



PUBLIC INFORMATION BRIEF

Aug. 21, 2012

CITY SIDEWALK FUNDING PROPOSALS

Sidewalk Funding: New Policy Proposals

Public Hearing: Monday, Aug. 27, 7 p.m., City Council Chambers

The City of Missoula is considering making significant changes to the way the community pays for sidewalks. Missoula City Council members want to hear from Missoula residents at the public hearing that will help set the new direction.

Today, sidewalks, along with curbs, gutters and alley approaches, are paid for by the owners of the adjoining properties. The total amounts become assessments on the properties' tax bills. They can be financed, payable in installments, for eight, 12 and 20 years. While the median assessment is \$3,500, some assessments are higher, for instance for sidewalks around homes on corner lots. City Council representatives and City staff members have heard from citizens through the years about the hardships brought by large assessments. Some argue that the increase in property value brought by the improvements is a benefit that compensates for the expense; some disagree.

Since January, a Pedestrian Subcommittee of the Council's Public Works Committee chaired by Marilyn Marler has been working to develop alternatives. The committee has forwarded two models, as well as a resolution addressing retroactivity to provide reimbursement of some past expenses for property owners. The subcommittee worked from here:

- **Missoula needs more sidewalks.**
- **Missoula has historically built sidewalks by charging homeowners. Is that fair? Do we want to change the way we fund sidewalks?**

The City Council wants to hear citizens' opinions on the proposals. Questions to consider:

- **Do people think sidewalks are valuable to the community at large or just to adjoining property owners?**
- **In a new partnership between property-owner assessments and City funds, what should the percentage split be?**
- **Is one of the two proposals best? Is there a hybrid model using elements of each?**

- Should funding using a portion of City money be retroactive, reimbursing property owners who have already paid for sidewalks? If so, how should that work?

Two proposals in the form of resolutions will be considered at the Aug. 27 public hearing.

City First Share Model

- Spreads the cost city-wide by augmenting property owners' expenses with funds from Missoula Road District Number 1, which consists of assessments made to all applicable properties annually, referred to as the *premium*;
- City pays a *deductible* of up to \$500;
- Property owners pay a *co-pay* of the amount greater than \$500;
- Property owners pay up to \$3,500 and any amount more than \$15,000; and
- Program is open only to properties that pay taxes for the City of Missoula Road District Number 1.

City Co-pay Model

- Spreads the cost citywide by augmenting property owners' expenses with funds from Missoula Road District Number 1, assessed city-wide;
- Property owners pay first \$500;
- City pays 70 percent and owner 30 percent until the project totals \$3,500;
- Between \$3,500 and \$15,000, the City pays 100 percent; and
- Owner pays all costs above \$15,000.

A third resolution proposes retroactive financial relief for property owners currently paying in installments for previous projects.

Complete text of the resolutions and related documents are available on the City of Missoula website at www.ci.missoula.mt.us; go to Upcoming Public Hearings.

Citizens can offer public comment in person at the public hearing; by e-mail to individual City Council members or the entire Council; and by mailing or dropping off written comments at the City Clerk's Office, City Hall, 435 Ryman St. Chairman of the Public Works Committee is Ward 1 representative Jason Wiener. Public Works Department Director is Steve King.

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