



Sidewalk Gap on Reno Road south of Tilden

Closing Sidewalk Gaps in Ward 3

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By the
Sidewalk Advocacy Group

Marlene Berlin, Chair
Sharon Bauer, Analyst
Cathy Wiss, Former ANC Commissioner
Barbara Cline, Tenant Advocate

With assistance from
George Branyan, DDOT Pedestrian Coordinator
Dennis Waardenburg, DC Office of Planning GIS Specialist

Project of Iona Advocacy Initiative
Lylie Fischer, Iona Director of Community Engagement

Introduction:

The Sidewalk Gap Project was launched in April 2012 in response to a need for a more systematic approach to filling sidewalk gaps which exist throughout the City. Several factors led to beginning this project in Ward 3

- IONA is located in Ward 3, and there were clearly identified sidewalk gaps in Chevy Chase, Forest Hills and Palisades that inhibited residents of all ages from walking on their streets
- The Murch Safe Routes to School plan had detailed sidewalk gaps as a major issue for preventing children from walking to school
- The Rock Creek West 2 Livability Study had adopted those gaps in its recommendations

Since the priority Sidewalk Assurance Act of 2010 directed DDOT to close sidewalk gaps during road reconstruction, in areas around schools, recreation facilities and public transit, as well as hazardous areas for pedestrians, we decided to identify areas in Ward 3 with the greatest need.

Given this new criteria, we first focused on the sidewalk gap on the 3800 block of Albemarle, which filled many of the conditions of a priority area by being close to (within two blocks) the following:

- Tenleytown Metro Station
- Wilson High School
- Wilson Pool
- Tenleytown Library
- AU bus stops
- Metrobus stops

This was also a much utilized walking route between Connecticut Avenue and Wisconsin Avenues. This would present a good example of just such a priority gap that DDOT should fill without residential request, but as a matter of right since the space is public right of way, owned by city, meaning all the residents of the city.

In response to our request to fill the sidewalk gap, DDOT still had procedures in place from before the 2010 legislation.

- 51% residents on the block petition to close the sidewalk gap
- ANC resolution

At this point Heidi Nalven, a resident on that block, independently started the petition process, and another group of neighbors who were impacted by not having a sidewalk but not residing on that block worked on another petition. Both were submitted to ANC 3F which passed a resolution supporting the closure of this sidewalk gap. We are happy to report that the closure of this gap should be done by mid-May. But these procedures need to be changed and supported by regulations that provide a legal framework

for implementing this law and establish a “new normal” that assumes sidewalk gaps will be filled within priority areas.

Laws, Policy and Plans for Closing Sidewalk Gaps:

In addition to the Priority Sidewalk Assurance Act of 2010 (Attachment 1), the DC Complete Street Policy, the Pedestrian Master Plan, and the American Disability Act provide the framework for DDOT to close sidewalk gaps in a methodical and equitable manner with clear benchmarks and annual budget. In addition, Ward 3 specific transportation plans that specify closure of sidewalk gaps:

DC Complete Streets Policy:

“The District’s transportation network, as a whole, shall accommodate the safety and convenience of all users,”

DC Pedestrian Master Plan 2009

(<http://dc.gov/DC/DDOT/On+Your+Street/Bicycles+and+Pedestrians/Pedestrians/Pedestrian+Master+Plan/Pedestrian+Master+Plan+2009>)

Objective 1: Provide accessible, safe and well-maintained pedestrian facilities along and across all streets

Recommendation 1.3: Construct new sidewalk where missing on streets in the District.

Approximately eighteen percent of the blocks in the District have missing sidewalks on one or both sides of the street. The presence of sidewalks is critical to the safety of pedestrians because they provide an accessible travel path that is separated from traffic. This is a critical need that should be incorporated in the City’s budget in years to come. The City will use the pedestrian demand/deficiency analysis describe in Appendix A to prioritize sidewalk gap construction. The process should include a mechanism for citizen/neighborhood input and requests.

American with Disabilities Act:

Title II, Subpart D of regulations states that a government may not deny benefits of its programs, activities and services to people because existing facilities are inaccessible. We posit that sidewalks allow the activity of walking that should be accessible to all.

Ward 3 Specific Plans:

- Murch Safe Routes to School Plan 2009: This plan proposed closing sidewalk gaps in Forest Hills. Many were filled but there are still outstanding gaps to be filled
- Rock Creek West 2 Livability Plan: This plan adopted the sidewalk gap closure recommendations of the Murch Plan.
<http://ddot.dc.gov/DC/DDOT/Publication%20Files/Projects%20and>

Current Procedures:

The current procedures are specified by DDOT Departmental Order No. 1-2005. The first section of this specifies that DDOT shall analyze all streets in the District to establish priority list of streets to receive sidewalks. To our knowledge, this has not been done. What follows is very similar to what is in the 2010 sidewalk law, <http://dc.gov/DC/DDOT/Projects+and+Planning/Standards+and+Guidelines/Sidewalk+Construction/DDOT+Sidewalk+Construction+Policy+2005> . Given no priority sidewalk list, this leaves DDOT staff with only the old procedures in place.

Iona Sidewalk Gap Project

To show DDOT the way forward on closing sidewalk gaps for the city, the Iona Sidewalk Advocacy Group has engaged in a Sidewalk Gap Project for Ward 3 that included four components and that would be replicated in all Wards of the City:

- Updating the Sidewalk Gap Map for Ward 3
- Establishing Priority Zones
- Proposing new Procedures
- Soliciting Community Input

Below describes the steps we took for each component.

Updating the Sidewalk Gap Map for Ward 3:

Sharon Bauer, our analyst, worked with Dennis Waardenburg to get an electronic version of the original sidewalk gap map. Then she updated the map utilizing Google Map street view , as well as input from community members. We decided to use four classifications of sidewalks which are color coded:

- Streets with sidewalk on each side—Black
- Streets with one sidewalk on a side—Yellow
- Streets with no sidewalks—Red
- Streets with mixed configuration—Green

Establishing Priority Zones:

Sharon Bauer obtained shape files from the DC GIS website to get mapping information for the features specified in the law-- schools, recreation facilities and parks, and Metro stops. We tested ½ mile radius around these priority areas, but that filled the whole Ward 3 map. We then reduced it to ¼ mile radius, which would be between a 5-10 minute walk for most people based on a 20 minute walk/mile. These ¼ mile buffers make it easier to locate and understand the priority areas, and identify the gaps inside and outside the priority areas. Map can be found in Attachment 2.

Proposing New Procedures:

In Ward 3 we have sidewalk gaps on local streets, collectors, and arterials. We have developed the following recommendations for new procedures based on our analysis of gaps and feedback from the community:

1. Sidewalk gaps shall be filled on both sides of all “main streets” (collectors and arterials), defined as those that have on-going traffic throughout the day and require pedestrians to walk in the street or cross at unsafe locations to a sidewalk. (See Section 2(b)4 of the Priority Sidewalk Assurance Law) .
2. Sidewalk gaps shall be filled on at least one side of the roadways under construction, as specified in Section 2(a) of the Priority Sidewalk Assurance Act of 2010, and on roadway segments for which residents have petitioned for sidewalks.
3. Sidewalk gaps shall be filled on, at least, one side within ¼ mile priority areas: schools, recreation and park facilities, and transit stops.
4. For streets within priority areas not undergoing construction, 75% residents on a block can petition NOT to have a sidewalk. The ANC for the area shall consider such a petition and forward its recommendations to DDOT. DDOT shall determine whether the absence of a sidewalk presents a pedestrian safety issue or conflicts with an ADA requirement that cannot be resolved without a sidewalk.
5. For streets that do not have a sidewalk due to engineering issues, or if residents have petitioned for no sidewalks and their request has been approved by DDOT, the speed limit shall be lowered to 15 MPH.
6. Residents may submit petitions to the ANC at any time to register opposition to a sidewalk on their block.
7. DDOT will notify all residents of these new procedures.
8. DDOT will keep a record of petitions and DDOT determination with date of determination on DDOT website for five years, after which the determination will no longer be in force.
9. DDOT will update the Sidewalk Gap Map as gaps are filled.

Community Input:

We utilized the Forest Hills Connection, an e-magazine, www.foresthillsconnection.com, the community communication vehicle for Forest Hills, to publicize this work and include surveys to record community feedback. We asked to input on the following

- Accuracy of our map
- Low priority sidewalk gaps in priority areas
- High priority sidewalk gaps outside of priority areas
- Procedures

We had the questionnaires embedded in two pieces on the Forest Hill Connection, <http://www.foresthillsconnection.com/news/where-in-ward-3-are-sidewalks-needed-most/> and <http://www.foresthillsconnection.com/news/new-procedures-needed-for-filling-sidewalk-gaps/> up for the month of February. Notices were sent to community listservs, ANC's and citizen associations with links to these articles. We had 490 readers for the sidewalk gap map and 199 readers for procedures. On **Greater Greater Washington**, the first post on the map got 2,158 views, plus 247 people read it from the home

page. The second post on procedures got 1,008 views plus 319 from the home page.

Highlights of the Comments:

Map:

Fifty-two people responded to the on-line Sidewalk Gap Map Survey. Some people responded to all three questions (any errors, high priority sidewalks outside priority areas, low priorities inside priority areas) and some responded to only one. In total, there were 18 low priority comments, 26 high priority comments, and 27 error/correction comments (See Appendix 3 for a full list of these comments.).

Six people noted that 3800 block of Albemarle is missing a sidewalk and is high priority

Twenty two unique streets/segments were mentioned as high priority. Some were only listed once, but a handful were mentioned more than once: 3800 block of Albemarle –six times Park/Tilden-three times, Belt-twice, Murdock Mill- twice, Porter/Klingling-twice.

Fourteen unique street/segments were mentioned as low priority, three listed more than once; 29th-twice, Ashley Terrace-twice, Grant-four times.

Procedures:

Survey Results:

Forty-eight residents responded to this survey. There was a majority of support for all procedures (See Appendix 4 for more details than below): The choice of response for each procedure was support, neutral, don't support. All procedures received 48 responses except 4,5 and 8 with 47 responses, and 7 with 46 responses. Results are as follows:

Number Percentage of Support

1	75
2	85.4
3	83.3
4	57.4
5	59.6
6	66.7
7	91.3
8	57.4
9	87.2

Comments on Procedures:

The procedures which got the highest number of comments (See Appendix 5 for full list of comments):

#1—12 comments –equal number of pros and cons
Sidewalk gaps filled on both sides of the street on collectors and arterials in Ward 3, even if they lie outside priority areas, for no sidewalks present a safety hazard on such roadways.

#5—10 comments—most pro or other comments, no con
For those streets that do not have a sidewalk due to engineering issues, or if residents have petitioned for no sidewalks and their request has been approved by DDOT, the speed limit shall be lowered to 15 MPH.

#4—9 comments—most con, but the cons were equally divided between those wanting no petitions for opting out of sidewalks and those who wanted a simple majority.
For streets within priority area not undergoing construction, 75% residents on a block can petition not to have a sidewalk. The ANC shall consider such a petition and forward recommendations to DDOT. DDOT shall determine whether absence of a sidewalk presents a pedestrian safety issue or conflicts with an ADA requirement that cannot be resolved without a sidewalk.

Next Steps:

Iona Sidewalk Gap Advocacy Group would like a clear path to closing sidewalk gaps on arterials and collectors, and within priority areas in Ward 3 within the next 5 years. In order to achieve this we would like to work with DDOT on the following:

1. Establish regulations/policy and procedures to implement the Priority Sidewalk Assurance Act of 2010
2. Establish a list of priority sidewalk gaps in Ward 3
3. Establish a timeline for filling gaps in Ward 3 with dedicated funding
4. Conduct a public education campaign on public right of way and priority areas for sidewalk gap closure for all Wards of the city
5. Update the sidewalk gap map for the whole city
6. Conduct a public engagement campaign for Wards 4, 7, 8 which have the greatest number of sidewalk gaps
7. Establish a timeline for filling gaps in these Wards with dedicated funding.

We would like to work with DDOT and by the end of June establish timelines and determine funding necessary to achieve the above 7 steps.

Conclusion:

The Iona Sidewalk Advocacy Group sees a network of sidewalks as a cornerstone to a multimodal system of transportation for the District. Whether we drive a car, ride a bike, or use mass transit, we all walk on our city streets. Closing these gaps is claiming this right of way for all the residents to have sidewalks that connect us to the many facets of our city. We would like to continue to work with DDOT to achieve this.

Appendix 1: Updates Sidewalk Gap Map with Priority Areas

Appendix 2: Sidewalk Assurance Act—Engrossed Version

Appendix 3: Community Input on Map and Priority Areas

Appendix 4: Survey Results on Procedures

Appendix 5: Community Comments on Procedures