

CITY OF ALAMO HEIGHTS
CITY COUNCIL
August 18, 2021

A workshop of the City Council of the City of Alamo Heights, Texas was held virtually at the Council Chamber, located at 6116 Broadway, San Antonio, Texas, at 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, August 18, 2021.

Composing a quorum were:

Mayor Bobby Rosenthal
Mayor Pro Tempore Lynda Billa Burke – Via Zoom
Councilmember Lawson Jessee
Councilmember Wes Sharples
Councilmember Blake M. Bonner
Councilmember John Savage

Also attending were:

City Manager Buddy Kuhn
Assistant City Manager Phil Laney
City Secretary Elsa T. Robles
Director of Finance Robert Galindo – Via Zoom
Human Resources Manager Lori Harris – Via Zoom
Fire Chief Michael Gdovin – Via Zoom
Police Chief Rick Pruitt – Via Zoom
Public Works Director Pat Sullivan – Via Zoom

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City Manager Buddy Kuhn opened the meeting at 8:35 a.m.

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Item #1 **City Council work session for the lower Broadway/Austin Highway Improvement Project**

City Manager Buddy Kuhn stated the workshop was to provide Council with an updated status of the lower Broadway/Austin Highway Improvement Project. Ms. Samantha Schwartz from Overland Partners and Mr. Jeremy Doege from WGI Engineering were also present.

Mr. Kuhn highlighted current project initiatives. Staff continues to work with project partners Overland Partners and WGI Engineering. He stated WGI started the design work for the water and sewer infrastructure, initiated an evaluation of the existing storm system with LJA Engineering, and began utility coordination. TxDOT is evaluating the environmental impact of the Karst found at the Robber Baron Cave, studied by U.S. Fish and Wildlife.

The Texas Historical Commission (THC) review is also ongoing. Overland Partners Architect Samantha Schwarze reported the THC provided a detailed report of historical findings along Broadway that may be impacted by the project. She noted the THC requires improvements to be made with “common sense” and in a tasteful manner in an effort to preserve historical structures.

Mr. Kuhn shared the project is scheduled to start in March 2024 with an 18-month construction timeline and affirmed the project is still on schedule. He discussed landscape design ideas and advised there were limitations with the corridor width(s), bus stops, and historical structures. Mr. Kuhn noted Ms. Schwarze is currently looking for opportunities to break up parking down the corridor by adding landscape features, low impact design landscaping (LID) features, and bike lanes. Other special features to think about include: a gateway, identity features, pavers, or stained concrete.

Mr. Kuhn reminded Council the original draft budget for the project was \$6.5M; however, the current amount budgeted through FY2025 is \$3.2M. Overland Partners and WGI Engineering are tasked with ensuring the infrastructure underground is available and help plan for additional improvements within budget.

Mr. Kuhn stated there were project challenges with the corridor and storm water. The Patterson outfall is requiring a 4x7 box culvert be installed down Patterson Street to meet the 25-year flood event. This will create additional challenges for the surrounding businesses and neighborhoods. Other challenges to note were center tree planting(s), crosswalks/turning lanes, and angled/parallel parking.

Mr. Jeremy Doege from WGI Engineering addressed Council regarding storm water challenges. He stated he is evaluating how much storm water can be captured in the box culverts that are currently in place. The goal is to try to incorporate these boxes into the new storm drainage system. He is working closely with LJA Engineering and Overland Partners on infrastructure plans. He added the box culvert was evaluated and found to be in good condition. It can be upgraded to current standards with minimal cost.

Ms. Schwarze stated other challenges such as center tree planting, crosswalks, turning lanes, bike lanes, and parking should be viewed as opportunities to improve and enhance the corridor. She observed from previous improvement plans, how important it is to the City of Alamo Heights to have a greener center median that is lush and full of trees and landscapes. To accomplish this, parking and sidewalks may be reduced to accommodate a 6-foot or larger center median in certain areas of the corridor. Ms. Schwarze noted the vision for Broadway is to enable the street to handle storm water better, introduce greenery to the streetscape and create a space for businesses, pedestrians, and cyclists. Broadway is currently auto-centric and, cars dominate the environment.

Ms. Schwarze spoke on sidewalk improvements. She stated there were different widths along Broadway that create opportunities to incorporate different designs for bike lanes and sidewalks. At times, the bike lane and sidewalk would be side by side and other times the bike lane will route in a different direction and create a different experience for

cyclists. Mr. Kuhn added the bike lane routes need to be designed within the confines of the right-of-way.

Mr. Kuhn stated the goals of LID landscaping is to capture and slow down storm water, and withstand long-term maintenance. Ms. Schwarze added the size of the LID is important. Bigger and longer areas of LID should be incorporated into the plan to serve as rain guards down the center and sides of the street.

Ms. Schwarze reviewed proposed renderings of street design plans incorporating LID features, accent paver crosswalks, bike lanes, accent street lighting, and Alamo Heights branding signage. She noted the street light fixtures will be designed to anticipate future telecom installed infrastructure. It will help keep the street overhead clean. Mr. Kuhn agreed and stated the overhead at crosswalks are being reviewed to see if they can be cleaned up, minimize; or with additional funding, buried.

Councilmember Blake M. Bonner shared concerns regarding the height of the trees in the proposed center median. He stated large delivery trucks/18-wheelers may not clear the trees as they drive down Broadway. Ms. Schwarze stated tree specifications will be collaborated with TxDOT who provide safety standards to ensure a driver's vision is not obstructed and vehicles clear the trees.

Mayor Bobby Rosenthal spoke on behalf of Mayor Pro Tem Lynda Billa Burke who suggested incorporating native plants in the landscaping to ensure foliage can withstand climate change and drought conditions. Ms. Schwarze commented she will be working on developing a palette of landscape ideas using a combination of native and other plants to represent Alamo Heights.

Councilmember Lawson Jessee agreed to include a minimum of native landscaping, use traditional street lighting and make the lighting pedestrian friendly. He suggested incorporating a pocket park with a water fountain and moving the bike lanes way from the street as much as possible to ensure cyclists' safety. Councilmember Jessee stated street parking should be reduced in certain areas along Broadway, but maintain a balance of LID and parking. He added another goal is to create a Public Improvement District (PID) to help with landscape maintenance.

Mr. Kuhn stated TxDOT is planning to maintain the right-hand turn to Austin Highway as noted in the improvement design. A concern is maintaining the integrity of the bus stop by Central Market. Mr. Kuhn commented the THC had expressed zero tolerance for designs that may take away from features in that area. Additionally, the lane behind the bus stop is used heavily by truck traffic going into Central Market and should stay the same.

Staff and Council reviewed a preliminary plan of the proposed lower Broadway/Austin Highway corridor improvements. Mr. Doege stated the project would start at Patterson and Burr. Mr. Kuhn added there are no plans to close businesses during construction. Councilmember Jessee inquired on the cost for utility burial. Mr. Doege stated it's being studied and will be coordinated with CPS Energy.

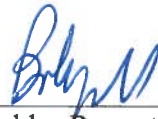
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Councilmember Bonner suggested engaging the business owners in the project. Mr. Kuhn agreed, but noted it should be done carefully since the parameters have been defined by TxDOT and there is minimal room for change. The business owners may have input on matters such as parking and curb cuts. Councilman John Savage added it would be more personable to go to each business individually and get their support on the project.

In closing, Mr. Kuhn recommended the group meet again in six weeks to discuss the project status.

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With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:30 a.m.



Bobby Rosenthal
Mayor



Elsa T. Robles, TRMC
City Secretary