

Norwood Streets

The Tarnish on the "Gem of the Highlands"

A New Plan for Norwood's Street Problem

First, Admit There is a Problem

Communication

Admit our Mistakes

Communication

Evaluate and Rate Every Street

Communication

Create a 10-year plan

Communication

Development of a long-term resurfacing and replacement plan

Communication

Accountability

Communication

Replacement

Communication

A Vision of the Future

Communication

Funding, Inside and Outside Resource

Communication

Ordinance for Curb to Curb Restoration

Communication is the key.

What needs to be done?

What is being done?

Where are we spending our money?

How much are we spending?

What is the plan for our tax dollars?

First, Admit There is a Problem

Norwood streets are in overall poor condition due to years of misappropriating street maintenance funds. Too often cities cut money from the resurfacing budget if they are running tight in other areas. This is a mistake which ultimately costs more in the long run. Resurfacing budgets should never be treated as a source of unallocated funds that can be used elsewhere as needed. Resurfacing funds should be allocated for pavement maintenance only and not used for other municipal expenses.

Norwood has allowed the streets to deteriorate to a level which will require an accelerated resurfacing plan to catch up for our past mistakes. We must plan for which streets need preventative maintenance, which need resurfacing, and which need replacement.

Communication

This part of the plan is repeated many times due to its importance and its current lack of attention.

As with most successful government projects, the key to an effective street program is communication between City Managers, Public Works Planners, Elected Officials and Citizens. What is being done, today, what are the future plans, and how much will it cost? Citizens of Norwood deserve accurate and full communication of the plans to utilize their tax dollars. The City should provide a venue for citizens and business owners to express their opinions and concerns of such matters. This is the minimum level of communication required for any long-term plan to be realized.

Regular public meetings with reporting of the current plan and updates of revenue and expenses. These meetings should include regular reports by Street Department managers of their activities and upcoming plans. Residents and business owners should be encouraged to attend and offer observations and criticism but care should be taken not to allow political agendas to drive the direction of the plan. We must learn to say "No" when necessary and remain with the long-term plan which may be dynamic and change over time but driven by engineering and planning not by political will.

At a minimum, monthly meeting must be held during which the Public Works Director or Service Director presents a report to the Norwood Streets and Infrastructure Committee detailing work currently being done and the plan for the next few months and where the City is in the implementation of its long-term plan. Plans for usage of Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC) programs and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds should be discussed including their usage in major street projects such as replacement of designated streets as part of the long-term street plan.

Admit our Mistakes

The lack of communication, as detailed above, is our greatest weakness. The plan for the usage of tax payer dollars should be open and public. This should be made public not only in committee meetings but published in public forums for citizen review.

Who is responsible for our streets? Who runs the department? Who reports to council and the public? Where is the public accountability? In the current information age, why doesn't the community know where and how their tax dollars are being spent? The current system lacks any visible accountability and the public accepts the status quo. The current system is not acceptable.

The City lacks a long-term plan and vision for the future. The past practice of cutting of thousands of dollars of spending to support other budgetary issues will cost millions of street dollars for the future. Department of Transportation (DOT) studies show that every \$1 spent on Pavement Preservation can save \$8-10 or more in future rehabilitation costs. Norwood has neglected general street maintenance shifting the majority available dollars to major replacement projects with OPWC matching funds. While this plan, in some opinions, gave the City the most "bang for its buck" it has neglected the general maintenance required of most of its streets.

Like many communities with financial hardships, Norwood has neglected funding for street maintenance and repair as well as utilizing street dollars to pay for **street lighting**. While lighting is important, it is a public safety issue and not street maintenance. The dollars used to pay Duke Energy should be used to repair the potholes these lights shine upon. By moving the cost of lighting out of these street maintenance funds we make an additional \$205,000 available each year.

Evaluate and Rate Every Street

How many years has it been since our last street evaluation? All the streets in Norwood deserve evaluation and rating on a regular and recurring basis. At the minimum, our streets must first be rated into three grades, Good, Fair, Poor. This rating is most often performed by the County Engineers office. Only though knowing what challenges we face can we actually develop reasonable plans for our future.

The City should develop a system that takes the focus away from the streets in dire need of repair and focus on ALL of our roadways. We must not ignore the fair streets in favor of the poor, but also not ignore the good either. Nominal spending on "good" streets will extend the life-expectancy paying dividends in the future.

How much it costs to resurface all the streets in Norwood?

According to the Ohio State Auditors website the cost of resurfacing one mile 2 lane street should be calculated at \$120,000. With 142 lane miles, a rough estimate for the City of Norwood total resurfacing cost would be **\$8,520,000**. *See Appendix A.*

Development of a Long-Term Resurfacing and Replacement Plan

DOT recommendations indicate that cities need to resurface 6.6% of their streets annually to keep up with a 15-year cycle. The minimum funding level for Norwood street resurfacing on a 15-year plan should be $6.6\% \times 142 \text{ lane miles} \times \$60,000 = \$562,320$. This amount does not include preventative maintenance which should be an additional 15% or \$84,348 for a total annual cost of \$646,668.

This includes resurfacing and preventative maintenance but not replacement of the streets in need of complete overhaul to their base. Replacement plans should be reserved for the most heavily used and/or delegated projects requiring a “base-up” replacement. Street resurfacing programs should not just conceal the effects of aging, but remedy the cause.

These initial financial projections represent the long-term need based upon current levels of expense, not adjusted for inflation. Norwood has for too long neglected its duties and must have a plan to catch up to this level before initiating such an ongoing plan.

The Need for a 10-year plan

Given the current state of streets in Norwood, a 15-year resurfacing plan may not be adequate. We are too far behind due to lack of public planning and foresight. The tax payers dollars should not be used exclusively for special projects approved by the State but also for the continued and ongoing preservation of our City.

A 10-year street plan for Norwood should annually budget \$852,000 for corrective maintenance activities (resurfacing), and \$127,800 for preventative maintenance activities (rejuvenation). The total annual budget should be \$979,800 not including the cost of Street Department employees, street lighting, and major replacement projects.

The major replacement projects required, total “base up” replacement of streets must be budgeted outside of the regular maintenance and resurfacing of streets. We must plan ahead for these large projects and see the need for them in the future.

See Appendix A.

Accountability

Public accountability with regular reporting of progress and long-term planning to council and the citizens is required for a successful street plan. Regular meetings with street department management which are open to the public and broadcast to the citizens. These meetings will detail the progress of current projects and detail future plans in order to inform the public of the work being performed on all 142 lane miles in Norwood. The budgeting and financial projections for all projects and maintenance should be available for public review and comment on a regular basis.

Replacement

Annual funds must be allocated for projects where streets require near complete replacement. These are often referred to as “base up” projects. The City must plan for such projects and utilize as many outside sources of revenue as possible. This is where the City should utilize Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC) funds. Through the use of grant money and State matching funds, grants, and zero interest loans, major replacement projects should continue and, with increased focus and effort, increase in their effectiveness.

A Vision of the Future

The City must spend time and money on our streets, not only replacing those most deserving but maintaining those in which we invest the citizens tax dollars. There must be a long-term plan of replacement, resurfacing, and preventive maintenance of streets to achieve ongoing satisfactory street conditions. There is no one single plan, no magic wand, no wonder pill to fix this problem. An effective program takes constant work in a flexible plan which grows and changes over time to bring our streets and City to a level the citizens of Norwood deserve and then maintain that level of care.

Ordinance for Curb to Curb Restoration

Each time an outside company or utility must dig a hole in the street they are obligated to restore the pavement to its original condition. Some municipalities have adopted policies of “curb to curb” restoration. In this type of program, the company breaking through the pavement not only repairs the hole that was dug but must pave the area from one curb to the other. This practice will help alleviate the patchwork appearance of our streets and improve their longevity. The City should investigate and implement an ordinance or regulations which compel companies which violate our street surfaces. The City should require inspections to be performed after each street opening.

Funding, Inside and Outside Resource

In the City of Norwood, street maintenance and repair is managed through three funds as well as outside sources. The funds are, Street M&R Fund (02), State Highway Fund (03) and Permissive Tax Fund (05). The revenue for the funds are primarily gasoline excise taxes, license fees and trucking fees. The outside resources currently being utilized are the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) which is available on a three-year cycle, and the Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC) which offers matching grants and loans.

Street Fund (02) projected 2017 revenue is \$660,000 per year with a five-year average of \$55,000 per year going to materials and supplies such as paving materials and street paint. Street fund Duke energy bills average \$180,000 per year.

The State Highway Fund (03) has an average revenue of \$50,000 per year Duke Energy bills average \$25,000 per years and Salt purchases of \$30,000 per year.

The Permissive Tax Fund (05) has an average revenue of \$110,000 per year which is mostly used for matching funds for OPWC projects though the City's current plan is to move the cost of Duke Energy lighting from other funds to this one.

OPWC matching funds for street projects vary year to year with an average of \$750,000 and over 2.2 million dollars for 2017.

The current CDBG funds are available on a three-year cycle with Norwood currently budgeted for \$200,000 per year for street projects. These are used as matching funds for OPWC projects.

Street Maintenance and Repair

Using Correctly Allocated Revenue Sources

No Duke Energy bills paid by street maintenance and state highway revenue- \$205,000

Street M&R Fund (02) material and supplies - \$55,000

Permissive Tax Fund (05) revenue- \$210,000

Total- \$470,000

With an annual cost of \$979,800 this leaves an additional **\$509,800** needed annually to complete a 10-year plan.

Major Street Replacement

CDBG funding- \$200,000 for matching funds for OPWC programs

Additional OPWC average funding- \$500,000

Total- \$700,000

(A significant percentage of additional funds should be allocated towards OPWC programs with matching funds for street replacement to the level of the base.)

This is our Philosophy and Our Starting Point for an Effective Street Plan.

What are the Next Steps?

- 1- Establish Regular Meetings**
- 2- Open Lines of Communication**
- 3- Prepare an Ordinance for a “Curb to Curb” Repair Program for Street Openings**
- 4- Request a County Engineers Audit of Norwood Streets**
- 5- Establish a Timeline for a 10-year Resurfacing Plan**
- 6- Prepare Cost Estimates for Each Year**
- 7- Evaluate Fund Expenses and Prepare to Move Lighting Costs Out of Street Funds**
- 8- Identify those Streets in Need of and Eligible for Major Reconstruction**
- 9- Identify What is Currently Being Done and What is Scheduled**
- 10- Continue Regular Public Meetings**
- 11- Communicate**

Please read the accompanying supporting documentation :

“What Elected Officials Need to Know About Streets”,

and

“Slides-Are Your Roads Struggling to Keep Up With Deterioration?”

and

Revenue and Expense Reports Available on “www.NorwoodAuditor.com/AuditorReports”

Appendix A

Preventative Maintenance Activities-

Penetrating asphalt rejuvenators in years 1 to 5 of a pavements life.

Restorative seals, slurry and micro thin (0.5 inch) resurfacing for pavements 8-10 yrs old.

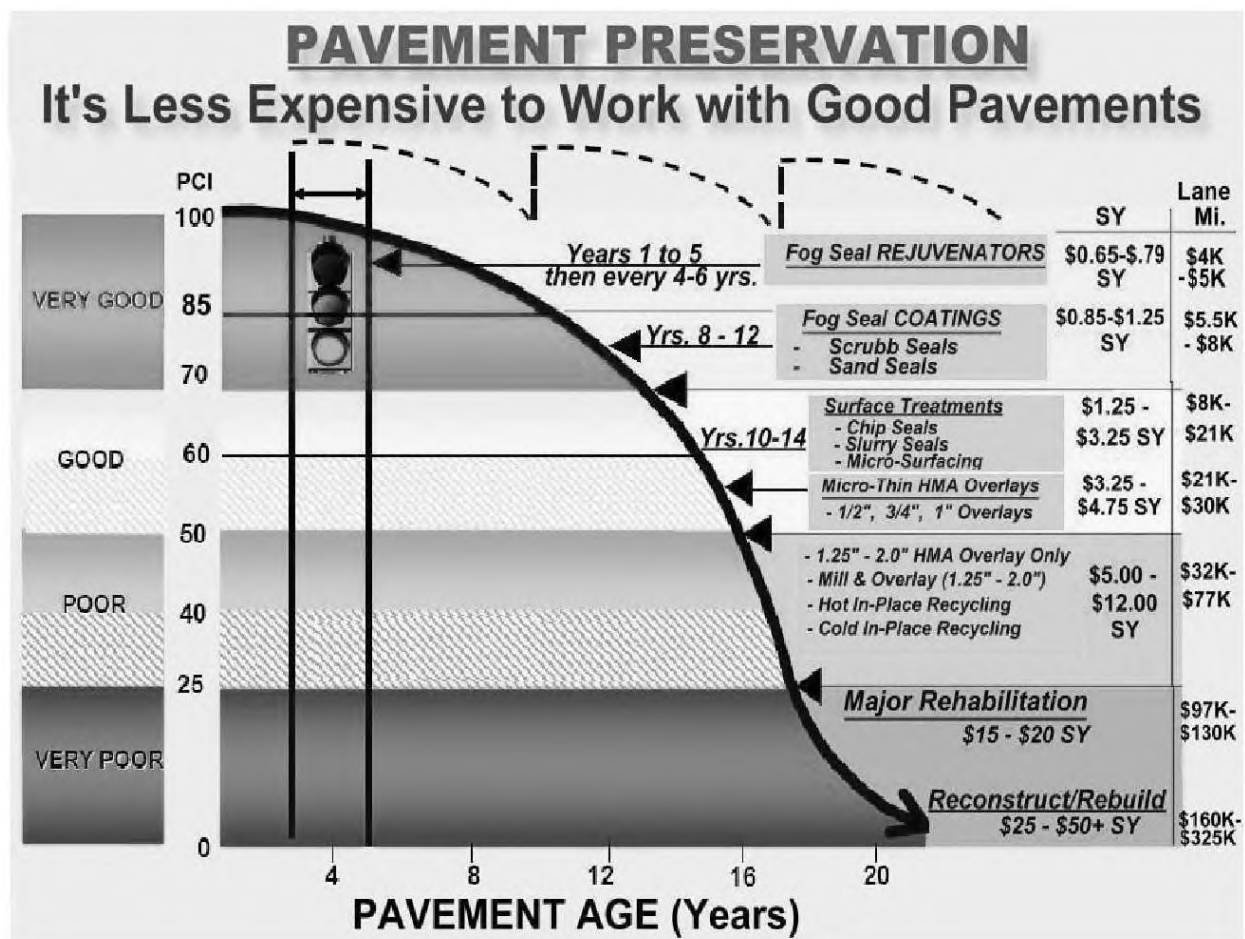
Crack Filling and/ or sealing on pavements 8-10 yrs or older.

Corrective Maintenance Activities

A variety of pavement milling techniques and depths including both Wedge and Whole Width milling techniques.

Finer grade asphalt design for use with 0.75, 1.0, and 1.25-inch-thick overlays.

Conventional asphalt mix designs for 1.5-inch overlays.



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Sources

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