

## Craig, Sondra

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**From:** Kevin Hundt <kevinhundt0@gmail.com>  
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This is a problem without a good immediate solution. If we add sidewalks, we upset homeowners who don't necessarily want or think they need them and have to deal with construction, loss of lawn area, need to shovel, etc, and there are probably so few pedestrians that it doesn't seem worth it. But if we don't add sidewalks, we force pedestrians to use the streets alongside cars- essentially threatening them with a gruesome death if they dare to not drive, which reduces the number of pedestrians and makes the sidewalks seem not worth it. And since there are few or no businesses in these neighborhoods, about the only places to walk to anyway are parks.

The lack of sidewalks in the neighborhoods in question is a perfect example of how car-oriented construction makes other forms of transportation more unsafe and difficult, if not impossible. However, this argument about sidewalks is a red herring. The problem is not the existence or nonexistence of sidewalks, but the poor urban planning over the past 70+ years that has led to this situation.

The mistake was in building these suburban-style neighborhoods in the first place in the 1950s-60s. Because they were built with an assumption of universal car ownership, they lack infrastructure for non-car transportation. Because they are low-density, the costs for streets and city services are higher per-capita for these residences, and the bus system has fewer potential riders per route-mile; these costs and effects were not considered when these neighborhoods were built, but now we're dealing with the consequences. Among the consequences, for example, is the increased demand for parking, to the point that about a quarter of downtown is now dedicated to parking, which generates very low tax income. Low-density, car-oriented housing leads to more parents driving their children to school, creating more car traffic around schools, making walking less safe, pushing more parents to drive their children, creating more traffic, etc. Poorly-planned low-density housing led to the construction of Pammel Canal, costing an inflation-adjusted \$80 million, of which La Crosse paid about \$20 million. Just for a couple of examples.

I don't have a recommendation for how to vote on this. My point is just that we need to place this issue in the larger context, and ensure that we are making other reforms to parking, zoning, and transportation so that this doesn't happen again.

It would also be worthwhile to calculate the cost to the city to provide services and infrastructure to each home individually, to compare, for example, what the city spends on street and sewer repairs/replacement for low-density and high-density residences versus what they pay in property taxes, respectively, and how much foot traffic vs car traffic they generate.

Kevin Hundt