

WALKABILITY ASSESSMENT MOUNT MORRIS, IL SPRING 2021

Completed by:



This assessment was made possible by funding from the U.S. Economic Development Administration granted to Blackhawk Hills Regional Council for assistance with response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Executive Summary

The Mt. Morris walkability assessment was completed by Blackhawk Hills Regional Council (BHRC) staff and was made possible through U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) funding for COVID-19 response and recovery. The goal of this assessment is to identify opportunities to improve active transportation within the Village of Mt. Morris. The three priority focus areas identified for assessment were 'Routes for Seniors,' represented by McKendrie Ave between the Pinecrest campus and the library, 'Critical Connections', which included north/south routes in the Village that crossed IL 64 (W Hitt St), and 'Food Access', which was comprised of various routes to Sullivan's Foods.

The assessment was completed by surveying the identified priority routes in each focus area. The survey looked at a variety of factors that contribute to walkability, including connectivity of the sidewalk network, compliance with accessibility standards, and streetscape elements that make a place more or less appealing to walk versus drive. Crash data for the section of IL 64 that runs through the Village was obtained from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). This data provided a measure of existing safety conditions for this route of concern. Village ordinances and planning documents were also reviewed for broader opportunities to improve active transportation.

Survey findings were presented to the steering committee along with initial recommendations for improvements. The steering committee discussed prioritization of improvements and worked with BHRC to organize a walk audit along IL 64/Hitt St. The walk audit, held on June 8, 2021, looked at some of the higher prioritized areas of concern, including sidewalk gaps along Ogle Ave and IL 64 in front of Sullivan's Foods. The group also reviewed crossings along IL 64/Hitt St and a sidewalk gap on the west end of IL 64/W Hitt St.

From the survey findings and walk audit, the higher-prioritized recommendations are:

- Sidewalk construction to minimize gaps in the existing network
- A village street tree plan to replace trees lost or to be lost
- The addition of a sidewalk on the west side of IL 64 in front of Sullivan's Foods
- The improvement of intersection safety at IL 64 and E Hitt St

Project Overview

BHRC was awarded \$400,000 from the U.S. Economic Development Administration in 2020 to support the region's response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Providing an assessment of communities' walkability was identified as a comprehensive way to look at factors that contribute to safety, inclusivity, sense of place, and human health and well-being. These factors are major drivers of a community's resilience during the pandemic, the recovery period, and beyond.¹ Working on improvements for walkability has numerous positive implications for communities, including:

Safety: Over the past decade, the United States has seen a 45 percent increase in people struck and killed while walking. The past four years were the most deadly in the past three decades.² Despite fewer vehicles on the road during the height of the pandemic in 2020, pedestrians faced greater risks due to the absence of typical traffic congestion to slow speeds and the presence of other factors that contributed to dangerous driving behavior. When accounting for the 13.2 percent decrease in vehicle miles traveled in 2020, the pedestrian fatality rate saw an unprecedented 21 percent increase from 2019.³ Improving safety for pedestrians helps make roads safer for all users. Traffic calming and other engineering techniques designed to create safer environments for pedestrians also have the impact of reducing fatalities from automobile crashes.⁴

Health: Nearly 80 percent of American adults do not get enough physical activity. About half of all American adults have one or more chronic diseases, and seven of the most common chronic diseases can be improved by regular physical activity.⁵ Walking offers a no-cost, low-skill opportunity for people to be active across a lifetime.

Social Equity: Non-motorized transportation is essential for accessibility. One-third of Americans do not drive due to age, disability, choice, or lack of financial means to own

¹ Love, Hanna and Mike Powe. "The Necessary Foundations for Rural Resilience: A Flexible, Accessible, and Healthy Built Environment." Brookings. 1 Dec. 2020 <u>https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-necessary-foundations-for-rural-resiliencea-flexible-accessible-and-healthy-built-environment</u>, "Cities that Heal: How the Coronavirus Pandemic Could Change Urban Design." On Point. WBUR. 3 Aug. 2020. <u>https://www.wbur.org/onpoint/2020/08/03/healthy-cities-urban-design-pandemic</u>, Sisson, Patrick. "How the '15-Minute City' Could Help Post-Pandemic Recovery." Bloomberg CityLab. 15 July 2020. <u>https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-07-15/mayors-tout-the-15-minute-city-as-covid-recovery</u>

² Dangerous by Design 2021. National Complete Streets Coalition and Smart Growth America. <u>https://smartgrowthamerica.org/dangerous-by-design</u>

³ Snider, Adam. "Pedestrian Deaths Soar in 2020 Despite Precipitous Drop in Driving During Pandemic." Governors Highway Safety Association. 20 May, 2021. <u>Pedestrian Deaths Soar in 2020 Despite Precipitous Drop in Driving During</u> <u>Pandemic | GHSA</u>

^{4 &}quot;What is Vision Zero", Vision Zero Network, https://visionzeronetwork.org/about/what-is-vision-zero

⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. 2nd Edition. 2018.

and maintain a vehicle.⁶ Consequences for poor walking and wheelchair rolling conditions are disproportionately affecting older adults, people of color, and people walking in low-income communities. These groups are overrepresented in fatal pedestrian crashes – even when accounting for differences in population size and walking rates.²

Environment: The transportation sector is the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in the United States.⁷ Passenger vehicles and light-duty trucks are the largest contributing category, emitting 59 percent of transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions.⁸ In addition to reducing transportation's large carbon footprint, trading more short drives for active transportation (walking, biking, or rolling) can also positively affect air quality. Ground level ozone, created by vehicle emissions, can create health problems, especially for children, older adults, and individuals with chronic conditions like asthma and emphysema.⁹

Transportation: Active transportation is a viable alternative to driving for many trips from a distance perspective. About 40 percent of all trips are less than 3 miles.¹⁰ Improvements to pedestrian infrastructure benefit everyone, as even motorized trips involve an active transportation link such as from a parked car to a destination.

Economy: Automobile-dependent communities offer residents less opportunity for economic resiliency. During times of unexpected financial distress, such as job loss or fuel price spikes, households are left with few options to reduce their transportation costs, which is the second largest household expense in the United States.¹¹ In addition to helping families find ways to reduce their transportation costs, improving walkability can help communities recruit talent and attract business. Between 2010 and 2015, nearly 500 companies relocated to more walkable downtowns.¹² This trend was seen across the country in both small and large cities.

7 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (2021). Carbon Pollution from Transportation. <u>https://www.epa.gov/transportation-air-pollution-and-climate-change/carbon-pollution-transportation</u>

⁶ Thomas Gotschi and Kevin Mills. Active Transportation for America: The Case for Increased Federal Investment in Bicycling and Walking. Rails to Trails Conservancy. 2008.

⁸ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (2020). Fast Facts on Transportation Greenhouse Gas Emissions. https://www.epa.gov/greenvehicles/fast-facts-transportation-greenhouse-gas-emissions

⁹ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (2021). How Mobile Source Pollution Affects Your Health. https://www.epa.gov/mobile-source-pollution/how-mobile-source-pollution-affects-your-health

¹⁰ Litman, T. Short and Sweet: Analysis of Shorter Trips Using National Personal Travel Survey Data. Victoria Transportation Policy Institute. 2010. <u>www.vtpi.org/short_sweet.pdf</u>

¹¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Consumer Expenditures-2019. Economic News Release (2020). https://www.bls.gov/news.release/cesan.nro.htm

¹² Smart Growth America. Core Values: Why American Companies are Moving Downtown (2015). https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/core-values-why-american-companies-are-moving-downtown

Goals & Objectives

Mt. Morris was included in the first round of walkability assessments conducted in spring of 2021. A kick-off call was held on March 11th with the steering committee to introduce the assessment process and begin identifying local goals. Members of the steering committee provided representation from the village economic development group and its cultural initiative Encore!, the Pinecrest Community, and Studio GWA, which has a long and supportive partnership with the Village from past and on-going projects.

In subsequent calls, the steering committee identified priority issues and routes to be surveyed. Three major themes emerged from these discussions: safe routes for seniors, safe routes to schools and parks (combined as "critical connections"), and safe food access. With the help of the steering committee, BHRC staff tailored the assessment to identify opportunities for improving active transportation options to school, parks, the grocery store, and library for all residents but especially populations that rely on active transportation. Specific objectives to meet the goal included:

- Survey three route categories in the village *(see map below for locations):*
 - **Routes for Seniors:** The critical route selected for seniors was McKendrie Ave from the Pinecrest Campus north to the library.
 - Critical Connections: These routes included the destinations of Zickuhr Park, Dillehay Park, and DLR Junior High. The criticality of these connections was linking the north and south parks of the village across IL 64/W Hitt St.
 - Food Access: Certain routes were identified as important for access to the grocery store, Sullivan's Foods. These routes included IL 64 to the mobile home park, Mt. Morris Estates, located just beyond village limits, E Hitt St to Katie's Way, and E Front St to S Ogle Ave to the Parkside Apartments complex on the east side of the street.
- Conduct a group walk audit with members of the steering committee to look at priority areas assessed by the survey
- Review crash data available from IDOT for IL 64/Hitt St
- Examine village ordinances and planning documents for opportunities to further encourage active transportation and associated infrastructure
- Create a table of recommendations for improving active transportation in Mt. Morris
- Identify grant opportunities and funding strategies to implement selected recommendations



Map 1. Selected survey routes and focus area descriptions

Methods

Routes within the three focus categories (Routes for Seniors, Critical Connections, and Food Access) were assessed using a set of surveys designed to evaluate sidewalk conditions, intersections, and ADA compliance. Surveys were completed on April 7th and 14th, 2021, through ArcGIS Survey123 app data collection, photography, qualitative notes, walking, and drive-by methods.

Locations Surveyed and Data Reviewed

Routes for Seniors:

 <u>S McKendrie Ave</u> from Pinecrest Grove Community Center north to Mt Morris Public Library

Critical Connections:

- IL 64/W Hitt St from N McKendrie Ave west to Maple Ave
- <u>Mulberry Ave</u> from Sunset Ln south to W Brayton Rd
- <u>Fletcher Ave</u> from Sunset Ln south to W Brayton Rd
- <u>Maple Ave</u> from IL 64/W Hitt St north to Zickuhr Park
- <u>Sunset Ln</u> from N Mulberry Ave west to Zickuhr Park
- <u>Brayton Rd</u> from S Fletcher Ave east to S Ogle Ave
- <u>S Ogle Ave</u> from E Brayton Rd south to Stengel Dr / Dillehay Park

Food Access:

- <u>IL 64</u> from Mt Morris Estates northwest to E Hitt St
- <u>E Hitt St</u> from IL 64 east to Katie's Way
- <u>E Front St</u> from Sullivan's Foods west to S Ogle Ave
- <u>S Ogle Ave</u> from E Front St south to Parkside Apartments

A mapping exercise using Google Earth aerial imagery was also conducted to develop a sidewalk gap audit. The resulting map allows for identification of patterns in missing sidewalks throughout the Village (see map below).

As safety along and crossing IL 64 was identified as a concern, traffic crash data was reviewed from IDOT for insight on the corridor's recent safety history. Village ordinance and planning documents were also reviewed for opportunities for improvement via planning and policy changes.



Map 2. Red sections indicate missing sidewalks

Following the completion of survey work and a follow up call with the steering committee to review findings, a walk audit was organized to provide an opportunity for steering committee members to review priority areas with BHRC staff. The route shown on the map below was used for the walk audit.



Map 3. Walk audit route shown in green

US Access Board's Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG)

Originally established in 1973 to ensure access to federally funded facilities, the US Access Board is now the nation's lead agency on accessible design. In 1990 when the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law, the board was tasked with developing accessibility guidelines for facilities and transportation systems.¹³ Since the board published the original ADA Accessibility Guidelines in 1991, several updates have been published to incorporate additional aspects of public life and changes in technology.

In 2011, the board issued proposed Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG) for public comment.¹⁴ These guidelines would set standards for sidewalks, pedestrian crosswalks, and other public right-of-ways. The PROWAG have not yet been finalized for a variety of reasons including the board's decision to supplement the guidelines to address shared use paths. Although not yet enforceable at the federal level,¹⁵ the PROWAG offer the most up-to-date and recommended design practices for supporting accessible active transportation. It is anticipated that the board will release the finalized version of the guidelines shortly, and for that reason, the proposed guidelines were used as a benchmark for assessing accessibility in this study.

ADA Self Evaluations and Transition Plan Requirements

Two critical requirements of the ADA, which are frequently left uncompleted, are a selfevaluation and transition plan.

The 1991 ADA regulation required all public entities, regardless of size, to evaluate all of their services, policies, and practices and to modify any that did not meet ADA requirements. In addition, public entities with 50 or more employees were required to develop a transition plan detailing any structural changes that would be undertaken to achieve program access and specifying a time frame for their completion. Public entities were also required to provide an opportunity for interested individuals to participate in the self-evaluation and transition planning processes by submitting comments.¹⁶

Completing or updating a self-evaluation and transition plan would give the Village a broader perspective of where improvements in accessibility are needed, an action plan to implement needed changes, and would ensure that legal obligations are being upheld should a complaint be filed.

¹³ U.S. Access Board (2021). About the U.S. Access Board. https://www.access-board.gov/about/

¹⁴ U.S. Access Board (2021). (Proposed) Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines. https://www.access-board.gov/prowag/ 15 The 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design are the current enforceable standards to date, but lack nuanced guidance for outdoor access routes.

¹⁶ U.S. Department of Justice (2015) ADA Update: A Primer for State and Local Governments.

https://www.ada.gov/regs2010/titleII_2010/title_ii_primer.html#coordinator

Findings

SURVEY

Routes for Seniors

Pinecrest campus to library via S McKendrie Ave

The most notable gap in connectivity in this route is the lack of sidewalk along the west side of S McKendrie Ave south of E Brayton Rd in front of the Pinecrest campus. Although the Pinecrest campus has some interior sidewalk network, it lacks a solid connection to the broader network of the Village. The sidewalks within Pinecrest are of mixed condition. Some areas, particularly around the northwest buildings, are new and in excellent conditions. Other areas require maintenance work and have construction debris accumulating in curb ramps.



Sidewalk gap along Pinecrest Campus on S McKendrie Ave

The existing sidewalk along the route from Pinecrest to the library contains older infrastructure. Most of the sidewalks are 4 feet wide with some narrower sections. The US Access Board's Public Right of Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG), which are anticipated to be adopted soon, indicate that sidewalks should be 5 feet wide for accessibility, but may be 4 feet if a 5 by 5 foot passing zone is available every 200 feet. Sidewalks have moderate maintenance issues including some sections of severe cracking, spalling (deterioration of the top layer of concrete), and accumulation of debris and gravel from adjacent driveways. Overall the sidewalks are in good to fair condition. curb ramps also lack flush transitions with the street due to frost heaving and have subsequently collected debris. Sightlines at intersections are generally good and free from obstructions. The southeast corner of S McKendrie and E Brayton Ave has a problematic diagonal curb ramp alignment, but intersections otherwise provide appropriate perpendicular crossings of the street.



Curb ramp misalignment at S McKendrie Ave and E Brayton Ave

Critical Connections

IL 64/W Hitt St from McKendrie Ave west to Maple Ave

The most notable gap in connectivity along this section of IL 64 is the absence of sidewalks on the north side between N Reynolds Ave and N Hannah Ave and on the south side from mid-block N Reynolds Ave/S Hannah Ave west onward. This gap in the sidewalk network results in pedestrians walking the busy road or navigating the front yards of homes on either side of the street. Yards on the north side of the street have a steep slope, which adds to the challenge of staying off the road.

Sidewalk conditions on this route are good to fair. Most sections are around 4 feet wide, and there are sporadic issues with grass encroachment, heaving, and cracking. Conditions worsen slightly between N Hannah Ave and Maple Ave with more instances of spalling, heaving, and cracking.



Missing sidewalks along IL 64/W Hitt St



Fence inhibiting turning space and blocking sightlines at IL 64/W Hitt St and N Seminary Ave

Routes north of IL 64/W Hitt St to Zickuhr Park

Sidewalk connectivity is intact along N Hannah Ave and N Seminary Ave to the Sunset Ln park access point. Maple Ave, N Reynolds, N Fletcher, and N Mulberry all have significant gaps in sidewalk connectivity to the park. Sidewalk conditions are generally fair along these routes with a few more issues on Sunset Ln including grass encroachment and spalling. Conditions of curb ramps are fair to poor. Several intersections are missing curb ramps, have stairs, or are otherwise not ADA compliant in design and condition.



Lack of sidewalks along Maple Ave to Zickuhr Park

Routes south of IL 64/W Hitt St to DLR Junior High and Dillehay Park

Gaps in connectivity along these routes include missing sidewalks along the west sides of S Fletcher Ave and S Mulberry Ave, west and east sections of S Ogle Ave, a missing section along W Brayton Ave on the north side between S Fletcher Ave midblock to S Mulberry Ave, and lack of sidewalks on both sides of Stengel Dr to Dillehay Park. Sidewalk conditions are fair to poor with worse conditions along the south end of S Fletcher Ave and interspersed along S Mulberry Ave. These condition concerns include vertical faults greater than $\frac{1}{2}$ inch, severe spalling, and cracking. Curb ramps are also missing at some intersections along these streets.



Sidewalk maintenance issues at south end of S Fletcher Ave

W Brayton Ave has condition issues with vertical faults and side slopes exceeding 2 percent. Crosswalks in front of the school are missing curb ramps on the north side of W Brayton Ave and other curb ramps along the street are accumulating detritus due to lack of flush transitions.

Food Access

Parkside Apartments to Sullivan's Foods

Sidewalk gaps along this route include the east side of S Ogle Ave from E Front St to E Center St and the west side of S Ogle Ave from E Brayton Rd to the south end of the street. The sidewalks along this route are aging and are showing maintenance needs with vertical faults over 1/2 inch, sections of severe cracking and spalling, and gravel accumulation from adjacent driveways. Some curb ramps are missing at the S Ogle Ave/E Center St and S Ogle Ave/E Lincoln St intersections. Other curb ramps lack ADA compliant detectable warning strips and flush transitions.



Gravel accumulation from driveway along S Ogle Ave sidewalk

Katie's Way to Sullivan's Foods

This route lacks pedestrian infrastructure (sidewalks and crosswalks) from Sullivan's Foods on IL 64 across the railroad to E Hitt St. The crossing of IL 64 is particularly difficult at this point due to poor visibility of traffic coming around the bend in the highway from the west. Sidewalks end again just past the intersection with Nancy St. The neighborhood along Katie's Way has segments of sidewalk, but is disconnected to the village sidewalk network as County Rd 31/W Mud Creek Rd lacks sidewalks or bike lanes and has a 45 mph speed limit. Existing sidewalks along this route are in need of maintenance and replacement. Curb ramps are missing or are not ADA compliant (missing detectable warning strips and flush transitions).

Mt Morris Estates to Sullivan's Foods

The route between Mt Morris Estates Mobile Home Park and Sullivan's Foods along IL 64 lacks pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure (sidewalks, bike lanes and crosswalks) but is frequently used by walkers and cyclists. A paved shoulder (approximately 8 feet wide) starts just after N Everett Rd going northwest into the Village. The shoulder is worn, has uneven sections of pavement, and the division line is faint in many sections. The paved shoulder transitions to gravel east of N Everett Rd to Mt. Morris Estates.



Paved shoulder along IL 64, Google Earth imagery, 2018



Gravel shoulder along IL 64, Google Earth imagery, 2018

TRAFFIC CRASH DATA

Traffic crash data for IL 64 from Maple Ave to N Ridge Rd (just east of the Village limits) was requested from the Illinois Department of Transportation. Data was provided for the indicated road segment for the years 2015 to 2019. There was one crash involving a bicyclist between Mt Morris Estates and village limits.

Crash Data for Mt Morris IL 64 (2015-2019)						
Year	Number of Crashes					
2015	4					
2016	4					
2017	9					
2018	4					
2019	7					



Heat map indicating prevalence of crashes along I-64, hottest point indicating four crashes (2015-2019)

CITY ORDINANCES & PLANNING DOCUMENTS

The **Mt. Morris Comprehensive Plan (MM2035)**, adopted in 2017, provides numerous recommendations and references to the importance of improving conditions for walking, bicycling, and streetscapes. Prioritizing infrastructure and re-investing in the village tree canopy are two active transportation and streetscape topics that are highlighted throughout the plan. Key objectives and actions include:

Invest in walkable & people-centered neighborhoods

2.1.3 Invest in ADA-compliant sidewalks (including the construction of curb ramps) that lead to destinations, such as parks and other amenities.

Support aging-in-place design

2.6.2 Establish a 25 (municipal)/75 (homeowner) sidewalk improvement incentive, up to a set amount, for public terraces adjacent to existing residential properties.

Improve terrace appearance

2.7.1 Establish a removal/planting plan for trees and other vegetation to replace diseased and deteriorating trees/other vegetation.

2.7.2 Establish a 25 (municipal)/75 (homeowner) vegetation improvement incentive, up to a set amount, for public terraces adjacent to existing residential properties, in keeping with an established municipal planting plan/tree guide.

Invest in pedestrian & bicycle facilities

3.2.1 Install or encourage businesses to install pedestrian/bicycling facilities (e.g. benches, bike racks, etc.)

3.2.2 Establish a bicyclist rest stop at Main and Wesley (vacant lot) or another suitable location

3.2.3 Work with "Bike Ogle" to create a "Bike Mount Morris" sub-map that includes facilities, amenities, and points of interest; promote special events on the sub-map; establish a Mount Morris to White Pines State Park route

Re-invest in village tree canopy

4.4.1 Plant in areas previously impacted by construction, including along IL 64, following guidelines set by village officials (use "Trees for 2050" from the Chicago Botanic Garden to assist in guideline creation)

Gather information on transportation systems

6.1.6 Designate intersections or sidewalks near retail for future bulb-outs

The **Sidewalk/Driveway Specifications** for the Village were reviewed with attention paid to consistency with PROWAG. The specifications are in need of revision and should reflect current 2010 ADA standards at a minimum or, preferably, the PROWAG. Point B. of the specifications notes that sidewalks shall not be wider than 4'. According to the proposed PROWAG, 4' sidewalks are a minimum and should be paired with 5x5' passing areas every 200' if they are narrower than 5'.

The specifications fail to address common issues when driveways intersect sidewalks, although they are addressed in the Village's Code of Ordinances. It would be prudent to add requirements to

maintain a 2% or less side slope, flush transitions, and a firm and stable surface (no course gravel) where driveways intersect.

The **Code of Ordinances** reviewed for this assessment was last revised on March 10, 2020. The Village of Mt Morris upholds several ordinances that provide a framework for sidewalk maintenance and construction. Some of the pertinent ordinances include:

7-1-2 Street, Sidewalk Construction and Repairs:

<u>7-1-2-6: Sidewalks; Responsibility:</u> It shall be the responsibility of the lot owner to construct the initial sidewalk across his property. It shall be the responsibility of the Village to maintain, repair and to replace said sidewalks when deemed necessary by the Chairman of the Committee on Streets and Alleys, except those sidewalks that are part of the lot owners' driveways. (1979 Code § 7-1-2-6)

7-1-3: Driveways:

<u>7-1-3-4: Construction Specifications:</u> A. Grade Surface: No driveway shall be so constructed or graded as to leave a step, sharp depression or other obstruction in the sidewalk. The grade shall be as nearly as possible the same as that of the adjoining sidewalk. It shall be unlawful to have the surface finish of any driveway where the same crosses the sidewalk constructed of such materials as to render it slippery or dangerous, or hazardous to pedestrians, or to have the grade of such portion vary from the grade of the sidewalk, or be other than level.

B. Materials: Driveways shall be constructed as per specifications on file in the Office of the Village Clerk. (1979 Code § 7-1-3-3)

<u>7-1-3-4: Repairs; Maintenance:</u> It shall be the duty of the person maintaining a driveway to keep the same in good repair where it crosses the sidewalk, and free from obstructions and openings. (1979 Code § 7-1-3-4)

7-1-14: Snow Removal from Sidewalk in Commercial District:

A. Responsibility Of Lot Owners: It shall be the responsibility of the lot owner adjacent to the sidewalks on the following described streets to remove therefrom any snowfall accumulation by six o'clock (6:00) P.M., the evening of the accumulation (Sundays excepted):

East Front, the north and south sides, from Wesley Avenue to McKendrie Avenue.

Main Street, the north and south sides, from McKendrie Avenue to Seminary.

Wesley Avenue, the east and west sides, from Hitt Street to Center Street.

B. Notice: Whenever it comes to the attention of the Chairman or Superintendent of the Streets and Sidewalk Department that a lot owner has failed to comply with this provision, then a written notice shall be served upon the occupant of the land adjacent to the sidewalk or in case there is no occupant or the occupant is not present, then upon the adjacent building or land notifying the owner of the necessity to remove snow from the adjacent sidewalk. If the snow is not removed, the Streets and Sidewalk Department is authorized to remove the snow.

C. Penalty: Any person violating the provisions of this section shall be subject to a fine of fifty dollars (\$50.00). Each act in violation of any of the provisions herein shall be deemed a separate offense. (1979 Code § 7-1-13)

To support a complete sidewalk network, the Village should consider requiring new subdivisions to construct sidewalks. This reduces the burden on homeowners and puts the sidewalk construction upfront, when it is less likely to encounter issues with existing utilities or landscaping. An option to

encourage lot owners to fill gaps in the sidewalk network would be to split the cost of new sidewalk construction 25 (municipal)/75 (homeowner), as referenced in the comprehensive plan.

By taking on the responsibility for sidewalk maintenance, the Village is acknowledging the importance of keeping up conditions for the safety of all users. Maintenance can help prevent and protect against liability claims in situations where sidewalk conditions are in question following an incident. Even when a community has ordinances that require adjacent property owners to maintain sidewalks (through snow removal, vegetation trimming, etc.), the municipality may still be found ultimately responsible for sidewalk conditions. Having a sound written maintenance program can help limit exposure to liability. In times when a municipality's budget is minimal, having a policy in place that effectively uses resources that are available can still help mitigate risk of liability.¹⁷

The benefits of having a written sidewalk maintenance plan are manifold. Advantages of a maintenance plan include:

- Improved sidewalk conditions and safety
- Protection of infrastructure investment
- Conveyance of information to residents
- Provision of guidelines for city employees in public works departments
- Mitigation of exposure to lawsuits
- Compliance with the ADA and improved accessibility of the sidewalk network for all users

Sidewalk maintenance policies should contain some level of detail to be effective. Strong policies address the following elements:¹⁸

1. Identification of defective conditions

The policy should establish criteria that defines when a sidewalk is defective and requires repair or replacement.

2. Development of an inspection procedure and schedule

The plan should include conducting an initial survey (or continuation of the survey provided in this assessment). A frequency for subsequent surveys should be set, and it should be determined whether surveys cover the entire village or are done by sections.

3. Prioritization of repair and replacement needs

An effective policy should establish prioritization criteria: location of sidewalk, pedestrian traffic, cost vs effect, resident complaints, etc. The development of a repair and replacement schedule should also be incorporated and designed in a way that can address unexpected changes in budget, resources for conducting work, and condition of sidewalks.

¹⁷ U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, *A Guide for Maintaining Pedestrian Facilities for Enhanced Safety*. Washington D.C. (2013) <u>https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/tools_solve/fhwasa13037/chap2.cfm#ftn3</u>

¹⁸ U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, *A Guide for Maintaining Pedestrian Facilities for Enhanced Safety. Appendix D: Risk Management Information* (2010). <u>https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/tools_solve/fhwasa13037/appxd.cfm</u>

4. Development of cost-recovery mechanisms

If property owners are expected to share the cost of sidewalk repair, clear policies and procedures for assessing costs to property owners should be established.

5. Response to resident complaints and concerns

It is best to consult with an attorney to develop an appropriate plan for addressing sidewalk incidents and complaints.

More information about developing a sidewalk maintenance plan, including examples, can be found in the <u>US DOT Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)'s Guide for Maintaining Pedestrian Facilities</u> for Enhanced Safety.

The Village takes a good first step in requiring lot owners in the commercial district to take responsibility for winter sidewalk maintenance. These sidewalks are likely to have the most use, so the impact of the maintenance requirement (and enforcement plan) should be significant. The next important step to take is to expand the maintenance requirement to all sidewalks and communicate this (and options for assistance) to residents.

Winter precipitation has a profound effect on all modes of transportation, but sidewalks can be particularly vulnerable as they are often last to be cleared or end up being used for snow storage after roads are cleared. A new, ADA-compliant sidewalk can be rendered useless after just a few inches of snow if a winter maintenance plan isn't in place. This can be particularly frustrating for those who have disabilities and rely on active transportation. The ADA requires any "accessible route" to be maintained "in working order." This means that sidewalks left covered in ice or snow are in violation of the ADA.

Expanding the ordinance along with an enforcement plan to include all sidewalks can also play an important role in mitigating risks for the Village in the case of a lawsuit. The ordinance should address requirements for businesses, single-family residents, and property owners of multi-family housing with sidewalk frontage. Details about enforcement should also be explained so businesses and residents can know when to expect a warning or a fine.

It should be recognized that some residents may struggle to meet snow removal requirements due to age or disability. Coupling a snow removal ordinance with a volunteer program or student on-call job service can be a good way to address this need.

Informing and reminding residents and businesses about snow removal requirements should be the first step in gaining compliance. An annual brochure mailer is one method for ensuring that information is circulated. The brochure can also be used to share information about winter parking, snow emergencies, appropriate de-icing mechanisms (rock salt can be damaging to concrete sidewalks), and keeping catch basins and fire hydrants cleared. Massachusetts's Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) has collected examples of snow removal procedure brochures which can be found in their <u>Snow Removal Policy Toolkit</u>. The University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration also offers a <u>Winter Maintenance of Pedestrian Facilities Guide for Local</u> <u>Governments</u>, as does the FHWA in its <u>Guide for Maintaining Pedestrian Facilities</u> and <u>US DOJ in its ADA Guide for Small Towns</u>.

WALK AUDIT

The walk audit was held on an unseasonably warm evening on June 8th. BHRC regional planners Emily Lauderdale and Tara Walters were joined by steering committee members Paula Diehl, Ferol Labash, and Jeff Bold, and Village of Mt. Morris Trustee of Streets, Ed Higley. The group reviewed the gaps in the sidewalk network along Ogle Ave and discussed the challenges posed by mature trees growing where sidewalks are absent. Due to age, pest and disease, removal for various construction projects (including work on IL 64), and lack of replacement, the Village's tree canopy has dwindled.

The absence of sidewalks along the west side of IL 64 between Ogle Ave and Sullivan's Foods was the second stop in the walk audit. This sidewalk gap was identified as a priority to address as pedestrians face an unsafe section of road to navigate with poor sightlines when trying to access the grocery store. The challenges with crossing IL 64 at the E Hitt St/railroad crossing were also acknowledged at this stop.



Walk audit participants reviewing the sidewalk gap along IL 64 near Sullivan's Foods

The audit continued west along IL 64/E Hitt St, and included a test of the pedestrian crossing signals at McKendrie Ave. It was aparent that one of the crosswalk countdown lights was out (located on the northeast corner). The angle of that signal is also in need of repositioning to face pedestrians entering the crosswalk. The northeast corner's pedestrian signal button is failing to activate the light to cross the north side of McKendrie Ave.

The group reviewed accessibility issues at curb ramps and along the sidewalks, including a fence that is creating an accessibility barrier as well as sightline problems for drivers turning on to IL 64/W Hitt St (see photo on pg. 15). The audit continued on to the gap in the sidewalk network on IL 64/Hitt St between Reynolds Ave and Hannah Ave. Again, the challenges of navigating a busy street with truck traffic were acknowledged. The group also noted mature trees growing in the would-be sidewalk corridor and a challenging side slope that pedestrians must contend with if they stay off the road. The criticality of this sidewalk gap was also recognized. Residents accessing Zickuhr Park, where improvements are under construction, would potentially cross IL 64/Hitt St around the sidewalk gap area if coming from the south part of the village. The United Methodist Church, which is designed to be accessible and thus hosts many senior-oriented events, would, in theory, be accessed via the sidewalk gap route by many residents.

Recommendations

The following improvement options were identified based on survey findings, review of village ordinances and planning documents, the walk audit, and discussions with the walkability assessment steering committee.

Improvement	Route Category	Benefit/Cost*	Requires ext. involvement (IDOT)	Requires ext. involvement (other)	Relies on other improvements to be effective	Notes
Demonstration Project						
Temporary protected walk/bikeway	All	Low cost/Moderate benefit				This trial project can be implemented using low cost materials such as paint and planters to test out the effectiveness and public perception of a protected walk and/or bikeway. The demonstration project would be applicable to any streets that may be future candidates for sidewalks or bike lanes.
		Fraphic depicting a tempor	Array walk/bikeway	Y along Maple Ave	towards Zickuhr Par	k

Improvement	Route Category	Benefit/Cost*	Requires ext. involvement (IDOT)	Requires ext. involvement (other)	Relies on other improvements to be effective	Notes
Infrastructure Improvements						
Construct sidewalk along west side of S. McKendrie Ave in front of Pinecrest	Routes for Seniors	High cost/High benefit Estimate: \$80,500-\$96,600		√ Pinecrest		Benefits existing Pinecrest community as well as future senior housing residents. Completes sidewalk network to library as well as Dillehay Park (one side of street). Allows seniors to use walking as a mode of transportation and for exercise.



Current conditions of S McKendrie Ave near Pinecrest campus



Graphic depicting a sidewalk addition along the west side of S McKendrie Ave

Install curb ramps at intersections along S McKendrie Ave between Pinecrest and library where they are missing or in poor alignment	Routes for Seniors	Moderate cost/High benefit Estimate: \$36,000-\$48,000 for 8 curb ramps		Missing curb ramps at S. McKendrie & E. Lincoln, poor alignment at S. McKendrie & Brayton Ave. Important for population prone to trips and falls.
Replace/Repair curb ramps along S McKendrie Ave from Pinecrest to library and within Pinecrest campus	Routes for Seniors	High cost/Moderate-to-high benefit Estimate: \$157,500-180,000 for 30 curb ramps	√ Pinecrest	Important for population prone to trips and falls.

Improvement	Route Category	Benefit/Cost*	Requires ext. involvement (IDOT)	Requires ext. involvement (other)	Relies on other improvements to be effective	Notes
Replace/Repair sidewalk sections along S McKendrie Ave from Pinecrest to library (primarily east side between E Brayton Rd and Clifford St)	Routes for Seniors	Low cost/Moderate benefit Estimate: \$12,700-\$15,240				Important for population prone to trips and falls.
Add sidewalk along west side of IL 64 to N Ogle Ave within Village limits	Food Access	High cost/High benefit Estimate: \$146,000- \$175,200	√			Priority would be a sidewalk between N Ogle Ave and Sullivan's Foods. Estimate for this section: \$33,800-\$40,560.
Repair paved shoulder and pave gravel shoulder along IL 64 to Mt Morris Estates	Food Access	Moderate-to-high cost/Moderate benefit	\checkmark			
Repair crosswalk light placement and function at corner of McKendrie Ave and IL 64/ Hitt St	Food Access	Low cost/Moderate benefit	1			Issues uncovered during walk audit.
Install a paved shoulder or bike lane along E Hitt St/Mud Creek Rd to Katie's Way	Food Access	Moderate-to-high cost/Moderate benefit		√ Ogle County		Would require coordination with Ogle County for work on 31/Mud Creek Rd.
Fill sidewalk gaps on east side of S Ogle Ave from E Front St to E Center St	Food Access	Low cost/Moderate benefit Estimate: \$17,940-\$21,530		√ Residents		Improvement would pair well with a village tree plan.
Conduct sidewalk and curb repair and replacement on S Ogle Ave and E Hitt St	Food Access	Moderate-to-high cost/Moderate benefit Estimate for sidewalk section replacement & 34 curb ramp replacements: \$188,950-\$226,740				Project cost could be reduced by selecting highest priority curb ramps and sidewalk sections.
Add sidewalks to fill gaps along IL 64/Hitt St	Critical Connection s	Moderate cost/high benefit Estimate: \$60,190-\$72,230		√ Residents		Improvement would pair well with a village tree plan. Sidewalk construction on just the north side estimate: \$17,225-\$20,670

Improvement	Route Category	Benefit/Cost*	Requires ext. involvement (IDOT)	Requires ext. involvement (other)	Relies on other improvements to be effective	Notes
Install an additional traffic control or signalized crossing along IL 64/W Hitt St	Critical Connection s	Moderate cost/High benefit	\checkmark		✓ May be best paired with curb ramp and sidewalk work	Intersections to consider: Seminary Ave, Hannah Ave (contiguous sidewalks north of IL 64/Hitt St), Reynolds, Fletcher, or Mulberry.
Conduct curb ramp and sidewalk maintenance/replacement/construction along north/south streets based on potential additional IL 64 crossing location	Critical Connection s	Moderate-to-high cost/Moderate benefit Cost will vary based on selected route(s)			✓ Could pair with additional IL 64/Hitt St crossing, but not necessary	
Conduct ramp maintenance along Sunset Ln	Critical Connection s	Moderate-to-high cost/ Moderate benefit Estimate for 23 curb ramps: \$150,000-\$180.000				Project cost could be reduced by selecting highest priority curb ramps.
Fill sidewalk gaps along S Ogle and Stengel Dr to Dillehay Park	Critical Connection s	High cost/moderate-to-high benefit Estimate: \$91,850-\$110,200		√ Residents		Project cost could be reduced by filling gaps on one side of the street versus both.

*Note that cost estimates are very broad and actual costs may vary significantly

Policy, Plan, and Ordinance Changes

Improvement	Notes
Develop a written sidewalk maintenance plan	A sidewalk maintenance plan that addresses short and longer-term needs would help the village plan for improvements by identifying both budget and coordination needs with IDOT, businesses, and/or residents. A maintenance plan could work particularly well in combination with a village tree plan or forestry program to address necessary tree removals and replacements.
Extend the sidewalk snow removal ordinance to include all sidewalks	The ordinance update should be done in tandem with an enforcement plan, a plan for residents who require assistance with snow removal, and a plan to inform residents about the requirement and options for assistance.
Require new subdivision developers to construct sidewalks and, in certain cases, bike lanes along any new roadways	Requiring new subdivisions to include sidewalks will help to ensure that new parts of the village are connected to the sidewalk network and will reduce future gaps. Criteria for when bike lanes would be required should also be incorporated.
Incorporate division of gap-filling sidewalk construction costs into Village ordinances and streets budget	Encourage lot owners to fill gaps in the sidewalk network by splitting the cost of new sidewalk construction 25 (municipal)/75 (homeowner) as referenced in the comprehensive plan.
Develop a community forestry program to address declining canopy, tree health, and tree planting needs	Working through the Tree City USA program would provide a strong framework for the village to address concerns and needs regarding trees. The process of becoming a designated Tree City requires municipalities to develop a tree board, establish a tree care ordinance, institute a community forestry program, and host an Arbor Day observance and proclamation. Tree City USA offers helpful resources and templates for developing these programs and ordinances. Trees Forever, a non-profit based in Marion, IA, assists communities in Iowa and Illinois in community forestry efforts and would be a helpful partner for the Village in establishing a forestry program.
Complete or update an ADA self- evaluation and transition plan for the Village	To be compliant with the ADA, the Village should ensure that a self-evaluation has been completed and is on file. Although not required for municipalities with fewer than 50 employees, a transition plan would be helpful in planning out improvements to meet compliance. The New England ADA Center offers an Action Guide for State and Local Governments on how to conduct a self-evaluation and develop a transition plan. The website also offers sample documents and self-evaluation forms.

Funding Strategies

The following grant opportunities and programs are a snapshot of what is currently available or may be available in the future. Additional guidance and future opportunities are likely to be offered as the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic progresses.

Grant/Strategy	Administrating	Funding available & match	Applicable projects
Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP) Next funding cycle will be announced in the fall of 2022	Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT)	Up to \$2,000,000, Illinois House Bill 270, which was passed by the State House and Senate in May 2021, removes the 20% local match requirement for biking and walking infrastructure on IDOT-maintained roads. The bill is expected to be signed into law in summer of 2021. Preliminary engineering costs is eligible for reimbursement, but invoices must be submitted after Federal Authorization of the funding.	All improvements along and within the IL 64 corridor.
Local Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)	IDOT	State DOTs receive federal funding for projects on their State Transportation Improvement Program lists.	Work with IDOT staff to determine if IL 64 projects would qualify.
AARP Community Challenge Grant	AARP	Grants can range from several hundred dollars to several thousand or tens of thousands of dollars. Applications are typically due in April and projects must be complete by November of the same year.	Most improvements along local roads would qualify under the Transportation category. The Village may be interested in submitting other projects under the Public Places or Diversity and Inclusion categories.
<u>Urban and</u> <u>Community</u> <u>Forestry Grants</u>	Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR)	The program is 50/50 cost share reimbursement. The applicant must have an approved tree care ordinance or equivalent or must use an application to ask for funding to create a tree care ordinance.	Creation of a tree care ordinance and village forestry plan.