

DRAFT

A Proposal for East Asheville Corridor Study

Introduction/Purpose

East Tunnel Road (US 70E) from I-240 to the Blue Ridge Parkway is one of the most visible and important transportation corridors in the City of Asheville. This corridor serves as a major gateway into the City from the east and is significant as the location or accessway for many important institutions and destinations. These include the Asheville Veterans Administration Medical Center, Azalea Park, Recreation Park, the Western North Carolina Nature Center, East Asheville Community Center and Fire Station, and the Blue Ridge Parkway. It is also the locale or means of accessing numerous churches, schools, businesses and residential communities.

Transportation, development, and quality of life issues have caused concerned residents in the East Tunnel Road area to approach the City seeking the development of a corridor study. The desire is to create a formal policy plan which establishes a cohesive vision and strategies for sustainable development, revitalization, and renewal along the corridor. It is hoped that such a plan will create more attractive ties between the neighborhoods adjacent to the corridor and the commercial and institutional entities along the street.

Some basic groundwork has already been completed by a core group of residents from various neighborhoods primarily accessed off of East Tunnel Road. This groundwork includes the enumeration of core issues needing to be addressed and thoughts about the geographical scope of the project. This groundwork should serve as an important starting point for a corridor study. Additionally, the core group is in the process of reaching out to business and property owners along the corridor to garner support and involvement.

Expected outcomes of such a plan/study, although largely conceptual in nature, include the identification of realistic, actionable recommendations for future action/development. The plan would provide the City, property owners, and residents with a coordinated blueprint to guide future improvements. This information could be utilized to initiate zoning amendments and transportation design improvements.

The following report identifies a proposed process, schedule and suggested partners/participants for the endeavor. The East Asheville Sidewalk Initiative seeks the support of the Committee and Council for staff to initiate this project.

Suggested Participants/Partners

Project Manager: Julia Fields

Principal Staff Support: Nate Pennington

Project Sponsor: Shannon Tuch

The project manager is responsible for keeping the project on schedule and leading the Internal Working Group (IWG) meetings. Working with the principal staff support person they will assist the Stakeholders/Steering Committee (SSC) with facilitation of the SSC meetings and public meetings. The manager and principal support will be the primary authors of the report and assign duties to others as needed. The project sponsor approves major steps and decisions during the process.

Stakeholders/Steering Committee (SSC)

The SSC will be comprised of 12 to 14 members identified by staff (working with EASI) and approved by the Project Sponsor. The SSC shall select a chair from among its members who shall serve as part of the Core Internal Working Group. The SSC will be made up of a mix of residents of neighboring residential areas and business or property owners along the corridor. It is recommended that a representative of the local office of NCDOT be a part of this committee.

The SSC will receive reports/recommendations from the IWG concerning meeting formats, process steps, process schedule, etc. and must approve all such matters before they are implemented. The SSC will also review and approve/amend any plan reports or drafts before they are presented at public meetings. The SSC will preside over public meetings with assistance provided by the IWG as needed.

Internal Working Group (IWG)

The IWG will be comprised primarily of City of Asheville staff from different disciplines. The IWG may be changed as needed during the process as issues are identified. The IWG will consist of a core group (key support) with interdepartmental team members available to assist as needed as a broadened support team. Some of the meetings of the IWG will involve just the core group (meeting planning) and some will involve the core and support members (development of strategies/draft proposals). The IWG is responsible for the evolution of the content of the plan, providing technical expertise and base information, assisting in graphics and document production, etc. The IWG is responsible for ensuring that the recommendations in the plan are reasonable and can be carried forward.

Suggested members of the IWG Core:

- Project Manager – Julie Fields
- Project Support Lead – Nathan Pennington
- Project Sponsor – Shannon Tuch
- Chair of Stakeholder/Steering Committee
- Transportation Lead ??
- GIS Support – Blake Esselstyn

- Neighborhood Support – Marsha Stickford
- General Support – Clerical
- Communications, Design, Outreach, Web – Christy Edwards

Suggested potential members of the IWG Support Team:

- Transportation – Maybe several here – transit; bike/pedestrian/traffic engineering
- Police
- Fire
- Economic Development and Market Analysis
- Asheville Design Center??? Or other Pro Bono Design Assistance
- Parks
- Infrastructure – as Identified
- ????

Process

The proposed process will follow the typical trajectory of planning practice: inventory and analysis; public outreach and visioning; plan preparation and refinement; and, adoption. Specifically, it is proposed that the process will involved the following steps.

1. Project Scoping

- a. Meeting(s) of Internal Working Group (IWG). Review proposed schedule, inventory and analysis needs, and prepare for initial meetings. Review proposals for Stakeholder/Steering Committee (SSC) membership and extend invitations after project sponsor approval. Project charter developed.
- b. Meeting(s) of Stakeholder/Steering Committee (SSC). Review and approve/amend thoughts of IWG on schedule, inventory and analysis needs and first public meeting. Project charter approved and signed.
- c. Kickoff Public Meeting/Visioning Workshop. Open opportunity for interested parties to identify issues and strengths/weaknesses. Should this be oral or drop in/write on maps, etc.? Hybrid recommended. Identifying study priorities and confirming study area.
- d. IWG Review and Prepare Next Steps. Review comments from Kickoff Meeting and prepare summary paper for SSC on inventory/analysis needs, desired outcomes, and issues to be addressed (becomes official Project Scope). Not looking at goals and solutions here.
- e. SSC reviews and approves Project Scope.

2. Inventory and Analysis

- a. IWG Compiles Inventory and Analysis. Information that provides the factual and analytical basis for the planning process. IWG and other staff, with outside assistance as needed, conducts this phase of work. Information will most likely include: transportation conditions, land use, zoning, infrastructure, environmental conditions, market conditions, urban design features, etc.
- b. SSC Reviews/Amends Inventory and Analysis Report.

- c. IWG and SSC Prepare for Public Planning Workshop.
3. Preparation of Draft Corridor Plan
 - a. Public Planning Workshop. SSC and IWG conduct Public Planning Workshop. Present inventory and issues and opportunities. TOPs method? Groups work on brainstorming ideas? Staff assigned to appropriate groups.
 - b. Conceptual Goals/Strategies/Solutions Developed. IWG prepares initial report on goals/strategies/options/solutions from ideas generated at the Public Planning Workshop as well as ideas generated internally.
 - c. SSC Review and Approval of Goals and Strategies. Fine tuning of product developed by IWG.
 - d. IWG Creates Draft Corridor Plan
 - e. SSC Reviews and Amends/Approves Draft Plan
 4. Public Review of Draft Plan
 - a. Public Presentation of Draft Plan. SSC and IWG present draft document to public???? Not exactly sure of whether is public meeting or just put out for public with notice of upcoming meetings.
 - b. IWG and SSC Revise Draft. IWG revises draft as necessary with review by SSC.
 - c. Formal Presentations. PED, Planning and Zoning Commission, City Council.

Schedule – Very Rough Proposal – May be Ambitious

- Project to PED and Council for Approval – February – March 2012
- IWG and SCC Established and Initial Meetings – April 2012 –August 2012
- Kick off Meeting – September 2012
- Project Scope Completed by October 2012
- Inventory and Analysis – October 2012-January 2012
- Public Planning Workshop –February or March 2013
- Preparation of Draft Plan – March 2013 – August 2013
- Public Presentation of Draft – September 2013
- Formal Presentations – September – November 2013

Costs.....Mailings, Printing, Supplies, Etc.