

**July 25, 2009 Minutes**

## **Neighborhood Meeting about Delaware Ave.**

Residents and property owners of Delaware St. met at the home of Tim and Jennifer Grove (318 N. Delaware) to discuss sidewalks and other public improvements for Delaware St. and the Truman Historic District. Approximately 30 people were in attendance.

City officials present: Mayor Don Reimal, Councilmember Marcie Gragg, John Powell (Public Works Director); Jennifer Clark (Community Development Director); and Wendy Shay (Historic Preservation Manager).

Brent Schondelmeyer facilitated the meeting and the discussion.

The minutes summarize the general discussion and are not a point-by-point transcription of the meeting.

### **Sidewalks**

There was general agreement that portions of the sidewalks along Delaware are in poor shape, particularly the 300 to 400 block, just north of the Truman Home.

The neighborhood is interested in improving or repairing the sidewalks for several reasons:

- Delaware is a major street within the city's single historic district
- Tourists walk Delaware Street on their way from the Truman Home to the Truman Library
- Neighbors walk the neighborhood and want better, safer sidewalks

### **What kind of sidewalk**

Powell proposed three options for sidewalk replacements

- Regular concrete - \$5 per square foot
- Stamped (hex) concrete - \$10 to \$12 per square foot
- Hexagonal pavers (like those in front of the Truman Home) – no clear price provided

The city has negotiated agreements for sidewalk replacements with two local contractors. Some neighbors have used this, particularly when the historic walking trail was installed. In general, payment is added to the property over a 10-year period.

There was consideration discussion that the hexagonal pavers (apparently installed by the City of Independence in the mid-seventies) did not hold up well to heavy use, the elements and time.

Shay shared that the National Park Service was interested in maintaining the hexagonal pavers in front of the Truman Home, but felt that other alternatives could be considered and would be appropriate for the rest of the historic district.

The general consensus was that replacing or expanding the hexagonal pavers was not a good option and that concrete was preferable. If the hexagonal pavers were replaced, it was suggested that they could be given to the National Park Service to provide replacement pavers in front of the Truman Home.

### **Which sidewalks**

There was a good discussion about which sidewalks should be replaced. The general options were:

- piece meal basis – where bad or a property owner wanted to make an improvement
- phased (couple of blocks at a time)
- the entire street and/or the historic district

Much of the discussion focused on the benefits and potential costs of doing the entire historic district because it would provide some uniform design and continuity to the neighborhood. Examples of the improvements to Chrysler and McCoy (demonstration blocks) were cited as good examples.

### **Other improvements**

Other infrastructure improvements were also discussed including curbs, water, storm water and undergrounding utilities.

This larger infrastructure agenda received much discussion and general support among the group.

There was a straw poll on whether to work only on the sidewalk or explore sidewalks and other potential infrastructure improvements. **Consensus: larger infrastructure improvements.**

### **Funding options**

There was a general discussion about how improvements could be financed. In general, sidewalks are the property owner's responsibility. There was some discussion about potential private/public partnership given that Delaware was a tourism destination and received heavier use than normal residential streets.

Possible funding options identified were:

- Property owners responsible for their own lot

- Neighborhood Improvement District
- City Council Strategic Goals Funds
- Community Development Block Grant
- State and Federal Grants
- City street sales tax which funded other sidewalks

## Next steps

Councilmember Gragg said she will work with the City Manager's office to get additional information including costs, options and alternatives so that the neighborhood can make some potential choices on the potential extent, scope and size of any projects.

A follow-up meeting will be held in the next 45-60 days to consider options based on additional information provided and developed by city staff.

## Conclusion

There is no commitment on the part of any party about what exactly might be done, but a strong consensus that the neighborhood wants to make significant improvements to Delaware because we live here, it is significant to the city's heritage, and the national attention the street receives as a tourism destination.

*Meeting summary was prepared by Brent Schondelmeyer*

*Please call if you want more information or share thoughts and comments.*

*Phone: (816) 547-9425 | Email: [bschonde@swbell.net](mailto:bschonde@swbell.net)*

## Attachments

***To Revive Memories: Truman Heritage Gets Emphasis in Independence, Kansas City, Star, Feb. 19, 1976***

# To Revive Memories

## Truman Heritage Gets Emphasis In Independence

By Bob Lynn  
A Member of the Staff

For Independence the vision of progress is a return to the past.

If the hopes of the city council there are realized it soon may be possible to return to the Independence of the late 1940s simply by driving from the Harry S. Truman Library and Museum along Delaware past the Truman home.

The short trip down memory lane would be made possible by a renovation project planned by the council. Construction on the first phase of the project, the renovation of the sidewalks and curbing in front of the Truman home, is scheduled to begin this spring.

William C. Bullard, city planning director, said plans call for sidewalks and curbs to be restored in a style similar to that used during Truman's presidency. The restoration will include the installation of limestone blocks exactly like those used to build the original sidewalk in front of the Truman home.

The city council recently authorized the expenditure of \$4,101 to purchase cut limestone from a Topeka stone company for the curbing work. Limestone blocks for the sidewalk will be taken from other areas in Independence.

The city's return to yesteryear hasn't been entirely smooth.

Bullard said the plan to obtain the limestone for the sidewalk renovation has created a minor furor in some sections of the city. When some Independence residents discovered that the city planned to take limestone blocks from other sidewalks in the city to repair the Truman sidewalk, they protested.

"For awhile there was a minor rhabarb about taking the blocks from other parts of the city," Bullard said.

"We thought we needed a certain type hexagonal block to restore the sidewalk to its original style. There are only a few places in the city where we could have gotten those blocks, and the residents in the area where the stones were to be taken contended that if we took the limestone it would mar the appearance of their area.

"We did some checking and found out that we didn't really need the hexagonal blocks but had the choice of using one of two different types, and the problem has been ironed out."

Bullard said Lyle W. Alberg, city manager, found a place in the city where he could get the required blocks without upsetting residents. Bullard refused to say where the limestone blocks will be obtained.

"I don't think the city manager would want to advertise where he is getting the blocks because that might make the people decide that they

block in front of the Truman home is the first stage in a larger project planned for a 12-block area along Delaware from U.S. 24 to Maple.

"The whole area from the Truman Library to the old William Chrisman High School (now William Chrisman Junior High School) is a national landmark listed in the National Register of Historic Sites," Bullard said. "Since there has been considerable deterioration in the area the city council decided it was time for renovation."

Bullard said a large part of the deterioration in the area is because more persons are walking by the home each year after they visit the Truman library. The library has experienced an upsurge in attendance recently because of a renewed interest in Mr. Truman, officials said.

A large percentage of the people who visit the library go ahead and make the trip to look at the house," Bullard said. "There never has been a control system set up that would make an accurate count of how many people visit the house but during the tourist season you can always see two or three people walking by and taking pictures."

Bullard said the Independence Heritage Commission, a group appointed by the city council to help preserve the historic area, decided that a project to preserve the historic value of the area should also include preserving the aesthetic value.

"The sidewalk in front of the Truman home originally was paved with two separate types of limestone blocks and the curbing also was limestone instead of the poured concrete you see today," he said. "The heritage commission suggested that to preserve the aesthetic value of the area it should be restored with the original limestone as much as possible."

Bullard said the end result should be a sidewalk that retains the characteristics of the area as it was during the Truman years.

"The matter of starting the restoration really depends on two things," he said. "One is getting the limestone from the stone company. We really don't know for sure when they will be able to deliver it and we can't plan a starting date until we know for sure when the stone is available."

"The other factor is getting the time to do the work. City crews will be doing all of the construction and we will have to find a time when they aren't busy with other projects, but I'm certain it will be sometime in early spring."

Bullard estimated the construction would take about a week to complete.

He said the limestone curbs will be cut into the shapes and sizes the city needs at the time they are mined. This will allow the city crews to handle the renovation work without the aid of a stonemason, he said.

Bullard said that within two to three years a comprehensive renovation study will be started for the entire 12-block area.

"The plan hasn't been fully developed yet so it is rather hard to talk about a time period, but the Truman home renovation is just the first part," he said. "We will be studying the whole area to determine the best type of landscaping, curbing and lighting."