

# 31ST STREET IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT ISSUES MEMO

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To: Chuck Soules – City of Lawrence Date: 8/30/2007  
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Subject: 31st Street Improvements

During our research for this project, we noted a variety of issues that would benefit from the guidance of the City prior to preparing our scope of services and fee for this project. As we noted in our presentation, there are 3 basic categories that these issues can be categorized.

1. Flexibility of Design
2. Connectivity
3. Public Outreach Program

## **Flexibility of Design**

Through the public outreach process, we will want to discuss the various elements of the project that will establish a set of design criteria. The ultimate design will be based on sound engineering judgment that provides safety for both the pedestrian and the motorist.

The functional classification of the proposed roadway will set a major portion of the design criteria with design speed being one of the most critical elements. As you know, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) design guidelines is divided into high-speed vs. low-speed criteria. Simply setting the design speed below 45 mph can provide more flexibility in the alignments (both horizontal and vertical).

Other issues that will need guidance include:

- **Access Management**: Restrict side street direct access to 31st Street or provide access to Mary's Lake subdivision, Prairie Park subdivision, future development.
- **Traffic modeling**: Utilize the City's traffic model to run various design scenarios based on future land use, the construction of the SLT, and various lane configurations; compare level of service for various design options.
- **Traffic calming**: Use of curvilinear alignment, narrower lanes (11-feet vs. 12-feet), or roundabouts.
- **Typical sections**: 4-lane divided, 4-lane undivided w/ curb, 4-lane undivided w/ ditches, 2-lane w/ curb, or 2-lane w/ ditches; auxiliary lanes; bicycle lanes.
- **Alignment options**: Straight alignment along section line to minimize right-of-way acquisition; curvilinear alignment that follows the terrain; coordination with future SLT.
- **Right-of-Way**: Permanent right-of-way; landscape and utility easements; existing right-of-way; new right-of-way; residual properties created by fragmentation.
- **Geological Considerations**: Alignment options through construction landfill; use of existing rock cuts as aesthetic features.
- **Intersections**: Signalized intersections vs. roundabouts.
- **Water quality**: Review BMP options; BMP's within the right-of-way or easements; coordination of BMP's with natural streamways.

## Connectivity

The proposed roadway improvements have the ability to “connect” to existing features within the project corridor.

- Streetscape: Landscape materials may include street trees, shrubs, perennials, seed, sod, and other accent plantings along the street, intersections, entries, or seating areas; hardscape materials can vary from specialty pavements, fencing, retaining walls, and site furnishings to architectural or artistic elements; landscape materials that depict the aesthetic theme and /or character of the 31st Street corridor.
- Bicycle lanes: Continue bicycle lanes from O’Connell; have bicyclists use the multi-use path.
- Pedestrian: Sidewalks; trail connections to Mary’s Lake, Prairie Park; connection to future trail system from HINU.
- Animal crossings: Review endangered species; field investigation for existing animal trails; coordination with KDWP.
- Prairie Park: Review access opportunities; potential extension of park with residual property.
- Mary’s Lake: Review access opportunities.
- Wetland: Review opportunities to utilize planting materials or other features along the future 31st Street improvements.
- Utility Coordination: Review needs for utility easements; water main extension; sanitary sewer main crossing(s).
- Environmental clearances / Permitting:
  - Baseline environmental review of the project area
    - wetlands, streams and tributaries
    - potential snake habitat
    - cultural resources
  - Project impacts for alternatives
    - complete a wetland/Waters of the U.S. determination on alternatives
    - complete an assessment of state protected species habitat on the project (smooth earth snake; red-bellied snake)
    - develop an environmental matrix for various project alternatives
  - Environmental Compliance
    - KDOT Local Roads Compliance-provide an environmental resource review and Categorical Exclusion-type document with a listing of ultimate permit requirements
    - Corps of Engineers Permitting-can secure a COE permit for the project but this seems premature as they expire after 2 years.
    - NPDES Permit-same as above

## Public Outreach Program

**Overview:** We have been made aware of a variety of pre-existing conceptions and/or misconceptions about the proposed 31st Street improvements. Therefore, the public outreach program is a critical element to the success of the project. An effective community outreach program informs stakeholders, the public, and city officials about a project. It also provides a mechanism for community understanding and supports, solicits input, and develops a

relationship for future implementation. Even so, public input will likely not be part of every decision associated with the 31<sup>st</sup> Street Improvement project.

The Wilson & Company Team's proposed approach to public involvement is described below in terms of general phasing, meetings and workshops, and outreach methods and strategies, but coordination between the City and the Team is necessary in advance to understand what the City wishes with regard to:

- What the public can decide for the 31<sup>st</sup> Street improvement project?
- What factors, e.g. funding and timing, influence decisions?
- Whose support is necessary for implementation, are certain groups more affected than others?
- How the community will be informed throughout the design process?
- How can input be gathered?
- What outreach methods and strategies are most preferred?

**Proposed Approach to Public Involvement:** In general, the Team recommends that public input happen at three key phases in the 31<sup>st</sup> design process:

- Inventory Phase: To raise issues and help mold the vision and guiding principles for the project.
- Alternatives Generation Phase: To review and provide feedback on the conceptual alternatives and streetscape/landscape theme for the roadway.
- Preferred Alternative Phase: To review and provide feedback on the preferred alternative for the roadway.

**Meetings and Workshops:** The Team's proposed approach would require a coordinated series of meetings with City staff and officials, a Technical Advisory Committee, Community Stakeholders, and the general public where input is gathered from each of the groups.

- City Staff: Involved throughout the entire design process and meeting as required, e.g. monthly, in City Hall.
- Technical Advisory Committee:
  - Involved through the inventory, alternatives generation, preferred alternatives, and final plan phases.
  - Meeting up to 5 times at City Hall.
  - Committee members may include, but are not limited to, the Departments of Public Works (City and County), Parks and Recreation, Utilities, other agencies, etc.
- Community Stakeholders:
  - Specifically involved during the inventory phase to give input on community issues and the vision and guiding principles.
  - Meeting one time for a facilitate round table discussion. Depending on the size of the stakeholder group, a neutral location within or close to the project area, e.g. the Prairie Park Nature Center, could serve as a meeting location.
  - Community stakeholders should consist of a representative cross-section of the community that may include, but is not limited to, neighborhood associations, local businesses, environmental advocacy groups (Sierra Club, Wetlands Preservation Organization, Kansas Audubon Society, Save the Wetlands), Lawrence Bicycle Club, Kennedy Elementary School, Haskell Indian Nations University, Baker University, and the University of Kansas.

- General Public:
  - Involved during the inventory, alternatives generation, and preferred alternative phases.
  - Meeting up to three times in an interactive workshop setting held at a public school located within or close to the project area, e.g. Kennedy Elementary School, Broken Arrow Elementary, or South Junior High.
    - **Interactive Workshop 1** would focus on refining the issues, vision, and guiding principles as gathered from the round table discussion with community stakeholders. Here the interactive element of the workshop would happen when the large workshop audience is broken into several smaller groups to participate in a facilitated exercise and then is brought back together for report back.
    - **Interactive Workshop 2** would center on the conceptual alternatives and the input gathered would reflect the focus. The interactive component of this workshop would be two dot exercises. The first exercise would allow workshop participants to rate each of the alternatives against the vision and guiding principles. The second exercise would give them the opportunity to vote for the alternative most preferred.
    - **Interactive Workshop 3** would focus on the preferred alternative and the input gathered would reflect the focus. The interactive component of this exercise would also be a dot exercise. Workshop participants would use dots to rate the degree to which the preferred alternative responds to the vision and guiding principles.

**Outreach Methods and Strategies:** The Wilson & Company Team would employ several community outreach methods and strategies to gain meaningful input throughout the design process, for example:

- Being Sensitive to Diverse Audiences: The Team and staff would communicate as effectively as possible and avoid technical jargon during public meetings. The success of our message would be monitored and refined based on the needs of the audience.
- Being Realistic with Participants: In public meetings, the Team would emphasize the realistic nature of the design process, helping people understand that results may not be seen quickly to help create realistic expectations and built trust between staff, meeting participants, and other stakeholders.
- Defining the Framework: At each meeting, the Team would set up the discussion by defining where a particular meeting falls in the scope of the design process, what the role of the participants is, what decisions can and cannot be made, and then providing the background information needed for successful discussions and decisions.
- Focusing and Elevating the Discussion: Information gathered from the round table discussion with community stakeholders would provide early insight into neighborhood issues and could serve as a tool to elevate the discussion for the first interactive public workshop, demonstrating that the Team and staff are listening. It would also help focus and elevate the discussion.

## ***Memo (cont.)***

- Stakeholder Communications: The Team would use the City's existing website or create a new website specifically for the 31<sup>st</sup> Street Improvement project where project information, notices, and community comments could be posted. The site should include a "how to get involved" icon and the site address should be included on all project publications.

We anticipate that there will be other issues that the City Commission will want to address during a meeting at the Work Session. Other items may arise during the public outreach process that will need to be addressed, reviewed during future meetings with the technical committee and/or the City Commission.