



Legislation Text

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Report regarding a resolution authorizing the City Manager to execute a Consulting Services Agreement between the City of South San Francisco and Plan to Place, LLC for Facilitation Services for Community Discussions of Decommissioned City Facilities, and consideration of potential alternatives. *(Nell Selander, Economic and Community Development Director, and Megan Wooley-Ousdahl, Principal Planner)*

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends City Council consider adopting a resolution approving a Consulting Services Agreement with Plan to Place, LLC for Facilitation Services for Community Discussions of Decommissioned City Facilities in an amount not to exceed \$79,920 and authorizing the City Manager to execute the agreement. Should Council decline to approve the resolution as drafted, staff is seeking feedback on the alternatives discussed in the Conclusion section of this staff report.

BACKGROUND

Over the past year, the City has received significant public comment regarding the future use of the City-owned Municipal Services Building. Both the Municipal Services Building and West Orange Library are two aging pieces of the City's infrastructure that beginning in 2014 were planned for decommissioning when their continued repair and maintenance begged the question - should they be substantially repaired or replaced? Over several years, the City planned for these buildings to be replaced and new community-serving spaces to be built, including a new Police Department, the new Library | Parks & Recreation Center, and eventually a new Fire Station 63. The planning effort for the delivery of these new facilities included substantial community outreach engagement, passage of a local sales tax measure (Measure W), selection of design and construction firms to complete the projects, property acquisition, and rezonings to accommodate these new uses.

Staff detailed the current conditions of the Municipal Services Building and West Orange Library facilities, past planning efforts for these properties, reuse and redevelopment options for them, and information regarding a community engagement effort planned for Fall 2024 in a staff report and presentation to the City Council on June 26, 2024 (see Link 1). During that meeting, Council directed staff to move forward with an inclusive community engagement process to hear from the community regarding the future of these sites. The input gathered during this engagement process would be used to help inform next steps for these City-owned properties.

At its June 26th meeting, City Council also requested additional outreach meetings be held, in addition to the two Open Houses staff had proposed. Regarding the timeline for this effort, Council expressed an interest in allowing more time for community input, yet not excessively elongating the process. City Council also expressed appreciation for the engagement process for the new park at Linden Avenue and Pine Avenue which

included multiple meetings and engagement opportunities, and refreshments. At the time staff received this feedback from Council, the Request for Proposals to solicit a facilitator had already been released with responses due just two days later, on June 28th. Staff asked short-listed firms invited to interview to incorporate this expanded scope in their interview presentation. This expanded scope was then negotiated as part of the contract with the staff recommended firm, as detailed below.

DISCUSSION

Facilitation Professional Services Procurement

Staff issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) on the City's preferred procurement platform, OpenGov Procurement, on May 28, 2024, with proposals due a month later, on June 28, 2024. While this RFP was open to the general public, to generate interest in the project, staff notified a total of 11 firms and non-profits, including firms on the City's on-call list and others that staff has worked with in the past on similar efforts. Twenty-five firms downloaded the proposal packet. Eight firms submitted proposals. Review and recommendation of a preferred firm consisted of a two-step process outlined below. In all, seven staff from three different City departments reviewed the proposals and participated in evaluating the responsive firms.

Step 1. Paper Review of All Eight Proposals

A panel of four staff members (the Director of Capital Projects, Deputy Director of Economic and Community Development, Chief Planner, and Principal Planner) reviewed the eight proposals. The panel rated the proposals in the following areas:

1. *Knowledge and Understanding:* Demonstrated understanding of the RFP objectives and work requirements. Identification of key issues. Methods of approach, work plan, and experience with similar projects related to type of services.
2. *Management Approach and Staffing Plan:* Qualifications of project staff (particularly key personnel such as the project manager), key personnel's level of involvement in performing related work, and the team's experience in maintaining schedule.
3. *Qualifications of the Proposer Firm:* Experience with similar projects. Technical experience in performing work related to type of services; record of completing work on schedule; strength and stability of the firm; technical experience and strength and stability of proposed subconsultants; demonstrated communications quality and success, and assessments by client references as available.
4. *Presentation of a Concise and Responsive Proposal*

The total possible score a firm could receive was 100 points. The panel's scores are included in Attachment 1. The top four scores, all above 80 points, were Lighthouse Public Affairs, Winter Consulting, Plan to Place, LLC, and SERA Design & Architecture.

While Lighthouse Public Affairs received the top score during the paper review, staff made the decision to exclude them from the interview process because the City's former Assistant City Manager is a principal at this firm. Staff was concerned about a conflict of interest specifically on this project, as the former Assistant City Manager was a key member of the project team managing Measure W and the planning process and development of the new L|PR Center. Staff reached out to Lighthouse Public Affairs to inform them of this decision.

Step 2. Interviews of Top Three Firms

Of the remaining applicants, staff invited the firms with the three highest-rated proposals to an interview. The firms included Plan to Place, LLC, Winter Consulting, and SERA Design & Architecture. City staff invited the firms to give a presentation and asked the firms to address the following prompt during their interview:

For the interview, please watch the City Council meeting on June 26, 2024. Staff presented a report to Council regarding this item, and City Council provided direction. During the interview, please discuss how you would adjust the proposed scope and timeline to address Council's comments.

Prior to the interviews, staff called references for all three firms. All three firms received strong references from former clients. These reference checks helped inform the interview questions.

Interviews were conducted on July 29, 2024, by a panel of three staff members (the Assistant City Manager, Director of Economic and Community Development, and Director of Parks and Recreation). After a presentation by the firm, including a response to the prompt above, the interview panelists asked each firm the following questions:

1. Can you speak to your experience facilitating sensitive community conversations?
2. How do you build credibility with community members?
3. What effective tools or processes do you use to ensure all voices are heard?
4. How do you create a transparent and open process that generates community buy-in?
5. How would you approach getting constructive feedback from community members who lack faith in the process?

Members of the panel rated the interviews in the following areas:

1. *Presentation Quality:* Was the presentation professional, engaging, and concise?
2. *Response to City Prompt:* Response to the City's prompt for the interview which was "Discuss how you

would adjust the proposed scope and timeline to address Council’s comments from the 06/26/2024 City Council meeting.”

3. *Overall Q&A Responses*

4. *Demonstrated Qualifications of the Project Manager and Team*

5. *Demonstrated Experience with Similar Projects*

The total possible score a firm could receive was 100 points. The interview panel’s scores are included in Attachment 2.

Staff Recommended Firm

Based on the scoring of the interviews and the consensus of the panel, staff identified Plan to Place, LLC as the recommended firm. The firm’s description and biographical information on the staff for the proposed project is included as Attachment 3. In addition to submitting a thoughtful, comprehensive, and responsive scope of work in response to the RFP, Plan to Place delivered a concise and responsive interview presentation. They answered questions thoroughly, drawing parallels between past work and the proposed project.

Plan to Place has extensive experience working with communities throughout the Bay Area on complex projects ranging from City-wide General Plans, Specific Plans, and Housing Elements, to the adaptive reuse of discrete sites and Vision Plans. They regularly facilitate conversations related to adaptive reuse, vital infrastructure improvements and essential services, housing and displacement, and more. Their sole focus is on the public facing side of projects.

While the firm’s senior staff have urban design and planning backgrounds, the firm’s work is limited to just community engagement - they would not have a contractual interest in the outcome of the engagement effort as they would not be the planning or architecture firm engaged on future phases of a project to reuse or redevelop. Plan to Place also committed their most senior staff to completing the majority of the hours projected for this project - this is notable as the City would have the most experienced staff committed to this important and sensitive project.

Proposed Scope of Work

After the conclusion of the interview process, City staff contacted the Principal at Plan to Place and worked with them to revise the scope of work that was outlined in the Request for Proposals to better align with Council’s direction during the June 26, 2024 meeting. Plan to Place’s updated proposed scope for this effort includes:

- Two Hosted Tours of the Municipal Services Building and West Orange Library sites, held prior to the Open Houses and on two different days to increase participation
- Two Community Open Houses

- Eight focus group meetings and pop-up activities
- Online feedback form to include prompts similar to those asked in the in-person community open houses to provide an equitable opportunity for input
- Outreach materials

Attachment 4 is Plan to Place's original proposal, submitted on June 28, 2024. Attachment 5 is Plan to Place's updated scope of work revised per Council's guidance during the June 26, 2024 City Council meeting.

Proposed Schedule

City staff has revised the initial project schedule to allow for additional time and engagement opportunities, per guidance from Council during the June 26, 2024 meeting. Staff now proposes that the Hosted Tours, Open Houses, and focus group meetings / pop-up activities be held over the fall (September through November 2024) and conclude with a presentation of the Community Engagement Summary Report to City Council in early 2025.

Proposed Budget

Plan to Place's budget of \$79,920 is commensurate with the level of effort for this initiative. This effort will be led by Plan to Place's Principal and Senior Engagement Specialist who have led numerous community outreach and engagement efforts similar to this one and have experience facilitating community conversations on sensitive topics. Plan to Place staff have backgrounds in community engagement, urban design, landscape architecture, and the creative arts which will assist them in facilitating an engaging and dynamic community engagement process for the future of the MSB and West Orange Library sites. While this is a significant investment, it is important to note that disposition of the Municipal Services Building could have very substantial start-up and ongoing impacts on the City budget, and should be carefully considered. If approved by Council, the City Manager will execute the Contract Services Agreement with Plan to Place.

FISCAL IMPACT

The fee for this project (\$79,920) will be absorbed by the operating budgets of the City Manager's Office, Parks and Recreation Department, and the Economic and Community Development Department. There is no new impact to the General Fund associated with adopting the recommendation.

CONCLUSION

While staff recommends the consultant, Plan to Place, selected through a rigorous and competitive public procurement process and the proposed scope of work as presented with this staff report, there are various alternatives Council may wish to consider. Staff is presenting these options without recommendation and simply to provide Council with information to consider in evaluating whether or not to approve the associated resolution authorizing the City Manager to enter into a consulting services agreement with Plan to Place as presented in Exhibit A to the associated resolution.

Alternative 1 - Reduced Scope or Phased Scope of Work

While staff believes the negotiated price for the proposed scope is reasonable and reflective of the effort

involved in a broad community engagement effort, Council could direct staff reduce the scope of work or phase the scope of work. In a reduced scope of work scenario, staff would recommend returning to the scope of work identified in the RFP including just two community open houses, two tours, and a report to Council. In a phased approach, staff would recommend Council approve the associated resolution and direct staff to return to Council approximately halfway through the project with initial results of the outreach before proceeding with additional engagement and exhausting the full budget. The goal of a reduced or phased approach would be to spend no more than \$50,000 and then return to Council before proceeding.

Alternative 2 - Eliminate Outreach Effort and Remove the Municipal Services Building as a Housing Opportunity Site

Over the past year, the City has received numerous comments from a group of residents requesting the Municipal Services Building site be removed from the City's certified 2023-2031 Housing Element. As presented to Council on June 26, 2024 and detailed in the staff report linked below, the State of California requires all jurisdictions in California to adopt a Housing Element and have it certified by the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) every eight years. The Housing Element is a planning document prepared by local jurisdictions to identify how the jurisdiction will meet its Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA). Cities do not have to build the housing, but they do have to rezone the site to permit housing and remove any constraints, to demonstrate capacity for housing development.

The Municipal Services Building site was included in the City's 2015-2023 Housing Element beginning in 2017 when the City was required by HCD to select a replacement Opportunity Site for the parcels now occupied by the L|PR Center (which was a previous Housing Element site). Opportunity Sites not developed during a Housing Element cycle are typically included in the following Housing Element, and so the Municipal Services Building site was carried forward from the 2015-2023 Housing Element to the City's 2023-2031 Housing Element. Identifying a site as an Opportunity Site in the City's Housing Element does not require it to be built for housing; however, if the site is used for something other than housing, an alternative site would be required to be identified as an Opportunity Site in its stead.

If Council desires to remove the Municipal Services Building site from the City's adopted and State-certified Housing Element, Council would need to consider and adopt an amendment to the Housing Element, which would then be submitted to HCD for review and approval. Removal of the Municipal Services Building site would require identification of other similar and suitable sites that can accommodate the same amount of affordable housing, and very low-income housing in particular. The Municipal Services Building is located in a high-opportunity area, providing lower income residents access to schools, jobs, and community amenities in a higher-income neighborhood. This furthers the State's goals of providing lower income community members with access to opportunity. Any replacement sites would need to be similarly situated in high-opportunity areas of the City and, preferably, be City-controlled in order to maximize the amount of affordable housing possible within any housing development on the site.

While Council could elect to replace the Municipal Services Building site with the West Orange Library site in the 2023-2031 Housing Element, the West Orange Library site may not be big enough to accommodate the

amount of affordable housing that the Municipal Services Building can accommodate and therefore other sites may need to be identified in addition to the West Orange Library site. The City's property holdings are primarily in the Downtown and so would not meet the high-opportunity threshold required of any other substitute Housing Element sites that would need to be identified. In this case, privately owned sites would need to be identified. Together, the West Orange Library site and any other identified replacement sites that would generate sufficient capacity for lower income housing would need to then be evaluated for feasibility - are there barriers (including economic barriers) to their development or redevelopment.

Any identified replacement sites if not already zoned for housing (such as the West Orange Library site) would need to be rezoned to allow for housing development. This may also necessitate a General Plan Amendment depending on the identified sites. The process to replace the Municipal Services Building site with other suitable sites and complete any necessary rezonings would take nine months to a year to complete given the number of Planning Commission and City Council hearings necessary to complete the process, as well as capacity analysis and feasibility analysis on the selected sites.

As previously discussed at the June 26th Council meeting, removal of the Municipal Services Building site as a housing opportunity site in the Housing Element leaves the future of the property uncertain and has no direct effect on immediate use of the property. With the opening of the L|PR Center, staff and functions previously housed at the Municipal Services Building were moved to the L|PR Center. Substantial building improvements would have to be identified through a feasibility study and identified improvements completed at the Municipal Services Building before services and programs could resume there. At this time, the City's operating and capital budgets do not include funding capacity for the capital improvement costs or operating expenses necessary to reopen the Municipal Services Building. Therefore, reinitiation of services at the Municipal Services Building would not occur prior to identification of programming to be provided at the site, budgeting to provide funding, completion of required improvements, and hiring of necessary staff. In the interim, the Municipal Services Building would continue to remain unused.

Finally, it should be noted that removing the Municipal Services Building site as a housing opportunity site in the City's 2025-2031 Housing Element may not necessarily prevent it from ever being redeveloped for housing or affordable housing. Should the City determine that it wishes to lease the property for more than 15 years or sell the property, it would need to be surplus under the State's Surplus Land Act. Through this State-mandated process, the property would need to be first offered to affordable housing developers and if offers are received, the City would be required by State law to engage in good faith negotiations for a period of time before declining or accepting an offer. If an offer is not accepted, the City could proceed to lease or sell the property for a use other than affordable housing once the State certifies that the surplus process has been adhered to and State law requirements met.

Alternative 3 - Proceed with Community Engagement and Remove the Municipal Services Building as a Housing Opportunity Site

Should Council wish to replace the Municipal Services Building site in the City's 2025-2031 Housing Element with other similar and suitable opportunity sites, staff would strongly recommend also proceeding with a

facilitated community engagement process as described in Plan to Place's scope and proposed in the associated resolution. While the Municipal Services Building would be removed from the Housing Element, it would remain a City asset that has been largely decommissioned and plans should be made for its reuse or redevelopment. As illustrated by the discussion of capital and operating expenses and State Surplus Land Act requirements discussed above, significant City funding and effort will have to go into any reuse or redevelopment. As such, any future plans for the Municipal Services Building and West Orange Library should be informed by a broad community engagement effort, as is contemplated by the proposed scope of work.

Links:

1. June 26, 2024 City Council Meeting, Agenda Item #20:
<https://ci-ssf-ca.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6734493&GUID=D8B102CE-D536-48CA->

Attachments:

1. Paper Review Scoring
2. Interview Scoring
3. Plan to Place Firm Description and Staff Bios
4. Plan to Place's Proposal, as submitted on June 28, 2024
5. Plan to Place's Revised Scope of Work and Budget, as submitted on August 13, 2024

Associated File: Resolution 24-783