

Commission Letter: 141-11
Commission Meeting of: **May 16, 2011**
RE: **Public Sidewalk Improvement Program Report**

May 9, 2011

The Honorable Mayor
and
Members of City Commission

The City of Royal Oak began a city wide Sidewalk Improvement Program in the fall of 1995 at the direction of the City Commission. When the program began, it was estimated that the 11.83+ square miles of Royal Oak would require twelve years to complete. After being directed to move forward with the City Wide Sidewalk Improvement Program per Commission Letter No. 172 dated 8-7-95, the Engineering Department established a target area system for proposed sidewalk work each budget year. The sidewalk improvement work was scheduled and performed in target areas to systematically address the necessary public sidewalk repairs and keep the costs of the work at a minimum. Using the above for mentioned work plan, the Engineering Department was able to complete the work in eleven years, one year ahead of schedule due to the efforts of city personnel. The City dedicated one full time Engineer and Engineering Assistant, one part time clerk, and three seasonal inspectors for the management and operations of the Sidewalk program. The City Wide Sidewalk Improvement Program was completed five years ago in the fall of 2006. The 1995-2006 City Wide Sidewalk Improvement Program included:

1. Replacing existing bad 5' wide sidewalks.
2. Replacing less than 5' wide substandard sidewalks.
3. Installing new 5' wide sidewalks where none existed.
4. Repairing existing barrier-free sidewalk ramps.
5. Installing new barrier-free* sidewalk ramps where none existed.
(*Barrier free in accordance with ADA at that time)

A map showing the Sidewalk Improvement Program's year by year target areas is the attached Exhibit "A". The criteria used throughout the Sidewalk Improvement Program to determine when improvements were deemed necessary is listed on Exhibit "B". Over the entire 11 years of the Sidewalk Improvement Program more than 24,700 properties were inspected for Sidewalk Improvements. Of that number, some 19,600 or 79% were scheduled for some type of Sidewalk Improvements. The total cost of the 11 year Sidewalk Improvement Program was \$9,173,200. An additional \$1,860,000 was spent city wide on Barrier Free Sidewalk Ramp Improvements at intersection. It is interesting to note that the cost per square foot of sidewalk remained fairly stable over the 11 years of the City Wide Program. Over the course of the last sidewalk program the City benefited in a general down turn in the number of sidewalk trip and fall claims made against the City as shown in Table 4.

The costs for the City Wide Sidewalk Improvement Program by year are shown in Table 1. The total cost of the Sidewalk Improvement Program was \$9,173,200. An additional \$1,860,000 was spent city wide on Barrier Free Sidewalk Ramp Improvements at intersections. The public sidewalk work was funded by the property owners adjacent to the sidewalk improvement and the barrier-free sidewalk ramp work was funded with Community Development Block Grant monies. Property owners that had sidewalk improvement work adjacent to their property had the option of paying for the improvements either in a lump sum bill or be special assessed for the work over 6 years or 15 years depending on the total cost of the improvements. The last sidewalk program had about 6% of the properties requesting special assessment which represented about 12% of the work performed adjacent to private properties.

The Engineering Department has revisited the 1995 and 1996 year Sidewalk Improvement Program target areas to survey and evaluate the current condition of public sidewalks in those neighborhoods. A sample area of about 25% for both the 1995 and 1996 programs was selected at random and the

data from that survey is shown in Table 2. The survey was performed to determine the potential Sidewalk Improvement Program size and impacts on residential properties. The Engineering Department anticipates a new sidewalk program will be about half as large as the 1995-2006 program and recommends that any new program be instituted and conducted over a 6 year timeframe. For future sidewalk programs the Engineering Department recommends a maximum 6 year Special Assessment payment period to address a more favorable return on City fronted monies.

It should be noted that some areas of the City still do not have public sidewalks where they could be installed. These areas were passed over during the previous sidewalk program after the City Commission granted exemptions because of objections by adjacent property owners. These sidewalk exemptions represent about 6.4 miles of potential pedestrian sidewalk network. In 2010, Michigan Lawmakers passed House Bills 6151 and 6152 establishing a "Complete Streets" legislation that requires communities to promote "...safe and efficient movement of people and goods whether by car, truck, transit, assistive device, foot or bicycle". This law also requires communities that wish to continue to receive State transportation funding for City transportation projects, to develop their own "Complete Streets Policy" that address the above mission statement. The City has received Federal Grant money to develop a "Non-Motorized Plan" which will address the City's sidewalk network and is expected to be completed this spring. Engineering has recommended including completing the public sidewalk network throughout the City as one of the key goals of this policy. Additionally, the City's current Master Plan is being revised to address this issue as a key goal as well.

In the City's current Master Plan, one 'neighborhood objective' is to promote a safe, walkable community with a complete sidewalk network that is environmentally friendly for all pedestrians. This objective is best accomplished by adopting a program that continues to maintain existing sidewalks and install new sidewalks where the sidewalk network is incomplete.

Summary:

The Sidewalk Survey conducted by the Engineering Department in the fall of 2010 applied the same 1995 Sidewalk Improvement Program criteria. The current condition of the public sidewalks is summarized below.

1. The sidewalks needing to be repaired today are about one half of the work needed in 1995/1996.
2. Of the sidewalks needing repair, 83% are sidewalks that were not repaired in 1995/1996, 17% are sidewalks that were repaired in 1995/1996.
3. Of the sidewalks that were repaired in 1995/1996 and require repair today, 50% of those required repairs are due to tree root lifts.
4. The total estimated cost for a new sidewalk program is about \$6,000,000.00.
5. Examples of estimated 2011 special assessment costs for various items of work are shown in Table 3.

Recommendation:

The Engineering Dept. recommends that the City undertake a new city wide sidewalk program over six years starting in the spring of 2012. The program will be funded utilizing special assessments and direct billing of the properties adjacent to the sidewalk improvement work. During the initial year, the Engineering Dept. will assess the need to potentially address the more egregious sidewalk lifts throughout the City using water meter personnel for the survey. The City Manager has indicated that it will be necessary to finance this project through a bond issue or other instrument.

The following resolution is recommended for approval;

Be It Resolved, that the City Commission hereby directs the Engineering Dept. to implement a six year city wide sidewalk improvement program starting in the year 2012 with the details to be worked out by the Engineering Dept and Finance Department.

Respectfully Submitted,



Elden R. Danielson, P.E.
City Engineer

ERD/jlh
Attachments

Approved,



Donald E. Johnson
City Manager