

January '13 – City Attorney's Report

1. Speed Limit Adjustment – Ordinance No. 182.

- The Council will have its first Consideration of Ordinance No. 182, which establishes speed limits on certain City streets.
- Previously, a map showing proposed speed limits was posted on the City's website and discussed at several Council meetings.
 - Generally, the map maintained a 25 mph speed limit on Melrose Avenue and on Sunset Street south of Melrose Avenue.
 - The map reduced the speed limit to 20 mph on most other City streets, except those terminating in dead-ends (Prospect Place, North Sunset Street, Mahaska Court). On those dead-end streets, the map proposed a speed limit of 10 mph.
- [MPO-JC has generated an analysis](#) of the proposed speed limits, and a copy of the report is attached.
 - MPO-JC supports all of the recommended speed limit changes except those lowering the speed limit to 10 mph on the dead-end streets.
 - Instead, MPO-JC suggests that the City use "No Outlet" signage to inform motorists that these streets do not go through. If desired, the City could also add language to the effect of "Pavement Ends in XYZ Feet" to emphasize the point.
 - (MPO-JC also mentions that the City might want to post such "No Outlet" signs just north of Melrose Avenue on Sunset Street and on Golfview Avenue to discourage cut-through traffic from Melrose Avenue.)
- I have drafted two versions of Ordinance No. 182, and each is attached.
 - The first version ("10 mph") sets the speed limits on the "dead-ends" at 10 mph as originally discussed. In other words, it does not follow the MPO-JC recommendation.
 - The second version ("MPO") makes everything aside from Melrose Avenue and Sunset Street up to Melrose Avenue 20 mph. In other words, it follows the MPO-JC recommendation.
 - I believe the Council has the discretion to adopt the version it considers to be best for the community. The possibility exists that if the "10 mph" ordinance is enacted, someone receiving a citation someday might contest the speed limit on the basis of the MPO-JC recommendation, and a Court might conclude the City Council did not have authority to enact the speed limit. I think those possibilities are fairly remote and unlikely to occur.
- Regardless of which ordinance the Council ultimately adopts (assuming the Council adopts one), I have prepared a motion setting the speed limit on Olive and Leamer Courts at 10 mph through the period of construction to the south. Both versions of Ordinance 182 grant the Council the authority to adjust speed limits in this fashion when circumstances warrant. This motion will be considered by the Council after a version of Ordinance No. 182 is adopted.

ORDINANCE NO. 182 (MPO-JC)

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE NO. 120 (TRAFFIC REGULATIONS)
TO AMEND THE SPEED LIMITS ON CERTAIN STREETS IN
THE CITY OF UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS, IOWA

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS,
JOHNSON COUNTY, IOWA:

Part I: AMENDMENTS:

University Heights Ordinance No. 120 is amended as follows (with additions indicated by double underline and deletions indicated by ~~strike-through~~):

Section 7 - SPEED RESTRICTIONS.

1. **Speed Restrictions.**

A. General Speed Limit Provisions:

2. The following shall be the maximum allowable speed for any vehicles, except as otherwise modified in this Ordinance:

a. ~~Twenty (20) miles per hour in any business or commercial district.~~ Twenty-five (25) miles per hour on the following streets:

i. any portion of Melrose Avenue; and

ii. any portion of Sunset Street south of its intersection with Melrose Avenue.

b. ~~Twenty five (25)~~ Twenty (20) miles per hour in any school district.

c. ~~Twenty five (25) miles per hour in any residential district; provided, however, that the Council may enact a limit of twenty (20) miles per hour upon streets or parts of~~

~~streets to be designated by the Council and identified by signs accordingly. Twenty (20) miles per hour on all public streets other than the following:~~

~~i. Melrose Avenue; and~~

~~ii. Sunset Street south of its intersection with Melrose Avenue.~~

d. Ten (10) miles per hour in any alley or other public place not specifically mentioned in this Section.

~~3. "Residential district" as used herein means an R-1 single-family and R-3 multiple-family residential district according to the University Heights Zoning Ordinance, Ordinance No. 79. "Business district" and "commercial district" as used herein mean, respectively, a B business district and a C commercial district according to the University Heights Zoning Ordinance.~~

~~4.3.~~ The City Council may reduce or increase speed restrictions set forth in this Section where such greater or lesser speed is reasonable and safe under the conditions presented. Signs shall be posted to give notice of such speed restrictions.

PART II: EFFECTIVE DATE:

This Ordinance shall become effective upon its passage and publication as provided by law.

PART III: REPEALER:

All ordinances and parts of ordinances in conflict with the provisions of this ordinance are hereby repealed.

Adopted by the University Heights City Council on this _____ day of January, 2013, and approved this _____ day of January, 2013.

Louise From, Mayor

ATTEST:
(SEAL)

Christine Anderson, City Clerk

STATE OF IOWA)
) SS:
COUNTY OF JOHNSON)

On the ____ day of January, 2013, before me, a notary public in and for the state of Iowa, personally appeared Louise From, Mayor, and Christine Anderson, Clerk of the City of University Heights, to me personally known, and who, being by me duly sworn, did say that they are the Mayor and City Clerk of the City of University Heights, Iowa; that the seal affixed to this instrument is the corporate seal of the City; and that said instrument was acknowledged and sealed on behalf of the City, and that Louise From and Christine Anderson acknowledged the execution of said instrument to be their voluntary act and deed and the voluntary act and deed of the City, by it and by them voluntarily executed.

Notary Public in and for the
State of Iowa

STATE OF IOWA)
) SS:
COUNTY OF JOHNSON)

I, Christine Anderson, being first duly sworn, certify that the above ordinance was published in the Iowa City Press-Citizen the ____ day of _____, 2013.

Christine Anderson

Signed and sworn to before me on the ____ day of _____, 2013, by Christine Anderson, Clerk of the City of University Heights.

Notary Public in and for the
State of Iowa



Date: January 4, 2013
To: Steve Ballard; University Heights Attorney
From: John Yapp; Executive Director
Kent Ralston; Assistant Transportation Planner
Re: University Heights Speed Limits

At your request staff has reviewed the proposed City Ordinance to adjust the posted speed limit on several streets within University Heights. Upon review, staff has determined that the proposal to generally reduce the posted speed limit on local streets would be beneficial from a traffic safety perspective. Our conclusions are as follows:

- Maintaining the existing 25mph posted speeds on the arterial streets (Melrose Avenue and Sunset Boulevard) as proposed is appropriate. These corridors carry high volumes of traffic during peak travel hours and provide direct access to/from arterial streets at the municipal boundaries of University Heights. Lowering posted speed limits on these corridors would likely increase cut-through traffic on adjacent local streets and prove ineffective at lowering speeds on these corridors given the existing 85th percentile speeds.

85th percentile speeds are used by traffic engineers as a measure of the “safe and reasonable” speed on a roadway. Typically speed limits are set near the 85th percentile speed so that there is voluntary compliance by the majority of motorists. If speed limits are set below the 85th percentile speed, consistent and frequent police enforcement may be necessary as a high percentage of motorists will likely violate the posted speed limit.

- The provision of 20mph zones on local and collector streets in University Heights is appropriate as many of these corridors lack complete sidewalks and ADA accessible curb ramps (maps attached), are relatively narrow, and provide on-street parking. Coupled with the fact that University Heights has one of the highest bicycle/ pedestrian commuting rates within the state at 39% (2010 American Community Survey), high volumes of pedestrians and bicyclists must share the roadway with motorists. The proposed reduction in posted speed limits may slow traffic and would provide a visual ‘cue’ to motorists that a special emphasis on safety is necessary.
- Providing a 20mph speed limit on all local and collector streets would provide motorists with a consistent message. The proposed changes would conform with many streets in University Heights that are currently posted at 20mph. Inconsistency in signage often frustrates motorists and reduces compliance.
- Providing posted 10mph zones as proposed on portions of Mahaska Court, Sunset Street, and Prospect Place is not recommended. Given that these sections of roadway are narrow dead-end streets, excessive vehicle speeds should not be a problem. Realistically, vehicles would not adhere to these posted speed limits without strict enforcement and posting speed limit signage for these streets is unnecessary. An ordinance stipulating a 20mph speed limit for these roadways, similar to others local streets in University Heights, would be appropriate.

Ensuring that these portions of roadway are marked with NO OUTLET signage will also help ensure that motorists unfamiliar with the area are not accessing these roads – thereby reducing traffic volumes and the possibility of frustrated motorists exhibiting unwanted driving behaviors.

- We recommend the existing 10mph posted speed limit on Olive and Leamer Court be increased to 20mph after construction at the south end of the block concludes – thereby providing consistency with other local streets in University Heights.
- The existing school speed limit zone sign assemblies on Oakcrest and Koser Avenue should remain in place. Although there would no longer be a reduction in posted speed limits in the school zone (if the proposed ordinance is passed), the existing school signage will provide motorists with a visual cue that extra caution should be demonstrated due to the presence of children.

All new (and existing) regulatory street signage in University Heights must conform to the retroreflectivity and size standards outlined in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). The University Heights City Engineer is familiar with the manual and will be able to ensure compliance is met.

Should you have any questions regarding this analysis please don't hesitate to contact us at john-yapp@iowa-city.org or kent-ralston@iowa-city.org or by calling 319-356-5230.



SIDEWALK INVENTORY



Date Prepared: May 2012



Sidewalks

- Both Sides of Street
- None
- One Side Only

32 Street Width

University Heights Curb Ramp Inventory

August 2012



Prepared by: Kris Ackerson &
Stephanie Schrader

Data source: MPOJC and Johnson County

Legend

Curbscuts

- No curbscuts
- One curbscut
- Two curbscuts

