

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.