

Final report of Sidewalk Advisory Committee activity Jan 2021 to July 2021

and of related 311 inquiries prompted by the sidewalk discussions.

Submitted to my SAC sponsor, Cara Mendelsohn and to the SAC team on November 15, 2021.

By Rod Scales representing North Dallas Neighborhood Alliance.

The DPW consultant Kimley Horn, along with the DPW used a ranking system that gave no points for the many trip hazards on many sidewalks. It used other ranking criteria to bring attention to 12 focus areas¹ deemed to be of greatest need.

The graphic prepared by DPW that showed 1081 miles of defective sidewalks² (due to these many trip hazards), was removed from the final presentation by DPW to Council members so all they saw was the graphic of 2085 miles of missing sidewalks.³

The City budget⁴ included money for just 3 of the 12 focus areas to be “fixed” in 2022.

Since the cause of most trip hazards are due to original defective design/construction/inspection, it was relevant to inquire with Efrain Trejo, Manager of the Sidewalk Replacement Program, if on-site inspectors were now following correct construction practices for sidewalk replacement. At 4 sample locations, it was shown that the correct process is being followed and matter was pursued no further.

The DPW 2002 construction drawings⁵ updated this summer were reviewed for correction of missing or contradictory sidewalk details and it was pointed out that there was still no detail for how a new section of sidewalk is to be joined to an existing sidewalk to avoid future trip hazards appearing due to ground movement. Also noted that there is still no requirement for soil compaction at water meter locations in sidewalks to avoid later settlement. No firm commitment could be obtained from Mr. Trejo to add these drawing omissions.

OBSERVATIONS OF 311 SYSTEM DISCOVERED WHEN LOOKING AT HOW SIDEWALK PROBLEMS CAN BE REPORTED

Since fixing sidewalk defects seems to be a rare event, inquiries were made via Mr. Trejo of how defects are reported through the 311 system. Is there a system/process issue or is it homeowner lack of interest? Certainly, lack of homeowner interest is a big factor. The following suggestions would help the 311 system and department delegation work better.

It was suggested that the 50/50 sidewalk replacement web page⁶ be edited to add an 8.5x11 drawing⁷ of approved sidewalk construction meeting ADA requirements, so residents can print it to for their private contractor. Same as other suburban cities do. The web page does not reference that the work be done only by City-approved contractors. Why is this all so secretive when DPW complains of sidewalk defects being a problem of not following approved standards?

There is sometimes money available for minor sidewalk repairs for low income senior citizens living in CDBG-eligible areas, who in the last year have either been issued code citations or have contacted the Department of Public Works for sidewalk repairs. There are no such funds currently available. No mention of that periodic subsidy on the 50/50 webpage.

The 311 app OurDallas has no drop down choice for reporting a sidewalk trip hazard by a sidewalk walker other than ADA Accessibility Concerns option. That option refers to constraints, barriers and ramps but is SILENT on trip hazards that violate ADA criteria.

Service requests are marked as closed even though the work has not been done. “Closed” just means the s/r was moved from the call center to the appropriate department. In the *Kilmichael*

example below, you can see how multiple service requests were opened and closed for the same complaint. So how can the s/r open/close elapsed time data be analyzed for resolution performance if the clock keeps getting restarted with a new number?

A defect can be reported by any sidewalk user. A sidewalk replacement request results in an inspection and the homeowner is given notice to fix the hazard. The homeowner can choose the 50/50 cost share or hire their own contractor without that subsidy. The homeowner is supposed to contact Public Works if they choose DIY. But there is no follow up by the City if the homeowner chooses an unapproved contractor. The homeowner is NOT provided with a handout explaining the process of permit, and City-approved contractor following the specifications/design. Code enforcement is only concerned that the problem appears to be fixed, not if it was done properly per City standards. The City will fix a defect with a free temporary asphalt application if asked, but apparently is often refused by the homeowner. No sidewalk user is able to know if a defect is awaiting a fix. There is no way on the 311 app for the public to view the status for an address. Logic would suggest the defect location be marked with paint or similar to indicate "in process" and avoid repeated reporting. The Water Department does that when they have work yet to be completed. In practical terms, it means no one knows, so presumably someone is doing something, but in reality oftentimes no one does anything. So the problems persist and accumulate until possibly reinspected. If it went to the 50/50 program, that could take a year, although it is understood steps are underway to shorten that with more contractors, if the money is allocated to support that greater velocity of spending. Two examples of the drawn-out process follow:

7751 La Bolsa has a measured 4" high step up trip hazard across the full width of the sidewalk on its side street. Admittedly from a tree root. It was submitted on 11/19/20 as s/r 20-01138286. On 11/20/20 the status reported that the inspector could not find the 4" trip hazard and closed the s/r. It was resubmitted and changed to s/r 20-01142797 and the problem confirmed and the s/r closed 1/20/21. On 3/8/21, the homeowner requested to be added to the low income help program for sidewalks, but there was no low-income money available. On 10/21/21 a new s/r 21-00916501 was created to place asphalt ramp, which appears to be because of my multiple inquiries. So the hazard remained for almost a year after the first complaint and no target date to remediate.

7622 Kilmichael has a 3" high step up trip hazard across the full width of the sidewalk on its side street. It was submitted on 5/31/21 as s/r 21-00489922. On 6/21/21, for unknown reasons, the s/r was closed and a new s/r 00489959 was created as needing a wheel chair ramp (which it did not) and then later closed 8/19/21. It was reported that this was incorrect and so a new s/r 21-00767264 was created on 8/19/21, and 311 showed that the violation was confirmed 8/30/21 and then it was closed on 9/29/21 marked as Completed, yet nothing had been done as of 10/22/21. On 11/1/21, trying to find out why it was closed but not done required a call to the Sidewalk Replacement Program (perhaps I should have started with 311) who said I had to talk to Code Compliance 214 670 5708 for detail. They referred to me to the North East division 214 670 9703. They said I had to talk to inspector, Russell Johnson 469 515 0858. She said she did not inspect it, but looked it up and said it went to the sidewalk replacement program – back to square one! Why is general information on status not available to the public?

FOOTNOTES

1 June 20, 2021 Dallas Sidewalk Master Plan (SMP) Final Report

2 The presentation, dated January 21, 2021, provided by consultant Kimley Horn, was developed from City data. The information map of the miles of damage is on page 4 thereof. On June 2, 2021 DPW Director Perez presented the Update of the City's Five-Year Infrastructure Management Program and Pavement Degradation Models in a City Council Briefing. Sidewalks were a small part of that presentation. On page 17 the graphic of 1081 miles of damaged sidewalks had been removed.

3 On June 2, 2021 DPW Director Perez presented the Update of the City's Five-Year Infrastructure Management Program and Pavement Degradation Models in a City Council Briefing. The 2085 miles of missing sidewalk work was estimated at \$1.08B on page 18; maintenance of existing sidewalks *going forward* was estimated at \$976M. It proposed each amount be spread over 40 years, or about \$25M/yr for each category. Those amounts could not then be traced into the current City 2021-2 budget.

4 The August 10, 2021 2021-22 City budget on page 7 contains \$30M allocated over two years to address half of the first 12 focus areas, or 3 per year.

5 Dept of Public Works Standard Construction Details, file 251D-1 dated June 2021 drawing 1015, sidewalk construction details, still missing the two omitted items referenced above.

https://dallascityhall.com/departments/public-works/DCH%20Documents/Public%20Works/pdf/Standard%20Construction%20Details%20%28251D%29%20-%20Final%206-14-21_Rev3.pdf

6 Sidewalk replacement program web page: <https://dallascityhall.com/departments/public-works/Pages/SidewalkReplacementProgram.aspx>

7 Frisco construction documents pdf page 502, drawing P23

https://www.friscotexas.gov/DocumentCenter/View/19609/Engineering-Standards-August-2020_Final-V2?bidId=