

Time for a Seattle Children's Safety Garden (draft 7/12)

Learning to ride a bicycle to school is not just a matter of going to the park with a parent, getting a push, and falling down a bunch of times until you can pedal on your own. Likewise, road safety is so much more than “look both ways before you cross the street.”



In Holland, children are expected to learn and follow the rules of the road, because starting in secondary school – at age 12 – they are expected to be able to ride their bikes on their own to school, sometimes as far as nine or 10 miles. Because independent travel for children is valued in Dutch society, education about traffic safety is something that every Dutch child receives. Their school curriculum includes regular field trips to a local “Traffic Garden”. A Traffic Garden or “Safety Garden” is streetscape in miniature, to teach children the rules of the road. Students take turns as cyclists, pedestrians and car drivers, learning how to take other types of street users into consideration. Hands-on experience navigating in traffic gives kids the skills and confidence to get around the city under their own power as soon as their early teens and safely in group walks and rides even earlier. There are Safety Gardens in many European and US cities including this one in Utrecht, Holland www.streetfilms.org/self-reliance-grows-in-the-utrecht-traffic-garden/

Will Seattle get a Children's Safety Garden? Seattle Neighborhood Greenways has been talking with a number of partners including Bike Works, Seattle Parks Foundation, Seattle Parks, Washington DOT, and Seattle Department of Transportation about this idea. Seattle Parks Property management has indicated Genesee Park next to Rainier Community Center as a good location for this facility. Seattle Neighborhood Greenways has applied to the Seattle Parks Opportunity Fund for Planning / Design funding in 2012.

We need a Traffic Garden to be a cooperative effort

- **Possible funding partnerships** Auto Clubs, Seattle Children's Hospital, National Institute of Health, Seattle Parks Foundation, WashDOT, Seattle Parks Opportunity Fund
- **Many Public Agencies need to be engaged in a Safety Garden idea including** Seattle Mayor's Office, Seattle Parks, Seattle Department of Transportation, Seattle City Council Transportation Committee, Seattle Police Department, Puget Sound Regional Council, WashDOT
- **NGOs needed to make a great Safety Garden include Seattle Neighborhood Greenways / Rainier Valley Greenways.** Safety Garden is a Key Advocacy Campaign of Seattle Neighborhood Greenways. The Rainier Valley Greenways group would love to have this facility in their neighborhood. Seattle Neighborhood Greenways has applied for Seattle Parks Opportunity Fund money to start the design process. Even if we have a linked network of safe, healthy streets throughout Seattle, we still need to teach children how to use them effectively. Because of the proposed location in nearby Genesee Park, and because **Bike Works** currently teaches youth road safety classes, this group can serve a key role in programming. **Cascade Bicycle Club, Bicycle Alliance of Washington, Feet First** and other experts in youth road safety instruction can be involved in fundraising and program management as well.
- **Safety Garden Users.** Children need Safety Garden programs. Seattle Public Schools is a key partner, as are the Pacific Northwest Association of Independent Schools and Archdiocese of Seattle Catholic Schools.

Next steps

Scope out a preliminary design plan including cost estimates.

Build partnerships with key funders, public agencies, NGOs, and future user groups.

www.SeattleGreenways.org Seattle Neighborhood Greenways is fiscally sponsored by Seattle Parks Foundation