



Staff Report

File #: 23-0974

REQUEST FOR CITY COUNCIL ACTION

DATE: 12/06/2023

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Public Works Department

SUBJECT:

CITY HALL VETERANS MEMORIAL ENHANCEMENT PROJECT NO. FC-2023-06 OUTREACH AND SURVEY RESULTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This staff report asks the City Council to review and provide direction on the final design for the City Hall Veterans Memorial Enhancement Project. Staff has worked with various veterans groups and conducted significant outreach to the veterans community to solicit their input on the project.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the City Council provide direction on the final design for the City Hall Veterans Memorial Enhancement Project No. FC-2023-06.

BACKGROUND & HISTORY:

The City of Corona's current Veteran's Memorial is located in a cove on the south side of City Hall, in an area that is below the existing grade and somewhat hidden. At the November 10, 2021, Committee of the Whole (COTW) meeting, staff presented the City Council with some general improvement concepts that could be made to the Veteran's Memorial. Both local veteran's groups and the City Council desired to enhance the monument to provide a more prominent area that would draw the community to a place that pays tribute to residents who lost their lives serving their country.

At the COTW meeting, the City Council provided direction to staff to proceed with an enhancement project that would include granite monuments, taller flag poles, lighting, signage, landscaping, and seating. A new Capital Improvement Project (CIP) No. FC-2023-06 was subsequently created, titled "City Hall Veterans Memorial Improvements Project," and an appropriation of \$450,000 of Measure X Funding was established through the annual budget process for Fiscal Year 2023.

A Request for Proposals (RFP) No. 23-040AS was issued on December 14, 2022, and IDS Group, Inc. was awarded an agreement in the amount of \$55,427 and the consultant began work on the project. Three design concepts were developed for City staff to review and provide input. City staff also met with local veteran's group advocates on June 5, 2023, to review the initial design concepts to receive feedback and discuss the purpose and need for the improvements.

Subsequentially, three design concepts were presented to the City Council for consideration at the July 19, 2023, City Council Meeting. At that time, the City Council directed staff to obtain additional feedback from Corona's veterans through various outreach efforts.

ANALYSIS:

In response to the City Council's direction, staff developed a paper and online survey to obtain feedback from veterans in the community on the three design concepts. The survey was posted on the City's website and social media channels for approximately 45 days. The three concepts were as follows:

- **Concept 1 - Service to Country:** This concept utilizes patriotic red, white, and blue flower beds and a colorful stained concrete banner to inspire and draw the public to the space. A flag promenade and granite signs also beckon visitors to the area. Once in the cove, an experiential archway, including colored plexiglass or metal cutouts, utilize the changing sun to cast images and phrases in the cove. Slanted granite monuments document the names of fallen soldiers from Corona, and landscaping finishes off the area to soften the space. A spot for a statue, whether incorporated now or in the future, is featured on the main level at the site.
- **Concept 2 - Honor and Glory:** A calm and reflective space is created in the cove area featuring white flowered camellias and ground cover. Amphitheater seating replaces portions of the existing stairs to provide additional seating for reflection, events, or teaching opportunities. A unique flag arrangement, tall granite walls, and mosaic add color and attract members of the public to the spot.
- **Concept 3 - Solitude and Remembrance:** A tranquil sanctuary is created through the use of green foliage and white camellias in the landscaping for this concept. More subtle features, such as pathway panels with inspirational words or historical events and concrete etchings, mark the pathway for visitors to the site. Cold and heavy concrete benches are replaced with more artistic curved metal benches, and at night, names of fallen soldiers are projected in the cove as a peaceful tribute.

The survey requested information from the veteran on their branch of service, time period of service, and the option that they preferred. The survey also asked two open-ended questions: 1) What features did the participant like most about their preferred option? and 2) What features, if any, did the participant like from any of the other options? The goal was to ensure that if any changes were made to the final designs, elements that were important to the veterans were not removed or could be added if possible.

City staff and volunteers also reached veterans in the community for their input on the three

memorial options through the U.S. Veterans Affairs Department, American Legion Posts 216 and 742, Vets Connect, and Veterans Honoring Veterans. This included attending local meetings and gatherings of these associations and providing paper copies of the survey. Additionally, City staff contacted just under 200 military banner program participants, from 2017 to present, to obtain their input.

In total, the City received 117 survey responses. Option B - "Honor and Glory" - received the most votes at 67, followed by Option A - "Service to County" - with 46 votes. Option C - "Solitude and Remembrance" - only received four (4) votes. Based on the voting as well as written comments provided in the survey, City staff recommends Option B with the following modifications:

- Place the military flags around the walkway and lower the height to 50'.
- Add colorful features from Option A to the Veteran's Square, including the emblem and the colorful flower beds.
- Include a granite monument for engraving the names of fallen soldiers.
- Remove the granite signs to help keep the project within budget. Wayfinding signage will still be added in the final design.

Staff also recommends that the City Council consider a future modification or removal of the free-standing archways adjacent to the memorial. This will increase visibility into the memorial and allow more flexibility for events and presentations in front of the new amphitheater seating area.

During the outreach, some veterans groups expressed an interest in fundraising for the project. City Council may consider allowing these groups to fundraise for some additional features that were not included in the recommended final design due to budget constraints, such as elements of the experiential archway and bronze statue.

COMMITTEE ACTION:

This item was presented at the November 10, 2021, COTW Meeting. This item was also presented at the July 19, 2023, City Council Meeting.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The financial impact will be dependent upon which memorial option the City Council selects. Staff is requesting that the City Council select a conceptual design, and the project costs will not be known until a final design is developed. The project budget is currently appropriated in the City Hall Veterans Memorial Improvements Capital Improvement Project No. FC-2023-06 with an available balance of \$374,064 within Measure X Fund 120.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

This action is exempt pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the Guidelines for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), which states that a project is exempt from CEQA if the activity is covered by the commonsense exemption that CEQA applies only to projects that have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA. This action requests direction on design concepts, and there is no

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possibility that this will have a significant effect on the environment. Therefore, no environmental analysis is required.

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REVIEWED BY: SAVAT KHAMPHOU, PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

Attachments:

1. Exhibit 1 - Presentation