

# sidewalk & parkway strip maintenance

## property owner responsibilities

department of public works

805-781-7220

805-781-7015

The City receives many requests from citizens to make repairs to sidewalks. This brochure provides general information to the public on this subject.

### **What is the sidewalk, parkway, and curb and gutter?**

The sidewalk, parkway strip, and curb & gutter are typically made of concrete and located next to the street on the front and/or side portion of your property. The curb and gutter are located at the edge of the street pavement. The sidewalk is either separated from the curb by a parkway strip, or is located adjacent to the curb. Parkway strips are sometimes planted or filled in with brick or other materials.

### **Who is responsible for maintenance?**

The property owner is responsible for properly maintaining this area (see San Luis Obispo Municipal Code Section 12.16.020 and Streets and Highway Code Division 7, Part 3, Chapter 22). This responsibility includes maintenance of damaged or displaced concrete and abatement of weeds or debris. While the City may be liable for injuries to pedestrians that are determined to have resulted from a dangerous condition of a public sidewalk, property owners should be aware that they may also be found liable if it is determined that their negligence caused someone to be harmed.

### **When should property owners consider doing sidewalk repair?**

Repair of the sidewalk, curb and gutter concrete should be considered when one or more of the following exists:

- When there is a vertical difference in height between sections of the sidewalk or concrete parkway strip of 1" or more.
- When a horizontal opening of 1" or more has occurred.
- If the concrete has broken apart.
- In any instance where the owner has reason to know that the condition presents a danger to users, or the owner has observed someone trip because of damage to the surface.

In addition to damaged sections of sidewalk, curb and gutter replacement is typically required when sidewalks and driveways are replaced, unless the sidewalk is separated from the curb by a parkway.

### **What are the options available for completing the work?**

The City recommends construction of curbs, gutters, and sidewalks in City streets be performed by a properly licensed and insured contractor. A permit is required for concrete repair. Call (805)781-7015 for permit requirements.

### **Are there inspections and standards for concrete repair work?**

Yes, all work and materials must be in conformance with the City of San Luis Obispo Engineering Standards for Public Works Construction.

Before placing any concrete, you must have any tree root removal approved, and the saw cut, forms, and base inspected. After approval, a City-approved concrete mix must be used. The surface finish must be a light broom finish with score marks. After the work is completed, you must call for a final inspection.

A permit is required for all concrete work in the public right-of-way. Engineering Standards for construction are available on the City's web site on the Public Works page [www.slocity.org](http://www.slocity.org). For information on obtaining a permit call (805)781-7015.

**Is the property owner responsible for repairs if the concrete damage is caused by a tree?**

The City encourages street trees in front of residences. (Municipal Code 12.24.010) The property owner is responsible for the maintenance of the street tree but the City will repair the sidewalk when the concrete has been damaged by a street tree, as funding is available, and timed with the area rotation program. Concrete damaged by trees other than street trees is the responsibility of the property owner. Maintenance, trimming and replacement of street trees and shrubs is governed by Chapter 12.24.110, 12.24.120 and 12.24.150 of the Municipal Code.

**What measures should be taken to minimize concrete displacement by tree roots?**

Certain species of trees may raise concrete if preventative maintenance is not performed. To reduce the chance of future concrete displacement, trees can be root-pruned. Care must be taken when root pruning to avoid damaging underground utilities or destabilizing or harming the tree. This work must be completed by a licensed arborist. Also, deep-watering the tree, that is, applying a slow trickle of water over a 24-hour period, encourages deeper root growth which reduces the chance of sidewalk damage.

**If a problem is reported to the City, how long does it take for a repair?**

When a report is made to the City, it is entered into a work order program. Subject to the availability of resources and personnel, the City will attempt to review the site within a week of entry of the work order. If a temporary repair, such as grinding or ramping the area can be made, the City will generally attempt to complete that work within two weeks. Severe damage caused by a street tree, which cannot be repaired adequately, will be reconstructed as soon as resources and available personnel allow.

Areas of less severe damage are completed as the next priority, working around the City in a systematic fashion in advance of the paving program. That can mean the sidewalk will not be replaced for several years. Damage other than that caused by street trees needs to be completed by the property owner.

**Related to sidewalk repair is clearance and visibility. When is maintenance required?**

- Visibility – When parkway strip shrubbery interferes with the ability of a driver to see pedestrians or approaching traffic, either from a driveway or an intersection, trimming of shrubs must be completed by the property owner. Shrubs must be trimmed to a maximum height of 36", for a minimum distance of 30' from an intersection. (Municipal Code 10.60 and 17.16.020)
- Walkway and Gutter Clearance – Trimming of ground cover or shrubs is required when the plants extend onto or over the sidewalk, gutter, or street.
- Parkway Strip Condition – All tree stumps, large rocks, trash and holes must be removed by the property owner. The parkway strip must be level and holes must be filled and leveled with dirt or other material.

**When is a permit required for landscape maintenance work?**

If the sidewalk or the street must be closed for the work, a permit is required from Public Works. Call (805)781-7015 for additional information. If a tree is to be removed, a tree removal permit must be obtained. Applications for tree removal are available on the City's web site on the Public Works page [www.slocity.org](http://www.slocity.org) or call 781-7220 for additional information.