



Legislation Text

File #: 19-2176, **Version:** 1

Resolution Creating a Resident-Driven Sidewalk Gap-Filling Program and Appropriate \$150,000.00 from the General Fund, Fund Balance **(8 Votes Required)**

While Ann Arbor is an inherently walkable city, our sidewalk network has substantial gaps. Engineering estimates a total of 149 missing miles with an estimated installation cost of \$150 to \$220 million. The City currently installs approximately 1.25-2.75 miles of new sidewalk annually through capital projects, as well as a smaller number through private development projects. This level of funding and construction activity does not reflect or represent a strong Council interest to address sidewalk gaps on a community-wide basis.

Sidewalk gap prioritization is currently performed by City staff using a multi-criterion values matrix. While this approach ensures consistency in establishing the priority of work, it only includes resident identified and driven initiatives to address neighborhood connectivity as one, among many, criterion. This resolution serves to complement the current approach by adding a resident driven-process.

The primary source for funding new sidewalk installations is the levying of special assessments to property owners who benefit from the public improvement. Per Chapter 12, Sections 1:274-5 of the City code, the cost for sidewalk improvements is funded by the benefitting property owners through special assessment. Staff also uses the availability of grant funding to reduce the financial burden on property owners, when such opportunities exist. Current City code provides Council with the option of adjusting the assessment by determining that there is a "community benefit," mitigating the impact on individual property owners.

This resolution seeks to address the above obstacles through a Resident-Driven Sidewalk Gap-Filling initiative.

Budget and Fiscal Impact: This resolution required a budget amendment to add \$150,000 from the City's General Fund to the FY20 Public Services Budget.

Prepared by: Howard S. Lazarus, City Administrator

Whereas, The City of Ann Arbor has adopted the values of environmental stewardship and building sustainable infrastructure as core values in its Sustainability Framework.

Whereas, The City of Ann Arbor recognizes that a connected sidewalk network is consistent with these values.

Whereas, The expense of new sidewalk construction is currently assessed to the owner of the property.

Whereas, The City Council is legally permitted to evaluate and make changes to the assessment if the improvement is determined to have "community benefit."

Whereas sidewalk gap-filling priorities are currently established by City staff using a formal values

matrix and includes community requests and support as one of the multiple criteria evaluated.

RESOLVED, Council directs the City Administrator to establish and implement a Resident-Driven Sidewalk Gap Filling Program that provides a cost-sharing approach for sidewalk-gaps identified as priorities through resident input. The program will consider qualifying resident petitions as proof of community benefit under Chapter 12, Section 1:274 of the City code and cap the non-City cost share at 50% of the cost of the sidewalk. This program will incorporate the following:

1. Any resident living within 750 feet of a sidewalk gap may petition the City to prioritize the gap and pay up to 50% of the cost of installing the missing sidewalk through a Resident-Driven Sidewalk Gap Filling Program. Resident petitions regarding sidewalk gaps that are already designated as “High Priority” on the existing sidewalk gap prioritization map will be moved to the front of the queue in the program, pending the availability of funding and coordination with other scheduled work.
2. Under the Resident-Driven Sidewalk Gap Filling Program, staff will notify all residents/occupants and property owners within 750 feet of the sidewalk gap identified in the resident petition. Staff will survey by public meeting, written support, or other method deemed appropriate to evaluate evidence of “community benefit.”
3. More than 50% positive resident responses from within the 750-foot radius, with a minimum of a 60% response rate, to the resident survey will be sufficient evidence of “community benefit” and would trigger: (1) creation of a special assessment district for the sidewalk gap construction and (2) automatic cost-share of 50% of the sidewalk costs between the City and the assessed property owner(s), subject to the availability of funding and coordination with other work.
4. Staff will develop further details of the Resident-Driven Sidewalk Gap Filling Program based on the above criteria.

RESOLVED, That \$150,000.00 be appropriated from the balance of the General Fund to amend the FY 20 Public Services General Fund budget for purposes of establishing a pilot Resident-Drive Sidewalk Gap Filling Program; and

RESOLVED, That the funding shall remain available without regard to fiscal year.

Sponsored by: Councilmembers Nelson, Ackerman, Griswold, and Mayor Taylor