Comprehensive Analysis: Gating Arrowhead Point Neighborhood

Cost-Benefit Analysis for Installing Gates and/or Security Cameras

Executive Summary

Proposal: Investigate the installation of automated gates and security cameras at the two entrances to Arrowhead Point neighborhood in North Spokane, Washington to reduce crime in the neighborhood and incidences of porch piracy

Key Finding: Gating the community would transfer full responsibility for 3.2 lane miles of 35-year-old streets from Spokane County to the neighborhood association, creating substantial ongoing financial obligations that far outweigh security benefits. Additionally, managing gates and cameras would be well beyond the reasonable expectations of a volunteer board of directors and would require contracted professional management at considerable cost.

Financial Summary (Based on AHP HOA Cost Analysis):

- Initial Special Assessment: $8,146 - $40,067 per lot
- Total Initial Cost: $1,140,400 - $5,609,344
- Annual Dues Increase: $396 - $1,321 per lot (on top of current $350)
- Professional Management: Additional $357 - $914 per lot annually
- Total Potential Annual Dues: $1,103 - $2,585 per lot (215% - 638% increase)
- High-end scenario: Annual dues would increase from $350 to $2,585 - a 638% increase
- 10-Year Total Cost: $1,695,200 - $7,459,344 (plus professional management costs)

Note: The 3.2 lane miles of streets do not include current private roads. If private roads were included, the total would be approximately 3.7 miles with proportionally increased costs.

Recommendation: The costs and ongoing responsibilities of gating Arrowhead Point significantly outweigh the potential benefits at this time.

Background & Context

Arrowhead Point is a neighborhood in North Spokane with 137 households, featuring homes ranging from 3,100 to 5,900 square feet. The community has 3.2 lane miles of streets that are currently 35 years old and maintained by Spokane County. Current HOA dues are $350 annually per lot.

Important Note: The 3.2 lane miles calculation includes only public streets currently maintained by Spokane County. This does not include existing private roads within the community. If private roads were included in the analysis, the total street mileage would be approximately 3.7 miles, resulting in proportionally higher costs across all categories.

The scenarios in this analysis are based on grind overlay at the high end and chip seal on the low end. And would need to be done initially and the annual contributions to the reserves to pay for repeat at end of their lifespan. Grind overlay costs are about $10/square foot and chip/seal about $2-3/square foot. Pinning the cost down is a very difficult process.

Critical Legal Requirement

When streets are gated off in Spokane County, the neighborhood association becomes fully responsible for ALL street maintenance, including:

- Street resurfacing and repairs
- Snow removal
- Utility access and coordination
- Emergency vehicle access
- General maintenance and upkeep

According to Spokane City Municipal Code Section 17H.010.090, private streets require “a maintenance agreement shall be recorded with the Spokane county auditor that commits the owner(s) to maintain all elements of the private street.” Similar regulations are in Spokane County.

Detailed Cost Analysis

Based on actual cost estimates prepared for Arrowhead Point HOA, adjusted for 3.2 lane miles:

Professional Management Requirements

Security System Management Beyond Volunteer Capabilities

The installation of gates and camera systems would require professional management that is well beyond the reasonable expectations of a volunteer board of directors. The complexity and liability associated with security systems necessitate contracted professional management at considerable cost.

Required Professional Services:

- 24/7 Security Monitoring Service: $2,400 - $18,000 annually
- Professional Property Management Company: $35,000 - $75,000 annually
- Legal and Compliance Management: $8,000 - $20,000 annually
- Technical Support and Maintenance Coordination: $5,000 - $15,000 annually

Why Professional Management is Necessary:

- Legal Liability: Security systems create significant liability exposure requiring professional oversight
- Technical Complexity: LPR systems, gate automation, and monitoring require specialized knowledge
- Emergency Response Protocols: Professional coordination with law enforcement and emergency services
- Compliance Requirements: Ongoing regulatory compliance and safety inspections
- Financial Management: Complex budgeting and reserve fund management for infrastructure
- Vendor Coordination: Managing multiple contractors for gates, cameras, streets, and snow removal

Total Professional Management Costs: $50,000 - $128,000 annually

These professional management costs are in addition to the operational costs already outlined and would further increase annual dues by $357 - $914 per lot.

Security Context & Crime Analysis

Current Crime Statistics

Arrowhead Point benefits from being in the Mead High School area, which has significantly lower crime rates than Spokane proper:

- Mead area: 14 crimes per 1,000 residents
- Spokane city: 62 crimes per 1,000 residents
- Property crime risk: 1 in 77 chance (Mead) vs 1 in 18 (Spokane)

Limited Security Benefits of Gating

Research on gated community security shows:

- 33% reduction in burglaries - the primary measurable benefit
- False sense of security - residents become complacent about basic security measures (locking doors/windows)
- Limited package theft protection - ~44% of Americans experience package theft; gates provide minimal protection as delivery drivers typically have access codes
- No reduction in other crimes - most crime in residential areas is not prevented by gates

Given AHP's already low crime rate, the 33% burglary reduction benefit is minimal in absolute terms.

Operational Considerations

Professional Management Required

License Plate Recognition Monitoring: The neighborhood would need to contract with a professional security monitoring company for $3,000-$18,000 annually, as volunteer management is inadequate for:

- 24/7 monitoring capabilities
- Legal liability issues
- Technical maintenance and updates
- Emergency response protocols

Street Maintenance Complexities

Utility Coordination: Arrowhead Point has extensive buried utilities (water, sewer, gas, electricity, cable) that complicate maintenance:

- Utility companies retain easement access rights
- Coordination required for any street work
- Potential conflicts between private ownership and utility access

Emergency Access: Must maintain emergency vehicle access at all times, including:

- Fire department requirements
- Ambulance access
- Police patrol capabilities

Weather-Related Challenges

Snow Removal Obligations: Spokane County currently handles snow removal with specialized equipment and 24/7 response during snow events. The neighborhood would need:

- Contracted snow removal services ($16,000-$50,000 annually for 3.2 lane miles)
- Equipment storage considerations
- Liability insurance for winter conditions
- Compliance with emergency access requirements

Risk Assessment

Financial Risks

- Massive Initial Assessment: Low-end $8,146 to high-end $40,067 per lot represents a significant financial burden
- Escalating Maintenance Costs: Road maintenance costs typically increase 3-5% annually

- Emergency Repairs: Unexpected street damage could require immediate expensive repairs
- Technology Obsolescence: Gate and LPR equipment requires updates every 5-7 years
- Reserve Fund Requirements: $13,480-$45,000 annually needed for future major expenses
- Professional Management Costs: Additional $50,000-$128,000 annually for required professional oversight

Operational Risks

- Contractor Availability: Limited local contractors for specialized street maintenance
- Emergency Access: Gate failures could impede emergency services
- Utility Conflicts: Disputes with utility companies over access rights
- Community Management: Current volunteer board structure inadequate for complex infrastructure management
- Legal Liability: Increased exposure to lawsuits related to security systems and private streets

Financial Burden Analysis

The cost analysis reveals several concerning financial realities:

- Dues could increase dramatically: From $350 to potentially $1,671+ annually (377%+ increase), plus an additional $357-$914 for professional management
- Major upfront cost: $8,146-$40,067 special assessment per household
- Ongoing liability: Permanent responsibility for 3.7 lane miles of aging street infrastructure
- Professional management necessity: Additional $357-$914 per lot annually for required professional oversight
- Limited escape: Once gated, the community cannot easily return streets to county control

Alternative Security Measures

Lower-Cost Options

- Enhanced Neighborhood Watch: $0 - $500 annually
- Improved Lighting: $5,000 - $15,000 one-time cost
- Security Patrol Service: $2,000 - $6,000 annually
- Community Communication System: $500 - $1,500 annually
- Traffic Calming Measures: $3,000 - $10,000 one-time cost

Individual Home Security

- Home security systems: Homeowner responsibility

- Doorbell cameras: $100 - $300 per home
- Motion sensor lighting: $50 - $200 per home
- Drop box or off site package pick up $0

These alternatives could provide meaningful security improvements at a fraction of the cost.

Financing Considerations

Special Assessment Requirements

To fund gating, the neighborhood association would need to:

- Immediate assessment: $1,140,400 - $5,609,344 total
- Per lot impact: $8,146 - $40,067 per household
- Homeowner approval: Likely requires super-majority vote
- Payment plans: Most homeowners would need financing options

Ongoing Financial Management

Annual budget increases of $55,480 - $185,000 (plus professional management costs of $50,000 - $128,000) require:

- Professional financial management
- Reserve fund planning for major repairs
- Regular assessment of infrastructure needs
- Potential for additional special assessments

Conclusion

The financial analysis demonstrates that gating Arrowhead Point would create an unprecedented financial burden on homeowners. The combination of immediate special assessments ranging from $8,146 to $40,067 per lot, plus ongoing annual dues increases of $396 to $1,321+ per lot (including professional management), represents a fundamental change in the cost of living in the neighborhood.

Key Factors Against Gating:

- Massive Financial Impact: Total costs of $1.7 million to $7.5+ million over 10 years
- Minimal Security Benefit: Already low crime rate (14 per 1,000 vs 62 citywide) limits impact of 33% burglary reduction
- Permanent Financial Obligation: Taking responsibility for 3.7 lane miles of aging streets creates enormous ongoing liability
- Professional Management Necessity: Volunteer board cannot manage complex security and infrastructure systems

- Alternative Solutions Available: Lower-cost security measures could provide meaningful improvements
- Risk of Escalating Costs: Street maintenance and professional management costs will increase over time

The Bottom Line:

Even the “low-cost” scenario would:

- Require an $8,146 special assessment per household
- More than double annual dues (from $350 to $746+)
- Commit the community to permanent maintenance of 3.7 lane miles of aging streets
- Require professional management beyond volunteer capabilities
- Provide minimal additional security benefit given the area’s already low crime rate

The high-cost scenario is financially devastating:

- $40,067 special assessment per household
- Nearly quintuple annual dues (from $350 to $1,671+)
- Total 10-year cost of over $53,000+ per household

In Summation:

There are substantial long-term financial commitments and operational complexities to gating and/or HOA or 3rd party managed camera systems. The cost-benefit analysis clearly shows that the financial burden far exceeds any potential benefits.

This analysis is based on actual cost estimates prepared for Arrowhead Point HOA and current market conditions as of June 2025. Street maintenance cost estimates are based on recent Spokane city expenditures and professional contractor estimates, and do not include replacing asphalt.