

**CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA**



Agenda Date:	October 16, 2017
Action Required:	Vote on Resolution
Presenter:	Jeanette Janiczek, UCI Program Manager
Staff Contacts:	Alex Ikekuna, NDS Director Tony Edwards, Development Services Manager Jeanette Janiczek, UCI Program Manager
Title:	Belmont Bridge Replacement Project – Resolution Confirming Conformance With City's Comprehensive Plan & Authorization to Commence Final Design

Background:

The City of Charlottesville has been engaged in a process to replace the bridge referred to as “Belmont Bridge” which crosses CSX rail lines and Water Street maintaining an important community connection. The prior bridge design process reached the 35% plan stage before strong community participation implored exploration of other alternative designs/concepts. After two years of discussion, City Council voted on July 21, 2014 to focus on the “enhanced bridge” concept including a specified list of design performance guidelines. The design direction is for a shortened bridge (reduced from more than 440 feet to approximately 205 feet) to be designed with the following criteria in mind:

- Belmont Bridge is a gateway into the Charlottesville and its downtown
- Belmont Bridge should be an enjoyable pedestrian experience
- Views of the mountains and railroad tracks are appreciated and should be preserved
- The design should be innovative and entertaining
- The design should maintain a 25 MPH speed limit with one lane in each direction
- The design should include space for vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians. The pedestrian zone should be separated from vehicles and bicycles
- The design should have a shorter span
- Bike and pedestrian lanes should be 10.0 feet wide, traffic lanes should be 11.0 feet wide
- The design should incorporate improvements to the north and south intersections along 9th Street
- Landscaping should be enhanced on the approaches
- Accent lighting should be considered to showcase the bridge

A Request for Proposals was advertised that included these design parameters as well as an extensive public participation process and in January 2017, the City of Charlottesville contracted with Kimley-Horn, an engineering consulting firm to develop plans for the replacement of Belmont Bridge.

In addition to the design parameters established by City Council, Kimley-Horn also researched a variety of initiatives within the City of Charlottesville that are focused on enhancing the vibrancy and quality of life, including the City of Charlottesville Comprehensive Plan, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, Streets That Work, and the Strategic Investment Area. Work product was analyzed from the previous design effort and additional studies were performed to update information (such as survey and traffic counts). With a firm grasp of background information, the project team began the public involvement process to ensure agreement with the project's purpose and need before beginning development of a conceptual design.

Discussion:

Preferred Conceptual Design Concept: The preferred Conceptual Design concept aligns closely with the adopted City Council program which was modified and discussed during previously held public meetings. In regard to this direction, the preferred Conceptual Design includes the following main features:

- Design based on the reduced bridge length
- 10 foot wide pedestrian and bike zones on both sides, including protected bike lanes separated from pedestrian and vehicular traffic with curb and a mountable concrete median respectively
- One-lane traffic in each direction, supported by detailed traffic impact analysis to confirm traffic operations at existing levels or better including future anticipated volumes in the corridor.
- Creation of pedestrian plazas and potential programmed spaces, as well as public art opportunities.
- Closure of Old Avon Street at Levy to create a pedestrian plaza and improve operations and safety at the intersection
- Addition of new pedestrian facilities including new stairways (with bike runnels) at the southwest (Old Avon Street), northeast (Water Street) and northwest (Water Street). A mezzanine walkway feature connects pedestrians from the east side to the west side of the bridge between the stairways.
- Planned pedestrian underpass below ninth street south of the bridge
- Significant street tree plantings and plaza vegetation

Key Design Issues

There has been general community and stakeholder support for the key elements of the conceptual design; however, there were three (3) specific design elements that warranted further targeted discussion to obtain direction for the consultant team and staff. Citizen participants and committee members were asked to help provide the design team with direction with these topics, which included:

1. Graves Street Access and Circulation.

Issue Summary

- a. Existing condition allows full movement turn entering and exiting Graves at 9th Street
- b. South-bound left turns on to 9th can create safety issues and congestion on east

side, impacting traffic on 9th Street. Traffic Counts confirm low utilization of this turning movement – likely due to safety & congestion issues. Traffic counts were taken in February 2017 during the AM and PM peak hours which showed minimal lefts out of Graves onto 9th (under a dozen) – particularly compared to the number of rights out of Graves (over 100). A turning movement count was conducted on July 20, 2017 from 7am to 6pm to ensure turning movement patterns remained consistent. There was a slight uptick from noon to 1pm of 15 vehicles turning left, but the remaining hours remained consistent with the original traffic counts.

Public Response

- a. Surrounding businesses have expressed not wanting to increase travel along East South Street and 6th Street SE and finding the route confusing/inconvenient
- b. Several residents find it convenient to turn left at from Graves Street at 9th Street
- c. Steering Committee PLACE, Bicycle and Pedestrian, Tree Committees endorsed:
 - Allow left turns from 9th Street (Avon Street) SB
 - Allow right-in and right-out movements from Graves Street
 - Prohibit left turns from Graves Street to 9th Street (Avon Street) SB
 - Pursue study of alternative traffic flows on Monticello

Staff / Consultant Recommendations

- a. Allow left turns from 9th Street (Avon Street) SB
- b. Allow right-in and right-out movements from Graves Street
- c. Prohibit left turns from Graves Street to 9th Street (Avon Street) SB
- d. Improve existing roadways to aid in circulation from public easement to Levy Street.
- e. Improve access/means for deliveries to neighboring parcels
- f. Changes to Monticello Road direction of travel for one block are currently under review to accommodate those lefts at the 9th/Levy signal. A city pilot project to study these changes is under consideration.

2. Pedestrian Crossing of Ninth Street South of the Bridge.

Issue Summary

- a. Crossing is a desired, convenient location for Belmont residents to cross 9th Street
- b. Documented conflicting and potentially unsafe conditions at crossing
 - i. 9 Crashes at Graves and 9th Street (2012 – 2016)
 - ii. 2 crashes involved pedestrians in/near existing crosswalk
- c. Existing 6% grade along 9th Street – with high travel speeds
- d. Existing crosswalk is 190' north of signalized crosswalk at 9th/Avon/Graves/Levy Intersection - is not in accordance with Streets That Work or VDOT guidance
- e. City Attorney's office has issued an opinion that due to safety and liability concerns, city infrastructure improvement should be built to city or applicable engineering standards. .
- f. The consultants' written opinion did not support retention of the crosswalk.

Public Response

- a. Public comment from the survey had 32.2% respondents support constructing the underpass, 22.1% maintain the existing at-grade crossing and 45.7% do both.
- b. The general public is split with a slight, but vocal majority supporting maintaining the at-grade crossing
- c. The Steering Committee narrowly voted 5-4 to maintain the at-grade crossing. At a later Steering Committee meeting, those that attended seemed to understand City staff's and the consultants concerns of maintaining the at-grade crossing
- d. Steering Committee, PLACE, Bicycle and Pedestrian, Tree Committees endorsed:
 - Maintain existing pedestrian crosswalk north of Graves Street on 9th Street
 - Construct pedestrian passageway beneath 9th Street
 - Stairs on west side in Old Avon R/W to provide access to 9th Street
 - Pedestrian upgrades at intersection at Levy – Old Avon – Garrett for improved mobility
 - Construct stairs from bridge to Water Street on both sides of 9th Street.

All Committees except PLACE supported the mezzanine between the two stairs, under the bridge.

Staff / Consultant Recommendations

- a. Remove existing pedestrian crosswalk north of Graves Street on 9th
- b. 10 ft (tall) x 21 ft (wide) Pedestrian passageway beneath 9th Street
 - Provides east-west accessible route under 9th Street for bikes and pedestrians
 - Emphasis on good lighting
 - Opportunity to promote new, safer mobility patterns
- c. Stairs on west side and/or sidewalk in Old Avon R/W provide access to 9th Street
- d. Pedestrian upgrades at intersection of Levy / Old Avon / Garrett for improved mobility
- e. New pathway just north of bridge to the Downtown Mall & Water Street being created with stairways & mezzanine

3. Vertical Circulation at Water Street

Issue Summary

- a. Lack of good connectivity / ADA accessible routes east to west
- b. Lack of convenient vertical circulation from Water Street to bridge/9th street
- c. Several new ADA accessible ramp options were studied. Technical barriers were found in each rendition. Ramps were explored (ones that would not be ADA compliant but could aid with strollers/bikes) but construction costs, beyond the project funding capacity, were deemed too significant to include those improvements.

Public Response

- a. General support for full build out of stairs on east and west sides of bridge 9th St. and Water St as well as mezzanine
- b. Committees support full build out as well though PLACE Design Task Force recommended eliminating mezzanine

Staff / Consultant Recommendations

- a. Construct stairs on east and west sides of bridge 9th St. and Water St.
- b. Construct a mezzanine connection between stairs beneath the bridge

These three topics were put before the Steering and Technical committees, , the general public during the Open House event, the Planning Commission, Board of Architectural review, PLACE Task Force, Bike/Pedestrian Advisory Committee, and the Tree Commission. The Open House public comments received, and voting sheets are posted under the resources tab at www.belmontbridge.org. The results of the voting sheets were presented to the Steering Committee on June 14th, 2017.

Following the Open House, an on-line survey regarding the three design issues was made available through the project website to capture opinion and feedback from those that may have not been able to attend the Open House. 244 people participated in the focused on-line survey, and the results were presented to the Steering Committee on June 14th to help inform committee members of the public input/comment.

A memo to the Planning Commission dated September 12, 2017 is included as an attachment to provide further background and analysis performed regarding these 3 Key Design Issues that further explain Staff/Consultant Recommendations.

Each committee also provided detailed comments that will be explored during the next stage of final design and which is available under the resources tab at www.belmontbridge.org.

Comprehensive Plan Alignment: On September 12, 2017 the Planning Commission voted unanimously that the Conceptual Design is consistent with the City of Charlottesville adopted 2013 Comprehensive Plan. The following excerpts from the Comprehensive Plan were used as support and are followed with project details on how these goals are being met:

Transportation:

- **Goal 1: Increase safe, convenient and pleasant accommodations for pedestrians, bicyclists, and people with disabilities that improve the quality of life within the community and within individual Neighborhoods.**
 - This project provides approximately 40 total feet in width dedicated to bicyclists and pedestrians, an increase in width from the existing condition. That width includes 2, 10' wide sidewalks on each side of the roadway, and two, 10' wide protected bike lanes in each direction (7' bike lanes with 3' buffer). In addition, a pedestrian tunnel is proposed underneath 9th Street, south of the railroad tracks as well as new vertical circulation on both the east and west side of the bridge down to Water Street. A connection is also proposed on the western side of the bridge to connect 9th Street to Water Street during paid Pavilion events.
- **Goal 1.2: Provide convenient and safe pedestrian connections within 1/4 miles of all commercial and employment centers, transit routes, schools and parks**
 - This project provides wide sidewalks and vertical circulation to enable multi-modal connections to transit routes and employment centers
- **Goal 1.3 Provide design features on roadways, such as street trees within buffers, street furniture and sidewalk widths that improve the safety and comfort level of all users and contribute to the City's environmental goals.**
 - This project includes street tree plantings within buffers where appropriate as well as

- 10' wide sidewalks.
- **Goal 1.4: Explore and implement safe, convenient and visually attractive crossing alternatives to enable pedestrians and bicycles to cross major thoroughfares**
 - The project provides a pedestrian passageway under 9th St. south of the railroad tracks, and provides for a mezzanine connection from the east and west side of 9th St. north of the railroad tracks
- **Goal 1.5: Continue to include bicycle and pedestrian accommodations in conjunction with the planning and design of all major road projects, all new development and road paving projects**
 - The project provides two, 10' buffered bike lanes(7' bike lanes with 3' buffer) continuous in each direction from Market St. to Garrett St as well as the aforementioned new pedestrian connections.
- **Goal 1.6 Consistently apply ADA standards to facility design and ensure that accessible curb ramps exist at all pedestrian crossings where conditions allow.**
 - Curb ramps will be provided at all crossings.

Urban Design:

- **Goal 1: Continue Charlottesville's history of architectural and design excellence by maintaining existing traditional design features while encouraging creative, context-sensitive, contemporary planning and design.**
 - Per the public comment received, design focus is on seeking to blend and connect the new bridge into the surrounding neighborhoods with several modern and/or funky design features – such as the treatment of abutment walls and pier system – to add distinct contemporary details.
- **Goal 1.1: Emphasize the importance of public buildings, public spaces, and other public improvements as opportunities to promote a sense of place and a welcoming environment for residents and visitors.**
 - The project is proposing to close Old Avon Street at the Garrett/Levy/9th intersection to create a pedestrian zone. Both the pedestrian passageway and mezzanine will be designed to encourage pedestrian use through good design concepts. Enhanced landscaping is also proposed – separate concepts for corridor as well as surrounding areas.
- **Goal 1.2: Promote Charlottesville's diverse architectural and cultural heritage by recognizing, respecting, and enhancing the distinct characteristics of each neighborhood.**
 - This project will be coordinated with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources as well as receive a Certificate of Appropriateness from the City's Board of Architectural Review.
- **Goal 1.3: Facilitate development of nodes of density and vitality in the City's Mixed Use Corridors, and encourage vitality, pedestrian movement, and visual interest throughout the city**
 - The project provides for upgraded pedestrian and bicycle facilities, as well as architectural elements that will enhance the neighborhood and corridor
- **Goal 1.4: Develop pedestrian-friendly environments in Charlottesville that connect neighborhoods to community facilities, to commercial areas and employment centers, and that connect neighborhoods to each other, to promote a healthier community.**
 - The project provides for an upgraded multi-modal connection from the pedestrian mall in downtown Charlottesville to the Belmont and Martha Jefferson neighborhoods.

- **1.5: Encourage community vitality and interaction through the incorporation of art in public spaces, neighborhoods, signage, and gateways.**
 - Opportunities for art are being proposed along the bridge's abutment walls south of the railroad tracks – as well as preservation of a programmed space for graffiti or commissioned art.
- **1.6: Encourage the incorporation of meaningful public spaces, defined as being available to the general public, into urban design efforts.**
 - Retention of the graffiti wall for public, free expression and creation of a new pedestrian space along Avon Street are intended to meet this goal.
- **1.7: Promote design excellence for public projects and installations at all scales.**
 - The request for proposals created a project development process centered around design. The extensive public participation process is ensuring design excellence in meeting the community's present and future needs.

Following City Council acceptance of the Conceptual design, the project will advance to final design and a Combined Location & Design Public Hearing. The following community engagement activities are anticipated in the design process (all dates To Be Determined):

- Technical Committee Meeting
- Steering Committee Meeting
- Design Public Hearing
- Final BAR Presentation - COA Action
- Presentations to:
 - Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee
 - PLACE Design Task Force
 - Steering Committee
 - Tree Commission

Alignment with City Council's Vision and Strategic Plan: Approval of this agenda item upholds the City's commitment to create "a connected community" by improving upon our existing transportation infrastructure. In addition, it would contribute to Goal 3 of the Strategic Plan, to be "A Beautiful and Sustainable Natural and Built Environment" by meeting Objective 3.1 Engage in robust and context sensitive urban planning and implementation; Objective 3.2. Provide reliable and high quality infrastructure; and Objective 3.3. Provide a variety of transportation and mobility options.

Community Engagement:

To help guide the project, the City Council appointed a project Steering Committee composed of:

- Amy Gardner, Belmont Neighborhood
- John Harrison, Business Community
- Patrick Healy, Ridge Street Neighborhood
- Heather Danforth Hill, North Downtown Neighborhood
- Harry Holsinger, Martha Jefferson Neighborhood
- Scott Paisley, PLACE
- Tim Mohr, PLACE
- John Santoski, Planning Commission
- Lena Seville, CAT Advisory Board
- Fred Wolf, PLACE

The process also involves coordination with the following City Council appointed stakeholder

groups:

- ADA Advisory Committee
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee
- Board of Architectural Review
- Downtown Business Association/Chamber of Commerce
- PLACE Design Task Force
- Planning Commission
- Tree Commission

The City of Charlottesville has provided multiple opportunities for the public to provide input into the plan development process. A project website, two on-line surveys, three community events (Mobility Summit, Design Charrette, and Open House) as well as 18 stakeholder meetings occurred between February 21 and July 14th. Information presented and gathered at the meetings can be found at www.BelmontBridge.org, however a summary of each event is below:

Project Website: The Project website (www.belmontbridge.org) contains information that has been presented to date as part of the process. Information presented includes:

- Project background
- Project schedule
- A “resource” page that provides access to the traffic analysis, project fact sheet and FAQ, information presented and gathered from community events, and information presented at the stakeholder meetings
- A contact form
- A “get involved” page

As of June 22, 2017, the project website has logged approximately 3,000 unique users, and over 8,000 page views.

Community Event 1: Mobility Summit, March 11, 2017: A Mobility Summit was held on Saturday, March 11, 2017 at the Sprint Pavilion from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM. The event drew nearly 100 people to discuss issues and needs related to the replacement of the Belmont Bridge which resulted in 1,679 data points. Participants provided input on the original design parameters established by City Council and future design objectives/goals through a combination of 6 interactive stations, guided walking tours and biking tour of the study area, and, had an opportunity to have one-on-one conversation with the consultant team and City staff. At sign-in, participants received an information handout, a rack card with more detail on upcoming events, and a passport to guide them through various stations.

A summary document provided on www.BelmontBridge.org briefly summarizes the community input data collected at the event and offers stakeholders and community members the opportunity to see the thoughts of others in the community. In addition to data collected in person, the event served as the launch for the MetroQuest survey.

On-Line MetroQuest Survey: The MetroQuest survey was active from March 11, 2017 through April 16, 2017. The goal of the survey was to educate the public about the project and collect feedback on project priorities, tradeoffs to help direct design, and design preferences related to function and aesthetics. Following completion of the survey, an optional question requested how

the participant uses the existing bridge to further illustrate the needs of the project. The survey was design to mirror the activities of the in-person activities at the Mobility Summit, and included:

- Priority Ranking
- Tradeoffs, which included categories such as Design, Role, Views, Mobility, and Parking
- Visual Preference Survey, which included categories such as Landscaping, Lighting, Public Spaces, and streets

The results for each category can be found at www.BelmontBridge.org, on the resources page. Additionally, the 771 written comments can be found on the project website as well. The amount of participation captured in the MetroQuest on-line survey is summarized as follows:

- 896 Participants
- 27,677 individual data points
- 771 written comments

Community Event 2: Design Charrette, April 17-19, 2017: Project team members held a collaborative charrette on April 17-19, 2017 at CitySpace in downtown Charlottesville. During the event, conceptual design concepts were developed based on the original City Council design directive that was supported by feedback collected at the Mobility Summit and online survey. The design process throughout the charrette was iterative, with the working studio open to the public throughout the day to encourage engagement with the project team. Pin-up sessions each evening occurred to show the day's progress, and allowed project staff to answer questions, address concerns, and document new ideas.

Additionally, five work sessions were organized around key topics central to the bridge design – Traffic, Bicycle & Pedestrian Facilities, Parking, Community Space and Bridge Design. The outcomes of the topic discussions informed the design process and the selection of preferred alternatives throughout the remainder of the charrette process.

Overall key takeaways from the design charrette include:

- Overall corridor approach
 - New block structure
 - Closing Old Avon St. at Garrett St.
 - Creating new east/west public street at the railroad property line
- Develop a two lane, 62' bridge section with a protected bike lane and wide sidewalks
- Additional vertical circulation (pedestrian) north of the railroad tracks on the east side
- Modern / Funky design features
- Enhanced landscape elements on approaches
- Accent lighting for pedestrian safety (not theatrical)
- Interim / shared parking solutions (in cooperation with property owners)
- Minimize maintenance concerns regarding raised, planted medians

Following the design charrette, concepts were refined and alternatives were developed for various design elements. The concepts and alternatives were presented to the Steering Committee, Technical Committee, and Small Stakeholder groups on May 15th and 16th. A full

summary of the event, including a summary of the work sessions is posted on www.belmontbridge.org.

Community Event 3: Open House, June 1, 2017: Project team members held an open house on June 1, 2017. The open house provided an opportunity for the public to provide feedback on the latest design concept for the Belmont Bridge that became the preferred Conceptual design. The design concept were developed from more than 30,000 outreach data points and 1,000 written comments provided through previous public meetings, the project website, and MetroQuest survey. At the open house, a presentation was made that provided a brief overview and the public was requested to visit stations set up with the following focus areas to provide feedback and ask questions:

- Bridge Architecture, which included architectural elements such as fencing, lighting, walls, vertical circulation, and overall 3-dimensional views of the concept. This station also included an interactive 3-D architectural model, giving the opportunity to see alternate views of the design.
- Corridor, which included the recommended corridor concept, and, a potential “future build” concept. Additionally, cross sections of the road and plan views of the intersections were a focus.
- Traffic, which included graphics depicting lane configuration, queue length, delay, level of service, and projected future traffic conditions in a video format.

Stakeholder Meetings: Throughout the process, individual stakeholder groups met to provide input and feedback during the design process. Stakeholder meetings were open to the public. The following groups met on the following dates in 2017:

- Steering Committee: February 21, March 29, May 15, June 14, August 16
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee: February 23, May 16, September 7
- PLACE Design Task Force: February 22, May 16, September 14
- Downtown Business Association / Chamber of Commerce: February 22, May 16
- Board of Architectural Review: February 22, May 16, August 15 (BAR Meeting)
- Tree Commission: February 23, May 16, September 5

The ADA Advisory Committee and Planning Commission were invited to attend any of the five stakeholder group meetings. These stakeholder groups provided feedback in their specialized areas of interest and confirmed that design was progressing in keeping with the project’s purpose and need.

Meeting agendas and summaries can be found under the resources tab on the project website www.BelmontBridge.org. Additionally, a Technical committee was formed which is comprised of representatives from appropriate City departments. The technical committee held meetings on the project on February 22, 2017, March 30, 2017, May 16, 2017, June 13, 2017 and August 16, 2017. The technical committee meetings confirmed input received from the public and stakeholder groups could be technically attained and then maintained.

Budgetary Impact: The preferred Conceptual design falls within the established budget comprised of a combination of City, State and Federal funding sources. No additional impact is anticipated on the General Fund. An appropriation for the remaining committed funds will be completed later this year.

Recommendation: Staff recommends approval of the conceptual design and authorization to proceed with commencement of the final design phase of the project.

Alternatives: A prior study investigated the feasibility of bridge renovation and found complete bridge replacement was the most cost effective means to address the bridge's current and anticipated deficiencies. That stated, City Council may provide direction on how to alter the preferred Conceptual design or provide questions/concerns that need to be addressed during final design.

Attachments:

Preferred Conceptual Design

September 12, 2017 Planning Commission Memo – Background/Update on 3 Key Design Issues

Resolution of the Charlottesville Planning Commission

Resolution for City Council



**City of Charlottesville
Department of Neighborhood Development Services
Staff Report**

**CITY COUNCIL AND PLANNING COMMISSION
JOINT PUBLIC HEARING**

**DATE OF HEARING: AUGUST 12, 2017
RE: BELMONT BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT**

Project Manager: Jeanette Janiczek

Date of Staff Report: September 12, 2017

Action Required: Pursuant to Virginia Code section 15.2-2232, the Planning Commission will review the proposed Belmont Bridge Replacement concept, located on 9th Street between Market Street and Garrett Street / Levy Street in the City of Charlottesville, to determine if the general character, approximate location and extent of the proposed improvements are substantially in accord with the City's adopted Comprehensive Plan or part thereof.

UPDATE:

At the August 8th Planning Commission Meeting, there were three Open Design issues:

- Vertical Circulation North of Water Street
- Graves Street Vehicular Circulation
- At-Grade Crossing at Graves Street

Since the meeting, the project team has further explored these issues and has also met with the Board of Architectural Review, Steering Committee, Tree Commission and Bicyclist/Pedestrian Advisory Committee. The following is the updated status on these 3 issues.

Vertical Circulation North of Water Street

Both sides of the bridge will be connected by stairs to a mezzanine and then to Water Street. The Board of Architectural Review suggested the eastern staircase be oriented to the east (instead of west, to the Transit Center). Steering Committee, Tree Commission and Bicyclist/Pedestrian Advisory Committee all supported this concept.

A ramp was under consideration from the bridge to the mezzanine on the east side of the bridge which could be constructed ADA-compliant. The connection from the mezzanine to either the Downtown Mall or Water Street could not be meet ADA standards due to space constraints and the amount of height needing to be overcome. The ramp was eliminated from consideration by the Steering Committee due to cost of design tradeoffs needed for construction.

Graves Street Vehicular Circulation

Existing condition allows full movement turns entering and exiting Graves at 9th Street. The issue was to whether to allow southbound left turns onto 9th which creates a safety concern and congestion impacting traffic on 9th Street. If left turns out of Graves Street onto 9th Street were not allowed, how could this movement be efficiently accommodated in another circulation pattern?

Traffic counts were taken in February 2017 during the AM and PM peak hours which showed minimal lefts out of Graves onto 9th (under a dozen) – particularly compared to the number of rights out of Graves (over 100). A turning movement count was conducted on July 20, 2017 from 7am to 6pm to ensure turning movement patterns remained consistent. There was a slight uptick from noon to 1pm of 15 vehicles turning left, but the remaining hours remained consistent with the original traffic counts.

An existing access easement for the public was confirmed on the 110 Avon Street (Innova property) that allows access from Graves Street to Avon Street, East South Street, 6th Street SE and Levy Avenue back to 9th Street. The project will be adjusting the existing street network and neighboring parcels to ensure two way traffic can be maintained as well as truck deliveries/circulation. While there are many turns on this route, the distance traveled is approximately 2,000 feet or 0.4 miles from Graves to Levy/9th signalized intersection.

A pilot project is also under consideration by the City, separate from the bridge replacement project, to “flip” the direction of a single block of Monticello Rd, to allow vehicles to turn onto Monticello Road and then onto Levy Avenue to access the signal at Levy/9th Street. This is moving forward through upper City management and then will proceed with communication/coordination between the neighbors and neighborhood before being instituted as a demonstration project.

Other measures – such as time restrictions for left turns from Graves onto 9th – have been considered and eliminated due to enforcement concerns.

At-Grade Crossing at Graves Street

Issues Summary – At-Grade Crossing at Graves Street

- Crossing is a desirable, convenient location for Belmont residents to cross 9th Street
- Conflicting and potentially unsafe conditions at crossing
- 10 Crashes at Graves and 9th Street (2012 – 2016)
- 2 crashes involved pedestrians in/near existing crosswalk
- Existing 6% grade along 9th Street – high travel speeds
- Existing crosswalk is 190' north of signalized crosswalk at 9th/Avon/Graves/Levy Intersection
- Crosswalk is not in accordance with Streets That Work or VDOT guidance

Current Concept

- Pedestrian passageway beneath 9th Street
- Provides east-west accessible route under 9th Street for bikes and pedestrians
- 10'+/- tall and 21' wide – emphasis on good lighting
- Opportunity to promote new, safer mobility patterns
- Will help activate 6th Street, South Street and Old Avon Block with planned redevelopment
- Maintain existing pedestrian crosswalk north of Graves Street on 9th

- Stairs on west side and/or sidewalk in Old Avon R/W provide access to 9th Street
- Pedestrian upgrades at intersection at Levy – Old Avon – Garrett for improved mobility

The Steering Committee narrowly endorsed maintaining the existing pedestrian crosswalk north of Graves Street on 9th Street by a vote of 5 to 4. Other boards such as the Planning Commission, Board of Architectural Review, Bike/Pedestrian Advisory Committee and Tree Commission generally feel the convenience of the crossing outweighs safety concerns. We have heard both vocal support for the maintenance of this crossing from the public as well as comments that support its removal. However, staff and our technical consultants cannot recommend nor support maintaining the mid-block crossing.

The previously forwarded Mid-block Pedestrian Crosswalks on 9th Street Technical Memo outlines the following main concerns:

- 1) In the past five years (2012 to 2016) 10 total crashes occurred near candidate location A. Two of the 10 crashes involved pedestrians and resulted in minor/possible injury. Eight of the 10 crashes were property damage only with rear-ends as the predominant crash type.
- 2) While the mid-block at-grade crossing location does provide unrestricted views of the entire length of the crosswalk for vehicles traveling in the northbound and southbound directions, the crosswalk is located on or near a 6% gradient. This 6% gradient will lead to longer stopping/braking distances for vehicles should a pedestrian enter the crosswalk unexpectedly.
- 3) The proposed location of the at-grade crossing is less than 300 feet from another marked and signalized crosswalk across 9th Street at the intersection 9th Street/Avon Street and Garrett Street/Levy Avenue.
- 4) The proposed at-grade crossing location can be facilitated by two other means. The first route is for pedestrians to utilize the existing and proposed signalized crosswalk at the 9th Street/Avon Street and Garrett Street/Levy Avenue intersection, which is located approximately 190 LF south of the candidate crossing location. The second route is for pedestrians using the proposed pedestrian underpass and stairs on the west side of 9th Street. It is noted that pedestrians will have to utilize stairs or a longer route, but the inconvenience is deemed to be secondary to the potential safety concerns presented by the pedestrian crash pattern, the proximity to the marked and signalized pedestrian crossing to the south and conflicts with vehicles exiting from Graves Street onto 9th Street NB.

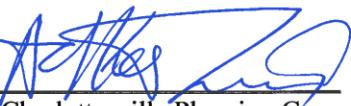
The City Attorney's office has reviewed whether the City would be exposed from a liability standpoint if the consultant team's recommendation was overturned and the crossing was installed. It was the City Attorney's office opinion that the City would be potentially at risk should an incident occur under that condition.

**RESOLUTION
OF THE CHARLOTTESVILLE PLANNING COMMISSION
RECOMMENDING THE BELMONT BRIDGE REPLACEMENT
PROJECT IS IN CONFORMANCE WITH THE CITY'S
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

Whereas, this Planning Commission and City Council jointly held a public hearing on the proposed Belmont Bridge Replacement concept, after notice given as required by law, NOW THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED that this Planning Commission confirms that the general character, location and extent of the proposed improvements are substantially in accord with the City's adopted Comprehensive Plan or part thereof.

Adopted by the Charlottesville Planning Commission, the 12th day of September 2017.

Attest: 
Secretary, Charlottesville Planning Commission

RESOLUTION
APPROVING AN AMENDMENT TO THE CITY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
BY INCORPORATING THE BELMONT BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT'S
PREFERRED CONCEPTUAL DESIGN

WHEREAS, on September 12, 2017, after notice given as required by law, the Charlottesville Planning Commission and Charlottesville City Council conducted a public hearing on a proposed amendment to the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Charlottesville (2013), to include the contents of the preferred conceptual design of the Belmont Bridge Replacement project ("Comprehensive Plan Amendment"); and

WHEREAS, on June 12, 2017, the Planning Commission adopted a resolution recommending approval by City Council of the Comprehensive Plan Amendment, and certifying a copy of the Comprehensive Plan Amendment to Council for its consideration; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED that, upon consideration of the Comprehensive Plan Amendment, the City Council hereby adopts the preferred conceptual design of the Belmont Bridge Replacement project as an amendment to the City's Comprehensive Plan and authorizes commencement of final design. Neighborhood Development Services staff shall post on the City's website notice of Council's adoption of the this Update, along with a copy of the approved Update.