



Position Paper on 2006 Proposed Sidewalk Master Plan & Ordinance

We support the adoption of the Abilene's proposed 2006 Sidewalk Master Plan and Ordinance.

Background

The streets of our cities and towns ought to be for everyone, whether young or old, motorist or bicyclist, walker or wheelchair user, bus rider or shopkeeper. But too many of our streets are designed only for speeding cars. They're unsafe for people on foot or bike — and unpleasant for everybody.

Walking (and riding a bike) is how many in Abilene get where they need to go, build relationships with neighbors, walk the dog, get exercise, and have an easy and safe family activity outside of the house. Without sidewalks in our neighborhood and city, walking becomes a challenge and a significant safety risk—especially for our children.

We Support the Adoption of the Sidewalk Ordinance because...

- The benefits of sidewalks far exceed construction and maintenance costs
- Sidewalks increase safety for pedestrians and cyclists of all ages, races, and backgrounds
- Residents are more likely to walk in a neighborhood with sidewalks. This benefits the neighborhood and its residents
- Sidewalks help battle sedentary lifestyles
- Sidewalks remove access barriers to citizens without vehicles
- Sidewalks are esthetically pleasing and contribute to the beauty, livability and quality of life in our neighborhoods and city
- Sidewalks result in a friendlier, more communal atmosphere in our city and neighborhoods
- Sidewalks are good for air quality because they encourage other forms of transportation
- Sidewalks promote building relationships rather than the isolation of traveling in cars
- Sidewalks in new developments make fiscal sense. Integrating sidewalks into initial design spares the expense of retrofits later

- Sidewalks consider our growing population of non-drivers in planning our transportation system
- It is a step to put the 2004 Comprehensive Land Use Plan in action
- Abilene citizens have already spoken on this issue (85% of respondents “strongly support” or “support” construction of sidewalks in new development according to the 2003 Comprehensive Plan survey)
- The ordinance will increase safety in parking lots, not only streets
- Abilene is the only Texas city (out of 24) with more than 100,000 people without a sidewalk requirement.

In addition to the adoption of the proposed Sidewalk Ordinance, we support...

- Stricter enforcement of sidewalk upkeep and replacement to make existing sidewalks functional, particularly on Abilene’s deteriorating rental properties
- Increased funding and additional construction of sidewalks in existing neighborhoods without sidewalks. This includes the exploration of creative funding options (including cost-share plans for neighborhood sidewalks)
- Increased focus on connecting existing sidewalks in our city and neighborhoods
- The design standards that include a separation of the sidewalk from the back of the curb or pavement, a clear path of all sidewalks, and pedestrian friendly landscaping. We strongly support these standards because they increase the safety, sense of wellbeing, beauty and friendliness of Abilene’s streets.

Conclusion

Sidewalks are, as the proposed ordinance states, “an integral part of the street system and should not be of secondary consideration.” The adoption of the 2006 proposed Sidewalk Ordinance is a good starting place to begin making Abilene’s streets more pedestrian friendly. This is a step in the right direction for the wellness, safety, and renewal of our community.

This position paper was formally adopted by unanimous vote of the Cedar Creek Neighborhood Association on Tuesday, July 11, 2006. The Cedar Creek Neighborhood Association is located in northeast Abilene bounded by Judge Ely, EN 10th, Treadaway and Ambler.


Brad Carter
CCNA President