



CITY OF KIRKLAND
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MEMORANDUM

To: Kurt Triplett, City Manager

From: Kathy Brown, Public Works Director
John Starbard, Interim Deputy Public Works Director

Date: July 3, 2018

Subject: Discussion: Street Connections Maps

RECOMMENDATION:

That the City Council discusses the topic of studying potential street connections when the City updates or creates neighborhood plans. The Council should further discuss when potential connections are identified, whether a map of the connections should be included in those neighborhood plans. A draft resolution supporting street connections and maps in neighborhood plans is provided as a basis for the discussion, though action on it is not being sought at this time. The resolution is drafted based on current policy as the starting point.

BACKGROUND DISCUSSION:

The City has a program to review and update its now fourteen neighborhood plans and business districts that are part of the *Comprehensive Plan*. The most recent plan to be acted on by the City Council was the Finn Hill Neighborhood Plan, which was adopted by the Council on January 16, 2018 by Ordinance O-4636. This was the first City-developed neighborhood plan for Finn Hill since the area's annexation in 2011. Staff and the community worked together over two years to develop a recommended plan that addresses vision and values, the natural environment, land use, transportation and mobility, and other community planning topics. During the planning process, discussions were held about the fact that in some areas of Finn Hill the street system is underdeveloped. There are dead ends that preclude neighborhood connections, locations that lack sidewalks or even pavement, and segments that are inconsistent with the street standards found elsewhere in the City.

As was done when the North Rose Hill and the Highlands neighborhood plans were updated, and when the Totem Lake Business District Plan was created, potential street connections were studied in the Finn Hill area. The issue was discussed with the community, and the point was made that likely most of these potential connections would occur in conjunction with infill development. A map of potential street connections was drafted, an open house was conducted about many planning topics including connectivity, and staff provided the Finn Hill community and all interested parties with an explanatory memo about the draft street connections map and the reasons for creating it.

Nationally, there is a considerable amount of literature in support of street connectivity for the convenience, efficiency, and health of communities. The Urban Land Institute, for example, in its publication *Ten Principles for Smart Growth on the Suburban Fringe* identifies one of the principles as being the use of multiple connections to enhance mobility and circulation. It elaborates on that principle by saying, in part, that creating a system and hierarchy of connected roads:

"...helps to spread traffic over a number of different streets by providing drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians with a number of choices to reach their destination. A network of interconnected roads also improves access for emergency vehicles, allowing alternate routes in the case of blockage or congestion. By having a variety of routes, the network allows for reduced travel time and congestion because traffic is not all on one arterial road."

Similarly, the National Complete Streets Coalition, in one of its fact sheet publications entitled "Implementing Complete Streets," begins by discussing the typical arterial and residential street networks that have been built since the 1950s.

"This system concentrates motorized traffic on a limited number of large roads, which causes longer, indirect trips and limit opportunities for alternate routes. Such a network makes it difficult for people who might walk, bike, or take public transportation because the indirect routes lengthen their trips and force them onto roads that are usually not designed for their safety or comfort. Public transportation also has a difficult time serving isolated neighborhoods with only one or two entry or exit points. So, people end up driving, even for very short trips."

In Washington State, an initiative called Transportation Efficient Communities that is supported by the Washington State Departments of Commerce, Ecology, Health, and Transportation cites several benefits associated with improved street connectivity, including enhanced bicycle and pedestrian travel when the number of street connections and local intersections in communities are increased.

Kirkland has a strong history of supporting street connections and increasing non-motorized transportation options. The *Comprehensive Plan* speaks to connectivity in several policies and statements, including the following:

Land Use Element

- Policy LU-3.9: "Encourage vehicular and non-motorized connectivity."
- Improved connectivity encourages walking and biking and reduces travel distance for all transportation modes.
- Vehicle connections between adjacent properties reduces congestion on streets, number of turning movements, and gasoline consumption.
- As a part of land development, new connections to the existing street system are often required.

Transportation Element (TMP)

- Policy T-5.2: "Design streets in a manner that supports the land use plan and that supports the other goals and policies of the transportation element."
- Policy T-5.3: "Create a transportation network that supports economic development goals."
- Policy T-5.6: "Create a system of streets and trails that form an interconnected network."
- Action T-5.6.1: "Develop a plan for connections between street ends and complete those connections."

Additionally, the Zoning Code and the Public Works Pre-approved Plans Manual provide guidance and regulations concerning street connections and non-motorized improvements:

- Chapter 105: Parking Areas, Vehicle and Pedestrian Access, and Related Improvements
- Chapter 110: Required Public Improvements
- Chapter 180: Plates 34 A-P

While there has been occasional discussion at the Council about whether to modify these connection policies, the Council as a whole has not formally debated the issue or directed staff to propose changes. Since no change has been requested, staff continue to use the policies as the framework in decision making for street connections. Not only has staff worked to implement these policies and apply these regulations, staff also has made productive use of the three street connections maps that have been adopted as well as the plates (illustrations) in the Zoning Code.

However, when new street connections are proposed, there is often considerable opposition expressed by the surrounding neighbors. Local residents, many of them families with children, raise concerns about potential increased traffic and perceived child safety issues that could result from the connections. At times these residents appeal the connection. Currently, the subdivision code requires appeals of a short subdivision *that contains a new through-street connection* to be filed directly with the City Council instead of the Hearing Examiner (who generally hears all other short subdivision appeals). The Council must review these appeals in quasi-judicial manner and must conduct the required open record hearing. These hearings can be very lengthy as they must comply with all due process requirements.

It has been suggested that the formal adoption of street connection maps, through the legislative process, may create a strong presumption of street connections that are then difficult to change during the permit process and even more difficult to successfully appeal. If the Council is interested, staff could explore alternative options to the quasi-judicial process for through street appeals and bring those options back to the Council for review and discussion.

The street connection maps, even though they show precise locations, are used in a more generalized way. As private development is proposed, staff refers to the street connections maps to see if the proposed development could facilitate a connection, even if not exactly in the location shown on a map. Additionally, as funding opportunities arise, these maps also are used in conjunction with public investments and development. Examples include:

- Of the 17 potential street connections originally mapped in the North Rose Hill Neighborhood Plan, six have been completed;
- In South Rose Hill, "The Preserve" subdivision completed a through-street connection and sidewalks on 128th Avenue N.E. between N.E. 70th Street and N.E. 80th Street, as originally mapped in Figure SRH-5 in the South Rose Hill Neighborhood Plan; and
- Both Plate 34C in Chapter 180 of the Zoning Code and Figure TL-6 in the Totem Lake Business District Plan propose a connection of 118th Avenue N.E. between N.E. 116th Street and 118th Street, which is being constructed now in association with the "Lifebridge" multifamily project.

Given the City's robust policy support for street connections and the successes the City has had in the past by using street connections maps during project reviews, staff anticipates continuing to use the ones that are adopted. Further, staff will continue to be alert to this issue so that future opportunities are not lost as new private and public projects are proposed.

At the time of final review and unanimous adoption of the Finn Hill Neighborhood Plan, staff proposed postponing the inclusion of a street connections map until a public outreach process was conducted in Finn Hill about connectivity issues, including developing priorities and objective criteria for which streets should be connected for vehicles and/or pedestrians and/or bicycles, evaluating emergency response times, and whether bollards should replace the existing barriers. The Council agreed with that recommendation. In addition, staff will initiate three transportation engineering projects in the Finn Hill area: 1) Holmes Point Overlay District street standards, 2) Holmes Point Drive design engineering in response to a recent geotechnical analysis, and 3) a corridor improvement design for N.E. 131st Street/90th Avenue N.E. All of the projects identified in this paragraph could be complete by the end of calendar year 2018 and are funded in the General Fund.

Staff recommends continuing the City's practice of discussing and analyzing street connection possibilities whenever a neighborhood plan is under review. It is possible that there are not street connection opportunities in every neighborhood planning area. However, if there are, then staff recommends that they be mapped and included as part of the adoption process of neighborhood plan updates to provide transparency of the potential connections to current and future residents. On the other hand, the Council may choose not to have a policy of adopting street connection maps in its future planning documents. In that case, staff will not propose future street connection maps in neighborhood plans. Staff will continue to fulfill adopted policies and regulations concerning street connections and non-motorized systems on a case-by-case basis unless Council provides different policy direction.

RESOLUTION R-5323

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF KIRKLAND TO PROVIDE FOR THE MAPPING OF STREET CONNECTIONS IDENTIFIED AS PART OF THE REVIEW OF AND UPDATES TO THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, NEIGHBORHOOD PLANS, AND BUSINESS DISTRICT PLANS.

1 WHEREAS, one of the City Council’s land use policy goals is to
2 achieve balanced transportation by reducing reliance on single-
3 occupancy vehicles and improving connectivity and multi-modal mobility
4 in Kirkland in ways that maintain and enhance travel times, safety,
5 health, and transportation choices; and
6

7 WHEREAS, policy LU-3.9 in the Land Use Element of the Kirkland
8 Comprehensive Plan encourages vehicular and non-motorized
9 connectivity, noting that improved connectivity encourages walking and
10 biking and reduces travel distances for all transportation modes; and
11

12 WHEREAS, policy T-5.6 in the Transportation Element of the
13 Kirkland Comprehensive Plan seeks to create a system of streets and
14 trails that form an interconnected transportation network, noting that
15 new connections often are required as part of land development, that
16 traffic spread over a grid of streets helps balance and minimize impacts
17 across the network, and that emergency response times are shorter and
18 more reliable when responders have routing options; and
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20 WHEREAS, the Urban Land Institute’s publication *Ten Principles*
21 *for Smart Growth on the Suburban Fringe* advocates for the use of
22 multiple connections to enhance mobility and circulation; and
23

24 WHEREAS, the National Complete Streets Coalition’s publication,
25 *Implementing Complete Streets* lauds the value of connected streets
26 because “well-designed, connected [streets] make travel more efficient
27 by providing choices not only in modes, but also in routes”; and
28

29 WHEREAS, Transportation Efficient Communities—an initiative
30 supported by the Washington State Departments of Commerce,
31 Ecology, Health, and Transportation—cites several benefits associated
32 with improved street network connectivity, including enhanced bicycle
33 and pedestrian travel when the number of street connections and local
34 intersections in communities are increased; and
35

36 WHEREAS, the City’s Comprehensive Plan includes fourteen
37 different Neighborhood Plans that are reviewed and revised from time
38 to time; and

39 WHEREAS, the City currently has "Street Connections" maps in
40 its adopted North Rose Hill Neighborhood Plan (figure NRH-5) and its
41 Highlands Neighborhood Plan (figure H-5), and as well as the City's
42 Totem Lake Business District Plan (figure TL-6); and
43

44 WHEREAS, the City has found these street connections maps to
45 be effective tools in identifying and causing new connections to be
46 created and wishes to include such maps wherever appropriate in all
47 such plans in the future; and
48

49 WHEREAS, at the time the community and the City drafted the
50 Finn Hill Neighborhood Plan, staff created a draft "Finn Hill Street
51 Connections and Trails" map; and
52

53 WHEREAS, the Finn Hill Neighborhood Plan was adopted on
54 January 16, 2018, including its policy FH-14.2, stating, "Develop a map
55 where potential street connections should be made, with a map to be
56 inserted at a future time," and
57

58 WHEREAS, having experienced the value and effectiveness of
59 such street connections maps, and foreseeing future benefits of them
60 to fulfill the City's policies for improving connectivity and multi-modal
61 mobility.
62

63 NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the City Council of the City
64 of Kirkland as follows:
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66 Section 1. Potential street connections shall be studied in all
67 future reviews of City of Kirkland Comprehensive Plan neighborhood and
68 business district plans.
69

70 Section 2. If potential street connections are identified as part
71 of any such review, then a street connection map shall be included in
72 the revised neighborhood or business district plan document.
73

74 Section 3. In anticipation of adopting a street connections map
75 for the Finn Hill Neighborhood Plan, staff will conduct a public outreach
76 process to develop connection priorities and objective criteria,
77 specifically address "bollards" versus "barriers," and evaluate
78 emergency response times.
79

80 Passed by a majority of the Kirkland City Council in open meeting
81 this _____ day of _____, 2018.
82

83 Signed in authentication thereof this _____ day of
84 _____, 2018

Amy Walen, Mayor

Attest:

Kathi Anderson, City Clerk