



## MEETING MINUTES

# COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING NO. 3

**Date:** December 7, 2019

**Time:** 10:00 am – 12:17 pm

**Location:** I-526 Lowcountry Corridor Community Office, 5627 Rivers Avenue, N. Charleston, SC

**Project Name:** I-526 Lowcountry Corridor WEST

### Attendees:

Gilbert Reeves, Ferndale

Larenda Baxley, Ferndale

David L. Johnson, Ferndale

Tina A. Baxley, Ferndale

Geneva Swett, Ferndale

Ruth Mae Whitney, Highland Terrace

Nathan Bryant, Highland Terrace

Carolyn Varner, Liberty Park

Doris Twiggs, Liberty Park

Tony Grasso, Russelldale

Saint Julian Corey Van Hannegeyn IV, Deas Hill

Earl Muhammad, Muhammad Mosque

Rick Day, Stantec

Ryan White, Stantec

Amy Sackaroff, Stantec

LaTonya Derrick, Stantec

Fran Bickley, SCDOT ROW

Joy Riley, SCDOT

Chad Long, SCDOT ESO

Yolonda Jordan, FHWA

Maxine Smith, Maximum Consulting (Community Liaison)

Mattese Lecque, Maximum Consulting (Community Liaison)

Frank Scott, N. Charleston Housing Authority

Horrace Tobin, Community Office

Jamelle Ellis, Empowerment Strategies

### Participant Summary

Total participants: 25

Ferndale: 5

Highland Terrace: 2

Liberty Park: 2

Russelldale: 1

Adjacent/affected communities/agencies: 3

Community Liaisons: 2

SCDOT: 3

FHWA: 1

Community Office: 1

Stantec: 4

Facilitator: 1

### Meeting Summary:

#### Welcome and Introductions

- Roll call

#### Administrative Items

- Agenda Review:
  - Administrative Items
  - Revisit/Finalize Rules of Engagement
  - Recap of November Public Outreach Efforts
  - Social Needs Assessment Survey – Results/Discussion
  - Break
  - Right-of-Way/Relocation Information Session
  - 'Open Mic' Session

- Summary and Next Steps

### **Revisit/Finalize Rules of Engagement**

The Rules of Engagement were approved. A poster board of the Rules of Engagement will be printed and displayed in the Community Office during each CAC meeting.

Non-CAC members and residents in areas outside of the potentially impacted neighborhoods of Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Liberty Park, and Russelldale may present project-related questions and concerns to the project team and CAC members during two Open House meetings scheduled in 2020.

The project team is seeking subject matter experts to serve as presenters for informational and educational purposes in upcoming meetings.

The project team continues to seek CAC members to represent the Russelldale community. CAC membership will be finalized and capped in January 2020. In order to preserve the integrity of the CAC meetings and in order to clearly define community representatives serving on the CAC, no new members will be invited to the CAC after that time.

- The project team agreed that more representation is needed from underrepresented communities and groups such as Russelldale and tenants. Only residents (property owners and tenants) of Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Liberty Park, or Russelldale communities should serve on the Community Advisory Council. CAC members may revisit or revise this criteria for membership at any time.

### **Recap of November Public Outreach Efforts**

- Public Information Meeting attendees: 223
- Completed comment cards: 29
- Community Office visits: 64
- Increase in out-of-town visitors to the Community Office with aging relatives who live in one (1) of the four (4) impacted communities.
  - Visitors are encouraged to invite others in the community to visit the office to learn more about the project.
- The project team will compile all comments provided during November meetings as well as throughout the comment period and a summary (with major themes) will be made available to the CAC by mid-January 2020.
- Informational workshops will be held at the Community Office in the first quarter of 2020 to address the educational needs of the community.

### **Social Needs Assessment Survey – Results/Discussion**

- The Social Needs Assessment Survey was discussed. The scoring system allowed the project team to prioritize (rank) survey topics.
- One responsibility of the project team is to inform other relevant agencies of specific needs identified by the community that are outside the scope of the SCDOT project in order to increase visibility and potential resolution by appropriate groups. This is referred to as Integrated Planning.
- Results were categorized by CAC surveys and community meeting surveys. Hard copies of results were made available to all meeting attendees. Surveys will continue to be administered through December 2019.

- The Social Needs Assessment indicates that the most significant concerns for community members include:
  - Quality of teaching
  - Safety of schools
  - Well-lit streets
  - Stormwater management
  - Available affordable housing
  - Available quality housing
  - Adequate sidewalks/bicycle facilities
  - Appearance of neighbors' homes
  - Available agencies for senior services
  - Available agencies for youth services
- A CAC member expressed concern about grocery stores receiving generally satisfactory results because there are significant problems associated with the lack of quality grocery stores in the target communities.
  - The project team noted that although construction of grocery stores falls outside the scope of the current project, they will work with other key entities to identify practical, sustainable solutions for better quality grocery stores.
- A CAC member asked if the CAC will have a “voice” when addressing issues that are outside of the scope of the project with other entities engaged in the Integrated Planning process.
  - SCDOT Project Manager explained the scope of the project addresses typical infrastructure issues. There may be community concerns that SCDOT may be required to partner with other groups to address such as job training and employment opportunities. SCDOT may be able to partner with the City of North Charleston on specific initiatives or to incentivize development.
  - Results of the Social Needs Assessment have been shared with the City, but the project team will continue to keep the CAC informed about other initiatives.
- CAC members are encouraged to contact each other directly when there are meetings of interest to the community that fall outside of the scheduled I-526 LCC WEST CAC meetings.
- CAC members will use the data collected from the Social Needs Assessment and community meetings to drive change while working with the project team and as they transition into oversight of the project after construction.

#### **Right-of-Way (ROW)/Relocation Information Session**

- The Project Manager provided an overview of the ROW process, which was identified as one of the most significant challenges for the project.
- SCDOT commissioned a study as the first step to understand:
  - the level of ROW impacts
  - what types of housing and businesses would potentially be impacted
  - the ability of the Charleston real estate market to absorb those types of impacts (i.e., is there readily available replacement housing?)
  - are there developments within the community that SCDOT could partner with to take advantage of some of the new housing?
- The study identified the four communities within the project scope as those receiving the greatest adverse impact.
- Approximately 75% of the ROW/Relocation impacts are in these communities.
- There are commercial property impacts further north of these communities along the corridor.

- The potentially impacted communities are losing the first row of homes whereas the homes along some areas of I-526 are primarily losing areas of vegetative buffer.
- SCDOT started with seven alternatives, then narrowed it to the 2-4 alternatives displayed on the walls at the meeting.
- The purpose of the I-526 LCC WEST project is to fix the traffic problems associated with the interstate. After analyzing alternatives to address the problem, SCDOT began considering the footprint that is going to have the least significant impact on the both the human and natural environment.
- Mitigation of unavoidable impacts was discussed since the ROW process focuses on making people “whole.”
- The *Highways and You* document is the first material SCDOT provides to impacted homeowners to explain their rights as a homeowner in plain language. There are also a number of additional resources available to residents to help them better understand the ROW process. This information is available to the public at the Community Office. SCDOT is transparent throughout the process, including:
  - Information on the funds invested in this project
  - How the money is spent
  - How the new housing is built
  - What proposed housing will look like
  - How communities are going to look in the future
- The goal is to make sure residents who live in the community are the ones who benefit from the process.
- ROW benefits packages will be specific to individuals. Residents should visit the Community Office to have a ROW Specialist determine the best package for individuals or families. ROW Specialists will also work with renters to facilitate homeownership.
- The ROW process has been expedited compared to the traditional ROW timeline because of the limited Charleston housing market. SCDOT may have an opportunity to build replacement housing on undeveloped land.
- SCDOT is starting early ROW activity geared toward single family developments, to partner with developers and non-profits, so that when they begin contacting residents about relocation, there are already homes built or almost completed. For renters to consider home ownership, there is some preliminary work that needs to be done to connect first time homeowners with credit counselors.
- *Understanding the Right-of-Way Process* video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISDHJxiUqSw>
- Informational Workshops
  - Currently staffing the Community Office
  - Workshops will be held first quarter 2020
  - Resources and assistance provided to all community members by the Community Office in coordination with the Center for Heirs Property Preservation, Charity Foundation, and SC Community Loan Fund
- Project Manager reviewed examples of ROW transactions addressing concerns and reviewing the Uniform Act which accounts for making people “whole”
  - Reviewed Replacement Housing Examples (Three different scenarios)
  - Right of Way FAQs
    - Posted on the website
    - Included in the handouts
  - Project team is not currently contacting property owners; they are currently focused on identifying replacement housing.

- SCDOT will begin developing a construction plan for replacement housing to build new homes on vacant lots
  - The project team is interested in talking with people who own land in impacted communities that may be interested in selling their property. SCDOT would like to place new construction on existing vacant lots.
  - Review of Affordable Housing/Replacement Housing

#### ROW Discussion

- The project team will provide comprehensive education on ROW and Relocation and provide information, resources, and options available to renters, but cannot mandate home ownership for anyone.
- SCDOT is currently considering the purchase of property behind the mobile home park, adjacent to existing apartments.
- Current project maps include all project details, including buffer spaces and impacts that extend beyond the current footprint.
- Mitigation will address multiple issues including beautification, vagrant activities and homelessness, littering, poor lighting, etc.
- There are multiple components in the mitigation process:
  - ROW
  - How the project is implemented/how the project is built
  - What the project looks like (e.g. noise walls, lighting, etc.)
  - Community mitigation focuses on community-level issues; ROW focuses on individual tenants and homeowners
- The lack of adequate lighting on I-526 will be addressed as a part of this project.
- It is uncertain if solar lights are an option for small-scale interstate lighting. The project team will investigate solar lights as a potential application.
- The project team is unaware of buried asbestos related to the original I-526 construction project. This was not discovered as a part of the HAZMAT assessment, but SCDOT conducts extensive studies as an ongoing part of the process.
- A significant part of the project is ensuring the community has an opportunity for economic participation in the project, ranging from job training to local small businesses partnering with larger (prime) contractors. SCDOT can arrange meetings between prime contractors and local contractors to determine how local businesses can be included in the mitigation process. Including local, small businesses in mitigation projects is standard practice for SCDOT.
- The project will include bike trails under the interstate. Evaluation of foot traffic and alternate means of travel from one community to another is included in the project to achieve optimal community connectivity.
- The project team will work with the CAC to determine the best approach to update and inform community members on project milestones.

**Open House discussion**

- Open House dates
  - Events will be held at the Community Office to generate publicity for the location and to ensure the public knows and understands what services are being offered
  - Open House date: Saturday, January 25, 2020, 1:00-4:00 PM
    - Advertisement strategies have been developed
- Community Transportation for the Open House
- The purpose of the Open House is for community residents to meet Community Office staff and to understand the function of the office.
- Primary focus of Open House is on the impacted communities but should be open to the larger community as well
  - Recommendation to contact local restaurants as food vendors for the event
  - Perhaps providing bus passes for community members to attend

**Summary and Next Steps**

- Open Mic will be scheduled for the next and subsequent meetings
- Project team briefly reviewed the project schedule
- Discussion on beautification should be included in future meetings
- Continue discussion on the number of CAC members to optimize effectiveness of the group
- CAC members agreed that email is the best form of communication with the project team
- Begin developing priorities based on the Social Needs Assessment; Mitigation conceptualization
- Vision Statement development

**CAC meeting #4 is scheduled for January 4, 2020 beginning at 10:00 AM until 12:00 PM at the I-526 Lowcountry Corridor Community Office, 5627 Rivers Avenue, N. Charleston, SC.**