SANDY SPRINGS
GEORGIA

# CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM

**TO:** Mayor & City Council **DATE:** May 6, 2011

**FROM:** John McDonough, City Manager

**AGENDA ITEM:** Discussion on Funding in FY2012 for the Neighborhood Sidewalk Matching Program

**MEETING DATE:** For Submission onto the May 17, 2011, City Council Work Session Meeting Agenda

*BACKGROUND INFORMATION:* (*Attach additional pages if necessary*)

See attached:

Policy

*APPROVAL BY CITY MANAGER:* JJM _____ *APPROVED*

_____ *NOT APPROVED*

*PLACED ON AGENDA FOR:* 5/17/2011

*CITY ATTORNEY APPROVAL REQUIRED:* ( ✓ ) *YES* ( ) *NO*

*CITY ATTORNEY APPROVAL:* WBell

*REMARKS:*

# Sidewalk Master Policy

**Originally Adopted - February 12, 2008**
**Amended April 6, 2010**

Sidewalks provide serve a number of functions including: encouraging people to make more use of the most basic form of transportation – walking; providing non-vehicular mobility options; recreation space for walking and jogging; and informal meeting places for neighbors. They also improve pedestrian safety throughout the City.

The sidewalk policy has three major components: a comprehensive sidewalk plan as part of the capital improvement program (CIP), developer requirements, and a neighborhood sidewalk program. Sidewalks constructed as part of the CIP follow the Sidewalk Master Plan and focus on overall mobility needs. Developers install sidewalks or provide funding as required by the City's development regulations and impact fee ordinance. The neighborhood sidewalk program is a way to partner with the neighborhoods to provide primarily recreational and amenity features to local residential streets.

The main goals of this policy are to improve:

- Safety
- Pedestrian mobility
- School connectivity
- Recreation and park connectivity
- Transit access
- Multiple land use connectivity

## CIP Sidewalk Program

Sidewalks installed with the City's capital improvement funds follow a prioritized master plan that is part of the overall Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP). The master plan outlines a desired future network of sidewalks and pedestrian connections that improve safety and mobility throughout the City. The master plan network includes roadways of a functional classification of collector and higher, all City and PCID zoning overlay districts, and areas within a walkable radius of pedestrian destinations such as transit, schools, and parks.

The master plan network is prioritized on the basis of how many different criteria a particular road meets. For example, a road that was a collector in the proximity of a school, park, and transit station would take priority over a local road only in proximity to a park. The master plan network map and the various criteria maps used in its development can be found in the CTP document.

Construction of master plan network sidewalks will be handled as normal CIP projects, to be programmed and managed in the City's CIP work program. The primary funding sources for these projects are City CIP funds and impact fees.

Individual projects may qualify for match funding from such sources as LCI funds, federal TE funds, State programs, and CDBG funds. Any matching funding will have specific criteria and restrictions that must be met for eligibility.

## Developer Requirements

All developers are required to install sidewalk along all roadway frontages of their properties as part of any land disturbance or building permit. Building permits that are issued for renovation or accessory structures are excluded from this requirement. Any building permit issued for renovation in the City's zoning overlay district that meets the threshold amount specified in the zoning ordinance will be required to install sidewalk along all property frontages.

Development projects with roadway frontages that are not on the master plan network can pay in lieu of installing the required sidewalk on those frontages. The payment will be based on a per linear foot amount that is determined by the Director of Public Works. This amount will be evaluated on an annual basis to reflect current construction costs. In cases of hardship, where it would not be safe or advisable to construct sidewalk, the Director of Public Works can approve payment in lieu for any development project. All funds collected as payment in lieu will be deposited in a unique account to be used solely to fund CIP sidewalk projects.

Sidewalks and streetscapes are project improvements for individual developments along their property frontages. This includes curb, gutter, and pedestrian signalization upgrades. As project improvements, work along the property frontage does not qualify for any impact fee credits. Additional work on off-site improvements may qualify and will be approved on a case-by-case basis by the Director's of Public Works and Community Development. Standards and construction specifications for all work done in the right of way can be found in the City's development regulations.

## Pedestrian Access Program

The City Council identified a need for a program that allows quick response to pedestrian access issues from residential neighborhoods to pedestrian destinations. Sidewalk segments of this type may take an unacceptably long time to prioritize within the capital sidewalk construction program funding mechanism due to their short length and disconnected nature. Therefore, the Neighborhood Access Program provides a separately funded annual budget allotment to be spent for small scale sidewalk projects on a first-come first-served basis. Projects must meet the following criteria to qualify for this program:

- Projects have a maximum total cost of $50,000.
- Projects must be located on streets with a functional classification of collector or higher.

- Projects must connect a neighborhood to clear pedestrian destination, such as parks, schools, playgrounds, community centers/pools, activity centers, retail development, sports facilities, transit facilities, libraries, etc.
- No compensation will be given for right of way or easements of any kind. All required right of way and easements must be donated for a project to be eligible to use these funds.
- The proposed sidewalk project must form a contiguous segment from either an intersection or the end of existing sidewalk facility to another intersection, end of a sidewalk facility, or pedestrian destination. No parcels may be omitted from contiguous segments. Any omissions will make the project ineligible for funding.
- Projects will be initiated by written request from the community to the Director of Public Works. Priority will be given on a first-come first-serve basis with the date of letter received arbitrating.

Once Director of Public Works deems that a proposed project meets all required criteria for the program, the project request will be sent to the City Manager for final approval and funding allotment.

## Neighborhood Sidewalk Program

The most immediate and significant mobility and safety concerns are addressed in the sidewalk master plan as part of the City's CTP. The planned network does not, however, address all desires for sidewalks within local neighborhood streets. Many of these sidewalks serve more recreational needs and act as neighborhood amenities.

The Neighborhood Sidewalk Program addressed the community desire for these pedestrian facilities by allowing them a way to participate in requesting and funding projects for their neighborhood. The program is funded separately from the CIP, with neighborhoods sharing the in cost and showing further community support in the form of a petition process.

### Neighborhood Sidewalk Request Process

1. A Homeowners' Association, neighborhood group, or individual may request to have sidewalks installed in their neighborhood

2. The neighborhood must show support for proposed solution by submitting a petition to the Public Works for verification

3. Once the petition is verified, Public Works staff will submit the request and petition to the City Manager for direction

4. Public Works will make a field review of the area, document findings, and develop a conceptual cost estimate for the request

5. A score will be developed for the request and the Public Works staff will develop a recommendation for the City Manager

6. The sidewalk is included on the list of neighborhood sidewalk projects and placed in order based upon the site score

7. If directed by the City Manager, Public Works staff will develop a final project design and cost which will be presented to the neighborhood in a neighborhood information meeting

8. Once the neighborhood can provide the matching funding, the final design and cost will be presented to the Mayor and City Council for consideration of approval and funding

9. Upon City Council approval, the sidewalk project will be implemented at the direction of the City Manager

**Neighborhood Petitions**

The City of Sandy Springs requires that there be wide support from the community for implementing sidewalks in its neighborhoods. All of the impacted property owners on the street where the sidewalk is being requested should be contacted and given an opportunity to sign this petition, indicating their opinion concerning the installation of the sidewalk. Any abstention or indication other than a "yes" will be considered a "no."

A spouse's signature will not be acceptable if he/she is not the legal owner. If both husband and wife are joint legal owners, both signatures are required. A "Mr. and Mrs." signature is not acceptable. All owners must sign individually, including owners of undeveloped lots. Renting tenants are not an acceptable substitute for the legal homeowner. The percentages will be calculated, based on individual lots where the owners sign affirmatively, divided by the total number of lots in the neighborhood. Each lot counts as only one lot regardless of the number of owners signing. At least 65% of the homeowners in the impacted area must vote in favor of installing the sidewalk, before the petition will be accepted. Where a neighborhood has a homeowners' association or other legal mechanism allowing a group less than the previously stated required percentages to represent their position on matters such as these, this mechanism may replace the petition process as approved by the City Manager after consultation with the City Attorney.

The completed petition must be returned to Public Works where it will be verified against tax records and land lot maps to ensure that it meets all requirements. The petition will be presented to the City Manager for action. Public Works and

the City Manager reserve the right to set a reasonable expiration date on petition signatures.

**Neighborhood Cost Share**

All installation costs for the neighborhood sidewalk project will be shared between the City and the neighborhood, with the City providing 75% and the neighborhood providing 25%. Installation costs include but are not limited to: establishment of a level shoulder, reconstruction of driveways, construction of the sidewalk, sign and pavement marking modifications, and landscaping. Mail box relocation, if required by the final design, will be a homeowner responsibility. For sidewalk projects, the neighborhood will assist the City in obtaining the necessary easements or right-of-ways to facilitate the construction project.

**Sidewalk Request Scoring**

Sidewalk requests will be scored on the following criteria. These criteria will be used to score sidewalks to determine a priority for implementation of the neighborhood requests.

**Safety:** Any potential or demonstrated pedestrian safety hazard, such as crash history, topography, roadway alignment, street lighting, speeds, or nearby land uses, will increase the justification for a project.

**School Connectivity:** Walking becomes an alternative form of transportation when located near a private or public school. Therefore, this will increase the justification for a project.

**Recreation and Park Connectivity:** Sidewalk projects located within ¼ mile of a COSS park, green space or neighborhood park and providing connectivity to a green space or a park will increase the justification for a project.

**Transit Connectivity:** Based on multi-modal studies, people will typically consider utilizing an alternate mode if within ¼ mile of a transit option; therefore the proximity of a request to a bus stop or rail station will increase the justification for a project.

**Multiple Land Use Connectivity:** Requests for projects that promote pedestrian connectivity between land uses, such as links between residential, commercial, and office use will increase the justification for a project; the shorter the distance between uses, the better it serves the transportation system as people are more likely to choose walking for trips under ¼ mile.

**Current Pedestrian Use:** Requests for locations that show defined "desire lines" will increase the justification for a project.

**Adjacent Roadway Volumes:** Requests on roads that have Average Daily Traffic (ADT) volumes of greater than 400 will increase the justification for a project.

**Constructability:** Existing shoulder and curb and gutter conditions will have an impact on the project cost and feasibility. Good condition curb and gutter and flat, unobstructed shoulder conditions will increase the justification for a project.

**Age of Request:** Every 12-month period that the project remains on the priority list will increase the justification for a project.