STAFF REPORT

Council Meeting Date: October 25, 2022

Subject: Adoption of the "Close the GAP" Plans

Staff Resource(s): Ken Putnam, PE, Director of Transportation
Lucy Crown, AICP, Transportation Planning Manager

Action Requested: Adoption of a resolution adopting the "Close The GAP" Plans, the City's integrated Greenway Master Plan, ADA Transition Plan for public rights-of-way, and Pedestrian Master Plan.

Background:

- In 2018, the City received $135,000 in Surface Transportation Block Grant funding from the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) to develop a City Pedestrian Plan and an ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan for public rights-of-way (a federally-required plan that evaluates ADA accessibility and recommends improvements).
- At that time, the City Council also approved an additional $100,000 to be used to simultaneously update the City's existing Greenway Master Plan.
- The plans will replace the current Greenway Master Plan (2013), ADA Transition Plan (1998), and Pedestrian Master Plan (2004).
- City staff worked with a local transportation consultant to develop all three plans together to ensure that the plans and resulting recommendations related to sidewalks, greenways, ADA infrastructure, and other pedestrian amenities were coordinated.
- Extensive public outreach and engagement was conducted over a period of approximately two years to identify community needs and priorities for the pedestrian, greenway, and ADA-accessible infrastructure.
- In addition to community-identified needs, robust GIS-based analyses were conducted to assist with the identification and prioritization of potential future pedestrian, greenway, and ADA projects.
- These analyses used a combination of demographic data from the U.S. Census that included data related to race, income, vehicle ownership, age, and disability, and coupled it with data related to pedestrian crashes, transit routes, connectivity opportunities, and the locations of housing and jobs.
- Each plan provides an Action Plan of prioritized lists of recommended projects that will be used to help program the City's CIP and maintenance projects, as well as inform future grant applications.
- Each Action Plan goal also provides recommendations related to City policies that need to be updated, as well as design standards.
- The Action Plans for the Close the GAP Plans will strengthen our commitment to a strong network of safe pedestrian facilities with new design guidelines, policy updates and changes, new best practices for development, and technology to assist with communications and reporting.
- Multiple departments will work on the implementation of the GAP plans.
- Staff intends to develop an annual report that will provide information on the implementation status and monitor progress toward improving pedestrian, greenway and ADA infrastructure.

Council Goal(s):

- Improve and expand core services

Committee(s):

- MMTC - 04/27/2022 - Approved unanimously
- Greenway Committee - 04/07/2022 - Approved unanimously

- AARRC - 04/14/2022 - Approved
- DRC - 05/19/2022 - Approved unanimously
- P&Z - 06/01/2022 - Approved unanimously
- PED - 10/10/2022, - Information only
- PED - 10/25/2022 - Approved unanimously

Pro(s):

- Adoption of the “Close the GAP” Plans will provide a resource for City staff to utilize when programming the City’s CIP, determining priorities for maintenance of sidewalks, adding and reconstructing ADA accessibility improvements, and determining which projects we should submit grant applications for moving forward.
- The adopted plans provide comprehensive documentation of public engagement conducted, data collection and analysis, and the methodologies used to recommend and prioritize projects.
- Adoption of the ADA Transition Plan is required by federal law.

Con(s):

- Implementing the action steps in the adopted plans will require significant City resources, including both staff time and funding on an annual basis.
- In particular, planning, design, and construction of various capital projects will require additional funding resources.
- A number of existing City policies and standards will need to be updated.

Fiscal Impact:

- While the City currently funds new sidewalk construction, sidewalk maintenance, ADA improvements, and greenways, significantly more funding over the next several decades will be necessary to complete the projects prioritized in the GAP plans.

Suggested Motion:

- Motion to adopt a resolution adopting the “Close The GAP” Plans, the City's integrated Greenway Master Plan, ADA Transition Plan for public rights-of-way, and Pedestrian Master Plan.

Attachment(s):

- Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. 22-____

RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE GAP PLANS: THE GREENWAY, ADA TRANSITION, AND PEDESTRIAN MASTER PLANS

WHEREAS, the City of Asheville has authority pursuant to N.C.G.S 160D-501 to adopt plans setting forth goals, policies, and programs intended to guide the present and future physical, social, and economic development of the jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS, the City hired the consulting firm Traffic Planning and Design, Inc. to conduct the Greenway, ADA Transition, and Pedestrian (GAP) plans; and

WHEREAS, the Asheville City Council supports the development of multimodal transportation options that encourage walking, biking, and riding transit as a core service; and

WHEREAS, the intent of conducting the three plans together, as a suite of plans, is to fortify the planning, policy, and prioritization of the pedestrian network, so all pedestrians, including those with mobility disabilities, can walk and roll safely throughout the streets of Asheville.

WHEREAS, the GAP plan recommends policies, guidelines, and a prioritization of projects for sidewalks and greenways based on data analysis of equity, destination, safety, connectivity, and public input: and

WHEREAS, the GAP Plans create new typologies of greenways to create a strong network of greenways and trails; and

WHEREAS, the GAP Plans establish a vision for pedestrian improvements that improve the public rights-of-way and develop cohesive strategies to improve ADA facilities and new sidewalk projects within regular maintenance and capital projects;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE THAT:

The GAP Plans are hereby adopted as the City of Asheville's Greenway, ADA Transition, and Pedestrian Plans.

Read, approved, and adopted on the 25th day of October 2022.

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City Clerk Mayor

Approved as to form:

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City Attorney