

[Note: SR means Staff Report – sometimes identified by the date of the Council meeting]

1989 – 1990: City undertakes General Plan amendment program. “A significant concern to the Willows neighborhood was the impact of traffic.” [Staff Report 3/16/93]

October, 1991: City of Menlo Park hires TJKM traffic consultant which uses focus group of fourteen members “to receive input from a cross-section of the neighborhood”. [SR 3/16/93] The resulting plan consists of a set of barriers to block cars to/from EPA.

1992: Drug related crime wave in EPA results in highest per capita murder rate in country. Eleven murders in EPA section of Willows [PA Times 12/22/92].

October, 1992: City hires (New Age-flavored) Magic Inc to “assist the neighborhood with public education”. [SR 3/16/93] The traffic activists organize as the **Willows Working Group (WWG)** and revise their plan to include a maze of traffic circles and “median diverters” instead of barriers at the EPA border.

December, 1992: **WWG, stressing EPA crime wave, acquires 793 signatures (representing 592 households) on a petition supporting their plan.** Meanwhile, the crime wave is defeated by multi-jurisdictional infusion of extra law enforcement.

March, 1993: **Menlo Park City Council approves a one year trial** of about forty traffic control devices in the Willows, but no barriers, unless trial shows other measures do not work [SR 3/21/95]. Projected cost: \$516,000. The Council creates the Willows Traffic Committee (WTC), populated by Willows traffic activists, to manage the trial.

March – September 1993: WTC meets bi-monthly, decides to install devices in two phases.

October, 1993: WTC holds public meeting to present proposed Phase I. Two residents object to the plan [SR 3/21/95]

November, 1993: A group of Willows residents organize to provide a forum for communicating information about the new street obstacles. The group is called **SOS**, a community association for **Safe Open Streets**.

January – March, 1994: **WTC installs Phase I obstacles.** WTC coins the term “street furniture”. They call the array of obstacles an “under-installation” and promise more for Phase II.

January, 1994: The presence of street obstacles triggers neighborhood backlash. SOS distributes a flyer door-to-door to the entire neighborhood and begins to circulate a petition.

June, 1994 Safe Open Streets presents the petition to the City Council. **The petition, signed by 955 Willows residents (representing 627 households), says “the obstacles reduce the quality of life in the Willows”** and specifies standards to protect the community from unwarranted, unwanted and unsafe street obstacles.

[Note: 273 households signing the SOS petition had previously signed the Willows Working Group petition. 46% (273/592) of early supporters had changed their minds, leaving a net post-installation support of 319. By this measure, neighborhood opposition to the Willows Traffic Plan was almost 2 to 1 against (592 against, 319 for).]

June, 1994: The WTC sends a survey to approximately 2000 Willows households. **A majority perceived either no improvement or actual deterioration of traffic speed/volume, general safety and pedestrian safety.** A large majority said the obstacles were esthetically detrimental.

July, 1994: WTC holds three meetings called “street nights” to “provide residents an opportunity to state their views on the Willows traffic furniture” [SR 3/21/95]. Traffic activists use pep rallies, attended by a reliable core of supporters, to claim neighborhood support.

October, 1994: **Mediation by Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center** is initiated by city manager. After a month of intensive preliminary effort by the community, the **Willows Traffic Committee abandons mediation** because the PCRC wants them to “stop implementing the traffic plan, which the WTC did not want to do.” [SR 3/21/95]

December, 1994: City Council approves \$8k to put potted trees in two circles to increase their appeal.

December 28, 1994: Willows traffic controversy makes the Palo Alto Weekly top ten stories of 1994.

February 11, 1995: WTC holds public meeting on Phase II of the plan.

March, 1995: WTC proposes Phase II to be decided by residents of “affected streets”. City Council meets to consider Phase II but adjourns before decision.

April 25, 1995: City Council approves WTC’s Phase II including the adoption of the Interim Menlo Park Neighborhood Traffic Management Plan Protocol for the Willows Area. [SR 11/14/95]

May 23, 1995: **Council authorizes removal of five circles and five chokers.** [SR 11/14/95]

September 19, 1995: Council study session on new Willows Plan.

October, 1995: Five separate informational meetings pertaining to planned balloting for remaining devices.

November, 1995: **Balloting to decide fate of remaining Phase I devices.** Seven small zones within neighborhood decide fate of devices within zone. **Two of three remaining traffic circles are voted out.** Stop signs are voted in. [SR 11/14/95]

December, 1995: **Unwanted traffic circles (Pope/Woodland and Menalto/Durham) removed, effectively ending the “one year trial” two years and nine months after it was approved** in March 1993.

June – July, 1996: Meetings regarding three speed hump installations to be balloted and six new traffic calming projects under the new Interim Protocol.

July, 1996: Speed humps on O’Connor, Durham and O’Keefe approved by residents of those streets.

January, 2000: Start of demolition of the “Whiskey Gulch” commercial area in the East Palo Alto-Willows, to prepare for the University Circle office/hotel complex. This redevelopment will also eliminate a freeway entrance at the end of O’Connor St.

December 10, 2002: Council forms subcommittee to work with Transportation Commission and staff to develop a Willows Traffic Mitigation Implementation Plan [SR 02-266]

March 20, 2003: City stages a Willows public meeting to discuss traffic problem locations, islands, barriers plantings etc. Slide show includes 1991 TJKM Preferred Plan with barriers.

May 7, 2003: Willows volunteers record license plate numbers for cut through traffic analysis of AM commute period. Results not available as of March 14, 2004.

August 15, 2003: Staff sends letter to residents informing us of the city’s vigilance in planning for possible traffic generated by the new **IKEA** store and requesting our “help in assessing the impact on local Menlo Park traffic”. Staff report [SR 03-158] Information Regarding the IKEA Traffic Contingency Plan.

April 8, 2003: Council approves “Immediate Traffic Control Measures for Woodland Avenue” (SR 03-060). Cost \$35,000 Paid for by University Circle Developer. Staff Report shows 1991 TJKM Preferred plan with barriers.

November 18, 2003: Council approves creation of **Neighborhood Traffic Management Plan** [SR 03-209]

March 16, 2004: Council approves traffic control measures for Chester Street: speed humps, semi-chokers, chicane [SR 04-049] Cost: \$156,000

April 20, 2004: Results of the City's Willows Through-Traffic Study [SR 04-072] are published. Cut through results considering EPA residents to be outsiders reported; results for case considering EPA residents to be insiders not reported or even mentioned. This inflates cut-through traffic numbers, supporting activists' key argument.

October 26, 2004: City Council approves city-wide **Neighborhood Traffic Management Program** by a 3-2 vote.

May 2005: Armed robberies at La Hacienda Market [SR 05-069] revive demands by activists for “**selective street closures to reclaim our roads for Menlo Park residents**”. Conventional security measures and regulation of check cashing operation provide the solution.

May 2007: Two shooting incidents revive calls for Willows crime and traffic control. Three public meetings (total attendance ~100) result in formation of Willows Traffic Task Force, led by veteran traffic activists.

December 2007: Transportation Staff recommends a Willows Area Wide traffic study be included in the City's list of priorities. The study is to include “potential closure of certain roadways, traffic circles, create maze-like experience” as possible solutions.

October 2008: Staff devises a plan in response to the Willows Traffic Task Force's recommendations and drafts a Request for Proposals – to hire a consultant to run the show.

December 2008: Council approves RFP for \$120,000 for a consultant to manage the Willows Area-Wide Traffic Study. The initial work may proceed without resident approval (per the NTMP) but any implementation will conform to NTMP requirements for resident approval. Traffic with an origin or destination in East Palo Alto-Willows is considered neighborhood traffic, not cut-through.

April 2009 – April 2011: Consultant hired (\$86,676), work begins – review history, rudimentary measure cut-through traffic, online survey, three neighborhood meetings.

April 2011: Transportation Commission rejects putting consultant's recommendation to a vote of residents.

June 2011: council considers recommended plan. Public comment 5 to 1 against the proposal. Council rejects the proposal, terminating the project.

November 2011: Council approves Transportation Commission two year work plan, including “review of NTMP for possible revisions”.

March 2013: Council requested that the Commission provide a preliminary report to the Council on why changes are needed on the NTMP.

October 2013: Transportation Commission approves subcommittee report “A Case for Change”, subject to staff approval.