

**Detroit River International Crossing Study**  
**Local Advisory Council Meeting**  
**Notes**  
**November 18, 2009, 7:00 p.m.**  
**Southwestern High School**

**Purpose:** To review the progress of the Detroit River International Crossing Project and present the preliminary plan for the stabilization and revitalization of Delray by the firm Capital Access.

**Attendance:** See attached.

**Discussion:**

**Introductions**

Following the welcome by Mohammed Alghurabi, each person in attendance introduced himself/herself.

**Meeting Conduct Procedures**

Mohammed Alghurabi explained the procedures for the evening's meeting. The public has time at the beginning and end of the meeting to ask questions/make comments. The LAC members have the first opportunity to comment and ask questions and to conduct their business uninterrupted in the core of the meeting.

**Agenda Review**

Mohammed Alghurabi reviewed the agenda. He asked if there were any changes. None were offered. Mohammed Alghurabi noted that he would be calling upon Community Benefits Coalition (CBC) members to help with questions regarding the exhibits around the room related to Capital Access proposals for Delray stabilization and revitalization. The bulk of the meeting would be a Capital Access presentation on this subject.

## **LAC Comments**

Tom Cervenak noted that an issue had come up at the last meeting with respect to truck traffic being routed through Delray as a result of changes with the Gateway Project. He said he understood this truck routing caused by the Detroit International Bridge Company (DIBC) not fulfilling its obligations for Gateway project construction. He expressed concern about the truck traffic and asked when the routing through Delray might end. Mohammed Alghurabi said that Victor Judnic, MDOT's Gateway project construction manager, is working to address the issue.

John Nagy said that to follow up on then truck routing issue, he counted 688 trucks on Jefferson and 304 on Westend on November 3. He said more thought must be given to how these trucks were moving through the Delray neighborhood. He urged MDOT to meet with representatives of the community to find a better solution. He stressed the trucks are affecting the quality of life in Delray.

## **Public Comments**

Otis Mathis noted that when leaving Fort Wayne recently, the draw bridge went up on Jefferson blocking the traffic. The presence of additional trucks on Jefferson made the situation intolerable. He wanted a letter written by the LAC (to MDOT) complaining about the truck traffic.

Norm Motowski of All Saints Church indicated that he had spoken with Mr. Judnic and had been assured that MDOT's strategy was to disperse the truck traffic coming across the bridge. This is good for All Saints Church which is on Fort Street; it experiences fewer trucks with the new routing plan.

## **Meeting Notes**

Scott Brines indicated that, while earlier sets of LAC meeting notes had names of people asking questions, that is not the case in the last set of notes. Mr. Rosen echoed that position. Scott Brines also indicated the last set of notes was abbreviated compared to earlier sets of notes.

Tom Cervenak asked Mohammed Alghurabi if there were any report on air quality measures. Mohammed Alghurabi responded that MDOT is assisting the CBC to obtain funding and \$300,000 has already been awarded for diesel engine retrofit implementation.

Mohammed Alghurabi recognized Andre Spivey, a newly elected City Council member.

### **DRIC Monthly Progress Review**

Mohammed Alghurabi asked Gerardo Evangelista of Bridging Communities for an update on housing development. Mr. Evangelista said that up to \$2 million had been awarded for new housing through the Michigan State Housing Development Authority's (MSHDA) "HOME" program. An application for the second round of federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program funding had been submitted; that application is being reviewed. Bridging Communities is now working with Capital Access on example home plans. Soon, Capital Access will be asking Delray residents who could be relocated by the DRIC about their interest in staying in the community if such new housing is available.

John Bendzick suggested that the project's reference be changed from "DRIC" to the "Ontario-Michigan Bridge" to distinguish the DRIC from other projects, such as the Gateway. Mohammed Alghurabi said he would take that under advisement.

Mohammed Alghurabi indicated that MDOT was committed to fulfilling the requirements set forth in Senate Bill 254 by May 1, 2010. He also reported that MDOT was still working to get an aesthetics consultant onboard by the end of the year.

### **Delray Work Plan for Stabilization and Revitalization**

Mohammed Alghurabi introduced Jeremy Newberg of Capital Access to present the draft plan to stabilize and revitalize Delray. Mr. Newberg gave a PowerPoint presentation first explaining his consulting group had been brought into the Delray project by MSHDA. He explained that the purpose of the planning was what he called "second generation urban renewal with citizen

input.” There were two basic issues. First, conditions in Delray have reached a point of blight beyond which the private sector can successfully intervene without a partnership with government. Secondly, revitalization of Delray must retain the fabric of the community. This is to be done by building on a core of stable housing and working out from that area in a phased approach with both infill housing and rehabilitation of those structures judged to be sound. Blighted structures need to be removed.

He identified an 11-point program as follows:

1. Identify the target area. This was done in Delray in three sections: west, central, and east.
2. Seek input from the community members and stakeholders.
3. Survey all properties with respect to ownership, rental status, occupancy, and structural condition.
4. Develop a community vision.
5. Examine target markets.
6. Develop a range of housing products that could be implemented.
7. Develop a land use plan consistent with the above points.
8. Generate a budget identifying where funding could be obtained.
9. Develop an acquisition plan.
10. Identify roles and responsibilities of the implementation team including an independent manager.
11. Sell Delray every day.

Mr. Newberg stressed that work to date had carried through stage seven of the above numbered list.

He then reviewed in some detail the first seven steps that had been accomplished to date, citing statistics from the neighborhood and a draft vision. He emphasized that acquisition of as much property as possible, as early as possible, was very important to control the site. There had to be a strategy for every individual parcel and there had to be a clustered approach. This includes:

code enforcement: property acquisition and demolition; rehabilitation of existing homes that can be saved; combining lots and making sure that they are environmentally clean for redevelopment; identifying infill and rehabilitation opportunities; and, making supportive infrastructure improvements.

He closed his presentation indicating the next steps that need to be taken are: 1) identify community stakeholders; 2) determine a budgeting and fundraising process to accomplish the neighborhood redevelopment; 3) develop a specific acquisition strategy; and, 4) identify a professional program manager to coordinate all the stakeholders, agencies and ideas generated through the planning process to get the job done.

### **LAC Comments**

*Q. Unidentified questioner: How do you know how many want to stay if you didn't interview anyone?*

R. Mohammed Algurabi responded that such a survey was conducted in the summer of 2007.

*Q: John Bendzick asked if the 30-foot existing lots might go to 60- or 80-foot wide.*

R: Jeremy Newberg responded that might occur in the south part of the study area in a later phase, but there is a relationship between the budget for redevelopment and the size of the lots so it is best in the early phase of the project to stay with 30- to 40-foot wide lots.

*C: Unidentified questioner: There should be driveways.*

R: Jeremy Newberg responded that the emphasis in the plan would be on alleys with garages.

*C: Same questioner: That's a security issue.*

R: Jeremy Newberg responded that, generally, in urban areas, curb cuts in the front are bad design, but it's important to understand the security issue and he will relook at that.

*Q: Bob Benson: If the lots are 30- to 40-feet wide, how deep are they?*

R: Jeremy Newberg responded that, generally, 100 to 120 feet. The existing street grid system will not be changed.

*C: Mr. Walker: The city's policy is to close alleys. You can look other places like on the east side of Detroit where Habitat for Humanity has put in driveways and eliminated alleys.*

R: Jeremy Newberg responded that vacating alleys is very difficult because all the property owners have to agree.

*C: Elizabeth Johnson: To clarify, it is important to understand that the city allows homeowners who want to close alleys to do so. But some communities elect to retain their alleys and keep them open. So there are different approaches within the city.*

*C: Unidentified questioner: Up near Six Mile Road, alleys were closed because no one used them. However, in Corktown the alleys are still open. It has to do with the width of the lot. With a 30-foot wide lot, side driveways as not possible*

R: Jeremy Newberg responded he will be looking at wider lots where possible. It may be that alleys could be eliminated in those situations. Otherwise there may be locations with alleys and garages and, perhaps, those garages could be attached to the houses. That will be investigated.

*C: Unidentified questioner: What's going to be done with Family Independence Agency on Jefferson?*

R: Mohammed Alghurabi responded that institution is part of MDOT's relocation program.

*Q: Mr. Rosen asked if Mr. Newberg is just going to present a plan and then go back to Philadelphia.*

R: Jeremy Newberg responded it is necessary that the Delray program be locally managed. Capital Access would prepare the job description of the manager and set up the program by which the individual would be hired to run that program.

*Q: Pat Loubriel: Complimented the presentation and asked what will happen with those on Ball Street?*

R: Jeremy Newberg responded that those people are expected to be relocated within the area.

*Q: Pat Loubriel: What's likely will be the price range of homes?*

R: Jeremy Newberg responded that, for those who will be relocated by the DRIC, the new houses could cost up to \$175,000. They would apply the relocation money they receive from MDOT to the purchase price and the balance of the housing cost would be subsidized to write down the mortgage to what they can pay. The standard is that those acquiring homes would pay no more than 30 percent of their income for the mortgage. To that is added the taxes and insurance on the new home.

*C: Pat Loubriel: The Woodward-Davidson-Six Mile area near Highland Park represents how not to do a program. There, \$135,000 homes were built; few were sold and then many were vandalized. .*

R: Jeremy Newberg said the Delray program would not involve houses built on a speculative basis. Homes would be built for a specific buyer.

*Q: Pat Loubriel: How do you get a grant to rehab a house?*

R: Jeremy Newberg responded that grants and loans are available as a function of the homeowner's ability pay.

*C: Pat Loubriel noted that at the intersection of Springwells and Fort, trucks are running the red light causing accidents.*

R: Mohammed Alghurabi responded that MDOT is aware of this and MDOT is planning to redesign/re-signal the intersection by January.

*C: Tom Cervenak commented that this was as reasonable timeframe within which to make the Springwells/Fort improvement.*

*C. Unidentified commenter: The Northpoint development north of Highland Park was not controlled. New homes were built next to existing ones that needed to be removed. The development was all wrong.*

With that, the meeting ended about 9:15 pm with Mohammed Alghurabi reminding attendees that the next Local Advisory Council meeting would be the last Wednesday of January.