



Following my ride last weekend with a number of bike advocates, Cathy Tuttle from Spokespeople invited me to provide further information about my vision for Neighborhood Greenways.

The answers that follow are mine and only meant to provide information and inspire discussion. I welcome your input and further refinement, as these ideas could become the actual standards by which we implement these Greenways.

What is a Neighborhood Greenway?

Neighborhood Greenways are dedicated residential streets with low traffic volume and traffic speeds. The street is an extended connection between parks or schools or neighborhood businesses. The connection provides a quieter, slower paced place where bicycles, pedestrians and neighbors' safety are given priority.



What are the key elements of a Neighborhood Greenway?

A Neighborhood Greenway provides a long and safe connection for pedestrians and bicyclists (a few blocks can connect with other neighborhoods to extend for a few miles).

*Car travel is allowed along the Greenway but at reduced speeds.

*Neighbors and the City can agree to add more trees or greenery in the planting strips where desired, hence the name "Greenway."

*Cars are stopped at non-arterial crossing and intersecting streets along the way so that bicycles and pedestrians can flow along the Neighborhood Greenway with safety.

*Cars, bikes and pedestrians co-exist. Where bicyclists and pedestrians cross busy arterials, many tools can be used to alert faster-moving traffic to the presence of bicyclists and pedestrians. A combination of signals, "pedestrian/bike channelizers," distinctive signage, medians, bollards, and paint-on-street could provide protection for bicyclists and pedestrians while allowing cars to flow along the arterial.

*Neighborhood Greenways can be adapted for each neighborhood with trees, art, and designated connections such as parks, schools, or local business districts. These are not cookie cutter projects, but rather can be catered to each area's gathering spaces.

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How will Neighborhood Greenways be identified and selected?

Each Neighborhood Greenway could first be identified by Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) and informed by the City’s Bicycle Advisory Board and the Bicycle Master Plan. Ideally, neighborhoods would also be able to recommend a route for a Neighborhood Greenway. Priorities could be established based on available funding or through coordination with scheduled public projects.

If my neighborhood is selected for a Greenway, what happens next?

Conceivably, once a residential street is recommended for consideration as a Neighborhood Greenway, neighbors would be notified and invited to a public meeting to discuss the project. There would be an opportunity to talk with leadership from SDOT, Seattle Parks and where water-runoff is an issue, with Seattle Public Utilities (SPU). Creating the design for the Neighborhood Greenway is an interactive process and you neighbors should be a part of the discussion.



Will a Greenway take away the parking on my street?

In most cases, parking along the Neighborhood Greenway and in front of homes would remain. In some instances where water run-off or pedestrian crossings are addressed — such as curb bulbs for safe crossings and bioswales to take care of street runoff — a few parking places may be eliminated.

Will I be able to drive on a Greenway?

Yes, but we hope you will drive slowly and remember that your kids and your neighbors may be riding their bikes or playing in the street.

Will Greenways have more public art or trees?

This depends on the neighborhood. Some streets (like 39th Avenue NE where we rode on April 9) are spectacularly planted already and there’s little room for more trees along the route. But some neighborhoods may want more trees and coordinated planting to contribute to our tree canopy and to create a new look of the neighborhood.

We can take a page out of Portland’s book here, where Portlanders worked with arborists and interested non-profit organizations to select the right tree and plant it in the right place. Trees were provided by the City of Portland and non-profit organizations, and neighbors took responsibility to water the new trees to get them established. In some cases that I witnessed firsthand, the new trees transformed what had been a dreary residential street, providing color and sense of neighborhood pride and connections.

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How do you recognize a Greenway?

Neighborhood Greenways may be signed with sharrows, speed bumps where appropriate, and signed with distinctive “pedestrian/bike” identifiers to alert drivers to the fact that the driver is on a Greenway and expected to drive slowly. In addition, a Neighborhood Greenway may take on a new character and charm in terms of the type of plantings or art created by the neighborhood and SDOT.

Can emergency vehicles use Greenways?

Of course! Neighborhood Greenways will be designed so that fire trucks, ambulances, and police cars can get to the houses along the Greenway.

Do all my neighbors need to approve the greenway before it is added?

Selecting the Greenway should be a collaborative process where everyone in the neighborhood is

invited to attend public meetings and discuss the options and possibilities. Since Greenways are new to Seattle, we can work to create our own approach. But Portland’s leadership found that once the idea of the Greenway was explained and people understood that their street would be quieter and that they could still drive on and park their cars in front of their homes, consensus emerged. Portland’s transportation leaders told me that Portland residents have faith that their property values will rise, and Greenways provide a more peaceful “neighbor friendly” environment.



What are the other advantages of a Greenway?

Remember when you were a kid? Did you ever play “kick the can” with your neighbors on a hot summer evening in the middle of the street? My hope for the Neighborhood Greenways is that this sense of neighbors at play can return and that drivers will be looking out for kids. My goal is that these streets will be sufficiently safe and denoted clearly that you will with confidence let your 8-year-old daughter ride her bike the entire length of Greenway.

Will bike commuters use the Greenways?

Bike commuters – both adults and kids – use their Greenways in Portland.

And that’s my hope for Seattle. The more of us who ride our bikes to school, work, or our local amenities on safe streets separated from traffic, the safer we will all be. One note for those bicyclists who are “Fast and Fearless”: you are certainly not **REQUIRED** to use the Greenways. But you will be welcome to do so. Those of us who consider ourselves “Willing but Wary” will be more likely to ride our bikes when we have company along the way and confidence in our connections.

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How fast can cars go on Greenways? How is traffic reduced and slowed?

As described above, signage and road width will slow traffic. One goal might be to keep residential vehicle speed under 20 mph. Cars would be slowed by a variety of measures including but not limited to distinctive signage, speed bumps, road markings, bollards, protected pedestrian/bike crossings and neighborhood expectations.

How might Greenways affect my property values?

Experience with property owners along amenities like the Burke Gilman or Sammamish River trail shows that proximity to the trails is a real estate plus. Although I have no data to back up my supposition, I can only imagine if a neighborhood street became greener, traffic was slower, and fewer cars were driving on the street that property values would be enhanced.

Some people will never ride a bike on a Greenway. Why should their tax money go to create a Greenway?

Neighborhood Greenways are for all of us, not just for bicyclists. Greenways are for those who want to live in a quieter, calmer neighborhood. They are for those of us who want to let our children play outside safely, where neighbors like to walk and ride in front of their homes in relative peace. Greenways are for people who like green and flowering trees and want to recreate how their neighborhoods look and feel.



Regarding the tax question, we are better off when we think like a region. We pay for things like schools or Medic One, for example, even if we don't have kids in school or if we are healthy.

We do this because in the long run we improve our own quality of life as well as the quality of life for our family and neighbors. Many people may never ride a bike or jog along a new Greenway, but thousands of others will enjoy the route immensely. And drivers of cars, buses, and trucks will be happier when they are not competing with bicyclists on arterials. We want to be an inclusive community and provide space for cars, buses, trucks, pedestrians and cars. Neighborhood Greenways are one tool we can use to do it. We know that the majority of bicyclists do pay city and state taxes, much of which goes toward fixing roads, expanding transit options, maintaining our parks and paying for police and fire services. Bicyclists pay sales taxes, property taxes, and many own a car and pay gas taxes. By thinking about what's good for the region, we create places that all of us can enjoy.

Will Greenways make communities happier?

Absolutely! In every neighborhood where I have spoken about Neighborhood Greenways and listened to neighbors talk about their desires for their neighborhood, residents are eager to have traffic slowed so they and their children and their vulnerable neighbors will be safe on the streets and sidewalks. And as a financial bonus, if we can work with our Parks Department and Seattle Public Utilities to leverage our dollars and make linear connections between our parks, clean up our water, and provide us with cool connections between our neighborhoods, parks, schools, and neighborhood business districts won't we ALL be happier?

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