



Sidewalk Hazard Mitigation Program 2019 Proposed Changes: Fact Sheet

City of Lawrence Sidewalk Maintenance Code

[Section 16-105 of the City of Lawrence Code](#) stipulates that property owners responsible for assuring that sidewalks adjacent to their property are properly maintained. City code requires repair of any raised section that is higher than ½ inch above the adjacent sidewalk or of any holes or depressions that might cause pedestrians using the sidewalk to trip and fall. Historically, however, there was no proactive system in place to assure sidewalks were maintained in accordance with city specifications. This lack of a system resulted in poorly-maintained sidewalks in much of the community. In 2013, the Lawrence-Douglas County Community Health Plan called on communities in Douglas County to build stronger, safer sidewalk networks to ensure residents, regardless of age or ability, could be active by walking (or rolling or wheeling) on their neighborhood sidewalks. Local residents in groups such as LiveWell Lawrence (now [LiveWell Douglas County](#)) and the Lawrence Pedestrian Coalition, citing the new health plan, called on the City of Lawrence to address the poor quality of city sidewalks, and in 2016 the Pedestrian-Bike Issues Task Force issued a [report](#) urging the city to establish an equitable and practical sidewalk repair program that would bring all sidewalks and curb ramps up to code by 2030.

Sidewalk Hazard Mitigation Program

In response to growing concerns, on March 6, 2018, the Lawrence City Commission approved Administrative Policy 117, which clarified that it is the policy of the City to require property owners to maintain sidewalks adjacent to their property and to repair hazardous sidewalks adjacent to their property. The policy also outlined

procedures for annual inspection of a portion of the sidewalks located within the City limits, notification of property owners when sidewalk hazards are documented, and a process for ensuring repair of the identified hazards. The policy also noted that the City may provide financial assistance under this program for qualified applicants that meet the US Department of Housing and Urban Developments (HUD) annual income thresholds, if funding is available. The policy also called for the City Manager to consider funding for the program in annual City budgets and Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) prepared for consideration by the Lawrence City Commission each year. The 2019 adopted budget included \$1 million for the program (of which \$800,000 was available for financial assistance to residents), and the 2020 adopted budget included another \$1.5 million (of which \$1.2 million was available for financial assistance programs). The 2020-2024 CIP calls for additional annual investments of over \$500,000 into the financial assistance program for the sidewalk hazard mitigation program.

Program Changes for 2020

Municipal Services & Operation staff implemented a number of changes to the program that were outlined during the City Commission Work Session on September 10, 2019, including:

- Borders of mitigation zones were modified. Click [here](#) for a map of the zones. The city may elect to focus on a sub-region in any given year.
- Public meetings will be held for residents in the mitigation zone slated for inspection in advance of the work, in order to answer questions.
- There will be a two-phase notification to property owners (notifications first in January and then again in February following the inspection) regarding necessary repairs.
- Property owners will have until the last day of April to make repairs.
- Appeals will be considered administratively by an appeal officer designated by the city manager.
- The City will perform repairs for property owners who request the City to perform repairs on their behalf or who do not perform the repairs prior to the last day of April.
- Property owners who have the City complete repairs will be billed after the repairs are completed and will have until to the last day of July to pay the City for the cost of the repair. If a property owner has not paid in full by that time, they will be required to pay the amount of the assessment, together with interest at a rate equal to the interest rate on bonds issued by the City to finance the costs of the assessment, in four equal annual installments.

For more information on changes to the program and information about implementation of Phase Two of the project, visit <https://lawrenceks.org/sidewalk-hazard/>.