

February 3, 2025

To: CATSO Technical Committee

Appreciating that the opportunity for public input has recently been re-opened for the West Ash Improvement Project, residents of the West Ash neighborhood and members of the West Ash Neighborhood Association (WANA) again respectfully request that West Ash Street (Providence to Clinkscapes) be re-classified from a Major Collector to a Neighborhood Collector. Pedestrians for Ash Street is a group of citizens formed to advocate for a neighborhood scale and non-motorized traffic focus regarding proposed “improvements” of the street. We have a core team of 6 people and at the time of this writing over 75 members who are engaged and interested in the outcome of this project.

Issues include incomplete, broken or unsafe sidewalks and bike lanes, poor visibility for pedestrians at minor crossings, issues with speeding traffic along Ash, and frequent traffic collisions at the intersection Ash and West Boulevard. The section of Ash Street in question is residential, lined with the homes of families and individuals who frequently walk, play in their yards and ride bicycles, and some individuals with disabilities who use wheelchairs or scooters. West Ash was built during a time when it was thought the street would function as a low traffic residential street and little thought was given to things such as sidewalks and safe pedestrian crossings. Many driveways open onto the street. A previous Public Input phase of the project identified pedestrian improvements, including increased safety measures, as the most desirable feature. We believe continued classification of West Ash Street as a Major Collector conflicts with this desired outcome.

As a group, goals we have identified are:

1. Equity for both pedestrian and vehicular users.
2. Increased safety measures for non-motorized travel: Traffic calming via use of narrow driving lanes (10 ft lanes per NACTO guidance¹) and use of mature trees² and mid-block crossings as horizontal and vertical calming measures. Small footprint intersections with safety features such as curb extensions, pedestrian refuge islands and tight curb radii to control motorized vehicular traffic.
3. Preservation of trees and lawns to the extent possible, with replacement of trees that must be removed.^{2,3*}

*The tree and green space preservation goal overlaps with traffic calming measures^{1,4} since narrower drive lane widths ensure space for improved pedestrian amenities with

minimal loss of trees and yards. Additionally, narrowing of driving lanes requires less significant land acquisition from home owners, and will prevent the right of way from encroaching undesirably close to homes that already have short front yard set backs. Tree removal will likely decrease property values, raise energy usage and costs for homeowners, may turn the Ash Street corridor into a heat island, and will likely increase storm water runoff. None of these is beneficial to our neighborhood or to the city.

The recently adopted CATSO 2055 Metro Transportation Plan supports these goals:

Goal 1 – Objective 1: Design streets and highways safe and efficient to move vehicular traffic and accommodate transit, pedestrians and bicyclists with minimal environmental impacts.

Goal 2 – Objective 3: Reduce reliance on automobile travel and better serve those who do not or cannot own and drive an automobile.

Goal 5 – Objective 3: Develop and modify the transportation system so that it respects and enhances the natural and built environment.

Goal 7 – Objective 2: Reduce injuries, fatalities and property damage for all modes of transportation with the Vision Zero Plan as the model.

Ash Street can provide good connectivity for non-motorized transportation and calm vehicular traffic. That West Ash Street is currently classified as a Major Collector with a high volume of high-speed cut-through traffic is out of context for its land use. It is difficult for people walking or riding bikes and for people with disabilities to feel safe.

Some of Columbia's design standards for different street and roadway classifications:

Major Collector:

Right-of-way 66'

Pavement widths 32'-44'

Typically no driveways and no street parking

Neighborhood Collector:

Right-of-way 60'

Pavement widths 30'-34'

Driveways and on-street parking allowed

Residential Street:

Right-of-way 50'

Pavement widths 28'-32'

"Designed for this intended function and exhibit characteristics which contribute to a safe and attractive living environment"

While a Major Collector is defined as having 66 feet of right-of-way (ROW), West Ash has only approximately 50-62 feet of ROW. **Both pavement widths and ROW widths are more consistent with West Ash being a Neighborhood Collector.**

We urge adoption of a 10 foot maximum width for driving lanes based on guidance from the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO).¹ Narrower streets are slower and safer and allow space for street trees, a valuable resource.

Reclassifying West Ash Street (Providence to Clinkscapes) as a Neighborhood Collector and then making infrastructure improvements that prioritize the land use context and people walking or riding bikes or contending with disabilities supports our goals as well as being in direct alignment with the 2055 Metro Transportation Plan's goals and objectives.

Signed,

West Ash Neighborhood Association West Ash Improvement Project Core Interest Group:

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Carol Rogers
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James Gordon, Board Member, Worley Street Round Table
Susan Maze, North Central Neighborhood
Pat Kelly, Member, Ridgeway Neighborhood Association

¹ National Association of City Transportation Officials, Urban Street Design Guide, October 2013.

² Naderi, et al. The street tree effect and driver safety. Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Journal on the Web, January 2008, 78. 69-73.

³ <https://www.vibrantcitieslab.com/research/transportation/>, Accessed October 2022

⁴ <https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2019/1/8/new-20-mph-street>, Accessed October 2022