



NEWS RELEASE

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Beaufort's Boundary Street Redevelopment to improve traffic flow and boost business

Building a better Beaufort is the goal of a multimillion dollar investment in Boundary Street that will create a more scenic entry to the city, provide better commercial and retail locations, and improve traffic conditions, city leaders said.

Early phases of the project, including realigning the intersection of SC 170 and US 21, will kick off within months, and most of the heavy work could be completed within three years.

The work is part of a larger effort to reconfigure Beaufort from near the Marine Corps Air Station to annexed areas of Lady's Island, creating a unified and connected neighborhood designed for people, not just cars.

"In the past year, we've seen a number of achievements, from improving crosswalk safety on Carteret Street to finding a viable tenant for the old City Hall," said Jon Verity, chairman of the Beaufort Redevelopment Commission. "The Boundary Street Redevelopment District is the big picture, the thing that will help re-shape the entrance to Beaufort for decades.

"There's a lot of work ahead, but the payoff will be huge for everyone – our residents, people who travel the Boundary Street corridor, our merchants and businesses and our visitors," Verity said. A financial impact analysis indicates the local economy will see \$5 in benefits for every \$1 invested in the Boundary Street Redevelopment District, he said.

To help pay for the \$30 million project, Beaufort applied for a \$21.2 million federal Department of Transportation grant now under review. If received, this grant will supplement the current one cent sales tax project that has been under engineering and design. The project is part of the

Boundary Street Master Plan adopted by City Council in 2006, which includes a designated redevelopment district and plan, Tax Incremental Finance District and Form-Based Code.

Throughout the project is the intent to create commercial nodes along Boundary Street that can be safely reached by foot, bicycle, wheelchairs and vehicles. Designing shopping centers and retail shops only for vehicular access limits their potential for success.

Communities across the country are emphasizing the retrofit of their suburbs, said Craig Lewis from the Beaufort Office of Civic Investment. The “retrofit” is needed because of a growing market for multi-unit housing in the suburbs; continued growth in the percentage of jobs in suburban locations; rising gas prices making housing on the periphery less affordable; and local smart growth policies that limit sprawl and redirect growth to what’s already built, he said.

Making the change involves using the form-based zoning codes, working with the S.C. Department of Transportation on road improvements, partnering with the Lowcountry Housing Trust to assist with housing revitalization, rehabbing existing buildings to new uses, and working alongside SCE&G to bury overhead lines.

Since last spring, hundreds of Beaufort-area residents and business people have participated in charrettes led by the Beaufort Redevelopment Commission. Already, block-by-block studies are complete for downtown Beaufort and Ribaut Road. The remaining areas of the city will be studied during 2012 and will include additional public meetings for input.

The conversion of the former Port Royal Railroad line into a recreational trail ties into the Boundary Street project at Beaufort Plaza and provides alternate ways for people to reach destinations, Lewis said. The City is working with Beaufort County to complete the first section of the paved trail by next summer.

The Boundary Street Redevelopment District also will reconfigure retail shopping opportunities to improve public access and sustainability, Beaufort City Manager Scott Dadson said.

“Even in a city the size of Beaufort, people will choose not to go out shopping if it means driving in traffic at certain times of the day. We also look at the cost of gas as another gauge of whether it’s ‘worth it’ to get in the car and drive somewhere,” Dadson said.

“If walking or biking or taking a golf cart are other options to get to the store, suddenly those businesses have a more robust market in which to serve and hopefully succeed,” he said.

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