

To: **Mayor and City Council**
Through: **Ryan Schroeder, City Manager**
From: **Ross Beckwith, Public Works & Parks Director/City Engineer**
Date: **September 28, 2020**

Moreland Avenue Street Reconstruction CP 21-1

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The 2021 Street Improvement Project includes reconstruction of Moreland Avenue from Delaware Avenue to Robert Street. St. Paul Regional Water will also be replacing their watermain as part of the project.

There are currently three different road widths of 32-feet, 36-feet and 42-feet along Moreland Avenue as shown on the *Moreland Avenue Existing Widths* attachment. It is proposed to reconstruct Moreland to a 32-foot wide section for the most part. One exception is through the commercial area near Robert Street where the width would remain at 36-feet like other commercial areas. The second area, Delaware Avenue to Smith Avenue, will be dependent on what ultimately is constructed through this sidewalk gap area. A 32-foot street allows for two 12-foot driving lanes and an 8-foot parking lane. The south curb line would remain in the same location and the north curb line would shift south, resulting in a slightly wider boulevard on the north side. Benefits of narrowing the roadway to 32-feet include:

1. Reducing impervious surface by 8%
2. Decreasing project costs
3. Reducing future maintenance costs
4. Providing natural traffic calming
5. Providing a wider boulevard on the north side to better separate pedestrians from the roadway and increase area for boulevard trees
6. Reduce the distance needed for bikes/peds to cross the street

Currently, parking is allowed on one side of Moreland Avenue, mainly the north side, with the exception of Galvin Avenue to Charlton Street where it is on both sides. A 32-foot roadway section would include an 8-foot parking lane on the north side. There would be no parking on the south side. The existing sidewalk on the north side of the road also complements parking on the same side. In addition, Moreland Elementary is on the north side so they would continue to have parking along the street.

The majority of the existing sidewalk on the north side is 4-feet wide. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires a minimum 5-foot wide sidewalk. It is proposed to remove and replace the existing walk with a 5-foot sidewalk. The one-foot widening would be to the south, which fits with a wider boulevard created by narrowing the roadway.

We also explored the option of adding an additional sidewalk on Moreland Avenue along the south side. The boulevard on the south side is narrow and temporary easements would be needed from 12 properties between Charlton Street and Smith Avenue. There are also a significant amount of private utility poles that would need relocating and retaining walls to construct. The estimated cost of a sidewalk on the south side is \$380,000 plus the cost of the 12 temporary easements.

There is currently a sidewalk gap on Moreland Avenue between Smith Avenue and Delaware Avenue. The current City and County Capital Improvement Programs show Delaware Avenue reconstruction in 2025. That project will bring trail to one or both sides of Delaware Avenue. It is proposed to close this pedestrian gap with this reconstruction project. Both sides of Moreland were analyzed for feasibility of construction, impact to adjacent properties and cost. After a thorough review, the north side is more feasible as the south side would require more property acquisition and larger retaining walls with geo-grid reinforcement that would extend well into private property.

The current roadway width between Delaware Avenue and Moreland Avenue is 32-feet wide. The side slopes are steep and the overall right-of-way is narrower than the rest of the corridor. If a sidewalk were added and the road stayed 32-feet wide, some of the driveway grades would be more than double from their existing slope to greater than 20%. That is not practical. There would also be retaining walls running down the majority of these blocks in entirety. The two most realistic options for this stretch are:

1. Re-construct a 32-foot wide roadway with parking on the north side and not build any sidewalk.
2. Construct a 26-foot wide roadway, which eliminates on-street parking, and add a 5-foot sidewalk on the north side. See the *Delaware Ave. to Smith Ave. North Side Sidewalk Concept* attachment.
3. Between Ottawa Avenue and Smith Avenue, a 32-foot roadway and 5-foot walk is buildable, but it would be invasive and expensive. It would entail property easements of 500 square feet and large retaining walls all the way up to (and possibly connecting with) two houses. A structural analysis would be required on the two houses prior to moving forward with this option.

Fortunately, these three blocks are short and the houses have side streets to park on (with the exception of the two on Delaware Avenue) so the . A 26-foot roadway would significantly decrease the amount of retaining walls and temporary easements needed along this section.

Similar to the 2018 Street Improvement Project on Bernard Street, boulevard trees will be impacted throughout the Moreland Avenue corridor. Many of the roots will be disturbed with the roadway excavation and sidewalk widening and staff reviewed each tree on the corridor. As a result, 23 trees are proposed to be removed from City right-of-way. If not removed with the project, it is likely they will die within the next few years due to the root impacts. Of the 23 trees identified, 15 are ash trees. Removing and replacing (with different species) boulevard ash trees is part of the adopted 2012 Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Management Plan. Typically, reconstruction projects do not include tree replacement. However, a wider boulevard on the north side allows more room to replant, and diversifying our tree varieties aligns well with our EAB plan. Tree planting also coincides our Greensteps Program Best Practice #16 for Community Forests and Soils. A 2-inch tree costs about \$400-\$500 installed depending on the variety.

The easternmost block of Moreland Avenue as it approaches Robert Street is a commercial area. Staff has met with these property owners to discuss the project and possible changes. It is intended to keep the existing 36' wide street through most of this commercial area, which is consistent with other areas in the

city and allows truck turning and queuing in the roadway. There are seven driveways along the Signal Hills shopping center on the north side of Moreland Avenue. It is proposed to close two of these and relocate others to better serve the needs of their property. There is also a driveway further west for Signal Hills, which connects an alley to the Kmart building. Signal Hills has asked to keep that access in place for the time being. On the south side of Moreland Avenue, business accesses and on-street parking changes are not proposed. See the *Property Impact Summary Gorman Ave. to Robert St.* attachment.

Currently, the boulevards on both sides are mostly impervious concrete or asphalt as shown below.



Greensteps Best Practice #17 is Stormwater Management, which promotes the reduction of impervious surface and this project allows the opportunity to make such changes. With the recent construction of More Space at 68 Moreland Avenue came landscaping rock with shrubs and trees in the front of their property. This low maintenance option increases infiltration and brings some ‘green’ to this stretch of Moreland Avenue. In discussions with the property owners along this stretch, they were open to something similar which would only require pulling weeds on occasion. There was not much interest in a grass boulevard, as it would require frequent maintenance and watering. Estimated costs of different options for the boulevard in this commercial area include:

- Topsoil (6”) and sod \$11,000
- Topsoil (24”) and rock mulch (4”) with perennials \$42,000 (similar to More Space)
- Concrete (4”) \$52,000

With a sidewalk proposed on the north side throughout the corridor, there is no intention of having any sort of sidewalk/hardscape on the south side of the commercial area. The businesses on the south side are not the type that attract foot traffic and therefore do not support the need for hardscape.

Street lighting exists today between Hall Avenue and Robert Street. These poles will be replaced with City standard poles, like those on Marie Avenue, and will be converted to LED. The wiring will also be updated and installed into a conduit as it currently is direct buried in the boulevard.

For a project open house during COVID, staff is planning to mail each resident an information packet explaining the project and showing the proposed changes to their block. See the *Property Impact Summary Stryker Ave. to Gorman Ave.* attachment for an example. In addition, there would be a frequently asked questions sheet to address common open house questions for reconstruction projects like hours of work, construction timeline, mail delivery, etc. This information would also be on the

website for everyone to view. City staff is always willing to meet on-site with any residents that are looking to discuss the project or their property in more detail.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The feasibility report is nearly complete and contains construction cost estimates.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff is looking for input on various aspects of the Moreland Avenue design.

Attachments: Moreland Avenue Existing Widths
Delaware Ave. to Smith Ave. North Side Sidewalk Concept
Property Impact Summary Gorman Ave. to Robert St.
Property Impact Summary Stryker Ave. to Gorman Ave.