



City of Portland

Office of the
City Administrator
1221 SW 4th Ave.
Portland, OR, 97204

Office of the City Administrator Michael Jordan, City Administrator

(He/Him) michael.jordan@portlandoregon.gov

Memo: Transportation Infrastructure Changes in Northwest Portland

Date: August 11, 2025
From: Mike Jordan
To: Mayor Keith Wilson
CC: Council President Elana Pirtle-Guiney
Council Vice President Tiffany Koyama Lane
Portland City Councilors
Deputy City Administrator Bob Cozzie
Deputy City Administrator Priya Dhanapal
Police Chief Bob Day
Portland Bureau of Transportation Director Millicent Williams
City of Portland Vision Zero Lead Dana Dickman
Portland Solutions Director Skyler Bocker-Knapp
Chief Communications Officer Laura Oppenheimer

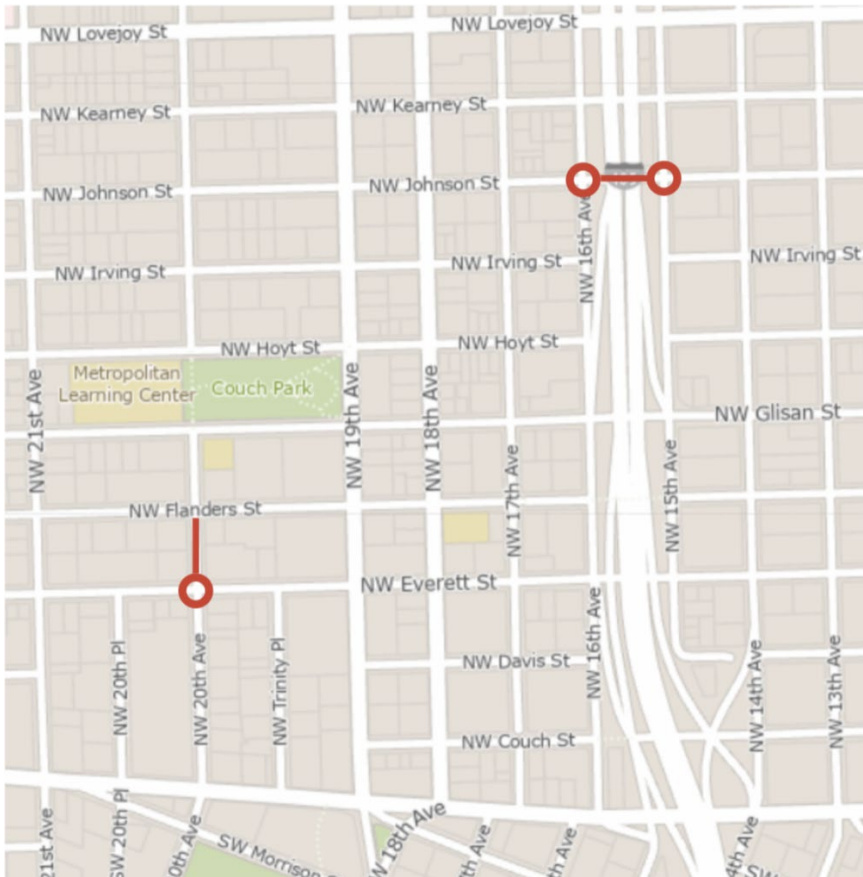
The City of Portland is committed to addressing concerns about public safety in all its dimensions – including crime, public health, and transportation. Long-term solutions require us to balance the interplay between these different elements of safety, prioritizing the overall health and well-being of our community.

This memorandum provides background, context, and recommended actions regarding transportation changes at two locations in Northwest Portland near Couch Park: Northwest 20th Avenue between Everett and Flanders streets and Northwest Johnson Street between 15th and 16th avenues.

Planters were placed at these locations in 2019 to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists. However, these features have inadvertently escalated public safety concerns and impeded the city's ability to respond.

Residents and business owners have reported increased narcotic use and sales, as well as assault and harassment toward pedestrians and cyclists. Meanwhile, public safety partners face challenges navigating the area to deter and respond to crime.

Our recommended changes – developed jointly by the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT), Portland Police Bureau (PPB), and Portland Solutions – address escalating public safety concerns while preserving safe bicycle and pedestrian access. PBOT's traffic engineering team is overseeing design and PBOT's maintenance operations team (Structures and Traffic) will lead implementation, with safety and access as top priorities.



Map of NW Portland showing location of proposed changes: NW 20th Ave and Everett, and NW Johnson and 15th and 16th Street.

Problem Statement

For years, the Portland Police Bureau (PPB) has documented persistent public safety and livability issues in and around Couch Park, driven by a concentration of criminal behavior.

In response to repeated community requests and feedback fielded through community meetings, Public Environment Management Office Problem Solver Meetings, and 911 calls, PPB has increased patrols to disrupt criminal behavior and monitor the area.

There is limited access to routes between West Burnside Street and Couch Park. The current traffic pattern prevents northbound travel on Northwest 20th Avenue beyond Northwest Everett Street. This limits patrol access on the blocks between Northwest Everett and Glisan streets from routine police presence.

Problem Solver Interventions

As part of the Portland Solutions program, the Public Environment Management Office (PEMO) delivers solutions to livability-related issues in public spaces by coordinating resources efficiently. Over the past two years, PEMO has:

- Increased pedestrian lighting adjacent to commercial and school properties
- Funded safety improvements to Couch Park

- Coordinated with area service providers including William Temple House, Rose Haven, Trinity Episcopal and affordable housing, to ensure their staff and guests/clients are safe and welcome despite predatory practices of those preying on people who are vulnerable.

Despite these interventions, persistent public safety concerns remain.

Existing Public Safety Conditions

The following is a summary of persistent public safety challenges in the affected corridors, based on reports from residents, businesses, schools, and public safety partners.

- **Educational Impact:** Two schools, Multnomah Learning Center and Cathedral School, remain adjacent to high-incident corridors. Emerson School relocated due to safety concerns.
- **Residential/Commercial Impact:** Stadium Fred Meyer's parking garage has seen chronic vandalism, assaults, and drug-related activity.
- **Business Closures:** Persistent public safety concerns in the area have contributed to business and school closures or relocations, including Chipotle, Dutch Brothers, Banfield Veterinarian, Emerson School and others.
- **Additional Hotspots:** The I-405 viaduct underpasses (Northwest 15th-16th avenues) are not illuminated and experience drug dealing, solicitation and continued anti-social activities. Residents of the Pearl District and Northwest neighborhoods consistently report feeling unsafe using this block.

A recent site walk with PEMO, Central Precinct Commander, Northwest Community Conservancy and residents reinforced ongoing concerns regarding public safety in this block. Two weeks ago, a shed at the community garden adjacent to the block on NW 16th was set on fire and destroyed. PEMO is working to get the community garden activated, funding sidewalk illumination on this block and along NW 16th in partnership with PGE and ODOT. In this area, the request to reestablish two-way traffic has also been elevated.

These conditions, sustained over multiple years despite targeted interventions, have escalated the urgency of modifying the existing traffic configuration to support more frequent patrols and improved public safety.

You can find a [general picture of crime statistics](#) for the area on PortlandMaps.

Community Conversations and Outreach

NW Subdistrict Problem Solvers meeting has been convening every two weeks since September 2023 (approximately 40 meetings to date). Vandalism, public defecation, stolen vehicles, drug dealing, drug use and public nuisances are reported at each meeting. Attendees include a mix of residents, business owners, and property managers. There are also representatives from schools, nonprofits, business associations, and other public agencies. At the request of attendees, PEMO staff have conducted 30 site visits and coordination meetings in the area since September 2023. (This number does not account for meetings and calls with community conducted by other city staff on chronic safety issues.)

Old Town/Pearl District Problem Solvers has been meeting since Spring 2022 (approximately 80 meetings to date). At the request of attendees, PEMO staff have conducted several additional site visits near the NW Subdistrict area.

Transportation Review

Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) data shows the NW 20th/Everett planters contributed to a reduction in crashes from nine in the five years of data before installation (involving conflicts between cars, pedestrians, and cyclists) to three (vehicle only) in the 4.5 years of data since installation. As heightened public safety concerns were identified, PBOT traffic engineers and the PPB Traffic Safety Division explored three options to address the needs at Northwest 20th and Everett.

1. Maintain existing planters and traffic controls.
2. Relocate planters and add an all-way stop.
3. Replace planters with a raised crosswalk.

Initially, PBOT recommended the first option. However, given the increased access needs and the broader awareness of the extent of the public safety-related issues, PBOT ultimately recommended the second option.

Final Project Scope: Northwest 20th & Everett

- Install all-way stop at Northwest Everett and 20th Avenue, including advance “Stop Ahead” signing, stop bars, and additional signage as needed.
- Remove “Right Turn Only” sign for northbound traffic on Northwest 20th Avenue.
- Existing planters will be moved to the curb – one on the west side and one on the east side – to function as vision clearance for safety. This will result in the removal of one parking space on the northwest corner. “No Left Turn/ No Through Traffic” signs will be removed from planters.
- Restripe Northwest 20th for two-way traffic, including sharrows in the travel lanes.
- Add “Cross Traffic Does Not Stop” or similar signage at 20th and Flanders to mitigate for additional traffic crossing the Flanders Greenway at 20th Avenue.
- Restoration of two-way traffic on Northwest 20th.

Final Project Scope: Northwest Johnson between 15th and 16th avenues

Two-way traffic will be restored. This location is still in design with the following changes anticipated:

- Remove existing planter and “Do Not Enter” sign that prohibits westbound traffic.
- Remove “No Through Traffic” sign on NE corner.
- Restripe NW Johnson Street to allow two-way traffic, including sharrows in the travel lanes.
- Remove parking on both sides of NW Johnson Street

Once work orders are processed and ready to deliver, PEMO will send a mailer to all neighbors in seven delivery routes that touch both blocks about changes to traffic patterns.

PBOT will monitor speeds, volumes and crash data at both locations over time to determine if additional changes are needed to support safe travel in the area.

These recommendations are presented with the goal of preserving safe bike and pedestrian access while enhancing public safety, livability, and public health.

City Administrator
Michael Jordan