

To: Planning Commission and Environmental Commission
From: Nonmotorized Transportation Code Committee
Nancy Lillquist, Chair
Subject: Recommended Street Policies
Date: October 2010

SUMMARY: Changes to the Street Standards and other municipal code provisions are provided to implement Comprehensive Plan goals and policies.

BACKGROUND: Ellensburg's Comprehensive Plan includes a number of goals related to non-motorized or multi-modal transportation, most notably Goal T-10 *"Implement a non-motorized transportation system that increases the number of residents who choose to walk or bicycle in lieu of driving."* One of the programs included under that goal is a recommendation to *"update the Non-motorized Transportation Plan to develop a comprehensive non-motorized circulation plan and implementation program."*

An ad-hoc committee was authorized in 2007 to develop the new NMT Plan. It met from October to September and hosted a well attended public Open House in May. The NMT Plan was adopted as a Comprehensive Plan amendment in December 2008. That plan included several recommendations to amend City Code to accomplish plan goals.

A second ad-hoc committee was authorized in October 2008 to review existing subdivision code and street standards and recommend amendments consistent with the goals of the plan. The NMT Code committee included diverse membership to provide a variety of perspectives on the proposed amendments. The Land Development Code Update Team reviewed a draft of the recommended policies and met with the NMT Committee. Their recommendations were discussed and some of the amendments were made. The Non-Motorized Code Committee now offers the following revisions to City policy for your review.

SUMMARY: The goal of these policy recommendations is to create more safe and attractive environment for all modes of transportation, and more specifically, to enhance walkability and bikeability. Major changes include:

1. **Connectivity:** A more connected street network is desirable to reduce distances between locations, an important factor when deciding whether to walk or drive. Increasing street connections is a key component of the LDCU and Energy Efficiency Strategy. Highly connected street networks have been shown to increase walking and health. Less connected networks add to traffic congestion on arterial streets. Ellensburg's current policy fails to assure a level of connection beyond the roughly ½ mile arterial/collector street grid

identified in the Comprehensive Plan. As a result, over ½ mile distance is added for Ridgeview residents to Mt Stuart School for example, and trespass issues plague Anchor M apartments from Yellowstone Ave residents taking shortcuts over the fence.

- a. The desired connected street network will need to be mapped, discussed with landowners, and adopted as a Comp Plan amendment. Adopting these policies will allow the City to begin that process.
 - b. The policies anticipate that natural barriers and existing development will interrupt the desired street spacing. A perfect grid will not be possible.
 - c. Collector streets are recommended at ¼ mile intervals, to move traffic from neighborhoods to Arterial Streets. It is recommended they not exceed 1 mile in length, to avoid cut through traffic (a main complaint of “grid” street networks).
 - d. Local Street spacing is reduced from 1200 feet block length to 660 feet (1/8 mile). Note that this recommendation is at the upper limit of what is recommended by Washington State (300 to 500 foot blocks) and by “Smart Growth” advocates, but was considered “feasible” in Ellensburg given the challenges of existing land use and lot size. A pedestrian walkway may be substituted for a street in long blocks. Generally, local streets should not connect two higher level streets to reduce cut through traffic.
 - e. Cul de sacs are prohibited, except where barriers constrain street connections.
 - f. Gated communities are allowed, but only where they do not interrupt the street network. LDCU consultants have concerns about gated communities, which interfere with the grid in many communities, and create issues for fire response, as well as suggesting the area outside of the gate is unsafe.
2. All proposed street sections include planting strips on at least one side of the street with trees to buffer pedestrians from traffic, provide a place for snow storage and storm runoff, and improve the aesthetics of the community.
 3. Arterial Streets:
 - a. A distinction between “Principal” and “Minor” Arterial streets and street design is created consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.
 - b. Proposed changes to the Arterial Street standards improve the appearance of these well-traveled gateways to our community by avoiding the long, boring, fences that occur when backyards face the arterial, while at the same time minimizing driveway access that create hazards and interrupt traffic flow from cars backing onto the street. The LDCU consultants will also be making recommendations regarding street frontage design.
 - c. Parking is prohibited on Arterials, except in single family residential zones and in certain commercial areas to avoid hazards to bikers created by doors from parked

cars opening into the bike lane, to aid traffic flow, and to make plowing of snow easier.

- d. Arterial rights of way are amended from 80 feet to ranging between 80 and 116 feet, depending on whether the street is a Principal or Minor Arterial, and whether it is in a Commercial/Industrial/Multifamily zone or a Single Family Residential Zone.

4. Collector Streets:

- a. The main change is a narrowing from 44 to 38 feet pavement width. Right of way width remains unchanged. The Committee is divided on whether to require a 6 ft planting strip be provided on both sides of the street (symmetrical), or offer an optional street section with a planting strip on one side and a landscaping buffer (on the non-street side of the sidewalk) on the other side (assymetrical) for ease of maintenance and to buffer homes. LDCU consultants recommend planting strips between the street and sidewalk for design reasons (less consistent with historic Ellensburg neighborhood character, less symmetrical, feels more generic suburban in character), and for safety and comfort for pedestrians (though parked cars help).

5. Local Streets:

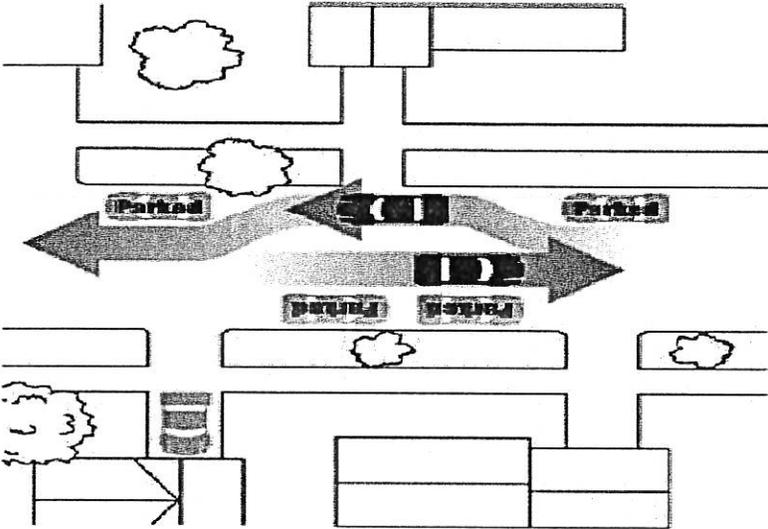
- a. Four options are created for Local Street design with the goal of narrowing the pavement width from the current 38 feet to reduce traffic speed in residential areas, increase pedestrian safety, reduce paved area, stormwater runoff and radiative heat, to optimize land utilization, and to create more aesthetically pleasing streets. Narrowing of pavement width is in keeping with national trends; many cities have adopted street standards of less than 28 feet with two-way traffic and parking on both sides. Recommended options include:
 - 20 ft paved travel surface and no on-street parking, with planting strips and sidewalks on both sides of the street. Paved off-street guest parking, at the rate of one space per dwelling unit, must be provided within the development in addition to the standard off-street parking requirements. (Example: Cliff Avenue West of Maple St is 21 ft wide).
 - 24 ft paved surface with parking on one side (north and east), a planting strip on the other side (south and west), and sidewalks both sides. (Example: 9th Avenue west of the University is 24 ft wide).
 - 30 ft paved surface providing parking for both sides of the street, a planting strip on one side (south and west), and sidewalks on both sides. (Example: 2nd Avenue near Chestnut is 30 ft wide). Public works has concerns regarding plowing snow when the street is “parked up”.
 - A fourth option, 34 ft paved surface with parking on both sides of the street, sidewalks adjacent to the street on both sides, and no planting strip, was omitted. (Example: Bluegrass Lane). The Committee majority was

concerned that it does not achieve the above goals but would become the default because it is familiar, and the minority wanting to offer an option more similar to current street standards. LDCU consultants recommend against including the 34 foot street option.

- b. The 24 and 30 foot street options require cars traveling in opposite directions at the same time (a fairly rare occurrence on these low traffic streets) to “queue”, or yield between parked cars or at intersections and wait for the other car to pass. (See diagram).
 - c. The 24 and 30 foot options do not provide for 20 foot clear space required by the International Fire Code, but which Washington State Law (RCW19.27.060) allows cities to supersede with regards to street design. Kittitas Valley Fire and Rescue Chief Sinclair has said that while 20 feet clear space for firefighters to work is preferable, they would be able to serve the proposed streets.
 - d. Local Street right of way width is increased from 50 to 60 feet. The amount of right of way actually used by street improvements varies by option. The ROW is increased to push homes, fences and garages further from the sidewalk (solving the “long truck overhanging the sidewalk” concern), and can be utilized for utilities instead of a required utility easement in the setback. LDCU consultants recommend reducing the ROW width to just a few feet beyond the sidewalk and using other tools to achieve the desired landscaping and design concerns; they believe that the ROW in addition to the building setback pushes the building back too far on the lot and reduces the building envelope.
6. Multi-use trail routes need to be preserved. The committee recommends requiring reservation or dedication at time of platting. We have requested a legal opinion on the issue of reservation vs. dedication and whether establishing “nexus” is different for trails vs street.
 7. Bicycle parking is required based on building size to provide bikers secure parking when they arrive at their destination.

The NMT Code Committee will review the Planning Commission and Environmental Commission’s comments and suggestions, and adjust the recommendations if necessary. The proposals will be made part of the Land Development Code Update public open house in January. Recommended code changes will be submitted to the Council in ordinance form as part of the Code Update process near the end of 2011.

Diagram of Queuing



Ellensburg Nonmotorized Transportation Code Committee 2009-2010

Anita Boyum, Ellensburg School District

Bill Yarwood, Central Washington University

Dan Davis, Biking Community

Gretchen Thatcher, Mobility Impaired Community

John Sinclair, Kittitas Valley Fire and Rescue

Alternate: Joe Seemiller

Karen Raymond, Citizen at Large

Kay Forsythe, Walking Community

Ray Miller, Economic Development Community

Sarah Bedsaul, Health Department

Steve Willard, Homebuilding Community

Chair: Nancy Lillquist, Ellensburg City Council