

Staff Responses to Questions Raised at the 12/9/14 Planning Commission Work Session

Q1: Urban Plaza in Municipal Facilities Project - Is this the Library Lane site or Liberty Plaza?

A1: MF-PR-14-08, Urban Park/Plaza Improvements was created by Parks & Recreation as a "category" project similar to their MF-PR-10-01, Playgrounds and Neighborhood Park Improvements. These category projects provide monies to be designated for certain types of improvements, in this case, urban parks in the city core. At present, only improvements to Liberty Plaza have been explicitly discussed during the CIP process as it is the only existing urban plaza presently included in the Parks system. However, improvements to Library Lane or any other urban core park that might be created could conceivably be included under this category in the future.

Q2: Municipal facilities: Solid Waste - Is there receptivity to Waste-to-Energy and carbon biomass systems technology?

A2: Absolutely. Key city staff contact is Matt Naud, Environmental Coordinator. The Environmental Commission is also active in investigating new technologies and processes.

Q3: Everything we do should be getting us closer to true sustainability. For example, the comment about "double-counting" energy didn't distinguish between operational and community energy use. No one is talking holistically with the zero waste goal as an example. Are these CIP projects are getting us there, or are we just perpetuating the status quo?

A3: Many efforts are occurring at the community energy use level but are not necessarily occurring in conjunction with a capital project. For example, the City's Environmental staff group has been very actively involved with an effort to increase energy efficiency in rental housing by furnishing educational information to landlords and tenants as well as utilizing the PACE program to encourage commercial owners to improve energy efficiency. A significant effort is also underway with DTE to place a large solar energy facility at the City airport. The proposed biodigester project is a step towards zero waste and renewable energy.

Q4: Who at the city is responsible for following up on the Sustainability Goals implementation?

A4. All City staff are encouraged to be actively involved in this process. Project related resolutions that go to Council are now including a brief statement of their impact on sustainability framework goals. Matt Naud, Environmental Coordinator, together with Jamie Kidwell-Brix (Sustainability Associate) and Nathan Geisler (Energy Programs Analyst) spearhead the implementation strategy. The Sustainability Action Plan, nearing completion, will be another mechanism to track city actions organized around sustainability goals.

Q5: The plan includes a project for the runway at the airport. Is this a change from the last CIP?

A5: No changes are proposed to the Runway Safety Extension project itself. A Runway Rehabilitation and Pavement Markings project was introduced in the event that the Safety Extension project does not move forward before it is deemed necessary to do capital maintenance to the runway.

Q6: In the Nixon Farm projects discussion, the community brought up the Green Road sidewalk gaps. Is there a project in the CIP for this?

A6: Not at this time. Efforts are proceeding with development of a sidewalk gap elimination strategy with input from the Pedestrian Safety Task Force. Prioritization method and funding sources are being explored in detail as part of that strategy.

Q7: Does the CIP contain a traffic study for the Nixon Road corridor?

A7: A traffic study for the Nixon/Green/Dhu Varren intersection is currently underway and is scheduled for completion in January. The study will recommend improvements to that intersection. A previous traffic study of the Nixon/Huron Parkway intersection resulted in installation of a roundabout at that intersection.

There was an item in the CIP from 2004 until 2010 for a Nixon Road Study to undertake “a study of Nixon Road from Plymouth Road to Dhu Varren Road to examine transit, traffic operations and non-motorized facilities.” This item was removed from the CIP in 2010 following the completion of the City’s Transportation Master Plan Update in 2009, which indicated that within the context of the entire City transportation system, Nixon Road was a lower priority corridor compared to those identified as high or medium priority. In addition, as the recession had eliminated development activities in the area of the corridor, the immediate need for this study was no longer deemed present at that time.

If a corridor study for Nixon Road is reintroduced into the CIP, some key points of consideration are:

- Funding for corridor studies such as this have typically been funded by the General Fund
- This corridor study should be prioritized within the framework of the Transportation Master Plan Update in that studies on other higher priority corridors, such as Ellsworth Road, should be undertaken in advance of this study

Q8: How is the sustainability goal of energy conservation/high performance buildings measured and tracked in capital projects?

A8: The City has data for city buildings and is occasionally able to get city wide data from DTE at a macro scale. For certain projects (e.g., PACE) the City requires before and after data for evaluation purposes. We are exploring an energy benchmarking ordinance based on success in several other cities.

Q9: In looking at projects, it seems like we're adding to the list, and nothing comes off - explain how this works out in real life. There is \$82 million in the early year vs. \$500 million in later years - how can numbers can be different from year to year? Some items look like studies, but this is not consistent. How are these identified?

A9: A list of Completed Projects for fiscal years 2014 and 2015 was included with packet materials. By its nature, a Capital Improvement Plan will continually be adding projects as new capital needs are identified due to aging of infrastructure and facilities as well as establishing of new goals by master plans, commissions, committees, and task forces. Cost estimates for a project are planning level estimates which are refined as the scope of the project is further developed. The cost estimate for a particular project may also be adjusted due to recent experience with actual bid costs for similar projects and/or to cost-forward values. With regard to studies, most are so identified by name but sometimes the study component is part of a larger identified capital project and may not be so explicitly called out.

Q10: Is this plan doing the smart things early to prevent cost in long run, like staying ahead of maintenance, for example the DDA parking structure rehab program?

A10. Yes. The DDA has developed a long-term strategy for capital maintenance of the parking structures to minimize life-cycle costs and maximize the public benefits afforded by the City's investment.

It is noted that the CIP also includes new projects for creation of long-term asset management plans for the sanitary sewer collection system (UT-SN-16-11), the wastewater treatment plan (UT-SN-16-15), and the stormwater system (UT-ST-16-06) and that the Water Distribution System Master Plan - Asset Management (UT-WS-09-05) system is nearing completion.

Development of a pavement asset management plan is currently underway as a staff process with the initial step, the rating of condition of all roads, nearing completion as part of a joint sign inventory/road rating contract with an outside vendor.

All such asset management efforts focus on sustainable, fiscally sound long-term management of the City's capital assets and are anticipated to include stronger emphasis on preventative maintenance as a key strategy.

Prepared by Deb Gosselin
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