

Sidewalk and Tree/Shrub Inspection Program

Spring is here! It is that time of year that the City of Altoona will begin its annual sidewalk and tree/shrub inspections in the very near future. So, how does this work, you may ask. The city has identified four (4) zones for this program; these zones are on a rotating schedule and each year one (1) zone is walked by the City to identify any defects and encroachments that are defined by Chapter 136 (Sidewalks) and Chapter 151 (Trees) of the Altoona Code of Ordinances. In 2020 we will be focusing on Zone 1 (please see map for details of this area). We will only be inspecting sidewalks and encroaching trees/shrubs located within this zone. If a complaint is received regarding issues of a sidewalk condition or an encroachment of trees/shrubs located outside this particular zone we will conduct an inspection and if it is deemed there is a compliance issue than the appropriate action to bring the property within compliance will be mandated.

What to Expect: As the City walks the sidewalks any defects requiring repair/replacement will be identified with pink paint. If the sidewalk abutting your property is marked don't panic! We will be in touch with you shortly regarding your specific options.

Sidewalk Notification: Once inspections of the designated area are completed, the property owner will be notified via certified letter of the deficiency that exists on the property and the acceptable "fixes" for the identified defects. This notification shall provide a reasonable degree of time in which the sidewalk can be repaired/replaced by the owner of the property.

Tree/Shrub Notification: Once inspections of the designated area are completed, the property owner will be notified via a letter of the deficiency that exists on the property. This notification shall provide a reasonable degree of time in which the trees/shrubs must be trimmed by the owner of the property.

The following sidewalk defects will be marked with pink paint:

- A. Vertical separations equal to one-half (1/2) inch or more.
- B. Horizontal separations equal to one (1) inch or more.
- C. Holes or depressions equal to three-fourths (3/4) inch or more and at least four (4) inches in diameter.
- D. Spalling over fifty percent (50%) of a single square of the sidewalk with one or more depressions equal to one-half (1/2) inch or more.
- E. Spalling over less than fifty percent (50%) of a single square of the sidewalk with one or more depressions equal to three-fourths (3/4) inch or more.
- F. A single square of sidewalk cracked into six (6) or more pieces.
- G. A sidewalk with any part thereof missing to the full depth.
- H. A change from the design or construction grade equal to or greater than three-fourths (3/4) inch per foot.

The following tree/shrub encroachments will be identified:

1. The tree(s) on, or overhanging the sidewalk, has branches that are lower than 8 feet from the surface of the sidewalk; and/or
2. The tree(s) on, or overhanging the street, has branches that are lower than 14 feet from the surface of the street; and/or
3. Shrubs are overhanging/encroaching onto the sidewalk.

Tree branches are measured vertically from the surface of the street/sidewalk to the lowest projecting limb.

According to our City Code Ordinance Section 136.01, 136.02, 136.04 and 136.05 the homeowner is responsible for the care and maintenance of the sidewalk area that abuts their property. Copies of the code are available at City Hall and on the website (<http://www.altoona-iowa.com/download/City%20Code/Altoona-Code.pdf>). The Sidewalk and Approach handout provided by the Building Department is also available on-line at <http://www.altoona-iowa.com/download/City%20Departments/Building/Handouts/Sidewalk-Repair-Guide.pdf>.

Permits Required: Under this Sidewalk Inspection Program all fees required pursuant to Ordinance Section 136.07 are exempted and waived. Permits shall be required for inspection of panel replacement only. Repairs not requiring removal and replacement of panels will not be required to obtain a permit.

Repair/Replacement: If the property owner has failed to correct the deficient sidewalk, then the City of Altoona shall make the necessary repairs. All costs, including administrative fees, associated with such repairs may at the discretion of the council be assessed to the property as allowed pursuant to Section 136.05 of the Ordinance and Section 364.12[2d&e] of the Code of Iowa.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the start of this year's program feel free to contact Erin Wiggins at via email: ewiggins@altoona-iowa.com or via phone: 515-957-5128.