

# Sidewalk Improvement District Program

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. How did you decide where to start the program?

The city's previous program worked on a cycle where a project area was inspected every 20 years. The SID program is using the same map and rotation so the sidewalks in the first project area were always scheduled to be "next." The 2023 project was originally scheduled to run in 2022; however, the project was paused to allow the conversation for SID program to proceed.

### 2. Will you be filling sidewalk gaps through this program?

No, this program targets maintenance and repairs of existing sidewalks. New sidewalk segments, known as gap fills, are the financial responsibility of the property owner.

### 3. Why do I have to pay this if I don't have sidewalk on my property?

Everyone benefits from a walkable community and most people use sidewalks somewhere within Rochester, even if they do not have one directly in front of their house.

### 4. Will I only pay fees for the 5 years after there is a project in my neighborhood?

Since there will be a project somewhere in your district every 5 years, the fees will continue annually for continued sidewalk maintenance.

### 5. Will this program fund goals of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) transition plan?

The Sidewalk Improvement District program and the ADA transition plan are related and working toward the same goal of safe, accessible pedestrians facilities, but one isn't necessarily part of the other. The ADA transition plan focuses mostly on ramps, push buttons, complete streets, etc., while the maintenance program focuses on trippers and cracks. City Council voted on November 14, 2022 to accelerate progress toward the goals in Rochester's Americans with Disability Act (ADA) Transition Plan by approving a combination of additional tax levy and SID charges.

## Continued

### 6. Are sidewalks reported as unsafe addressed by this program?

With this approach and depending on the timing of defect reports, defects may not be addressed for up to 5 years after initial receipt. Parcel owners abutting sidewalk defects are responsible for mitigating defects between project years in a district. At a minimum, the abutting parcel owner is responsible for refreshing paint marks from the initial City inspection until the program rotates to a project area in the same district as a defect.

### 7. What are my responsibilities if my sidewalk has been marked?

At a minimum, the abutting parcel owner is responsible for refreshing the pink paint marks from the initial City inspection until the program rotates to a project area in the same district as a defect (See photos for examples of painted sidewalk defects). Abutting parcel owners may also choose to repair their sidewalks prior to the next district cycle; however, SID rate reductions will not necessarily apply. Property owners considering this should contact the City to discuss whether or not this approach makes sense for them.



### 8. What if I don't want grinding or other mitigation methods used to improve my sidewalk? Can I opt to have the City fully replace some or all of my faulty panels?

Yes, as long as you are willing to cover the cost difference between the repair method selected by the City and your preference. You will not, however, have the option to be assessed for this work – payment would be due in full, up-front at the rates in the City's contract.

### 9. Will this program be used to repair public bike trails too?

Not at this time. This could, however, change in the future, as Public Works continues to evaluate options for funding trail maintenance.

### 10. I just built a new house and my sidewalk won't need repairs for many years. Why should I have to pay for the SID?

Most parcels in the City with existing sidewalks paid for the original construction of their sidewalks. The intent of the policy is to maintain this financial obligation for new sidewalk construction. Going forward, new houses/buildings and assessments associated with sidewalk gap fill projects will probably be the two most common examples of parcel owners paying for newly constructed sidewalks. The SID fees are a related, but somewhat separate consideration – they should be viewed as a contribution to maintenance of the sidewalks in the broader district (not just the sidewalk abutting a single parcel).

## Continued

### **11. Can neighborhood associations opt out of this project if they have been, and will continue to, maintain their own sidewalks?**

No, property owners are not able to opt out of the SID program. Rates for individual residences within the Home Owners Association (HOA) will depend on tax records and presence/absence of public sidewalk, but SID fees will generally apply to maintain the HOA's public frontage and/or sidewalks within the District. The SID Program is not set up to maintain privately owned and maintained sidewalks, thus the HOA will continue to be responsible for the maintenance of their privately owned sidewalks.

### **12. When will construction occur in the first District?**

Construction on the first project area will occur in Spring 2023. In Fall 2023, sidewalk inspections will occur in the second District, ahead of the formal adoption of the project area and associated rates for 2024.

### **13. When will the first District see the assessments on their property tax statement?**

Assessments are certified for collection on property taxes the year following completion of a sidewalk project. We anticipate SID fees will be included on property tax statements for the southeast district in 2024 (following completion of the first SID project in 2023).

### **14. How do I pay these fees and can I pay them in advance?**

Unlike Special Assessments (including those for past sidewalk projects), these fees are only payable on your property tax statement and cannot be paid in advance.

### **15. How are these fees handled when the property is sold?**

Since these fees cannot be paid in advance and all participating parcels will eventually pay annually, we do not anticipate property transactions will involve escrow accounts for SID fees.

### **16. What do I do if I believe I have been improperly assessed?**

Property owners with questions about their Sidewalk Improvement District assessment can contact Tyler Spies, Project Manager at 507-328-2466 or [tspies@rochestermn.gov](mailto:tspies@rochestermn.gov)

### **Program contact information**

Questions not answered via these resources can be directed to:

Tyler Spies, Project Manager  
507-328-2466 or [tspies@rochestermn.gov](mailto:tspies@rochestermn.gov)