Newport Way Sidewalk Committee
Bellevue, WA

Description and purpose
SE Newport Way connects public facilities such as the Newport Way Library, South Bellevue Community Center, and Eastgate Park. However, a 0.9-mile section of the road currently lacks safe access for walkers and cyclists. Although the Bellevue City Council had recognized the need for sidewalks and bike lanes and developed preliminary designs for such improvements along Newport Way, the project faced competition with many other capital requests.

The Newport Way Sidewalk Committee was founded to unify community voices in favor of Newport Way sidewalks and bike lanes as a top spending priority. The committee requested conversations with the City of Bellevue, hosted neighborhood workshops, attended both Bellevue City
Council meetings and Bellevue Transportation Commission meetings, built a website to aid their cause, and sought endorsements from 14 local organizations.

The Committee had many successes along the way. They persuaded the City of Bellevue to do a traffic study. They expressed the importance of sidewalks on Newport Way to the Transportation Commission. They publicized traffic and safety issues along Newport Way and united many community members to testify for their cause at Bellevue City Council meetings. Finally, on December 3, 2014, the Bellevue City Council unanimously adopted a budget which included $7 million for sidewalks and bike lanes on Newport Way. This not only marks the success of the Newport Way Sidewalk Committee, but also showcases the community’s overall effort to improve walkability in Bellevue.

Costs and funding
$7 million is budgeted for the Newport Way Sidewalk and Bike Lanes project through the City of Bellevue 2015-16 Operating Budget and 2015-2021 Capital Investment Budget.

Implementation time-frame
Barbara Spindel, President of Newport Way Library Association, founded the Newport Way Sidewalk Committee in 2005. She began by researching the possibility of a sidewalk along SE Newport Way to serve the Library. At the time, this section of Newport Way was an unincorporated part of King County. The County had acknowledged the need for sidewalks but did not have funds to construct them. Bellevue also acknowledged the need, but could not address the issue without the jurisdiction to do so.

In 2012, a subcommittee from the Newport Way Library Association was formed after Spindel met with the Bellevue Transportation Department staff to discuss the need for sidewalks and bike lanes along Newport Way. Interested board members from the Newport Way Library Association joined the subcommittee and began to query the city about how they could help make the sidewalk happen. In January 2014, the Newport Way Sidewalk Committee hosted its first neighborhood workshop, where many new members became active. The next month, the committee hosted its first organizational meeting. Procedures and actions were identified to achieve city funding for Newport Way sidewalks and bicycle lanes in the 2015 budget. The committee evolved into a very efficient, effective and collaborative group.

Community involvement
The Newport Way Sidewalk Committee collaborated with local organizations, cities and associations. Besides the Transportation Commission and the Newport Way Library, the committee worked with groups such as boy scout troops, Tyee Girls Cross-Country, and Aldersgate Methodist Church. The committee and its partners signed online petitions, e-mailed members of the City Council and Transportation Commission, attended City Council and Transportation Commission meetings, and publicly supported the project. They developed a well-functioning online website in 2014, which opened the door for more community members to become involved.
Benefits and results
The Newport Way Sidewalk Committee successfully secured $7 million for sidewalks and bike lanes on Newport Way. Following this success, Spindel suggests that the next step for the committee is to find new ways to continue their involvement throughout the design and implementation of the project.

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Resources
Newport Way Sidewalk Committee Website
http://www.newportwaysidewalk.org/about.html