

FOREST HILL AVENUE IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT
STAKEHOLDER MEETING #2

October 26th, 2011
6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
St. Lukes Church

MEETING NOTES

The purpose of this meeting was to present the changes in the design concept since the last meeting and to update members on the requests made at the first meeting. The meeting started with an update on the overall status of the project.

Current Project Status:

The revised designs were presented to the stakeholders and included the following elements. Discussion items for each are included.

- The bicycle lane will be constructed to the curb – the gutter will be paved over as part of the design, reducing the total cross section. Stakeholders mentioned that maintenance will be important as cyclists will now potentially ride in this area.
- The planting strip has been re-designed to include tree wells. This will allow a reduction in overall width as well, but still allow medium scale trees to be included in the design. In conjunction with this alternative, the width of the sidewalk would be reduced by one foot in areas with tree wells. This would maintain a minimum sidewalk width of four feet near the tree wells and five feet in areas without the tree wells. Stakeholders requested that if possible, they would like to reduce the sidewalk width to 3 feet overall. It was noted by the City that 3 feet would not meet ADA requirements. The stakeholders stated that they still prefer 3 foot sidewalks and that they would like for the City to confirm a) that 3 feet is the ADA requirement as there was some confusion at the meeting and b) explain how some new sidewalks in the City (along Hathaway for example) were being constructed at 3 feet. There was also discussion that a consistent 4 foot sidewalk was an alternative that would meander some in the areas of the tree wells. The City did not support this concept and said it would investigate ADA requirements and confirm how 3 foot sidewalks were being constructed, once verified.
- Other elements in the design remained the same in terms of widths. The reduction in overall width results in an 84.5 foot cross section and a total reduction in tree loss along the corridor. Estimated tree loss will go from 169 to 131 with a total of 250 new trees being added.
- Staff discussed underground utilities. Undergrounding would cost \$3.2 million, but the funding is unavailable to do so. The consensus from stakeholders is that utility lines should be buried if at all possible and that the City should continue efforts to get additional funding. Stakeholders themselves indicated that they would contact elected officials and the MPO to promote the need for funding for underground utilities. Underground utilities remains a recommendation and strong desire from the stakeholder group.

Lighting/Utilities

City staff then presented two options for discussion related to utilities in the event that funding is not available to underground utilities. One option would place utilities along the outside of the corridor and one inside. Pros and cons of both were discussed among the stakeholders (concerns included lighting, the appearance of the utilities and other poles, number of poles, maintenance of the median overall, and ability to create a canopy effect of trees within the corridor). The city noted that their recommendation would be to place utilities in the center median due to an overall reduction in the number of poles and the elimination of the need for a utility easement (concerns about the easement were also discussed by stakeholders). An informal poll was taken of the stakeholders to see if there was consensus on the location – all except 3 people preferred the median option. Two people preferred the outside option and one stakeholder abstained without more information on lighting, maintenance, etc. The stakeholders were in agreement about the general need to maintain plantings in the median (by the City) and the need to think about the maintenance and aesthetics of the utilities overall.

Crosswalks

- The City stated that they agreed with the request at the first meeting to include several crosswalks that would have a higher level design, using specially designed pavers. There was discussion of the using granite pavers and the City indicated that their pavers could be designed to look like granite.
- Stakeholders had concern over the crosswalk at Powhite and requested that more be done to ensure that it operates safely. The potential for pedestrian crossing signals was discussed at the meeting.

Median Plantings and Retaining Walls

- The City presented some tree and planting options, and some alternatives were discussed. It was requested by the stakeholders that a landscape committee of local residents be created to consider the median plantings and to consider potential gateway treatments as well (a variety of potential gateway elements were discussed at the meeting). The City Arborist would be a resource for this process. There was no formal recommendation on plantings or tree species at this meeting.
- Concern was again raised about the overall need to maintain the medians and ensure that plants live – the City noted that they will maintain medians and that a two year guarantee for trees would be included. Stakeholders noted that they are still concerned about overall ability of the City to maintain median and reiterated that plantings, gateway treatments, etc. would aid in defining this section as residential.
- The City agreed with the recommendation from the first meeting and will look into making the retaining walls look decorative.

Other Discussion Items:

- It was requested that the City send a notification explaining how the property will be acquired during the project.
- A request that the drainage pond have a fencing style other than chain link fencing was made by the stakeholders.

- A question was raised as to when the marking of properties would be done. The City would be marking once the design has been finalized.
- Several issues that were outside of the purview of this meeting were mentioned and should be noted. Various stakeholders raised continuing concerns about the need for bicycle lanes, the need for a deceleration lane, the lack of a signal at Retting, and buffering between residential and commercial properties. Not all members shared the same concerns and there was some debate, but the concerns were noted as part of this process. In addition, some stakeholders remain generally concerned about the overall effect this project will have on the neighborhood, property values, safety, etc. These were noted as part of the discussion.

Next Steps:

- Notes from this meeting will become part of the record and any edits to the plans assessed by the City.
- Design will be reviewed based on the comments received and an informal update presented to UDC and Planning Commission.
- The project will go back before the Urban Design Committee in a public session and a public hearing will be held at a future date.

Participants were thanked for their participation in this process and the meeting was adjourned.