

Traffic Calming Process Generally Takes Three Years for Neighborhoods Who Want to Control Speeding

Speeding on residential streets is a perennial and apparently growing problem affecting the quality of life in every urban neighborhood. One time or another you have all observed cars speeding on your street. Speeding creates noise, causes difficulties for bicyclists and pedestrians and jeopardizes the safety of our children. We all want to discourage speeding in our neighborhoods, especially on the street where we live.

If you see cars speeding down your street or through your neighborhood, what can you do about it? There are several actions that can be taken with your neighbors and city officials. Did you know a vast majority of the people who are caught speeding in neighborhoods are area residents?

Some experts claim speeding traffic is a social issue and behavioral problem that cannot be addressed through engineering or enforcement. These experts point out the paradox of human behavior in which a resident wants drivers to drive slowly on their street, however that same resident will speed in other residential areas. They believe until this issue of human behavior is addressed, speeding problems will persist. Although this may be true to a certain degree, many local governments around the world have experienced some success with traditional traffic calming programs.

What is Traffic Calming?

Traffic calming is a way to design streets, using physical measures, to encourage people to drive more slowly. It is an approach to reduce the negative effects of automobile use, alter driver behavior and improve conditions for neighborhood residents, pedestrians, retailers, walkers and bicyclists. Traffic calming involves the installation or construction of road treatments, which include raised devices, such as speed bumps and raised crosswalks, roadway narrowing, horizontal shifts in the roadway, medians, roundabouts or planting trees along the street. (To see the pictures and description of these techniques, visit the following Web site: <http://www.sarasotagov.com/InsideCityGovernment/Content/Engineering/Programs/TCTechniques.html>)

Traffic calming is self-enforcing. The design of the roadway results in the desired effect, without relying on compliance with traffic control devices such as signals, signs and without enforcement. While elements such as landscaping and lighting do not force a change in driver behavior, they can provide the visual signs encouraging people to drive more slowly.

For example, mini-circle (raised circular islands constructed in the center of the street) force motorists to maneuver around them and have been found to reduce vehicle speeding at the intersection and to reduce motor vehicle crashes by 90–93 percent. Colorful edges from seasonal plantings on street corners and in median noses can also calm traffic substantially. These

spaces can be adopted by neighbors or area businesses where benefactors can be acknowledged through small, tasteful signs.

The reason traffic calming is such a powerful and compelling tool is it has proven to be so effective. The number of fatalities due to motor vehicles crashes are reduced on streets with slower-moving traffic. Traffic-calmed streets also encourage more people to walk and ride bicycles. It creates pleasant streets, attract pedestrian, encourage people to walk more frequently for short trips and increase the likelihood of interactions among residents.

Will Traffic Calming Work in My Neighborhood?

Traffic calming can work in any neighborhood. Communities that are organized,

active and motivated are most likely to design and carry out effective traffic calming program. Traffic calming is a process as much as a product. Because traffic calming is a relatively new idea in many communities, most people do not understand its benefits. Many people will resist the change, often because they do not fully understand how traffic calming can improve the quality of life in the neighborhood.

For traffic calming to be implemented, a majority of neighborhood residents must be in favor of the program. Typically, cities seek 60 to 70 percent approval from the community; the percentage depends on the type of traffic calming treatment proposed. The process works best if many people are involved: residents, students and staff from the local school, local business owners and employees, city and county staff, representa-

tives from the emergency response system, including fire and police department and anyone else who uses the streets in the neighborhood on a regular basis.

Communities with a capacity to develop a plan for their future and work together to carry it out are likely to find and solve traffic problems. Strong communities where people look out for each other and place a high value on the quality of their neighborhoods have what it takes to implement successful traffic calming program. Traffic calming helps create livable communities where people have many opportunities to interact with neighbors because the streets are pleasant places to walk and socialize.

(Source: Streets and Sidewalks, People and Cars – The Citizens' Guide to Traffic Calming by Dan Burden. Local Government Commission, Center for Livable Communities, 2000.)

Steps in Traffic Calming Process

Get involved in your neighborhood — contact your local neighborhood association or homeowners' association to address the speeding problem on your residential streets.

Form a task force or committee which will deal with this problem — take part in creating a neighborhood you can be proud of.

Educate your neighborhood about the speeding problem. Education can be a very powerful tool in reducing neighborhood speeding. Design the educational campaign:

- Flyers distributed in the neighborhood and sent home with children in the school district.
- Posters distributed through the community.
- Banners hung across arterial and collector streets.
- Create and distribute "Slow Down! It's Our Neighborhood!" lawn slogans.
- Submit press release to local newspapers and high school/college newsletters.

Identify problem area and start collecting data on the streets on your neighborhood:

- Crash statistics (the police department might maintain computerized geographic information systems that can provide you statistics for your local area): Where crashes occurred? How fast are the cars typically traveling? How many cars use a street in one day?
- Arrange to loan "speed trailer," a portable radar display is used to encourage speed compliance in a targeted area. The display is available to individuals, neighborhood associations and school groups after a short training orientation. For more information, you need to contact Traffic Enforcement Unit at (402) 441-6587. The unit specializes in resolving special problems in residential neighborhoods; the officers in the unit have the ability to perform traffic and speed studies in problem areas. (For statistical information visit: <http://interlincoln.lincoln.ne.us/city/police/annual/05annual.pdf>)
- Contact your local planning department to obtain the information on width of the streets. The planning depart-

ment also has maps showing the locations of parcels, roads, streets, street widths, block length, schools, shopping areas and other land uses.

- Contact municipal public works or transportation department. Local government unit has data on traffic volumes, speeds, level of service for major streets and roads in its jurisdiction.

Organize a meeting with neighborhood residents, civil engineers, local city officials to address these issues and share your collected data. Appropriate traffic calming solutions can be identified.

A neighborhood or homeowners' association must submit a written request for traffic calming on a specific street segment; they must collect signatures from about 70 percent of the residents in the affected area.

The city will evaluate the request and the following criteria must be met:

- Street is a through street and not a transit route or primary emergency access route.
- Posted speed limit is 25 mph

or less.

- Traffic-calming devices would not cause safety problems.

Neighborhoods must participate in education and enforcement program for three to six months.

If the city determines these efforts have not fixed the problem, the neighborhood can proceed to the next step.

The city will design appropriate traffic-calming measures. For traffic calming measures to be installed in a neighborhood, plans for them must be reviewed and approved by city staff and often by elected leaders. The traffic calming projects must compete with many other roadway needs for limited funding.

The city will prioritize the project. The city will pay for and install traffic calming measures for high priority projects depending on how serious the speeding problem is and how expensive the measure is. However, if your neighborhood is able to raise some funds the city is more likely be able to provide matching funds to construct traffic calming in your neighborhood.

Taking Responsibility for America's Electronic Waste

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Each year in America, several million tons of electronic goods become obsolete. This electronic waste, or e-waste, often contains hazardous materials such as lead, mercury and many others that can harm humans and the environment. Recy-

cling this material into new electronics is the best options for safely disposing of it, but many of America's recyclers that collect e-waste actually send it overseas. The Basel Action Network (BAN), a group that monitors the international trade of toxic materials, estimated between 50 and 80 percent of all e-waste collected in America for recycling was simply exported.

Why does America send

its e-wastes overseas? While recycling the materials in e-waste is the best option for our environment, it isn't for our checkbooks. Due to the low cost of new materials and the price of the recycling process, recycling e-waste generally costs a recycler more than they will make by reselling materials. For example, on average it costs a recycler \$10 or more to recycle one computer monitor, which most consumers aren't

willing to pay. While some recycling is done using inexpensive prison labor, domestic recyclers can't match this price and are forced to look for other options.

One of those options is to send materials overseas. The labor needed to recycle e-waste costs much less in other countries and some developing nations welcome the materials. E-waste is sent to nations in Asia and Af-

rica where it is broken down, usually by hand, for the small amounts valuable material inside. The rest of the e-waste is usually thrown into makeshift landfills which are often dangerously near local water supplies. People in the area are exposed to the hazardous materials in e-waste through direct contact or through their polluted environment. They

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