



Department Source: Community Development - NS

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: February 4, 2019

Re: Sidewalk Snow Removal Enforcement Efforts

Executive Summary

The snowfall on January 11 and 12 rendered public sidewalks impassable if they were not cleared. While City ordinance requires property owners or occupants to clear their sidewalk, the rate of sidewalk snow removal was low. Downtown and commercial or institutional property owners with access to maintenance crews were more successful clearing sidewalks. The heavy, wet snow and additional obstructions such as overspray from street plowing and fallen tree limbs presented significant challenges to sidewalk snow removal in some areas. City staff and Council received complaints from those who were not able to safely use sidewalks; this report reviews enforcement actions and reviews plans to address this issue in the future.

Discussion

Current Enforcement

City ordinance requires sidewalk snow removal in two places: Sec. 24-12 and also in section 302.3 of the International Property Maintenance Code that the City had adopted. Community Development staff respond to citizen complaints regarding snow covered sidewalks. Building & Site Development (BSD) handles commercial property complaints. Following the January 11-12 snow, BSD received six complaints resulting in contact with several properties and staff proactively canvassed the downtown area resulting in 100% voluntary compliance. Neighborhood Services opened 174 cases where residential property owners were notified of the ordinances and asked to clear the sidewalk. The majority of those properties complied.

Already, the number of enforcement cases for residential properties for FY19 far exceeds that of past years as tracked by Neighborhood Services: 2018 - 1 case; 2017 - 0 cases; 2016 - 15 cases; 2015 - 66 cases; 2014 - 61 cases. There is no record of prosecuting property owners or tenants for clearing snow from sidewalks during this time.

For the remainder of this winter season, Community Development staff will prioritize complaints on sidewalks along first and second priority snow routes and review properties that were previously in violation.

Future plans

Work to improve the City's response to sidewalk snow removal issues will take additional time with a goal to prepare for the 2019-2020 winter season. Input from stakeholder groups including the Bicycle & Pedestrian Commission, Disabilities Commission and others would be sought. Those efforts may include:



City of Columbia

701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201

- Revising our ordinances to include a time frame for compliance and clarifying responsibility between owners and tenants.
- Discussing best practices to successfully prosecute continual violators of City ordinance with the Law Department.
- Requesting Council approve a policy to prioritize areas for sidewalk snow removal enforcement and provide resources to property owners that need assistance.
- Preparing a communications plan to better educate our residents on the importance of sidewalk snow removal.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: none
Long-Term Impact: none

Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

[Strategic Plan Impacts:](#)

Primary Impact: Not Applicable, Secondary Impact: Not Applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

[Comprehensive Plan Impacts:](#)

Primary Impact: Mobility, Connectivity, and Accessibility, Secondary Impact: Not applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Legislative History

Date	Action
n/a	n/a

Suggested Council Action

Acceptance of this report.