

WALDENWOOD DRIVE SIDEWALK GAPS DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Date: Thursday, October 3, 2013

Time: 4 to 5 p.m.

Location: King Elementary, 3800 Waldenwood Drive

Attendees: Public present: 21; refer to Appendix A for sign-in sheet.

City staff present: 3; Patrick Cawley, Kayla Coleman, Nick Hutchinson

Council members present: 1; Jane Lumm

Re: Waldenwood Drive Sidewalk Gap

Next steps:

The results of this meeting will be shared with the City of Ann Arbor Public Services Administrator for direction on next steps. Once detailed 'next steps' information is available an email update will be sent to this distribution list.

Meeting notes:

City staff shared information about the sidewalk gap in the area; impacts of this potential project, maintenance concerns, very preliminary cost estimates and potential funding sources.

Open discussion and feedback forms:

The majority of feedback received was in favor of the sidewalk installation, though not all were supportive, and many expressed that they support sidewalk installation but would expect that the crossing guard also be maintained. Meeting participants voiced their thoughts about a number of other traffic and pedestrian safety related concerns in this area.

Some key topics of discussion included:

- Importance of safety for school children in this area.
- Sidewalk winter maintenance responsibility.
- Opinion about best crossing location to improve pedestrian safety.
- Opinion that crossing guard is necessary, regardless of sidewalk installation.
- Request for additional law enforcement services.
- Interest in additional information about the history of this concern, i.e. when this was reviewed in 2009; What were the recommendations from that study? Was a design developed? Are we re-creating the same efforts?
- Overall safety issues in the area (is sidewalk installation the answer?)

The complete meeting notes are provided as Appendix B.

Feedback Form results summary:

- 16 Total feedback forms were submitted
- 10 Respondents were in favor of City Staff moving forward to pursue sidewalk installation along Waldenwood Drive (Penberton Drive to King Elementary)
- 6 Respondents were opposed to City Staff moving forward to pursue sidewalk installation along Waldenwood Drive (Penberton Drive to King Elementary)

Many respondents also provided open ended feedback (refer to Appendix C). Key topics addressed on the feedback forms were similar to what was heard during the open discussion, particularly the importance of maintaining a crossing guard even if the sidewalk is installed.

Electronic feedback

- 5 Email responses were received regarding the Waldenwood Drive sidewalk gaps meeting:
- 3 Respondents were in favor of City Staff moving forward to pursue sidewalk installation along Waldenwood Drive (Penberton Drive to King Elementary)
- 1 Respondent opposed to City Staff moving forward to pursue sidewalk installation along Waldenwood Drive (Penberton Drive to King Elementary)
- 1 Respondent expressed specific concern regarding the anonymity of the feedback form and requested clarification on how the results will be used. *Staff clarification: Feedback forms and responses at the meeting are not a formal “vote.” Feedback is shared with the City Administrator and potentially City Council who will make the final decision whether funding be approved to complete the project. Any member of the traveling public could potentially use the sidewalk; therefore all public is welcome to submit feedback that City Council can take into consideration in their decision making process.*

One response in support of the sidewalk installation also expressed concern about the meeting time; 4:00-5:00 p.m. City staff chose a time to coincide with the end of the school day, this approach has been used in the past, and was successful for the Safe Routes to School program. However, it is noted that this time can be problematic and will need to be carefully considered in the future.

The complete electronic feedback responses are provided as Appendix D.

Appendix A

Sign-in Sheet

1. Kathryn daCosta	
2. Travis Peterson	
3. Gailly Griswold	
4. Leon Bryson	
5. Sharon Jones	Bob Forke
6. Don Salberg	Cinder Pedra
7. Sheldon Marcel	BITSY LAMB
8. Laura Weintraub	AB
9. PETER VACULIK	June Wynn
10. LIZ LECKE	Nancy Brugg
11. Eve Losman	Brian Wynn
12. Line van Nieuwstadt	Tracey Jones
13. Peter Zetlin	Libby Hunter

Appendix B

Open Discussion Meeting Notes

Note: this is not a direct transcription of the meeting discussion. This summary has been developed from notes taken during the meeting; comments are paraphrased. Where staff responses or clarification were provided they are shown in italics.

General discussion notes:

- My understanding is that a design had previously been made for this section, are we re-doing this work? *Some new work needs to be done because the previous design was for bituminous asphalt and concrete would be the preferred material due to lower life cycle costs.*
- Do we have estimates for a potential project cost? *The previous estimates were around \$23,000 but that was based on bituminous asphalt, the likely project cost is estimated around \$15-20,000*
- The question that we should be asking is whether it is worthwhile to spend \$15-20,000 to make it safe for the children at King School.
- Traffic infractions occur in this area daily, children almost getting hit. The current conditions are very unsafe for the children.
- Is it safer for children to cross at an intersection rather than mid-block? At intersection where there is a stop sign drivers are accustomed to stopping their cars, does this make it safer for the pedestrians? *There may be some benefit to crossing at the all way stop but still does not ensure that 100% of drivers will comply with the traffic laws.*
- Safety issues in the area need to be reviewed collectively.
- When this issue was reviewed in 2009 private funding was identified for this project.
- Does this mean the crossing guard will not be available if the sidewalk goes in? *We can't say for sure because that is a Police Department decision; but the original justification for implementing the crossing guard was the sidewalk gap in this area.*
- Could "Student Safeties" be used in this area to help with crossing? King Elementary Principal comment: this would not be a safe area for "Student Safeties."
- How would snow removal be handled for this sidewalk? *According to City Ordinance it is the homeowner's responsibility to handle winter maintenance of sidewalks adjacent to their property. However, in practice, rear lot sidewalks are sometimes maintained by the City.*
 - Many meeting attendees voiced concern about sidewalk winter maintenance practices.
 - "I shovel my own sidewalk, why shouldn't they have to?"
 - "Why should taxpayer dollars be spent to shovel sidewalks that the homeowners should be shoveling?"
 - It was discussed that perhaps the school should/could handle the maintenance because they are already doing other snow removal nearby; meeting attendee response: "Where do you draw the line? I live 3 blocks from the school, so should the school come and shovel my sidewalk too?"
- Does the school have any responsibility related to sidewalk maintenance in this area? *The school is already handling maintenance beyond their required responsibility.*
- The school may not want to take liability for maintenance; and homeowners realistically may not want the school doing the snow removal for their sidewalk because they may take out sprinkler heads, etc. they are using a truck to do the snow removal, not shoveling.
- The school has discretionary funds; maybe the PTO can contribute funds for the maintenance.
- I hope that if the sidewalk goes in we won't lose the crossing guard.

- It is rare to see a police car out in front of the school, if there were a police car there more often, it could have a big impact. Councilmember response: police enforcement has been requested from time to time, this issue does come up all over the city.
- Whether or not this sidewalk gap installation is approved we should continue this discussion. Need to do something before someone gets hit.
- Children under the age of 8 don't have the judgment to cross on their own in an uncontrolled area; also they are more susceptible to being hit because they are shorter and drivers may not see them. Need to provide the safest area that we can.
- I believe that cars are more likely to stop at a stop sign than a mid-block crossing.
- I see two issues (1) sidewalk (2) safety; which comes first? It's a "chicken and the egg scenario." The sidewalk installation could be a platform to pursue other issues that feed into this.
- It's a process – the sidewalk will come and then other issues can be addressed. Need to get started. Let's not get stuck on funding.
- There are a variety of other issues in the area; will the sidewalk be the best way to alleviate the issues in the area?

Other issues related to this topic but not specifically addressing preferences for the sidewalk installation were also noted:

- The entrance into the school is very unsafe; the area where the crossing guard is currently
- We need a more aggressive crossing guard
- The north entrance of King Elementary School is a problem.
- The street should be narrowed to only two lanes to slow the traffic. *This type of request is handled through the Traffic Calming program (visit a2gov.org/trafficcalming for additional information). Also Washtenaw County Health Dept Safe Routes to School program.*
- What can we do to improve sight distance in this area? The two intersections of Waldenwood and Penberton, as well as Waldenwood and Foxhunt.
- There is a Transportation Safety Committee working on some of these issues; the committee meets quarterly
- Could a speed hump be installed in this area? *This would go through the traffic calming process and has to be initiated by residents living on the street.*
- Could we implement turning regulations coming out of the King Elementary driveway? Could that help keep kids safe? Seems like this could be effective to have less traffic coming toward the crosswalk. *Turning regulations may increase congestion, the capacity of the street may be an issue but this must be balanced with safety needs.*
- Could the crossing guard be moved down the street? Do kids have other paths they could take?
- Has work already been done for best practices at this intersection? *We have not done a comprehensive study at this location but the Safe Routes to School program may be an effective way to have this area studied.*
- What about a different color road surface in the area where there is a crosswalk (e.g. a red crosswalk area), this has been done in some other states/countries.

Appendix C

Open-ended Feedback Form Responses

1. Clearly need to keep crossing guard. If the crossing is moved to the corner, danger increases for kids living across from the school. Therefore, moving crosswalk to corner doesn't solve the problem.
2. This also meshes with policing issues. It sounds to me that additional crossing guard effort need to be implemented. Not knowing what crossing guard issues entail I am available to volunteer as a crossing guard – traffic monitor.
3. Crossing guard still needed. Can a speed bump be put in place prior to stop sign at Waldenwood and Penberton? Current situation is VERY unsafe, something needs to be done before a death occurs.
4. I would not want to see the removal of the crossing guard as a result of the sidewalk being installed. I am a neighbor and my son is a walker to King school.
5. Listen to the professionals! TSC made a recommendation. Move crosswalk before a student is injured or killed!
6. We need the sidewalk- we also need police to enforce traffic rules- we still need a crossing guard.
 - Trees should be cleared to allow for full sight
 - Sidewalk is needed
 - Safety of kids is improved with sidewalk and enforcing simple traffic rules
 - This has been discussed over and over and over again. It is time for action.
 - When it snows, streets need to be cleared, salt needs to be placed for ice, this intersection (Waldenwood and Penberton) often has ice that makes it dangerous.
7. Do the sidewalk, then address the safety issues. Separate issue: funding is needed for more police. Less art. Re-allocation. Includes roundabouts.
8. Paint street intersection to raise awareness and change behavior. Put up flags at stop signs. Police/ humps at intersection. Put sign in middle of street- for cars to stop and look. Send note to all parents regarding corner safety.
9. Enforcement is necessary to get better behavior at the four way stop. Citizens need to clear snow from their adjacent property. Enforcement might need to be engaged to gain compliance. Rumble strips could raise consciousness in advance of the stop signs. Why did this neighborhood get built without sidewalks? Much of this area is unsafe for all of us, not just the children!!
10. I cannot support the sidewalk build without an integrated safety study of the King School traffic safety. In 2009, when the mayor and City Councilperson visited, they deemed that the sidewalk alone does not contribute to safety improvement.
11. As described, crossing guard is often ineffective. Crossing Waldenwood at the Penberton Drive intersection will be safer and will provide an alternative path to school. If sidewalk will be on private property, must an easement be obtained? Maintaining walkway must be determined.
12. I cannot imagine the confusion the extension of the sidewalk would create. I have observed children arriving and also leaving at the end of the day for the last 35 years. The benefits are just not there to construct additional sidewalk to extend to Penberton. To increase pedestrian traffic with the amount of automobiles that are present would result in a very unsafe situation. To continue crossing with a crossing guard at one location is the only safe and correct solution or course of action.
13. The student crossing at King School should not be moved. The suggested new location is a four way street, so that students will have vulnerability in four directions rather than two. Also, the hill going north towards King is very slippery during the winter and cars

often slide into the intersection after they brake for the stop sign. Our three children walked to King School when they were students and I walked when I was a teacher there, so we are familiar with the situation. Having the school crossing away from the intersection made sense then, as it does now. I hope you will not be influenced by people who have had limited experience with the school and its students. P.S. the adult crossing guard should be retained.

14. The partial walkway had been there for over 40 years with no problems. We do not see a need to "fix" a non-issue and create a problem for the neighbors who would be affected.

15. **Note: Our children attended King School with the current configuration and there has never been an accident of that stretch of Waldenwood or indeed on Penberton since King School opened.**

We believe that the set up as it exists is actually safer than this proposed sidewalk extension. Our points:

1. The sidewalk on Waldenwood is on the west side of the street. Thus the children stay on the sidewalk as they come down the hill or turn the corner and then cross safely at the crossing where a crossing guard is present. This new plan would place unsupervised children in a cross walk intersection where two streets cross and many cars are turning which creates an even more dangerous situation, especially if the crossing guard is eliminated.
2. If the issue is parents driving too fast, this sidewalk does nothing to address that issue.
3. This sidewalk extension costs money that the city should be spending on much-needed street repair.
4. Who would be responsible for maintaining this sidewalk? It certainly seems unfair to our neighbors that not only would they have a sidewalk on the back yard of their property that they don't want and is hard to observe, but they may be liable for accidents on their section of the sidewalk.
5. We are sure that if King School parents realized that this sidewalk would mean that our crossing guard would be eliminated, no one would want it. Note: Even if the city would agree to keep the crossing guard now, if this solution would be considered "safer," that guard could easily be eliminated in years to come. Why take the chance?

Appendix D

Additional feedback received after the meeting (via email).

1. I wanted to comment about the time frame for the upcoming meeting regarding a "sidewalk gap" on Waldenwood near King Elementary.
As a parent of two children that go to King Elementary, we received this notice in the kid's, "Friday folders". As a resident on Waldenwood, I received this notice in Friday's mail. The meeting is held during standard work hours. The late notice, coupled with the time of the meeting, did not give ample time for people who have an opinion to make arrangements to attend this meeting.
In my opinion, this is a very important topic as there is a significant traffic/pedestrian problem at the entrance of the school driveway. I have been walking my children to school for the past three years. In that time, I've seen more than one instance where a child was nearly hit by a car. I've seen multiple driving infractions (daily) at the entrance of the school; increasing the odds for children to be involved in an accident. An extended sidewalk could reduce (possibly eliminate) pedestrian traffic at the entrance of the school, making for a much safer environment for the children.
This upcoming meeting should not be considered as the only opportunity for people to discuss this very important issue.
2. I am an impacted resident/parent at King school. I have a few questions about the survey for the Waldenwood sidewalk "gap." There is no place on this survey for responders to specifically submit their names or address. Thus, how does the city know that survey responders are King parents *or* neighborhood residents who would be directly impacted by the decision?
I'm aware that there are people "recruited" by someone with a driving agenda to respond "Yes" (or in favor of the sidewalk) to this survey. That's fine, but some (many?) of these folks do not live in the neighborhood, the King School district -- or even live in the city of Ann Arbor. This does not seem at all fair to those directly impacted by the outcome.
How does this type of vote get taken into account of the final "tally" of responses? Or, may I or anyone else submit as many anonymous surveys as we want to help boost our opinion on the matter? What comes from these surveys to truly influence the final decision?
Thanks very much for your time. I appreciate it.
3. This is a project that should have been completed long ago. What is the holdup?
4. Kathy, Thanks so much for keeping us in the loop on how this is progressing - and your continued advocacy for the safety of our students. Let us know what you need.
5. I live in the King neighborhood and have young children, one of whom is now a student at King. Unfortunately, I cannot make it to the informational meeting tomorrow. However, I do have some concerns about extending the sidewalk on the east side of Waldenwood and so I have written them into the attached letter. Thank you very much for your time. I look forward to hearing more details about the proposal in the future:

October 1, 2013

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this today as a neighborhood homeowner and parent of two children that might be affected by the proposed sidewalk extension from the corner of Waldenood Dr. and Penberton Dr. to King Elementary school. Unfortunately, I am out of town tomorrow and will not be able to attend the informational meeting in person.

Although the details of the proposal are not known to me, I have some safety concerns that a sidewalk extension at this site might create. Currently, schoolchildren that walk to King from west or South of the Waldenwood/Penberton intersection are funneled onto the sidewalk on the West side of Waldenwood and cross at the front of the King driveway under the supervision of the student safety patrol and a crossing guard. This process works very well and is very safe for the children. This intersection, although not at a stop sign, is very well marked and easily managed.

If the sidewalk is extended as proposed, an additional crossing these students will be created. This will either create a burden on the school to supply an additional crossing guard and/or safety patrol for a crossing not more than 100 yards from the current crossing, or one of these crossings will not be monitored. The latter possibility is a particularly significant concern, as many of the children crossing are quite young and may not be able to gauge the speed of oncoming traffic well or understand when it is safe to cross.

Additionally, as Penberton Dr. east of Waldenwood does not have sidewalks and the east side of Waldenwood south of Penberton does not have a sidewalk, this extension would not significantly improve accessibility of to these parts of the neighborhood for school transit or normal neighborhood activity.

As a more minor point, the partial sidewalk on the east side of Waldenwood is immediately adjacent to the curb, whereas the sidewalk on the west side has a parkway strip of 4-5 feet in width, providing additional security for small children walking to and from school.

Thank you very much for taking the time to listen to my opinions about this issue. In summary, I feel that an extension of the sidewalk at this site is unnecessary and would potentially create some safety issues for the children that walk to and from King school on a daily basis.