

2021 Downtown Paving & Sidewalk Improvement Project (Phase III)

The 2021 Downtown Sidewalk and Paving Improvement Project (Phase III) is one project with two unique project areas (purple and green) that have different Public Works Project Managers and slightly different timelines and approaches using City contractors.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Can property owners do their own sidewalk removal and replacement work?

It depends. Property owners in the “green” project area of Phase III can hire a licensed and bonded contractor to do their sidewalk work. If property owners are going to do their own sidewalk work, they must notify Saint Paul Public Works no later than May 1, 2021. Public Works has a list of licensed and bonded sidewalk contractors. The list can be obtained from the Public Works Sidewalk Division at 651-266-6120. Sidewalk contractors will have to obtain the required permits from Public Works to do the work. ***If property owners in the green area choose to hire a private contractor to replace the sidewalk, all sidewalk work must be completed by August 1, 2021.***

Property owners in the “purple” area may be able to hire a private contractor *only if* all the sidewalk work is removing concrete or brick and replacing it with concrete. ***If property owners in the purple area choose to hire a private contractor to replace the brick in the sidewalk with concrete, all sidewalk work must be completed by June 1, 2021.***

If you are considering using a private contractor for any sidewalk work, immediately contact the Public Works project engineer in your area to finalize timing and scope of work.

2. Why is the City removing the brick pavers from the sidewalks and street pavements and replacing it with concrete or asphalt?

In many areas the brick pavers in both the sidewalk and street pavement are in poor to moderate condition. The brick pavers in the street that are being removed are located in the parking lanes. This is not “historic” brick work original to the area.

Although the brick pavers add some aesthetic value to the area, they have been problematic for maintenance, especially with our winter conditions. The salt and plowing/shoveling easily damage the individual pavers which can be costly to repair and replace. The brick pavers are also often challenging for individuals with mobility issues, including but not limited to using wheelchairs, walkers, scooters and canes.

3. Are you removing the clay brick pavers from the streets around Rice Park?

No. Per a request from the Rice Park Association, Saint Paul Public Works will not remove the clay brick pavers from the street segments abutting Rice Park: Washington Street, Market Street, Fourth Street and Fifth Street.

The City of Saint Paul and Saint Paul Public Works do not have any current or planned funding or timelines for any major repairs or replacement of the clay brick pavers in the street segments surrounding Rice Park.

4. Why would it be better and easier for property owners to use the City's contractor to have the sidewalk work done?

In 2020, Saint Paul Public Works conducted a sidewalk condition assessment in the 2021 project areas, including the Rice Park area of downtown, and identified locations where sidewalk area/panels need removal and replacement. As a part of this project, the City is removing all brick pavers from the sidewalk and replacing it with concrete. The removal process is being done by a City contractor because it requires additional time, equipment, and resources due to replacing larger sections of sidewalk.

Saint Paul Public Works is in the process of preparing the necessary contract documents to have the sidewalk work competitively bid. The benefits for property owners to use the City's contractor for doing the sidewalk work versus doing it themselves include:

- Public Works is contracting for a significant amount of sidewalk work to be done through a competitive bidding process. Given the quantity of work proposed, the City anticipates receiving competitive/lower bid prices. Contractors are likely to bid less per foot for a larger total volume of work.
- Public Works will be able to coordinate construction activities with one contractor to minimize both the extent and duration of construction disruption in both the Rice Park area (purple area) and the other project area (green area) of downtown. *Note: There will be disruption to vehicle traffic, parking, ramp/driveway access and pedestrian movements throughout sidewalk construction. Having one contractor will make it easier to manage construction activities and to notify property owners of when and where work activities are scheduled to take place.*
- Sidewalk construction will be inspected by Public Works staff to ensure the quality of the work being performed and that specifications are being met.
- Having one contractor performing the sidewalk work will ensure quality and consistency of sidewalk work throughout the project area.
- Public Works will be responsible for making all payments to the contractor.
- Property owners will be sent an invoice from the City for the sidewalk work performed and will have the option of paying it in full upon receipt of the bill or having it certified to their property taxes and paying for it over time.

5. What is the timing/schedule for the sidewalk removal and replacement work?

Sidewalk/concrete work in the both the purple area and green area of downtown will take place throughout the 2021 construction season.

In the purple area, sidewalk work is expected to begin in June 2021 and be completed by the end of October 2021. The project will be done in stages to minimize traffic disruptions. Please see the project website for the latest project updates and timing.

In the green area, sidewalk work is expected to start in May 2021 if all work is being done by the City's contractor. The anticipated sidewalk completion date is by the end of September 2021.

As with any construction work, the schedule is subject to change based on weather conditions.

6. Is sidewalk removal and replacement mandatory?

Yes. The City is committed to improving pedestrian safety and mobility access in downtown. Having sidewalks that are free from defects and hazards are key components to keeping pedestrians safe and allowing access for all regardless of mobility needs.

All existing brick pavers will be removed and replaced with ADA-compliant concrete sidewalks.

7. How is Public Works going to address areaways and vault locations that are in the sidewalk areas?

Public Works has identified where the known areaways and vaults are located in both the purple area and green area of downtown (at least those that have been documented in some way). Public Works welcomes the opportunity to meet with individual property owners to better understand the location, use, and condition of any areaway or vault. That review will determine the next steps to address individual areaways or vaults. The City's preference is to have areaways filled in that are no longer in use. The cost for addressing areaways or vaults will be the responsibility of the property owner.

8. Is the City running conduit in sidewalks when they are replaced? What if the adjacent property owner wants to run conduit in the sidewalks?

No. Public Works will repair or replace any conduit that is exposed and damaged due to sidewalk removal, but we will not be installing new conduit in sidewalk areas for future use. Putting conduits in sidewalk areas is problematic because it will inevitably be damaged in the future if the sidewalk needs to be removed and replaced.

If property owners/management companies believe that they will need or want additional fiber or connectivity in the next five years, we recommend they reach out to their service providers to review opportunities now while the street is open and sidewalk panels are being replaced.

9. Are there any stamped or colored concrete finish options for sidewalks?

No. Research has shown that colored and stamped concrete does not hold up as well as non-stamped or smooth-surfaced concrete in the long term. Also, if there are eventual “cuts” into the sidewalk for utilities, it’s extremely hard to match and gives a less appealing “patchwork” look to the sidewalk.

10. Can property owners install heated sidewalks?

Heated sidewalks are very time consuming and expensive to install. All operations and maintenance costs of any heated sidewalk is the responsibility of the adjacent property owner. There may not be sufficient planning and construction time to accommodate a special provision for heated sidewalks. If a property owner is interested in having heated sidewalks, contact Public Works as soon as possible.

11. Will Public Works coordinate with utility companies to have their facilities located and/or relocated if needed? Does the City require locators to use a removable paint?

Yes. Public Works has met with Xcel Energy, District Energy, Saint Paul Regional Water Services and various communication companies about this project. They have been provided a map showing the locations of proposed sidewalk and street work that may impact their facilities. The timing of the City’s work has been adjusted in a few areas to accommodate the needed utility work first.

Yes. Public Works does require locators to use a marking paint that can be easily removed and one that fades/disappears quickly over time.

12. Will the sidewalk removal and replacement work trigger additional expenses to meet watershed requirements?

No. The project scope is only reconstruction or replacement of the existing sidewalk. Because we will not be expanding or adding more sidewalks, there are no requirements mandated by the Watershed for this type of work.

13. Who is responsible for damage to trees and other easement plantings?

Any tree damage caused by the contractor during construction will be the responsibility of the contractor to fix or replace. Public Works inspectors will be on site to ensure damage is noted and addressed.

14. Is Public Works coordinating with the City forester to have trees replaced as part of this project?

Public Works is coordinating with the City forester to determine where existing stumps may be removed as a result of sidewalk removal and replacement. New trees will not be added at this time as part of this project, but spaces where trees once were will be preserved to allow for future plantings.

15. What are some other City of Saint Paul projects that are scheduled for Downtown Saint Paul in the coming years?

Wabasha Street from Kellogg Boulevard to 6th Street is scheduled for full street reconstruction in 2022. Wabasha Street from 6th Street to 11th Street will be milled and overlaid in 2022.

Minnesota Street from Kellogg Boulevard to 11th Street is scheduled for a full street reconstruction in 2024.

The western section of the Capital City Bikeway will be installed in the coming years when a final location decision of either Wabasha Street or St. Peter Street is determined.

There is planned work for the eastbound Kellogg bridge and Exchange Street, as well as the Kellogg/3rd Street bridge in the coming years.

16. What happens to existing bus stop locations during construction?

As with all construction projects, Public Works will work with Metro Transit to determine where temporary bus stop locations will be needed during construction. Metro Transit will notify riders and temporary locations will be signed. Public Works is working with Metro Transit to coordinate future Gold Line stops.

17. How is the Downtown Paving & Sidewalk Improvement Project (Phase III) being funded?

The estimated project budget (without sidewalk work) is \$4 million. All project work, except for the sidewalk repair and replacement work, is being funded 50% by the City's general fund and 50% by a special tax assessment to adjacent property owners. The final rate has not yet been determined.

Sidewalk work is 100% assessed to the adjacent property owners.

18. How can property owners stay informed of project work?

Public Works has established a project webpage at www.stpaul.gov/downtownsidewalks to provide regular project updates, timing, and maps. Public Works encourages property owners, businesses and tenants to visit the website and sign up to receive project updates via email.

19. Who can I contact with questions or concerns about this project?

The 2021 Downtown Sidewalk and Paving Improvement Project (Phase III) is one project, but has two unique project areas that have different Public Works Project Managers and slightly different approaches using City contractors:

- Purple area: Barb Mundahl at barbara.mundahl@ci.stpaul.mn.us
- Green area: Jary Lee at jary.lee@ci.stpaul.mn.us
- You can also always email downtownsidewalks@ci.stpaul.mn.us with questions, comments and concerns and your email will be directed to the right person(s)

Updated 3/3/2021