



CITY OF KIRKLAND
Department of Public Works
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MEMORANDUM

To: Kurt Triplett, City Manager

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

Date: November 15, 2018

Subject: RESOLUTION: TRANSPORTATION CONNECTIONS MAP

RECOMMENDATION:

City Council adopts a resolution that:

- Affirms the City's existing policies related to transportation connections and encourages their application; and
- Directs staff to create a citywide transportation connections map through technical review and a public involvement process, and include that map as part of the 2019 annual update of the *Comprehensive Plan*.

BACKGROUND DISCUSSION:

The City has a program to review and update its fourteen neighborhood plans that are part of the *Comprehensive Plan*. The most recent neighborhood plan acted on by the City Council as of the writing of this memo 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 a two-year period 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 transportation system is underdeveloped. There are several dead-ends that preclude neighborhood connections, public street segments that lack sidewalks or even sufficient pavement, and areas 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 motorized and non-motorized connections were studied in the Finn Hill area. The issue was discussed with the community, the point was made that likely most of these potential transportation connections would be made in conjunction with infill development, a map of potential transportation 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 explanations about the draft transportation connections map and the reasons for creating it.

Kirkland has a strong history of supporting transportation 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/Transportation Master Plan

- 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 and Policies 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

Not only has staff worked to implement these policies and apply these regulations, staff also has made productive use of the three connections maps that have been adopted as well as the plates in the *Zoning Code*. The existing transportation connection maps, even though they show precise locations, are used in a more generalized way. As private and public development is proposed, staff refers to the connections maps to see if the proposed development could facilitate a connection, even if not exactly in the location shown on a map. 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.

Because of community concerns raised about some of the connections, at the time of final review and unanimous adoption of the Finn Hill Neighborhood Plan, staff proposed postponing the inclusion of a transportation connections map. A connections map was postponed until a public outreach process could be conducted in Finn Hill about connectivity issues, including developing priorities and objective criteria regarding transportation connections for vehicles and/or pedestrians and/or bicycles, evaluating emergency response times, and how best to address bollards and barriers in the area.

Staff returned to the Council on July 3, 2018 to continue the discussion of mapping transportation connections and outreach about that topic in Finn Hill. Staff also was seeking affirmation that it should continue applying the connections policies the City has now, and recommended that connections maps should be discussed and included in future neighborhood plan updates throughout the City.

During that July 3 discussion, the Council expressed several views related to transportation connections:

- There was support for the City’s policies on connectivity, though there was interest in having the City be more intentional about why certain connections are sought;
- That the *Kirkland Municipal Code* should be amended so to that all land use appeals, including those projects that recommend connections, be directed to the Hearing Examiner; and
- There was discussion about having connections identified on one citywide map rather than on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis.

Advantages noted by the Council to having a citywide transportation connections map were that the final map could be finished sooner, and that there would be a single source for seeing all proposed connections. The map could be finished sooner because the current practice of discussing connections at the neighborhood level means the mapping would be complete only after the multiyear neighborhood plan update cycle was complete, which takes about eight years. Also, the City’s transportation network is an integrated system that provides service to the entire City and the region; evaluating connections on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis diminishes that perspective.

A challenge to doing a citywide map is that discussions about proposed connections benefit from the local knowledge of the people who live or who have businesses closest to them.

Staff discussed the idea of a citywide transportation connections map with the Public Safety Committee on October 18 (all committee members were present) and with the Public Works,

Parks, and Human Services Committee on October 19 (all committee members were present). Both committees showed interest in a citywide transportation connections map. Committee members also discussed the following:

- That both the type of connection (e.g., foot path, street connection) and the rationale (e.g., pedestrian connection, emergency response time) should be identified;
- That transportation connections still could be discussed as part of neighborhood plan update processes, though any suggested amendments to the citywide map would be bundled and acted upon every few years; and
- That action on a proposed ordinance to amend the Hearing Examiner process should be postponed until the public process to draft a citywide transportation connections map is complete.

A thought was raised by a committee member that it might be beneficial for the Council to remain part of the community discussion when connections are proposed, but not have appeals heard by the Council. Most of the time, connections are proposed and required in conjunction with new plats, which have quasi-judicial processes.

Presently, if there is an appeal of any plat that proposes a new transportation connection, then it is heard by the City Council rather than the Hearing Examiner *even if* the appeal does not concern the connection. At the July 3, 2018 City Council meeting, some members of the Council expressed that all appeals should be referred to the Hearing Examiner. In subsequent Committee discussions, some Councilmembers expressed a desire to have input to the decision process. If the Council wishes to remain part of the decision process regarding individual transportation connections, then staff could return at another time with an amendment whereby the Council would only hear plat appeals where at least one of the appeal issues is a proposed transportation connection. This would mean that if there were an appeal of a proposed connection in addition to other appeal issues, then the Council would be required to hear all of the appeal issues.

Attached to this staff report is a proposed Resolution that affirms the City's existing policy, plan, and code support for transportation connections; directs staff to conduct a public process to draft a citywide connections map that identifies the type of and rationale for each connection; and provides for the citywide map to be included in the late-2019 annual update of the *Comprehensive Plan*.

To help the staff that works on code amendments, staff also would welcome the Council's direction about whether and how to amend the plat appeal process.

Attachment A: Proposed Resolution

RESOLUTION R-5350

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF KIRKLAND TO AFFIRM ITS POLICY SUPPORT FOR INCREASING TRANSPORTATION CONNECTIONS WITHIN THE CITY, TO INITIATE A PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS, AND TO DIRECT STAFF TO CREATE A CITYWIDE TRANSPORTATION CONNECTIONS MAP TO HELP FULFILL THE CITY'S POLICIES FOR IMPROVING SAFETY, CONNECTIVITY AND MULTIMODAL MOBILITY.

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
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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 *The Principles*
21 *for Smart Growth on the Suburban Fringe* advocates for the use of
22 multiple connections to enhance mobility and circulation; and
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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, Ecology,
31 Health, and Transportation—cites several benefits associated with
32 improved street network connectivity, including enhanced bicycle and
33 pedestrian travel when the number of street connections and local
34 intersections in communities are increased; and
35

36 WHEREAS, the City currently has "Street Connections" maps in
37 its adopted North Rose Hill Neighborhood Plan (figure NRH-5) and its

38 Highlands Neighborhood Plan (figure H-5), and as well as the City's
 39 Totem Lake Business District Plan (figure TL-6); and

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 41 WHEREAS, the City has found these connections maps to be
 42 effective tools in identifying and causing new connections to be created;
 43 and

44
 45 WHEREAS, at the time the community and the City drafted the
 46 Finn Hill Neighborhood Plan, staff created a draft "Finn Hill Street
 47 Connections and Trails" map; and

48
 49 WHEREAS, the Finn Hill Neighborhood Plan was adopted on
 50 January 16, 2018, including its policy FH-14.2, stating, "Develop a map
 51 where potential street connections should be made, with a map to be
 52 inserted at a future time," and

53
 54 WHEREAS, upon reflection and discussion, it would be more
 55 efficient in time and effort to create a single map that identifies potential
 56 transportation connections citywide rather than on a neighborhood-by-
 57 neighborhood basis; and

58
 59 WHEREAS, having experienced the value and effectiveness of
 60 such transportation connections maps, and foreseeing future benefits,
 61 the City should adopt a citywide map to help fulfill the City's policies for
 62 improving safety, connectivity and multi-modal mobility.

63
 64 NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the City Council of the City
 65 of Kirkland as follows:

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 67 Section 1. The City Council affirms its support of existing City
 68 policies related to transportation connections and encourages their
 69 application.

70
 71 Section 2. Staff is hereby directed to initiate a public
 72 engagement process that includes broad community participation for
 73 discussing and evaluating proposed transportation connections
 74 throughout the City.

75
 76 Section 3. Staff shall create a citywide transportation
 77 connections map, which shall identify the type of and the rationale for
 78 each connection.

79
 80 Section 4. The final draft citywide transportation connections
 81 map shall be included in the 2019 annual update of the *Comprehensive*
 82 *Plan*.

83
 84 Passed by a majority of the Kirkland City Council in open meeting
 85 this _____ day of _____, 2019.

86 Signed in authentication thereof this _____ day of
87 _____, 2019.

Mayor

Attest:

Kathi Anderson, City Clerk