

Ninth Avenue Report

July 27, 2015

Proposal

Among the amendments proposed by City staff to the Transportation 2030 map of the Comprehensive Plan is reclassification of the single block Ninth Avenue SE east of Boulevard Road. This about 300-foot block of existing street and right-of-way would be changed from 'local access' to 'neighborhood collector.' This change in the map would guide any future improvements.

Review Criteria

In reviewing a proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment the Planning Commission, and City Council, are to consider:

1. Does the proposed amendment or revision maintain consistency with other plan elements or development regulations? If not, are amendments or revisions to other plan elements or regulations necessary to maintain consistency with the current final docket that will be considered by the Planning Commission and the City Council?
2. Is the proposed amendment or rezone consistent with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan?
3. Is the proposed amendment or revision consistent with the county-wide planning policies?
4. Does the proposed amendment or rezone comply with the requirements of the GMA?

Staff Analysis

In 2009 Medela Group LLC proposed that about nine acres east of this section of Ninth Avenue be rezoned from single-family to multi-family zoning. Those nine acres were then in Thurston County and thus the County was the lead agency for reviewing that proposal. Review of that proposal continued for five years and culminated in 2014 in denial by the County, just a few weeks before the City completed a multi-year annexation process and incorporated the area.

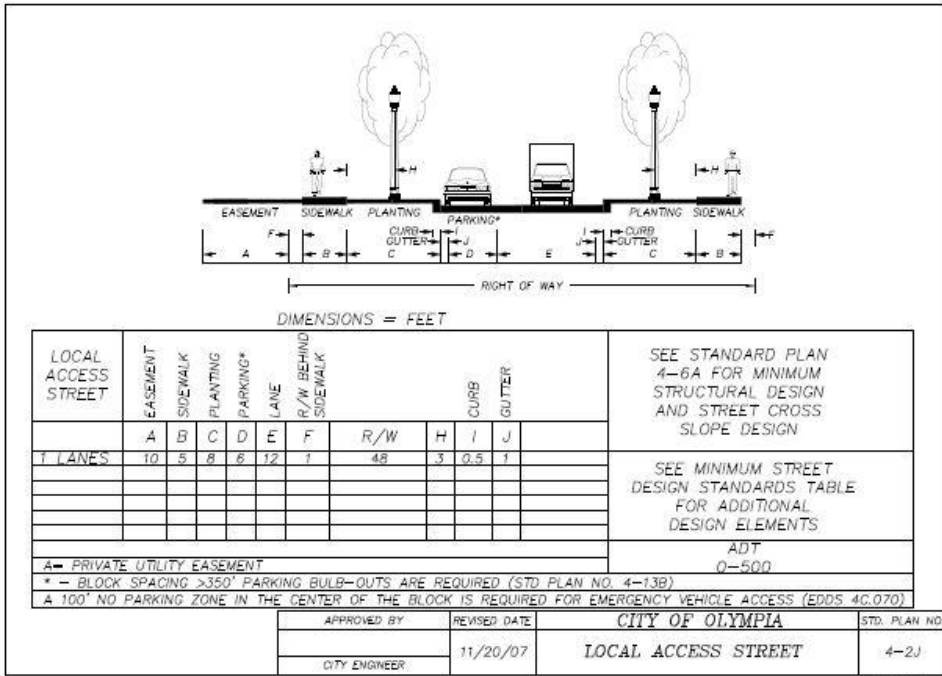
During review of the Medela proposal, City and County staff identified limited access opportunities into the area as an issue of concern. This led to a proposal to amend the City's Transportation map with regard to this block of Ninth Avenue – that block then being within the city limits -- by changing the classification from "local access" to "neighborhood collector" if the County approved the requested rezone. Because the rezone was denied, the Transportation Map was not amended. However, because issues of limited access in this area

remain, the City staff proposed reconsideration of this issue as part of a general 2015 update of the Transportation 2030 maps.

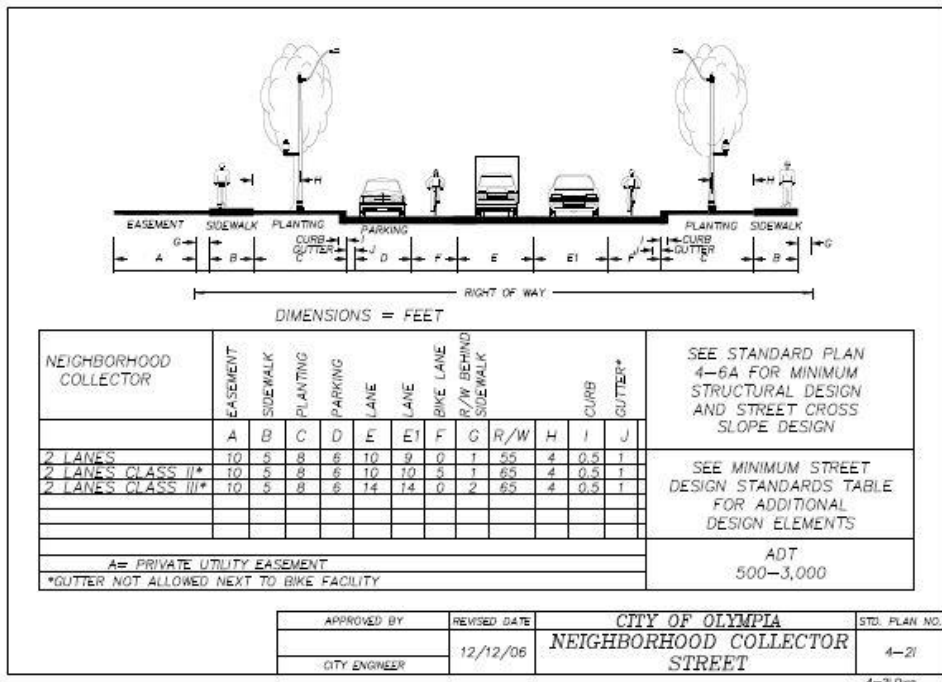
As illustrated below, the combination of Seventh and Ninth Avenues SE provide the only access to an area of about fifteen acres located east of Boulevard Road and north of Interstate 5. Although both streets are constructed with about 20-feet of pavement and a short section of sidewalk, Ninth Avenue has a 60-foot right-of-way, while Seventh Avenue's right-of-way is limited to 30 feet, as is the adjacent section of Chambers Street. (Note, '15 acres' is a rough estimate, the specific developable area in this neighborhood would depend upon critical area buffers, property ownership patterns and other factors.)



To construct a full 'local access street' with two sidewalks, planter strips, a parking lane and a shared or 'queued' travel lane, 48 feet of right-of-way is needed. Building just 'curb to curb' plus sidewalk and planter strip on one side requires about 34 feet. Thus the current Seventh Avenue right-of-way lacks space for even that one-sided street. Staff has not been able to determine why more right-of-way was not dedicated when this area was subdivided, as the norm at the time appears to have been 60 feet. However, housing along Seventh Avenue has been constructed close to the existing narrow right-of-way and thus any expansion of the street beyond the existing right-of-way would have greater than normal impacts on those homes.



In contrast, the 60-foot right-of-way of Ninth Avenue provides sufficient space to construct a local access street, or a “neighborhood collector” without bike lanes. As shown in the cross-section below, a neighborhood collector street differs from a local access street in that it has two travel lanes instead of one shared lane, and the potential for bike lanes. (Note, at the moment the City’s Engineering and Development Design Standards (EDDS) provide that the only neighborhood collectors that will be built or rebuilt with bike lanes are Ensign Road from Lilly Road to Trail and Fern Street from 9th Avenue to 16th Avenue.)



The result of this difference is substantial. While a local access street can accommodate up to about 500 vehicle trips per day (also known as average daily trips or “ADT”), a neighborhood collector street can accommodate up to 3,000 trips per day. As shown on the Transportation 2030 maps of the Comprehensive Plan, these types of streets are commonly located along higher traffic routes in residential areas. Some, such as Fairview Street south of 5th Avenue and Conger Avenue east of Division Street, currently carry less than 500 trips each day. Others, such as Cooper Crest Street – the sole entrance to that subdivision from 20th Avenue NW, and Quince Street north of State Avenue, carry over 1000 trips per day. Many carry even more traffic.

As illustrated above, Seventh and Ninth Avenue combine to provide the sole access to an area of about fifteen acres. Developed properties to the north obstruct access from this area to Pacific Avenue. Indian Creek and an associated wetland lie between the area and Devoe Street to the east. And, as described above, although Seventh Avenue provides a secondary access point, in the short-term Ninth Avenue is the only route with the prospect of providing the primary access into the area.

This area is currently zoned Single-Family Residential 4 to 8 units per acre (R 4-8). A proposal to change the zoning to Residential Multi-family 18 units per acre is currently pending before the Olympia Hearing Examiner. Although ultimate build-out of an area is difficult to predict, studies by Thurston Regional Planning Council have indicated that on average 3.75 homes are built on each ‘gross acre’ (land outside critical areas) of R 4-8 zoned property. According to national and local studies, each single-family home tends to generate about 9.5 trips each day. Thus this area – even if not rezoned – on average has the prospect of generating about 480 trips each day. (15 x 3.75 x 9.5) However, the maximum allowed density – even if bonuses are not granted – is 7 units per acre. At that density fifteen acres of single-family homes would generate almost 1,000 trips each day -- exceeding the capacity of a single local access street.

Options

1. Recommend approval of the map amendment to ‘neighborhood collector’ as proposed.
2. Recommend that the classification of Ninth Avenue be amended if and when zoning in the area is changed to allow more potential development.
3. Recommend that the proposed reclassification not be adopted and Ninth Avenue remain a ‘local access street.’

Staff Conclusions

City staff is of the opinion that the current zoning in the area offers sufficient development potential that any Ninth Avenue improvements should be consistent with the neighborhood collector form, and thus the amendment should be approved. The prospect of development in this area, even if not rezoned, creates the prospect of heavily burdening the combination of a narrow Seventh Avenue and a fully improved Ninth Avenue if built as a local access street. Olympia’s Engineering Standards provide that, if physically possible, any new development of

four acres or more is to have two connections to the public street system. (See EDDS section 2.040.B.3.f) In the judgment of City staff, similar principals of redundant access points suggest that the access from this area to Boulevard Road should include a two-lane neighborhood collector.