

17th Ave NW Stormwater Improvements Early Community Engagement Summary September 2022



Seattle Public Utilities is planning a new project to reduce street flooding and sewer backups in the Crown Hill neighborhood. Most of the work will be on 17th Ave NW between NW 85th St and NW 90th St. The project will use a mix of green stormwater infrastructure and pipe improvements.



Green stormwater infrastructure uses special soils and plants to capture rainwater, clean it, slow it down, and soak it into the ground.

In summer 2022, SPU engaged with the Crown Hill community about how our future stormwater project can build off [recent neighborhood planning](#) to address a wider range of community priorities. Engagement included:

- Postcards to area residents
- Yard signs along the 17th Avenue [Neighborhood Greenway](#) project area
- Pop-up information booth at the project site
- Presentation to the Ballard Greenways group
- Phone and email communications
- Online survey

Key findings generally aligned across all engagement activities including survey responses (which are documented below):

- Excitement about fixing the long-standing drainage problems
- Broad support for a permanent “Stay Healthy Street” designation
- Broad support for some form of pedestrian improvements
- Concerns about impacts to street parking in the project area.

A few other topics that weren’t covered by the survey included:

- Concern about a sinkhole that opened up on 17th Ave NW during the summer. SDOT and SPU worked to evaluate the problem and fix it.
- Concern about nearby flooding of private property along 18th Ave NW. While caused by different issues than the flooding on 17th Ave NW, the project team is exploring how we can expand our project scope to reduce risks in both areas.

See below for a detailed summary of survey results. For more information and project updates, visit www.seattle.gov/utilities/neighborhood-projects/17th-ave-nw-stormwater-improvements or email project manager dave.laclergue@seattle.gov.

17th Ave NW Stormwater Improvements Project

Survey Responses Summary

A total of 137 respondents were surveyed on potential project options for the 17th Ave NW Stormwater Improvements Project.

Question 1 asked respondents what their preference for the look and feel of a GSI system on 17th Ave NW is, when given a choice between natural and modern. Out of 119 total answers, there was a slight preference for native, natural landscaping, which earned 46% of the vote. 37% of respondents chose a hybrid option (combining modern and natural), while only 17% chose completely ornamental/modern landscaping.

Question 2 asked respondents about potential solutions (via permanent design improvements) for discouraging drivers from cutting through 17th Ave NW to avoid traffic on 15th Ave NW. The answers to this question demonstrated a clear preference for curb bulbs at the intersections, which earned 55% of the vote out of 129 total respondents. Approximately 39% of respondents selected an overall narrowing of the roadway as a potential solution, and only 21% selected “none of the above.”

Question 3 required respondents to rank their preferences on a total of six potential ways to repurpose the limited space on 17th Ave NW to fix drainage issues. Given the total number of options available, and the various combinations possible, the responses to this question did not produce obvious community preferences. 45 total respondents listed flood-reducing drainage improvements as their number one priority, and 37 total respondents listed sidewalks on both sides of 17th Ave NW as their number one priority. Beyond these two community priorities, there appears to be an even split between the other four options provided in the survey. A more in-depth breakdown of responses is included below.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	Score
Flood-reducing drainage improvements	34% 45	26% 34	20% 26	15% 20	4% 5	2% 2	132	4.67
Sidewalks on both sides of 17th Ave NW	29% 37	13% 16	6% 7	12% 15	14% 18	26% 33	126	3.52
Traffic calming elements	13% 17	16% 20	21% 27	17% 21	13% 17	19% 24	126	3.42
Additional green space, landscaping, and planting strips	5% 6	15% 19	29% 37	27% 34	19% 24	6% 8	128	3.41
Sidewalks on one side of 17th Ave NW	7% 9	24% 30	13% 16	19% 23	28% 35	9% 11	124	3.37
Street parking on 17th Ave NW	16% 21	10% 14	11% 15	9% 12	19% 26	34% 46	134	2.91

Questions 4 and 5 invited participants to sign up for the project listserv and captured contact information for participants who opted into receiving the project listserv from SPU.

Questions 6 and 7 asked respondents about their relationship with 17th Ave NW. Out of 133 total answers, 56 (42%) of respondents indicated that they lived along 17th Ave NW, while another 42% of respondents indicated that they lived in the broader Crown Hill neighborhood. Of the 56 respondents who lived along Crown Hill, 40 (67%) of the respondents stated that they either don't park along 17th Ave NW or have access to alternative parking if needed.

Questions 8, 9, and 10 delved into the community's views on and actual utilization of Ballard's Stay Healthy Street program. Question 8 asked about how respondents utilize the program, to which the responses overwhelmingly favored walking (92%) and biking (71%). Question 9 asked if respondents believed that Ballard's Stay Healthy Street program should be made permanent. 84% of respondents believed that it should.

Questions 11 – 15 captured demographic information of survey respondents.

- The majority of respondents were between 25-54 years old (73%)
- Most respondents identified as White or Caucasian (85%)
- Almost all respondents predominantly speak English in their households (96%)
- Nearly all respondents did not specify having household members with mobility concerns (91%)
- The majority of respondents stated that they owned property in Crown Hill (68%)

Finally, **Question 16** gave respondents space to provide any additional information or feedback that they had. We received 63 total responses. Four key themes that came out of these responses were:

1. The overwhelming community need for improved storm water drainage in the streets. Significant flooding levels and their proximity to homes in the area came up in several responses.
2. A strong desire to have Stay Healthy Street improvements made permanent. Sidewalk consideration was addressed multiple times. Most community members would like to see more sidewalks with improved safety and accessibility. Many of the pedestrians and bikers utilizing the area are children going to and from school.
3. Conversely, if new sidewalks are built in the area, many survey respondents have concerns about how this will limit parking availability. Especially with increased redevelopment on adjacent blocks, some residents feel that parking is getting tight, and that parking reductions should be kept to a minimum.
4. A community call to address speeding in the area. The most prevalent suggestion (as evidenced by question 2) was to install curb bulbs in the area, which also addresses the issue of drivers cutting through 17th Ave NW to avoid traffic on 15th Ave NW. Additionally, another suggestion was to install speed bumps on the street.

All write-in comments are included in the Appendix on page 3.

Appendix: Survey Write-In Comments

Drainage and Green Space Comments

- Looking forward to having the massive pools of water on 17th improved with this project. I am one block away from this area, on 16th Ave NW. When walking and/or driving, these are a nuisance and a hazard.
- Make 17th greenway permanent
- Parking shouldn't be a priority. Safety, green, alternative transportation is most important
- Please consider larger street trees that will actually provide shade/shelter (eventually)
- Please prioritize dealing with the drainage issues for our neighbors on 17th above all else! I've seen the water back up dangerously close to those houses on the south end of the 8700 block of 17th during heavy storms.
- Poor drainage and lack of sidewalks have a very big and negative impact on everyone who lives on 17th Ave NW. Young children play in the puddles that contain chemicals from parked cars. (And possibly sewage?) Older residents have difficulty walking when there is rain, and also must be very cautious due to the lack of sidewalks. The street is not in any way, shape, or form wheelchair accessible. Improved drainage and sidewalks are BOTH urgently needed for the tax - paying residents who live on this street to live here safely!
- The flooding is worst on the north corners of 17th Ave NW and NW 87th St.
- Very supportive of adding more green space and native plantings!
- We love to see drainage fixed and increased drainage!
- We really enjoyed the closed street, but many cars cut through 17th to miss the traffic light which you are in the process of fixing I've seen other walk streets around that have a new improved signage over by St John's Catholic Church One side for sidewalk is great idea
- With all the climate change issues that we've been facing, a green street with sidewalks on both sides, where we can have space to plant more trees, makes so much more sense than parking spaces.

Parking Comments

- I'd say next to drainage improvements keeping adequate street parking availability on our streets is crucial. With the up zoning we've become a lot denser, and most people have to rely on street parking.
- Minimize reduction in parking for residents
- Parking is most important – traffic calming is a non-issue since street has been closes

- Parking is the most important with density increasing
- Parking is of paramount importance. Each new construction project in the neighborhood is required to include sidewalks and the available space for parking is eroding. Sidewalks and curbs will cut the available parking by 50-65%, which is unacceptable to me.
- Prior to the 'Stay Healthy' designation, our street was not used as a 'cut-thru' at all, with the exception of school children walking or biking to school. The street was quiet and safe. We need our parking spots because there is no alternative, and several (15+ town homes have been added at the end of the block during the last 24-36 months, and construction vehicles and increased density has already made it very difficult to park). Parking is a real issue and taking it away would reduce our home values. We need the storm water improvements on the south end of 17th and 85th, clearly, because it's a problem there. As for the 'Stay Healthy Street', designation? Nobody on the street voted for that designation and we weren't asked. Right? We have no traffic issues because the street goes nowhere...why would we want narrower streets and our parking removed completely? Please just correct the stormwater issue and repave the street. Then remove the stay healthy designation and let us get back to pre-Covid normal life. That's this homeowner's opinion and suggestion. Thank you so much for reading and seeking my input.
- With additional apartments and housing being added to the area, parking is critical to maintain.
- With all the construction on 15th and people moving in parking is the most important. With greenway through traffic slowed way down. Make it nicer but keep parking as is and keep it wide.
- With the increasing housing density in the neighborhood, it's important to keep as much street parking available as possible, as well as to plan for the future light rail expansion. But keeping the street as a safe street walkway is also a high priority as the middle school kids use it heavily.

Stay Healthy Street and Pedestrian Comments

- As far as the stay healthy streets and the closure of 17th. I live on the corner of 17th and 89th. The north end of 17th with the pass through between 89th & 90th needs to be made safer for pedestrians, and drivers. It's hard to see oncoming peds and bikers turning left onto 17th on that sharp and blind corner. I've seen many near misses, that could be corrected with a simple yield to peds sign around that sharp and blind corner to drivers.
- I live at 70th & 8th, but I use the 17th St safe street almost daily for commuting, errands, visiting businesses in Ballard and along 15th. If this street disappeared, we'd lose one of the only safe routes from Upper Ballard to lower Ballard
- I'd really like to see sidewalks along 17th Ave NW in the 8500 - 8700 blocks

- I'm thrilled to see this project happening. I love that improvements will be made to the flooding. I was happy to hear that 17th was becoming more pedestrian friendly with the Stay Healthy Streets initiative, but nothing really changed except intrusive signs that seem to force drivers to make more dangerous choices. No alternate streets/parking/access options were provided for residents, so the level of traffic barely changed if at all. I hope if 17th continues as a Stay Healthy Street more thought will be put into how to separate cars from pedestrians without leaving residents high and dry in terms of access and parking. Perhaps nearby alleyways could be used for pedestrian pathways or for local car access.
- I love that there are Stay Healthy streets, however the implementation feels lacking. Along 17th Ave NW, the signage somehow impedes both walking & driving, leaving less room for everyone to maneuver. I love the idea of sidewalks in theory but have a hard time visualizing how it would work with how packed the street already is with parked cars - I also feel like if large groups of people are walking to the school or park, they'll continue to do so on the street rather than stagger on a sidewalk. Also, if there are sidewalks, is it still a Stay Healthy Street? It's a little confusing. Once flooding is fixed it will open up so much space that has been unable to be utilized, which will help everyone. I'm so excited for this project! Thank you for your hard work!
- More bike space is better, more pedestrian space is better, less car space is better.
- Pedestrian and bike mobility designed to the level of safety necessary for Elementary and middle school age children is absolutely critical for this street. A simple paint & post bike lane type of solution is not enough to keep children safe here. We need physical separation and barriers to keep people outside of cars safe and to slow cars down. We need to have functioning drainage infrastructure so that people aren't going to choose to walk in the same spaces as cars to keep their feet dry.
- Please be sure the Whitman students have a safe, accessible, easy to find alternative route during construction.
- Please make the street as safe as possible
- Please prioritize repurposing 17th as a safe inviting neighborhood amenity for people that is full of plants, not cars
- Sidewalks please. There is enough parking in the area. Look south of 17th Ave NW and 85th. It works just fine!
- Stop the traffic, kids walk past my home twice a day on the way to school and home with no sidewalks
- The Stay Healthy streets have tremendously improved my quality of life. It is often difficult to find a quiet and safe place to walk - Seattle has loaded a lot of development along polluted, noisy, and dangerous arterial corridors. The sense of wellbeing and community created by the Stay Healthy Street is just incredible. It has allowed me to take my 70+ year old parents for walks, bike safely from A to B, and to be honest I will

often go out of my way to simply enjoy the serenity of a street that's devoted to people instead of moving traffic quickly. I hope this drainage project is an opportunity to create a resilient and healthy right of way that's appropriate for all ages and all abilities – not just people that want to drive and park their cars.

- This bike safe street is well used every day by students heading to both Whitman MS and Salmon Bay. Without sidewalks, it is less pedestrian friendly, but on my daily bike commute it is not uncommon for me to pass by 10-12 other cyclists/pedestrians/dog-walkers each morning.
- This is one of few routes that's relatively safe for kids on bikes.
- We are homeowners who have lived on 17th Ave NW (between 87th and 89th) since 2012. We see a LOT of foot and bicycle/scooter traffic: North Beach Elementary students (northbound) around 7:30-7:45am, then Whitman Middle School students around 8:30-8:45am, then North Beach students again (southbound) around 2:45pm, and finally Whitman Middle Schoolers heading home around 3:45pm. 17th is also (as mentioned) the main North-South access to Sound view Playfield due to its alignment with the pedestrian path leading to 90th. We even see shoppers coming back from Swansons Nursery with plants on carts. We are proud of our street's "Neighborhood Greenway" and "Stay Healthy Street" designations. It seems crazy that in spite of all that pedestrian traffic, there are no sidewalks. When it rains, pedestrians have to weave around giant puddles while dodging cars and trucks which are doing the same thing. When it snows, there is no safe walking path. We really need sidewalks (preferably on both sides), AND improved drainage. This would make the street much safer for everyone. Doing it with Green Stormwater Infrastructure (as seen south of 85th) would be AMAZING. As for traffic calming... It seems like the traffic circle on 87th (~2006), the curb bulbs on 85th (2015), the speed bumps (2016) and the Stay Healthy Street signs (2020) have each helped to calm and reduce traffic. We do still get the occasional speeder, but I'm not sure that making the road narrower would help. Instead, I'd suggest making the traffic circle at 17th & 87th slightly bigger (like the one on 18th) and adding big signs stating that there is no vehicle access to NW 90th Street. Thank you!!!
- We need pedestrian sidewalks throughout Crown Hill to keep people safe from vehicular traffic.

Street Feature Comments

- Don't modify 17th NW street!
- finding solution, a combo of parking and rainwater that does not narrow street. The majority of houses already have gardens which equates to natural drainage the issue of drainage is mainly on the 90th and down to the walk way an issue. Between 85th and 90th on 17th in winter there is not enough drainage on NE side
- Flood reduction is very much needed at the south end of the 8700 block of 17th NW (simply relocating the existing storm drains to where water actually accumulates would

solve it), but equally important to the residents who live on this block is the on-street parking most of us depend upon. Do not take away our parking!!!!!!

- I do not want to see any “improvements” which will narrow the street and cause more parking congestion than we already have. Almost all houses have two cars associated with them. Sidewalks especially will narrow down the road to effectively one lane as are most streets south of 85th. This will make it very difficult for aid vehicles, especially fire trucks, to access the neighborhood. Also quite a few people have boats on trailers and narrowing the streets would likely make getting out and back in to the area very challenging if not impossible. I have lived in this neighborhood for 37 years and it has gotten more and more congested with all the multiple family construction going on and there are more of these projects starting all the time. We don’t need the streets to handle fewer cars.
- I would vote for completely removing parking on 17th and adding a bike lane in the center and more walking space. or at least removing parking on my side. glad you’re doing this, thank you!
- Love how wide and open the street is!
- Re the curb bulbs for traffic calming - I live on a street in Crown Hill with those, and even as someone who walks more than I drive, I hate them. The curb bulbs mean that we can't walk straight down one side of the road, making us constantly have to check for traffic and swerve around the curb bulbs with our young kids. Drivers accelerate anyway once they're past the curb bulbs. Just not worth it to me.
- Traffic calming needs were prior to greenway it’s significantly improved. Preference is to keep the street as wide as possible for line of sight for walkers and cyclists versus narrowing it with one or both side of sidewalks. Kids walk and bike 3-4 deep narrowing this space would make it more dangerous for all people. Since this is a closed greenway street, I would welcome options that level the streets and introduce raingardens in unoccupied areas around areas where there is natural unused space (mailboxes, circle area). If a sidewalk has to be introduced, I would make it rounded so bikes can easily navigate in between (see Woodway area for inspiration). Make the greenway street signs more permanent so they can’t be damaged as they currently are. From a traffic calming perspective great speed bumps that truly slow cars down and then have flat sections that allow bikes to not have to feel the bumps at all. That would truly slow cars down but the traffic issues we have are pre-pandemic do not exist anymore.
- We've been involved in past efforts to bring sidewalks and drainage improvements to this neighborhood, so are excited to hear about this project.

Traffic Comments

- 19th Ave NW between NW 85th St and NW 87th St needs speed bumps to keep people from speeding through and cutting the light at 15th Ave NW.

- Traffic calming should also be considered for 18th Ave NW and NW 87th St. Many drivers already use 18th to circumvent the signal at 85th and 15th. Narrowing these streets would help a lot.
- We live on 19th Ave NW near the intersection of NW 87th St. People cutting through the neighborhood (and even some that live here!) drive so fast through the intersection as it has no stop signs. I can't count the number of times I've witnessed very close calls for car-on-car and car-on-pedestrian (yes, children, dogs, and adults) collisions. I think we need a stop sign or around-about put in, but I am unsure of how to start that process.

Other Comments (Other Potential Improvements)

- 19th Ave NW & 85th St has become a hazard for those of us living in the pocket & trying to leave or come home. We need a stop sign at 85th & 19th. Since the crosswalk was added at 17th Ave & 85th NW - we are often trapped by a blocked intersection. There is no signage to help us.
- Better ways to exit 17th onto 15th. Priority turning at 15th and 24th, please.
- Cars don't drive down 17th to bypass the traffic on 15th. They speed down my street (16th) to bypass the light at 85th. 16th needs speed bumps.
- Could we also modernize the alleyways?
- Getting sidewalks on one side of 16th would be great as well in this neighborhood
- Please bring mitigations to cut-through traffic to other streets in Seattle too!
- Please consider working with SDOT to make 17th Ave NW one-way north of NW 85th St.
- Please take a look at 13th as well - it has many of the same challenges at 17th (drainage issues, no curbs, or sidewalks on the 8500 block) and is also a common route for pedestrians, especially Whitman students.
- There is a sinkhole
- With zoning now allowing multiple homes to be built on formerly single home lots, the city is already reducing open space for water absorption and increasing traffic and parking challenges on our street...I do hope the city-imposed zoning changes are also being reviewed.