

July 27, 2020

TO: Mayor Chuck Bennett, Councilor Nordyke, Councilor Anderson, City Council,
Robert Chandler, Phd, PE

FROM: Southwest Association of Neighbors (SWAN)

RE: Pedestrian Connection between Candalaria and Fairmont Neighborhoods

Council has recently received a report detailing over 35 years of history for a connector pathway between Candalaria and Fairmont neighborhoods with 6 options for consideration to provide direction to Public Works and Transportation Planning. The Southwest Neighborhood Association (SWAN) is supportive of neighborhood connectivity through the development of safe pedestrian pathways but is also committed to a larger vision of community connectivity that promotes, protects and enhances the unique character, history and cultural heritage of our neighborhoods. The Hoyt/Rural connector offers an excellent opportunity to begin to implement this vision as it relates to the potential impact of a pathway through Pioneer Cemetery, a nationally recognized historical site with deep roots into the cultural heritage of Salem's founders. SWAN has devoted many hours researching, holding special meetings, consulting with friends of Pioneer Cemetery, reaching out to neighbors and attending tours in order to thoroughly understand and make a recommendation that moves this issue forward in the best way possible for all concerned. We believe Option 5 is most aligned with the needs required for connectivity and responsible preservation if executed in accordance with the recommendations we outline below.

SWAN cannot support the other Options put forward to Council for the following reasons:

Option 1: Taking no action is a missed opportunity and we do not encourage it.

Option 2: Removing the path from master plans and vacating the pedestrian access easement is a poor choice but is supported if there is a *removal and hold* on the transportation system master plan and pedestrian easement until a plan is put forward for the protection of Pioneer Cemetery. As Salem moves toward implementing neighborhood connectors and urban trails this would eliminate a connectivity option between neighborhoods which we greatly value.

Option 3: Improving pedestrian facilities along Commercial Street would require purchasing land, cutting down established trees, construction of a retaining wall due to topography and determination of impacts to the historic Pioneer Cemetery. This does not address the issue of eliminating the need to use Commercial Street as a connector between neighborhoods and SWAN does not see this as a viable option.

Option 4: Constructing a trail through Fairmont Park with connections to Rural and Crestview would utilize an existing trail that is unpaved, steep and often muddy. Improving this trail would require considerable modification of the topography on an often unstable hillside to make it viable. This does

not address the issue of convenient off street connectivity between neighborhoods that is sought with the Hoyt/Rural connector.

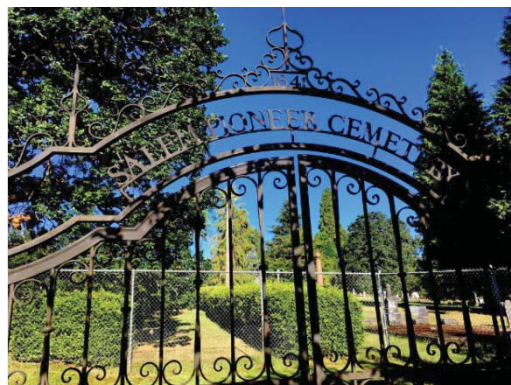
Option 5 represents the most direct connection between neighborhoods with a link between John Street and Hoyt through Pioneer Cemetery but poses risks to the cemetery if preservation and protection fail to be fully incorporated. Accommodating a trail/path through the cemetery would only require a width of 36 inches and a length of approximately 500 feet ending at a landing leading to John Street over an unopened alley right-of-way. **This route makes the most sense but would require design elements providing for protection and security of historic Pioneer Cemetery if it is pursued.** The significant amount of vandalism, damage and destruction occurring at Pioneer Cemetery prior to placement of the current chain link fence around the property must not be ignored. Vandalism continues to be a concern today evidenced by openings being cut into the chain link fence and several unauthorized uses at property located adjacent to the cemetery at Hoyt and Commercial Street which ultimately required fence placement and padlocks for protection. It is therefore imperative that any consideration of a pathway through Pioneer Cemetery require that the cemetery be fully enclosed.

A path connection along the western border of the cemetery is a good choice if it is pursued slowly and methodically with design input from the public and preservation of Pioneer Cemetery as the keystone of design/build concepts. If there is no provision for historic property and artifact protection included in follow through to Option 5, SWAN recommends tabling the neighborhood connector until such time as a design/build plan including protection for the heritage of Pioneer Cemetery can be developed.

Option 6: Constructing a connection that includes City View Cemetery to which the owner has stated he is not interested in providing an easement for a pedestrian pathway. Additionally this option would need similar design assurances and construction plans to provide protection against vandalism, theft and destruction of property. SWAN would not support this option without security concerns being addressed for both historic properties.

RECOMMENDATION

Pioneer Cemetery lies wholly within the boundary of the Southwest Association of Neighbors (SWAN) in Ward 7 and we recognize the opportunity and responsibility to get this right! Input from invested members of our neighborhood association along with cemetery volunteers and neighbors have helped to craft a vision for a possible pedestrian connection between Rural and Hoyt through Pioneer Cemetery. SWAN envisions protecting an irreplaceable State and City of Salem asset with a first class trail connector showcasing this historical gem and providing pedestrian access.



Protecting historic urban cemeteries and utilizing them for education, architecture and tourism as windows into the past is not unusual. Outstanding examples of historic urban cemeteries abound and Salem could be a part of this heritage process through well-executed planning of this connector which could lead to more urban path connections throughout the city. Boston links 2.5 miles of trail into the Freedom Trail. While not Boston, we have an opportunity to create a heritage trail of our own that could be linked with wayfare signage to Minto Brown Park, Riverfront Park and downtown Salem. The connector through Pioneer Cemetery could highlight the memorial to black pioneers, heritage markers for pioneers and show off the Chinese shrine. It would welcome users to learn about the history of Salem with the placards, historic display boards or maybe engraved stones similar to those found on the Capital Mall placed along the trail. Not only would our history benefit but it could encourage volunteerism by exposing visitors to other cemetery assets such as the historic rose collection, significant white oak and madrona trees in addition to educational opportunities from grade school to university archaeology and architecture studies.



The trail would be bordered with an architectural wrought iron fence and three gates on the western edge of the cemetery extending from the northwest corner to the southern entrance enclosing the entire cemetery. This enclosure is a fundamental requirement for security and protection against theft, vandalism and overall destruction of Pioneer Cemetery which required the necessity of a chain link fence to be build in the 1980's the first place. This threat still exists today and cannot be emphasized enough.



The design proposal (see Attachment 1) envisions a 6 foot pathway, well within ADA specifications, at the northwest corner leading from the easement on John Street into Pioneer Cemetery fenced on one side by the current City View barbed wire fencing and chain link fencing along the other side attaching to the current storage area fencing. It would require removal of the existing arborvitae hedge and other vegetation as well as lighting for security. The current storage area would not need to be relocated. The design does not address a gate at this entrance which may be a concern for residents in the immediate area due to potential increased foot traffic.



Current South entrance gate



North end near Storage Area

After approximately 75 feet, the trail would widen onto a road that currently exists. Three gates would provide easy access for maintenance and visitors to access existing roads into the cemetery with a larger main gate in the center to resemble the architectural style of the original gate on Commercial. Again, no gate is currently envisioned on the southern boundary as the iron fencing would be attached to the current chain link fence at either end fully enclosing the cemetery. Although a second enclosure may seem redundant and a potentially unnecessary expense, the dual benefits of a deterrence to the vandalism that has plagued this site and a visual structure consistent with historical urban cemeteries outweigh the cost.

We ask the Council to consider a request for further study, possible site renderings, cost analysis of this vision and public input. If pursued with community partners, grants may be awarded for projects of this type that include historical preservation grants, active transportation grants and cultural awareness and education grants so the city would not need to rely on sparse general funds.

SWAN seeks your support to envision what is possible for our community. We see an opportunity that goes beyond a pedestrian connection between Candalaria and Fairmont neighborhoods to a greater community connectivity that showcases gems like Pioneer Cemetery to its fullest historic and cultural potential while still honoring the need to preserve and protect.

Submitted on behalf of the Southwest Association of Neighbors,

Jeanine Stice, SWAN Chair

Ted Burney, SWAN Land Use Chair