The Problem

1) Lack of pedestrian paths along Lake Dr. on the northern end of campus. Walkers and joggers from Calvin and the surrounding neighborhoods are forced to run either in the road or along a narrow strip of grass on the southern edge of Lake Dr. This is dangerous and uncomfortable for pedestrians.

2) Lack of bicycle paths along Lake Dr. on the northern end of campus. There are not marked bicycle lanes that separate auto traffic from bicyclists. Those biking to or from East Grand Rapids, Eastown, or the surrounding neighborhoods are forced to ride in the road with traffic. This is also dangerous and uncomfortable.

3) Excessive speed of vehicles along Lake Dr. near Calvin. A recent East Grand Rapids Cadence article pointed out that neighbors along Lake Dr. near Calvin and the East Beltline are very concerned with the excessive speeds of vehicles. The speed limit changes from 35 mph to 25 mph in this area; a recent speed summary reported, “64.5% of vehicles sampled were driving in excess of 35 mph.” The speeds of vehicles are likely related to the roads’ extremely large lanes (approx. 21’) which are much wider than freeway lanes. The road is wide enough for four lanes of traffic, but only has markings for two lanes. We believe drivers will subconsciously drive as fast as the road design allows them; you can not design a road for 70 mph and expect cars to go 25 mph!

4) Ecological and Social Concerns of wide roads. Lake Dr. is excessively wide, covering a large amount of earth with pavement that prevents the percolation of rainwater into the soil below. Instead of being retained onsite, water is carried to surrounding streams which leads to erosion and water pollution. Wide roads also have a significant social impact as they divide up residential areas with large spaces that are usually unfriendly to pedestrian life. An auto-dominated landscape prohibits the social connections that are key to communal life. Danish architect, Jan Gehl, recently said that Grand Rapids has twice as much pavement as it needs. We agree.

Propositions

After considering 8 criteria (traffic calming, pedestrian/cyclist safety, connectivity/accessibility, aesthetics, impact, permeability, maintenance, and cost), we have come up with three proposals for improving Lake Drive along the northern edge of campus.

Support

BUFFERED BIKE PATHS

This proposal would add bike lanes on the northern and southern edges of Lake Drive. The bike paths would connect to a the proposed bike path along Lake (GVMC) that will extend from downtown to East Paris. We also propose a 3-4’ buffer of hatched lines between auto and bike lanes in order to narrow auto lanes and clearly separate auto traffic from bicycle traffic.

MULTI-USE PATH

This proposal would narrow Lake Dr to 20’ from Woodshire Ave to just before (approx. 350 ft) the East Beltline where it would widen to its original width. The remaining 22’ would consist of a 10’ vegetative buffer with street trees and a 12’ multi-use path with designated bike and pedestrian lanes. West of Woodshire and East of Calvin, the path would revert back into on-road bike lanes (as proposed GVMC) and connect to the existing sidewalk infrastructure (via crosswalks).

SIDEWALK + BIKE LINES

This proposal would narrow Lake Dr to 30’ from Woodshire Ave to just before the East Beltline where it would widen to its original width. The road would feature 5’ bike lanes on each side with 1’ white lines separating the bike lanes from the 9’ traffic lanes. The remaining 12’ would consist of a 8’ vegetative buffer with street trees and a 4’ sidewalk for pedestrian use.

Lake Drive(s) Me Crazy

Andy McBurney & Matt Vander Ploeg

Buffered Bike Paths

Multi-use Path

Sidewalk + Bike Paths