



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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**MAYOR BRANDON JOHNSON, CITY OF CHICAGO RELEASES PLOW THE SIDEWALKS
PILOT PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS**

The report offers 11 recommendations that address how, when and where the pilot program will be administered, as well as the cost of implementation.

CHICAGO - Mayor Brandon Johnson and City leaders today released the [Plow the Sidewalks Pilot Program: Report of Recommendations](#) to guide City departments in developing innovative solutions for removing snow and ice from sidewalks in Chicago. The report, constructed by a cross-departmental working group convened since September 2023 with guidance from community stakeholders, offers recommendations and direction for the design and implementation of a pilot program, recognizing that safe and clear sidewalks are essential for the mobility and well-being of all Chicagoans, especially members of the disability community, senior citizens, and others with accessibility issues navigating hazardous, icy, or snowy sidewalks in the winter.

“Chicago is a world-class city, and as a world-class city, it must be accessible for our seniors and individuals living with disabilities in the winter months during periods of heavy snow and ice,” said **Mayor Brandon Johnson**. “Our Plow the Sidewalks pilot program is an example of how our administration is committed to addressing the needs of all Chicagoans, and today is an important step forward in building a safer city where no resident is left behind.”

In 2021, a campaign to establish a municipal sidewalk snowplow service was launched by several transportation and disability organizations in Chicago. With the support of Mayor

Johnson, Ald. Villegas worked with Ald. La Spata and others to pass the Chicago Plow the Sidewalks Pilot Program Ordinance in July 2023, which tasked a multi-department Working Group with creating recommendations for a new pilot program for sidewalk snowplow services.

"We've seen other municipalities are already providing this service, and now Chicago is a step closer to joining them - this report showcases the practicality of implementing a pilot program that will allow us to identify challenging areas to focus on," said **Alderman Gilbert Villegas**. "Over half a million residents will benefit from a city sidewalk plowing service. The end goal is to improve mobility citywide, especially for our seniors and members of the disability community."

"The Plow the Sidewalks Working Group has been an extraordinary experiment in co-governance and what we're proposing is an equally extraordinary experiment in mobility and accessibility," added **Alderman Daniel La Spata**.

From the start, the Working Group engaged a coalition of community stakeholders as partners in building recommendations, including organizations representing transportation, accessibility and disability as well as the City Council Committee on Pedestrian and Traffic Safety.

"Better Streets Chicago is laser focused on fighting for universal mobility in Chicago — no matter the weather," said **Micheál Podgers, Policy Lead at Better Streets Chicago**. "Today is a monumental day for our #PlowTheSidewalks campaign as Chicago takes a significant step toward becoming the largest city in the United States to pilot a sidewalk plowing program. We look forward to continued partnership with our coalition, City Council supporters, and the City to ensure this program's success."

"We applaud the collaboration of city departments, advocacy organizations, and community engagement that has ensured that the Plow the Sidewalks Pilot Program considers accessibility," said **Laura Saltzman, Senior Policy Analyst at Access Living**. "We appreciate that the pilot proposal actively included the transportation needs of disabled people and an enthusiasm to prioritize working towards universal mobility year-round."

The report released today serves as the main guidance for City departments to implement an effective Plow the Sidewalks Pilot Program, with a set of recommendations for the City to launch a Plow the Sidewalks Pilot Program in 2025 through 2026. The report recommends the City clear the sidewalks of snow and ice, when at least two inches of snow accumulates in a 24-hour period, in four 1.5 square mile pilot zones across the city on the South, Southwest, West, and North Sides of Chicago.

“I applaud this framework developed in collaboration with all involved including Mayor Johnson and the Mayor’s Office, fellow City Department leaders, Alderpersons, and our stakeholders including transportation and disability advocacy leaders,” said **Commissioner Rachel Arfa, Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities**. “Information obtained through this pilot will help inform the path forward in removing barriers that our communities experience.”

The report recommends the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) serve as the managing department for the contractor-operated pilot with support from the Department of Streets and Sanitation (DSS).

“It is a priority of CDOT to ensure safe and efficient travel on the public way,” said **CDOT Commissioner Tom Carney**. “We are eager to learn from administering the pilot how the City can efficiently deploy sidewalk snow removal as a city service. We look forward to continuing to work with the Mayor’s Office and the Working Group to evaluate this important pilot and to improve the City’s transportation system for all sidewalk users.”

Following the recommended pilot program, the City can evaluate its sidewalk plowing strategies and gather comprehensive data from various snow events, focusing on mobility and accessibility, operational efficiencies such as staffing and equipment, and resident feedback in the pilot zones. This data will help the City make informed decisions about future sidewalk plowing operations.

“In Chicago we know about snow removal, through tried-and-true practices developed from historic snow events over the years and upgraded technology we’ve been able to implement to be more responsive and efficient,” said **DSS Commissioner Cole Stallard**. “At DSS, we stand ready to use this knowledge to evaluate and complete snow and ice removal from sidewalks for the recommended pilot zones.”

Full details on the pilot program can be found [here](#).

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