

To: Members, Madison Board of Public Works
From: Rob and Cindy Zaleski
4925 Turner Ave
Re: Sidewalks on Turner Avenue

My wife Cindy and I moved into a home on Turner Avenue last spring after 36 years on the west side. We love the house, and were attracted to the area for two other reasons: no sidewalks, which meant we wouldn't have to shovel snow as we grow older. And the number of beautiful, mature trees lining the street.

So imagine our shock upon learning that the city not only wants to install sidewalks on the street with residents being forced to pay a large portion of the cost but wants to eliminate 20 of those trees as well. We were further astounded to find out that neighborhood residents hadn't requested the sidewalks. In fact, a large percentage are adamantly opposed, for a variety of reasons.

So why do it? Because, we learned at a meeting at Glendale School, it's standard practice to add sidewalks in situations like this. What's more, streets department employees present at that meeting seemed unfazed by residents' concerns that eliminating those trees will dramatically alter the character of the neighborhood. They also did not address whether the loss of those trees would affect the many songbirds that inhabit the area.

I am a progressive who, during my 30-plus years as a newspaper reporter and columnist, came to appreciate that government does many positive things to assist middle- and lower-income citizens. But I also know there are many citizens who believe government does more harm than good and isn't very good at listening to citizens' concerns. If the city insists on installing sidewalks as part of this project thus ignoring residents' strong opposition it would, I contend, be a blatant, callous example of why more and more people have lost faith in government. It would also validate the widely-held view that "There's no fighting city hall."

Thank you. Rob Zaleski