

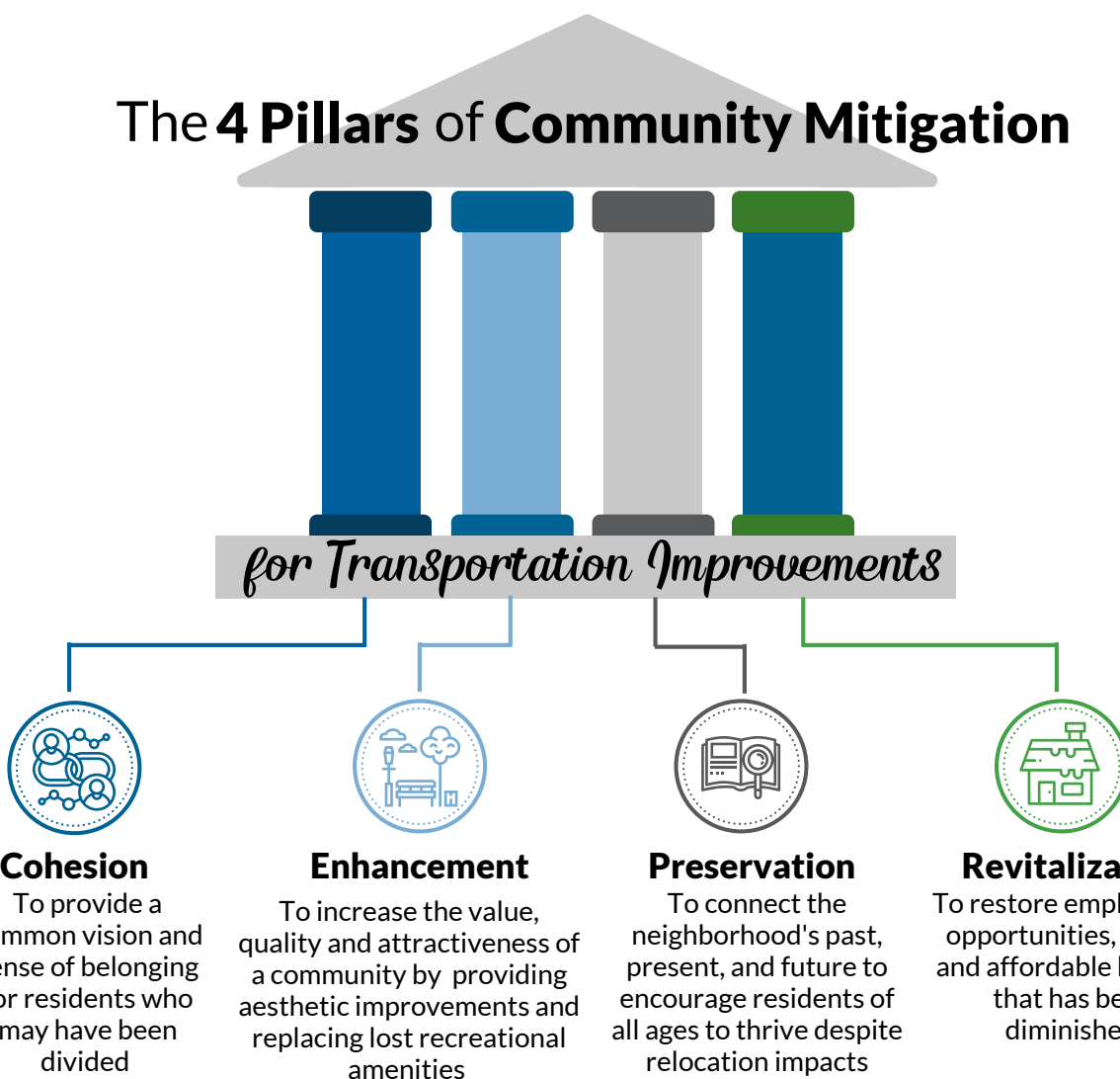
Environmental Justice Community Mitigation Plan

Highlights

August 2022

Every effort was made to **avoid and minimize impacts** to your community during the development of the project alternatives. However, because of the close proximity of many communities to the existing interstate, significant impacts were unavoidable in all reasonable alternatives and would require mitigation. **SCDOT will implement all community mitigation items prior to the interstate project being constructed, except for the mitigation barriers, railroad crossing upgrades and pedestrian bridge which will require additional coordination.**

The 4 Pillars of Community Mitigation



NEW

UPDATE

Since the 2020 public hearing and 2021 community outreach, additional items have been added to increase the **quality of life** and provide opportunities to increase the **generational wealth** of the impacted communities. These are identified as **NEW** or an **UPDATE** throughout this document to show how your feedback has made a difference. Specific changes are shown in **bold and green** text.

Generational wealth includes financial assets like property, investments or money that you can pass down from one generation to the next. Additionally, non-physical items like financial education, values and habits are equally as important. Why is this important? This allows parents to give their children more options in life and rebuild generational wealth that may have been adversely effected by past highway projects.



Focused Community Outreach (2022 - 2038)

Community Advisory Council (CAC)

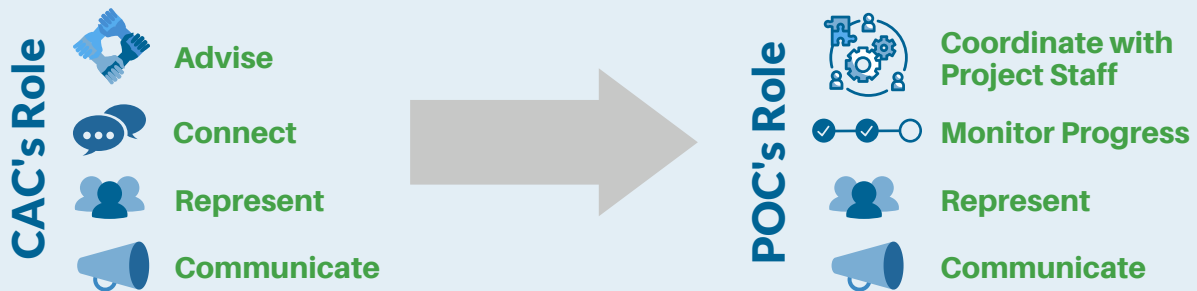
The CAC is a group of local citizen leaders who represent the Environmental Justice neighborhoods that would be impacted by the I-526 LCC WEST project (Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Joppa Way, Liberty Park, and Russelldale). Established in 2019, the CAC plays an important role in sharing the latest information with the community, so residents remain engaged. SCDOT will continue to support the CAC until the Federal Highway Administration publishes their record of decision on the project by:

- Facilitating regularly scheduled monthly meetings
- Providing logistical and administrative support.



Project Oversight Committee (POC)

SCDOT will assist with the creation of a Project Oversight Committee (POC) to ensure the promises made in the mitigation plan are implemented.



Organizational Training

SCDOT will provide organizational training for the CAC and community members from Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Joppa Way, Liberty Park and Russelldale interested in creating a community advocacy organization.



Community Office

The I-526 Lowcountry Corridor Community Office opened in 2019 and will continue to operate through construction as a central place for all mitigation opportunities and right-of-way advisory services. In addition, all project-related information and community resources, including free workshops, will be available. The Community Office will be staffed with a Community Mitigation Project Manager, Community Liaisons, and Right-of-Way Specialists who will be available to provide residents with real-time project, mitigation, and relocation information.



Make an appointment at our Community Office (5627 Rivers Avenue, Gas Lite Square) for assistance!



Focused Community Outreach (2022 - 2038)

Community Resource Guide & Community Workshops

SCDOT will work with the Community Advisory Council, Community Liaisons, and local non-profit organizations to develop a Community Resource Guide and offer community workshops. The purpose of the guide and workshops is to help sustain livability within affected Environmental Justice neighborhoods by increasing residents' awareness of local resources relating to: food insecurities, health and wellness, housing and home repairs, financial assistance, referral agencies, mentoring, transportation, veterans, and minority-owned businesses. The guide will be available summer 2022 and updated yearly throughout the construction of the project.



Community History Preservation Study (2022 - 2027)

Community History Preservation Program

For Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Liberty Park, and Russelldale.

The purpose of the Community History Preservation Program is to record the past of Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Liberty Park, and Russelldale through interviews with current and former residents; to collect historic photographs of the communities prior to the construction of I-26, I-526, and other developments; and to gather images of the communities prior to the potential construction of the I-526 Lowcountry Corridor WEST transportation project. This study will document the cultural history and character of the impacted neighboring communities and be available online and at the new, state-of-the-art community center. Historical displays collected from this program will be included in the new community center.

Do you live or have lived in the Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Liberty Park, or Russelldale neighborhoods?

Please contact us at the Community Office by phone at 843.258.1135 or in person at 5627 Rivers Avenue in Gas Lite Square, North Charleston. Email us at HistoryProject@526LowcountryCorridor.com to share stories, pictures, and videos of your memories.



Participate in interviews!



Share your photographs!



Be a part of your Community History!

Make an appointment at our Community Office (5627 Rivers Avenue, Gas Lite Square) for assistance!

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Education, Employment & Economic Opportunities (2023 - 2038)

UPDATE

College Aid Initiative

SCDOT will establish and manage a scholarship fund of **up to \$500,000** (increased from \$100,000). High school and college students that intend to or are currently attending institutions of higher education will be eligible for the scholarship. Residents of the EJ neighborhoods that will be displaced and relocated by the proposed project would remain eligible for the scholarship program. Members of the Community Advisory Council will assist in the development of the selection criteria, and members of the Project Oversight Committee will assist in the selection of the scholarship recipients. The College Aid Initiative will begin in 2023, and funds will be available while the project is in construction or until all scholarship funds have been awarded.



UPDATE

Summer Transportation Institute

SCDOT will provide skill-building programs to create awareness of and expose high school students to career opportunities in the transportation industry. The program will begin in 2023 and SCDOT will provide the Summer Transportation Institute Program each summer throughout the project construction. Priority will be given to students from the impacted communities **for up to 50% of the slots per year.**



UPDATE

School-to-Work Program

SCDOT will develop partnerships with organizations to develop school-to-work employment programs with the goal of enhancing employment opportunities within the fields of construction, engineering, and transportation. During the right-of-way phase, an internship program will be funded by SCDOT to provide **20 internships** (increased from 10) in the transportation sector to high school students, college students and young adults up to age 25 from the impacted EJ neighborhoods. This program will begin in 2023 and end once 20 students have participated.



Priority will be given to residents of Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Joppa Way, Liberty Park, and Russelldale for these limited educational and employment opportunities. However, residents from all minority and low-income neighborhoods identified in the I-526 EJ analysis report are eligible to participate.

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Education, Employment & Economic Opportunities (2023 - 2038)

Pre-Employment Training

SCDOT will identify and provide financial support for pre-employment training opportunities that encourage career placement in the transportation industry. The program will be administered through the Community Office prior to construction of the interstate improvements. Priority will be given to residents in the impacted communities of Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Joppa Way, Liberty Park, and Russelldale



NEW

Small Business Development Program

SCDOT will create an educational program to **bring awareness to the generational wealth benefits of entrepreneurship**. SCDOT will partner with organizations and other disadvantaged business enterprises (DBE) in SC to develop and deliver an educational program that empowers residents interested in learning about starting a small business enterprise (SBE). The goal of this program is to bring awareness to small business resources and to the benefits and programs offered in South Carolina. Information sessions will be held and additional opportunities to work on the I-526 LCC projects will be offered for disadvantaged business enterprises.



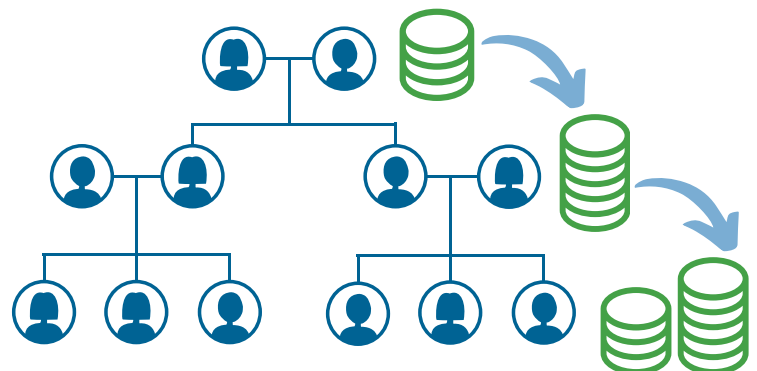
What is Generational Wealth?

Generational wealth allows parents to give their children more options in life by passing down assets like cash, stocks, and property.

Generational wealth also includes the passing down of:



Passing wealth from a previous generation to the next, benefitting the next generation



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Affordable Housing (2022 - 2027)

UPDATE

Replacement Affordable Housing

SCDOT is partnering with the South Carolina State Housing, Finance & Development Authority to build 100 new affordable housing units with a mixture of sizes (1-3 bedrooms) as close to Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Liberty Park and Russelldale as possible. SCDOT will work to secure **45 residential lots** (increased from 20) in or near these communities and partner with a local non-profit to develop a Single-Family Affordable Replacement Housing Program. These houses must have **direct access to transit** and **convenient access to the proposed Lowcountry Rapid Transit (LCRT) System**. Relocated residents in the impacted communities of Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Liberty Park, and Russelldale will get first priority, and then remaining units will be open to other residents in the impacted EJ communities. This may extend past 2027 into construction.



NEW

First Time Homebuyer Grant Program

SCDOT will partner with an agency to administer financial grants for **down payment assistance for first time homebuyers**. First time homebuyers in the impacted communities and individuals relocated to other communities will be eligible for this program.



Financial Literacy and First Time Homebuyer Counseling

SCDOT will develop partnerships with local organizations to provide financial literacy and first-time homebuyer counseling to displaced residents, which could assist them in securing residential loans and transitioning from renters to homeowners. The counseling will occur in group and individual classes and continue until the projected completion of the right-of-way phase in 2027.



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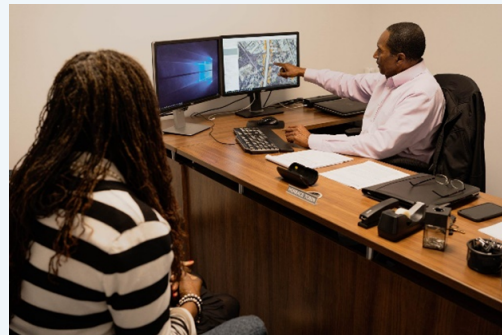


Enhanced Right-of-Way Services (2022 - 2027)

Priority will be given to residents of Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Joppa Way, Liberty Park, and Russelldale. However, residents from all neighborhoods identified in the I-526 Environmental Justice (EJ) analysis report are eligible to participate.

Enhanced Advisory Services

Right-of-way advisory services, including in-house SCDOT right-of-way liaisons, will be offered at the Community Office for impacted residents. Homebuyer assistance, Section 8 coordination, affordable housing coordination, and transportation for viewing replacement properties will be part of these enhanced advisory services.



NEW

Acquisition Fairness Program

The Acquisition Fairness Program offers independent property appraisals paid by SCDOT for **second opinions of property value** and owners may be eligible for **additional Mitigation Payments** to address property values impacted by previous public acquisitions or zoning changes.



NEW

Enhanced Relocation Mitigation Assistance

SCDOT will offer additional supplemental rental mitigation payments based on income and rent for **up to an additional 18 months** (in addition to 42 months provided under the Uniform Act). Businesses may also be eligible for an additional mitigation payment to cover their actual expenses in reestablishing their business above the maximum amounts allowed under state and federal law.



Reach out to the Community Office to make an appointment with a Right-of-Way Specialist:

✉ info@526LowcountryCorridor.com

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Community Infrastructure Enhancements (2023 - 2038)

UPDATE

Mitigation Barriers (Walls)

Mitigation barriers are walls constructed along a highway to protect sensitive land-uses, such as homes, from impacts associated with transportation projects. SCDOT will construct mitigation barriers along the eastbound and westbound sides of I-26 and I-526 and Remount Road interchanges to benefit the Highland Terrace and Liberty Park communities and the westbound side of I-526 between the Rivers Avenue and I-26 interchanges to benefit the residents of the Liberty Park community. SCDOT will construct mitigation barriers along the **eastbound side of I-526 from the I-26 interchange to east of the CSX railroad tracks to benefit the residents of the Russelldale and Ferndale communities.** SCDOT will construct a mitigation barrier along the **eastbound side of I-526 and the eastbound exit ramp at the Montague Interchange to benefit the west side of the Camps community.**



NEW

Community Air Quality Monitoring Program

Air quality sensors will be installed to detect fine particles of pollutants (Particulate Matter 2.5) in Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Liberty Park and Russelldale. The sensors will provide real-time data online to these communities during construction, and SCDOT will develop a response plan for elevated levels.



What is Air Quality?

Air quality measures how clean or polluted the air is. Particulate Matter 2.5 is a type of air pollutant that refers to tiny particles or droplets made up of a mixture of chemicals. One source of Particulate Matter 2.5 is dust from construction.



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Community Infrastructure Enhancements (2023 - 2038)

UPDATE

Community Center Facilities and Amenities

This will be offered for Highland Terrace, Liberty Park, and Russelldale.

SCDOT will partner with the City of North Charleston to fund the construction of **one replacement community center, two pocket parks**, and associated infrastructure that could include:

- Flexible space/classrooms
- Basketball courts
- Wi-Fi/internet access
- Audio/visual equipment
- **Emergency generators and refrigerators**
- **Solar Power**
- Well-lit facility access
- Shared-use path
- Multiple pedestrian access points
- Crosswalks/traffic calming
- Walkways, user-friendly common spaces
- Directional signs to help guide residents to new facilities
- Community garden
- Educational wetland
- Covered shelters/grills
- Mural in the community center
- Parking for the community center near trail entrances



Community Programs and Activities

SCDOT will partner with the City of North Charleston to develop programs, services, and arrangements for long-term operation and maintenance of the replacement community center and amenities. The City will encourage residents of Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Liberty Park, and Russelldale to apply for jobs at the community center, and priority will be given to these residents for programs. Potential programs and activities could include:

- Senior/youth-focused programs and activities
- Yearly calendar of community center events focusing on fostering community cohesion
- Programming that provides access to educational and financial resources for community advocacy and self-advocacy
- Inclusion of a community garden to serve as an educational program and effort to mitigate a known food desert
- Maintenance of stormwater detention for educational purposes during summer programs



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Community Infrastructure Enhancements (2023 - 2038)

This will be offered in Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Liberty Park and Russelldale.

Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan (CIEP)

The CIEP is focused on providing infrastructure improvements within the Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Liberty Park and Russelldale neighborhoods to address bicycle and pedestrian safety, access to community centers and transit, landscaping options at neighborhood entrances, project-related stormwater improvements, bus shelters, and traffic calming measures that would be implemented as part of the project. This plan was developed based on input from the Community Advisory Council and the community and has been coordinated with the City of North Charleston.



Bicycle/Pedestrian Connectivity and Safety Improvements

SCDOT will fund shared-use pathways to provide connectivity to the community center; a pedestrian bridge over the Norfolk Southern railroad tracks connecting Lacross Road to the new community center; and a pedestrian bridge over Filbin Creek to connect the replacement community center to Russelldale. Sidewalks will be improved along Rebecca and Twitty Streets, and new sidewalks will be constructed along Russelldale Avenue, Elder Avenue, Piedmont Avenue, Dorothy Williams Boulevard (from the shared-use path to the existing sidewalk on James Bell Drive), West Deacon Street and Railroad Avenue. Pedestrian safety measures will also be installed at the railroad crossing on Taylor Street. All of these improvements will connect to the bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements planned on Rivers Avenue which will be constructed as part of the Lowcountry Rapid Transit project during the same timeframe.



Bus Shelter Amenities

SCDOT will partner with the Charleston Area Regional Transportation Authority (CARTA) to fund bus shelter facilities at all stops along Rivers Avenue between Taylor Street and Mall Drive that border the Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Liberty Park, and Russelldale neighborhoods. A bus rapid transit system is planned to be under construction along the median of Rivers Avenue in this community as part of the Lowcountry Rapid Transit project during the same timeline. This will provide additional bus shelter amenities and transit access to the impacted communities.



Potential Bus Shelter Design



Traffic Calming Measures

SCDOT will conduct additional traffic studies to determine if the speed limits on Taylor Street, James Bell Drive, Dorothy Williams Boulevard, Elder Avenue, Rebecca Street, Russelldale Avenue, Piedmont Avenue, and Railroad Avenue can be reduced to 25 miles per hour. If speed limit reductions are warranted, SCDOT will fund and install traffic calming measures on these streets. Additionally, crosswalks at identified locations will be implemented.

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Community Infrastructure Enhancements (2023 - 2038)

This will be offered for Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Liberty Park, and Russelldale.

Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan (CIEP) Continued



Stormwater Infrastructure Improvements

SCDOT will fund stormwater improvements on sections of: Harper Street, Willis Drive, Elder Avenue, Taylor Street, James Bell Drive, Rebecca Street, Piedmont Avenue, and Railroad Avenue. Additional stormwater improvements are currently being implemented by the City of North Charleston on Van Buren Avenue. All existing drainage infrastructure will be cleaned and inspected to ensure that they are in good operating condition. During the design of the interstate project, additional stormwater infrastructure from the expanded interstate will be constructed as part of the larger project.



Aesthetics and Landscaping Improvements

SCDOT will fund and implement plantings/seating/lighting at neighborhood entrances around neighborhood signage on Piedmont Drive (Ferndale), Fuller Street (Ferndale), Taylor Street (Highland Terrace/Liberty Park), and Rebecca Street (Russelldale) to reinforce neighborhood identities. There will also be an opportunity for public art at shared-use path trail entrances, pocket parks, and the community center. Educational and directional signs will also be placed within the communities.



Potential Community Entrance Landscaping Improvements



Lighting Improvements

At least 75 pedestrian-scale lights will be installed along the proposed shared-use paths that connect the new community center with the surrounding neighborhoods. Additionally, increased lighting may be considered near the Highland Terrace-Liberty Park pocket park, on Taylor Street, Elder Street, Rebecca Street, and/or Piedmont Avenue. The City of North Charleston is currently upgrading the lighting within the communities with LED lights and all new lighting will be LED lights which provides broader lighting coverage.

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