



To: President Gardiner and the Members of the Town Council

From: Town Manager, Dustin Anderson

Date: October 16, 2023

Re: Ordinance 1920: Amending the 50/50 Sidewalk Program

Background

In 2021, the Town adopted by ordinance a 50/50 program to assist residents in maintaining their sidewalks in the right-of-way.

The ordinance was amended in 2022 to establish a maximum on residents' financial responsibility for required sidewalk repairs. Under the adopted ordinance, the maximum resident responsibility for repairs is based on a length equal to 75% of lot frontage for typical lots and 50% of lot frontage for corner lots. For repairs in excess of this length, the difference between the actual length of the repair and this maximum is paid for in full by the Town.

This year we have had a number of residents express concern about the affordability of the improvements that they must make. Even after considering the option to defer a year and/or set up a payment plan, some folks continue to find this to be a financial hardship.

Methodology

Staff recommends a further amendment to the ordinance that would establish income guidelines for the potential waiver of improvement fees.

In researching the potential mechanics of this, we found that the State of Indiana has established income guidelines for water assistance through the office of Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority (IHCDA).

The IHCDA establishes a threshold of earning 60% of the State individual median income to be eligible for assistance. Further, the Authority raises this threshold as the number of people in the household increases.

For Munster, staff initially proposed utilizing the same proportion of increase and using the median income for the Town of Munster as reported by the United States Census Bureau.

After internal discussion and feedback from Council, staff suggests that the financial relief threshold be set to 40% of the median household income as the appropriate benchmark. This would mean that any household that make less than 40% of the median income would be eligible.

The current median household income is \$96,938. A household with an income of \$38,775 or less would be eligible. In the previous version of this ordinance, the threshold income was proposed as \$26,100.

Staff recommends that if a resident homeowner provides the Town with their tax returns from the prior year and they meet the income threshold, that their portion of the sidewalk improvement cost be waived in a manner similar to water bill leak adjustments that are considered on the consent agenda portion of a regular meeting.

Recommendation:

By motion and roll call vote to adopt Ordinance 1920: AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE 50/50 SIDEWALK PROGRAM.