



SAN RAFAEL CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

Department: City Manager's Office

**Prepared by: Walter Gonzalez,
Equity and Outreach Specialist**

City Manager Approval: _____

TOPIC CANAL NEIGHBORHOOD LIGHTING

SUBJECT ACCEPT INFORMATIONAL REPORT REGARDING THE CANAL LIGHTING PROJECT

RECOMMENDATION

Accept informational report regarding the Canal Lighting Project.

BACKGROUND

In collaboration with the Dominican University of California and Canal Alliance, members of Voces del Canal (the project team) partnered on developing a project to advocate for public lighting improvements in the Canal neighborhood. See Attachment A for a photo and list of names of all the project team members.

Voces del Canal is a coalition of parents, essential workers, and community leaders dedicated to improving the health and economic well-being of Canal neighborhood residents. Their vision is for the Canal community to be a safe, clean, and healthy environment for families. Voces del Canal advocates for improved access to housing, education, and increased accountability of local government to the community. Voces del Canal aims to work with local government and other nongovernmental agencies to co-create solutions to the community's concerns.

The project team identified public safety as a significant concern that could be addressed by increased public lighting. The project team identified seven routes that need lighting improvements in the neighborhood and took photos of these specific areas to highlight their priorities. See map for more details in Attachment B.

On February 26, 2022, the project team presented their findings and recommendations to the Canal community by hosting a community-led photo exposition event in the Canal. The project team displayed their findings and recommendations, as well as photos that highlighted the need for improved lighting in the neighborhood. In addition, the project team collected testimonies from

FOR CITY CLERK ONLY

Council Meeting:

Disposition:

participants regarding their experiences with illumination in the Canal. The project team collected participants' testimonies to serve as another data point used by the project team to advocate for more lighting in the routes identified. This event was attended by City and County officials and staff, including elected leadership and members of the Police Department.

On March 23, 2022, the project team invited the District 1 Councilmember Llorens Gulati and City staff¹ to collaborate by participating in a qualitative data analysis working session. In partnership with the City, the project team analyzed and categorized the testimonies collected at the photo exposition held the previous month to identify overarching themes, community priorities, and specific recommendations. The event successfully brought together community members and City officials to better understand the issues, build trust, and work toward co-creating short and long-term solutions together. The project team will be presenting their findings and recommendations at the May 2nd City Council meeting, along with City staff who will be co-presenting to provide responses on how we are working together to create and implement solutions.

The City has made several safety improvements over the last year in response to previous feedback provided by the community. Specifically, improvements have been made at six intersections in the Canal neighborhood. The improvements included new curb ramps, lighting, and rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFBs) at the crossings at Bellam Blvd and Vista del Mar, Medway Road and Front Street, Medway Road and Mill Street, Kerner Blvd and Sonoma Street, Canal-Spinnaker Streets and Bahia Way, and Belvedere Street and Vivian Place. Staff also installed new lighting at Bellam Blvd and Windward Way. The City has also improved parking in and around the Canal neighborhood including significant changes to parking durations, added parking where possible, installed pavement markings to better define the spaces available and installed angled parking on Bellam Blvd and Kerner Blvd. The City also formed an "East San Rafael Parking Task-Force," which is currently on-going, to identify other opportunities to create parking in the area.

ANALYSIS

The project team developed six recommendations related to lighting and public safety in the Canal neighborhood. These recommendations arose from the community input collected by the project team during the lighting event on February 26, 2022, as well as from the qualitative data analysis working session with City staff on March 23, 2022. The project team's recommendations are:

1. Increase lighting along the seven routes identified by Voces del Canal. Use survey data to prioritize lighting routes.
2. Improve pedestrian safety, including adding pedestrian lighting and beacons at crosswalks.
3. Increase parking availability.
4. Install security cameras.
5. Increase communication and collaboration with the police. Work together with the police department to create a Neighborhood Safety Committee that develops policies for effective policing.
6. Provide a safe space for children to play outdoors by increasing lighting around Pickleweed Park in the evenings and prohibiting gambling, drinking, smoking and drug use near children's play areas.

City staff have communicated to the project team the City's intention to proactively support their

¹ Bill Guerin (Public Works Director), Vedika Ahuja (Data Product Manager), Cristine Alilovich (Assistant City Manager), Walter Gonzalez (Equity & Community Engagement Specialist), Lieutenant Lisa Holton, Police Officer Sebastian Sanchez.

project by responding to their recommendations with both short- and long-term solutions to improve lighting and public safety.

Public Works – Lighting and Transportation

The Department of Public Works (DPW) has identified 45 locations on five of the seven pathways identified by the project team where lights will be installed, where none exist today, including the children’s playground area and close vicinity at Pickleweed Park. DPW staff also identified 65 locations where existing lighting can be made brighter by changing the lights that currently exist. DPW is also working with Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) to seek approval to implement these solutions. These five pathways can be improved quickly once approval is received from PG&E.

The two other identified pathways, Bahia Way and the Starkweather Path, and the larger area of Pickleweed Park, will require more community engagement and additional approvals before City staff can proceed to improve lighting. Bahia Way is a privately maintained street and the Starkweather waterfront path is regulated by the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC). Staff will work with these entities to seek approval for additional lighting. Some of the lighting improvements would require additional analysis, community outreach, and detailed cost estimates (i.e., lighting of shoreline path), which staff will conduct in the next few months. Staff will continue working with the project team to update them on the City’s progress toward the longer-term, more complex solutions.

DPW has also contracted with a contractor to “shave” high spots in the sidewalks to reduce the possibility of people tripping when out for a walk.

The City also received grant funding from the Transportation Authority of Marin to conduct a Community Based Transportation Plan (CBTP) in the Canal neighborhood. This plan, underway now, is conducting a series of public outreach meetings to identify transportation improvements that can be made. When completed, the report will identify needs with estimated costs, and will be used to seek grant funding opportunities.

Police Department - Public Safety

The project team also developed specific recommendations related to public safety overall. The City’s Police Department met with members of the project team on April 25th to listen to their concerns and to collaborate with them on a path forward to address their concerns and specifically the three recommendations related to policing. The Police Department is committed to continuing to formalize a structure with the project team to identify additional ways to increase public safety in the Canal neighborhood.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The project team coordinated a robust outreach strategy to obtain a project plan that addresses the community’s needs. The photo exposition event hosted by the project team on February 26, 2022, served as a venue for the community to provide their feedback on the project and share their lived experiences as it relates to lighting in the Canal. In addition, members of Voces del Canal conducted targeted outreach at the Canal Based Transportation Plan event held on April 23, to further identify the community’s priorities for increased lighting.

FISCAL IMPACT

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City staff are recommending an initial investment of \$100,000 toward improving lighting in the Canal, based on the priority areas identified by the community. The specific funding for the initial lighting improvements will be identified in the upcoming, proposed Capital Improvement Program, along with the Fiscal Year 22-23 budget, and may include ARPA, gas tax, and/or General Fund dollars.

OPTIONS

1. Accept the informational report.
2. Do not accept the report at this time and direct staff to come back with more information.

RECOMMENDATION

Accept informational report regarding the Canal Lighting Project.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Voces del Canal, Canal Alliance, and Dominican University Project team

Attachment B: Lighting Project Map Priority Routes

Attachment A: Project team members:

Voces del Canal - Marina Palma, Isabel Recendiz, Rosaura Rios, Zoila Rios, Cristina Rosales, Darlin Ruiz, Blanca Salinas, Maria Salinas and Vicky Tenorio

Canal Alliance - Rose Costello and Cristina Rosales

Dominican University.- Jennifer Lucko, Julia van der Ryn, Leslie Bejaron Solorio, Jennifer Cortez, Angelica Gonzalez Almanza, Silvia Gramajo Mazariegos, Britney Gutierrez Calderon, Sizi Rios and Lizbeth Valdez Duran



Attachment B: Lighting Project Map Priority Routes:

1. Harbor and Hoag St.
2. Pickleweed Park
3. Path behind Bahia Vista Elementary School
4. Novato St.
5. Larkspur St.
6. Fairfax St.
7. Shoreline Path

