



MEMO

Certified Mail

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Prepared For: MRA
1900 Block of Birch St Property Owners and Tenants
City Council Ward Representatives
Mayor's Office
Westside Leadership Team

Subject: Maple/Birch (URD II) Project and Roadway Striping on the 1900 Block of Birch St.

This memo summarizes the design decisions made for the Birch Street portion of the Maple/Birch Sidewalk and Complete Streets Project. Based on feedback from adjacent property owners and tenants, the City is moving forward with a revised design that balances community needs, City policies, and technical constraints.

Project Overview

The project will install new curbs and sidewalks along Maple and Birch Streets between North Russell Street and West Broadway. On Birch Street, improvements will also include:

- New asphalt paving
- Bicycle lanes on both sides of the street
- Upgraded, ADA-compliant curb ramps
- Crossing enhancements of Russell St

These upgrades aim to improve safety and connectivity for people walking, biking, and driving.

Constraints and Tradeoffs

Birch Street is a key connector between W. Broadway and Mullan Road. However, limited right-of-way means we cannot fit all desired features—curb alignment, sidewalks, bike lanes, boulevards, and on-street parking—without compromise. To stay within the existing curb-to-curb width, adding bike lanes requires removing some on-street parking and repurposing right-of-way currently used for informal private parking.

City staff worked to understand and reduce impacts on residents and businesses while still achieving the project's goals.

Parking Considerations

Currently, Birch Street has approximately 35 on-street parking spaces. Residents generally park on the north side of the street at night, while businesses use the south side during the day. To maintain some level of on-street parking and still accommodate bike lanes, the City evaluated three design options:

- **Alternative A** – Retains 13 spaces on the north side; removes all south-side parking.
Pros: Residents can park near their homes.
Cons: Greatest loss of total parking.
- **Alternative B** – Retains 22 spaces on the south side; removes all north-side parking.
Pros: Maximizes total parking for businesses.
Cons: Residents lose adjacent parking near their homes.
- **Alternative C (Selected Option)** – Retains 7 spaces on the north side and 9 on the south side, for a total of 16 spaces.
Pros: Balances parking for both homes and businesses; provides bike lanes with shared-lane markings ("sharrows") near the W. Broadway intersection to preserve four extra parking spaces on the south side; the shift in on-street parking creates a horizontal deflection in the road striping that will help calm traffic; the vehicle west bound right, straight thru and left turn striping at W. Broadway fits the intersection well.
Cons: Removes dedicated south-side bike lane near W. Broadway.

Community Engagement and Feedback

The City held a public meeting in April to share the original design, which eliminated parking on the north side of Birch Street. No one attended. To gather more direct input, staff met individually with nearby business owners, tenants, and residents in June.

Key concerns raised included:

- Loss of parking near commercial buildings
- Overall reduction in available parking within the right-of-way and on-street
- Preference for parking on the south side for businesses
- Vehicle speeds on Birch Street
- The need for bike facilities to improve safety

Design Revisions

Based on this feedback, the City has modified the design to reflect community priorities:

- **Sidewalk Alignment Adjusted:** Behind the sidewalk near businesses, we reduced infrastructure width to preserve informal off-street parking but within the right-of-way
- **Balanced On-Street Parking (Alternative C):** Parking will remain on both sides—north near N. Russell (residential) and south near W. Broadway (commercial).
- **Traffic Calming Benefits:** The selected striping option (Alternative C) will help reduce vehicle speeds, improving safety and comfort for people biking and walking.

Next Steps

Construction of the project is expected to begin in spring/summer 2026 and wrap up later that year.

We appreciate the input from neighbors and businesses and believe this revised design offers a fair and effective compromise. If you have questions or comments, please reach out to Mark Todorovich at TodorovichM@ci.missoula.mt.us or 406-552-6098.