

**Naples Pathways**Michelle Avola
Guest columnist

Support for 8th Street Corridor improvement project needed

Your attendance is strongly recommended at a public meeting on Monday, Aug. 20, at 4 p.m. The City of Naples and Q. Grady Minor & Associates, P.A., will be presenting the 60 percent design phase for the 8th Street Corridor Improvement Project, which extends from Fifth Avenue South to 7th Avenue North. Currently, the corridor includes a mix of signalized and non-signalized intersections, roadway with and without sharrows for bicyclists, on-street parking, and various landscape designs.

The 8th Street Corridor Improvement Project will improve stormwater drainage, promote traffic calming, and create a street image more consistent with the Naples brand, the City's Complete Streets Policy, Blue Zones Initiative, Tree Ordinance and Redevelopment Plan. The project aims to make 8th Street a safe, multi-modal, attractive and more consistent corridor. Utility improvements will be included in the scope of the project as well.

The 8th Street Corridor Improvement Project has received extensive community support from residents and businesses in this area, letters of support from Blue Zones Project, the Department of Health, the board and membership of Naples Pathways Coalition, to name a few. At a meeting of the Naples Community Redevelopment Agency on March 21, it was very distressing when a motion to move forward with the important improvements along this corridor failed.

City staff and the engineering team listened to all feedback received from the public, stakeholders, the CRA Advisory Board and City Council and have come up with a 60 percent design plan that will accomplish so much for our community. The plans include wastewater and water main improvements to address drainage issues, replacing failing infrastructure and improving water quality.

Safety concerns will be alleviated with sight line and ADA improvements, improved bus stops and traffic calming — did you know there have been 48 crashes in this area in the past three years?

There are also enhancements for safer, more inviting walking and bicycling along the corridor including better crosswalks, connections of missing links and sidewalks that abruptly end, installation of sidewalk ramps for accessibility, and dedicated bicycle facilities. To help minimize construction during high season and spread the expenditure over two fiscal years, a two-phase approach has been discussed.

The City of Naples has done such an outstanding job on Central Avenue, 3rd

See PROJECT, Page 7D

Project

Continued from Page 4D

Street, 10th Street, and several others. The 8th Street corridor is such a logical and necessary next step. Olde Naples is a unique and special area — truly different than any other community in the United States — but the area must be properly maintained and updated to keep the charm we all love.

Walkability to restaurants, shopping, banking, hair and nail salons and other services; the sense of community that is developed when people are not so dependent on a car; and the sheer pleasure of riding a bike down a well-landscaped and shaded roadway that feels safe and inviting are all vital characteristics

that residents and visitors enjoy about Naples.

We cannot let this project fail. The funding is there, and this investment will net a huge return for our City. Please come out to the public meeting 4-6 p.m. Monday, Aug. 20 at Naples City Hall, 735 8th Street South, in the multi-media room on the second floor, to see the plans for yourself and talk with City staff and members of the engineering team. Then call 239-213-1000 or email City Council, Council@NaplesGov.com, and let our elected officials know that we need and want the 8th Street Corridor Improvement Project to move forward without any further delay.

The next Community Redevelopment Agency Advisory Board meeting is on Monday, Aug. 27, at 9 a.m. and the next City Council meeting will be Sept. 5 at 8:30 a.m. They need to hear from you before the next vote.