



CITY OF CHARLESTON
CURRENT WEST ASHLEY INITIATIVES
January 25, 2016



CITY OF CHARLESTON

CURRENT WEST ASHLEY INITIATIVES

INTRODUCTION:

The City of Charleston is currently engaged in the following initiatives to improve West Ashley and better position key areas for revitalization.

I. IMPROVE THE PUBLIC REALM:

- **Complete the West Ashley Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District Plan to fund beautification and infrastructure improvements.** Tax increment financing is a powerful public finance tool that helps fund public improvements and stimulates redevelopment. West Ashley's first TIF district includes the Citadel Mall area and Sam Rittenberg Blvd.
- **Install landscaping and signage at key gateways to West Ashley.** Landscape enhancement projects awaiting SCDOT permit approval include the Sam Rittenberg Blvd/Old Towne Rd median, Sam Rittenberg Blvd/Orleans Rd median, Old Towne Rd/Ashley River Rd median, and Savannah Hwy/St. Andrews Blvd median. The City will continue to work with SCDOT to install new gateway signage welcoming folks to West Ashley.
- **Invest public funds to improve open spaces and create new bike/pedestrian connections.** This effort includes physically enhancing older parks within West Ashley, developing plans for new parks on Bender St and Wappoo Rd, completing the West Ashley Greenway surfacing project, resurfacing portions of the West Ashley Bikeway, and connecting the West Ashley Greenway and Bikeway.
- **Improve drainage in key areas of West Ashley.** Spring 2016, construction work will begin on the Forest Acres drainage improvement project. Also planned for 2016 is a City of Charleston/Charleston County jointly funded watershed basin study for the Dupont-Wappoo and Citadel Mall areas. In addition, the City is developing a strategy for improving drainage within the Church Creek Drainage Basin.
- **Improve streetscape in the Dupont-Wappoo area.** The Dupont-Wappoo area planning charrette held in June 2015 identified the need and desire for beautification within the planning area. The City will continue to work with Charleston County to implement a street tree planting plan for Savannah Highway.
- **Create a West Ashley Farmers Market with thorough input from residents and vendors.** The City is utilizing online community surveys, focus groups, best practices research, and site analyses to establish a West Ashley Farmers Market.

II. REVITALIZE KEY AREAS:

- **Use economic incentives to spur revitalization.** This initiative includes developing innovative financing and zoning tools to attract private sector investment in West Ashley. This effort also includes identifying new sources of revenue to enable the City to incentivize catalytic revitalization projects for West Ashley.
- **Identify, prioritize and plan for key redevelopment areas.** In 2014 the City developed a vision plan for the Citadel Mall area and the Sam Rittenberg Blvd corridor. The City will continue to develop similar plans for other key areas in West Ashley including the Dupont-Wappoo area, the Ashley Bridge District, North Bridge, and others. Additionally, the City will continue ongoing work to encourage and assist in the redevelopment of the aforementioned areas by engaging developers and property owners.
- **Assist with business development, retail recruitment, and infill redevelopment in West Ashley.** The West Ashley Project Coordinator will continue to assist developers, commercial real estate brokers and businesses to find great business locations in West Ashley. The coordinator will also facilitate professional connections and help identify financial resources. Additional services also include providing assistance navigating the City's approval and permitting processes.
- **Improve architecture and design standards throughout West Ashley.** The City's Design Review Board (DRB) plays a significant role in ensuring that new development and redevelopment projects along key corridors are well designed – both from an architectural and site perspective. While the DRB's purview applies only to City parcels, County parcels are not subject to the same important design review standards. A joint City/County DRB will help to ensure comprehensive quality design throughout West Ashley.

III. IMPROVE TRAFFIC:

- **Prioritize the completion of I-526 to alleviate traffic congestion.** The Mayor will continue to work with state leaders in this effort.
- **Improve traffic flow at key intersections throughout West Ashley.** These improvements include the opening of the West Ashley Circle and implementing approved intersection improvements at Ashley River Rd/ Sam Rittenberg Blvd, Bees Ferry Rd/Glenn McConnell Pkwy and Savannah Hwy/Main Rd. The City will continue to pursue funding through state and county programs for intersection improvements at Savannah Hwy/Orleans Rd, Savannah Hwy/Dupont Rd, and Savannah Hwy/Wappoo Rd.
- **Develop a comprehensive transportation plan for West Ashley.** In early 2016, the City will issue a request for consulting proposals to analyze the existing, city-wide transportation network and develop a plan for improvements. West Ashley will be a priority for this work. Pedestrian, bicycle, public transit and streetscape improvements will also be explored.

- **Improve signal synchronization throughout West Ashley.** In 2016 the City will analyze and improve traffic signalization city-wide. West Ashley will be a priority for this work.
- **Plan and secure funding for the extension of the Glenn McConnell Parkway.** As part of the Long Savannah development plan, the developer is required to build a two lane extension of Glenn McConnell from Bees Ferry to the Long Savannah project the limits. City staff will facilitate these road improvement plans through the City’s approval processes.

III. OFFER INCREASED CITIZEN SERVICES:

- **Appoint a full-time Citizen Service Representative in West Ashley to ensure that information and assistance are always available.** Currently the Ombudsmen and Neighborhood Services Manager provide direct assistance to citizens and act as liaisons between citizens and the numerous City departments/divisions. The City will explore opportunities to find office space in West Ashley to provide enhance services to West Ashley residents.
- **Craft a community engagement plan.** This plan will be designed to foster neighborhood and community interaction, support local businesses, and provide guidance and support for community projects. Key components will include online and social media tools to share information and solicit resident input.
- **Work to enhance West Ashley’s image.** The first-ever West Ashley community survey, which was conducted Fall 2015, yielded over 3,000 unique survey responses. The City will utilize this important citizen input to create a community driven visioning process to enhance West Ashley’s image, and highlight pride points such as a West Ashley’s strong sense of community, great neighborhoods, local businesses, and unique parks and public spaces.
- **Create more community places for residents.** The City will continue its partnership with Charleston County and Roper St. Frances to build the West Ashley Senior Center. The City will also continue to provide assistance to Charleston County in planning a new public library in the West Ashley. Additionally, the City will offer continued support to the Charleston County School District in planning for several new schools in West Ashley.
- **Enhance annexation efforts to eliminate jurisdictional “donut holes” within West Ashley.** Newly focused efforts to encourage annexation into the City of Charleston will help unify West Ashley. Key advantages to annexing into the City include: tax credits, reduction on water and sewer bills, lower recreational user fees, and better services (emergency services, public services, neighborhood services and Livability services).