



Recommendation for Action

File #: 19-1345, **Agenda Item #:** 15.

3/28/2019

Posting Language

Approve adoption of the Brush Square Master Plan.

Lead Department

Parks and Recreation Department

Fiscal Note

This item has no fiscal impact.

For More Information:

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Council Committee, Boards and Commission Action:

January 16, 2019-Approved by the Downtown Commission on a vote of 9-0 with Board Member Andrew Harrison absent.

January 28, 2019-Approved by the Design Commission on a vote of 10-0.

February 13, 2019-Approved by the Waller Creek Local Government Corporation on a vote of 9-0 with Board Member Lucia Athens absent.

February 25, 2019-Approved by the Historic Landmark Commission on a vote of 8-0 with Vice Chair Reed and Commissioner Hibbs absent.

February 26, 2019-Approved by the Parks and Recreation Board on a vote of 8-0 with Board Member Farasat and Chair Rivera absent.

February 26, 2019-Approved by the Planning Commission on a vote of 11-0 with Commissioner DeHoyos Hart off the dais.

Additional Backup Information:

The City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) launched a master planning effort for Brush Square located in downtown Austin in spring, 2018. Brush Square is one of three remaining historic public squares from the 1839 Waller Plan for the City of Austin and is located in the southeast quadrant of downtown. It is home to the Susanna Dickinson Museum, O. Henry Museum, the Austin Fire Museum, and Austin Fire Station #1.

Funding for the master planning effort is provided by the 2012 General Obligation Bonds for Downtown Squares. PARD contracted with Asakura Robinson Landscape Architecture firm through the 2015 City of Austin Landscape Architecture Rotation List for a contract amount of \$125,000.

The community engagement process included community meetings on April 7, 2018, June 16, 2018, and a special event with the Downtown Austin Alliance on October 31, 2018. Additionally, the process included

targeted outreach to Planning Partners, which are organizations, businesses and residential complexes in the vicinity as well as focus groups. Two online surveys were also conducted.

The master plan envisions Brush Square as a unique park for downtown Austin that is distinct yet complementary to other downtown squares and public spaces. The master plan recommends that improvements to Brush Square be implemented in two phases. Phase 1 maintains the operating Fire Station #1, but recommends shifting the parking lot to the west to capture more central greenspace and to provide screening of the parking. Accessibility, circulation, lighting and signage improvements as well as a “water wall” signature entry would be implemented in Phase I. Existing heritage trees would be protected and an array of native or adapted plantings would be added to provide visual delight and habitat. Shaded, small gathering spaces will be abundant as places of respite for nearby residents, workers, transit users, and event attendees. The cost of Phase 1 is estimated at approximately \$3.1 million. Phase 2 may be implemented when the fire and emergency operations functions are relocated to a new state of the art facility in downtown. In this next phase, the historic 1930s Art Moderne Fire Station would be adapted into a new Downtown Visitor Center and café with indoor and outdoor seating. The parking lot would be removed to allow for further reclamation of greenspace. An architecturally distinct band shell will be constructed to the west of the festival lawn. The cost of Phase 2 is estimated at approximately \$2.7 million.

Funding for design development for Phase I has been provided through the City of Austin Historic Preservation Fund. Funding for construction has yet to be determined, but may draw from sources ranging from the Historic Preservation Fund, the 2018 GO Bond and other financing strategies identified in the master plan.