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Title: Receive the report and concur with staff recommendations for Washington Street Streetscape Option 3 and Main Street Streetscape Option B

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12/6/2022	1	City Council	received	Pass

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM

ACTION REQUESTED:

Receive the report and concur with staff recommendations for Washington Street Streetscape Option 3 and Main Street Streetscape Option B

DEPARTMENT: Transportation, Engineering and Development

SUBMITTED BY: William J. Novack, Director/City Engineer

BOARD/COMMISSION REVIEW:

N/A

BACKGROUND:

Since the original plat for the City of Naperville in 1842, the downtown business district has seen considerable growth and redevelopment. Over time, this area has been built with various standards and streetscape designs. Streetscapes have generally been improved on a development level with a handful of City-led projects such as the 1978 Jefferson Avenue streetscape improvements.

In June of 2019, City Council adopted the current version of the Downtown Streetscape Standards that aim to enhance the pedestrian environment, improve compliance with accessibility requirements, and improve safety in the downtown area.

With these goals in mind, in 2019, the City of Naperville began the multi-year project of reconstructing Downtown Naperville to the newly adopted standards. This project was also fueled by the need to repair and replace aging utilities, as well as reconstruct the roadways. The first phase of this project, which focused on portions of Main Street, Webster Street, Jackson Avenue and Jefferson Avenue, was recently completed.

The proposed second phase of the project aims to rebuild Washington Street between Chicago Avenue and Benton Avenue and the east side of Main Street, just south of Van Buren Avenue. The construction, which is tentatively scheduled to begin in summer of 2023, includes utility repair and upgrades, streetscape modernization, and complete road reconstruction.

As the City continues to work through various phases of the Downtown Streetscape Project, the Downtown Streetscape Standards are consistently referenced to ensure development cohesiveness. While many aspects of the standards apply to all areas of the downtown, there are some areas of downtown that may require a deviation from the standards to achieve the original goals of the standards. One such area is along Washington Street within the downtown corridor.

DISCUSSION:

While the Downtown Streetscape Standards provide an excellent baseline for creating a cohesive downtown, Washington Street is unique and should be evaluated independently. Washington Street is classified as a major arterial roadway and it is the only major arterial in the downtown business district. During the weekday morning and evening peak travel hours, the roadway must move large amounts of traffic and functions as a four-lane roadway with no on-street parking. Throughout the remainder of the day, while there are still relatively large amounts of vehicle traffic, the roadway operates as a two-lane roadway with on-street parking. This parking supports businesses and also provides a buffer between the vehicular traffic and the pedestrians along Washington Street. However, when the roadway operates as a four-lane street, there is very minimal separation between the roadway and the pedestrian walkway.

Washington Street Streetscape

Three options were considered during the evaluation of Washington Street.

Option 1

The first option considered for the Washington Street streetscape, Option 1, strictly adhered to the adopted Downtown Streetscape Standards. Based on the available width, most of Washington Street would be governed by the standards for a “Narrow design.” This would allow for a two-foot carriage walk constructed of three rows of brick while the remainder of the pedestrian area would be a concrete sidewalk. Any amenities would be primarily limited to intersections where additional space is available.

While this maximizes the pedestrian walking zone, there are several drawbacks. Without the presence of vegetation, this option allows for very little visual interest along Washington Street. Additionally, the designated walking area would only be two feet from the curb. While this may be sufficient during on-street parking hours, during times when Washington operates as a four-lane roadway, additional separation would increase pedestrian safety. Furthermore, with only two feet of brick, pedestrian light poles would need to be placed half in the brick carriage walk and half in the concrete sidewalk which would not provide an unobstructed pedestrian walkway.

Option 2

This option reduces the concrete sidewalk width from the recommended eight feet to the minimum six feet. The remainder of the area between the sidewalk and the curb is finished with additional pavers. This allows for greater visual separation between the roadway and the pedestrian area. It also allows for the streetlights to be fully outside of the sidewalk. This option, however, is still lacking in visual interest and a barrier between the street and the pedestrian area.

Option 3

This option reduces the sidewalk width to six feet and provides planters wherever possible. This provides for both visual and physical division between the roadway and the pedestrian area. The space constraints along Washington Street do not allow for planters wide enough to sustain a tree; however, the planters can be filled with flowers, native grasses and the street lights. Where space allows, permanent planters will be specified that allow for built-in irrigation, as well as space for pedestrian lights to be placed within the planters. Where there is not enough space for permanent planters, moveable planters will be added where possible. This option still provides adequate space for pedestrians along Washington Street while also increasing the comfort of those pedestrians by providing an increase in the separation between vehicular traffic and pedestrian traffic. This option also allows for the most visual interest along the roadway.

This option requires a deviation from our current Downtown Streetscape Standards, but it does align with the intent of these standards. The six-foot sidewalk would allow adequate walking space for pedestrians while the additional planters would provide separation between vehicles on the roadway and pedestrians enjoying the downtown area. These planters would beautify Washington Street and enhance the downtown experience.

Main Street Streetscape

Three options were also considered for the east side of Main Street, just south of Van Buren Avenue.

Option A

Providing a buffer between the adjacent parking lot and the sidewalk.

Option B

Providing a buffer between the street and the sidewalk.

This option is aligned with the City's current Downtown Streetscape Standards and provides the most continuity with the adjacent sidewalk and recently constructed streetscape. While the existing trees are currently healthy, there is no guarantee that they would still be healthy after construction. Additionally, removal of these trees allows the proposed trees to be placed in planters with permanent irrigation systems.

Option C

Preserving the existing two trees currently in the tree grates along Main Street.

Public Meeting

TED staff, along with the project consultant, Civiltech Engineering, Inc., hosted a public input meeting on Thursday, November 3, to share the three preliminary design options for this project and allow business owners and residents to provide feedback. Additionally, comments were accepted by email through November 15. These comments are included with this document.

City staff also presented the design options to the Downtown Naperville Alliance (DNA) as well as the Downtown Advisory Committee (DAC) Task Force. Based on the presentations and discussions at these meeting, both groups provided feedback to the City in support of their preferred options.

DNA provided a letter in support of Option 3 on Washington Street and Option B on Main Street (letter attached).

DAC voted at their meeting unanimously in favor of Option 3 on Washington Street and Option B on Main Street.

Both groups also noted the desire for additional movable planters in areas where space does not allow for permanent planters.

Recommendations

Based on the feedback received, as well as discussions between City staff and the consultant, City staff recommends Option 3 on Washington Street and Option B on Main Street.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The difference in cost between the options is minimal when compared to the entire cost of the improvements. The City intends to establish an SSA to fund 40% of the streetscape improvements over a 15-year period