

Seattle Department of Transportation
Proposed Olympic Hills Neighborhood Greenway
Questions and Answers

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SDOT is constructing a neighborhood greenway in the Olympic Hills neighborhood with the ultimate goal of creating a greenway network. After reviewing data and talking with neighbors, SDOT has recommended a route along 27th Avenue NE, jogging over to 25th Avenue NE to take advantage of existing traffic signals to cross NE 125th Street and NE 145th Street. Design elements include speed humps, bicycle pavement markings, wayfinding signs, stop signs and a paved pathway to improve access to the signal at NE 125th Street.

1. Why is SDOT proposing this project?

In Seattle, we want people of all abilities – from our 5-year old kids to our 80-year old grandparents – to be comfortable moving about the city, whether on foot, by bike, riding transit, or driving a car. By offering people more choices, we can decrease the demand on our streets and reduce our impact on the environment. In doing so, we can build a network that supports healthy and sustainable communities, keeps more money in people’s pockets, increases economic competitiveness, and adds to the character of our great city.

Neighborhood Greenways are one piece of the puzzle. They are streets that already have low volumes of auto traffic and low speeds, and where things like directional signs, speed humps and crossing improvements at busy intersections can be added to make them even safer and more comfortable.

To learn more about Seattle’s polices, actions and measures of success read our [Transportation Action Agenda](#).

2. How can I get involved and participate in the development of this project?

SDOT works to actively involve residents and the broader community from the start in neighborhood greenway projects. We host two open houses. The initial open house is an opportunity for all residents and businesses to participate and provide input about the challenges they face when traveling around the neighborhood, where auto use is low and where they want to walk or ride a bike more. Feedback helps shape the design proposal that will be shared at a second open house.

3. Will the project add a bike lane and take away on-street parking?

Bike lanes are not a part of neighborhood greenways. A greenway route in the Olympic Hills neighborhood would function just like the street currently does—a street where people driving and

riding a bike share the same road; as well as people walking. Changes would include signs and bicycle pavement markings on the street that indicate the street is a designated greenway route. On-street parking stays the same. However, stop signs could be added on the streets crossing it. As at all stop signs in Seattle, to ensure pedestrian and stop sign visibility, there would be no parking within 30 feet of the sign.

4. What are the results of the NE 125th Street rechannelization project?

Traffic data show a decline in the rate of total collisions, fewer injury collisions, a reduction in the number of people exceeding the speed limit and a reduction in bicycle and pedestrian collisions. The full report can be downloaded at the following website:
<http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/saferstreetsforall.htm>

5. School buses use 27th Avenue NE. Won't speed humps get in their way?

We work with the school district to ensure that speed humps are constructed to allow bus access. They have been installed successfully in front of schools and along bus routes in other locations. Speed humps are designed to allow large vehicles to move across them safely. Traffic calming evaluations indicate that speed humps are a successful tool for slowing vehicle speeds. The City of Portland has a nice [traffic calming evaluation web page](#) that shows the value of adding speed humps.

6. I've heard there is a safety project on Lake City Way. What is happening?

SDOT has formed a public task force consisting of the WTSC, WSDOT, law enforcement, and residents to address safety along Lake City Way (LCW) from I-5 to the city limits at NE 145th Street. The task force will create an Action Plan for the corridor with the goal of reducing collisions by 25 percent through low cost engineering, enforcement, and education efforts. The project's task force is currently in the process of selecting engineering projects and developing education and enforcement strategies to address the issues that commonly lead to crashes on LCW. Engineering work will likely focus on crossing improvements, traffic signal upgrades, and signage and channelization enhancements. \$400,000 in grants and about \$1 million in local funds are available. To learn more visit the project website http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/lcw_safety.htm

7. What is happening with the sidewalk installation on NE 130th?

New sidewalk is being constructed on the south side of NE 130th Street from 25th Avenue NE to 28th Avenue NE, crossing the neighborhood greenway. The project was identified as a key connection between Olympic Hills School, the Lake City urban village and the branch library. The project is being funded with a combination of city funds and a grant from the Washington State Department of Transportation. Construction is scheduled to be completed by the end of March, 2014.

8. Will you be planting any trees with the project?

The [Trees for Neighborhoods](#) program helps Seattle residents plant trees around their homes. Participants in the program receive free trees (up to 4 per household), watering bags, training on proper planting and care. Applications to the 2014 program will open in early August. Email treesforneighborhoods@seattle.gov to receive updates on available tree species and the application opening date.

9. How does this improve the pedestrian environment? Shouldn't you be constructing sidewalks?

Reducing vehicle speeds makes it safer and more comfortable for people walking even without a dedicated walkway. SDOT is working to install sidewalks in your neighborhood on NE 125th and NE 130th streets. Constructing sidewalks is expensive and is a long-term effort. According to our 2007 citywide sidewalk inventory, there are more than 12,000 street segments in Seattle without a constructed sidewalk. Given available funding for sidewalk projects, which allows for approximately 10 blocks of sidewalks each year, completing the sidewalk network will be a very gradual process. Seattle's Pedestrian Master Plan includes sidewalk project prioritization criteria which we use to help make the difficult choice as to the highest priority areas for sidewalk construction. The criteria emphasize areas where there is the greatest need for pedestrian improvements, for instance, high volume streets with multiple destinations to walk to and streets with barriers in the existing sidewalk system.

10. What if I don't want a speed hump in front of my house?

SDOT makes every effort to install speed humps along property lines so that they are not directly in front of your house. A number of factors are considered when locating them such as proximity to intersections, driveways and overhead lighting (for visibility).

11. Our streets already feel safe. How would a greenway help?

There's growing evidence that residents in neighborhoods with slower streets are more likely to take ownership of those streets and in so doing increase the surveillance that is key to deterring crime. Criminals will find a fast, unpleasant street lined with garage doors an easier target than a slow, quiet street watched over by neighbors walking and biking along the street. Motorists traveling at slower speeds are more aware of their surroundings and help deter crime. Also, greenways can be especially beneficial for families, children and seniors who might find these routes more comfortable than busier nearby streets.

12. Will it be hard to see people on bikes when we use our driveways?

The good news is that as bicycling increases drivers become more accustomed to seeing them. Residents pulling out of their driveways need to pay attention and expect to see pedestrians and bicyclists, just as they currently do. Pedestrians and people riding bikes along the greenway also must pay attention, because there is always a likelihood they could encounter a vehicle pulling out of a driveway.

13. How does the greenway help seniors and people with disabilities?

The main purpose of neighborhood greenways is to provide people of all ages and abilities a safe place to travel. We understand that some people have restricted mobility and are not able to walk along the greenway, but they will still experience the benefits of a quieter street.

14. What effect does a greenway have on property values and crime rates?

The value of a property is a function of many attributes including but not limited to house and lot size, age of the structure, school and tax districts, proximity to desirable and undesirable amenities, views from the property, noise and pollution levels, interest rates, month and year of sale, as well as socio-economic elements such as characteristics of neighboring structures, residents and streets. Because there are so many variables that determine the value of a given property at a given moment in time, it is challenging to make an “apples-to-apples” comparison of two streets where the only difference is the presence of a neighborhood greenway. This is particularly difficult given the relative newness of greenways (or bike boulevards as they are called in some city’s) in the United States. There is not a lot of existing data that measures all of these changes after a street becomes a greenway.

According to researchers studying the links between property values and the environmental changes that take place after a greenway is built (including decreased traffic volumes, less noise, and having more transportation choices) it appears that the overall effect is a positive one. More information on existing research is available from the Transportation Research Board.

16. We already have a lot of bike lanes, how about spending the project money to fix potholes?

Not everyone can drive and yet almost everyone pays sales taxes and property taxes. These taxes all contribute to funding transportation so it is important to deliver a safe, reliable, efficient and socially equitable transportation system that gives people travel options. One way to do that is to make walking and riding a bike more convenient. When one person chooses to walk instead of driving it means more space on the roads for those who are driving. It also means less damage to roads, reducing the need to fix potholes.

15. What about 30th Avenue NE?

SDOT is evaluating potential improvements on 30th Avenue NE between roughly NE 130th and 143rd streets. Once project boundaries are confirmed and design starts a public engagement process will also launch to discuss what is possible.

16. Will emergency vehicles still be able to access the neighborhood?

The proposed changes do not negatively impact emergency vehicles. SDOT works with emergency providers prior to making street changes, like adding medians to ensure there are no conflicts.