



Staff Report

City of Manhattan Beach

TO: Honorable Mayor Fahey and Members of the City Council

THROUGH: Geoff Dolan, City Manager

FROM: Richard Thompson, Director of Community Development
Rob Osborne, Management Analyst

DATE: October 18, 2005

SUBJECT: Uphold the Parking and Public Improvements Commission Recommendation to Implement Various Pedestrian Safety Measures at the Flournoy Road/Ardmore Avenue and Flournoy Road/Valley Drive Intersections

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Council pass a motion to approve the Parking and Public Improvements Commission recommendation to:

- Install pedestrian warning signs on the Parkway side of Ardmore Avenue and Valley Drive at Flournoy Road
- Remove or trim back all view-impacting landscaping
- Modify the stairway access landings to increase safety as necessary
- Install pedestrian caution signs at the stairway access points

FISCAL IMPLICATION:

Installation of the recommended measures would cost approximately \$1,000 and could be accomplished through existing Public Works programs and budgets.

BACKGROUND:

The City recently received a petition requesting installation of pedestrian warning signs and/or painted crosswalks at the Flournoy Road/Ardmore Avenue/Valley Drive intersection. The petitioners expressed concern about safety for pedestrians crossing the Veterans Parkway at this location. The request was reviewed by the Parking and Public Improvements Commission at a public meeting on September 22, 2005.

DISCUSSION:

As described in the attached staff report, the Traffic Engineer does not support installing crosswalks at this location. He feels the presence of painted crosswalks might tend to give pedestrians a false sense of security in crossing Valley and Ardmore. He recommended the following to enhance

pedestrian safety in the area:

- Installation of pedestrian warning signs on the Parkway side of Valley and Ardmore in both directions
- Removal of an existing oleander bush and yucca plant east of the Parkway access point on Ardmore to improve visibility of pedestrians

At the Commission meeting public testimony was provided by four residents, three of which felt crosswalks should be installed. The fourth stated a general concern for safety in the area.

The Commission agreed with the Traffic Engineer's findings. They feel painted crosswalks would not necessarily enhance pedestrian safety. They voted (4-1, Osterhout against) to recommend the following:

- Pedestrian warning signs be installed on Valley and Ardmore
- All view-impacting landscaping in the area be trimmed back or removed
- Both stairway access landings be modified to increase safety
- Caution signs be installed at the access points to alert pedestrians

The Traffic Engineer subsequently inspected the entrance landings and does not feel that any significant modifications are necessary.

Meeting notices were sent to the petitioners and to all properties within 300 feet of the subject intersection.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. **APPROVE** the recommendation of the Parking and Public Improvements Commission.
2. **REMOVE** this item from the Consent Calendar and provide staff with direction.

- Attachments:
- A. Area map
 - B. Excerpt from PPIC minutes of 9/22/05
 - C. PPIC report dated 9/22/05, with attachments
 - D. Additional letters from residents (not available electronically)
 - E. Meeting notice, 10/5/05

Flournoy Road at Valley/Ardmore

~ PPIC Recommended Measures ~



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**CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH
PARKING AND PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS COMMISSION
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
SEPTEMBER 22, 2005**

1. Ardmore Avenue/Valley Drive at Flournoy Road - Request for Pedestrian Warning Signs and/or Markings

Traffic Engineer Erik Zandvliet presented the staff report, explaining that the City received a petition requesting new pedestrian warning signs and/or crosswalk markings at the Veteran's Parkway access path on Ardmore Avenue and Valley Drive near Flournoy Road. The petition stated that signs and markings will improve safety.

He reviewed staff's analysis and findings on this request, and stated that based on low pedestrian volumes and potential for pedestrians to use less caution, staff is not recommending painted crosswalks on Valley Drive at Flournoy Road or Ardmore Avenue at Flournoy Road at this time. However, due to reduced sight visibility, staff is recommending removal of the oleander and yucca bushes just east of the access path on Ardmore Avenue near Flournoy Road. A pair of pedestrian warning signs facing opposite directions should also be installed on the Parkway side of Valley Drive and Ardmore Avenue at Flournoy Road near the access stairs.

Traffic Engineer Zandvliet clarified that the pedestrian warning signs will be the yellow diamond shaped signs with the green pedestrian markings and can be installed on the existing pole or near the side of the tree on the east side to alert both west and eastbound traffic.

Commissioner Lang questioned the rationale in placing a crosswalk at 18th Street on Ardmore Avenue and not at this location. Traffic Engineer Zandvliet responded that the 18th Street location has a high volume of pedestrian traffic generated from Live Oak Park and the Joslyn Center.

Noting that the placement of the stairway encourages pedestrians to cross, Commissioner Seville-Jones questioned if the City has considered its removal. Traffic Engineer Zandvliet explained that the City Council is against removing the stairway.

Talking of the area's high pedestrian volume, Commissioner Seville-Jones shared that other cities have designated similar areas as pedestrian safety zones. The designation is used as a tool to increase driver awareness that the area carries a high amount of pedestrian activity.

Traffic Engineer Zandvliet acknowledged the idea could be pursued, suggesting sign wording that included "high pedestrian crossing ahead".

Audience Participation

Noting that her husband brought forth this petition, **Fran Lauson, 600 Block of 23rd Street**, voiced her support of crosswalk markings at the Veteran's Parkway access path. She walks her children to school daily and uses the stairway as it affords a direct route; however, the lack of a crosswalk at this location makes for a frightening and dangerous situation. Vehicles speed along this stretch of road and pedestrians have to wave at drivers to make their presence known. Referring to her submitted pictures to the Commission, she also pointed out the small, narrow landing of the stairway which contributes to the dangerous situation, as children run down the steps and are deposited right at the street frontage. Ms. Lauson stated that the City put in the stairway which encourages its use but didn't mark the crosswalk to reach the stairway. She talked of the inconsistencies in crosswalk marking throughout the City, stating that if staff's opposition is based on the potential for pedestrians to use less caution, then all the crosswalks should be removed.

Bob Lauson, 600 Block of 23rd Street, reiterated his wife's comments on the dangerous situation this stairway poses without a crosswalk and asked that the Commission consider their request.

Warren Mori, North Valley Drive, stated that there isn't much pedestrian traffic at this location because there isn't a crosswalk, and that more people would use the stairway if a crosswalk was marked. He questioned staff's position that crosswalks may actually increase pedestrian risk, stating that a recently marked crosswalk on Highland Avenue seems safer, adding that pedestrians have to be cautious regardless.

Judy Pogreda, 900 block of Manhattan Beach Boulevard, shared that she used to frequent this area often as a child and can attest to the dangerous situation it poses for pedestrians as she was almost hit many times.

Discussion

Commissioner Powell spoke of past City Council discussions regarding crosswalks and the false sense of security they may provide to pedestrians. He thought contrary to this belief, but has since seen numerous occasions where drivers disregard a crosswalk and pedestrians enter a crosswalk with the assumption that the driver will automatically stop. Pedestrians tend to be more cautious when there is not a crosswalk. Commissioner Powell stated that he will support the pedestrian warning signs and removal of the bushes and plants, but at this point has mixed feelings on the crosswalk.

Referring to comments made regarding the inconsistencies in crosswalks throughout the City, Commissioner Saunders pointed out that the PPIC can be, and he believes has been, uniform in their decisions regarding crosswalks, and that destination point is a factor in the decision. However, the City Council makes the final decision, which in some cases is not what the Commission recommended. He agrees with the argument that crosswalks can actually make crossing more dangerous, stating he has seen many near misses at the

crosswalk on Highland Avenue at Local York. Commissioner Saunders stated he will support staff's recommendation as they represent a good first step, which can be then be reviewed for effectiveness.

Commissioner Lang relayed that the fundamental issue is speeding and the submitted pictures depict how dangerous this situation is. The City has not been consistent with crosswalks and he would like to see a comprehensive approach and study performed on this issue. He is very concerned that pedestrians will think the crosswalk gives them the right of way and actually make the area more dangerous. Commissioner Lang stated that he is leaning toward moving forward with staff's recommendations, agreeing with Commissioner Saunders that they represent a good first step that can be reviewed.

Commissioner Seville-Jones stated her general agreement with staff's recommendations and asked that the narrow landing of the stairway also be addressed as it deposits pedestrians right at the street. She suggested some type of caution sign at the bottom of the stairway to make the pedestrian more aware. Commissioner Seville-Jones further stated that this area along Valley Drive and Ardmore Avenue has heavy pedestrian traffic and speeding concerns. She would like to discuss the possibility of making this area a designated safety zone whereby traffic fines could be doubled, and education programs promoted to make drivers and pedestrians more aware.

Chairman Osterhout relayed that although he understands the concerns with false sense of security and crosswalks, he believes a crosswalk is warranted at this location. He suggested that some type of cross barrier, post or gate system be installed at the stairway landing to make pedestrians more aware of oncoming traffic. He talked of his trip to the UK where these measures are used as a practical method to direct people. Chairman Osterhout stated his support of cutting back the foliage, but indicated he is not in favor of more signage.

Commissioner Saunders inquired if it would be appropriate to include in the recommendation that all foliage affecting visibilities, including trees, be cut back to maximize visibility.

Management Analyst Osborne responded that any recommendation affecting a tree or trees should be done separately.

Commissioners Lang and Powell noted that they would not support the removal of trees in the recommendation.

Chairman Osterhout stated that he could not support a motion that doesn't include the crosswalk.

Commissioner Seville-Jones talked again on the possibility of a designated safety area, clarifying it is not her intent to have the area's access reconfigured, but to focus on the

speeding and safety issues and how to educate and sensitize the public on being good neighbors.

Commissioner Saunders said that he supports the idea, but questions who would lead such an effort.

Commissioner Lang clarified that his request for a comprehensive study on crosswalks was not to add or take out crosswalks but to gather information on why that are or aren't in certain locations.

Traffic Engineer Zandvliet stated that these more "global" issues should be brought forth for discussion at the City Council's Work Plan and at the Commission's joint meeting with City Council.

Action

A motion was MADE and SECONDED (Saunders/Lang) to approve staff's recommendations to install pedestrian warning signs at the pedestrian access path on the Parkway side of Ardmore Avenue and Valley Drive near Flournoy Road facing both directions, remove the existing oleander bush and yucca plant just east of the Parkway access point on Ardmore Avenue near Flournoy Road. Staff is further directed to include all foliage that needs cuttings back or removal to improve visibility; redesign the stairway landing to make it more safe and place caution signs for pedestrians at both access points.

AYES: Lang, Powell, Saunders, Seville-Jones
NOES: Osterhout
ABSENT: None
ABSTAIN: None

**CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

TO: Parking and Public Improvements Commission

FROM: Richard Thompson, Director of Community Development
Robert D. Osborne, Management Analyst

BY: Erik Zandvliet, Traffic Engineer

DATE: September 22, 2005

SUBJECT: **Ardmore Avenue/Valley Drive at Flournoy Road
Request for Pedestrian Warning Signs and Markings**

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Commission pass a motion to approve staff's recommendation to:

1. Install pedestrian warning signs at the pedestrian access path on the Parkway side of Ardmore Avenue and Valley Drive near Flournoy Road facing both directions.
2. Remove the existing oleander bush and yucca plant just east of the Parkway access point on Ardmore Avenue near Flournoy Road.

BACKGROUND:

In June 2005, Mr. Bob Lauson, 628 23rd Street, submitted a petition signed by local residents requesting new pedestrian warning signs and/or crosswalk markings at the Veterans Parkway access path on Ardmore Avenue and Valley Drive near Flournoy Road. The petition states that signs and markings will improve safety.

On May 22, 2003, the Parking and Public Improvements Commission reviewed a similar resident petition to install stop signs or other measures to reduce speeding on Valley Drive near Flournoy Road. The Commission recommended against the stop signs but supported the installation of pedestrian warning signs, red curb on the north side of Valley Drive at Flournoy Road and trimming the existing banana tree leaves on the northwest corner to improve driver visibility. On June 17, 2003, the City Council approved the PPIC's recommendation, with the exception of any pedestrian signs or markings.

On January 4, 2005, the City Council adopted Ordinance No. 2070 to reduce the speed limit on Ardmore Avenue between Manhattan Beach Boulevard and Pacific Avenue from 35 MPH to 30 MPH on the basis of updated speed surveys and roadway conditions that may not be apparent to drivers. The reduced speed limit was posted in February 2005.

DISCUSSION:

Valley Drive is a two-lane collector street that carries approximately 7,500 vehicles per day and is stopped at Blanche Road to the west and Pacific Avenue to the east. Valley Drive is divided with a double yellow centerline that provides a 12 feet wide eastbound lane and a 22 feet wide westbound lane with curb parking. The speed limit on Valley Drive is 30 MPH.

Ardmore Avenue is a two-lane collector street that carries approximately 4,650 vehicles per day and is stopped at 9th Street to the west and Pacific Avenue to the east. Ardmore Avenue is divided with a double yellow centerline that provides a 12 feet wide westbound lane and a 22 feet wide eastbound lane with curb parking. The speed limit on Ardmore Avenue was recently lowered from 35 MPH to 30 MPH in February 2005.

Flournoy Road is a local residential street that “tees” into Valley Drive and Ardmore Avenue with stop signs on Flournoy Road only. Flournoy Road is 20 feet wide north of Valley Drive and 30 feet wide south of Ardmore Avenue. The intersections of Valley Drive/Flournoy Road and Ardmore Avenue/Flournoy Road are located in a residential area along Veterans Parkway. Pedestrian access stairs are provided from Valley Drive to the Parkway and from Ardmore Avenue to the Parkway at Flournoy Road. There are sidewalks on the north side of Valley Drive and the south side of Ardmore only. There are no pedestrian signs or markings at the pedestrian access to the walk path. Curb parking is not permitted on the Parkway side of Valley Drive and Ardmore Avenue.

The traffic collision history between January 1, 2001 and September 30, 2004 was analyzed for the intersection. According to City records, there were no traffic collisions reported on Ardmore Avenue near Flournoy Road during this three and three-quarter year period. There was one traffic collision reported on Valley Drive near Flournoy Road during this three and three-quarter year period. On May 31, 2004, a southbound vehicle backed into another parked vehicle.

Field observations were made at the Parkway access points during peak travel and pedestrian periods. Field observations confirmed the traffic count data and moderate pedestrian activity in the morning and early evening. The pedestrian access path is not easily identifiable to passing motorists at either location, but these locations are similar to many other pedestrian access points along the Veterans Parkway. Conversely, approaching vehicles are very visible to pedestrians waiting to cross either street at the two access paths with the exception of a partial sight obstruction on Ardmore Avenue just east of Flournoy Road caused by an oleander plant and yucca plant. (See photos.)

Whenever possible, pedestrians should always cross at controlled crossings, especially on busy streets. Drivers have sufficient time at controlled locations to react to pedestrians and pedestrians can cross with some degree of protection. Numerous crosswalk studies have found that painted crosswalks are less safe than unmarked crosswalks at uncontrolled locations. This is because pedestrians tend to be bolder and less cautious when crossing between two crosswalk lines, while the driver’s perspective of those same lines is very faint. Pedestrians use more caution and are more alert when entering a street at an unmarked crosswalk. Therefore, painted crosswalks across Valley Drive or Ardmore Avenue at Flournoy Road would not be safer than

allowing pedestrians to cross the street without markings. However, since the access path might not be obvious to motorists due to the existing landscaping on the Parkway side of Valley Drive and Ardmore Avenue, high visibility pedestrian warning signs would help alert motorists to the presence of the access path.

CONCLUSION:

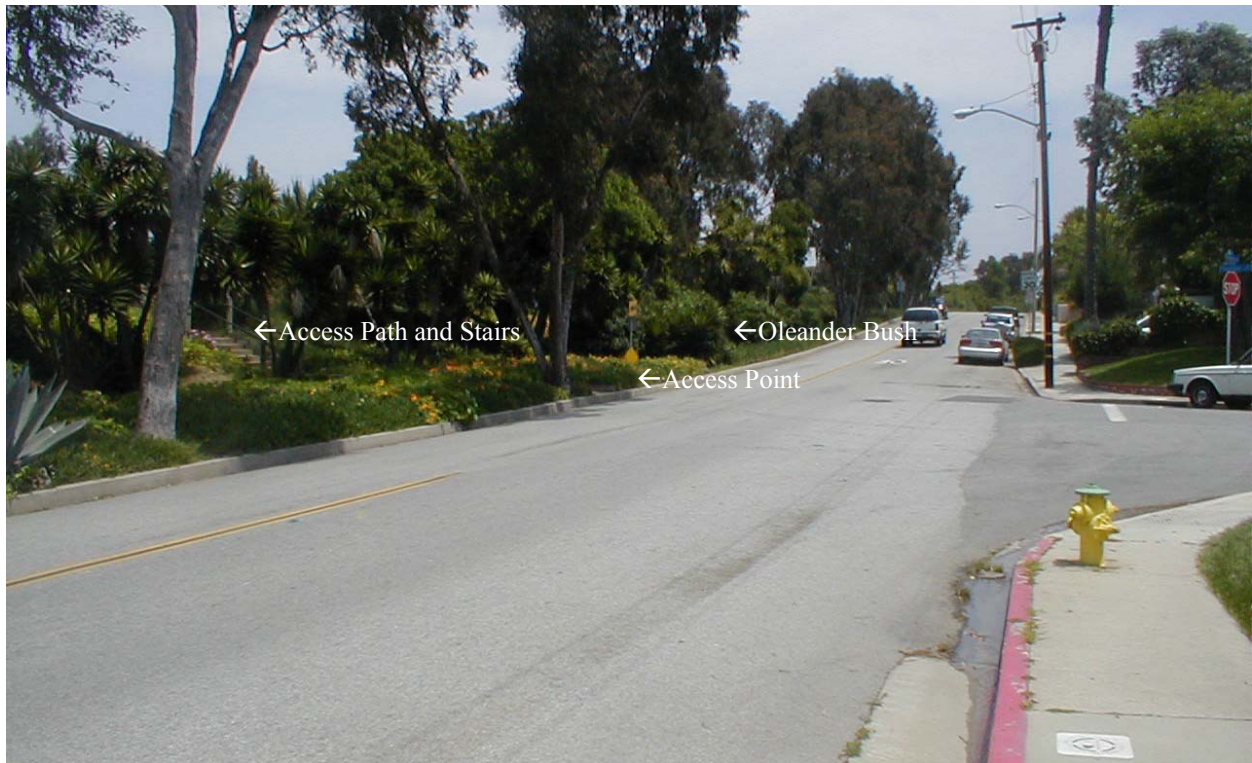
Based on low pedestrian volumes and potential for pedestrians to use less caution, painted crosswalks are not recommended on Valley Drive at Flournoy Road or Ardmore Avenue at Flournoy Road at this time. However, due to reduced sight visibility, removal of the oleander and yucca bushes just east of the access path on Ardmore Avenue near Flournoy Road is recommended. A pair of pedestrian warning signs facing opposite directions should also be installed on the Parkway side of Valley Drive and Ardmore Avenue at Flournoy Road near the access stairs.

Meeting notices were sent to the petitioners and to all properties within 300 feet of the Valley/Flournoy and Ardmore/Flournoy intersections.

Attachments:

- Area map
- Site Photos
- Resident petition
- Resident Correspondence
- Meeting notice, 9/8/05

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Ardmore Avenue at Flourney Road Looking Eastbound



Access Path to Veterans Parkway at Ardmore Avenue/Flourney Road



Access Point →
Oleander Bush →

Ardmore Avenue at Flournoy Road Looking West



Valley Drive at Flournoy Avenue Looking East



Access Path to Veterans Parkway at Valley Drive/Flournoy Road



Valley Drive at Flournoy Road Looking West



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October 5, 2005

***** PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE *****

Re: Request for Pedestrian Safety Measures – Flournoy Road/Ardmore Avenue/Valley Drive

Dear Resident/Property Owner:

On September 22, 2005, the Parking and Public Improvements Commission reviewed a petition requesting installation of pedestrian warning signs and/or painted crosswalks at the Flournoy Road/Ardmore Avenue/Valley Drive intersection. The Commission voted to recommend the following:

- Installation of pedestrian warning signs on Ardmore Avenue and Valley Drive at Flournoy Road
- Removal of all visibility-impacting landscaping
- Redesign of both stairway access landings to increase safety
- Installation of pedestrian caution signs at the stairway access points

The City Council will review this recommendation at a public meeting on Tuesday, October 18, 2005. The meeting will be held in the City Council Chamber, 1400 Highland Avenue, and will begin at 6:30 p.m. Any comments you might like to make at the meeting would be welcomed.

The issue will be on the portion of the agenda known as the “Consent Calendar”, meaning that it will not automatically be discussed. If it is not requested to be discussed by either a member of the audience, a City staff person or a Councilmember, the recommended action will be approved without discussion. At a point at the beginning of the meeting the Mayor will ask the audience if they would like any items to be removed from the Consent Calendar. If you do not agree with the recommended action for this item, be sure to request that it be removed at that time. It will then be discussed during the portion of the agenda entitled “Items Removed from the Consent Calendar”, toward the end of the meeting.

If you have any questions or would like any additional information, please call me at 802-5540.

Sincerely,

Rob Osborne
Management Analyst