Downtown Crossing - Route 34 East Public Meeting
Meeting Summary

Location: New Haven Free Public Library, New Haven, CT

Date: November 16, 2010

Welcome and Introductions

Karyn Gilvarg, City Plan Executive Director, and Kelly Murphy, Economic Development Administrator, welcomed attendees and introduced the project team. Ms. Murphy presented a brief update on grants received by the City, including a $16 million TIGER grant to help fund infrastructure for the first phase of the RTE 34 East project

Overview

Bob Brooks, PB Americas Project Manager, provided an overview of the project and study including:

- Description of the project area
- Scope, schedule, and phasing of the project
- Goals of the project and benefits to the City

Summary of Public Meetings

Joanne Frascella, PB Americas, provided a summary of the public comments received at Public Meetings held June 24th and September 30th.

Themes

Alex Krieger, CKS/NBBJ, described four overarching themes as they relate to the project:

- Connectivity/Complete Streets
- Placemaking
- Economy
- Environment/Sustainability

Mr. Krieger described initial concepts that the design team is developing to transform the Route 34 East corridor from a depressed highway stub to two urban boulevards. He presented a series of graphics that showed how the boulevards and cross streets would reconnect neighborhoods, the downtown, and the Yale Medical District. Within the existing highway right of way, four new development parcels would provide opportunities for job growth and positioning the City for economic growth. Concepts were also presented for creating access to the new development parcels with a below grade access drive. A series of images were presented to illustrate bike lanes, bike boxes, enhanced pedestrian crossings and other principles of Complete Streets and livable communities that could be integrated in the Route 34 East corridor. Examples of sustainable design were also discussed.

Attendees broke into four small groups to discuss the project in the context of each of these four themes.

Work Group Exercises

The following ideas were generated by each of the four themed groups:

Connectivity/Complete Streets

- Locate a non-vehicular street between Air Rights Garage and Parcel D building
- Rationalize blocks south of Route 34 and develop what are now small irregular surface parking lots
- Make effective use of alternative locations to bring highway traffic into New Haven
- Maximize alternatives to cars
- Shift "route" destinations away to alternate locations (Route 10 & 34 move to Ella Grasso Boulevard)
- Give names now to our new boulevards to express our vision for them
- Establish Park & Ride locations
- Create separated bike lanes with bike boxes

Placemaking

- Create more plazas, public spaces, pocket parks
- Create public spaces at gateway/entrances
- Encourage reduction of vehicular speeds as vehicles enter the project area
- Connect the project area to the waterfront
- Create and link open spaces to Union Station and Trowbridge
- Create a continuous walking experience throughout the project area
- Create attractive views, view corridors, visual landmarks
- Create a retail/active environment
- Consider building convention space in the project area
- Consider making Orange Street a pedestrian-only street
- Consider locating a dog park on State Street
- Use open space to break up buildings
- Provide open space for residents
- Encourage traffic calming
- Create public spaces and encourage farmer' markets and more food carts/vendors to generate activity
- Continue Orange Street to Union Station
- Address State Street underpass
- Improve crossings over train tracks
- Create better connections to the Knights of Columbus Museum
- Just give us great streets!

Economy

- Locate taxable development on parcels
- Encourage uses such as affordable housing, local retailers
- Make New Haven distinctive
- Encourage suitable development types in negotiations with developers

- Develop design guidelines
- Recognize that the constraints on development include size of parcels, infrastructure costs

Environment & Sustainability

- Encourage retail, cafes, and housing, in addition to biotech, medical, and research
- Bring scale of buildings down to street-level; the massive scale of existing buildings are a barrier
- Create a network of walkways throughout the project area between blocks with green spaces
- Green and remove one vehicular travel lane on Church Street
- Create a pedestrian-only corridor on High Street, between Crown and George Streets
- Incorporate planting of trees and urban rain gardens along streets to improve visual landscape, air quality, storm water management
- Create courtyards and green spaces within development parcels — places for people to meet, eat lunch outside
- Encourage green roofing, which will keep the City cooler
- Use permeable pavement where possible
- Widen sidewalks to encourage pedestrian travel and calm vehicular traffic
- Create green jobs
- Concentrate retail in the block between Church and Temple Streets
- Locate commuter parking lots just outside the project area and run shuttles from the lots into downtown
- Locate public parking under development parcels
- Remove surface parking lots in project area that take up valuable space
- Run a medical school shuttle with frequent headways around the downtown, with stops at Union Station; survey medical school student to explore whether or not they will use the shuttle
- Coordinate Downtown Crossing study with other ongoing studies
- Coordinate with CT Transit to make improvements to transit bus routes
- Until development of parcels takes place, the land should be public open space
- Develop an air quality index and threshold not to exceed using a model with vehicle miles traveled as one of the model parameters
- Do not construct an 800-space parking garage between College and York Streets.

Attachment:
Presentation