



MEMO

To: Mayor and City Council
From: Justin Clausen, P.E., Public Works Operations Manager
CC: Steven L. Schainker, City Manager
 John Joiner, P.E., Public Works Director
Date: June 14, 2023
Subject: Sidewalk Safety Program Referrals

At the May 16 and June 14 City Council meetings, during Disposition of Communications, the City Council requested a memo regarding the Sidewalk Safety Program in response to inquiries from Shawn Kenny and Laurel Scott.

Currently the City addresses sidewalk safety issues on a complaint basis. Once a complaint for a particular property is received, staff will investigate, paint the sidewalk panels that are not in compliance, and send the abutting property owner a letter indicating the sidewalk panels that need to be repaired. The responsibility for the abutting property to maintain the sidewalk is contained in Municipal Code section 22.1, and in the Iowa Code section 364.12 2 c and d. If no action is taken within 60 days, a second letter is sent by certified mail reminding the abutting property owner of the need to make repairs. If no response is taken 30 days after the second letter, City staff will coordinate with a contractor to make the repairs. The City will pay the contractor and invoice the abutting property owner for the cost of the repair.

The table below indicates the number of sidewalk repair letters sent out by calendar year. The current calendar year of 2023 has seen a significant increase in sidewalk reporting, especially in the Somerset and Prairie View East and Prairie View West neighborhoods.

2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
28	3	76	60	94	27	85	90	221

Unique situations regarding tree roots (both on public and private property), utilities, recent CIP construction projects, and repair techniques are a common occurrence when working with abutting property owners. Staff works closely with those owners and contractors to achieve compliance with the standards for sidewalk safety.

The City’s standards for sidewalks have been developed utilizing past practices, guidance from the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG), Iowa Statewide Urban Design and Specifications (SUDAS), and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The attached table indicates the City’s current standards for sidewalk safety as well as standards from several other cities in Iowa. It should be noted that standards from other communities appear to exceed federal guidance under PROWAG.

Comparisons of Sidewalk Safety Standards

City	Vertical Displacement	Horizontal Displacement	Inspection Frequency	Holes	Spalling	Cracks	Deviation from Grade	Offers Subsidies	No. of Days to Repair
Ames	1/4"	1/2"	Complaint Only	1/2" diameter	50% + 1/4" depth	2 cracks greater than 1/8" wide	-	No	90
Des Moines	3/4"	3/4"	8 Years	3/4" deep	50% + 1/2" depth	No piece of panel smaller than 1 SF	3/4"	Yes	-
West Des Moines	1"	-	8 Years	-	50% of panel	-	2"	-	75
Altoona	1/2"	1"	4 Years	3/4" deep - 4" diameter	50% + 1/2" depth >50% + 3/4" depth	6 pieces	3/4"	-	-
Urbandale	1"	2"	4 Years	-	50% + 1/2" depth	4 pieces + 1/2" Vertical or 2" Horizontal	2"	-	-
Clive	1"	-	3 Years	-	Loose material	3 pieces + 1/2" Vertical or 2" Horizontal	2"	-	45
Iowa City	1"	2"	10 years	-	75% + 1" depth	4 cracks - no piece smaller and 16 square inches	3"	-	-
Coralville	3/4"	3/4"	5 Years	-	50% + 1/2" depth	3 pieces - one or more loose	2"	-	-
Cedar Rapids	1/4"	-	8 Years	-	-	-	2"	Yes	-
Marion	1"	2"	-	-	1" depth	3 pieces + 1/2" Vertical or 2" Horizontal	2"	-	-
Waterloo	3/4"	3/4"	12 Years	1/2" deep - 1-1/2" diameter	50% + 1/2" depth	3 pieces - one or more loose	2"	-	45
Dubuque	3/4"	3/4"	10-12 miles per year	3/4" deep	50% + 3/4" depth	3 pieces + 3/4" Vertical or 3/4" Horizontal	2"	-	60
Sioux City	3/4"	3/4"	10 Years	3/4"	50% + 1/2" depth	No piece of panel smaller than 1 SF	3/4"	-	-