



Lawrence Association of Neighborhoods

March 6, 2018

Dear City Commissioners, City Manager and City Staff,

Lawrence Association of Neighborhoods stands firmly in opposition to the proposed sidewalk hazard repair program as it is presently written. Sidewalks, like other infrastructure, constitute a public good and as such should be similarly maintained and financed. The City of Lawrence has the latitude to implement a policy which spreads the cost of sidewalk repair equally among Lawrence citizens.

Staff has not been clearly directed to consider other funding options.

While staff has looked at some examples of solutions being used by other communities throughout the country, it has not engaged the public on this topic. The city has a mechanism for public feedback which could be used to gather input on alternative policies. In the interest of transparency, please consider clearly directing staff to use its polling system and have public forums to discuss alternate funding options.

The prioritization of property zones for inspection is arbitrary and ignores the importance of sidewalks in areas of high pedestrian traffic. If the city is truly concerned about liability issues disrepaired sidewalks create, priority should fall on areas with higher pedestrian use. Furthermore, if liability to the city is a legitimate concern the backlog of sidewalks previously identified as hazardous that remain unrepaired should be addressed regardless of geographical area. Beginning implementation of the proposed policy in an area with fewer and newer sidewalks suggests more concern with enforcement than public safety or liability.

The proposed policy is not currently or predictably funded.

Implementing this policy without the funding to provide for the cost-sharing program or the financial assistance program would be a disadvantage to the first targeted area. There are ways to address this problem. We request that staff and commissioners arrive at a clear long term solution to funding before the policy is adopted or implemented.

There is no clarification in the policy for brick sidewalks.

The maintenance of brick sidewalks seems like a low priority to some. Nevertheless it is reasonable and wise to have a clear plan for how the city will address them before the policy is approved. A year ago at the unveiling of this policy the City Manager acknowledged this shortcoming. Please, clearly direct staff to address this.

While a workable sidewalk policy is overdue, it must be carefully crafted to address the complexities that exist in our community. This policy, in its current form, presently has several problems and unanswered questions. Property owners, renters and taxpayers in every neighborhood in Lawrence expect that policies approved by the City Commission do not give an advantage to some citizens over others. Given the importance of this issue, LAN urges the City Commission to give further consideration to this policy, and to allow for public input and involvement as we move forward. Please do not approve Administrative Policy 117 as it is written now.

Respectfully,
Courtney Shipley, LAN Chair