

# Snow Removal from Pedestrian Walkways Survey

Highlights and Key Findings

City of Ithaca Mobility, Accessibility, and Transportation Commission  
Monday, April 26, 2021  
Online on Zoom

# CPF Request

- 2018: MATCom (Hector & Eric) did research on other cities and current situation
- 2019
  - **January:** Commission Project Form approved by City Administration Committee  
“Council would like to understand the priorities of the public so we can determine how to proceed.  
**Are the main issues with lack of sidewalk clearing by property owners? Large piles of snow at curb cuts and corners? Other issues? And does the public want the City government to take on more of the responsibility for keeping pedestrian routes open, or to enforce more vigorously the regulations that exist? How much more is the public willing to pay?”**
  - **Deliverable:** Arrange for a public presentation on the topic, gather feedback, solicit questions, and synthesize feedback in a findings report. (Vote of commission not required)

# Timeline

- 2018: MATCom (Hector & Eric) did research on other cities and current situation
- 2019
  - **January:** Commission Project Form approved by City Administration Committee
  - **Summer:** MATCom (Chris & Hector) develops survey
  - **November:** Snow Removal Survey launched just before snowstorm
- 2020
  - **January:** Preliminary Key Findings presented to MATCom
  - **February:** Coding of written responses (Q16) completed with help from Megan and Srikar
  - **Mar-Sep:** COVID-19 Pause
  - **October:** MATCom reactivated, work begins again
- 2021
  - **April:** Report on survey results completed, present to CA

# Demographics

## Survey Respondent Group

Completed surveys: **814**

Broad cross-section of Ithacans

**Race & Ethnicity:** 80% White, 20% P.O.C.

**Gender:** 61% Female, 35% Male

**People with Disabilities:** 14%

**Representation from all neighborhoods**

Notable characteristics

**Majority homeowners** (73%)

**Majority middle-aged & older** (82% are age 35+)

## City of Ithaca

Population (ACS 2019): **30,569**

Comparison

**Race & Ethnicity:** 68% White, 32% P.O.C.

**Gender:** 50/50

**People with Disabilities:** 7%

**C'town and Downtown** are most populous

**Majority renters** (26.4% homeownership rate)

**Majority college-aged** (23% are age 35+)

# Written Comments

“What do you think is the main issue with snow removal from pedestrian walkways in Ithaca?”

Concerns about Specific Places	Count	Pct (n=730)
Snow and ice plowed in piles around curbcut and crosswalk	166	23%
Icy sidewalks, including hills and damaged pavement	108	15%
Inaccessible to elderly, disabled, strollers	42	6%

Concerns about Properties	Count	Pct (n=730)
Homeowners/residents who do not clear snow	168	23%
Renters/landlords who do not clear snow	133	18%
Too hard, time consuming, or expensive for many people	116	16%
Full width of sidewalks not cleared	51	7%
Not cleared in a timely fashion	43	6%

# Written Comments

continued

“What do you think is the main issue with snow removal from pedestrian walkways in Ithaca?”

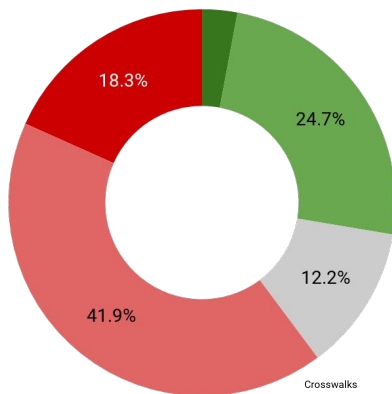
Concerns about City Implementation	Count	Pct (n=730)
Inconsistency in how/when sidewalks are cleared	95	13%
Lack of enforcement	62	8%
Should not be left to individual homeowners/residents	43	6%
Too big a time window is allowed	30	4%
Lack of education/ignorance about ordinance	17	2%
No Concerns	Count	Pct (n=730)
It's not a problem	9	1%

# Key Finding #1

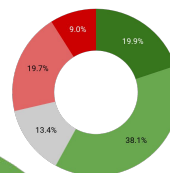
## Crossing the Street

A majority of people (60%) are dissatisfied with snow and ice removal from sidewalks, but **respondents are particularly dissatisfied (75%) about the condition around curb cuts.**

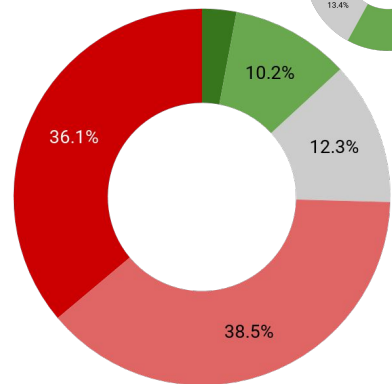
Sidewalks



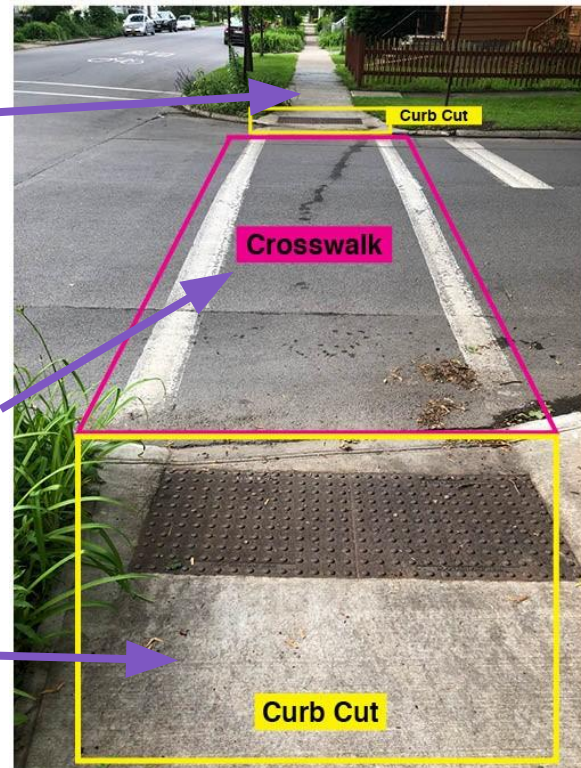
Crosswalks



Curb Cuts



Very Satisfied   Somewhat Satisfied   Neither  
Somewhat Dissatisfied   Very Dissatisfied



## On curb cuts, crosswalks, and intersections

Often, obstructions along pedestrian walkways in Ithaca are the **mounds of snow & slush where the sidewalk meets the street**. Due to street plow piling and lack of attention, these obstructions remain for days after the traffic lanes and sidewalks are clear.

Currently, adjacent property owners are responsible to clear the ramp to the curbline. However, street plows do not clear right next to the curb to prevent plow & curb damage.







## From the Comments

“...We have 2 curb cuts, and the plows go by and pile up heavy, ice snow that is literally IMPOSSIBLE to clear. Even if we manage, the plow will come back and do it again.”

“Pedestrian walkways aren’t the problem. City plows that fail to adequately clear the roadbed in crosswalks, push snow that has been cleared from the sidewalk back on to the sidewalk, and block cleared curb cuts are the problem.”

“As a pedestrian, I put my boots on and walk along the sidewalk - using Yaktrax if necessary - and have no problems; then I come to the corner, and my boots sink into 3 inches or even 6 inches of slush and water.”

## From the Comments

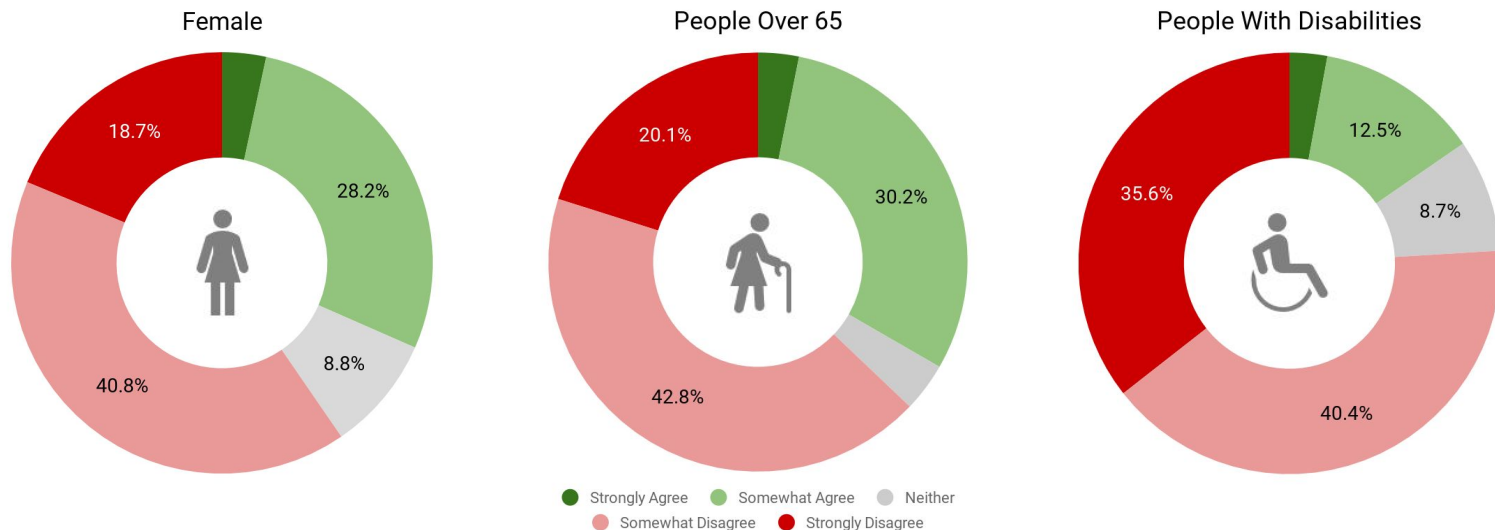
“There is a constant battle between the plows and owners for the curb cuts and driveways. The entire policy is ableist. As a two-income family ... we cannot clear our sidewalks during daylight hours.”

“The problem for me is that whenever the city plows the snow my entryway to the curb is blocked and I have to shovel it out myself. I am elderly with a heart condition prone to a heart attack. I have no easy way to find a dependable snow snow shoveler.”



## Key Finding #2 Impact on People

Most respondents (55%) disagreed or strongly disagreed when asked whether “pedestrian walkways are cleared of snow and ice to a degree that I can easily get around.” **Women (60%), people over 65 (63%), and people with disabilities (76%) disproportionately disagreed with it.**

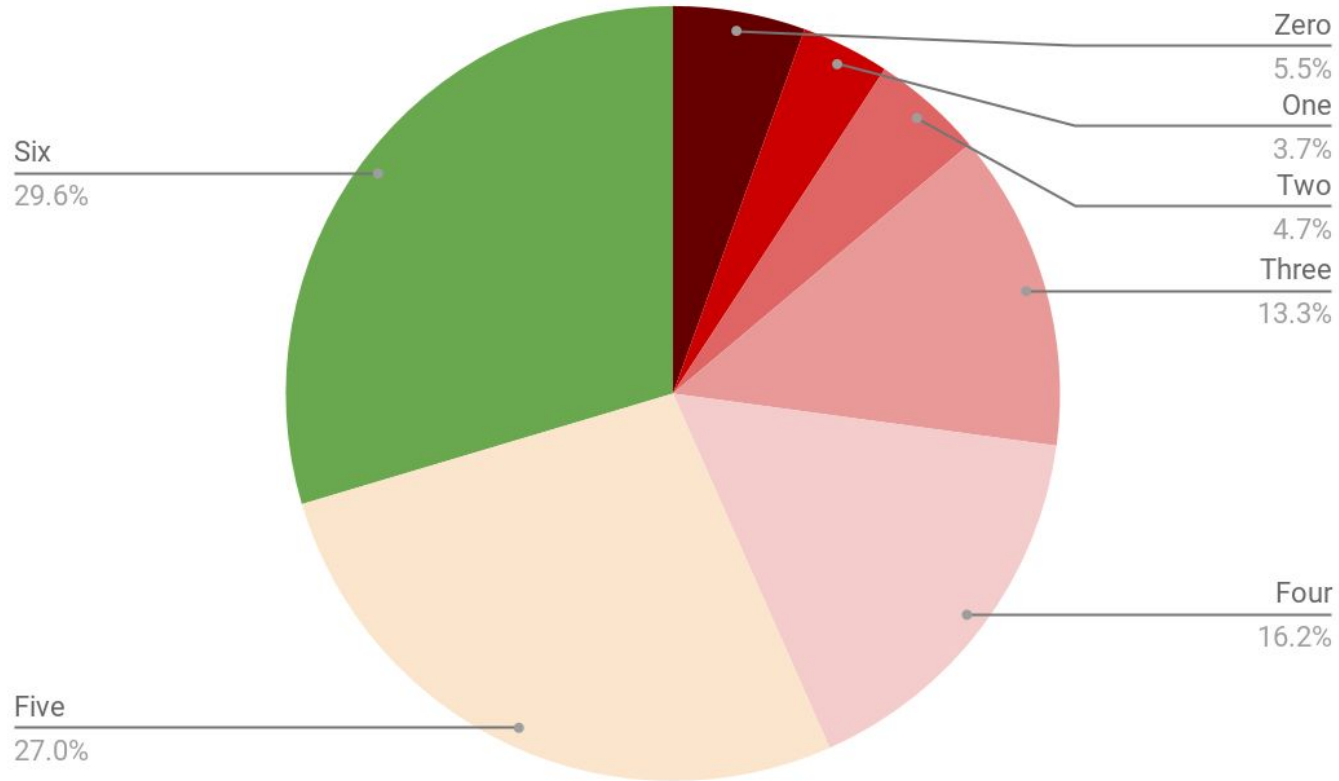


## Key Finding #3 Knowledge of Ordinance

Significant percentage of respondents did not know or got the wrong answer on True/False/DK questions about the snow clearing ordinance.

	Don't Know	Wrong Answer	Right Answer
Properties next to a street crossing need to clear the curb cut	31%	14%	55%
Material that provides traction must be placed when ice is too hard to remove	35%	5%	60%
The full paved width of the sidewalk must be cleared	20%	8%	72%
Pedestrian walkways must be cleared of snow <i>and</i> ice	20%	7%	72%
Walkways must be cleared within 24 hours after the start of a snowfall	11%	5%	85%
Properties at street corners must clear sidewalks on all sides	13%	1%	86%

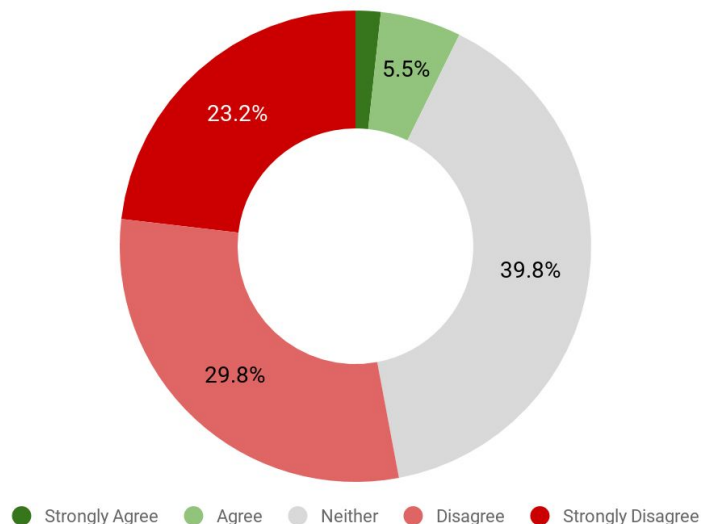
## Respondents by number of correct answers



## Key Finding #4 Enforcement of Ordinance

A majority of people (53%) disagreed or strongly disagreed when asked if they were satisfied with the city's current enforcement of the ordinance.

"I am satisfied with the city's enforcement of ordinances related to snow removal from pedestrian walkways"



### From the Comments

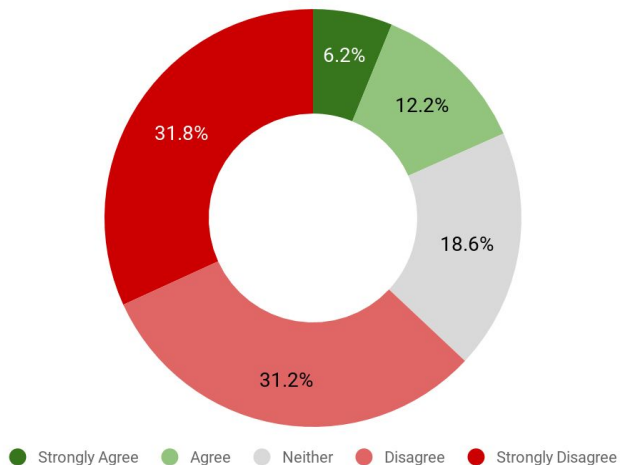
"The same houses are never shoveled. Either they don't care about paying the fines or they have never been fined."

"The same people/properties are always the problems. Enforcement appears to be non-existent, or is not severe enough."

## Key Finding #5A Interest in Change

A majority of people (63%) disagree or strongly disagree that the current system for snow removal is working.

"I believe the current way of relying on property owners to keep pedestrian walkways clear in the winter is sufficient"



### From the Comments

"It seems impractical to have each resident remove snow. Everyone will do things differently, and some people might be out of town or otherwise unable to remove the snow ... or renters might not know they are responsible (even if it's stated on the lease)."

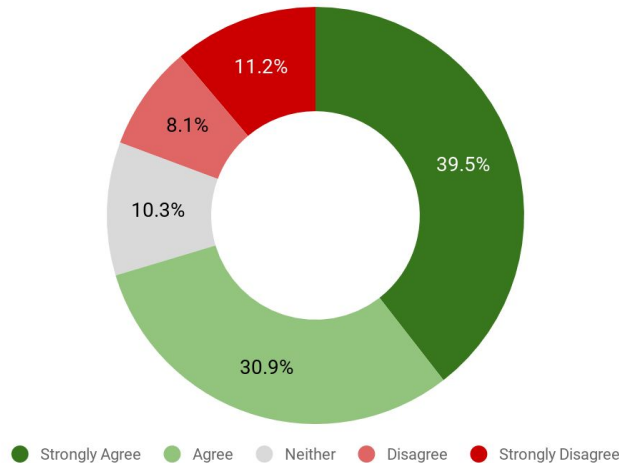
"Relying on residents to clear their own sidewalks is completely unreliable. Tenants often seem to take a long time to get around to it [and] landlords don't always seem to care about the situation."



# Key Finding #5B Interest in Change

Most people (70%) agree or strongly agree that the City should further evaluate taking over the responsibility.

"I support further study of the cost and feasibility for the City of Ithaca to take over responsibility for snow removal of pedestrian walkways"



## From the Comments

"The corners/curb cuts are terrible, and blaming property owners for lakes of ice is not okay. The city needs to take responsibility."

"Differently abled and elderly find this to be too much of a burden. Back injuries and heart attacks are too high a cost. City equipment could do a better job and literally save lives."

"The main issue is private responsibility of a public good. Especially insulting when the motor vehicle pathways are cleared perfectly."