

GARDINER SIDEWALK COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION REPORT TO THE GARDINER CITY COUNCIL

1. Our Mission:

Mission of the Gardiner Sidewalk Committee

The mission of the 2007 Gardiner Sidewalk Review Committee is actually a two-fold mission:

First, to develop a fair, comprehensive and impartial review and evaluation process for sidewalk repair and sidewalk creation that takes into account such factors as population changes (e.g., concentrate more on sidewalks that are near shopping areas, schools, churches and recreation facilities), aesthetic value (e.g., determine if granite curbing is better suited to the area being considered or if asphalt curbing can be used), and factors such as cost and community perceived needs, including other pedestrian and non-motorized ways; and

Second, to provide guidance to the Gardiner City Council regarding the recommended use of a \$628,000 bond issue that will be initiated to improve sidewalks in Gardiner based on the process developed above.

2. Our process: The Sidewalk Committee worked with City Staff to develop a comprehensive document that lists current sidewalk conditions along with a list of community priorities to consider where the community can best spend its dollars for upgrading sidewalks.

The Sidewalk Committee used a number of tools including tours, DOT provided criteria, discussions with the Cobbossee Corridor Committee, MSAD 11 Transportation Director Sam O'Connor and City Staff to formulate its recommendations.

City staff evaluated every sidewalk in Gardiner (which includes South Gardiner) and classified each section of sidewalk in a category. Category 1 sidewalks are

newly constructed, safe, in good condition, and meet current standards. Category 5 sidewalks are unsafe, and in very bad shape, and do not come close to meeting current standards.

City staff assigned a ranking to every sidewalk segment in the city. The Sidewalk Committee wants to especially acknowledge the work of intern Joe Grant for the comprehensive and detailed inventory and ranking of the all city sidewalks.

The Committee then reviewed these rankings and evaluated each sidewalk against the criteria contained in “Recommendation 1” below. From that process came a judgment by the committee about which sidewalks needed to be fixed first.

The following needs to be kept in mind when considering sidewalks for upgrade:

- With heavy traffic from fast moving cars and truck traffic as on Brunswick Avenue and Highland Avenue, the Sidewalk Committee prefers a road with one sidewalk to all be on the same side. An example of where this does not happen is Highland Avenue, where you have to cross this busy street to remain on the sidewalk. The Committee understands that cost, land ownership and easements all need to be considered before final decisions can be made.
- The City should finalize a set of criteria for sidewalk justification. Our recommendation is included. There may be sidewalks that can be removed rather than repaired or replaced, once the useful life has been realized by the community.
- Upgrade Criteria are listed where both Community Priorities and current condition overlap. These two factors, community priorities and current conditions, should drive current any future decisions about how to spend limited taxpayer dollars to improve sidewalks that are most frequently used, and in bad shape.
- Generally, to reduce costs, sidewalks and curbs should be constructed of asphalt. However, certain publicly important areas, such as, downtown and other high visibility should include other construction materials, such as brick, and granite curbing.

3. Our conclusions and recommendations:

We make **four recommendations** to the City Council. Several documents are attached that support our recommendations.

Recommendation #1:

We recommend the council adopt these criteria for current use in evaluating our recommendations, and for future use in prioritizing how limited tax dollars should be spent to maintain Gardiner's sidewalks.

SIDEWALK EVALUATION CRITERIA

To maximize community resources, the following criteria were used to develop the Committee's recommendation to the City Council and should be considered in the future for deciding when to repair, install or remove sidewalks on any given street.

- Safety, for example conflicts between motor vehicle and pedestrian conflicts, especially those involving children, such as experienced on both Route 126 and West Hill Road, or the need to cross the street several times on the same road for sidewalk use such as is required on Highland Avenue.
- Handicapped assessibility.
- Volume of pedestrian traffic.
- Ways linking key destinations, such as schools, parks, post offices and shopping areas with residential areas and parking lots.
- High population commercial and residential areas,

- Costs benefit ratios to establish the justification for a sidewalk

Generally, to reduce costs, sidewalks and curbs should be constructed of asphalt. However, certain publicly important areas, such as, downtown and other high visibility should include other construction materials, such as brick, and granite curbing.

Recommendation 2#:

Attachment 1 contains the committee's recommendation for addressing current sidewalk issues and needs, given the prospect of a \$628,000 plus bond issue that will allow about \$555,000 to be spent on actual sidewalk construction. This recommendation includes repair or replacement of almost every sidewalk segment that was ranked a category 4 (bad) or category 5 (really bad). Some bad or really bad sections of sidewalk may not be included in this attachment, as the committee felt they are not worth repairing, due to non-use or very limited use of the sidewalk.

Recommendation #3:

Some sections of sidewalk are no longer worth maintaining, in our opinion, and we recommend the city consider removing these sections of sidewalk by using city crews over a period of 2-3 years. Attachment 2 contains this list. Sidewalk sections to be removed can be replaced in some instances with a white stipend line painted on the roadway where the sidewalk used to be (similar to a striped bicycle lane on many roads now).

In addition, a few new sidewalks should be built with this bond issue. The clearest need is to finish the sidewalk on West Hill Road that runs from Highland Avenue to Ash Street to ensure the safety of the dozens of students who walk up West Hill Road daily to attend Gardiner Area High School. These specific recommendations are also included in Attachment 1.

Recommendation #4:

Once the initial investment of \$628,000 has been made in sidewalk upgrades, we recommend that the city begin to budget \$100,000 per year, every year, in its public works budget to continue repairing, replacing, or removing sidewalks in Gardiner. Our master list of all sidewalks, compiled by city staff, indicates that we have nearly \$2 million dollars invested in sidewalks. Sidewalks generally have a 15-20 year useful life. Simple division of \$2,000,000 investment in sidewalks by 20 years create a budget of \$100,000 per year and would put all our sidewalks on a 20 year repair cycle and benefit all current and future residents of and visitors to Gardiner. This recommended \$100,000 per expenditure could come in the form of a multiple yearly average using annual budget, additional side projects through bonding or any other creative financing the City might employ. Using these funds and our criteria, policy makers and city staff can work together to determine annually which sections of sidewalk in the city should be repaired, completely replaced, or removed.

Recommendation #5:

Prior to any construction taking place on sidewalk improvements the City needs to evaluate and determine whether existing crosswalks meet current standards, whether additional crosswalks are warranted and whether traffic slowing devices should be employed.

Finally, the committee suggests that prior to the adoption of any part of this plan by the City, that the Council conduct a public hearing to explain the recommendations and to receive public comments.

Respectfully,

Dennis Doiron
Sidewalk Committee Chairman