



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Angel Rios, Jr.
Kim Walesh

SUBJECT: SAN JOSE LIGHT
TOWER PROJECT

DATE: April 17, 2018

Approved

D. D. S. L.

Date

4/20/18

RECOMMENDATION

Endorse the concept of and authorize the Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS) and Office of Economic Development/Office of Cultural Affairs (OED/OCA) to guide the San Jose Light Tower Corporation as they investigate options to design and construct in downtown an artistically inspired and iconic structure as a gift to the City of San José.

OUTCOME

Through this action, the City Council will acknowledge ongoing, limited staff work being performed by PRNS and OED/OCA to guide the not-for-profit San Jose Light Tower Corporation as they perform site selection and fundraise to support the vision.

BACKGROUND

The San Jose Light Tower Corporation (SJLTC) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation that is seeking to build an artistically inspired world-class iconic landmark on park land located in downtown San Jose. The intent of the SJLTC is to provide the city a gift that will build civic pride, drawing residents and visitors as an active destination thereby enhancing economic development in downtown core.

The SJLTC has met with numerous elected officials and city staff over the past year. Beginning in early 2018, PRNS staff set up a monthly meeting to guide the SJLTC as they develop their concept, identify a suitable location, and develop and implement fundraising strategies. To aid in their fundraising, SJLTC is seeking formal City support for their concept and a partner in the project. Council action on this agenda item would provide endorsement of the project concept.

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ANALYSIS

PRNS with support from OED/OCA has been coordinating with the SJLTC representatives to guide development of the concept. The SJLTC team is developing some preliminary thoughts on what type of programming may be included in the project. Ideas include programming space for local museums or non-profits, a café and possibly other amenities.

In addition to programming, the location of such a structure must be carefully considered. Regard must be given to the intended programming of the structure, but also to its scale and context within the urban fabric of the downtown. An iconic “selfie spot” will need to be strategically located to provide the appropriate vistas and viewsheds that an important structure deserves.

As next steps, the SJLTC will secure an urban design consultant to evaluate placing this structure in one of the following existing parks: Arena Green, Discovery Meadows, Guadalupe Gardens Park, Plaza de Cesar Chavez, and Saint James Park. Initial discussions centered around placing the tower on city-owned parkland and SJLTC expressed particular interest in Plaza de Cesar Chavez as a location, but has agreed to a more holistic site selection process.

In addition, placing the structure in the vicinity of Diridon Station in coordination with the proposed Google development project will also be considered. SJLTC has agreed to include this location in their evaluation.

The SJLTC recently indicated that Steinberg Hart is their preferred consultant for this site evaluation work and a scope of work has been developed but not finalized. PRNS and OED/OCA does not have the staffing resources available to lend the substantive amount of staff support needed to lead such an iconic project. Therefore, the SJLTC intends to engage and manage the consultant directly with limited guidance from PRNS and OED/OCA. The intent of the initial phase of consultant work is to determine the constraints and opportunities at each location. The product is expected to be a detailed report that includes mapping of each location; evaluation of the size and height of a structure that can be located there, including the square footage of a potential structure; and definition of any site constraints resulting from existing land use restrictions and zoning requirements. Staff expects that at each location, information provided will include maximum height allowed, maximum square footage of any proposed structure and a massing diagram that shows the building footprint and height in relation to surrounding buildings.

Staff have requested that during 2018 the focus of SJLTC should be: (1) preparing a vision document and an initial concept; (2) fundraising; and (3) preparing the technical (non-community outreach side) of a site selection process. The SJLTC team plans a four-year project development and construction cycle, with the project complete in 2022.

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It is expected that an extensive amount of community outreach and engagement will be needed throughout the project development. When a preferred site is selected, PRNS and the City's Department of Public Works (DPW) will need to provide ongoing support to the project by way of public outreach, design review and construction management. At this time, PRNS staff is spending up to 10 hours per month supporting the SJLTC efforts. As the project is more fully vetted and it appears that more robust City involvement is needed, staff expects that additional staffing resources will be requested during the mid-year adjustment or annual budget development processes. The need for future staffing resources will depend on the complexity of the design and schedule of the project. At this time, staff expects that if and when these resources are requested, the costs will be offset by reimbursements from SJLTC. The SJLTC will contract a consultant and fund a site selection study with private monies. The SJLTC team would like to use the City's support of the project to enhance its fundraising efforts.

In summary, staff recommends continued limited staff support of the SJLTC team as they pursue this idea with the following specific direction:

- 1) Perform a holistic site selection process that includes the sites mentioned above. Staff does not view Plaza de Cesar Chavez as an ideal location, but does agree that including it in the initial evaluation is appropriate.
- 2) Defer a robust community outreach process regarding potential site options until such time as the project is clearly defined. The community outreach process will require an extensive number of meetings with representatives of a large cross section of the community. Such a robust program will require an intense amount of staff time and adequate resources are not currently available for that effort. Technical aspects of a site selection process can proceed immediately.
- 3) Staff will focus efforts on guiding and advising the SJLTC team only. Given previously stated Council Priorities, staff has limited bandwidth to support this effort in 2018.
- 4) When the project becomes defined, staff will return to the City Council to request the allocation of additional staff resources to focus on this project. Staff will seek financial support from SJLTC for these resources.
- 5) Project development, design and construction should be 100% privately funded. The final project must include funding for long-term operation and maintenance.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

If the Council accepts the recommendation, SJLTC will continue their fundraising efforts and recognize the City's support in those efforts. Periodic reports back to Council on the status of the project (fundraising, project vision and concept) will be provided. The timeline of these reports will be dictated by the project progress.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

This memorandum will be posted on the City's Council agenda website for the May 1, 2018 Council meeting.

To date, the SJLTC has held private meetings with a number of individuals and stakeholders in the downtown area. We expect that an extensive amount of community outreach and engagement will be completed throughout the project development. The exact methods of outreach and engagement will be determined as the project progresses.

COORDINATION

This memorandum has been coordinated with the City Attorney's Office and City Manager's Budget Office.

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION/INPUT

This item will be provided as an information report to the Parks and Recreation Commission during its May meeting.

FISCAL/POLICY ALIGNMENT

There is currently no City funding support for this project. The SJLTC is requesting staff time but no discrete funding. The need for additional financial resources will be evaluated as the project progresses. If resources are to be provided, they would be requested and obtained through the City's typical budget process and appropriate Council action.

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CEQA

Statutorily Exempt, File No. PP17-001, CEQA Guidelines Section 15262, Feasibility and Planning Studies.

/s/
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/s/
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For questions, please contact Nicolle Burnham, PRNS Deputy Director of Capital Programs, at (408) 793-5514.