



July 1, 2019

RE: Main Street Enhanced Sidewalk Project

Dear Citizen:

On June 11, 2019, the City held a Public Information Open House (PIOH) to allow the public opportunity to view, ask questions, and offer comments regarding concepts for the Main Street Enhanced Sidewalk Project. For those unable to attend, a virtual PIOH was available on our website and a display remained available in the lobby of City Hall, allowing comments to be accepted through June 28, 2019.

This letter is being sent to you as your email address was either included on the sign in sheet at the PIOH, or you filled out an on-line comment card related to this project. We thank you for your interest in this project, and we appreciate any feedback you may have offered during the open comment period.

Between June 11th and June 28th, 70 comments were received. After June 28th, those comments were grouped by category and a comprehensive response was developed. A list of all comment groups and responses are below.

Category 1 – Sidewalk Width

Several comments expressed concern over a 10' width citing the potential loss of tree canopy specific to the section of Main Street generally between Brock Road and Dailey Drive. Concerns also articulated a 10' path would be out of place on Main Street given the width of the road. There were also several comments applauding the proposed width of the trail for future use.

The purpose of the project is to create an everyday multi-use path for cyclists and pedestrians, and to create a more comprehensive network for these travelers to get to/from and around downtown without the need for a car. The project starts at Brock Road and effectively ends at Peachtree Industrial Boulevard (PIB), where it will tie to a recently constructed 10' sidewalk at Marketplace Village, across from Sugarloaf Market, at PIB. The PIB intersection is also the link to the Western Gwinnett Bikeway and several other Duluth subdivisions.

As riding a bicycle on a sidewalk is illegal in Georgia, the City wishes to provide a safe, legal, multi-use facility that encourages use by both cyclists and pedestrians of all ages. The standard width for this type of facility is 10'. And for the majority of the project, the 10' width will not impact mature tree canopies or change the character of the corridor.

Category 2 – Trees

The majority of the overall corridor does not have tree canopy that would be affected by the sidewalk construction.

Small stretches of mature trees exist along Main Street in sections between Brock Road and Dailey Drive. In areas where it is possible to save existing tree canopy, the design team will investigate the use of an 8' wide multi-use sidewalk along with the partial elimination of the grass strip from between the road and sidewalk, saving up to 5' of width for remaining trees. Eight feet, while less than desirable for a multi-use path of this length, is acceptable for small stretches of the path, under certain conditions.



Category 3 – Lighting

Many citizens have expressed a desire to include lighting as part of this project. The City agrees this is an added value for the project and will investigate including pedestrian appropriate lighting along the corridor.

Category 4 – Art and Branding

Since the multi-use enhanced sidewalk project adds value and connectivity to the community, there have been inquiries about naming or branding the “trail”, and inquiries about public art along the “trail”. Mayor and Council will take this under consideration, and staff will consult with the Duluth Public Arts Commission (DPAC) as the design process continues.

The private development under way along Main Street, to the south of Marketplace Village will also include a 10’ sidewalk along its frontage, and will include a public parklette with a sitting area and possible public art. The developer agreed to include this amenity so as to tie seamlessly into the City’s planned sidewalk project.

Category 5 – Project Location and/or Extensions

There were some inquiries as to why the sidewalk is planned for the northwest side of the road, why it was planned along Main Street at all, and why it doesn’t continue all the way down Rogers Bridge Road to PIB.

1. The sidewalk is planned for the northwest side of the road to allow for maximum access by neighborhoods and homes along Main Street. If planned for the opposite side of the road, it would be difficult to access and likely unacceptable to the railroad, whose property upon which half the project will reside.
2. The project is planned along Main Street as part of a greater plan to extend pedestrian accessibility in every direction from the downtown core. While health and well-being are added bonuses to walking/cycling, the key is having every day transportation options that do not require a motor vehicle or a parking space at one or both ends of the journey.
3. A separate sidewalk project may be planned for the east side of Rogers Bridge Road in the future. The budget for the Main Street sidewalk could not include the additional length along Rogers Bridge Road. Until then, pedestrians can cross at the new signal at Rogers Bridge Road and Main Street, or the existing signal at Rogers Bridge Road and Albion Farm Road, then travel the existing sidewalk on the west side of the road all the way to PIB.

Category 6 – Construction Phasing

A few inquiries asked for clarification on the phasing of construction. As the project budget is significant, the construction may be broken into two phases. Since there is an existing stretch of sidewalk (albeit narrow) between Brock Road and Rogers Bridge Road, Phase 1 will start at Rogers Bridge Road and continue northeast to tie to the existing 10’ sidewalk approaching PIB. This will allow for a continuous walking path. Once funds are available for phase 2, the section of sidewalk from Brock Road to Rogers Bridge Road will be improved to allow a consistent and continuous walking and cycling path.



Category 7 – Existing Irrigation

The frontage of the Nesbitt Crossing neighborhood has landscaping and two zones of irrigation that may be impacted by the sidewalk project. If this is the case, the landscaping and the associated irrigation would be redesigned and reinstalled at no cost to the HOA. Any changes to the landscaping and irrigation would be in consultation with the HOA prior to being implemented.

Category 8 – Landscaping

Several citizens expressed interest in having the sidewalk landscaped. While it is cost prohibitive to landscape the entire 1.75 mile linear project, there will be opportunities along the corridor for pockets of landscaping and potential parklette settings (benches/receptacles/doggie poop pickup stations, etc). Those locations have not yet been identified, but can be included in the design as the project progresses.

Category 9 – Project Cost

Due to the significant cost, many inquiries were received about budget. Here are the general highlights:

- The majority of the project has no existing curb/gutter or underground drainage. Roadside ditches currently carry the water away from the road. The expense of adding curb/gutter and underground drainage, along with the anticipated grading and retaining walls, is around \$2 Million (just under a million for pipe and related materials, and just over a million for grading).
- The sidewalk itself is estimated at about \$650k.
- Other items, such as erosion control, signing/markings, and traffic control make up another estimated \$650k.
- Right of way costs are estimated at \$600k, but are anticipated to increase based on rising property values.
- Additional costs for storm water detention facilities are another \$1.2 Million.
- A 20% contingency (about \$1 Million) was added to account for unknowns and escalation. This is typical for this stage of design, especially with the rising costs of materials and labor.
- At this time, the cost of lighting was not included. This could add about \$1 Million per mile.

Through an agreement with the City, Gwinnett County is paying for 81% of the project costs. The City of Duluth is paying for 19% of the project costs. Project betterments, such as lighting, landscaping, and rest areas would need to be paid 100% by the City of Duluth, as the County does not cover such additional amenities.

Category 10 – Unnecessary/Necessary Project?

Some citizens did not see the value in constructing this project, and suggested alternate uses for the money. This project is part of a larger overall pedestrian plan for the City. It is one of five projects in the 2017 SPLOST program for Duluth. All five were selected by Council and subsequently approved by Gwinnett County in 2017.

Several folks considered the corridor to be “fine the way it is”, requesting only repairs for old sidewalk. While this may satisfy those few who use the small section of existing sidewalk, it does not meet the overall project need which ties activity nodes together on each end, and offers greater connectivity and transportation options.



Alternatively, the design team received a significant amount of positive feedback and suggestions from citizens in strong favor of the project. Citing the need for safe access to/from the middle and high schools, as well as to/from the activity centers on each end of the project, many citizens look forward to using the new facility.

Category 11 – Miscellaneous

A few comments/concerns did not fall into a category, but included valid points:

1. Concern was expressed for the project's effect on property value. Studies around the Country confirm multi-use enhanced sidewalks and trails increase property values and desirability of real estate.
2. Concern was expressed over the need for trash pickup with a facility such as this. As with any City owned right of way, the City's Department of Public Works is responsible for maintenance and trash pickup. Even though part of this project falls within railroad right of way, the sidewalk itself will still be maintained by the City and trash pickup would fall under that maintenance responsibility.
3. Questions were included on potential loss of property resulting from this project. Where property is required for construction of this project, each individual affected property owner will meet separately with the City's property acquisition team, and will be compensated fairly for their property.

Category 12 – Request for Additional Input

A few comments requested additional opportunities to view the project layout and offer additional feedback. A second PIOH will be scheduled in early 2020 once the design team has had the opportunity to adjust the design accordingly and determine the actual level of impacts to the corridor. The design team encourages constructive feedback from the public and will work toward developing a project that brings value to the community.

Mayor, Council, and Staff, along with the Design Team, thank you for your participation in the process. We recognize and understand your concerns and will keep those in mind as design progresses. While the formal comment period has ended, you are always welcome to email our City Engineer at mpozin@duluthga.net with additional questions or concerns specific to this project.