

MEMORANDUM

Office of the City Manager



DATE: October 29, 2021

TO: Mayor and Council

THROUGH: Steve McHarris, City Manager *Steve McHarris*

FROM: Ashwini Kantak, Assistant City Manager *Ashwini Kantak*

SUBJECT: **Community Engagement Tool: Soofa Digital**

The City of Milpitas is committed to engage its residents, businesses, and other stakeholders through effective communication channels that help inform and connect the community and ensure that City services and programs continue to be responsive to the needs of the community.

With the upcoming rollout of the new City brand and the constantly changing landscape of the way residents consume information, staff continues to evaluate opportunities to improve communications. Soofa Digital is one such opportunity. Soofa Digital is a unique platform that can communicate citywide information, community meeting agendas and notes, and other local information to a wider audience through a 100% solar powered, wireless digital neighborhood news feed outdoor screen. It has been successfully deployed in 23 states, five countries, and 75 cities, which include Fayetteville (GA), Atlanta, (GA), Manchester (NH), Albany (NY), Eastvale (CA), San Jacinto (CA), Northampton (MA), Framingham (MA), and Miami (FL) to name a few.

Through Soofa Digital, the City will be able to provide Milpitas community members with an additional resource that will make information available to a wider audience, beyond social media followers and help establish a more cohesive community.

Pilot Program

City staff negotiated a significantly discounted rate with Soofa Digital to implement a pilot program that includes three digital signs. These outdoor communication channels will be strategically placed in key locations throughout the City – City Hall, the Library on Main Street, and the Milpitas Sports Center. The total cost to participate is \$28,410, a portion of these costs is anticipated to be offset by advertising revenue. This amount includes the cost to customize and install three signages and will cover a 5-year period that considers the programming dollars associated with syncing real-time transit updates from BART and VTA.

Milpitas Soofa signs will be colorful and customized to reflect the City's new brand logo and character. The signs are intended to bring mobility, transit, public health and safety, economic development, tourism, and City information to the outdoors, to all residents and visitors in an easily accessible format. City staff will also be able to upload and manage content through the cloud based Soofatalk.com platform that transmits over a 4G network. Soofa sign screens are also unique in that they utilize E-ink technology which, unlike LCD screens, remain visible in bright sunlight without glare and provide zero light pollution to residential and natural areas at night, as they are not back-lit.

The target timeline for Soofa signs installation in Milpitas is between December 2021 and Jan 2022.

Soofa Digital combines smart city communication technology and innovative digital advertising and will help with:

Instantaneous Communication

Deliver important information to the Milpitas community at the right time from upcoming events to emergency information in a way that no other platform can.

Real-time Information

Soofa apps can display real-time public transit, local events calendars, news, city social media feeds and more.

Local Content

Soofa will empower Milpitas community groups to share relevant local content, and businesses of all sizes to engage with customers using the local business platform. The signs can also help connect residents to the City's social media feeds, expanding access to relevant City updates.

Return on Investment

Soofa staff will be reaching out to local businesses in Milpitas for paid advertising opportunities. In turn, the City will receive a 20% revenue share on any advertisements placed on the City's digital signages.

Polling Services

Soofa will enhance communication with members of the Milpitas community by having the ability to gather feedback on local initiatives. Soofa signs offers Milpitas residents a voice, as the City can use the tool to collect feedback and ideas from passersby.