

Re: Concerns/Question

From: [REDACTED]@gmail.com>
To: [REDACTED]@seattle.gov>, [REDACTED]@seattle.gov>
Cc: woodlandparkaven <woodlandparkaven@gmail.com>
Date: Sat, 30 Dec 2023 16:16:36 -0800
Attachments: Woodland Park Ave N - Street View.png (237.52 kB); Woodland Park Ave N - Traffic Calming Aerial.pdf (372.29 kB)

CAUTION: External Email

Hi [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

Hope your holidays are going well!

I'm reaching out because I've spent more time looking over the Woodland Park Ave Traffic Calming Phase 2 Project (P23043) and have some concerns that **I'm looking for support from the city on**. To be transparent, the neighbors leading this project dismiss any and all concerns raised to them (you can see this in the thread above) and blatantly misrepresent neighborhood details/support for the project.

A couple examples of this are below:

1. *"There are designated bike lanes that the city recently spent a great deal of time and money to plan and implement on Stone Way."*
 - o **This isn't correct**, as there are no dedicated bike lanes on Southbound Stone Way between N42nd and N43rd. Cyclists must share the driving lane with vehicles which is very dangerous for both parties.
2. *"Unsurprisingly, 94% of residents living on WPA and 91% of all neighbors support the project to make our streets safer."*
 - o In September, I engaged with the neighborhood by sharing explicit details about the project and asked residents to reach out to the Seattle Neighborhood's Department directly. Of those who reached out, 57% Support and 43% Opposed. **This is not even close to the support numbers shared by the neighborhood leaders.**

My motivation behind my engagement is ensuring this new street design equitably serves all residents and not just the interests of a select few.

@ [REDACTED], @ [REDACTED] could you help with these questions below?

1. **Could the design be updated to include a dedicated bike lane in each direction?** By reviewing the latest design details shared it looks like there is 10 feet of space dedicated on each side to painted curb bulbs which could easily accommodate a dedicated bike lane (Average Size 5 Feet). This seems like a no-brainer in protecting the safety of cyclists that use Woodland Park Ave N while also achieving the goals of the traffic calming redesign. When I tried to raise this concern to the neighborhood leaders (congestion and cyclists) they completely missed that vehicles and cyclists competing for one driving lane is very dangerous.
 - o *"That is exactly what we would hope for, as that congestion is what will lead drivers to stop using WPA as a cut-through and use the arterial streets instead."*
2. **Is the city coordinating with the other neighborhood groups focusing on Stone Way street safety?** I've seen several flyers recently and I'm concerned that this project on Woodland Park Ave N is going to negatively impact Stone Way. The neighborhood leaders for

the Woodland Park Ave N project have been very clear in their goals of pushing traffic to Aurora and Stone Way.

I wish I could have productive conversations with the neighborhood leaders but as you can see from this thread that any idea/concern that isn't immediately aligned to their perspective is met with resistance and disrespect. They also won't sign any emails so it's very hard to have a conversation with an anonymous email group.

At its core this is a project affecting a **public** street using **public** funds, which all residents should have a voice in. I really appreciate your time and assistance on this! Hope you both have a wonderful new year!

--
[REDACTED]

On Mon, Nov 27, 2023 at 8:00 AM woodlandparkaven <woodlandparkaven@gmail.com> wrote:

As mentioned in the last email and as directed by [REDACTED] please send any questions or concerns regarding the street calming project to woodlandparkaven@gmail.com. This email address has been specifically created for correspondence regarding this project.

We are sorry you feel disrespected, as that was not the intention. Rather, we hope that by outlining the facts, it will be easier to understand the current circumstances. Additionally, we want you to know that we have heard and documented all of your concerns, including those expressed over the summer in addition to those outlined more recently.

As discussed, the traffic calming measures to be implemented on WPA are for the purpose of addressing excessive vehicle speeds. We recognize that not everybody is going to support the traffic calming project on WPA. This is particularly true if one does not feel that there is a problem with traffic speeds on WPA and therefore, a need to do something about it. That being said, we have overwhelming majority support for the traffic calming measures that will be implemented next summer.

We are still confused by your comment about a "neutral" location for the information meeting in January. Again, the meeting in January will be held for the purpose of providing more details about the traffic calming project to be implemented next summer on WPA. You are absolutely free to air your thoughts and grievances. However, the project has been funded and is moving forward. We have already reserved a date for the Wallingford Public Library. However, we are not sharing that date yet, as we are still waiting for SDOT to confirm that they can have a representative present. We will provide details about that meeting once we have received that confirmation. Thank you.

On Sun, Nov 26, 2023, 7:58 PM [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@gmail.com> wrote:
Hello,

Thank you for removing [REDACTED] as he notified me that he will not be the SDOT representative for this project but I will cc [REDACTED] back in so they can see your response.

You are right. I am opposed to this project as I do not believe it is a good use of city funds, as well as disagreeing with the proposed design. That does not mean I deserve to be treated with such disrespect. I have not made any insinuations or personal comments about any of this projects steering committee but you feel so empowered to make them about me.

The only point in your response that I will comment on is around the neutral location for the January community meeting. From my perspective, it would be respectful to host the meeting in a neutral location where all neighbors would feel comfortable asking questions. We have many great local organizations that could offer a meeting space (Boys and Girl Club, Local Schools/Churches, etc.)

Thanks,

[REDACTED]

On Nov 26, 2023, at 4:23 PM, woodlandparkaven <woodlandparkaven@gmail.com> wrote:

Please note that we are not continuing to cc the individual email addresses for [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] as DON and SDOT have directed this email address to be used for community inquiries now that the grant has been funded.

There is a process to getting things done in community government. Unfortunately, you have entered the process at the end versus the beginning. While this is new for you, the other people who have worked on the project have been doing so for at least five years. While you would like to go back to the beginning and start over with this process, the rest of us would respectfully disagree. Unfortunately, in every decision made there are always going to be people in support and people opposed. We are sorry that you are opposed to the project. However, you are in the minority.

The numerous concerns that you have expressed from June until now have been unrelated to street safety due to the speeds that vehicles travel on WPA. However, the purpose of the traffic calming measures and the reason for obtaining the grant is based on reducing traffic speeds on WPA. From your comments, it appears that you do not believe that vehicle speeds and street safety are a top concern. You are in the minority. Not only do we have a decisive majority of residents who believe that traffic speeds are a top concern, we also have a street planner who studied the street and drew the same conclusion.

What makes WPA unique is its width. This width is also what makes the street extremely dangerous.

You mention cars backing up due to implemented changes. That is exactly what we would hope for, as that congestion is what will lead drivers to stop using WPA as a cut-through and use the arterial streets instead. Drivers take streets that will get them to their location more quickly. As such, drivers do not take Midvale in order to drive faster than they would be able to travel on Stone Way. That is how we know that Midvale was designed for its current use as a non-arterial street. The changes that will be implemented on WPA are not exceptional. They merely bring the same traffic calming measures to WPA as are already in existence on other non-arterial streets.

The plan proposed by SDOT is not a perfect solution. If you ask ten people on the street what their solution would be, you are likely to get ten different responses. It is not SDOT's responsibility to implement all ten ideas. It would be impossible to do so--such is the challenge of democracy. No one is going to get exactly what they want and it would be naive to believe that they would. At the end of the day, SDOT's responsibility is to design streets that meet current code and keep the community safe. The work that will be done next summer satisfies those criteria.

Please be assured that we have very competent and highly qualified people working for SDOT. They are educated about how to design safe streets and they are uniquely qualified to recognize all of the benefits, potential problems and nuances involved in doing so.

We are not sure what you're referring to when you state "neutral location". The meeting in January is a community meeting to share with residents the changes that will be implemented on WPA next summer. There is no need to suggest anything otherwise or to infer that there is a need for a safe or "neutral" location. That kind of language or insinuation is unnecessary.

You mentioned interacting with the steering committee following the meeting in June. To clarify, you were engaged repeatedly over email. Additionally, you were offered an opportunity to have an in-person meeting with one of the members to specifically discuss

your concerns and to hear more about the project. You declined. Moreover, the issues that you have raised in these last two emails are different from those that you raised in the email correspondence following the meeting in June.

Again, we are at the end of the process and decisions have already been made. We are not starting the process over again. That is not how government works. A process does not start over every time a new person gets elected, or in this case, every time a new person moves to the street or decides to get involved. Nothing would ever get done if that were the case.

If you have not had the chance to review the following video, we would encourage you to do so. It will answer many of the questions and concerns you might have about what does and does not work regarding traffic calming.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3oP-Ndvv1zw>

On Fri, Nov 24, 2023 at 7:26 PM [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@gmail.com> wrote:

Hello,

Thank you for your reply, context, and transparency about this project. I'm excited to hear there will be a community meeting in January (at hopefully a neutral location for all neighbors).

In response to, "Unsurprisingly, 94% of residents living on WPA and 91% of all neighbors support the project to make our street safer.", I'm glad to know outreach was done! I do question if all the details were shared about the project though. Several of the neighbors I've spoken with said they were asked about supporting a project for street safety but no details were shared. We may just have to agree to disagree here but I believe you should fully inform individuals before asking their opinion on something. I will remind the neighbors I've chatted with to email into to this group to discuss their specific concerns with you all.

I love the history of this street! It has so much potential and could turn into something great where it'd be a safe pedestrian/bicyclist connection between Woodland Park and Lake Union. On the note of the actual design, it was stated at the last community meeting in June that our street is unique. We have 5 T intersections and I cannot imagine that is very common in Seattle. My understanding from your answer is that this detail wasn't explicitly confirmed with the street designer but we are trusting it was taken into account.

I also want to acknowledge some of your comments about myself. You are correct I am very new to this project and at the very first community meeting the sentiment from this project's leaders was similar to, "We know this plan isn't great but we are going with it". That was deeply concerning to me as it is a very big unknown to change a street design which I have experienced when I lived in Greenwood. Around 85th/Greenwood Ave, a lot of the side streets are used for cut through traffic. Traffic calming measures were installed but during rush hour, the streets turned into gridlock. This is where my concerns for this project are coming from and when I tried to engage after the meeting in June, I was met with a bit of dismissive attitude when I only wanted to know the concrete details about parking loss, specifics on safety measures, layout, etc. These interactions are what is making me concerned/questioning the quality of the project. When I'm only trying to ensure our neighborhood isn't negatively impacted.

Thank you for all the other details regarding safety measures, bicyclists, and pedestrians. I'm very much looking forward to the meeting in January.

Hope you all are having a wonderful holiday season!

- [REDACTED]

On Nov 19, 2023, at 6:56 PM, woodlandparkaven
<woodlandparkaven@gmail.com> wrote:

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We understand that you are concerned about coming into this project at the end versus when it was started approximately five years ago (longer if you talk to residents on the street who worked to get the first traffic circle implemented). Traffic speeds and volume on WPA have increased significantly over the last five+ years and we are thrilled that something is finally going to be done to address it. The work to get us this far has been completed by a coalition of over 100 individuals, including street and neighborhood residents as well as organizations such as the Fremont Neighborhood Council.

This project has been in the works for many years and has involved a great deal of time and energy on behalf of our coalition as well as SDOT, the Seattle Parks Foundation and Seattle Neighborhoods. Though we haven't had many to share until recently, over the years, updates regarding the project have been shared via email, fliers and word of mouth. Most recently, we have spent many weeks working to update the email list and have obtained contact information for just under 200 residents. At SDOT's request, we have spent a great deal of time talking with residents to inquire about their feelings regarding the grant that was recently funded. Unsurprisingly, 94% of residents living on WPA and 91% of all neighbors support the project to make our street safer. Families with children and older residents are particularly thankful for the impending changes though younger professionals such as yourself have also expressed their enthusiasm.

We want you to know that your concerns have been heard. We appreciate that since July 2023, you have invested time emailing with members of the steering committee about your concerns, talking with neighbors, hanging fliers informing people about your concerns and emailing the city. Please know your concerns have been heard as well as documented.

You mentioned 20-30 people that you know who share your concerns. Please direct those residents to send their concerns along with their name, contact information and street address to the woodlandparkaven@gmail.com account so that we can keep them updated about the project. At this point, aside from your message, that account has not received any emails from residents expressing opposition to the project.

In terms of street use, Woodland Park Ave N was not designed for its current use. It was originally designed to accommodate a trolley car that went back and forth between Downtown and Woodland Park. As a non-arterial street, Woodland Park Ave N does not meet current code. As such, it is an unregulated street without the traffic calming measures implemented on other non-arterial streets. The plan presented by SDOT brings our street to current code. It was designed in consideration of community input and a street planner from a previous grant in addition to rules and guidelines outlined by the city.

Narrowing the street between 42nd and 43rd will bring WPA in line with the widths of other non-arterial streets. Emergency vehicles drive on non-arterial streets every day. They will also continue to be able to drive on WPA. For vehicles not using the street for neighborhood use, they have access to the arterial streets of Aurora located two blocks to the west or Stone Way located two blocks to the east.

The new plan will implement extra safety measures for pedestrians crossing the street. This will be particularly helpful for children, older residents and those with mobility issues.

There are designated bike lanes that the city recently spent a great deal of time and money to plan and implement on Stone Way. Stone Way is located two blocks east of WPA.

We will be having a meeting in January to discuss the project and are hoping to have more details to present at that time. We will send a notice once we have confirmed the meeting location, date and time. Notice of this meeting will also be sent via email and residences will be fliered.

Thank you for once again sharing your concerns.

Friends of Woodland Park Avenue

On Sat, Nov 18, 2023, 2:16 PM [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@gmail.com> wrote:
Hello,

I was notified by neighborhoods department that the project to redesign Woodland Park Ave N between N 43rd and N 42nd has been approved to move forward.

In an effort to productively engage with this project, I spent some time reading up on SDOT Traffic Calming policies and guidelines ([SDOT Site](#))

My families main concerns and questions are below:

1. Can you share all neighborhood involvement/public comment you've incorporated into this proposed design? In conversations with a handful of neighbors (20-30), I've heard many people upset about this plan and confused by the details. I also feel this way. This makes me believe that this project was done in a silo and not transparently communicated to ensure ease of understanding and predictable design by all.
2. How does this design accommodate emergency vehicles? I'm concerned that by narrowing the street it will delay emergency response for this section of Woodland Park Ave N which could be a life or death impact for residents.
3. How does this traffic calming street design prioritize bicyclists, pedestrians, and people with disabilities? There is already a serious issue with sidewalks on the corner of N43rd/Woodland being very inaccessible to individuals with mobility issues so I would like confirmation this new street design is not going to make this problem worse.
4. Has the area wide street system been evaluated to ensure minimal negative impacts from this traffic calming design?

All of these questions above are aligned to the SDOT guidelines I linked above. It should not be asking too much for a new street design to follow SDOT best practices.

Looking forward to hearing from you all!

[REDACTED]