Questions and Answers about the second phase of improvements in Snider Plaza

Why is the project needed?

- Upcoming work in Snider Plaza centers on stormwater upgrades, and replacing aging surface infrastructure including sidewalks, curbs, gutters and old street surfaces much of which dates back to the 1920’s.
- Through the addition of pedestrian amenities including lighting, benches and sidewalk pavers, and associated landscaping, this effort strives to reinforce the charm of the Plaza. The project will not change storefront appearance, and no parking spaces will be removed for street-side landscaping.
- Many sidewalks in Snider Plaza are not accessible for persons with mobility issues. Improvements required under the Americans with Disabilities Act will improve accessibility for all visitors throughout the shopping center.
- Street surfaces throughout Snider Plaza are in need of replacement. Measured by the Pavement Condition Index (PCI), the scoring system used to assess pavement conditions, deterioration levels are currently rated poor to fair (47-70) in all but one segment of roadway. A PCI of pavement at the beginning of its life cycle is 100.

How does the project impact parking?

- The project will make Snider Plaza more accessible for anyone with mobility concerns. While the installation of ADA compliant parking spaces, sidewalks, and curb cut ramps will result in the loss of 22 parking spaces from what is currently available, pedestrian safety will also be enhanced with improved driver sight lines.
- Responding to concerns about a reduction of storefront parking, the City Council restored all parking spaces that were originally considered for planned green space.
- To preserve as much existing curbside parking as feasible, the City Council approved a plan where no parking spaces are lost to landscaping. However, the plan maximizes available space to add 41,500 square feet of additional sidewalk and 18,500 square feet of landscaping, including an additional 83 trees.

What steps has the City already taken to address parking concerns?

- At a cost of nearly $4 million, the City has purchased property on Rankin, just west of Snider Plaza, to add a new surface parking lot with 53 spaces.
- To boost the availability of quick-in, quick-out curbside slots, the City has an agreement with Hilltop Plaza that provides Snider Plaza shoppers and diners with the opportunity to park in that building’s garage for free for the first hour. The rate is only $4 an hour after that.
• At taxpayer expense, dozens of Snider Plaza employees have already been provided with passes to park in the Hilltop Plaza garage. That program will remain in place throughout the upcoming construction project.

Is the City working with merchants and owners to further address parking concerns?

• Knowing that over half of available curbside parking spots are being utilized by Snider Plaza employees, limiting shopper and diner opportunities, the City is striving to work collaboratively with Snider Plaza merchants and owners to find additional parking solutions.

Are Snider Plaza improvements in line with the goals and objectives of the City’s Centennial Master Plan and Snider Plaza Master Plan (2008)?

• Yes. Approved by the City Council in 2022, the City’s Centennial Master Plan was designed to provide a roadmap for the City’s continued success during the next few decades. Developed with input from more than 4,000 residents, the plan emphasizes the necessity to support efforts to preserve and enhance the sense of University Park’s identity and to enhance and maintain our commercial areas.
• Yes. The Snider Plaza Master Plan, which was adopted in 2008 following a taskforce study that included merchants, property owners, and nearby residents contained a conceptual streetscape plan that is the basis for the proposed surface improvements.

What Citizen input was utilized to develop this plan?

• A lot of study, listening and contemplation has brought us to this point. In 2018, the City engaged Paris Rutherford of the Catalyst Group to facilitate a series of public meetings to identify improvements and make recommendations to the City. Public input from these meetings indicated that the top five areas of improvement included the following items:
  1. Fix parking undersupply and relieve congestion
  2. Add pedestrian and bicycle-oriented amenities
  3. Improve aesthetic appearance of Snider Plaza district
  4. Add more restaurants and retail options
  5. Create a District-wide valet service

This input directly contributed to decisions to purchase property for a surface parking lot on Rankin, the need to invest in upgrades to the aesthetic appeal of Snider Plaza, and the zoning ability to add more restaurants.

• In 2020, the City Council approved a concept plan, authorizing staff to pursue detailed design plans. In December 2022, city staff constructed a streetscape mock-up to showcase components of the plan, including pavers, landscaping, lighting, and benches. This mock-up is still on display, located on city property along Rankin, just west of Snider Plaza.

• Each of these milestones warranted a number of public meetings and opportunities for community input. In total, the City has held more than 50 public meetings with Snider Plaza as an agenda item. These meetings have been supplemented by a broad communication effort. Since 2018, Snider Plaza improvements have been the subject of 18 articles in City publications (Arbor and/or UPdate). 2018 was also when staff began posting the latest information about Snider Plaza improvements on a dedicated page of the City’s website.
How much money has the City invested in Snider Plaza?

- Rankin lot purchase for surface parking: $3,821,919
- Water and sanitary sewer improvements: $7,415,780
- Snider Plaza surface improvements: $16,000,000

(engineer’s estimate of probable cost):