

City of Columbia

701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201



Agenda Item Number: REP 43-15

Department Source: Community Development - NS

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: 4/6/2015

Re: Enforcement of Sidewalk Snow Removal

Documents Included With This Agenda Item

Council memo

Supporting documentation includes: City Code Sidewalk Maintenance Requirements

Executive Summary

Sidewalk snow removal is an issue every winter in the City of Columbia. Snow is usually short-lived in our community but when present it is a hazard and impediment to persons using public sidewalks. Over the last few years the Office of Neighborhood Services has made an effort to increase awareness of the ordinances related to sidewalk snow removal, yet increases in compliance have not been observed.

Discussion

The Office of Neighborhood Services has continued to work on the issue of removal of snow from sidewalks as it is the responsibility of the owner or tenant. Gearing up for winter 2014-15, ONS sent postcards to owners of all properties along a priority snow route that had a sidewalk reminding them of the ordinances, worked with the City Channel on public service announcements, and shared the ordinances with neighborhoods and rental property owners in our regular monthly communications.

Staff in ONS and Building & Site Development (BSD) also conduct enforcement action as needed. During our recent winter, ONS opened 66 cases where contact was made with residential property owners about sidewalk snow removal and BSD received 13 complaints on commercial properties. In the winter of 2013-14 ONS opened 61 cases while BSD received six complaints, one resulting in prosecution. The majority of cases opened are as a result of resident complaints. Each time a complaint is addressed we are educating property owners about their responsibilities.

Our current system has several shortcomings and challenges including:

- Enforcement of the entire City is not feasible because of the number of properties not in compliance and the existing workload of City staff. The City's GIS staff reports there are 3,136 parcels on state and city first-priority snow routes with sidewalks. Assuming that one-third voluntarily comply this would leave more than 2,000 properties out of compliance.
- The City has a total of 538 miles of sidewalks. Again assuming that the compliance rate after a snowfall is one-third, for example, that would leave approximately 360 miles of snow-covered sidewalks and thousands of properties in violation.
- A complaint-based system does not address the areas of highest pedestrian traffic. Some

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complaints may be a result of an existing neighbor disagreement.

- Some areas of city-maintained right of way are not adequately cleared of snow, making it difficult to expect residents to comply.

In spite of the increased activity related to education and enforcement, staff does not observe an increase in compliance. Staff recommends additional enforcement in addition to our continued education about this issue. One approach may be focusing enforcement on priority snow routes and rotating sections of the City over the winter in order to address various part of town with existing staff.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: N/A

Long-Term Impact: N/A

Vision, Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

Vision Impact: Not Applicable

Strategic Plan Impact: Health, Safety and Wellbeing

Comprehensive Plan Impact: Not Applicable

Suggested Council Action

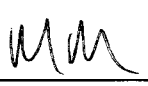
Acceptance of this report.

Legislative History

none



Department Approved



City Manager Approved



SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS INCLUDED WITH THIS AGENDA ITEM ARE AS FOLLOWS:

City Code Sidewalk Maintenance Requirements

City of Columbia Code of Ordinances

Excerpts – Requirements for sidewalk maintenance including snow removal:

Chapter 6 Buildings and Building Regulations:

Sec. 6-71. - Adopted.

The 2012 Edition of the International Property Maintenance Code, published by the International Code Council, Inc., including all appendices, one (1) copy of which has been on file with the city clerk for a period of ninety (90) days prior to the adoption of this article, is hereby adopted by reference and made a part of the Code of Ordinances, City of Columbia, Missouri as fully as if set forth in its entirety. At least one (1) copy of the 2012 Edition of the International Property Maintenance Code shall remain on file in the office of the city clerk and shall be kept available for public use, inspection and examination.

2012 International Property Maintenance Code:

302.3 Sidewalks and driveways. All sidewalks, walkways, stairs, driveways, parking spaces and similar areas shall be kept in a proper state of repair, and maintained free from hazardous conditions.

Chapter 24 Streets, Sidewalks and Public Places:

Sec. 24-12. - Cleaning sidewalks.

All persons are hereby required to keep the sidewalks in front of, or adjacent to, the property or premises owned or occupied by them or under their control, within the city, clear and free from rubbish, filth, refuse, dirt, snow, ice and from any and all obstructions and dangerous agencies of every kind and description whatsoever; and any person failing to observe the provisions of this section shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor.