

Staff Report

SIDEWALK SNOW REMOVAL PRIORITY AREA

April 26, 2011

On June 22, 2010, the City Council received a staff report summarizing what other communities are doing to enforce property owners maintaining sidewalks under adverse winter conditions. Council then asked staff to establish a pilot area for proactive enforcement. It was decided that the pilot area would be Ash Avenue from Chamberlain Street to Storm Street, Knapp Avenue from Ash Avenue to South Sheldon Avenue, and Hayward Avenue from Chamberlain Street to Storm Street.

The proactive enforcement effort meant that staff would visually inspect the pilot area once other snow operations were complete. Depending on actual storm conditions, this would occur two to three days after the snow began. If staff identified a sidewalk that has not been cleared, staff was to post a notice on the front door of the property stating that the owner had 24 hours to remove the snow and/or ice. If the work was not done within the 24-hour period stated on the notice, staff then hired a contractor to remove the snow and assessed the actual cost billed from the contractor, plus a \$50 administrative fee, to the property owner.

As evidenced on the attached map, during the winter of 2010-11 a total of 235 notices were issued to 214 properties city-wide for failure to remove snow and/or ice from sidewalks in a timely manner. Of these 214 properties, 122 were rental properties. In the pilot area, a total of 40 notices were issued to 36 parcels, 31 of which were rental properties. In total for 2010-11, 43 parcels were ultimately billed for snow removal, 15 of which were in the pilot area. In comparison, during 2009/10 a total of 559 notices were issued to 385 properties across the community. Within the priority area during 2009/10, 145 notices were issued to 86 properties.

The following are staff observations from administering the pilot area:

- It is difficult to drive the area and find deficient sidewalks if there is accumulated snow in the parking. Therefore, this pilot project required more staff time than expected in order to get out of the City vehicle and walk the area.
- Interns were not used this year due to difficulty in coordinating schedules since they are part-time. Therefore, more permanent staff time had to be devoted to this effort than first estimated.
- A new system allowing citizens to lodge complaints by e-mail caused some complaints to be lodged before staff could look at the pilot area. This delay might have caused some frustration on the part of our citizens because we did not inspect the area until all of our other snow operations were completed.

- Because of the different type of winter we experienced this year (fewer snow events and less total accumulation than the previous year), it is difficult to determine the effectiveness of this pilot program. The data does indicate that a higher rate of City-initiated snow removal was required after the initial notification in the pilot area (38%) than for the remainder of the City (15%).