San Francisco
County Transportation
Authority

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Memorandum

AGENDA ITEM 8

DATE: June 20, 2025

TO: Transportation Authority Board

FROM: Rachel Hiatt – Deputy Director for Planning

SUBJECT: 07/10/2025 Board Meeting: Adopt the Walter U Lum Place Public Space Study Final Report

RECOMMENDATION ☐ **Information** ☒ **Action**	☐ Fund Allocation
Adopt the Walter U Lum Place Public Space Study Final Report	☐ Fund Programming
SUMMARY	☐ Policy/Legislation
Former Transportation Authority Board Member Aaron Peskin requested that the Transportation Authority conduct the Walter U Lum Place Public Space Study to examine various scenarios for a people-first Walter U Lum Place and select one concept design for advancement. The enclosed draft final report presents a concept design that responds to community input; improves connections between the alleyway, Portsmouth Square, and other destinations in Chinatown; addresses trade-offs between pedestrian and loading access; and is compatible with the ongoing renovation of Portsmouth Square. The Study, which was funded with District 3 Neighborhood Transportation Program funds, includes a funding and implementation strategy.	☒ Plan/Study ☐ Capital Project Oversight/Delivery ☐ Budget/Finance ☐ Contract/Agreement ☐ Other: _____

BACKGROUND

Former Transportation Authority Board Member Aaron Peskin requested that the Transportation Authority conduct the Walter U Lum Place Public Space Study to examine various scenarios for a people-first Walter U Lum Place and develop an urban design strategy to cohesively connect the alleyway with other cultural destinations in Chinatown and improve the public streetscape. Transportation Authority staff contracted and collaborated with the Chinatown Community Development Center (CCDC), San Francisco Department of Public Works (SFPW), and San Francisco Municipal Transportation Authority (SFMTA) on this study.

In 2020, Transportation Authority staff completed the Portsmouth Square Community Based Transportation Plan to identify solutions to improve transportation safety and circulation around Portsmouth Square and access to Chinatown as a whole. Study recommendations included improvements to Walter U Lum Place such as widened sidewalks and a raised speed table to make the alleyway more of a shared space with low vehicle speeds.

DISCUSSION

The Study began with existing conditions analysis, including multimodal counts and observations of parking and loading behavior. Community outreach defined community priorities and preferences for design elements, which guided the development of three potential design concepts, and selection of the final, recommended design.

Outreach. The study included two primary rounds of outreach and ongoing input from a seven-member steering committee. For each round, we worked closely with CCDC and the steering committee to promote outreach surveys through mailing lists and WeChat groups. The project team also collected feedback through in-person community meetings, open house events, and merchant focus groups. The survey from the first outreach round had a high response rate from seniors and underrepresentation of youths. The second outreach round engaged the CCDC youth team. Community priorities identified in the first round of outreach included: safety, connectivity and circulation, community identity, livability, cleanliness, and delivery access. The most popular design elements were landscaping and specialty lighting. Feedback from the second round of outreach was used to refine the concept design.

Concept Refinement and Selection Process. Based on technical analysis and findings from the first round of outreach, we identified three potential design concepts to test different physical solutions for the alleyway and to get feedback on community interest in design features. The potential designs addressed parts of the alleyway that were out of compliance, including the cross-slope of the sidewalk and substandard width of the cut-in loading zone. Other significant constraints included the grading of the street, drainage, street width, and the planned park renovation design, led by the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department.

Recommended Concept Design. The final concept design was selected based on input from the second outreach round and feedback from the steering committee. The main features of the concept design include:

1. Widened, ADA-accessible 13-foot sidewalk on the west-side of the street. This design expands the sidewalk into the existing cut-in loading zone.
2. Narrow overall street width from 22.5 feet to 18.5 feet, providing a single lane of traffic and a continuous loading zone at the curb. This modifies the existing,

substandard 4.5-foot-wide cut-in loading zone into a standard, 8-foot-wide loading lane.

3. Low retaining wall to provide a less than 2%, ADA accessible grade on the west-side sidewalk. To maintain pedestrian connectivity to the street level, the retaining wall is split into two levels divided by a five-foot-wide step. The step area can be used for planting or as an open area for walking and seating.
4. Expanded, raised crosswalk at Clay Street, to align with the Portsmouth Square entrance plaza, and new crosswalk and concrete bulb-outs to shorten the crossing distance at Washington Street.
5. Common paving materials and pattern for the street and sidewalk, matching the planned paving pattern in Portsmouth Square. This creates a common design language between the two spaces.
6. Poles or bollards mounted on either side of Clay Street and Washington Street that can be used for temporary street closures.
7. Art and culture opportunities through catenary lighting and historical plaques and handrail designs on the sidewalk steps.

Implementation Plan. The final report includes a discussion of detailed design and construction cost estimates, potential funding sources, and implementation next steps. Detailed design would be led by SFPW. There are some community concerns around parking and loading impacts of removing the cut-in loading zone. SFMTA should develop a parking and loading management strategy as part of the detailed design phase.

There is an opportunity to coordinate the Walter U Lum Place project with the upcoming renovation of Portsmouth Square by including the recommended design as a change order to the existing park renovation contract. This option would save time and money and minimize construction impacts. It would also require detailed design funding (estimated at $870,000) to be secured by December 2025 and construction funds ($4,350,000 conceptual planning level estimate) to be secured by September 2026. The Transportation Authority will continue to support City and County of San Francisco agencies to identify funding for detailed design and construction. Potential funding sources identified in the report include but are not limited to local funding sources such as Prop L and City and County of San Francisco funds, regional and state sources such as One Bay Area Grant, and private funds.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The recommended action would not have an impact on the adopted Fiscal Year 2025/26 budget.

CAC POSITION

The CAC will consider this item at its June 25, 2025 meeting.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

- Enclosure – Walter U Lum Place Public Space Study Draft Final Report