



# COUNCIL REPORT

**DATE:** June 28, 2022

**CATEGORY:** Consent

**DEPT.:** Public Works, Community Development

**TITLE:** **Resolution of Intent to Establish Pedestrian Malls on Castro Street Between West Evelyn Avenue and California Street, and Report on Design Competitions**

## **RECOMMENDATION**

1. Adopt a Resolution of Intent of the City Council of the City of Mountain View to Establish Pedestrian Malls on Castro Street Between West Evelyn Avenue (East Leg) and Villa Street, Villa Street and Dana Street, and Dana Street and California Street, to be read in title only, further reading waived (Attachment 1 to the Council report).
2. Receive a report on design competition options for the Mountain View Transit Center.

## **BACKGROUND**

California Vehicle Code (CVC) Section 21101(e) gives a local jurisdiction the authority to temporarily close a portion of any street to vehicles for celebrations, parades, local special events, or other purposes when the closing is necessary for the safety and protection of persons who are to use that portion of the street during the temporary closing. In June 2020, the City Council adopted [Resolution No. 18470](#) to temporarily close the 100 to 400<sup>1</sup> blocks of Castro Street to vehicular traffic with continued side-street access for motorists. With this action, the Castro StrEATs program was launched to support the recovery of Mountain View's downtown businesses as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic by allowing outdoor dining within the public right-of-way during the State of Emergency.

The current Castro StrEATs program has allowed businesses and the public the opportunity to experience a vehicle-free roadway on the 100 to 300 blocks of Castro Street. Over the course of the last two years, several engagement activities were conducted seeking feedback from the community and businesses on their experience of the open-street arrangement. Efforts included online surveys, business visits, public open houses, and presentations at the Downtown Committee and Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee. Feedback from the committees,

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<sup>1</sup> [Resolution No. 18576](#) terminated the street closure for the 400 block of Castro Street as it had been underutilized during the Castro StrEATs program.

community, and businesses showed strong support for permanently closing the 100 to 300 blocks of Castro Street to motor vehicles to create a permanent pedestrian mall.

On [October 12, 2021](#), a Council Study Session was held to review the Castro Pedestrian Mall Feasibility Study’s high-level concept alternatives for the 100 block of Castro Street and the potential inclusion of the 200 and 300 blocks of Castro Street into the pedestrian mall concept. The Study Session memo included an overview of the process necessary to establish a permanent pedestrian mall and listed Council adoption of a Resolution of Intent to establish a pedestrian mall in spring 2022 as one of the next steps. At the meeting, a Council majority indicated support to:

- Further develop a pedestrian mall concept for the 100 block of Castro Street based on Alternative B (which maintains the current Evelyn Avenue alignment) with the planning and design of this alternative to not preclude Alternative C (which realigns Evelyn Avenue to the east of Castro Street) as a potential future phase (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Castro Street 100-Block Alternatives B and C

- Include the 200 and 300 blocks of Castro Street in the development of a pedestrian mall concept.
- Direct staff to explore design competition options for the Mountain View Transit Center.

On [December 14, 2021](#), Council adopted Resolution No. 18470 to extend the temporary closure of the 100, 200, and 300 blocks of Castro Street until January 16, 2023, to continue to facilitate economic recovery during and after the COVID-19 states of emergency, with the understanding that the City would begin a process in 2022 to consider adopting a pedestrian mall ordinance for a permanent closure of these blocks to vehicular traffic.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **Castro Street Pedestrian Mall Process**

To close one or more blocks of Castro Street permanently, the City needs to comply with the Pedestrian Mall Law of 1960, California Streets and Highways Code Section 11000, *et seq.* (the Law). According to the Law, a pedestrian mall is to be used exclusively or primarily for pedestrian travel, and a local agency has the power to:

- Establish a pedestrian mall by prohibiting, in whole or in part, vehicular traffic on a street;
- Use City funds or levy assessments on lands benefitting from the establishment of a pedestrian mall, to pay claims for damages, if any, to a property owner or tenant due to the establishment of a pedestrian mall;
- Identify and construct improvements on City streets which have been, or will be, established as a pedestrian mall; and
- Use City funds or assessments levied on lands benefitting from the pedestrian mall improvements to pay for the improvements.

The key steps to comply with the Law include:

- Council adoption of a Resolution of Intent to establish a pedestrian mall;
- A public hearing not less than 90 days after adopting the Resolution of Intent;

- Council adoption of a resolution determining whether to abandon the proceedings or establish the pedestrian mall; and
- Council adoption of an ordinance after all claims for damages submitted are resolved.

### *Resolution of Intent*

The first step of the Law process is Council adoption of a Resolution of Intent to establish a pedestrian mall. The Resolution of Intent must identify the extent of the pedestrian mall, identify general improvements and funding sources, set a public hearing date, and outline the process through which property owners and tenants may submit written claims for damages seeking compensation if they believe the establishment of the pedestrian mall will harm their property interests. The Resolution of Intent must also identify proposed funding sources to pay for any claims for damages.

As identified in the Resolution of Intent (Attachment 1), the City intends to establish pedestrian malls on the following three segments of Castro Street: (1) between West Evelyn Avenue (east leg) and Villa Street; (2) between Villa Street and Dana Street; and (3) between Dana Street and California Street (Figure 2). Vehicular through-traffic access on the cross-streets along Evelyn Avenue, Villa Street, Dana Street, and California Street will continue to remain open similar to current conditions. Motor vehicle traffic will be prohibited on the proposed pedestrian malls except for emergency and utility maintenance vehicles, which shall be allowed at all hours. Planning for bicycle access to and/or through the pedestrian mall segments will be addressed during the design process for the pedestrian mall.

The segment of Castro Street, between the east and west legs of West Evelyn Avenue, is not included because this segment will become part of West Evelyn Avenue to provide for vehicle access between the Mountain View Transit Center and Shoreline Boulevard when the Castro Street crossing of the train tracks is closed for the grade separation project. Proceeding with the Pedestrian Mall Feasibility Study's Alternative C to realign the West Evelyn Avenue connection to the east of Castro Street will not require changes to or affect the pedestrian mall designation process. Realigning a road segment maintains vehicle access and the through connection.



**Figure 2: Castro Pedestrian Mall Extents**

The recommended Resolution of Intent sets a public hearing date of October 11, 2022, specifies a process for property owners and tenants to submit claims for damages, indicates that the City’s General Fund will be used to pay for any damages, and identifies general improvements related to traffic control that will be paid for by the City. With these provisions, the recommended Resolution of Intent satisfies the Law’s requirements.

#### *Outreach in Relation to the Pedestrian Mall Law*

Over the last few months, staff conducted property owner and business outreach meetings to provide information about the City’s intent to establish pedestrian malls along Castro Street and the Law process. Property owners also received updates on the Law process through letters and postcard notices. Two meetings were held virtually on April 19 and May 25, 2022 to provide property owners information on the Law and the Castro Street closure. In addition, staff held in-person meetings with the businesses in each block on April 21 and May 26, 2022 to engage with business owners and answer questions about the process. The attendees generally expressed support for permanent closure of the 100 to 300 blocks of Castro Street to vehicular traffic to create pedestrian malls. The Downtown Committee and Downtown Business Association have also received updates on the process at their regularly scheduled meetings.

#### *Next Steps*

The next step in the process is to conduct a public hearing at least 90 days after the Resolution of Intent is adopted by the Council. The Resolution of Intent identifies the public hearing date as

October 11, 2022. No later than the time set for the public hearing, property owners and tenants may file a claim of damages to seek compensation if they believe they will suffer legal damage due to the establishment of the proposed pedestrian mall. In addition, any interested person may submit objections to the establishment of the proposed pedestrian mall. If property owners representing a majority of the frontage abutting the proposed pedestrian mall submit written objections, the City cannot move forward with the street closure. At the conclusion of the public hearing, Council will adopt a resolution determining whether to abandon the proceedings or establish the pedestrian mall. To proceed with establishing the pedestrian mall, an ordinance must be adopted. All submitted claims for damages must be resolved prior to the Council's adoption of an ordinance to establish the pedestrian mall.

In preparation for a potential permanent pedestrian mall along the 100 to 300 blocks of Castro Street, staff is developing recommendations for interim or near-term improvements of Castro Street to be in place for the next three to five years until a permanent pedestrian mall can be funded, designed, and constructed. These recommendations will include the following:

- **Functional Plan**—The Functional Plan will focus on expanding the programming across the three blocks to help invite more people to shop, dine, and gather in downtown.
- **Interim Design Guidelines**—The design guidelines will focus on providing consistency in the aesthetics, street furniture, and other features for the three blocks.
- **Interim Infrastructure Plan**—This plan will include infrastructure and other street improvements to support the street closure. The infrastructure improvements will include, but not be limited to, bollards, planters, other traffic-control devices, cross-street intersection improvements, street furniture, lighting, and accessibility improvements.

These plans and design guidelines will be brought to Council in fall 2022 for review and approval.

Environmental clearance documentation for this project is under way. This documentation will be available for public, downtown businesses and property owners, and Council review prior to the October 11, 2022 public hearing date.

### **Transit Center Design Competition Options**

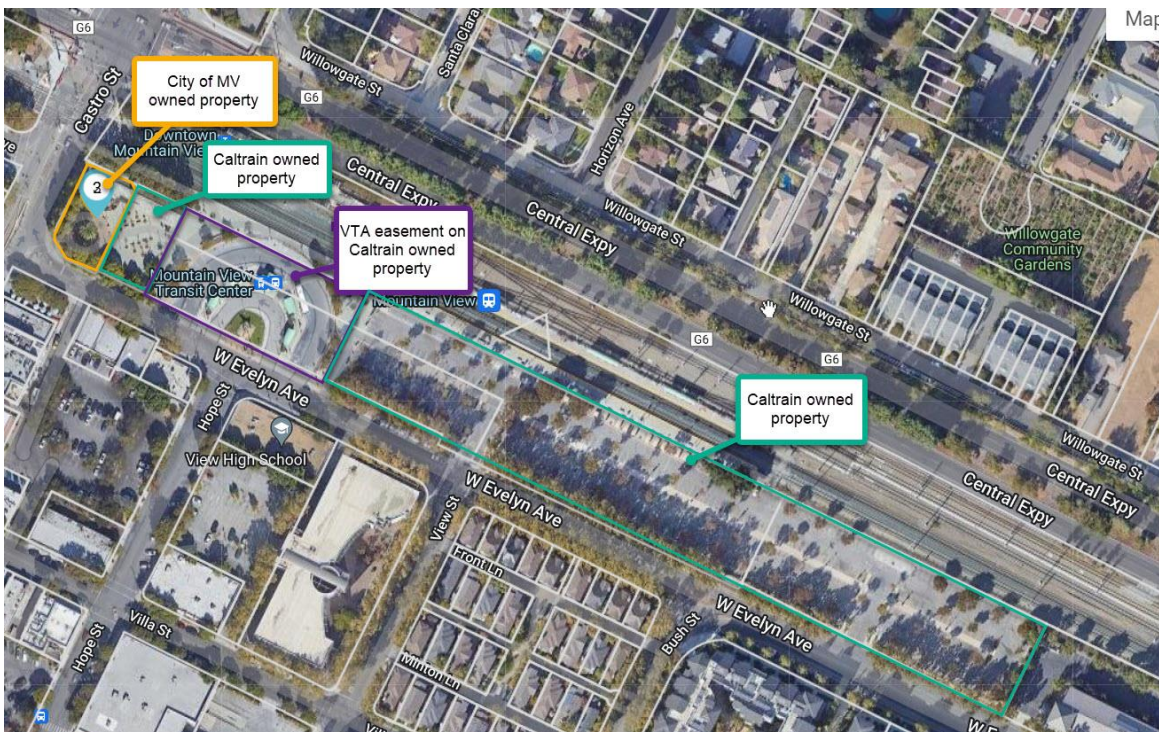
As directed by Council on October 12, 2021, staff reviewed the concept of a design competition for the Mountain View Transit Center. The Council did not specify the scope of a design competition; however, Council comments ranged from a revised Master Plan to implementing specific elements of the 2017 Master Plan, including linkages with the grade separation project and Castro Street Pedestrian Mall.



### 2017 Transit Center Master Plan

In 2017, Council approved a Master Plan for the Mountain View Transit Center. The purpose of the Master Plan was to identify future needs of the Transit Center in consideration of expected growth in transit use and access to the facility. A second objective was to assess the potential for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), including compatibility with transit operations and transportation improvements such as expanded bus and shuttle loading areas, longer Caltrain boarding platforms, and improved bicycle and pedestrian access.

The Transit Center includes Caltrain and VTA light rail stations, several VTA bus lines, public and private shuttle bus service, transit station parking and bicycle parking facilities. Caltrain owns most of the six-acre site, the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) has easement rights over a portion of Caltrain’s property, and the City owns a small parcel adjacent to Castro Street and Evelyn Avenue (Figure 3).



**Figure 3: Mountain View Transit Center Property Ownership**

When the Master Plan was developed, the Transit Center was heavily utilized in terms of transit riders, bus and shuttle usage, and vehicle parking. The Master Plan also considered the planned growth in Caltrain service with electrification. Therefore, the priority in the Master Plan was to ensure properly sized transportation facilities, the elimination of conflicts with the increased rail service, and safer/better access for all modes, particularly walking and biking.

In 2018, Council supported dividing the implementation of the Master Plan into two elements (see Figure 4).

- Element I, which is now in final design, is the Grade Separation and Access Project (GSAP). This project replaces the current at-grade vehicle track crossing on Castro Street with a below-grade pedestrian and bicycle corridor and concourse and provides other access improvements, including a vehicle ramp to Shoreline Boulevard.
- Element II, which is currently on hold due to City and Caltrain workloads and other priorities, will further refine and develop the transportation elements of the plan (bus and shuttle loading, parking, and pedestrian and bicycle access) and assess the economic potential of land development. This work will be closely coordinated with Caltrain and VTA. A following task, led by the City, will develop a specific land use plan for the Transit Center. One task will be to review the park and open space components of the plan, including the potential modification or replacement of Centennial Plaza and the replica train station. In approving the Transit Center Master Plan, the City Council expressed interest in a more active space that could be well-integrated with existing and future development.

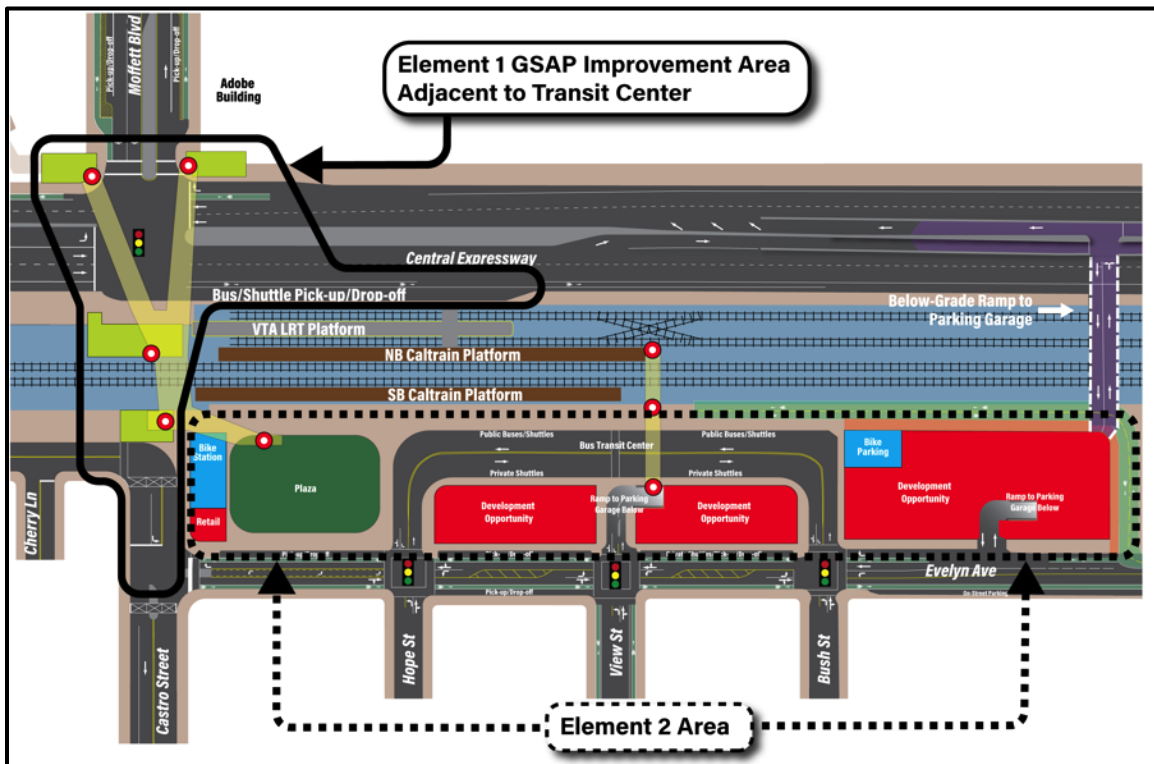


Figure 4: Transit Center Master Plan Implementation Areas



### *Types of Design Competition*

To assist in staff's review of design competition options, Gehl Studio, Inc. (Gehl), prepared a memo summarizing the typical types of design competitions and staging formats with pros/cons and three case studies of design competitions in our region (Attachment 2). Gehl, an urban design firm, is the consultant preparing the Castro Pedestrian Mall Feasibility Study and is currently assisting in developing the interim functional plan, design guidelines, and infrastructure plan for the pedestrian mall.

The types of design competitions include:

- **Open**—Anyone may enter the competition, regardless of their formal qualification. Open-entry formats are great for big-idea competitions that seek to draw on multiple cross-disciplinary teams for innovative, if not always feasible, solutions. They can be resource-intensive, and hosts may have limited control over whether a winning design is feasible, especially with projects that have significant complexity like multiple ownership jurisdictions, communities that require in-depth and meaningful engagement, and resolution to complex design challenges.
- **Limited**—Only submissions from teams within a specific geography that meet a certain licensing requirement or unique considerations may enter. Limited competitions are useful for projects that require a set budget or local expertise. Competition hosts can expect that the more restrictive their requirements, the fewer entries they will receive.
- **Invited**—Only groups invited by the competition holder may enter. Competition hosts are potentially able to closely manage participants' work, given the lower number of competitors. Because of the exclusive nature of invited competitions, these types of competitions can run into issues and claims of bias for awards due to the lack of a more open opportunity to participate or potentially perceived favoritism.
- **Request for Qualifications/Request for Proposals (RFQ/RFP)**—Design teams are selected to participate in the design competition based on their experiences and qualifications in response to an RFQ/RFP. RFQ/RFP competitions are useful for assuring that the eventual design concept selected will be from a team with the knowledge and capacity to carry out a feasible design. This approach is compared to the City's standard RFQ/RFP process below.

The competitions can be conducted in one-stage or two-stage formats. In a one-stage competition, the final winner is selected directly from the wider pool of submissions. One-stage competitions are efficient for big-idea or high-level projects that do not require significant details, technical plans, or feasibility studies. In a two-stage competition, finalists are selected from the initial pool of submissions and then invited to further refine their designs. Finalists are often

given a reward for advancing to the second stage. Though it is more costly and requires more oversight by the competition hosts, this two-stage process can allow for more focused community involvement and control in the eventual final design.

### *Design Competitions Benefits and Challenges*

Design competitions have long been used by public and private agencies around the world to help plan community improvements and individual projects, including building architecture, land use plans, parks, plazas, and public art, with varying degrees of success. When staged properly, design competitions can produce new ideas or innovations, provide publicity, and generate increased community interest and engagement. As noted in the summary of options above, the design competition approach can be beneficial in certain, but not all, situations and may face a number of challenges.

Gehl identified the following challenges that have emerged from the history of design competitions that need to be considered in staging a successful competition:

- **Design competitions often add time, require design changes, and can falter due to insufficient funds.** The Harvey Milk Plaza project experience demonstrates these issues, with three different concepts considered over a 20-year span. Other projects have had a similar experience, such as the Adobe Creek/U.S. 101 pedestrian overcrossing, which had to be significantly revised from the initial concept.
- High-profile projects involving international or national sites can attract quality design firms, but it can be challenging to attract participants to more local projects. **Substantial financial awards may be needed to bring in top design firms.**
- **The competition process can affect the quality and level of community engagement.** Since competitions are designed to bring in multiple design submissions simultaneously, it can be challenging to ensure meaningful community input into the development of the design concepts and can result in designs that do not reflect the needs of the community. Compensating for this disconnect requires a longer time frame and increased process management from the competition host organization.
- **Local agencies are more likely to utilize an RFQ/RFP design competition process than an open competition in order to limit costs and time as well as improve the chance that a feasible project will result.** However, an RFQ/RFP design competition process may require more time, staffing, and costs than the other competition types to be successful.

In summary, there are tradeoffs with the different types of competitions and selection of the right approach is important for a successful result. The more time and resources competition

hosts spend on developing and implementing the competition, the better the results of the competition will be.

### *City Standard Processes*

The City uses RFQ and/or RFP processes to hire consultants for project planning and design. Consultants are selected based on their qualifications, experience, and project understanding, for both the technical work and community engagement. Qualifications and experience are evaluated for both the consultant firms and the consultant team members proposed to work on the project. Project understanding is generally demonstrated by identifying the key issues or challenges that the project may face and presenting a work plan that promotes a successful project design that is technically and financially feasible and reflects the needs of the community. The proposer may present a design concept to demonstrate their project understanding, but that design concept is not selected at this stage. Once under contract, the consultant develops a variety of concept alternatives during the planning process and refines the preferred concept during the design phase, incorporating community outreach and input throughout.

The open, limited, and invited design competitions described above differ from the City's standard process by focusing on selecting a design concept rather than the design consultant. The design consultant that submits the winning design concept would be engaged to prepare the final design. The RFQ/RFP design competition process is somewhat similar to the City's process, except that after the firms are deemed qualified, they are invited to develop and submit design concepts for the competition rather than being selected based on project understanding and approach. Community engagement and input is included in selecting the winning design concept before the consultant is contracted for the final design.

### *Transit Center Design Competition Opportunities*

The Mountain View Transit Center site presents the following significant challenges for a successful design competition focused on the entire Transit Center:

- Most of the Transit Center property is owned by Caltrain, who would have to be in full support of any design competition and willing to commit staffing resources to the effort. In the Lake Merritt BART TOD case study in the Gehl memo, BART, as the property owner and transit operator, led the RFQ/FRP design competition with the City of Oakland being one of several involved parties.
- The Transit Center is a major facility that includes Caltrain and VTA light rail stations, several VTA bus lines, public and private shuttle bus services, transit station parking, and bicycle parking facilities. Transit, pedestrian, bike, and vehicle access must be maintained and planned for, taking priority over joint development and other uses. In addition, the design

concepts must be coordinated with, and not delay, the grade separation project, Castro Pedestrian Mall, or Caltrain's future project to extend boarding platforms.

- The Transit Center is included in the Evelyn Avenue Corridor Precise Plan with the permitted uses limited to transit stations, parking lots, garages, passenger loading areas, transit support services, and limited retail and office. The City has not engaged in a planning study with Caltrain and the community on preferred land use plans for joint development of the property.

**Due to these factors, a design competition for the entire Transit Center site, including revising the master plan, is not recommended.** It would require significant staff effort and costs, divert Caltrain staff resources away from the City's two grade-separation projects, and may not result in a feasible design concept.

**There may be opportunities, however, for design competitions to address components of the plan,** such as a redesigned Centennial Plaza with or without the realignment of Evelyn Avenue, per Alternative C for the Pedestrian Mall, and/or the joint development plan on Caltrain property. If the City were to pursue such design competitions, the following planning steps would first need to be completed by the City, working jointly with Caltrain:

- Confirm the transportation elements of the Master Plan in terms of capacity and space allocation and identify the design requirements for transit operations.
- Complete an economic feasibility analysis that would help determine the potential development opportunities and compatibility of development with the transportation elements.
- Develop a land use plan that defines allowable uses and provides a general site plan. The site plan could include allocation of space for the transportation elements, potential commercial and/or residential development, and open space or parks/plazas.

Following the completion of these steps, the City and Caltrain could define the appropriate strategy for implementation. At that point, design competitions that have a high likelihood of successfully producing feasible design concepts could be considered for components of the Transit Center Master Plan.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no fiscal impact to adopt the Resolution of Intent to establish a pedestrian mall, nor in receiving the report on design competition options.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Council, community, and downtown businesses have indicated support for creating a pedestrian mall along the 100, 200, and 300 blocks of Castro Street. Adopting a Resolution of Intent to establish a pedestrian mall along these blocks is required to comply with the Pedestrian Mall Law. A public hearing on establishing the pedestrian mall is scheduled for October 11, 2022.

Staff does not recommend a design competition for the entire Transit Center site, including revising the Master Plan, due to the complexities of the site and the significant staff effort and costs that would be involved. There may be future opportunities for design competitions to address components of the Transit Center Master Plan, with Caltrain concurrence, once additional site planning and economic analysis is completed.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

1. Do not approve the resolution.
2. Adopt an alternative resolution.
3. Provide direction to develop a work plan and budget for a Transit Center design competition.
4. Provide other direction.



**PUBLIC NOTICING**

Agenda posting and email distribution to the Downtown Committee, Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee, Downtown Business Association, Mountain View Chamber of Commerce, Old Mountain View Neighborhood Association, *myMV* project subscription list, and posting on the project website.

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Attachments: 1. Resolution of Intent to Establish Pedestrian Mall  
2. Design Competition Memo