



Wilburton Neighborhood Streetscape Enhancements

124th Avenue Corridor Improvements South of NE 8th Street

Neighborhood Streetscape Committee Meeting #1

Meeting Summary

August 5, 2013

Meeting Date: Thursday, July 25, 2013

Time: 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Location: Three Cedars Waldorf School, 556 124th Avenue NE

Attendees:

Committee Members

Carolyn Harris

Peter Maxim

Dan Renn

Rob Herschkowitz

Anita and Phil Leising

Jay Hamlin

Susan Myer

Sandi Van Kleeck-Claggett and daughter

Bob Shay

Jo Scott

City of Bellevue

Marina Arakelyan

Rick Logwood

Karen Gonzalez

Vangie Garcia

John Murphy

Consultant Team

Paul Farrier (HDR)

WD Baldwin (HDR)

Sarah Brandt (Envirolssues)

Kelly Knickerbocker (Envirolssues)

Committee members not in attendance:

Zee Straight-Weiss

Harvey Kriloff

Mike Edde

David Cayle

Darryl Nance

Marjorie Hall



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Welcome and Introductions

Sarah Brandt welcomed the attendees. She thanked the Committee members for their interest in participating in the discussion now and as the project progresses. The group – both Committee members and City employees – did a round of introductions and Sarah asked how many Committee members had attended the community open house on June 20, 2013 (most had).

Sarah then reviewed the agenda and the purpose of the meeting, which was to:

- Provide an overview of the project, including the Operating Guidelines and Project Description
- Discuss the Neighborhood Streetscape Committee's purpose, focus and roles
- Review input received at the June 20, 2013, community open house
- Brainstorm initial streetscape enhancement ideas for 124th Avenue NE south of NE 8th Street

Marina Arakelyan, City of Bellevue Project Manager, provided a brief overview of the project, schedule, draft Project Description, and framing policies.

Recap of Operating Guidelines Comments/Discussion:

Committee members were asked for feedback on the draft Committee Operating Guidelines, and provided the following input:

- I like the idea of sharing the information we discuss with neighbors and bringing the conversation to them. That's the main reason I'm here, so I was glad to see that reflected in the Operating Guidelines.
- Committee members have created a private social media platform called "Wilburton Next Door." The site has almost 90 people taking part in the Streetscape Committee conversation and some interest was expressed in also housing materials there.

Sarah and the project team also highlighted the following key points about Committee communication and information sharing:

- All information and materials related to the Committee and its work will be available at www.ci.bellevue.wa.us/124th-ave-improvements.htm and/or through a project SharePoint site to be established.
- Requests, feedback and questions should be directed to both Marina Arakelyan and Sarah Brandt (marakelyan@bellevuewa.gov, sbrandt@enviroissues.com).
- A summary will be available to Committee members after each meeting, and also made available on the City's project website.
- The project team currently expects to meet approximately monthly, but will work with the Committee to determine whether in-person meetings are appropriate or necessary at every major milestone.

Recap of Draft Project Description Comments/Discussion: The project team explained that the draft Project Description (attached to the end of this summary) will serve as criteria that frame the scope of the Committee's work. They represent fatal flaws and guidelines that the project team will use to develop and evaluate alternatives. Committee members had the following comments and questions:



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- There used to be load limit signs along 124th Avenue and they were taken away. Why? Garbage trucks are also using 124th throughout the week and outside of regular garbage pick-up days.
Response: The project team will research why these signs were removed.
- How did you draft the Project Description?
Response: We used feedback from the community open house and incorporated it into the preexisting framework as the City sees it. There are existing constraints included, too. Some examples are the scope of the project, budget, Comprehensive Plan policies, etc.
- What about the bullet that says 124th must accommodate bicycles? The road may not be wide enough to allow for a designated bike lane.
Response: We are following the City's Pedestrian-Bicycle Plan, which states that 124th Avenue NE must be able to accommodate bikes. It doesn't necessarily need to have a bike lane, but bikes must not be precluded from using the road.
- I think this is an excellent description. Looking into the future as outlined by the Urban Boulevard Project and Better Bellevue Greenway, it sounded so beautiful. Is that something we can incorporate into our planning?
Response: Yes, definitely, we partnered with the City staff addressing the urban design projects you've mentioned to be able to make these improvements. That's where part of our budget for this project came from.

Recap of Open House Post-Event Intelligence Comments/Discussion:

Committee members were asked to share their impressions from the June 20 community open house:

- The major impression I got from the open house is that 124th Avenue NE looks too straight and too easy to speed through. If you actually try to drive 25 mph, other drivers will pass you (even on the shoulder!).
- The major question to me after the open house is how do we stop 124th Avenue NE from looking like a freeway?
- The community open house was good. We know the street is there for a purpose; some of us want traffic to move even slower. We need to figure out a balance. The idea of traffic calming is a good idea and I'm happy that the open house will continue to inform our conversations moving forward.
- One thing I heard at the community open house was that 124th Avenue NE at NE 8th Street needs to look less like a freeway and more like a neighborhood street. We want people to think of it as a local access street, so we should consider a Wilburton neighborhood welcome sign and/or a median. Drivers don't necessarily follow directions on signs, but if they can see that it looks like a neighborhood street, they'll get the idea. An example of this is the entrance to Surrey Downs and 108th Avenue south of Main Street.
- I gathered that people don't like the straightaway between NE 8th Street and Main Street.



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Recap of Traffic Data Comments/Discussion:

WD Baldwin, HDR, provided an overview of the traffic analysis recently performed in the Wilburton neighborhood. In terms of traffic data, not much stood out as surprising. In the future, the model shows that traffic volumes will increase, but no streets are expected to go above their designated capacity.

One thing to note about the traffic data is the rate of cut through traffic. With the traffic volumes observed, we can get an idea of the cut through traffic rate. Approximately 41% of traffic on 124th Avenue NE enters and exits the project area in less than seven minutes. We consider any car taking less than seven minutes to move through the neighborhood to be a cut through traveler; those drivers aren't spending any time in the neighborhood. In 2035, 124th Avenue will be at 80% capacity according to the modeled projection.

The Committee had the following questions and comments:

- What's your vision for these traffic numbers? There aren't any intermediate models, all we have is 2035. By then, the light rail will be operating. Does this projection account for light rail traffic?
Response: Yes, it does account for light rail traffic.
- My fear is that things will get a lot worse before the light rail goes online. Is that a rational fear?
Response: There's no model that can predict what development will happen where and when. There are so many variables. Remember that even if we do something now based on the information we have, it doesn't mean it has to stay like that forever. We always come back and reevaluate the effectiveness of our mitigation measures if circumstances change.
- There's a traffic management problem between SE 1st Street to Main Street. There used to be two left turn lanes, now there's only one.
Response: Traffic light issues in Bellevue can be looked by the City. The City will review the light to make sure it's meeting drivers' needs.
- When you did your analysis, where did the cars come out? We've heard that some are using NE 7th Street and 129th Place NE to cut through the neighborhood east of NE 124th Avenue. That seems like a very long route to take.
Response: HDR will try to gather more information about why drivers might be likely to take this less direct route.
- 123rd Avenue NE is a road, too, but isn't labeled on the map.
Response: HDR to add this label to the Arterials and PM Traffic Volumes map.

Streetscape Enhancement Brainstorm

Committee members were asked to brainstorm potential streetscape enhancement ideas for consideration. These ideas will be reviewed and analyzed by the project team, who will return to the August Committee meeting with the initial alternatives for review. Ideas below are grouped into categories beginning with general ideas for the entire corridor between NE 8th Street and Main Street, followed by ideas for geographic areas from north to south.



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General project area:

- Get traffic to slow down and make the project area safer for pedestrians.
- Incorporate different visual elements along the corridor.
- Picture the drive behind Washington Park Arboretum; incorporate those visual elements and the “wiggle” in the road to 124th Avenue NE.
- Create a consistent and a complimenting theme throughout.
- What are the options for getting more color into the landscaping? Consider color variation or incorporating rocks for a Pacific Northwest look.
- We need to keep vegetation maintenance in mind – both the City and property owners are responsible for keeping it up.
- Neighborhood signage should be kept up. Plants shouldn’t be allowed to grow up around them.
- 124th Avenue is a standard test drive street for the car dealerships to the north. That’s the road’s history and it’s still used that way today.
- I don’t feel safe driving in my own neighborhood. My daughter has been hit. Children try to walk and there are no crosswalks across 124th Avenue – they’re almost getting hit.
- There are too many signs along the road. I think that reduces their overall effectiveness because people tune them out.
- Many drivers are using this neighborhood as a way to bypass I-405 traffic and blockage.

Intersection at NE 8th Street at 124th Avenue NE (gateway to the neighborhood):

- What does the City find usually works best for similar situations? Entry points are important.
- Make it look like it’s not a quick pass through. Reinforce that idea throughout the route with median treatment, move the cars through in a non-straight line, add vegetation.
- Better crosswalk identification.
- Consider longer medians continuing down the street, not just the small lozenges (lane marker bumps).

NE 3rd Street:

- There’s a big parking area between NE 5th Street and NE 3rd Street, you could bring the corner there out, so that as you look down the street, it doesn’t appear that the road just keeps going. You might be able to make the road look narrower and wider in some spots; making the road appear to wiggle might help.
- There’s an existing parking lane along the road that should be removed to create more visual wiggle to the road.
- Is it an option to extend the corner of NE 3rd Street?
- I would prefer that we treat the roadway edges more than the center lane area.

Crossing at NE 2nd Street:

- I live in an area where I see a lot of pedestrians, particularly coming out of NE 3rd and NE 5th Streets, having no easy way to cross over to NE 2nd Street to get to the park. I’d like to prevent traffic from whipping around the corner. Perhaps vertical curbs at the corners to keep drivers from running up on the sidewalks, a roundabout or more medians.
- It’s too open; there also needs to be traffic calming here.
- Darryl Nance, an absent Committee member, would like to see a crosswalk at NE 2nd Street.



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- Move bus stops from the crossing at NE 2nd Street. There might be room between NE 3rd Place and NE 4th Place.
- Consider trees to create visual blockage.
- At the southeast corner of NE 2nd Street, look at flood control options.

124th Avenue and Main Street:

- There isn't any crosswalk option to the botanical gardens from across the street.
- Do something at the corner of Main Street and 124th Avenue, perhaps a median.
- Could we do a big median in the same location as the painted yellow bubble at Main Street?
- At Main Street and 124th Avenue, you can't see NE 2nd Street and it becomes dangerous if people can't see that you're turning right or left.
- Warning sign of speed coming north from SE 1st Street to Main Street – there are serious traffic and light control issues.
- There needs to be a better crosswalk option for people crossing Main Street to get to the Bellevue Botanical Garden.

Next Steps and Action Items

Sarah noted the following action items and next steps that resulted from the meeting:

- City to research why the load limit signs along 124th Avenue were taken away; several committee members were concerned about garbage trucks using 124th throughout the week and outside of regular garbage pick-up days.
- City to share examples with the Committee of similar streets where traffic-calming has been implemented and their effectiveness (when possible).
- Add links and photos of the Urban Boulevard Project and Better Bellevue Greenway so that Committee members can review the overall plan.
- City to review traffic light timing at SE 1st Street to Main Street.
- Regarding the traffic data analysis, HDR will look at the route where cars exit the project area at SE 7th Street. The route is longer and less direct than others, so why are drivers using it?
- HDR to add 123rd Avenue NE to the "Arterials and PM Traffic Volumes" map.
- Confirm a time and date in August for the second Committee meeting.
- Plot Committee member addresses on a map and circulate to all.

Parking Lot Issues

The following issues were raised at the meeting, but may not be directly related to the work of the Committee. While the City plans to follow up on these questions, they may not be further addressed by the Committee.

- Can the City repair damage to the tiled sound wall post at NE 8th Street, on the east side of NE 124th Avenue? (A Committee member noted that the company that made that sound wall no longer carries those parts. The City would need to research options to address this issue.)
- In the same area, a fallen tree has damaged the fence. Can that be fixed?
- Research structural issues along ditch at NE 2nd Street.

Meeting adjourned at 7:05 PM



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Project Description

August 5, 2013

- This project is intended to address future potential traffic changes along 124th Avenue NE associated with the BelRed Plan and vision, with a focus on the Wilburton neighborhood south of NE 8th Street.
- The City of Bellevue is offering this unique and proactive opportunity so that local residents can inform early actions to be implemented along 124th Avenue NE.
- Continuity must be maintained for other community services and amenities using the corridor (e.g., Three Cedars Waldorf School, parks, emergency services, Sound Transit facilities, etc.).
- The street use designation and speed limit on 124th Avenue NE will remain the same.
- 124th Avenue NE must accommodate bicycles.
- The City of Bellevue will not acquire additional right-of-way as a result of this project.
- The Committee and project team will coordinate with the Urban Boulevards Project and Better Bellevue Greenway effort.
- The City of Bellevue is committed to preserving existing infrastructure as much as possible.
- The current budget allocation for this project is \$300,000 to \$500,000.
- Results of this project are subject to Bellevue City Council concurrence relative to policy.