



728 Madison Ave, Suite 105  
Albany, NY 12208

[pinehillsna.org](http://pinehillsna.org)

August 25, 2022

To: Mayor Kathy Sheehan

Re: Draft Washington Park Area Complete Streets Study

I am writing on behalf of the Pine Hills Neighborhood Association to thank you for undertaking this study and to provide our specific comments on the draft.

Washington Park is one of Albany's distinguishing features and a great asset for the City. This study is a great step forward in improving public access to and enjoyment of the Park. The Pine Hills Neighborhood Association strongly supports its approach and the many recommendations to restructure and calm vehicle traffic, improve safety, and enhance pedestrian and bicycle access. The opportunity for comment is also appreciated, which provides an opportunity to help improve specific recommendations and build public support.

Our specific comments are limited to Recommendation 9, which most directly affects the Pine Hills neighborhood. This recommendation proposes to close the park road south of the Park Lake to vehicle traffic and provide an enhanced crossing at the intersection of South Lake and Hudson. We strongly support this recommendation, with some qualifications listed below.

The closure of park roadway bordering the Lake to vehicle traffic has been a longstanding goal for Park advocates and for all who enjoy the Lake. It would greatly improve public access, enhance the peaceful setting offered by the Lake, and address problems of litter and idling vehicles.

However, we take issue with the suggestion (on page 39 of the draft) that this closure could be implemented as a pilot project to gauge public reaction. No other recommendation in the draft is suggested as a pilot, including many which are likely to generate substantial feedback. An extensive public outreach program has already taken place. Moreover, inasmuch as that section of roadway has been closed to regular vehicle traffic for approximately two months each year for lights in the park (which ran for decades), as well as for extensive periods during recent public works projects, a pilot seems highly unnecessary.

We are also strongly supportive of improving the crossing at the intersection of Hudson and South Lake Avenues. That intersection is a major access point for pedestrians crossing into the Park, including residents of the Parkview Apartments (at 400 Hudson Avenue) which provides housing for elderly and disabled persons.

However, we are very concerned by a notation in the illustration (in Figure ES-1) which indicates "Traffic Signal Removal Indicated" at the intersection of South Lake and Hudson Avenues. Elimination of that traffic light would have very negative consequences for pedestrians and vehicle traffic. Traffic volume and speed on South Lake Avenue is high, and the difficulties for pedestrians trying to cross South Lake would be serious. Speed on that section of South Lake is also a problem, and a speed checker has been put in place in response to neighborhood concerns.

Additionally, regarding vehicle traffic, it is already difficult to exit from Hudson Avenue to South Lake whether turning left or right. Parking impairs visibility for those exiting Hudson Avenue. South Lake is high volume particularly at rush hour and is furthermore heavily used by fast moving emergency services vehicles. Notably the traffic volume at this intersection (as shown in Table 3.4 on page 36) is far higher than at any of the other intersections where the draft indicates signal removal. Of course, improvements in the pedestrian crossing at Hudson and South Lake would be most welcome, and we strongly support this recommendation. Table 4.1 "Implementation Plan and Costs" shows \$105,000 for Recommendation #9, but does not describe the specific improvements envisioned; a description would be helpful.

In conclusion, we thank you again for this commendable study and for an opportunity to comment. We hope our suggestions for improvement of Recommendation 9 will be reflected in the final report and look forward to supporting the improvements to come from this vital study. Please reach out if there are any questions or further discussion needed in the context of our suggestions.

Sincerely,



John Clarkson  
President, Pine Hills Neighborhood Association

Copied: David Galin (Chief of Staff), Bill Trudeau (Chief Supervisor of Traffic Engineering), Matthew Peter (Albany Parking Authority); Council Member Owusu Anane; Kayleigh Goergen (Parkview Apartments); Pine Hills Neighborhood Association Board