



AGENDA REPORT

TO: DEANNA J. SANTANA
CITY ADMINISTRATOR

FROM: Fred Blackwell, Assistant
City Administrator

SUBJECT: Latham Square Plaza Redesign

DATE: November 21, 2013

City Administrator
Approval

Date:

12/3/13

COUNCIL DISTRICT: 3

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Council approve a permanently expanded and redesigned Latham Square Plaza and that the 1500 block of Telegraph Avenue be redesigned to reduce the travel lanes from three to two, with one travel lane northbound and one travel lane southbound.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2008, the City received a \$9.9 million Proposition IC grant for streetscape improvements in the downtown/uptown areas, of which \$6.5 million remains. In addition to improvements at the Latham Square intersection and Plaza (\$2.2 million), other improvements are in progress, in the neighborhood, for the 17th Street BART Entry, San Pablo Avenue, 17th Street, and Jackson Street. In 2007, the City Council approved a new intersection configuration/design at Broadway, Telegraph and 15th Street. This new design included minor expansion to the Latham Square Plaza as well. This is illustrated in *Attachment A* per Resolution No. 80358 C.M.S. However, this project was delayed because of the discovery of poorly reinforced sidewalks above private basements in the City right-of-way.

In August of 2012, the City began exploring ways to improve and expand pedestrian space in the Latham Square area since the 2007 approved design. This resulted in the idea of a "pilot" project with a revised circulation system and new temporary amenities. This was presented to the City Council and approved in May 2013 as Resolution No. 84348 (*see Attachment B*). The pilot project was intended to gauge the feasibility of a permanent street closure and pedestrian-only plaza for daily use and programmed events. The pilot project intended to consider community feedback, document actual use of the plaza, complete traffic studies, and survey local businesses, property owners, and other stakeholders.

Since the implementation of the Latham Square Plaza pilot project on July 15, 2013, two perspectives of the pilot have emerged. Citizens against the permanent street closure are concerned about the limited circulation and access to the Telegraph corridor and to Broadway.

Item: _____
Public Works Committee
December 17, 2013

Citizens in support of the permanent street closure want a large pedestrian-only space for community gathering. Therefore, City staff has developed a compromise solution to address the concerns expressed by both sets of stakeholders. The compromise design includes:

1. Major expansion of Latham Square Plaza (from 2,500 sf to 9,500 sf), with amenities similar to the pilot project, to allow for community gathering.
2. Re-opening of two lanes, of the 1500 block of Telegraph, to allow for efficient circulation and access to properties and businesses in the Telegraph corridor and Broadway.

The recommended design, *Attachment C*, is the result of a compromise position to significantly expand the Plaza and still allow for vehicular access to nearby businesses. The recommended Plaza project includes expansion of the existing Latham Square Plaza to nearly four times its current size of 2,500 square feet to 9,500 square feet. In addition, it includes a reduction from three lanes and a median to two lanes, without a median, in the 1500 block of Telegraph Avenue (one north-bound and one south-bound) for vehicles, cyclists, and public transit. See *Attachment D* for a comparison of the original 2,500 sf Plaza size and the 9,500 sf proposed Plaza. This larger Plaza will be able to accommodate events, kiosks, food carts, benches, landscaping, public art, restoration of the historic fountain, and other amenities. The proposed Plaza will be designed to allow flexibility for temporary closure for First Fridays or other large programmed events that require extra space. See the Artist's rendering of the before and after Plaza design, *Attachment E*, to gain a sense of the Plaza design from a pedestrian's perspective.

The terms of the grant require that construction of the improvements be complete by December, 2014. This is a very aggressive schedule that requires that final design begin immediately. Failure to meet this deadline risks losing \$2.2 million of the Proposition 1C grant funding. Significant changes to circulation components of this design will trigger additional environmental review which will prevent staff from meeting Proposition 1C grant requirements. At the time this report was prepared, staff was informed that the California Legislature is considering an extension to some of these grant funds. However, no formal notice has been provided. Should an extension be granted, it is anticipated that it will be up to one year maximum.

Once the City Council has approved the Plaza plan, staff will hold an additional community meeting to discuss final design options for amenities and the flexible design of the space.

BACKGROUND/LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

Over its 160-year history, Latham Square has undergone several redesigns changing both its look and function. However, the gateway to Telegraph Avenue at Broadway has never been closed to vehicles, streetcars, or buses since its original construction.

The City Council approved re-design in January of 2007 provided a safer intersection at 15th and Broadway while maintaining two-way traffic on Telegraph Avenue. The redesign also provided an opportunity to improve Latham Square amenities. However, the redesign created an

extensively long intersection on Broadway at 15th Street. In addition, the Plaza expansion was very minimal and would not have provided much opportunity for expanded daily use and/or special events. This design met CEQA requirements, as does the recommended design.

Construction of the pilot project approved by City Council in April 2013 began in July 2013 with full closure of the two lanes on Telegraph Avenue between Broadway and 16th Street on July 15th. On September 28th, the south bound lane of Telegraph Avenue was re-opened from 16th Street to Broadway as Phase II of the pilot project. City staff evaluated both phases of the pilot through community feedback, traffic data collection, field observations, steering committee meetings (staff/community stakeholders), community meetings, and an online survey.

ANALYSIS

Community Response

Since the Plaza pilot project began, City staff has met with various stakeholders and staff has gathered feedback from community members through a series of door-to-door canvassing, email, surveys, observation, community meetings, and interviews. Meetings were held with City staff across departments as well as community stakeholders from Walk Oakland Bike Oakland (WOBO), Oakland Heritage Alliance (OHA), the Cathedral Building occupants/owners, the Downtown Business Association, and other business owners.

A community meeting was held on September 14, 2013, two months after the pilot project opened for use. Approximately 40 people – property owners, business owners, merchants, office workers, neighborhood residents and interested citizens attended the workshop. At the meeting, those favoring the re-opening of Telegraph to vehicles were overwhelmingly property owners, business owners, merchants, office workers, and neighborhood residents. Those favoring closure were generally residents from throughout the City and some pedestrians that have frequented the area. Reasons cited by those opposed to the closure of Telegraph included potential use of the space for illicit activities and difficult vehicular access to the corridor and the impact to businesses.

Another community meeting was held on Wednesday, November 20 at City Hall. About fifty-five attended. Similar opinions on opening or closing Telegraph were cited as in previous meetings. Additionally, anecdotal observations about the negative impacts to local businesses and traffic patterns were cited. Finally, there was discussion among many of the benefits of a permanently flexible space, i.e., a “shared street” concept on Telegraph Avenue with curbs flush to the Plaza. This design allows for multi-modal travel, but encourages slow speeds and allows for easy street closure for special events.

Plaza Use, Events and Programming

City staff conducted frequent field observations of plaza use at various times of the day. These observations suggest that the highest use of the plaza occurs on weekdays during lunch and early afternoon hours, typically 8-15 people, at any given time. Use of the space was observed to be sparse during mornings, evenings and weekends unless there were special programmed events.

The City of Oakland issued an Encroachment Permit to the Downtown Business Association in July 2013 to oversee the Plaza and its programming. Free music events have been held in October and November with attendance varying from 30-40 people.

Traffic Analysis

The closure of northbound Telegraph Avenue at Broadway created a .3 mile distance between permitted left turns off Broadway (see **Attachment F**), a fairly significant distance in an urban setting. City staff obtained traffic counts before and after the closure to assess the impact of detouring traffic around the Plaza. These pre and post-closure counts indicate that in the 1600 block of Telegraph, vehicular traffic dropped from approximately 6,830 vehicles per day (pre-Latham closure) to 2,420 vehicles per day, or about a sixty-five percent (65%) drop.¹

About 3,700 vehicles per day previously turned left from Broadway onto Telegraph, but no longer can turn, due to the street closure. Instead, they must now detour four blocks north and turn left at 19th Street. However, the counts show that less than half of those vehicles, 1,170, are turning left at 19th. It is unknown where the other 2,630 vehicles are traveling; however, they are by-passing the Telegraph Avenue corridor between 15th & Broadway and 19th & Broadway. Traffic detours are illustrated on **Attachments G, H, and I**.

Recommendation

Based on the data described above, staff recommends approving a permanently expanded and redesigned Latham Square Plaza, including provision for left turns from northbound Broadway onto Telegraph. The 1500 block of Telegraph Avenue should be redesigned to have northbound and southbound lanes open in such a way as to allow the Latham Square to have the maximum amount of pedestrian area possible. This recommendation includes:

- Expansion of the Plaza to nearly four times its original size (non-pilot project) to allow for ample pedestrian space and new amenities, landscape improvements, and community programming;
- A flexible design, i.e., “shared street” design, that will allow Telegraph Avenue to be temporarily closed as needed for special events and other programming;
- Improved pedestrian access and safety to/from Latham Square Plaza by providing a protected pedestrian signal phase; and
- The most effective vehicle circulation for access and deliveries to local businesses.

¹ Hourly traffic counts were collected in January and September, 2013. Daily volumes are projected, based upon the p.m. peak hour on the days that counts were collected.

PUBLIC OUTREACH/INTEREST

See the Community Response section in the ANALYSIS section

COORDINATION

Offices consulted in the preparation of this report include the Office of the City Attorney, Budget, Office of Neighborhood Investment, the Public Works Agency, the Department of Planning and Building, and the Fire Department.

COST SUMMARY/IMPLICATIONS

\$2.2 million in grant funding from the Uptown Proposition 1C grant under the California Department of Housing and Community Development's Infill Infrastructure grant program is available for the design and implementation of the Latham Square Project. Sufficient funding for the final design and construction of the Latham Square project is available in Fund 2144 (California Housing and Community Development), Project C464560 (Latham Square/Telegraph Avenue Streetscape). The terms of these grant funds require that construction of this plaza be complete by December 31, 2014 (unless the City receives confirmation from the State that the grant has been extended for one year).

CEQA

The Latham Square permanent plaza design for a two-way street on Telegraph Avenue between 16th Street and Broadway (as shown in *Attachment C*) is categorically exempt from the environmental analysis requirements of CEQA. This conclusion relies on the detailed environmental analysis conducted to support Resolution No. 80358 C.M.S. (which approved the 2007 Latham Square design). The project is exempt from CEQA under both the Class 1 (operation, repair, or minor alteration of existing facilities, 14CCR 15301) exemption and Class 2 (replacement or reconstruction of existing structures or facilities, 14 CCR 15302) exemption.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Michael Neary at (510) 238-6659.

Respectfully submitted,



FRED BLACKWELL
Assistant City Administrator

Attachments:

Attachment A: - 2007 Design Approved by City Council Resolution No. 80358 C.M.S.

Attachment B – 2013 Pilot Project Design Approved by City Council Resolution No. 84348 C.M.S.

Attachment C – 2013 Recommended Permanent Project Design

Attachment D – Aerial Photo of Existing Intersection and Plaza with Recommended Permanent Project Design Overlay

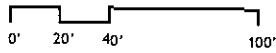
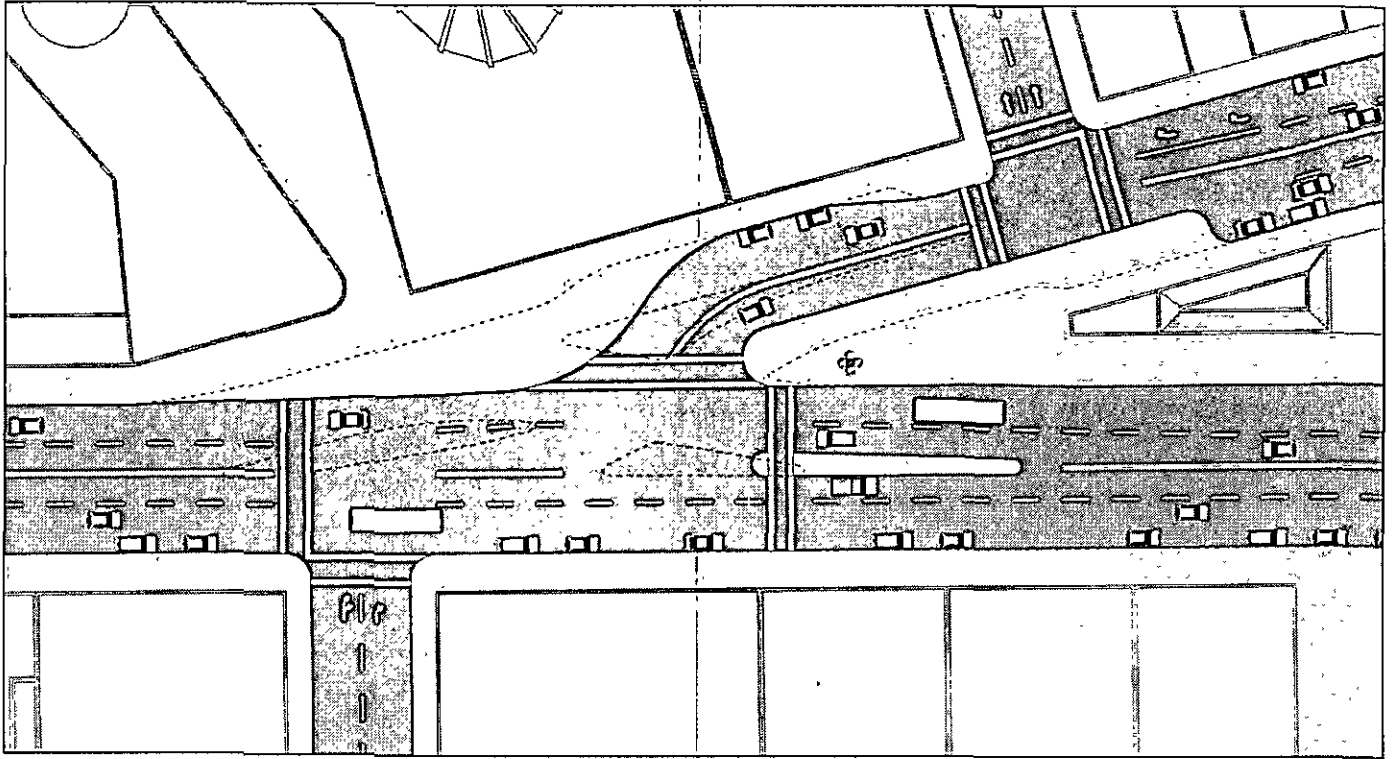
Attachment E – Photo of Existing Street View of Intersection and Plaza and Artist's Rendering of Recommended Permanent Project Design Overlay

Attachment F – Street Grid Map with Left Turn Restrictions

Attachment G – Street Grid Map with Broadway Detour

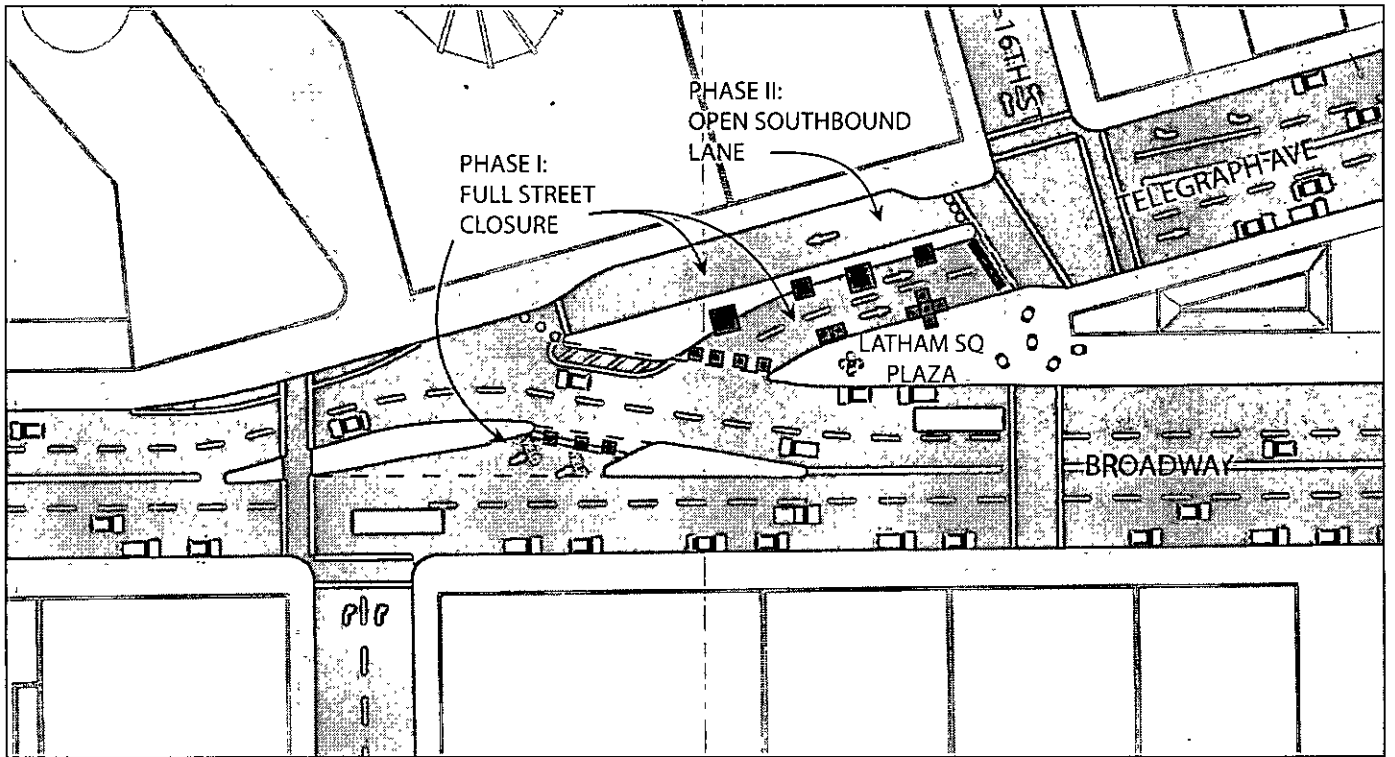
Attachment H – Street Grid Map with Telegraph Avenue Detour

Attachment I – Street Grid Map with 16th Street Detour



PROPOSED DESIGN - 2007

ATTACHMENT A



PILOT PROJECT

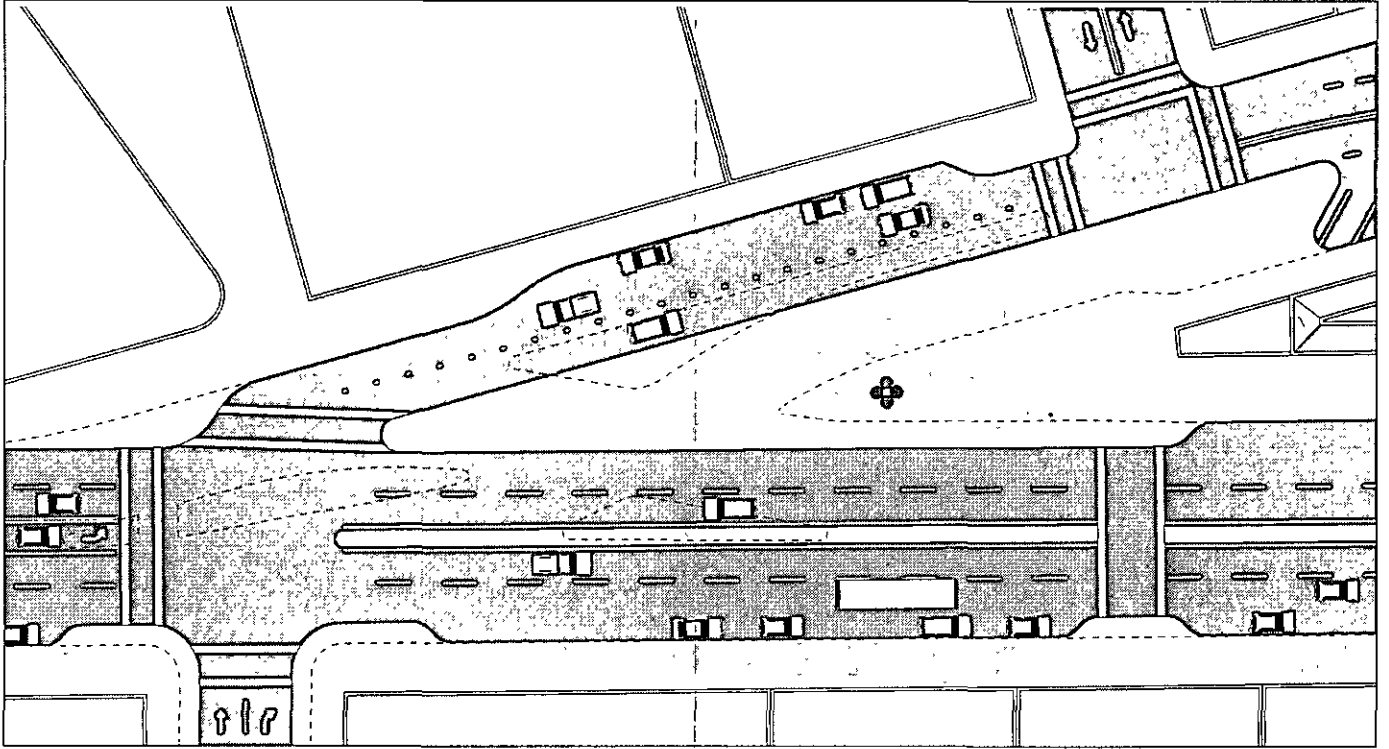
ATTACHMENT B

July 15, 2013

- PHASE I:**
(10 weeks)
- Two (2) northbound lanes closed
 - One (1) southbound lane closed
 - Street furniture, planter boxes with trees and landscaping added

September 28, 2013

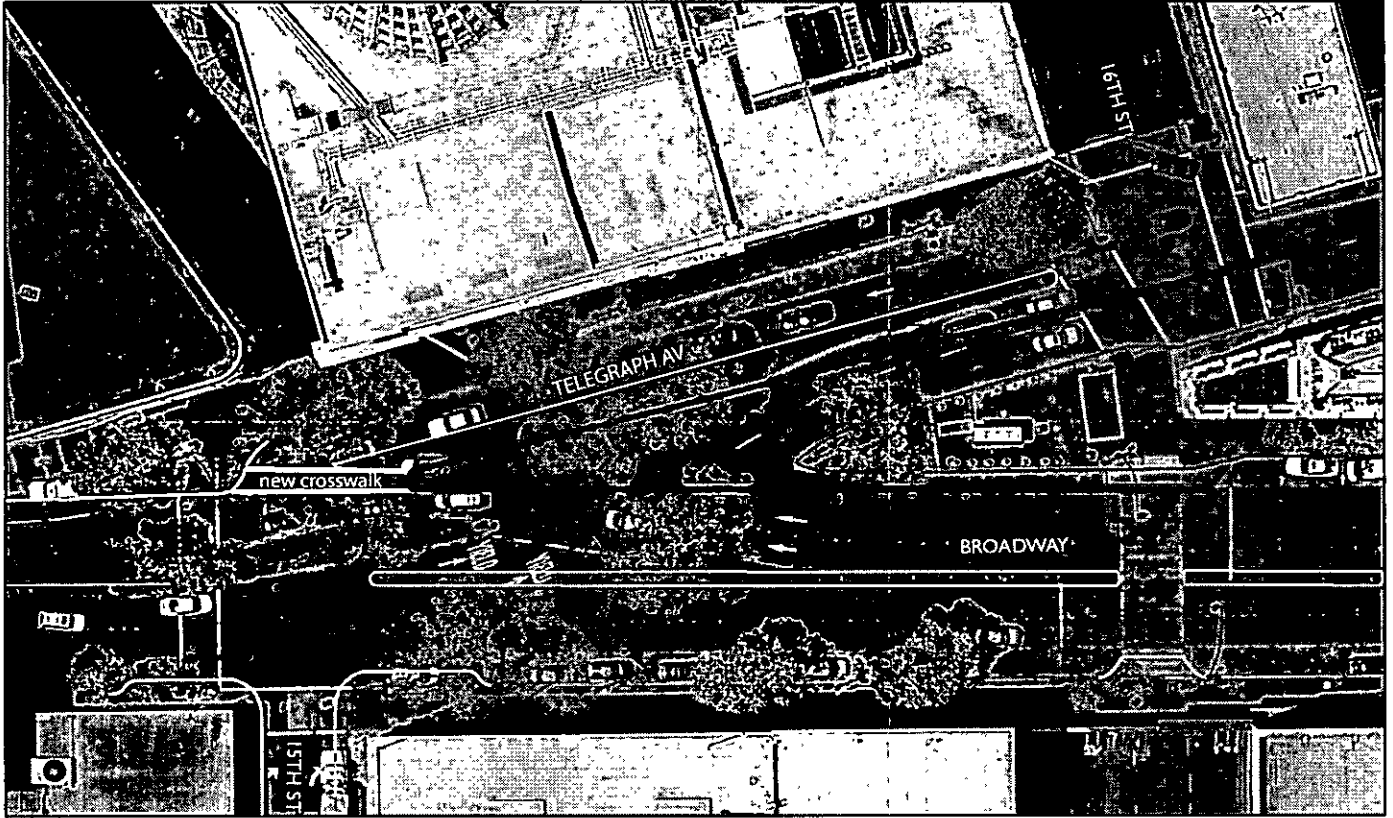
- PHASE II:**
- Southbound lane opened, bollards removed
 - Street furniture, planter boxes with trees and landscaping remain in place



0' 20' 40' 100'

PROPOSED DESIGN - NOVEMBER 2013

ATTACHMENT C

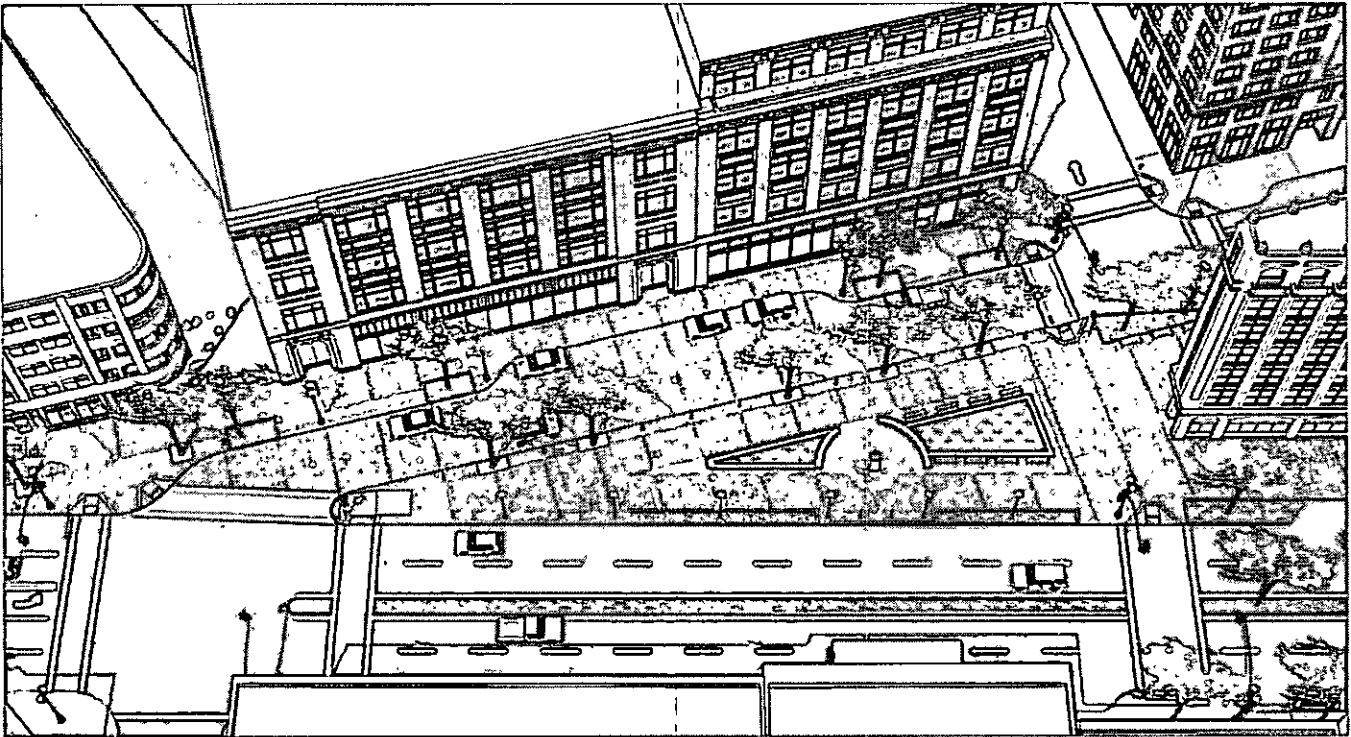
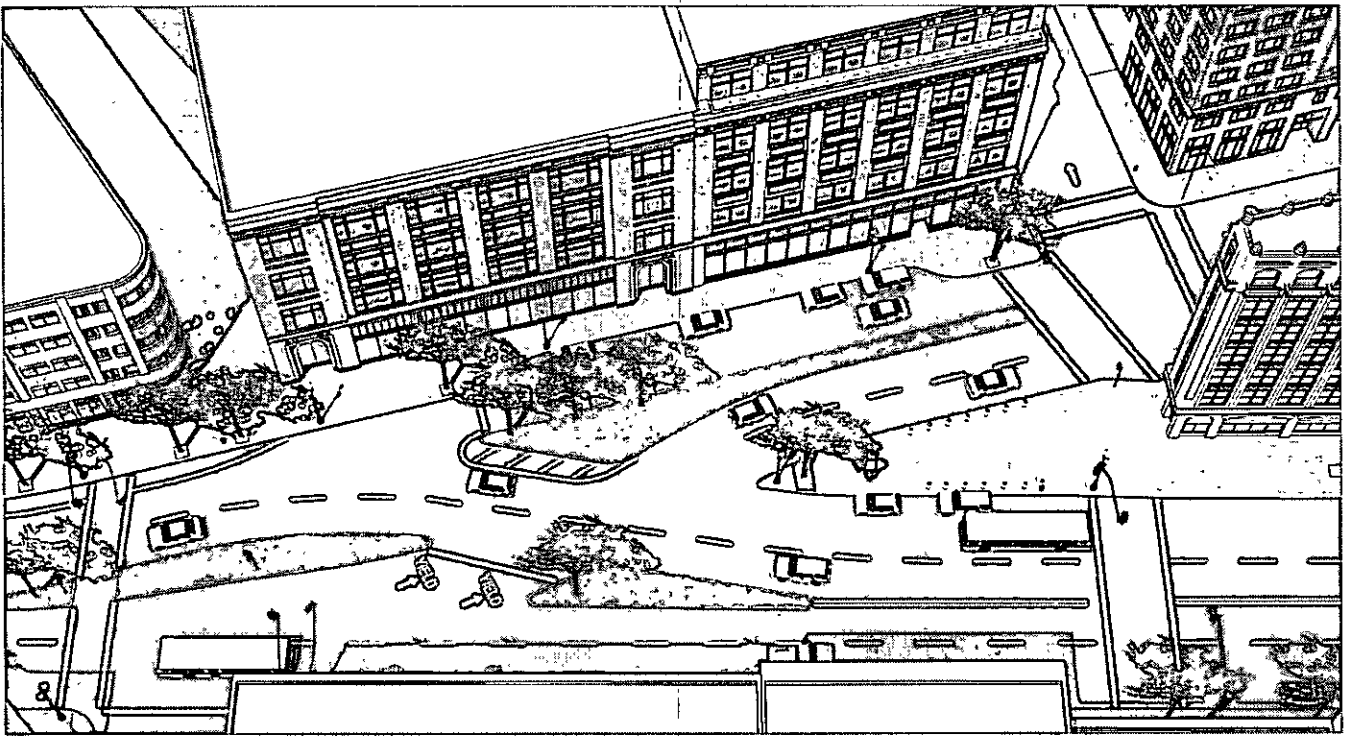


0 25 50 75 100 Feet

LATHAM SQUARE PLAZA

ATTACHMENT D

- Existing Plaza
- ▬ Proposed expanded Plaza
- New median and other curb extension

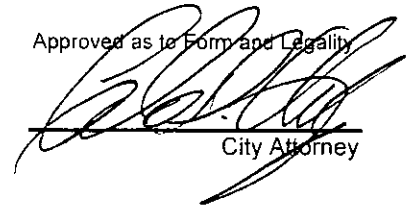


ATTACHMENT E

FILED
OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
OAKLAND

OAKLAND CITY COUNCIL

Approved as to Form and Legality



City Attorney

2013 DEC 12 PM 2:29 RESOLUTION NO. _____ C.M.S.

Introduced by Councilmember _____

RESOLUTION APPROVING A PERMANENTLY EXPANDED AND REDESIGNED LATHAM SQUARE PLAZA; THAT THE 1500 BLOCK OF TELEGRAPH AVENUE BE REDESIGNED TO REDUCE THE TRAVEL LANES FROM THREE TO TWO, WITH ONE TRAVEL LANE NORTHBOUND AND ONE TRAVEL LANE SOUTHBOUND

WHEREAS, in 2008, the City received a \$9.9 million dollars in a Proposition 1C California Department of Housing and Community Development Infill Infrastructure grant, \$2.2 million of which has been set aside for intersection reconfiguration and streetscape improvements to Latham Square; and

WHEREAS, the City Council adopted C.M.S. No. 80358 in January of 2007 that approved a modified street design and CEQA exemption for Latham Square and Telegraph Avenue; and

WHEREAS, in May of 2013, the City Council approved C.M.S. No. 84348, which authorized a temporary street closure on Telegraph Avenue between 16th Street and Broadway in order to create a temporary or "pilot" pedestrian plaza with new amenities; and

WHEREAS, City staff has worked with all aspects of the community to evaluate the success and challenges of the temporary plaza; and

WHEREAS, staff recommends a permanent design that includes an enlarged pedestrian plaza with two travel lanes (one north, one south) along Telegraph Avenue between 16th Street and Broadway, and a left turn lane on Broadway going north at 15th Street; and

WHEREAS, the proposed permanent two-travel lane design relies on the detailed environmental analysis conducted to support the 2004 design (Resolution No. 80358 C.M.S.); and

WHEREAS, the Proposition 1C grant requires that final invoices for constructed project must be submitted to the State of California (granting agency) before February 1, 2015; and

WHEREAS, to meet the deadline for submittal of final invoices to the State, the City must complete project construction by December 31, 2014; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council authorizes the City Administrator or designee to implement the 2013 Latham Square permanent plaza design; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the project be designed such that the entire area may be used flexibly to accommodate occasional street closures for special events.

IN COUNCIL, OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA, _____

PASSED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES - BROOKS, GALLO, GIBSON MCELHANEY, KALB, KAPLAN, REID, SCHAAF and PRESIDENT KERNIGHAN

NOES -

ABSENT -

ABSTENTION -

ATTEST. _____
LaTonda Simmons
City Clerk and Clerk of the Council
of the City of Oakland, California