



SIDEWALKS INITIATIVE

Creating a Walkable City



March 2007



SIDEWALKS AND OTHER PEDESTRIAN-RELATED IMPROVEMENTS

Creating a Walkable City

The City's goal is to expand and improve the current inventory of sidewalks to create a safe, contiguous, and geographically-appropriate pedestrian network throughout the city. Seattle's neighborhoods are characterized by a mix of housing, dining, retail, and employment opportunities. The pedestrian environment is a critical connection between these opportunities and a key to neighborhood livability. While the majority of city streets include sidewalks, many do not.



To achieve this goal, the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) is proposing new legislation that would require a greater number of projects to build sidewalks than is required under the current code — resulting in the construction of more sidewalks. The legislation is to be accomplished in two phases of work as described below.

Existing Conditions

Based on 1996 data, there are 1,806 miles of streets within Seattle city limits; 598 miles of those streets — or approximately 1/3 — do not have sidewalks on both sides of the street.* On average, the ratio is the same for streets within and outside of Urban Centers and Villages.

- Streets north of 85th Street comprise 16% of the city's total streets, but 36% of the city's total street without full sidewalks.
- Some areas of Southeast and West Seattle are also missing significant sidewalk infrastructure.

*Includes streets with only partial sidewalks or sidewalks on one side only, as well as streets with no sidewalks at all — many of these have been updated since the map's creation.

Urban Centers/Urban Villages Most Lacking In Sidewalks

Urban Centers/Villages where 1/4 or more of the streets are lacking in sidewalks

Urban Village	Miles of streets	Miles of streets without sidewalks
North Rainier	20	7
MLK at Holly St [#]	12	6
Northgate	9	5
South Park	11	4
Lake City	5	4
Columbia City	14	4
Bitter Lake Village	7	4

[#] data compiled before redevelopment

Current Code Requirements

Current Land Use Code regulations include thresholds and exceptions that exempt developments of a certain size or type from providing sidewalks. The table below shows some of the projects for which current regulations from Chapter 23.53 of the Land Use Code offer sidewalk exceptions.

<u>Zone</u>	<u>Number of Units, No Sidewalks Required</u>
Single Family	9 or fewer units
LDT/LI	9 or fewer units
L2, L3, L4, MR, HR	5 or fewer units

Application of current requirements often has unintended results including:

- New multi-family developments are built without the necessary pedestrian infrastructure — sidewalks — to support the resulting increase in population density.
- Gaps are created between segments of fully improved sidewalks.
- Improvements made per Land Use Code requirements may be the wrong solution for a particular circumstance, such as when traditional sidewalk, curb, and gutters are constructed within a creek watershed that may otherwise be better served by a more sustainable drainage and pedestrian walkway design.

In sum, the outcome is an inconsistent and incomplete pedestrian network that is often poorly matched to local conditions and needs. In some situations, it also results in unwarranted expense for the applicant for an improvement that does not advance City policy with regard to the treatment of critical environmental areas.

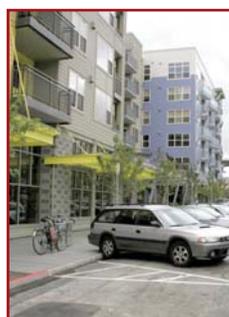
Proposed Code Revisions—Phase I

DPD's proposal for revised sidewalk requirements will be implemented in two phases. In the first phase:

- Sidewalks would be required for all development within Urban Centers and Urban Villages, and adjacent to arterials regardless of size or type of project. The current exception for additions and remodels would remain.
- The threshold for pedestrian-related improvements in other parts of the city would be reduced to three units of housing or greater.
- The proposal emphasizes pedestrian improvements where the greatest amount of new development is anticipated and supported by City policy, rather than basing requirements on the size or type of development.

It is the City's intent to:

- increase accessibility and safety for all pedestrians
- improve the streetscape and public realm
- maximize and leverage public and private investments in right-of-way improvements
- reinforce the Urban Village strategy
- encourage sustainable practices and materials in the construction of pedestrian infrastructure



Proposed Phase I Sidewalk Requirements, Thresholds, and Exceptions

Project Location	Pedestrian-related requirement	Threshold and Exceptions
Urban Centers and Villages* : All zone categories, all streets	Sidewalk as per <u>new</u> requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No threshold; applies to even 1 unit of housing and any size of commercial space. Existing code exceptions: Keep exception for additions to existing structures; remodeling or use changes within existing structures, eliminate all other exceptions.
All zones along arterials outside Urban Centers and Urban Villages	Sidewalk as per <u>new</u> requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No threshold; applies to even 1 unit of housing and any size of commercial space. Existing code exceptions: Keep exception for additions to existing structures; remodeling or use changes within existing structures, eliminate all other exceptions.
All other areas/zones not addressed above (outside Urban Centers/ Villages, not adjacent to arterial)	Sidewalk/curb/gutter as per <u>existing</u> street improvement requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower threshold to 3 units of housing. Existing code exceptions remain.
Creek watershed areas	Sidewalk/curb/gutter as per <u>existing</u> street improvement requirements.	Thresholds/Exceptions: Creek watersheds are not currently identified separately in the code with respect to required street improvements. Thresholds and exceptions for projects within a creek watershed would therefore be those associated with the project's location — e.g. within an urban center, urban villages, adjacent to arterials, or outside of those areas.

Proposed Code Revisions—Phase II

Phase II of work will address pedestrian walkway requirements in areas of the city outside of urban centers and urban villages, and adjacent to non-arterial streets. Recognizing that pedestrian-related improvements may appropriately vary in different locations, the City will develop several pedestrian walkway designs tailored to geographic conditions, planning objectives, and site constraints and opportunities. Some options are likely to be less expensive than the traditional sidewalk, curb and gutter currently required, while still providing needed pedestrian connectivity in a manner that fits local conditions. The details of Phase II will be developed in conjunction with the development of a Pedestrian Master Plan for the entire city, throughout 2007.

Conclusion

These sensible reforms will result in safer conditions for pedestrians, and more pedestrian amenities citywide. The Reforms are the next step in encouraging the evolution of lively urban villages and centers that are at the core of the City's plan for gracefully accommodating future growth.

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