Corridors of Opportunity

Corridors of Opportunity

Year in Review

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2+2=5	10
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2022

Corridors of Opportunity

A Year of Engagement, Project Planning and Implementation

Since Summer 2020, the City of Charlotte has embarked on transformational work in six historically under-invested corridors. The pivotal work includes collaboration among 8+ City departments, Mecklenburg County, non-profit organizations and for-profit corporations working together to make systemic changes and build economic opportunity in each corridor.

In 2020-2021, in the face of the pandemic, the initiative gained speed with implementation in West Boulevard and Beatties Ford Road. Strategic engagement began along two more corridors: Albemarle Road and West Sugar Creek Road.

In 2022, two corridor playbooks and road maps (strategic plan documents) were completed for Albemarle and West Sugar Creek and engagement kicked off for the North Tryon Street/North Graham Street corridor. The team also formed key external partnerships and guided coordinated investment strategies.

Moving forward, 2023 will bring implementation and strategic planning for all six corridors. The Corridors Core Team looks forward to working with residents, business owners and community members to create and measure long-lasting, positive impact.

Sincerely,
Marcus D. Jones
City Manager

Corridors of Opportunity Directors Team

Reenie Askew
Assistant City Manager / Innovation & Technology

Liz Babson
Assistant City Manager

Tracy Dodson
Assistant City Manager / Economic Development

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Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department

Alyson Craig
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Rebecca Hefner
Housing & Neighborhood Services

Jason Lawrence
Charlotte Area Transit System

Jason Schneider
Charlotte Communications & Marketing

Debbie Smith
Charlotte Department of Transportation

Jennifer Smith
General Services

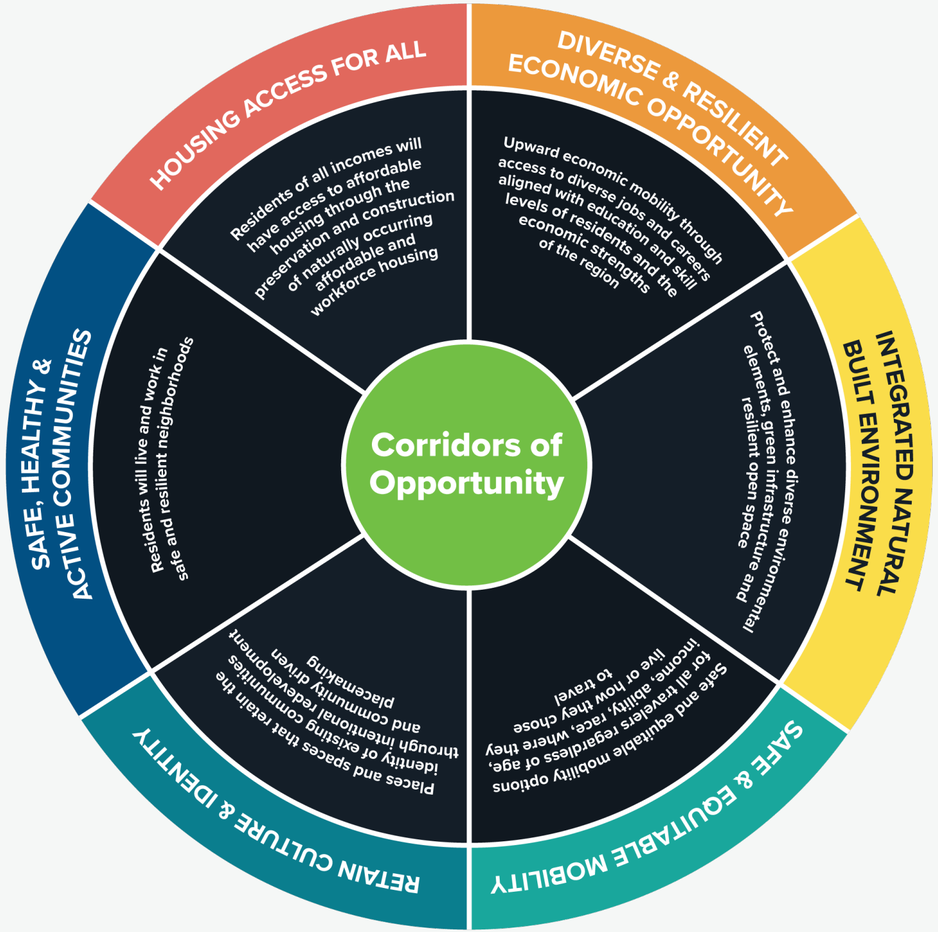
Six Corridors of Opportunity

The Corridors Framework

The City of Charlotte's Corridors of Opportunity (Corridors) program is a coordinated $70+ million investment to create safe, prosperous communities and build legacies for future generations in six key corridors.

Since the program's inception, the City has adopted the Charlotte Future 2040 Comprehensive Plan and Strategic Mobility Plan. These citywide plans identify how the city should grow holistically and create opportunity for long-time residents.

In 2022, the City built a Corridors of Opportunity Core Team that focuses on targeted implementation of the Charlotte Future 2040 Plan within the six corridors. The program uses six of the ten goals in the 2040 Plan to organize corridor goals and themes.



The program is part of the Mayor's Racial Equity Initiative, a public-private partnership working toward an equitable city that achieves racial equity, social justice, economic opportunity and upward mobility. The initiative strives to provide solutions-driven, measurable strategies that produce equitable access, opportunities, treatment and outcomes for Charlotte's communities of color.

Partnerships Take Off

The Corridors of Opportunity Program is successful because of the City's intentional partnerships and coordination.

Success in Corridors is contingent on the hard work of partners that are also investing time, resources and expertise to the effort. Organizations such as Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), the Knight Foundation, United Way, YMCA, Foundation for the Carolinas, Wells Fargo, Lowe's and more are aligning strategic programming and funding to multiply impact.

To further coordinate efforts among partners, the Neighborhood Investment Advisory Council (NIAC) was established in 2022 to regularly communicate and facilitate Corridors work.

The below represents a sampling of key partnership dollars:

$4.8 Million
Knight Foundation

$5 Million
United Way United Neighborhoods Program

$1.7 Million
Lowe's Foundation

$20 Million
Beyond Open Small Business Grant Program

LISC is partnering with Barings and Fifth Third Bank to expand access to capital to corridor-based borrowers.

Wells Fargo and CLT is Creative collaborated on a façade beautification and creative placemaking partnership in Sugar Creek, West Boulevard and Wilkinson Boulevard.

Bank of America has committed to Corridors with a Leader on Loan to the City for 12+ months.

YMCA of Greater Charlotte is expanding youth programming in five of six corridors and partnering with Atrium Health to build a new health clinic at their facility on West Boulevard.

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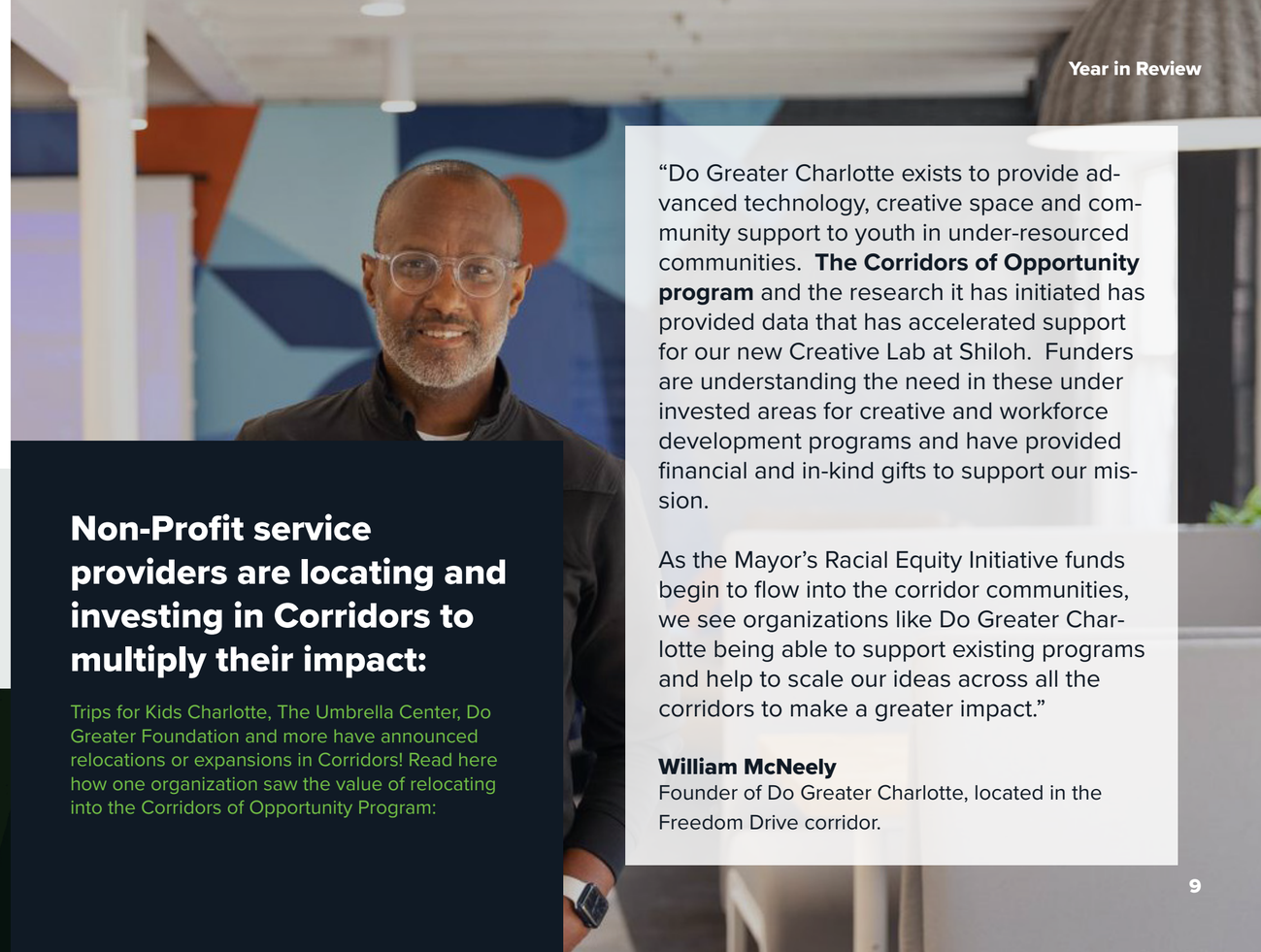

Non-Profit service providers are locating and investing in Corridors to multiply their impact:

Trips for Kids Charlotte, The Umbrella Center, Do Greater Foundation and more have announced relocations or expansions in Corridors! Read here how one organization saw the value of relocating into the Corridors of Opportunity Program:

"Do Greater Charlotte exists to provide advanced technology, creative space and community support to youth in under-resourced communities. **The Corridors of Opportunity program** and the research it has initiated has provided data that has accelerated support for our new Creative Lab at Shiloh. Funders are understanding the need in these under invested areas for creative and workforce development programs and have provided financial and in-kind gifts to support our mission.

As the Mayor's Racial Equity Initiative funds begin to flow into the corridor communities, we see organizations like Do Greater Charlotte being able to support existing programs and help to scale our ideas across all the corridors to make a greater impact."

William McNeely
Founder of Do Greater Charlotte, located in the Freedom Drive corridor.

2+2=5 Corridors Programs Means Exponential Investment

Staying in Place

$4.9 Million

Staying in Place is a collaborative approach to provide opportunity for residents who want to stay in their neighborhoods to remain, while preserving housing affordability for future generations. It is currently in pilot phase in three neighborhoods within the Corridors of Opportunity: Hidden Valley, Washington Heights and Winterfield.

- Staying in Place includes partnerships with the United Way, Atrium Health, Habitat for Humanity and Duke Energy to provide a comprehensive set of tools based on community input to preserve housing affordability
- Community Health Workers will be embedded within the United Way United Neighborhoods program or within the neighborhood associations and provide door-to-door resources including limited care coordination, program promotion and referrals within the local healthcare and hospitals community partners network.

Small Business Support

$1 Million

The City of Charlotte is utilizing the Corridors of Opportunity Program to customize small business support and capacity for each corridor. With the initial investment in efforts like the Beatties Ford/LaSalle Main Street program, the West Boulevard Merchants Association and the newly forming Sugar Creek/I-85 Business Association, these groups are building stronger business districts from within and sending a message to potential investors that they are open for business and ready to support growth.

Alternatives to Violence

$2.7 Million

The City and County's initial $250,000 investment in the Cure Violence pilot program in the Beatties Ford/LaSalle area led to expanded investments from the Greenlight Fund and Wells Fargo to further the program and study the impact in years 2 and 3. Thanks to a $1,000,000 Justice Assistance Grant, the program will soon expand to two additional corridors. Stay tuned for more updates on the next phase of the Alternatives to Violence Program and the work happening within the Corridors of Opportunity.

Housing Trust Fund

$34.3 Million

Since 2020, the City of Charlotte has used housing bonds to fund nearly 2,400 units of affordable multi-family housing in Corridors. This investment protects families from the rapidly growing cost of housing in Charlotte. The Housing Trust Fund has worked to leverage private investments and provide guaranteed affordability.

House Charlotte

$2.8 Million

House Charlotte, which is similar to the Housing Trust Fund but for home purchase, has provided 189 homeowners with interest-free down payment assistance across all six corridors. With the highest number of units within the Sugar Creek geography, the corridor will benefit from the investment of new homeowners.

ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act)

$16 Million

Several projects receiving funding from the American Rescue Plan are in the Corridors and have a clear mission to improve the quality of lives in the greater Charlotte community. Investments in naturally occurring affordable housing like the Peppertree Apartments provide stability for the quickly changing rents in the corridor, while projects like Three Sisters Market in the West Boulevard corridor will provide access to healthy food. ARPA funding also includes Corridor-based partnerships with Hire Charlotte, the creative community and The Umbrella Center.

Looking Forward

Stay tuned for continued growth in marquee programs within the City of Charlotte and Corridors of Opportunity partners. On the horizon, Corridors will pursue expanding the SafeBiz Program, leveraging the framework of Hire Charlotte and new prototypes for small business support hubs in each corridor. Corridors will also pursue federal infrastructure grants and technical assistance opportunities for transformational projects.

Corridor-by-Corridor Updates

Beatties Ford

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Connecting prior infrastructure successes by investing in home grown businesses and equitable development

Community Connections

Identified through a series of community conversations and ongoing planning efforts, the community's priorities include affordable housing, community safety and placemaking. Corridor work was launched in Fall 2020 with numerous public and private investments and staff continues to inform residents about transformative projects. In Spring 2022, the City hosted an infrastructure drop-in meeting at the newly opened Ritz at Washington Heights. Community updates will continue to be prioritized as design on these projects finishes up and construction is set to begin. Outside of infrastructure projects, staff continues to partner with key stakeholder groups like the Historic West End Neighborhood Association, LISC and Historic West End Partners to build community trust and ongoing communication.

Implementation

In implementation for the past two years, the Beatties Ford Road Corridor is prospering with new businesses and growing community capacity. The Main Street commercial district program is working at full capacity with Historic West End Partners at the helm and Staying in Place is hitting stride in Historic Washington Heights.
Alternatives to Violence, piloted in the Beatties Ford Road Corridor, is now in full swing in the second year and will continue until May 2023. This partnership with Mecklenburg County is a unique opportunity to address systemic community safety issues in Beatties Ford Road area.

Infrastructure projects are advancing into construction and programming at both Five Points Plaza and the Ritz at Washington Heights continues to be successful. From a 5k race in August to the Jingle Jam in December – Five Points Plaza has built community and will continue in 2023.

Key projects in 2022

- $1.1 million in Business Matching Grant Awards
  - Leveraged $8.3 million in private investment
  - Benefitted small businesses like West End Fresh Seafood, ArchiveCLT, BW Sweets Bakery and more
- Beatties Ford at LaSalle Main Street commercial district revitalization
- Transportation/infrastructure projects
- Alternatives to Violence
- Ritz at Washington Heights

Looking ahead – what will come online in 2023

The first infrastructure projects from Corridors of Opportunity will begin construction in 2023. New businesses will add to the retail mix when they open at the intersection at Beatties Ford and LaSalle. New creative and community-driven placemaking installations will reflect the community's history and culture.

Corridor-by-Corridor Updates

West Boulevard

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Working with capacity builders to foster nodes of investment

Community Connections

With support from the Corridors program, West Boulevard Neighborhood Coalition (WBNC) is expanding community-driven initiatives including the development of the West Boulevard Merchants Association. Staff also hosted several virtual community meetings, online surveys and an in-person visual preference survey at West Boulevard Library to confirm placemaking priorities. Over 40 individuals participated in the online and in-person surveys, which identified the community's preferences. The placemaking engagement identified projects like a gateway mural near the I-77 underpass and design preferences for a corridor-wide, commemorative marker project.

Implementation

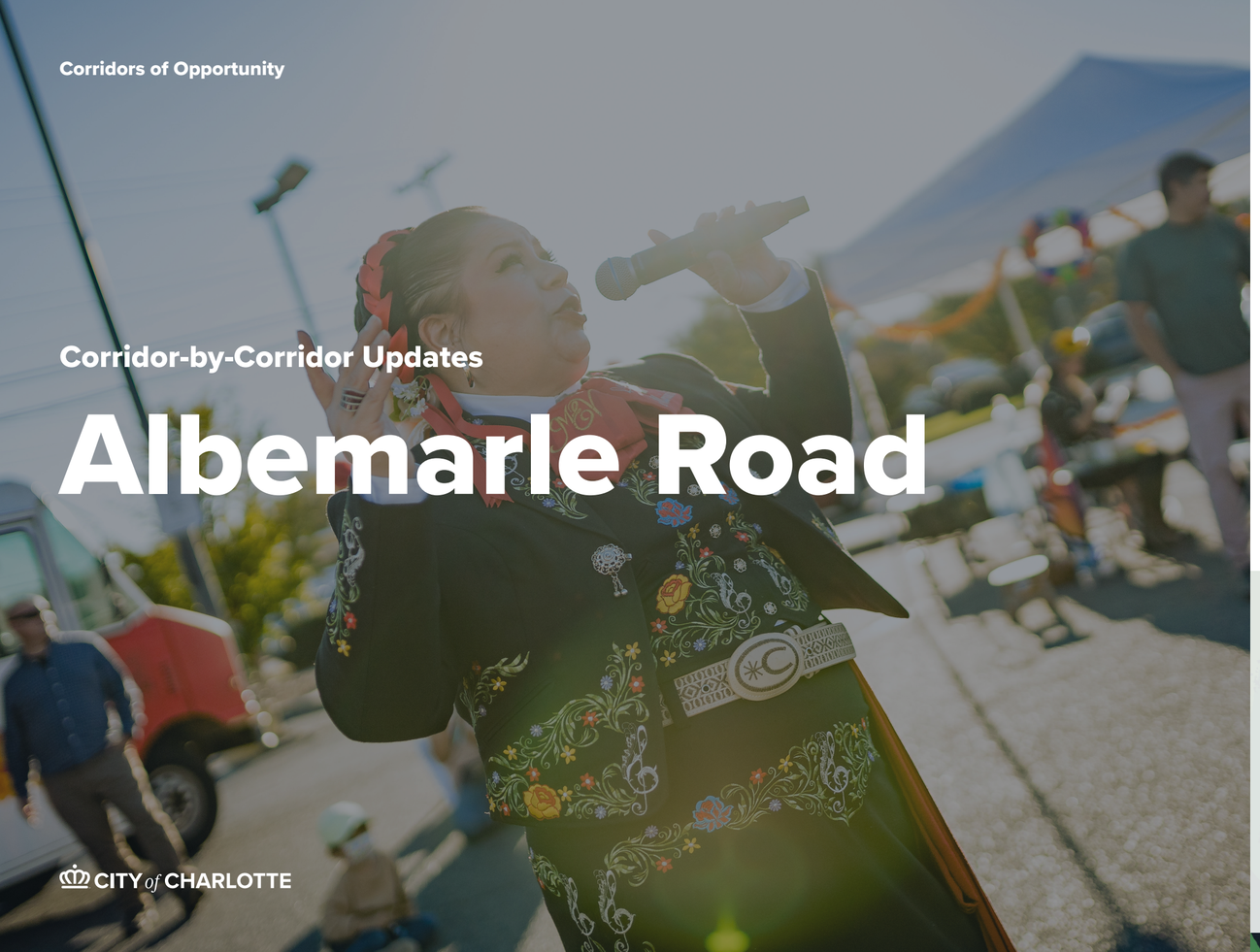
The West Boulevard Corridor is continuing to grow and prosper. In 2021, the City of Charlotte established multi-year support for the West Boulevard Neighborhood Coalition to advance community work on the Three Sisters Market co-op efforts, the urban farm program and their work to build a merchants association. The City of Charlotte also purchased a small retail center near the intersection of Remount Road and West Boulevard to further infuse the neighborhood with sustainable businesses and retail services.

Key projects in 2022

- WBNC support
- Public space and infrastructure improvements
- Business Matching Grants and small business support
  - Benefitted businesses like Mr. Jim's Pizza, Shop N Go, Dee's Vegan To-Go, Renaldo's Culinary Experience and more

Looking ahead – what will come online in 2023

In 2023, multiple placemaking projects will be designed, built and installed, infrastructure projects will come online and staff will continue to work with the community and local partners on catalytic redevelopment projects.



Corridor-by-Corridor Updates

Albemarle Road

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Creating economic opportunity for existing residents and businesses through improved access

Community Connections

Community engagement for the Albemarle playbook broke the mold for creative engagement during the pandemic; the playbook incorporated community artists and creative tactics to increase community input. Out of the comprehensive engagement and planning effort, economic opportunity and access to jobs rose to the top for early implementation. The Playbook development was guided by a steering committee of 20+ stakeholders representing the diverse residents, businesses and organizations of the corridor. The City held nearly 50 unique opportunities for stakeholders to engage with the project as well as online through social media, the project's website and features on news outlets. The result was a spring release of the Playbook and the development of a roadmap for strategic investment in August. The roadmap outlines 15 projects to move into implementation over the next two years.

In the fall, staff met with the Far East Neighborhood Coalition, East Charlotte Coalition of Neighborhoods and Charlotte EAST to provide updates and review the finalized roadmap.

Implementation

The first projects to be implemented from Albemarle will focus on connecting people to jobs and supporting business growth in the corridor while retaining the culture that makes the corridor unique. In December, the City hosted a ULI Technical Assistance Panel that developed a conceptual framework for a key Playbook idea, the Albemarle Cultural Trail. The City partnered with small business support organizations to engage Hispanic-owned small businesses.

Key projects in 2022

- Business Hub and Incubator Program
- Albemarle Cultural Trail Plan (ULI partnership)
- Eastland Yards Groundbreaking
- Transportation and Intersection Improvement Projects
- Business Matching Grant Investments
  - Benefitted businesses like The Laundrolab, MC Family Medical and organizations like Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy and Legal Aid of North Carolina

Looking ahead – what will come online in 2023

In 2023, a Business Hub and Incubator Program will continue to develop through partnerships, transportation projects that improve walkability and intersection safety will be designed and the Cultural Trail will continue to be planned, all while maintaining a focus on housing affordability in the corridor. Also stay tuned to more work around naturally occurring affordable housing.

Corridor-by-Corridor Updates

Sugar Creek Road

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Stabilizing the intersection to create opportunity for the residents

Community Connections

In 2022, Corridors hosted ongoing engagement activities to stay connected with the community as projects moved into implementation. Engagement efforts focus on supporting the development of a Sugar Creek/I-85 business association, partnering with local nonprofits that provide supportive services to residents and sharing project updates with key stakeholder groups. In November, Keep Charlotte Beautiful and local nonprofit Champion House of Care co-hosted a large-scale community event along Sugar Creek. Two-hundred and thirty corridor-based families received supplies and resources and over 40 volunteers contributed 80 cumulative volunteer hours toward picking up 50+ bags of litter during a corridor cleanup.

Implementation

The Sugar Creek Playbook was released in Spring 2022 and projects are already underway—improving street lighting on Reagan Drive and the SafeBiz security partnership with CMPD. The Playbook's release launched a renewed effort by the local business owners to improve the quality of life for residents, business owners and visitors. Corridor stakeholders began organizing regular meetings and building capacity for a business association. In late 2022, the SafeBiz Camera Pilot will launch as a foundation to building trust with businesses and organizations in the corridor. Beginning this winter, the City will conduct additional litter pick up and mowing efforts to keep the interchange clean and in good condition.

Key projects in 2022

- SafeBiz CLT: 19 new cameras installed; investing in fiber upgrades
- Staying in Place in Hidden Valley
- Business District Capacity Building and Formation
- Business Matching Grant Investments
  - Benefited new business: Brows by Keke Brow Spa
- Corridor clean-ups and landscape maintenance
- Installed new street lighting

Looking ahead – what will come online in 2023

- Targeted clean-up and corridor landscape maintenance
- Micro-transit mobility pilot
- Smart streetlight upgrades
- Transportation and pedestrian improvements projects
- Catalytic redevelopment at former Asian Corners Mall

Corridor-by-Corridor Updates

North Tryon/ North Graham

Retaining the history and assets of the neighborhoods while building an employment hub

Community Connections

The Corridors project kicked off in North Tryon/North Graham in August with an in-person stakeholder workshop at Charlotte Fire Department Headquarters. Since the kickoff, more than 60 stakeholders participated in community engagements through interviews, work sessions, a community-wide web survey and a walking tour of the corridor. At each engagement, stakeholders discussed corridor issues and explored potential opportunities and assets. In December, Corridors hosted a second public workshop to confirm the results of engagement and unveil a draft plan for implementation.

Implementation

As the playbook process kicked off in August, some implementation was already underway. Business Matching Grant Investments benefitted multiple small businesses as well as large-scale shopping plazas like Hutchinson Shopping Center. From the playbook engagement process, the community demonstrated strong support for investments that value and preserve the community's history and prioritized housing and connectivity to transit.

Key projects in 2022

- Business Matching Grant Investments
- Business Hub and Incubator Program
- Transportation and pedestrian improvements projects
- Micro-transit mobility pilot

Looking ahead – what will come online in 2023

In 2023, the Playbook document will be completed and distributed to the community. The Corridors program will develop a package of initial investments and advance key community priorities.

Corridor-by-Corridor Updates

Wilkinson/ Freedom Drive

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Incremental investments and planning leading to engagement and planning in FY23

Community Connections

Public engagement for the Wilkinson/Freedom Corridor will launch in 2023. Early engagement activities have focused around developing and fostering relationships with neighborhoods and community groups in the corridor area of influence.
There is already a robust engagement effort underway around the future Silver Line and land use planning. In 2022, Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) concluded a Silver Line Transit Oriented Development Study and will soon begin a future study around Equitable Transit Oriented Development (ETOD), funded by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). In 2023, the Corridors team will build off these existing efforts and coordinate on short-term implementation projects and long-term capacity building and engagement efforts around future transit.

Implementation

Incremental investments and planning are still underway even if public engagement hasn't begun yet. Creative small business support from a Wells Fargo-funded initiative by Charlotte is Creative brought a new mural and outdoor seating to Pauline's Tea-Bar Apothecary. The recently opened CRTV Lab at Shiloh by the Do Greater Foundation provides a creative lab and co-learning space for corridor youth. Do Greater received funds for their youth employment and design apprenticeship programs. Also completed in 2022 is the Silver Line Transit Oriented Development Study, which focused on the Wilkinson Boulevard Corridor and identified future infrastructure investments to support a walkable, transit-ready corridor.

Key projects in 2022

- Equitable Transit Oriented Development (ETOD) – Silver Line TOD Planning Study
- Do Greater Foundation CRTV Lab at Shiloh
- Business Matching Grant Investments

Looking ahead – what will come online in 2023

In 2023, the Wilkinson/Freedom Drive corridor will complete community engagement and prioritization with projects outlined for implementation. This process will happen in conjunction with the ETOD Study for the Silver Line – a $400,000 grant from the FTA focused on building capacity and education around transit along the future light rail Corridor.

Community Voices

Beatties Ford

"We are here to facilitate positive change for all those who live, work and invest in this community. We believe in preserving the history and culture of the West End community as we embrace the start of developments that will reshape the outside perception of the area and showcase what is a strong and vibrant community."

Christopher Dennis
Owner and CEO of E-Fix Development Corp

Sugar Creek

"Fostering relationships with the Corridors of Opportunity initiative is helping to create change in the I- 85 Sugar Creek Corridor that many said was impossible. Yes, it's hard work, but my passion makes it worth it all. Everyone is somebody!"

Janette Kinard Champion
President and CEO of local nonprofit Champion House on Care

Albemarle

"I'm so enthusiastic about the possibilities on Albemarle Road... Upgrading Albemarle is a major necessity in the gradual upgrading of East Charlotte."

Mimi Davis
President of East Charlotte Coalition of Neighborhoods

Pictured from left to right: Aisha Sabur, Erin Gillespie, Monica Holmes, Walta Blackmon, Robin Stuart.

Meet the Team!

The City of Charlotte Corridors of Opportunity Team is working hard to deliver projects, programs and partnerships that create systemic change in Charlotte. Each team member brings a unique perspective and expertise that together creates magic!

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Monica Holmes

Corridors of Opportunity Executive Manager

Monica is an experienced leader with a background in cross-collaboration and implementation. The Corridors of Opportunity work, the people and the ability to build a program that can positively impact stakeholders for generations to come in the city she's from invigorates her.

Robin Stuart

Bank of America Executive on Loan

Robin is an executive on loan to the City of Charlotte from Bank of America. As part of the program, he is working on the city's approach to Corridors of Opportunity while also being a liaison between the city, the County and the nonprofit and funder ecosystem. Being part of a team that is thinking and organizing differently to maximize the impact the city, partners and community can make on both truly excites him.

Walta Blackmon

Corridors of Opportunity Program Manager

Walta's project management experience coupled with her passion for innovating and driving community impact has prepared her for success in this role. She is most excited to embrace the challenge of implementing meaningful projects while making sustainable positive impacts in disinvested communities.

Erin Gillespie

Corridors of Opportunity Strategy and Development Manager

Erin brings community-based economic development expertise to the Corridors of Opportunity program. Erin is most excited to create an equitable investment and development culture within the corridor communities that benefit those who live, work and spend time there.

Aisha Sabur

Corridors of Opportunity Community Engagement Manager

Aisha focuses on developing and directing strategies to effectively communicate and engage the community in all the Corridors of Opportunity. She is most excited about the community relationships she can continue to foster while expanding outreach to new partners committed to supporting equitable investment across Charlotte.

Get in Touch!

Keep up with Corridors of Opportunity projects and updates in the new year

Corridors *of* Opportunity