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## M.L. planning commission discusses pilot projects for corridor plan

By CARA LORELLO

*Staff Reporter*

A public workshop updating the progress of the Medical Lake SR-902 Corridor Plan, held Wednesday, June 15, at City Hall brought together most members of the Planning Commission along with Studio Cascade planning consultant Rick Hastings and Dan Dorshorst of the project's citizens advisory panel to prioritize and select two projects for the city's revitalization plans.

The 902 Corridor study has been in full swing since January, having implemented a number of community surveys including a mail-out in February, which garnered 225 responses, and two on-site penny-weighting surveys held at local businesses that same month. The results from the surveys culminated in a priority list for corridor improvements which Studio Cascade posted on the company's website. The top three priorities by percentage according to the surveys were: 1) parks and trails, 2) visual appeal, and 3) activities and events.

In late April, a city-nominated, six-member citizen advisory panel—members of which include Mayor Terry Harland and Duane Wolfe—met with Hastings to come up with a strategic plan for the corridor based on the study's findings thus far, and policies for implementing those projects in a way that supports the city's Comprehensive Plan, zoning and development regulations.

So far, the panel has had two meetings, the most recent being May 13. Their discussions produced an impressive number of specific building-, pedestrian- and street-related strategies, all of which were presented to the commission by Hastings through a PowerPoint presentation at the workshop.

"We listened very hard to what people said when we asked for ways to improve the corridor," Hastings said. While not all members of the panel agreed on certain items, a broken-down list of projects and policies appeared to show a common view as far as improving key areas such as the 902 and Lefevre intersection, improving pedestrian crossings, adopting better landscape features and strengthening sanitation codes for streets, lots and neighborhoods.

Proposed building-related projects included promoting parking lot improvements and side-yard improvements, both of which would include new landscaping and use of walkways and other features to promote a strong visual appeal and possible pedestrian benefits. Improvements such as these, according to Hastings, would be considered "short-term" pilot projects if selected and would take generally up to a year or so to complete.

Other short-term, generally low-costing pedestrian-related projects included adding unique seating and crossing designs throughout M.L. and street tree patterns along the corridor. Installing streetlamps was another suggested feature, although Hastings noted that funding would be more difficult to obtain. Mid-block pedestrian easements were another suggestion, which would require on-going maintenance, a drawback Hastings believes is outweighed by the benefits it could provide.

"It would be worth it for a community that wants to establish itself as an outdoorsy place," he said.

For street and parking strategies, placing a roundabout structure at the 902 and Lefevre intersection—a suggestion that has surfaced before in previous discussions—could improve a number of issues that already surround the area, such as pedestrian traffic from the high school.

State Department of Transportation funding is possible, according to the report. Signalizing the intersection and additions of traffic circles at major intersections were other suggestions. Panel member Diane LaLicker suggested building of a pedestrian overpass at the intersection, which would provide relatively less benefits than previous ideas and would also be expensive to pursue.

Members of the panel also discussed addition of "way finding elements," another inexpensive strategy that could be coordinated using best existing models of signage already in use around town. Other miscellaneous strategies included Wolfe's idea to shelter all bus stops in M.L.—another possible way of incorporating visual elements into the neighborhood landscape.

At the presentation's end, members of the commission and panel participated in a project/policy weighting exercise to identify two short-term pilot projects and two long-term projects using green and yellow stickers and poster boards containing items from the panel's discussions. Studio Cascade will have results posted on the company website under the "project resources" link at [www.studiocascade.com](http://www.studiocascade.com).

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