



14TH AVENUE NW PARK PROJECT – WALKING AUDIT

SUMMARY

This report summarizes the 14th Avenue NW walking audit led by Fehr & Peers. This audit was held to receive input on converting a portion of 14th Avenue NW into a linear park. City staff, local residents, and the consultant team were well represented. Comments were received throughout the meeting and are summarized by location in Figures 1 through 4. This audit provided valuable feedback for the design team in creating park street concepts.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this project is to create a linear park within the existing public right of way on 14th Avenue NW between NW 59th Street and NW 61st Street. This will be accomplished by realigning the existing roadway to bring together the two travel lanes on 14th Avenue NW and eliminate the existing median. A park will be created in the excess space created by the roadway and median changes.

On November 30, 2011, Fehr & Peers led a walking audit for the Ballard 14th Avenue NW Park Project. In attendance were representatives from the Seattle Parks Department, the Seattle Department of Transportation, members of the East Ballard Community Association, as well as other members of the project team, including the prime consultant Mithun and the civil/drainage lead Mayfly Engineering.

The audit consisted of an opening meeting, walking tour, and recap session. Notes were taken throughout the process and feedback was consolidated into figures provided at the end of this memorandum.

The opening meeting allowed for introductions and a discussion of pedestrian safety. It also gave each participant an opportunity to provide their project goals. During the walking tour, positive elements were discussed and issues and opportunity areas were noted. Finally, the recap session allowed for further discussion and project brainstorming.

OPENING MEETING

The walking audit began with an opening meeting, where those present were asked to identify their project goals. These goals included improving safety for all users, maximizing usable green space, having 14th Avenue NW serve as the “Gateway to East Ballard,” envisioning the corridor as “park first, street second,” adding bicycle facilities, and creating a village square. The opening meeting also included a presentation by the East Ballard Community Association on the history of the corridor, previous planning efforts, and the vision that they have established.

The vision for the corridor centers on maximizing green and open space by removing the median and relocating the roadway along the west side of the existing right-of-way (ROW). The community summarizes their vision for the corridor as “community, safety, and sustainability.” While they have developed a vision, the community and City staff are looking to the consultant team to develop a working plan for the park.



Previous 14th Avenue NW Community Planning Work

WALKING AUDIT

After the opening session, Fehr & Peers led the group on a walking audit of 14th Avenue NW between 58th Street and 62nd Street. This tour included walking the corridor and using physical observations to discuss the corridor's attributes, constraints, and opportunities for improvement. During the audit, general roadway characteristics were discussed. These included that the street is a collector arterial with a 30 mph speed limit. SDOT estimated that the average daily traffic is less than 8,000 vehicles.

Parking is allowed along the curb on both sides, but is often not used. One of the most prominent features of 14th Avenue NW is the wide (28 foot) gravel median, which accommodates perpendicular vehicle parking. This area was described as a largely unregulated space, which, at times, suffers from signs of neglect including accumulating trash and abandoned vehicles.



*Walking Audit in Action
 (<http://eastballard.wordpress.com/>)*

With regards to services, residents to the east have primary access and trash collection via an alley behind 14th Avenue NW, while residents on the west use 14th Avenue NW for access and trash collection.



While visiting the site, those present were asked to identify existing elements that work well and elements that need improvement. The recent pedestrian improvements at NW 58th Street were universally praised. There were questions about the function and maintenance of existing swales, and the community would like to see stormwater treatments included in the project plan. Participants expressed a preference to retain existing cherry trees, and other mature trees where possible. It is dependent on final design, but the west side of the street and sidewalks would likely require no change.

RECAP MEETING

At the conclusion of the walking audit a recap session was held where further comments were recorded on an aerial map. Key issues raised included:

- The need to address access issues for properties affected by any planned roadway modifications.
- Recognition of the potential issues that a loss of street parking may cause.
- A need for a commitment to maintain privacy for those who live on the east side of 14th Avenue NW and will now be adjacent to a community open space.

The meeting concluded with a request from the community to further understand the specific transportation issues related to shifting the roadway (such as taper length requirements and other potential requests from SDOT). These transportation considerations would then guide further understanding of the options for designing the remainder of the space.



*Walking Audit Recap Meeting
(<http://eastballard.wordpress.com/>)*

RECOMMENDATIONS

Location-specific feedback from the walking audit is summarized on Figures 1 through 4, which cover the project area from south to north. Key elements for each of the four project blocks are also summarized in the following section.

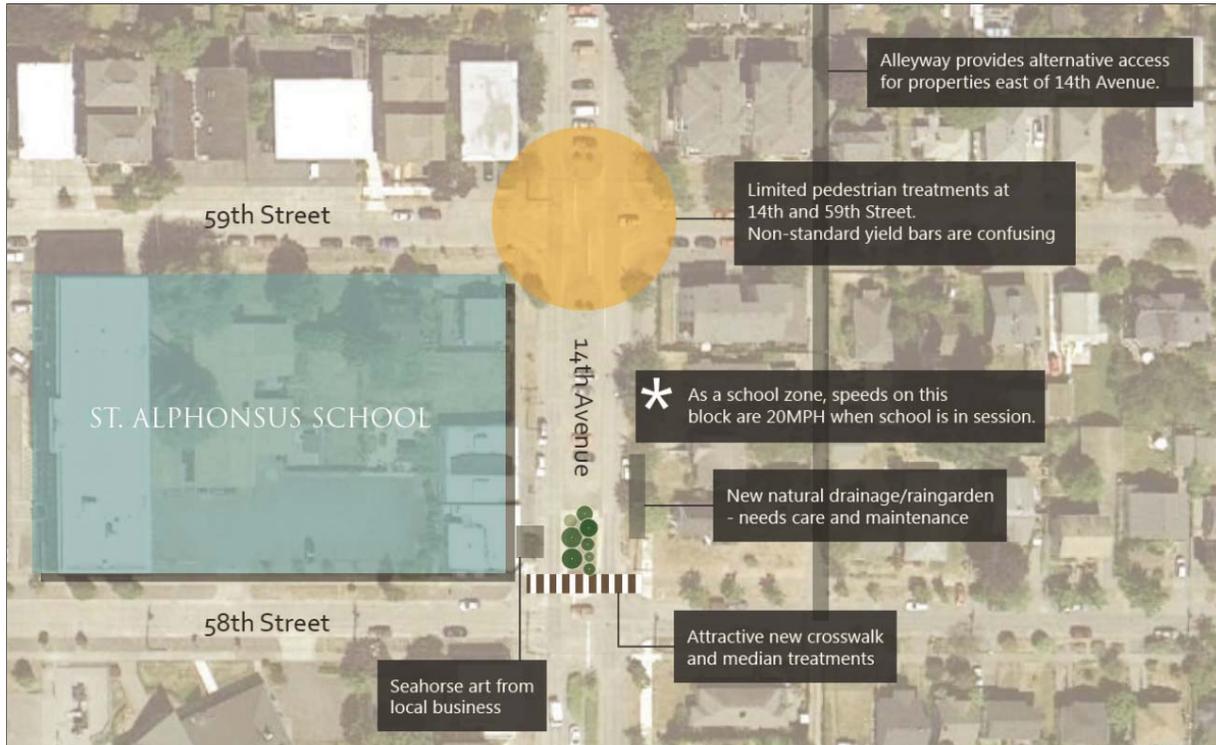


Figure 1. NW 58th Street – NW 59th Street Transition Block

Block 1, NW 58th Street to NW 59th Street

This block will serve as the transition block for shifting the northbound travel lanes to the west. At the southern end of this section, the community would like to retain the enhanced, high-visibility crosswalk that has been added at 58th Street NW. Local residents noted that they will walk out of their way to utilize this crosswalk and hope that it will be included in any future roadway enhancements.

Following the grade, stormwater flows south on 14th Ave NW. Existing raingardens on the east and west side of 14th Ave NW capture some storm water, but the final design for the park should incorporate improvements to increase stormwater / runoff catchment.



Figure 2. NW 59th Street – NW 60th Street Park Block

Block 2, NW 59th Street to NW 60th Street

This will be the first full park block. Planters and prominent cherry trees should be retained and incorporated into the park. Crossings of 14th Ave NW at NW 59th Street and NW 60th Street are confusing and difficult for motorists and pedestrians, due to the unusual application of yield bars and absence of marked pedestrian crossings.

Participants widely viewed the intersection of 14th Avenue NW and NW 60th Street as the center of the future park and an ideal location for gateway treatments, such as a raised intersection.



Figure 3. NW 60th Street – NW 61st Street Park Block

Block 3, NW 60th Street to NW 61st Street

This is the second full park block. The aspirations for this block are similar to those for the previous block. One concern unique to this block is the residential property fronting 14th Avenue NW on the southeast corner of the intersection with NW 61st Street. Park construction will likely require modification to this property's street access.



Figure 4. NW 61st Street – NW 62nd Street Transition Block

Block 4, NW 61st Street to NW 62nd Street

This block will serve as the transition block for the northbound travel lane to return to its current alignment. The north end of this block has a partial access concern for a residential unit fronting 14th Avenue NW. Local residents noted that curb parking is not intensely used in this section and that the median parking is often angled, resulting in a lower parking capacity.