



CITY OF SALEM

585 Liberty St SE
Salem, OR 97301

Staff Report

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Date: 7/24/2023

Item #: 5.a.

TO: Mayor and City Council
THROUGH: Keith Stahley, City Manager
FROM: Brian D. Martin, PE, Public Works Director

SUBJECT:

Salem Heights Avenue S Street Refinement Plan

Ward(s): 7

Councilor(s): Nordyke

Neighborhood(s): SWAN

Result Area(s): Safe Community; Safe, Reliable, and Efficient Infrastructure

SUMMARY:

City staff collaborated with interested residents to develop a refinement plan to address safety and operations on Salem Heights Avenue west of Liberty Road. *The Salem Heights Avenue S Street Refinement Plan* (Plan) outlines the issues, planning process, and recommended solutions to improving Salem Heights Avenue.

ISSUE:

Shall City Council accept the Salem Heights Avenue S Street Refinement Plan (Attachment 1) and direct staff to incorporate recommendations into the *Salem Transportation System Plan* (Salem TSP) at the next amendment opportunity?

RECOMMENDATION:

Accept the Salem Heights Avenue S Street Refinement Plan and incorporate recommendations into the Salem TSP at the next amendment opportunity.

FACTS AND FINDINGS:

Salem Heights Avenue west of Commercial Street is an underimproved collector street that does not meet current City standards. It lacks bicycle and pedestrian amenities, curb, and stormwater

collection facilities. In 2018, a group of Salem Heights Avenue neighbors approached the City with concerns about the impending Wren Heights residential development. A proposal had been put forth to develop approximately eight acres of unimproved land along Salem Heights Avenue into a 34-lot residential subdivision. Neighbors were concerned about traffic impacts generated by the subdivision, as well as the potential threat to the mature tree canopy and the general neighborhood character. The Wren Heights development was approved by the City Planning Administrator on June 6, 2019, and development is currently underway.

The neighbors requested that the City investigate ways to make Salem Heights Avenue safer for all users while still preserving the tree canopy and neighborhood character. Staff worked with the neighbors to develop a robust public outreach effort including:

- Project page on the City website, including a GIS story map.
- A Project Advisory Committee comprised of interested neighbors that guided the planning process.
- Two public meetings that were well attended by residents of Salem Heights Avenue and the surrounding areas.
- A presentation at the August 2021 SWAN Neighborhood Association meeting.
- Two surveys at key points in the planning process targeted to area residents. Staff received over 500 responses combined to the two surveys.

The Salem TSP establishes a 60-foot right-of-way width for collector streets. However, the TSP acknowledges that circumstances may require adjustments to either the right-of-way width or to the improvements to the street. The Public Works Director has the authority to approve adjustments to street cross sections or right-of-way requirements in response to those circumstances. The public outreach campaign resulted in a refinement plan that proposed three potential 48-foot street cross sections:

- Alternative #1 - Multi-Use Path: This alternative consists of a 24-foot-wide street with a 10-foot-wide multi-use path separated by a planter strip.
- Alternative #2 - Sidewalks on Both Sides of the Street: This alternative consists of a 28-foot-wide street with 6-foot-wide bike lane in the uphill direction and 5-foot-wide sidewalks on each side of the street. There would be a planter strip on one side of the street.
- Alternative #3 - Sidewalk on One Side of the Street: This alternative consists of a 30-foot-wide street with a 6-foot-wide bike lane in the uphill direction and a 5-foot sidewalk on one side separated from the street by a planter strip.

The second community survey, conducted in May 2022, indicated a community preference for Alternative #1 - Multi-Use Path. This finding was supported by the Project Advisory Committee and is being advanced as the preferred alternative in the Plan.

The Plan outlines planning and engineering guidelines designed to advance the goal of making Salem Heights Avenue safer for all users while protecting the tree canopy and preserving the neighborhood

character. It also identifies possible funding opportunities, although no funding is currently programmed to implement the improvements proposed in the Plan.

In addition, the Plan includes language to be added into the Salem TSP at the next amendment opportunity:

Salem Heights Avenue S Street Refinement Plan

Salem Heights Avenue is a narrow Collector Street with a mature tree canopy lacking any bicycle/pedestrian accommodations, curbs, or stormwater collection facilities. The Salem Heights Avenue S Street Refinement Plan calls for implementation of a special 48-foot cross section that includes two 12-foot travel lanes and a dedicated 10-foot multi-use path separated from the street by a planter strip comprised of existing trees. This cross section is to be implemented with an eye toward minimizing impacts on trees at every possible opportunity.

BACKGROUND:

Salem Heights Avenue was annexed from Marion County in 1946. It was built in a way that did not conform to current City standards. The City standard for a collector street is a 60-foot right-of-way containing curb, pedestrian facilities, bicycle facilities, planting strips, and stormwater collection. The right-of-way for much of Salem Heights Avenue in the study area is 40 feet, and the street lacks required facilities including sidewalks and storm drainage. There is also significant topography that causes sight distance issues. City staff collaborated with interested residents to develop a refinement plan to address safety and operations on Salem Heights Avenue west of Liberty Road. *The Salem Heights Avenue S Street Refinement Plan* (Plan) outlines the issues, planning process, and recommended solutions to improving Salem Heights Avenue.

Robert D. Chandler, PhD, PE
Assistant Public Works Director

Attachment:

1. Salem Heights Avenue S Street Refinement Plan