

Notes from Lortz Lane Community Meeting

January 26, 2023

Govans Elementary School

5801 York Road

50 participants

- Introduction of Planning Team
 - Councilman Mark Conway, 4th District Council Office. Have been a part of the planning team. Want to get this right.
 - Sandi: Govans Elementary School & Mid-Govans resident for 20+ years. Have been a part of the planning process for the new school since the beginning. Work daily with school staff, faculty, administrators, parents, students, and community partners.
 - Principal Kwaw & Ms. Jennings: Govans Elementary administration, here to support the safety of Govans students.
 - Gia & Kyra: Loyola University, major partner, and institution in the area. Led the work of the York Road Initiative for over 10 years, focusing on strengthening the commercial corridor, civic capacity, and youth development.
 - Will: DOT Planner. Worked city-wide to include safety around schools into transportation planning.
- Marie sets expectations.
 - Hold questions until end of presentation, SMARTIE guidelines for comments and concerns
- Overview of INSPIRE & Walking Routes
 - Govans Elementary is one of 28 reconstructed schools in Baltimore City through the 21st century school program.
 - Through this process, not only is there investment in the school but also in the surrounding community (quarter mile to half mile radius). For Govans this includes safe walking routes, connection to Dewees Rec & Park, and now a possible connection to Govans Library.
- Alignment with Past/Current Plans
 - East-West connections and building of community across York Road is central to each of these plans (York Road Vision & Action Plan, Mid Govans Neighborhood Safe Paths to Schools, The York Road Community SNAP)
- Project Proposal
 - Activate the easternmost portion of Lortz, adjacent to Heritage Smokehouse & Nailah's through
 - Outdoor dining
 - Increased lighting
 - Landscaping to create separation from public right of way.
 - Public art to create visual interest.
 - Enhance pedestrian safety and connection between York Road commercial corridor & Bellona Ave.
 - Utilized by folks traveling both east to west and west to east.

- Goals for the Project
 - Safety
 - Disproportionate number of traffic accidents along Lortz
 - Connection
 - Govans Elementary & Library, Parts of Homeland zoned for Govans Elementary
 - Epiphany House senior living facilities and the Dollar General – only place within walking distance with fresh produce
 - Main access route for customers parking on Bellona Ave. to the York Road commercial corridor (pending lighting and safety measures)
 - Commercial Activation of Space
 - Needs investment alongside private businesses, public governmental investments.
 - Outdoor dining is wanted and needed for restaurants.
 - Equity
 - Heart of project is ensuring safe access to Govans Library for youth at Govans Elementary School
 - Pedestrian access to 17% of residents without vehicles
- Timeline to Now
 - September: INSPIRE Planning Engagement reconvened.
 - New recommendations but also reemphasized the connection of E-W heightened by commercial investment.
 - Conversations with individual property owners both residential and commercial along Lortz Lane where support has been indicated by all adjacent owners. Paperwork still pending.
 - Community Leadership presentations: Govans PTO, Govans faculty, YRP Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization Committee, YRP Leadership, and Homeland Board about the project
- Feedback
 - Fire & Emergency Vehicle access
 - No negative response yet from these groups
 - Loitering & Noise, as well as the space will not be activated enough.
 - How is the balance between making the space welcoming and not a space for after-hours hang outs?
 - How to activate the space beyond business hours?
 - Ensuring there are safety measures in place to keep space safe.
 - Traffic and Access to Homeland
 - Later in the presentation Will is going to discuss alternate routes. Traffic is not significantly impacted to counter the value of pedestrian and business benefits.
- Lortz Lane Traffic Study
 - Will: Developed a plan for partial closure of Lortz if the community is amenable to it
 - Ideal for pedestrian & bicycle connection
 - Lortz is the most direct, shortest, fastest route for pedestrians.
 - Utilize preexisting structures.
 - Water filled barriers will be installed for temporary closure

- DOT will review the existing traffic signal timing – examining the timing as it may be too short particularly for young children.
- Complete streets ordinance enforced by City DOT uses prioritizes pedestrian & bicycle safety.
- Visuals show where partial closure occurs Lortz from Bellona
 - Access from Bellona will have low amount of traffic for resident, BGE substation, and businesses.
- Visuals show where the barriers will be placed in alignment with Heritage’s building.
- **Every single property owner has to give signed consent in order for Lortz Lane in order to authorize the partial closure** While property owners are supportive of the idea, no signed consent forms have been received.
- Financial Funding
 - Loyola received a federal grant this past fall for economic and community development on York Road
 - Gia Grier, ED for Loyola’s Center for Community, Service, and Justice breaks down the federal grant money allotted to Lortz Lane project:
 - \$30,000 for public art
 - \$20,500 for lighting, outdoor furniture, and landscaping
 - Graham Projects LLC is on standby to develop space.
 - Community engagement project for how space will develop.
 - The goal is for residents to have ownership in the design process
 - Funding must be spent by the end of this year or the \$50,000 will be returned to the federal government.
 - How can the project be nimble for public benefit?
 - Example of the 26th Street Green
 - The street was turned into public space by Graham Projects LLC.
 - Another point of reference: crosswalks by the GFM also done by Graham & team.
- Pictures to Conceptualize the Space
 - What is typically used in placemaking?
 - Public Art
 - Landscaping makes a distinction between public right of way and outdoor dining.
 - Seating
 - Lighting
 - What are the priorities of placemaking for Lortz?

Community Feedback Portion:

Feedback on Design:

- What are priorities?
 - Activate more of Lortz Lane or not at all
 - Do more than link the restaurants together, make sure space is activated, even at Bellona end

- Impact convenience
 - Add another food truck/trailer for additional lane activation
 - Heritage Parking Lot should be utilized in the design to put eyes on BGE Substation to ensure unsavory business isn't happening on Lortz
 - Pinching YR with Pedestrian Bump Out on either side for easier crossing
 - Learn from 26th Street Green: Create an Intergenerational Space
 - Outdoor public space for seniors
 - Games, cards, etc. for folks to use and gather around.
 - Ensure proper Facilities management
 - Who programs the space?
 - Who funds the upkeep? (YRP, Business Improvement District: Councilman Conway talked about current campaign for a York Road BID. More info: www.bidyork.org)
 - Potential space for the Business Improvement District to use for live music, events, gatherings.
 - Focus on youth pathway.
 - Who will be utilizing the space? What are the demographics of those who use space?
 - What theme are we doing?
 - What is the budget for long term/permanent design? *Note: this is a temporary project that can be extended if wanted.
 - Comfortable seating that people want to hang out in.
 - Lighting to keep it bright.
 - Year round versus seasonal
 - What happens in the winter?
 - Hope is for this install in summer / fall.
 - The use in the winter is up to the community.
 - Plants & gardening
 - Native plants! Support local nature and wildlife, especially birds
 - Bike amenities
 - Colorful sidewalks like the senator theatre
 - Evaluate possibilities for both cars and street activation

Proposed Alternative Routes

- 3 alternate routes suggested that factor in partial closure of Lortz.
 - Lyman Ave.
 - Less than a quarter of a mile, delay of 30-40 seconds
 - From Northern Parkway to Bellona Ave
 - Three quarters of a mile
 - Several people said left turn onto Bellona south from Northern Parkway west is dangerous
 - Lake Avenue to Bellona
 - One mile
- Routes 1&2 are equidistant and have same travel time predictions.
- Routes 1&3 have about .5-mile difference but same travel time

Reimagining York Road

- In order for this project to happen and if the BID moves forward will change how York Road corridor is used and perceived. This project is a start of more projects to draw people to the area.
- BID – potential for financial investment in the community to make our community a destination versus a pass through corridor.
- York Road Partnership Housing & Neighborhood Revitalization & DOT Study Group- Dan Pontious
 - City DOT process has yielded tentative long-term plan (2025+) with wider sidewalks (shorter York Road crossing distance), more landscaped medians, bus queue-jump lanes, but waiting for results of MTA north-south transit study and current Bus Lane 6-month pilot
 - Long-Term Plan envisions incorporating Lyman Avenue into triangle green space and making sharp right from York Road South onto Bellona a viable and save alternative to current Lortz & Lyman cut-throughs.
- To get involved with the YRP Neighborhood Revitalization Committee, contact Dan Pontious (dan.pontious@gmail.com) or Donna Blackwell (satnamt21@gmail.com)

Comments on Alt. Routes

- Connection for vehicles and values in traffic calming
 - Should Rosebank be 2 way?
 - Planning team will evaluate alleyway adjacent to Govans Presbyterian
 - Orkney & Rosebank both head east
- Bellona Turn from Northern Parkway is unsafe and many accidents occur there.
- DOT is evaluating turn restrictions into St. Dunstan Rd. and Spring Lake; signage will come down at Bellona and St. Dunstans
- Concern that a partial closure does not make it safer for pedestrians.
- Top Priority is for Children.
- Lever bars at Friends School
 - Block automobile traffic during the school day
 - And raise the bars for after school & weekends.
- Support design idea that would allow both pedestrians and vehicles to safely share the space without completely losing vehicular traffic.
- Model after Historic Lutherville
- Govans Elementary input:
 - Lights at Lortz Lane are very short, especially when trying to get 20 Pre-k students across
 - School could manipulate the light during emergency and evacuation situations. DOT is following up on this request.
 - 2 after school opportunities: After school until 5:30 and STEM Dragons After Dismissal
 - After school programs also travel to the library

Next Steps Close Out

- Temporary Closure for the next month
 - DOT will evaluate traffic patterns for the next month

- Reach out to Councilman Conway & Marie with constructive concerns & comments to help mitigate issues.
- Loyola will be finalizing contract with Graham Projects LLC and will be attending the meeting in March.
- Follow Up Public Meeting on March 2
 - DOT will share data collected from temporary closure
 - Loyola will introduce Graham Projects LLC who will describe what the community engagement process towards creating a design will look like

Comments from Note Cards:

- Theme: History, Architecture, Intergenerational conversation
- Music and outdoor events
 - Generational, cultural
- Any design should accommodate both traffic and pedestrians.
- Paint the sidewalk in a rainbow.
- Excited to see more opportunities for uninterrupted walking, biking, and simply sitting outside. This activation encourages people to get out of their vehicles and into the neighborhood. Yes!
- Great presentation! I'm new to the neighborhood, so this was informative. My comment is to make this as inclusive/public as possible, in terms of design, and not just something that appears to be private dining for restaurants. It should be welcoming and inviting to all!
- Thanks for the presentation of this fabulous idea! I use this to access the library on foot and by bike now (and by car sometimes). I want the improvements in York to continue south and think this helps at a very low inconvenience.
 - Hopscotch for the kids!
 - It does seem like the closed stretch could extend west a bit while preserving some parking and emergency access for BGE substation.
- Please conduct a comprehensive traffic study of York and Bellona
- I support this street closure/street activation.
- This will help Heritage Smokehouse be viable and we need good restaurants.
- Traffic flow simulations based on real time data and parking.