



Department Source: Public Works

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: December 16, 2024

Re: Report: Ash Street Improvement project summary.

Executive Summary

Staff has prepared for Council information a report outlining the design process for the Ash Street improvement project.

Discussion

The Ash Street improvement project was initiated following the renewal of the quarter-cent sales tax proposition in August 2015 which allocated funds for capital improvement projects (CIP) related to streets and sidewalks. The Ash Street improvement project was originally listed as a stop removal project at the intersections of Clinkscapes, Pershing, West, and Garth at a cost of \$2,600,000. When the project was originally included on the 10-year (2016-2025) CIP plan, mini-roundabouts were anticipated as the improvements for the stop sign removal. As staff started working on projects in the 10-year CIP plan, strong opposition for the mini-sized roundabouts was voiced during the public engagement process for the other roundabout projects. Thus, anticipating strong opposition for mini-roundabouts when starting the Ash Street improvements project, staff proposed providing residents with options to improve Ash Street which included nonmotorized improvements or full size roundabouts at Clinkscapes, West, and Garth.

Bartlett & West, Inc. was hired in November of 2021 to provide design services for the Ash Street Improvement project. The design services to be completed were separated into two phases. Phase 1 included a corridor study, development of concept plans, and the public engagement process to determine the preferred improvement option for the corridor. Phase 2 services included the completion of preliminary plans, right of way plans, and final plans for construction of the desired improvements determined from the Phase 1 process.

Phase 1 - Concept Plans and Public Engagement Process:

The Ash Street improvements concept plans proposed to potentially include pedestrian and bicycle improvements, intersection improvements, or a combination of both types of improvements. The initial Interested Parties (IP) meeting was held on March 8, 2022 and a second IP meeting was held on July 26, 2022. In addition, walk-throughs of the project were held on April 14, 2022 and on April 30, 2022. The IP meetings and the walk-throughs were open to anyone interested in learning and asking questions about the project. The design consultant and city engineering staff attended each of the IP meetings and the walk-throughs. The project was also featured on the city's Be Heard webpage where citizens could learn about the proposed project and leave comments.

At the initial IP meeting, the proposed pedestrian and bicycle concept plans included a continuous 10-foot wide sidewalk at the back of curb along the north side of Ash Street and a continuous bike lane and 5-foot wide sidewalk along the south side of the road. The



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concept plans also included pedestrian crosswalks with rapid flashing beacons at Redwood Road, at Anderson Avenue, and at Aldeah Avenue. The proposed intersection concept plans included 100-foot diameter single-lane roundabouts or improving the 4-way stops with pedestrian islands and additional stop signs. Intersection improvements were proposed for the Clinkscales Road intersection, the West Boulevard intersection, and the Garth Avenue intersection. Citizens reviewed the various concept plans, discussed the plans with the consultant and city staff, and provided comments. Fifty-nine citizens signed in for attending the initial IP meeting and 34 written comments were received.

The two project walk-throughs were held in April. The consultant and city staff walked the length of the project with interested residents to physically look at how the proposed improvements could affect properties and fit within the constraints of the corridor. The first walk-through was focused on citizens that owned property along Ash Street to discuss how the proposed improvements could affect their properties. The second walk-through was for the West Ash Neighborhood Association to generally discuss the improvements along the corridor and how the constraints of the corridor affect the design. Each of the walk-throughs were attended by a variety of interested citizens that wanted to learn more about the project. Some citizens walked the length of the corridor and others walked the area of the corridor where they were most interested in the improvements.

After compiling comments from the initial IP meeting and the two walk-throughs, the second IP meeting was held. For this meeting, the consultant revised the pedestrian and bicycle concept plans based on input gathered from the initial IP meeting and the walk-throughs. The revised concept plans reduced the width of the proposed sidewalk along the north side of Ash Street to 8 feet wide and added a 3-foot wide grass buffer between the sidewalk and the curb. The intersection concept plans remained essentially the same as used for the initial IP meeting. At the second IP meeting, citizens reviewed the various concept plans, discussed the plans with the consultant and city staff, and provided comments. Fifty-six citizens signed in as attending the second IP meeting and 37 written comments were received.

The public hearing for the project was held at the October 17, 2022 council meeting. In general, a large variety of comments were received throughout the public engagement processes. The pedestrian and bicycle improvements were the most favored; therefore, Staff recommended moving forward with the final design and construction of pedestrian and bicycle improvements as proposed in the second IP meeting. It was noted at the public hearing that project budget constraints may limit the construction of the entire project at one time and part of the project may need to be constructed in a future phase. Council voted to move forward with the pedestrian and bicycle improvements as were proposed in the concept plans from the second IP meeting.

Phase 2 - Preliminary Plans and Right of Way Plans Design:

The second phase of the design process with Bartlett and West was initiated in December of 2022. This phase included the completion of the topographic survey, preliminary plans, right of way plans, and final plans and specifications for construction.



The following summarizes some of the design revisions that were addressed with the development of preliminary plans and right of way plans.

- 1. Project Limits:** It was determined that construction of the project for the entire length of Clinkscates Road to Providence Road was out of the budget range for this project. Therefore, the design team decided to remove the section of improvements between Garth Avenue and Providence Road. It was decided to remove this section from the project because there are existing continuous sidewalks and bike lanes on both sides of this roadway section. The engineering consultant planned to complete the design for this section such that it could be completed as a future project. At the November 18, 2024 council meeting, council voted for staff to include the section between Garth Avenue and First Street/Park Avenue to be constructed with the section between Clinkscates Avenue and Garth Avenue. Council also directed staff to find the additional funding needed to complete this section of the project. The consultant is revising the design to include this section in the project.
- 2. Pedestrian Crossings:** The design team decided to remove the center islands for the three midblock pedestrian crossings at Redwood Road, at Anderson Avenue, and at Aldeah Avenue. These three intersections have north/south crossings where the side streets stop, but Ash Street is not stopped. The fire truck and school bus turning movement from the side streets required that the center islands be set 30 to 40 feet away from the intersection instead of at the intersection as originally proposed. The center islands being set back from the intersections created additional impacts to the adjacent yards and utilities from the need to widen the road accordingly. In addition, there was the concern that with the pedestrian crossings set so far back from the intersection, pedestrians would not be willing to walk to the crossing and instead would still cross at the intersection. Pedestrian crossing improvements are still included in the plans at all three of these locations and will include curb ramps, marked crosswalks, rectangular rapid flashing beacons, and signage. Diagrams showing the crosswalks with the center islands and additional impacts to the properties are included as exhibits to this report for all three of the locations.
- 3. Roadway Width:** There have been some questions about how the design changes the width of the roadway. There is not a consistent cross-section for the existing road with it varying between blocks. The proposed design provides a fairly constant road cross section. The design cross-section for the road includes a curb and gutter section on both sides of the road, two 11-foot wide driving lanes, and a bike lane on the south side of the road along with the sidewalks on both sides of the road. The following table summarizes where the road width stays the same, where it is widened, and where it is narrowed. The typical cross section is included as an exhibit to this report.



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Segment Start	Segment End	Length (ft.)	North Curb Line	South Curb Line
Clinkscales	Pinewood	1605	Match Exist.	Match Exist.
Pinewood	Redwood	265	Narrow	Narrow
Redwood	Anderson	1870	Narrow	Match Exist.
Anderson	Glenwood	580	Widen	Widen
Glenwood	Hirth	260	Widen	**
Hirth	Bicknell	140	Narrow	**
Bicknell	Garth	1980	Narrow	Match Exist.

**no curb present, adding C&G to existing pavement edge

It should be noted that the driving lane widths are remaining the same, but curb and gutter are being added along some of the blocks that currently do not have curb and gutter sections:

- Between Anderson and Glenwood the existing road has been paved over, essentially eliminating the gutter which conveys the stormwater. The design is adding a curb and gutter section where there is currently only a minimal curb.
- Between Glenwood and Hirth there isn't a curb on the south side of the road. The design is matching or narrowing the south edge of pavement, but adding a curb and gutter section.
- Between Hirth and Bicknell there is not a curb on the south side of the road and there is a horizontal shift. The design is adding a curb and gutter section.

4. **Utility Poles and Utility Boxes:** There are existing utility poles and utility boxes along both sides of the corridor which must be accounted for in the design of the project. Individual utility poles are difficult to relocate and trying to relocate one pole usually requires a line of poles to be relocated. The design consultant has worked with city electric along with the fiber optic providers on which poles and boxes are difficult to relocate and which can be more easily relocated, if needed. At many of the locations, the grass space between the sidewalk and the back of the curb allows for the utility poles and utility boxes to remain in place. There are a few blocks along the corridor where the utility poles are farther back and the sidewalk is designed to be constructed along the back of the curb such that the utility poles can remain in place. Finally, there are some locations where the utility poles will need to be relocated because the sidewalk cannot be adjusted to miss them. One of the design plan and profile sheets is attached showing pole locations in comparison to the sidewalk layout.
5. **Tree Removal:** On November 22, 2023, the design consultant, project engineer, and city arborist walked the length of the project discussing which trees would need to be removed due to the construction of the project. The health of each tree, the impacts from grading, and from the construction of the sidewalk on each tree was discussed. Trees determined that probably would not survive the construction and would need to be removed were marked on the plans. It should be noted that a few of the trees to



be removed are Ash trees that could or eventually will be affected by the emerald ash borer.

As part of the easement acquisition process, the appraiser will determine the value to replace each tree removed that is not in existing right of way and that value will be included in the compensation offered to the property owner. The tree compensation value includes the cost for the property owner to hire a tree expert to provide and plant the replacement trees if they so desire.

In the past on some improvement projects, the City has planted trees within the right of way once the project has been completed. There is not adequate right of way for the City to plant street trees within the right of way for this project. The Arbor Day Foundation has a program to plant trees on private property for property owners and the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP) Natural Resources Good Stewards group has reached out to the foundation about the program. This is just in the discussion stage and if determined as a viable option, would need to be brought forward to Council for approval.

One other option to try to save some of the existing tree canopy, would be for the City to work with individual property owners where they have trees not directly in the path of the sidewalk, but within the grading limits and would like to attempt to save the tree. A Plant Healthcare Specialist would need to be hired to provide consulting services and administer the work needed to aid the tree roots from the impacts of construction. The property owner would be responsible for any future maintenance and/or removal of the tree if it does not survive.

6. **Easement Acquisition:** Staff is currently working on the easement descriptions and diagrams for the improvements between Clinkscates Road and Garth Avenue which includes 143 properties. It is anticipated that the easement acquisition ordinance for this section will be brought to council for approval at the January 6, 2025 (first read) and January 21, 2025 (second read/old business) council meetings. The easement acquisition ordinance for the properties between Garth Avenue and First Street/Park Avenue and the bid call ordinance is anticipated to be brought to council in the spring of 2025.
7. **Project Cost Overruns:** The initial budget for this project was \$2,600,000. \$970,428 (Ordinance #024247, Ordinance #025241) has been transferred into this project from savings from other completed CIP projects resulting in an increase of the project budget to \$3,570,428. The engineering design cost estimate for this project is \$547,700. The design easement acquisition and construction cost estimate for the improvements between Clinkscates Road and First Street/Park Avenue is \$3,746,600. An additional \$200,000 will need to be transferred into the project from savings from other projects or from the Annual Sidewalk funding from the 2015 Capital Improvement Program sales tax.



CAAP Goals and City Strategic Plan Goals

The improvement project is striving to align with the City's CAAP goals and with the City Strategic Plan goals with the construction of the continuous sidewalk along both sides of Ash Street and the continuous bike lane along the south side of the road. The CAAP goals addressed with the project include the Transportation Strategy T-1.1.1: Prioritize transportation funding for safe streets for walking, biking, and riding transit and T-1.4: Create a walkable community by building sidewalks, bike lanes, and crosswalks. The Strategic Plan priority for the Reliable Infrastructure Goal 2: Construct/Repair Sidewalk is met by providing sidewalk connections with the construction of sidewalks to fill in gaps and replacement of the existing sidewalk that does not meet Americans with Disabilities standards.

If the City moves forward with the work with the Arbor Day Foundation to plant replacement trees and/or hires a Plant Healthcare Specialist provide consulting and services to protect tree root systems the project can address the CAAP Strategy NR-1.1.4: Support the Urban Forest Master Plan to identify programs and suitable locations to maintain and expand Columbia's urban tree canopy and NR-1.1.5: Update current tree preservation requirements to protect tree root systems and large legacy trees during construction and the City Strategic Plan Reliable Infrastructure Goal 3: Prepare Columbia's natural and built environments for the impacts of climate change/Maintain urban tree canopy percentage within City-managed areas (i.e. right of way, parks, etc.) across the community while mitigating the effects of Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) by continued implementation of the 2014 EAB Management Plan.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: none

Long-Term Impact: Sidewalks to be maintained by adjacent property owners.

Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Reliable and Sustainable Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Secondary,

Tertiary Impact: Tertiary

Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Mobility, Connectivity, and Accessibility,

Tertiary Impact: Tertiary

Legislative History

Date	Action
11/18/2024	REP75-24 Summary of costs for the Ash Street Improvement project, information and costs for improvements between Garth Avenue and First Street/Park Avenue.
01/17/2023	REP3-23 Summary of Steps for the Design and Construction of the Ash Street Improvements.



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12/19/2022	R200-22 Authorizing Amendment No. 1 to the agreement for professional engineering services with Bartlett & West, Inc. for Phase 2 design services relating to nonmotorized/pedestrian and intersection improvements along Ash Street, between Providence Road and Clinkscates Road.
10/17/2022	PH32-22 Proposed construction of improvements on Ash Street between Providence Road and Clinkscates Road.
09/19/2022	R133-22 Setting a public hearing: proposed construction of improvements on Ash Street between Providence Road and Clinkscates Road.
11/01/2021	R172-21 Authorizing an agreement for professional services with Barlett & West, Inc. for design services relating to nonmotorized/pedestrian and intersection improvements along Ash Street, between Providence Road and Clinkscates Road

Suggested Council Action

For information only.