

Dear City Council, Planning Commission, and others it may concern,

At the end of December a “Green-ing Lincoln Avenue” concept was presented to the Planning Commission by City staff. As residents of Lincoln Avenue, we ask for your support in designing and implementing a Lincoln Avenue for the 2020s and beyond.

We request that the City work with the residents to develop a comprehensive plan for Lincoln Avenue, comprising low-cost and pilot improvements in 2021 and 2022 in advance of the repaving scheduled for 2023. This is an opportunity to take a broad look at the street and build something that will shape Lincoln Ave’s character for its next generation. A comprehensive approach will get the best value from city funds as we address multiple city priorities with one integrated concept that can be effectively piloted, prioritized and phased over time.

Our high-level objectives are to:

- **Improve safety** – passively encourage drivers to keep speeds below the posted 25 mph limit and remain attentive, provide sidewalk space and crosswalks for pedestrians, provide bicycle access for riders of all ages to the W&OD trail and other bike lanes, increase compliance with the existing ban on trucks over 7500 lbs.
- **Manage stormwater and add canopy** – reduce impermeable surfaces, add green spaces to hold and filter stormwater, plant trees to capture runoff and reduce summer air temperatures
- **Strengthen the neighborhood feeling** – retain and enhance a “sense of place” based on focal points neighbor gather around, such as Lincoln Park, the Meridian Street school bus stop, W&OD connections, and other public spaces
- **Beautify the street** – improve quality of life for residents and serve as a fitting gateway to FCC
- **Retain necessary “street” functions** – retain “more than enough” parking for residents and guests. Also, we recognize the need to balance state requirements and broader FCC needs (e.g., emergency vehicle access, snow emergency route) with our local concerns.

Current conditions: Today Lincoln Avenue is a ~40-foot wide, mostly straight road with some intersections wider than 150 feet from corner-to-corner (half a football field). East of Great Falls Street, there are no stop signs at intersections. This has significant safety implications. It is well documented that straight, wide roads with spacious intersections give drivers a sense of safety, which subconsciously leads to higher speeds and less attentiveness. We see this in the crashes that happen each year on Lincoln and in the 85th percentile speed of 37 mph. That speeding matters: the risk of death for a 60+ year old pedestrian struck at 37mph is 95%, compared to 20% at 25mph. For children mortality drops from 20% to almost zero (source: NACTO). When overly large trucks use Lincoln Ave, this safety problem is heightened, on top of noise and pavement degradation. While it may be counterintuitive, making the road “feel” smaller greatly improves safety.

The pedestrian experience is worse than in many locations in FCC. Traffic makes crossing without crosswalks more dangerous. The sidewalk narrows to less than 3 feet at many points due to utility poles and guy wires, making it unsuited for bicycles, strollers, and some people with disabilities. In some areas, the sidewalk disappears entirely. FCC evaluated ADA requirements in 2012 but not all issues appear to have been resolved (and new obstructions like speed meter boxes have been installed). This not only continues the risk to the public but also continues the legal risk for the City in not ensuring ADA compliance for public infrastructure.

Flooding during storms is a problem for many residents and often renders Lincoln Park difficult to access. These problems will only worsen as regional and FCC population increases, sites like Founders Row draw visitors, and building larger homes adds impervious surface.

Changing needs: Lincoln Ave is has become a connector street for commercial and other traffic from the region, even though it is a residential, neighborhood street. In a time of less traffic, fewer driver distractions,

and less development the current design worked. It no longer does. We need a plan for how Lincoln Ave can meet the needs of today and of the next generation given recent and planned growth in the City and nearby. Recent spot fixes (e.g. lane striping) have helped and yet they are not enough.

Solutions we encourage you to consider: We ask the City to develop a comprehensive plan for Lincoln Avenue. Within that plan, we ask you to consider at least these “building blocks” as part of a design that draws on the latest data and design guides for urban streets. We recognize that the final design must be based on legal requirements, best practice design, and public input and debate.

- Planted medians with trees and other plants (e.g. N George Mason Drive in Arlington)
- Shrink and square intersections (per National Association of City Transportation Officials guidelines, reduce paved area, and consider mini-roundabouts for improved safety, fuel economy, and noise)
- Road narrowing at crosswalks with island/median or curbside plantings where not addressed by intersection improvements (e.g. at Lincoln Park crosswalk)
- Design at Meridian Street that enhances pedestrian safety and school bus waiting conditions, including consideration of stop signs
- Adding striping for crosswalks at all intersections, signage used in neighboring jurisdictions (“State Law: Stop for Pedestrians”), and, if needed, pedestrian-activated signal lights
- Planting, pocket parks, and stormwater space in underutilized paved areas, e.g., at intersections that are shrunk, to add trees and permeable surface, while preserving plentiful street parking.
- Expand sidewalks around utility poles / guy wires (using already-impervious street area if possible) and remove pinch points and encroachments (e.g., poles near each other)
- Evaluate adding sidewalks where pedestrians currently cut through on grass (e.g., on roads connecting to the W&OD) and where sidewalks “disappear” without a connection to a crosswalk, again with a bias for using existing paved area rather than replacing grass with concrete
- Consider how to appropriately connect to bicycle routes (e.g., signage to W&OD and intersection design for individuals and families crossing Lincoln Ave)
- Low-cost art, education, and historical items, such as road/curb painting based on the current solar system markers along Lincoln Ave and preserving historic properties

We ask that you evaluate the entire length of Lincoln and go “beyond the curb” to at least one lot and one block off Lincoln to ensure solutions are comprehensive (e.g., parking effects on Great Falls Street, rain gardens on public land). We ask you to consider low-cost pilot solutions to “try it before you buy it” which have proven effective in other jurisdictions. For example, FCC could use paint and plastic bollards to shrink intersections to prove out the benefits and obtain real-life reactions before paying for concrete. We hope that what we learn on Lincoln could become a blueprint for the similar streets across the City over time.

We thank you for your consideration and stand ready to provide volunteer support on this effort. We look forward to discussion of the alternatives with Council, city staff, and our neighbors.

Sincerely,

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Lincoln Avenue residents (with more to come)