Item 7:  50/50 Sidewalk Program – Citywide ½ Cent Sales Tax Funded

The city currently funds a Sidewalk Repair Program that repairs existing deteriorated sidewalks at various locations throughout the city. The program provides matching funds to allow residential property owners to repair sidewalks that are out of compliance with current codes. This is commonly referred to as the 50/50 program. Current funding is $100,000/year.

Current Process:

Engineering bids out sidewalk panel replacement at the beginning of each year. When a complaint comes in about a sidewalk, city staff reviews the sidewalk for broken sections or trip hazards of 1” or more. The property owner is notified in writing of the issues and the need to repair within 30 days. At that time, they are told about the 50/50 program. If they elect to participate in the program, engineering provides a detailed cost based on bid prices. Once the city receives payment for 50% of the cost, their name is put on a list. Once we have 5 to 7 locations where payment has been received, we notify the contractor and the sections of sidewalk are replaced.

Pros/Cons:

- Residents are only responsible for 50% of the bill.
- Can be a month or more between payment and the city having enough work to release the contractor to work
- Contractor is working at many different locations – so they may remove the sidewalk and form up the new sections but not place the concrete until all the different locations are ready to pour.
- Any issues with the contractor such as reseeding, or ruts, or trash or whatever, come back to the city.

Proposed Process:

City responds to complaints as before and notifies the property owner of the issues and the need to repair within 30 days. At that time they are told about the 50/50 program. City notifies the owner in writing how much the city will cover based on bid prices from similar sidewalks projects. Property owner hires their own contractor, city inspects the work and the property owner pays 100% for the repair. Once the city received a copy of the paid invoice, we will reimburse the property owner for 50% - based on our written estimate.
Pros/Cons:

- Sidewalk may be repaired much more timely as contractor is working for just that one property owner.
- Homeowner addresses any problems directly with the contractor.
- Much less time needed by city staff dealing with bidding, correspondence, receiving funds, complaints about the waiting list and busy contractors not being responsive.
- Homeowner is required to pay 100% upfront and then be reimbursed for city’s match – this may create hardships for those experiencing economic hardships.

Staff is planning to utilize the proposed process starting in 2021 unless the committee feels strongly that the current process should be maintained.