

Traffic calming pilot shows promise in Brooklyn Center

Speed tables and diverters slow vehicle speeds

Residents of the East Palmer Lake neighborhood in Brooklyn Center raised concerns about speeding traffic on their neighborhood streets. A preliminary 2023 speed study conducted by the city showed Newton Avenue with over 1,000 vehicles a day traveling down the stretch, with nearly 50 percent of drivers over the 30-mph speed limit and top speeds reaching 90 mph. This was a concerning discovery for a 30-foot-wide residential street.

The City of Brooklyn Center, with support from Hennepin County Active Living, carried out a pilot project to test a variety of traffic control measures on Newton Avenue during the summer of 2024. The pilot project included tools such as delineated posts, reflective tape, signage, and temporary speed tables. Moreover, the city designed the project to collect data on impacts not only on Newton Avenue, but also on parallel streets to track any impacts of traffic diverting onto alternative routes.

Project design

Brooklyn Center Public Works devised a three-step process using the newly acquired traffic calming tools:

1. Establish a baseline understanding of traffic volume and speed on Newton and adjacent streets
2. Install delineated posts to narrow the road at strategic points to test the effectiveness of narrowing
3. Add speed tables to the narrowed roadway

The project aligned with the city values of *safety, community centered, and transparency*, which help to make the city safer, healthier, and a more welcoming place to live.



Project results

- Traffic calming on Newton Avenue reduced speeds, traffic volumes, and reckless driving on that street
- Daily total traffic on Newton (pilot location) and Logan, Morgan, and Oliver (control locations) dropped by nearly 400 vehicles
- There was a substantial decrease in the number of cars driving 20+ mph over the speed limit, with an initial average of 33 reckless drivers per day dropping to just three per day after installing speed tables and delineated posts



Key recommendations

Short Term

- Install permanent speed tables on Newton Avenue in spring/summer of 2025.
- Invest in radar-based or video-based portable traffic counting devices that can be mounted on posts and light poles.
- Test additional pinch points and curb extensions, evaluating their impact on driver behavior by comparing target speed reductions, vehicle positioning, and pedestrian safety improvements.
- Develop a comprehensive speed table policy that balances traffic calming benefits with maintenance needs and emergency services (EMS) access.
- Increase public awareness of and support for traffic calming initiatives through signage or digital platforms.

Medium and Long Term

- Conduct additional traffic calming pilots at locations due for roadway improvement projects.
- Consider piloting pedestrian and bike trails when narrowing roadways.
- Create a stronger connection between the city's goals and active living/transportation.
- Integrate traffic calming measures into the city's broader infrastructure and mobility plans.
- Develop a citywide traffic calming master plan that identifies priority areas based on crash data, resident input, and pedestrian/bicycle traffic.
- Integrate traffic calming elements into new development guidelines.

Brooklyn Center Public Works used the East Palmer Lake project as the foundation for the city's first official traffic calming program. The short-term recommendations were successfully implemented in 2025. Mid-and-long-term recommendations are underway. After testing in additional neighborhoods in 2025, adoption of a citywide speed table policy is expected in early 2026.