

MOTION

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PUBLIC WORKS

BUDGET & FINANCE

SEP 06 2005

The City should explore creative approaches to solving the backlog of sidewalk repair needs. While many and varied approaches are helping, miles and miles of sidewalks heave and buckle. Tree roots must be pruned. Root barriers must be installed to protect new sidewalks, and more trees - species appropriate to planting next to new sidewalks - must line our City's streets. The Bureau of Street Services is budgeted to replace 52 miles of the 6500 miles of sidewalks this year. A customer calling in for sidewalk service today can expect the work to be done in 83 years. The City's 2005-06 budget did expand the successful pilot 50/50 sidewalk repair program, but this still leaves 98% of the sidewalks in need of repair yet unfixed.

Urban planners have long advocated a point-of-sale plan similar to what is done in other cities and what is done currently to ensure the safety of water heaters and the water efficiency of toilets. This approach acknowledges that it is the property owner who is responsible for the repair of their sidewalk and then offers a simple and efficient way of getting sidewalks fixed: before real estate is sold, the city inspects the sidewalk fronting the property. If the sidewalk is in good condition, the owner is not required to do anything. If the sidewalk is damaged, the owner is required to repair it before the property is sold. City workers will fix sidewalks, affordably, and homeowners can pay for these repairs when they sell their homes. Beyond improving sidewalks, the point-of-sale strategy has several advantages. Owners don't have to do anything until they sell their property. The sale provides the cash to pay for required repairs. Owners fix only the sidewalk on their own property.

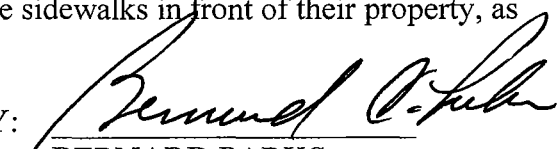
Improved sidewalks increase the value of property and this may persuade owners to make repairs early. Half of all properties in Los Angeles are sold at least once every decade. Because the turnover rate is about the same all over the city, sidewalks will be repaired at about the same rate. These repairs would cost the city nothing. In fact, the city would save money because better sidewalks reduce the number of trip-and-fall lawsuits. Half of what the City will spend this year paying for trip-and-fall lawsuits can serve as seed money to start this program. Given the rate at which houses change hands in Los Angeles, a revolving fund could build quickly.

In addition, there is a clear economic development benefit to this proposal. It is estimated that in the first year of a point-of-sale program, 460 miles of sidewalks would be repaired, total local wages would increase \$102 million, and 2,600 new jobs would be created with average annual wages and benefits of \$39,000. Los Angeles city workers strive to provide high quality cost effective services. This approach could provide benefits to all sectors.

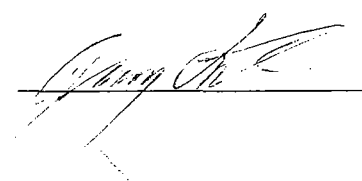
This pay-as-you go proposal promises to fix an unfixable sidewalk problem, to create many good jobs which would in turn pump millions into the local economy, enhance individual property values and neighborhood beauty and safety - and with no expense of public funds.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Bureau of Street Services, with the assistance of the CAO and the City Attorney and in consultation with affected stake-holders such as realtors associations, apartment associations, homeowner groups, and others, be directed to report with recommendations relative to a point-of-sale plan for fixing the City's sidewalks whereby property sellers would be assessed the cost of fixing the sidewalks in front of their property, as further described in the text of this Motion.

PRESENTED BY:


BERNARD PARKS
Councilman, 8th District

SECONDED BY:



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