



# CITY OF FALLS CHURCH

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**DATE:** June 9, 2021

**TO:** Members, Citizens Advisory Committee on Transportation

**FROM:** Jeffrey Sikes, Senior Planner

**SUBJECT:** Final Report and Recommendation on the Great Falls/Little Falls Traffic Calming and Pedestrian Safety Project

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This report to the Citizens Advisory Committee on Transportation (CACT) describes the process and efforts made to gain adequate citizen support to move two Neighborhood Traffic Calming (NTC) Projects from the conceptual stage to construction. The report provides background information and a staff recommendation.

**Background:** City staff received two requests for traffic calming in 2015 to deal with speeding, pedestrian safety issues, parked car crashes and inadequate sidewalks on a section of Great Falls Street and Little Falls Street. The Locations of these requests were:

- Great Falls Street from N Maple Ave to Little Falls Street, and
- Little Falls Street from Great Falls Street to W Jefferson Street.

Because of their proximity to each other, it was decided to combine these traffic calming requests into a single project and a study area for project impact was developed for the project.

As an initial part of the NTC process, petitions of interest were circulated in the study area to determine if there was sufficient interest to move forward with a NTC project. These petitions were successful and the next steps in the process were to form a Working Group of residents and to collect traffic speed and volume data on Great Falls and Little Falls Streets.

The results of the data collection are shown on Attachment 1.

### **Public Engagement During Planning Process**

Prior to the Pandemic emergency, Working Group meetings were held with residents willing to volunteer their time to represent their streets and to work with staff and develop solutions for consideration of their neighbors. In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic restricted the ability of citizen groups and staff to meet in person and eventually meetings became virtual.

The NTC process is very “hands on” process that relies upon the ability of residents and staff to come together and to work together on solutions to traffic and pedestrian safety issues. It was intended that residents be able to go door-to-door to inform and engage each other about the project, ask to sign a petition, or remind them to mail in their post card ballot or send their vote by email.

Staff used several means to encourage public participation during this time, including postage paid post cards, providing a staff email address, signs posted in the neighborhood and having residents to contact their neighbors.

### **Initial Traffic Calming Plan:**

An initial Traffic Calming Plan was presented to households in the large study in May 2020. When all the comments and votes were counted there were 35 votes, or 46 percent in favor of the project and 11 opposed. NTC guidelines require that at least 67 percent of households support projects consisting of heavy solutions. While the 67 percent threshold was not met, a number of residents commented that they would consider a revised plan that addressed plan comments from residents. NTC guidelines also provide for working towards a plan that can be supported by the community even though the initial plan might not have 67 percent support.

The initial plan was modified based upon comments received from residents. For example, the new speed hump proposed for Little Falls Street was removed from the plan. Also on Little Falls Street, the widening of the sidewalk (curb extension) was reduced to 3 feet from 5 feet, and was shortened in length. At the intersection of Great Falls and Little Falls Street, the curb extensions were modified to not encroach as far into the intersection.

The revised plan was resubmitted to households in the study area for approval.

### **Larger Project Separated into Two Individual Projects:**

Because of the low rate of return of post cards or email responses, staff and some supporting residents proposed to separate the overall plan into two individual traffic calming projects as described below. This changed the study area slightly so that residents with an interest in the project by close proximity to their homes may be more inclined to provide a response. Attachment 21 shows the resulting revised Study Areas as a result of separating the overall plan into two projects.

### **Concept Plans for Traffic Calming and Pedestrian Safety Improvements:**

The final plans presented to residents are shown on Attachment 3 and 4 and described below:

**Concept plan for Great Falls/Little Falls intersection:** Shown as Attachment 3, the concept plan for the intersection of Great falls and Little Falls street includes curb extensions at three of the four intersection corners. The curb extensions will provide for safer pedestrian crossing by shortening the crossing distances and slow traffic by slightly narrowing the streets. New curb ramps will improve ADA access at three corners. The intersection street widths will be no narrower than 25-feet measured curb to curb. The curb return radii proposed will be 25-feet which will accommodate turning vehicles. Additional pavement markings may be painted, as needed.

**Concept Plan for Little Falls Street, W Columbia Street and Shadow Walk:** Shown as Attachment 4, the concept plan for the area of Little Falls Street and intersections of W Columbia Street and Shadow Walk include a new sidewalk along one property on the north side of W Columbia Street. The new sidewalk will provide a continuous walk along W Columbia Street from Maple Ave to Little Falls Street. The existing sidewalk on the west side of Little Falls Street will be widened from the Shadow Walk intersection to the south by 3 feet to accommodate school children at the school bus stop. A new crosswalk across Little Falls Street will connect to the new sidewalk on W Columbia Street and a new crosswalk across W Columbia will connect to the existing sidewalk on the south side of W Columbia Street. New access ramps will be constructed at the new crosswalks and existing ramps will be updated.

**Results of Latest Neighborhood Vote on Projects:**

The results of the final round of voting by residents in each study area are shown on Attachment 5.

For the Great Falls Street/Little Falls Street intersection project, there are 51 households, of which 33 approved of the project for 65 percent approval. Only 3 households opposed the project with 15 not voting.

For the Little Falls Street/W Columbia/Shadow Walk intersection and sidewalk project, there are 40 households, of which 26 approved the project for 65 percent approval. Seven households opposed the project with seven not voting.

**Conclusion and Recommendation:**

The support for each traffic calming project was calculated at 65 percent. The NTC guidelines state that 67 percent of the households in the study area should support projects involving Heavy Solutions. However, it should be noted that a small number of the total households in each case were opposed to the projects. Despite efforts by staff and residents to encourage their neighbors to return their post card or send an email to staff, in each case, some residents choose not to vote. It is staff's position that there are likely supporters of the project that had they voted, would have brought the support level above 67 percent.

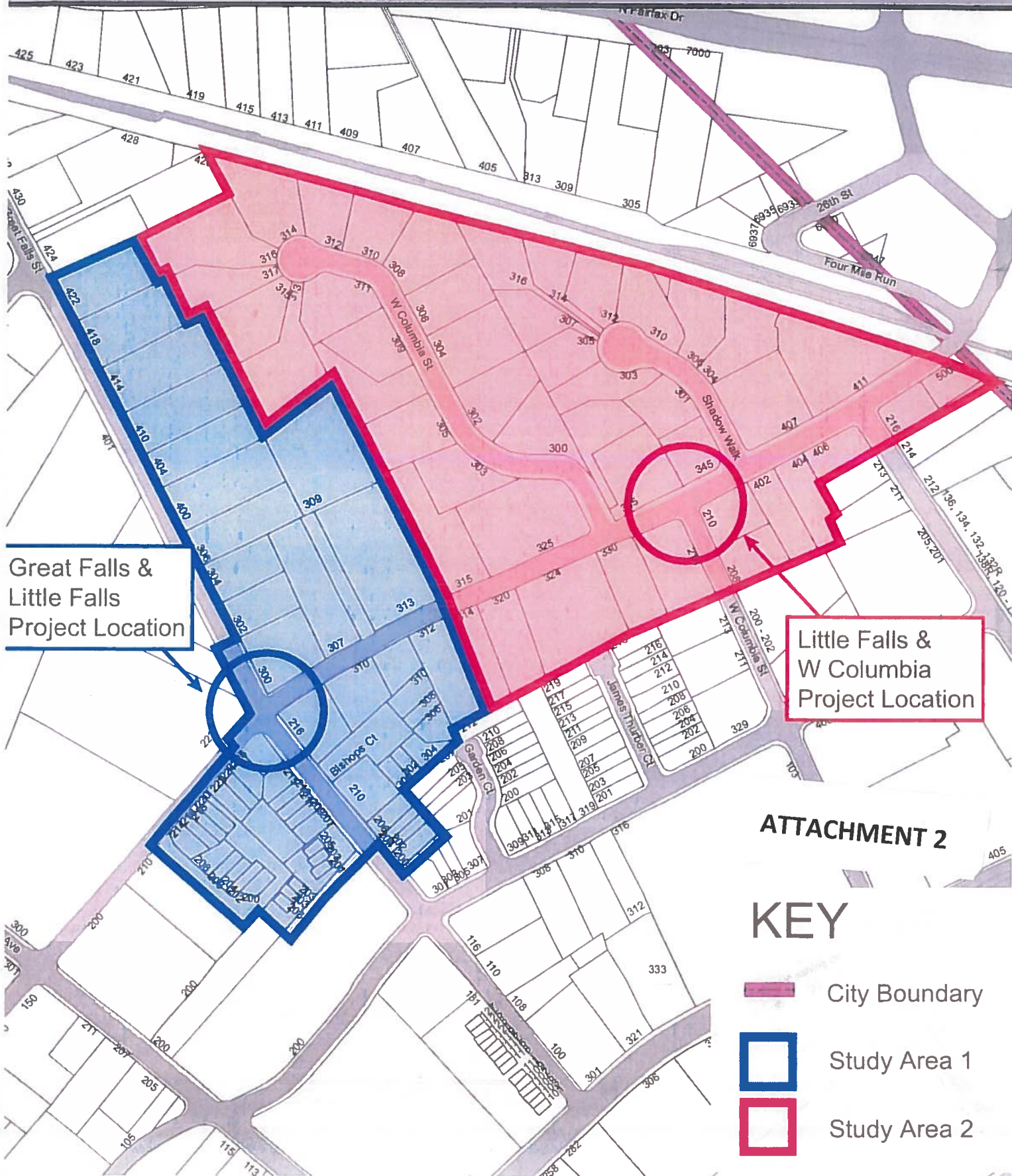
**Therefore, staff recommends to the CACT that the Great Falls Street/Little Falls Street intersection project and the Little Falls Street/W Columbia Street/Shadow Walk intersections project be approved, and that the CACT recommend to the City Manager that these projects move ahead to construction this summer.**

# NTC CASE SUMMARY SHEET

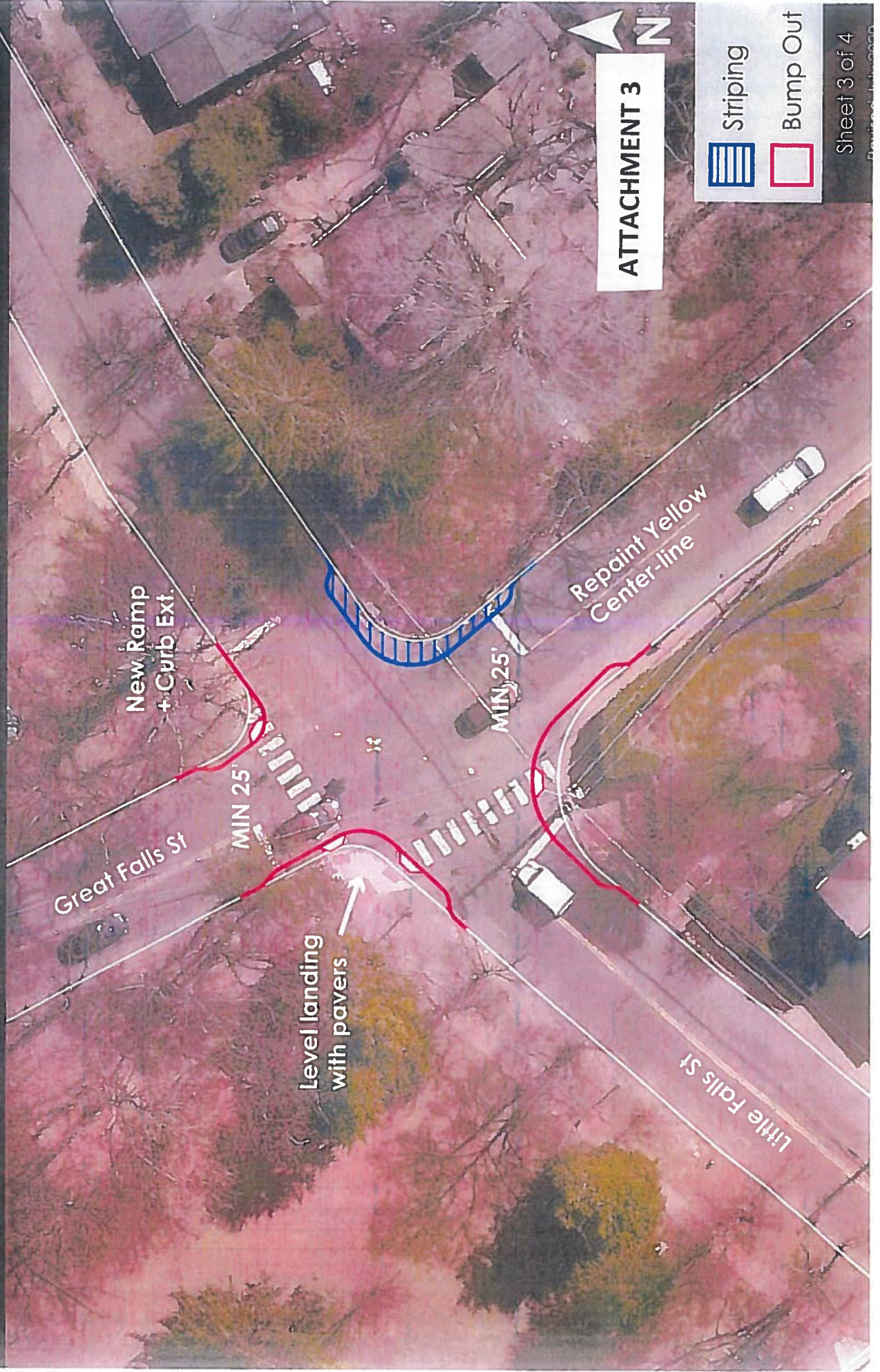
ATTACHMENT 1

STREET NAME	GREAT FALLS	LITTLE FALLS	NORTH CHERRY	SOUTH WEST	GROVE
LOCATION	N. Maple to Little Falls	Great Falls to W. Columbia	E. Broad to E. Columbia	Ellison to Parker	N. West to Spruce
DAILY TRAFFIC VOLUME	5,000 vpd	2,680 vpd	1,937 vpd	7,744 vpd	1,855 vpd
POSTED SPEED	25 mph	25 mph	25 mph	25 mph	25 mph
AVERAGE SPEED	22.4 mph	21 mph	21 mph	21.4 mph	22.3 mph
85% SPEED	26.6 mph	26.6 mph	25.3 mph	24.5 mph	26.4 mph
STUDY AREA LENGTH	0.10 mile	0.34 mi	0.47 mi	0.20 mi	0.27 MI
DESIGN DEFICIENCIES PEDESTRIAN GENERATOR	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
PRIORITY BIN	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
ESTIMATED DAILY RISK OF SEVERE PEDESTRIAN INJURY	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low
% CHANCE OF SEVERE PEDESTRIAN INJURY FROM CRASH	0.00002	0.00004	0.00004	0.00007	0.00001
	20.3%	18.9%	17.8%	18.8%	20.2%

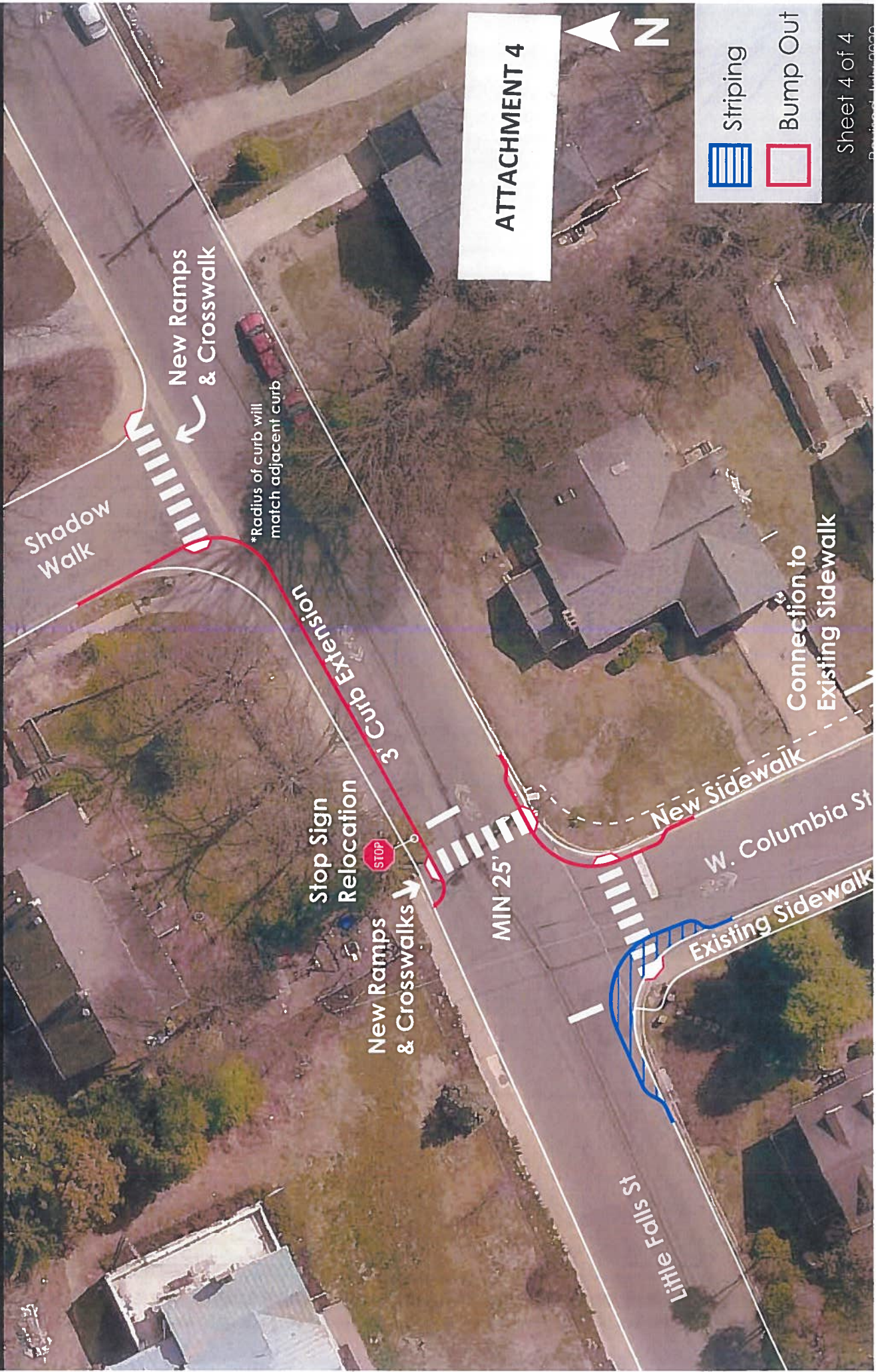
# GREAT FALLS / LITTLE FALLS TRAFFIC CALMING STUDY



# GREAT FALLS & LITTLE FALLS PROPOSED TRAFFIC CALMING



# LITTLE FALLS & WEST COLUMBIA PROPOSED TRAFFIC CALMING



## ATTACHMENT 5

### Great Falls/Little Falls Traffic Calming and Pedestrian Safety Project

#### Final Results May 2021

##### **Great Falls/Little Falls Intersection Improvements:**

# of households in study area (blue) 51

Approve Plan 33

Percent approval 65%

Disagree w/ Plan 3

Households not voting 15

##### **Little Falls/ W Columbia Street Improvements:**

# of households in study area (red) 40

Approve plan 26

Percent approval 65%

Disagree with Plan 7

Households not voting 7