

STAFF REPORT
City of Lancaster

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Date: November 12, 2014

To: Mayor Parris and City Council Members

From: Vern Lawson, Economic Development Director
Robert Neal, Public Works Director

Subject: **Professional Services Agreement - Auto Mall Urban Design, Landscaping and Civil Engineering Services**

Recommendations:

- a) Approve the professional services agreement with Sargent Town Planning of Los Angeles, California (“Consultant”) in the amount of \$436,830 for Auto Mall Urban Design, Landscaping and Civil Engineering Services and authorize the City Manager, or his designee, to sign all documents.

- b) Appropriate \$200,000 in Traffic Impact Fee fund balances to Capital Improvement Budget Account No. 232-15BW005-924, Lancaster Auto Mall project.

Fiscal Impact:

\$436,830; with these actions, sufficient funds are available in Capital Improvements Budget Account Nos. 209-15BW005-924, 210-15BW005-924 and 232-15BW005-924.

Background:

In March 2010, the City of Lancaster broke ground on the BLVD Transformation Project, a massive initiative to redesign and reconstruct Downtown Lancaster to better suit the lifestyles of the 21st century. The designs for this project incorporated cutting-edge concepts that reflect a new, more urban philosophy of planning. Under this philosophy, the atmosphere is designed with the pedestrian in mind. Mid-block crossings and a “park once” mentality allow patrons to comfortably and conveniently stroll the BLVD. A form-based code encourages building to the sidewalk and fosters interaction between pedestrians and their surroundings. Drought-tolerant landscaping creates an attractive environment that also provides shade for pedestrians. Additional amenities, such as strategically placed street furniture and a center-street dual-function “Ramblas” that can serve as either parking or event space, complement the pedestrian-friendly ambience.

This project has not only drastically improved the atmosphere of the downtown area for residents and patrons, but has also had a significant impact on commerce. Since the project broke ground, more than 55 new businesses have been attracted to the downtown area, property values have increased by nearly 11%, and sales tax revenue has more than doubled. Overall private investment is estimated at \$135 million, while over 800 permanent jobs have been created.

Given this success, it's undeniable that the transformation of public space has a direct and substantial effect on commerce. The Lancaster Auto Mall has long served as the City's number-one sales tax generator, providing more than 450 jobs for local workers. However, the Auto Mall's public realm is in dire need of updating. Constructed approximately two decades ago, exceptionally wide streets and high speeds of traffic inhibit pedestrians from safely walking between dealerships. Outdated signage is less than welcoming, shade is all but nonexistent, and landscaping is lackluster.

The agreement now before you for consideration would be the first step in changing all that. This agreement would enable Sargent Town Planning to create construction-ready plans for a complete redesign of the Lancaster Auto Mall, utilizing the same design concepts that have made the BLVD such a remarkable success. These designs will create a substantially safer and more welcoming environment for pedestrians, thus not only establishing a more aesthetically pleasing and walkable environment for citizens to enjoy, but also facilitating and enriching the shopping experience in an effort to capture increasing numbers of customers from the Antelope Valley and beyond. Success in this endeavor would, in turn, generate increased sales tax revenue for essential City services while also creating additional jobs within the Lancaster Auto Mall. In short, this agreement offers the opportunity to transform a regional economic powerhouse into a premier vehicle-buying destination for all of Southern California.

These efforts are an extension of the original design work contracted to the Consultant for Downtown Lancaster. The contract for downtown streetscape design was awarded by the City Council on May 12, 2009 in the amount of \$167,000, and later continued with a contract for construction plans and specifications in the amount of \$500,000 awarded on August 11, 2009. At the time of the previous awards, the City contemplated including the Auto Mall during a later phase. As the Consultant has been involved with the design of these and other plans, this contract allows the Consultant to continue this work and creates continuity of design throughout the City. This agreement value is approximately 6% of the estimated project construction cost and is consistent with typical design/construction cost ratios. The original consultant selection was made in accordance with GC 4526.

VL:CD

Attachment:

Professional Services Agreement for Auto Mall Urban Design, Landscaping and Civil Engineering Services