



**CITY OF LOS ALTOS
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
April 28, 2015**

DISCUSSION ITEM

Agenda Item # 8

SUBJECT: Reaffirm the Council decision to move the Walter Singer Bust from the Community Plaza; reaffirm the Council decision to locate the Walter Singer Bust near the History Museum; and transfer the Walter Singer Bust to the History Museum's permanent collection

BACKGROUND

Walter Singer was a long-time resident of Los Altos who passed away in 1992 after contracting AIDS from a blood transfusion. Mr. and Mrs. Singer were active in the community, including in the Rotary Club. The Los Altos Chamber of Commerce presents an award named for the Singers each year. Following his passing, artist Ingrid Jackson MacDonald created a bust of Mr. Singer. The bust was included as part of the Community Plaza project which was accepted by the City in 1994.

The Community Plaza is a small urban neighborhood park (similar to a pocket park) at the intersection of Main and State Streets in Downtown Los Altos. It currently has tables with umbrellas and a small bandstand. According to the 2012 Los Altos Parks Plan (Attachment 1), "its current configuration causes it to be underutilized and not reach its full potential." There is currently a CIP project listed as Unscheduled and Unfunded to renovate the Community Plaza. The Parks Plan also includes a recommendation to "Move Walter Singer Bust to a new location to expand the openness of the Plaza."

EXISTING POLICY

Los Altos Municipal Code Section 2.08.150 – Powers and duties of the Public Arts Commission

PREVIOUS COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

September 9, 2014

DISCUSSION

On September 9, 2014, the City Council considered a recommendation from the Public Arts Commission to move the Walter Singer Bust from the Community Plaza to near the History Museum. At that meeting, two members of the public spoke in support of placing the Bust in front of 315 Main Street. Following discussion, the Council directed staff to move the Walter Singer Bust from the Community Plaza to near the History Museum. In addition, Council directed that staff work with the Executive Director of the Museum on the final placement.

The Bust currently sits on a pedestal that is 28 inches wide by 21 inches deep by 40.5 inches high. It is anticipated that a pedestal of similar dimensions would be needed to display the Bust in a new location. The Bust is an additional 32 inches high for a total, current height of 72.5 inches.

The alternate location of 315 Main Street was proposed as that was one of the locations of Mr. Singer's business. The site is currently occupied by Apricot Lane. The building at 315 Main Street is 25 feet wide. The sidewalk in front of the building is approximately 11 feet wide. Of the 25 feet of sidewalk in front of the building, there is only approximately five feet of open space in which the

Bust could be placed; however, this space is directly adjacent to on-street parking. Placing the Bust in this location could present a difficulty with pedestrian access to the sidewalk from the parking area.

The History Museum Board has had the Bust on its agenda from October 2014 through March 2015. At its February 4, 2015 meeting, the Board formally offered to host and store the Bust until a new location has been determined.

It is recommended that the Council transfer the Bust to the History Museum's permanent collection. The Bust would still be owned by the City as everything in the Museum's collection is City-owned. This would remove the Bust from the City's Public Art Collection. The Museum would then care for the Bust until a suitable location is identified by City and Museum staff, presumably once a determination has been made regarding setting of the new Community Center.

As one Council member owns property within 500 feet of the where the Bust is currently located, it is recommended that Council discussion be done in two parts. The first would be to discuss the merits of moving the Walter Singer Bust from the Community Plaza and the second, should Council decide to move it from the Plaza, would be to discuss proposed locations. This way, the Council member with the conflict could recuse herself for the discussion on actually moving the Bust, but then could participate in a discussion on proposed locations.

PUBLIC CONTACT

The Public Arts Commission discussed and approved a recommendation to move the Bust from the Community Plaza to a location near the History Museum at its June 26, 2014 meeting. The Parks and Recreation Commission endorsed the Public Arts Commission initiative to relocate the Bust at its August 13, 2014 meeting.

The Executive Director of the History Museum was provided a copy of this report.

Posting of the meeting agenda serves as notice to the general public.

FISCAL/RESOURCE IMPACT

The moving of the Bust could be done by Maintenance Services staff. If outside resources were needed, the cost most likely would be between \$5,000 and \$10,000. The piece is currently owned by the City as is the land on which it is proposed to be moved.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Not applicable

RECOMMENDATION

- A. Reaffirm the Council decision to move the Walter Singer Bust from the Community Plaza
- B. Reaffirm the Council decision to locate the Walter Singer Bust near the History Museum
- C. Transfer the Walter Singer Bust to the History Museum permanent collection

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ALTERNATIVES

1. Direct that the Walter Singer Bust remain in its current location
2. Direct that the Walter Singer Bust be moved to an alternate location
3. Do not transfer the Walter Singer Bust to the History Museum's permanent collection

Prepared by: Jon Maginot, Public Arts Commission Staff Liaison

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Council report dated September 9, 2014
2. Sidewalk plan for 315 Main Street and current site conditions

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DATE: September 9, 2014

AGENDA ITEM # 4

TO: City Council
FROM: Jon Maginot, City Clerk
SUBJECT: Relocation of Walter Singer Bust

RECOMMENDATION:

Direct staff to proceed with moving of Walter Singer Bust from the Community Plaza to near the History Museum

SUMMARY:

Estimated Fiscal Impact:

Amount: Unknown at this time

Budgeted: No

Public Hearing Notice: Not applicable

Previous Council Consideration: Not applicable

CEQA Status: Not applicable

Attachment:

1. 2012 Los Altos Parks Plan page 8

BACKGROUND

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The Community Plaza is a small urban neighborhood park (similar to a pocket park) at the intersection of Main and State Streets in Downtown Los Altos. It currently has tables with umbrellas and a small bandstand. According to the 2012 Los Altos Parks Plan (Attachment 1), "its current configuration causes it to be underutilized and not reach its full potential." There is currently a CIP project listed as Unscheduled and Unfunded to renovate the Community Plaza. The Parks Plan also includes a recommendation to "Move Walter Singer Bust to a new location to expand the openness of the Plaza."

The Public Arts Commission (PAC) routinely considers the Community Plaza as a location for public art, whether it is a loaned sculpture or another type of piece. The current configuration inhibits those types of opportunities. The placement of the bust is such that adding another piece would further constrain the space within the Plaza.

DISCUSSION

The PAC 2014/15 Work Plan includes items to evaluate site criteria for public art as well as evaluating public art opportunities. At its June 26, 2014 meeting, the PAC discussed the current location of the Walter Singer Bust. At that meeting, the Commission felt that moving the Bust was important to provide opportunities for placement of public art. Several potential new locations were discussed. Ultimately, the Commission felt that near the History Museum was the most appropriate as Mr. Singer was an integral part of the history of Los Altos. An exact location has not yet been determined, though there are a number of possible locations. The Commission voted 6-0, with one member absent, to approve sending a recommendation to the City Council, with input from the Parks and Recreation Commission, to move the Walter Singer Bust from the Community Plaza to near the History Museum.

On August 13, 2014, the Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) discussed the proposed recommendation. Following Commission discussion, the PARC voted unanimously to endorse the PAC's recommendation to Council.

As part of the evaluation and effort to put forth a recommendation to Council, a great deal of outreach has been done to inform members of the community as well as to gather feedback on a potential recommendation. The Chair of the PAC Maddy McBirney has contacted Paul Nyberg of the Los Altos Cultural Association, Jane Reed, President of the Board of the History Museum, Roy and Penny Lave from the Los Altos Community Foundation and the Board of the Rotary Club of Los Altos as well as other members of the community who knew and interacted with the Singers and the artist. All those contacted

supported moving the bust and the proposed placement near the History Museum. The one exception is the Board of the Rotary Club which has not yet responded to communications.

There are a number of advantages to moving the Bust sooner rather than later when the Plaza is redeveloped. As mentioned, a number of potential sculptures have either been rejected or placed elsewhere because of the lack of space in the Plaza. The PAC had a lengthy discussion on a series of kinetic pieces which were ultimately not recommended for placement because the PAC felt the best location was the Community Plaza. Moving the Bust would also allow the Plaza to be more useable and accessible for visitors to the Downtown. It would allow for greater opportunities to gather and would help to make the Plaza a true gathering space. A more open Plaza could be used for performance art, as a site for a community art project, as a location for an iconic art piece placed in a location which would still allow optimal use of the Plaza, or any number of other uses.

FISCAL IMPACT

The cost of moving the sculpture is unknown at this time. The piece is currently owned by the City as is the land on which it is proposed to be moved.

As an alternative, Council could direct staff to investigate whether the move could be done by City staff and what the estimated cost would be prior to approving the move.

PUBLIC CONTACT

The Public Arts Commission discussed the recommendation at its June 26, 2014 meeting. The Parks and Recreation Commission discussed the recommendation at its August 13, 2014 meeting.

Posting of the meeting agenda serves as notice to the general public.



Community Plaza

Main Street and State Street

Community Plaza is a 0.16 acre piece of land located at the intersection of Main and State Streets in downtown Los Altos. It can be described as an urban, active neighborhood park (with elements of a pocket park). It offers tables with umbrellas and a small bandstand with turf areas for informal seating. Its current configuration causes it to be underutilized and not reach its full potential.



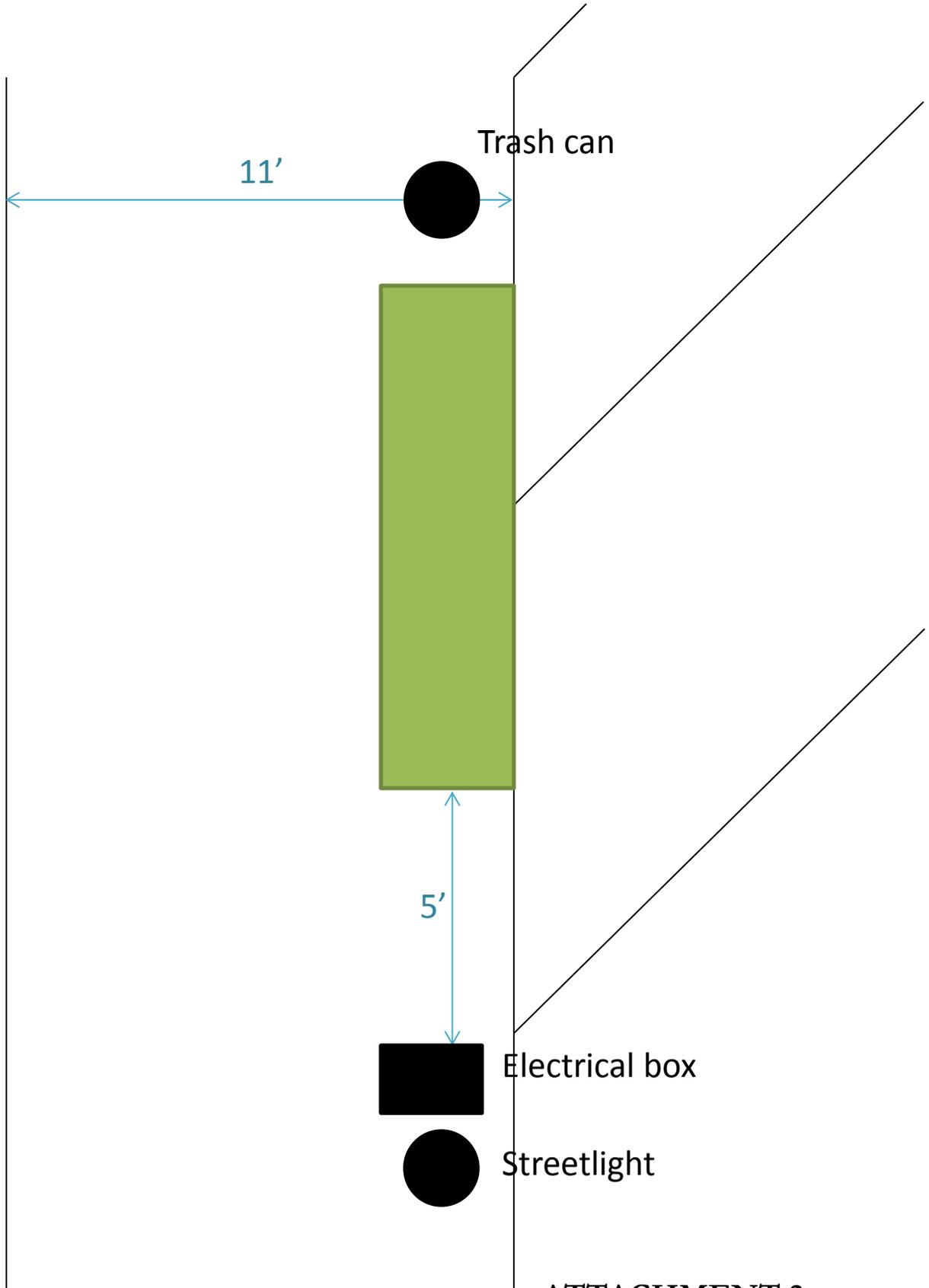
Assessment

- No major known maintenance issues
- Large raised planting area
- Current design impedes easy maneuverability and ability to host large gatherings

Recommendations

- Schedule the Community Plaza Renovation CIP Project to reconfigure and expand the Plaza
- Include an iconic feature as part of a redesign of the Plaza
- Move Walter Singer Bust to a new location to expand the openness of the Plaza

315 Main Street sidewalk plan



315 MAIN STREET CURRENT CONDITIONS

