



CITY OF
**PALO
ALTO**

City Council Staff Report

From: City Manager

Report Type: CONSENT CALENDAR

Lead Department: City Manager

Meeting Date: December 16, 2024

Report #:2410-3668

TITLE

Approval of Professional Services Contract Number C25192045 with Urban Planning Partners, Inc., in the Amount Not to Exceed of \$165,573 for Phase I of the Car Free Ramona Street Project for a Period of One Year, Direct Staff to Return with an Amendment to Approve Phase II; Approval of a Budget Amendment in the General Fund; and Adopt a Resolution Continuing the Closure of a Portion of Ramona St. through 2025; CEQA Status – categorically exempt.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Council:

1. Approve and authorize the City Manager or their designee to execute Contract No. C25192045 (Attachment A), with Urban Planning Partners, Inc. (UPP), for Phase I of the Car Free Ramona Street project for a term of one year, and a total Not to Exceed Amount of \$165,573, including \$163,148 for basic services and \$2,425 for additional services; and
2. Direct staff to return with a contract amendment to approve Phase II with UPP, with a Not to Exceed Amount of \$233,763, to support additional stakeholder outreach and street design for long-term street improvements, for a total Not to Exceed amount of \$399,336, and required budget appropriation action for Council consideration in 2025, and
3. Amend the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Appropriation for the General Fund (2/3 vote needed) by:
 - a. Increasing funding in Non-Departmental for the Car Free Ramona Street Project Phase I by \$165,573, and
 - b. Decreasing the Budget Stabilization Reserve by \$165,573; and
4. Adopt the attached resolution to continue the closure of the half-block of Ramona Street through 2025.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A portion of Ramona Street between University and Hamilton Avenues, in Downtown Palo Alto, has been car-free since 2020. The City Council has directed staff to follow necessary steps to make this closure permanent and to develop outdoor dining standards and guidelines to create a unique visitor experience with enhanced street amenities, signage, and art.

The scope of work for the project is divided into two Phases. Phase I includes focused stakeholder engagement on development of outdoor dining standards for a car free street, including guidance on enclosures, size, and aesthetic features for parklets and other outdoor dining. This Phase also includes a street design for near-term improvements including bollards to replace barriers, planters, street amenities, landscaping, and signage.

Implementation of Phase 1 improvements will include replacement of the temporary barriers, modifications to vehicle pavement markings to restrict vehicular traffic while permitting emergency access, upgrades to street furniture and equipment, and new wayfinding signage.

Phase II includes a street design for long-term improvements including signage and gateway elements reflecting the historical significance of the street, decorative paving, new lighting and street amenities, enhanced landscaping, and public art, as well as broader stakeholder engagement with relevant Boards, Commissions, and Committees, downtown stakeholders, and the Palo Alto community at large.

Although scoping and costs for both Phases I and II have been developed, staff is only recommending contract award and associated budget amount for Phase I at this time. Upon completion of Phase I, staff will bring back recommendations related to Phase II, including a contract amendment for the consultant. The Not to Exceed contract amount for Phase I is \$165,573.

Lastly, the attached resolution will continue to authorize the City Manager to close the half-block of Ramona between Hamilton and University to vehicular traffic through 2025. This will allow continuity while the general plan amendment and CEQA review necessary to close the street permanently are completed (anticipated for Spring 2025).

BACKGROUND

Ramona Street between University and Hamilton Avenues, in Downtown Palo Alto, has been identified as architecturally significant in the local historic and architectural survey and has been adopted by the City as a landmark district.

A portion of this street has been closed off to vehicular traffic since 2020 and is now referred to as Car Free Ramona Street. The City Council has directed staff to take the necessary steps to make this closure permanent and staff is working separately with a consultant to bring forward a General Plan amendment to make this portion of Ramona a permanent car-free street. Additionally, the City Council has also directed staff to develop outdoor dining standards and

guidelines to create a unique visitor experience with enhanced street amenities, signage, and art.

Currently, restaurants on the car-free portion of Ramona Street offer outdoor dining either in parklets or on sidewalks and streets. The parklets and outdoor dining on this street are still governed by the temporary parklet program and were excluded from the ongoing parklets regulations adopted in June 2024, in recognition of the car-free nature of this street.

ANALYSIS

Scope of Work

The scope of work for the car-free Ramona Street project will be performed in two phases, with Phase I focused on outdoor dining standards and street design for near-term improvements and Phase II focused on street design for longer-term improvements.

Phase I includes focused stakeholder engagement, development of outdoor dining standards, an evaluation of the historical context, and a street design plan and signage for near-term improvements. Outdoor dining standards will be specific to a car free street and include guidance on enclosures, size, and aesthetic features for parklets and other outdoor dining.

Phase 1 will be closely coordinated with the annual Public Works street re-surfacing project. This coordination will ensure street re-surfacing and minor sidewalk repairs are completed before the businesses re-build parklets and outdoor dining areas to comply with the new standards.

Construction drawings for street design, including bollards, planters, limited street amenities, landscaping, and signage are included in the scope of work for Phase 1. Implementation of Phase 1 improvements will include replacement of the temporary barriers, modifications to vehicle pavement markings to restrict vehicular traffic while permitting emergency access, upgrades to street furniture and equipment, and new wayfinding signage. Funding for the physical infrastructure of this work will need to be identified and appropriated as part of the annual budget process.

The scope of work for Phase II includes broader stakeholder engagement with relevant Boards, Commissions, and Committees, downtown stakeholders, and the Palo Alto community at large. It also includes a street design for long-term improvements, including signage reflecting the historical significance of the street, decorative paving, new lighting and street amenities, enhanced landscaping, and public art.

Staff is currently recommending approval of the contract for Phase I only. Upon completion of Phase I, staff will bring forward options for Council discussion, including connecting the project scope to historic Centennial Alley and to the University Avenue streetscape project. Based on these discussions, a contract amendment for Phase II shall be brought forward for Council consideration. Funding for the implementation of Phase II will also need to be discussed as part of the discussions with the City Council about the scope of Phase II work. Funding could be

appropriated through Council action with approval of the Phase II contract or through the annual budget process and could incorporate additional funding mechanisms such as grants and/or assessment districts.

Estimated Timeline for Phase I

Table # 1			
Stakeholder Outreach	Outdoor Dining Standards	Street and Signage Design	Construction
Winter 2024- Spring 2025	Complete by Spring 2025	Complete by Summer 2025	<p>Summer 2025: Street re-surfacing and minor sidewalk repairs.</p> <p>Summer 2025-Winter 2025: Installation of bollards, planters, signage, limited improvements to landscaping and street amenities.</p>

Consultant Selection

Since several projects related to downtown streetscape and outdoor dining standards are underway, it was deemed in the City’s best interests to select from one of the firms already familiar with the City’s stakeholders and Council and community priorities related to the proposed project. This would allow both efficiency and continuity and enable the project to progress quickly.

On July 18, 2024, the City sent a request for proposals to the three firms currently working on projects closely related to the Car Free Ramona Street project. The three firms included Urban Field Studio, CSW/ST2, and Urban Planning Partners, Inc. (UPP). Urban Field Studio is working on street design and outdoor dining standards for a car-free California Avenue, CSW/ST2 is working on the University Avenue Streetscape Design, and UPP is working on the ongoing parklet standards, designs, and program implementation.

On August 13, 2024, the City received proposals from two firms, CSW/ST2 and UPP. The CSW/ST2 team included the firms of Gates and Associates and Fehr & Peers as sub-consultants on their proposal. The UPP team included the firms of PGA design and BKF Engineers as sub-consultants on their proposal.

An evaluation panel comprised of staff from the City Manager’s Office, Office of Transportation, and Public Works reviewed the proposals and evaluated the two firms based on the following criteria:

- a. Quality of the proposal
- b. Quality, performance and effectiveness of the solution, goods and/or services
- c. Consultant experience
- d. Cost
- e. Consultant’s ability to perform the contract
- f. Consultant’s prior record of performance with the City.

UPP was selected as the top ranked consultant for the project because of their experience, their proposed approach, the team's ability to perform the work within the desired timeline, and their prior performance with the City. A Notice of Intent to Award was sent on August 30 and no protests were received.

It was anticipated that the informal proposals would be under \$85,000 but due to the extensive stakeholder engagement requested, lack of existing topographic surveys, and the fact that the project requires specialized historical research and branding, both proposals came in at much higher costs. An exemption to formal competitive solicitation pursuant to Palo Alto Municipal Code section 2.30.360(b)(2) was approved by the City Manager.

FISCAL/RESOURCE IMPACT

The total not to exceed amount of the consultant contract for Phase I is \$165,573. The cost for Phase I is \$165,573 and the cost for Phase II is \$233,763. In the FY 2025 budget, \$50,000 was appropriated for the car free Ramona Street project, however, this money is being used to complete the CEQA analysis for making the street permanently car free. A budget amendment to increase the FY 2025 appropriation for this project in the amount of \$165,573 is thereby required to complete this work. Approval of this action would decrease the Budget Stabilization Reserve (BSR) to approximately \$54.3 million or 18.4% of the FY 2025 Adopted budget. This amount is based on FY 2025 budget adjustment actions detailed in the 2026-2035 Long Range Financial Forecast (Report 2405-3068¹) that was presented to the Finance Committee on December 3, 2024.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

In Phase I, the consultant will conduct focus group and community meetings, prepare information for a dedicated project webpage, and present at the Retail Committee and City Council meetings. Stakeholder engagement will be focused on outdoor dining standards and near-term street improvements. If the City proceeds with Phase II, the consultant will present to relevant Boards, Commissions, and Committees, and engage downtown stakeholders and the larger Palo Alto community to solicit input on long-term streetscape improvements during that Phase.

¹ December 3, 2024 Finance Committee Meeting:
<https://cityofpaloalto.primegov.com/Portal/Meeting?meetingTemplatId=14543>

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The recommended actions are exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 (existing facilities); 15304 (minor temporary use of land); and 15262 (planning study).

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: City of Palo Alto Contract No. C25192045

Attachment B: Resolution Extending City Manager's Authority to Temporary Close a Portion of Ramona Street through 2025

APPROVED BY:

Ed Shikada, City Manager