



# SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION

City Hall—Shared Vision Room, 3989 Central Ave NE

Tuesday, April 09, 2024

6:00 PM

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## 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](http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-teams/join-a-meeting), Meeting ID 243 913 149 963 and passcode xLXsYc. 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. Sustainability Commission Representation at City Events

### **NEW BUSINESS**

10. Round Robin

### **ADJOURNMENT**

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**SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION**  
**City Hall—Shared Vision Room, 3989 Central Ave NE**  
**Tuesday, March 12, 2024**  
**6:00 PM**

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## AGENDA

### 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, LaPlante, Leoni-Helbacka, Kurek, Evenson

Members absent: Commissioner Johnson

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

Staff absent: Liam Genter, Urban Forestry Specialist

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 said that he did see some comments on the group's Teams page that had been created. Ahmadvand asked what the cutoff should be to get feedback to Sulmaan – Sulmaan said that whenever the group is comfortable they can move on to next steps. Boucher said that if they have questions, he can run it past the MPCA resource he has. LaPlante suggested that we do that as our version of the policy is close to completed. Boucher said that most of the work has been done that would be needed for a City Council work session, and Khan stated that May is probably the soonest time that this could get on the agenda. Evenson suggested that the deadline for the commission to get in comments would be in two weeks so that we can have them in time for the May work session.

#### 2. Complete Streets Policy Update

Khan had included a draft of the policy in the packet, and went through the comments – many of them have to do with not having the information to report on certain things. Some

roadways were mentioned that are actually state roadways, so they become hard to prioritize. Finkelson brought up that we should include MNDOT and county roads as MNDOT had said they didn't consider sidewalks to be their business. The trigger for the complete streets program would just be when the street is up for reconstruction. Boucher asked if the county or MNDOT have complete street design standards – Khan said that for sure the state does. Boucher asked if we could incorporate their language into our policy, and Khan replied that it is somewhat in the policy already. Boucher said that there is a complete streets evaluation tool – we can upload our policy and judge our policy based on the feedback. Khan said that the entire policy is in the Teams group and to please go in and make comments. LaPlante asked if we can add language about coordinating with other entities about the connected streets that would include a community engagement piece. Finkelson stated that there should be some language outlining the expectations for the city are such that our streets are “complete” streets. Khan asked for clarification about what “downtown” means – Boucher explained that we do have a central business district that could be considered downtown. Boucher asked if everyone could put their final comments in by the next meeting, and possibly this will go on the May work session for City Council.

### **3. Partners in Energy Update**

Khan stated that Columbia Heights has been approved for the Partners in Energy Program. Boucher explained a little more about the program and said that he has a couple of contacts there who can schedule a kickoff meeting for us in order to go over the process and plan what would be best for the community. We would put together an Energy Action Team that can include community members, city staff, businesses etc. Ahmadvand said that having this kickoff at the expo would be a good idea, and Boucher agreed. LePlante asked if a tabling event would get the message across, and Boucher said that he is open to ideas about that. Ahmadvand said it might be best to have a separate event if there is enough interest at the tabling event. Groseth suggested that we have the date and time of the stand-alone event available for folks who might be interested. Boucher said that he liked the engagement for the Medtronic project, and something similar might work well for this project. Having a landing page for the Sustainability Commission would be a good way to promote the commission in general. Khan introduced Grant who works for the CEE and would like to be involved in the PIE program. Grant gave a short explanation about what the CEE does. Ahmadvand asked what involvement would be needed from the schools, and Boucher said they could be a good resource for getting the word out and community engagement. Boucher also said that some feedback they got was to clarify goals: social equity, land use etc.

### **4. GreenCorps Host Site Update**

Boucher said that there is a companion program called ImpactCorps – they accept proposals as they get them, so it is a rolling application. There is also the ability to suggest a particular person for the role. GreenCorps is not a quarterly application – it is yearly. Leoni-Helbacka said that the subcommittee formed at the previous meeting is called the Sustainable Collaboration Committee – they will research and bring up other opportunities

for grants or internships. They can investigate this ImpactCorps and find where we might have a need for it. Boucher said that he would encourage the subcommittee to put their suggestions into a workplan. Jenson-Christen said that talking to city staff to identify where there might be needs in the city for an internship would be helpful. Kurek suggested that GIS maps might be a great project to get one of these interns started on.

**5. Sustainability Commission Newsletter Submission**

LaPlante said that she came up with about 6 topic ideas for a submission. LaPlante went over what ideas that she came up with. They decided that xeriscaping would be the best topic to cover first for the newsletter, and compost and organics topics can be covered in the city Expo. Boucher brought up a new citywide Time of Sale policy that may include some energy audits.

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

Kurek asked if we could get in contact with the Business Council – this might be a great topic to chat with them about. Leoni-Helbacka said that there is program called minimize that does a reusable takeaway program that some of our businesses might be interested in knowing about.

**7. People Over Parking Act**

Finkelson mentioned withdrawing this until further notice.

**8. City Representation**

Groseth said that she would like to have more representation at city events. We could have a couple of people at many events in the city and tailor the message to the event.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**9. Expo**

Ahmadvand asked how many people would want to go to the Expo, several members of the commission will be at the event. LaPlante asked to send ideas for handouts and print outs to our communications team. Ahmadvand asked about approving the materials that we will have at the table – the group can send over ideas for comments. Kurek asked about the PIE being included in the tabling event and whether or not we should have a GreenSteps City blurb as well. Ahmadvand asked if it would be possible to get the SC webpage up by the time the expo happens.

**10. Round Robin**

Connie shared that Fridley submitted a grant application for a hydraulic separator that would reduce pollutants to Sullivan Lake.

Evenson brought up park system planning, and wanting to be included in some of that planning.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Ahmadvand, seconded by LaPlante to adjourn the meeting at 7:26 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

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

5 WHEREAS, the 2040 Comprehensive Plan acknowledges the City of Columbia Heights has not  
6 established design guidelines related to complete streets. It does state the city will need to  
7 consider how to address existing transportation needs and identifies Complete Streets as an  
8 item for consideration; and

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

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

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

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

21 **SECTION 1. PURPOSE**

22 This policy defines a process to ensure future street and transportation projects consider the  
23 equity of current and future users and incorporate features as necessary to implement Complete  
24 Streets. The City views each street and transportation project as unique. This means design  
25 features will likely differ from street to street, yet each street may still be considered “complete”.

26 Complete Streets call for a safe, accessible transportation network that accommodates users of  
27 all ages and abilities, which encompasses bicycles, pedestrians, transit riders, and motorists.  
28 The intent behind Complete Streets is that streets should be for everyone. To carry out this  
29 vision, a Complete Streets approach shall be integrated into the planning, design, construction,  
30 operation, and maintenance of the transportation system.

31 **SECTION 2. POLICY**

32 The City of Columbia Heights is committed to the implementation of Complete Streets to create  
33 a comprehensive transportation network that is safe, equitable, multi-modal, complete, and  
34 connected network.

35 All new construction and reconstruction or retrofit transportation projects shall account for the  
36 needs of all modes of transportation and all users of the road network.

37 All maintenance projects and ongoing operations, such as resurfacing, repaving, restriping,  
38 rehabilitation, or other types of changes to the transportation system receiving state or federal  
39 funding, must account for the needs of all modes of transportation and all users of the road  
40 network.

41 Accommodation must be provided for all modes of transportation to continue to use the road  
42 safely and efficiently during any construction or repair work that infringes on the right of way  
43 and/or sidewalk.

44 When transportation projects are initiated by other jurisdictions, such as the state or county, but  
45 are located within or on the edge of city limits, city staff should advocate for the integration of  
46 Complete Streets principles.

47 Private development projects are encouraged to follow and Complete Streets approach. And to  
48 the extent possible, city staff should encourage private development projects to follow a  
49 Complete Streets approach.

50 Effective July 1, 2024, all projects entering the design phase will comply with this policy except  
51 as to the components for which an exception has been granted.

52 **SECTION 3. DESIGN**

53 Design Complete Streets to be context-sensitive and meet the needs of the community and  
54 surrounding area while emphasizing safe and accessible travel for all people. All facilities shall  
55 be designed in accordance with the best state-of-the-practice design guidance available, such  
56 as:

- 57 • Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
  - 58 ○ Manual on Uniform Traffic Control
  - 59 ○ Separated Bike Lane Planning and Design Guide
- 60 • American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO)
  - 61 ○ Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities
  - 62 ○ A policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets
  - 63 ○ Guide for the Planning, Design, and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities
- 64 • Minnesota Department of Transportation
  - 65 ○ Bicycle Facility Design Manual
  - 66 ○ Minnesota’s Best Practices for Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Guide
  - 67 ○ Complete Streets Policy and Complete Streets Handbook
- 68 • National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO)
  - 69 ○ Urban Street Design Guide
  - 70 ○ Designing for All Ages and Abilities
  - 71 ○ Urban Bikeway Design Guide
  - 72 ○ Transit Street Design Guide

73 Guides which use highway engineering principles and prioritize vehicle throughput over all other  
74 uses of the street must be avoided. For example, encouraging wider lanes and fewer crossings,  
75 in order to move vehicles more efficiently, is often done at the expense of safety and mobility for  
76 anyone not in a vehicle. This kind of guidance is at odds with the Complete Streets approach.

77 **SECTION 4. EXCEPTIONS**

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

- 80 • The cost of establishing facilities for all users would be excessively disproportionate to  
81 the need or exceed budget costs.



- 82 • Routine maintenance of the transportation network that does not change the roadway  
83 geometry or operation, such as mowing, sweeping, and spot repair.
- 84 • Emergency repairs such as a water main leak that requires an immediate, rapid  
85 response; however, temporary accommodations for all modes should still be made.  
86 Depending on the severity of the repairs, opportunities to improve multimodal access  
87 should still be considered where possible.
- 88 • Where a reasonable and equivalent project along the same corridor is already  
89 programmed to provide facilities exempted from the project at hand.

90 Requests for an exception must be approved by the Sustainability Commission on a case-by-  
91 case basis. Public notice must be given 30 days prior to granting an exception. The request  
92 should include supporting data or evidence showing the need for an exception.

93 When exemptions occur, the City Engineer shall be responsible for seeking alternative options  
94 to accommodate users with whom the City was unable to initially accommodate.

95 **SECTION 5. PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

96 The City shall maintain a publicly available list of performance measures on the City website  
97 and prepare an annual report documenting the City’s progress with respect to these  
98 performance measures as described in this policy.

99 *Evaluating Complete Streets Projects: A Guide for Practitioners* by AARP, Smart Growth America, and the  
100 National Complete Streets Coalition provides metrics and measurements for evaluating Complete  
101 Streets policies. These performance measures should be used to track Complete Streets  
102 implementation progress, prioritize projects, and evaluate designs.

103 Equity shall be incorporated into every performance measure listed above to the extent data are  
104 available.

105 **SECTION 6. CONFLICTING OR COMPETING NEEDS**

106 When there are conflicting needs among users or modes, safety shall be the highest priority;  
107 particularly safety for the most vulnerable street users (pedestrians, bicyclists, children, seniors,  
108 and people with additional accessibility needs). Selection and quantitative weighting of  
109 performance measures shall also support investment in the most underinvested and  
110 underserved communities.

111 Motor vehicle speed, flow, and driver convenience shall not be prioritized over safety for  
112 vulnerable street users. Reducing excessive motor vehicle speed on streets where vulnerable  
113 users are likely will be considered a net benefit to the community.

114 To the extent that current code allows, when space is a limiting factor and where vulnerable  
115 users are likely, allocating space to a mode that is not currently accommodated shall be  
116 prioritized over providing additional space to a mode that is already accommodated.

117 The City must also mitigate unintended consequences such as involuntary displacement.

118 **SECTION 7. CREATING A NETWORK**

119 To connect people to the places they want to go, the entire trip should be safe and comfortable.  
120 This requires a seamless, connected street network, regardless of mode, including safe and

121 convenient pedestrian crossings and access to transit. Even a small interruption in the  
122 connection or one hazardous section can make a trip challenging.

123 Every street does not necessarily need to provide separate accommodations for every mode,  
124 but a network should be in place so that likely trips can be made by walking, biking, and taking  
125 public transit, as well as driving. The street network is also complemented by pathway  
126 connections in many locations.

127 The City shall require developers to implement Complete Streets as per this policy.  
128 Furthermore, the City shall work proactively with the State of Minnesota, neighboring  
129 communities and counties, and businesses and educational institutions to develop plans,  
130 facilities, and accommodations that further the City's Complete Streets policy. Such coordination  
131 should result in continuing such infrastructure beyond the City's borders to the extent feasible.

132 **SECTION 8. SUPPORTIVE LAND-USE**

133 The City shall incorporate this policy into all city-developed land-use policies, plans, and zoning  
134 ordinances. New or revised land-use policies, plans, zoning ordinances, or equivalent  
135 documents should specify how they will support and be supported by the community's Complete  
136 Streets vision. The City must consider the needs of not just today's users, but those who will be  
137 using it in the coming years.

138 **SECTION 9. EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

139 The City shall provide training to all staff in all City departments who are responsible for site and  
140 road improvements on the content of this policy and the City's new standards for using the  
141 policy for project development and review. Training shall also be provided for staff who are  
142 responsible for street maintenance and operations to offer an understanding of how  
143 maintenance and operations activities affect the experience of all street users. The City shall  
144 also encourage staff professional development and training on non-motorized transportation  
145 issues through attending conferences, classes, seminars and workshops, as appropriate.