**Sidewalk Presentation Prompt**

Good morning and thank you all for your time.

This past year the Planning Department and I have collected new data points about Meriden’s pedestrian infrastructure and developed a strategy to incrementally improve the city’s walkability and overall value.

Today’s presentation will skim some of the finer points of the report and reach the main ideas and findings of the report.

I understand 22 pages of sidewalks can be a challenge to get through so today will be a guided crash course of the report.

If you’re curious about the rest or any of the details, all of the information is outlined and explained in the report in front of you.

You can also stop me at any time and I’ll do my best to address any questions you have.

The hope is that by the end of the day you will be as excited about sidewalk improvement in Meriden as I am.

Before really getting into the report let’s take a quick look at the *value* of sidewalks.

I’d like to start by showing you pictures of two similar storefronts whose sidewalks are in different states of repair.

The point of this is to show that the value goes deeper than the typical arguments of health and walkability.

Which store are you more likely to go into? Which is more attractive to you?

A lot of business can benefit from walk in customers.

People walking by are more likely to stop in than those driving.

They don’t need to find parking and it’s easy to pop in and take a look.

Improving pedestrian infrastructure improves the location’s opportunity for success.

Therefore, investing in pedestrian infrastructure is investing in the success of our neighborhoods and businesses.

So how do we invest wisely?

Our report took an inventory of Meriden’s major and collector streets and mapped their conditions.

The details of the rating system are in the report attached at the end.

If you take a quick look, you will see it is a scale of 0-3, 3 being the best condition and 0 the worst.

There are also photographs to give you a general idea of each with the different materials.

Up here is an excerpt from the report that gives a general description of each value.

Each situation is a little bit different so a bit of judgment on the part of the surveyor is required but this scale provides the building blocks to keep that judgment more consistent.

We put this information into our GIS system and found that approximately 54% of the sidewalks are actually in good condition.

31% is in fair condition.

This only leaves 15% in lesser condition.

Although this number is not too bad we must remember that these are only major and collector roads and 15% leaves room for improvement.

So although it could be worse, we still have a bit of work to do.

This is the Condition Map that we were able to develop with the information we gathered.

It represents the data points we collected in a visual format and is easily linked to other data points in the GIS system.

It is also able to be updated by future surveys.

This map and its uses will be discussed in more detail later.

While collecting and adding this information to the system, we also took account of Meriden’s current strategies and programs in place to address sidewalk development and repair.

In addition to the regular maintenance done by the Engineering Department, the Department of Neighborhood Preservation has a well organized program called C.I.D.E.W.A.L.K.

Those approved for this particular program have 65% of the costs covered by the city for residential projects and 50% for non-residential projects.

Since the programs adoption in 1992 (21 years ago), the program has helped pave over 9 miles (approx. 47,520 linear feet) of sidewalk totaling an expenditure of $2,810,969. (~10% of overall network)

The makeup of this expenditure is $1,731,201 of city funds and $1,079,768 of property owner funds. $1,300,443 of the city funding was bond funds.

In 2013, the program processed 26 applications, of which 13 were completed.

800 linear feet of sidewalk and 656 linear feet of curbing were replaced.

The program has 40 applications held for the 2014 season and a balance of $50,000. Over the past two years the city’s contribution averaged $41,017.36.

To help us determine how our sidewalks are used and where a strong network is most important we looked at Meriden’s Board of Education “School Walks” program.

This program develops a list to determine which students have access to bus services each year.

This list assigns bus services to students by street according to which school they are enrolled in.

Developing or expanding this program to include pedestrian education could help to increase involvement and public support.

Another way we developed an understanding of our sidewalk network’s use was to map activity centers.

The recognized standard for pedestrians to walk is a ¼ mile.

We mapped out a half mile radius around “Activity Centers” (public services, shopping centers and other important destinations) to help us understand where pedestrians can most likely be expected.

With this we can visualize where people will be most likely to choose walking over driving.

When linked with the condition data, we get some interesting results.

This is a graph of the amount of sidewalk by material and location.

It gives us a view of the makeup of our core network.

75% of our major and collector network lies within the selected activity centers.

Not shown here, we linked this with our condition data and found that 85% of the sidewalk within the activity centers is in Good or Fair condition while the remaining 15% is in lesser condition.

If you remember back to the beginning of the presentation, this was the same percentage that the overall network faced.

This shows a trend that our network is behind an acceptable condition by 15%.

To begin reducing this 15%, we developed a strategy to incrementally bring our sidewalks up to an acceptable condition with budget minded solutions.

The strategy begins with pedestrian education and involvement.

Done through the school systems and other public outreach channels, support from citizens and knowledge of programs already in place can be increased at a negligible cost.

The next step is the three “Plan of Action” items.

These can be implemented in any order but build off each other and therefore are strongest when implemented together.

Finally, maintaining the necessary funding for the program to have the ability to reach its goals is important to its continued success.

Action 2 is to implement a sidewalk plan map similar to the POCD map.

This map would outline the desired network including details such as one sided or two sided walkway and acceptable material types.

Adopting a minimum standards for sidewalks would help in developing this map, enforcing the design choices and providing consistency in the network.

A proposed set of standards is shown here.

Action 3 is to adopt a replacement rate.

This rate would be a goal of linear feet to commit to paving annually.

A rate of 8,300 linear feet per year is estimated to maintain the network in its current condition according to material lifespans.

A higher rate would be needed to improve the network.

In conclusion, by expanding the annual sidewalk budget by $160,000 and implementing the strategies outlined in this report, the city can improve its sidewalk network and incrementally increase the overall value of the city.

By doing this, the city should continue to grow in a healthy direction.