

Department of Public Works

Board of Public Works Report No. 2

July 15, 2016
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CD No.: ALL

REQUEST TO APPROVE PROPOSED EXPEDITED ADOPT-A-MEDIAN “FAST TRACK” APPLICATION REVIEW, PLAN, AND PERMIT PROCESS FOR STREET MEDIAN DESIGN IMPROVEMENT/REDESIGN WORK

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Board of Public Works:

1. APPROVE the proposed Expedited Adopt-A-Median “Fast Track” Application Review, Plan, and Permit Process for Street Median Improvement/Redesign Design Work that meet the criterion (expedited process parameters), including pre-approved design elements and descriptions, set forth in this report;
2. AUTHORIZE the Bureaus of Engineering and Street Services and the Office of Community Beautification to modify its internal processes, including updating the Adopt-A-Median Application Packet, to effectuate the intent of the proposed Expedited Adopt-A-Median “Fast Track” Application Review, Plan, and Permit Process;
3. AUTHORIZE the Board of Public Works’ Executive Officer, or in his absence, the Director of the Office of Community Beautification, to review and approve Adopt-A-Median future proposed applications that meet the criterion (expedited process parameters), including pre-approved design elements and descriptions, set forth in this report; and
4. INSTRUCT the Director of the Office of Community Beautification to continue to accept, review, and process, including obtaining permit approval, through the standard, regular “non-expedited” process for those future proposed Adopt-A-Median applications that do not meet the proposed expedited process parameters, set forth in this report.

TRANSMITTAL

1. Adopt-A-Median Application Packet
2. Adopt-A-Median Maintenance Agreement
3. Proposed Council District Notification to Support Letter
4. Pre-Approved Design Elements and Descriptions for “Fast Track Approval”
5. Public Works Residential Parkway Guidelines – June 22, 2015
6. Median Design/Sketch Templates

DISCUSSION

Background

The Adopt-A-Median Program was originally established in 1988 with Operation Clean Sweep, now known as the Office of Community Beautification (OCB) under the authority of the Board of Public Works, as a way to empower neighborhoods to engage in community beautification efforts. Since the late 80's, the Adopt-A-Median Program has evolved into a “tool” for the community to:

- Beautify and increase the quality of life in neighborhoods;
- Promote community involvement through landscape and streetscape projects;
- Promote a sense of ownership by community members through “sweat equity” on their projects; and
- Infuse the landscape of the City of Los Angeles with color, culture, and creativity.

OCB's Adopt-A-Median Program works as a “conduit,” with other City agencies to assist citizen groups in bringing their street median creations (designs) to life. There are three main phases in the Adopt-A-Median Program determination, which are: (1) review of the application, (2) coordinating and planning, and (3) obtaining permit(s) to implement proposed projects. All three phases primarily involved OCB. For example, firstly, OCB ensures that the proper paperwork is documented, reviewed by the correct agencies, and that projects are guided through the process as expeditiously as possible. Secondly, OCB acts as the liaison to coordinate with the Board of Public Works Commissioners, in regards to application approval by the Board, including some elements of project planning. Finally, OCB serves as the proxy applicant for any relevant permits, and coordinates directly with the Bureau of Engineering. Other City departments are involved in the approval process, as well, which include the Bureaus of Street Services, Engineering, Street Lighting, Contract Administration, and also on occasion, the Departments of Transportation, and Water and Power.

Adopt-A-Median General Provisions

In general, proposed Adopt-A-Median projects are normally smaller in nature, have a cost of or less than \$100,000, and are designated to be undertaken on the Public Right-of-Way. The Adopt-A-Median application reviewing, planning, and permitting process, as currently in-place, typically can take between three (3) to nine (9) months, or about six (6) months on average.

The idea and agreement of the Adopt-A-Median program entails that the proposing community group would handle the construction and maintenance of the project for as long as it exists, and the City of Los Angeles would waive any fees for the necessary permit(s) - usually an “A” Permit and/or a Revocable Permit. Four criterion are established to help qualify the project and guide community members as they undertake an Adopt-A-Median project, which are:

- 1) “Project should be sponsored and submitted by a neighborhood-based organization such as Homeowners Associations, Neighborhood Councils, Improvement Associations, Block Clubs, Neighborhood Watch Groups, Chambers of Commerce and Beautification Committees, and City Council Offices;

- 2) Project is under \$100,000 in total cost;
- 3) Project will maintain structures below 36” in height from road surface for freestanding objects, such as street furniture or signage. Acceptable exceptions to this requirement include, but are not limited to, murals on existing walls and/or new trees; and
- 4) Project is free of improvements that require extensive technical review such as: alterations to the horizontal alignment of the street (i.e. changes to the street width, curbs, gutters, median locations/shapes, or traffic lanes), alterations to the water drainage patterns on the street, alterations to traffic lane alignment(s) or street parking, high voltage (120V) electrical equipment drawing in excess of 330 watts, fountains/water features requiring pump equipment, etc.”

Once a group has formulated the type of project they wish to undertake, they may apply with OCB, by filling out and signing a Neighborhood Beautification Partnership Agreement, and a Waiver and Release of Claims¹, and a Maintenance Agreement² (**See Transmittals 1 and 2**). Applicants must also submit renderings of the proposed project, and letters of support from the Council Office, as well as the Neighborhood Council overseeing the area where the project is to be constructed. **Transmittal 3** provides a proposed Notification of Support Letter template that the OCB intends to use for respective Council Offices. Once the intake process has been completed, all the pertinent paperwork is then forwarded to the proper City agencies for review.

Upon approval from all relevant agencies, the project is then submitted to the Board of Public Works, as an agenda item, for its consideration. In the Board Report, it is requested that the Board of Public Works grant no-fee permits for the project. If approved, OCB then applies for the permits from the Bureau of Engineering, and once those are issued, work may commence.

Street Median Design Competition

The concept to expedite and accelerate the Adopt-A-Median process was developed under the leadership of Commissioner Rodriguez and her proposal (in spring 2016) to the Innovation and Performance Commission to fund a Street Median Design Competition that would target current landscape architecture students, including students from other related fields, to design small and large scale median concepts through a “Median Design Competition.” The concept was approved by the Los Angeles City Council in July 2015. In October 2015, a “Request for Designs” was released and proposals were received in January 2016. Selected winners were notified in February 2016 and awards distributed by the Board in March 2016.

In brief, the Median Design Competition was created to encourage creativity and innovation among students by designing median concepts that would provide options for communities to consider as a neighborhood improvement project. The designs then allowed the City of Los

¹ To download the Adopt-A-Median Application Packet, please visit the Board of Public Works’ website, under Community Beautification Services, at:

http://bpw.lacity.org/ocb/AAM%20APP%20Packet%20REVISED%20FOR%20APPROVAL_CURRENT_IN%20USE%20AS%20OF%20MARCH2016.pdf

² To download the Adopt-A-Median Maintenance Agreement Form, please visit the Board of Public Works’ website, under Community Beautification Services, at

<http://bpw.lacity.org/ocb/Maintenance%20AGREEMENT%20-%20CURRENT%20as%20of%20MARCH2016.pdf>

Angeles to create a “kit of parts” that includes the design, streamlined permitting, and the blue prints for communities wishing to overhaul their community medians. Students were requested to select a climate area template, prepare concept plans and construction drawings, and develop an itemized cost estimates, including anticipated construction time schedule.

Proposed Expedited Planning and Permit Process

Based on the Street Median Design Competition results and proposed designs, including the developing of the “kit of parts” or “tool kit”, the next step is to incorporate these findings into the City’s existing Adopt-A-Median process and identify ways to improve upon the process. In short, the Adopt-A-Median Program was selected as the vehicle to accelerate the aforementioned process for the Median Design Competition. However, modifications have been made to expedite the process. During the Median Design Competition process, the Bureau of Engineering and Street Services, the Board’s Executive Officer and Office of Community Beautification, the proposed design templates and related elements (components) for designs were reviewed and vetted, and subsequently pre-approved by the Bureau of Street Services (**see Transmittal 4**). In addition, applicants should refer to the Department of Public Works’ Residential Parkway Guidelines, adopted in June 2015, to provide more context of designs and elements recommended (**See Transmittal 5**). Further, the Street Median Design Competition provided an opportunity to review and obtain potential street median designs (sketches) using various climate and median shape templates that are acceptable to the City (**See Transmittal 6**). Therefore, the proposed expedited process would require future proposed Adopt-A-Median applications to adhere to said pre-approved elements, designs, etc. in order to qualify for the proposed expedited or “fast-track” review, plan, and permit process. **Thus, the “tool kit” is comprised of all transmittal numbers 1 through 6.**

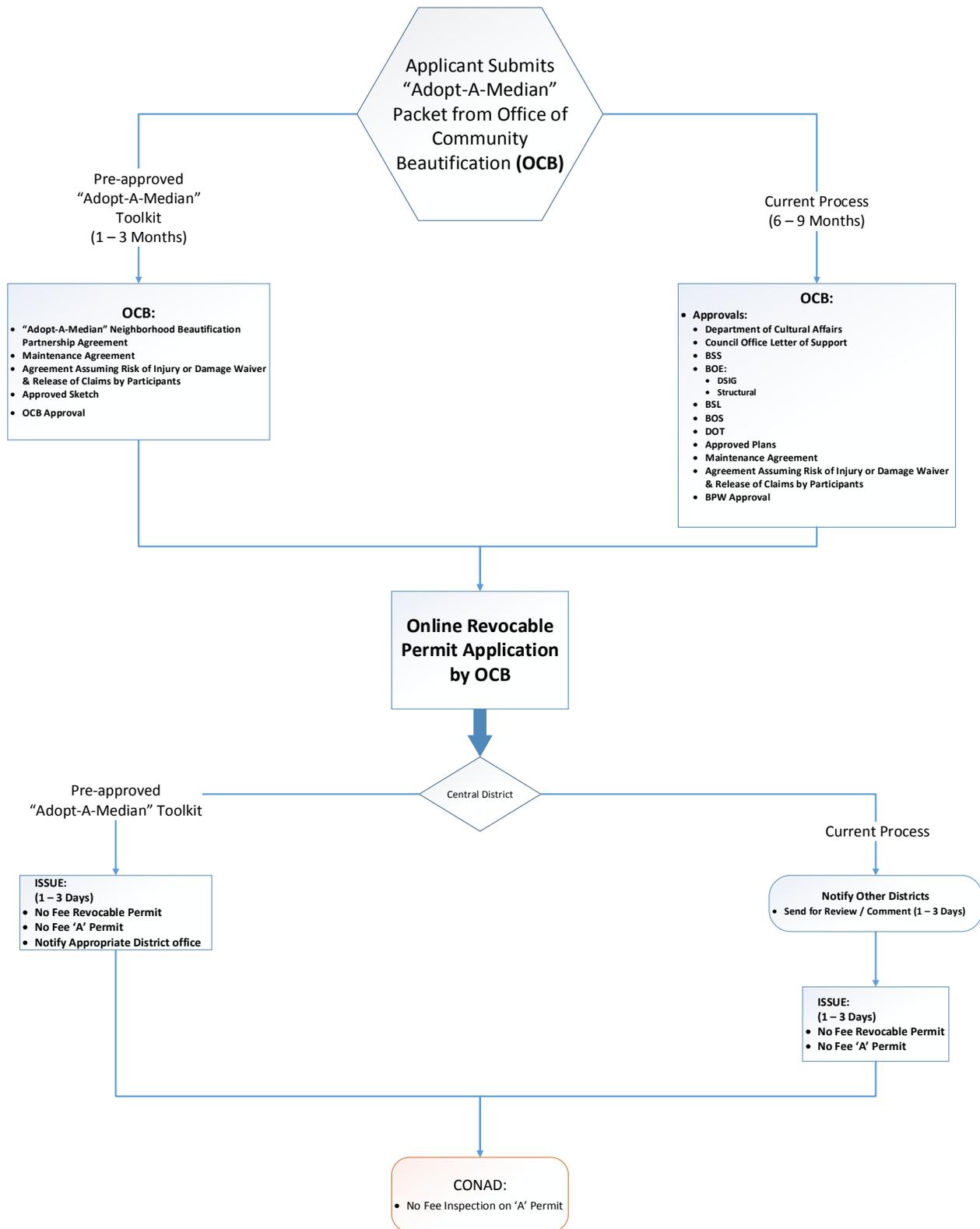
*It is important to also note that **“Any variance from the pre-approved parameters will result in the standard review processes for projects”** and therefore, not qualify or be part of the proposed Expedited Adopt-A-Median “Fast Track” Application Review, Plan, and Permit Process.*

These modifications will initially be used as an experimental tool to “fast-track” the Adopt-A-Median Program review, plan, and permit process. Further, to help expedite the process, the Bureau of Engineering has agreed to re-engineer and modify the permit review process to help accelerate the issuance of a required permit(s). The proposed expedited process flow for the Adopt-A-Median is provided below. In addition, to streamlining the application review, plan and design of pre-approved elements, and modification of the permit process, the last step or timeframe to obtain Board approval has to be further collapsed if approval authority is delegated. Therefore, as part of the accelerated Adopt-A-Median process, it is requested that the authority to approve projects be delegated to the Board of Public Works Executive Officer, or in his absence, the Director of the Office of Community Beautification. It is anticipated that the proposed Expedited Adopt-A-Median “Fast Track” Application Review, Plan, and Permit Process will significantly reduce the timeframe to obtain project approval and “put the shovel” in the ground.

As diagramed on the following Process Flowchart, the following steps are proposed to streamline the issuance of OCB issued Revocable Permits for Pre-Approved Items:

1. Applicant is given an Adopt-A-Median Application Packet which lists submittal requirements. (This will also be made available on-line).
2. Applicant Completes and Submits Application to OCB.
3. Determination is made by OCB whether the type of work proposed in the median is Pre-Approved in nature, or a Non-Standard installation.
4. Pre-Approved Installations are processed by OCB, and submitted directly by OCB to the Bureau of Engineering for issuance of the permit. (No Board of Public Works approval will be required).
5. As part of the review process, OCB will verify that application is complete, and prepare various documents for the applicant's signature (such as the required Maintenance Agreement, Waiver of Damages, Approved Sketch). (The process is anticipated to take from 1 to 3 months – This is partially dependent on how long the applicant takes to return documents).
6. After OCB determines that all documents are complete, OCB completes an On-Line-Revocable Permit Application in Bureau of Engineering's permitting system.
7. The Bureau of Engineering's Central District Issues Revocable Permit (typically within one week).
8. Non-Standard work will be processed using the current procedure which requires additional reviews and approvals by agencies such as the Bureau's of: Street Services, Street Lighting, Bureau of Engineering, Sanitation, as well as LADOT, and Cultural Affairs.
9. Non-Standard Installations will still require Board of Public Works approval as well.

Proposed Permit Process Flow Diagram:



FISCAL IMPACT

Approval of the proposed Expedited Adopt-A-Median “Fast Track” Application Review, Plan, and Permit Process will not have a negative impact to the City’s general fund. The intent is to streamline and gain operating efficiencies where feasible and practical to reduce the number of days it may take a “typical” Adopt-A-Median project to obtain full approval. The proposed Expedited Adopt-A-Median “Fast Track” process is an experimental tool to “fast-track” the Adopt-A-Median Program review, plan, and permit process, and may be modified once implemented. Should any future modifications be required, the Executive Officer or Director of Community Beautification will seek Board approval for said modifications.

Respectfully Submitted,

FERNANDO CAMPOS
Executive Officer, Board of Public Works

Report Prepared by and in Collaboration with the following:

For General Policy and Expedite Process Overview,
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For Questions on Street Median Design Elements and Descriptions:
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For Questions on Adopt-A-Median Applications or Getting Started:
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S://Admin/Initiatives/Median Design Competition/Policy Median Design Fast Track Board Report