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Report regarding implementation of an outdoor dining pilot program in the City of South San Francisco to enhance restaurant and business recovery during COVID-19. *(Christopher Espiritu, Senior Planner and Sailesh Mehra, Planning Manager)*

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Council approve the proposed pilot program as outlined in this staff report, appropriate an amount not to exceed $35,000 for labor and materials, and authorize the City Manager to take any actions necessary to implement the pilot program and resolve any inconsistencies with the Municipal Code.

BACKGROUND

On June 10, 2020, City Council provided Staff with feedback and directions to explore Shared Streets concepts for the Downtown area. Several options, specific for Grand Avenue were discussed, including full and partial closure of travel lanes on Grand Avenue. However, Council Members were not supportive of closing or restricting vehicular travel on Grand Avenue, given the potential for effects on residents, rerouting of existing transit services, and other concerns. Council directed City Staff to explore and develop a 'Restricted Parking' option on Grand Avenue, which enables outdoor dining on the public right-of-way, and became the preferred option for implementing the Shared Streets Pilot Program in the City.

Subsequently, on June 17, 2020, the San Mateo County Health Officer and the County Health Department announced revised orders to align with State Health Orders allowing for the continued re-opening of businesses, provided that gatherings are not to exceed 50 people, allow for social bubbles, adherence to social distancing requirements, face covering requirements, and requirements for businesses to implement a social distancing protocol and written health and safety plans. In conjunction with the revised County Health Orders, nearly all cities in San Mateo County have implemented an outdoor dining program.

As City Staff engaged in discussions across departments and divisions, and conducted further outreach with businesses, Staff determined that an outdoor dining program can be implemented as a separate effort from the Shared Streets Pilot Program in residential neighborhoods throughout the City. Therefore, the following Staff Report and the accompanying Resolution describes specific performance standards and process for the Outdoor Dining Pilot Program.

Expanded Outreach to Downtown Businesses

City Staff, in coordination with the SSF Chamber of Commerce conducted additional outreach to businesses and restaurants regarding interest in an outdoor dining program. On June 19 and June 24, City Staff and the SSF Chamber surveyed all available downtown businesses and restaurants and received feedback as summarized below:

- Eight restaurants (Di Napoli Pizzeria, Café 382, Nick's On Grand, Thai Satay, Fil-Am Cuisine 2, Antigua, Amoura, and Dead Eye Coffee Bar) all expressed a strong desire for outdoor seating in front of their businesses. Further, Café 382, Antigua, and Amoura have committed to working with the City on options for outdoor dining.
- Other restaurants expressed either no interest (Grand Palace) or hesitation due to incurring any additional costs (Café Bunn Mi).

Similar to Council's previous concerns regarding potential effects of restricting vehicular traffic along Grand Avenue, restaurants and businesses surveyed by City Staff and the SSF Chamber also noted that restricting vehicles on Grand Avenue would be detrimental to restaurants and businesses that have pivoted to take-out and delivery services only. City Staff was cognizant of these concerns and determined that implementation of the Outdoor Dining Pilot Program would be an "opt-in" only program, instead of an implementation spanning entire blocks in the Downtown.

SSF Temporary Outdoor Dining Program

Given Council's direction to explore outdoor dining concepts and combined with an anticipated number of restaurants that would make use of available outdoor dining space, City Staff developed an Outdoor Dining Pilot Program (the Program). This would allow interested restaurants and businesses to "opt-in" and utilize public right-of-way space (adjacent parking) for an expanded dining area. The Program would include specific performance standards (See Exhibit A to the accompanying Resolution) which would address the appropriate application and review requirements and provide interested businesses with specific guidelines on outdoor dining operations.

As part of the Program, the City would install temporary and removable barriers (see Attachment 2 for details) along parking spaces fronting the participating restaurant. The restaurant would then be able to place tables and chairs, or other equipment (depending on specific needs), for use by patrons of that restaurant only. The street would remain open to vehicles and parking is repurposed for outdoor dining.

This also presents an opportunity to reduce the speed limit on the street using available traffic calming devices such as temporary speed limit signs and portable speed tables (speed humps) that can be installed prior to approval of the outdoor dining application.

By providing additional space on the right-of-way, restaurants are able to accommodate a greater number of customers while remaining in compliance with County Health Orders regarding social distance.

In conjunction with approving the Program, the accompanying Resolution would temporarily provide the City Manager certain authority to waive or modify existing Municipal Code requirements to the extent necessary to effectuate the Program. These provisions are described in detail in the Resolution.

Outdoor Dining on Private Property

Outdoor dining may also be implemented within privately owned shopping plazas (i.e., Westborough Square, and others). However, given that no encroachment onto the public right-of-way would occur, City Staff recommends that property owners and restaurant operators submit only a supplemental checklist for outdoor dining to ensure that County Health Department standards are met. (See Exhibit B to the accompanying Resolution.)

FISCAL IMPACT

The proposed Outdoor Dining Pilot Program would require allocation of a not-to-exceed limit of $35,000 in order to procure barriers to be installed on the right-of-way and the associated labor costs for installation, modification, and removal of the barriers. The proposed costs would also cover signage and other necessary information to be posted at specific sites.

CONCLUSION

Staff recommends that the Council approve the proposed Outdoor Dining Pilot Program.

- Due to the potential loss of parking meter revenue, the pilot program would be considered at the Downtown Parking Commission for approval at its next scheduled meeting on July 14.
- Initial pilot program would expire after 30 days, and would be evaluated by staff and operators for eligible extensions of another 30 days.

Attachments:

1. Encroachment Permit
2. Preliminary Cost Calculations
3. Cost Calculation Addendum
4. Staff Presentation

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