



MEMORANDUM

to Nieves Castro, Project Manager

from Joan Chaplick, Public Involvement Specialist, MIG, Inc.

re **SR 99 Soundwall Community Safety and Enhancement Project
Project Initiation Meeting, October 26, 2009**

date 11/09/09

Participants

Nieves Castro, Caltrans District 3 Planning
Gabriel Corley, Caltrans District 3 Planning
Bobbe Dworkis, Sacramento County Neighborhood Services
Eva Gordon, Caltrans Excess Lands
Hilary Gould, Sacramento County Neighborhood Services
Rusty Grout, Caltrans District 3 Maintenance
Derrick Lim, City of Sacramento Neighborhood Services
Greg Lundblad, Caltrans Right-of-Way
Chris Nguyen, Caltrans District 3 Planning
Bruce de Terra, Caltrans District 3 Planning
John Wells, Caltrans District 3 Maintenance
Kris Wimberly, City of Sacramento Neighborhood Services

Welcome and Team Introductions

Joan Chaplick of MIG, Inc. welcomed meeting participants and provided brief, opening remarks about the SR-99 Soundwall Public Outreach Project. Bruce de Terra shared that the California Transportation Commission (CTC) has expressed strong interest in this process. This represents the first time the State is proposing to sell excess land along a highway right-of-way to adjacent landowners for the purposes of alleviating criminal activity and improving public safety. As such, the SR-99 process may serve as a model or pilot project to replicate in other areas in California.

Project Overview and Desired Outcomes

Eva Gordon, Caltrans Excess Lands representative, provided background on the SR-99 Soundwall Project. The desired outcome of the project is to sell excess land located between the

Highway 99 soundwall and individual properties to the respective landowners who live along the Caltrans right-of-way. This project focuses on the east side of the Highway.

The project area is comprised of four groups of properties as follows:

- 1) City of Sacramento - Comprised of back-to-back City parcels. Nine property owners and ten parcels. Three landowners have expressed interest in purchase. Caltrans Right of Way will move forward on these parcels.
- 2) Sacramento County - Fruitridge/Martin Luther King area. Six County parcels, including one large, vacant lot that is currently for sale.
- 3) Sacramento County - Mascot Avenue area. Seventeen parcels. A large, complicated area with rows of houses. Will be very important to avoid a "saw-tooth" pattern of ownership here.
- 4) Sacramento County - Frank Court South: 15 properties.

Preliminary sale price estimates are approximately \$300. This "ballpark" figure was provided to land owners as an estimate and is not an appraised figure. In order to appraise the property, Caltrans Right of Way must first calculate the property lines and square footage. Additionally, land owners were notified that size, location, and condition of the property will be taken into consideration in the final appraised figure. No appraisal has been completed to date and there is no guarantee of value at this point.

Caltrans will retain easement over this property should there be the need to expand the highway in the future. However, Highway 99 is not prioritized for modification or expansion and, given limited funding for transportation and the expense at which such modifications would be made, it is highly improbable that this will occur in the next fifty years.

Project Status and Activities to Date

On April 15, Caltrans sent letters to 58 landowners between 12th Avenue and 47th Streets on the east side of Highway 99. Fifteen landowners have expressed initial interest in purchasing the property between the soundwall and their property and requested additional information. Five landowners requested to proceed with sale, and three landowners requested that Caltrans evaluate the health of the trees located on the excess land adjacent to their property. Caltrans has completed this evaluation. Three landowners declined outright to purchase the property. Initial outreach for the project has been conducted in English and in Spanish.

Caltrans has environmental clearance to proceed with the project and will move forward with plans to survey and assess the ten properties located in the City that have expressed interest in purchasing. Letters notifying landowners of this will be sent to provide property owners sufficient notice and an opportunity to call Eva with any questions.

Issues and Concerns

Meeting participants identified and discussed project-related issues and concerns. The following statements and recommendations are a result of this conversation.

- This process must recognize neighborhood-level economic issues in its outreach and negotiations.
- In discussing benefits to the community, the focus should remain on the alleviation of criminal activity. This process is intended to help resolve issues related to the thoroughfare behind houses. It cannot resolve all neighborhood issues.
- Establishing project advocates within the community is a very important part of this process.
- Resource issues related to fence removal and property maintenance will be a big issue for many landowners.
- Caltrans will need to link landowners to available resources. The City and County can help by sharing their community contacts.
- Keep in mind that the landowner's bottom line and be prepared to answer the question: "What will this cost me?"
- The role of Neighborhood Services in the process is to facilitate contact and communications with landowners, but not to negotiate on Caltrans' behalf.
- Formal commitments cannot be made on a property-by-property basis. In other words, there must be a limit to what is negotiable.
- Caltrans must provide clear and specific information to landowners about a number of issues, including:
 - The project scope (no current plans for the western side)
 - Caltrans and landowners rights and responsibilities
 - Property taxes
 - Hidden County fees to real estate transactions
 - Property maintenance and liability
 - Attaching structures to the soundwall
- As part of this process, develop a list of frequently asked questions to share with landowners and other interested parties.

- The Project Team must answer the question, “How much consensus among landowners is needed to be successful?”
- Appropriate messaging and conducting a transparent process is critical to establishing trust.
- Non-permitted structures on homeowner parcels may be discovered during the process. Caltrans should talk with the City and County about the possibility of granting amnesty to property owners for non-permitted uses that do not raise safety-related concerns.
- Understanding the concerns and issues of individual property owners will help Caltrans negotiate successfully.
- Outreach must be targeted and context sensitive (in other words, don’t wear orange and keep attire “tie-free”).
- Keep outreach material and content clean and simple.

Future Outreach

Outreach for this project is anticipated to take place over an 11-12-month time-frame and will include door-to-door outreach to landowners and at least one community workshop targeting the participation of landowners in the project area.

MIG will develop a community outreach strategy to serve as a blueprint for the process, and will develop user-friendly outreach materials including a graphic depicting the outreach process and a draft set of frequently asked questions. Caltrans and MIG will also coordinate to provide project information via the state-wide CSMP website.

All outreach will take place in English, Spanish, and Hmong languages as needed. Printed outreach materials will be provided in all three languages. To assist team members conducting outreach on-the-ground and to help track project efforts, Eva will provide a map and general descriptions of the four groups of properties and the key issues in each area. MIG and Eva will coordinate the dissemination of project information to ensure that landowners receive needed information in the most timely and effective manner possible.

Action Items and Next Steps

MIG will send all project materials electronically for Project Team review, with a clear deadline for submitting comments and suggestions for improvement. All draft materials will be labeled draft but will also be appropriate for public consumption, should team members wish to share with other staff and interested parties. Content experts are granted authority to approve specific

information before it is used or distributed and Nieves will provide final approval for all project materials.

The following action items were identified during the kick-off meeting:

- Develop draft letter to property owners (Eva, week of November 2nd)
- Distribute map of project area to project team (Nieves, week of November 2nd)
- Add project information to Statewide CSMP website (MIG, Wednesday, November 4th)
- Send letter to property owners in the project area (Eva, week of November 2nd)
- Draft initial list of frequently asked questions for team review (MIG, week of Monday, November 2nd)
- Develop draft Community Outreach Strategy for team review (MIG, Friday, November 6th)
- Develop project process graphic for team review (MIG, Friday, November 6th)
- Adapt existing project map to reflect property owners' level of interest in purchase (Eva, week of November 9th)

The project team will identify dates for the next team meeting and the project community outreach meeting as the outreach strategy is developed and finalized.