



## MEMO

TO: City Management Team

FROM: Brennen Duncan, Traffic Engineer; Amanda Poncy, Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator

DATE: May 5, 2020

SUBJECT: Safe Streets for Social Distancing – Proposal to close vehicle traffic lanes to support social distancing and active transportation/recreation

### **Background/Purpose:**

With the onset of Covid-19, many communities are taking advantage of the reduced traffic volumes in order to reallocate the roadways to give citizens more space to walk, bike and exercise while still maintaining recommended social distancing guidelines. With the onset of Covid-19, many communities are taking advantage of the reduced traffic volumes in order to reallocate the roadways to give citizens more space to walk, bike and exercise while still maintaining recommended social distancing guidelines. City staff has looked at what other communities are doing to see how we can implement those strategies in our neighborhoods. There are several criteria that we are trying to incorporate in the implementation including access to existing parks, residential density, equity (both spatially and economically), grade/topography, traffic volumes, emergency access, existing traffic control inventory, etc... Taking all of those factors into account, staff as come up with 5 locations as pilot projects that we would like to implement for one week starting May 15. The week-long time frame is being proposed to reduce concerns related to crowding that could occur for a shorter duration event (if we were to only close the roads for a few hour window on a weekend, people would be more inclined to use the streets at that confined period of time, rather than try to spread out their activity throughout the week). The proposed locations are intended to serve as a starting point for discussion.

### **Communications:**

Should this proposal (or some version of it) move forward, staff envisions a communications campaign (including press release, social media, website banner and possibly Cville360 participation) to provide traffic and safety information. In addition, there would need to be an opportunity for public feedback to determine whether/how/where future closures could occur. Feedback could be collected via myCville, email, social media, website form or phone.



## **Implementation Costs/Logistics:**

Staff has evaluated current workload and materials and feel confident that the closures can be implemented with existing materials and personnel in Public Works. In addition, staff has been in contact with many members of BPAC as well as the Piedmont Environmental Council and see this as a collaborative effort in which community members will be able to help set up and maintain these closures. Staff anticipates that some materials may need to be replaced throughout the pilot due to theft/vandalism. Assuming that 10% of the materials are damaged/vandalism, this represents a cost of approximately \$600.

## **Moving Forward:**

It is our understanding that the bike/ped community is currently working on a formal letter to City Council requesting consideration of implementing street closures to support social distancing.

In effort to get ahead of the forthcoming request from the community, we have provided this information for your review and consideration. **Staff requests direction from the City Manager's office and the Critical Incident Management Team whether or not this effort can be supported by our leadership.**

We also understand that the governor's recent announcement that the stay at home order may be lifted on May 15<sup>th</sup>, however we still feel this topic may be relevant with the unknown duration of the coronavirus and the likelihood that our community will experience future stay at home orders and that social distancing requirements will continue to remain in place for an unknown duration.

Lastly, pursuing a pilot of this nature would demonstrate the City's effort to collaborate with the community, show a good faith effort to increase biking and walking opportunities and reinforce Council's Visions of A Green City, America's Healthiest City and A Connected Community.

## **Proposed Locations:**

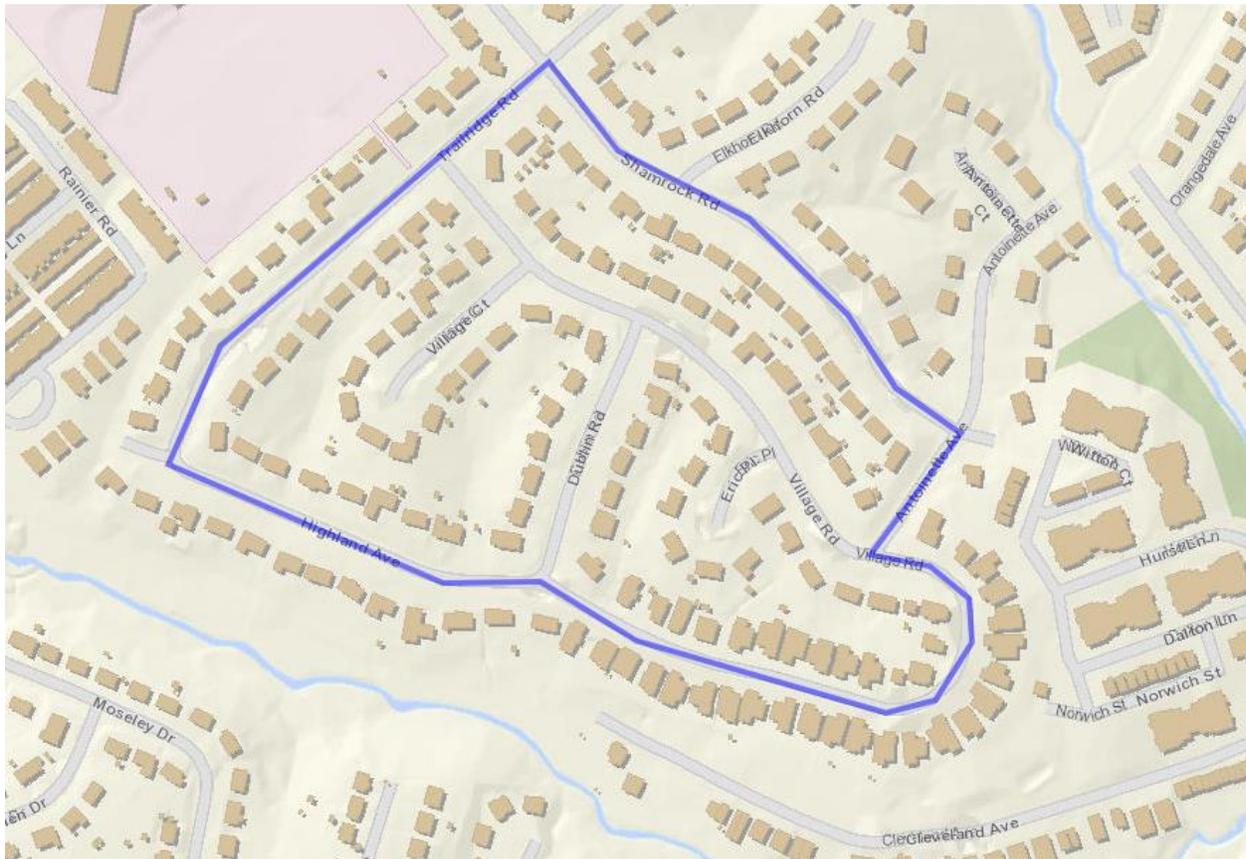
Below are the 5 pilot locations as well as the rational for why they were chosen.

- 1) Belmont Bridge (Lane closure in southbound direction between E. Market St. and Levy Ave. – maintains two way traffic)



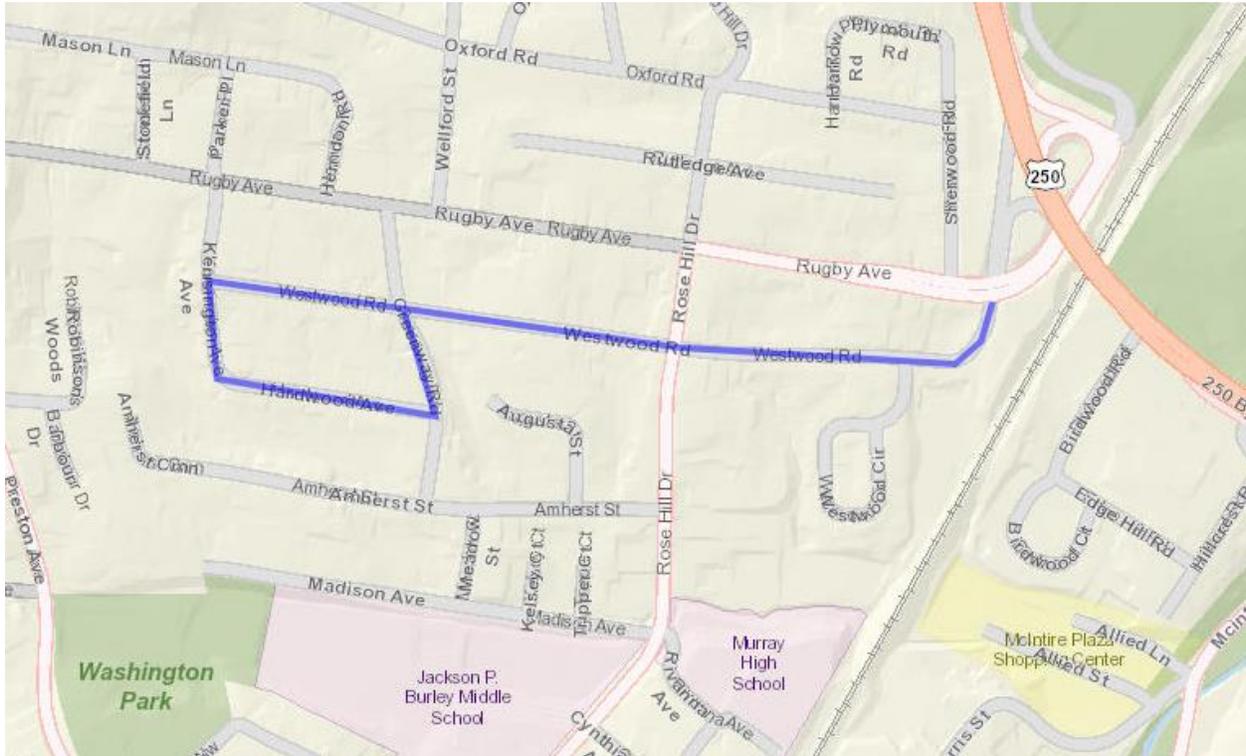
The Belmont Bridge/9<sup>th</sup> Street SE has a sidewalk only on one side of the road. People walking on the bridge are not able to pass each other safely using social distancing without stepping off a high curb into the roadway. Due to the vertical curve of the bridge it is difficult to see on-coming traffic. The proposal recommends placing cones between the bike lane and travel lane to provide additional space for safe social distancing. People walking on the bridge will be able to use an additional 5' of roadway for walking and those biking will have additional separation from vehicle traffic. This concept was tested in September 2019 and seemed to work well.

## 2) Shamrock/Trailridge Loop (Lane closure and conversion to a one-way street)



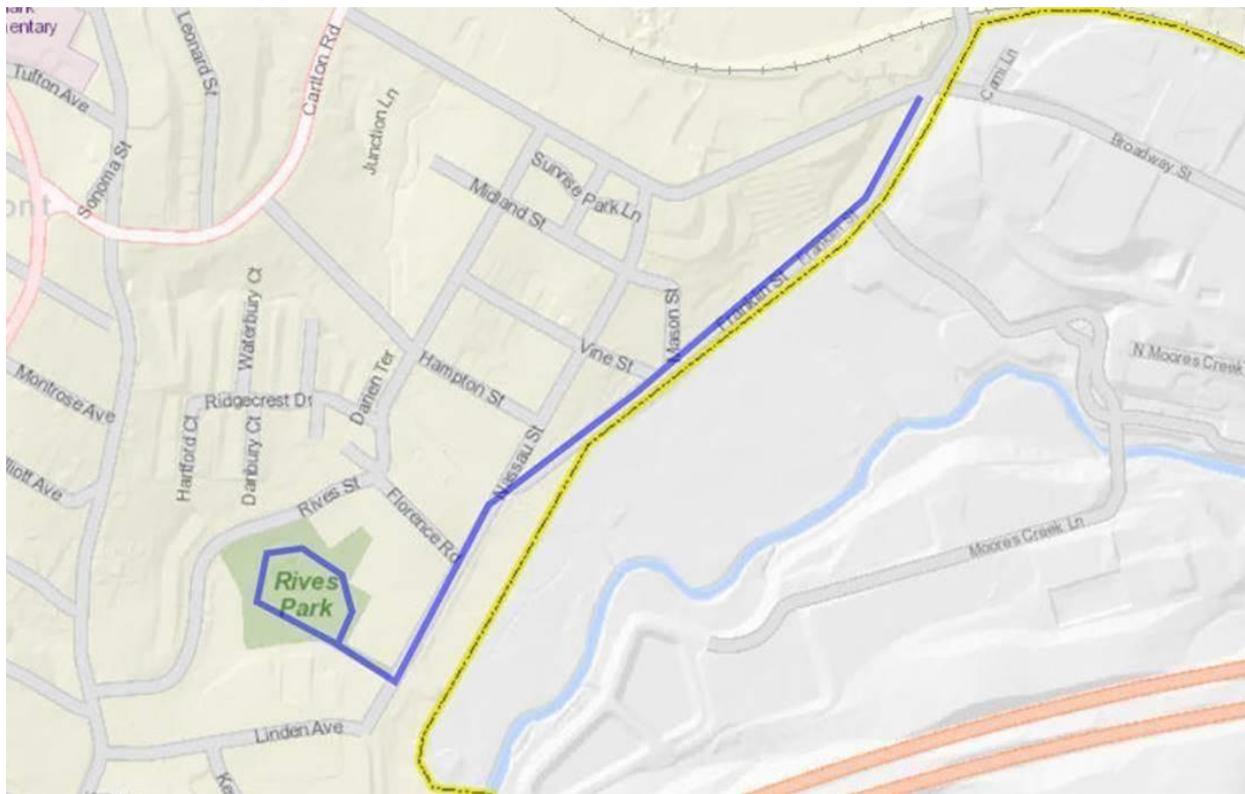
The Shamrock/Trailridge loop would take advantage of existing wide streets and create a one-way loop for traffic, while reallocating the other lane and parking to bike/ped and creating nearly a mile of additional "trail". This would allow for 17 feet of room with minimal impact to home owners as many of the residences have driveways and on street parking is plentiful for those that do not. This location has access to Forest Hills Park via a short dead end street and the trail connection that runs behind Orangedale Avenue. The location is relatively flat making for easier walking and biking. It has easy access from lower income residents along Orangedale, Prospect and Bailey Road. It is accessible via a trail connection through the Beacon on 5th development as well as from the Rainier Rd development. It is a short distance from larger traffic streets such as Cleveland Ave and Cherry that have adequate sidewalks to allow those who would like to walk from other portions of the Fry Spring neighborhood to do so.

### 3) Westwood Rd (Lane closure and conversion to a one-way street)



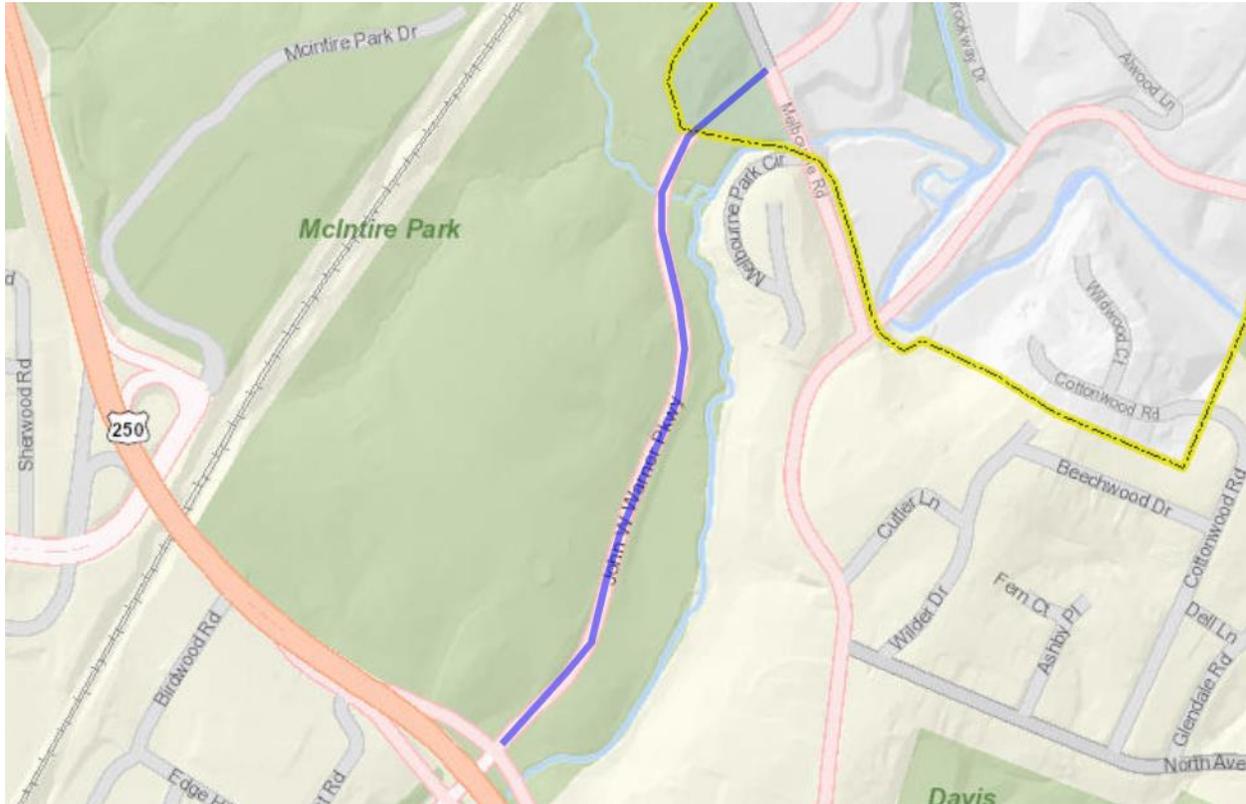
Turning Westwood Rd into a one way road would allow us to reallocate a lane and parking into a wide bike/ped boulevard that would provide an extension to the McIntire Park trail network. The section west of Rose Hill Drive does not have sidewalks so by providing this space we are giving access to an area that does not even have basic pedestrian infrastructure. The east end of Westwood, while having sidewalks, is also a bottleneck for anyone that is walking to McIntire Park from further south on Rose Hill. Creating this one way street would allow for much more room as people get more congested as they funnel toward the park and would continue the connection from the west side of Westwood. This would create an additional 9/10 of a mile of "trail".

#### 4) Franklin Street (One lane closure for local traffic only with vehicular detour)



The Franklin Street closure is located in a CDBG neighborhood and connects a number of communities of concern including Carlton View Apartments, Sunrise, and a mobile home neighborhood to Rives Park. This route currently does not have a sidewalk, but designating space in the roadway will simulate the sidewalk project that is funded and under design. The closure will provide a .8 mile walking route (one way).

## 5) John Warner Parkway (Full closure with vehicular detour)



While this .5 mile route does not provide direct access to a significant residential density, it is in a location that is easily closed to traffic and can provide additional relief for the trail on the John Warner Parkway, as well as the trails in McIntire Park. There is access from Melbourne Road, Rugby Avenue and Ridge McIntire for the surrounding neighborhoods. And can connect to the proposed closure on Westwood (via shared use path in McIntire Park and existing lane closure on Rugby Avenue) further extending the distance people can travel in a more protected environment (approx.. 1.8 miles).