



The Washington Avenue Corridor

Super Neighborhood Twenty-Two

WASHINGTON AVENUE BUSINESS OWNERS GROUP MEETING MINUTES

MEETING DATE: Tuesday December 15th, 2009

MEETING TIME: 3:00 P.M.

LOCATION: Art Studio of Jeanette Chinelli at 1813 Crockett, Houston TX 77007

3:00 p.m. Meeting commence

Paul Nicosia - recapped Super Neighborhood 22 meeting on December 14 regarding the Quiet Zone for Sherwin to Harvard. The First Ward Safety Zone in moving forward, by April May June of 2010 will be implemented.

3:15 p.m. Guest Speaker Daniel R. Menendez, P.E. Deputy Director Public Works & Engineering City of Houston Daniel Menendez spoke about the City of Houston's "Safe Sidewalk" program. On the Internet, google "City of Houston" and "Safe Sidewalks" to reach the web page with information. To recap what the information there: there are three main categories: Disability (mayor's office); Schools (sidewalks within 3-blocks); Major Thoroughfares (e.g. Washington Avenue). The process is to apply online or on paper:

- Define the parameters of where is covered
 - For example he would recommend that changes to Wash Avenue Corridor would be done by geographical phases
- Assessment of sidewalk would be done
 - Amount of right-of-way ROW for sidewalks might be an issue on WAVE.

Usually property owners are responsible to replace sidewalks adjacent to their land.

Questions and Answers:

Q: Paul – How are American Disability Assoc (ADA) ramps handled?

A: Dan –

- If the City of Houston replaces the roadway, they will do sidewalk
- When CoH strips the street to do overlays, they may also re-do sidewalk to ADA standard

Q: Paul – Big problem is power pole right in middle of sidewalks. How to address this?

A: DM - Problematic. These poles usually carry power distribution. Funding might occur to get this put underground, and the property owners would then have to pay for their service connection (Costs = \$15K < \$7K for owners). Example of this is at Kirby and downtown.

Q: Lauren Barrash – Is there a way to see if others have submitted requests

A: DM - 60/90 day evaluation for Safe Sidewalks. Every application will get a response letter (to applicant and District Council person). Accepted/approved projects are discussed at the annual first-of-the-year Capital Improvement Program CIP meeting, where Mr. Menendez is in attendance. The CIP is a five-year forecast of upcoming projects (a three-volume document, in which Public Works is comprised of one Volume). The Major Thoroughfare/Freeway Plan sets out width, number of lanes. Roadways are "pro-rommatic."

Q: Mary-Jane Buschlen – When is the next CIP?

A: Tanya Makany-Rivera, Chief of Staff Houston City Council Member, District H Edward Gonzalez: Currently two meetings are in the process of being set up for January.

A: Dan Menendez – The CIP program is a good program to identify needs.

Q: Monica Savino – There is a high need along Washington Avenue Corridor. Can your division work with groups at WAVE to help prioritize?

A: DM – Disability is our first priority. Therefore, have people with disabilities and children as part of the plan. Thoroughfares get last priority.

Q: Linda Darke – What width would new sidewalks be?

A: DM - Five-foot width. The Minimum is 36".



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Q: Paul – there are five people here today that are on the Super Neighborhood 22 Transportation Committee. Does it make sense to present a comprehensive plan or to address sidewalk deterioration issue separately?

A: DM – WAVE is a major transportation way and realistically there will be challenges if and when the city re-constructs the avenue because of ROW bottlenecks, which leads to the purchase of properties. Integrating bikeways will be challenging. The future of rail is plausible down WAVE. Consider the rail line going in that is downtown next to Hobby Center, it will zig zag around the bridges and go up Lubbock past Washington Avenue to get to 290.

Q: Jeff (Max Wine Dive) During redevelopment re-building of existing buildings, where did developers go in the city for permission?

A: DM – There are two ways to re-build.

- The City Planning Department handles plats
- City Engineering at 3300 Main handles re-models and then owners do not necessarily have to re-build sidewalks. It is a case by case scenario.

Q: Jeff – If buildings went over a proposed ROW (example 5900 block of Washington Ave.), the title company would not insure the ROW.

A: DM – the natural progression is the Planning Dept work with Traffic and Transportation to identify needs.

Q: Brett (Corkscrew) – Many buildings go right up to the curb. Does the city know this?

A: DM – No. Planning has specs on road width. Surveying has to be done and the impact (numbers of land owners impacted, historic buildings impacted, etc.) will affect decisions.

Q: Monica – is application of Major Thoroughfare/ Freeway standards i.e., a 60' ROW being widened to 100', a requirement?

A: DM – A balancing act. City tries to forecast in advance. It is not a blind assessment to decide the best choice. Example, Is mobility of a region being sacrificed for one building?

Q: Lauren – Light rail?

A: DM – Tens of millions of dollars to re-do Washington Avenue to the terminus, involving multiple projects. Our first call is to Metro to see what their plans are before considering a project. Metro is usually three years in advance to know what solutions are.

Q: Lauren – Cost of planning and changing plans, this is a lot of resources of tax payer's money...

A: DM – No cost on Washington Avenue right now until the dollars are programmed.

Q: Lauren – The Parking Management Division are planning for Washington Avenue right now.

A: Tanya District H – District H works with Parking Management Div. and right now we are just talking because we are waiting for the newly elected administration to be in place.

Q: Lauren – At the end of the day here, residents and businesses of the Washington Avenue Corridor have needs that are not being met.

Q: Monica – It is hard to get sidewalks fixed.

Q: Paul – the community wants to consolidate our requests to maximize efficiencies

A: DM – Constant dialogue through CIP to determine where resources allocated. I suggest you identify the big ultimate plan i.e. street reconstruction, underground lines, and push it through a mechanism like SN22.

Q: Monica – various civic clubs have specific concerns that are context-sensitive. There are inconsistencies of surface of the sidewalks, power poles are a problem, inconsistencies in drainage cause dangerously dodging traffic. Also, does your department handle crosswalks at signalized roads?

A: DM – Traffic and Transportation handles crosswalks but Public Works and Engineering does replace them. TTD handle them regularly through the 311 system. Every request is tracked and each is addressed in short timelines... it is an excellent system.

4:00 p.m. Parking Plan

Paul Nicosia – because of the recent elections, this has been put on hold

Tanya Makany-Rivera – Preliminary meetings are still occurring with Planning and Traffic department officials regarding metered parking ideas. The main issues to be understood are the costs and manpower and the control of implemented systems. We have not estimated realistically what revenue will be captured and how the



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Residential Parking Permit RPP program will affect the parking meter program from a financial standpoint. The discussion includes how the revenue can stay within the area.

Brett- Rice Military just got approved for RPP. The cost of one meter (handling multiple parking spaces) is rumored to be around \$8K each and only two a month can be installed because of the experienced manpower to do so.

4:15 p.m. Washington Wave Jitney Service

Lauren Barrash, owner – a new parking stand will happen at Lot H (east end of Washington Avenue)

- Safer for residents and customers
- There are not enough taxis at peak hours

Jeff (Max's Wine Dive) – Would a more centralized lot be better, i.e. Memorial/Waugh?

Lauren – Yes, if I could get the same dollar lease

Paul – How is ridership?

Lauren – There is a perception of transportation in Houston I feel I am trying to change. Many people need transportation at 2 a.m. and I cannot accommodate all of them then. We need more people to park in a centralized area.

Paul – Midtown had just completed a study amongst their residents for feedback along their spine. Mind you, they have funding to conduct such studies, while we don't.

4:30 p.m. Arts District Sign Topper Program

John Deal (Beavers, Winter Street Studios) – The program came about from realizing a need for identity. Steve Gibson and other landowners agreed regarding an arts district because of the variety of structures in the area contributing to this theme.

Jeannette Chinelli (Art Studio) – First Ward wanted esplanade markers but these are not allowed any more.

John - We have applied for grant matching for sign toppers and it is pending. We would like for the concept to be expansive to connected neighborhoods.

Jeannette – We are building a steering committee (facilitated by Texas Commission on the Arts) to include MECA) to actualize the Arts designation which implies many advantages for local business.

4:45 p.m. Washington Avenue Business Owner's Group Structure

Paul Nicosia (SN22 liaison to WAVE BOG) – In January this group need to elect a board. SN22 has sent Paul to help get this started because they recognized the lack of business owner representation at SN22 council meetings. Paul envisions WAVE BOG working with SN22 to approach the City of Houston with a clear voice and proactive ideas. A recent example of a successful synergistic effort was the postponement of the sale of the Center Street Recycling facility to Admiral Linen. It is Paul's hope that the WAVE BOG positions will be filled with people with diverse businesses.

Brett – There seems to be competition amongst bar owners and wonders if that is a deterrent to bar owners participating.

Lauren – Concerned that bars will move out of Washington Avenue Corridor if issues are not resolved. Currently there are 52 applications for bar permits.

Paul – One advantage for business owners to attend a WAVE BOG meeting is that government representatives (such as Tanya from Dist H office) get to hear first hand from multiple business owners about their specific issues.

Brett – Inspectors have been a problem

Lauren – Another advantage for business owners attending WAVE BOG meetings, is media promotion and integrated promotions through her company

5:00 p.m. Announcements

Paul – KICK Indoor Soccer League has plans for a WAVE BOG league. More info to come.

Lauren – Wave Jitney is doing a charity run on Wednesday Dec 16 at Max's Wine Dive for Juvenile Diabetes and on Thursday Dec 17 for Child Advocates