

Comments on Winter Maintenance and Snow Removal

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Generally, property owners need to continue to clear the snow from their sidewalks. Since property owners usually need snow removal equipment to clear other places on their property (like driveways and walkways), clearing adjacent sidewalks is not an undue additional burden. Also, property owners are uniquely positioned to monitor the adjacent sidewalks to ensure they remain clear over time after drifting snow accumulates. The majority of property owners in the city are conscientious and do a good job of shoveling; but since sidewalks function as a network, a few scofflaws can render the system unusable. Consider changes to winter maintenance that help the city be more successful at quickly clearing its own parcels and more effectively enforcing the existing standard in the snow removal ordinance.

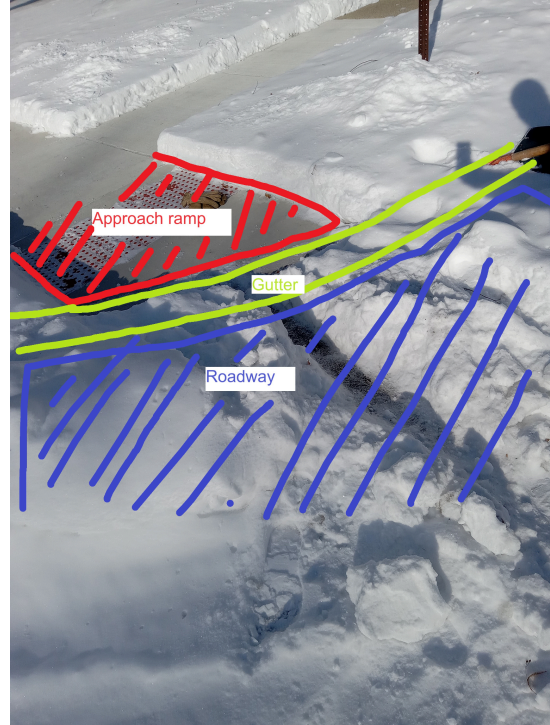
This Commission should consider the following:

1. Deploy city employees from outside of operations to snow shoveling during snow emergencies. Snowstorms are infrequent. Snow shoveling does not require specialized expertise. Employees from other departments can help during snow events.

In the 24 hours after a heavy snow, assign extra personnel to work on clearing snow from crosswalks and city parcels, then transition to proactively enforcing the snow removal ordinance. Don't wait for people to complain before starting enforcement actions; after 24 hours, the snow should already be removed by the property owner or a citation should be issued.

Additionally, consider a volunteer effort, actively managed by city staff, to clear city parcel sidewalks and crosswalks. For example, the amazing Give365 team, most of which is laid off during the winter, could be an excellent employee resource for organizing volunteers and going on site for snow clearing activity.

2. Clarify responsibilities for city operations staff and property owners with respect to the snow banks that are left after the plows clear the street. Are property owners expected to clear snow banks formed at the curb and in curb cuts by plowing of street snow? Or is this the city's responsibility? This is a serious issue; recall that a man walking his dog in Kerrytown died from his injuries after tripping on one of these piles left in a crosswalk. We need to clearly define who is responsible for removing snow from these areas and then act to clear them or enforce clearing. Sometimes this mound is on the ramp to the crosswalk, sometimes it is on the pan of the gutter, and sometimes it is in the roadway; this is difficult to determine before the snow is cleared from the area. Consider that the city needs to take more responsibility here.



Snow bank on Rugby Ct. Picture taken during January, 2024. The property owner has cleared the approach ramp but a very large snow bank remains in the roadway.

3. Compile and publicize the list of parcels and crosswalks for which the city is responsible. There are city-maintained sidewalks near my house that only get cleared AFTER I submit a seeclickfix. Sometimes it looks like new infrastructure has not been captured in the list of sidewalks that the operations team needs to clear. Here are some examples, both from the same location:

<https://seeclickfix.com/issues/15913185>

<https://seeclickfix.com/issues/11794619>

When new infrastructure is built, what is the process for informing the operations team that they now have new sidewalks to clear? How is their budget adjusted to make sure they have the personnel on staff to do the new work?