

SAFETY MEASURES, STREET NARROWING - Jenifer Street Reconstruction

Prepared by Gary Tipler, Chair, Marquette Neighborhood Association Traffic Committee 2/1/16

Jenifer Street is a neighborhood street that experiences heavy use by pedestrians, bicycles, buses and cars. It is also the location of the Wil-Mar Neighborhood Center, a playground, a farmer's market, a grade and middle school.

There is a strong perception among neighbors of danger due to speeding cars and buses. As a result, improving safety through the use of traffic calming rates highly as a neighborhood goal. Planning and engineering research demonstrates that **changing the design of a roadway to calm traffic and improve safety is far more effective than lowering the speed limit and installing stop signs**. Cities that have narrowed streets and have had fewer accidents. When a road is narrowed it provides a visual cue to slow down.

In 2015, narrowing was originally proposed for Jenifer Street by Traffic Engineering and City Engineering to meet neighborhood desires as a traffic calming measure, for additional green space, and to improve tree health. It was not included in the final plan.

As part of the plan evaluation and adoption of measures to improve the project, the Marquette Neighborhood Association Board voted to support the narrowing of Jenifer Street by two feet. To demonstrate that narrowing is a valuable tool to create traffic calming, citations are provided below.

Citations on Narrowing

"To be clear, I'd support a narrower street, especially a narrower street with bulbouts that extend at least as far into the travel lanes as the ones the city proposes." – Chuck Strawser, Resident. 1/21/16.

"Although many people initially assume that narrower streets are unsafe, the opposite is true in many cases. Safety has been correlated with narrower residential street widths. In a study of the relationship between physical characteristics of streets and accidents, a high correlation was found between street widths and accidents." *Skinny Streets and Green Neighborhoods: Design for Environment and Community*, Cynthia Girling, Ronald Kellett. p. 85.

"While many may initially assume they are unsafe, these narrow roads, or "skinny streets" actually reduce average speeds and vehicle accident rates. For instance, a 24-foot wide street has a 0.32 accident per mile per year, while a 36-foot wide street has 1.21. (Walker Macy-Villebois, v.4)." *Low Impact Development, A design manual for urban areas*, U. of Arkansas Community Design Center, 2010. P. 104.

Urban Assets Report, Excerpts:

77% of respondents were "very concerned" about safety for pedestrians and bicyclists. (P. 9)

Of 114 total comments, 46 listed speeding of cars or buses as problematic. (Survey, P. 26.)

and,

"Safety and Traffic Calming – Considerations. Narrowing also presents an opportunity to calm traffic by visually narrowing the roadway and discouraging speeding. ... narrowing the roadway is

an appropriate and desirable measure to decrease pedestrian crossing distances, increase terrace space, and slow vehicle speeds.” (Urban Assets, P.8.)

“6. The committee [Isthmus 2020] supports the efforts of the Pedestrian-Bicycle Committee, Transportation Commission, and Traffic Engineering Division to develop a neighborhood traffic management program that will include neighborhood traffic calming. ... which relies on physical changes to streets to slow down motor vehicles or reduce traffic volumes to make neighborhoods safer and quieter. **Successful traffic calming measures often include a combination of roadway barriers and narrowings ...**”

7. “The City needs guidelines for pedestrian and transit-oriented development and public works in the Isthmus. ... Keeping narrower streets in residential and main street settings with sharper curb radii. **This narrows the street width a pedestrian must cross and slows the speed of turning traffic.”**
(Isthmus 2020 Committee Report, A Guidebook for a Model Isthmus. P. 19-20)

“Consider “road diets” (e.g., narrower streets, bike lanes, island, etc.) to calm traffic and provide a better environment for human powered transportation and decreased road costs”
(Madison Sustainability Plan: Fostering Environmental, Economic and Social Resilience. P. 27.)

“Local streets should have travel and parking lanes sufficiently narrow to slow traffic and allow trees to form a pleasing canopy over the street.”
The Next American Metropolis, Ecology, Community, and the American Dream. Peter Calthrope, P. 100.

“Push for reduced design speeds and roadway widths in neighborhood and residential areas. In other words, change the design so motorists are more inclined to obey the posted speed limits.”
Increasing Physical Activity through Community Design, National Center for Bicycling and Walking, P. 18.

“Communities and transportation professionals who seek to create streets where drivers will respect the local context – both residential and commercial – should design these streets using narrow lane widths, street trees ...” Citizen’s Guide to Better Streets, Project for Public Spaces. P. 64.

Principal Planning Document Sources

Summary Report - Jenifer Street Reconstruction Neighborhood Engagement Process,

Prepared for the Marquette Neighborhood Association by Urban Assets, LLC., Dec. 2015

<http://marquette-neighborhood.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Jenifer-Street-Reconstruction-Neighborhood-Engagement-Final-Report.compressed.pdf>

Isthmus 2020 Committee Report, A Guidebook for a Model Isthmus. City of Madison. 1998.

Madison Sustainability Plan – Fostering Environmental, Economic and Social Resilience. City of Madison, 2011. <http://www.cityofmadison.com/sustainability/documents/sustainplan2011.pdf>

Sidewalk Extensions (Bump-outs)

Originally included in the City Engineering plan of early 2015, the bump-outs were approximately 5 feet wide by 10 feet long, at the pedestrian crossings that already are off-limits to parking and are narrower than the 8 feet wide parking lane. Bump-out visually narrow the street and calm traffic. They do not impact cyclists, except for making it better for them by calming traffic.

“Curb bump-outs at intersections are now better understood by the neighborhood and supported as an opportunity to enhance pedestrian safety and add natural beauty to the street.” (Urban Assets, p. 8.)