



Ballard Neighborhood Greenway Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

March 2014

The city is seeking input on proposed safety improvements to create a second neighborhood greenway in the Ballard neighborhood with the ultimate goal of creating a greenway network. Have questions on what this might mean? Keep reading.

1. What is a neighborhood greenway?

On streets with low vehicle speeds and low vehicle volumes, a neighborhood greenway can:

- Improve safety
- Help people cross busy streets
- Discourage cut-thru traffic
- Protect the residential character of our neighborhoods
- Keep speeds low
- Get people to where they want to go like parks, schools, shops and restaurants

Safer, calmer residential streets are achieved by using some combination of the following:

- Signs and [bicycle pavement markers](#)
- Sidewalk and pavement repairs
- Intersection medians
- Flashing beacons
- Bicycle parking
- Traffic signals
- Speed humps
- Curb ramps

Neighborhood greenways are not car free zones, do not add bike lanes and there are minimal if any on-street parking impacts.

2. How can I get involved and participate in the development of a Ballard Greenway?

SDOT's approach to neighborhood greenway projects is to actively involve residents and the broader community from the start. We hold two public meetings, talk with stakeholders and offer to attend community meetings. 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 is shared at a second open house.



Please attend our first Open House on March 25th 2014 from 6 – 7:30 PM (presentation at 6:30PM) at the Ballard High School Commons Room (1418 N 65th St). Materials are posted on the web site at <http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/ballardgreenway.htm>

Additionally, we want to more clearly convey what a neighborhood greenway is. Neighborhood greenways are new in Seattle. We have completed a few in [Wedgwood](#), [Ballard](#), [Greenwood](#), [Delridge](#) and [Beacon Hill](#).

3. Will you add a bike lane and will it take away on-street parking?

Bike lanes are not a part of neighborhood greenways. A north-south greenway route in Ballard 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 usually 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 is no parking within 30 feet of the sign.

4. Can you build a neighborhood greenway on streets that carry more than 1,500 vehicles per day or streets that have large vehicles and freight trucks?

Neighborhood greenways work best on low volume, low speed streets. Traffic volumes near the heart of Ballard, around NW Market St and south of NW Market St, are higher than they are north of NW Market St. Luckily, traffic speeds on potential greenway routes are around the speed limit.

In the commercial, industrial and multi-family area of Ballard, more extensive engineering treatments may be necessary to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians of all ages and abilities, without compromising commercial access and freight mobility, especially on Major Truck Streets.

5. Will a neighborhood greenway decrease the number of cars driving on other streets?

Neighborhood greenways do not decrease the current number of cars traveling on the street. Rather they help ensure that those that do are moving at a safer, calmer pace.

6. 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 and prevent crashes. Greenways can be especially beneficial for families, children and seniors who might find these routes more comfortable than busier nearby streets.

7. 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.

8. How many more people will be bicycling on my street?

It is impossible to know for sure, however, SDOT expects more people to use a street than currently do if it becomes a neighborhood greenway. It will not become a major bicycle thoroughfare like the Burke-Gilman Trail, but rather a neighborhood amenity primarily used by those who live nearby. In 2014, SDOT installed permanent bicycle counters along the Ballard Neighborhood Greenway on NW 58th St. With only a few months of data, it is difficult to extrapolate trends. This summer, we will be validating the data and conducting a formal evaluation of the performance and impacts of the Ballard Neighborhood Greenway on NW 58th St.

9. 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, calm street.

10. What does this greenway add for walkers that they don't have already?

One of the great things about Ballard is that there is a complete sidewalk network, south of NW 85th St. Other proposed neighborhood greenways in Seattle do not have this. We would make other

improvements that should make it even easier and safer to walk, including crossing improvements at the major street, marking crosswalks and installing curb ramps.

11. Why can't you install sidewalks where they don't already exist?

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.

12. Won't adding east-west stop signs make the north-south neighborhood greenway more appealing to cars?

Adding stop signs means drivers have to stop before turning onto or crossing the greenway making it safer and providing priority for walkers and bicyclists. To ensure that additional auto traffic is not attracted to the greenway, SDOT will measure speeds and volumes along the greenway and other parallel routes one year after implementation to evaluate the performance of the greenway.

13. 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).

14. Will SDOT install stop signs at traffic circles?

Traffic circles on their own do not require a driver to stop, so the stop signs require drivers to stop before they enter the greenway, helping them to notice pedestrians and people biking. In addition to the stop signs, we also install stop bars and a "no parking within thirty feet" sign so the stop sign and stopping location is clear. Drivers approaching an intersection with a traffic circle and a stop sign must stop before entering the intersection, just as they would at other intersections with stop signs.

We do not remove existing traffic circles as they continue to calm traffic traveling along the neighborhood greenway. Neighborhood greenways are built for all ages and abilities, and our goal is to make the street safer for our most vulnerable populations. When we do that, then the street is safer for all.

15. 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 cities) in the United States. There is not a lot of existing data that measures all of these changes after a street becomes a greenway. In Beacon Hill and Ballard real estate brochures have promoted that homes for sale are located on a neighborhood 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 drive 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.

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

SDOT will work with emergency providers prior to making street changes, like adding medians and speed humps, to ensure there are no conflicts.

18. Will the potential neighborhood greenway route connect to the Burke Gilman Trail?

The Burke-Gilman Trail Extension between 11th Avenue NW and the Ballard Locks is currently under environmental review. Once a preferred alignment is identified SDOT can consider the best way to connect the two projects. For more information visit www.seattle.gov/transportation/missinglink.htm.

