



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council
FROM: Tom Crawford, City Administrator
Craig Hupy, Public Services Area Administrator
DATE: January 5, 2021
SUBJECT: Sidewalk Gap Update

This memorandum is to update Council on the process for prioritizing sidewalk gap filling projects. It includes a brief review of the criteria used for prioritization as well as an update on what has changed following the approval of the New Sidewalk Millage by voters in November.

Background

The City of Ann Arbor has approximately 436 miles of existing sidewalk, and 144 miles of gaps (as defined by any location in the public right-of-way adjacent to a street that does not have sidewalks). Staff has estimated that the cost to fill all these gaps would be in the range of \$150 to \$220 million, in 2020 dollars.

Based on this volume of needs, staff recognized the need to prioritize the sidewalk gaps in the system. A prioritization system was developed by staff in 2017 and was based on the system used by the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) process. It was updated in 2019, with another minor update in 2020. The results of this effort can be found in Attachment A.

Prioritization System

To standardize the prioritization effort and minimize subjectivity, it was decided that the prioritization system would be developed using criteria that would be as “automated” as possible. The system was drafted to use the existing wealth of data contained within the City’s Geographical Information System (GIS) and consequently cut down the amount of manual effort required by City staff for this massive task.

A group of City staff developed a series of criteria that factored in the relative importance of constructing sidewalk at every gap in the City. These criteria included such factors as distance from various pedestrian generators, access to transit, citizen requests, pedestrian/automobile crashes, and road classification. Understanding that not all these criteria are of equal importance, different weights were assigned to each criterion.

After using the initial priority system for a couple of years, more recent experience and feedback led staff to explore the need to update the criteria. This effort was undertaken in the summer/fall of 2019. The goal was to incorporate some of the feedback received and create projects that are more successful and impactful. The major changes are summarized below:

- What was originally the “Requests” criteria was changed to “Evidence of Community Support” and added a scoring factor to account for evidence of existing pedestrian usage (desire lines).
- “Classification of Adjacent Road” added a scoring factor to award more points to locations where there is currently no sidewalk on either side of a road.
- The “Pedestrian/Auto Crashes” category was modified to include a manual review and give points to locations where crashes were deemed to be related to the lack of a sidewalk.

During the 2019 update, staff also reevaluated the relative weights of the criteria. The evaluation resulted in greater weight being given to such criteria as Community Support and Pedestrian/Auto Crashes. Prior to being adopted, the revisions to the prioritization system were presented to the Transportation Commission and City Council for comment.

Staff completed another minor update to the criteria in the fall of 2020. The only change to the criteria at that time was to make “Pedestrian/Auto Crashes” the top weighted criterion.

A “heat map” of priority areas based on the current scoring system is attached (Attachment B).

The New Sidewalk Millage

On November 3, 2020, voters approved a New Sidewalk Millage for the specific purpose of filling gaps in the City’s sidewalk system. While this millage will not affect how sidewalk gap projects are prioritized, there are a few things that will be different:

- Changes to City Code will be proposed shortly that will modify the requirement for new sidewalks to be specially assessed to property owners.
- If these Code changes are approved by Council, then sidewalk gap filling projects will be funded primarily from the New Sidewalk Millage without the use of special assessments.
- The Street, Bridge, and Sidewalk Millage, which is used for repairs to existing infrastructure will no longer be used to fund any portion of sidewalk gap filling projects.

Revenue from the New Sidewalk Millage will first be collected in July 2021. Staff has scheduled multiple sidewalk gap projects to be completed in the 2021 construction season, which include:

- Barton Drive (Brede to Pontiac)
- Boardwalk Drive (east side from end of sidewalk to Oakbrook)
- Jackson Avenue (Wagner to Park Lake)
- Manchester Drive (near Washtenaw)
- Scio Church Road (Landmark to Seventh)
- Stimson Street (State to end of gaps)
- Yost & Eli (Forestbrooke Athletic Club frontage)

Since funding from the New Sidewalk Millage will not be available until July 2021, some of these projects will require interim financing so that the designs can be completed, and they can be bid out in time to be constructed in 2021. Two Resolutions to accomplish this will be coming to City Council in January 2021.

Project Programming

City staff uses the prioritization system as a guide to program projects in the CIP. Projects on major streets and/or larger sidewalk gap projects appear in the CIP as stand-alone projects. Other smaller gaps are collected under the umbrella project of “Annual Sidewalk Gap Filling”, so that they can be bid together to be done more efficiently and inexpensively.

In addition to programming stand-alone sidewalk gap projects, staff also review other scheduled capital projects that have sidewalk gaps within their limits. As a rule of thumb, staff attempts add sidewalk gap filling to projects that include sidewalk gaps in the “Mid-High” to “Highest” priority tiers, utilizing funding from the New Sidewalk Millage (as described in Attachment B).

2 Attachments

cc: J. Fournier
C. Hupy
N. Hutchinson

	Scoring	Sidewalk Gap Prioritization v2.1				
1	Pedestrian/ Auto Crashes (Weight 100)	0 Zero to one pedestrian/automobile crashes within the past 5 years within 300 feet of gap		10 More than one pedestrian/automobile crash within the past 5 years within 300 feet of gap		
2	Evidence of Community Support (Weight 100)	0 No requests	2 Single request	5 Petition signed by 25%-49% of affected residents OR a clear desire line	8 Petition signed by 50%-75% of affected residents OR requested by barrier-free group/SRTS committee	10 Petition signed by greater than 75% of affected residents
3	Proximity to Schools (Weight 90)	1 Greater than ½ mile from a school	3 Greater than ¼ mile to ½ mile from a school	6 ⅓ mile to ¼ mile from a school		10 Less than ⅓ mile from a school
4	Proximity to Transit (Weight 75)	1 Greater than ¼ mile from an AAATA bus stop	3 Greater than ⅓ mile to ¼ mile from an AAATA bus stop	6 300 feet to ⅓ mile from an AAATA bus stop		10 Less than 300 feet from an AAATA bus stop
5	Proximity to Affordable Housing (Weight 60)	1 Greater than ½ mile from an affordable housing facility	3 Greater than ¼ mile to ½ mile from an affordable housing facility	6 ⅓ mile to ¼ mile from an affordable housing facility		10 Less than ⅓ mile from an affordable housing facility
6	Proximity to a Library, Government Office, Major Commercial Attractor, or Park (Weight 60)	1 Greater than ½ mile from a library, government office, major commercial attractor, or park	3 Greater than ¼ mile to ½ mile from a library, government office, major commercial attractor, or park	6 ⅓ mile to ¼ mile from a library, government office, major commercial attractor, or park		10 Less than ⅓ mile from a library, government office, major commercial attractor, or park
7	Classification of Adjacent Road (Weight 60)	1 Adjacent to a local street	4 Adjacent to an urban collector with existing sidewalk on one side	6 Adjacent to an urban collector with no sidewalk on either side	8 Adjacent to an arterial street with existing sidewalk on one side	10 Adjacent to an arterial street with no sidewalk on either side
8	Near Term Opportunity in City's Non- Motorized Plan (Weight 40)	1 Not identified in Figure 5.1E. in the Plan as a Near-Term Opportunity			10 Identified in Figure 5.1E in the Plan as a Near-Term Opportunity	
9	City-Owned Parcels (Weight 40)	0 Not adjacent to a City-owned parcel			10 Adjacent to a City-owned parcel	
10	Gap Length (Weight 30)	1 Total length of gap between adjacent sidewalks is greater than 330 feet		5 Total length of gap between adjacent sidewalks is greater than 150 feet and less than 330 feet		10 Total length of gap between adjacent sidewalks is less than 150 feet

Sidewalk Gaps -- Progress and Prioritization

