

South End Revitalization Meeting Notes
February 10, 2009
Questions & Answers

Q. Are there still plans to open up Wendell Place?

A. The plans for Wendell Place are in a later phase. The focus of the current meeting is Main Street. (Scott Hanson)

Q. Why is the City doing this revitalization project?

A. The South End was identified as needing assistance and the government funding received is earmarked for infrastructure. The revitalization is occurring to improve the front door of the businesses on Main Street, improving the quality of life for the residents of the South End section and overall making it more attractive for new businesses to come onto Main Street. (Scott H.)

Q. This has been tried before and it failed. It is time we learn from our mistakes. People are what bring crime rates down, not pretty sidewalks and fancy lights. Why doesn't the City use the money to buy empty lots and use them as incentive for new businesses?

A. The funding is earmarked for particular projects. It cannot be used for whatever the City wants. It is designated for projects such as this revitalization. (Scott H.)

Q. Are additional crosswalks going to be added?

A. Yes, there will be some crosswalks added and some will be rebuilt. They have not reached the phase in which the exact position of the crosswalks has been decided but most of the major crossings and where Main Street meets side streets will have crosswalks. (John Bechard)

Q. How long will it take from start to finish to complete these crosswalks? It is already very congested and this will increase the congestion. What will be done about traffic and congestion during construction?

A. The design will pay specific attention to this issue. Some disruption is expected but the plan VHB will put together will attempt to place the construction in phases in order to have as little congestion as possible. (John B.)

Q. What are the plans for residents living on Wendell Place? There are many one way streets in the area and getting of this street may be difficult during construction.

A. A traffic management plan will be put together to address this. This will be done later in the spring of 2009. (John B.)

A. Periodic updates of the project will also be placed on the City's website for viewing. (Scott H.)

People are also welcomed to call the Office of Planning and Economic Development with any questions. (Samalid Hogan)

Q. The plan is ambitious but there are only a few months of summer. There is already a problem with snow piles causing parking issues on Main Street and this will escalate that issue. What is the plan for this problem?

A. The areas that were proposed for expansion were along Union Street. Many of the other intersections are tight to buildings so there is not a lot of room to maintain handicap accessibility. We are attempting to move the curb line out to give more room to make building entries handicap accessible and improve on the drainage area in the streets. The areas that were discussed as far as expansion and improvements were from Broad Street to Locust Street. The snow storage is a major concern and by placing some of the bulb outs, which help pedestrians, they can impact parking but we will do our best to make sure snow is not trapped and causing problems. Even though some of the streets are narrow, there is a lot of foot traffic in the South End and we want to be sure this foot traffic is promoted. I will make a note of that comment. (John B.)

Q. How much will the whole project cost and where is the money coming from?

A. A table was presented. The money is broken down into city funds and state funds although no federal funds have been applied for yet. The City of Springfield has committed \$6.2 million from a city bond that will go towards construction. The City has also committed \$1.1 million from the CDBG. That is a total of \$7.3 million the City of Springfield has committed for this project. A Public Works Economic Development grant is being applied for from the state for \$1.6 million and the application is due in March. Most of that grant money will go toward Main Street. A Community Development Action Grant is being applied for also for the Dwight Street extension improvements. All these funds total up to \$9.9 million. Including the park expansion and things like that, the project is projected to cost about \$12 million leaving a \$2.1 million gap. The way this was planned it was broken into fiscal years by phases. The issues with the sidewalks will be addressed hopefully with CDBG money. (Sam H.)

Q. How will the residents of the City of Springfield being laid off feel about \$12 million being spent on infrastructure and pretty flowers?

A. This money is designated for certain activities in the City and it cannot be distributed for labor or the workforce. Millions of dollars are being pumped into a revitalization plan for the South End after many years of the band-aid approach at rebuilding the neighborhood. The South End is the gateway into the City of Springfield from the south and it was chosen from all the other neighborhoods in the City as the first project to tackle. Referring to the question about sidewalks and snow, the sidewalks are the responsibility of business owners and they should clear the way for patrons to visit their establishments. The investment in the South End is also of an aesthetic quality including the thoroughfare, the sidewalks, the roadways and the landscaping. Being in the position to make the difficult decisions for layoffs in FY 2010, I am fully aware of the economic and employment crisis and if the money could be used for employment it would be. The money is earmarked for specific things and it is one time money. It cannot be

used for reoccurring costs. The money is earmarked for economic development.
(Mayor Sarno)

Q. Peter Gagliardi stated he owns a parking lot on York and Main Street. He asked if it would be possible for him to contact VHB in order to make the landscaping and improvements on his lot congruent with the improvements of VHB.

A. Final design plans for Main Street will be complete by April or May. Mr. Bechard gave Mr. Gagliardi his contact information. (John B.)

Q. Are the plans to open up Wendell Place concrete despite what the residents feel about that?

A. That is the concept plan for that area at the current time. There will be additional public meetings to address each phase of the project. There are many variables and each idea cannot be integrated into the plans, although we will do our best to hear all concerns. (Scott H.)

Q. There are new light fixtures on Union and Main Street. Will the same wattage be used in the South End?

A. There hasn't been a lighting analysis done yet so the fixtures and wattage have not been decided on. The wattage was 175 and it was upgraded to 400 watts. The wattage will depend on many things such as how frequent poles will be placed along the streets in the South End. (Scott H.)

Q. The wattage on Main Street was reduced from 1100 to 400 watts first, so will they go back up to 400 watts? That isn't a lot of illumination.

A. Some other factors that will play a role in the lighting are using different fixtures and scaling the fixtures down. It is still too early to give a definitive answer on how the lighting will be handled. A lighting analysis will be done and these details will be decided then. The essential goal is to over illuminate, not under illuminate. (Scott H.)

Q. Concerning the intersection at Mount Pellier and Gardner Street, where is the pedestrian light going to go? There will be a hotel built near this corner soon and foot traffic may increase.

A. The Hampton Inn will be another block down from this intersection and the front door will be on the East Columbus Avenue side, so it shouldn't cause a negative impact on the pedestrian traffic at this intersection.

Q. Regarding the landscaping plans discussed for the Elmwood and York Street portion of the project, will shrubs and trees be used? Shrubs collect litter and they are difficult to maintain due to the weeds they cause. Also, trees overgrow and begin to block the lighting on the street, especially in the Hollywood section. Has any thought been given to these issues?

A. The plan is still in the preliminary stages, so the details of landscaping and things like that will be decided with input. VHB has met with the City Forester and the Parks Department to discuss some of these issues. VHB appreciates the concerns and they will be taken into account when final details are developed. (John B.)

Q. The roots of some trees damage sidewalks. If this happens, will the sidewalks be corrected immediately?

A. Part of the details of the plan is to select species for landscaping that will prevent these things from happening. This will be considered when final plans are made. (VHB Rep)

Q. Scott Hanson asked if there were any concerns with the expansion of the Columbus Avenue intersection.

A. One resident stated she feels it will help drivers. The set up of the intersection now, drivers may get confused. I like the design.

Q. Is there any money earmarked for the restoration of blighted buildings in the Hollywood section of the South End?

A. Different departments of the City are being asked to all step up so that they can coordinate plans with these plans for revitalization. It is a collaboration. (Samalid H.)