



City of Seattle
Edward B. Murray, Mayor

Department of Transportation
Scott Kubly, Director

February 8, 2016

Dear neighbor,

As you may know, the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) began work to rebuild the stairway along 12th Avenue S between S Donovan and S Concord streets. Since that time, we have heard concerns from a few of the residents nearby regarding illegal activities that may take place on or near the stairway. I am writing to provide you with some information about our plans for the stairway and how we are trying to address what we have heard.

On Wednesday, February 3, 2016, I met with some of the adjacent homeowners who have reached out to me about the project. I have outlined some background information on the project, as well as SDOT's responses to the concerns we received.

Background

There has been great interest from the community in improving the stairway for many years. Late last year, we identified funding and began preparing to remove and replace the existing stairs, add new landings, and install new handrails. These improvements will bring the stairway up to current design and accessibility standards, as well as maintain an important link in the pedestrian network in the community.

Outreach and feedback

In December 2015, we posted and distributed an initial project fact sheet, as well as a subsequent construction notice, announcing that construction would begin as soon as January 2016. After completing some emergency work at a different location last month, our crews became available to work at the 12th Ave S Stairway earlier this week. We began preparing the site and excavating on Monday, February 1. Around this time, we received concerns from some nearby neighbors about SDOT's investment of resources into a stairway that is perceived to attract illegal activity.

SDOT's role and the Seattle Police Department's role

We are aware that there are ongoing concerns about illegal activity that may occur on/near the stairway. We share your concern about the stairway being an uncomfortable environment. However, SDOT is responsible for maintaining the City's transportation infrastructure (e.g., the stairway), whereas criminal activity and enforcement must be taken up with the Seattle Police Department (SPD).

We have reached out to SPD's Southwest Precinct about concerns of unsafe/ illegal activity happening near the stairway. SPD recommends that neighbors call their non-emergency phone number (206-625-5011) to report the activity when it is happening. From there, the report gets logged and once a vehicle becomes available, SPD will dispatch someone to the area to investigate. If you think the situation poses a danger to life or property, then please call 911 immediately.

Design considerations and agency coordination

After meeting with residents, we understand that there is a greater interest in improving visibility around the stairway as a way to discourage dangerous or illegal activity. As such, here are some considerations we are looking into:

- Realign the new stairs and landings slightly to the west – to be more in the center of the right of way and make the stairway more visible from the lower street
- Coordination with SDOT's Urban Forestry division to remove trees in poor health, trim overhanging branches, and replace the removed trees with vegetation (e.g., trees, groundcover) that do not shade the stairway and are better suited to prevent erosion on the hillside
- Coordination with Seattle City Light (SCL) to identify potential opportunities to:
 - Reconfigure the streetlight at the top of the stairway to direct light onto the stairway and/or
 - Add new lighting near the stairway to improve visibility
- Coordination with Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) regarding drainage concerns at the bottom of the stairway coming off the hillside

While we cannot guarantee any specific outcomes, we are committed to coordinating with the appropriate City departments to determine the feasibility of implementing these measures.

Next steps

SDOT has decided to move forward with the stairway improvements, as noted. The improvements are an important investment in the community as well as consistent with our commitment to improve mobility and maintain our infrastructure. Next week, I plan to meet with a representative from Urban Forestry regarding the tree removals and plantings. I will also be contacting SCL about lighting feasibility and SPU about possible drainage improvements. We also remain committed to listening and being responsive to your concerns as much as we are able.

Keeping you up-to-date

I will follow up with you on these topics and construction progress as I know more. Feel free to contact me using the information listed below if you have questions or concerns in the meantime.

For more information about SDOT's Stairway Maintenance Program or the 12th Ave S Stairway Replacement Project, please visit: www.seattle.gov/transportation/stairways.htm.

Sincerely,

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