



Christine Clancy, P.E., DPW Commissioner

Ting Chang, P.E., City Engineer

TO: Eileen M. Donoghue, City Manager

CC: Christine Clancy, DPW Commissioner

FROM: Ting Chang, City Engineer

DATE: March 31, 2022

SUBJECT: MOTION OF 2/15/2022 BY COUNCILOR GITSCHIER: REQ. CITY MANAGER HAVE THE ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT LOOK INTO ADDING GRASS STRIPS BEWTWEEN THE ROAD AND SIDEWALKS ON HIGHLAND AVENUE DURING THE UPCOMING PAVING PROJECT.

Highland Ave is an accepted city street with 40 ft. right of way, 28 ft. wide roadway, and existing grass strips existing on this section of roadway sporadically. Throughout the years, some of the grass strips were paved by residents to create parking in front of their property and some vehicles parked on top of the grass strip, as shown below, causing deterioration or rutting of the grass area.





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On March 10, 2022, the Engineering Department conducted field measurements to verify available roadway and sidewalk widths. Most of Highland Avenue is comprised of 40 ft. wide between back of sidewalk and back of sidewalk with the exception of few locations where retaining walls existed on both sides of the right of way causing a reduction in overall width to 39 ft.

There are few factors to consider when installing grass strip along the roadway to be successful for its survival:

- Minimum width of grass strip
- Maintenance of the grass strip
- Street cross section: wide of travel lane, parking, sidewalk

The Engineering Department recommends a minimum width of 18” for a grass strip to be successful for survival. With 40 ft. wide right of way, and 28 ft. wide roadway, remaining 6 ft. wide of either side of the roadway could be used for sidewalk. This is based on assumption of the center of roadway is aligned with the center of right of way. Exact location will require detailed survey. Considering 6” wide curbing and 18” wide grass strip, a 4-foot sidewalk can be accommodated on both sides of the street for most of Highland Avenue. . Where the overall width is less than 40 ft., a grass strip is not recommended. Though a 3 ft. unobstructed sidewalk is required to meet the ADA minimum requirement, 5 ft. is preferred. There are also pending ADA regulations that might change the minimum width to 4 ft. For sidewalks less than 5 feet in width, a 5’x5’ ADA passing area is required every 200’. Some of these passing areas might be able to be accommodated at driveways, but if not, then these areas would not be able to have a grass strip.

Proper maintenance of the grass strip is another critical factor to consider. The unusually rainy summer of 2021 for an example resulted in many sidewalks with grass growing out of the curbing, at grass strips, or at the back of sidewalk. DPW was asked to maintain these areas. Complaints came in from the community and Councilors asking DPW to maintain these areas. DPW does not have the capacity to maintain grass strips throughout the City. In severe cases where grass or brush impedes vehicular or pedestrian traffic, DPW coordinates with the adjacent property owner and if considered a safety issue, addresses those specific areas. It is recommended that grass strips only be considered if there is support from the immediate community to maintain the grass strips. For this particular project, the Engineering Department recommends conducting a community outreach effort to confirm if residents desire grass strips and plan to maintain them. Another consideration is to amend the City Ordinance to have homeowner maintain the grass strips similar to snow removal.

Curbs with an average of 6” curb reveal will be installed as part of this project. Vehicles currently park within the grass strip area since the existing roadway width does not accommodate parking on



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both sides. Vehicles might try to jump the new curb and still park on the sidewalk or grass strip. Parking on sidewalks is not permitted in the City.

Engineering Department suggest the following roadway cross section options to allow proper travel widths and parking lanes. These options will be discussed with the residents of Highland Avenue to understand a preference. Upon receiving feedback from the residents of Highland Avenue, a final design will be recommended. This project is anticipated to be completed as part of the FY23 capital/CH. 90 projects.

Option 1: Change current direction to One Way

2- 6' sidewalk (.5' curb, 4' concrete sidewalk, 1.5' grass strip)
2- 8' parking lane (parking on both side of road)
12' travel lane

Option 2: Two-way (one side parking)

2- 6' sidewalk (.5' curb, 4' concrete sidewalk, 1.5' grass strip)
7' parking lane
2- 10.5' travel lane

Option 3: Two-way (one side parking)

2- 6' sidewalk (0.5' curb, 5.5' concrete sidewalk)
7' parking lane
2- 10.5' travel lane

If option 1 is desired, Engineering and Assistant Transportation Planner can conduct traffic count and determine the one way direction.

For Option 3, upright tree can be installed in a 2'x4' wide tree pit along the sidewalk at proper locations to provide greenery; bump outs can be added on selected locations on the street parking side, this will also have traffic calming effect on the roadway.

Engineering Department also recommends to update city street cross section standards on the Subdivision Rule and Regulations.