



SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION

City Hall—Shared Vision Room, 3989 Central Ave NE

Tuesday, March 12, 2024

6:00 PM

AGENDA

ATTENDANCE INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC

Members of the public who wish to attend may do so in-person or via Microsoft Teams www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-teams/join-a-meeting, Meeting ID 220 710 057 646 and passcode 9SW2ZH. For questions please call the Public Works Department at 763-706-3700.

COMMUNITY FORUM: At this time, individuals may address the Sustainability Commission about any item not included on the regular agenda. All speakers need to state their name and connection to Columbia Heights, and limit their comments to five (5) minutes. Those in attendance virtually should send this information in the chat function to the moderator. The Commission will listen to brief remarks, ask clarifying questions, and if needed, request staff to follow up or direct the matter to be added to an upcoming agenda.

CALL TO ORDER

1. Roll Call
2. Review of Minutes

OLD BUSINESS

3. Sustainable Purchasing Policy Update
4. Complete Streets Policy Update
5. Partners in Energy Update
6. GreenCorps Host Site Update
7. Sustainability Commission Newsletter Submission
8. Implementing Ban on Black Plastic To-Go Containers From Restaurants
9. People Over Parking Act

NEW BUSINESS

10. Sustainability Commission Representation at City Events
11. Round Robin

ADJOURNMENT

Auxiliary aids or other accommodations for individuals with disabilities are available upon request when the request is made at least 72 hours in advance. Please contact Administration at 763-706-3610 to make arrangements.



SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION
City Hall—Shared Vision Room, 3989 Central Ave NE
Thursday February 16, 2024
6:00 PM

DRAFT/UNAPPROVED MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Ahmadvand at 6:02 p.m.

Members present: Commissioners Ahmadvand, Finkelson, Groseth, Jensen Christen, Johnson, LaPlante, Leoni-Helbacka

Members absent: Commissioners Kurek, Evenson

Staff present: Sulmaan Khan, Interim City Engineer
Liz Bushaw, Administrative Assistant

Staff absent: Liam Genter, Urban Forestry Specialist
Andrew Boucher, City Planner

Council Liaison: Connie Buesgens (present)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Ahmadvand, seconded by LaPlante to approve the minutes of October 10, 2023 as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Sustainable Purchasing Policy Update

Khan stated that a draft copy of a sustainable purchasing policy was distributed at the December meeting and opened the floor for comments or questions from commissioners. LaPlante stated that she would like more time to consider the policy, and Ahmadvand agreed. There were some issues getting access to the policy, and Khan stated he would reach out to IT to get that resolved. Commissioners agreed to revisit the sustainable purchasing policy at the next meeting.

2. Complete Streets Policy Update

Khan stated that he reviewed the information in the complete streets policy, and wanted to ask commissioners for their thoughts about the language requiring reporting the race and ethnicity of car accident victims – the State of Minnesota does not provide that information, and it is only reported at a Federal level. LePlante said that she wanted to keep the language the same, but remove the specifics about race. After some discussion about editing parts of the language, Khan stated that he would make the adjustments discussed and then send back out to the group for approval and comments via Teams.

LePlante suggested that a report about the condition of the infrastructure be provided to ensure it is maintained. Khan explained that this may be something we could achieve through a GIS map. Khan further explained that Columbia Heights breaks the city into zones every year to assess and repair

infrastructure as needed, and this would also include any pedestrian and bike areas. Khan said that he can check through the street rehab policy and make sure the language includes the complete streets items. LePlante requested a copy of the street rehab policy Khan discussed, and Khan agreed to provide it for the next meeting.

3. Partners in Energy Update

Khan stated that Boucher has submitted the application for this, and will need to follow up with him about the results.

4. GreenCorps Host Site Update

Khan went over the need to choose a focus area in order to submit an application for GreenCorps, and commissioners discussed what that might look like at the city, and who this person might work with for their 11-month assignment.

Khan suggested a sub-committee to provide a little more research and information about what this focus area should be, and what project makes the most sense to have this person work on. Commissioners expressed an interest in speaking with Jesse Davies to discuss a little further what might be needed in the Refuse and Recycling department, and if this GreenCorps position would be a good fit.

Ahmadvand made a motion to start a subcommittee to do more research and evaluation around opportunities for these and other internships. Motion was seconded by Finkelson. Motion Passed.

NEW BUSINESS

5. Sustainability Commission Submission for City Newsletter (e.g. zero waste tips, sustainability facts, etc.)

Buesgens and Groseth explained that it may be a good idea to include a sustainability section to the city's newsletter, and gave examples of possible topics.

LePlante stated she works in marketing, and would love to work on some communications on behalf of the Sustainability Commission to include in the newsletter.

Commissioners discussed possible ideas to highlight in the newsletter including organizing some clean-up days.

6. Changes to Municipal Organics Program going into effect in Spring

LePlante brought up the communication that had been sent out about the new organics recycling program. She asked if the group might be able to speak with Jesse, the Refuse and Recycling Coordinator, to talk about messaging, communication, and education about new organics recycling program. Khan stated that he would see if he would be available for the March meeting.

7. Implementing Ban on Black Plastic To-Go Containers From Restaurants

LePlante explained the problems with recycling black plastic and brought an example to share with the group about the Minneapolis ban on black plastics for to-go containers. LePlante shared that she believes it may be a good first step for Columbia Heights.

Finkelson suggested getting feedback from the community about the possibility of banning black plastic.

Khan stated that in order to enforce any policy banning the use black plastic, there would need to be an ordinance passed for that.

The commissioners decided to bring some action steps forward for the March meeting.

8. People Over Parking Act

Finkelson brought forward the idea to stop requiring a parking minimum in the City of Columbia Heights for new spaces in the city.

Beusgens said that it would be a good idea to bring a list of pros and cons for getting rid of parking minimums to the council for consideration.

9. Round Robin

Leoni-Helbacka made a motion to create a subcommittee for invasive species removal. Motion was seconded by Johnson. Motion passed unanimously.

LePlante mentioned that she had attended a field trip to a recycling plant with Jesse Davies that was valuable and educational and encouraged the other commissioners to attend these adult education events in the future.

Khan stated that the draft agenda can be sent to the group for additional items or edits.

Groseth asked if anyone from the group would want to table at an upcoming event for the city, and that this could also be added to next month's agenda.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Ahmadvand, seconded by Jensen-Christen to adjourn the meeting at 7:45 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Bushaw
Administrative Assistant

Complete Streets

AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING A COMPLETE STREETS POLICY DEFINING A PROCESS TO ENSURE FUTURE STREET AND TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS, GIVE AMPLE CONSIDERATION TO ALL FUTURE USERS AND INCORPORATE FEATURES AS NECESSARY TO FULFILL THE CITY'S VISION OF COMPLETE STREETS

Commented [SK1]: Resolution?

WHEREAS, Complete Streets as defined in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan means roadways planned, designed, and constructed to create a complete, connected network and provide equitable access to all users and promotes safe and efficient movement of people and goods, whether by car, truck, transit, assistive device, foot, or bicycle; and,

WHEREAS, Complete Streets supports economic growth, community equity and stability by providing complete, accessible and efficient connections between home, school, work, recreation, and retail destinations by improving pedestrian and vehicular environments; and,

WHEREAS, increasing walking and bicycling offers improved health benefits for community members by reducing air pollution, stormwater runoff, and energy consumption, and makes Columbia Heights a more livable and equitable community; and,

WHEREAS, Complete Streets enhance safe walking and bicycling options for school-age children, in recognition of the Safe Routes to Schools program; and,

WHEREAS, the City of Columbia Heights recognizes the importance of equity in relation to street infrastructure and modifications such as sidewalks, crosswalks, shared-use paths, bicycle lanes, signage, and accessible curb ramps that enable safe, convenient, and comfortable travel for all users regardless of age and ability.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBIA HEIGHTS DOES ORDAIN AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION I. PURPOSE

This policy defines a process to ensure future street and transportation projects, give ample consideration to the equity of all current and future users and incorporate features as necessary to fulfill the City's vision of Complete Streets. The City views each street and transportation project as unique. This means design features will likely differ from street to street, yet each street may still be considered "complete".

SECTION II. COMPLETE STREET POLICY

This policy consists of narrative standards and a map illustrating focus corridors that applies to all development projects and phases unless an exemption is approved by the City Engineer. The following guidelines should be followed and implemented at the beginning of the project process including retrofitting and reconstruction, repaving and restriping to ensure that complete streets elements are incorporated into all transportation improvement projects (except as exempted herein):

1. Complete Streets elements should be incorporated into all public transportation projects, Capital Improvement Plan, or any other existing and future supporting plans and adhere to the Minnesota Department of Transportation's Complete Streets Policy to serve as a resource for incorporating complete street design standards into City projects in line with the 2040

Complete Streets

Comprehensive Plan's commitment to advancing equitable opportunities for all and committing to interagency coordination as applicable. The City is committed to adopting the best state-of-the-practice design guidance in line with Minnesota Department of Transportation standards as the agency adopts or updates their guidelines.

2. At the start of any transportation project or when land use policies, plans or ordinances are being reviewed, the following factors shall be considered:
 - Identifying priority groups, places, and the presence of historically disenfranchised or disproportionately underrepresented groups of people regardless of age or ability, whether there are special accommodations necessary to make the process more accessible, and acknowledging unintended consequences such as involuntary displacement and determining if mitigating actions are required.
 - Current and anticipated land uses along the corridor as well as nearby ~~destinations~~designations (parks, library, post office, shopping centers, etc.)
 - Anticipated uses and their abilities anticipated to frequent the corridor based on the identified land uses, nearby destinations, and surrounding development.
 - Existing and anticipated transportation infrastructure that will interact with the subject corridor.
 - Stated public desires for specific transportation infrastructure in specified areas; such as public facilities, transit, regional transportation network, and commercial areas.
 - General and specific guidance for the corridor in the City's Comprehensive Plan.
 - Identifying the presence of gaps or barriers to active transportation and connectivity with existing street networks and seek out opportunities to enhance connectivity for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit.
3. Complete Streets elements that potentially address the agreed upon factors should be identified at the start of a project.
 - Determine whether the project area includes or intersects with any identified gaps, underinvested, or has a presence of underrepresented people such as Black and Native Americans, older adults, and people walking in low-income neighborhoods that should be engaged as part of the outreach process and included as stakeholders.
 - Require new developments to provide interconnected street and sidewalk networks that connect to existing or planned streets or sidewalks on the perimeter of the development.
 - Include consideration of the logical termini by mode when designing a bike lane or sidewalk.
 - Provide accommodations for all modes of transportation to continue to use the road safely and efficiently during any construction or repair work that infringes on the right of way and/or sidewalk incorporating feedback received during previous roadwork projects to guide these accommodations.
4. Within the City of Columbia Heights, there is no singular design prescription for Complete Streets; each design is unique and responds to its neighborhood area or overall community context. A complete street may include but is not limited to one or more of the following elements:
 - Designated walking facilities, including sidewalks, trails, and adequate roadway shoulders if other facilities are not feasible;

Complete Streets

- Safe crossing facilities, including marked crosswalks and curb ramps;
 - Signs, signals, and pavement markings that improve pedestrian visibility, safety and convenience;
 - American with Disabilities Act compliant accessibility improvements, including curb ramps, detectable warnings and audible signals;
 - Improvements to the quality of the pedestrian environment, including street trees, boulevard landscaping, ~~planter strips~~~~planter strips~~, street and sidewalk lighting, street furniture and other pedestrian amenities;
 - On-street bicycle facilities
 - Off-street bicycle facilities, including shared-use paths and bicycle trails;
 - Bicycle parking/storage facilities
 - Preservation of on-street parking
 - Safe and effective lighting
 - Adequate drainage facilities.
5. All identified elements may not be warranted based on the importance and limitations of the corridor but will include the following guidelines to direct the planning, funding, design, construction, operation, and maintenance of new and modified streets, sidewalks, paths, and trails while allowing for context-sensitive designs.
- Keep street pavements widths to the minimum necessary.
 - Provide well-designed pedestrian accommodation in the form of sidewalks or shared-use pathways on all arterial and collector streets and on local connector streets as determined by context. Sidewalks shall also be required where streets abut a public school, public building, community playfield or neighborhood park. Termini will be determined by context.
 - Provide frequent, convenient and safe street crossing. These may be at intersections designed to be pedestrian friendly, or at mid-block locations where needed and appropriate.
 - Provide bicycle accommodation on all primary bike routes.
 - Allocate right-of-way for boulevards.
 - Allocate right-of-way for parking only when necessary and not in conflict with **Living Streets principles**.
 - Consider streets as part of our natural ecosystem and incorporate landscaping, trees, rain gardens, and other features to improve air and water quality.
6. The ideal roadway design may not always be feasible due to either a physical constraint such as lack of right-of-way or an economic constraint such as unsustainable cost of improvement. Factors to consider in making this judgment may include but are not limited to:
- Whether or not the corridor is within an identified area for complete streets as illustrated on the **attached map**;
 - Community desires;
 - Available and planned right-of-way;
 - Existing and future use context;
 - Existing improvements;
 - The number and types of users;

Commented [SK2]: What are differences between Living Streets and Complete Streets? Would it make more sense to just mention Complete Streets instead of introducing another set of principles?

Commented [SK3]: I don't believe we have a Complete Streets map that has been created as of yet.

Complete Streets

- Existing and proposed utilities;
 - Parking needs
 - Available budget
7. When balancing competing interests, design decisions should favor the following:
- Transportation infrastructure that provides safe and equitable access for as many appropriate modes of transportation as possible regardless of age or ability and with special consideration taken to conduct outreach to historically underrepresented groups through accessible means and ensure these groups can provide input.
 - Transportation design that fits within the corridor's environmental context in that it preserves the scenic, historic, aesthetic, community, and environmental conditions of the location.

SECTION III. COMPLETE STREETS FOCUS CORRIDORS

The maps accompanying this narrative is intended to illustrate Complete Street focus areas. The following suggestions are provided for consideration as the Columbia Heights Complete Streets policy is administered:

- **Downtown:** Consider all ages and abilities. Design to accommodate delivery trucks and passenger autos at low speeds. Favor the pedestrian experience. Sidewalks should be maintained throughout the Downtown adjacent to streets. Pedestrian enhancements are desired for boulevard areas. Greenspace, pocket parks, and decorative lighting will enhance the pedestrian experience. Bike racks are necessary to allow bicyclists to park and walk through Downtown.
- **Future expansion:** Implement Complete Streets policy as development occurs. Consider all ages and abilities. Consider truck routes, passenger auto routes, sidewalks/trails, overhead street lighting, and boulevard trees when reviewing street designs.
- **Industrial:** Consider all ages and abilities. Design to accommodate heavy trucks and delivery traffic. Provide for employees arriving/departing by various means including on foot, by bicycle, and other modes. Favor lighting for safety and security purposes.
- **Residential:** Consider all ages and abilities. Implement Complete Streets policy as street/utility reconstruction and/or sidewalk maintenance/construction plan is implemented. Truck traffic should be accommodated in designated truck routes. Vehicular traffic at slower speeds should be anticipated. Pedestrian accommodation should be considered on sidewalks adjacent to one or both sides of the street. Bikes may be accommodated in on-street lanes adjacent to collector streets. Lighting is anticipated overhead, typical street style. Boulevard trees incrementally spaced are recommended.
- **Residential neighborhoods and commercial corridors along and adjacent to University Ave., Central Ave., and 37th Ave.** should be prioritized as there is a high correlation between frequency of crashes and higher traffic volumes and the City must improve safety along the corridor as opportunities arise to benefit underserved or underinvested communities.

Commented [SK4]: What are we considering as Downtown within Columbia Heights? We have to be cognizant that some roadways that we consider our Downtown are not City owned streets and we would not be able to apply this policy to those streets.

Commented [SK5]: Some of these streets are not under the City's jurisdiction which makes it more difficult for us to prioritize.

Complete Streets

SECTION IV. BENCHMARKS AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The City will monitor and measure its performance relative to this policy, demonstrating success will include:

- Measure the amount of pedestrian accidents and deaths by severity within the City, per 100,000 by race and ethnicity as certain populations are disproportionately represented in traffic fatalities, specifically measuring the rate of pedestrian deaths or injuries by race and ethnicity and by census tract income.
- Priority groups are defined by the 2040 Comprehensive Plan as follows:
 - Minority populations such as Black or African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, Hispanic, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, or other immigrant populations that are not explicitly identified in the Comprehensive Plan.
 - Older adults aged 65+ and children as defined as being under the age of 18.
 - People with disabilities.
 - Households with incomes below \$55,000.
- Residential neighborhoods and commercial corridors along and adjacent to University Ave., Central Ave., and 37th Ave. should be prioritized as there is a high correlation between frequency of crashes and higher traffic volumes and the City must improve safety along the corridor as opportunities arise to benefit underserved or underinvested communities.
- The City shall track the following metrics and provide annual updates:
 - Number of crashes, severity of injuries, and fatalities based on each mode of transportation (walking, driving, biking, etc.).
 - Presence and conditions of lighting, transit, biking, and walking/rolling facilities such as sidewalks, streets, trails, street trees, and multimodal connections.
 -

Commented [SK6]: Is this bullet necessary or should there be more information included? It is not currently providing any information that will be monitored or measured.

Commented [SK7]: Same comment as above. It will be hard for us to prioritize some of these streets since they are not under the City's jurisdiction.

Commented [SK8]: Can we remove the first bullet under Section IV because it is asking the same thing as this bullet?

Commented [SK9]: In regards to the presence of the various things mentioned, would a map be sufficient? We will not always have condition information for everything so this will be tough to provide information on.

SECTION V. EXEMPTIONS

Complete Street elements shall be considered and included in street construction, reconstruction, repaving and rehabilitation projects unless:

- ~~Accommodation is not necessary on corridors where specific users are prohibited, such as interstate freeways or pedestrian malls. Exclusion of certain users on particular corridors should not exempt projects from accommodating other permitted users.~~
- Cost of accommodation is excessively disproportionate to the need or probable use.
- A documented absence of current and future need.
- Emergency repairs such as a water main leak that require an immediate, rapid response; however, temporary accommodations for all modes should still be made. Depending on the severity of the repairs, opportunities to improve multimodal access should still be considered where possible.
- Transit accommodations are not required where there is no existing or planned transit service.
- Routine maintenance of the transportation network that does not change the roadway geometry or operation, such as mowing, sweeping, and spot repair.

Commented [SK10]: There are no corridors where specific users are prohibited in Columbia Heights which is why I think this bullet can be removed.

Commented [SK11]: Is this referring to bus stop pads, benches, etc.? The City typically does not provide these accommodations. These are provided by the transit authority.

Complete Streets

- Where a reasonable and equivalent project along the same corridor is already programmed to provide facilities exempted from the project at hand.

Whereas exemptions occur, the City Engineer will be responsible for seeking alternative options to accommodate users with whom the City was unable to initially accommodate and approve exemptions on a case-by-case basis with an opportunity for the public to provide feedback through online posting and during the Community Forum section of City Council meetings.