

Date: June 30, 2021

To: Thomas B. Modica, City Manager 

From: John Keisler, Director of Economic Development 

For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: **North Pine Avenue Community Vision and Action Plan**

On June 11, 2019, the City Council adopted a [recommendation](#) to request the Economic Development Department to coordinate the creation of a community vision for business corridor improvements that revitalize and activate the historic North Pine Avenue commercial corridor and neighborhood. The recommendation came with \$25,000 in one-time funding to implement the project. The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the City Council with an update on the progress that has been completed to date on this project and discuss the next steps.

Background

As mentioned in the original City Council recommendation, the North Pine Avenue commercial corridor and neighborhood has seen significant progress over the years with the addition of businesses, improvements in the public right-of-way, and special events that have activated the area. While the original intent of the City Council action was to identify business corridor improvement strategies that build on this progress, the priorities of business owners and residents regarding how to invest the one-time funding have changed over time.

Landscaping Improvements

In October 2019, the Council District 1 office requested staff to explore the feasibility of utilizing the one-time funding to complete landscaping improvements in the area. Specifically, staff was requested to coordinate improvements to approximately eight planters located on Pine Avenue between 4th Street and 6th Street. Staff from both the Economic Development (ED) and Public Works (PW) Departments worked in partnership and conducted an assessment of existing planters and landscape, reviewed options for replacement plants to beautify the corridor, and prepared options for review and feedback from North Pine Avenue business owners and residents. Staff also completed site visits in the area with stakeholders to review the conditions of the planters and inform the exploration of potential options for landscaping improvements. These activities sparked a discussion among staff across multiple City departments and partners including the Downtown Long Beach Alliance (DLBA) regarding the long-term maintenance of the planters. The identification of a funding source for costs for landscaping and irrigation is an unresolved funding issue.

COVID-19 Pandemic and Changes in Priorities

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and civil unrest related to the murder of George Floyd, new priorities have emerged, including the removal of plywood board-ups, the demolition of buildings damaged by arson, and the completion of new residential buildings along the corridor, which will soon bring new residents to the area. The COVID-19 pandemic also created new challenges for

small businesses and commercial property owners, which are ongoing. For example, many service-related small businesses were required to modify business operations or even close temporarily to protect public health and to comply with State and local Health Orders. This disruption to business activity and special events, coupled with a reduction in customer foot traffic in the North Pine Avenue corridor, created financial challenges for many small businesses and has led to new discussions about what is needed to promote the reactivation and recovery of the North Pine Avenue corridor.

A New Vision

In May 2020, business owners on North Pine Avenue organized an outdoor meeting with representatives from the Council District 1 office, the DLBA, and the City to discuss priorities for the commercial corridor. Multiple ideas were shared by business owners for improving North Pine Avenue including the full closure of Pine Avenue between 4th Street and 5th Street. The City completed the full closure of this section of Pine Avenue on September 25, 2020 as part of a series of innovative programs approved by the City Council to provide outdoor dining and other activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. These temporary closures were extended by the City and continue to provide outdoor dining and other activities while the State moves closer to full reopening later this year.

In addition to the street closures, outdoor dining, and other temporary strategies to activate the North Pine Avenue corridor, staff are working with business owners and the DLBA to complete a more comprehensive vision and implementation plan to promote activation of North Pine Avenue in the recovery following COVID-19. This may include both temporary and permanent changes that will require City Council approval. Although the initial \$25,000 in one-time funding will not be sufficient to implement all the improvements identified by North Pine Avenue business owners and residents, staff are seeking to align this effort with the much larger Long Beach Recovery Act program [approved](#) by the City Council on March 16, 2021, which includes additional grant funding for storefront activation, working capital, and business fees among other support programs. City staff expect to provide a written update to the City Council in 120 days or once the activation plan is completed, whichever comes first.

Next Steps

In addition to working with property owners and businesses to immediately begin the removal of plywood board-ups and the demolition of buildings damaged as a result of arson, staff is near finished with the process of selecting a consultant with experience in commercial corridor activation who will help develop a North Pine Avenue Community Vision and Action Plan (Plan).

The timing of the new Plan aligns well with existing DLBA efforts to create a new strategic plan and retail strategy for Downtown Long Beach, as well as the Long Beach Recovery Act program recently approved by the City Council, so that activation efforts and investments will be complementary. Staff intends to identify synergies between the two projects to build on both DLBA investment and Long Beach Recovery Act funding and create a more focused vision for the North Pine Avenue area. Staff have identified a firm that will manage the project and are working through the process of issuing a purchase order for their services. The project is tentatively set to begin in this month and end in October 2021. The project will create multiple opportunities for residents, business owners, and property owners to provide input on the Plan. Staff anticipates that

additional funding will need to be secured to implement improvements identified in the Plan but anticipate that program goals for corridor beautification, activation, and small business support will align with priorities and programs identified in the Long Beach Recovery Act program approved by the City Council.

Conclusion

Staff will continue to provide written updates to the City Council and the public regarding this important project so that North Pine Avenue small business owners, residents, and property owners are aware of opportunities to provide input on the Plan.

Please feel free to contact me by phone at (562) 570-5282 or by email at john.keisler@longbeach.gov with additional questions.

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