

REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL

A report of the RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

TO CITY COUNCIL KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE

November, 2004

Committee members

Councilman Joe Bailey, Chairman

Councilwoman Barbara Pelot, City Council

Councilman Bob Becker, City Council
and 5th District representative

Councilwoman Marilyn Roddy, City Council

Carole Allen, 1st District representative

Christy Graffeo, 4th District representative

Joe Fuhr, 2nd District Representative

Al Acker, 6th District representative

Stacey Campfield, 3rd District representative

Deputy Chief Roger Byrd, KFD

Sharon Boyce, Knoxville Law Department

Captain Gordon Catlett, KPD

Sergeant Ronnie Bradley, KPD

Lt. Monty Boone, KPD

Bill Cole, Knoxville City Engineering

AN IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATION STRATEGY TO CITY COUNCIL

FROM THE
RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

MISSION STATEMENT:

The City of Knoxville is committed to strengthen and protect its neighborhoods by improving the quality of life in residential areas. The desirability of Knoxville neighborhoods as places to live and raise a family is directly affected by local traffic conditions. The City allocates a portion of its resources annually to address neighborhood traffic safety. The resources are divided among education, engineering and enforcement initiatives through the promotion of neighborhood friendly design, community awareness and effective enforcement. Knoxville also depends on commitment and support from many partners including neighborhood organizations, City, County and state administrations, and law enforcement agencies for success of these initiatives.

DEFINITION OF TERMS:

Traffic calming – As used in this report, traffic calming refers to all efforts to control the speed of traffic in neighborhoods with a goal of increased safety.

Neighborhood – A distinctive pedestrian-scale region characterized by the presence of predominantly residential structures and social interaction between residents and bounded by major streets, which set the limits thereof and give a clear identity in people's consciousness.

Directly affected street(s) – The area(s) where traffic calming solutions are proposed to be deployed.

Indirectly impacted area(s) – All other areas which may be impacted by the use of traffic calming devices, but are not on the directly affected street(s).

SHORT TERM IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS:

(Start and complete in less than 1 year)

- 1) Encourage the City of Knoxville administration and City Council to make traffic calming a funding priority in all budget years. Request Mayor Haslam to designate a liaison to implement the report of the Residential Neighborhood Traffic Safety Committee (RNTSC).
- 2) Mayor's Public Information Office to initiate a public awareness campaign:
 - a) Campaign kickoff with Mayor Haslam's announcement that the City of Knoxville is committed to a citywide traffic calming program, including unveiling of the new

"Neighborhood Enforcement Zone" sign to be installed under the existing, standard speed limit sign.

- b) Community and Neighborhood Services to follow-up the initial kick-off with timely and regular public service announcements, press releases of success stories, and progress reports.

3) City Engineering will implement the neighborhood planning process (see Appendix "A") for traffic calming improvements in petitioning neighborhoods. The process will include device feasibility (speed humps, traffic circles, etc.) and enforcement (neighborhood enforcement zone, photo radar, etc.). City Engineering and Knoxville Police Department (KPD) personnel will determine the best approach to reduce a neighborhood's traffic issues.

4) The Residential Neighborhood Traffic Safety Committee will create a process and notify neighborhood association leadership of the procedure to be followed for requesting police enforcement of their neighborhood enforcement zone.

5) City Engineering will define neighborhood enforcement zones and ensure proper signs are installed.

6) Fund allocation recommendations for the first fiscal year (ending 6/30/2005) will not exceed:

- a) 65% first year fund allocation for traffic enforcement in neighborhoods
 - 1) 25% equipment purchase, 75% man-hour cost
 - 2) KPD to begin purchase of radar guns primarily for use in neighborhood traffic calming program
 - 3) KPD to begin dispatching police enforcement to a minimum of two (2)-targeted neighborhoods in each Council district. Four (4) hours in each targeted enforcement zone each day.
 - 4) Recommendation of neighborhoods for targeting will come from KPD Traffic Services pending approval of respective district's Council member after receipt of request for enforcement from the neighborhood leadership through the process established by the Residential Neighborhood Traffic Safety Committee.
- b) 20% first year fund allocation for implementation of approved traffic calming plan(s) and neighborhood enforcement zone signs.
- c) 15% first year fund allocation for public awareness campaign.
- d) All fund disbursements are recommended to be by City Council only when requested by city department. Fund disbursement **is not** recommended to be placed directly into the departmental annual budgets.

7) City Plans Review, as part of the review process, will require a traffic calming assessment from City Engineering on new neighborhoods.

8) Residential Neighborhood Traffic Safety Committee will develop community partners such as neighborhoods, businesses, and community organizations.

9) KPD will conduct demonstrations and feasibility studies of digital/video radar and other state-of-the-art enforcement devices.

ON-GOING IMPLEMENTATIONS BEGINNING IN YEAR 1:

10) Annually, City Engineering will report to City Council on zoning and access control for developments to reduce negative impact on capacity of arterial roads.

11) Annually, City Engineering will report to City Council on the most congested arterial roadways and their affected neighborhoods and recommend to Council needed roadway improvements.

12) Annually, KPD will internally evaluate the enforcement program and present a report with any recommended program changes to the Residential Neighborhood Traffic Safety Committee.

MID TERM IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS:

(Start in less than 1 year and complete by end of year 3)

13) City Engineering will provide City Council an annual report on neighborhoods with approved traffic calming plans, their cost and need for implementation and, as part of that report, a follow-up study for previously implemented traffic calming plans. Need shall be assessed according to the following criteria: the number of homes on the affected street(s); the number of traffic crashes in the impacted area(s); the average speed and traffic volume at all study locations; the number of significant safety problems; the number of years that the plan has been approved, but not implemented due to lack of funding; and the number of traffic calming plans in the project's Council district.

14) Initiate "Safe Neighborhood Day" as part of an ongoing public awareness campaign.

15) Enhance existing resources such as Safety City, high school drivers' education courses; establish a virtual center for traffic calming on the City's website including the petition for calming process.

16) City of Knoxville will pursue methods of increasing fines for program offenders.

17) The Residential Neighborhood Traffic Safety Committee, as a resource for City administration and City Council, will serve as program oversight, and will remain active.

a) The Residential Neighborhood Traffic Safety Committee will:

- 1) Develop and recommend to City Council accountability standards for the city's traffic calming program.
- 2) Review and recommend program reallocations based on results, budget, fund allocation and need, giving each Council district equal consideration.

b) The Residential Neighborhood Traffic Safety Committee will remain as presently appointed and will meet on an as-needed basis at a minimum of every six (6) months until year-end 2005.

18) City Engineering will explore hi-tech flow control for road network, and pursue funding through the City and other sources to update synchronization of traffic signals, including an increase in signal group staff for synchronization, installation, and maintenance.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS:

During the course of the Committee's work, a few other comments by citizens related to safety in neighborhoods were considered to be outside the scope of this committee. The committee would like for the City of Knoxville to further research and, if possible, adopt policy as related to trucks, weight limits, and sidewalks throughout the city.

CONCLUSION:

As a Committee, the Residential Neighborhood Traffic Safety Committee has reached consensus that the implementation of these recommendations will significantly reduce the incidences of speeding and through traffic that have negative impact on the quality of life in Knoxville and whole-heartedly recommend their adoption.

APPENDIX A

Traffic Calming Plan Development, Approval Process, and Allocation of Funds

Traffic Calming Plan Development, Approval Process, and Allocation of Funds

Preamble

Our goal is to make our neighborhoods safer and we see the primary function of traffic calming is to cause traffic to abide to the posted speed limits. With these principles in mind, we believe a process which achieves the proper balance between the need for relief from unsafe traffic and the wishes of those who may have to travel over traffic calming devices is necessary. Since it is hard to argue against improvements which will cause traffic to obey the posted speed limits, we feel the process should be weighted to benefit those seeking relief.

The Traffic Calming Plan Development and Approval Process

(In 10 easy steps...)

The process is broken down into sequential steps. As each milestone is reached, the next step in sequence is executed.

Step 1: A homeowners/neighborhood association or resident requests City Traffic Engineering to start the traffic calming process. City Traffic Engineering will recommend one or more facilitating agencies, such as the East Tennessee Community Design Center, to aid the neighborhood in building consensus and developing their plan.

Facilitating agencies may or may not charge for their services, and should be independent third parties to avoid conflict of interest. City Traffic Engineering must approve any facilitating agency.

Step 2: A neighborhood meeting is held with residents and the facilitating agency to discuss the traffic calming process and decide if they want to pursue traffic calming as a solution for their traffic problems.

Step 3: A traffic study petition drive is conducted in order to demonstrate that there is some support for traffic calming in the area, with approximately 10% approval required to proceed.

Step 4: A meeting between representatives of the neighborhood, the facilitating agency, and City Traffic Engineering is held to define the traffic calming study area.

Step 5: A traffic study is performed by City Traffic Engineering to determine traffic problems within the traffic calming study area.

Step 6: The results of the traffic study with an explanatory cover letter is mailed to residents in the traffic calming study area by the facilitating agency.

A design request petition drive is conducted in order to demonstrate more widespread interest in traffic calming, with a minimum of 50% of property owners in the traffic calming study area signing in approval.

Step 7: A traffic calming plan is developed by City Traffic Engineering, who will identify problem areas and develop a comprehensive solution to address them.

Problem areas and the appropriate traffic calming solutions may exceed neighborhood boundaries or may impact only a portion of a neighborhood. Since neighborhood boundaries may not properly reflect those who will be impacted by traffic calming solutions, two distinct kinds of areas are identified in the traffic calming plan:

Directly Affected Street(s): The area(s) where traffic calming solutions are proposed to be deployed.

Indirectly Impacted Area(s): All other areas which may be impacted by the use of traffic calming devices, but are not on the directly affected street(s).

Engineering, working in conjunction with the facilitating agency and representatives of the neighborhood, will determine the directly affected street(s) and indirectly impacted area(s) boundaries.

The directly affected street(s) and indirectly impacted area(s) boundaries are significant in the balloting process described below.

Step 8: The facilitating agency will prepare a cover letter that includes the proposed traffic calming plan, which is mailed to all property owners in traffic calming study area, and explains the balloting process.

Step 9: The facilitating agency will conduct a meeting for property owners in the traffic calming study area approximately two weeks after Step 8. Minor plan modifications are possible at this time provided they are approved by City Traffic Engineering. This step may be repeated at the discretion of the facilitating agency.

Step 10: The Balloting Process

Traffic plans are approved by a community balloting process. The facilitating agency will mail the proposed traffic calming plan and ballot to residents and property owners on the directly affected street(s) and in the indirectly impacted area(s) to determine approval or rejection of the plan.

Franchise

One vote is given to each residential property on the directly affected street(s) and in the indirectly impacted area(s).

Multi-family residential properties, with up to four apartments, will have ballots mailed to both the renters and property owner. If the property owner does not vote, then the votes of each apartment are tallied and the one vote for the property is assigned based on simple majority. If the renters' votes are split 50/50, then the vote for the property counts neither for nor against the traffic plan.

Multi-family residential properties, with more than four apartments are considered commercial, and the one vote for the property may be placed by the property owner.

Voting Period

Ballots are returned to the facilitating agency. The balloting process lasts for six weeks from the date of mailing.

Weighted Vote Tally

Directly affected streets need relief, but a very small number of dwellings should not be able to hold an entire neighborhood hostage. Likewise, a neighborhood should not be able to dictate to a portion of the neighborhood that their street is to be used as a raceway. Traffic calming solutions make drivers travel at the posted speed limit, so it is difficult to oppose relief via traffic calming. A balance favoring those on directly affected streets is desired because our overwhelming goal in this effort is to make our neighborhood streets safer.

By distinguishing between directly affected street(s) and indirectly impacted area(s), an equitable balance can be achieved. A traffic plan is approved if the following criteria are met:

- Residential properties on directly affected street(s) must have 75% of ballots returned and 80% in favor of those returned. This ensures that there is overwhelming support from those who will benefit most from the traffic calming measures.
- Residential properties in indirectly impacted areas combined with directly affected streets must have 30% of ballots returned and 60% in favor of those returned. This ensures that overwhelming support exists from all that are impacted by traffic calming measures.

If a ballot fails, this traffic calming plan development and approval process may be repeated at the discretion of the facilitating agency.

Allocation of Funds to Implement Approved Traffic Calming Plans

Ideally, funds allocated for engineering and law enforcement activities, in aggregate, will be distributed equally through the six Council districts.