



MEMORANDUM

CC-26-156

Suggested Revisions to Draft Neighborhood Traffic-Calming Policy

Item Type: Backup Memorandum, Action Memorandum, or Informational Memorandum
Prepared For: Mayor Lord and Homer City Council
Date: August 7, 2026
From: Councilmember Davis
Through: Melissa Jacobsen, City Manager

I appreciate the work that has gone into the draft Neighborhood Traffic-Calming Policy. Homer needs a consistent and practical process for identifying dangerous street conditions and correcting roads whose design encourages excessive speed. The draft provides a strong starting point, and I would like to offer the following suggestions for Council's consideration as ways to strengthen it further.

1. Avoid giving too much weight to whether a crash has already occurred

Serious crashes on residential streets in a community of fewer than 6,000 people are fortunately rare. Whether one has already occurred on a particular street may therefore be largely a matter of chance rather than a reliable measure of underlying danger.

Crash history should certainly be considered, particularly where there is a recurring pattern or a pedestrian or bicycle injury. However, the absence of a serious crash should not count heavily against a street. The purpose of traffic calming is to prevent a foreseeable injury, not to wait until one occurs.

2. Separate safety need from petition support

Resident support is important when selecting and designing a project, but a street's eligibility and priority should be based primarily on measured speeds, high-speed outliers, pedestrian conditions, vulnerable users and roadway design, rather than on how successful a particular neighborhood is at organizing a formal petition.

The policy should also make clear that the City Manager, Public Works Director or City Council may initiate a traffic-calming review without a petition where conditions warrant.

3. Do not require unsuccessful education or enforcement before engineering changes

Signs, public education and targeted enforcement can all be useful tools, but they should not be mandatory preliminary steps where the physical design of a street plainly encourages excessive speed.

A wide, straight roadway will often continue to produce high speeds despite signs or sporadic enforcement. The policy should allow the City to proceed directly to physical traffic-calming measures when the available evidence supports that approach.

4. Require speed-management review before paving gravel streets

The draft appears to focus principally on retrofitting existing paved streets. It should also address gravel streets that will be paved in future years.

Paving can increase vehicle speeds by creating a smoother, wider and more visually open roadway. The City should not pave a gravel road and then wait for speeding complaints before considering traffic calming.

The policy should state that no existing gravel street will be paved without first evaluating and, where appropriate, incorporating traffic-calming features into the project design. Particular attention should be given to avoiding excessive pavement width, unnecessarily wide travel lanes, long uninterrupted straight sections and other design features that encourage speeds above the intended neighborhood speed.

Traffic calming incorporated when a street is designed or paved will generally be more efficient and less expensive than retrofitting it afterward.

5. Strengthen consideration of pedestrian risk

Low pedestrian counts should not be treated as proof that pedestrian risk is low. People may avoid walking on a street precisely because it feels unsafe.

The evaluation should consider factors including:

- the absence of sidewalks or adequate shoulders;
- routes used by children, seniors and people with disabilities;
- connections to schools, parks, trails, transit stops and commercial destinations;
- roadway width, sight distance and crossing difficulty; and
- gaps in the pedestrian network.

6. Remove the categorical exclusion of cul-de-sacs and dead-end streets

Dead-end streets and cul-de-sacs should not be automatically excluded. They will generally rank lower because of limited traffic volumes, but we cannot know in advance that none will ever present a meaningful speeding or pedestrian-safety concern.

7. Separate qualification, prioritization and funding

The policy should distinguish among:

1. whether a street has a documented safety problem;
2. how that problem ranks against other eligible streets; and
3. whether funding is available in a particular year.

A street should not lose its status as an identified safety concern merely because funding is not immediately available.

8. Allow temporary and seasonal solutions

The policy should expressly allow temporary, reversible and seasonal traffic-calming measures. These can allow the City to test a treatment before making a permanent investment and can provide workable options where year-round installations are impractical.

Possible measures could include removable rubber speed humps or cushions where they can be securely installed, temporary lane narrowing, delineators, planters, chicanes and other low-cost demonstration treatments. The fact that a measure may need to be removed seasonally should not, by itself, be a reason to reject it.

The draft appropriately recognizes both general operating speeds and the smaller number of drivers traveling at especially dangerous speeds. I think that emphasis should be retained so that a genuine speeding problem is not dismissed simply because the worst offenders make up a relatively small percentage of drivers.

Requested Council Direction

If a majority of Councilmembers concur with these recommendations, with or without amendment, this memorandum shall constitute direction to the City Manager to revise the draft Neighborhood Traffic-Calming Policy accordingly before returning it to Council for consideration.