



**Public Works Committee
Meeting Summary**

Date: Tues. Aug. 21, 2007

Time: 1:30 p.m.

Room 391

Members Present: Johnson, Brown, Lehmann, López, Nevitt

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Madison, Robb

1. Local Maintenance Districts Group One – Budgets and assessments

Committee Action

The Committee approved moving the budgets and assessments for 8 local improvement districts to Council sitting as the Board of Equalization on Sept. 17.

Summary of Discussion

Randy Schnicker and Brendan Kelly, Districts Management Office, presented an overview of the special districts within the city and specific information on 8 of the local maintenance districts. A special district is a quasi-governmental form of government created for specific purposes funded by owners of the properties within its boundaries. The types are:

City Charter Districts – created under authority of the City Charter

Local Improvement District (LID)

- to construct improvements, such as alley or street paving; sidewalks; curb & gutter, storm drainage systems; wastewater lines; streetscape amenities; etc.

Local Maintenance District (LMD)

- to provide for continuing care, operation, security, repair and maintenance of improvements within pedestrian areas of the public right-of-way.

State Statute Districts – created under authority of the State Statutes

Business Improvement Districts (BID)

- to acquire, construct, finance, maintain and operate improvements such as pedestrian malls; streetlights; landscaping; streetscape amenities; off-street parking facilities; information booths; restrooms, etc.

General Improvement Districts (GID)

- to construct, install or acquire any public improvement except solid waste disposal improvements and services.

Metropolitan Districts

- to provide services such as street improvements; sanitation and water systems; park & recreation improvements; ambulance service; fire protection; mosquito control; etc.

The local maintenance districts each have a 5-member board of directors, and the Manager of Public Works is a member of each. The board prepares a work program and budget for each year, which is reviewed by the Districts Management Office. Based on the budget, assessments are calculated for each property, determined by linear-foot of frontage. Individual assessments are mailed to each property owner, accompanied by directions on how to protest the assessment (send a letter to the Manager of Public Works stating why the protest is being filed). Residential properties, churches and non-profit organizations normally request an adjustment in their assessments. Sitting as the Board of Equalization, City Council holds public hearings on the assessments of each LMD and considers any protests. The Board (Council) has the authority to make "equitable and just" changes in the assessment on any property, which can be a reduction of up to 100%, recognizing that any reduction results in higher assessments on the other properties within the district.

The LMDs have been divided into three groups, and hearings on the first group (listed below) are scheduled for September 17. The second and third groups will be heard on September 24 and October 22.

Local Maintenance Districts – Group ONE		
Local Maintenance District	Council District	Proposed 2008 Budget
15 th Street Pedestrian Mall	9	\$27,000
20 th Street Pedestrian Mall	9	\$ 7,000
Consolidated Larimer St. Pedestrian Mall	9	\$32,000
Santa Fe Drive Pedestrian Mall A	9	\$24,990
Santa Fe Drive Pedestrian Mall B	9	\$36,873
Santa Fe Drive Pedestrian Mall C	9	\$ 2,583
Welton Street Pedestrian Mall	8	\$30,000
St. Luke's Pedestrian Mall	8	\$58,000

2. Safe Routes to School update

Crissy Fanganello, Senior City Planner, Public Works, updated the Committee on this program, which aims to promote walking and biking at school through health and safety education as well as physical improvements need to provide safe routes.

- First round federal funding was available in 2005-2006.
- Construction contracts were finalized this week for the 1st round of funding.

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- First round schools:
 - University Park \$70,154
 - Valdez \$38,941
 - Mitchell \$37,689
- Applications were submitted for 3 schools in funding round 2 funding; 2 were approved and contracts are pending:
 - Ashley \$85,061
 - Swansea \$134,640
- Council Proclamation No. 15, March 27, 2007, endorsed creation of a Coalition of organizations and city agencies to:
 - Develop a citywide action plan
 - Make policy recommendations
 - Coordinate the program
 - Implement the plan
- Coalition members will include:
 - Denver Public Schools
 - Several non-profit groups promoting health and safety
 - Colorado Dept. of Transportation
 - Denver Public Health Dept.
 - Environmental Health Dept.
 - Denver Public Works Dept.
 - Denver Police and Fire depts.
 - Denver City Council (hopefully)
- Greenprint Denver has a goal of establishing walking and bicycling programs at all DPS schools by 2011.
- October 3 is Walk to School Day 2007; participating DPS schools are:
 - Howell (K-8)
 - Phillips (primary media site for the event)
 - Park Hill
 - Bromwell
 - University Park
 - Hamilton
 - Mitchell
 - Valdez

Councilman Brown noted that the first case, University Park Elementary, was not handled well and ended in mediation as neighbors argued over where the proposed new sidewalk should be located. Some people do not want sidewalks. He said he hoped lessons had been learned and would be applied in future projects.

3. Proposed Sidewalk & Curb Ramp Construction Rules & Regulations

Jason Longsdorf, Supervisor, Public Works Planning & Development, presented revised sidewalk and curb ramp construction rules and regulations to be presented to and signed by the Manager of Public Works on August 28.

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Mr. Longsdorf said that one goal identified in Comprehensive Plan 2000 is that rules and regulations for sidewalks and curb ramps be well-defined and consistent as part of the City's efforts to connect all parts of the city, enhance the pedestrian environment, and encourage walking and biking. Current conditions are:

- 3,400 miles of street frontage, including
 - 1,000 miles detached sidewalks
 - 1,400 miles attached sidewalks
 - 400 miles of non-compliant sidewalks
 - 200 miles of missing sidewalks
 - 5-10% of sidewalks are flagstone
 - 32,000 curb ramps
 - 18,000 missing curb ramps

Over the past couple of years, Public Works has worked to draft a comprehensive sidewalk policy. Parks & Recreation and Community Planning & Development have been partners in the effort. Dozens of individual neighborhood meetings have been held, in addition to large public meetings. Over 100 community members attended the public hearing on December 13, 2006, and the draft policy has been revised based on comments received at that hearing. For example, the proposed fee in lieu of sidewalk installation has been removed. The Manager of Public Works has reviewed the policy and is prepared to officially adopt it as part of the Manager's Rules & Regulations on August 28.

The policy:

- Streamlines the sidewalk permitting process.
- Adopts a consistent trigger for application of new rules: A building permit application for improvements valued at \$100,000 or more.
- Certificate of Occupancy will not be issued until the sidewalk work is completed.
- Creates a formal exceptions process but minimizes potential for exceptions.
- Adopts a standardized requirement for retaining valuable trees in the right-of-way.
- Clarifies expectations for parkways.
- Codifies expectations for curb ramps.

Basic sidewalk regulations:

- Properties with sidewalk:
 - bring any substandard sidewalk up to code.
- Properties without sidewalk & NOT on a parkway:
 - install attached or detached sidewalk (based on prevailing neighborhood character).
- Properties without sidewalk ON a parkway:
 - install detached sidewalk.

The policy aims to protect valuable trees by allowing for sidewalks to meander, adjust grade or width in order to avoid causing root damage. A "valuable tree" is defined as one that is established, is healthy and structurally sound, is a desirable species, and is not overly mature. The City Forester will make those determinations.

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The six areas listed below are exempt from compliance with the policy based on set criteria.

Exempted areas:

- **Belcaro** neighborhood south of Exposition (which is excluded from exemption) to Kentucky between Colorado and Steele.
- **Crestmoor** neighborhood south of 6th Ave. (which is excluded from exemption) to Bayau between Monaco and Holly.
- **Park Lane Historic District of Country Club** south of 6th Ave. (which is excluded from exemption) to 3rd Ave. between York and High.
- **South Jackson Street** between Iliff (which is excluded from exemption) and Harvard Gulch.
- **Lakeridge Road** between Wolff (which is excluded from exemption) and Tennyson.
- **Inspiration Point streets** of Ames Way; W. 51st Ave. from Benton Way to Benton St; and Benton Way from W. 51st Ave. to Inspiration Point Dr.

Exemption Criteria

- Historic sidewalk-less design;
- No internal transit service;
- No internal civic features, such as schools, parks;
- Compliant accessibility and drainage;
- Inconsistent grid; and
- Pedestrians and vehicles can safely share the streets.

Questions and comments during the discussion included:

- Find some way to provide for sidewalks in hazardous locations where right-of-way width does not accommodate sidewalks.
- Develop ways to consolidate sidewalk complaints on any given block or couple of blocks so residents can benefit from economies of scale with contractors.
- When the City plans a street reconstruction, sidewalks can be inspected first and homeowners may want to “bundle” sidewalk reconstruction with the contractor.
- Sidewalk policy applies to commercial as well as residential areas, although permits for tenant finish will not trigger the policy requirements.
- Areas with lots of scrape-offs and pop-tops will have “sidewalks to nowhere”.
- City annually issues about 2,000 permits for work valued over \$100,000; most of these locations have good sidewalks.
- Kim Bailey, Manager of Parks & Recreation, will sign the cover page of these rules and regulations along with the Manger of Public Works to underscore the cooperative effort.

Gretchen Williams
Council Legislative Services
08-28-07

s:committees/2006-2007/public works/agenda