

March 11, 2016

The Honorable Joe Buscaino
Chair, Public Works Committee

The Honorable Paul Krekorian
Chair, Budget & Finance Committee

Los Angeles City Council
200 North Spring St.
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: CF-0163-S3 Sidewalk Repair Policy

Dear Chairmen Buscaino and Krekorian:

Established in 1924, the Central City Association (CCA) is Los Angeles's premier business advocacy organization, with 450 members employing over 350,000 people in the Los Angeles region. CCA submits this letter in support of the elements of a citywide sidewalk repair program.

CCA represents many of the largest property owners in Los Angeles, not only high-rise office towers but also universities, hospitals, residential complexes and other properties with large footprints as well as many small properties. We were pleased to see the approach presented in your February 29, 2016 letter to your colleagues that balances the needs of the City while acknowledging the responsibilities of the City.

CCA applauds the proposal to incentivize proactive repairs by property owners. By allowing owners to directly contract this work and then be reimbursed by the City, it will expedite repairs and manage costs. This approach will allow more repairs to be done much faster than if the City attempted to do this work itself.

The sticking point in previous discussions on this topic has been on the issue of warranty. We understand the demands that heavy usage puts on sidewalks in commercial and industrial areas and are not opposed to a shorter warranty in these areas. However, the issue of damage caused by City trees still remains. By limiting the warranty to five years, but requiring property owners to maintain trees that have previously caused sidewalk damage, the City may be placing property owners in an unfair situation. Property owners could be facing costly repairs for root damage in seven or eight years, through no fault of their own. Instead, we suggest the City warranty commercial area sidewalks for five years for normal wear and tear while extending that warranty for damage caused by City-controlled trees to the twenty years.

Similarly, while we do not advocate haphazard tree removal, the City should consider ways that property owners may replace troublesome trees at reasonable costs. This can be done in ways that protect the urban forest, but still allow for access and reduce the potential for injuries. Requiring a two-for-one replacement or using the same tree well are not always reasonable or logical conditions. There are alternatives that should be explored that will both promote safety and encourage and protect the urban forest.

Thank you for your hard work on this vexing issue. CCA believes that this is an important step in giving Los Angeles safe and passable sidewalks.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carol E. Schatz", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Carol E. Schatz
President & CEO

cc: Members, Public Works and Budget & Finance Committees