

HIGHCREST — connection

providing a multi-use path for bikers and pedestrians

We're glad you could make it!

Background Information

In 2010 the City of Rockford started its **first 10-year plan** that concentrated on establishing a system of bike facilities throughout the City. The first 10-year bike plan resulted in the creation of **45 miles of on street facilities, 21 miles of multi-use paths, and approved a Complete Streets Policy.**

In 2019 the City of Rockford, began planning for its **Second 10-year bike plan.** The City established a steering committee that was made up of community members and organizations that included Transform Rockford, Rock Valley YMCA, and Rockford Mass Transit District, among others.

In November of 2019, the Steering Committee held a workshop that was open to the public to **understand public concerns and help establish priorities for bike and active transportation amenities.**

From the Public Engagement and Steering Committee the City's **Second 10-Year Bike Plan** titled The City of Rockford Bikeway Implementation Plan was drafted and passed by City Council in 2020. Rather than continuing with large growth of the system, the new bike plan looks to balance expansion with increasing rider comfort by **creating more bike lanes, multi-use paths, establishing traffic calming and installing bike detection at some signalized intersection.**

The Highcrest Road Multi-Use Path was originally designed as an alternative to a path along Spring Creek Road. The Bikeway Implementation Plan lists it as **a valuable connection from the Rock River Path to the East Side including Rock Valley College and Perryville Path.**



Fast Facts

STATION 1

What is a Multi-Use Path?

A Multi-Use Path (MUP) or shared-use path is a bi-directional 10-foot wide path that can be used by both pedestrians and bikes. MUP's are one of three types of bike facilities used in the City, the other two are Signed Bike Routes and Bike Lanes. MUP's are the only bike facility that are separated from the roadway and therefore provide a higher level of safety for pedestrians and bikes.

Why is the City considering placing a Multi-Use Path on Highcrest Road?

The proposed path would serve as a valuable east / west connection to existing pedestrian and bike facilities, retail, places of employment, and community gathering spaces. Highcrest Road MUP, in addition to allowing access from the neighborhoods to the north and south, would provide access to the River Path to the west, and a connection to Spring Creek Road and the Bike Lanes on Spring Brook Road that ultimately lead to Rock Valley College and the Perryville Path to the east. The City has considered alternate routes along other nearby streets and has found these alternate routes to be either significantly more expensive, requiring more acquisition of private property, or to be more intrusive to the residents.

Will I have to give up part of my property?

Right-of-way (ROW) is property or area reserved for public transportation purposes like roadways, sidewalks or even railroads. All public roads are within ROW. The Highcrest Road ROW is already between 66 feet and 73 feet wide, which is fairly large for a two lane road. More than likely this is because Highcrest Road at one time was being considered for a four lane roadway. Four lanes of traffic on Highcrest Road are no longer planned, but the area reserved for the larger roadway still exists. The proposed path is within this area that many residents may believe to be their private property; however, it is actually within public ROW. Because of this existing ROW, the vast majority of the project can be done without asking homeowners to give up part of their property. The proposed path will cross in front of approximately 70 homes along Highcrest Road, of which we are only anticipating asking 7 homes for additional property. Nevertheless, homeowners' yards along the path may look different after the project is completed. In addition, the path may require the removal of trees within the ROW, and some properties may require their front or side yard to be re-shaped or re-graded to accommodate the improvements.

Why is the Multi-Use Path proposed on the south side of Highcrest Road?

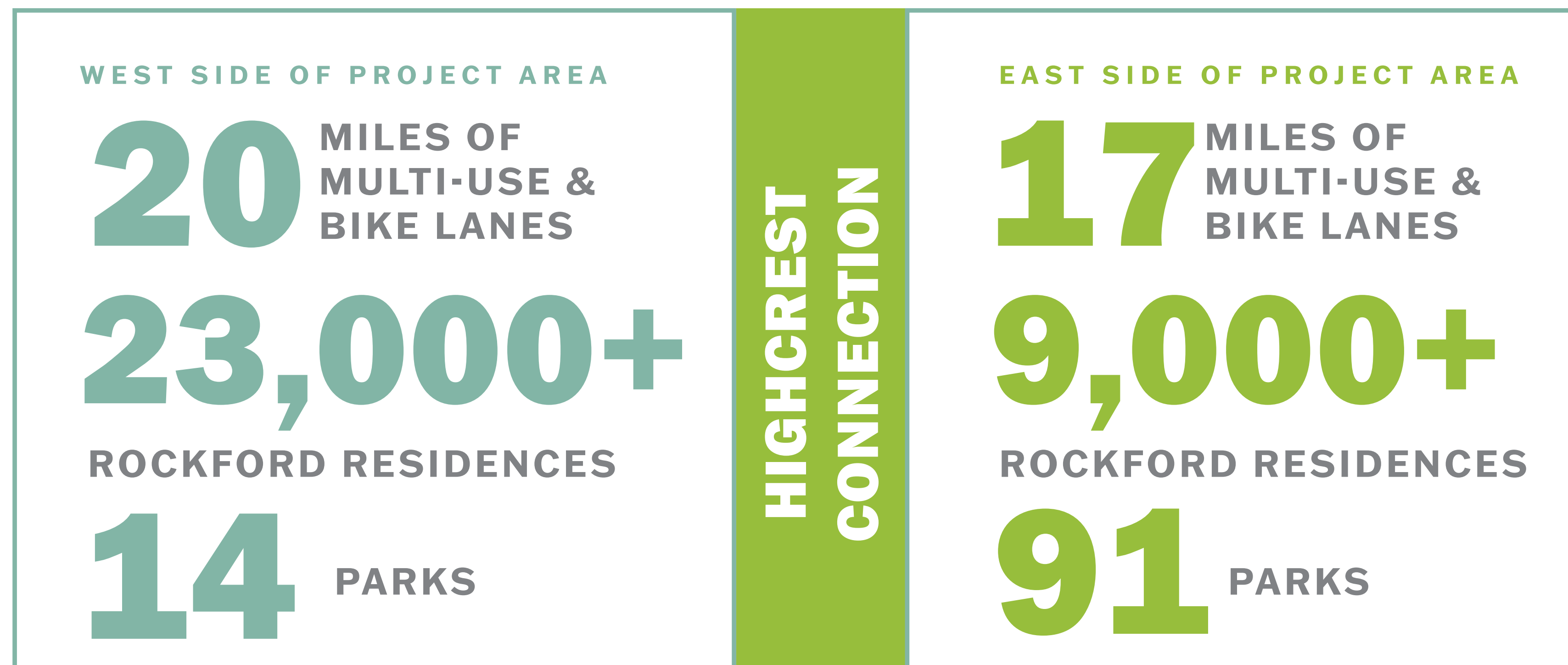
Initially the City and their consultant looked at both sides of the road as possibilities for the proposed path. After a right-of-way survey and preliminary design considerations, it was determined that the south side of the road would be the preferred route as it required less private property acquisition, less impact to mature trees, and had better connectivity to existing and proposed facilities.



Fast Facts

STATION 1

What are we connecting?



PROJECT AREA TOTALS

40 MILES OF MULTI-USE & BIKE LANES

= 32,000+ ROCKFORD RESIDENCES

105 PARKS

The proposed Highcrest Connection will result in approximately 40 miles of multi-use paths, connecting 20 miles to the west and 17 miles to the east. Having direct access to this continuous strip of paths are more than 32,000 Rockford residences. This connection will also tie 14 parks to the west- and 91 parks to the east-side of Rockford, within a half-mile radius of paths and bike lanes.

This connection can reduce accidents on Highcrest Road.

ACCIDENT HISTORY ALONG HIGHCREST ROAD FROM SPRING CREEK TO ALPINE (JUNE 2017 TO JUNE 2020)

44 ACCIDENTS	12 TURNING ACCIDENTS
19 INJURIES	18 REAR END

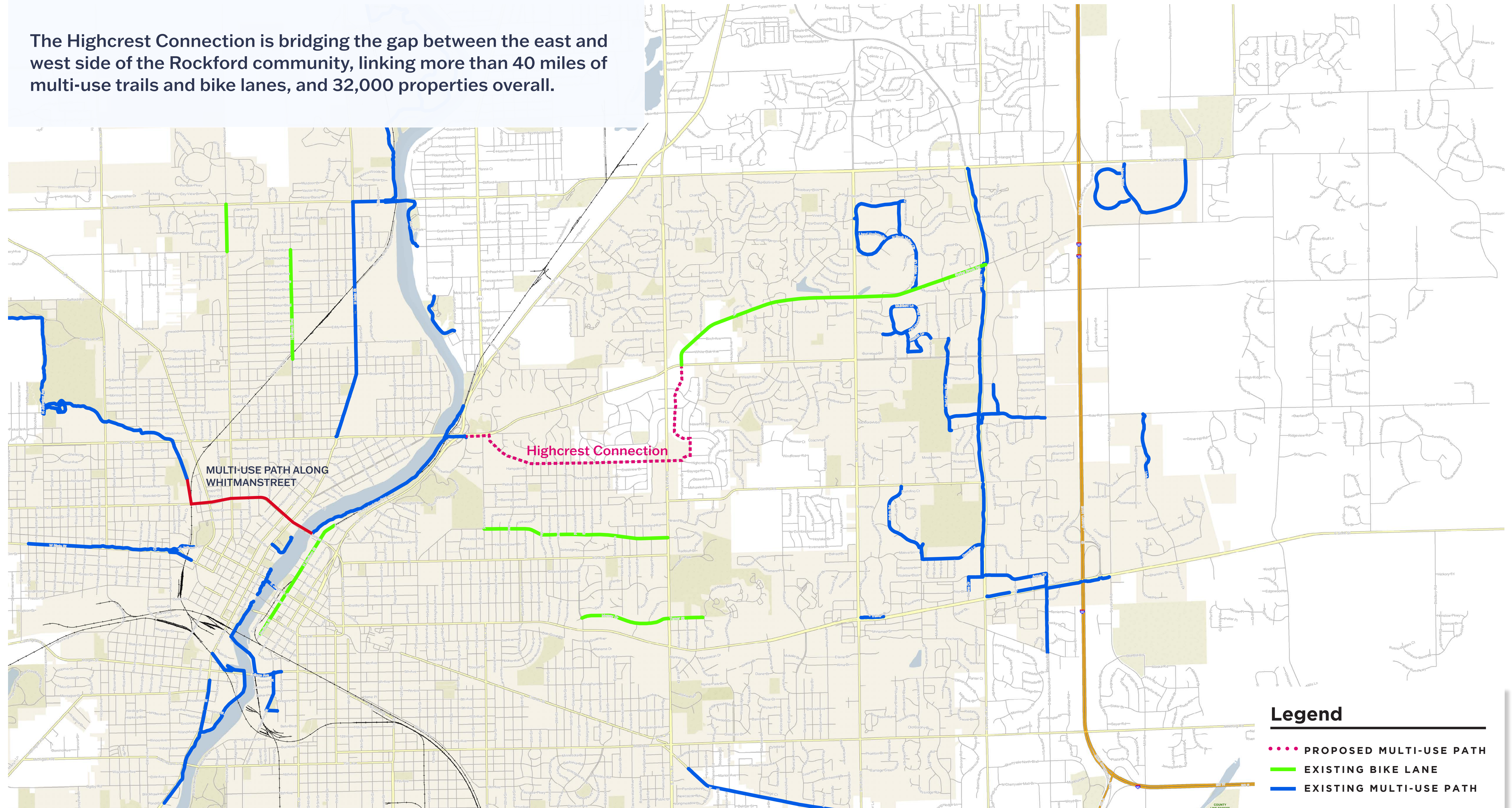
Highcrest connection can reduce vehicular speed on Highcrest Road, resulting in less accidents and subsequent injuries. Often, changing the built environment can be a strong signal to cars to change behavior and pay attention to pedestrians and cyclists utilizing the adjacent multi-use path.



Highcrest Connection

STATION 1

The Highcrest Connection is bridging the gap between the east and west side of the Rockford community, linking more than 40 miles of multi-use trails and bike lanes, and 32,000 properties overall.



10-Year Bike Plan

STATION 2

The first 10-year Bike Plan has resulted in a number of initiatives, including:

45 miles of on-street facilities added

21 miles of paths added

A Complete Street Policy approved

New bikeway implementation study passed

2010 - 2019

SECOND 10-YEAR BIKE PLAN - ENGAGEMENT PHOTOS



2020 - 2030

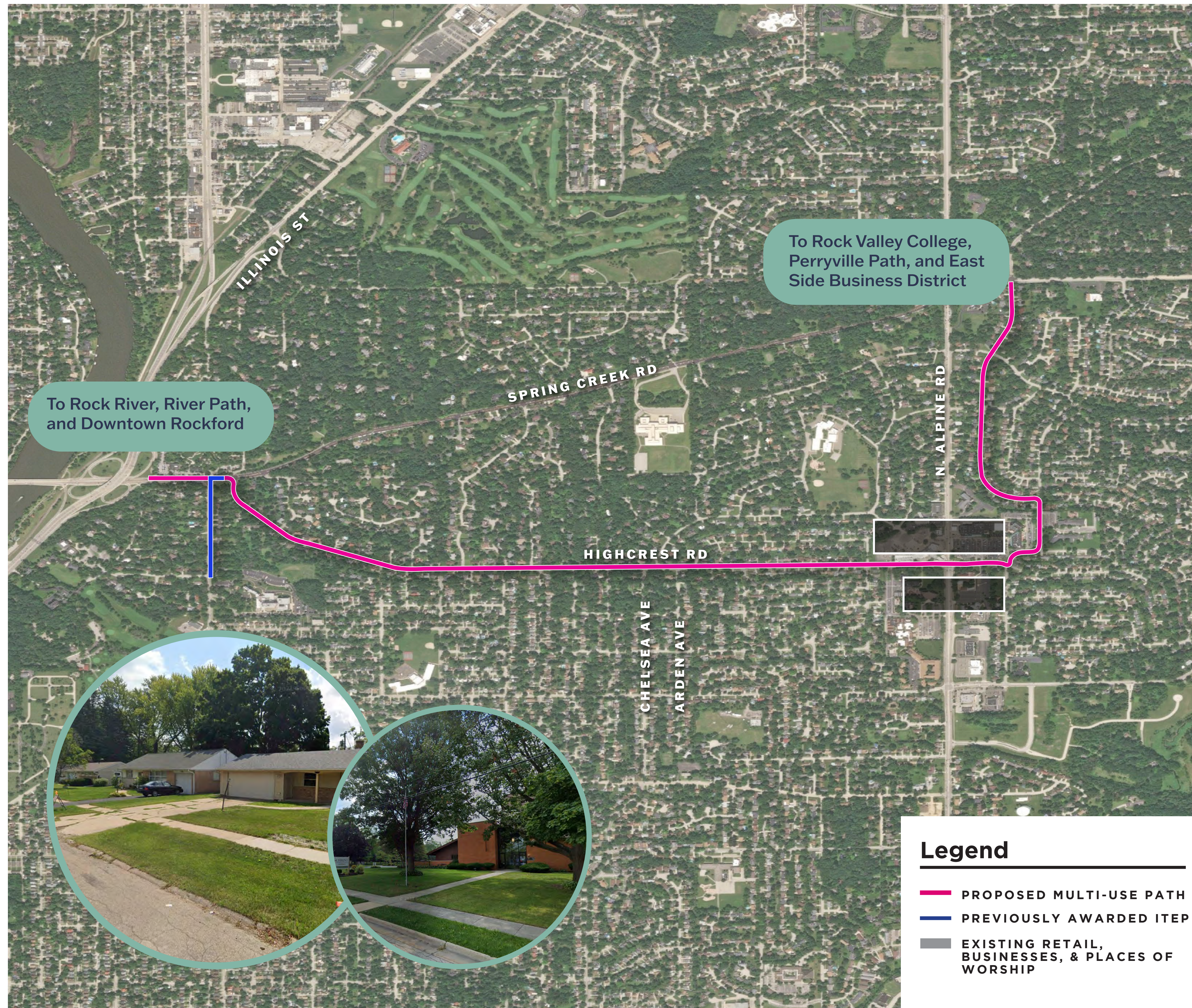


Groups involved:

- Transform Rockford
- Rock Valley YMCA
- Rockford Mass Transit District
- Region 1 Planning Council
- Rockford Park District
- City of Rockford Council Members
- City of Rockford Public Works Department
- City of Rockford Community and Economic Development Department
- IBikeRockford
- Blackhawk Bicycle & Ski Club
- Ride Illinois (formerly The League of Illinois Bicyclists)

Study Area

STATION 3



Did you know?

- Highcrest Connection was originally developed as an alternative to possible \$4.3 M Spring Creek Path by R1PC.
- Highcrest Connection addresses needs per R1PC Pedestrian and Bike Study
- Highcrest Connection is part of the City of Rockford Bikeway Implementation Study
- The City of Rockford began study of project in March 2020 with anticipation of submitting for ITEP Grant
- The City of Rockford looked at both sides of road for possible multi-use path
- Southside of Highcrest was determined more feasible due to less right-of-way needs, and better connections at Spring Creek and Alpine Road
- Highcrest Connection proposes on-street facilities east of Alpine Road
- Highcrest Connection is 2.7 miles including 1.7 miles of MUP along Highcrest Road
- Highcrest Connection's estimated cost is \$2.5 M (\$2M Grant and \$500k local match)

Connecting Uses

STATION 3

ANDERSON JAPANESE GARDENS



PERRYVILLE PATH



ROCK VALLEY COLLEGE



RIVER PATH



ROCK RIVER AND DOWNTOWN ROCKFORD



GETHSEMANE CHRISTIAN CHURCH



What other connections can be made to the west side?



What about the east side?



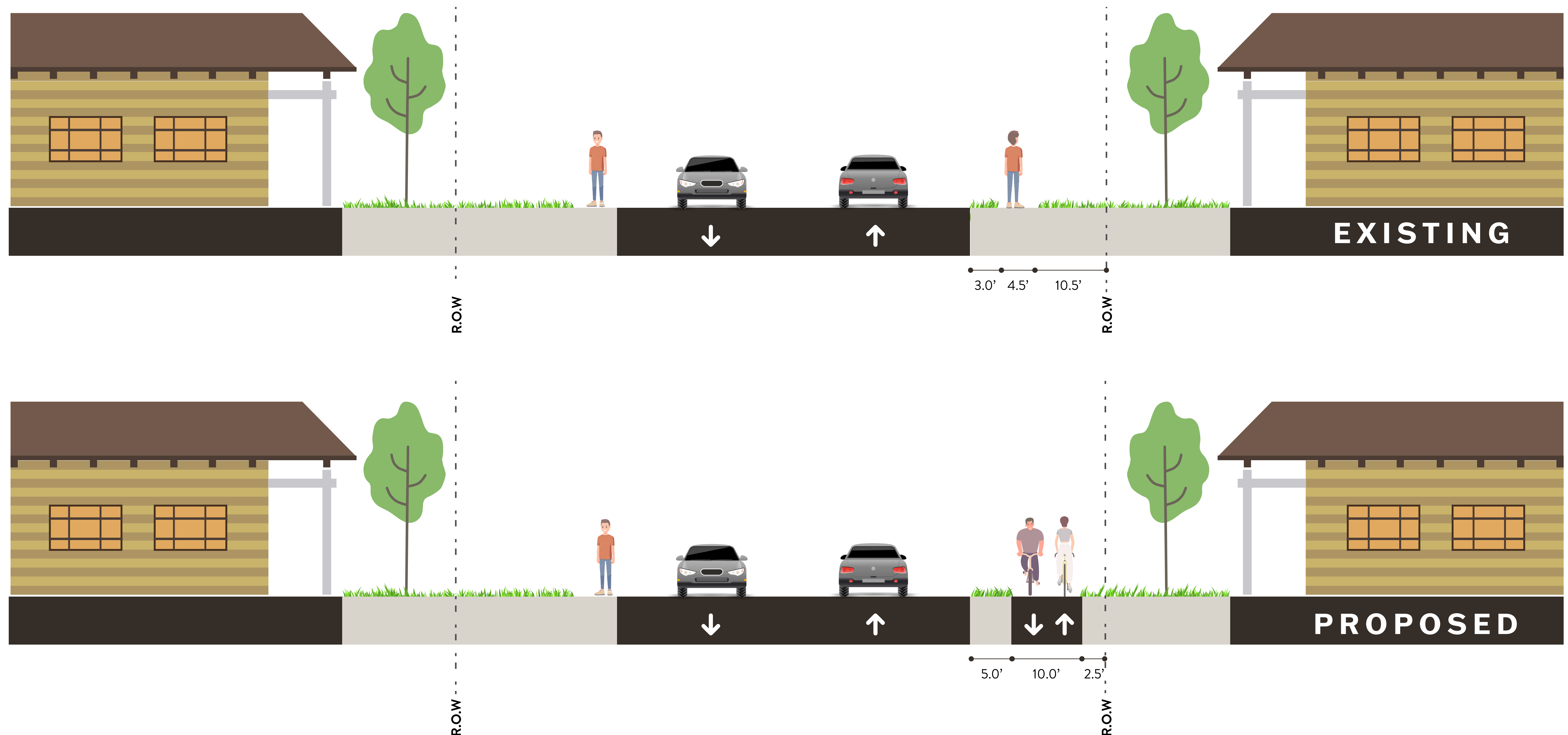
HIGHCREST CONNECTION

Proposed Path

STATION 3

Did you know?

The proposed path sits within the right of way and does not require the City of Rockford to acquire land from property owners, with the exception of 9 properties—two properties along Spring Creek Road, five properties along Highcrest Road, and two corner clips at the intersection of Alpine and Highcrest. For more information, please refer to the following exhibits.

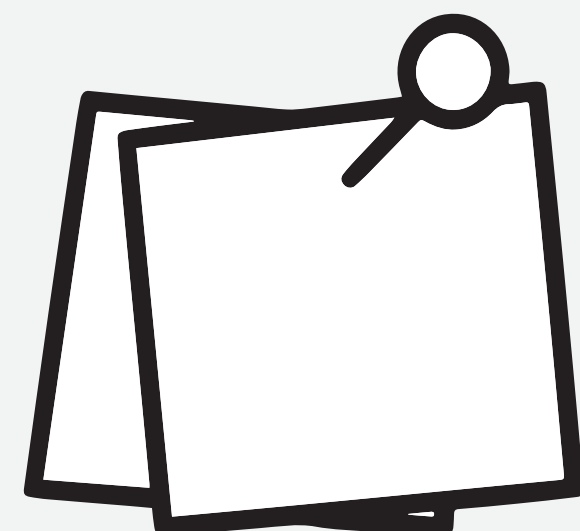


Proposed Path

STATION 3

What are your thoughts about the Highcrest Connection multi-use path?

Use the Post-its provided to share your thoughts!



What do you like most about this improvement?

Use the Post-its provided to share your thoughts!

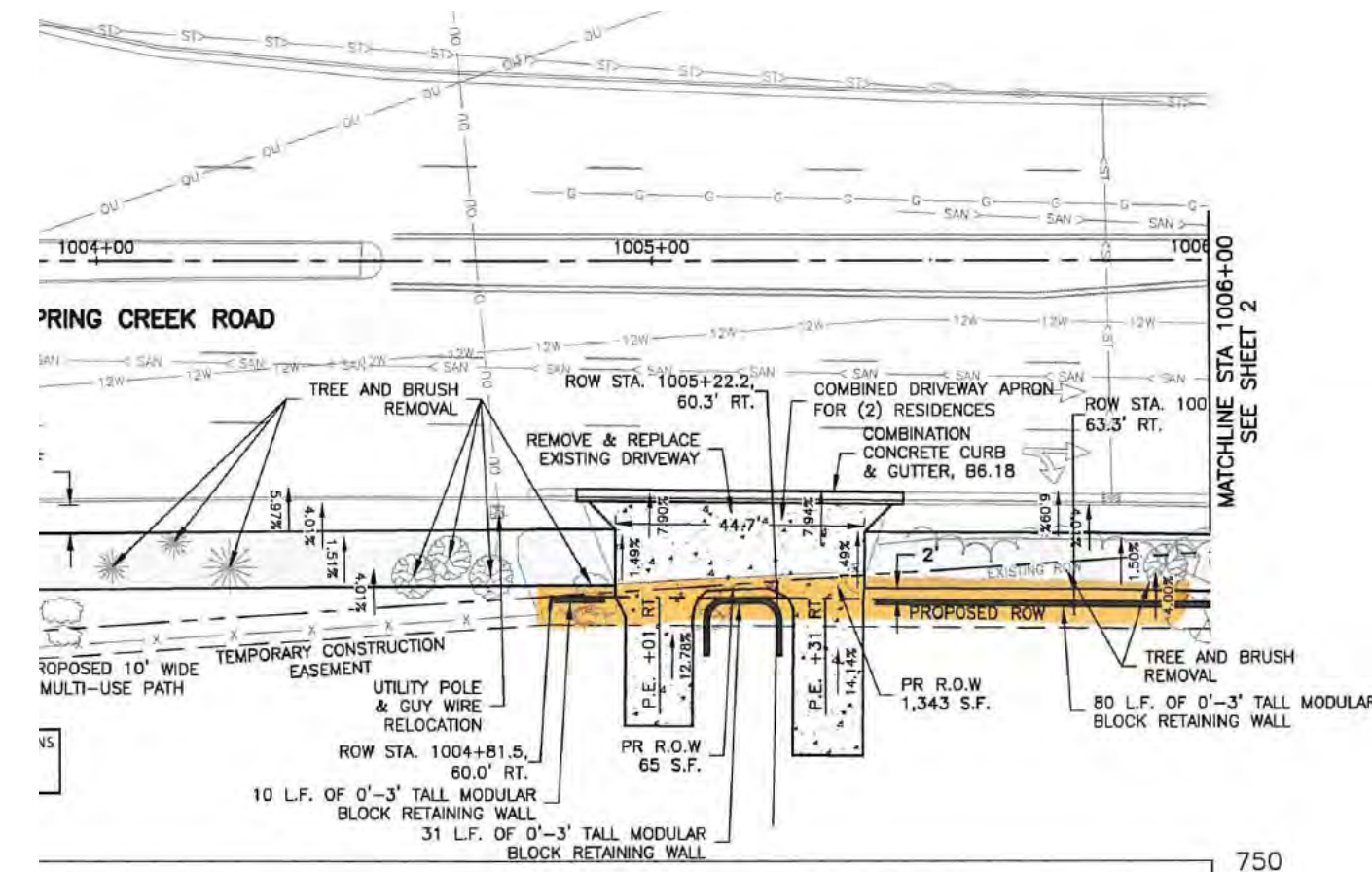
Do you have additional ideas to help implement this proposed multi-use path?

Use the Post-its provided to share your thoughts!

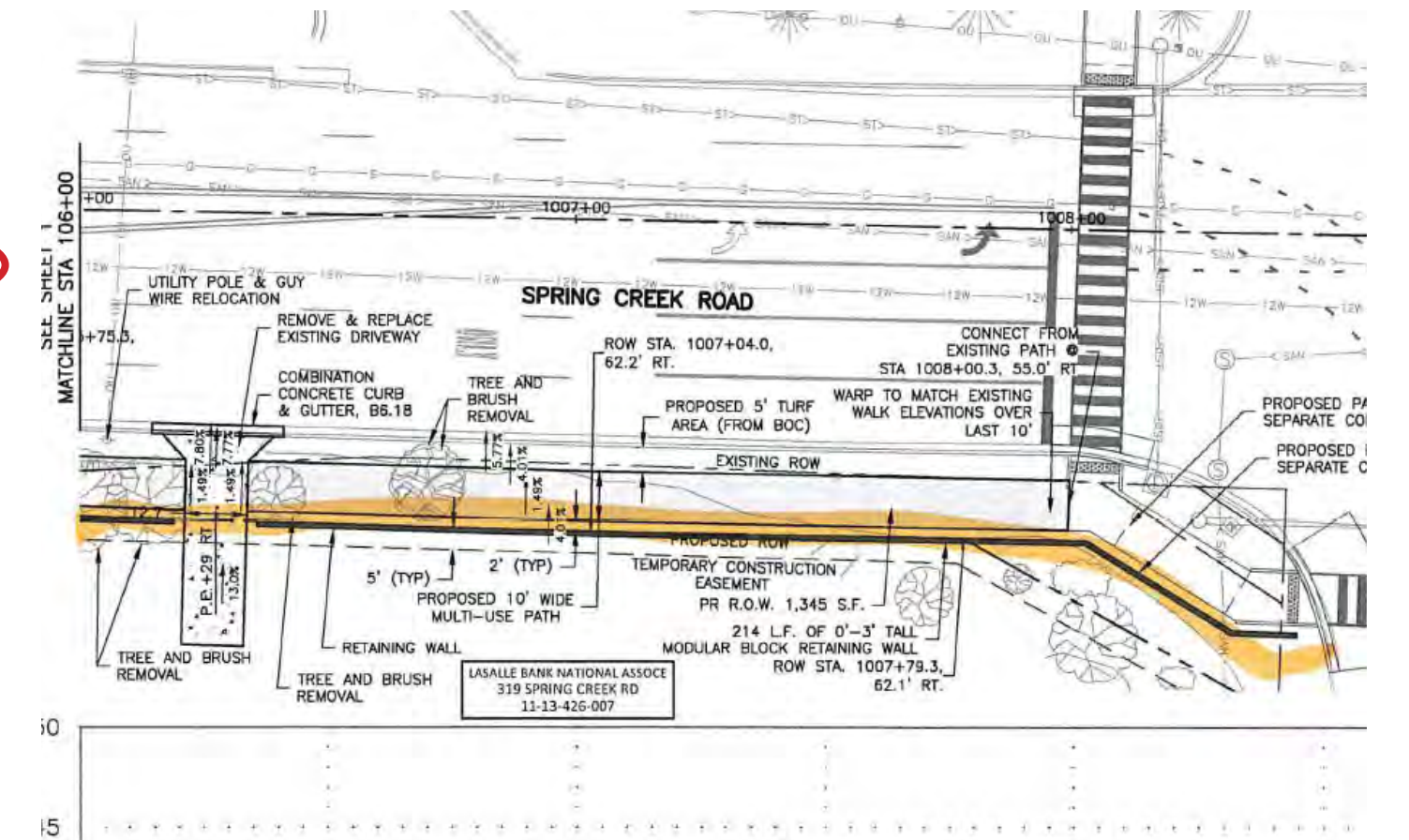
Acquiring Property

STATION 3

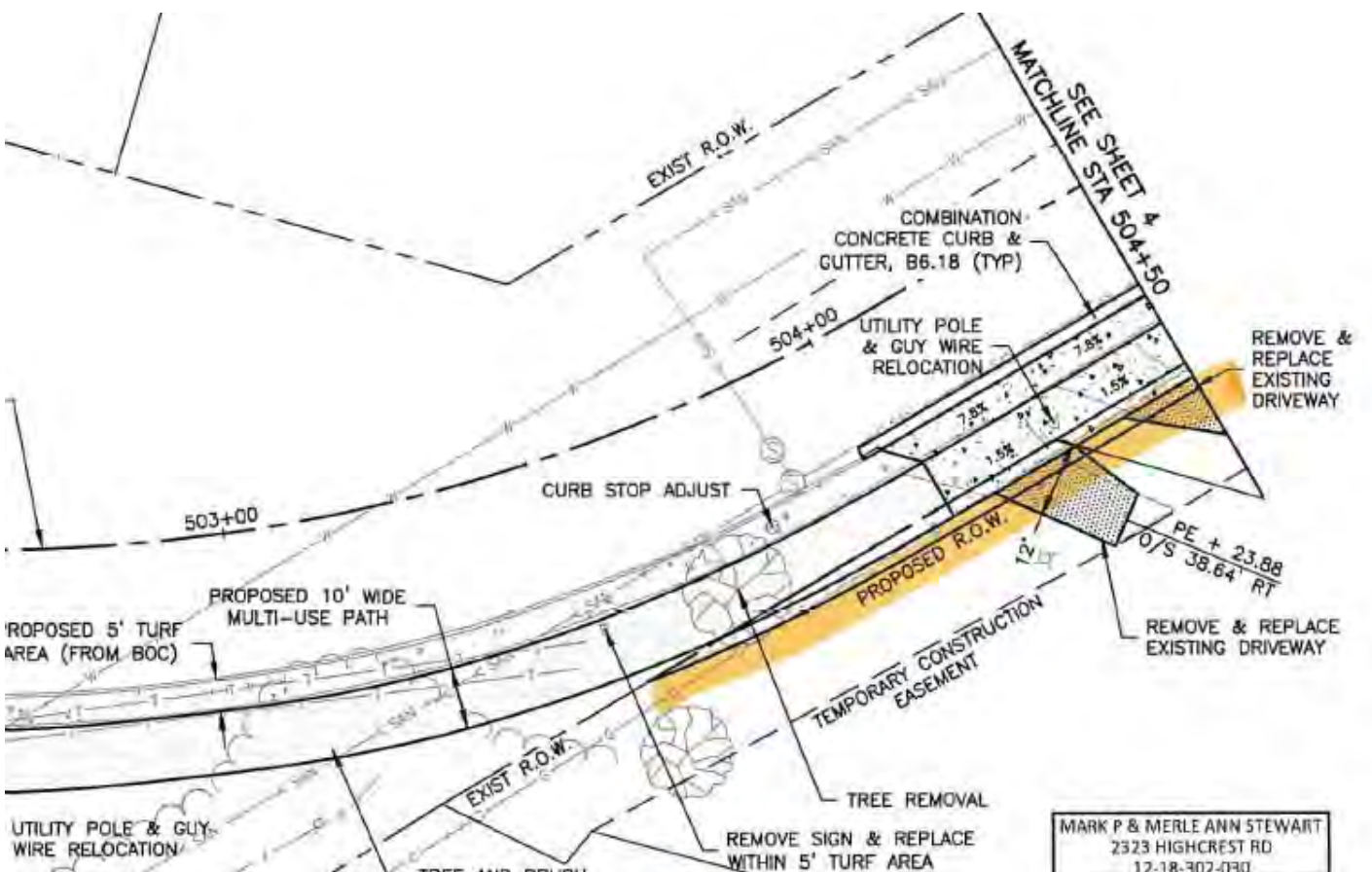
311 Spring Creek Road



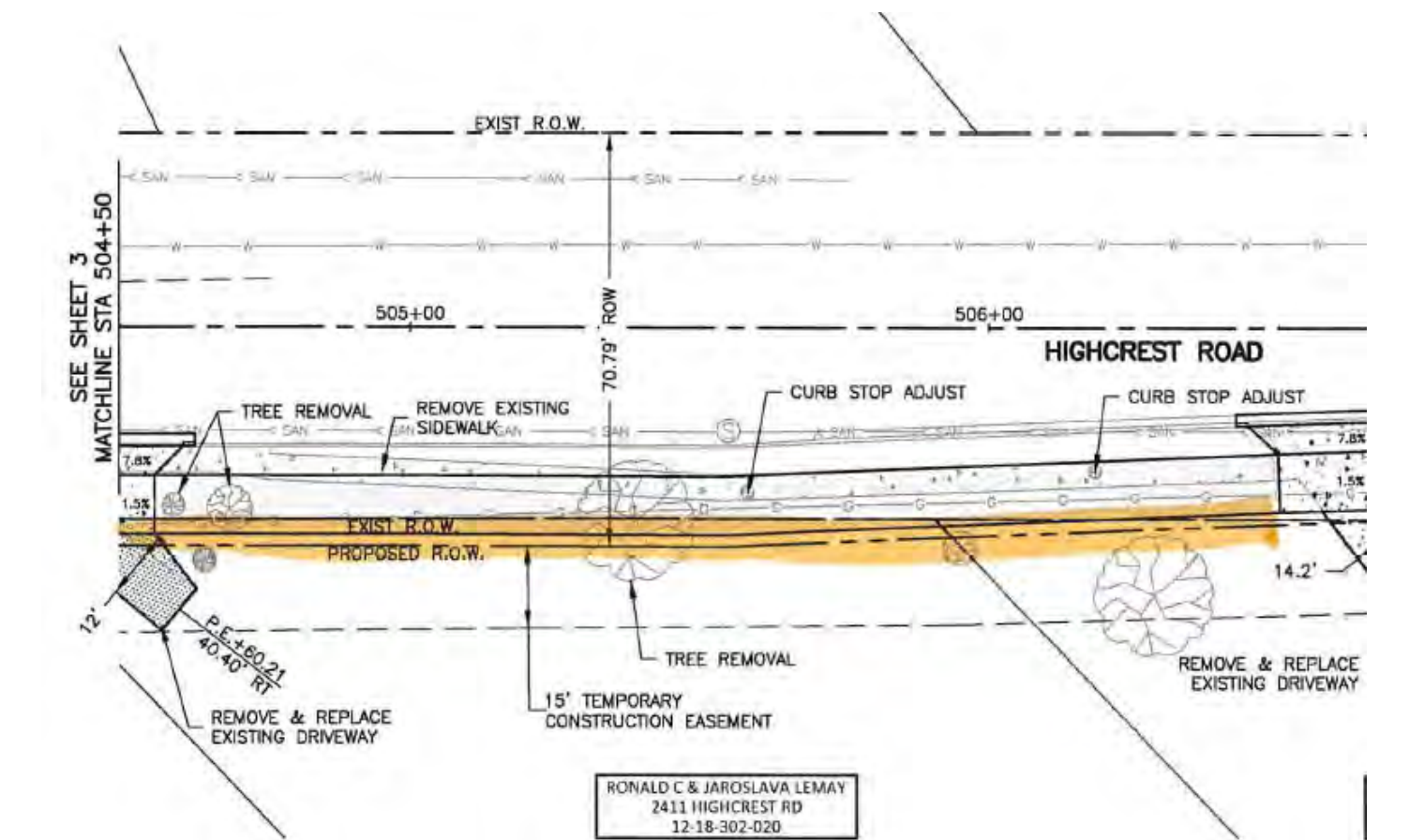
319 Spring Creek Road



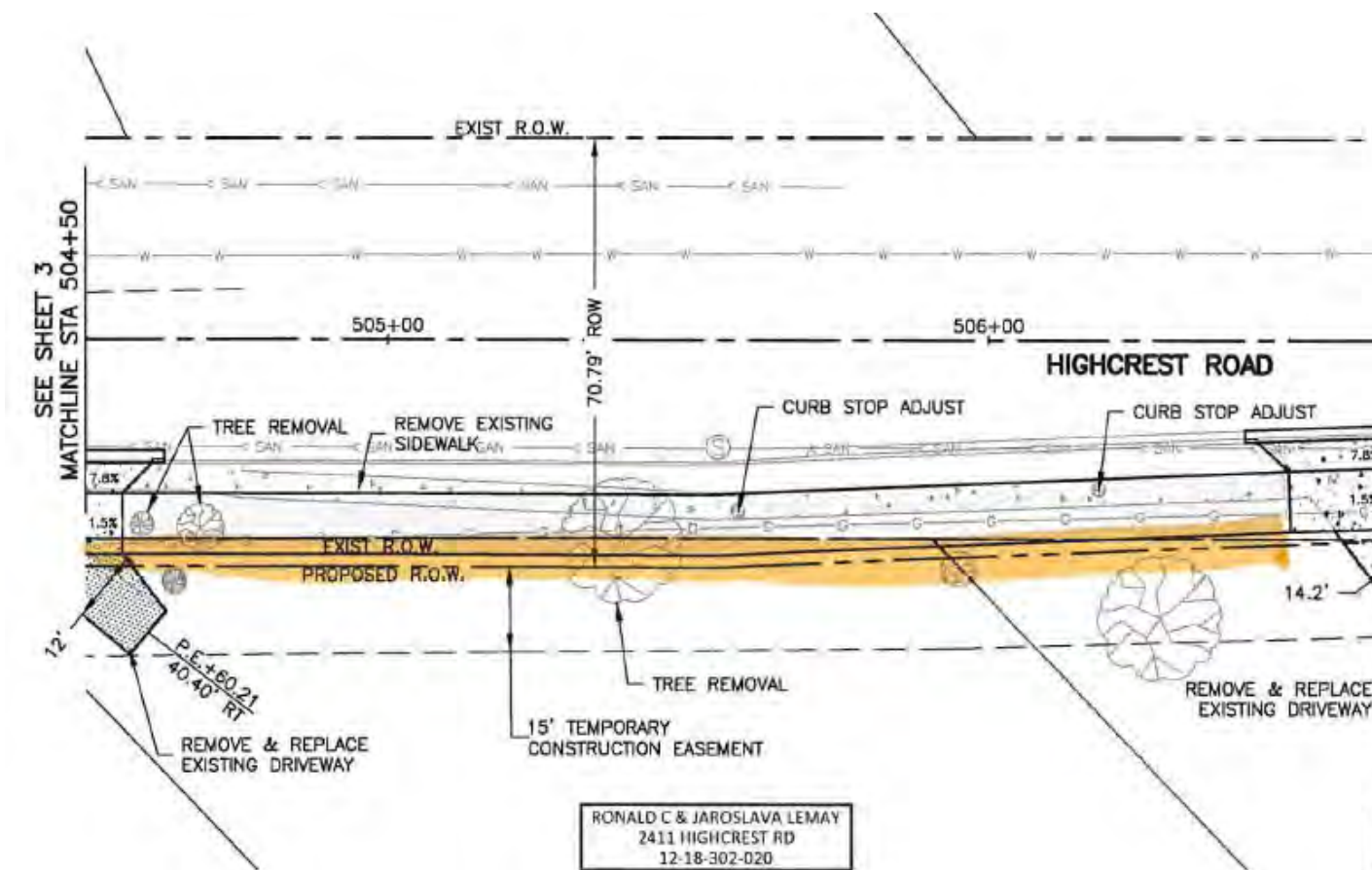
2323 Highcrest Road



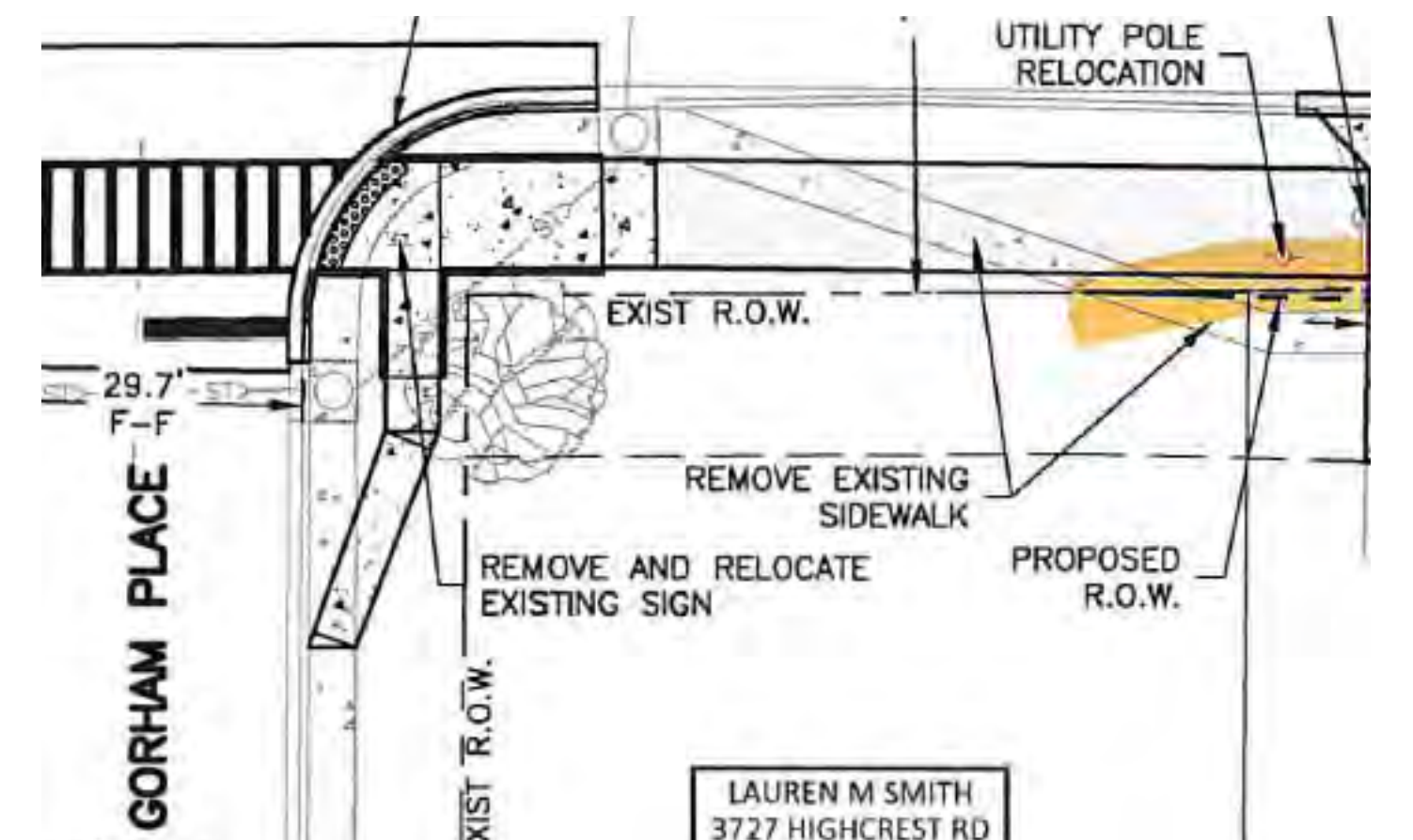
2411 Highcrest Road



2419 Highcrest Road



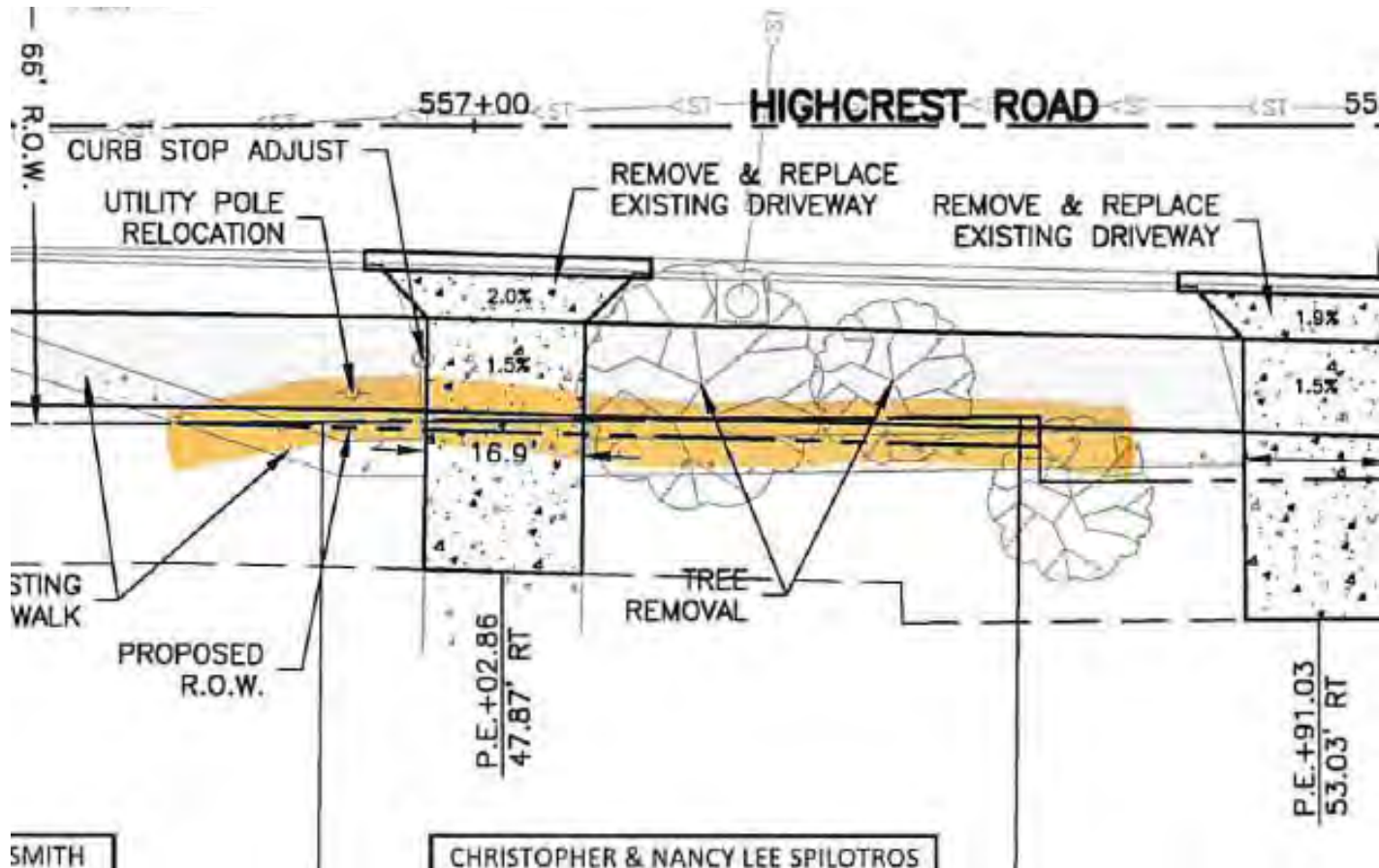
3727 Highcrest Road



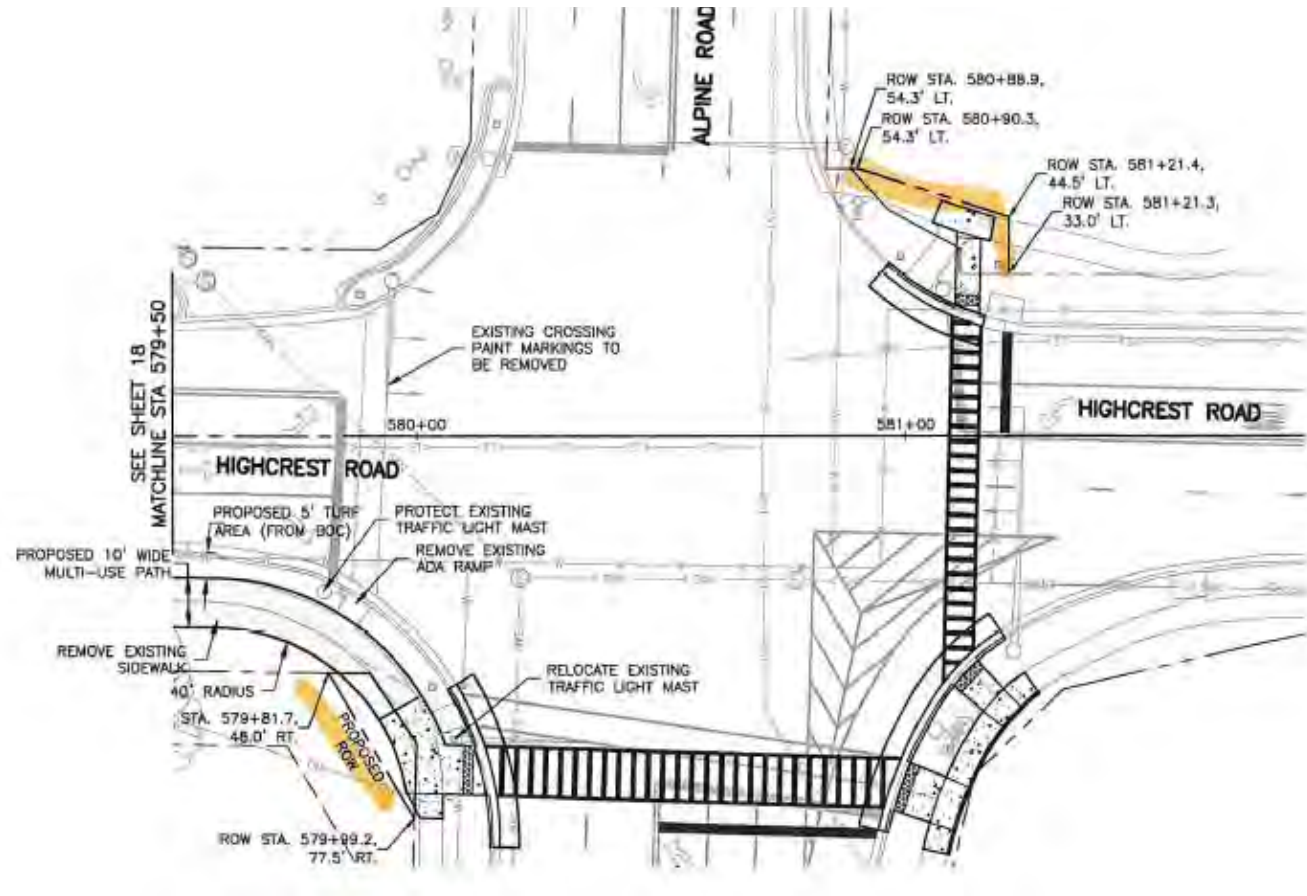
Acquiring Property

STATION 3

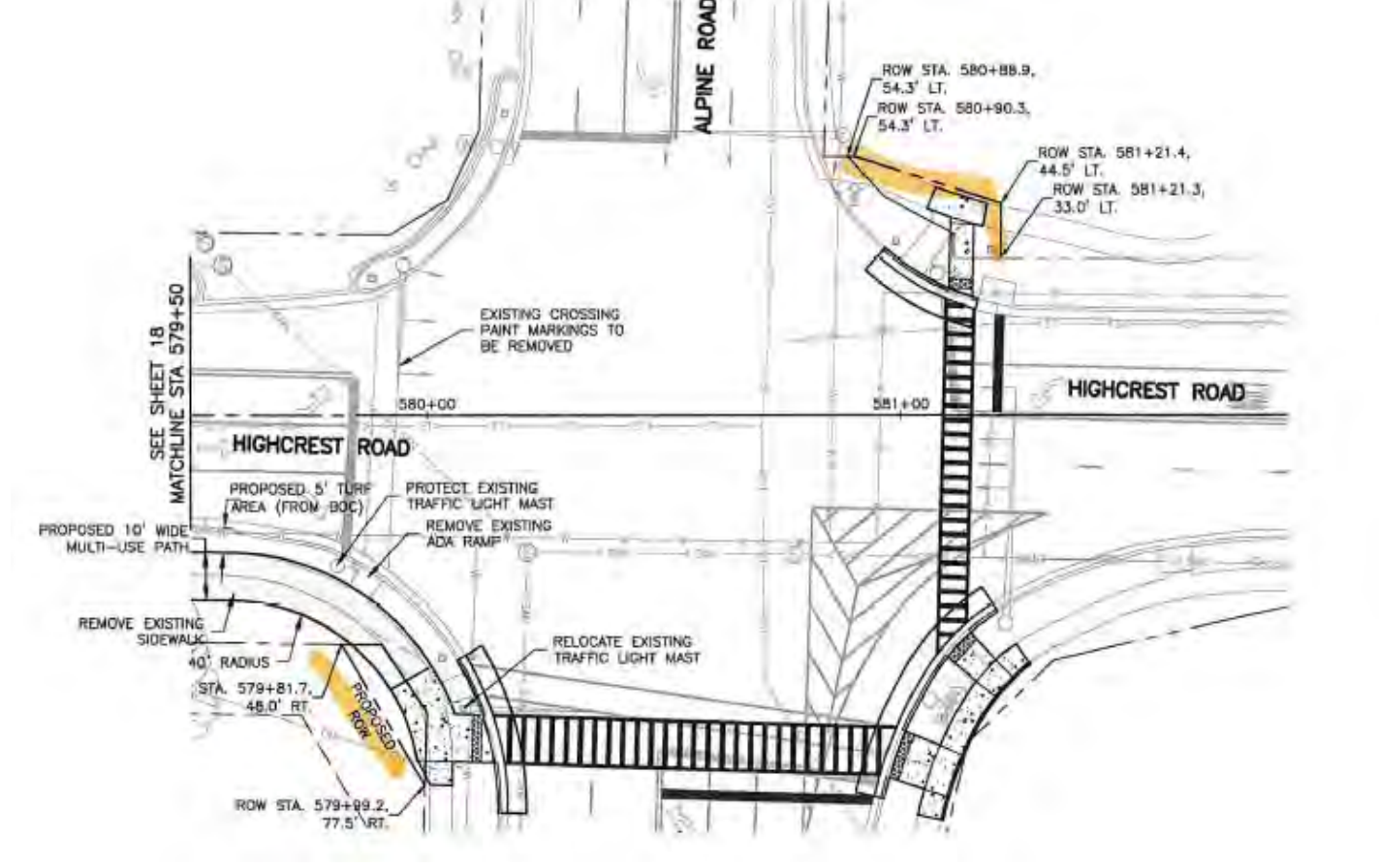
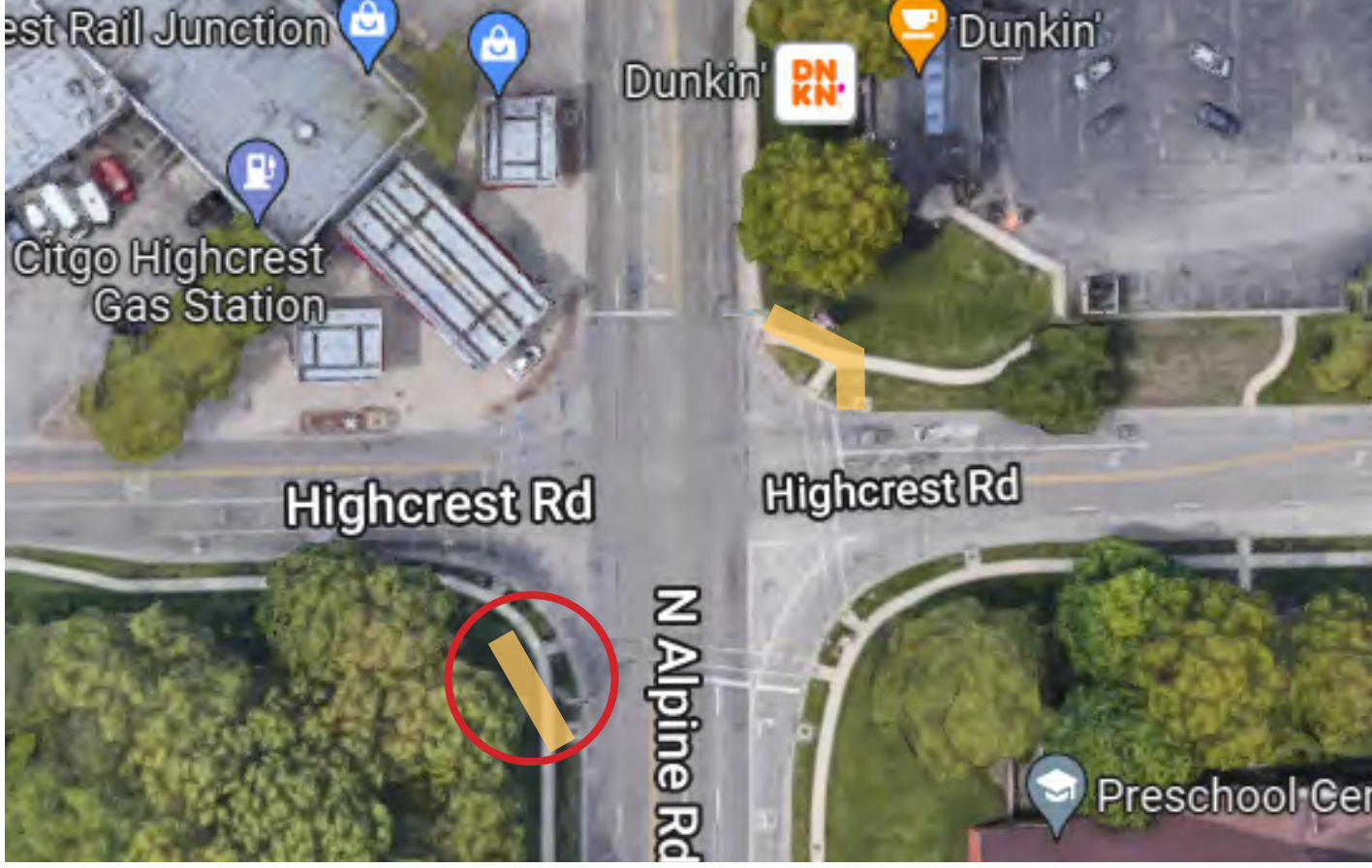
3731 Highcrest Road



NE corner of Alpine & Highcrest Roads



SW corner of Alpine & Highcrest Roads



Anything else you would like to share?

Use the Post-its provided to share your thoughts!



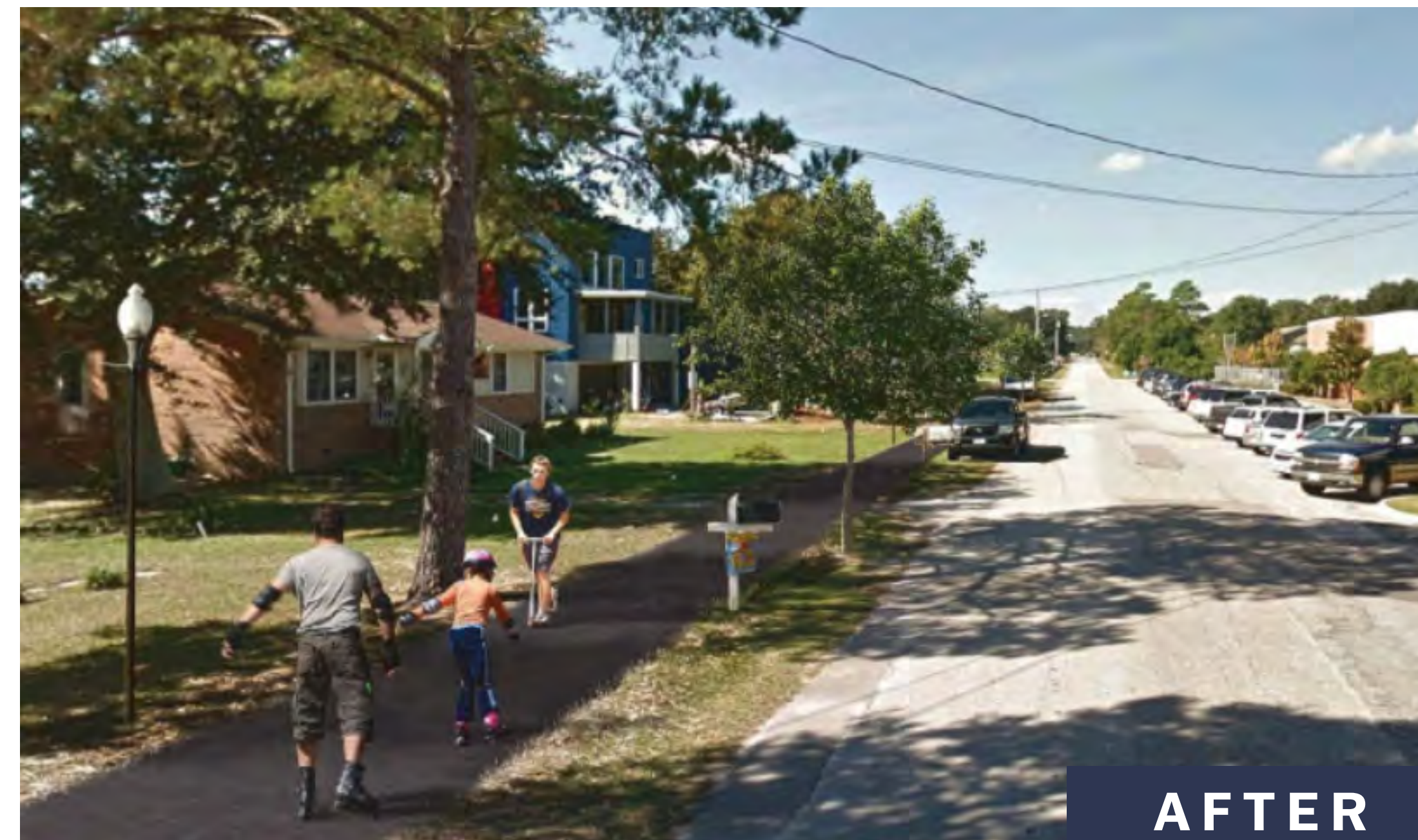
Comparable Trails

STATION 4

Clarendon Ave. | Carolina Beach



BEFORE



AFTER

Clarendon Avenue in Carolina Beach passes right by the Carolina Beach Elementary School, it is a popular route for both pedestrians and bicyclists. That is why the town is looking to create a 2,900-foot mixed-use pathway on Clarendon. The pathway would help provide connectivity between several areas including the Central Business District, the Boardwalk, and Carolina Lake Park, just to name a few.

The project involves the construction of a 10-foot wide paved multi-use-path (MUP) route beginning at the southeast intersection of Clarendon Ave. and Fourth St. adjacent to Carolina Beach Elementary School and Carolina Lake Park and continuing west within the existing 90' Clarendon street right-of-way.

Plans for Clarendon Avenue are nothing new, in fact, in 2011 the project was identified by the Carolina Beach Multi-Use Plan. In 2018 the town adopted the Carolina Beach Pedestrian Plan which listed Clarendon as a priority project. The town applied for a grant to help fund the project — and this year, it was awarded 80% of the total project cost — \$546,450.



BEFORE SHOT

Property Value / Desirability in Response to Bike Paths Adjacent to Residential Properties

The majority of studies indicate that the presence of a bike path/trail either increases property values and ease of sale slightly or has no effect.

Studies have shown that neighbors of many bike paths/trails feel that the quality of life of their neighborhood has been improved, that the trails were a good use of open space.

There is definitely a large portion of the population that sees bike paths as an amenity and will seek out residences near trails, parks, and other natural resource areas.

Development of a trail must have a clear plan for maintenance and addressing issues.

In some areas a large majority of neighbors are very happy with the trails, even some who were originally opposed to their construction.

What We've Heard

STATION 5

WHY A MULTI-USE PATH ON HIGHCREST?

? “I feel like this project has already been decided, we have no say in it, and there is nothing we can do about it”. —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

A Prior to bringing any project to the public, City Staff must evaluate its feasibility, once that is determined the City engages the public to determine the extent of support and discuss concerns. While some design items like alignment or construction standards may be set, staff is always looking to understand the public's concerns, especially when it comes to safety.

? “If it's so important why doesn't Rockford budget for it? Or is the free money the issue?” —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

? “To me, this project just doesn't make sense. Waste of money and city property. This proposed bike path, with no changes to the specs, does more harm than good for our community (Highcrest area people). Again, my opinion. So, let's make some changes! And get Rockford Cops to discourage fast driving people! Are we going to have cops on bikes to patrol the path?” —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

A The City of Rockford is looking to apply for an Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program Grant. This competitive grant, through the State of Illinois, is designated for projects that include bike paths and street beatification. If awarded the grant, it will bring Rockford tax payer money back to our community to be used on this project as opposed to it going to another community for similar improvements.

? “I am not against the idea of bike paths, just questioning if it works here”. —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

? “We are spending too much money on something that very little Rockford citizens will be using for less than half of the year”. —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

Questionably - “As a degreed electrical and Quality engineer (notice the big Q), medically retired commissioned officer (with additional duties as Safety officer at Ft. Bragg and Panama, I question why you are creating this bike path BECAUSE a bike path already exist! Just like the flier you posted on our door “Highcrest connection”. Are you looking for a Cadillac (that follows bad specs)? Have more “what if” questions that I will share later”. —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

Observation - “Back when the initial grant was proposed (2020) there were a group of 8-10 cyclist who rode down the center of Highcrest early in the morning. They were riding 4 abreast, it's like they were riding “Tour de Rockford”. Didn't see them at all in 2021 or not yet this year. I'm thinking they were probably some activist politicking for bike paths”. —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

? “I'm a disabled veteran who lives with his family on Highcrest. My observation tells me (for the time I'm watching (about 3 hrs daily) that there is 2-3 cyclist on Highcrest. (There was no school)”. —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

? “Do a feasibility study (return on investment) think of the State of Illinois wasting money (or is that what they do?)”. —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

A The proposed path would serve as a valuable east / west connection to existing pedestrian and bike facilities, retail, places of employment, and community gathering spaces. In addition to allowing access from the neighborhoods to the north and south, the Highcrest Road MUP, would provide access to the River Path to the west, and Spring Creek Road, the Spring Brook Road bike lanes (that ultimately lead to Rock Valley College), and the Perryville Path to the east. The City has considered alternate routes along other nearby streets and has found these alternate routes to be either significantly more expensive, requiring more acquisition of private property, or to be more intrusive to the residents.

What We've Heard

STATION 5

SAFETY CONCERNS

? “How will the project consider the conflicts of backing out of their driveway and potentially hitting a bicyclist on the path?” —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

“We live on a hill, and I have no doubt that you will need to put a wall up. I am worried about backing into someone”.

—ROCKFORD RESIDENT

A Similar to backing across the existing sidewalk, drivers will need to be aware of their surroundings and take care to avoid pedestrians and bicyclists. The City will review options for advanced warnings in the form of signage or pavement markings for bicyclists that are approaching hidden driveways.

? “Can we add rumbling strips, signs, slow down signs, or change the speed of Highcrest Road so we can ensure safety?” —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

“What can we do about the traffic speed?” —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

“I am concerned about this because many cars speed on Highcrest and there have been over 20 accidents on Highcrest on the turn right by my house”. —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

A The City recently striped parking lanes along Highcrest Road to help with traffic calming, and continues to look at additional ways to lower the speeds on the road. A multi-use path will increase pedestrian and bicycle traffic and studies have shown where there are increased pedestrians/bicyclists, speeds tend to be lower.

? “The turns on Highcrest make it hard to see traffic as is. There are so many cross street and hills it seems impractical and dangerous”. —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

“A bicycle path on Highcrest is a hazardous situation. Drivers of cars and emergency vehicles on Highcrest usually do not follow the speed limit. There are a number of blind driveways on Highcrest where people do not have a clear line of sight as they out of their driveways. Cyclists move fast and likely unaware of the driveways and possibly are riding too abreast. It takes only a tap from the car or swerving to miss a driveway car to send cyclists flying. Riders are going to get hurt or even killed. Given the situation, what is your risk tolerance level? Stated more directly, how many cyclists are you willing to sacrifice? To what extent did you factor in risk tolerance level as well as your usual emphasis on cost and accessibility in your decision to place a bicycle path on Highcrest rather than a safer street?” —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

A Having a multi-use side path will allow bicyclists to be off the road thus increasing their safety.

? Opinion - “Reinforce the bike lanes/slow down lanes, and teach cyclist how to directional travel (maybe mark it again)”. —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

“Some residents will lose space for their cars on their driveway, so they park on the street. For me, who does not drive, is frustrating/unsafe when my driver can't see oncoming traffic with cars (speeding) and parking on the side of the road”. —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

A Thank you for your comments and for participating in our public engagement.

? “At Pleasant View, there is existing guard rail. Will it be replaced with the MUP project?” —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

A Thank you for your comments and for participating in our public engagement.

What We've Heard

STATION 5

HOW WOULD THIS AFFECT MY PROPERTY?

? “Will the City be restoring decorative mailbox structures and flagstone sidewalks with in-kind materials?” —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

A Decorative mailboxes will be relocated if they are within the path limits and flagstone walks on private property, that are impacted by the new path, will be replaced with in kind materials.

? “I am worried about the loss of privacy since this is too close to my house”. —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

A The proposed improvement includes 5' of green space between the existing back of curb and then 10' of multi-use path. Efforts have been made to keep the new path on public ROW, generally where the existing sidewalk is located.

? “I am worried about the grade change of my driveway”. —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

A As part of a separate project, programmed to start Spring 2023, we are planning to construct a pedestrian crossing at Parkview Avenue and Spring Creek Road. This proposed project would tie into those improvements before continuing west toward the River Path.

PROJECT SUPPORT

? “I am highly in favor! Many cyclists would use this!” —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

“Optimistic [for the whole] because I speculate that; climate change, questionable oil resources, and the younger generation (who strives on what was mentioned earlier in this sentence) might change (notice the underlined might) the economics of Rockford. Thus, should Rockford change with the times? Maybe somehow?” —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

A Thank you for your support!



What We've Heard

STATION 5

PROJECT SUGGESTIONS

? “Can the MUP be rerouted within the right-of-way at the SW corner of Highcrest & Spring Creek to create a more straight-through path to the Parkview intersection?” —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

A Great suggestion, we will look to incorporate that change into our construction plans if the project moves forward.

? “How does the MUP go on Spring Creek? Is there a way to cross Spring Creek as part of this proposed path? It is dangerous to cross Spring Creek; can we add a pedestrian light or better crossing?” —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

A As part of a separate project, programmed to start Spring 2023, we are planning to construct a pedestrian crossing at Parkview Avenue and Spring Creek Road. This proposed project would tie into those improvements before continuing west toward the River Path.

? “As an alternative, can we have the bike path on the street, rather than the right of way?” —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

“After the 17 Aug meeting, I walked with what I thought was the bike lane (with my cane) on the South side of Highcrest Rd, and 36 vehicles passed me with no one breaking the white line barrier”. —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

“Though, Was In Janesville Wi on Monday the 22nd on Pontiac Dr. and the road was the most similar to Highcrest that I have seen because they have the “slow down” or a bike lane strips on the road (I witnessed 5 bikes too)”. —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

A With our second 10-year bike plan, the City is focusing more on increased rider comfort on Highcrest Road currently has cars traveling at higher speeds so to improve rider comfort and safety, an off-road Multi-Use Path is being proposed.



What We've Heard

STATION 5

GENERAL QUESTIONS

? “Can the trees that we are taking out be replaced with new trees? And can new trees be planted behind the path to provide a buffer between the path and the private property?”
—ROCKFORD RESIDENT

“I am worried about the existing trees. Can we replace the trees that we are taking out with new ones on the path?” —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

“Save our forest city trees (doesn't trees capture carbon?).” —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

A The City plans to replace larger public trees that are removed within the new parkway. The City will coordinate with property owners regarding replacement of any trees on private property that are removed due to regrading.

? “Where will the power poles in conflict with the path be relocated?” —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

A Typically, ComEd determines the best location for relocating their power poles. However, the City anticipates they will move them to the 5 foot area between the MUP and the roadway.

? “Have noticed/appears that people on bikes do not like to flow with traffic (maybe because they are traveling slower/ease?)” —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

A The off-road MUP will allow them to move off the road making it safer for the bicyclists.

? “Have not seen a bike path that would be similar from Rebecca to Cynthia. It would be nice to have a reference”. —ROCKFORD RESIDENT

A Between Rebecca Drive and Cynthia Drive, the path will expand towards the street and should not be any closer to the homes than the existing sidewalk.

