as possible.

The priority for on-street parking is further illustrated by the cost of providing parking elsewhere. Structured parking is typically \$30,000/space plus cost of land. Underground parking costs more. Even a surface parking lot has the high cost of land. Pacifica has very limited ability to create alternative parking and needs as much on-street parking as possible.

Mid-block bulbs are helpful in retail streetscapes where blocks are long (300' for example). Each Palmetto block is only 180' long from Paloma and Montecito. Benches at corner bulbs will be more than ample.

**Recommended Changes.** Eliminate mid-block bulbs in favor of additional on-Palmetto parking and reduce over-large corner bulbs where possible.

## 4. Landscaping - Choose Plants Suited to Climate, Winds and Store Front Visibility

**The Original Plan Discussed.** The original plan envisions traditional full canopy, full height street trees. Landscape architects and Palmetto merchants have stated that the salt air and fierce ocean winds will not support full-crowned trees because Palmetto is so close to the ocean. (By comparison, Main Street in Half Moon Bay is significantly farther inland.) The original plan also calls for planter areas at the corner bulbs, and these are recommended for inclusion with the proposed changes.

**Best Practices for “Main Streets”.** Full canopy, full height street trees give pedestrians critical protection from summer sun and heat. Pacifica’s milder climate makes this shade far less important, and Palmetto merchants repeatedly said they welcomed the sun. In addition, retailers everywhere tend to chafe against street trees because the foliage blocks store fronts and store signage. Palmetto merchants also repeated this concern. Plants are desired, however, and businesses particularly want something attractive and well-planned.

**Recommended Changes.** Limit the overall landscaping to plants that are known to survive beautifully, and can be efficiently maintained. Planter areas at the corner bulbs where they have highest visibility are still proposed. Work with community partners and supporters, including Rotary International, and the City’s Beautification Advisory Committee to develop the landscape plan and funding for implementation. Landscaping is currently in Phase II, but is a potential Add Alternate if the proposed recommendations are approved.

## 5. Restore Bike Paths to the Streetscape for Safety

**The Original Plan Discussed.** There is no provision for bike lanes in the original plan because the 4’ band added to the sidewalk eliminates room for bike lanes. However, the recommendation in item 1, above to forego the 4’ band along the existing sidewalk width will allow a dedicated north and southbound bike lane to remain. If approved the bike lanes will be treated with thermoplastic for color as in other Bay Area cities for better visibility.

**Best Practices for “Main Streets”.** Bicyclists are generally perceived as valuable contributors to main street revitalization and transportation planning. There is widespread acceptance that increased use of bicycles is better for humans and better for the environment. Certainly within Sharp Park there is opportunity to bicycle to Palmetto; one Palmetto merchant reports that customers, especially families, regularly use bikes.

**Recommended Changes.** Re-establish dedicated 4’ bike lanes in both north and south directions, highlighted by thermoplastic color the full lane width.

## 6. Keep Decorative Street Lights with Mounts for Banners and Power for Festival Lights

**The Original Plan Discussed.** The original plan for streetlights with power outlets for festival lighting and mounting brackets for banners is recommended. It is possible to install the streetlights just beyond the front of the curb at the curb edge of the parking area, surrounded by a curb. This will keep the existing sidewalks clear of obstructions, whether they are 8’ wide or narrower.

**Best Practices for “Main Street”.** Pedestrian streetlights that offer festival lights and banners mounts are critical elements for safety and ambience on main streets. They are likely to be one of the most transformative elements of the streetscape with a banner program visible during the day and the powerful impact of decorative lighting and festival lights after dark. Banners, often

partly hidden by street trees, will be fully visible on Palmetto, and offer an opportunity for decoration.

**Recommended Changes.** Install the streetlights with power supply in front of the curb, and surround them with protective curbing as part of Phase I. Develop a banner program that tests fabric for wind and salt air, and develop fundraising for banner maintenance and replacement on an ongoing basis.

## 7. Upgrade Driveways to meet ADA Standards; Ultimately Phase Out

**The Original Plan Discussed.** The original plan includes the legally required upgrade driveway aprons that do not meet ADA standards. This will result in a surface that is easier to traverse. This construction will be disruptive to business. In many cases the driveway is immediately adjacent to a business. However, it is still a much smaller scale of disruption than the full excavation and new concrete proposed in the original plan.

Where driveways are no longer in use, staff will work with property owners to replace them with standard sidewalk. There is at least one case where this condition exists.

**Best Practices for “Main Streets”.** Driveways are a problem for main streets especially if they lead to a garage that fronts the street. The driveway and the garage create an interruption of the retail continuity of the street, and they interrupt pedestrian traffic for cars. The discontinuity is so problematic for retailers that it is referred to as “missing teeth.”

Palmetto has many garages fronting the street. Over time, it is important to replace the driveways and garages with retail stores. One owner has already approached staff about the feasibility of doing that. During 2015, the Planning Commission also noted this problem when reviewing a prospective Palmetto development during a study session.

**Recommended Changes:** Replace all driveways to meet ADA requirements, and, in the future, encourage retail in spaces where garages exist.

## 8. Trade Patches in Phase I for Full Asphalt Overlay

**The Original Plan Discussed.** The original plan calls for asphalt patches upon completion of the concrete work in Phase I and complete asphalt overlay in Phase II. Budget forced staff to delay the asphalt overlay, but staff anticipates that the overlay can be done in Phase I in lieu of patches, in the event Council approves the proposed recommended changes.

**Best Practices for “Main Streets”.** A finished asphalt overlay with repainted cross walks, center line and bike lanes is the finishing appropriate to this or any streetscape.

**Recommended Changes.** Include the asphalt overlay with Council approval of the recommended design revisions.

## 9. Use Parklets, Temporary Curbside Areas for Cafés and Activities, Instead of Mid-Block Bulbs

**The Original Plan Discussed.** Parklets are not included. They have become popular only in recent years.

**Best Practices for “Main Streets”.** People everywhere gravitate to street scenes that are active and lively. In response, cities and retailers are using platforms that extend the sidewalk level beyond the curb to provide outdoor cafes and activity areas. These parklets are comparatively inexpensive, movable, and they can be installed by merchants with approval of the City.

**Recommended Changes.** Develop implementation concepts for parklets to support retailers who want to expand and bring increased retail vitality to Palmetto main street.

**Funding and Expected Costs, Review Prior to Bidding Project in October 2016**

This section addresses high level funding and cost expectations, before bids are received. To reiterate, the current funding authorized by City Council is restated here:

C/CAG One Bay Area Grant (OBAG)	\$1,000,000
Excess ERAF (Fund 30)	375,000
Certificates of Participation (Bond Proceeds)	<u>1,500,000</u>
<b>TOTAL FUNDING Palmetto Streetscape – Phase I</b>	<b>\$2,875,000</b>

- Based on preliminary information, staff expects the approved budget will fund the following:
  - Streetscape components 1, 2, 3 and 5, 6, 7 and 8, including a full asphalt overlay.
  - Staff hopes to include landscaping, component 4, as an add alternate in the event that the bid will leave enough project budget to pay for it.
  - Component 9 is expected to require fundraising or funds from private parties, but will meet City criteria and require City approval on a case by case basis. It is included here to explain one of the possible enhancements over and above Phase 1.
  
- If Council approves the recommendations to revise the original plan, the construction documents would need to be revised accordingly. Staff anticipates this cost would not exceed \$150,000 and will be accommodated by the savings gained with the recommendations. The largest savings will come from reducing the removal and pouring of concrete related to the sidewalk work, and eliminating the costly drainage systems which would have been required by moving the curb alignment in the original plan.

**Collaborating to Include Area History in Plans for Palmetto**

During the last nine months staff has discussed the hopes of several WSPAC and Pacifica Historical Society members for Palmetto. One focus of the discussion was the desire to incorporate Sharp Park area history in the development of Palmetto so the history is available and attractively presented to area residents and visitors. This can bring an authenticity and richness as well. Although Phase I does not address this concept, it is mentioned here because it can enrich the street with information unique to Pacifica.

**CONCLUSION**

The recommendations above will tailor the streetscape plan to Palmetto and the current budget. The recommendations address the risks construction brings to Palmetto businesses, the need for safety in the design, the impact of sea air and wind on landscaping, the best information available on creating a main street, and the “best bang for the buck”. These recommendations are expected to bring Palmetto one important step closer to achieving the main street designation in the General Plan.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Approval of the report recommendation would appropriate up to \$150,000 to complete the plan revisions and prepare to put them out for bid in October 2016. These funds would come from the total \$2,875,000 available for the project and already allocated by previous Council action

**ORIGINATED BY:**

City Manager's Office  
Public Works

**ATTACHMENT LIST:**