

# Appendix H

## Environmental Justice Community Mitigation Plan





# ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE (EJ) COMMUNITY MITIGATION PLAN

INTERSTATE 526 (I-526)

FROM PAUL CANTRELL BOULEVARD TO VIRGINIA AVENUE  
NORTH CHARLESTON AND CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1.0 Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Project Impact Overview	1
1.2 Development of the Draft EJ Community Mitigation Plan	2
1.2.1 Community Advisory Council (CAC)	2
1.2.2 Community Office	3
1.2.3 Mitigation Framework	3
1.2.4 Social Needs Assessment	4
1.3 EJ Mitigation Plan Purpose and Regulatory Background	5
<b>2.0 Mitigation Outreach Summary</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1 Outreach Strategy Overview	6
2.2 EJ Community Outreach Summary	6
2.2.1 EJ Community Outreach	6
2.2.2 EJ Community Mitigation Plan Outreach Efforts	7
2.2.3 CAC's Response to Draft EJ Community Mitigation Plan	10
<b>3.0 Mitigation Measures</b>	<b>11</b>
3.1 Community Advisory Council	18
3.2 Community Project Office	18
3.3 Community Impact Mitigation Pillars	19
3.3.1 Cohesion: Actions that Strengthen Neighborhood Connections	19
3.3.2 Enhancement: Community Center and Recreational Facilities	19
3.3.3 Preservation: Infrastructure Needs	21
3.3.4 Revitalization: Replacement Housing & Employment/Economic Opportunities	23
3.4 Implementation of Mitigation Measures	28
3.4.1 Community Mitigation Implementation Schedule	28
3.4.2 Community Mitigation Implementation Plan	28
3.4.3 Project Oversight Committee	29
3.4.4 Community Meetings	30
<b>4.0 References</b>	<b>30</b>

## Appendix

- Appendix A: Formal SCDOT and Community Advisory Council Correspondence
- Appendix B: Replacement Community Center and Pocket Park Conceptual Renderings
- Appendix C: SCDOT – City of North Charleston Inter-Governmental Agreement
- Appendix D: Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan Summary Report
- Appendix E: Draft EJ Community Mitigation Plan Survey Results





# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document is part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation being prepared for the proposed I-526 LCC WEST project. It contains references to supportive information contained in the appendices of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)-Record of Decision (ROD):

- Community Impact Assessment (CIA): Appendix D
- Environmental Justice Analysis: Appendix G
- Public Involvement Plans and Meeting Summaries: Appendix U
- Informational Pop-Up Meeting Outreach Summary: Appendix W
- Environmental Justice Outreach Strategy: Appendix X
- Comment Tracking and Responses: Appendix Z

## 1.1 PROJECT IMPACT OVERVIEW

The South Carolina section of Interstate 26 (I-26) was completed in 1969 and served as the first major interstate to facilitate movement directly into and out of the Charleston and North Charleston peninsula. The construction of I-26, along with the construction of Interstate 526 (I-526) in the late 1980s, resulted in bifurcated neighborhoods in North Charleston. According to community residents, an insufficient amount of opportunities for residents to voice their concerns and a lack of community involvement/mitigation during these projects were contributing factors that helped foster the innate distrust between residents and government that continues to this day.<sup>1</sup> In addition to effectively bisecting the existing communities, members of the I-526 LCC WEST Community Advisory Council (CAC) also emphasize that many low income and minority residents felt like the I-26 and I-526 transportation projects did not properly inform or assist with relocation.<sup>2</sup> By physically separating these neighborhoods, both interstates negatively impacted community cohesion and created a barrier effect that continues to prevent residents from accessing previously walkable recreational facilities, grocery stores and other community amenities. There are residents in the I-526 LCC WEST project area who suffered harms from past transportation project and will likely encounter additional impacts with the implementation of the I-526 LCC WEST project.

The Preferred Alternative was developed to avoid and minimize impacts to the maximum extent practicable; however, impacts would still be created by the proposed project. In addition to residential, commercial, and community facility displacements, the proposed project would further encroach upon low-income and minority (Environmental Justice (EJ)) populations in the immediate vicinity of the I-526/I-26 interchange and along I-526 in the vicinity of the W. Montague Avenue and Dorchester Road interchanges. Specific mitigation measures have been developed to offset community impacts within the Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Liberty Park, and Russelldale neighborhoods in North Charleston, while other mitigation programs have been developed to mitigate the broader effects of the project on EJ populations within the project study area. All EJ areas will continue to receive outreach in 2022 to provide project updates and project awareness in consideration of rent cycles and potential turnover in area residents since the last large-scale contact in March 2021.

As discussed in Section 3.0, the indirect, cumulative, and direct impacts in all EJ areas would be offset by multiple mitigation plan components including the opportunity to participate in various employment and

<sup>1</sup> Nonko, E. 2019. Trying Not to Repeat History on the East Side of Charleston. Next City. <https://nextcity.org/daily/entry/trying-not-to-repeat-history-on-the-east-side-of-charleston>.

<sup>2</sup> I-526 Lowcountry Corridor Community Advisory Council Meeting No. 4, Meeting Minutes. January 4, 2020. FEIS Appendix U Public Involvement Plan Part 2.

educational programs, the creation of quality affordable housing, access to the Community Office and enhanced Right-of-Way services, and the opportunity to participate in the Small Business Development Program.

## 1.2 DEVELOPMENT OF THE DRAFT EJ COMMUNITY MITIGATION PLAN

### 1.2.1 Community Advisory Council (CAC)

As part of the I-526 LCC WEST EJ Outreach Strategy, a Community Advisory Council (CAC) was formed to facilitate meaningful engagement as intended under EO 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice to Minority and Low-Income Populations* and United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) Order 5610.2C *Final Order to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations* thereby ensuring full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process.

A frequently unchallenged barrier is the issue of participation in the decision-making process and how to extend it to the community. Residents of impacted communities are often approached for input on a transportation project that may not be of relevance to that individual. The CAC was established as a means to establish trust between the community and SCDOT, shed light on the NEPA process, and assist in the implementation of measures that not only mitigate project impacts, but also address the issues and priorities of directly-impacted residents and the larger community as a whole. Additionally, engaging with the CAC was one way the project team learned of specific concerns from individual residents of impacted EJ neighborhoods, and moreover, how they prioritize these issues. The overarching role and responsibility of the CAC was to:

- Share individual knowledge, experiences, and perspectives,
- Provide input on community needs and project-related impacts
- Provide input to help guide the development of proposed mitigation measures,
- Help give EJ neighborhood residents a strong voice in the process, and,
- Play an integral role in the development of outreach materials and participate in outreach efforts including community canvassing and community meetings.

The goal in selecting CAC members was to have balanced representation of residents from the neighborhoods that would likely face the largest number of direct impacts. As such, a variety of criteria was established to assist in the recruitment of CAC members. These included residency (property ownership or tenant), adult children of elderly residents, and clergy or members of religious organizations in the communities. In order to identify potential CAC members, the project team reached out to local community organizations, contacted neighborhood presidents identified on the City of North Charleston's website, and engaged churches and mosques located in and around the communities. To recruit members, each candidate was contacted by a member of the project team to gauge their interest; collect personal information such as the neighborhood they represent and reason(s) for participating in the CAC; discuss level of commitment, roles and responsibilities of the group and each member; share the desired number, frequency, and duration of



meetings; and identify outcomes each candidate would like to achieve from their participation. At its peak of participation, the CAC consisted of 19 members.

The first CAC meeting was held on September 30, 2019. Subsequent meetings were conducted on a near-monthly basis and consisted primarily of formal meetings that included SCDOT, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), project staff, and a facilitator. Informal meetings attended by CAC members, project staff, and a facilitator were also conducted to allow the CAC to have more independent and focused conversations. Subject matter experts were also invited to meetings to provide the CAC with information related to a variety of subjects including community advocacy and other local projects. To encourage productive discussions and meaningful engagement during each meeting, CAC members were provided a packet prior to each meeting that included an agenda and details on each topic to be discussed.

The CAC worked closely with SCDOT and project staff to develop preliminary mitigation recommendations. Several CAC meetings were utilized as a forum to collaborate with SCDOT, FHWA and project staff to develop preliminary mitigation measures. After the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) with the Draft EJ Community Mitigation Plan were published in October 2020, and the public comment period ended on January 15, 2021, the CAC was briefed on the comments received regarding the draft community mitigation recommendations. After their careful review and further deliberation of the proposed mitigation plan, the CAC provided a response to SCDOT which included concerns about impacts they felt were not fully addressed in the proposed plan. This letter gave SCDOT and FHWA better insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the mitigation concepts and played a crucial role in revising the mitigation commitments for the final document. All formal SCDOT and CAC correspondence can be found in Appendix A of this document.

### 1.2.2 Community Office

In November 2019, the Community Office was opened at 5627 Rivers Avenue in Gas Light Square, just north of the Liberty Park Community. The primary purpose of the Community Office is to provide residents with local and immediate access to project materials and knowledgeable project staff. The Community Office is staffed with a full-time Office Manager, Community Liaisons/Outreach Specialists, and Right-of-Way Specialists who are available to share project information by way of maps, videos, and other public involvement event materials; explain the property acquisition and relocation process; and inform impacted residents of their rights under the Uniform Act.

The Community Office, which is open on weekdays and by appointment on the weekend, also serves as the base for community outreach efforts such as neighborhood canvassing, direct mailings to residents, and phone calls. Through the outreach efforts, residents have been encouraged to visit or call the Community Office with their project-related questions and other community concerns that result from the project. Additionally, the Community Office has served as a venue for an informational Open House for the public and a meeting place for the CAC by hosting formal, informal, face-to-face, and virtual meetings.

The Community Office will continue to operate throughout the remainder of the project development phase and through the final design and Right-of-Way Acquisition phases of the project. The Community Office will remain available to serve as meeting space for the Project Oversight Committee, community advocacy groups, impacted community members, and other stakeholders with an interest in the I-526 LCC WEST project.

### 1.2.3 Mitigation Framework

Four important elements to building or rebuilding a sustainable community are cohesion, enhancement, preservation, and revitalization. The EJ outreach efforts and the EJ Community Mitigation Plan were both

framed around these four pillars, with the goal of developing mitigation measures that address each aspect of sustainability.

- **Cohesion: Actions that Strengthen Neighborhood Connections**

Within a cohesive community, one should find: (1) a common vision and sense of belonging for all residents; (2) a diversity of backgrounds where circumstances are appreciated and positively valued so that everyone benefits from their similar life opportunities; and (3) a network of strong and positive relationships between people with different interests, careers, and education within their neighborhood.

- **Enhancement: Community Center and Recreational Facilities**

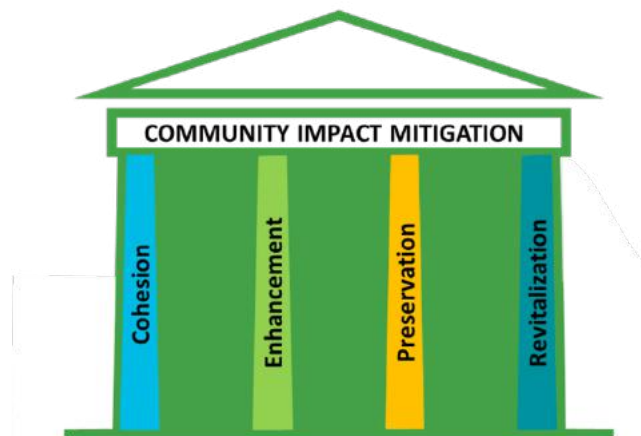
Community enhancement projects improve the value, quality, desirability, and attractiveness of a neighborhood. For the purposes of this EJ Community Mitigation Plan, this pillar focuses on infrastructure enhancements that will be developed in conjunction with the replacement community centers and recreational facilities.

- **Preservation: Infrastructure Needs**

Community preservation connects the past, present, and future of a community by maintaining and preserving neighborhood infrastructure in consideration of past effects of highway/infrastructure projects and current transportation and land use decisions; the ability to prepare for, and recover from, severe weather; and the ability of residents to be able to age in place.

- **Revitalization: Replacement Housing and Employment/Economic Opportunities**

Community revitalization focuses on actions such as maintaining and providing more affordable housing stock, providing employment opportunities for neighborhood residents, actions such as improved public safety which foster community development, and addressing the loss of generational wealth and creating opportunities to foster resident' financial growth.



### 1.2.4 Social Needs Assessment

A Social Needs Assessment (SNA) was developed and presented to the CAC, residents of the EJ neighborhoods that attended the 2019 Community Drop-Ins and Public Information Meeting, and visitors at the Community Office. The purpose of this tool was to provide a snapshot of the norms, needs, and desires related to various social determinants and then to rank the importance of and satisfaction with each of the following categories:

- Community Cohesion: Actions that strengthen neighborhood connections
- Community Enhancement: Community center and recreation facility replacement
- Community Preservation: Infrastructure needs
- Community Revitalization: Replacement housing and employment/economic opportunities.

Nearly 50 EJ neighborhood residents completed the survey. Each of the services and programs presented in the survey were ranked as important; however, residents were generally unsatisfied with each of them. The survey results shown in **Table 1.1** illustrate how residents prioritized each social need category. Top priorities include infrastructure improvements related to stormwater management and bike/pedestrian facilities, the availability/quality of affordable housing, and services that support seniors and youth. Those that align with the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts resulting from this project will be addressed through the mitigation measures proposed in Section 3.0.

**Table 1.1:** Social Needs Assessment Prioritization

SNA	Community Cohesion	Community Enhancement	Community Preservation	Community Revitalization
	FOCUS AREAS: Actions that strengthen neighborhood connections	FOCUS AREAS: Community center and recreational facility replacement	FOCUS AREAS: Infrastructure needs	FOCUS AREAS: Replacement housing and employment/economic opportunities
1-5	Community cohesion SNA topics did not rank (1-5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Services for seniors (5)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adequate stormwater management (1)</li> <li>Adequate Sidewalks/Bicycle Facilities (2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Availability of quality housing (3)</li> <li>Availability of affordable housing (4)</li> </ul>
6-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safety of Schools (10)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Services for youth (6)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Well-lit streets/sidewalks (8)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality of teaching at schools (7)</li> <li>Appearance of neighbors' homes (9)</li> </ul>
11-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City's response public service requests (15)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervised after-school activities (12)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good grocery stores (13)</li> <li>Public transportation and facilities (14)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth employment opportunities (11)</li> </ul>
16-20	Community cohesion SNA topics did not rank (16-20)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nearby medical services (17)</li> <li>Parks and recreation facilities (18)</li> </ul>	Community preservation SNA topics did not rank (16-20)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employment-assistance services (16)</li> <li>Employment opportunities (19)</li> <li>Small business opportunities (20)</li> </ul>
21-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emergency services response times (23)</li> <li>Garbage collection frequency (25)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality of daycare centers (21)</li> <li>Affordable daycare centers (24)</li> </ul>	Community preservation SNA topics did not rank (21-25)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ability to open a small business (22)</li> </ul>

**Table 1.1:** The table above shows the Social Needs Assessment results ranked 1 (highest priority) through 25 (lowest priority) and grouped by EJ Community Mitigation pillar. Individual rank is in parentheses following each SNA topic description. The majority of identified needs fall under Revitalization and Enhancement.

## 1.3 EJ MITIGATION PLAN PURPOSE AND REGULATORY BACKGROUND

The overarching goal of the I-526 LCC WEST EJ Community Mitigation Plan is to effectively mitigate disproportionately high and adverse effects to EJ communities within the I-526 LCC WEST study area and create opportunities to offset the loss of generational wealth. Specific mitigation measures have been developed to offset community impacts within the Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Liberty Park, and Russelldale neighborhoods in North Charleston, while other mitigation programs have been developed to mitigate the broader effects of the project on EJ populations within the project study area. Additionally, the intent of the EJ Community Mitigation Plan is to address the issues and priorities of the affected EJ communities, not only as a way to mitigate impacts, but most importantly as a way to convey ownership of the community mitigation and work toward establishing a foundation of trust.

The final EJ Community Mitigation Plan is based on recommendations received from the CAC (see Appendix A of this plan), comments received from EJ community residents (see Appendix E of this plan), resource agencies, local government, and other stakeholders on the draft EJ Mitigation Plan. Mitigation commitments within the impacted EJ communities, coupled with overall project benefits, would effectively offset adverse effects to the



extent that effects on minority and low-income populations will not be appreciably more severe or greater in magnitude than the adverse effect on non-minority and non-low-income populations. This final EJ Community Mitigation Plan will satisfy mitigation requirements under Executive Order (EO) 12898, USDOT Order 5610.2C, FHWA EJ Order 6640.23A, Section 4(f), and Section 6(f).

## 2.0 MITIGATION OUTREACH SUMMARY

### 2.1 OUTREACH STRATEGY OVERVIEW

In order to ensure meaningful engagement with residents of the impacted EJ communities in the project's decision-making process, an EJ Outreach Strategy (see FEIS-ROD Appendix X) was developed, implemented, and refined throughout the project development phase. In addition to ensuring meaningful engagement, the other primary goals of the I-526 LCC WEST EJ Outreach Strategy were to inform SCDOT of the communities' needs and guide the development of the mitigation strategies included in this EJ Community Mitigation Plan.

The EJ Outreach Strategy consisted of a combination of "low touch" and "high touch" techniques that would assist SCDOT in overcoming traditional barriers to effective public engagement, particularly in low-income and primarily minority communities. "Low touch" techniques implemented included updating the I-526 LCC WEST project website, posting on social media pages, and creating online surveys. "High touch" techniques such as face-to-face interaction (including neighborhood canvassing, pop-up meetings and community-scale meetings), door hanger and flyer distribution, yard signs as notifications placed in the impacted EJ neighborhoods, and telephone calls were also utilized and found to be more effective methods of both disseminating project information and collecting feedback from residents.

### 2.2 EJ COMMUNITY OUTREACH SUMMARY

#### 2.2.1 EJ Community Outreach

##### 2016 – 2018 Outreach

Following the initiation of environmental studies in 2015, SCDOT developed a comprehensive public involvement plan which outlined methods to ensure community awareness of the project and gather feedback during the project's development. Community studies identified EJ communities along the project corridor that could potentially be impacted. As a result, from 2016 to 2018, SCDOT implemented focused outreach efforts to ensure project awareness by residents of the EJ communities. The activities included community meetings hosted during the Summer of 2016 and informational booths sponsored at local events like the North Charleston and West Ashley Farmers Markets and the Latin American Festival in the Fall 2017. At this point in the project's development, alternatives had not been developed and community impacts were unknown. However, SCDOT and the project team were available to answer questions and listen to community concerns. The goal of this initial outreach was to build trust, form relationships, and establish a foundation with residents and local stakeholders that would encourage participation at future events when potential impacts were known. See Appendix U of the FEIS-ROD (Public Involvement Plans and Meeting Summaries) for more details on community outreach efforts.

##### 2019 Outreach

- **CAC Recruitment:** The project team queried community leaders, neighborhood associations, organizations active in the community, and local churches to assist with identifying

community residents that may be interested in becoming involved in the CAC. The goal was to identify multiple (3-5) community members from Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Liberty Park, and Russelldale to serve on the CAC.

- **2019 Pop-up Events:** The Pop-up meetings consisted of setting up a mobile booth in various locations within and in close proximity to the EJ neighborhoods to engage area residents, create opportunities to discuss the project with team members, and increase overall exposure to project resources. Twelve Pop-up meetings were conducted between July and October 2019 at scheduled events including: Caribbean Jerk Festival, the Harvest Pointe Church Community Yard Sale, North Charleston High School's Friday Night Football Game, and North Charleston Creative Arts Elementary School's Career Night. In addition, a member of the project team attended worship service at multiple local churches in the Liberty Park neighborhood including Bethel Pentecostal Holiness and Biblical House of God to provide project literature, engage with the public, and answer any project related questions. A detailed summary of all of the 2019 Pop-up Meetings is located in the Informational Pop-Up Meeting Outreach Summary (Appendix W of the FEIS-ROD).
- **2019 Community Drop-ins:** Prior to the 2019 Public Information Meeting (PIM), three of five Community Drop-ins, or informal meetings, were hosted in the EJ communities. These events not only gave residents an advance viewing of the potential impacts to their neighborhoods, but also provided opportunities for one-on-one interactions with every component of the project team in a less hectic and more intimate setting. Attendees could provide feedback on the proposed design alternatives, privately discuss property impacts and relocation concerns with a Right-of-Way Specialist and engage with their neighbors while learning more about how the proposed project would impact the greater community. When planning these meetings, special consideration was given to the scheduled time and location to ensure flexible timing and convenient access. Attendees received all of the materials that were provided at the larger PIM including maps that identified locations of residential, commercial, and environmental impacts. Other important project information provided includes mainline design alternatives, an overview of the project schedule, and instructions on next steps and how to stay involved. A detailed summary of all of the 2019 Community Meetings is located in the Environmental Justice Outreach Summary Strategy & Tools document (Appendix X of the FEIS-ROD).

## 2.2.2 EJ Community Mitigation Plan Outreach Efforts

### 2020-2021 Outreach

In October 2020, the DEIS and the Draft EJ Community Mitigation Plan were made available to the public for review and comment in person at the 526 LCC Community Office, the SCDOT District 6 Office in North Charleston, and the SCDOT Headquarters in Columbia. Both documents were also available to the public online on the I-526 LCC website ([www.526lowcountrycorridor.com/westph/](http://www.526lowcountrycorridor.com/westph/)). All materials were available in both English and Spanish. The comment period for the DEIS and the Draft EJ Community Mitigation Plan ended on January 15, 2021. This coincided with the implementation of State-mandated stay-at-home orders, social distancing requirements, and policies prohibiting official gatherings. This posed challenges to conducting traditional, interactive outreach activities as face-to-face public meetings were not allowed. Consequently, SCDOT implemented the following outreach efforts to disseminate project information and encourage residents of the EJ communities to provide feedback on the draft EJ Community Mitigation Plan:

- **2020 Pop-up Events:** The project team developed creative approaches to outreach and utilized opportunities with local organizations that provide community support services as a means to safely disseminate project literature, encourage participation in the public comment period, and obtain



feedback on the EJ Community Mitigation Plan. Between September and December 2020, eight pop-up events were conducted in and around the EJ communities. These outreach efforts included: Senior care package distribution events, Back-to-School Giveaway, Palmetto Community Action Partnership Drive-up Event, Vida Nueva Church Service, and the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) COVID Testing and Food Distribution event. In addition, a project team member attended a Spanish worship service at Enoch Chapel United Methodist Church (UMC) in the Liberty Park neighborhood to further engage with Spanish-speaking residents and answer any project related questions. A detailed summary of all the 2020 Pop-up events is located in the Informational Pop-Up Meeting Outreach Summary (Appendix W of the FEIS-ROD).

- **Draft EJ Community Mitigation Plan Survey:** A survey was developed using MetroQuest with the intent of giving residents an opportunity to view, prioritize and provide comments on various Draft EJ Community Mitigation Plan components. The survey could be accessed from a weblink included on the project's website; however, a paper-based version was prepared to ensure access to anyone not able to complete the survey online. The paper survey was also available at the Community Office and provided to residents that attended pop-up events attended by the project team. Results of this survey can be reviewed in Appendix E of this document.
- **October 2020 Community Mailer Campaign:** The Community Mailer Campaign was initiated to inform residents that the DEIS and Draft EJ Community Mitigation Plan had been published. Residents and property owners were mailed a packet that included a letter from the SCDOT Project Manager encouraging them to review and provide comments on the draft Plan, the Draft EJ Community Mitigation Overview document, a copy of the EJ Community Mitigation Survey with a self-addressed, stamped envelope, and a "Neighborhood Resource" magnet. Packets were mailed to 1,201 addresses.
- **Fall 2020 Community Drop-ins:** Three community drop-ins were held in November 2020 at the following locations within the EJ neighborhoods: Biblical House of God (Liberty Park), the Ferndale Community Center, and Enoch Chapel United Methodist Church (Liberty Park). The purpose of these drop-ins was to give all EJ residents an opportunity to view and discuss the direct and indirect impacts from the Recommended Proposed Alternative, speak to a Right-of-Way Agent about specific residential relocations, and provide feedback on the Draft EJ Community Mitigation Plan. Residents living in impacted EJ neighborhoods, including Russelldale and Highland Terrace, were invited to attend these meetings via postcard sent to 1,201 addresses within these neighborhoods. In addition, flyers were posted throughout each community, ads were run on local billboards and buses, and notices were published in three local newspapers. Attendees at each drop-in received a copy of the Draft EJ Community Mitigation Plan overview document, the paper version of the mitigation plan survey, and a self-addressed, stamped envelope to conveniently return the survey to the Community Office. Of the 199 total surveys received from the public, 130 were returned via the self-addressed envelope. See Appendix E of this plan for a summary of the survey results.

Due to the on-going 2020 public health concerns, the meetings were held outdoors under large tents that allowed residents and project team members to discuss the project and mitigation while adhering to social distancing guidelines set forth by the Center for Disease Control (CDC). Each attendee was screened for an elevated body temperature and provided personal protective equipment (face masks, gloves and hand sanitizer), if needed. A total of 110 residents attended the three meetings. A detailed summary of all of the 2020 Community Meetings is located in the Environmental Justice Outreach Summary Strategy & Tools document (Appendix X of the FEIS-ROD).

- **CAC Postcard:** In early January 2021, prior to the end of the public comment period, the CAC sent a postcard to residents reminding them to complete and submit the online or paper survey regarding the Draft EJ Community Mitigation Plan.

Upon closure of the public comment period on January 15, 2021, 199 survey responses were received: 130 paper submissions; 39 computer-based submissions; and 30 mobile device submissions. A detailed summary of the public comments related to the DEIS and Draft EJ Community Mitigation Plan is included in the Informational Pop-Up Meeting Outreach Summary (FEIS-ROD Appendix W) and the Public Involvement Plans and Meeting Summaries (FEIS-ROD Appendix U).

- **March 2021 Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan Open-House and Survey:** An Open House was hosted at the Ferndale Community Center on March 6, 2021, to give residents an opportunity to submit comments on the recommended improvements to existing infrastructure within the EJ communities and to identify additional areas where infrastructure improvements should be considered. In addition to the feedback captured and documented at each station, an online survey, with an alternative paper version, was developed to give residents an additional method to view and provide input on the proposed community infrastructure improvements. Results of this survey are reports in Appendix D of this plan. All input received during the open house and online surveys was used to inform the Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan, which is a component of the EJ Community Mitigation Plan. See Section 3.3.3 for additional details on the Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan.

## 2022 Outreach Efforts

- **2022 Pop-up Events:** The project team identified six local events in the surrounding Charleston area that provide opportunities to safely disseminate project literature and to obtain feedback on new community mitigation commitments. The identified local events include local farmer's markets, along with the City of North Charleston Summer Break Café Program. In addition, the project team hosted monthly pop-ups at the Ferndale Community Center in the Ferndale neighborhood to increase team accessibility.
- **Coordination with Religious & Faith-Based Organizations:** As noted above, coordination with religious and faith-based organizations has provided numerous opportunities for the project team to engage with the public and disseminate project literature through community drop-in meetings held at these locations as well as attending Sunday service and speaking with the congregation. "Sunday Refresh" was a new 2022 initiative in which project team members attended worship service at local churches, including Bethel Pentecostal Holiness Church, Biblical House of God, Enoch Chapel UMC, Pilgrim Baptist Church, and Radiant Church, to host a post-worship light snack or cool treat while providing project updates, encouraging visits with the ROW Liaisons & Relocation Specialist, and gathering information from potentially impacted residents.
- **Flyer Box Initiative:** The intent of the flyer box program is to keep citizens in and around the affected areas up to date on project information without relying on the use of technology, making it more accessible for those with limited computer/internet resources. Indoor and outdoor locations for the flyer boxes include transit stops, local businesses, community centers, and the library. Fifteen flyer boxes were installed and each of them were counted and replenished weekly.
- **Community Workshops & Information Sessions:** The Community Liaisons hosted workshops and information sessions by presenting topics generated by the CAC and from feedback received through queries, including the Community Infrastructure Enhancement Program Workshop/Survey, and the

door-to-door canvassing effort. The workshops and information sessions were hybrid events with in-person and virtual attendance.

- **Community Drop-In Event:** In August 2022 a community drop-in event was held at the Ferndale Community Center to present the final EJ Community Mitigation Plan to the EJ residents and other interested members of the public. This meeting was also an opportunity for the project team to provide schedule and project timing updates, increase community office visibility, introduce Full-time Right-of-Way Liaisons to the EJ Communities, and encourage participation in the Community History Preservation Program.
- **Summer Transportation Institute/School-To-Work-Program:** The Summer Transportation Institute/School-To-Work Program was hosted at Benedict College in Columbia, SC and structured to expose participants to all aspects of the transportation industry and to provide hands-on work experiences through internships. The objectives of the program were to address work ethics, leadership skills, and career opportunities.
- **Community Office Open Houses:** Immediately following the CAC Meetings scheduled for August, September and October, a 2-hour Community Office Open House was hosted so attendees could interact with the I-526 LCC WEST Project Team and neighborhood representatives. Along with project materials and take-away literature, information about the resources available at the Community Office and through its staff was shared. The EJ Team sought feedback on the EJCMP and encouraged appointments with the ROW Liaisons.

#### Future Outreach Opportunities

- **Organizational Training:** SCDOT will provide organizational training for the CAC, identified members of the Project Oversight Committee (POC), and community members interested in creating a community advocacy group beginning in 2023. The EJ Team and Community Liaisons will identify resources and vendors that support administrative and leadership development; strategic and community planning; and grant and funding opportunities. This organizational training will continue to be provided until 2024.
- **Small Business Development Program (SBDP):** An educational program to bring awareness to the generational wealth benefits that entrepreneurship can provide to the community members will begin in 2023 and be available throughout the project until construction is substantially underway, and all contracts are fulfilled. SCDOT will conduct these DBE information sessions to provide information on opportunities to work on the I-526 LCC-WEST project during design, right of way, and construction.

### 2.2.3 CAC's Response to Draft EJ Community Mitigation Plan

As noted in Section 1.2.1, the CAC was assembled to provide insight regarding (1) impacts resulting from the proposed I-526 LCC WEST project and (2) mitigation measures designed to address the identified impacts. Once the DEIS was published and the public comment period ended, comments specific to the Draft EJ Community Mitigation Plan were provided to the CAC for their consideration. Upon completion of their review, the CAC provided a formal response consisting of a summary of mitigation items they felt adequately addressed project impacts and a detailed summary of impacts that they believe were not adequately addressed in the Draft Plan. The CAC's Response Letter and SCDOT's formal reply can be reviewed in Appendix A of this document. Specific requests of the CAC are incorporated into the Mitigation Matrix (Table 3.1). Based on input and comments included in the CAC's Response Letter and feedback during subsequent CAC

Meetings, additional commitments were added to this Community Mitigation Plan. Follow-up CAC Meetings and subcommittee meetings were conducted in order to receive additional feedback on the updates.

## 3.0 MITIGATION MEASURES

Using information collected from the CAC, residents of the EJ neighborhoods, and the Social Needs Assessment, mitigation measures were developed to address the direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to the EJ communities. A detailed summary of the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to the EJ communities is located in the EJ Analysis (FEIS-ROD Appendix G). The Mitigation Matrix outlined in Table 3.1 presents the following: potential impacts to the EJ neighborhoods from the proposed project; results of the Social Needs Assessment and feedback from the CAC; mitigation measures proposed to address project impacts; and project-related impacts that will not be addressed by the mitigation measures. The latter category can be further sorted as: (1) items to be addressed through a City of North Charleston initiative; (2) items that are the result of direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts from the project; or (3) items that are not the result of direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts. As noted in Section 1.4, the mitigation items outlined below are based on the following elements:

- **Cohesion:** Actions that Strengthen Neighborhood Connections
- **Enhancement:** Community Center and Recreational Facilities
- **Preservation:** Infrastructure Needs
- **Revitalization:** Replacement Housing and Employment/Economic Opportunities

Each mitigation measure is described in further detail in Sections 3.1 through 3.4.

Table 3.1: Mitigation Matrix

I. COMMUNITY COHESION: ACTIONS THAT STRENGTHEN NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS	
PROJECT IMPACTS	SCDOT COMMUNITY MITIGATION MEASURES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adverse effects on community cohesion from original construction of I-26 and I-526</li> <li>• Adverse cumulative effects on community cohesion associated with the EJ neighborhood zoning of “mixed” use. Mixed-Use (MU) zoning includes a mixture of commercial and residential land uses located in close proximity to each other.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replacement Affordable Housing Program</li> <li>• Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan</li> <li>• Financial Literacy &amp; First-Time Home Buyer Counseling</li> <li>• First-Time Home Buyer Grant Program</li> <li>• Community Workshops</li> <li>• Community Office</li> <li>• Enhanced Right of Way Advisory Services</li> </ul>
CAC/SNA FEEDBACK	SCDOT COMMUNITY MITIGATION MEASURES
<p><b>CAC Feedback:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More access to community center for community children; “neighborhood” center versus “community” center</li> <li>• Crime prevention through well-lit streets; going above code for minimum requirements for spacing of streetlights<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Sense of community ownership through well-defined private/public areas; directional signs, landscaping, and informal common areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreation Facilities and Amenities</li> <li>• Recreational Programs and Activities</li> <li>• Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan</li> <li>• Community Resource Guide</li> <li>• Community Workshops</li> </ul>
<p><b>CAC Feedback:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concern about residents and children safely crossing the railroad tracks separating Highland Terrace from Liberty Park</li> <li>• Concerns about walkability for children to the proposed community center</li> <li>• Crime prevention through lighting design and maintenance (CPTED principle)<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Need to eliminate abandoned properties/overgrown lots</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan</li> <li>• Replacement Affordable Housing Program</li> </ul>
<p><b>Social Needs Assessment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appearance of neighborhood homes (Ranked #9 out of 25)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizational Training</li> <li>• Community Resource Guide</li> <li>• Community Workshops</li> </ul>

## I. COMMUNITY COHESION: ACTIONS THAT STRENGTHEN NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS

### CAC/SNA Feedback (Items Not Addressed by Mitigation Measures):

- Pedestrian bridge to help children and other community center users to avoid traffic on Rivers Avenue<sup>2</sup>
- Surveillance cameras as crime prevention measure<sup>3</sup>
- Convey sense of ownership of public spaces as crime deterrent by maintaining areas in public domain
- Crime prevention through increased law enforcement presence<sup>3</sup>
- Community yard sale to foster community cohesion<sup>3</sup>

### Footnotes related to CAC/SNA Feedback on Community Cohesion:

<sup>1</sup> Item to be addressed by the City of North Charleston's City-wide LED lighting upgrade program.

<sup>2</sup> Pedestrian safety improvements along Rivers Avenue will be implemented by the Lowcountry Rapid Transit Project starting in 2026 (<https://lowcountryrapidtransit.com/>)

<sup>3</sup> Items were identified through the SNA or by the CAC but are not specifically related to direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts and thus, are not addressed by proposed SCDOT mitigation.

## II. COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT: COMMUNITY CENTER AND RECREATIONAL FACILITY REPLACEMENT

PROJECT IMPACTS	SCDOT COMMUNITY MITIGATION MEASURES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Displacement of two community centers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreation Facilities, Programs, and Amenities</li> </ul>
CAC/SNA FEEDBACK	SCDOT COMMUNITY MITIGATION MEASURES
<b>CAC Feedback:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Installation of traffic calming measures</li> <li>• Installation of speed humps to address speeding and general safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan</li> </ul>

## II. COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT: COMMUNITY CENTER AND RECREATIONAL FACILITY REPLACEMENT

### Social Needs Assessment:

- Services for seniors (Ranked #5 out of 25)
- Services for youth (Ranked #6 out of 25)

### CAC Feedback:

- Concerns about residents and children safely crossing the railroad tracks separating Highland Terrace from Liberty Park
- Pedestrian bridge to help children and other community center users to avoid traffic
- Concerns about ability of children to walk to community center
- CAC agreeable to evaluate one, centrally located facility and smaller pocket parks due to limited availability of large and/or contiguous vacant/underdeveloped parcels
- Residents' first choice options (amenities) should be included in the inter-governmental agreement
- CAC input in the inter-governmental agreement with the City of North Charleston (Appendix C)
- Facility should be broad scale in design, diverse use, forward-thinking, multi-faceted
- Center staffed by neighborhood residents with scheduled activities that engage the community
- Center staff need to be qualified to run the center
- Design of center should facilitate delivery, storage, and distribution of emergency supplies
- Incorporate visual imagery in community center
- Center should integrate solar power with generator backup to ensure the facility can be used as an emergency resource.

- Recreation Facilities and Amenities
- Recreation Programs and Activities
- Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan
- Community History Preservation Study
- Project Oversight Committee
- Community Mitigation Implementation Schedule

**CAC/SNA Feedback (Items Not Addressed by Mitigation Measures):** None

### Footnotes related to CAC/SNA Feedback on Community Enhancement:

<sup>3</sup>Items were identified through the SNA or by the CAC but are not specifically related to direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts and thus, are not addressed by proposed SCDOT mitigation.



### III. COMMUNITY PRESERVATION: INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

PROJECT IMPACTS	SCDOT COMMUNITY MITIGATION MEASURES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adverse effects to family generational wealth created by land ownership due to cumulative acquisitions from original construction of I-26 and I-526</li> <li>• Diminished economic vitality due to depreciated home values, a high number of vacant or underdeveloped parcels, and a high number of homes in disrepair</li> <li>• EJ neighborhood residents are anticipated to experience disproportionate impacts associated with exposure to construction noise and dust as they are likely to have windows open to help ventilate homes<sup>4</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replacement Affordable Housing Program</li> <li>• Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan</li> <li>• Financial Literacy &amp; First-Time Home Buyer Counseling</li> <li>• First-Time Home Buyer Grant Program</li> <li>• Enhanced Right of Way Advisory Services</li> <li>• Acquisition Fairness Program</li> <li>• Enhanced Relocation Mitigation Program</li> <li>• Community Mitigation Implementation Schedule</li> <li>• Community Air Quality Monitoring Program</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liberty Park and Highland Terrace residents are anticipated to experience increased exposure to traffic noise</li> <li>• Visual changes to the existing environment in the EJ neighborhoods because the existing road already sits above many of the affected communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mitigation Barriers</li> </ul>
CAC/SNA FEEDBACK	SCDOT COMMUNITY MITIGATION MEASURES
<p><b>Social Needs Assessment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adequate stormwater management (Ranked #1 out of 25)</li> <li>• Adequate sidewalks/bicycle facilities (Ranked #2 out of 25)</li> <li>• Well-lit streets/sidewalks (Ranked #8 out of 25)<sup>1</sup></li> </ul> <p><b>CAC Feedback:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Installation of speed humps to address speeding/general safety</li> <li>• Address sidewalk infrastructure needs/neighborhood connectivity</li> <li>• Importance of safe, practical footpaths/sidewalks</li> <li>• Safety for bicycle riders</li> <li>• Address areas with inadequate streetlighting/standing water</li> <li>• Bus shelters with covers and seating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan</li> <li>• Community Mitigation Implementation Schedule</li> </ul>



### III. COMMUNITY PRESERVATION: INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

#### CAC Feedback:

- *Remove barriers to residents' ability to 'age in place'*

- Replacement Affordable Housing (rentals and owner-occupied with ADA accessible units available)
- Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan
- Community Resource Guide
- Financial Literacy & First-Time Home Buyer Counseling
- First-Time Home Buyer Grant Program
- Community Workshops
- Acquisition Fairness Program
- Enhanced Right of Way Advisory Services
- Pre-Employment Job Training Program
- On the Job Training Program
- Careers in Transportation Educational Programs
- School to Work Program
- Small Business Development Program
- Community Mitigation Implementation Schedule
- Enhanced Relocation Mitigation Program

#### CAC Feedback:

- *Potential partnerships with local college nursing programs to develop health and wellness program for senior residents*

- Recreation Programs and Activities
- Community Resource Guide
- Community Workshops

#### CAC/SNA Feedback (Items Not Addressed by Mitigation Measures):

- *Pedestrian accommodations over/across Rivers Avenue; safety issues for veterans crossing at Patriots Villa across Rivers Avenue<sup>2</sup>*
- *CARTA/shuttle bus (with seats) to transport residents, AM/PM<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>2</sup>Pedestrian improvements along Rivers Avenue will be addressed by the Lowcountry Rapid Transit Project to provide safe access to the transit service stops serving these communities. In addition, CARTA OnDemand program that serves seniors and disabled community members provides low cost, comfortable and easily accessible shuttle rides (<https://www.ridecarta.com/services/ondemand/>).

<sup>4</sup>The contractor(s) will use fugitive dust control measures such as covering or treating disturbed areas with dust suppression techniques, sprinkling, covering loaded trucks, and other dust abatement controls, as appropriate. The contractor(s) will ensure that all construction equipment is properly tuned and maintained. Idling time will be minimized to save fuel and reduce emissions. Water will be applied to control dust impacts off site. There will be no open burning of removed vegetation. Vegetation will be chipped or delivered to waste energy facilities.

#### IV. COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION: REPLACEMENT HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT/ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

PROJECT IMPACTS	SCDOT COMMUNITY MITIGATION MEASURES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Displacements associated with original construction of I-26 and I-526</li> <li>Many of the houses in the affected EJ neighborhoods were built in the 1940's; these homes were prefabricated houses designed to be easily assembled and disassembled so they could be moved as needed; as such, the existing housing stock is old, and much is in disrepair</li> <li>Affordable housing stock is also affected by the reduction of mobile homes in the project area and vicinity; this trend is anticipated to continue based on local growth plans and policies related to mobile homes</li> <li>Available land for affordable housing is also being reduced by new development in the area including other transportation projects, past airport expansions, and large-scale commercial development<sup>5</sup></li> <li>Due to a lack of access to legal resources, many early black landowners did not have wills, therefore their descendants now lack clear titles. This type of property issue is called "Heirs' Property", and historically, it has hindered residents from performing home repairs or building new homes. Additional information on Heirs' Property can be found in the EJ Analysis, FEIS-ROD Appendix G</li> <li>EJ neighborhood residents experience environmental stressors, notably those related to economic insecurity, outdoor and indoor pollutants<sup>3</sup></li> <li>EJ neighborhood residents experience a high degree of vulnerability related to weather hazards given the quality of housing stock, location within the Filbin Creek drainage basin, and Heirs' Property issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Replacement Affordable Housing Program</li> <li>Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan</li> <li>Community Resource Guide</li> <li>Financial Literacy &amp; First-Time Home Buyer Counseling</li> <li>First-Time Home Buyer Grant Program</li> <li>Community Workshops</li> <li>Acquisition Fairness Program</li> <li>Enhanced Right of Way Advisory Services</li> <li>Enhanced Relocation Mitigation Program</li> <li>Community Air Quality Monitoring Program</li> <li>Community Mitigation Implementation Schedule</li> </ul>
CAC/SNA FEEDBACK	SCDOT COMMUNITY MITIGATION MEASURES
<p><b>Social Needs Assessment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Availability of quality housing (Ranked #3 out of 25)</li> <li>Availability of affordable housing (Ranked #4 out of 25)</li> </ul> <p><b>CAC Feedback:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prefer single-family rental units as opposed to multi-family units/mobile homes/modular</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Replacement Affordable Housing Program</li> <li>Financial Literacy &amp; First-Time Home Buyer Counseling</li> <li>First-Time Home Buyer Grant Program</li> <li>Enhanced Relocation Mitigation Program</li> <li>Community Mitigation Implementation Schedule</li> </ul>

#### IV. COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION: REPLACEMENT HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT/ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

##### CAC Feedback:

- Advocacy and self-advocacy – educational and financial resources
- Need for advocacy training to prepare CAC members and residents to participate in the transition to Project Oversight Committee (POC)
- There is a need for and added value from organizing as a community advocacy group when the purpose of the CAC has been fulfilled
- Internship programs for 9<sup>th</sup> grade students
- Networking opportunities
- Residents feel there have been adverse effects to economic vitality due to what they consider improper compensation (for property impacts) from original construction of I-26

- Organizational Training
- Project Oversight Committee
- Careers in Transportation Educational Program
- College Aid Initiative
- School-to-Work Program
- Summer Transportation Institute Program
- Pre-employment Training
- On the Job Training Program
- Small Business Development Program
- Community Resource Guide
- Community Office
- Community Workshops

##### Footnotes related to CAC/SNA Feedback on Community Revitalization:

<sup>3</sup>Items were identified through the SNA or by the CAC but are not specifically related to direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts and thus, are not addressed by proposed SCDOT mitigation

<sup>5</sup>Items were identified as a direct, indirect, or cumulative impact. However, mitigation developed for the project does not (or cannot) directly address these impacts.

Mitigation components included in Table 3.1 are further detailed below:

### 3.1 COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

SCDOT will continue to support the CAC throughout the remainder of the I-526 LCC WEST project development phase and publishing of the FEIS/ROD by facilitating their regularly scheduled monthly meetings and providing logistical and administrative support, as needed. Residents from the Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Liberty Park, and Russelldale neighborhoods are represented on the CAC. Once the FEIS/ROD is approved, the CAC will officially cease to operate. When the project transitions from the project development phase (which includes development of the Environmental Justice Community Mitigation) to the design phase, a Project Oversight Committee (POC) tasked with overseeing the implementation of the various EJ mitigation commitments will initiate. See Section 3.5 for additional details on the composition and role of the POC.

### 3.2 COMMUNITY PROJECT OFFICE

SCDOT will continue to operate and maintain a Community Office for the remainder of the project development phase and throughout the life of the project. The Community Office will continue to be staffed with a full-time Office Manager, Community Liaisons/Outreach Specialists, and part-time Right-of-Way Specialists who are available to provide community residents with real-time project, relocation, and property acquisition information and assistance. Once the final FEIS/ROD is approved, the Community Office will serve as a location for residents to receive information related to the implementation of the items identified in this EJ Community Mitigation Plan and the meeting place for the POC. Additionally, the Community Office will be available to all residents to serve as a meeting space for community advocacy groups and other stakeholders with an interest in the I-526 LCC WEST project.

## 3.3 COMMUNITY IMPACT MITIGATION PILLARS

As noted in Section 1.4, this EJ Community Mitigation Plan is framed around four pillars of Community Impact Mitigation. Sections 3.3.1 to 3.3.4 summarize the mitigation actions that fall under the four pillars.

### 3.3.1 Cohesion: Actions that Strengthen Neighborhood Connections

- **Organizational Training:** SCDOT will provide organizational training for the CAC, identified POC members, and other members of Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Liberty Park, and Russelldale communities who are interested in creating a community advocacy group. The Community Office and its staff will be available to provide support and identify resources that support, at a minimum, the new group's administrative and leadership development and strategic and community planning. The organizational training will be provided until 2024. Throughout the life of the project, the community office and administrative staff in the office, including our meeting facilitator, will be available to support development, implementation, and operations of the community advocacy group.
- **Community Resource Guide:** SCDOT will work with the CAC, Community Liaisons, and local non-profit organizations to develop a Community Resource Guide for EJ neighborhood residents. The purpose of the guide is to help sustain livability within affected EJ neighborhoods by increasing residents' access to local organizations, resources, and other information on the following topics: food insecurities; health and wellness; home repair; financial assistance; minority-owned businesses; transit resources and referral agencies. The Community Resource Guide will be made available to all residents of the impacted EJ communities within six months of the approval of the FEIS/ROD. It will be updated yearly throughout the construction of the project.
- **Community Workshops:** SCDOT will work with the Community Liaisons and local non-profit organizations and community leaders to develop community workshops or information sessions of interest to all EJ community members. These sessions will be free to residents and will provide useful resources and beneficial information on relevant topics. Some of the sessions offered may be related to the right of way acquisition process or community mitigation items to provide opportunities to learn more about upcoming activities or active mitigation programs. These workshops will be on going throughout the life of the project to assist in maintaining regular engagement with the community. Some examples of information session topics offered in 2021 include:
  - Let's talk about Public Safety
  - Let's put your financial House in Order
  - White Coat Fright – Are you afraid to visit the Doctor?
  - What's the Difference in Trusts versus Wills?
  - What is PTSD (Personal Traumatic Stress Disorder)?

### 3.3.2 Enhancement: Community Center and Recreational Facilities

- **Community Center Facilities and Amenities:** SCDOT will fund the construction of replacement recreational facilities and associated infrastructure to mitigate project impacts and satisfy Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) requirements. SCDOT will acquire parcels located within the affected neighborhoods and provide funding to the City of North Charleston who will oversee construction of one large, modern, centrally located community center complex with expanded programs and operating hours and two pocket parks, one within the Liberty Park neighborhood and one within the Russelldale

neighborhood. See Appendix B for draft facility and amenity renderings. The Russelldale pocket park location is preliminary and SCDOT is committed to continuing to identify additional locations within Russelldale and reviewing the options with community members. Additional details of the amenities to be included in the community center and the pocket park is included in an inter-governmental agreement between SCDOT and the City of North Charleston (see Appendix C). The community center will also be equipped with ADA compliant features, solar power and generator backup to be eligible as an emergency event distribution center. The community center will serve as a resource center during disaster preparation, response, and recovery operations within the community.

Construction of the new, centrally located community center and the pocket parks will be completed prior to the project construction impacting the existing community centers.

*Infrastructure related to the replacement recreational facilities will include, but is not limited to:*

- Classrooms designed for flexibility, which include moveable panel divider walls allowing room size to be modified to meet program needs,
  - Basketball courts,
  - Facility approaches to be well-lit, and meet design requirements to provide safe lighting for center visitors,
  - Covered shelters with grills,
  - Walkways, common spaces to be user-friendly and defined by vegetation or other natural definitions; fencing should not be first choice,
  - Wayfarer/directional signs to help guide residents to new facilities,
  - Facility and pocket park approaches designed with pedestrian facilities, crosswalks, and traffic calming measures such as speed humps,
  - Emergency generators and solar power to enable the community center to be used as a food and supply distribution center during emergencies and/or inclement weather,
  - Facility to include shared use path to provide recreational opportunities for walking/biking and connectivity to North Charleston's proposed Greenway system,
  - Satellite parking on Dorothy Williams Boulevard and Margaret Drive, adjacent to the shared use paths, to provide additional access points for residents driving to the community center,
  - Audio/visual equipment,
  - Artwork and visual displays based on recommendations from the Community History Preservation Program
- **Community Center Programs and Activities:** As detailed in Appendix C of this plan, SCDOT and the City of North Charleston have an inter-governmental agreement outlining the programs, services, structural components, and arrangements for long-term operation and maintenance of the replacement community centers and recreational facilities. The agreement includes language that gives priority access to residents of the communities served by the community centers in areas such as program enrollment/participation, reserving facility space, and volunteer opportunities.

The City of North Charleston will continue to look for qualified candidates who live in the impacted EJ neighborhoods to fill Parks and Recreation positions at the community center. The City of North Charleston will post job openings for the community center recreation positions within the neighborhoods and encourage the CAC and neighborhood councils to submit qualified applicants.

*Programs and activities that could be provided at the community center include, but are not limited to:*

- Senior and youth-focused programs and activities,
- A monthly programming/activity calendar that prioritizes programs for community seniors and youth such as meeting spaces, youth lunch programs, and tennis associations,
- A yearly calendar of community center events that focuses on events that foster community cohesion such as those that highlight/preserve local history, involve meeting with government representatives, and cross-cultural activities,
- Programming that provides access to educational and financial resources for community advocacy and self-advocacy,
- Volunteer opportunities with priority on neighborhood residents,
- Inclusion of a community garden at the recreational facility to serve as both an educational program and effort to mitigate neighborhoods' location in known food desert, and,
- Maintenance of stormwater detention as an educational wetland to be used for educational purposes during summer programs.

### 3.3.3 Preservation: Infrastructure Needs

- **Community History Preservation Program:** SCDOT will fund a study to document the cultural history and character of the impacted neighborhoods of Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Liberty Park, and Russelldale through the support of a qualified historian and photographer. The study efforts will include collecting oral history, archival research, collection of historic photography, and the development of a report that will be available for viewing online and at the community center. The Community History Preservation Program will be completed within two years of the approval of the FEIS/ROD. However, the visual imagery will be implemented as part of the construction of the replacement community center and pocket parks.

*The scope of the Community History Preservation Program consists of:*

- Conducting oral history interviews with current and past residents,
- Archival research to collect old aerial photography and other historic photographs to create a visual archive of the communities prior to the construction of I-26, I-526 and other recent developments,
- Collecting photographs and recent images of the communities,
- Development of a report of the communities' history which will be made available for viewing online and at the replacement community center, or other venue if preferred by the residents, and,
- Development of history banners and recommendations for visual imagery that can be incorporated into the proposed community centers.

Additional items may be incorporated in the scope as determined by the POC.

- **Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan:** SCDOT will implement the Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan (CIEP), which is a subset of improvements that will address identified infrastructure problems within Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Liberty Park, and Russelldale. Problem to be addressed include those associated with bicycle and pedestrian safety, access to the community center/park amenities and transit, neighborhood entrance aesthetics, stormwater improvements, lack of bus shelter amenities, and traffic calming measures that would be implemented as part of the project.

Field evaluations were conducted to quantify the specific needs identified by the CAC and planning and design studies were conducted to develop recommendations for addressing the deficiencies. Once the recommendations were reviewed with City of North Charleston Planning and Public Works Department staff, outreach efforts were conducted to receive input from residents. Details on outreach can be further reviewed in Appendix D of this plan.



Upon closure of the CIEP comment period, 85 completed surveys were received: 49 by paper, 27 on a mobile device, and nine via a computer. A detailed summary of the comments received on the CIEP is included in the Public Involvement Plans and Meeting Summaries (FEIS/ROD Appendix U). After public comments were received, the final set of infrastructure needs to be addressed by the CIEP were developed to include the following:

- **Bicycle and 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 connecting the replacement community center to Russelldale. Sidewalks will be improved along Rebecca Street and Twitty Street, and new sidewalks will be constructed along Russelldale Avenue, Elder Avenue, Piedmont Avenue, Dorothy William 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 during the same timeline as a part of the Lowcountry Rapid Transit Project (LCRT). Construction for the LCRT project is slated to start in 2026 (<https://lowcountryrapidtransit.com/>).
- **Bus Shelter Amenities:** SCDOT will partner with CARTA to fund bus shelter facilities at all transit stops along Rivers Avenue between Taylor Street and Mall Drive that border the impacted EJ neighborhoods. A bus rapid transit system will be constructed along the median of Rivers Avenue in the vicinity of the communities during the same timeline as part of the LCRT project. This will provide additional bus shelter amenities and transit access to the impacted communities.
- **Neighborhood Lighting Improvements:** SCDOT will fund the installation of at least seventy-five pedestrian-scale lights along the proposed shared-use pathways that connect the proposed 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. All the existing lighting within the communities are currently being upgraded to LED lights by the City of North Charleston. All new lighting will be LED lights which provides broader lighting coverage and safer road conditions.
- **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 also be implemented.
- **Stormwater Infrastructure Improvements:** SCDOT will fund stormwater improvement measures on sections of the following streets: 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 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 for the increased drainage flows from the expanded interstate will be included within the larger project.
- **Aesthetics and Landscaping:** 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 help reinforce neighborhood identities. In addition, there will be an opportunity for public art at shared-use path trailheads, pocket parks, and the community center. Educational and way finding signs will also be implemented within the communities.

The majority of the CIEP components will be completed prior to the construction of the I-526 LCC WEST Improvements. However, the schedule for construction of components such as the shared use

path along Margaret Drive and the pedestrian bridge and at-grade railroad crossing upgrades may be dictated by the availability of railroad flagging operations for the I-526 LCC WEST Project, construction sequencing and access needs. A detailed summary of the proposed improvements is located in the CIEP Summary Report (Appendix D).

- **Community Air Quality Monitoring Program:** SCDOT will develop and fund a PM 2.5 monitoring program within the impacted EJ communities of Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Liberty Park, and Russelldale. SCDOT will provide results to their website where community members can access real time data/results through 2038 or until the end of construction activities within the EJ neighborhoods listed above.

**Mitigation Barriers:** Mitigation barriers are walls constructed along a highway to protect sensitive land-uses from impacts associated with transportation projects. SCDOT will construct mitigation barriers along the eastbound and westbound sides of I-26 between the I-526 and Remount Road interchanges to benefit the residents of the Highland Terrace and Liberty Park communities. SCDOT will construct mitigation barriers along 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.

### 3.3.4 Revitalization: Replacement Housing & Employment/Economic Opportunities

- **Enhanced Right of Way Advisory Services:** SCDOT will provide a full time EJ Community Right of Way Liaison to be available in the Community Office as a resource to all impacted EJ communities. The liaison will provide advisory services to the impacted residents to ensure they fully understand their rights, benefits, responsibilities, and opportunities available. The liaison will be a resource to the residents when they need assistance in understanding any letters, offers, appraisals or other documents during the ROW process and will communicate what options may be available to the resident to address any concerns. The liaison, agents, and community office staff will provide bilingual services for residents if required. The liaison will assist in resolving any issues or disputes that the residents may experience with agents or contractors working on behalf of SCDOT during the project. The liaison will assist in implementation of the Acquisition Fairness Program to ensure that appraisals are in compliance. The liaison will assist the residents in understanding their eligibility for any of the mitigation opportunities and assist in coordination with the program staff. The project team will provide training and orientation to the right of way agents contracted to work on the project in order to ensure that agents understand the mitigation benefits and the liaison's role on the project during acquisition. Transportation to view comparable properties will be provided for the displaced business owners, property owners and tenants who require assistance. The liaison will be available to the residents to answer any questions or concerns that arise during the right of way acquisition and relocation process.
- **Affordable Housing:** Due to the subsequent challenges residents may face resulting from relocations due to the I-526 LCC WEST Project, SCDOT is taking a two-pronged approach to addressing the replacement housing needs of the displaced residents in the impacted EJ areas. Both programs will be implemented during the right-of-way acquisition phase in order to maximize the benefit to the



displaced residents. The replacement housing units for qualified displaced residents will be built and ready for occupancy prior to residents being displaced by the project. Qualified displaced residents (persons who qualify as displaced under 49 CFR 24.2 (a)(9)), will be allowed to stay in their existing units until replacement housing is available.

**Developer Incentive Affordable Multi-Family Housing Program:** SCDOT will partner with the South Carolina State Housing and Finance and Development Authority (SC Housing) to implement the program which will be funded by a minimum of \$1.5M in SCDOT grant funding, SC Housing low-income tax credits, and bond financing. The maximum amount of SCDOT funding may fluctuate based on current market values. SC Housing partners with affordable housing developers to finance high quality and affordable rental housing across the Palmetto State. These programs provide permanent real estate financing for property being developed for multifamily rental use. Development teams should have sufficient experience in multifamily rental housing designed for use by low income tenants to assure the successful completion and operation of the development. Additional grant money will be added to this financing package by SCDOT to offset additional costs necessary to meet the needs of this project and to ensure the funding/finance opportunity is attractive to affordable housing developers. SC Housing will provide SCDOT with the amount required for the grant funding based on market conditions at the time of the solicitation. More information about the programs is available at <https://www.schousing.com/Home/Development>. SCDOT intends to ensure housing remains affordable for twenty (20) years, consistent with SC Housing's public-private partnerships. The program will create a funding/finance opportunity for an affordable housing developer to submit a housing proposal that will meet housing priorities based on input from the CAC, SCDOT, and SC Housing. At a minimum, the program should include the following components:

- Construction of 100 affordable housing units with a mixture of unit sizes (1 – 3 bedrooms) for the lowest income level category
- Developments must include green space or a recreational area component
- Developments must be located in an area with direct access to transit and convenient access to the proposed Bus Rapid Transit System
- Developments that are in compliance with the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Government's Lowcountry Rapid Transit - Transit Oriented Development Plan will be given priority
- Development must be located in close proximity to the impacted communities; the closest developments will be given first priority, but proposed developments must be located, at a minimum, within the City of North Charleston.

**Single-Family Affordable Replacement Housing Program:** SCDOT will work to secure 45 vacant lots within the EJ communities and partner with a local non-profit that specializes in developing or constructing affordable housing to implement a Single-Family Affordable Replacement Housing Program. SCDOT will identify undeveloped lots within the EJ communities of Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Liberty Park, and Russelldale and contact property owners to inquire of willingness to entertain an offer to sell their lots. In addition, SCDOT will monitor the real estate market to identify suitable properties that are offered for sale within these EJ communities. SCDOT will not utilize eminent domain for these purchases, however every effort will be made to secure undeveloped lots in all four EJ communities to the extent practicable. If all 45 lots cannot be secured within the four identified EJ communities, then SCDOT will identify and pursue lots for sale within neighboring residential communities located within the local area. At a minimum, the program should include the following components:

- SCDOT will secure vacant lots within the EJ communities, zoned for single-family or duplex homes, in each of the four impacted EJ communities (or in close proximity) for the purpose of constructing housing for displaced residents who would like to remain in their community. Some of these lots

will be preserved for the construction of replacement market rate homes for displaced families that do not fall into the low-income category

- A majority of the lots would be utilized for low-income affordable replacement Single Family Home Housing Development
  - SCDOT will allocate funds for program administration as well as purchasing the land/lots
  - SCDOT will engage non-profits during the fall of 2022 to arrange interviews in order to learn more information on what organizations may be interested in and what resources would be required to execute an affordable housing home ownership program for interested families that will be displaced by the I-526 LCC West Project
  - The program would give priority to displaced families but could be opened to other EJ community residents currently renting if there are remaining lots once all families are relocated
  - SCDOT will issue a Notice of Interest and implement an interview and selection process to identify a partnering non-profit organization in 2023. During this process SCDOT will interview, review qualifications and proposals, and select a non-profit organization that has the capability to develop the replacement homes and administer this program
  - SCDOT and Community Office staff will work with the selected non-profit to assist in identifying qualified families and coordination through the application process.
  - Residents of the impacted EJ communities who are displaced by the project will receive first priority in this program.
  - Once project relocations are completed, if there are remaining replacement housing opportunities in this program, the program will be opened to residents of all of the EJ communities on the project.
  - Upon completion of the construction of the project, if there are still remaining replacement housing opportunities available, these will be transferred to the contracted organization. These remaining lots will be developed and administered by the contracted organization's normal affordable housing program operations and will fully mitigate for the project's impact to affordable housing in the local community.
- **Financial Literacy and First-Time Home Buyer Counseling:** SCDOT will develop partnerships with local organizations to provide financial literacy and first-time home buyer workshops and counseling to all residents of the impacted EJ communities. This educational offering is intended to assist participants as they attempt to secure residential loans and transition from renters to homeowners. The counseling will continue until the completion of the right-of-way phase in 2027.
  - **First-Time Home Buyer Grant Program:** SCDOT will implement a grant program for first-time home buyers that are residents of the impacted EJ communities and individuals relocated to other communities. SCDOT will partner with a state or federal agency or non-profit organization that is qualified to administer this type of program. SCDOT will provide funding for program administration as well as Grant funds as determined by estimated participation in the program. Since the program will be based on a sliding scale based on participant's income, the initial budget would be based on reasonable estimates for participation rates and average income levels to initiate the program. This program will be established at the start of the right-of-way phase and be available throughout property acquisitions and relocations. Receipt of these funds would likely be considered income and thus would be subject to taxation. Program participants are advised to seek input from a tax advisor if they have questions.
  - **Enhanced Relocation Mitigation Program:** SCDOT will assist displaced business owners by reimbursing reasonable moving costs, personal property losses, expenses in finding a replacement, and expenses in reestablishing their business. SCDOT will offer relocation counseling to employees of

displaced businesses to minimize economic harm and provide information as to possible sources of funding and assistance from other local, state, and federal agencies. SCDOT will partner with career development and employment organizations to ensure that displaced employees are aware of and provided offerings including career development information, job search resources, and training programs. Any unanticipated business relocations in the EJ communities may also be eligible for an additional mitigation payment to cover the actual expenses in reestablishing their business above the maximum amounts allowed under state and federal law. Transportation to view comparable replacement properties will be provided for displaced business owners, residents and tenants requiring assistance. SCDOT will also assist displaced residential tenants by reimbursing reasonable moving costs and providing rent supplement payments in accordance with the Uniform Act. In addition to the benefits provided under the Uniform Act, the Enhanced Relocation Mitigation Program will allow for supplemental rental mitigation payments for up to an additional 18 months based on the displacee's replacement rent and income. The enhanced relocation mitigation payments would be eligible under 23 CFR 771.105(e) for project mitigation since they are not eligible under 49 CFR 24 and SC 28-11-10.

- **Acquisition Fairness Program:** SCDOT will implement an acquisition fairness program on this project to address community concerns over the fairness of property appraisals. SCDOT will hire a licensed appraiser to prepare an appraisal in compliance with all State and Federal laws that affect property value at the initiation of the Right of Way acquisition. If a second opinion is desired, the property owners will be given the option to have a licensed appraiser of their own selection to prepare a second appraisal of their property, and SCDOT will compensate their appraiser directly for this appraisal. SCDOT shall be given the opportunity to review the selected appraiser's fee for service as to reasonability prior to commencement of the work to ensure that the appraiser is properly licensed and is preparing the appraisal in accordance with appropriate standards and guidelines. The property owner may also be eligible for an acquisition fairness mitigation payment based on two factors upon review of the accepted appraisal. SCDOT's I-526 LCC-WEST Right of Way Liaison will review the appraisal to determine if property values were decreased or damaged due to conditions that may have been created by previous public eminent domain acquisitions on the property (such as property access or property shape). The appraisals will also be reviewed to determine whether prior zoning changes have impacted the highest and best use for the property utilized in the appraisal. The mitigation payments would be calculated based on the additional value that the two factors above would have increased the property value to the benefit of the property owner. These payments should eliminate any potential for disparities in value due to prior project impacts or local zoning changes in the community.
- **College Aid Initiative:** SCDOT will establish and manage a scholarship fund of at least \$500,000. High school and college students from any of the impacted EJ communities 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 CAC 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 scholarships will be available for both technical and trade schools as well as four year colleges. The College Aid Initiative will begin in 2023 and funds will be available through the construction phase or until all scholarship funds have been awarded.

- **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, planning, emerging technologies, engineering, and transportation. During the right-of-way acquisition phase, SCDOT will seek to hire up to twenty high school students, college students, or young adults 25 years of age and younger from the impacted EJ neighborhoods and neighboring EJ communities to work as summer interns. High school and college students from the EJ neighborhoods that will be displaced and relocated by the proposed project would remain eligible for participation in the School-to-Work program. The School-to-Work Program will begin in 2023 and end once twenty (20) students have participated in the program.
- **Careers in Transportation Education Program:** SCDOT will provide an awareness program that increases the understanding of the transportation industry and the builds interest in the wide range of career opportunities available. This program will explore all levels of opportunities from entry level positions only requiring a high school diploma to the professional level opportunities. This program will be offered to middle school, high school, and young adults in any of the impacted EJ communities. This program will begin in 2023 and will be available until construction of the project is complete.
- **Summer Transportation Institute Program:** SCDOT will provide a skill building program to create awareness of and expose high school students to career opportunities in the transportation industry. This program will assist with addressing the need for a diverse workforce in the 21st century by preparing young people to become our future transportation workforce. The program will begin in 2023 and SCDOT will provide the Summer Transportation Institute Program each summer throughout the project construction. SCDOT will prioritize students from the impacted EJ communities for up to 50% of the available slots annually during the life of the project.
- **Pre-employment Training:** During the Right-of-Way Acquisition phase of the project, 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 and offered to residents of the impacted EJ communities prior to construction of the interstate improvements. Participants who successfully acquire relevant job readiness skills will be considered for the On-The-Job Training (OJT) Program implemented by the contractor selected to construct the project.
- **Small Business Development Program:** SCDOT will develop an educational program to bring awareness to the generational wealth benefits that entrepreneurship can provide to EJ community members. SCDOT will partner with organizations and other disadvantaged business enterprises (DBE) in the state to develop and deliver an educational program that empowers those interested in learning more about starting a small business enterprise (SBE). This program will include awareness about how to access small business resources and orientation to the benefits and programs offered to SBE and DBEs through SCDOT, FHWA and other local organizations. SCDOT will also conduct DBE information sessions to provide information on opportunities to work on the I-526 LCC-WEST project during design, right of way and construction. Additional recruitment, round table discussions and partnering sessions will be conducted once the potential prime contractors are identified for the project. This program will begin in 2023 and be available throughout the project until construction is substantially underway and all contracts are fulfilled.

## 3.4 IMPLEMENTATION OF MITIGATION MEASURES

### 3.4.1 Community Mitigation Implementation Schedule

SCDOT is committed to delivering the Community Mitigation measures outlined in this plan in a timeline that maximize the benefits to the impacted EJ communities. On past projects, community mitigation is typically implemented during construction or at the end of the project construction. SCDOT has committed to implementing a majority of the mitigation measures immediately upon approval of the FEIS/ROD. Early implementation will allow the impacted residents to have access to the benefits of the mitigation in advance of the impacts and will increase the quality of life within the impacted communities. There are several mitigation items, such as Mitigation Barriers and pedestrian bridges over the railroad where implementation may be during the later construction phases of the project. These features are located within the construction footprint of the project or are located in areas necessary to facilitate safe construction access, operations and staging for construction workers. SCDOT is committed to delivering a high quality mitigation measure package and has maintained responsibility for delivery of all the mitigation measures within SCDOT controlled contracts with one exception. The Replacement Community Center and Recreational Facilities design and construction will be administered by the City of North Charleston under the oversight of SCDOT's Local Public Agency Program. SCDOT and the City will work together to ensure successful delivery of these community facilities prior to the closure of the existing community facilities. See Appendix C of this plan for the inter-governmental agreement outlining these details.

SCDOT, in coordination with FHWA, will track all the environmental commitments on this project, including community mitigation measures, with diligence to ensure that all commitments are implemented in a timely manner and in accordance with the FEIS/ROD.

#### **Additional Projects to Benefit EJ Residents**

The City of North Charleston has committed to fully funding and implementing a plan to upgrade existing lighting to LED lighting in North Charleston neighborhoods, including those within the impacted EJ communities. This project has been initiated and as of December 2021, approximately half of the LED lights had been successfully installed to reduce energy consumption and increase lighting capabilities to create safer road conditions.<sup>3</sup>

BCDCOG has committed to pedestrian, transit, and bicycle safety improvements along Rivers Avenue as an element of the larger LCRT project. As of July 2022, the LCRT project is expected to begin construction in 2026. More information on this project can be found on the LCRT project website at <https://lowcountryrapidtransit.com/>.

### 3.4.2 Community Mitigation Implementation Plan

SCDOT will develop an implementation plan that outlines more detailed plans and details for each of the mitigation items. As the mitigation items are implemented, it may be necessary to adjust some of the criteria or detailed implementation strategies in order to ensure participation. The implementation plan will be evaluated each year and adjustments will be proposed for mitigation items that had low participation in the previous year. The updated implementation plan will be provided to FHWA for review and approval each year that it is revised from the original implementation plan. The plan will also be shared with the Project Oversight Committee with the intention of continuing outreach and project communication with all EJ residents. The

<sup>3</sup> Huechtker, S. 2021. Dominion Energy adding new LED lighting in North Charleston. Live 5 WCSC. <https://www.live5news.com/2021/12/22/dominion-energy-adding-new-led-lighting-north-charleston/>



implementation plan will not revise the mitigation commitments but will adjust the execution strategies as necessary to ensure successful implementation.

SCDOT recognizes lower income community members may still face barriers to participation in the I-526 LCC EJ Mitigation Plan programs and opportunities. Lower income participants may not have access to reliable transportation or childcare which would limit their ability to attend a program not offered within the immediate community boundaries. Participants may also work during the day which would impact their ability to participate in programs hosted during standard work hours. Missing work to participate in program opportunities would result in loss of income necessary for food and shelter expenses. SCDOT will work with community members to identify additional barriers to participation in the mitigation programs. SCDOT will incorporate reasonable budgets for eliminating these barriers to increase program participation, when feasible. These proposed budget expenses would be outlined and assessed each year in the I-526 LCC EJ Community Mitigation Implementation Plan. Some examples of budget items may include the following:

- Transportation expenses to contract with a qualified transportation provider;
- Childcare expenses with a qualified and licensed day care provider;
- Reimbursements for necessary supplies for participation; or
- A reasonable stipend offered to participants each week of program participation.

Accommodations may not be necessary for every mitigation program offered but will be implemented in programs where barriers exist to recruiting reasonable participation. SCDOT will continue to work with local transit providers and other community organizations to develop partnerships to meet these needs with combined resources where feasible and reasonable for the partnering organizations.

### 3.4.3 Project Oversight Committee

A Project Oversight Committee (POC) will be established after the FEIS/ROD is approved. At that time, the POC will be tasked with overseeing the implementation of the EJ Community Mitigation Plan commitments. Prior CAC members and/or EJ neighborhood residents interested in getting involved with the project will be encouraged to participate on the POC. In addition to residents, the POC will consist of agency representatives responsible for implementing the various components of the EJ Community Mitigation Plan including: SCDOT, FHWA, the City of North Charleston, SC Housing, CARTA, and the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester- Council of Governments. SCDOT will provide administrative support to the POC, consistent with the services provided to the CAC, as it assumes the following duties:

- Coordinate with technical staff on issues related to implementation of the EJ mitigation,
- Serve as a liaison between the communities and project staff during the final design and construction phases, and
- Assist SCDOT in outreach efforts and meetings to get input from the greater community on detailed design concepts for those mitigation items that require physical construction.

Once established, it is anticipated that the POC would meet on a quarterly basis until the completion of all EJ Mitigation components.

### 3.4.4 Community Meetings

SCDOT will work with the POC to conduct community meetings and distribute flyers throughout the implementation of the EJ Community Mitigation Plan to keep residents informed of the project schedule and to seek input on any mitigation-related commitments.

## 4.0 REFERENCES

Final I-526 LCC WEST Community Impact Assessment (CIA). April 2021.  
Final I-526 LCC WEST Environmental Justice Analysis, April 2021.  
Final I-526 LCC WEST Environmental Justice Outreach Strategy & Tools, April 2021.  
Final I-526 LCC WEST Indirect and Cumulative Assessment. April 2021.  
Final I-526 LCC WEST Public Involvement Plans and Meeting Summaries, April 2021. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Guidance on Environmental Justice and NEPA, December 2011



## APPENDIX A

### FORMAL SCDOT AND CAC CORRESPONDENCE



March 2, 2021

Ms. Joy Riley, PE, PMP, CPM, DBIA  
SCDOT Project Manager  
I-526 Lowcountry Corridor WEST  
Post Office Box 191  
Columbia, SC 29202-0191

Dear Ms. Riley,

Since our first meeting in September 2019, it has been our pleasure to serve on the I-526 Lowcountry Corridor (LCC) WEST Community Advisory Council (CAC) representing the residents, property owners, and other stakeholders associated with the Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Joppa Way, Liberty Park, and Russelldale neighborhoods. While the purpose of the interstate improvements project is to increase capacity at the I-26/I-526 interchange and along I-526 to relieve traffic congestion and improve operations, the CAC has remained committed to ensuring that expressed needs of the impacted Environmental Justice (EJ) communities related to cohesion, enhancement, revitalization, and preservation have effectively guided the mitigation decision-making process.

This letter serves as a response to the South Carolina Department of Transportation's request dated January 30, 2021 for the CAC to review the results from the draft EJ Community Mitigation Plan (EJCMP) survey, the related public comments received between October 2020 and mid-January 2021, and the proposed framework for the Project Oversight Committee. We appreciate the opportunity to provide additional comments on the proposed mitigation commitments, particularly those that we feel do not adequately address the impacts associated with the project.

Based on the EJ priorities established by the CAC over the previous 16-month period, we have determined that the following items in the draft EJCMP adequately address project-related impacts to the affected community:

- The commitment to provide infrastructure improvements within each neighborhood, including sidewalks, curb, and gutter, streetlights, drainage, traffic calming measures, and crosswalks.
- Preferred single-family affordable housing built near or within the existing impacted neighborhoods, as opposed to multi-family affordable housing.
- Basketball courts as a priority amenity for the recreational facilities.

The CAC has identified the following items as areas in which the EJCMP does not adequately address impacts associated with the project:

#### **REPLACEMENT COMMUNITY CENTER - DESIGN**

While we understand that the final EJCMP might not be the vehicle to highlight every amenity we've discussed as a desired benefit to the EJ communities, we would like to officially document our request to have a multi-purpose facility that supports stability in our neighborhoods and provides resources when we are most vulnerable. Not only are we interested in a variety of recreational experiences at the replacement community center, but we have expressed our desire for the center's design to provide support to residents when weather and other unexpected perils occur.

- We feel strongly that the design of the facility should integrate, at a minimum, solar power with battery and/or generator backup as well as other ADA-compliant features to ensure the community center is eligible as an emergency shelter for residents in the impacted EJ neighborhoods.
- Stormwater management should be considered in the design to prevent future flooding or at least avoid further damage to our properties and degradation to our quality of life.
- The design of the community center should facilitate delivery, storage (*as needed*), and distribution of emergency supplies such as sandbags, potable water, batteries, toiletries, etc. to ensure these resources are conveniently accessible to residents in the impacted EJ neighborhoods.
- We are all continuing to learn more about preparing for the unexpected as we cope with the impacts of a health pandemic. As such, we request that the facility be equipped with proper refrigeration capabilities to manage perishable resources. Being mindful of this feature NOW gives us some assurance that many types of consumables, including medicines, can be stored and available during emergencies to residents in the impacted EJ neighborhoods who have limited independence due to age, access, and functional needs.
- In anticipation of increased traffic volumes associated with heavily attended community center events, we have concerns about the logistics of competing pedestrian and vehicular traffic at the Elder Avenue and James Bell Drive entrance. Ideally, we feel there should be multiple vehicular and pedestrian routes to access the community center. We request that this concern be addressed in the design and discussed with the residents and property owners in the impacted EJ neighborhoods, particularly those living nearby, prior to site plans being submitted to the City of North Charleston for review and approval.
- For the safety of children utilizing outdoor space at the community center, the facility's design should include features that protect children from alligator encounters near Filbin Creek. A member of the CAC has shared an encounter where an alligator was seen in/near the creek.
- Having a facility that is designed for multiple purposes with flexible, convertible spacing (partitions, etc.) is very important to us. This would allow the community to use it for social and educational events, group activities, and other public functions. These types of events often require additional audio/visual equipment and other technology to make the event a success for all attending. Yes, it is imperative that the new community center be equipped with various types of technology that support events; however, what should not be overlooked is providing similar resources that strengthen the capacity of our children and youth. Having consistent access to cellular service and wi-fi capabilities has been a challenge in these communities long before the pandemic brought it to others' attention. Please do not miss the opportunity to ensure that the current and future generations have access to the resources that support their educational and social development.

#### **PLAN FOR INCREASED CONGESTION**

We request a secondary plan to reconstruct an onramp from Rivers Avenue to I-26 as a contingency plan if this area proves to remain congested post-construction. There are 300 apartment units on Mall Drive with anticipated new occupancies over the next few months. Our concern is that although Remount Road has relieved some congestion, it may not be enough to mitigate for increased traffic over the next decade. Can we discuss this more? It would be great to have some visual references about what this new traffic demand will look like for our neighborhoods and how the improvements to the interstate will either give us some relief or at least not contribute to more traffic concerns for us.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL TRAINING AND ADVOCACY GROUP FUNDING**

We definitely see the need and the added value of organizing as a community advocacy group when our purpose as an advisory group has been fulfilled. We have asked the I-526 LCC WEST project's EJ Team to provide us with information regarding the structure and function of similar organizations, both locally and regionally. We would like the benefit of additional time to review that information and further evaluate representation from the impacted EJ neighborhoods on the Project Oversight Committee (POC) from the association that forms. Additionally, we would like to ask if Dr. Ellis is available for consultation given her experience with us over the past year and a half?

At the January 2021 CAC meeting, new language was presented for the "Organizational Training" commitment: *"SCDOT will provide organizational training for the CAC and community members interested in creating a community advocacy organization."* Also, the updated commitment for the POC included that SCDOT would *"provide administrative support to the POC for the duration of the project."*

- In addition to the revised commitments listed above, the CAC requests sustained or seed funds from SCDOT to support development, implementation, and operations of the community advocacy group.

## **EDUCATIONAL AND EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES**

After reviewing the College Aid, School-to-Work Program and Pre-employment Training commitments in the draft EJCMP, we would like additional information and present the following recommendations to SCDOT and FHWA:

- How was the amount for the scholarship program determined?
  - We would like to know more about the student population in our communities to ensure that the funding allocated for the scholarship program is equitable and adequate for the children that live in our neighborhoods. **At a minimum, we request that the \$50,000 that has been proposed be doubled to \$100,000.**
  - Our students from all grade levels should have an opportunity to benefit from the scholarship program. The proposed schedule that has been provided states *"Construction of the I-526 LCC WEST project begins"* with a date range of 2027 to 2032. A child living in either of the impacted neighborhoods that is in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade NOW will endure every phase of mitigation construction, right-of-way acquisition, and interstate construction during the balance of their formative educational years. They would be further penalized if we do not provide these resources for their educational pursuits after completion of high school.
  - We agree that residents of the impacted EJ neighborhoods that will be relocated as a result of the I-526 project should remain eligible for the scholarship program.
  - The commitment also indicates the scholarship will be available to students from "neighboring EJ communities."
    - What are the names of the other communities/neighborhoods and why are they eligible for the funding that is allocated for the neighborhoods that will be directly impacted by the I-526 project?
    - By dispersing the money beyond the neighborhoods represented and faithfully serving on the CAC, you are reducing the benefit to those families that are truly affected.
    - Students from the impacted EJ neighborhoods should always get preference in the selection process. Those residing elsewhere may have the benefit of other resources to which our children have no access. Likewise, students from neighboring EJ communities may have

other competencies and advantages that reduce our students' chances of receiving the scholarship.

- Who determines the criteria for scholarship eligibility and the amount awarded per recipient?
  - We request the opportunity to provide input on the selection process.
- Will the scholarship be “need-based” or awarded based on merit or competition?
- Will the scholarship be applied to the student's tuition only or could it be used for other expenses like books and supplies?
- We have requested additional information about the organization that was presented to manage the scholarship money. We would also like to know of similar agencies that offer the same services. Moreover, we respectfully ask that no part of the money provided for the educational and employment initiatives be controlled or managed by anyone at the local government level.
- Regarding the School-to-Work (STW) initiative, would SCDOT be amenable to creating internship-like opportunities, or something similar, for our 9<sup>th</sup> grade students so that they are inspired to pursue practical and sustainable careers?
- We would like to get a better understanding of the framework for this initiative. We have no idea of its structure, implementation, and benefits. We would also like to know of both the success stories and lessons learned from organizations that implement the program and students that have completed it.
- The EJ Team has advised us that this is a program with which SCDOT has considerable prior experience; however, we would like to know if there are other initiatives beyond what SCDOT is accustomed to delivering that might benefit our students.
- The draft EJCMP commitment indicates SCDOT will hire summer interns for the STW program during the right-of-way (ROW) acquisition phase, which is proposed to occur beginning 2023 through 2027.
  - Will the internship opportunities occur each year for the five (5) years that ROW will be acquired? Lives will be disturbed for longer than one (1) summer.
  - Can the STW program be implemented any earlier than the ROW phase of the project?
  - How was the number of students for this initiative determined and can that number be increased?
    - Would SCDOT consider either developing or recommending and funding an engineering, robotics or similar program that benefits our younger students? Most of the proposed initiatives serve our older students and we would like to increase our younger kids' exposure to the field of engineering and other STEM-related careers.

## **NOISE**

Residents are concerned about the impact of noise on their quality of life once the new interstate infrastructure is closer to their homes than it was before. It doesn't seem that there were many noise-related comments received in the Mitigation Survey; however, the focus of the survey was more about the other features and amenities with nothing specifically presented regarding noise. We kindly request that the same emphasis that has been placed on the impacts to both the Highland Terrace-Liberty Park Community Center and the Russelldale Community Center along with the construction of a new replacement facility be directed to the new relationship that residents will have with both noise and air quality.

Many in our neighborhoods enjoy our yards and being outdoors. We are all looking forward to the opportunity return to those spaces once health and safety restrictions are less of a concern. After the

I-526 project removes homes and adds an additional set of lanes into our existing neighborhood boundaries, we will endure the compounded result of noise from two (2) sets of highway structures. We might not fully understand the science and logic of federal and state noise policies; but we are completely cognizant of how loud interstate traffic is currently, how much more noise we will be exposed to once the new roads are open, and how much noise we will endure as the highway construction project begins.

We kindly request that SCDOT and FHWA reconsider its decision to not install noise barriers along the perimeter of the impacted EJ neighborhoods. We have and are continuing to bear an exorbitant amount of unsolicited burdens from the expansion of I-526, more than any other neighborhoods along this interstate corridor and likely more than any other project in the state of South Carolina. If mitigation is supposed to provide a degree of relief from the impact, there is no sign of relief from the noise we know we will encounter.

On behalf of the I-526 LCC WEST CAC and residents of the impacted EJ neighborhoods, these items are submitted for your serious consideration as a part of the Environmental Justice Community Mitigation Plan and beneficial long-term outcomes to our community.

Sincerely,

I-526 Lowcountry Corridor WEST Community Advisory Council

Tina Baxley  
Ferndale Neighborhood

Charlynn Smith  
Ferndale Neighborhood

Larenda Baxley  
Ferndale Neighborhood

Ruth Mae Whitney  
Highland Terrace Neighborhood

Prayonda Cooper  
Joppa Way Neighborhood

Carolyn Varner  
Liberty Park Neighborhood

Cynthia Anderson  
Liberty Park Neighborhood

Angela Anderson  
Russelldale Neighborhood

Brother Earl Muhammad  
Religious Leader (Ferndale)

Michael Halls, Sr.  
Ferndale Neighborhood

Gilbert Reeves  
Ferndale Neighborhood

Geneva Swett  
Ferndale Neighborhood

Nathaniel Bryant  
Highland Terrace Neighborhood

Doris Twiggs  
Liberty Park Neighborhood

Jeanaris Bannister  
Liberty Park Neighborhood

Tony Grasso  
Russelldale Neighborhood

Rev. David L. Johnson  
Religious Leader (Ferndale)

Brother DeAndre Muhammad  
Religious Leader (Ferndale)



August 10, 2021

I-526 LCC WEST Community Advisory Council  
C/O I-526 LCC Community Office  
5627 Rivers Avenue  
North Charleston, South Carolina 29406

RE: I-526 Lowcountry Corridor WEST Project Community Mitigation Plan

Dear Council Members:

The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) would like to thank you all for your time and consideration on the I-526 LCC WEST project. Your input during the project development process has been critical to the team's understanding of the community impacts and the mitigation needs. We appreciate the honest feedback in the organized letter of response in March 2021 outlining your concerns regarding the proposed Environmental Justice Community Mitigation Plan. We have reviewed these concerns and made changes in the Final Environmental Justice Community Mitigation plan that will be included in the Combined Final Environmental Impact Statement/Record of Decision. The following includes responses to your concerns and questions outlined in your letter:

**Replacement Community Center Design:**

SCDOT has coordinated with the City of North Charleston regarding the requests outlined in your letter. The City and SCDOT will implement coordination with the Project Oversight Committee (POC) and the community as a whole during the design and development of the community center design in order to receive feedback. The requested programs and amenities that were listed in your letter have been included in the mitigation plan which is enclosed under Section 3.3.2 with the following exceptions below:

- The community center will be equipped with a backup generator, normal refrigeration and will be fully ADA Accessible. The City would not be able to commit to providing solar power or to designation of the facility as an emergency shelter, but the center would be utilized as an emergency supply distribution center as requested.
- Current Local, State & Federal Stormwater management design criteria and standards will be adhered to in the design and construction of this facility.
- SCDOT & the City will coordinate with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) for an evaluation and request recommendations for incorporating appropriate features for alligator education, awareness and protections in any areas where alligator activity is anticipated.

**Plan for Increased Congestion:**

SCDOT and the project team prepared and presented a presentation on the traffic changes that would result from the removal of the direct access ramp from Rivers Avenue to I-26 at the I-526 at Rivers Ave Interchange. This presentation demonstrated that including the direct access ramp to I-26 would be detrimental to improving traffic operations at this critical ramping location and would result in additional





relocations to 5 residential homes and the Life Changers Church. As an alternative, SCDOT would propose to incorporate improvements at the Remount Road and Rivers Interchange which greatly enhances the traffic operations at this location and the adjacent ramping from Remount onto I-26. These intersection improvements were at one time proposed as a part of the I-526 LCC WEST project. However, the Lowcountry Rapid Transit Project is proposing to make similar improvements at this intersection and will be advanced to construction prior to the I-526 LCC WEST Project. This alternative would facilitate improved traffic performance for traffic accessing I-26 from the Rivers Avenue community and would minimize the impacts to the community.

The Council also expressed concerns that the proposed apartments being planned on Mall Drive may contribute to additional traffic congestion on the Rivers Avenue Corridor. Traffic modeling for this development indicate that a majority of the traffic from these apartments would access I-26 from Montague Avenue and only approximately 25% of the traffic would travel towards Rivers Avenue. The traffic studies indicate that the new apartments should not significantly increase traffic on nearby roads.

#### **Organizational Training & Advocacy Group Funding:**

The council has requested that SCDOT provide additional guidance, resources and support for organizational training. SCDOT will provide support to the council members and POC members during the life of the project to include administrative assistance, technical guidance from project team members, use of the community office facilities and equipment for meetings and training opportunities in this effort. In addition, Dr. Ellis, would be made available for any group meetings as a meeting facilitator during the life of the project. This language has been added to the mitigation plan as requested. SCDOT would not be able to provide seed funding for the organization of a future community advocacy group, but would provide services and support as outlined above as well as guidance on potential other funding mechanisms that may be available to your group.

#### **Educational & Employment Initiatives:**

SCDOT has increased the scholarship funding amount included in the mitigation plan from \$50,000 to \$100,000 as requested. The scholarship program can be implemented anytime during the life of the project after mitigation funds become available (likely in Late 2022 or 2023) and can be extended through the construction completion (which is likely in 2032) or until the scholarship funds have all been awarded and disbursed. SCDOT will rely on the recommendations from the council as to the requirements, eligibility criteria, and amounts of awards that they would like to recommend for the scholarship program. We concur that the scholarship opportunities should be open to current residents as well as residents that may have been relocated to other communities as a result of the I-526 LCC WEST project. The scholarship funds should be made available to the 4 communities that are disproportionately impacted by the project (Russelldale, Ferndale, Liberty Park and Highland Terrace) and the language referring to other EJ communities within the project has been deleted from the plan.

Upon further coordination with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), it was determined that the scholarship funds could not be managed by scholarship investment organizations as it is not allowed under federal regulations for this funding. SCDOT will partner with a local college or university to administer the program as we have done in prior scholarship programs. The guidelines and recommendations for the scholarship program that are provided by the council will be incorporated into the scope of services for the university or college that we contract with to administer the scholarship.






The Summer Transportation Institute Program (STIC) is geared towards high school age students. Internships can be opened to 16 and up but many places limit to 18 and up depending on the job function. Normally SCDOT offers the On-The-Job training, STIC & Scholarships only during the 3 year construction contract. However, SCDOT has increased the funding available and will commit to implementing these programs during the life of the project in order to maximize the benefits available to the impacted communities (anticipated to extend from 2022 – 2032). The CAC Subcommittee will decide on program details such as number of students chosen, the types of programs offered and the requirements and eligibility requirements for these programs. SCDOT's Civil Rights office will work with the project team to assist in executing these programs in accordance with these recommendations.

**Noise:**

SCDOT has added a commitment to the mitigation plan to include construction of Mitigation Barriers (similar to noise walls) to be built along each side of the I-26 corridor from just south of Remount Rd. to the southern end of Highland Terrace. Along the I-526 corridor, noise abatement is more complicated to address on elevated roadway bridge structures which have noise that may be originating under the structures and not just traffic noises from the top of the structure. Noise mitigation technologies are rapidly evolving and developing, so SCDOT would like to remain open to consideration of the most effective noise reduction technologies available at the time of construction. SCDOT will require the contractor selected for the projects to submit a design for this section of Interstate 526 that reduces the anticipated noise levels for receptors within the Liberty Hill, Russelldale, and Ferndale communities.

Again, we thank you for your support and your involvement as a community advisory council member on the I-526 WEST Lowcountry Corridor project. If you have any additional questions or concerns, please contact me at 803 737 1346 or by email at [rilevi@scdot.org](mailto:rilevi@scdot.org) or we can arrange to facilitate further discussions of these concerns at a future council meeting.

Sincerely,

  
Joy S. Riley, PE, PMP, CPM, DBIA  
Program Manager  
Lowcountry Regional Production Group

JSR:gg

cc: Randall Young, P.E., SCDOT Chief Engineer for Project Delivery  
John D. Boylston, P.E., SCDOT Director of Preconstruction  
Chad Long, SCDOT Director of Environmental  
Jennifer Necker, P.E., SCDOT Lowcountry Regional Production Group Engineer

File: PC/JSR



July 13, 2022

I-526 LCC WEST Community Advisory Council  
C/o I-526 LCC Community Office  
5627 Rivers Avenue  
North Charleston, SC 29406

RE: I-526 Lowcountry Corridor WEST Project Community Mitigation Plan Revisions

Dear Council Members:

The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) would like to thank you all for your time and consideration on the I-526 LCC WEST project. Your input during the project development process has been critical to the team's understanding of the community impacts and the mitigation needs. We appreciate the honest feedback in the organized letter of response in March 2021 outlining your concerns regarding the proposed Environmental Justice Community Mitigation Plan. We reviewed these concerns and made changes in the Final Environmental Justice Community Mitigation plan that was submitted to Federal Highway Administration for review last fall. During the FHWA review of the mitigation plan, the administration staff took the time to review all the community comments and CAC meeting summaries as a part of this extensive effort to ensure this plan adequately mitigates the impacts to the community. As a result of this review, FHWA and SCDOT have proposed some additional changes to the mitigation plan in order to further address some of the remaining concerns. The enclosed revised Final Environmental Justice Community Mitigation plan will be included in the Combined Final Environmental Impact Statement/Record of Decision that will be formalized later this year. The following provides a summary of the additional mitigation items revised in this revised plan:

**Community Workshops & Continuous Community Outreach:**

SCDOT will provide regular community outreach in the impacted communities to include distributions of flyers and community meetings in order to keep the community informed of the project's schedule and community mitigation programs and opportunities available. Part of this outreach will include community information sessions or workshops on topics of general interest to the community to stay engaged with residents.

**Replacement Community Center Design:**

SCDOT has added a commitment to provide solar power to the community center design.

**Community Air Quality Monitoring Program:**

SCDOT will develop and fund a PM 2.5 air monitoring program within the impacted EJ communities of Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Liberty Park, and Russelldale. SCDOT will provide results to their website where community members can access real time data/results through 2038 or until the end of construction activities within the EJ neighborhoods.



### **Community Mitigation Barriers:**

SCDOT will construct additional mitigation barriers along 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.

### **Enhanced Right of Way Services:**

SCDOT will provide a full time EJ Community Right of Way Liaison to be available in the Community Office as a resource to all impacted EJ communities. The liaison will provide advisory services to the impacted residents to ensure they fully understand their rights, benefits, responsibilities, and opportunities available. The liaison will be a resource to the residents when they need assistance in understanding any letters, offers, appraisals or other documents during the ROW process and will communicate what options may be available to the resident to address any concerns. The liaison, agents, and community office staff will provide bilingual services for residents if required. The liaison will assist in resolving any issues or disputes that the residents may experience with agents or contractors working on behalf of SCDOT during the project. The liaison will assist in implementation of the Acquisition Fairness Program to ensure that appraisals are in compliance. The liaison will assist the residents in understanding their eligibility for any of the mitigation opportunities and assist in coordination with the program staff. The project team will provide training and orientation to the right of way agents contracted to work on the project in order to ensure that agents understand the mitigation benefits and the liaison's role on the project during acquisition. Transportation to view comparable properties will be provided for the displaced business owners, property owners and tenants who require assistance. The liaison will be available to the residents to answer any questions or concerns that arise during the right of way acquisition and relocation process.

### **Affordable Housing:**

SCDOT has added a commitment to the mitigation plan to require that affordable housing developments constructed as a part of this plan must be located in an area with direct access to transit and convenient access to the proposed Bus Rapid Transit System. Developments that are in compliance with the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Government's Lowcountry Rapid Transit - Transit Oriented Development Plan will be given priority in the selection of proposed development plans. In addition, SCDOT has increased the number of single family home lots secured within or in close proximity to the impacted communities from 20 to 45 lots.

### **First Time Home Buyer Grant Program:**

SCDOT will implement a grant program for first-time home buyers that are residents of the impacted EJ communities and individuals relocated to other communities. SCDOT will partner with a state or federal agency or non-profit organization that is qualified to administer this type of program. SCDOT will provide funding for program administration as well as Grant funds as determined by estimated participation in the program. Since the program will be based on a sliding scale based on participant's income, the initial budget would be based on reasonable estimates for participation rates and average income levels to initiate the program. This program will be established at the start of the right-of-way phase and be available throughout property acquisitions and relocations.



### **Enhanced Relocation Mitigation Assistance:**

SCDOT will assist displaced business owners by reimbursing reasonable moving costs, personal property losses, expenses in finding a replacement, and expenses in reestablishing their business. SCDOT will offer relocation counseling to employees of displaced businesses to minimize economic harm and provide information as to possible sources of funding and assistance from other local, state, and federal agencies. SCDOT will partner with career development and employment organizations to ensure that displaced employees are aware of and provided offerings including career development information, job search resources, and training programs. Businesses being relocated in the EJ communities may also be eligible for an additional mitigation payment to cover the actual expenses in reestablishing their business above the maximum amounts allowed under state and federal law. Transportation to view comparable replacement properties will be provided for displaced business owners, residents and tenants requiring assistance. SCDOT will also assist displaced residential tenants by reimbursing reasonable moving costs and providing rent supplement payments in accordance with the Uniform Act. In addition to the benefits provided under the Uniform Act, the Enhanced Relocation Mitigation Program will allow for supplemental rental mitigation payments for up to an additional 18 months based on the displacee's replacement rent and income.

### **Acquisition Fairness Program:**

SCDOT will implement an acquisition fairness program on this project to address community concerns over the fairness of property appraisals. SCDOT will hire a licensed appraiser to prepare an appraisal in compliance with all State and Federal laws that affect property value at the initiation of the Right of Way acquisition. If a second opinion is desired, the property owners will be given the option to have a licensed appraiser of their own selection to prepare a second appraisal of their property, and SCDOT will compensate their appraiser directly for this appraisal. SCDOT shall be given the opportunity to review the selected appraiser's fee for service as to reasonability prior to commencement of the work to ensure that the appraiser is properly licensed and is preparing the appraisal in accordance with appropriate standards and guidelines. The property owner may also be eligible for an acquisition fairness mitigation payment based on two factors upon review of the accepted appraisal. SCDOT's I-526 LCC-WEST Right of Way Liaison will review the appraisal to determine if property values were decreased or damaged due to conditions that may have been created by previous public eminent domain acquisitions on the property (such as property access or property shape). The appraisals will also be reviewed to determine whether prior zoning changes have impacted the highest and best use for the property utilized in the appraisal. The mitigation payments would be calculated based on the additional value that the two factors above would have increased the property value to the benefit of the property owner. These payments should eliminate any potential for disparities in value due to prior project impacts or local zoning changes in the community.

### **College Aid Initiative:**

SCDOT has increased the scholarship fund commitment from \$100,000 to \$500,000 and the funds will be available through the construction phase of the project or until the funds have been fully awarded.

### **Careers in Transportation Program:**



SCDOT has added a commitment to provide an awareness program that increases the understanding of the transportation industry and the builds interest in the wide range of career opportunities available. This program will explore all levels of opportunities from entry level positions only requiring a high school diploma to the professional level opportunities. This program will be offered to middle school, high school, and young adults in any of the impacted EJ communities. This program will begin in 2023 and will be available until construction of the project is complete.

#### **Small Business Development Program:**

SCDOT will develop an educational program to bring awareness to the generational wealth benefits that entrepreneurship can provide to EJ community members. SCDOT will partner with organizations and other disadvantaged business enterprises (DBE) in the state to develop and deliver an educational program that empowers those interested in learning more about starting a small business enterprise (SBE). This program will include awareness about how to access small business resources and orientation to the benefits and programs offered to SBE and DBEs through SCDOT, FHWA and other local organizations. SCDOT will also conduct DBE information sessions to provide information on opportunities to work on the I-526 LCC-WEST project during design, right of way and construction. Additional recruitment, round table discussions and partnering sessions will be conducted once the potential prime contractors are identified for the project. This program will begin in 2023 and be available throughout the project until construction is substantially underway and all contracts are fulfilled.

#### **Community Mitigation Implementation Plan & Schedule:**

SCDOT has added a commitment to delivering the Community Mitigation measures outlined in this plan in a timeline that maximize the benefits to the impacted EJ communities. On past projects, community mitigation is typically implemented during construction or at the end of the project construction. SCDOT has committed to implementing a majority of the mitigation measures immediately upon approval of the FEIS/ROD. Early implementation will allow the impacted residents to have access to the benefits of the mitigation in advance of the impacts and will increase the quality of life within the impacted communities.

SCDOT will develop an implementation plan that outlines more detailed plans and details for each of the mitigation items. As the mitigation items are implemented, it may be necessary to adjust some of the criteria or detailed implementation strategies in order to ensure participation. The implementation plan will be evaluated each year and adjustments will be proposed for mitigation items that had low participation in the previous year. The updated implementation plan will be provided to FHWA for review and approval each year that it is revised from the original implementation plan. The plan will also be shared with the Project Oversight Committee with the intention of continuing outreach and project communication with all EJ residents. The implementation plan will not revise the mitigation commitments but will adjust the execution strategies as necessary to ensure successful implementation.

#### **Additional Benefits to Remove Barriers to Program Participation:**

SCDOT recognizes lower income community members may still face barriers to participation in the I-526 LCC EJ Mitigation Plan programs and opportunities. Lower income participants may not have access to reliable transportation or childcare which would limit their ability to attend a program not offered within the immediate community boundaries. Participants may also work during the day which would impact their ability to participate in programs hosted during standard work hours. Missing work to participate in program opportunities would result in loss of income necessary for food and shelter expenses. SCDOT will work





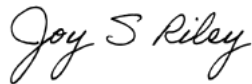
with community members to identify additional barriers to participation in the mitigation programs. SCDOT will incorporate reasonable budgets for eliminating these barriers to increase program participation, when feasible. These proposed budget expenses would be outlined and assessed each year in the I-526 LCC EJ Community Mitigation Implementation Plan. Some examples of budget items may include the following:

- Transportation expenses to contract with a qualified transportation provider;
- Childcare expenses with a qualified and licensed day care provider;
- Reimbursements for necessary supplies for participation; or
- A reasonable stipend offered to participants each week of program participation.

Accommodations may not be necessary for every mitigation program offered but will be implemented in programs where barriers exist to recruiting reasonable participation. SCDOT will continue to work with local transit providers and other community organizations to develop partnerships to meet these needs with combined resources where feasible and reasonable for the partnering organizations.

Again, we thank you for your support and your involvement as a community advisory council member on the I-526 WEST Lowcountry Corridor project. If you have any additional questions or concerns, please contact me at 803-737-1346 or by email at [rileyj@scdot.org](mailto:rileyj@scdot.org) or we can arrange to facilitate further discussions of these concerns at a future council meeting.

Sincerely,



Joy Riley

JSR: jsr

File: PC/JSR

cc: Chris Gaskins, SCDOT Director of Alternative Delivery  
Chad Long, SCDOT Director of Environmental  
Shane Belcher, FHWA-SC Environmental





## APPENDIX B

### REPLACEMENT COMMUNITY CENTER AND POCKET PARK CONCEPTUAL RENDERINGS

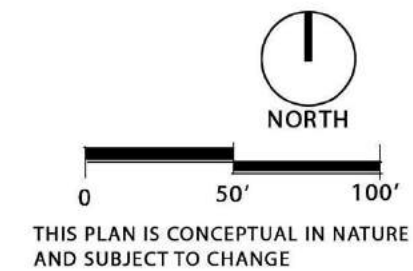


## REPLACEMENT COMMUNITY CENTER AND POCKET PARKS CONCEPTUAL RENDERINGS



### HIGHLAND TERRACE COMMUNITY POCKET PARK

- 1 ON STREET PARKING
- 2 WOOD BENCHES
- 3 FULL COURT BASKETBALL
- 4 HALF COURT BASKETBALL
- 5 25 X25 OPEN AIR PAVILION
- 6 5000SF PLAYGROUND
- 7 SIDEWALK CONNECTION
- 8 IMPROVE CROSS WALKS





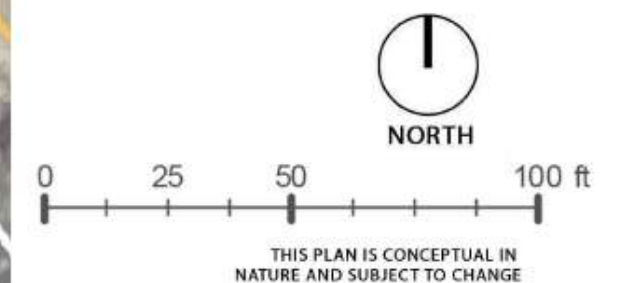
REPLACEMENT COMMUNITY CENTER AND POCKET PARKS CONCEPTUAL RENDERINGS



**RUSSELDALE  
COMMUNITY  
POCKET PARK**

**OPTION 1**

- 1 IMPROVED CROSSWALKS
- 2 FLOWERING SHRUBS AND PARK SIGNAGE
- 3 PRIVACY PLANTING
- 4 BASKETBALL COURT
- 5 TRICYCLE LOOP
- 6 WOOD BENCHES
- 7 15' X 30' OPEN AIR PAVILION
- 8 3000 SF PLAYGROUND
- 9 PUBLIC ART
- 10 WOOD PRIVACY FENCE





## REPLACEMENT COMMUNITY CENTER AND POCKET PARKS CONCEPTUAL RENDERINGS







## APPENDIX C

SCDOT – CITY OF NORTH CHARLESTON INTER-AGENCY AGREEMENT

**Cooperative Intergovernmental Agreement Between  
The City of North Charleston and  
The South Carolina Department of Transportation  
For Mitigation Efforts Related to the I-526 Improvement Project**

This Agreement is made this 15<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2021, by and between the City of North Charleston (hereinafter "City") and the South Carolina Department of Transportation (hereinafter "SCDOT") (collectively "the Parties").

**WITNESSETH THAT:**

WHEREAS, SCDOT is developing an interstate improvement project on the I-526 Lowcountry Corridor in the greater Charleston region; and

WHEREAS, SCDOT has determined that the project will have significant impacts to the communities surrounding the existing interstate corridor that will require mitigation; and

WHEREAS, SCDOT is committed to work with City in order to properly mitigate these potential community impacts; and

WHEREAS, City is agreeable to work with SCDOT in order to meet common goals regarding mitigation efforts in the North Charleston community; and

WHEREAS, SCDOT is an agency of the State of South Carolina with the authority to enter into contracts necessary for the proper discharge of its functions and duties; and

WHEREAS, City is a body politic with the authority to enter into contracts necessary for the proper discharge of its functions and duties; and

WHEREAS, the Parties wish to set forth herein the terms of their relationship to accomplish the purpose set forth above;

NOW THEREFORE, in consideration of the mutual benefits accruing to each and to the State of South Carolina, the Parties agree as follows:

**I. DESCRIPTION**

This Agreement is for the replacement of community centers that will be affected by SCDOT's I-526 improvement project and for the construction of new sidewalks and shared-use pathways that will include pedestrian-scale lighting improvements that provide access to the new community centers from the connecting community streets. The work covered by this Agreement is a component of a larger mitigation plan for SCDOT's interstate improvement project.

## **II. OBLIGATIONS OF THE PARTIES**

### **A. SCDOT WILL:**

1. Identify an SCDOT employee to serve as SCDOT's Contact for City.
2. Through its normal right-of-way acquisition processes, acquire the two community centers, as applicable, and any associated real property that will be impacted by SCDOT's project. These properties are identified in Exhibit A, attached hereto and incorporated herein.
3. Acquire real property for locating a community center and pocket parks to mitigate the loss of those impacted by SCDOT's project. This property will be transferred to City from SCDOT upon acquisition by quitclaim deed. These properties are identified in Exhibit B, attached hereto and incorporated herein.
4. Secure any necessary Section 6(f) approvals required for impacts to the current community center.
5. According to the terms of the Local Public Agency (LPA) Agreement with City, incorporated herein by reference, fund the design and construction of the replacement community center, pocket parks, and shared-use paths as specified in the mitigation plan, incorporated herein by reference. This obligation also will extend to the initial equipping and furnishing of the community center. SCDOT's funding obligation is for the community center and pocket parks as outlined in the mitigation plan. City may elect to include discretionary items in the design and construction of these, but any such discretionary items will not be reimbursable by SCDOT.
6. Identify an SCDOT employee to participate in City's discussions that result in the selection of designs, plans, contractors, and consultants for the replacement community center and pocket parks.
7. Accept maintenance responsibility only for standard transportation materials, structures, and workmanship within SCDOT rights-of-way according to common local practices. For those items which will be maintained by SCDOT, SCDOT will accept maintenance responsibility after construction of the project is complete and the project is accepted by SCDOT. This will include the portions of the shared-use path that parallel State roadways.

8. Perform all services required of SCDOT in accordance with SCDOT guidelines and policies.
9. Within the limits of the South Carolina Tort Claims Act, be responsible for any loss resulting from bodily injuries (including death) or damages to property, arising out of any negligent act or negligent failure to act on SCDOT's part, or the part of any employee of SCDOT in performance of the work undertaken under this Agreement.

**B. CITY WILL:**

1. Become qualified through SCDOT as a Local Public Agency in order to manage the design and construction of the community center, pocket parks, and shared-use path.
2. Transfer the identified portion (see Exhibit A for further details) of the impacted community center tract to SCDOT.
3. Maintain or demolish, as appropriate, any structures and appurtenances on tracts conveyed to City from SCDOT.
4. Design and construct, through SCDOT's LPA Program, the replacement community center, two pocket parks, the shared-use path, and any sidewalks within the community center property complex or not parallel to a State maintained road.
5. Be responsible for maintenance of the community center, the pocket parks, lighting, landscaping, community entrance signs, traffic calming features (speed humps and raised crosswalks), pedestrian bridges, and portions of the shared-use path that do not parallel State roadways.
6. Develop and deliver enhanced programs and services at the community center in accordance with the mitigation plan (incorporated herein by reference).
7. Retain all records dealing with the Project for three years after the performance period of all agreements and covenants entered into for the Project. Such records shall be made available to SCDOT and FHWA upon request.
8. Comply with the audit requirements of 2 CFR 200, Subpart F.
9. Within the limitations of the South Carolina Tort Claims Act, be responsible for any loss resulting from bodily injuries (including death) or damages to property arising out of any negligent act or negligent failure to act on City's



part, or the part of any employee of City in performance of the work undertaken under this Agreement.

### **III. GENERAL TERMS**

- A. This Agreement shall take effect upon its execution and shall terminate upon the earlier of: written notification for cause from one Party to the other, or satisfaction of all terms and conditions of this Agreement.
- B. The Parties hereto agree to conform to all applicable SCDOT policies, all State, Federal, and local laws, rules, regulations, and ordinances governing agreements or contracts relative to the acquisition, design, construction, maintenance, and repair of roads and bridges, and other services covered under this Agreement.
- C. The Parties, or their authorized agents, shall agree to hold consultations with each other as may be necessary with regard to the execution of supplements, modifications, or amendments to this Agreement during the course of the Project for the purpose of resolving any unforeseen issues that may arise or items that may have been unintentionally omitted from this Agreement. Such supplements, modifications, or amendments shall be subject to the approval and proper execution of the Parties hereto. No supplement, modification, or amendment to this Agreement shall be effective or binding on any Party hereto unless such supplement, modification, or amendment has been agreed to in writing by the Parties hereto.
- D. Any and all reviews and approvals required of the Parties herein shall not be unreasonably denied, delayed, or withheld.
- E. No waiver of any event of default by a Party hereunder shall be implied from any delay or omission by the other Party to take action on account of such event of default, and no express waiver shall affect any event of default other than the event of default specified in the waiver and it shall be operative only for the time and to the extent therein stated. Waivers of any covenants, terms, or conditions contained herein must be in writing and shall not be construed as a waiver of any subsequent or other breach of the same covenant, term, or condition. The consent or approval by a Party of any act by the other requiring further consent or approval shall not be deemed to waive or render unnecessary the consent or approval to or of any subsequent or similar act. No single or partial exercise of any right or remedy of a Party hereunder shall preclude any further exercise thereof or the exercise of any other or different right or remedy.
- F. In the event a dispute or claim in connection with this Agreement shall arise between the Parties, the Parties shall meet in good faith and attempt to resolve any issues prior to taking legal or equitable action. Any lawsuit arising out of or relating to this Agreement shall be filed for non-jury proceedings in Charleston County.
- G. All notices and other correspondence will be officially delivered as follows:

As to SCDOT:  
Deputy Secretary of Engineering  
South Carolina Department of Transportation  
955 Park Street  
Columbia, South Carolina 29202-0191

As to City:  
Ray Anderson  
Assistant to the Mayor  
City of North Charleston  
2500 City Hall Lane  
North Charleston, South Carolina 29406

- H. The Parties each bind themselves, their respective successors, executors, administrators, and assigns to the other Party with respect to these requirements, and also agree that no Party shall assign, sublet, or transfer its respective interest in this Agreement without the written consent of the other.
- I. This Agreement is made and entered into for the sole protection and benefit of SCDOT, City, and their respective successors and assigns. No other persons, firms, entities, or parties shall have any rights or standing to assert any rights under this Agreement in any manner.
- J. Invalidation of any one or more of the provisions of this Agreement by a court of competent jurisdiction shall in no way affect any of the other provisions herein, all of which shall remain in full force and effect.
- K. This Agreement may be executed and delivered in counterparts, and if so executed, shall become effective when a counterpart has been executed and delivered by all Parties hereto. All counterparts taken together shall constitute one and the same Agreement and shall be fully enforceable as such. Delivery of counterparts via facsimile transmission or via email with scanned attachment shall be effective as if originals thereof were delivered.
- L. By executing this Agreement, the undersigned each affirm and certify that he or she has the authority to bind his or her principal thereto and that all necessary acts have been taken to duly authorize this Agreement under applicable law.
- M. This Agreement with attached Exhibits and Certifications constitutes the entire Agreement between the Parties. This Agreement is to be interpreted under the laws of the State of South Carolina.

*[Signature blocks on next page]*

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Parties have caused this Agreement to be executed on their behalf

SIGNED, SEALED, AND DELIVERED  
IN THE PRESENCE OF

CITY OF NORTH CHARLESTON

Raymond H. Cusack  
Witness

By: R. Keith Summey  
R. KEITH SUMMEY  
MAYOR  
Title

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF  
TRANSPORTATION

C. G. Snyell  
Witness

By: Chris Hall  
Secretary of Transportation

RECOMMENDED BY:

Justin Powell  
Deputy Secretary for Finance and Administration

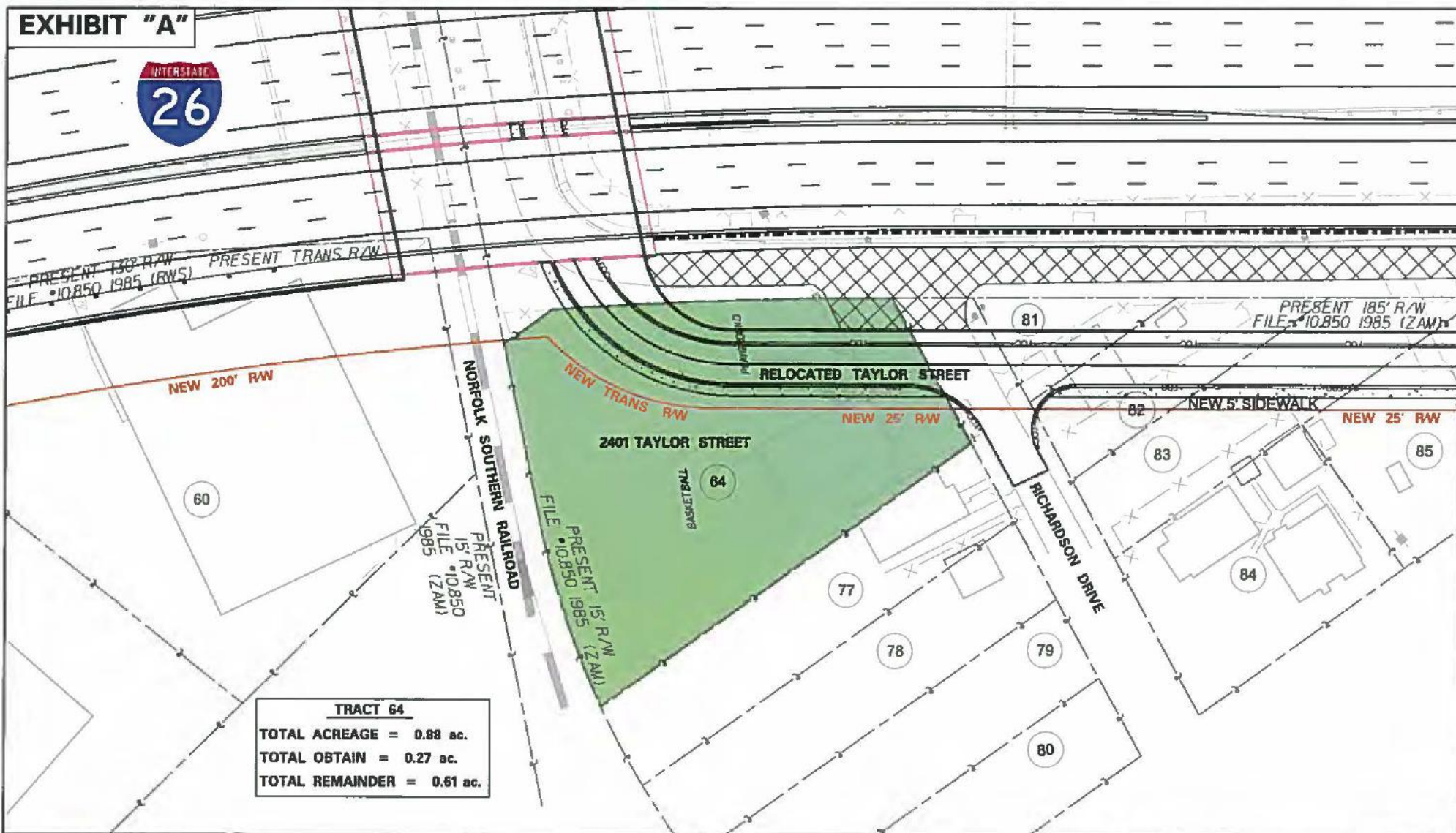
Lakshmi  
Deputy Secretary for Engineering

EXHIBIT A

HT Community Center Property RW Exhibit Map



# EXHIBIT "A"



**WEST 526**  
 LOWCOUNTRY  
 CORRIDOR

**LEGEND**  
 — NEW EDGE OF TRAVELWAY  
 — NEW BRIDGE STRUCTURE  
 — NEW RIGHT OF WAY  
 — EXISTING RIGHT OF WAY  
 — EXISTING PROPERTY LINE  
 — COMMUNITY CENTER PARCEL



**SCDOT**  
 South Carolina Department of Transportation

**Stantec**  
 Stantec Consulting Services Inc.  
 4937 Centre Pointe Drive Suite 300  
 North Charleston, SC 29418  
 www.stantec.com

**I-526 LOWCOUNTRY CORRIDOR  
 CONCEPTUAL IMPROVEMENTS AT  
 2401 TAYLOR STREET  
 HIGHLAND TERRACE COMMUNITY CENTER**

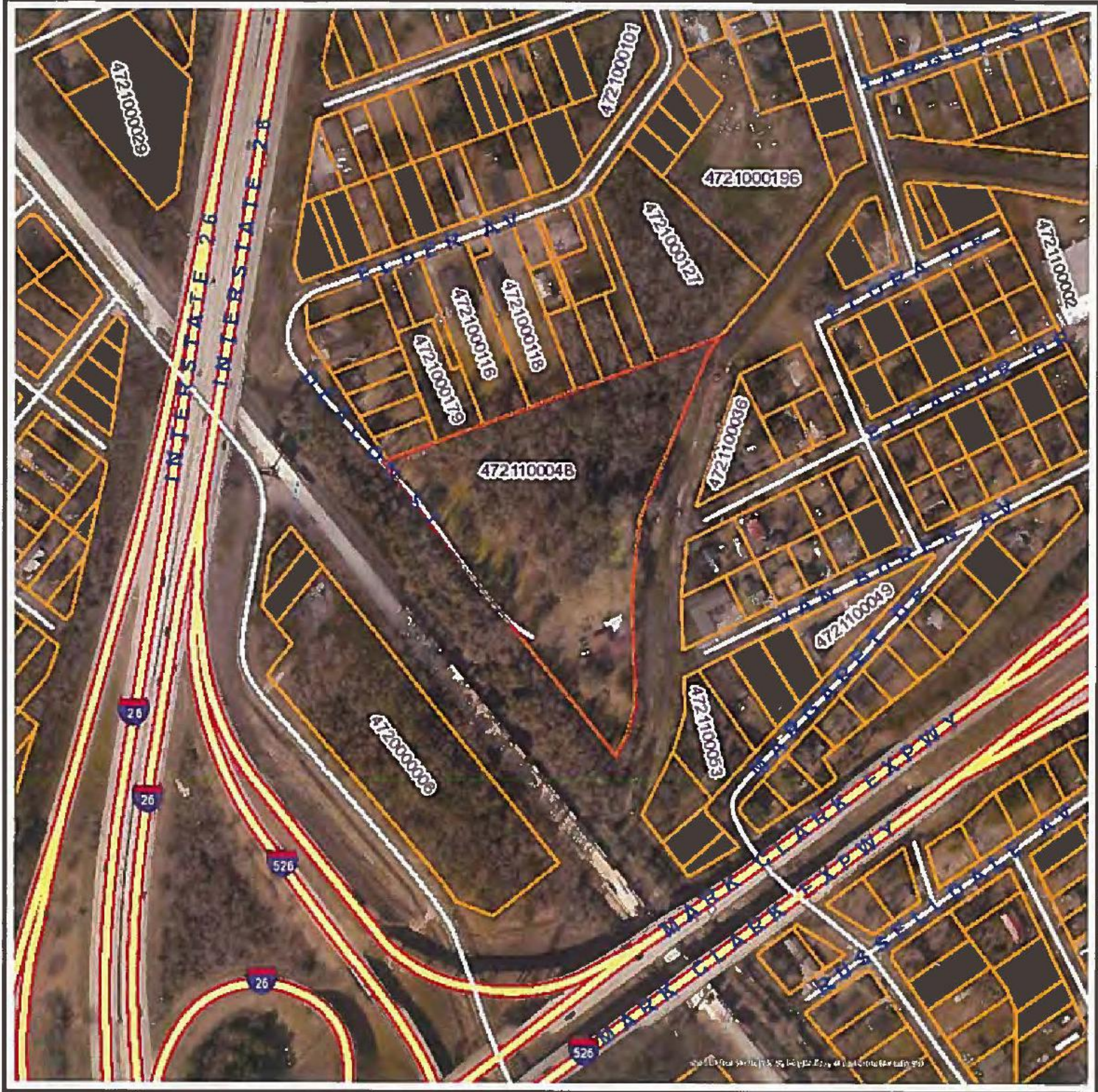
04/30/2021

SHEET 1 OF 1

**EXHIBIT B**

**Anderson Tract Property Map**

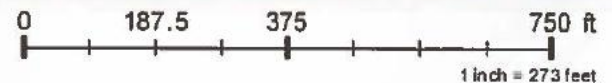




## Charleston County Parcel Map

Parcel ID: 4721100048  
 OWNER1: ANDERSON HATTIE RUTH  
 LEVY  
 DEEDED ACREAGE: 5.72  
 PLAT BOOK PAGE: F-182  
 DEED BOOK PAGE: Y658-882  
 Jurisdiction: CITY OF NORTH

CHARLESTON  
 Tax Map #472-11-00-048



**Note:** The Charleston County makes every effort possible to produce the most accurate information. The layers contained in the map service are for information purposes only. The Charleston County makes no warranty, express or implied, nor any guaranty as to the content, sequence, accuracy, timeliness or completeness of any of the information provided. The County explicitly disclaims all representations and warranties. The reader agrees to hold harmless the Charleston County for any cause of action and costs associated with any causes of action which may arise as a consequence of the County providing this information.

Author: Charleston County SC  
 Date: 3/18/2020





## APPENDIX D

### COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE ENHANCEMENT PLAN SUMMARY REPORT



# COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE ENHANCEMENT PLAN SUMMARY

INTERSTATE 526 (I-526)  
FROM PAUL CANTRELL BOULEVARD TO VIRGINIA AVENUE  
NORTH CHARLESTON AND CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA



SUBMITTED TO SCDOT: APRIL 2021

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1.0 What is the CIEP?</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.0 CIEP Open House</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1 Objectives	4
2.2 Audience	5
2.3 Public Engagement and Advertising	5
2.4 Logistics	7
2.4.1 Safety and Security	7
2.5 Materials Presented	7
<b>3.0 CIEP Survey</b>	<b>8</b>
3.1 Content	8
3.2 Distribution	9
<b>4.0 CIEP Survey and Open House Results</b>	<b>9</b>
4.1 Lighting	9
4.2 Landscaping and Aesthetics	9
4.3 Stormwater Drainage	9
4.4 Traffic Calming	10
4.5 Pedestrian Facilities	10
4.6 Personal and Professional Development Training	10
<b>5.0 CIEP Recommendations</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Appendix A: Public Engagement Materials</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Appendix B: CIEP Survey</b>	<b>19</b>

# 1.0 WHAT IS THE CIEP?

The Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan (CIEP) identifies a set of SCDOT committed improvements to address bicycle and pedestrian safety, access to community centers, neighborhood entrance aesthetics, stormwater drainage, lack of bus shelter amenities, and traffic speeding within the Environmental Justice (EJ) neighborhoods that will be impacted by the I-526 Lowcountry Corridor (LCC) WEST project. Neighborhoods considered for improvements as a part of mitigation for the project include Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Joppa Way, Liberty Park, and Russelldale. Specific locations for improvements were determined by CIEP survey participants, attendees at the CIEP Open House, and members of the Community Advisory Council (CAC). More information on the CAC can be found in the FEIS Appendix X – EJ Outreach Strategy and Tools, and FEIS Appendix H – EJ Community Mitigation Plan.

## 2.0 CIEP OPEN HOUSE

SCDOT sponsored an open house on March 6, 2021 at the Ferndale Community Center in North Charleston to gather public input on potential community infrastructure enhancements.

To promote safe social distancing, residents were encouraged to “drop-in” any time from 1:00 – 4:00 pm and have one-on-one opportunities to discuss the overall I-526 LCC WEST project as well as CIEP-related mitigation. The CIEP Open House, including survey results and subsequent recommendations, is discussed in the following sections.

### 2.1 OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the CIEP Open House was to provide residents of the potentially impacted EJ neighborhoods with an opportunity to provide feedback on the various improvement options developed by the project team in the categories listed below:

- Pedestrian facilities
- Aesthetics/Landscaping
- Conceptual lighting
- Traffic calming
- Stormwater facilities
- Bus stop facilities

Additionally, this event provided CAC members an opportunity to interact with other residents of their community and discuss project related issues with the support of project staff in a “safe space.”

Content and engagement activities were designed to educate the public about the CIEP and mitigation process, provide preliminary concepts for infrastructure enhancements, and receive feedback on the DRAFT Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan improvement options from the impacted residents.

## 2.2 AUDIENCE

The meeting plan anticipated an audience of approximately 50 residents and stakeholders from the EJ neighborhoods attending the three-hour open-house event.

## 2.3 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND ADVERTISING

The project team focused efforts on public engagement before the CIEP Open House to encourage participation and receive meaningful feedback. The following list provides a summary of the extensive public outreach and engagement efforts prior to the CIEP Open House. All relevant public engagement materials can be examined in Appendix A of this report.

- Information Box Flyer/Mailbox Flyers
  - Informational flyers were distributed in the identified EJ neighborhoods using the pre-established flyer box and indoor brochure stand route. This was done approximately two weeks prior to the meeting and replenished as needed when checked twice weekly. Approximately 63 flyers were retrieved from the flyer stations from February 18 – March 6, 2021.
  - Flyers included the date, time, and location of the CIEP Open House and Community Office contact information.
- Postcards
  - Postcards were delivered to each of the 1,198 residential mail stops in the EJ neighborhoods using the United States Postal Service’s Every Door Direct Mail (EDDM). The date of delivery was February 27, 2021, which was approximately one week prior to the event.
  - Postcards included the date, time, and location of the CIEP Open House and Community Office contact information.
- Local Officials Letter
  - The Mayor of the City of North Charleston, Keith Summey, along with North Charleston City Council Members Sam Hart and Dorothy Williams sent a letter to residents in the EJ neighborhoods to encourage their attendance at the CIEP Open House and encourage survey participation.
- Media Stories / Articles
  - Radio – Cumulus Media (WMGL 107.3 and WWWZ 293), Charleston Radio Group (Heaven 100.1), Blog Talk Radio and WJNI Gospel Radio (106.3)
  - Television – WCDB-TV, Channel 2
    - Interview conducted with CAC Member Cynthia Anderson
  - Newspapers – The Post & Courier, The Charleston Chronicle, Lowcountry El Informador
  - A Public Service Announcement (PSA) was distributed to media outlets.
- Social Media
  - The CIEP Open House flyer and multiple reminders of the event were posted on the project’s Facebook page.
  - A Facebook “event” was published to advertise the Open House and provide information on logistics.
  - Worked with Rosa Marcela Rabens to encourage her to share the information with her social media followers.
- Churches
  - CIEP information was shared via telephone and email with the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance (IMA) prior to the CIEP Open House



- Schools
  - The Charleston County School District's Office of Family and Community Engagement sent an automated message to families of students residing in the EJ neighborhoods on February 26 and March 4, 2021. These messages encouraged resident participation at the CIEP Open House and were received by 324 families.
- Project Website
  - The following features were added to the project's website to promote the Open House event:
    - Pop-up advertisement on the home page
    - Banner message below the menu on each webpage
    - EJ Community Mitigation Forum
  - Handouts and other materials presented at the event were also uploaded to the website, along with a link to the survey through March 27, 2021.
- Yard signs
  - The project team distributed 28 yard signs in high-traffic areas within or near the impacted EJ neighborhoods to advertise for the CIEP Open House. These included the following locations:
    - \*Family Seafood at Rivers Avenue and Morningside Drive
    - Corner of Marson Street and Railroad Avenue
    - Corner of April Avenue and Flora Street
    - Corner of Margaret Avenue and Van Buren Avenue
    - \*Corner of Fuller Street and Rivers Avenue (Ferndale welcome sign)
    - Highland Terrace-Liberty Park Community Center
    - Corner of Russelldale Avenue and Willis Drive
    - Corner of Russelldale Avenue and Delta Street
    - Corner of Russelldale Avenue and Butler Street
    - Corner of Russelldale Avenue and Rockingham Street
    - Russelldale Community Center
    - Corner of Rebecca Avenue and Butler Street
    - Corner of Rebecca Avenue and Delta Street
    - Corner of Southern Street and Rockingham Street
    - \*Ferndale Community Center
    - \*Corner of Railroad Avenue and Montague Avenue
    - \*Corner of Piedmont Avenue and Montague Avenue
    - \*Welch's Seafood on Rivers Avenue
    - Corner of Dorothy Williams Boulevard and Flora Street
    - Corner of Dorothy Williams Boulevard and James Bell Avenue
    - Biblical House of God Church
    - Life Changers Covenant Ministry
    - Resurrection Church of Jesus Christ
    - Iglesia Cristiana De Restauracion Church
    - CAC member yards
  - Locations with an asterisk indicate locations that also included balloons on the day of the event (March 6, 2021) as an attention-grabbing mechanism.

## 2.4 LOGISTICS

The CIEP Open House was held at the Ferndale Community Center on March 6, 2021, for residents of the impacted EJ neighborhoods to “drop-in” between 1:00-4:00 pm. The project team utilized both outdoor and indoor settings to encourage proper social distancing and safety protocols. Additional information on specific safety and security procedures are outlined in Section 2.4.1.

### **Drive-Thru**

A tent-based drive-thru station was available at the perimeter of the community center’s parking lot as an alternative for residents who either needed special accommodations or were uncomfortable participating in the Open House due to public health concerns.

### 2.4.1 Safety and Security

The City of North Charleston provided one police officer for the event.

Due to public health concerns, extra precautions were taken to ensure the safety of staff and each CIEP Open House attendee. Anyone entering the meeting was asked to wear a face mask. Face masks and hand sanitizer were made available at the sign-in stations, and temperature checks were performed using a forehead thermometer.

Tables and chairs in the open space were set-up with 6-foot social distancing and notices were posted to inform and remind attendees of the social distance requirement.

A 526-branded pen was offered to each attendee to minimize contact with shared surfaces as well as to encourage their completion of the survey.

## 2.5 MATERIALS PRESENTED

Preliminary concepts for infrastructure improvements based on initial reviews by SCDOT and the City of North Charleston were presented. Each attendee received a copy of the DRAFT CIEP overview along with the CIEP survey and a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Individual stations were set up for each component of the CIEP and allowed participants to provide specific feedback on locations for needed improvements. The preliminary concepts were presented on 48”x27” display boards and identified locations for improvements to lighting, traffic calming, pedestrian facilities, and stormwater drainage. While interacting at these stations, participants were encouraged to place small, red, circular stickers on the display boards in locations where they believe more attention is needed. Additional display board topics included aesthetics and landscaping options, bus stop improvements, the Community History Preservation Plan, community/recreation centers and pocket parks, affordable housing, personal and professional development training, and employment and education. A station was also available for right of way inquiries. Here, attendees were able to view right of way impacts on neighborhood mapping and provide the right of way specialists their contact information for follow-up conversations.

Each CIEP station also included an easel pad to record discussion points of note as well as a station-specific sign-in sheet.

## 3.0 CIEP SURVEY

The CIEP survey was initiated as the primary method to gauge residents' interest in each component of the plan and to identify areas in the EJ neighborhoods where improvements are desired. The survey was developed as a series of slides on the MetroQuest online forum and was transcribed as a paper version for distribution at the CIEP Open House and through direct mailing.

### 3.1 CONTENT

The survey invited participants to provide feedback on the CIEP in the following areas:

**Community Priorities** – Within the MetroQuest survey, residents were asked to allocate percentages of the CIEP budget to various components of the plan based on importance. The paper version of the survey presented the question as a ranking of the components. The CIEP categories included were community art, neighborhood entrance landscaping, lighting, sidewalks, stormwater drainage, security cameras, traffic calming measures (i.e., speed humps), and crosswalks.

**Infrastructure Map** – The MetroQuest survey presented participants with an overview map of the EJ neighborhoods and allowed them to drag and drop icons on the map where improvements are needed. The icons offered included lighting, sidewalk/bicycle facilities, crosswalks, speed humps, stormwater drainage, and landscaping. The paper version of the survey invited residents to list desired improvement locations by category.

**Mitigation Preferences** – The survey offered residents a menu of improvement options for several CIEP categories and asked for their preferred selection within each group:

- **Community Art** – Community Center Mural, Resident-Maintained Mini-Libraries, Community History Based Artwork, Bryant Street Overpass Mural, No Preference/Other
- **Neighborhood Entrance Landscaping** – Three (3) neighborhood entrance landscaping options were offered for incorporation at several locations.
- **Pedestrian Lighting** – Four (4) pedestrian lighting fixture options were offered for incorporation along shared use pathways.
- **Street Lighting** – Existing Lighting or LED Lighting Upgrade
- **Traffic Calming Measures** – Speed Humps, Mini-Roundabouts, Median Treatments, Other

**Personal and Professional Development Training** – The survey offered participants a chance to indicate their interest in classes pertaining to resume writing and job skills, computer skills, trade certifications, financial planning, business management, CPR and first aid, the construction industry, the transportation industry, or any other fields not listed.

**Demographic Data** – Residents were asked to note the neighborhood in which they currently live as well as how long they have lived within the EJ neighborhoods.

## 3.2 DISTRIBUTION

The CIEP survey was made available at the CIEP Open House and Community Office, mailed directly to residents in the EJ neighborhood, and advertised on the project website and in the informational handout flyer boxes.

# 4.0 CIEP SURVEY AND OPEN HOUSE RESULTS

Seventy-seven (77) people attended the CIEP Open House. The public comment period lasted from March 6<sup>th</sup> to March 27<sup>th</sup>. Completed surveys were received from 85 participants via paper submission, computer, or mobile device. Most of the respondents live in the EJ neighborhoods (89%), and responses were received from all of the impacted EJ neighborhoods.

The survey asked respondents to prioritize the categories in which improvements are recommended. Stormwater drainage and traffic calming were the top two selections, but participants also expressed the need for sidewalks, lighting, and security cameras.

The results of each component of the survey are described below. Further details of the survey results can be found in Appendix B.

## 4.1 LIGHTING

Improved neighborhood lighting was desired by 88% of respondents. The most recommended locations for lighting improvements included Rebecca Street (22 comments), Elder Avenue south of James Bell Drive (17 comments), Taylor Street (8 comments) and Piedmont Avenue (4 comments). Participants also indicated the need for lighting associated with security devices and tree trimming to improve existing lighting. The most popular pedestrian light fixture was the shepherd's crook option.

## 4.2 LANDSCAPING AND AESTHETICS

The most popular aesthetics improvements were resident-maintained mini-libraries and a mural for the replacement community center. 48% of respondents prefer the landscaping option that incorporates plantings such as Saw Palmetto Trees, Crepe Myrtle, Muhly Grass, and red mulch. All improved entrances must be maintained by the residents. Additional comments received expressed the desire for seating at neighborhood entrances and lighting for neighborhood signage, improvements for additional entrance locations at James Bell Drive at Rivers Avenue, Target Street at Rivers Avenue, and the neighborhood entrance at Joppa Way, and beautification between the Life Changers Covenant Ministries and the I-526 westbound ramp.

## 4.3 STORMWATER DRAINAGE

The two main locations recommended for drainage improvements were Taylor Street and Elder Avenue. Other comments received included frequent flooding of the Life Changers Covenant Ministries parking lot, maintenance of the Filbin Creek drainage pipe, and usage of stormwater fees paid by residents.

## 4.4 TRAFFIC CALMING

The most popular locations suggested for traffic calming improvements included Taylor Street (12 comments), Elder Avenue (10 comments), Piedmont Avenue (8 comments), Railroad Avenue (7 comments), and Rebecca Street (5 comments). Other responses included the desire for railroad signage at Taylor Street, and questions regarding the future appearance of the Rivers Avenue interchange area. Speed humps were the most preferred measure for traffic calming, and multiple locations were noted as needing crosswalks.

## 4.5 PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

Locations suggested for pedestrian improvements were widespread throughout the EJ neighborhoods and included areas outside of the CIEP focus area. The most recommended areas included Piedmont Avenue, Railroad Avenue, Rebecca Street, Taylor Street, and in the vicinity of the proposed shared use path near Filbin Creek.

Two comments received were opposed to the shared use path adjacent to Life Changers Covenant Ministries due to the potential for loitering and criminal activity. A community entrance facility was proposed instead of the shared use path. One comment indicated the preference for a fence instead of an open area near the Life Changers Church and I-526 to provide control of access.

## 4.6 PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING

Residents expressed the highest interest in courses covering Computer Skills (29 votes) and CPR/First Aid (21 votes). The remainder of vote totals are as follows: Business Management (12), Financial Planning (12), Trade Certifications (11), Transportation Industry (11), Resume Writing / Job Skills (11), and Construction Industry (9).

Additional suggestions for course topics included exercise classes and other activities for senior citizens, Spanish language instruction, and cooking.



## 5.0 CIEP RECOMMENDATIONS

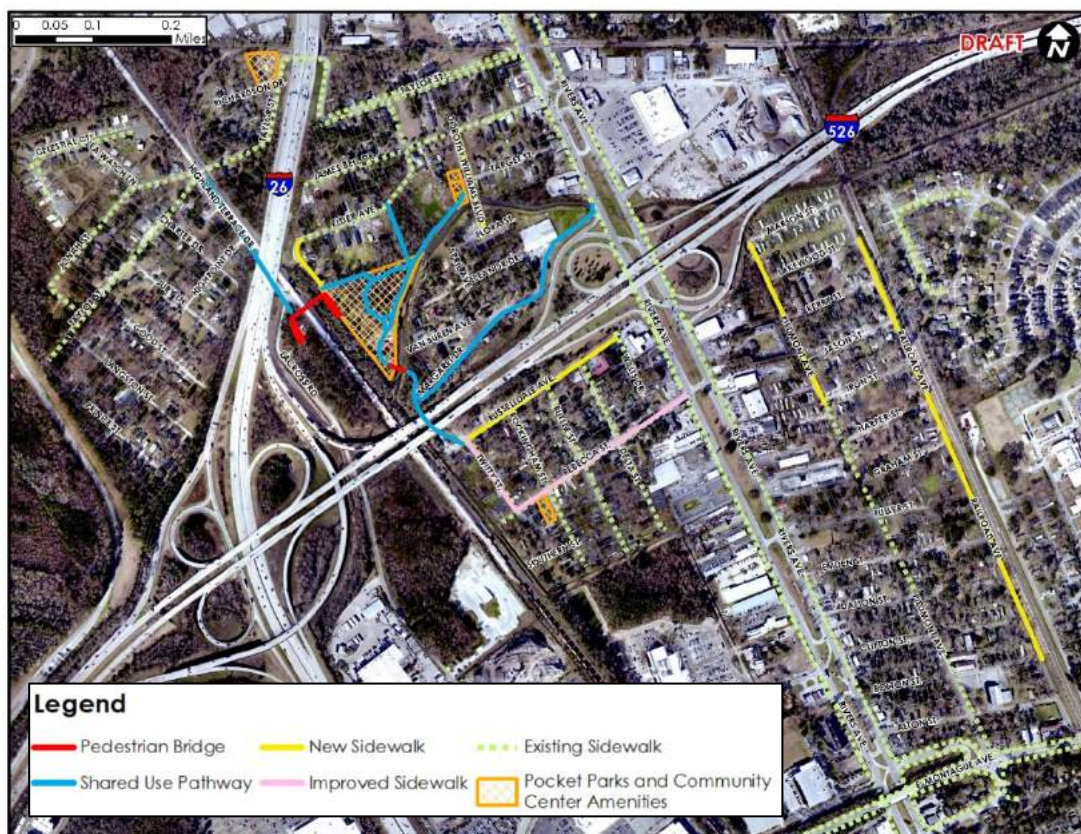
Final recommendations of the Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan have been approved by the SCDOT and the Technical Review Committee, (TRC) which includes staff from the City of North Charleston. Recommendations are based on field reviews and desktop analysis of limited information. Additional site surveys, environmental studies, traffic analysis and engineering design will be required to fully develop conceptual improvements. Concepts may change as they are further developed into greater detail. Coordination with the Project Oversight Committee and additional public involvement opportunities will be held during the final design and implementation phases to gather input into the final designs for construction.

Implementation of CIEP recommendations will require the development of site-specific NEPA documents and additional work tasks. Some improvements will be incorporated within the I-526 LCC WEST project based on their association with various project aspects such as right-of-way acquisition, relocations, or major interstate ramps and bridges. Other improvements may be delivered as stand-alone projects, coordinated with other City-led projects, or included with other resurfacing or maintenance projects to ensure best value of the final product.

## Bicycle/Pedestrian Connectivity and Safety Improvements

SCDOT will fund shared-use pathways to provide connectivity to the community center, pedestrian bridges to cross the railroad and Filbin Creek, improved sidewalks along Rebecca Street and Twitty Street, and new sidewalks along Russelldale Avenue, Elder Avenue, Dorothy Williams Boulevard (from the shared-use path to the existing sidewalk on James Bell Drive), and Railroad Avenue. Pedestrian safety measures will also be installed at the railroad crossing on Taylor Street.

Additional pedestrian recommendations based on public comments include the extension of sidewalk on Piedmont Avenue from Iron Street to Marson Street, and pedestrian railroad crossing improvements on Taylor Street.



## 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.



## Lighting Improvements

SCDOT will fund the installation of at least seventy-five (75) pedestrian-scale lights along the proposed shared-use pathways that connect the proposed community center with the surrounding neighborhoods. Additionally, increased lighting will be considered near the Highland Terrace-Liberty Park pocket park and along the new pedestrian bridge over the railroad.

Additional lighting recommendations based on survey feedback include the addition of streetlights along Rebecca Street, Elder Avenue, Taylor Street, and Piedmont Avenue.

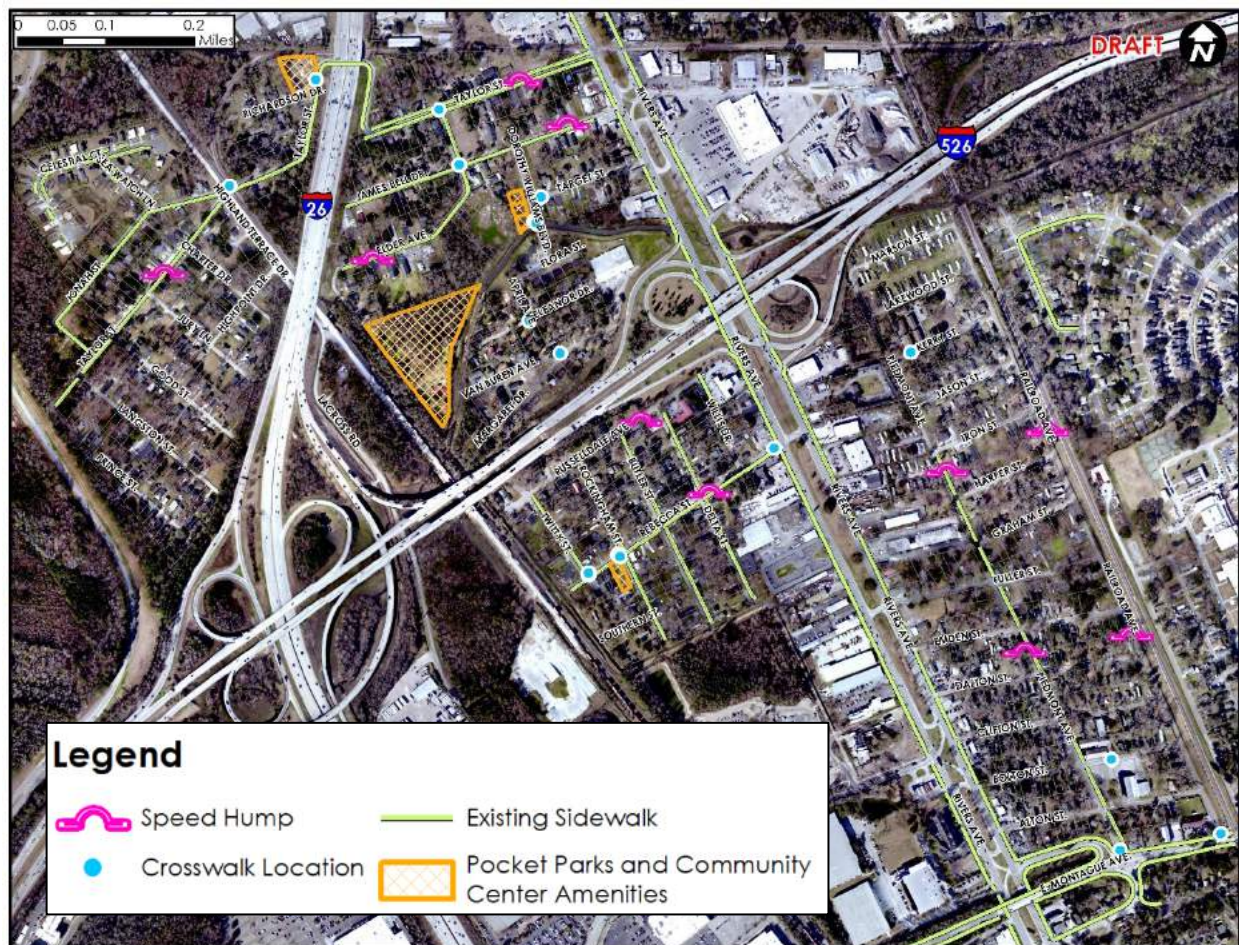




## Traffic Calming Measures

SCDOT will fund and install traffic calming measures on the following streets: Taylor Street, James Bell Drive, Dorothy Williams Boulevard, Rebecca Street, Russelldale Avenue, Piedmont Avenue, and Railroad Avenue.

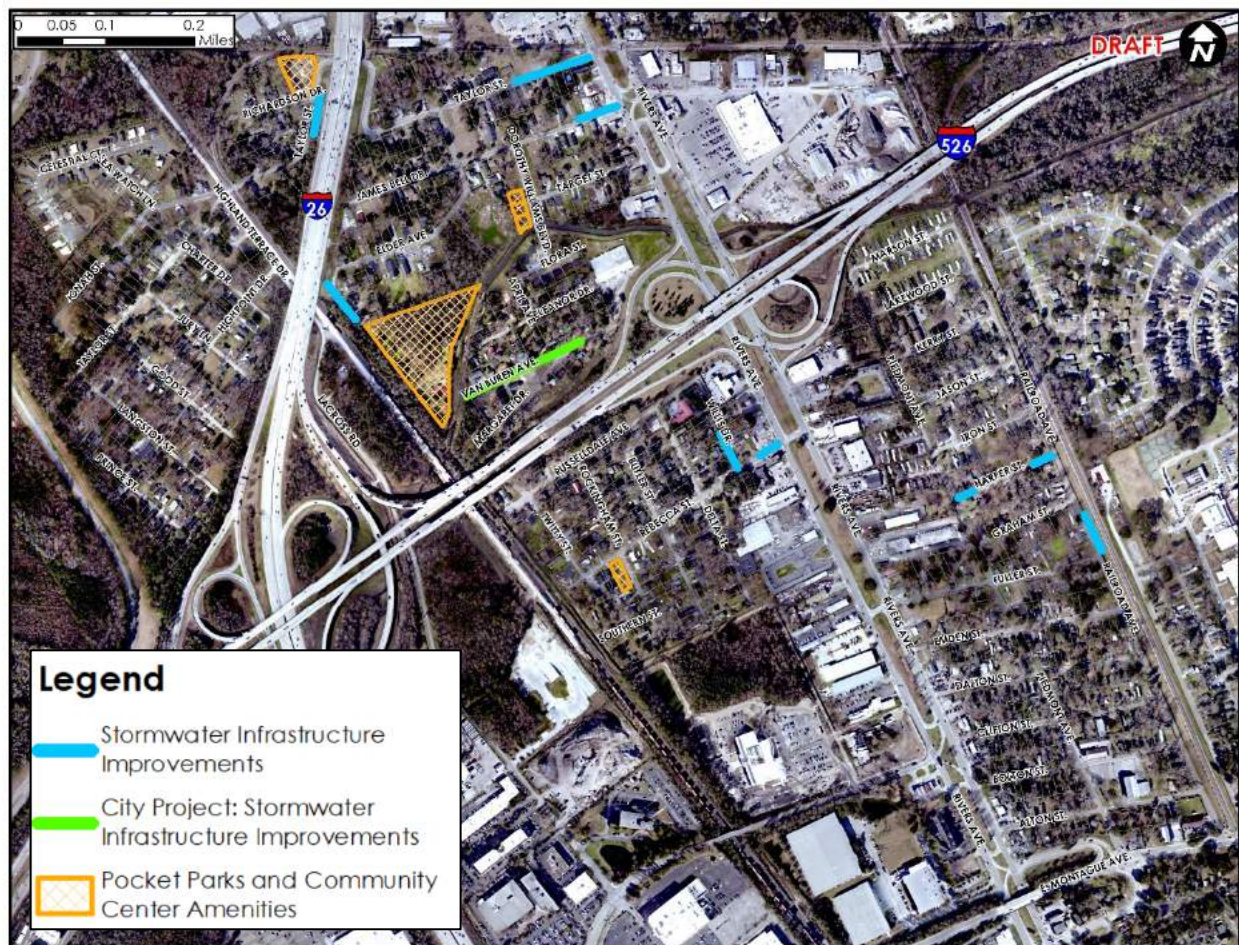
Additional traffic calming recommendations based on public comments include the addition of speed humps on Taylor Street in Highland Terrace and on Elder Avenue south of James Bell Drive, relocating proposed speed humps further south on Piedmont Avenue and Railroad Avenue, and implementing crosswalks at the locations identified by survey participants after further investigation of feasibility. Possible construction of speed humps along Piedmont Avenue and Railroad Avenue will be determined following a speed study to determine if the speed limit can be reduced to 25 miles per hour.





## Stormwater Infrastructure Improvements

SCDOT will fund and install stormwater improvement measures on sections of the following streets: Harper Street, Willis Drive, Elder Avenue, Taylor Street, James Bell Drive, Rebecca Street, Piedmont Avenue, and Railroad Avenue. Potential drainage improvements will also be investigated along Target Street and in conjunction with locations recommended for pedestrian improvements.



## Aesthetics and Landscaping Improvements

SCDOT will fund and implement landscaping improvements at neighborhood entrances on Piedmont Drive (Ferndale), Fuller Street (Ferndale), Taylor Street (Highland Terrace/Liberty Park), and Rebecca Street (Russelldale) to help reinforce neighborhood identities. In addition, there will be an opportunity for public art at shared-use path trailheads, pocket parks, and the community center.

Recommendations also include the addition of seating at neighborhood entrances and lighting for neighborhood signage; improvements for additional entrance locations at James Bell Drive at Rivers Avenue, Target Street at Rivers Avenue, and the neighborhood entrance at Joppa Way; beautification between Life Changers Covenant Ministries and the I-526 westbound ramp, along with the inclusion of an upgraded interstate privacy fence; and educational displays and signs to warn community center users of potential alligator encounters.



# APPENDIX A: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT MATERIALS

## CIEP OPEN HOUSE FLYER: ENGLISH AND SPANISH

Community Improvements Open House	Mejoras Comunitarias - Casa Abierta
<p>Ferndale   Highland Terrace   Liberty Park   Russelldale</p> <div> <p><b>Have 30 Minutes?</b></p> <p><b>Saturday, March 6, 2021</b> 1:00pm-4:00pm</p> <p><b>Ferndale Community Center</b> 1995 Bolton Street</p> <p>Drop-in between 1:00pm-4:00pm &amp; let us know what improvements you'd like to see in your community.</p> <p><i>Health/safety precautions will be in place.</i></p> </div>	<p>Ferndale   Highland Terrace   Liberty Park   Russelldale</p> <div> <p><b>¿Tiene ud. 30 minutos?</b></p> <p><b>sábado, 6 de marzo de 2021</b> 1:00pm-4:00pm</p> <p><b>Ferndale Community Center</b> 1995 Bolton Street</p> <p>Visítanos a cualquier hora entre la 1:00pm y 4:00pm y haznos saber qué mejoras le gustaría ver en su comunidad.</p> <p><i>Habrà precauciones de salud y seguridad.</i></p> </div>
<p><b>We heard YOUR ideas, now let's talk details!</b></p> <div>  <p><b>We want to hear from YOU about:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bicycle &amp; pedestrian safety</li> <li>• Landscaping</li> <li>• Lighting</li> <li>• Speeding concerns</li> <li>• Stormwater facilities</li> </ul> </div>	<p><b>Escuchamos sus ideas, ¡ahora hablemos de detalles!</b></p> <div>  <p><b>Queremos escuchar sus ideas acerca de:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seguridad para bicicletas y peatones</li> <li>• Paisajismo</li> <li>• Iluminación</li> <li>• Preocupación por el exceso de velocidad</li> <li>• Instalaciones para controlar las aguas pluviales</li> </ul> </div>
<p><b>QUESTIONS?</b> Call or text the Community Office at 843-258-1135</p> 	<p><b>¿PREGUNTAS?</b> Llame o manda un text a la Oficina Comunitaria 843-258-1135</p> 

## CIEP OPEN HOUSE POSTCARD

Community Improvements Open House	
<p>Ferndale   Highland Terrace   Liberty Park   Russelldale</p> <p><b>We heard YOUR ideas, now let's talk details!</b></p> <p><b>Saturday, March 6, 2021</b> 1:00pm-4:00pm</p> <p><b>Ferndale Community Center</b> 1995 Bolton Street</p> <p><b>QUESTIONS?</b> Call or text the Community Office at 843-258-1135</p> <p><i>Safety precautions will be in place.</i></p> 	 <div> <p>Local Postal Customer</p> </div>

## LOCAL OFFICIALS LETTER TO EJ NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTS

*City of North Charleston, SC*

R. KEITH SUMMEY, MAYOR  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Dear Resident,

On behalf of the City of North Charleston and the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT), we invite you to participate in an upcoming Open House to discuss improvements to the Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Joppa Way, Liberty Park, and Russelldale neighborhoods. The event will be held on Saturday, March 6, 2021 beginning at 1:00 pm until 4:00 pm at the Ferndale Community Center, 1995 Bolton Street in North Charleston.

As a part of the I-526 Lowcountry Corridor (LCC) WEST Environmental Justice Community Mitigation efforts, SCDOT is developing a Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan (CIEP) to address stormwater drainage, sidewalks and pedestrian crossings, speed reduction, street lighting, and appearance/landscaping in the five communities. During the Open House, there will be staff onsite to present options for these improvements and **YOUR INPUT IS NEEDED** to determine what and where improvements should be constructed.

The pandemic is not over. Keep your guard up! Remember to protect yourself and others by wearing a mask and practicing proper social distancing to limit the chances of spreading COVID-19. If you do not have personal protective equipment such as a mask and gloves, both will be provided prior to taking part in the conversation.

If you have any questions regarding the CIEP Open House or the I-526 improvements project, please visit the Community Office located at 5627 Rivers Avenue in the Gas Light Square shopping center or call/text (843) 258-1135 to speak with a Community Liaison. If you have any concerns or requests for service from the City, contact the Ombudsman's Office at (843) 740-5819.

Sincerely,



R. Keith Summey, Mayor



Sam Hart, Councilman



Dorothy Williams, Councilwoman

PO Box 190016 • North Charleston, SC 29419-9016 • T 843-740-2504 • F 843-745-1085 • northcharleston.org



## CIEP OPEN HOUSE YARD SIGNS AND SAMPLE OF LOCATIONS

### Community Improvements Open House

**Ferndale | Highland Terrace | Liberty Park | Russelldale**

**We heard YOUR ideas, now let's talk details!**

**Saturday, March 6, 2021**  
**1:00pm-4:00pm**  
*Safety precautions will be in place.*  
**Ferndale Community Center**  
**1995 Bolton Street**  
**QUESTIONS?**  
 Call or text the Community Office at 843-258-1135






# APPENDIX B: CIEP SURVEY

Paper version of the CIEP Survey that was mailed to each EJ residence



**INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT SURVEY**

**WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!**

The proposed features of the Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan are listed by category below. Please use this space to add locations where you think improvements could be made. *Please be as specific as possible.* To see the draft proposed improvements on a map, please visit [www.526lowcountrycorridor.com/west/community-commitments](http://www.526lowcountrycorridor.com/west/community-commitments) or use your smart phone to scan the QR code to right.



 **New or improved sidewalks** are needed on these streets: \_\_\_\_\_

 **Improved stormwater drainage** is needed on these streets: \_\_\_\_\_

 **Lighting** is needed on these streets: \_\_\_\_\_

 **Crosswalks** are needed on these streets: \_\_\_\_\_

 **Speed humps** are needed on these streets: \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional Comments** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**WHAT ARE YOUR PRIORITIES?**

Please put the following potential improvements in order of the **greatest value/importance to least (Numbered 1 - 8).**

_____ Community Art	_____ Stormwater Drainage
_____ Neighborhood Entrance Landscaping	_____ Security Cameras
_____ Pedestrian Lighting	_____ Traffic Calming Measures (i.e. speed humps)
_____ Sidewalks	_____ Crosswalks

**WHAT ARE YOUR MITIGATION PREFERENCES?**

**Please circle one (1) answer for each of the following questions.**

1. Would you support any of the following in your neighborhood?

a. Community Center Mural	b. Mini-Libraries	c. Historical Art	d. Overpass Mural	e. No Preference
---------------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	------------------






f. Other recommendations listed on the lines below

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I-526 LOWCOUNTRY CORRIDOR WEST | Page 1



2. Which type of light fixture do you prefer along the multi-use pedestrian pathways?

- a.  b.  c.  d. 

3. Do you want to see improved lighting on your street? If yes, where?

- a. Yes  
b. No

Street name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

4. Which neighborhood entrance landscaping example do you prefer?



5. Which speed reducing option, if any, do you prefer?

- a. Speed Hump/Table  
b. Mini Roundabout  
c. Median  
d. None of the Above

6. Which impacted neighborhood do you live in?

- a. Russelldale  
b. Highland Terrace  
c. Joppa Way  
d. Liberty Park  
e. Ferndale  
f. None of the above

7. How long have you lived in one of the impacted neighborhoods?

- a. 0 – 1 year  
b. 1 – 5 years  
c. 5 – 10 years  
d. 10+ years

8. For future planning purposes, please indicate your interest in any of the following classes (*check all that apply*)

- ☐ Resume Writing/Job Skills  
☐ Financial Planning  
☐ CPR / First Aid Training  
☐ Computer Skills  
☐ Construction Industry  
☐ Trade Certifications  
☐ Transportation Industry  
☐ Business Management  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please provide all responses by 3/27/2021 to be considered in the final plan for infrastructure improvements**

If you would like a response from the project team, please provide the following:

Name (*optional*) \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Number (*for text updates*) \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

MetroQuest (online) version of the CIEP survey available on the project website and social media pages

EJ Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan Survey

Progress

2 Infrastructure Budget

What to do Next Task

3 INFRASTRUCTURE MAP

4 PREFERENCES

5 THANK YOU

WELCOME

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

If you had complete control over the budget for the Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan, how would you spend the money?

Drag coins to invest in the categories you prefer.

1

20

Community Art Details

Entrance Sign Landscaping Details

Lighting Details

Sidewalks Details

Stormwater Drainage Details

Security Cameras Details

Traffic Calming Details

Crosswalks Details

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

EJ Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan Survey

Progress

2

3

4 Visual Preferences

What to do Next Task

5 THANK YOU

WELCOME

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

INFRASTRUCTURE MAP

PREFERENCES

Community Art

Community Art

Would you support any of the following in your neighborhood?

Choose one

Front Entrance Aesthetics

Pedestrian-Scale Lighting

Level of Street Lighting

Traffic Calming

Mural on the Community Center

Mini-libraries (resident maintained)

Incorporate community history into art

Mural above Bryant Street in Russelldale

No Preference

If you have another idea - please leave a comment

Previous Optional Comment Next Choice



WELCOME

2 COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

3 Your Neighborhood

4 What to do

5 Next Task

PREFERENCES

THANK YOU

Please drag and drop at least 1 marker on the map.

Lighting

Sidewalk/Bike

Crosswalk

Speed Hump

Drainage

Landscaping

Zoom to:

Map data ©2021 Imagery ©2021, Maxar Technologies, U.S. Geological Survey, USDA Farm Service Agency Terms of Use

WELCOME

2 COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

3 INFRASTRUCTURE MAP

4 PREFERENCES

5 Stay Involved

What to do

Tell us about you!

Which neighborhood do you live in?  
Select...

Home Address  
Type...

How long have you lived in your neighborhood?  
Select...

Cell Phone Number / Email Address for updates  
Type...

Interested in any of the following classes?  
☐ Resume Writing/Job Skills ☐ Computer Skills  
☐ Trade Certifications ☐ Construction Industry  
☐ Financial Planning ☐ Transportation Industry  
☐ Business Management ☐ CPR / First Aid

Any additional classes you'd like to take?  
Type...

Submit Final Questions

Skip

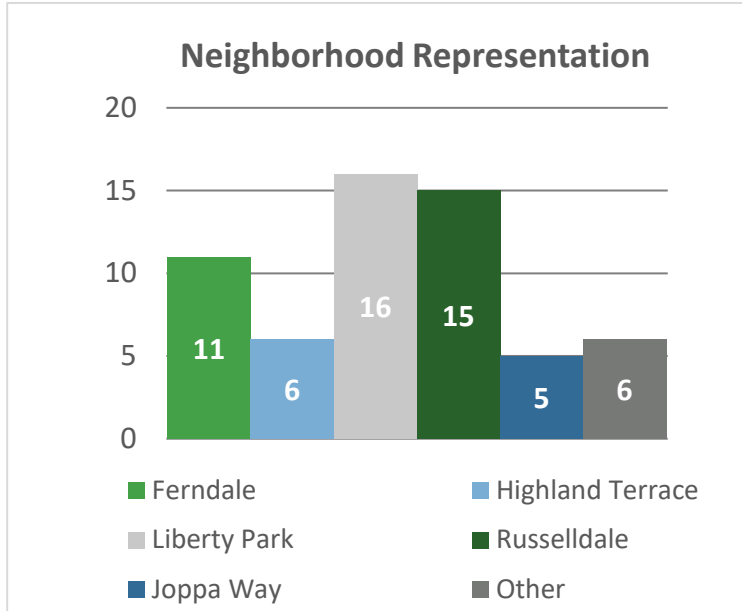
Input collected until 3/27/21

Visit the I-526 LCC WEST [website](#) for more information on additional mitigation commitments.

To share additional feedback please call or text the **Community Office** at (843) 258-1135.

SCDOT U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Highway Administration

## 1.0 Survey Participant Demographics / Statistics



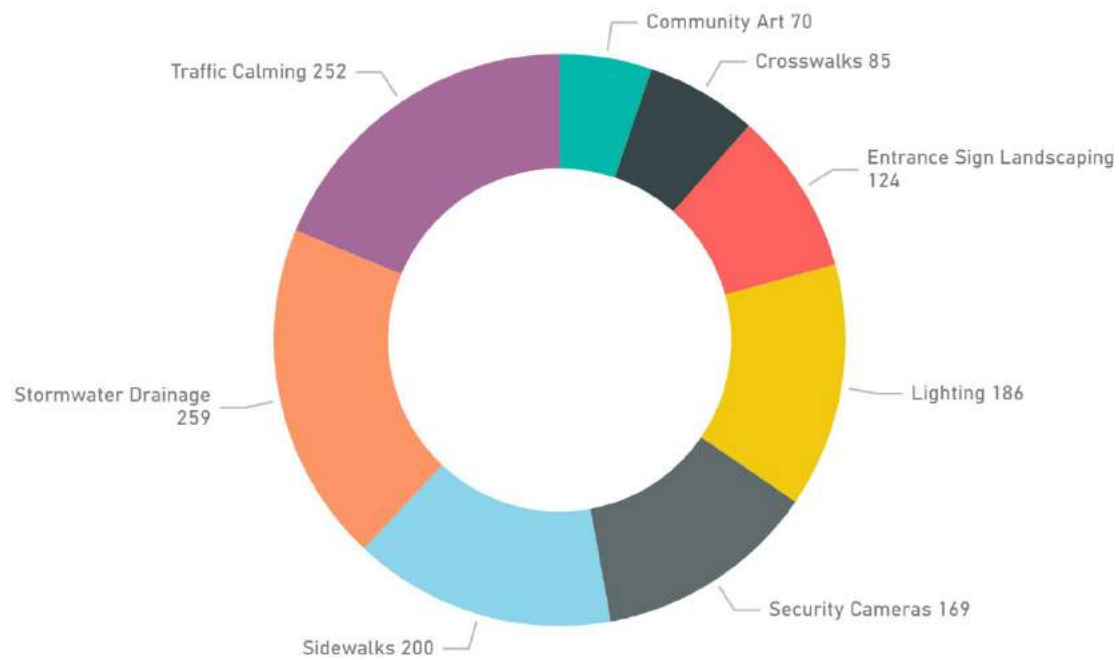
Platform for Taking the CIEP Survey	
Computer	9
Mobile Phone	27
Paper/Mailer	49
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>85</b>

94% of respondents have lived in their neighborhood for at least 10 years

89% of respondents live in EJ Neighborhoods

## 2.0 Budget Allocation (CIEP Resident Priorities)

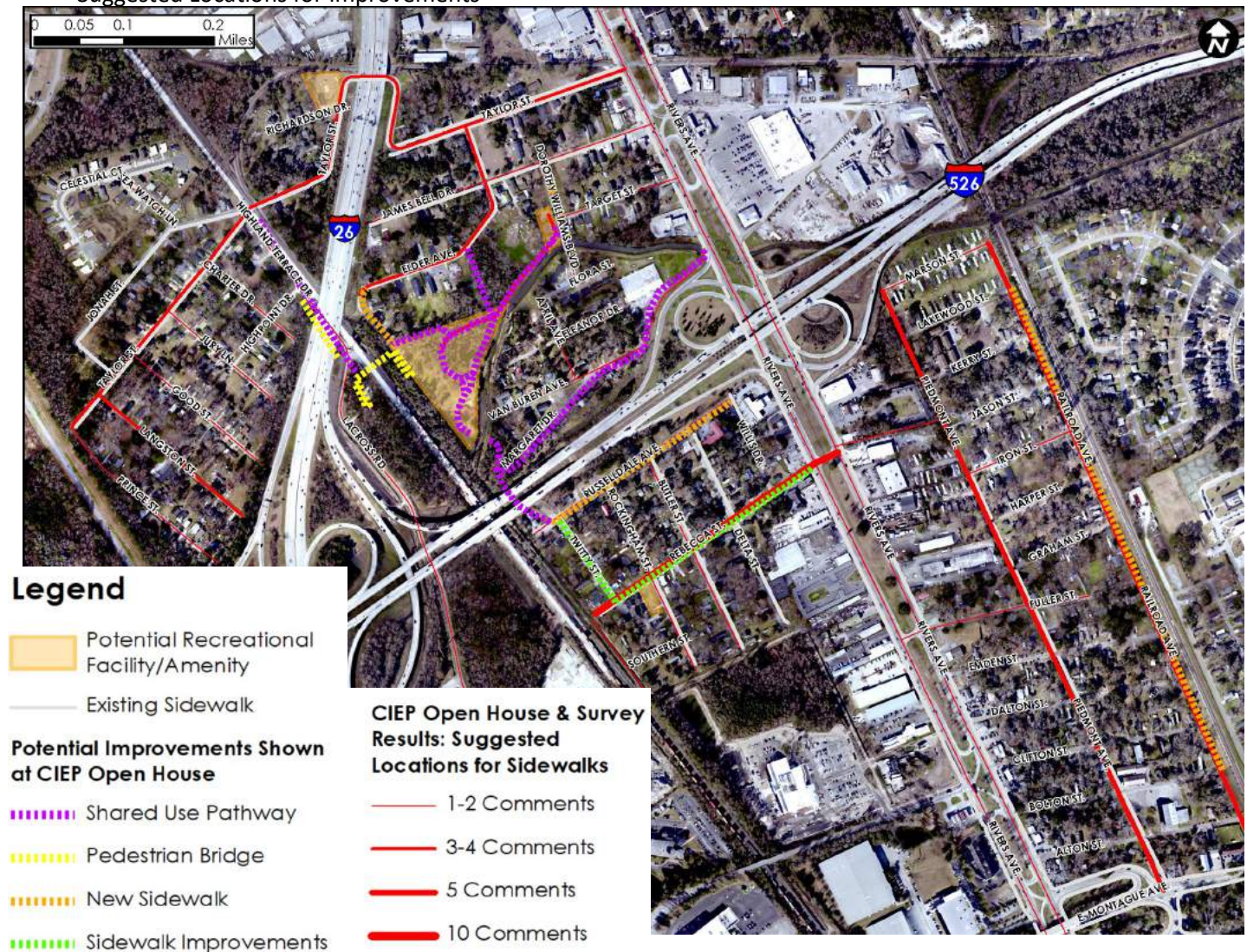
Stormwater Drainage and Traffic Calming were ranked as the #1 and #2 priorities by CIEP survey participants. Additionally, sidewalks, lighting and security cameras were given high rankings.





### 3.0 Pedestrian Facilities

### Suggested Locations for Improvements



- Most popular resident identified locations for pedestrian improvements:
  - Rebecca Street
  - Piedmont Avenue
  - Railroad Avenue
  - Taylor Street
- Public Comments
  - Two (2) comments were opposed to a Shared Use Path (SUP) adjacent to Life Changers because of the potential for loitering and criminal activity
    - Instead of a SUP near Eleanor Drive, commenter wants to turn it into a community entrance road/ramp
  - One (1) comment indicated preference for a fence instead of an open area near Life Changers and I-526 for control of access



## 4.0 Lighting

### Suggested Locations for Improvements



- Most popular resident identified locations for lighting improvements:
  - Rebecca Street
  - Elder Avenue
  - Taylor Street
  - Piedmont Avenue
- 88% of survey participants want *improved lighting* in their neighborhood
- Public comments**
  - Security devices need lighting for systems to operate
  - Please cut back the trees that are blocking existing lights (noted 4 times)
  - Streetlight at the end of Good Street is not on consistently
  - Two (2) lighting comments were noted outside of the impacted EJ neighborhoods
    - Woodbine Avenue and Singing Pines neighborhood

35% of survey participants preferred the circled pedestrian light fixture





## 5.0 Traffic Calming

### Suggested Locations for Improvements



- Most popular resident identified locations for traffic calming improvements:
  - Taylor Street
  - Elder Avenue
  - Railroad Avenue
  - Piedmont Avenue
  - Rebecca Street
- 62% of survey participants prefer speed humps for traffic calming
- **Public comments**
  - Can a sign be placed on Rivers Avenue to alert drivers that a train is blocking the railroad crossing at Taylor Street?
  - Questions about appearance of Rivers Interchange after removal
  - Two (2) traffic calming points were noted outside of the impacted EJ neighborhoods
    - Woodbine Avenue and Craig Road (near Singing Pines neighborhood)
  - Three (3) crosswalk points were noted outside of the EJ neighborhoods
    - Aviation Avenue, Core Road, and Singing Pines neighborhood



## 6.0 Stormwater Drainage

### Suggested Locations for Improvements



- Most popular resident identified locations for stormwater drainage improvements:
  - Taylor Street
  - Elder Avenue
  - James Bell Drive
  - Target Street
- **Public comments**
  - Filbin Creek drainage pipe [on Rivers Ave] needs to be enlarged and maintained
  - One comment indicating a preference for concrete versus earthen ditch
  - In favor of stormwater detention that allows water to flow and not remain stagnant
  - Neighbors pay \$72 for stormwater fee and would like to know what projects are accomplished with this money
  - Life Changers Church: water backs up between interstate and church - floods church parking lot (*SCDOT is looking into flooding issues in this area*)



## 7.0 Landscaping & Aesthetics

- 48% of survey participants chose the rendering to the right as their preferred neighborhood entrance
- **Public comments**
  - Seating at entrances
  - Lighted entrance signs
  - Consider additional neighborhood entrance locations at James Bell Dr. at Rivers Ave. and Target St. at Rivers Ave.
  - Entrance at Joppa Way needs fixing
  - Beautification between Life Changers and I-526 WB ramp



*Resident maintained  
mini-libraries*



*Community center  
mural*



*Community history  
art*



*Mural on the  
interstate*

## 8.0 Personal and Professional Development: Topics of Interest

1. Computer Skills (29 votes)
2. CPR First Aid (21)
3. Business Management (12)
4. Financial Planning (12)
5. Trade Certifications (11)
6. Transportation Industry (11)
7. Resume Writing / Job Skills (11)
8. Construction Industry (9)

### Additional classes suggested include:

- Senior exercise classes
- Activities for older adults
- Spanish language classes
- Restaurant/cooking skills



## APPENDIX E

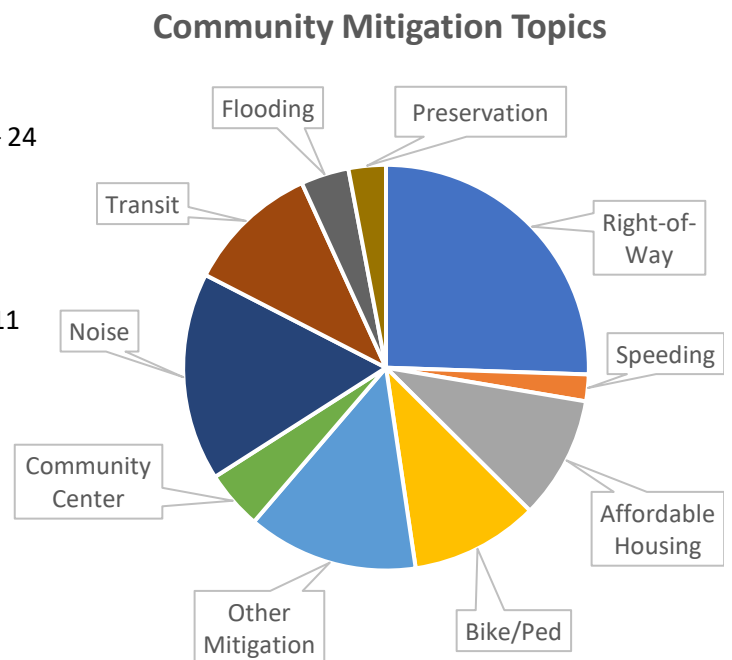
### DRAFT EJ COMMUNITY MITIGATION PLAN SURVEY RESULTS MEMORANDUM

## PUBLIC HEARING COMMENTS

As of January 15, 2021, 234 Public Hearing comments were submitted via the Environmental Justice (EJ) Community Mitigation survey, project website, and community meetings held in the EJ neighborhoods. According to the Public Hearing results, 58% of the total public comments mentioned components of the DRAFT EJ Community Mitigation Plan. Additional non-mitigation related topics are further described in the Public Hearing summary.

Primary community mitigation related topics are listed below. Please note that there were several instances where more than one topic was addressed in a comment submission. As such, the total number of times each topic was referenced will exceed the number of total comments received.

- Right-of-Way – 60
- Noise – 39
- Infrastructure Enhancements – 38
  - Bike and pedestrian improvements – 24
  - Flooding – 9
  - Speeding – 5
- Public Transit – 25
- Affordable Housing – 23
- Community Center/Recreational Facilities – 11
- Preservation – 7
- Other Mitigation Items – 32
  - Educational assistance
  - Cultural center
  - Cultural classes
  - Quality of life
  - General support for mitigation
  - Job Training
  - School-to-work programs
  - Neighborhood leadership empowerment



## MITIGATION SURVEY RESULTS

To facilitate full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the development of the mitigation plan, the project team developed a survey that was distributed to residents and owners of properties located in the EJ neighborhoods. The intent of the survey was to learn more about the individual preferences regarding topics such as recreational facility amenities and programs, affordable housing, educational and employment opportunities, infrastructure enhancements, neighborhood amenities, mitigation priorities, and project information dissemination. The survey along with a self-addressed envelope and stamp were mailed to each residence in the EJ neighborhoods as a part of a larger project information packet during the first week of October 2020. They were also distributed to

each resident who attended the community drop-ins hosted in November 2020. Lastly, these materials were also sent to individuals who own parcels and companies that lease properties within the EJ communities in early December 2020.

199 surveys were recorded at the end of the Public Comment period (1/15/2021)

The same content was also available as an online survey that was accessible to the general public but intended for residents in the EJ community who preferred to use an online platform. All paper copies of the survey were entered into the online database by the project team to garner all input into one database. As of January 15, 2021, a total of 199 participants submitted feedback to the project team using the I-526 Lowcountry Corridor WEST Environmental Justice Community Mitigation survey. A total of 130 paper surveys were received, 39 were completed on a computer, and 30 using a mobile

phone. The return rate of the 1,201 paper surveys that were initially mailed to the EJ residents as of December 16, 2020 was approximately 4%. The remaining 85 (out of 130) paper surveys were distributed and submitted at pop-up events such as the Pandemic-Relief Food Pantry or the SCDHEC COVID-19 Testing and Food Distribution. The project team is in the process of responding to all comments and input since the end of the public comment period on January 15, 2021.

## MITIGATION PRIORITIZATION: SCREEN 1

In order to gauge how residents might value each mitigation category, the project team asked survey participants to rank the 8 items listed below based on greatest importance:

- **Pedestrian Safety Plan**
  - Improve bike and pedestrian connectivity, safety and mobility between the replacement community center/recreational facilities and the surrounding communities. Improvements may include new/improved sidewalks, additional streetlights, or crosswalks.
  - Received #1 Ranking: 23 times
  - Ranked in the top 5: 87 times
- **Community Office**
  - The Community Office is staffed with a full-time Office Manager, Community Liaisons/Outreach Specialists, and part-time Right-of-Way Specialists who provide community residents with real-time project information. The office also serves as a place for community workshops and meetings.
  - Received #1 Ranking: 5 times
  - Ranked in the top 5: 46 times
- **Recreational Facilities**
  - Construction of replacement recreational facilities and associated infrastructure within or near Liberty Park, Highland Terrace, and Russelldale neighborhoods. This may include outdoor sports courts, playground, walking paths and a community center.
  - Received #1 Ranking: 7 times
  - Ranked in the top 5: 101 times

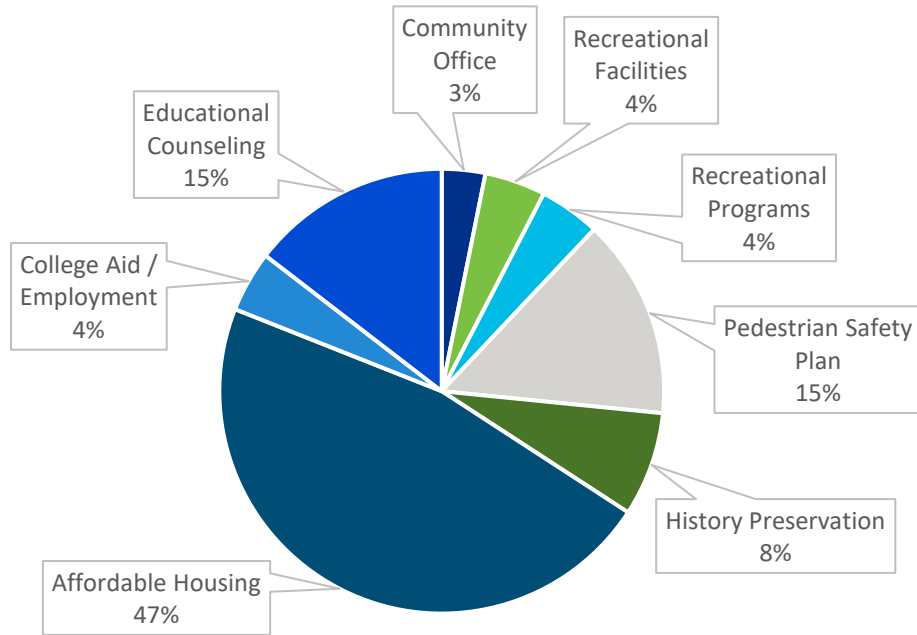


- **Recreational Programs**
  - Specific family-focused programs held at the replacement community center to address senior, adult and youth needs such as mentorship programs, low-impact chair exercise classes, financial literacy classes, etc.
  - Received #1 Ranking: 7 times
  - Ranked in the top 5: 96 times
- **Educational Counseling**
  - Local organizations provide financial and first-time home buyers counseling to displaced residents to assist them in securing residential loans and transitioning from renters to homeowners.
  - Received #1 Ranking: 23 times
  - Ranked in the top 5: 101 times
- **History Preservation**
  - Documentation of the cultural history and character of the impacted EJ communities by collecting oral history, archival research, and historic photographs. Research efforts will be available at the replacement Community Center.
  - Received #1 Ranking: 12 times
  - Ranked in the top 5: 62 times
- **Affordable Housing**
  - SCDOT will work with the SC State Housing Finance and Development Authority to construct single-family and multi-family replacement affordable housing units near the impacted communities.
  - Received #1 Ranking: 75 times
  - Ranked in the top 5: 127 times
- **College Aid / Employment Opportunities**
  - Partner with local educational institutions to provide \$50,000 for a scholarship fund for high school or college students from the impacted communities. Also, fund a program to provide opportunities within the fields of construction & engineering.
  - Received #1 Ranking: 7 times
  - Ranked in the top 5: 83 times

Overall, most of the mitigation items were ranked consistently in the top five. College Aid / Employment Opportunities, Affordable Housing, Recreation Facilities, Recreational Programs, and the Pedestrian Safety Plan all ranked in the top 5 over 80 times. The Community Office and the History Program were least prioritized, ranking in the top 5 only 46 and 62 times, respectively.

**Affordable Housing** was the primary concern as it was ranked in the highest priority slot the greatest number of times (75). The following pie chart presents the percentage that each mitigation item was ranked as the #1 priority.

## Frequency of a #1 Priority Ranking



Although not all of the comments below are necessarily mitigation related, they were suggested by survey participants as additional items or notes to consider:

- Public Transportation + reducing cars on the road.
- Traffic decongestion
- “These are older communities that have [elderly residents], like my 85 year old mother who has been in her same house for over 64 years, it would be nice to help her get into some type of affordable housing just for the elderly people too”
- Community solar to help keep power bills for these neighborhoods as affordable as possible.
- Improved transit opportunities
- Do not build I-526. Put it to public vote. I will NEVER vote for a tax increase on anything in this county ever again because you lie to the people and misappropriate funds.<sup>1</sup>
- All of these things are nice, but not at our expense!
- Separated and dedicated bike and pedestrian access needed to keep bikes from competing with pedestrians for sidewalk access. Look at 526 off ramp merging as most dangerous to both.

Based on the comments above, the project team recommends that SCDOT provide EJ neighborhood residents with an explanation of how mitigation will be funded.

<sup>1</sup> The EJ Team has assumed that this comment is related to the Mark Clark Extension project and not this project.

## MITIGATION ELEMENTS: SCREEN 2

Survey participants were asked to answer five (5) multiple choice questions to indicate their preference on specific mitigation related elements. Below is a list of each question and the potential answers with the percentage of votes it received. The most popular selections are listed first and highlighted in grey.

Which type of housing style is most appealing to you?	
<b>Single Family Home</b>	<b>58%</b>
Townhomes	17%
Duplex	13%
Garden Style Apartments	9%
High Rise Apartments	3%

How would you prefer to receive project information?	
<b>Receive Mail at Your Home</b>	<b>48%</b>
Email	21%
Talk to a CAC Member	15%
Text Message	12%
Visit the Community Office	4%

Which improvement should be prioritized?	
<b>Sidewalk with Curb and Gutter</b>	<b>29%</b>
<b>Additional Streetlights</b>	<b>29%</b>
Stormwater Drainage	23%
Traffic Calming Measures	15%
Crosswalks	4%

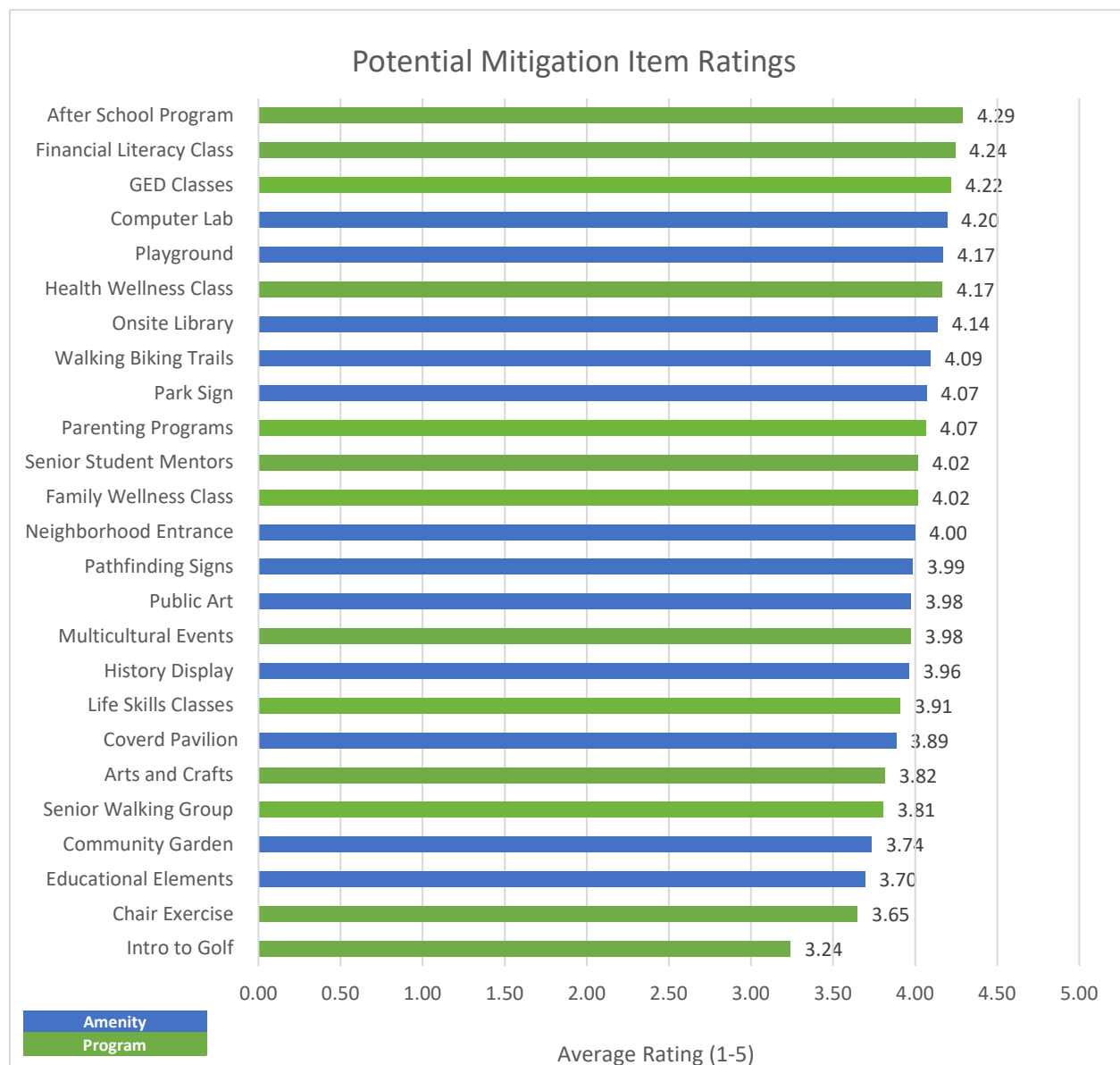
Where should replacement multi family housing be built?	
<b>Within the impacted neighborhoods</b>	<b>44%</b>
Nearby the Impacted Neighborhoods	36%
Outside North Charleston City Limits	20%

Which amenity would be most valuable in your neighborhood?	
<b>Basketball Court</b>	<b>59%</b>
Baseball Field	18%
Soccer Field	11%
Tennis Court	6%
Volleyball Court	5%
<i>NOTE: One participant also suggested a swimming pool</i>	

Overall, most participants prefer single-family replacement housing and ask that any multifamily housing be built within or nearby the impacted communities. The most popular type of multi-family housing are townhomes, followed by duplexes. Infrastructure improvements, such as sidewalks with a curb, streetlights, and stormwater drainage, are all desired at a similar level. This reflects a need for many infrastructure improvements within the EJ communities. A basketball court is currently utilized at both the Russelldale and Highland Terrace-Liberty Park Community Centers. Results from this survey can conclude that residents prefer to keep such facilities within their neighborhoods because 59% of participants regard a basketball court as the most valuable amenity in their neighborhood. Lastly, the majority of survey participants prefer to receive project information through the mail. These results, including the lack of overall interest in the Community Office, are consistent with the mitigation prioritization on screen 1.

### MITIGATION RATING: SCREEN 3

Using photographic examples and brief descriptions, survey participants were asked to rate specific amenities and program-related mitigation items within a range of least desirable, or one (1), to most desirable, or five (5). The average rating of each mitigation concept was above 3. This shows that residents see a need for both recreational programs and outdoor amenities in their communities and are amenable to the potential mitigation ideas presented. Overall, the mitigation element with the highest rating is the After-School Program, which is currently offered by the City of North Charleston at both the Highland Terrace-Liberty Park Community Center and the Russelldale Community Center. This program is closely followed in popularity by the Financial Literacy Classes, GED Classes, Computer Lab, and a Playground. The rest of the potential mitigation elements are listed in order of average rating in the bar graph below:



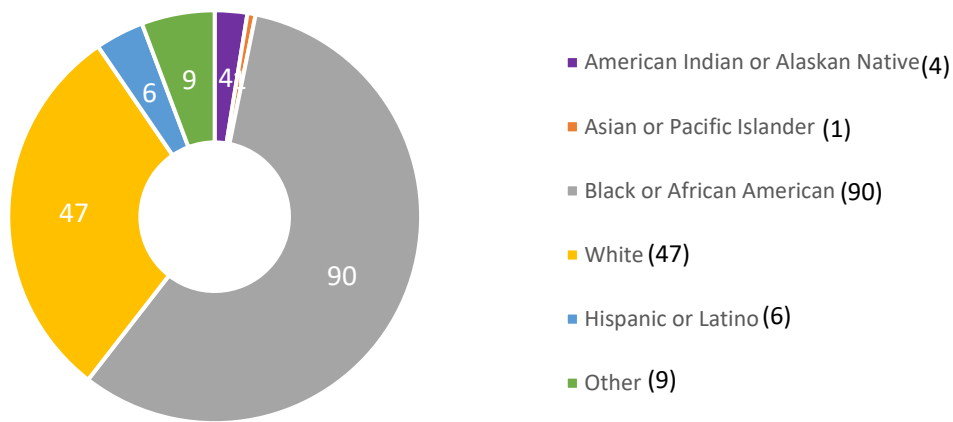


## PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS: SCREEN 4

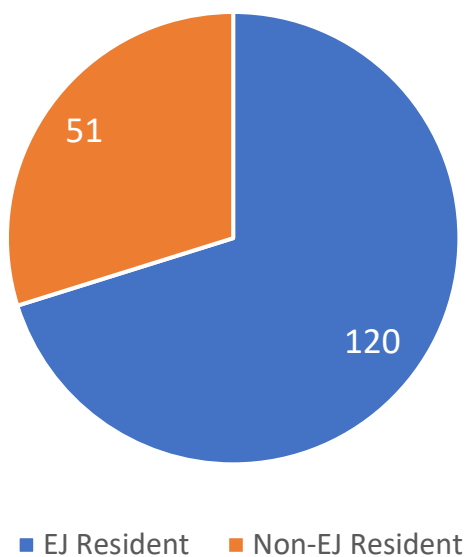
Demographic information, such as neighborhood of residence and ethnicity, was also included in the survey to assist the project team in determining the success of the survey in providing full and fair participation for the EJ neighborhood residents. This information will help validate the results and support any decisions that are made regarding the revised EJ Community Mitigation Plan.

Overall, the majority of survey participants who elected to answer the questions on Screen 4 were African American or Black residents of one of the five (5) EJ neighborhoods – Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Joppa Way, Liberty Park, and Russelldale. Each category is detailed in the graphs below.

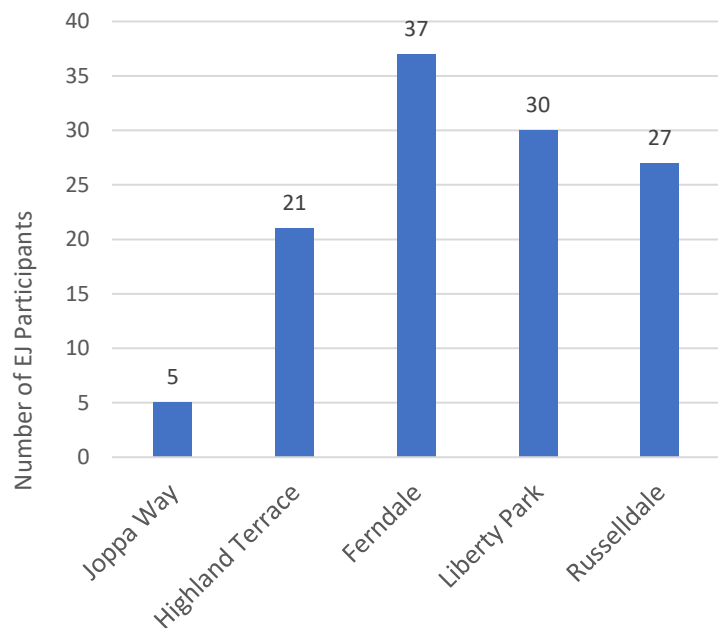
### Surey Participants: Race



### Survey Participants: Location



### Represented EJ Neighborhoods



Survey participants were also asked if they were going to be directly impacted by the project via relocation or displacement to identify residents who may need to speak to a Right-of-Way specialist. Individual appointments for impacted residents are important so that residents fully understand the acquisition and relocation processes, their rights as owners or renters, and the overall timeline for relocation. Fifty-seven (58) participants were unsure if they were going to be directly impacted by the project, 45 indicated that their property would not be impacted, and 40 indicated their property would be impacted. A list of individuals who left contact information and marked that they were unsure if their property would be impacted or confident their property would be impacted will be provided at the end of this report for use by the project's Right-of-Way Specialists.

To assist in future outreach and engagement efforts, the survey participants were asked how they first heard of the I-526 LCC WEST project. Over 45% of participants first heard of the project from newsletters or mailers, which provides support for the need to continue to provide this type of communication moving forward. Other methods of communication are outlined in the graph below.

