

## Highway 29 Boulevard of Opportunity Study Community Meeting #1

### Minutes of Meeting

*September 23, 2010/ 6:30pm/ Providence Christian Academy*

#### Agenda

**Welcome & Introductions**

**Study Overview and Process**

**Review Existing Conditions & Previous Studies**

**Interactive Exercise**

- Attendee Feedback
- Complete the Highway 29 Boulevard of Opportunity Community Survey

**Next Steps**

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#### Meeting Outcomes

The following are agenda items with corresponding feedback from attendees.

#### Welcome & Introductions

Mr. Gerald McDowell, Executive Director of the Lilburn Community Improvement District, welcomed attendees and stated the project purpose and process for selection of the consultant team (request for proposal and interview). Mr. McDowell introduced Ms. Shannon Kettering, Program Manager for Pond | Ecos, who provided the following presentation for Community Meeting #1:

#### Project Presentation Summary (via PowerPoint)

##### Study Overview & Process (via PowerPoint)

*The goal of the Highway 29 Boulevard of Opportunity Corridor Study is to provide land use, mobility, urban design and implementation recommendations for the 4-mile corridor between Ronald Reagan Parkway and Rockbridge Road.*

#### Why is it important?

- To determine appropriate land uses, transportation improvements, revitalization opportunities, and urban design elements to create a mixed-use, pedestrian friendly, upscale destination corridor that supports and encourages alternate forms of transportation.
- Create a regional model for how to effectively remarket, re-imagine and re-invigorate a community through the transformation of a currently auto-dominated street into a prestigious corridor.

#### Who is Involved?

- **Client:** Lilburn Community Improvement District

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Lilburn Community Improvement District

POND | ECOS Team

- **Community:** Highway 29 businesses and residents, citizens of Greater Lilburn and Gwinnett County
- **Consultant Team:** POND | ECOS, Street Smarts, Inc., Market + Main, Inc. and Collaborative Infrastructures, Inc.
- **Project Management Team**
- **Core Team**

## Where will this occur?

- Properties along Highway 29 between Rockbridge Road and Ronald Reagan Parkway (please refer to PowerPoint presentation for more details).

## How will the plan be completed?

- 6-month planning process between September 2010 and March 2011

## What are the possibilities?

- **Placemaking:** created through the combination of balanced elements, appropriate scale and quality design
  - **Balanced Elements**
    - Land Use & Housing
    - Community Identity and Economic Development
    - Open Space & Mobility
  - **Appropriate Scale**
    - Neighborhood
    - Community
    - Center
  - **Quality Design** that supports community...
    - Values & Goals
    - Identity
    - Preservation
    - Sustainability

## Review Existing Conditions & Previous Studies (via PowerPoint)

- Site Context
- Previous Studies
  - Gwinnett County 2030 Unified Plan
  - City of Lilburn 2030 Comprehensive Plan
- Socioeconomic Overview
  - Growing population
  - Average age structure/ socioeconomic status
- Existing Conditions Maps
  - Land Use
  - Zoning
  - Natural Features
  - Environmental Conditions

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- Community Resources
- Transportation Inventory (West, Central & East)

## **Interactive Exercise & Attendee Feedback (via open-ended discussion with attendees by consultant team)**

### What are the assets of the corridor that should remain or be enhanced/ strengthened in the future?

- A number of trees in the area and surrounding the corridor should remain;
- Schools in the area provide residents with a number of choices, with a mix of both public and private;
- New park areas, such as the proposed Bryson Park;
- New shopping center(s) with services that meet community needs, and complemented by pleasing architecture;
- A few 'hidden gems' (i.e. local dining and small boutiques), yet are limited in quantity and only known by locals;
- More "Destination" places/ quality shopping areas, similar to the existing places along the eastern segment of the corridor (i.e. Home Depot, Wal-Mart and Kroger); these centers are 'new' and are viewed positively by the community.

### What elements of the corridor do you feel are negative and should be addressed during this planning effort?

- A number of shopping areas along the corridor, none of which are connected or related;
- Disconnected sidewalks within the corridor and along Highway 29;
- Lack of consistent architecture;
- Lack of aesthetic appeal;
- Lack of "activities" to attract visitors, new residents and business to the area;
- Lack of streetscaping, including lighting, plant material and/or other landscape features;
- Inconsistent and unattractive signage;
- Rockbridge Road segment, specific comments:
  - The existing shopping areas are disconnected, and within the shopping areas, there is a lack of inter-parcel connectivity
  - The services offered in along this intersection/ segment of Highway 29 are attractive, yet generally too difficult to access, even via car
  - Similar to the entire corridor, it seems like the space was not planned well and carelessly built
- It seems that the current development mindset is to continue building in the existing manner, and little is being done to counter this mentality; perhaps City has not enforced certain development regulations;
- Many businesses have walls in front of them, preventing a desirable street frontage to Highway 29 and pedestrian accessibility;
- Undesirable uses are still coming into the corridor and this is detracting from its value.

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## What specifically could improve the Highway 29 Corridor or what could the Corridor benefit from in the future?

- Highway 29 West (Rockbridge Road- Indian Trail Segment) specific comments:
  - Traffic is not a primary issue along this section of Highway 29, yet some congestion especially from 12pm-5pm
- Highway 29 Central (Indian Trail-Postal Way Segment) specific comments:
  - Signage needs to be improved to be less haphazard
  - A new median design for this area is currently underway
  - A number of curb cuts in this area increases traffic congestion
- Highway 29 East (Postal Way- Ronald Regan Parkway Segment) specific comments:
  - Very heavy traffic in this area due to location of desirable 'destinations' (i.e. Wal-Mart and Home Depot)
  - This segment of the Corridor acts as a 'retail hub' for the City of Lilburn
  - Connection to adjacent neighborhoods could be achieved along the rear of many of the commercial properties along this segment
  - There are sidewalk for pedestrians, but they are too close to the street and don't feel safe
  - Would like a 'separation/buffer zone' consisting of plantings and street trees to improve the safety of the sidewalks
- If there was a reduction in the transient nature of residents in this portion of the County, there could be more 'ownership' of the corridor by the residents;
- Development of a greenway trail that connects to the corridor, as well as to existing Camp Creek Greenway Trail;
- Casual dining;
- More trees and better lighting;
- Bring Old Town Lilburn up to the Highway 29 Corridor so as to draw people into the central focal point of the City;
- Improved and more cohesive wayfinding;
- Supporting and complementary businesses and uses for future development
  - Example: Considering future ancillary needs that may be appropriate for/ support new development types, such as the proposed Sports Park (i.e. dining and shopping opportunities, possible hotel/ B&B, etc)
- More recreational opportunities throughout the corridor;
- Safe pedestrian crossings, and possibly a pedestrian bridge or tunnel;
- Quality hotel, Bed & Breakfast;
- Attendees referenced Downtown Suwanee, Norcross, Downtown Buford and Lawrenceville as quality redevelopment examples for the Highway 29 project due to the following:
  - All parks in these areas have programming
  - Each of these places has a clear community theme, character and feel
- Creation of places where community members and visitors can park their car and walk around to various areas/ services;
- There are a number of foot paths leading to the corridor, indication that connection by way of greenway trail even more sensible

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- Utilize streams, floodplains and buffer areas as areas for this connectivity to occur
- Connect businesses and residents
- Example: Suwanee trail brings people from other areas via greenway into their downtown
- Must remember that Suwanee is new, and with Highway 29 the design needs to be more realistic and adaptive to existing infrastructure;
- Modernize and improve existing infrastructure;
- Develop a theme/ character for Highway 29, and disperse destination points throughout.
  - Possibly a theatre as a destination

## Other Questions, Comments & Concerns

- Norcross did not have beautiful buildings, but they were still able to transform the area;
- So much change has occurred along Highway 29 over the years, that not much history remains to be protected
  - The Wynne Russell House, c. 1826 is the only historic structure in the area
- Consultant team should be sure to document the changes/ improvements currently underway with regards to the mobility of the Highway 29 corridor.

## Next Steps

- Community Meeting #2: Develop Vision & Goals  
Thursday, October 28, 2010 at 6:30 pm  
Providence Christian Academy
- Please tell friends and neighbors to complete the Highway 29 Boulevard of Opportunity Community Survey by visiting the project website: [www.highway29study.com](http://www.highway29study.com) (Survey open until October 24<sup>th</sup> 2010).

These minutes constitute the author's understanding of the items discussed and conclusions reached. If there are any errors or omissions, please notify this author in writing within four (4) working days of receipt.

END OF MINUTES