

Sidewalks and Trails Plan

BACKGROUND

The city's role in providing for pedestrian and bicycle traffic has changed throughout its history. Prior to the 1950's most development included public sidewalks along streets. This was standard development practice and provided for in the city charter. However, starting in the 1950's many cities, including Owatonna, stopped constructing sidewalks as part of new developments. This was primarily due to the rise in automobile ownership and usage and its impact on how people lived, shopped and worked. Sidewalks were considered by residents, businesses, and thus government officials as not being necessary anymore and with the expense and effort involved with construction and maintenance they were even considered undesirable. Besides, the construction of relatively wide streets seemed to provide for the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists. While there still seems to exist ambivalence towards the sidewalk there is a growing awareness of their benefits especially as it corresponds to the increasing popularity of walking for health, recreational and lifestyle reasons. There have even been two recent developments in the city that have elected to include the traditional sidewalk in the initial construction of the streets, viewing them as an amenity.

Urban trails on the other hand, are a fairly recent phenomenon. Prompted by growing use of bicycles for recreational purposes, proliferation of grant programs and recreational trail development in other cities, Owatonna has pursued a fairly aggressive program of trail development starting in the 1980's which continues today. Trails are specifically designed for multiple users, including bicycles, roller bladers and foot traffic, and while the function of sidewalks and trails overlaps it may be helpful to examine their characteristics.

Sidewalks

- Designed primarily for foot and wheelchair traffic. Typical design and construction is not conducive to biking except for the youngest of cyclists. However, there are instances where individual circumstances may warrant the construction of a hybrid trail/sidewalk which varies from typical design in order to accommodate multiple users.
- Typically constructed in street right-of-way running lateral to roadway.
- Provide a level of comfort and safety for foot traffic.
- Provide pedestrian access to various destinations in the city.
- May play a role in building a sense of neighborhood cohesiveness.
- May encourage walking with its recreational and health benefits.
- Function with the trail system to provide a coordinated system for both recreation and access to destinations, but role is more limited due to the sidewalks design and construction.

Trails

- Designed for multiple users (bicycles, foot traffic, roller bladers, wheelchairs)
- Trails are constructed both lateral to roadways and off road.

- Provide a level of comfort and safety for non-motorized wheel traffic and foot traffic but the design of the trail must take into consideration potential conflicts arising from their accommodation of multiple uses.
- Provide connections to park facilities
- Provide access to and through high amenity areas
- Function as a recreation destination in its own right
- Parts of the system will ultimately form a “beltline” corridor around the city
- Function with the sidewalk system to provide a coordinated system for both recreation and access to destinations, but role of trails is broader than sidewalks in that the trail is designed for multiple users and is a recreation destination in itself

The circumstances in which sidewalks are required are generally at the discretion and determination of the city council. There is no ordinance or formal policy which states the circumstances or conditions where sidewalks must be constructed. Several years ago the Planning Commission with city staff developed a sidewalk plan proposing sidewalk development in commercial areas, around public facilities including parks and schools and along major arterial streets. Largely as a result of these planning efforts, new sidewalks have been ordered by council as part of the construction or reconstruction of state aid streets in both commercial and residential areas. In these instances state aid funds are used for the construction.

The Parks and Recreation Board have engaged in an extensive program of trails planning and development for over thirty years. Several miles of trails have been constructed throughout the city based on trails plans created and updated over the years, the last plan being completed in 2010. Trail construction has relied greatly on the availability of grants and local philanthropic funding and the donation of trail corridor right-of-way.

Recognizing the advantages of an integrated sidewalk and trails planning and development program, the Parks Board and Planning Commission have met and developed a coordinated plan of action. As noted above, the recognition of the relationship between the function of sidewalks and trails and the advantages of integrating sidewalk and trails planning efforts has prompted the Parks and Recreation Board and Planning Commission to coordinate their efforts as an integrated approach to address the needs of foot and non motorized wheel traffic.

SIDEWALK AND TRAILS MAP

The Planning Commission and Parks and Recreation Board have prepared a sidewalk/trails map indicating existing and proposed trails and sidewalks. This map, along with the recommended policies as presented below, shall serve as the basis for future sidewalk and trail development in the city.

SIDEWALK AND TRAILS POLICIES

- 1) The city shall develop a construction/development schedule for trails and sidewalks based on the Sidewalk and Trails Map and include in the schedule project prioritization, and when applicable include such projects in the city’s capital improvement program.
- 2) Sidewalks as indicated on the plan map and when applicable, trails, should be included as part of street construction and reconstruction projects.

- 3) Prior to the construction of any new sidewalk, potential use of the sidewalk should be evaluated to determine if the sidewalk design needs to be upgraded to accommodate multiple users.
- 4) Land subdivision proposals shall be evaluated for compliance with the sidewalk/trails plan map. Securing any necessary right's-of-way for sidewalk/trail development shall be pursued as part of subdivision approval process.
- 5) The city will coordinate with the County and the State of Minnesota in the development of trails and sidewalks in instances where a proposed sidewalk or trail corridor falls within their right-of-way jurisdiction or when connections to state or county regional trails are anticipated.
- 6) It will be the policy of the city to extend to the intersection of the street existing sidewalks that end mid-block unless the existing sidewalk is less than 50% of the length of the block in which case the sidewalk may be removed if the costs of doing so are born by the abutting property owners.
- 7) The city will continue to require street widths on lower traffic volume streets where sidewalks are not intended to be constructed with adequate curb to curb width or shoulders to provide a degree of safety for foot traffic and non-motorized wheel traffic.
- 8) Periodically review existing ordinances and policies regarding sidewalk and trail construction to determine if any revisions are necessary.
- 9) Trails shall be constructed in priority to obtain a continuous loop around the City. Connections that continue this primary loop shall be of the highest priority.
- 10) Trails shall be constructed to provide a trail connection to every park.
- 11) Sidewalks that connect the surrounding residential neighborhoods to the neighborhood school shall be of the highest priority.
- 12) Sidewalks proposed along major commercial corridors shall also have a high priority.
- 13) Sidewalks that provide pedestrian connectivity throughout a neighborhood shall be of a lower priority unless privately funded.
- 14) The City will work with and encourage the Minnesota Department of Transportation and Steele County to provide complete streets on all State and County Roads.
- 15) The City will work with the Minnesota Department of Transportation and Steele County to provide any Interstate or river crossings that are needed to complete the system.
- 16) The City will attempt to provide a trail connection within ¼ mile of every property within the City. If a trail is not feasible, a sidewalk will be constructed in the vicinity that will provide connection to a trail or the greater sidewalk network.
- 17) Bike lanes will be considered as an option where trails either cannot be constructed due to physical conditions or where they may be constructed more expediently where existing conditions meet proper design standards for bike lanes.

EXISTING SIDEWALK/TRAIL DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCES AND POLICY.

The city's **Subdivision Ordinance** does not require the construction of sidewalks as part of on-site development improvements. However, developer may elect to include sidewalks as part of the construction of street improvements. If sidewalks are constructed they must meet design standards as required by the city engineer. The Subdivision Ordinance provides the City Council the option of requiring pedestrian crosswalks in blocks over 900 feet in length if they determine they are necessary to public safety, convenience and necessity. The following are provisions in the city charter, ordinance code and snow and ice control policies regarding sidewalk construction and maintenance.

City Charter

Section 6.4 SIDEWALKS. Owners of lands abutting upon a highway, street, lane, or alley in said City, shall construct, reconstruct, and maintain in good order and repair such sidewalks along the side of the street, lane, or highway adjoining the land of such owners respectively, as directed by the city council. All sidewalks shall be built in such manner and of such material and width, and upon such place and grade as the city council may prescribe.

City Ordinance Code

Section 640 - Sidewalk Construction

Section 640:00. Sidewalk Requirements. Permanent sidewalks of concrete shall be constructed wherever old walks are condemned, replaced or where new walks are ordered by the Council upon all streets.

Section 640:15. City Construction. Work on all permanent walks must be commenced within fifteen (15) days after being ordered by the Council. The property owners failing to do this, total cost of such sidewalk, when constructed or replaced under contract by the City, may be assessed against the abutting property as a special assessment, which assessment shall be made in accordance with the laws of the State or the Charter of the City for levying special assessments for street improvement.

Section 650:05. Snow, Ice, Dirt and Rubbish Removal.

Subd. 1. All snow, ice, dirt and rubbish remaining on a public sidewalk more than twenty-four (24) hours after its deposit thereon is a public nuisance. The owner and the occupant of any property adjacent to a public sidewalk shall use due diligence to keep such walk safe for pedestrians. No such owner or occupant shall allow snow, ice, dirt or rubbish to remain on the walk longer than twenty-four (24) hours after its deposit thereon, provided, however, that snow and ice removal in residential areas is required within forty-eight (48) hours.

Subd. 2. The City Engineer may cause to be removed from all public sidewalks all snow, ice, dirt and rubbish as soon as possible beginning twenty-four (24) hours after any such matter has been deposited thereon or after the snow has ceased to fall. A record showing the cost of such removal adjacent to each separate lot and parcel shall be kept and delivered to the Clerk-Treasurer.

Section 650:15. Repair of Sidewalks.

Subd. 1. The owner of any property within the corporate limits of this municipality abutting a public sidewalk shall keep the sidewalk in repair and safe for pedestrians. Repairs shall be made in accordance with standard specifications approved by the Council and on file in the office of the City Engineer.

Subd. 2. The City Engineer shall direct such inspections as are necessary to determine that public sidewalks are kept in repair and safe for pedestrians. If he finds that any sidewalk abutting on private property is unsafe and in need of repairs, he shall cause a notice to be served, by registered mail or by personal service, upon the record owner of the property and the occupant, if the owner does not reside within the corporate limits of this municipality or cannot be found therein, ordering such owner to have the sidewalk repaired and made safe within thirty (30) days and stating that if the owner fails to do so, the municipality may do so, that the expense thereof must be paid by the owner, and that if unpaid it will be made a special assessment against the property concerned.

Subd. 3. If the sidewalk is not repaired within thirty (30) days after receipt of the notice, the City Engineer shall order his agents or employees to repair the sidewalk and make it safe for pedestrians or order the work done by contract.

Section 650:20. Assessment. The Council may then spread the charges against property benefited as a special assessment under Minnesota Statutes, Section 429.101 and other pertinent statutes.

Snow and Ice Control Policies and Procedures for the City of Owatonna

Adopted Oct. 28, 1998

Rev. Nov. 30, 2000 & Dec. 21, 2010

FOURTH PRIORITY

Sidewalks

* In accordance with Section 650 of the Ordinance Code, "All snow, ice, dirt and rubbish remaining on a public sidewalk more than twenty-four (24) hours after its deposit thereon is a public nuisance. The owner and the occupant of any property adjacent to a public sidewalk shall use due diligence to keep such walk safe for pedestrians. No such owner or occupant shall allow snow, ice, dirt or rubbish to remain on the walk longer than twenty-four (24) hours after its deposit thereon, provided, however, that snow and ice removal in residential areas is required within forty-eight (48) hours."

Operations

* The Public Works and Park & Recreation Departments perform snow and ice removal from all sidewalks on and adjacent to City owned properties, including parks, parking lots, some Owatonna Public Utilities property and the Steele County Fairgrounds.

Exceptions

* Snow and ice removal is done by the Public Works Department at specific sidewalk locations that are adjacent to the curb or under a special agreement. The locations are:

1418 S. Oak Avenue (Oakdale Motel)

S. Oak Avenue from Holly Street to Bridge Street

N. Oak Avenue from Bridge Street to Rose Street

State Avenue from Frontage Lane NW to 12th Avenue NW

W. Bridge Street from I-35 to Walnut Avenue

W. Main Street from Walnut Avenue to East Park Square
E. Rose Street from Willow Avenue to Oakwood Lane NE
Mineral Springs Road along Forest Hill Cemetery
Mineral Springs Road from St. Paul Road to Mineral Springs Parkway
St. Paul Road along Forest Hill Cemetery
St. Paul Road from 24th Street NE to 26th Street NE
N. Cedar Avenue from 13th Street NE to 14th Street NE (west side)
N. Cedar Avenue from 11th Street NE to 14th Street NE (east side)
North Street from railroad tracks to N. Cedar Avenue (south side)
North Street from Straight River Bridge to N. Oak Avenue (south side)
Lemond Road from W. Bridge Street to Selby Avenue SW
Bixby Road from E. University Street to Truman Avenue SE
Truman Avenue from E. School Street to E. Main Street

FIFTH PRIORITY

Trails

* The City of Owatonna has a multiple-use trail system created to provide a variety of recreational opportunities for city residents and visitors. The Park & Recreation Department performs snow and ice removal on the trails that are designated as 4-season. The 4-season trail locations are:

Kaplan's Woods Parkway from boat landing to Morehouse Dam

Lake Kohlmier lower loop

Cashman Crossing Bridge and Morehouse Manor trail

All trails within Morehouse Park

Muckle Trail from Morehouse Dam to North Street

Buxton Trail from N. Elm Avenue to Brooktree Golf Course Clubhouse

Buxton Trail from Brooktree Clubhouse to Crestview Lane NE

Buxton Trail from Brooktree Clubhouse to Wedgewood Drive NE

All trails within Mineral Springs Park

Mineral Springs Road from Mineral Springs Parkway to Dane Road NE

N. Cedar Avenue from 24th Street NE to 26th Street NE

St. Paul Road from 26th Street NE to Stoneridge Lane NE

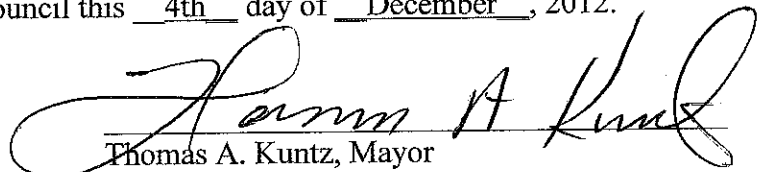
26th Street NE from N. Cedar Avenue to Kenyon Road NE

Exceptions

* Trails that are designated as 3-season and that have no destinations or specific termini at this time shall not have snow and ice removal done.

Approved and adopted by the City Council this 4th day of December, 2012.

ATTEST


Thomas A. Kuntz, Mayor


Kris M. Busse, City Administrator/City Clerk