



## MEMORANDUM

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to Nieves Castro, Project Manager

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

re SR 99 Soundwall Community Safety and Enhancement Project  
Meeting Summary

date January 27, 2010

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### Participants

Nieves Castro, Caltrans District 3 Planning  
Chris Gomez, Caltrans District 3  
Bobbe Dworkis, Sacramento County Neighborhood Services  
Eva Gordon, Caltrans Excess Lands  
Hilary Gould, Sacramento County Neighborhood Services  
Rusty Grout, Caltrans District 3 Maintenance  
Bruce de Terra, Caltrans District 3 Planning  
John Wells, Caltrans District 3 Maintenance  
Kris Wimberly, City of Sacramento Neighborhood Services  
Joan Chaplick, MIG Inc.  
Nicole Lewis, MIG Inc.

### Welcome and Introductions

Nieves Castro welcomed participants to the meeting. Joan Chaplick reviewed the meeting objectives which were to: update the team on outreach activities related to the Highway 99 Soundwall Project; discuss property-related issues, including potential foreclosure of properties within the project area; discuss providing property owners with fencing materials and other support to secure their property; and, begin planning for a community meeting in May 2010.

### Project Status and Activities to Date

Joan Chaplick provided a copy of the draft Outreach Strategy that was distributed in early January. The strategy outlines the basic approach for communicating with property owners, including outreach materials that have been produced. Joan provided copies of the materials that MIG developed, including a process graphic, frequently asked questions and a Spanish translation of each document. These are pieces that may evolve over time and will be updated as new or revised information becomes available.

Eva provided a graphic with a timeline and Nieves suggested creating an InDesign version that was consistent with the other materials prepared by MIG. This task won't be completed until we are closer to the community meeting since it is possible that some timelines may change.

Hilary is very encouraged by what he has generally heard from residents in the neighborhood. They are focused on safety which is consistent with our project objectives.

Letters sent to five property owners were returned. City Services is working diligently with Hilary to ensure he has the information needed to contact these owners so they are aware of the pending opportunity to acquire the property. Hilary provided a status report on each of the properties, as follows:

- 1) The 3325 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue property is owned by the Saldiva Trust and is not inhabitable. Hilary was not able to make contact with the owner. The bank took the house back about a year ago. There was a tenant who was paying rent in December. Hilary thinks we might be able to find the owner through the rental payment. Kris commented that this property will likely go to foreclosure.
- 2) The 3511 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue property is owned by the Robin Kane Trust. Hilary made contact and the trust director is excited about working with us.
- 3) The 3130 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue property is owned by the Moreno Family—Victor and Villahermosa Moreno. Hilary spoke with Ms. Moreno and provided copies of materials in both English and Spanish. She agreed with the need for the project and had questions about the land cost and project schedule.
- 4) Ramona Pineda owns the property at 3231 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue. Hilary's contact with her was a great success. He was able to reach them through an alternate address in Suisun City. Hilary visited the property. There was no answer and he left a packet of materials in the door. The daughter called Hilary and he told her the process. She explained they are a month behind on their payments. They purchased it as an investment property. Tenant issues got out of hand and they are in over their heads. She is encouraged by this process.
- 5) The Garcia Family Marital Trust owns the property at 3234 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Hilary spoke with the tenant who has been renting from them for 20 years. Hilary had a good conversation with her. Eva Garcia, the property owner and family matriarch, is a real supporter. The Garcia family (including Eva and her daughter Rosanna) is also part of our weed and seed project. These participants will be a real asset to the project.

Hilary noted that it may be beneficial to have Spanish translators available to help answer questions. Eva Gordon shared that if property owners need help in Spanish, Roberto Cardenas can speak on Eva's behalf. He is well-informed about the project. His number is 530-741-4069.

Bruce de Terra asked if any property owners were interested in paying in installments. Hilary commented that he hadn't received any requests as of yet. Eva responded that it was possible to pay on installment, but for bookkeeping purposes, we would not want to divide this into more than three payments. This may be negotiable depending on need. The property, however, will not be transferred over until the installment has been paid in full. Kris commented that the City anticipates that the initial payment and cost will not be the issue, but rather fencing materials and installation.

### **Property Issues and Foreclosures**

During the development of this project, the team hadn't anticipated that property foreclosures could have an impact on the process. Hilary provided an overview of some of the related issues such as squatters and gang activity. Even though buildings were boarded up, the boards were removed, and in some cases, wiring, plumbing and any other useable materials were removed or vandalized. Fences were torn down.

Eva provided the group an update on her activities. The surveys have been requested. Initially, Phase 1 and Phase 2 were going to occur on staggered schedules. Now, Phase 1 and Phase 2 are happening together. Phase 1 survey, deeding and legal restrictions will likely take longer than other Phases.

Eva may end up appraising these properties, as this will be her next assignment. In discussing fencing, contract language will remain the same in terms of responsibility of the landowner for fencing, but also let landowners know what we can offer. Eva's supervisor has reviewed contract language and says it's acceptable.

Property is appraised by size and grade. Location may be an issue in commercial properties. Commercial and residential will be appraised only slightly differently. Openings in the soundwall may also be a factor in appraisals.

Eva explained that dates noted on the timeline are deadlines for when contracts need to be signed to meet the CTC date. If timelines are not met the schedule will shift.

Phase 3 will be our greatest challenge. At Mascot Avenue, we will need to start at the center and work our way out so that everyone participates. We need to make sure properties don't get "boxed in" by those not participating. This would make it really difficult for Caltrans to get in there for maintenance if the ROW is partially fenced. In other phases, there are usually two landowners and a street. John suggested that we help people understand that the trees are an asset, especially when the area is cleaned up. People currently look at them as a nuisance when it is really a benefit.

Communication is key here. As this project goes to different locations, Kris is providing Hilary as much information as she can and they are communicating constantly. Also important to make sure that Hilary has county assessor's information—for example, to know when things were purchased. This can help anticipate potential foreclosure activity.

Joan asked the group—what is the potential risk for our project in regards to the foreclosures? When the property goes into foreclosure, it is in “limbo” and Caltrans is not able to do anything with the property during that time. The banks may or may not want to participate in the program. The County has information about the properties—which bank owns the property, contact information, etc. We may be able to contact bank staff directly.

Eva clarified that Caltrans still has a responsibility to maintain the soundwall even if a property is in foreclosure.

Hilary suggested that we provide a document or letter of intent to those property owners that have expressed willingness to participate. The purpose would be so that it can be viewed as a “next step” in process and as an effort to maintain their interest. Eva will follow up and create a letter of acknowledgement for those agreeing to participate.

It was called out that if post holes were to be dug, USA (Underground Service Alert) will need to be contacted and their procedures followed. Property owners will need to be reminded that their information is valid for a specific timeframe. Property owners will need some guidance on following this requirement.

## **Materials and Resources**

The group then discussed ways to help community members successfully integrate the right-of-way into their parcel. Property owners are more likely to participate if there are resources and materials to help them. It was suggested that the Garcia family is in property management so they may be able to help with advice on fencing and improvements. There were also suggestions of coordinating with a City program that works with high at-risk youth. We may be able to involve them and provide hands-on work and training. There are similar programs that involve training homeless and unemployed people. Kris noted that Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency (SHRA) may be able to cover the costs of the fencing for the properties that are located in the City of Sacramento. When the survey is done, the parcel measurements numbers will need to be forwarded onto Kris which will assist in determining costs for fencing.

Since Caltrans can't give away the surplus fencing, we need to find administrative solutions and other options. Some of the issues and ideas are as follows:

- Include fence in sale of property
- Get approval to recycle the materials
- Get approval to condemn the materials
- Provide guidance for the landowners
- Need to know how much fencing is needed, since there will be a surplus and homeowners will need to dispose of the extra fencing
- Need to pay attention to underground utilities if post holes will be installed
- Need to help home owner understand how to consult with USA and the required timeframes

- Contact Jobcorps and Conservation Corps as potential partners
- Involve youth at risk to help with labor
- Need 501c3 status to be able to accept donations
- Need ways to help elderly and/or disabled residents who want to participate but are unable to and can't afford to install their own fencing
- Consider advertising our need on the project website
- May get better results from donors through face to face contact, phone and written communications
- Need to develop a resource/fund raising strategy
- Need to take into account Caltrans liability in anything proposed

### **Community Outreach Meeting**

Joan led the discussion on the proposed community meeting. It will likely be held in or around May. Caltrans hopes to have some appraisals completed before the meeting so that landowners can share their property costs with other landowners. Caltrans legally cannot disclose appraisal values; however, landowners can share their information.

Eva commented that the community meeting will have the most impact on Phase 3 so we need to make sure it helps residents understand the benefits provided by the program. It might be helpful to have some visualizations to show how they can secure their property and how it can improve the safety and aesthetics of the area. It was also mentioned that it would be beneficial to share success stories.

Sumac Lane was called out as an example where Caltrans did a no-cost encroachment permit and property fences were extended to the soundwall. While the strategy did help to address trespassing issues, people now assume that the State right-of-way is their property and some have made improvements beyond what is allowed. Caltrans is now in the position of having to go back at some point and resolve this issue. Therefore, it was determined that Sumac Lane would not be a good example to share because property owners may want to also receive what may be perceived as a no cost remedy.

Some potential topics the meeting should address:

- Highlight the safety and security aspects by providing data about emergency calls, incident reports, etc.
- Focus on discussing Phase 2, 3, 4 properties
- Involve Phase 1 participants so they can share their experience
- Consider providing food and refreshments to attract participants
- Conduct door to door outreach to invite participants—Hilary's "knock and talk"
- Consider holding it at the Elementary school or Community Center in the project area
- Focus on making it an informational meeting

There were some comments about turning it into a "block party" since providing food in an informal setting is likely to attract good participants. Concerns were expressed that this might also attract people from outside the project area.

## **Action Items and Next Meeting**

MIG will complete the minutes next week and send a task list out to the team. Action items to be completed within the next two weeks:

- Translate timeline into Spanish and post on web—MIG
- Get copies of the translated timeline to Hilary Gould – Nieves Castro
- Add Roberto's contact info to the Spanish materials (530-741-4069) and post updated materials to the website—MIG, with review by Nieves Castro
- Get copies of the updated Spanish materials to Hilary Gould – Nieves Castro
- Follow-up on fencing options such as including fencing in costs—Eva Gordon
- Draft letter of acknowledgement for those agreeing to participate—Eva Gordon
- Provide information about how property owners need to contact USA—Rusty Grout
- Explore materials condemnation so they can be given to the property owner—Rusty Grout
- Provide information about fence connection to soundwall—Rusty Grout
- Create an implementation schedule/action list for homeowners—MIG lead, with team assistance
- Follow up with SHRA on fencing costs—Chris Gomez and Kris Wimberly
- Develop resource strategy—MIG
- Explore community meeting locations and logistics—MIG lead, with advice from Hilary Gould, Nieves Castro and John Wells
- Compile safety data for community meeting—Kris Wimberly, with advice from MIG on what data would be most helpful

Next meeting date: Wednesday, March 3, 1 to 3 pm.