

City of University Heights
Melrose Avenue Wide Sidewalk – Johnson County Trail Extension
Project Description
November 26, 2007

The City of University Heights has submitted an application to receive federal funding to construct an 8-foot wide sidewalk on the north side of Melrose Avenue. The City is still awaiting a final decision on the amount of funding it may receive for the project. The JCCOG Urbanized Area Policy Board will make funding decisions on December 5th, 2007, at 5 p.m. The meeting will be held in Emma J. Harvat Hall, Iowa City City Hall, 410 E. Washington St., Iowa City. The meeting is open to the public.

To date, the project concept has received support from JCCOG staff and the surrounding communities. This project would involve the north sidewalk on Melrose Avenue from the east city limit (railroad bridge by Kinnick Stadium) to the west city limit (University Athletic Club). Within Johnson County, a network of trails and wide sidewalks is being developed to provide connectivity between communities (<http://www.jccog.org/documents/trailsmapltr.pdf>). This project would connect with an existing wide sidewalk on the east side of University Heights, and end within a few hundred feet of an existing trail at Finkbine Golf Course. The City of Iowa City would then have the opportunity to continue this wide sidewalk west along Melrose Avenue and connect up with the Finkbine trail.

Within University Heights, the segment of Melrose Avenue east of Sunset Street has a narrow right-of-way and several steep driveway approaches on the north side. As a consequence, the City's proposed project involves narrowing Melrose Avenue by several feet on the north side to accommodate a wider sidewalk and maintaining the existing grades of the driveway aprons. In other words, the City does not plan to acquire property from adjoining landowners; rather, the intention is to widen the sidewalk into the existing street right-of-way. The possibility exists that some property would need to be acquired from certain landowners, but that is not the City's preference or plan. The City does anticipate acquiring temporary construction easements from property owners in this area. The segment of Melrose Avenue west of Sunset Street has a wider area between the street and sidewalk, so no street modifications are needed to place the 8-foot sidewalk.

The University Heights City Council discussed snow removal, maintenance, and repair of the 8-foot sidewalk at a recent meeting. The Council's sentiment was to require property owners to remove snow from a 4-foot section of the walk (like they do currently) and not require the entire 8-foot walk to be shoveled. The City would share equally with property owners in the event repairs to the wider walk were needed.

Features of the proposed project are summarized as follows:

- The City does not intend to acquire property from adjoining homeowners; sidewalks would be widened to the south and Melrose Avenue would be narrowed.
- Payment for the project would come from a combination of federal funds and from the City.
- Adjoining owners would continue to remove snow from a 4-foot section of sidewalk; they wouldn't be required to clear the entire 8-foot section.
- The City would pay half the cost of any future repairs or maintenance of the sidewalk; adjoining owners wouldn't have to pay for those repairs themselves.

An informational meeting to discuss the proposed project has been scheduled for 7:00 p.m. Monday, December 3, 2007, at Taste on Melrose, 1006 Melrose Avenue. The meeting is open to the public.