

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

Date: September 16, 2013

To: Miguel A. Santana, City Administrative Officer
Gerry F. Miller, Chief Legislative Analyst

From: Michael J. LoGrande, Director



Reference: Council File 13-1300-S1

Subject: (o) Great Streets Programs

On August 6, 2013 City Council directed the City Administrative Office and Chief Legislative Analyst with assistance from the Bureau of Street Services, Bureau of Sanitation, Department of Transportation and the Department of City Planning to report back on best practices associated with "Great Streets" programs, as well as potential funding sources, including one-time funding, that could be used to launch such a program in the City of Los Angeles.

This report provides information on ten Great Streets programs that are currently in place nationwide, describes "great streets" efforts that are already underway within the City, identifies potential funding strategies for the GSP, briefly describes the selection process utilized by other cities, and outlines the establishment of a multi-departmental working group to define and launch a formal Great Streets Program (GSP)

Great Streets Programs Nationwide

An early version of the great streets concept was initially launched as a "Main Street" model for revitalization by the National Main Street Center (Center), a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The Center developed a tested, successful "Four-Point Approach" to commercial district revitalization. One of the key advantages of the Main Street approach is that it goes well beyond infrastructure improvements – it takes an incremental, community-based approach to creating "Great Streets" that creates a grass-roots infrastructure, forges partnerships between the business and residential communities, addresses deep-seated economic challenges, and focuses on implementation. While this program was initially focused on small town Main Streets, in 1995 Boston Mayor Thomas Menino challenged the National Trust to include urban "Main Streets" in its program. The Boston program has since yielded tremendous success in revitalizing long-neglected commercial centers.

Following the success of the Boston Main Street program a number of other cities have initiated Great Streets Programs as a means to rejuvenate and transform select community corridors. For this report a total of ten cities (including Boston's) were examined. In each instance the scope and breadth of the program varied but the

unifying factor between them was the goal of improving the quality of the streetscape for pedestrians. In order to accomplish this primary goal some programs focused on upgrading storefronts while others focused more on the streetscape itself by making improvements to the public right-of-way. Many of the cities that focused on the streetscape included improvements that would benefit bicyclists and transit riders while also including stormwater infiltration strategies. In addition to improving either the adjacent buildings and/or streetscape more than half included economic revitalization as a key component of their program. Several cities placed special emphasis on the community engagement process and the importance of public participation in the development and on-going maintenance of the street projects. Programs that included an economic investment component tended to be located within a Business or Development Services Department whereas programs that focused largely on urban design or streetscape improvements housed their programs within the Department of Transportation, Public Works or the Planning and Community Planning Department.

A summary of the ten programs is included below:

- Boston, MA, *Main Streets Program* (1996), Devoted to the continued revitalization of Boston's neighborhood commercial districts through design, technical, and financial support.
<http://www.cityofboston.gov/dnd/obd/mainstreets.asp>
- Long Beach, CA (2012) Focused on revitalization of downtown area by modifying the streetscape to encourage walking, bicycling and the use of public transportation, promoting job growth, and encouraging quality architecture, light-filled public spaces, and respect for the natural environment.
<http://www.lbds.info/civica/filebank/blobdload.asp?BlobID=3707>
- Minneapolis, MN, *Great Streets Neighborhood Business District* (2007) Cultivates and sustains vibrant neighborhoods by focusing on business development, technical assistance to businesses, façade improvements and real estate gap financing.
http://www.minneapolismn.gov/cped/ba/cped_great_streets_home.
- New York, NY, *Sustainable Streets/Main Street Initiative* (2008) Focus on streets as public spaces to develop people-friendly boulevards along key corridors.
<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/about/stratplan.shtml>
- Portland, OR, *Portland Main Street* (2011) Looks to preserve the authenticity of main street districts by protecting, maintaining and energizing existing resources and strengthening the continuity of the street by infilling missing buildings with

new structures that are sensitive to the neighborhood identity. The program also advocates a return to community self-reliance and local empowerment.

([http://www.pdc.us%2FLibraries%2FDocument Library%2FMain Street District Design Handbook pdf](http://www.pdc.us%2FLibraries%2FDocument%2FLibrary%2FMain%2FMain%2FStreet%2FDistrict%2FDesign%2FDesign%2FHandbook%2FHandbook.pdf)).

- St. Louis, MO, *Great Streets Initiative* (2006) Triggers economic and social benefits by centering communities around interesting, lively and attractive streets that serve all modes of transportation.
(<http://www.ewgateway.org/GreatStreets/GSTSHistory/gstshistory.htm>)
- San Francisco, CA *Great Streets Project* (2009) Creates compelling public spaces that build community, are thriving shopping streets and provide a safe, accessible and welcome space for even the most vulnerable
(<http://www.sfdpw.org/index.aspx?page=88> and [sfgreatstreets.org](http://www.sfgreatstreets.org))
- Santa Monica's *Ocean Park Boulevard Complete Green Street Project* (2008) The result of many years of planning and collaboration between community members, City staff, and other local stakeholders. The result will be a better performing, enhanced streetscape that is pedestrian- and bicycle-oriented, attractive, green and prevents urban run-off from entering the Santa Monica Bay. (<http://www.smgov.net/Departments/PCD/Plans/Streetscapes/Ocean-Park-Boulevard-Complete-Green-Street/>).
- Seattle, WA, *Pedestrian Master Plan* (2002) Sees placemaking as an essential part of sustainability, livability, and equitable growth. Develops streetscape designs that consider the function, form, and feel of a space and its place within the larger community.
(<http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/docs/sdotactionagenda2812.pdf>)
- Washington, D.C. *Great Streets Initiative* (2008) Focuses on transforming nine under-invested corridors into thriving and inviting neighborhood centers.
(<http://www.dc.gov/DC/DMPED/Programs+and+Initiatives/Great+Streets>).

Organizational and Financing Models

Boston

The Boston model, as the oldest and largest (20 districts) program offers a number of organizational and financing tips that are worth considering as the City continues to explore the feasibility of launching its own Great Streets Program. Boston essentially treats each district as an independent entity. Each district receives financial and

technical assistance and intensive training in the Main Street approach from the City of Boston Main Streets office and the National Trust Main Street Center. In turn, each Main Street organization hires a full time Executive Director, raises matching funds, incorporates its organization and implements its programs according to an annual work plan.

Boston Main Streets districts follow a four-point comprehensive approach that creates and sustains the district's image: 1) community organization, 2) promotion, 3) design and 4) economic restructuring. Specific Main Street activities and operations include storefront improvement grants, public enhancements, local promotional and fund-raising events such as road races, parades, auctions, multi-cultural festivals and holiday shopping events that strategically aim to enhance the image of the business district and attract consumers. Using the Main Street four-point approach, district staff and volunteers draw upon the skills and experience of the local stakeholders to revitalize the district. (see <http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/about-main-street/the-approach/#.UglhcpLvVW9> for more information on the four-point approach).

The City of Boston commits a significant portion of its federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to the Boston Main Streets program, Neighborhood Development Funding (NDF) is used for the districts that are not eligible for CDBG. In addition, the City of Boston commits six full time staff to assist the local districts in many aspects of their programs. Local districts also have access to city architects, design staff, transportation planners and technical assistance specialists.

The funding is provided in four basic categories:

1. Executive Director Salary
2. Physical Improvements through Restore Boston
3. Technical Assistance and
4. Promotion

In addition, Boston Main Streets provides local districts with design assistance from local architecture firms in the form of Design Hours. The contracts with the architecture firms are administered by the Office of Business Development Design Services Unit.

Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C.'s *Great Streets Initiative* is a multi-year, multiple-agency effort to transform nine under-invested corridors into thriving and inviting neighborhood centers using public actions and tools as needed to leverage private investment. The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED) is partnering with the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) and the Office of Planning (OP) to manage the program. More than \$200 million is being invested in new mixed use development projects, storefront improvements, streetscape, and transit improvements along these corridors. In January 2008, the District made available \$95 million in

targeted Tax Increment Financing for neighborhood economic development projects which include over 10,000 square feet of quality local and national retail.

Local Readiness and Next Steps

As the City considers the feasibility and scope of developing its own Great Streets Program it would appear that a strategy that includes planning and community engagement, economic development, and physical improvements, to both the private and public realms, would seem to offer the greatest potential for transformative impacts. Fortunately, while the City has not yet had a Great Streets Program there are a number of similar, street improvements and activities that the City has initiated over the past years that it can draw on for "lessons learned."

In 1999-2000 the Los Angeles Conservancy tried to create a Los Angeles Main Streets Initiative, in partnership with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Among the communities interested in participating then were Highland Park (the N. Figueroa Corridor), Eagle Rock (Colorado Blvd.), Echo Park (Sunset Blvd.), Leimert Park Village, Little Tokyo (First St. historic district), and Canoga Park (Sherman Way, which actually did create a Canoga Park Main Street Program with assistance from the CRA (see <http://www.crala.org/internet-site/Projects/Reseda/MainStreetProgram.cfm>). While that effort was never fully embraced by City officials, it offers a potential model as a concept of a citywide program focused on creating great streets and vibrant neighborhoods.

A more recent local model for a new Great Streets Program to potentially emulate is the "Bringing Back Broadway" project. This effort illustrates the value of combining economic revitalization efforts with multi-modal transportation and streetscape improvements. Bringing Back Broadway also exemplifies the critical importance of obtaining community collaboration and establishing an independent organization(s) to oversee design, funding, implementation, and long-term maintenance. Temporary streetscape design features are currently being installed within the 1.3 mile stretch that will highlight the areas transformation as a safe, active pedestrian corridor. While the results may appear "instantaneous" they represent years of design development, community engagement and an intense commitment from local businesses and property owners. Notable with Bringing Back Broadway is the phased approach to implementing the physical streetscape reconfiguration developed as part of this larger multi-faceted initiative. The "Phase 1" street reconfiguration will be affected through the Broadway Dress Rehearsal, where cost efficient materials will set the stage for full build out of the streetscape plan block-by-block over time as funding becomes available.

The multi-departmental collaboration that members of the City's Transit Corridors Cabinet participated in this past spring further highlights the multiple layers of participation and years of patience that will be needed to make a Great Streets Program successful. The Transit Corridors Cabinet worked together feverishly over several months to assist Metro in reviewing the design drawings for the Crenshaw Light Rail project. Initially the then, 30% complete design drawings had not contemplated a range

of pedestrian and bicycle design features to fully embrace the area for active transportation. Thanks to the efforts of the Cabinet, which included staff from the Departments of City Planning and Transportation, the Los Angeles Housing Department and the Bureaus of Engineering, Sanitation, Street Lighting, and Street Services they were able to review and offer consolidated City comments on specific design elements at specific locations to augment the design/build process with detailed feedback to ensure that when the Crenshaw project is constructed several years from now that it will be a successful multi-modal corridor with the right "urban design scaffolding" in place upon which to build additional future economic and built environment Great Streets type improvements."

With the experience of these and other (Central Avenue, My Fig) local efforts to draw upon, coupled with the Complete Streets Network and new street design standards that are envisioned by the Mobility Plan 2035 (Mobility 2035) the City is well positioned to pursue its own Great Streets Program. The Complete Street Network identifies a series of inter-connected streets and districts enhanced for specific modes; transportation, bicycles, vehicles, and pedestrians. Streets on the Complete Street Network were selected based upon in-depth analysis that took into consideration existing and future land uses and densities, travel demand (by mode), demographics, and collision data. The streets selected for the Complete Streets Network could serve as a "short list" from which to further identify potential Great Street candidates. The street design standards will enable modified street configurations that are more conducive to transit users, pedestrians and bicyclists and include stormwater ("green street") treatments and can serve as templates for streetscape improvements along the selected Great Streets.

While the City does not currently have the opportunity to utilize tax increment financing (like D.C. did), Measure R Local Return and Prop C are two city-controlled funding sources that could be used for streetscape improvements. The City could also apply for competitive grant funds through sources such as Metro Call for Projects and California Safe Routes to School. As an example of the type of funding that might be needed the temporary streetscape improvements currently being installed on Broadway cost upwards of \$2 million and the long term improvements are estimated at \$40m. These costs are exclusive of any economic investments adjacent properties.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Council instruct the City Administrative Officer and the Chief Legislative Analyst, with the assistance of the Department of Public Works, Bureaus of Street Service and Sanitation along with the Departments of Transportation and Planning to work with the Mayor's office to establish a Great Streets Working Group to develop criteria for identifying and an objective, data-driven methodology for prioritizing the first Great Street pilot(s), establish goals and principles of Great Streets, develop associated metrics and benchmarks to evaluate and track project impacts over time and identify some immediate short-term, temporary streetscape improvements while laying the foundation for a long-term funding, design development, management and implementation strategy to install permanent streetscape improvements, activate the public realm and stimulate economic revitalization.



ERIC GARCETTI
MAYOR

EXECUTIVE DIRECTIVE NO. 1

Issue Date: October 10, 2013

Subject: Great Streets Initiative

Introduction

Los Angeles must carefully consider how to leverage and invest our scarce resources, and we must strategically coordinate our investments in a manner that has the most meaningful impact on the City and its residents.

Our street network stretches 6,500 centerline miles, making it the largest municipal street system in the United States. As the City's largest public space asset, covering approximately 13% of our land area, streets reflect and drive the economic and social vibrancy of our neighborhoods.

Accordingly, I am launching the City of Los Angeles Great Streets Initiative. This Initiative will focus on developing Great Streets that activate the public realm, provide economic revitalization, and support great neighborhoods.

Goals

Great Streets will support the following six goals:

- **Increased Economic Activity**
- **Improved Access and Mobility**
- **Enhanced Neighborhood Character**
- **Greater Community Engagement**
- **Improved Environmental Resilience**
- **Safer and More Secure Communities**

These six goals support my priority citywide outcomes:

- 1. Promote good jobs for Angelenos all across Los Angeles**
- 2. Restore the City services that make our neighborhoods livable and attractive**
- 3. Make our communities the safest in the nation**
- 4. Create a more sustainable and livable city**

Composition

I hereby create the City of Los Angeles Great Streets Initiative.

This initiative will be led by my Deputy Mayor of City Services, and is composed of the General Managers, or their designees, of the following City Departments in a Great Streets Working Group:

- Department of City Planning
- Department of Cultural Affairs
- Department of Transportation
- Department of Public Works
 - Bureau of Engineering
 - Bureau of Street Services
 - Bureau of Street Lighting
 - Bureau of Sanitation
- Economic & Workforce Development Department

I also expect the Working Group to closely coordinate with the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power as well as the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA).

I request that all other City Departments, Bureaus, Agencies, Boards, and Commissions support the Great Streets Working Group as needed.

Great Streets Action Plan

I am directing the Great Streets Working Group to develop a Great Streets Action Plan, which will produce the following deliverables:

- 1. Criteria and strategy for identifying streets to be included in the Great Streets Program**
- 2. Candidate list of 40 potential streets**
- 3. Comprehensive matrix of project elements and associated costs**
- 4. Strategy for the coordination of city services to Great Streets**
- 5. Project implementation timeline**
- 6. Funding strategy**
- 7. Metrics and benchmarks to evaluate and track project impacts**

This Action Plan will include an internal strategy that paves the way for implementation. The immediate focus is on improvements that are achievable in the near term, while laying the foundation for a long term funding, design development, management, and implementation strategy to install improvements and recommend policy that activates the public realm and stimulates economic revitalization.

I also direct the Working Group to partner with MTA on retrofitting our existing transit stops and station areas as well as better coupling of urban design interventions with MTA construction projects.

The Working Group will also coordinate with Council Offices and other stakeholders to define and identify the candidate streets across the City. There will be an additional focus on benchmarks, metrics, measurability, and replicability for any policy and implementation recommendations that are developed.

Executed this 10th day of OCTOBER, 2013



ERIC GARCETTI
Mayor