

Improving the Safety and Accessibility of Sidewalks in Santa Cruz County:

A Study of Jurisdiction and Property Owner Responsibilities and Practices

Compiled and written by the

Pedestrian Safety Work Group

A subcommittee of the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission's
Elderly & Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee

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Materials also available online:

Document - <http://www.sccrtc.org/pdf/2010/SidewalkMaintenanceReport2010.pdf>

Appendices - <http://www.sccrtc.org/pdf/2010/SidewalkMaintenanceReport2010Appendices.pdf>

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Appendices

A: Profiles of Local Jurisdictions' Current Practices

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City of Capitola
City of Santa Cruz
City of Scotts Valley
City of Watsonville
County of Santa Cruz

B: Benchmark Jurisdictions' Current Practices

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City of Corvallis, Oregon
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C: Maintenance Standards

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2. Pedestrian Access Route (Sidewalk) Maintenance Standards for Local Jurisdictions in Santa Cruz County and Benchmark Jurisdictions

D: Regulatory Guidelines and Information

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1. United States Department of Transportation Policy Statement on Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation – Regulations and Recommendations
2. Clarification of FHWA's Oversight Role in Accessibility – Frederick Isler, Associate Administrator for Civil Rights
3. California Streets and Highway Code, Chapter 22, Article 2, Section 5610
4. Barden v. City of Sacramento
5. Los Angeles Times article on Caltrans lawsuit

I. Introduction

The Pedestrian Safety Work Group is a subcommittee of the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission's Elderly & Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee. Its mission is to ensure safe and accessible pedestrian travel and access throughout the county for the benefit of all residents.

The Work Group has initiated a study to determine the status of local jurisdiction sidewalks, and of the practices employed in managing the property owner component of maintenance programs.

For the purposes of this study, *sidewalks* are defined as that portion of the public right-of-way which is primarily devoted to pedestrian use. *Pedestrians* are defined as anyone using the sidewalk network, including individuals walking, using a wheelchair or other mobility device, and pushing a stroller or cart.

The work group was interested in validating and responding to the following perceptions which were brought to our attention by members of the public:

- That, in several jurisdictions, a significant percentage of sidewalks do not meet basic safety and access standards
- That the majority of those sidewalks are located adjacent to private property
- That many property owners are unaware of their responsibility, under California law, for maintaining sidewalks adjacent to their properties
- That jurisdiction programs which address safety and access issues are not visible to, or understood by, many of their residents
- That most jurisdiction programs are not targeted to achieve a high rate of compliance within a defined period of time.

II. Objectives of this study

Based on these perceptions, the work group developed the following objectives for this study:

- Clarify property owner and jurisdiction responsibilities for maintaining safe and accessible sidewalks
- Clarify program objectives that will bring sidewalk networks into compliance with regulatory standards
- Encourage local jurisdictions to develop a commonly understood set of standards for sidewalk maintenance
- Determine the current status of local jurisdiction sidewalk networks
- Document the current practices of local jurisdiction sidewalk maintenance programs (See [Appendix A](#))

- Build a program model for managing to the objective of a compliant sidewalk network using advanced components of surveyed programs including examples from benchmark jurisdictions (See [Appendix B](#))
- Request that local jurisdictions conduct program assessments, and consider upgrades as appropriate
- Assist local jurisdictions in developing processes for outreach that build a greater awareness and support for a community value of safe and accessible sidewalks
- Request that local jurisdiction programs report status of sidewalk networks to their governing bodies annually; and coordinate in an annual reporting of status to the Regional Transportation Commission

In meeting these objectives, this report focuses mainly on Jurisdiction oversight of property owner sidewalk maintenance.

III. Presentation to the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission:

The Work Group is presenting this report to the RTC for the following reasons:

- Sidewalks are a critical component of the county's overall transportation network
- Sidewalk maintenance policies and practices are matters of concern to the Commission's member jurisdictions
- There are several program challenges shared across jurisdictions
- Coordination in addressing common challenges has the potential to leverage limited resources

IV. Presentation of Key Concepts

Unsafe sidewalk conditions:

Conditions arise in sidewalk networks that pose risks to pedestrians seeking to use them. These include broken and raised pavement, slopes with potential to tip wheelchairs and related mobility devices, vegetation that intrudes into the walkway, holes around trees, vehicles parked across sidewalks, and signs, poles, stands or benches that obstruct or narrow the path of travel (See Figures 1-6 in Section IX).

Trip and fall hazards are a danger to all residents. The elderly, and others with impairments that affect vision and balance, are more susceptible to such hazards. Devices such as wheelchairs, motorized scooters, strollers, walkers, skates and skateboards can dislodge passengers when significant pavement uplifts or angles of slope are encountered.

When hazards constitute barriers to sidewalk use, they may cause pedestrians, on foot or using mobility devices, to make detours into roadways, or other paths, to reach destinations.

The importance of sidewalks to population segments:

In addition to residents who use sidewalks for enjoyment and exercise, many find such use to be a necessary affordable and accessible option for traveling to a destination. Seniors, no longer able or choosing not to drive, people unable to purchase and maintain automobiles due to low income, and those with disabilities find the use of sidewalks to be essential for their travel in the community and for connecting with public transit.

When sidewalk networks are not consistently safe and accessible, residents may avoid use of the system. For the elderly and persons with disabilities, this may greatly restrict opportunities for involvement in neighborhood and community activities or may force reliance on the use of more costly transportation services such as paratransit.

The objective of sidewalk maintenance:

For a sidewalk system to function properly it must connect to popular destination points within a community and provide ease of movement for pedestrians traveling into and around a community.

Sidewalks that are *major paths of travel* make important connections within the jurisdiction and with networks of neighboring jurisdictions. These sidewalks tend to be located along major road corridors and connect to key community destinations.

Neighborhood sidewalk systems normally serve local residents. They link to neighborhood parks, schools, shops, transit stops and the jurisdiction-wide pedestrian network.

The objective of sidewalk maintenance is to have a seamless system, free of obstructions or missing segments, on which pedestrians feel safe and comfortable.

Standards for sidewalk maintenance:

Standards typically include tolerances for gaps, broken, raised, and settled sidewalks as well as delineation of which can be addressed by grinding and which require replacement.

Standards communicate the jurisdiction's requirements for sidewalk pavement condition and unobstructed pathways. They allow property owners, and other members of the public, to identify and address safety and access issues. Standards also provide a basis for the jurisdiction to initiate notification and compliance processes with property owners.

Enlisting residents in the identification and reporting of sidewalk issues is critical to the success of jurisdiction sidewalk maintenance programs. The following is a list of items generally included in sidewalk maintenance standards:

- Uplifts
- Gaps
- Surface condition
- Pathway obstructions
- Cross-Slopes
- Curb ramps

The challenge is to express these standards in non-technical terms so that they can be understood and applied by residents. Federal and state standards, including the U.S Access Board's Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) currently applied by the United States and California Departments of Transportation (See [Appendix C](#)), tend to be expressed as technical specifications so jurisdictions are faced with the task of developing their own language that is more readily communicated and understood. The work group's research failed to identify standards language that this report could recommend.

If common maintenance standards language could be developed for the five local jurisdictions it would provide an opportunity to leverage resources in communicating a consistent message.

Property owner responsibility:

A high percentage of the sidewalk networks of most jurisdictions are adjacent to private properties. *The California Streets and Highways Code Section 5610* requires the following:

"Owners of lots or portions of lots fronting on any portion of a public street to maintain the sidewalk in such a condition that it will not endanger persons or property, and will not interfere with the public use of the sidewalk."

It appears that many property owners in local jurisdictions are unaware of their responsibility for maintaining sidewalks adjacent to their properties or of their liability in the event of injury resulting from unsafe conditions.

Local jurisdiction responsibility:

The regulatory environment regarding sidewalk accessibility has evolved to give additional focus to a jurisdiction's responsibility for ensuring that its sidewalk network complies with Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines. (See [Appendix D](#) for additional resources on Regulatory Guidelines and Information.)

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, in *Barden v. City of Sacramento*, held that local jurisdictions are responsible for ensuring that programs achieve compliance with ADA-based standards for sidewalk accessibility.

While, under California law, property owners are responsible for maintaining sidewalks adjacent to their properties, jurisdiction processes and controls largely determine the rate at which safety and access issues are identified and addressed.

Jurisdictions are encouraged to consult with their legal staffs to track any changes in program oversight requirements.

Measurements of program status:

Without formal processes for measuring the percentage of sidewalks that are in compliance, it is difficult for local jurisdictions, and the community at large, to determine current status and rates of year-to-year improvement. This information is the foundation for establishing goals and timetables that achieve jurisdiction objectives.

Each local jurisdiction faces unique challenges in efforts to achieve and maintain an integrated and conforming sidewalk network and help residents understand their role in the maintenance of pedestrian facilities.

The manner in which jurisdictions assess their networks, report status, and monitor rates of progress may vary but certain measurements seem essential for determining the effectiveness of sidewalk maintenance programs:

- The current percentage of jurisdiction sidewalks that are in compliance with jurisdiction standards
- The year-to-year progress toward the jurisdiction's compliance goal, expressed as a percentage of sidewalks that meet jurisdiction standards
- The average interval from identification of a significant unsafe condition to its resolution

Setting objectives and timetables:

Objectives and timetables demonstrate a commitment to address and resolve sidewalk exposures within a defined period of time. They can be developed to reflect rates of progress exhibited by current program practices or on the expectation that a high level of compliance with jurisdiction objectives should be achieved within a defined time period.

A jurisdiction must weigh a number of factors in setting program goals. Among these are the extent to which its sidewalks are currently in compliance, the rate at which non-complying sidewalks are being replaced, the priority given to pedestrian safety and access, concerns regarding legal actions on behalf of those injured or denied access, and resources available to address safety and access exposures.

Methods for the identification of safety and access issues:

There are three primary sources for identification of safety and access issues:

- *Property owners* with knowledge of safety and access standards can identify issues regarding sidewalks adjacent to their own properties
- *Citizens* with knowledge of sidewalk maintenance standards and the process for reporting issues can notify the jurisdiction concerning safety and access exposures on the properties of others
- *Jurisdictions* can conduct periodic safety and access audits of their sidewalk networks

Effectiveness of methods:

The methods vary in effectiveness. No single system is capable of promptly identifying all safety and access exposures. The following describes the strengths and limitations of each:

The jurisdiction audit is the most comprehensive and effective approach to obtaining detailed and reliable data needed for the reporting of current status and rate of improvement. Safety and access issues that emerge between audits must be identified and addressed through the citizen reporting process.

The citizen reporting process relies on public knowledge of standards, an awareness of the reporting process, and a motivating community value that safe and accessible sidewalks are important. Without a sustained and effective public education campaign, citizens will not have the information needed to report exposures. Even under ideal conditions, sole reliance on this process would be expected to identify a limited subset of existing safety and access exposures.

When property owners identify and address issues that emerge on sidewalks adjacent to their properties, it is an indication that standards are understood and that there is community support for safe and accessible sidewalks. Property owner initiated repairs occur with greater frequency in jurisdictions where a community value has been established through sustained public education.

V. Survey of Jurisdiction Practices

The Work Group surveyed local jurisdictions to determine the status of their sidewalk networks and to understand the practices employed in managing property owner compliance with jurisdiction safety and access standards. Three additional jurisdictions, identified as having advanced program components, were also surveyed.

Methodology

Prior to its initial meeting with each of the five local jurisdictions, the Work Group requested background information regarding current sidewalk maintenance practices. An initial round of meetings was held with jurisdiction staffs to clarify questionnaire responses and discuss current practices for each of the program components addressed in this report. A second round of meetings was held to verify accuracy of information reported in the notes of the first meeting. Jurisdictions were encouraged to provide additional information and describe any changes implemented since the first meeting. Following the second round of meetings, drafts of the report and jurisdiction profiles were provided to public works directors and their staffs for final review and input. (Profiles of local jurisdiction program components are presented in [Appendix A](#).)

Work group research identified three additional jurisdictions, outside of Santa Cruz County, with programs that include advanced components. The three non-local jurisdictions were administered the questionnaire by phone and asked to describe the background and rationale for current practices. (Information regarding program components of the three additional jurisdictions is presented in [Appendix B](#).)

The Work Group gathered process documentation and educational materials describing advanced practices of all surveyed programs. Survey findings are intended as resources for local jurisdictions in assessing current program practices and in understanding alternative approaches that may improve outcomes or utilization of resources. The information addresses shared program challenges and is adaptable to a variety of environments.

In addition to program practices identified in this report, the staffs of local jurisdictions are encouraged to make inquiries within their professional networks regarding advanced practices in areas of interest. The advanced program components described in this report may suggest additional topics for discussion with those contacts.

VI. Format of a Program Model

The Work Group's survey of jurisdiction practices and government standards identified seven important components of a sidewalk network management program. In this section each component of the program model is identified and described, followed by a list of practices that have helped jurisdictions accomplish the objectives of that component. Jurisdictions having an advanced version of that program component are acknowledged.

To facilitate comparisons between local jurisdiction practices and components of the program model, both listings are numbered and labeled in identical sequences (See [Appendix A](#)).

Components of a program model:

(1) Conduct network-wide audits to identify sidewalks that do not comply with jurisdiction standards.

A full assessment of a jurisdiction's overall sidewalk network requires some form of audit process. Regular and comprehensive audits can generate data that is sufficiently reliable for determining status, setting goals, and tracking program performance.

Some jurisdictions that conduct audits divide their sidewalk networks into sectors and audit one sector per year, or other specified interval.

Few jurisdictions have made explicit commitments to bring sidewalks into full compliance within specific periods of time. In the absence of a specific commitment, a jurisdiction's percentage of non-complying sidewalks, and year-to-year rate at which that percentage is being reduced, serve as operational indicators of a timetable.

Practices identified in the programs of surveyed jurisdictions:

Types of Audits:

- Proactive, cyclical audits by the jurisdiction
- Audits that respond to citizen reports of unsafe or inaccessible sidewalks
- Ad hoc audits by DPW employees attendant to other activities

Scope of Audits:

- Audit subsections of a jurisdiction so that the full area is assessed over the course of a defined number of years
- Focus on areas where there is a pattern of citizen reported issues
- Expand the scope of audits that respond to reports of individual sidewalk issues
 - Check both sides of street on an entire block
 - Assess multiple blocks if the sidewalk issue is on a busy pedestrian corridor
 - Assess links from the citizen-reported sidewalk hazard to key origins, destinations or transit stops

Jurisdictions meeting the following criterion:

The full sidewalk network is audited within a defined number of years.

- City of Capitola
- City of Corvallis Oregon

- City of Fairfield Ohio

(2) Report status of the sidewalk network at a regularly defined interval.

Public perception of the level of emphasis a jurisdiction places on its maintenance program is determined by the condition of its sidewalk network and its responsiveness to issues.

If the network has a high percentage of sidewalks that conform to the jurisdiction standards, or if there is a strong indication of year to year improvement, then a clear message is sent that safe and accessible sidewalks are an important community value.

Evidence that the jurisdiction governing body is committed to the program is apparent when there is an annual reporting of network status. An annual reporting sustains focus on progress being made toward objectives.

Practices identified in the programs of surveyed jurisdictions:

- A statement of standards for accessibility and safety
- The percentage of network sidewalks currently in compliance
- Year-to-year improvement in percentage of compliant sidewalks
- Average interval from identification of an exposure to resolution

Jurisdictions meeting the following criterion:

The status of the full network, or of major segments, is reported at defined intervals.

- City of Capitola
- City of Corvallis Oregon
- City of Fairfield Ohio

(3) Implement administrative processes that ensure prompt resolution of safety and access issues.

Achieving objectives and timetables will depend on implementing administrative processes that ensure they will be met. Processes should be evaluated to determine their capacity to promptly identify safety and access issues, notify property owners of violations, track actions to repair or replace, initiate sidewalk repair or replacement when property owners do not take required actions, and inspect completed work to ensure compliance with standards.

Practices identified in the programs of surveyed jurisdictions:

- On-line and print forms for residents to report sidewalk conditions
- A database for tracking the sequence of steps from report of condition to its resolution
- On-site inspections to reported safety or access issues
- Photographs to document issues
- Letters, with support information, sent to property owners
- A time limit for making repairs or replacements
- Follow-up to determine if work has been completed
- A final enforcement step for those not complying

Jurisdictions meeting the following criterion:

The administrative processes that are in place have resulted in the prompt resolution of safety and access issues identified in the jurisdiction's sidewalk network.

- City of Capitola
- City of Santa Cruz
- City of Scotts Valley
- City of Watsonville
- City of Corvallis Oregon
- City of Fairfield Ohio

(4) Promote the community value of property owners maintaining safe and accessible sidewalks

The positive promotion of sidewalk maintenance programs makes the difference in whether or not program standards, requirements and processes are viewed as in the interest of property owners and the community. Jurisdictions will secure greater support if property owners are able to recognize that they gain substantially from program provisions.

There is a mutual interest of property owners and the community in maintaining safe and accessible sidewalks. Walkable, safe and accessible sidewalks enhance the appearance and value of individual properties and neighborhoods. They encourage walking for recreation and exercise, increasing resident interaction and strengthening of neighborhood and community social networks.

Safe and accessible sidewalks also help property owners and jurisdictions avoid liability claims that may originate from injuries caused by sidewalk hazards.

Practices identified in the programs of surveyed jurisdictions:

- Promotion campaigns that achieve high visibility for residents
- Program content that is interesting, persuasive and clear
- Information that is routed through channels that reach a high percentage of jurisdiction residents
- The message is reinforced at least annually to sustain community awareness

Jurisdictions meeting the following criterion:

An on-going, coordinated and highly-visible campaign is in place to build support for the value of property owners maintaining adjacent sidewalks

- City of Corvallis Oregon
- City of Fairfield Ohio

(5) Inform residents of the jurisdiction's program for ensuring the maintenance of safe and accessible sidewalks.

Public education has the potential to address sidewalk maintenance program requirements in several ways:

- It can alert citizens to safety and access issues that apply to themselves and their neighbors
- It may prompt property owners to initiate corrective action without the need for jurisdiction involvement
- It alerts citizens to processes for reporting hazards and barriers on the properties of others
- It can make citizens aware of jurisdiction information and services that will assist them in taking corrective action
- It will help build a community value for addressing issues concerning safe and accessible sidewalks

An educational initiative needs to have the capability of sustaining awareness of the program, its safety and access standards, the process for reporting issues, and support resources for corrective action.

Sidewalk maintenance initiatives can be presented as partnerships between property owners and jurisdictions:

- Property owners have responsibility for maintaining the sidewalks adjacent to their properties

- Jurisdictions can support these efforts with information, services, and monitoring
- On behalf of all residents, jurisdictions have responsibility for oversight of the sidewalk networks and for ensuring that sidewalks are safe and accessible

Conversations with jurisdiction staff confirmed that many property owners are not aware that sidewalk maintenance is their responsibility. They are also unaware of standards for determining if sidewalks are safe and accessible.

With property owner awareness, the early identification of unsafe conditions may allow issues to be addressed with less costly solutions. Property owners will more readily address major repairs if they understand that technical, and perhaps financial, assistance, is available from the jurisdiction.

Jurisdiction web pages and lobby brochures are passive outreach media that have limited ability to achieve the necessary level of awareness. Jurisdiction mailings, and publications that include program descriptions, may address the need. In the absence of jurisdiction mailings and publications, periodic placement of information in local news media may be a good alternative.

Practices identified in the programs of surveyed jurisdictions:

- A public information strategy that sustains resident focus on key aspects of the program
- Property owners are periodically reminded of their responsibility for maintenance of adjacent sidewalks and of the avenues for identifying and addressing issues
- Citizen initiative to identify and address hazards is encouraged
- A brochure/pamphlet is available that contains information about sidewalk maintenance standards and resources for addressing issues
- Residents are informed that sidewalk conditions will be audited periodically

Jurisdictions meeting the following criterion:

A high percentage of residents are aware of standards for safe and accessible sidewalks, property owner responsibility for their maintenance, and sources of information for addressing issues.

- City of Capitola
- City of Corvallis Oregon
- City of Fairfield Ohio

(6) Create highly visible processes for reporting sidewalk safety and access issues

Processes that encourage citizens to identify and report unsafe and inaccessible sidewalks are important supplements to jurisdiction audits.

Citizen reports can alert jurisdiction staff to serious issues that emerge between audits. They are particularly important if the jurisdiction's audit cycle extends over a number of years.

Standards and reporting processes must be well understood by a high percentage of residents to serve effectively as a stand-alone identification process

The citizen report form should include instructions for the immediate contact of an official when the sidewalk hazard poses a serious and imminent danger to the public.

Sidewalks are often blocked by objects whose removal is beyond the scope of public works departments' authority. It is recommended that contact information be included in program literature for the addressing of issues such as vehicles or objects repeatedly placed on sidewalks by residents or businesses.

The citizen reporting process is an important tool in building a community value of safe and accessible sidewalks.

Practices identified in the programs of surveyed jurisdictions:

- Make copies of the citizen reporting forms available online and in locations where residents would expect to find them.
- Create a process for notifying the person submitting the report of which jurisdiction will be responding to the hazard along with any pertinent follow-up information.
- Coordinate public education regarding the citizen reporting process with the broader program information initiative described in (5) above
- Consider coordination with other jurisdictions in a public education campaign to alert residents to the process.
- Sustain public awareness by periodically renewing the public information campaign.

Jurisdictions meeting the following criterion:

A well-documented issue reporting process is in place and a high percentage of existing sidewalk safety and access issues are being reported.

- City of Corvallis Oregon
- City of Fairfield Ohio

(7) Develop information and support resources for property owners seeking to address unsafe or inaccessible sidewalk conditions

Property owners, when advised that their sidewalks have unsafe conditions, will be able to effectively, and promptly, address the problems when they are provided with guidance and support from local jurisdictions.

Jurisdictions vary widely in the level of information and support they provide to property owners.

Practices identified in the programs of surveyed jurisdictions:

- Describe repair and replacement options that address specific situations
- Describe permit and inspection requirements and fees
- Offer jurisdiction services that reduce property owner effort and expense in completing sidewalk repairs
- Identify resources to which property owners can be referred in order to obtain services on their own

Potential services to be offered by a jurisdiction:

- Vegetation removal
- Grinding of sidewalk uplifts
- No-fee permits
- Providing a list of qualified contractors
- Referral to contractors with whom the jurisdiction has negotiated a favorable rate
- Low-interest loans
- Property liens that are repaid through property taxes

Jurisdictions meeting the following criterion:

Current information offers effective guidance for addressing a range of potential conditions and offers services, or identifies contacts, for making the necessary repairs.

- City of Santa Cruz
- City of Watsonville
- City of Belmont
- City of Corvallis Oregon
- City of Fairfield Ohio

VII. Overview of Local Jurisdiction Practices

The following are general observations regarding current practices of the five local jurisdictions as they relate to the program model:

(1) Conduct network-wide audits to identify sidewalks that do not comply with jurisdiction standards

Four of the five local jurisdictions rely on citizen reports as the primary method for identifying sidewalk safety and access issues. This approach can be expected to identify only a limited percent of the existing issues.

(2) Report status of the sidewalk network at a regularly defined interval

Local jurisdictions do not currently have the capability to report the overall status of their sidewalk networks. Incomplete data generated by current citizen reporting processes has limited value in the reliable tracking of overall network status and rate of improvement.

(3) Implement administrative processes that ensure prompt resolution of safety and access issues

Program staffs in all five local jurisdictions adequately notify property owners of reported incidents that come to their attention. Follow-up and managing the resolution of sidewalk safety and access issues is less effective. All jurisdictions have been creative in developing responsive processes and leveraging limited resources.

(4) Promote the community value of property owners maintaining safe and accessible sidewalks

Currently, many property owners give little thought to their sidewalks until they are notified of a problem, and do not understand their responsibility for maintaining adjacent sidewalks. The significant percentages of non-complying sidewalks indicate that a community value has yet to be established. All jurisdictions acknowledged that more promotion could be done and were receptive to the idea of creating a coordinated public service campaign to help build this shared community value.

(5) Inform residents of the jurisdiction's program for ensuring the maintenance of safe and accessible sidewalks

A significant percentage of residents are unclear about jurisdiction responsibility for maintaining sidewalks. Many are unaware of property owner responsibility for maintenance and their jurisdiction's processes for identification, notification, support and enforcement of safety and access standards. Public education initiatives to increase resident awareness have been limited. All jurisdictions requested the work group's assistance in creating and publicizing documents which explain their programs.

(6) Create highly visible process for the identification and reporting of sidewalk safety and access issues

Most jurisdictions have this information posted on their public works department website and available, as a brochure, in department lobbies. More proactive public education measures are needed to achieve and sustain awareness of this process. All jurisdictions have expressed an interest in creating a commonly understood set of sidewalk maintenance standards, making it easier for residents to identify hazards. Input from the work group was also welcomed regarding publicity of the reporting process and increasing the availability of hazard report forms.

(7) Develop information and support resources for property owners seeking to address unsafe or inaccessible sidewalk conditions

Some jurisdictions are able to offer services or referrals which can reduce property owner effort and expense. If more jurisdictions could offer such assistance, program support and compliance would likely be increased.

VIII. Conclusion and Follow-up

The goal of this report is to improve the condition of sidewalks throughout all jurisdictions in Santa Cruz County by evaluating current sidewalk maintenance program practices, identifying important potential program components and offering additional resources. The objective is to support jurisdictions in their efforts to achieve, within defined periods of time, sidewalk networks that are in compliance with jurisdiction standards for maintenance. The Work Group wishes to acknowledge the conscientious efforts of local jurisdiction program staff in the current climate of reduced staffing and financial resources. Current practices provide a sound foundation for upgrades needed to achieve network compliance. Local jurisdictions are encouraged to assess the objectives of their programs, the current status of their networks, the ability of current processes to achieve program objectives, and the comparative merits of program components of other jurisdictions.

While the five jurisdictions differ significantly in their needs and circumstances, there are many areas which can benefit from collaboration and adoption of common approaches. It is hoped that this report will support efforts by jurisdictions to work together to meet their common challenges and to enlist property owners as partners in creating a safe, pedestrian-friendly community.

The local jurisdictions have expressed an interest in collaborating in the following categories:

Program Management

- Defining common standards for sidewalk maintenance

- Exploring efficient methods for conducting sidewalk audits
- Evaluating the effectiveness of administrative processes
- Securing resources for program upgrades

Public Education / Outreach

- Developing content and media outlets to promote a community value of safe and accessible sidewalks
- Making property owners aware of their responsibility for maintaining sidewalks adjacent to their properties
- Educating residents about jurisdiction programs, processes and resources available to assist them in addressing sidewalk issues

Reporting Sidewalk Network Status

- Determining content, schedules, and methods for reporting the sidewalk network status to the Regional Transportation Commission

The work group, based on first hand experience and research/completion of this report, is prepared to supplement jurisdiction-based efforts by offering the following specific services:

- Creating and editing documents, publicity and public education materials
- Making or assisting with presentations to community groups
- Facilitating jurisdiction interaction with individuals or groups who have interest in sidewalk maintenance program design and status
- Facilitating networking among local jurisdictions
- Initiating a collaborative effort among the five local jurisdictions to develop sidewalk maintenance standards language which residents can easily understand
- Identifying and supporting grants to fund upgrades of program components
- Assisting with research, as resources allow

In one year, the Work Group will conduct a follow-up survey of the five local jurisdictions to assess changes in sidewalk network status and maintenance programs, and will submit a follow-up status report to the Regional Transportation Commission.

IX. Photographs of Barriers to Accessibility



Figure 1. Sidewalk uplift due to tree roots.



Figure 2. Large cracks in driveway.



Figure 3. Plant obstructing the sidewalk - before.



Figure 4. Plant removed from obstructing the sidewalk - after.



Figure 5. Deterioration of sidewalk curb.



Figure 6. Crack in new sidewalk.