

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE  
IMPLEMENTATION OF SIDEWALK BOND PROJECTS  
Resolution No. 106/2003-04

WHEREAS, On November 4, 2003, the voters of Carrboro approved a \$4.6 million general obligation bond issue for the purpose of constructing sidewalks and greenway trails.

WHEREAS, At its meeting on January 13, the Board of Aldermen asked Town staff to work with Aldermen Zaffron to develop a set of guiding principles for implementing sidewalk bond projects.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Carrboro Board of Aldermen that the Aldermen have reviewed and adopt the set of guiding principles for implementing sidewalk bond projects.

**Dale McKeel**

**From:** Allen Spalt [aspalt@mindspring.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 13, 2004 11:28 PM  
**To:** Michael Nelson (Forward to External); Joal Hall Broun; Mark Chilton; Jacquie Gist; John Herrera; diana\_mcduffee@unc.edu; DMCDUFFEE@nc.rr.com; Alex Zaffron  
**Cc:** Dale McKeel; Richard White; M.C. Peterson; Sarah Williamson  
**Subject:** Sidewalk comments

**ALLEN SPALT**  
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**Carrboro, North Carolina 27510**  
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January 13, 2004

Mike Nelson, Mayor  
Board of Aldermen  
Carrboro

Dear Mike and Members of the Board;

Thank you for the opportunity to provide some input on sidewalk priorities. I was pleased to play a very small role in promoting the recent bond as a member of the committee headed so ably by Shirley Marshall. Now, the real work begins. You have an opportunity to transform the town by providing safe paths for people to get around. Done right this will be one of the best improvements the town has ever made. Try to think of Carrboro now with out sidewalks along Main, Greensboro and Hillsborough Streets -- they are less than twenty years old.

You have a tough job. Adding sidewalks to established neighborhoods provides real challenges. I live on James Street, which has been regularly near the top of most lists but which, like other streets, has its own special circumstances. I think of your task in terms of James Street; you may want to picture a street you know well as I raise some questions.

These thoughts are my own for illustration only and do not represent a consensus of neighbors or residents of James Street. For the town, consultation with neighbors early and often is necessary and desirable.

**^ Balancing general and individual needs:** Voters agreed by an overwhelming margin with the Board's goal to add sidewalks to most streets. The general good on James Street is quite clear: it runs from a commercial center at one end through residential areas to a main street at the other. It is near and serves two schools that are walkable and bikable by many young children. It is served by bus routes. There is already a lot of recreational and purposeful walking on the street.

At the same time, not everyone is thrilled by the prospect of construction through "their" front yard. A lot will depend on how it is proposed and carried out. The program should take into account the needs of the residents along the streets affected. Most will want to have some input into design. Without sidewalks, some town right of way land has been de facto incorporated into front yards and landscaped.

^ **Consult Early and Often:** I was surprised to learn that the town's tentative plan calls for drawing up engineering plans before holding neighborhood meetings. I strongly suggest reversing that order. I can, for example, make as strong a case for putting the James Street sidewalk on one side as the other. But without consulting residents, how would one know what is the most practically feasible? It could save a lot of redesign time.

^ **Environmental Impacts:** The most obvious effect is increased impervious surface. The total amount is significant but seems justified for sidewalks. At the same time, it is worth exploring whether there pervious pavements that are acceptable and affordable? For some of them?

The next most serious impact is on trees. It will often be impossible to build new sidewalks and their associated construction and drainage on existing streets without losing some trees. Done carefully, a moderate loss of trees again seems worth the trade off. But the loss will be painful and efforts should be made to accommodate some specific trees. Some trees have "encroached" on public rights of way, many more have their root systems extended into what will become sidewalk. The life of "street trees" is limited, but they are a real asset and should be encouraged.

^ **Safety:** Sidewalks are safer if they are set back from the road. Will that be possible? What will determine? I encourage you to walk along Greensboro Street in the sections where there is a grass strip and where there is none to see how different the two sections feel. How is it walking a dog? Pushing a stroller? Accompanying a child? Would swale curbs be an appropriate separation? Can we afford them? Would changes in pavement texture or color help?

The sidewalks should not, however, end up widening streets in fact or appearance, as narrower streets tend to keep traffic speeds down.

^ **Aesthetics:** Most sidewalks I have seen that abut the edge of roads are not very pleasing. Think of Umstead Drive or Merritt Mill Road. They seem abrupt, unfriendly to cars with their square edge and offer too little separation for comfort for pedestrians. Can we do better than that? They would benefit from being set back from the street with a grass strip in between. This is a case where aesthetics and safety interests merge.

^ **Drainage:** I understand the bond funds will not cover the kind of drainage improvements that have typically been installed with new sidewalk installations with curb and gutter. If not, how do we keep this project from creating or exacerbating drainage problems? The town should commit to fixing any new drainage problems. Our street, for example, drains

well. Would a sidewalk added to one side impact drainage? It shouldn't.

^ **Grades/Slopes:** Some local street improvement projects have created, or exacerbated, difficult driveway entrances. Drives on the low side of the street often have the height of the curb and sidewalk added to slope they have to climb, creating an awkward hump. To counter this, sometimes the sidewalk has been allowed to dip down to the street level for the width of the drive, making a better entrance. Will the sidewalk designs be sensitive to these slopes? Will they be allowed to vary with the grade as appropriate? What are the criteria? Who decides?

^ **Which Side?** New sidewalks will be installed on just one side. Which side? And, who decides? What is the role of residents on the street in deciding which side? Is it an engineering decision? An economic one? I can imagine many streets, including James, where this will be an issue. Ultimately, the Board will need a process to decide where there is not agreement.

^ **Increased Pedestrian Safety:** Sidewalks are just part of a program to make walking safe. New sidewalks are the most expensive part of the program. We also need a comprehensive approach to pedestrian safety that includes crosswalks and signage making it unambiguously clear that pedestrians have the right of way. Carrboro has been hampered on state roads in town by what the DOT will allow. Most of the streets that will get sidewalks now are town roads that Carrboro controls. We should mark and sign them to clearly protect walkers. Clear crosswalks and Ped X Right of Way signs on town roads might help create habits that will spill over to state roads like Main, Hillsborough and Greensboro.

^ **Parking:** How will new sidewalks affect parking? Adding sidewalks to half the street lengths could reduce available on street parking by up to fifty percent. What are the implications of that? Is that what we want? Casual parking along the street in residential areas is useful for occasional overflow and reduces the need for off street pavement. Routine parking on the shoulder can be a traffic and maintenance problem. In twenty years on James Street, I don't think street side parking has been a problem more than a handful of times. It has been useful to virtually every resident at some time or other.

Thank you for considering these comments. As I said, done right, this will be one of Carrboro's most important improvement projects ever. Thank you for undertaking and overseeing it.  
Sincerely,

Allen Spalt.

## Town of Carrboro

**DRAFT Guiding Principles for Implementing Sidewalk Bond Projects**

January 27, 2004

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On November 4, 2003, the voters of Carrboro approved a \$4.6 million general obligation bond issue for the purpose of constructing sidewalks and greenway trails. Implementation of sidewalk bond projects will be accomplished in accordance with the following guiding principles.

**Purpose and Need**

Sidewalks constructed with bond funds will provide a pedestrian circulation network to improve mobility and expand access to downtown Carrboro, schools, parks, bus stops, businesses, residential areas, town buildings, and other facilities. Sidewalks will be constructed in a fiscally responsible and environmentally sensitive manner that enhances pedestrian safety by eliminating hazards and minimizing conflicts with vehicular traffic.

**Implementation**

The Town will hire a design consultant with appropriate project and community relations experience to assist Town staff in the design of new sidewalks.

The implementation process will take into account the needs of property owners along affected streets. Prior to the approval of a sidewalk plan for a particular street, two informational meetings will be held with property owners, as follows:

- The first meeting will describe the design and construction process and allow property owners to discuss their interests before the consultant begins sidewalk design.
- The second meeting will provide property owners the opportunity to review and comment on a preliminary sidewalk design.

Meetings will be scheduled with representatives of groups of streets from the same or close by geographic areas. For example, Ashe, Elm, Lindsay, and Shelton streets would be grouped together and property owners on those streets would be invited to the same meeting. It is anticipated that there will be about 7 to 9 such groupings. When a sidewalk project will affect only one property owner, a separate meeting will be held with that property owner.

The Town will produce a brochure and web page explaining the sidewalk design and construction process and designate a Town employee to serve as a primary contact person.

At any point in the implementation process, property owners on a street may submit a request that a sidewalk not be built on their street. Decisions on such requests are made by the Sidewalk Review Committee (see "Modifications to Sidewalk Designs" below).

### **Donation of Right-of-Way**

During meetings with Town staff and the design consultant, property owners will be informed of the opportunity to donate right-of-way for sidewalk projects and be encouraged to discuss the tax implications of such a donation with their tax advisor.

### **Modifications to Sidewalk Designs**

Once preliminary sidewalk designs have been prepared, affected property owners will have a reasonable amount of time to review and request modifications. The time period for requesting modifications will be specified at the informational meeting. Requests for modifications are submitted to the Public Works Director.

A Sidewalk Review Committee, composed of three members of the Board of Aldermen and two citizens, will be created and hear the following types of requests:

- Requests that a sidewalk not be built on a particular street.
- Requests that major modifications be made to the sidewalk designs on a street.

Requests to the Sidewalk Review Committee must be signed by at least 75 percent of the property owners of the street. The Town will prepare a form on which such requests may be submitted.

### **Sidewalk Design**

New sidewalks will be designed, installed, and maintained in accordance with government standards (including ADA accessibility standards). Generally, sidewalks will be a minimum of 5 feet in width, when feasible. Sidewalk installation will be coordinated with street maintenance and construction activities to the extent practical.

When a decision must be made about which side of a street to place a sidewalk, the following factors will be considered:

- A determination of which side would require the least new construction to provide connections to existing sidewalks.
- An inventory of existing trees, existing utilities, other immovable obstructions, available right-of-way, and adjacent parking and driveway locations.
- Drainage and environmental impacts.
- The request of a majority of the property owners abutting the street.

A grass strip between street/curb and sidewalk is encouraged. Such strips provide both an aesthetic benefit and physical separation between vehicles and pedestrians. If a grass strip is not possible, other alternatives that address aesthetic and safety concerns will be considered.

The impacts of sidewalk installation on existing on-street, off-street, and overflow parking will be considered in the design of new sidewalks.

The impact of new sidewalks on existing driveway entrances will be considered. Designs should seek to reduce awkward humps and abrupt grade changes.

The design of new sidewalks will take into account postal service standards for the placement of mail boxes and seek to reduce the conflict between mail boxes and Town maintenance operations such as street sweeping, refuse collection, snow removal, etc.

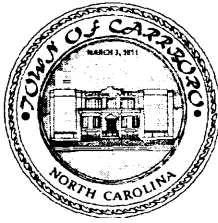
### **Environmental Concerns**

Trees are a valuable amenity to the urban environment. It is the intent of the sidewalk program to protect large trees if reasonably practicable. Large trees that are deemed to be in poor condition will not be protected. Removal of a tree may be required if the tree is determined to be hazardous. Options to protect trees may include:

- Using alternative materials or alternative construction methods over the critical root area.
- Altering the path within the right-of-way.
- Providing an easement to the Town to relocate the sidewalk to private property.
- Relocating the tree.
- Where grade cuts or fills are required, work shall adhere to best management practices for pruning roots and canopy, slope of cuts or fills, and installation of retaining walls or tree wells.

New sidewalks will be designed so that they meet the Town's stormwater management standards and do not create new drainage problems or exacerbate existing drainage problems.

The design consultant will be asked to consider the suitability of pervious concrete or similar materials for use in sidewalk bond projects in Carrboro. Pervious concrete is a special structural concrete with the fine particles removed.



## TOWN OF CARRBORO

NORTH CAROLINA

### MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** January 30, 2004

**TO:** Mayor and Board of Aldermen  
Town Manager Steve Stewart

**FROM:** Dale McKeel, Transportation Planner

**RE:** Alderman Zaffron's Suggested Modification to Guiding Principles

Aldermen Zaffron has reviewed the draft guiding principles for implementing sidewalk bond projects and has suggested the following modification:

- Set the threshold for sending a request to the Sidewalk Review Committee at the same level as that for the assessment process (i.e., 51 percent of property owners by frontage).

Aldermen Zaffron also raised this question: Should we have different criteria for deciding on whether or not to have a sidewalk or on how a different sidewalk design might be more or less appropriate for different classes of streets?

Please let me know if you have questions or need additional information.