

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

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

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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 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;

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- 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, 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;

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- 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.**

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 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.
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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.

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- 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.