Funding approved for village face-lift, City Council OKs $276K contract
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officials are moving forward with plans to update the downtown village area. The La Mesa City Council this week approved a $276,000 agreement with an Irvine-based consulting firm to prepare designs and engineering plans. Trees are dying, some sidewalks are cracked and broken apart, and streetlights are outdated, said Dave Witt, assistant city manager and community development director.

"It really needs a complete refurbishment," he said. The city plans to pay for the work out of the downtown parking fund, which collects revenue from parking meters, permits and fines. Without that source of money, the city couldn't afford to move forward with the program right now, said Mayor Art Madrid. City officials are trying to get state or federal money for construction, Madrid said, adding that the improvements have long been a priority.

"What we have is a keepsake," Madrid said of the village area. "Instead of letting it deteriorate, let's upgrade." Deena While, a board member with the La Mesa Village Merchant's Association and owner of the children's bookstore, Readers, Inc., said the upgrades are needed. She would like to see more streetlights and trash bins, refurbished sidewalks and new landscaping.

"We're all eager to see the place improved," she said.

Over the next year, RBF Consulting is expected to work with the community and city officials to develop the design and engineering plans. Witt said it's too early to say exactly when construction may begin. The preliminary list of improvements include:
* Better crosswalks and pedestrian access across Spring Street and the trolley line
* Sidewalks, curbs, gutters and pedestrian ramps
* Pavement and striping
* Landscaping, street trees and planters
* Streetlights with power outlets and a sound system for special events
* Banners and destination markers
* Street signs

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