

The connectivity of neighborhoods to trails and parks within our community is important. The 2018 Johnston Walkability Study identified a need for improved connectivity for pedestrians and bicycle users along the NW 86th Street corridor between NW 54th Avenue to NW 62nd Avenue. This project will construct a 10-foot-wide recreational side-path along the east side of NW 86th Street to provide an important link between the residential areas and the commercial destinations to the south. The project's additional benefits include updates to the curb ramps and traffic signals at the NW 54th Avenue, Chamberry Boulevard, and Windsor Parkway intersections and to provide for ADA-compliant pedestrian crossings at all street crossings.

The trail is expected to be complete mid-summer, and final grading and seeding will last into early fall 2021.

Below is a list of frequently asked questions.

Did the homeowners receive communication and are they supportive of this project?

The residents whose homes back up to this project have been involved in the project design/discussions and so has the Green Meadows West Homeowner's Association (HOA), which owns most of the land/trees where the trail will be located. The City and HOA will continue to communicate with adjacent property owners as the project evolves this summer.

The Green Meadows West HOA will also be involved in the design and planting of new landscaping that will be added to beautify the area. They will also maintain this area and landscaping upon completion of the project.

Why does the trail need to be 10-feet?

The State of Iowa and federal standard for high use trails is a minimum of 10-feet. The main reason for this width is to make sure there is an appropriate width for ADA compliance – the ADA requirement is five-feet. For high-use trails, they multiply the width by two for safe passing. Based on the results from the walkability study, this will be a high-use trail.

An example of a high-use trail: If you had a pedestrian, a person pushing a stroller, a runner, and a bike on the trail simultaneously, there would be a variety of speeds. To ensure safety, trail users need room for safe passing. Anything less than 10-feet begins creating a much less safe passing opportunity.

Why does the trail need to be on the east side?

The public meetings and walkability results indicated the trail needed to be on the east side due to the traffic along this corridor and nearly all of the residential uses in this area being on the east side of NW 86th Street. This prevents the need for all trail users to cross NW 86th Street to travel north/south along the trail. This heavily traveled area warrants a sidewalk on one side and a trail on the other. This is similar to many of our new road projects that have occurred in the community, including NW 70th Avenue and NW 100th Street.

Why are the trees being taken down?

As Johnston has developed, NW 86th Street has become much busier. As the street traffic has increased, the white pines planted about 30 years ago have deteriorated due to a number of issues.

A disease impacting white pines has taken out many of the weakened trees. Over the years, the City has modified treatment in the winter months to minimize the trees' street impact. This has helped prolong life, but the trees that are remaining are still experiencing dieback.

Unfortunately, the bottom five to six feet of the pines have had limbs removed as dieback occurs. This causes the trees to have fewer points of stress and lasts longer in the stressful environment. Arborists have worked with the Green Meadows West Homeowner's Association over the past 10 years to prolong the white pines' life. About 20 percent of the trees that have died have been removed in the past six to eight years, and about 40 percent of the remaining are in an advanced state declining health.

Many of the interior limbs are bare branches. While they may look okay on the outside of the tree clump, there isn't much to the trees' interior. Bare branches are all that is left.

Will new trees or landscaping be done?

Yes, the project area will have berms, landscape material, and a variety of tree species planted along this stretch of road. Ultimately, this will improve privacy for adjacent homeowners, as the white pines have been trimmed up over the years, leaving the bottom 6-8 feet without branches/screening from NW 86th Street.

What is the timeline for this project?

The trees are beginning to be removed this spring. Upon removal, the grading and trail will be constructed. Berms are expected to be complete by the Green Meadows West Homeowners Association by September 2021. The berms will initially be seeded and depending upon timing, some plantings may occur this fall and into spring 2022.

What are the future plans for connectivity to NW 70th Avenue?

A future connection is in the Capital Improvement Plan for 2024, which includes a 10-foot trail. This would extend the trail north (on the east side of the road) to NW 70th Avenue.

Is Johnston considered a Tree City?

Johnston does continue to be a Tree City. Johnston received Growth Awards in 2016-2019 as part of Tree City USA. This award looks at various projects and replanting's that are done within the City and greenspace areas.

The City of Johnston has an emerald ash borer plan, which included diversifying our species of trees. Providing diversity among species will help ensure an entire population is not taken out if a disease is to occur.

How will this affect drainage in the area?

The drainage will be improved with this project as stormwater calculations, new tile and intakes are all included. Several areas along this corridor need to be cleaned, but this project addresses this.

If we have concerns regarding this project, who can we contact?

Any concerns or questions regarding the project can be directed to our Public Works Director, Johnston Schmitz, at jschmitz@cityofjohnston.com.