

Alley Plowing Study Summary July 2019



Historically, the City of Saint Paul has never plowed alleys in winter. Residents must determine how and when to plow their alleys. Many residents in Saint Paul work with their neighbors to hire private contractors to plow their alleys. The City Council requested that Public Works conduct a study to better understand current alley plowing situations and examine potential options.

Resident Survey

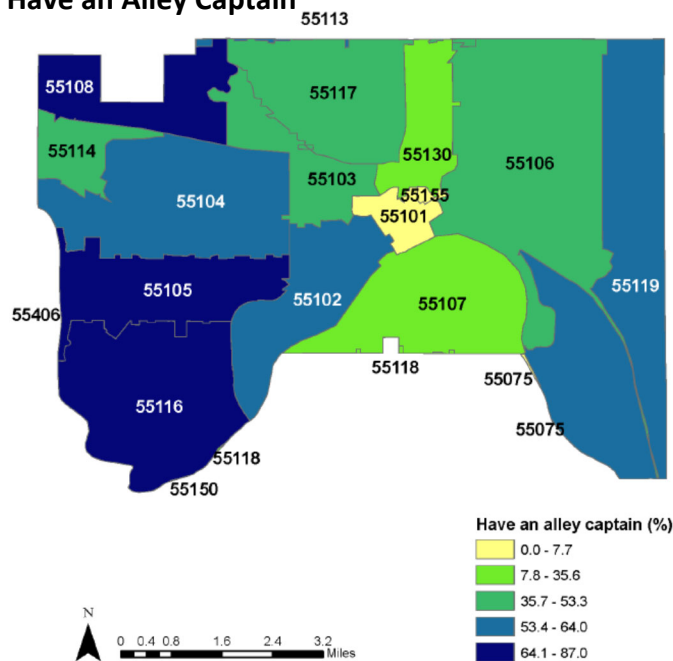
Researchers from the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota worked with Saint Paul Public Works to develop a survey to:

- Capture perceptions and concerns of residents
- Get feedback of current situation and costs
- Gather input related to potential options

The survey was available April 17 to May 3, 2019, to residents online and mailed to a random 250 households with alleys dispersed throughout the City. The research team analyzed a total of 7,834 completed surveys. Majority of the respondents were white, between 36-65 years of age, medium-high income, own their own homes, and have lived in Saint Paul for more than 11 years. Most of the respondents lived in zip codes 55104, 55105, and 55116 (primarily Wards 3 and 4). Sixty-six percent of the respondents with an alley indicated that they have an “alley captain” and twelve percent stated that their alley is not plowed at all.

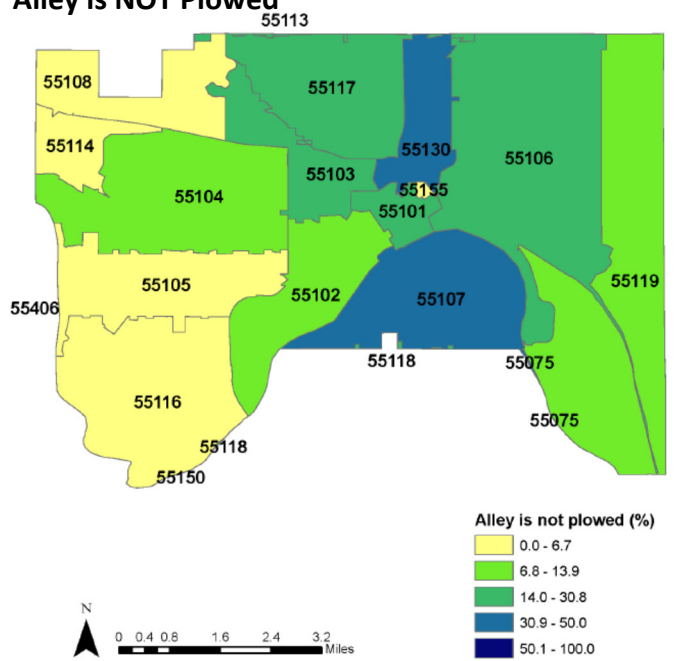
Type of Arrangement by Zip Code:

Have an Alley Captain

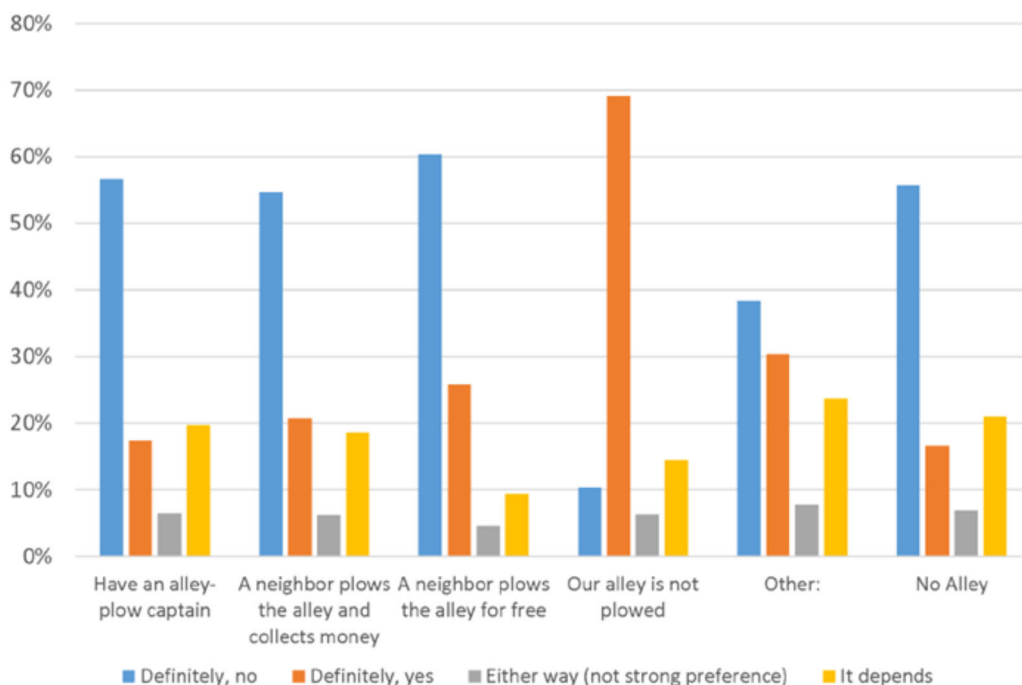


Type of Arrangement by Zip Code:

Alley is NOT Plowed



Should the City Plow Alleys? By Type of Arrangement (n=7,282)



Resident Survey: Should the City Plow Alleys?

- Survey respondents who said “It depends” reference cost, timeliness, and quality as determining factor
- Approximately 40% of the respondents believe that the City should provide alley plowing because it will alleviate the burden on alley captains, ensure that all alleys are plowed, and ensure that everyone pays
- 80% of the respondents believe that the City should not plow the alleys because it will increase costs and 72% believe that alleys would not get plowed as often if the City were to provide the service
- If the City was to provide alley plowing services, respondents will expect the City to plow the alleys after each snowfall or after a 2-inch snowfall, alleys to be plowed at the same time as main streets or at the same time as residential streets
- Residents will be willing to pay an amount that would not be more than the amount they are currently paying or less than \$15 per season

Options for Alley Plowing

Scenario	Benefits	Challenges	Considerations
Scenario A – City does not take any action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintains the status quo • No additional cost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alleys are not plowed unless residents make arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Status quo is an option; however, residents without alley plowing are dissatisfied and would like to have it
Scenario B – City does not provide alley plowing, but helps residents to coordinate the service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides resources for residents who want to coordinate alley plowing • Residents pay private contractor directly for services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alleys are not plowed unless residents make arrangements • Additional City resources may need to be allocated to support the program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows flexibility with the current arrangements and provides additional resources for those who might need it
Scenario C – City provides opt-in alley plowing to residents that do not have the service or those who are not satisfied with their current arrangement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows residents to access services if desired • Residents who opt-in to the program pay for it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alleys are not plowed unless residents make arrangements with a private contractor or 100% of residents in an alley opt-in each year for City coordinated service • Additional City resources will need to be allocated to support program • Alleys participating in an opt-in program could vastly differ year to year, affecting staffing and equipment needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not a viable option because to legally comply with the program 100% of residents in each alley must opt-in each year
Scenario D – City provides alley plowing citywide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All alleys are plowed as part of citywide services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional City resources will need to be allocated to support program – estimated one-time costs of at least \$3.2 million and annual expenditures of at least \$4.8 million • Additional cost to all property owners • For those with an alley plowing arrangement, costs could increase and frequency of plowing could decrease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a citywide systems change and should not be considered in the short-term • Survey suggests that most residents with an arrangement are satisfied

Recommendations

According to the University of Minnesota’s Alley Plowing Study, the City of Saint Paul should play a role in filling the service gap experienced by residents without quality alley plowing. Scenario B (improved coordination) provides the best solution at this time.