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Honorable Board of Public Works
City of West Allis

Re: Streets without Sidewalks

In the City of West Allis there are streets without sidewalks. There are many reasons for streets to be constructed without sidewalk. The main reason would be that the City, at the time, made an agreement with the developer of the subdivision which did not require sidewalks. Another reason would be that there is not enough dedicated right-of-way available to construct the street and sidewalks. When subdivisions were developed in the mid to late 1900's the prevalence of households having more than 1 or 2 vehicles was small. The theory was that it was safe to walk in the street because there were not many vehicles and they drove safely.

Today, many households have 3 or more vehicles especially if there are driving age children at home. According to the SEWRPC VISON 2050 report, in 1963 a 2-person household would make 10 trips per day (1 out and 1 back = 2 trips each time the vehicle leaves the house). A 4-person household would make 20 trips per day. In 2011, the same 2-person household made 12 trips per day and the 4-person household made 22 trips per day.

Pedestrian traffic has also increased. In 1963, a 2-person household would have less than 1 walker per day. The 4-person household would have 1.6 walkers per day. In 2011, the 2-person household had 1 walker per day and the 4-person household had 1.76 walkers per day. (The calculation for walkers is 8% of the vehicles.) Additionally, traffic speeds have been increasing. Traffic calming and traffic safety has become an important focus for the City of West Allis.

Consider that in West Allis, the average city block on one side of the street is approximately 1.7 acres. On that city block, there are 14 lots. That equates to 8.2 lots per acre. In one acre of land if all the homes were single family, 2-person households, there would be 98 trips per day generated by the 14 lots. If all the houses were single family, 4-person households, 180 trips per day would be generated. The entire city block along one side of the street, would generate 167 trips per day and 360 trips per day respectively. Double those for both sides of the street - 334 and 720 trips per day. In West Allis, many blocks have a blend of single family, duplex and 3- and/or 4-family houses so there may be even more vehicles than the calculations estimate.

For the driving public, that may not seem like a lot a vehicles, however; when pedestrians are forced to walk in the same street as with vehicles, the amount of vehicles becomes very important. In addition to the driving vehicles, often there are parked vehicles on the street which forces pedestrians further toward the center of the street where the vehicles tend to drive. The opportunities for pedestrian/vehicle collisions is significant. Fortunately, pedestrians are taught at a young age to avoid vehicles. This does not mean that the City should not create safe pedestrian paths when the opportunity arises such as when a street is scheduled to be reconstructed.

The City has stressed that pedestrian and bike safety is very important as is traffic calming. The City has implemented many strategies for traffic calming and pedestrian safety. Sidewalks are the safest way to move pedestrians especially in urban areas where the trips per day is significant.



In 2024, S. 118th St. between W. Washington St. and W. Rainbow St. is scheduled to be reconstructed. The street currently does not have sidewalks. The dedicated right-of-way would facilitate the addition of sidewalks for pedestrian safety. When reviewing this project, it became apparent that a discussion regarding the installation of sidewalks on streets without existing sidewalks should be brought forward at this time. My initial direction on this project, and any project that involves a street without sidewalks, would be to include sidewalks in the plans. It is my understanding, however, that installing sidewalks has not been supported in the past. I am therefore writing this letter for your consideration of the installation of sidewalks on streets without so that I can provide direction to the Engineering Department staff.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Melinda K. Dejewski".

Melinda K. Dejewski, PE
City Engineer