

12 Walk Audit at the Saddle Drive/Belt View Drive Intersection

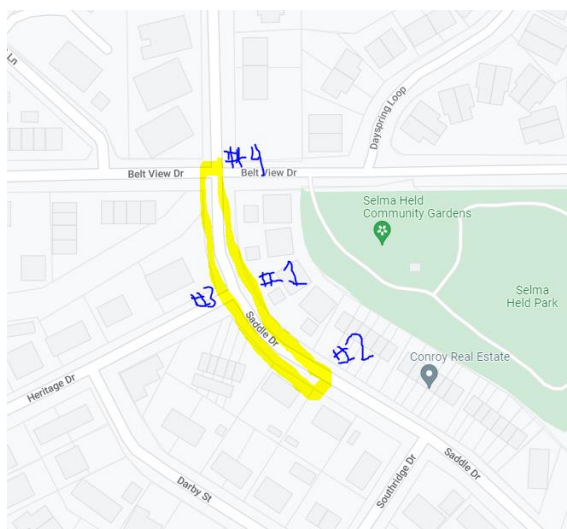
June 24th 12:00pm-1:30pm

Attendees: Joel Peden (Montana Association of Centers for Independent Living), Roger Stone (Neighbor and in charge of the Community Garden in the area), Diane VanHaecke (Neighbor), Jolene Jennings (Neighbor and Lewis and Clark Public Health), Melissa Baker (Neighbor and Lewis and Clark Public Health), Kim Lloyd (St. Peter's Health), Kevin Rechhoff (NMTAC member), James Szerwo (NMTAC member), Greg Wirth (NMTAC member), Sarah Sandau (Lewis and Clark Public Health and walk audit facilitator), Mark Young (City of Helena), Katie Campbell (Neighbor), Jay Campbell (Neighbor)

In the winter of 2021/2022, a complaint came in through the My Helena App about the intersection of Saddle Drive and Belt View Drive. The Non-Motorized Travel Advisory Council to the Helena City Commission (NMTAC) requested that Lewis and Clark Public Health assist in coordinating an Inclusive Interdisciplinary Walk Audit (I2 Walk Audit) at and around that intersection. Concern regarding accessibility and safety for local residents was voiced at a NMTAC meeting in May.

In that area of town, there are numerous houses that range from larger one family homes, to fourplexes, to Habitat for Humanity Homes (Day Spring Loop). There are a few businesses in the location, one being Gentle Healing Wellness Center. There are both assisted living facilities and daycares close by (or nearby). St. Peter's Hospital and other medical clinics are just a few blocks away. A park and community garden sit on this intersection and is well used by families in the summer. This route is owned by the City of Helena. It was noted the Library Bookmobile visits the neighborhood once a week. Residents typically walk or ride bike to visit the Bookmobile. The expansion of Shodair will contribute to more traffic. The community gardens in Selma Ward Park are accessed by numerous residents west of Saddle Drive.

The map of the route:



The Walk Audit started at the intersection of Saddle Drive and Belt View Drive. The group walked south along Saddle Drive on the right side of the street. They crossed at the top of the hill, then looped back to the start on the other side of the street.

Observations, questions, and ideas from the I2 Walk Audit are as follows:

Stop #1: Intersection of Saddle and Heritage (right side of the street). At the first stop the team assessed the area as an average score of 6.75. Comments on the first leg of the walk are as follows:

Positive aspects: network of facilities (homes, businesses, health clinic, park, garden, daycares, assisted living facilities), trees, boulevards, well designed curb cuts, street light, trails nearby, speed limit 25, tree roots aren't hurting the sidewalk

Needs Improvement: due to no stop signs, cars move quickly in this area. There is bad visibility for active transportation, high and quick traffic volume, parking leaving the houses have blind spots, loud due to high traffic, no signs, narrow sidewalk, no bike lane, in the winter the sidewalks are not shoveled

Ideas: Bike Lane going uphill. Signs warning of the intersection or crosswalk ahead.

Stop #2: Saddle Drive between Heritage Drive and Southridge Drive. At the second stop the team assessed the area as an average score of 7.25. Comments on the second leg of the walk are as follows:

Positive aspects: Trees, boulevard, sidewalk

Needs Improvement: No trees further down the road, no signage acknowledging the intersection, no bike lane, no park access, busy road

Ideas: Bike Lane going uphill. Signs warning of the intersection, trees further down Saddle

Stop #3: Intersection of Saddle Drive and Heritage Drive (left side). At the third stop the team assessed the area as an average score of 5. Comments on the third leg of the walk are as follows:

Positive aspects: Boulevard, grass, street light, visibility, sidewalk exists

Needs Improvement: Too narrow of a sidewalk, foliage in the way, drainage on the curb causes issues in the winter, mailboxes in the way

Stop #4: Intersection of Saddle Drive and Belt View Drive. At the fourth stop the team assessed the area as an average score of 5. Comments on the fourth leg of the walk are as follows:

Positive aspects: Wider sidewalks, street light, no obstructions, network of facilities

Needs Improvement: Busy and quick street

Ideas: 4 way stop signs, traffic calming techniques, traffic circle

Emailed input:

On the sidewalk by the playground in Selma Held Park, there's a missing handicap access ramp. It's all sort of gravelly concrete and might cause a slip and fall hazard.

Additional:

A resident has posted a private "Slow Down" sign.

Summary suggestions:*Short term:*

1. 4 way stop signs on the intersection of Saddle Drive and Belt View Drive to slow down traffic for safer community access
2. Crosswalk at the intersection of Saddle Drive and Belt View Drive.
3. Traffic Calming Request (ask Mark for the form)
4. Bike Lanes going up the hill
5. Signage at the top of the walk audit route to let cars know about the intersection below

Long term:

~Direct traffic to the frontage road

~Study of Saddle Drive

Next Steps:

This summary account will be provided to all participants in addition to NMTAC. This will be discussed at the next NMTAC meeting on Tuesday, July 12th.

Community members can always make requests to the City on their own through the My Helena App. They can also post signs, park vehicles, or make their own requests to the city in addition.