CITY OF HOUSTON

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND ENGINEERING

GUIDELINES

FOR THE

SAFE SIDEWALK PROGRAM

OCTOBER 20, 2009

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SAFE SIDEWALK PROGRAM

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CITY OF HOUSTON
Department of Public Works and Engineering
Safe Sidewalk Program
PO Box 1562 Houston, TX 77251-1562
Phone (713) 837-0623 Fax (713)837-7120

General Description

For the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of Houston, **the Safe Sidewalk Program (SSP)** provides sidewalks and ramps within the public right-of-way for pedestrians to use around schools and major thoroughfares and to improve accessibility for people with disabilities. The Department of Public Works and Engineering (PWE) constructs or reconstructs sidewalks as an independent public improvement through the SSP under the **Safe School Sidewalk Program**, **Major Thoroughfare Program, and Pedestrian Accessible Review (PAR) Program**, further described as follows:

Safe School Sidewalk Program: Provides for the installation of sidewalks leading to and surrounding schools based on the following criteria:

- Number of children using pathways
- Traffic count and road conditions
- Constructability issues
- Located within school block
- Collector street within school zone

Major Thoroughfare Program: Provides for installation of sidewalks along major thoroughfares based on the following criteria:

- Thoroughfares lacking safe passage for pedestrians
- Areas around shopping centers, bus stops and other frequently traveled routes
- Constructability issues

PAR Program: The PAR Program is administered by the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD). Sidewalks and curb cut/ramps are provided to improve sidewalk accessibility for people with disabilities. A citizen is considered eligible to participate in the PAR Program when there is no safe accessible path of travel to:

- Grocery/Pharmacy
- Vehicle
- Medical Facility
- Educational Facility
- Place of Worship
- Financial Institution
- Place of Employment
- Bus Stop/Metrolift
- Any facility/structure deemed necessary to provide quality of life

Request for Sidewalk Installation

The following is a summary of the process for the Safe Sidewalk Program application (attachment) and installation.

These programs are request generated and have strict guidelines. Construction costs are considered in determining the approval of each location.

Program Contacts:

Safe School and Major Thoroughfare Programs:

Engineering:	Ahmed Siddiqui	**Phone**	**(713) 837 - 7101**
		Fax	**(713) 837- 7120**
		E-mail	~~ahmed.siddiqui@cityofhouston.net~~
Pedestrian Accessible Review Program:		**Phone**	**(713)** 803-1075
PAR Program: Alvita McKinney MOPD		**E-mail**	**alvita.mckinney@cityofhouston.net**

Requests for these Programs can also be processed via the City's help line at 311.

A request for sidewalk installation, replacement or repair under the *Safe School* or *Major Thoroughfare* Programs can be made by any individual. *PAR* requests must be made by or for a person with a disability and submitted to MOPD. MOPD forwards the approved PAR request for final design and construction to PWE.

Written requests can also be submitted to the PWE at the address listed in the header of this document. An application form can be obtained by calling **(713) 837 - 7101** **Note:** A request may automatically be withdrawn for consideration once an evaluation determines non-compliance with program guidelines.

The request must be for a specific street segment and should include at least the following information (reference application form attached):

- The requested street name
- The limits of the street segment (i.e., from the 8500 to 8600 block)
- Name of requestor
- Address of requestor
- Daytime phone number of requestor

Eligibility

Safe School Sidewalk Program

The following criteria will be analyzed to establish the length, limits and location of sidewalks to be replaced and/or constructed under the Safe School Sidewalk Program:

1. Sidewalks will be built around the block of the school unless the length is excessive or a portion of the property is undeveloped.

2. Sidewalks will be constructed on streets that lead to the block on which the school is located, if determined to be a collector.

3. Sidewalks may be considered if the street dead-ends into the block on which the school is located.

4. Typically, sidewalks will be constructed on one side of the street only, and on that side of the street that is most economical to design and construct.

5. If necessary, sidewalks may be built on the opposite side of the street where the entrance of the school is located to relieve congestion.

6. The sidewalk length must be determined at each location, but should generally extend to a collector or well traveled street.

7. Sidewalks along parallel streets to the school/campus will not be considered unless the adjacent street is a collector or heavily traveled street.

8. Sidewalks may not be constructed on streets that are only one block in length or on dead-end streets.

9. Sidewalks may be constructed to school property if they connect to existing sidewalks.

10. Sidewalks may be constructed within school zones along major streets with coordination to cross walk locations.

11. Sidewalks with be designed in compliance with the Texas Accessibility Standards (TAS) Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG).

This criteria is to be utilized as a general guide while investigating each site. Not all locations will comply with each of the criteria.

Major Thoroughfare Sidewalk Program

The following criteria will be used to determine the location of new sidewalk construction or replacement of existing sidewalks under the Major Thoroughfare Sidewalk Program:

1. Sidewalk construction will be considered if the roadway is designated as a thoroughfare along major corridors and/or freeways *and* a visual inspection has noted the absence of sidewalks, in conjunction with evidence of pedestrian traffic. Thoroughfares are denoted in the City of Houston Major Thoroughfare and Freeway Plan available in our Planning and Development Department located at 611 Walker, Houston, Texas. Other major streets and collectors marked in yellow in the Key Map Book will also be considered.

2. On two-way thoroughfares, sidewalks will be constructed on both sides of the street unless sidewalks already exist on one side.

3. On one-way thoroughfares, sidewalks will be constructed on the bus loading side of the street only.

4. In situations where conditions are not suitable for construction on both sides of the thoroughfares, or are not favored, sidewalks will be constructed on one side of the roadway only.

5. Wheelchair ramps will be constructed as required.

6. Sidewalks will not be constructed along thoroughfares proposed for reconstruction or improvement by the City, METRO, County or State.

7. Design of sidewalks and curb ramps will comply with the TDLR Architectural Barriers Section and ADA.

8. Other factors, such as, but not limited to, alignments, grades and sight distances may also be evaluated in the selection of Major Thoroughfare Sidewalk candidates.

9. Sidewalks may be constructed on METRO bus routes, as METRO no longer has a specific sidewalk construction program. The sidewalks along METRO bus routes must meet the criteria listed in this section.

PAR Program

As previously cited, the PAR Program is administered by the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) and requestors should contact MOPD for further consideration.

Abutting Owners:

Note: In reference to those sidewalk requests that do not meet the SSP guidelines listed above, Article III, Sections 40-83 & 84 of the City Code of Ordinances addresses the responsibility of the abutting owner for construction, reconstruction, repair or re-grading of sidewalks, driveways, curbs and gutters. Should the homeowner wish to pursue this repair by petition to City Council at his/her cost, City Ordinance Article III, Section 40-85 gives guidance to the process.

Constructability Issue:

Upon receipt of a request, the first evaluation is performed as a tabletop or desktop evaluation based upon the SSP criteria and a key map. If the subject location qualifies under one of the aforementioned program guidelines, the request is considered approved for design evaluation. Accordingly, the site is added to the SSP candidate list for incorporation into the design process. Under the design process, the site is further evaluated in the field to determine if the sidewalk request is constructible before final design commences. For example, locations that contain open ditches and minimal available right-of-way, the sidewalk additions may not be possible without enclosing the open ditches with underground storm drainage systems. Sites that require installation of enclosed storm drainage systems are rejected under the SSP during the design process. The sites that **do** meet the SSP criteria and are determined to be constructible will enter the final design process.

Miscellaneous Provisions

The following guidelines will determine the location and amount (lineal feet) of existing sidewalk to be removed and replaced under the current Safe Sidewalk Program:

1. Low-lying sidewalk causing ponding during moderate rainfall events.
2. Broken sidewalk creating an unstable condition (i.e. sidewalk tilts and moves under foot pressure, bicycle traffic, etc.).
3. Existing features are located within the sidewalks such as fire hydrants, trees, poles and signs, which prevent adherence to TDLR or ADA guidelines regarding width and clearance requirements.
4. Sidewalk sections uprooted by nearby trees, shrubs or unusual settlement or upheaval due to soil volume shrinkage or swelling, or soil erosion.
5. Differential settlement between sidewalk sections (greater than 3/4") or differential movement at curb/sidewalk interface creating an undesirable trip hazard.
6. Old, broken or uneven asphalt or brick sidewalk.
7. Sidewalks less than four (4) feet in width.
8. Recurrent vertical displacements greater than 3/4" elevation difference.
9. Existing sidewalk section to be replaced is longer than 30 linear feet (or less if other work is planned in immediate area or nearby ramp replacement, etc.).
10. When the sidewalk is an integral part of an existing driveway and the driveway is substantially broken, sunken, or excessively steep, then the sidewalk design for the area may include driveway/apron replacement.
11. PAR request and MOPD approved routes will be evaluated based upon new construction requirements meeting TDLR and ADA requirements.
12. Safe School and Major Thoroughfare requested routes and existing sidewalk and curb ramp conditions to remain in-place, will be evaluated based upon the following existing criteria:

Existing Curb Ramp and/or Sidewalk	Criteria	Description
1. Clear Width (curb ramps)	Min. 36 inches	Clear width of curb ramp in the direction of travel
2. Running slope (curb ramps)	Max. 8.3%	Running slope (ramps)
3. Running slope (sidewalks)	Max. 5%	The surface should be stable, firm, and slip resistant.
4. Cross slope (curb ramps and sidewalks)	Max. 2%	Cross slope of curb ramp and sidewalk
5. Horizontal Faulting/Cracking 1 inch (curb ramps and sidewalks)	Max. 1 inch	Faulting and cracking in the horizontal
6. Change in level (curb ramps and sidewalks)	Max. ¾ inch	Vertical change in level
7. Change of Grade (curb ramps)	Max. 19%	Difference between the combined grade of two adjacent surfaces
8. Surface (curb ramps and sidewalks)	Stable and firm	The surface should be stable, firm, and slip resistant.

Funding

An annual budget is established for design and construction of approved projects. Projects are scheduled for construction by first in, first out basis. Approved projects that do not receive funding in the current fiscal year, are automatically placed in the following year's budget.

Based upon the currently adopted 2007-2011 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), under the Safe Sidewalk Program, the City is projecting to spend approximately $26.75 million dollars for the design and construction of sidewalk improvements which will result in approximately 100 miles of sidewalk.

Schedule

After the field evaluation previously described, the design process will yet include completing the design and incorporating the proposed work into a construction package. Typically, we will package approximately three (3) to seven (7) miles of requested sidewalk into a project package. , Then, the project is bid out under the CIP standard process of advertising, receiving and evaluating the bids, and forwarding to City Council for final Contract award. Based upon historical information and assuming that there are adequate CIP dollars available, the process currently takes eighteen (18) to twenty-four (24) months for completion through construction. PAR request are generally constructed under a previously bid "work authorization" contract. The work authorization process is primarily limited to the PAR Program request and requires thirty (30) days for design and one-hundred eighty (180) days for construction. A summary timeline is presented as follows:

Process Step	Safe School and Major Thoroughfare	PAR
Present Request	-	-
Perform Evaluation (tabletop)	30 days	30 days
Prepare Design and Construct	18-24 months* (following request and project approval)	180 days (following request and project approval)

*Assumes CIP Funding is available

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Department of Public Works and Engineering
Safe Sidewalk Program – Application Form

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Request for Sidewalk

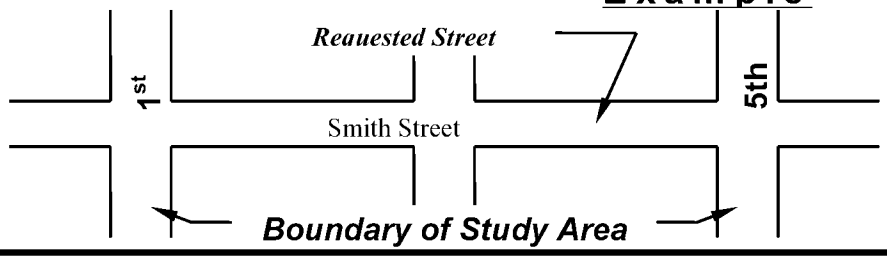
For a request to be considered, Part A and B must be completed. All request will be processed by a first in, first out basis.

A. Street Study Information

The following information is required in order to process your request:

Date:	
Requested Street Name:	
From Street Name:	
To Street Name:	
School Name (if applicable):	

Example



Requested Street: Smith St.
From: 1st Ave.
To: 5th Ave.

B. Contact Person Information

Each request must provide the following information:

Name:	
Address:	
City:	
Zip Code:	
Contact Phone Number:	
Signature:	
Date:	

To be completed by City personnel	
Key Map Page: _____	**Qualifying Program:** _____
Qualification Status: _____	