

# 2020 Safe Walks Program

## Project Background

The City of Delaware continues to take an active position in maintaining pedestrian sidewalks throughout the community through annual inspections and repair. Sidewalk maintenance is critical to ensure safe walking surfaces connecting our neighborhoods, especially for those unable to drive, for the elderly, and for those individuals with limited mobility. Every year, individuals are injured on sidewalk that has fallen below established safety criteria to the point it poses a hazard to pedestrians. The City's Safe Walks Program is designed to identify potential deficiencies within the sidewalk network and have them addressed within a reasonable amount of time.

In 2007, the City initiated the Safe Walks program whereby all sidewalk within the City was inspected over a 10-year period, with repairs being required to identified deficient sidewalk sections. This approach yielded over 11,000 repairs and greatly improved the safety of our sidewalk network within the community. Nevertheless, every year additional sections of sidewalk become deficient and require repair or replacement. The City continues to address sidewalk deficiencies in two ways.



**Customer Service Request:** CSR's are initiated through the submission of a sidewalk condition complaint by a resident. Upon receipt, the City will inspect the sidewalk for deficiencies. Tripping hazards are identified and marked with orange safety paint. Sections of walk that are marked with a BLUE dot are the city's responsibility to replace. The City will make best efforts to repair the deficient sections of walk in a timely manner. Walks marked with a WHITE dot are the property owner's responsibility to repair. Affected property owners will soon receive a notification letter outlining repair requirements and a REQUEST that repairs be completed within an established timeframe. Should a property owner fail to make the requested repairs, additional action is taken by the City to REQUIRE the repairs be completed. While the Ohio Revised code specifically assigns responsibility for maintaining sidewalks to the abutting property owner, the City is required to follow a process of notification before repairs can be required including passage of a Resolution of Necessity by City Council which includes the terms of completing required repairs. The process includes providing a property owner with a cost estimate and time frame to complete the work by certified mail, and the right to appeal the requirement. Should the property owner fail to make REQUIRED repairs, the resolution allows for the City to have the repairs completed and to invoice the property owner for the costs.

**Annual Pavement Management Program:** Each year the City initiates an annual street resurfacing program, and as part of this effort all public infrastructure on streets to be paved is inspected including pavement markings, signage, street lighting and sidewalks. Deficiencies are identified and repaired accordingly. Sidewalk deficiencies that are identified as the responsibility of the City are addressed timely by either grinding the tripping hazards smooth where practical, or by including the sidewalk repair work as part of the pavement maintenance contract to be completed in association with the street resurfacing work. If a deficiency is the responsibility of the property owner, the owner is notified in writing and provided sufficient time to address the REQUESTED work through hiring of a contractor. Should the owner fail to complete the requested repair, the City follows the same procedure as outline above whereby Council action will REQUIRE the repairs to be completed. This approach allows for more timely attention to the repair of tripping hazards by the City, especially those associated with ongoing street tree root damage.

### Common Repair Methods



The City has recently adopted the use of a concrete surface planer which essentially can grind the concrete walk smooth where a vertical tripping hazard is present. This work can be completed quickly by the City Street Crew with minimal disruption to pedestrians or the adjacent property. Though the surface finish is disrupted in the area of the repair, utilizing this method prolongs the useful life of the sidewalk before full replacement is necessary. This method is limited to addressing tripping hazards generally less than 1 ½" in height and is permitted for use by property owners.



Where surface grinding is not possible, conventional removal and replacement is the most common repair method available. When walk sections are removed, tree roots directly below the walk are removed to reduce the likelihood of reoccurring damage from roots lifting sidewalk sections. This method generally takes two or three days to complete before a walk can be opened to pedestrians.