

Meeting Date: 04/12/2016

Information

Title:

Set Preliminary Goals for Corridor Improvement Program (Strategic Action Plan Tactics No. 28 & 29)

Purpose/Background:

Staff acknowledges the complexity of this case, and is not expecting to develop a full policy in a single work session. The intent of this case is to provide broad, preliminary policy direction in order to develop a framework for a policy, and ultimately an adopted policy. Due to potential budgetary impacts, Staff has not recommended implementation of each of these ideas, but provides a menu of options to begin brainstorming ideas.

The purpose of this case is to discuss initial categories and tactics to develop a Corridor Improvement Program as established by Strategic Action Plan Tactics No. 28 & 29. Both of these tactics fall within the Strategic Plan Initiative to 'Improve the image of key corridors (Highway 10, County Road 5, and Highway 47)'. This falls under Strategic Imperative III: Smart, Citizen-Focused Government.

Strategic Tactic No. 28 is 'to use property owner citizen engagement strategies' to develop a key outcome indicator of an Adopted Statement of Goals. A component of this, in addition to reaching out to corridor stakeholders, is to develop acceptable tactics and strategies for this specific goals. Staff offers up the following broad strategies for City Council feedback. The City's planning consultant, WSB Associates, assisted with the development of these alternatives.

1. Strategic Acquisition, especially in 'gateway' districts (borders with adjacent communities)
2. Increased Code Enforcement for city code violations
3. Financial Incentives for facade improvements
4. Increased scrutiny in management of leases for City-owned parcels
5. Utilization of Public Works Resources for improvements/clean up of private property

Strategic Tactic No. 29 states to proactively implement corridor improvements through public investment and code compliance initiatives. The tactic has a metric of 30% of targeted property clean-up per year of plan. The City Council has not yet identified which properties to target. Additionally, this tactic noted a need to add 0.5 FTE of staff resources in order to accomplish this goal.

1. Strategic Acquisition for 'Gateway Districts'

A primary gateway to the community is the border with the City of Anoka along Highway 10. Several aging buildings exist at this gateway. A noticeable vacancy exists along the north side of Highway 10 at this gateway. A significant amount of outside storage exists along the south side of Highway 10 at this gateway. Additionally, these properties are impacted in various levels by the Highway 10 Access Planning Study. This strategy would likely have the largest positive impact on aesthetic improvements, but is also likely the most costly alternative presented. *Policy Direction: Does this City Council want Staff to explore the idea of approaching Property Owners to research willing sellers and potential asking prices to inventory the financial feasibility of strategic acquisition in this area?*

2. Increased Code Enforcement Resources

The City responds to a number of nuisance complaints along key corridors ranging from outside storage to building maintenance. The City is generally able to keep up with complaints regarding outside storage. However, case management for lack of maintenance to buildings and structures is a time-consuming process for the City and the necessary corrective actions are often times costly to property owners. This topic will likely be discussed as part of the 2017 Budget preparation. *Policy Direction: Does the City Council want Staff to explore allocating additional*

resources to code enforcement efforts along key corridors either through additional Staff/contracted services, redirection of existing resources (limited), or other. This can also be discussed in the context of revised revenue forecasts that can be utilized for building maintenance code enforcement.

3. Financial Incentives for Facade and Site Improvements

Rather than full property acquisition, the City could consider financial incentives in the form of improvements to existing buildings. When considering this option, the City Council should evaluate the problem attempting to be solved, and whether improvements to the building truly solves the issue, or simply delays the ultimate solution. For example, is the City incentivizing an improvement that will ultimately be removed for right of way acquisition? Will the overall site continue to appear blighted even with facade improvements (is there still outside storage issues, other aesthetic issues, etc.)? The City Council should consider the longevity of the improvements in the context of return on investment. *Policy Direction: Does the City Council want Staff to explore a program of financial incentives for facade or other site improvements?*

4. Increased scrutiny in leases for City-Owned Parcels

The City owns various parcels along the Highway 10 Corridor acquired for the purposes of Highway 10 expansion purposes. In the interim, the City has chosen to lease several parcels to private entities in order to retain these parcels as taxable parcels. Staff would like the City Council's thoughts on development standards for these parcels and its policy stance on continuing to lease these parcels. The City Council should consider this in the context of return on investment versus resources used to manage leases and the quality of aesthetics of these leased properties. *Policy Direction: Does the City Council want to continue to lease these Highway 10 parcels? Does the City want to set a higher standard for its properties (i.e. gravel parking, outside storage)?*

5. Utilization of City Resources for voluntary clean up and improvements (Non-Violation Improvements)

This would apply to improvements that are not a violation of City Code. Examples include painting/graphic wraps of plywood coverings of vacant structures and tree removal. This would direct resources to provide visual improvements for elements that are not violations of City Code. Before moving forward with this alternative, Staff would highly recommend a clear policy as to circumstances the City will consider this approach to avoid allegations of unfairness to properties receiving code violation notices. *Policy Direction: Does the City Council want to consider the utilization of City resources to provide visual improvements to structures and sites for those issues that are not a violation of City Code?*

Timeframe:

30 Minutes

Funding Source:

This case is being prepared as part of normal staff duties.

Responsible Party(ies):

Community Development Director

Outcome:

Consensus on acceptable approaches to explore in the formation of a Corridor Improvement Program to be brought back to a future session for further review and eventual adoption.

Attachments

No file(s) attached.

Form Review

Inbox

Kurt Ulrich

Form Started By: Tim Gladhill

Final Approval Date: 04/06/2016

Reviewed By

Kurt Ulrich

Date

04/06/2016 04:26 PM

Started On: 03/28/2016 02:19 PM

2.02: Set Preliminary Goals for Corridor Improvement Program (Strategic Action Plan Tactics No. 28 & 29)

Community Development Director Gladhill reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember LeTourneau referenced number three, the financial incentives, and stated that he would think that would be the responsibility of the business owner. He stated that perhaps he could support that item if that item could be tied into the EDA revolving loan fund.

Councilmember Riley agreed that it appeared to him that the City was asking a business to be better than they have to be and therefore he agreed that perhaps a method to utilize that item would be a low interest loan.

Councilmember Kuzma agreed and stated that perhaps number one would also tie into the EDA.

Councilmember Riley stated that he would not support number one as the City already owns too much land and is trying to get out of landownership.

The City Administrator stated that there are some variations of that, such as when the City used the County HRA funds to purchase the bookstore property. He stated that the intent would not be to invest in more property but to reinvest funds from the sale of properties in order to resolve some of the blighted sites.

Councilmember Riley stated that he would like to see something happen, specifically in regard to the “low hanging fruit” rather than just have discussions.

Mayor Strommen asked the thought process of having the Council weigh in on these strategies prior to the public engagement meetings. She stated that she would not want to narrow this before the public input is gained.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated that these five items have financial implications and therefore staff wanted to gain the input of the Council before putting these ideas out to the stakeholders in the corridor. He stated that there is some “low hanging fruit” but noted that some of those items are within the current policy and some are not.

Mayor Strommen stated that she did not see this issue as code enforcement and believed that the City would struggle to achieve these goals if this is done as code enforcement. She stated that she would see this as public engagement.

Councilmember Johns agreed with the comments of Mayor Strommen. She addressed the Highway 47 corridor and stated that Anoka is getting ready to do a gateway project on Highway 47 and then you would go into Ramsey that does not have improvement in the corridor.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated that staff will then reach out to the stakeholders for Highway 10 and Highway 47 and confirmed the consensus of the Council for staff to meet with those stakeholders to gain input.

Mayor Strommen stated that the “low hanging fruit” should be identified from the point of the City and the point of the stakeholders. She stated that perhaps number one should not be included from the first discussion.

Councilmember Williams asked the goal of the City as that should be identified prior to reaching out to the stakeholders, whether that is to improve the aesthetics or raise property values. She stated that a goal should be defined and then discussions can occur between staff and the businesses to gain their input.

Councilmember Johns stated that she would like to see the aesthetics improved.

Mayor Strommen stated that perhaps a statement of goal for the gateways and corridors should be identified and then the question should be posed as to how the City and stakeholders can work together to reach that goal. She confirmed that the goal should come from the Council.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated strategic tactic 28 referenced the development of a goal and believed that staff would have the capacity to develop that goal with the stakeholders. He noted that if the Council develops the goal the item would no longer be the responsibility of the public engagement process.

Community Development Director Gladhill reviewed the process that could be followed to complete a draft and then bounce the conversation between the stakeholders and Council.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that the City should be careful in regard to the language used as some business owners are struggling to keep their business open and it could be seen as government trying to impose additional costs. He noted that perhaps some of the Commissions and EDA could be brought into the discussion as well.

Councilmember Riley stated that it has been one year and still nothing has happened. He asked if the “low hanging fruit” could be gone after while this analysis continues.

City Administrator Ulrich confirmed that there are some items that could be done, such as brush clearing where the property owner is in agreement or addressing some of the most egregious violations. He noted that these actions will push the policy question and therefore that will also need to be completed.

Councilmember Williams stated that in her opinion if a business is leasing property from the City it is their responsibility to meet all elements of the City Code and enforcement should occur when necessary.

Community Development Director Gladhill reviewed the next steps that staff will follow.

Mayor Strommen stated that the citizen engagement process could be one or two meetings and would not need to be months long.

The City Administrator reviewed examples of what he would consider stakeholders for the corridors and confirmed the consensus of the Council.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated that staff will mail the residents directly on the corridor and have an inclusion in the *Ramsey Resident* if logistically possible.

Meeting Date: 09/13/2016

By: Tim Gladhill, Community Development

Information

Title:

Receive Update on Strategic Plan Initiative - Corridor Improvement Program & Authorize Highway 10 Update Workshop

Purpose/Background:

The City Council's Strategic Plan includes an initiative to improve the image of key corridors such as Highway 10, Highway 47, Nowthen Boulevard, and Armstrong Boulevard (this is not an all inclusive list). On April 12, 2016, the City Council directed Staff to engage stakeholders along these key corridors to identify issues and solutions to said issues. The Council had also asked for EDA feedback on this topic.

Notification:

Notification is not required at this time.

Observations/Alternatives:

Key outcome indicators of the Strategic Initiative itself are an adopted Statement of Goals of how to improve the image of key corridors as well as targeting 30% of properties for clean up per year of the plan.

A significant amount of discussion took place at the April 12, 2016 City Council Work Session where this topic was discussed. General consensus of the City Council was that the City should not define the issue itself nor simply propose a list of solutions to area stakeholders. Instead, direction was given to look more comprehensively and collaboratively and engage stakeholders. Council did clarify that this should be a simple engagement process, perhaps as one (1) or two (2) meetings. Finally, the City Council clarified that this initiative is not about code enforcement itself, which is a separate process. This initiative appears to be more incentive based and collaborative.

One step in the process prior to engaging stakeholders was to define the goal of the process. In other words, what is the question we should ask attendees? For purposes of starting a discussion, but not necessarily recommending as the question to be asked, Staff poses the following:

- "How can the City improve the image of Highway 10 (and other corridors)?"

Additionally, in order to maintain momentum on this initiative while the broader policy discussion unfolded, the City Council felt comfortable in the City (Staff) identifying 'low hanging fruit' (low-cost, high-benefit) initiatives that will incrementally improve the image of these corridors. A copy of findings from a recent Staff tour is included for review.

Logistics

Since this workshop is focused on business owners along the corridor as primary stakeholders, Staff recommends a daytime workshop to maximize attendance. Additionally, as Staff began to develop the logistics of the workshop, it was suggested to broaden the scope of the workshop as a general Highway 10 Update, including the Strategic Plan Initiative focused on image. In various conversations with corridor stakeholders, it has become evident that additional updates are warranted. This would be an excellent opportunity to communicate the corridor's broader strategy - the Greater Minnesota Gateway. There are a number of other updates of interest to Highway 10 stakeholders.

Staff suggests the morning of Wednesday, October 19. Agenda would be as follows.

1. Update on Highway 10 Access Planning Study
2. Update on City's Land Use Controls/Zoning (consistent allowable uses along corridor, updates to Official Map)
3. Update on RALF Program (property acquisition)
4. Discussion and Brainstorming for Corridor Improvement Program (incentive based)

Funding Source:

This case and initiative are being handled as part of normal Staff duties.

Recommendation:

Generally speaking, the EDA was supportive of this initiative as proposed. Much of the discussion with the EDA centered around financial incentives/loans less than \$25,000 to encourage facade and exterior improvements above and beyond code requirements. By consensus, the EDA agreed to one (1) initial workshop to scope potential alternatives, inviting individual businesses to participate to refine the alternatives, and then one (1) final workshop to agree on a policy for consideration by the City Council.

Action:

Motion to authorize the Highway 10 Update for corridor stakeholders for the morning of October 19, including discussion on the Corridor Improvement Program.

Attachments

Strategic Plan

April 12, 2016 City Council Work Session Agenda Item

Copy of City Council Work Session Minutes dated April 12, 2016

Low-Cost, High-Benefit Options

Form Review

Inbox

Kurt Ulrich

Form Started By: Tim Gladhill

Final Approval Date: 09/08/2016

Reviewed By

Kurt Ulrich

Date

09/08/2016 04:05 PM

Started On: 09/07/2016 09:33 AM

7.04: Receive Update on Strategic Plan Initiative – Corridor Improvement Program and Authorize Highway 10 Update Workshop

Community Development Director Gladhill reviewed the staff report and the feedback from the EDA noting that the EDA was supportive of the initiative as proposed. He noted that much of the discussion with the EDA centered on financial incentives/loans less than \$25,000 to encourage façade and exterior improvements above and beyond code requirements. He stated that by consensus the EDA agreed to one initial workshop to scope potential alternatives, inviting individual businesses to participate to refine the alternatives, and then one final workshop to agree on a policy for consideration by the City Council.

Councilmember Williams stated that, in general, the EDA was in favor of finding incentives to partner with the community along these corridors including forgivable loans and grants. She stated that the EDA is looking to continue to build relationships rather than punish or create additional standards.

Mayor Strommen referenced a property along County Road 5 where a property owner has trimmed a lot of the trees and completed landscaping that is very attractive along a trail corridor. She asked what encouraged that property owner to complete those actions and what could be done to encourage others to follow in those footsteps.

Motion by Councilmember LeTourneau, seconded by Councilmember Williams, to authorize the Highway 10 Update for corridor stakeholders for the morning of October 19th, including discussion on the Corridor Improvement Program.

Further discussion: Councilmember Shryock asked, and received confirmation, that Councilmembers can attend if available.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Mayor Strommen, Councilmembers LeTourneau, Williams, Kuzma, Riley, and Shryock. Voting No: None. Absent: Councilmember Johns.