

North Beacon Hill Town Center Safety

Beacon Ave S between S McClellan St and 17th Ave S

Applicant Problem

Beacon Avenue is the core retail corridor in Beacon Hill and the section between Forest St. and 15th Avenue S makes up the heart of the North Beacon Hill Town Center – with the light rail station, the library branch, the El Centro de la Raza community center, the Red Apple grocery, and myriad of other local businesses all within this three-block stretch. However, despite the wealth of community amenities, this stretch of Beacon Avenue is unsafe and uncomfortable for people on foot and on bikes. In this section in particular, Beacon Avenue cuts through the neighborhood street grid at a sharp angle, creating awkward, dangerous intersections with excessively long pedestrian crossings. Vehicles illegally park right up to the crosswalk, blocking visibility. Traffic enters and travels through this corridor at high speeds. Commuters cut through Beacon Hill to avoid traffic on I-5. The “sharrows” on Beacon Avenue provide no protection for people travelling by bike, and there are no alternative bike routes to the light rail station. Beacon Ave., 17th Ave S, and Forest St. all converge at an awkward and dangerous six-way intersection with no traffic signals.

PROJECT TYPE

Pedestrian/Bicyclist Improvements

APPROXIMATE LENGTH

650 lf

COST ESTIMATE

\$965,520

SDOT CONTRIBUTION

\$100,000

NSF FUNDS REQUESTED

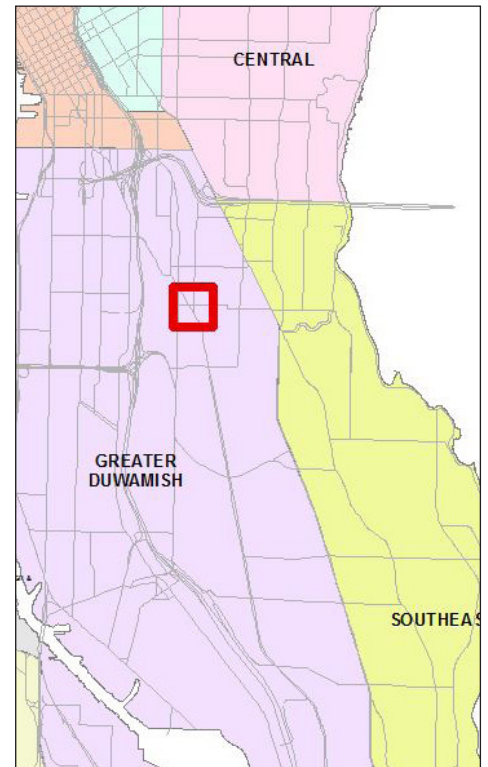
\$865,520



Looking northeast at the intersection of Beacon Ave S, S Forest St, and 17th Ave S



Looking east from the NW corner of Beacon Ave S and S McClellan St



In January 2016, a fifty-eight-year-old woman was struck and killed crossing Beacon Avenue at McClellan at a long diagonal crosswalk over 65-feet long. Several new large apartment buildings at the intersection of Beacon, 17th Ave, and Forest St. with residential and ground-floor retail (currently in design review) will only increase conflicts among all modes.

This Neighborhood Street Fund application proposes that the City fix the two intersections of Beacon & McClellan and Beacon & Forest/17th (and the block in between) to achieve the following community goals:

- 1) Significantly shorten and improve the pedestrian crossings across Beacon Avenue to encourage and protect people walking (and prevent future tragedies like the one that occurred in January).
- 2) Calm traffic on Beacon Avenue through the planned North Beacon Hill Town Center (north of Forest Street) to prioritize pedestrian, transit, bicycle, and local vehicular access to retail and discourage commuter through-traffic through the Town Center.
- 3) Provide a safe and protected bicycle route for people of all ages and abilities along Beacon Ave between Forest St. and McClellan St. to provide safe access to the light rail station from the planned Forest St. Neighborhood Greenway.

Applicant Solution

The applicants are amenable to any solution that achieves the goals identified above, but we note that several planning documents have considered potential changes to these intersections. In light of those proposals, the applicants ask SDOT to specifically consider the following changes to achieve the goals identified above:

- 1) Extend curb bulbs as far as possible to shorten pedestrian crossing distances and square off and/or raise crosswalks across Beacon Avenue. Given the long crossing distances from Beacon Avenue cutting diagonally through the neighborhood street grid, curb bulbs, should be extended as far as possible at every crossing to enable and prioritize angle. SDOT should consider raised crosswalks, which would help increase pedestrian visibility and calm traffic through the Town Center.
- 2) Remove center turn lane and replace with back-in angle parking on Beacon Avenue from Forest to McClellan. Beacon Avenue north of Forest is the heart of the North Beacon Hill Town Center and should reflect the community's desire to prioritize pedestrian, transit, bicycle, and local vehicle access to retail and community amenities. Beacon Avenue in

this corridor is currently configured as a major arterial to move vehicles through and past the Town Center as quickly as possible (at the expense of other modes). Narrowing Beacon Avenue north of Forest along the lines of what is shown in the North Beacon Hill Town Center Urban Design Framework would re-align the boulevard with the interests of the community and desired characteristics of the retail corridor (modeling other successful neighborhood retail corridors, such as Madison Park).

- 3) Consider restricting/modifying access to 17th Ave S. Several of the prior neighborhood planning documents have proposed closing of access to 17th Ave S entirely from Beacon Avenue. On the one hand, this has the advantage of simplifying the current six-way intersection at Beacon/Forest/17th Ave S. On the other hand, 17th Ave S is an arterial north of Beacon Avenue, so completely restricting access to that stretch of 17th Ave S would force more through-traffic to continue on Beacon Avenue into the Town Center. Moreover, the Fehr & Peers report notes that the closing 17th Ave S might require cul-de-sacs, which "would entail paving over existing green space and possible ROW acquisition." We encourage SDOT to consider these tradeoffs when deciding whether to restrict access to 17th Ave S north of Beacon Avenue. A third possibility might be to change 17th Ave S to a northbound one-way street from Forest to McClellan (which would allow northbound through-traffic on Beacon Avenue to use 17th Ave S instead of Beacon through the Town Center, but would prevent dangerous southbound turns from 17th Ave S onto Beacon, which currently require first turning into the center turn lane and then merging into arterial traffic).
- 4) Provide a protected bike lane on Beacon Avenue from Forest to McClellan. A safe, protected bicycle route on Beacon Avenue in this project area on the block between Forest and McClellan is needed to provide a connection for persons of all ages and abilities from the proposed greenway on Forest to the light rail station and heart of the North Beacon Hill Town Center. SDOT should consider whether one-way protected bike lanes or a single two-way protected bike lane would be most appropriate, but we note that a two-way protected bike lane on the Northeast side of the Beacon Ave could provide an efficient connection to the light rail station via the alley north of Beacon & McClellan (which leads directly to the secure bicycle parking facility, the Lander festival street, and El Centro de la Raza). SDOT also should consider how any protected bicycle infrastructure might integrate with future protected bicycle lanes on Beacon Avenue south of Forest.

5) Consider converting 17th Ave S from Beacon to Stevens and/or the right-turn slip lane from Beacon to McClellan into open pedestrian space. The North Beacon Hill Town Center Urban Design Framework proposed converting these street spaces into open pedestrian space. Converting those streets into pedestrian parks or plazas would significantly simplify each of the intersections in the project scope and prioritize pedestrian uses over vehicular through-traffic, as has been repeatedly requested by the community. If funding for these aspects of the plan is not available within the scope of the Neighborhood Street Fund, we ask that SDOT at least consider these proposals and design the improved intersections with these future community-supported projects in mind.

Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) Review

Project Description

Beacon Ave S is classified as a minor arterial and both S McClellan St and 17th Ave S north of Beacon Ave S are classified as collector arterials. There is a traffic signal at the intersection of S McClellan St and marked crosswalks at all sides of the intersection. At S McClellan St and 17th Ave S/S Forest St, there are stop signs controlling traffic on 17th Ave S and S Forest St with no stop signs for traffic on Beacon Ave S. There is a marked crosswalk at the north end of the intersection connecting to a public library with rectangular rapid flashing beacons. Beacon Ave S has 2 thru lanes, 1 in each direction with a center turning lane and on-St parking on both sides of the road. Both thru lanes also share traffic with bicyclists along the project limits.

A variety of options are proposed for possible implementation by SDOT after a full circulation study of the project area is conducted. This study would look at the specific impacts for people accessing properties within the three block study area. The proposed projects would not necessarily all be constructed since they represent different alternatives. For instance, bicycle facilities could be provided on Beacon Ave S or on 17th Ave S, but are not recommended on both. Projects include:

- Curb bulbs at the northwest, and southeast corners of S McClellan St and Beacon Ave S with an evaluation of signal timing and phasing
- Curb bulbs at the northeast and southeast corners of Beacon Ave S with 17th Ave S and S Forest St
- A curb bulb at the southern leg of 17th Ave S with signage to prevent traffic from turning onto 17th Ave S from Beacon Ave S
- A two-way striped, protected bike lane on the east side of Beacon Ave S between S Forest St and S McClellan St, or one-way striped, protected bike lanes on both sides of Beacon Ave S on this block
- Closure of the south-bound lane on 17th Ave S between S McClellan St and S Forest St and creation of either a 2-way bike lane or a landscaped area. If a bike lane is preferred, this project would also review options for extension of the bike lane north to S Lander St.

The cost estimate for this project does not include all the projects listed above. Final project choice would be made in conjunction with community stakeholders early in the design stage. At that time, project selection will be guided by the listed project budget. This project includes funding leverage from SDOT's Vision Zero Program.

Constructability

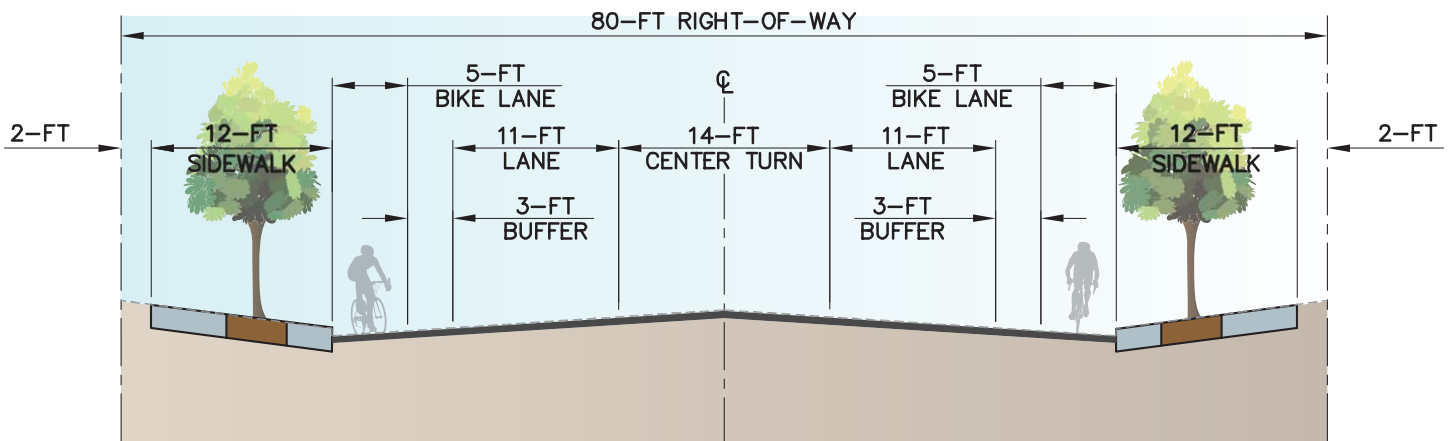
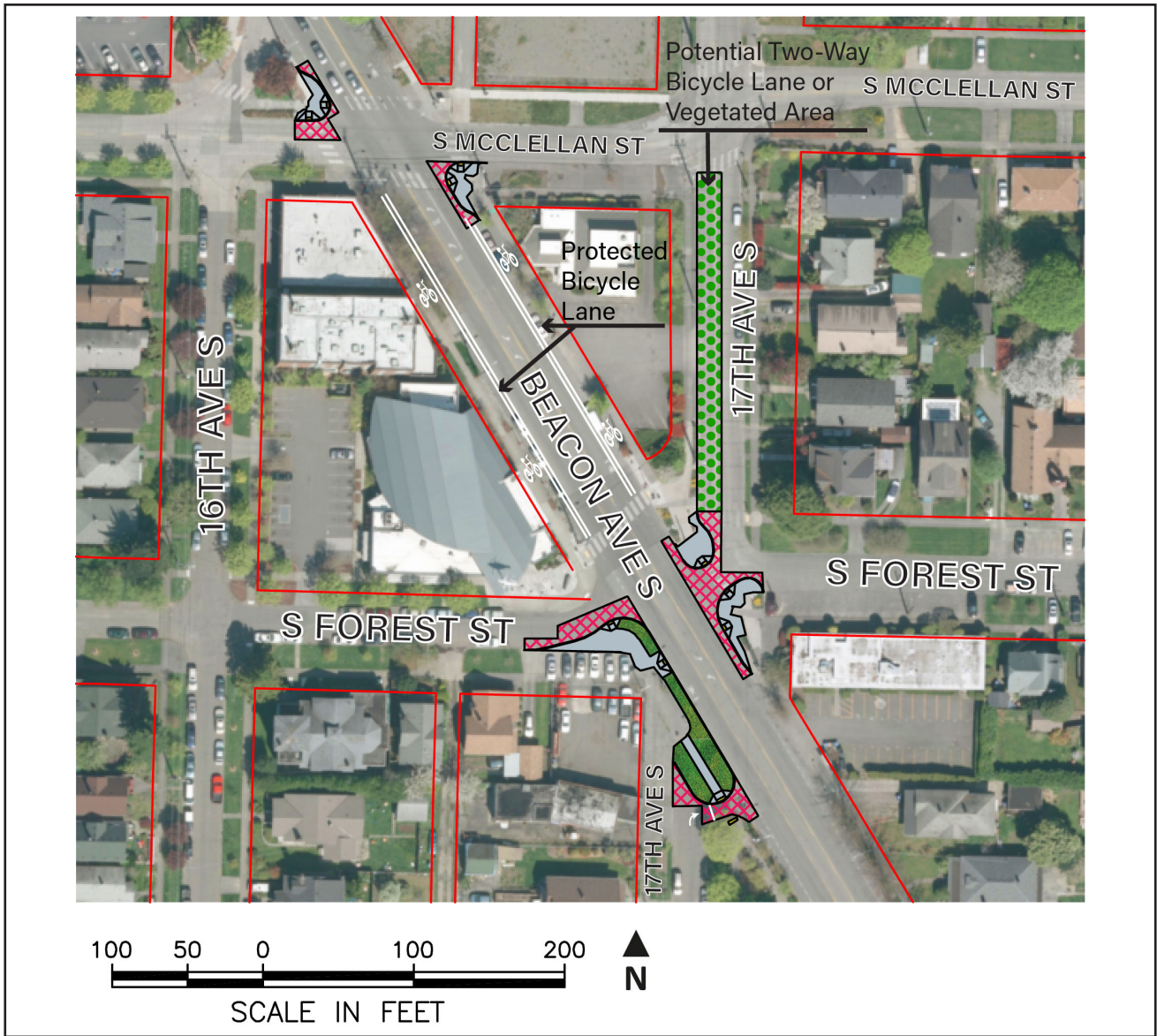
- Several drainage structures will need to be relocated with the construction of curb bulbs.

Impacts

- On-street parking would be eliminated with the addition of a protected bike lane on either Beacon Ave S or 17th Ave S.
- The curb bulb and signage at the south leg of 17th Ave S will create a partial closure of 17th Ave S; motor vehicles would only be able to make a right-turn only movement onto Beacon Ave S.

Benefits

- Increased safety and accessibility for pedestrians and bicyclists crossing Beacon Ave S
- Creation of a strong bicycle connection between the Beacon Hill Link Light Rail station and the future proposed neighborhood greenway on S Forest St
- Simplification of existing six-way intersection at S Beacon Ave, 17th Ave S, and S Forest St



BEACON AVE S
TYPICAL SECTION
 N.T.S.