

STAFF REPORT

To: Mayor and Council Members Date: May 17, 2016
From: Cathy D. Ball, PE, Assistant City Manager
Via: Gary Jackson, City Manager
Subject: Tourism Product Development Fund “Major Works Pathway”
Letter of Intent

Summary Statement: The consideration of a resolution authorizing the City Manager to submit a letter of intent to the Tourism Development Authority (TDA) to request \$20 M in funding for South Slope infrastructure improvements over the next 7 years to include complete street improvements, pedestrian and bike improvements at the intersection of Biltmore Avenue and Charlotte Street, gateway to the South Slope and a parking deck constructed with innovative renewable energy sources.

Review: The Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority’s Strategic Destination Development Plan published in 2006 recognized the need to continue to develop “cultural districts,” distinct areas defined by unique attributes that compliment Asheville’s culture and extend the Asheville experience. The plan specifically called for defining a framework of cultural districts and investing in one already forming area, the River Arts District, while creating welcoming gateways, beautification and interconnectivity between these areas.

Similarly, in 2014, the City of Asheville approved the designation of three “Innovation Districts,” areas surrounding the Central Business District (an existing Innovation District approved in 2012) that are targeted for capital investment and infrastructure improvements. These improvements, in turn, will provide the foundation for additional private investment and growth, similar to the efforts that promoted downtown’s resurgence over the last 30 years. The three innovation districts include the River Arts District, the South Slope Extension District and the Charlotte Street Corridor District.

During the last two funding cycles of the Tourism Product Development Fund, the BCTDA recognized the value of investing in connecting downtown to the River Arts District by awarding funding to the River to Ridge: Riverfront Destination Development Project – a project that includes a Riverfront Arts and Culture Dispensary, pedestrian walkway connections, boat ramps and an outdoor recreation experience that connects from scenic Beaucatcher Overlook Park to Downtown and South Slope to the River Arts District and New Belgium Brewery.

In 2015, the TDA revised the process for TPDF funding. They developed a “Major Works Pathway” process that could potentially commit multi-year funding to large projects. City staff have been working with the TDA to identify projects that would meet the City’s needs by improving the pedestrian and bicycle experience in downtown while also improving the downtown/south slope experience for citizens and tourist. The concept is to successfully expand the footprint of downtown Asheville into a thriving, sustainable and prosperous network of Innovation Districts that offer more of the experiences. By investing in gateways, connectivity, beautification, parking and recreational assets like McCormick Field, we are laying the groundwork for entrepreneurs, artists, restaurateurs, brewers and other private investors to expand the magical spirit of downtown to its surrounding areas and neighborhoods.

Capital investments envisioned for the district include:

- A defined South Slope gateway where Biltmore Avenue, McCormick Place and Southside Avenue intersect;
- Street, sidewalk and pedestrian improvements with wayfinding to improve access to Asheville’s walkable “Ale Trail” throughout the South Slope District. The Asheville In Motion (AIM) plan calls for Lexington Avenue, Coxe Avenue and Biltmore Avenue to improved to complete streets.

#	Projects	From	To	Public Sentiment	Economic Vitality	Social Equity	Community Vibrancy	Travel Mode Shift
a	Biltmore Ave	College St	All Souls Crescent	x	x	x		x
b	Broadway	I-240	Riverside Dr	x			x	
c	Charlotte St	Arlington St	Edwin Pl	x	x	x	x	x
d	Coxe Ave	Patton Ave	Short Coxe Ave	x	x		x	
e	Haywood Rd	Patton Ave	Clingman Ave	x	x			x
f	Tunnel Rd	South Tunnel Rd	Charlotte St	x	x	x		x
g	Fairview Rd	Sweeten Creek Rd	Swannanoa River Rd	x		x		
h	Sweeten Creek Rd	Lodge St	Long Shoals Rd	x			x	
i	Lexington Ave	Patton Ave	Southside Ave	x	x	x	x	x

*Corridors that are also identified as bicycle transformative Projects. This means that enhanced bicycle facilities are prioritized in the design and premium facilities will be pursued.

Top 9 Recommended Complete Street Projects in AIM Plan

- Infrastructure improvements surrounding McCormick Field to better connect the venue to the Brewery District – including a potential signature pedestrian bridge across Biltmore Avenue - and encourage private, mixed-use development surrounding the facility, and;
- Construction of a mixed-use building with a public parking deck near the intersection of Southside, Biltmore Avenue and Charlotte Streets. This parking garage could include renewable energy sources and battery storage.

The project below describes a parking garage in Berkeley, CA that is being proposed to include innovative energy solutions.

BERKELEY, CA

Berkeley is committed to advancing its energy assurance and community resilience through clean-energy microgrids. Ultimately, Berkeley envisions working with stakeholders to establish a series of microgrids throughout the community to connect multiple public and private critical facilities, such as care and shelter sites, public safety facilities, and health care facilities. As a first step, the City is establishing a multi-facility microgrid pilot project in its Downtown area. The anchor of the microgrid will be the Center Street Garage, which is being rebuilt in 2016 and is designed to include up to 318 kW of solar PV, battery storage, conduit, electric vehicles, and intelligent controllers. Through participation in eLab Accelerator, Berkeley and its partners seek to analyze the regulatory, operational, technological, and economic feasibility of connecting the Center Street Garage to other nearby critical facilities to efficiently manage load and operate independently of the macrogrid during a power disruption.

City of Berkeley, CA Project for Innovative Energy Solution

This direction aligns with the City Council’s Vision in the following ways: (1) *A WELL-PLANNED AND LIVABLE COMMUNITY* - Asheville promotes community through thoughtful, resident-led planning that result in pedestrian oriented development for all ages and abilities, harmonized with an integrated transportation system; (2) *A CLEAN AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT* - Asheville continues to be a leader in innovative technologies and conservation efforts in response to global climate change; and (3) *TRANSPORTATION AND ACCESSIBILITY* - Whether you drive a car, take the bus, ride a bike or walk, getting around Asheville is easy. Public transportation is widespread, frequent, and reliable. Sidewalks, greenways, and bike facilities get us where we want to go safely and keep us active and healthy. It is easy to live in Asheville without a car and still enjoy economic, academic, and social success.

Pros:

- Provides funding to construct complete streets for three of the top nine recommended streets in the Asheville In Motion (AIM) Plan.
- Improves street and sidewalk conditions in the South Slope Innovation District.
- Makes safety improvements to the intersection of Biltmore and Charlotte Street.
- Provides a parking garage in the South Slope that would include renewable energy sources including solar and battery storage. This asset would serve as an innovative solution to reducing reliance on fossil fuels.
- Provides infrastructure that encourages infill development with walkability.
- Provides placemaking to the south entrance to downtown.
- Expands the footprint of downtown into the South Slope by improving multimodal transportation options.
- The City would leverage \$28 M with an investment of \$3 M from the parking enterprise fund and \$1 M from the general fund.
- The City will seek funding for curtaining and associated improvements to the Thomas Wolfe Auditorium in the regular cycle of TPDF.

Cons:

- Matching funds would be provided from NCDOT STP-DA funding on your agenda tonight.
- Funding for major renovations to the Thomas Wolfe Auditorium will be requested from TPDF in future years.

Financial Impact: Staff plans to match the funding for these projects with grants from STP-DA funding also on your agenda for May 10, 2016 as well as potential innovative energy efficiency grants and funding from the parking fund for acquisition, design and permitting of the parking garage.

The total request from the TPDF is \$20 million over 7 years with the following tentative schedule.

Schedule of Projects and Funding

Project	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023
Gateway		\$500 K (design & ROW acquisition)				\$2 M (construction)	
Ped, Transit		\$500 K (design &				\$2 M (construction)	

and Bike Intersection Improvements at Biltmore and Charlotte		ROW acquisition)	
Complete Street Improvements		\$3.5 M (design & ROW acquisition)	\$6 M (construction)
Innovative Energy Parking Deck	\$2.5 M (acquisition and design)		\$13 M (construction)

Sources of Funding

Source	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	Total
TPDF	0	0	\$4 M	\$20 M				
STP-DA	0	\$1 M	\$2 M	\$1 M	0	0	0	\$4 M
Parking Enterprise	\$1 M	\$1 M	\$1 M	0	0	0		\$3 M
General Fund	0	\$0.5 M	\$0.5 M	0	0	0	0	\$1 M
Energy Efficiency Grants	0	\$0.5 M	\$0.5 M	\$1 M	0	0	0	\$2 M
Total	\$1 M	\$3 M	\$8 M	\$6 M	\$4 M	\$4 M	\$4 M	\$30 M

Recommendation: Staff recommends approval of a resolution authorizing the City Manager to submit a letter of intent to the Tourism Development Authority (TDA) to request \$20 M in funding for South Slope improvements over the next 7 years to include complete street improvements, pedestrian and bike improvements at the intersection of Biltmore Avenue and Charlotte Street, gateway to the South Slope and a parking deck constructed with innovative renewable energy sources.

Attachment:
(1) Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. 16-_____

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO SUBMIT A LETTER OF INTENT TO THE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (TDA) AND AUTHORIZATION TO REQUEST \$20 M IN FUNDING FOR SOUTH SLOPE IMPROVEMENTS OVER THE NEXT 7 YEARS TO INCLUDE COMPLETE STREET IMPROVEMENTS, PEDESTRIAN AND BIKE IMPROVEMENTS AT THE INTERSECTION OF BILTMORE AVENUE AND CHARLOTTE STREET, GATEWAY TO THE SOUTH SLOPE AND A PARKING DECK CONSTRUCTED WITH INNOVATIVE RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES.

WHEREAS, the City of Asheville's Vision includes creating multimodal opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the Asheville In Motion (AIM) plan prioritizes reconstructing Biltmore Avenue, Lexington Avenue, and Coxe Avenue as complete streets to include improved pedestrian, bike and transit options; and

WHEREAS, the City of Asheville adopted the South Slope Innovation District in 2014 for the purposes of creating a vibrant area for people to connect, work, and play; and

WHEREAS, the Tourism Development Authority has developed a process to obtain multi-year funding for capital improvements that meet shared objectives; and

WHEREAS, the plan includes the construction of a parking deck that would include innovative renewable energy generation and storage. This parking deck would serve for gaining access to the future Beaucatcher and Town Branch greenways; and

WHEREAS, the City has the potential to leverage \$30 million in funding with \$1 million investment from the general fund;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE THAT:

The Asheville City Council authorizes the City Manager to submit a letter of intent to the Tourism Development Authority (TDA) and to request \$20 million in funding for South Slope improvements over the next 7 years to include complete street improvements, pedestrian and bike improvements at the intersection of Biltmore Avenue and Charlotte Street, gateway to the South Slope and a parking deck constructed with innovative renewable energy sources.

Read, approved and adopted this 17th day of May, 2016.

City Clerk

Mayor

Approved as to form:

City Attorney