

DOWNTOWN BALLARD PARKING ACTION STRATEGY

GOAL #5: IMPROVE BALLARD AVENUE STREET DRAINAGE

“On Ballard Avenue NW, north of 22nd Avenue NW, investigate how changes to the angled parking could improve drainage on the block (currently the front tires of cars act as dams and, on occasion, have caused minor flooding into nearby storefronts).” – *Downtown Ballard Parking Action Strategy*

BACKGROUND

In 2003 the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) convened a Downtown Ballard Parking Workgroup as part of the Making the Parking System Work program. The Kick-Off of this program in Downtown Ballard, and the presentation of the workgroup’s recommendations in a Community Parking Forum, were well advertised through notices in Ballard Business Insider, the Ballard News-Tribune, Chamber and Community e-mail lists, and direct door-to-door flyer distribution. The workgroup is comprised of representatives from businesses on NW Market Street, Ballard Avenue NW, the Ballard Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Ballard Merchants Association, the Ballard District Council, and area residents.

Among the workgroup’s recommendations was the goal of finding a solution to the occasional flooding that occurs along the southwest side of the 5400 block of Ballard Avenue NW (between NW Market and 22nd Avenue NW). The flooding that occurs here has sometimes been severe enough to enter adjacent businesses.

On Tuesday, November 25, 2003, Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) staff (John Marek, Charles Bookman, and Randy Wiger) conducted a field check of the southern side of Ballard Avenue NW between NW Market and 22nd Avenue NW (the 5400 block) to survey conditions of improper drainage causing intermittent flooding of businesses. Staff determined that the improper drainage was not due to tires of cars parked in angled parking spaces touching the curb and causing a dam-like effect. Staff determined two factors contribute to the problem:

- 1) Insufficient number of inlet/drains per block, and
- 2) A great amount of fallen leaves blocking the existing drains. Staff speculated that flooding most likely has occurred in the fall on days that have unusually heavy or prolonged rainfall. Staff also noted that the curb edge varied in height from the road surface along the span of the block, sometimes to an unusually low degree.

NUMBER OF DRAINS: On a very general level, SDOT staff investigated the feasibility of installing more inlets/drains: specifically staff contacted Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) staff (Greg Stevens) to determine if the main drainpipe under the street is located directly under the existing drains and curb edge or not. If so, it would be somewhat less involved to install additional drains at some point than if the main drainpipe is located elsewhere. Even in an optimistic scenario (where the drainpipe is ideally placed), installing new drains is costly. Pursuing this option would require the community to champion this course of action and actively collaborate in developing a funding plan, perhaps through fundraising, acquiring an NMF Award, forming a LID, or similar strategy.

SPU staff determined that the combined mainline (main drainpipe) is fairly deep in this location and would require significant excavation. Typically SPU prefers not to install inlets/drains mid-block unless there is a serious threat to property or safety, in which case doing so is only a temporary solution because eventually the pavement surrounding the new inlet/drain tends to keep settling and causing the new inlet/drain to be ineffective in capturing runoff. SPU staff noted that this site has been added to the list of flooding locations on SPU's Comprehensive Drainage Plan which is scheduled to be finalized in 2004, and which may increase the likelihood of this site being considered in the future as a Capital Improvement Project.

The sunken curb in the area between the People's Pub (5429 Ballard Avenue NW) and Sunset Tavern (5433 Ballard Avenue NW) suggests that the street has settled at that point and it possibly has settled in other locations. As an alternative to the community pooling their resources in order to install new inlets, it may be possible to make improvements to the existing street. Some surface or subsurface improvements to the street may restore the conditions needed to allow the street drainage to flow to the intended inlet located to the south.

LEAVES: As an immediate remedy for the occasional flooding, the SDOT will install signs that read "No Parking 2:30 a.m. - 5 a.m. Tuesdays" along the first block of Ballard Avenue NW south of NW Market as indicated by the parking workgroup. The work order for signs to be installed should be issued by February 19, 2004, with installation occurring soon thereafter. Ballard Avenue NW is regularly swept on late Monday evenings/early Tuesday mornings. Prohibiting parking during sweeping should reduce leaves that clog the drains. A 2:30 a.m. start time for the "No Parking" zone should provide sufficient time for customers of late night entertainment businesses on and near to this block of Ballard Avenue NW to leave the area, while providing enough time for Seattle Police to ticket and tow any vehicles still parked there at 2:30 a.m. (if necessary). Adjacent property owners who are especially concerned about seasonal flooding may wish to develop an emphasis ensuring that cars do not park later than the 2:30 a.m. time during weeks of the year with heavy rainfall, perhaps engaging their Community Police Team Officer.

It should be noted that residents on Ballard Avenue NW may experience some hardship in finding alternate parking spaces one evening a week. However, Ballard Avenue NW should have a better appearance and not experience the occasional flooding that occurs during heavy rains, especially in the fall when an abundance of leaves has clogged the drains. Once the signs are installed, vehicles parked along this blockface will be subject to ticketing and towing during the specified hours. Among other blocks, possible alternate overnight parking areas that may be available nearby are:

- on or around 22nd Avenue NW (from Ballard Avenue NW to Shilshole Avenue NW),
- on the northwest side of Shilshole Avenue NW (to around 22nd Avenue NW), and
- on the southeast side of NW Vernon Place (from Shilshole Avenue NW to Leary Avenue NW).

APRIL 16, 2004 UPDATE

SDOT Streetsweeping services have found that during the four weeks since the "No Parking Tuesdays 2:30 a.m. – 5:30 a.m. for streetsweeping" signs have been installed on Ballard Avenue

NW that some vehicles are parking in this area during the restricted time. However, their number is few and they are in different spaces each week, and the streetsweeping crews perceive that all portions of this block of Ballard Avenue NW are effectively being cleaned all the way to the curb within several weeks, even though the whole length is not being cleaned all the way to curb on any single week. As far as SDOT has been able to determine, there have been no parking tickets issued specifically for failure to move a vehicle during the “no parking for streetsweeping” times.

For more information regarding the streetsweeping that occurs each week on NW Market Street and Ballard Avenue NW, contact Roxanne Thomas, SDOT's Street Cleaning manager at (206) 386-1006.

For more information on the Making the Parking System Work program, contact Randy Wiger at (206) 684-8186 or Randy.Wiger@Seattle.gov, or visit the program website at <http://www.cityofseattle.net/transportation/neighborhoodparking.htm>.