

El dorado plan for East 9th Street: Evaluation and Recommendations

Evaluation

While we welcome improvements to East 9th Street that include repairing pavement, sidewalks and adding limited lighting, the proposed plan does not fit with the character and use of the neighborhood for the following reasons:

- It puts an undue burden on residents and small businesses by taking away a majority of the sorely needed parking in the residential section of East 9th Street.
- The plan raises serious safety concerns for bike riders, especially children. Locating the shared use path off of the street will put cyclists in direct conflict with cars and trucks entering and leaving alleys. Many of the alley intersections are blind. Drivers and cyclists will not be able to see each other with enough time to stop before a potential collision. (For over fifty years drivers have exited alleys by driving up to the street, stopping and then turning. A new plan that would require them to stop 30-40 feet back into the alley is not sufficient to protect cyclists. On the street, cyclists and drivers have a mutual understanding of their relationship. This new path is an experiment that should not be tried on our neighborhood.)
- There is no clear plan for how artist's work will be incorporated into the plan and how it would impact the neighborhood. Art is a powerful tool for shaping how a place is understood and used. Without a clear plan, we cannot determine how this work will affect the social fabric of East 9th St. and the adjoining neighborhood.
- It is still unclear how greenspace will be treated. If all greenspace outside of tree shadows is planted with native grasses (as proposed), it will become unusable for any other purpose, including those residents who would like to plant gardens or use the space for leisure.
- Committed funds (see "Follow the Money" on eastninth.net) from private developers and individuals are not accounted for in this plan. We therefore have no idea how those funds will be used and what impact they will have on the street and neighborhood.

Recommendations

Currently, East 9th Street has space for bikes, parking, greenspace and pedestrians. Maintenance and targeted improvements can be made without the negative impacts outlined in our evaluation. Taking this approach will be good for the neighborhood and the City as a whole. We recommend:

- Maintaining the current path and width of the street (from Connecticut to Delaware)
- Marking bike lanes in the street from Massachusetts to Connecticut
- Improving and repairing the street pavement
- Repairing sidewalks, one of them up to ADA standards
- Adding low-level lighting in specific areas where it is needed
- Working with residents on a plan for how greenspace can be enhanced and where
- Having artists work in direct collaboration with East Lawrence residents and ELNA on all art projects

This approach will serve the needs of East Lawrence residents and will save the City significant funds to be used for street maintenance and improvements in other parts of town.

We appreciate the hard work and countless hours that el dorado, City staff, the Lawrence Arts Center and East Lawrence residents have committed to this effort. It is the first arts-based development project the City has ever engaged in. There was bound to be a steep learning curve. Coming to a solution that supports and serves the people who live and work in East Lawrence will go a long way towards modeling future efforts wherever they may be proposed.

East 9th street evaluation and recommendations addendum

"Given a choice b/t bike lanes and bike paths, I would add a 3rd choice, take bike route off 9th and put it on 8th and 10th to get downtown. That is what I hear both bike experts and bike novices wanting. And BAC also asked how it fits into the safe routes to schools program. I don't think that has come up (either). I am going to find out where that is."

" In my opinion, I just feel that E. 9th St just is not the right setting, or street, for such a project that has been proposed over the past few months. One other concern I have that I did not see, is the fact that E. 9th is still a truck route, which with the current proposed design plan does not mesh well together. It adds stress to truck drivers and, as mentioned, makes for a more un-safe path for children and other pedestrians riding bikes, etc., as a few large trucks make deliveries by pulling into alleyways and then backing up to loading docks."

"They should provide a specific assessment of how changes to 9th street will impact other streets in the neighborhood. Two pressing questions to answer are:

1. Where will people park who can no longer park on 9th?
2. What is the effect to traffic on 7th and 8th street when 9th is "calmed"? This is especially a concern for foot traffic since sidewalks do not exist on parts of 8th.

Any project like 9th street should have a documented benefit to the community as a whole. The vision for such an undertaking should never be construed as the myopic focus of a specific organization or business."

