



North Hamilton CROSSING

NHX NORTH END NEIGHBORHOOD WORKSHOP NOTES

January 22, 2024 | 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Garfield Middle School

Hosted by the City of Hamilton, BCTID, and ODOT, this was the second meeting with the North End neighborhood. Its purpose was to discuss project alternatives in the Central Section of the study area in more detail and to explore community needs and considerations more deeply.

The meeting took place at the Garfield Middle School cafeteria. This location was chosen due to its location within the affected neighborhood, ease of access and parking, and ample size of the meeting space.

PARTICIPANTS

Project Team Participants

Dan Corey
Allen Messer
Brandon Saurber
Edwin Porter
Liz Hayden
Sara Silva
Edie Parker
Keith Smith
Caroline Ammerman
Christine Rahtz
Matt Crim
Raymond Gonzo
Steve Shadix
Laura Whitman
Lynn Corbitt

Representing

Butler County TID
City of Hamilton
City of Hamilton
City of Hamilton
City of Hamilton
City of Hamilton
Ohio Department of Transportation
Ohio Department of Transportation
Stantec
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Based on sign-in sheets, 93 people attended the meeting (this number includes some City of Hamilton representatives). However, actual attendance was higher as some people opted not to sign in. Most attendees were North End neighborhood residents.

NOTIFICATION

A targeted notification effort was implemented to inform the North End neighborhood about the upcoming workshop and included the following:

Email

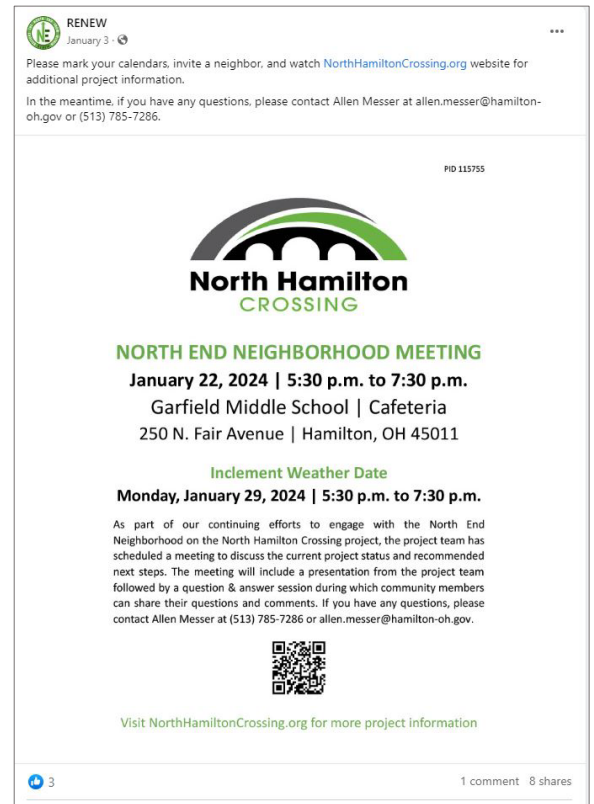
On January 3, 2024, the City of Hamilton distributed an email notice promoting the North End neighborhood workshop to those who had provided their email address at past public meetings and/or submitted them through the project website. A copy of this email is attached.

Social Media

A meeting notification was posted on January 3, 2024 to the RENEW (Renewing the North End from Within) Facebook page promoting the workshop and providing more information about the project (see Figure 1).

Mailed Flyers

A workshop notification flyer was prepared and mailed by the City to approximately 775 residences and tax mailing addresses near each of the alignment options in the North End neighborhood. Specifically, the parameters were between the railroad and Greenwood Cemetery, between Joe Nuxhall Blvd. and the south side of Heaton Street, and residences approximately 100-feet on each side of the alignments between Heaton Street and Fair Avenue. A list of all residences included in the distribution, as well as a copy of the flyer sent, is attached.



post promoting the upcoming North End neighborhood workshop.

MEETING SUMMARY

The goals set for the North End neighborhood workshop were to:

- Provide an update on the North Hamilton Crossing project.
- Share the alternatives currently being studied.
- Explore community needs and considerations in greater depth through conversation.

The meeting began with a presentation from project representatives followed by a workshop session during which attendees broke into seven smaller groups for more in-depth discussion about each of the Central Section alternatives:

- The Miami Connection
- The North 9th Connection
- The Vine Street Connection
- The Joe Nuxhall Connection

Presentation

Allen Messer, City of Hamilton, and Dan Corey, BCTID, presented information about the project's purpose and need, ODOT's project development process, the roadway corridor concept, and next steps. Steve Shadix, Stantec, reviewed alternatives recommended for further study based on the recently completed Feasibility Study and comments received at the Town Hall Meeting held last August. He placed particular emphasis on alternatives in the Central Section of the study area as these were most impactful to the North End neighborhood. He described modifications made to the Vine Street connection on the west end of the alternative that moved the intersection on US 127 north. He also introduced the Joe Nuxhall Connection alternative which brought the North 9th Street

connection to the same intersection on US 127 as Vine Street via Joe Nuxhall Boulevard. This alternative was created to reduce the number of resident/business relocations and reduce impacts to L.J. Smith Park and the Chem-Dyne property based on comments received from the Town Hall meeting.

Mr. Shadix concluded the presentation with a summary of the input heard to date, specifically from the North End neighborhood. A copy of the presentation is attached.

Workshop Session

During the workshop session, meeting attendees were divided into seven groups to discuss alternatives proposed for the central portion of the study area and the potential benefits and concerns related to each. Project team representatives and City of Hamilton representatives moderated each of the groups to ask and answer questions and take notes of the conversations. At the end of the discussion period, the groups reconvened into a larger group and shared highlights from their conversations.

Key learnings gathered from the individual group discussions include:

- The Vine Street Connection was preferred among three of the discussion groups (two additional groups said either the Vine Street or Joe Nuxhall connections would be preferred). Reasons included:
 - There's a perception that the Vine Street Connection requires fewer relocations.
 - The Vine Street Connection doesn't impact farmland, L.J. Smith Park, the canal, or Greenwood Cemetery.
 - There's already a lot of traffic along the route, so there wouldn't be as much of a change as there would be along the other routes.
 - Its location is more centralized to town.
- The Joe Nuxhall Connection was preferred among two of the discussion groups (two additional groups said either the Vine or Joe Nuxhall connections would be preferred). Reasons included:
 - It's perceived that the Joe Nuxhall Connection would require fewer relocations compared with Miami and North 9th connections.
 - The Joe Nuxhall Connection would have fewer impacts to farmland, the canal, Greenwood Cemetery, and L.J. Smith Park (might even provide better access).
 - It's more centralized to town.
 - Its proximity to Chem-Dyne is still a concern.
- Concerns with the Miami and 9th Street alternatives include:
 - They would bisect the North End neighborhood.
 - Because they are farther away from town, they seem more like a by-pass.
 - They would impact more residential properties.
- Several groups noted a preference for the NW Washington bridge crossing.
- A primary concern with all alternatives is the number of relocations required.
- Several groups mentioned continued concerns about impacts to the Chem-Dyne property and the surrounding area and/or disturbing contaminants in the ground in nearby areas.
- Residents are concerned about how children will cross the new road and remain safe.
- The desired speed limit is 35 mph or less, and 25 mph in some areas (along Heaton, in neighborhoods).
- The North End area needs more lighting; residents understand that lighting can be improved through this project.

A full summary of discussion points from each group is provided on the following pages.

DISCUSSION GROUP NOTES

Below is a summary of the conversations in the seven small groups during the workshop portion of the meeting. The conversations are organized by group.

Group 1

Group 1 generally consisted of residents and a small number of business owners/employees in the area. Residents indicated they lived on or near Bingham Street, Heaton Street, Seventh Street, Vine Street, Greenwood Avenue, and Reservoir Street next to St. Stephen Cemetery. Businesses represented included Hamilton Precision, LLC, and Kornylak Corporation.

General Discussion (not specific to any alignment)

Speed Limit

- Keep the speed limit at 25 MPH through the neighborhoods.
- Group 1 would like to see a map of speed limits/signage, particularly around proposed curves.

Lighting

- Group 1 would like to see a lighting plan.
- The North End area needs more lighting in general (not just along new roadway alignment).

Pedestrian Safety

- Pedestrian crossings are needed, particularly around schools and parks.

Relocations

- Relocations are a major concern for all routes.

Questions/Suggestions

- How will pedestrians get across the streets?
- Will there be traffic lights or stop signs to facilitate pedestrian crossings?

Miami Street Connection

Pros/Opportunities

- None discussed.

Cons/Concerns

- Miami Street (existing) is extremely narrow.
- This route bisects the park.
- This route brings a highway too near to “my” house.
- This route bisects the neighborhood.

North 9th Street Connection

Pros/Opportunities

- None discussed.

Cons/Concerns

- This route bisects the park.
- This route brings a highway too near to “my” house.
- This route bisects the neighborhood.

Vine Street Connection

Pros/Opportunities

- There is already a lot of traffic on Vine, so traffic impacts may be less than the other routes.

Cons/Concerns

- The grading to get up over the railroad would cause a lot of road closures.
- Access to the surrounding neighborhood is already limited and residents would have too much of a detour.

Joe Nuxhall Connection

Pros/Opportunities

- There is a lot more room for the road in this area and it does not take as many houses.
- It has fewer impacts to the park compared to Miami Street and North 9th Street.
- Lighting in this area is poor; more lights are needed.

Cons/Concerns

- The route should stick to the road to reduce park impacts.
- Even minor impacts to Chem-Dyne are a cause for concern.
- Lots of children cross the street to get to the park, creating pedestrian safety issues.

Do any alternatives stand out?

- The Joe Nuxhall alternative seemed the least impactful for relocations.

Group 2

Group 2 separated itself into three sub-groups. One included two individuals very concerned about one of their specific homes at Heaton and 7th Street. Another included a separate family that was asking questions specific to their property. The final group included four individuals, two of whom live near the North 9th alternative, and two of whom live in Fordson Heights.

First Group Conversation (Heaton and 7th Street residents)

This group primarily discussed their concerns which include:

- Relocations, especially for those still making house payments.
- Increase in homelessness and joblessness the project will likely cause.
 - This is personal to them, as the same woman's son and grandson have both been affected by homelessness.
- Impacts to Moser Park with the Vine St. route.
- Chem-Dyne impacts.
- People with more money coming in and displacing existing residents.
- More vehicles mean more noise and pollution.
- Children and their connectivity to parks, as well as recreation opportunities.
- Construction impacts.
- Effects of the boulevard even if the homes remain.

Second Group Conversation (single family)

- This group was concerned about relocations.
- This group was concerned about the fairgrounds, agriculture, and the derby.
- This group preferred the NW Washington bridge crossing.

Third Group Conversation (residents of North 9th area and Fordson Heights)

- Vine Street Connection seems to make the most sense.

- This group preferred the railroad overpass at the Vine and Joe Nuxhall routes, as it's more centralized to town.
 - The other, more north, overpass may as well be called a Hamilton by-pass.
- There was a consensus to not touch the Chem-Dyne site; the group also felt that contaminants from there have likely spread already.
- There was a consensus that the ball fields "aren't sacred" and are no longer used as much as they once were.
 - One woman who has lived in the Fordson Heights area for her whole life wouldn't let her now-40-something-year-old daughter play there when she was a child, and she wouldn't let her go there if she was a child now.
- The group felt that no matter which route is chosen, people will adapt, and any route would be fine.
- The group received clarification that the Heaton Street railroad crossing would be closed only with the Vine/Joe Nuxhall options. If the North 9th or Miami Street connection is chosen and the railroad crossing is more north, the Heaton Street crossing would stay open.

Question

- Which cross streets will be connected to the new road? *[Answer provided: Not all will be connected, but that will be determined at future meetings and with additional engineering study.]*

Advantages for the Community

- Any of the alternatives would relieve traffic on High Street.
- The neighborhood would be upgraded as the road moves through it.
- Not needing to stop for the train would be a major benefit.
- Avoiding having to stop at Heaton and Greenwood to look for a train and then determine which route to take based on the presence (or not) of a train is also an advantage.

Do any alternatives stand out?

- Joe Nuxhall is a preferred route, as it would likely take less property (along North 9th) as many of those homes are gone (plenty of empty lots can be seen when you sit at Greenwood and North 9th and look up the street).
- The Vine Street or Joe Nuxhall connections were also preferred because the southern railroad crossing is closer to town.
- Miami was also mentioned as a good option, as the route stays away from the busy-ness of the south and doesn't touch even the edge of Chem-Dyne.

Group 3

Group 3 generally consisted of residents and small number of business owners/employees in the area.

Concerns discussed included:

- The speed at which vehicles will be travelling along the new routes.
- Impacts to homes and businesses.
- Impacts to on-street parking.
- Whether the new road will be used as a truck route.
- Pedestrian safety with the increased traffic.
- Backups at Hampshire and demolition of apartment buildings.
- Impact on historical structures.
- Impact on property values.

Question

- Can the Heaton railroad crossing closure be delayed until after the new grade-separated crossing is constructed?

Do any alternatives stand out?

- The Joe Nuxhall Connection was the preferred route.

Group 4

[Did not capture a description of this group]

Miami Street Connection

Pros/Opportunities

- This alternative doesn't go through Greenwood Cemetery.

Cons/Concerns

- It bisects L.J. Smith Park, which creates separation between the Splash Pool and any future park development.
- This alternative will go behind several houses on Heaton Street, so the houses which currently sit fronting Heaton Street will have the new road behind them, as well as Heaton Street in front of them.
- There would be a high number of residential relocations.
- Costs are higher due to the additional bridge required for canal crossing.
- This alternative feels too much like a by-pass.

North 9th Street Connection

Pros/Opportunities

- This alternative presents an opportunity to improve/rebuild L.J. Smith Park. Lighting of the park is an amenity that the residents would like to see.
- This alternative has the least number of residential relocations.
- The bridge location for this alternative would have minimal impacts on US 127.
- This alternative doesn't impact Greenwood Cemetery.

Cons/Concerns

- This alternative impacts the Fire Station (Hose House No. 5).
- This alternative touches Chem-Dyne.
- This alternative is too close to Fairwood Elementary School. *(It was noted that all alternatives are close to the school. There is general concern regarding safety of school children.)*
- This alternative feels too much like a by-pass. It is not a direct route into downtown Hamilton.

Vine Street Connection

Pros/Opportunities

- This alternative doesn't impact the Bonham Farm.
- It doesn't go over the canal, so costs would be lower.
- This alternative avoids impacting Greenwood Cemetery.

Cons/Concerns

- This alternative is too close to Fairwood Elementary School *(Note: this comment applies to all alternatives)*
- It is too close to Moser Park. This is a very active, small, city park.

Joe Nuxhall Connection

Pros/Opportunities

- This alternative allows access to areas of economic development off US 127.
- It doesn't bisect L.J. Smith Park but provides access to the park.
- Because it doesn't go over the canal, it would have lower costs.
- This alternative doesn't impact Bonham Farm.
- It avoids Greenwood Cemetery.

Cons/Concerns

- This alternative is too close to Fairwood Elementary School. *(Note: this comment applies to all alternatives)*
- It touches the Chem-Dyne site.
- There would be impacts the Fire Station (Hose House No. 5).

Do any alternatives stand out?

- Both the Joe Nuxhall and Vine Street connections are more direct routes into downtown and provide access to more economic development areas and the historic area.
- The Vine Street Connection provides better access to Moser Park and could provide opportunities to improve the park.
- The Joe Nuxhall Connection provides better access to L.J. Smith Park and could lead to development opportunities for the park.
- The Joe Nuxhall Connection affects fewer people and provides more direct access to downtown Hamilton than the Vine Street Connection.
- Both the Joe Nuxhall and Vine Street connections avoid a canal crossing and would have lower costs as a result.
- Miami Street and North 9th Street connections are too much like by-passes. They also both require a canal crossing and impact L.J. Smith Park.

Amenities desired from the project:

- Improved lighting
- Improved landscaping
- Parking

Group 5

[Did not capture a description of this group]

General Discussion

- The NW Washington crossing serves the Freshman and high schools better.
- A con of the Miami/Joe Nuxhall/North 9th routes is that they displace too many people. *[It was discussed that the number of displacements were similar for each alternative, but the group questioned whether some of the structures along the Vine Street Connection are occupied or not (particularly around 4th and 5th Street).]*
- A con of the Vine Street Connection is that it blocks access for people to get on NHX if they live close to the railroad tracks.

Do any alternatives stand out?

- Group 1 prefers the NW Washington Crossing and Vine Street Connection

Questions/Suggestions

- Why do we need the central turn lane through the residential areas? Can we narrow the route through the North End to minimize impact?
- How steep is the bridge? South Hamilton Crossing is so steep it deters pedestrians and bikers.
- Can the Vine Street Connection go behind the parking lot and line up near Black St Bridge?

Group 6

[Did not capture a description of this group]

General Discussion

- This group did not care about the Heaton railroad crossing closing.
- There were no strong feelings about old connections.
- The North 9th Connection is fine if the ballfields are redone.
- Don't touch the ballfields or Chem-Dyne.

Questions/Suggestions

- Will the new road be a truck route?
- Don't include a median on Heaton.
- Maintain 25 mph on Heaton.
- Have an off-ramp into the parking lot at 127 with the Vine St. alternative.

Joe Nuxhall Connection

- Pros/Opportunities
 - Fewer property takes.
 - Less impact to Kornylak.
- Disadvantages
 - Berm impacts.
 - Route meanders.

Do any alternatives stand out?

- Vine Street was the preferred route.

Group 7

Group 7 consisted primarily of Butler County Fairground supporters who attended the meeting to learn more about potential impacts to the Fairgrounds and to share their concerns. Dan Corey (BCTID) told them that the alignment that traveled near the fairgrounds was part of the project's East Connection, which would be discussed in more detail at a later meeting. However, he spoke with the group for about 20 minutes and answered their questions. After the exchange, most members of the group left the meeting.

General Discussion

- While a concept of the East Connection alignment has been developed, specifics are not yet known. As a result, the specific footprint of the road and the area of impact (including structures) hasn't yet been determined. More will be known as additional studies are completed later this year.
- The fairgrounds group is planning on updating/upgrading their buildings and don't want to spend time or effort on buildings that will be affected by the project.
 - They will be pursuing a grant to help fund improvements.
 - The grant application is due to the state by March 1.
 - The fairgrounds group needs to know before March 1 what will and won't be affected, so they can complete their application accordingly.

Horse Barn Discussion

- The horse barns are located at the south end of the track (along the East alignment).
- The only building likely to be directly affected in this grouping is the maintenance shed.
- Access to the barns and shed is through the fairgrounds.
- When asked how the horses might be affected by the road, group members said:
 - It would be best to keep the road on county property.
 - There is a ditch behind the barns. It would be good for the road to be kept to the south side of the ditch.
 - Dan Corey noted that a buffer would need to be kept between the barns and the road to provide space for emergency vehicle pull off.
 - Speed limits should be no more than 35 mph.
 - It would be best to prohibit trucks.
 - The project team should consider installing a barrier that would block the view of the road and perhaps sound coming from it.

[After the fairgrounds discussion, most of the fairgrounds group left the meeting. The following notes are from the two remaining individuals who are Vine Street residents; one is a renter, the other has a long family history of living on Vine (grandparents, parents, herself).]

General Alternatives Discussion

- Despite their strong connection to Vine, they would prefer that the new NHX road follow the Vine Street alignment.
 - North End Market is the community center and is a "sacred cow." Anything affecting access to the market and its events will have a detrimental impact on the community.
 - There's a community event in August where "hundreds of people" dance in the street near the Market.
- After considering the possible amenities of a new roadway (crosswalks, better lighting, transit, bike lanes, etc.), these individuals felt that Vine Street was still the better option.
 - They felt that the North 9th or Miami alignments would cause more traffic in the area.
 - The additional traffic and higher travel speeds would be more dangerous if around the Market area.
- Concerns regarding the Vine Street alignment include:
 - Residential displacement.
 - Impact to/disturbance of Chem-Dyne contaminants still present in the soil underlying the Vine Street neighborhood.

Do any alternatives stand out?

- The Vine Street Connection is preferred.

Group Discussion Notes

Following are the highlights that the different groups shared during the full group conversation that followed the individual group discussions.

Concerns About Alignments:

- Consider a 25-mph speed limit on Heaton.
- Parking availability.
- Truck route vs. non truck route.
- Impacts to homes and businesses.
- Impacts to utilities – new and existing; is this an opportunity to make improvements?
- Impacts to cross streets *[It was noted that this will be discussed in more detail in future meetings].*
- Impact on community during construction.
- Impacts on quality of life after construction is completed.
- Impacts to L.J. Smith Park; make sure it's not split.
 - How would you get pedestrians to the park?
- Concerns about Chem-Dyne contaminants, outside of the remediated and capped area and under neighborhood; will construction disturb what has settled down over the years?
- The Miami/North 9th alignments feel like a by-pass.
- Access needs to be maintained for vehicular-oriented businesses.
- The height of the railroad overpass – will the incline be too steep for pedestrians and bicyclists?
 - Consider adding a pedestrian/bike crossing under the overpass.
- Does the center lane need to be included or can that be eliminated?
- Hold on closing Heaton Street railroad crossing until more safety studies have been completed; pedestrians are still going to walk over the railroad.
- Impacts to historic structures.
- Impacts to properties.

Benefits:

- Better access to the high school and Freshman school.
- Less congestion on High Street.
- Better connections to the west side of town.
- Opportunities for general upgrades to the neighborhood.
- Less time waiting for trains.
- Possible benefits for utilities – can they be upgraded as part of this project?
- North 9th and Miami are the only two alternatives north of the Black Street Bridge. *[This was more of an observation, not a benefit.]*
- Possible opportunities to rebuild the park.

Other Things for the Project Team to Know:

- Note that the list of PROs is much smaller than the list of CONs for each alternative.