



South Howard Flood Relief Project New Suburb Beautiful Roads Discussion

Wednesday, Feb. 7, 2024

Date: Wednesday, Feb. 7, 2024

Time: 1:00-2:00 p.m.

Location: Teams

Attendees: Patrick Crouch, President, New Suburb Beautiful
Peter Stravino, Treasurer, New Suburb Beautiful
Vik Bhide, Mobility Director, City of Tampa
Brandon Campbell, Transportation Engineering Manager, City of Tampa
Yuan Li, Stormwater Engineering Manager, City of Tampa
Brett Sillman, Project Manager, City of Tampa
Alex Awad, Engineer, City of Tampa
Elie Araj, Owners Representative for Tampa, Applied Sciences
Brian Cook, Director of Urban Design, Applied Sciences
John Zemina, Vice President, Kimmins
Michelle Robinson, Dialogue Public Relations

Vik Bhide thanked Patrick Crouch and Peter Stravino for making time to meet with the team. He asked everyone to introduce themselves. Vik said design has not yet started and the contract is not negotiated yet. He said Elie is a regional stormwater expert who serves as owner's rep so he could weigh in on design standards and what is in the contract.

Vik asked Peter and Patrick to share New Suburb Beautiful's (NSB) views and perspectives. Peter said they understand the scope of the project, but feels it has a commercial bias with construction mitigation and no mitigation given to NSB, which will be largely impacted. He said as the area continues to grow, it continues to push more traffic into the neighborhood, which further deteriorates the roads. Speeding is also a consideration. Over the past years, NSB has had several conversations with the City to understand where they stand with the roads. Overall, NSB has a lot of angst with both the South Howard and MacDill projects. He discussed the original brick roads being paved over several times over the years. He said NSB feels there must be a plan to address their streets, and they want to know where they fall in the hierarchy. He said NSB cannot support the South Howard project without mitigation for their streets as the construction will push even more traffic to NSB and compound the issue.

Patrick added that roads were an issue when he moved into the neighborhood in 2018. He acknowledged the tension between the trees and the roads and the drainage, but it feels like there have been a lot of excuses and delays, but no action. The neighbors are holding board members' feet to the fire to make something happen.

Vik acknowledged that NSB does have concerns that need to be addressed. He said NSB is at the top of the list to address the concerns. He said the team is assembled at today's meeting because they want to engage with NSB to 1) meet with the whole neighborhood to understand point by point what some of the challenges are and 2) to work with the City Transportation Engineering team to identify what can be done. He said the City is committed to start working with NSB to identify smaller projects to start implementing. He explained the MacDill project and South Howard project are funded either by fees, assessments, or grants and have narrow scopes which make it difficult to address all NSB's issues within the scopes of those projects.

Peter said he thinks there are things that can be done within the project budgets to address mitigation. He said both projects have a lot of dollars with which their concerns could be addressed, and that NSB's support is contingent on finding creative but legal ways to address their concerns within the project budgets.

Vik said Brandon is in the meeting because the City would like to restart the conversations with NSB to start programming within the Transportation budget what they have right now. He promised transparency and said if the project can accommodate anything beyond what is currently in the project plans, they will look at that as well.

Peter reiterated the impacts to NSB from both the MacDill and South Howard projects. He said their issues are simple – fix the streets and do so within the existing budgets.

Vik said he understands that Peter believes their concerns can be addressed in the scope, but Vik said he did not believe it could be.

A discussion ensued about previous efforts to address NSB's streets, which reached an impasse on more than one occasion because residents did not want to lose the tree canopy. The group agreed that there is latitude to revisit the roads and trees discussion with the community to understand priorities and potential impacts.

Peter reiterated that the crux of the conversation is that the project, which will push traffic to NSB, includes mitigation for the commercial area but not the neighborhood.

Vik said there are some dollars in the South Howard project budget, but not for the entire neighborhood. He committed that Transportation can meet with NSB to package some small projects to get going.

Michelle Robinson explained that the budget is not yet allocated to anything specific because there is no scope, and without a scope, there is no budget. She explained that the project is a progressive design-build. The first thing the contractor will do is put together a scope and fee for the design. After the design is finalized, the contractor will put together a Guaranteed Maximum Price, which is the pricing proposal to the City to build the project. The dollars sitting in the City pot of money are just sitting there, and some have strings attached, like THEA and the Resilient Florida grant. She said that the grant document says the Resilient Florida Funds can only be used for a sea level rise study and stormwater construction.

Michelle then explained that some roads are identified for early works, like paving. Morrison is one road currently identified to be paved as part of the early works. She explained that the east-west portion of the route is not yet set and could change. She said Kimmins would be looking at how the route goes from South Howard to Parkland.

Vik said the City wants to see what they can do within the existing projects, but is offering a Transportation Engineering piece to see what we can do now. He explained that the City intends to double its paving crew and may be able to save on paving this year. He said the City wants to meet with the neighbors to explore solutions and discuss trees and brick roads and other challenges.

Patrick said there seems to be some disagreement on the facts and there are different versions on the facts. He agrees that there needs to be further discussion and engagement with the neighborhood. Patrick said his current view is that NSB would want to delay current voting on the project until those discussions can be held. Patrick doesn't have a preferred fix; he's an advocate for the most thorough, long-lasting solution.

Peter suggested including Council Member Carlson in future discussions and meetings.

A discussion followed about the Resilient Florida grant dollars and NSB's position that nothing should move forward until their concerns are addressed. Vik clarified that the grant has been accepted, but what is pending is transferring the grant monies into the account to formalize it. Vik asked NSB to forward any question they have about transferring the funds. Elie Araj explained that the Resilient Florida dollars were awarded to fix the Parkland Estates flooding problem, and if they aren't accepted, then those dollars will go to another city or county.

Patrick said he wouldn't want those dollars to go to another community, but stated they can't support the South Howard project until they understand how their community will be mitigated. They are hearing a lot of different answers about what that means. They agree conceptually that the South Howard project is needed, but they believe it is appropriate to include mitigation funds in the project to improve their roads. NSB would like, with as much specificity as they can get, clarity around what can and will be done in that regard.

Elie suggested that NSB should request from the City a project for NSB to address their problems and seek grant dollars. The City can apply for grants specifically for NSB while working to identify problems and solutions, and identify where the money is coming from without delaying something else.

Vik committed to seeking grant funding, looking within the City budget and the South Howard project budget to see what can be done. He suggested starting with a vision and shopping that vision around for funds.

Patrick said the neighborhood may be skeptical about that approach, but they do want to engage with the City.

Peter requested that NSB and City staff meet with Council Member Carlson to agree on the next steps and to reach consensus on what is possible.

Alex Awad touched on the previous efforts and said they can bring those plans to future meetings.

Vik said City staff can build a vision and package together to fix the roads. The City can shop that vision to identify potential funding sources at the state and federal level. Meeting with residents will be important to understanding priorities. Patrick and Peter committed to communicating with Council Member Carlson to determine possible meeting dates and will communicate those to Michelle.

Patrick said he would like to explore any new technologies that can preserve more trees than was possible in the past. Vik said the City is open to exploring and adopting techniques and approaches that protect trees. He noted that the City's tree policy has changed, so they must comply with that, but they are open to exploring other means and methods.

Peter asked if there was a scope set in 2017 and what the budget was. Vik said he unaware. Peter said they were qualitatively told it's a \$3 million effort. Vik said he is hearing \$6-7 million.

Peter stressed that NSB streets must be a priority and safety is a concern.

Michelle summed up that NSB's priorities are road quality, water ponding, and traffic calming. Patrick and Peter agreed with the priority list.

The meeting concluded at 2:00 p.m.