

**CITY OF ALBANY  
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA  
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda Date: 05/02/05

Prepared Date: 04/25/05

Reviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_

**SUBJECT:** Contract with Kimley-Horn Associates to prepare a traffic circulation study to analyze the effects of closing four Albany Streets adjacent to the El Cerrito Plaza.

**REPORT BY:** A. Cherry Chaicharn, Transportation Planner  
Ann Chaney, Community Development Director

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**RECOMMENDATION**

Approve Resolution No. 05-22 authorizing the City Administrator to execute a contract with Kimley-Horn Associates to prepare a traffic circulation study for environmental review purposes, to analyze the potential effects of closing four Albany Streets adjacent to the El Cerrito Plaza, for an amount not to exceed \$26,000.

**BACKGROUND**

In April 2004, the Albany Traffic & Safety Commission met with residents who live adjacent to or near the renovated El Cerrito Plaza. The purpose of the meeting was to identify additional traffic calming measures that could be installed and receive comments on the mixed-use project proposed by El Cerrito. During the meeting, residents cited increased traffic volumes and speeds, increased truck traffic, and violations of one-way directional signs. Residents observed that these increases had occurred particularly since the opening of Trader Joe's and Copland's sports (late fall 2003). Based on data collected by the City before and after the opening of Trader Joe's, most of the subject streets experienced a 19% increase in traffic volume. Because of these increased volumes, the majority in attendance wanted the streets closed off regardless of the proposed El Cerrito Plaza mixed-use project.

Both the Traffic & Safety Commission and Planning & Zoning Commission agreed and recommended that the City Council amend the General Plan to allow the streets leading to the Plaza (i.e., Kains, Cornell, Talbot, and Evelyn) to be closed to vehicular traffic, except for emergency vehicles. Pedestrian and bicycle traffic would continue to be allowed. Because such a street closure would require an amendment to the Circulation Element of the General Plan, environmental review is required, including a traffic circulation study.

On January 18, 2005, the City Council took action regarding the Albany street closures and passed a Resolution #05-1 as follows:

1. Initiate an Amendment to the Circulation Element of the General Plan; and
2. Authorize an Environmental Review of that Amendment for use in considering the possible closure of Albany streets leading to the El Cerrito Plaza

## **ANALYSIS**

In March 2005, the City solicited requests for proposals (RFPs) to five different engineering firms. The RFP asked that the traffic circulation study analyze the potential effects of this street closure project on surrounding areas in both Albany and El Cerrito. The project would involve the closure of four (4) Albany residential streets that lead into the El Cerrito Plaza shopping center: Evelyn, Talbot, Cornell and Kains Avenues. (Note that Stannage Avenue is already a dead-end street at this location.). The RFP states that if a General Plan amendment were adopted to allow street closure, it would be the City's intent to consider physically closing these streets to vehicular traffic. The intent would be to allow continued access for emergency vehicles, pedestrian and bicycles.

In the RFP, staff asked that the consultant evaluate the potential impacts of various alternatives, in addition to the project description for closing the four subject streets. These alternatives include closing some, but not all the streets, installing traffic calming devices, and full street closure to all vehicles (including emergency vehicles). This latter alternative could include future pedestrian/bicycle bridges. The City Council should also be aware that there may be challenges in physically terminating, or creating a turn around at the end of, these streets. This issue, and alternative solutions, will be considered in the traffic circulation study.

The City received two competitive proposals from qualified firms. Staff evaluated the submittals, and after careful consideration, and comparison of the proposals, recommends that the contract be awarded to Kimley-Horn Associates (KHA). The KHA proposal offers a comprehensive analysis of the project area which staff believes will be important in determining the varying effects of closing off all or some of the streets and satisfying environmental requirements. This level of detail will also be important in responding to questions from residents in the two communities, the El Cerrito Plaza owners, and city of Albany and El Cerrito officials. It should also be noted that KHA peer reviewed the El Cerrito Plaza Mixed-Use Development SEIR on behalf of Albany which served as the basis of Council's comments on that document. Thus, KHA has recent experience related to the City's street closure proposal.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

This contract will not to exceed \$26,000. Funding for the project will come from the Transportation Projects account as approved by the City Council in the Capital Improvements Program (CIP). Gas tax revenues are the source of these monies.

### **Attachments**

- Resolution No. 05-22
- Kimley-Horn Associates - Scope of Work and Fee Estimates

