

To the City of Flagstaff Mayor and Members of the City Council:

The Commission on Inclusion and Adaptive Living (CIAL) has been established with the duty to advise the City Council on issues affecting individuals with disabilities in our community. With our duty in mind, we are submitting this letter to you to provide a voice for those members of our community whom we represent.

Since early in the spring of 2023, the CIAL has been discussing how sidewalks in our community are obstructed and encroached upon, often denying accessibility to members of community with mobility challenges. At times, these obstructions and encroachments completely prevent individuals from accessing businesses, schools, government buildings, and even homes. We on the CIAL consider this to be serious problem for and within the City of Flagstaff and have developed a PowerPoint presentation that includes pictures as a small sample of the sidewalk obstructions and encroachments that we see every day. Our PowerPoint also includes recommendations that could and should be put into place to ensure accessibility for all. We will summarize some of the challenges we have seen as well as our recommendations in the letter that follows, written to accompany the PowerPoint presentation that will be presented to the City Council on 10/10/2023.

Sidewalks provide space for use by pedestrians that is safe, comfortable, and accessible to ALL. Infringement on this space, including obstructions and encroachment on sidewalks, is damaging and dangerous to our community. The Commission on Inclusion and Adaptive Living has identified multiple concerns related to our sidewalks. These include bulk trash and trash cans impeding sidewalk flow, sidewalks in need of repair, vehicles being parked on sidewalks, sand bags improperly placed, and lack of snow removal.

Throughout the city, we have observed the problem of bulk trash blocking sidewalks. At times, when in between pickup days, individual trash piles block the sidewalk for over a month. Compounding this accessibility problem, city trash and recycling cans are often placed on the sidewalks rather than on the street curb. This improper placement of refuse cans occurs both by those occupying residences as well as by sanitation workers themselves.

Many of our city sidewalks are in desperate need of repair. Sidewalks that have lifted, sidewalks with cavernous cracks, sidewalks that no longer have a finished surface, and sidewalks that are obstructed by bushes and trees all create serious mobility challenges.

We also have a problem in our city with cars and trucks being parked on sidewalks. ARS 28-873 specifically states that it is against the law to park on sidewalks (with a few exceptions) yet within the City of Flagstaff every day dozens and dozens of vehicles go un-ticketed as they use sidewalks as parking places in front of homes and businesses.

With flood mitigation efforts actively put into place, often sandbags and Jersey barriers are used to deflect flood waters. Unfortunately, these same barriers, so purposely used to block water, also block citizen access as they are put into place on sidewalks and at street corners.

Lastly, during Flagstaff's winter season snow piling up and removal of it become serious problems for individuals with mobility challenges. Too often, throughout the city, snow is not removed as required by city ordinance. This is true for sidewalks in front of businesses as well as in front of residences. We also observe that city snow plows often push snow out of the street and onto the sidewalk. Snow in itself often creates mobility challenges for so many. These challenges are exacerbated when it is not removed from sidewalks properly.

Accessibility is absolutely vital to our community's aging and disabled population. We have a few recommendations that might help:

- 1) Perhaps Environmental Services employees could be trained to not place trash cans on sidewalks and could also note violations of city ordinance for clear sidewalks. Also, Environmental Services could add a note to water bills and email citizens explaining code compliance regarding bulk pickup, trash can placement, and sidewalks.
- 2) We would ask the City to continue with assessing sidewalks in need of repair and vegetation clearance and should continue with repairs as necessary to ensure accessibility,
- 3) For parking violations, including parking on sidewalks and parking in Accessible Parking spaces (without a permit), police officers could give a warning (with a pamphlet) for a first offense with a ticket or monetary consequence for all subsequent offenses.
- 4) Sandbag placement and other flood mitigation should be reviewed every season and mitigation should be modified relative to sidewalk accessibility.
- 5) Property owners could also be informed and reminded of city requirements for snow removal. Non-compliance should result in a warning and then a citation. Snow plow drivers could be trained so as to not push snow onto sidewalks. We also recommend that the City continue with the development (and publicity) of the "Snow Angel" program to aid citizens in need of assistance with snow removal.

Please know that the Commission on Inclusion and Adaptive Living is tasked with assisting the Council in the development of policies that meet the needs of those with adaptive living challenges. We are presenting you with concerns influencing the lives of those we represent. We ask that you address these concerns and please let us know if we can be of assistance in ensuring sidewalk accessibility for all.

We appreciate your time in listening to our concerns and thank you in advance for your time and attention in addressing them. We look forward to your response.

Members of the Commission on Inclusion and Adaptive Living