

What's up with sidewalks?

Our neighborhood has always had a split personality when it comes to sidewalks. The ten original sections of Knollwood Village were built without them while the adjoining Braes Terrace Section 2 chose to install them, leaving some blocks with sidewalks that ended where the invisible line separating the two subdivisions met. This is the condition that has remained for much of the past 60 years but that is now starting to change with the influx of new construction in the neighborhood. The City of Houston began requiring sidewalks to be built inside the 610 Loop around 2004 but with the adoption of Ordinance No. 2009-763 in 2009, Houston City Council mandated that all new home construction in Houston be required to construct 60" wide sidewalks along all adjacent streets. As neighborhoods like ours are re-built, the sidewalks will eventually fill in and the neighborhood in future years will look quite different from today.

Because sidewalks are built in the public right-of-way, there is often the perception that the cost of installing sidewalks should be paid by tax dollars. Historically, in Houston and most other cities, the installation of sidewalks has been a requirement placed on developers at the time a subdivision is built. Through this process, the cost of the sidewalks is eventually passed on the homeowner through the cost of the lot. The City only pays for the installation of sidewalks when it is part of a street re-building program (although not all) and the sidewalks are pre-existing as was the case when the City recently replaced the streets in portions of Braes Terrace in our neighborhood or where sidewalks are needed for access to schools or libraries.

What cost the construction of sidewalks adds to a home construction project will depend on the lot size and whether there are any existing sidewalks that will be considered "grandfathered" as is the case along parts of Linkwood Drive, Bevin and Buffalo Speedway. Corner lots pay a much higher cost due to the increased frontage as well as the requirement to install an accessible ramp at the corner to comply with Texas Accessibility Codes. Current costs run about \$6.00 / sq. ft. which will add approximately \$2,100 to a typical 80 wide lot and something closer to \$5,000 to a larger corner property. Of course, any home owner can opt to install sidewalks in front of their home even if they live in one of the original houses.

If you are planning on building a new home in Knollwood Village, you need to make sure that your plot plan shows the required sidewalks on your property as the City of Houston will be looking for it before they will issue a building permit. Although the City will allow sidewalks to be built along the property line, it is the preference of the Knollwood Village Civic Club that the sidewalks be placed along the curb so as to be consistent with the sidewalks in the original Braes Terrace Section 2 portion of the neighborhood. Any questions about sidewalks can be directed to any member of the Architectural Control Committee or in the form of an email to build@knollwoodvillagecc.org.