

Meeting Summary
City of Tucson
Ward 2 Citizen Design Review Committee (CDRC)
Houghton Road, Northern Segment: Tanque Verde Road to 22nd Street
June 11, 2008
Tucson Eastside City Hall, 7575 E. Speedway Blvd.

ATTENDEES:

Ward 2 CDRC Members

Paul Gegenheimer

Fran Johnson

Frank Salbego, Eastside Neighborhood Association (NA)

Tom Stefanek, Mesquite Trails NA

Ward 2

Tracy Neish, Aide to Council Member Rodney Glassman

Tucson Department of Transportation (TDOT) or City of Tucson (COT) Staff and Consultants

M.J. Dillard, TDOT Project Manager, Houghton Road Northern Segment (Tanque Verde Road to 22nd Street) and Central Segment (22nd Street to Valencia Road)

Gary Wittwer, COT Landscape Architect

Joe Vaskovic, PB Project Manager, Northern Segment

Jay Koesters, PB Principal-in-Charge

Greg Bambauer, PB Drainage Engineer

Arizeder Urreiztieta, Gordley Design Group, Public Involvement

Guests

Johnny Baker

Mary Baker

Bill Beatty (representing CDRC member Mike Collins)

Sandy Beatty (representing CDRC member Mike Collins)

Rochelle Browne (representing CDRC member Dominique Drentea)

Julia Potter

Louis Potter

John Norris

Sheila Norris

Steve Roberts

HANDOUTS PROVIDED

- Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) brochures
- Summary of January 30, 2008, Ward 2 CDRC meeting
- Agenda

INFORMATION

Project overview, implementation plan, and development along the corridor

Arizeder Urreiztieta opened the meeting by asking CDRC members and project team members to introduce themselves. M.J. Dillard welcomed Joe Vaskovic as the new project manager representing PB, the project engineer. She explained that Jay Koesters had stepped in to temporarily manage the project on the departure of Ricardo Pargas, who left the firm late last year. Joe's depth of knowledge of issues and concepts of the Houghton Road widening is longstanding.

The agenda for the evening was distributed. After providing a brief overview of the Houghton Road improvement project, which stretches from Tanque Verde Road to Interstate 10 and is divided in three distinct segments, each of which has its own timetable and unique set of characteristics, M.J. touched on the variety of funding sources; these include bond money and money from the RTA plan that voters approved in 2006. Although construction will be linked to funding as it becomes available, a preliminary Implementation Plan – how the project will actually begin to be built – calls for the following areas to be given earliest priority:

- Intersection of Old Vail Road and Houghton Road (Southern Segment)
- The area between Irvington Road and Valencia Road, including the Irvington intersection but not including the Valencia intersection (Central Segment)
- Intersection of Broadway and Houghton Road (Northern Segment)

The Old Vail Road/Houghton intersection is slated for completion by summer of 2009, with construction projected to begin in late 2008. At this time, TDOT is still finalizing plans for timing of the other improvements listed above, as well as on other sections of the Houghton Road corridor generally.

In response to a comment and a request from an earlier meeting, M.J. used a large aerial display to pinpoint areas of Houghton Road, especially in the Northern Segment, where there are potential future commercial/residential development projects. These areas include:

- Southwest corner of the Tanque Verde and Houghton Roads intersection:
Shopping plaza
- Vista Verde area: Eleven one-acre lots for single-family homes
- Faulkner area northeast of the Broadway-Houghton intersection: A 100-acre area comprising 300 housing units
- Area near the southeast corner of the 22nd Street and Houghton intersection:
Undefined or undetermined

Comments from public meeting held Feb. 12, 2008

M.J. summarized comments from the public, and interested or affected parties, received at the Feb. 12 public meeting and during the two-week period that followed. Comments addressed several topics:

- Access issues in general
- Access issues specific to five houses on the west side of Houghton Road just north of Fifth Street; information from the project team will be provided to those residents separately.
- Access issues specific to the Broadway-Houghton intersection; M.J. stated that one of the challenges of this area of the project is that some of the driveways that face each other across the road are not aligned.
- Relocating the large Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) utility poles, eliminating them and burying their power lines; these measures are cost-prohibitive and present other, technical, challenges.
- Noise mitigation or requests for noise walls; M.J. reminded the committee that rubberized asphalt has proven to be effective and is the preferred method for reducing noise. She added that an Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) video on noise demonstrates how prohibitively high, and continuous, noise walls must be in order to effectively reduce noise.
- Lighting options are under consideration, and lighting could be an agenda item at future CDRC meetings.
- The desire to have the project completed as soon as possible.

A committee member asked whether there was a way for the Ward office, the CDRC and the public at large, to know ahead of time what developments along Houghton Road are proposed. M.J. responded that she would distribute information as she receives it.

Another question revolved around development or improvements coming east on Broadway from Harrison Road toward Houghton Road. M.J. responded that she would take a closer look at the area.

Arizeder reminded the CDRC that the project Web site – www.houghtonroad.info – contains useful information resources, including the ADOT video on noise. These resources can be reached via a link at the bottom of the home page titled “Contact Info & Useful Links.”

M.J. reiterated that money for the Houghton Road improvement project comes from several sources that include capital improvement funds, Pima County and the RTA.

Arizeder asked the CDRC whether they would find an RSS feed to the project Web site useful. It was generally agreed that an RSS feed would be desired. RSS, or Really Simple Syndication, is a system of different Web-based feed formats that allow publication or

notification of updated content. Arizeder agreed to pursue implementation of this service in consultation with TDOT, which serves as host for the Web site.

City of Tucson Landscape Architect Gary Wittwer spoke about landscaping the project area and outlined four principal overriding factors and considerations:

- Houghton Road's status as a Scenic Corridor
- Adherence to the Native Plant Protection Ordinance (NPPO)
- COT funding for landscaping at an all-time low, without a budget increase in the last 10 years
- Dwindling water resources

Gary described a future successful landscaping concept with unique opportunities to link areas together, making the most of native plants that start out in small containers for increased survivability, with little to no irrigation. He added that because plans call for a more natural look, the use of decomposed granite will be minimized, and that due to water issues, it is expected that plants will be self-sustaining.

Because of the availability of time, Arizeder suggested that guests' questions be addressed at this time, rather than after the meeting adjournment. Comments and questions included the following:

A member of the CDRC referenced a section of an adjacent, completed improvement project, Harrison Road, which also has new landscaping. Is the quality of the work on Harrison indicative of what Houghton will be like? Gary said his plans are for Houghton to closely adhere to the NPPO, and for the work, which is contracted out, to be of high quality.

A committee member asked whether native plants that must be displaced could also be saved and replanted. Gary said that in some cases this is possible and that reasonable effort is made to save native plants.

A member of the public asked whether landscaping work would be contracted out. Gary responded that it would, since there are only eight landscaping employees. Asked about the timing of landscaping, Gary and M.J. responded that landscaping is last, while utilities are first.

M.J. was asked about plans for a Mall of America south of the project area, beyond I-10. She responded that planning takes into account future development, but that the greatest need is to work with what development there is now. Another reason the Houghton Road corridor is given such significance, she said, is the amount of development.

To allay concerns of residents that may see construction or technical equipment in or near the project area, M.J. indicated that soil-testing and other activities precede actual construction of a project, and that they should not be interpreted to mean construction has

begun. Arizeder added that the Ward office is kept apprised of these activities in the case of constituent calls.

A questioner asked what criteria were used to select the three initial areas or intersections for the preliminary stages of the Implementation Plan. M.J responded that these made the most sense based on a variety of criteria.

It was commented that Harrison Road was constructed well, and part of its success was well-delineated staging areas for equipment and personnel. M.J. responded that careful consideration would be given to Houghton Road, but that it was too early to begin to identify possible staging areas for construction equipment.

A question on the increased level of dust during construction elicited a response from M.J. that dust is strictly controlled.

Arizeder asked M.J. to recapitulate key points in the timetable for the project in terms of public involvement. M.J. indicated the possibility of a public meeting in late summer if enough new information is available. She also voiced the need for more involvement with the CDRC by a representative from the Tanque Verde Road-Speedway subsegment, which recently was added to the scope of the project.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:41 p.m.