

Staff's response to the comments

Thanks to everyone who took the time to share their thoughts. A few common themes came up in the questions, so we'd like to share some information that might help address them.

Material types

The City has experimented with different material types. Olympia was an early adopter of pervious concrete, which helped advance its science, and we routinely use it when the City builds new sidewalks. We have also used asphalt and rubberized asphalt in some instances to preserve mature or historic trees, and we have occasionally re-routed sidewalks when able.



Rubberized asphalt installed in Washington DC about 10 years post-installation

None of these alternative materials work very well long-term. Tree roots continue to grow and interfere with the sidewalk. At best, they can buy some time, and in cases of mature and otherwise healthy trees, that may be appropriate.

These approaches are very labor-intensive and costly, because they require several City staff members to review each individual case. Given the scale of tree/sidewalk conflicts in Olympia, it isn't realistic to try to deploy this method for every tree and sidewalk conflict citywide. We need a solution that will work at a citywide scale.

ADA compliance and “worst first” approaches

A sidewalk with a lift that is higher than a quarter inch is not compliant with current ADA standards and can be a barrier to some people using walking aids. A “worst first” approach, which targets the highest sidewalk lifts for repairs first, might not reduce the greatest number of barriers to people with disabilities. Instead, prioritizing sidewalk repairs based on the key locations pedestrians are most likely to go might reduce barriers to the greatest number of people soonest, regardless of the severity of sidewalk condition. There is a lot for the City Council to consider with this.

Sidewalks in neighborhoods

Many of the proposed common pedestrian destinations, like schools, parks, and some transit stops, are in neighborhoods.

Existing gaps in the sidewalk network

The City has a program to build new sidewalks on major streets, which is described in the [Transportation Master Plan](#). Some people remarked about the need to fill in gaps in the sidewalk network in older residential neighborhoods, which the new sidewalk program does not address. Developing an approach to fill in these gaps at a future date is something the community would clearly welcome.

Working with community groups to fix sidewalks

The City does not currently have the capacity to train community groups to do this work.

Thanks for your time. If you have any questions, please reach out to either of us in Olympia Public Works Transportation:

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