



Watertown City Council
Tuesday, October 14, 2014
7:00 p.m.

Work Session Agenda

Discussion Item:

1. Report of Crow Hazing Activities – Loomacres Wildlife Management
 - Cody L. Baciуска, Wildlife Biologist
2. Marketing and Tourism Fund
 - Sharon Addison, City Manager
3. Sidewalk Program
 - Justin L. Wood, City Engineer

October 8, 2014

To: The Honorable Mayor and City Council
From: Andrew Nichols, Planner
Subject: Crow Hazing Program

Cody Baciuska of Loomacres Wildlife Management will be attending the worksession to discuss the hazing program. In 2013, the City entered into a three year agreement with Loomacres to provide periodic hazing of crow roosts in sensitive areas of the city, at a cost of approximately \$5,000 per year.

The goal of the hazing program is to reduce the nuisance from noise and droppings in public areas. The program initially focused on public parking areas and right-of-way near the river and downtown. Hazing has occasionally been performed on private property when a roost posed a threat to nearby public assets, or in the process of chasing a flock out of the city.

There has been some discussion of considering alternative control methods, such as lethal population reduction. A summary of the obstacles to implementing lethal control is attached.

Lethal Means

- NY Penal Code § 265.35 forbids discharging of weapons (including air guns) in public places, unless in self defense or in the discharge of official duty.
- NYS hunting regulations forbid shooting firearms or bows:
 - Across public highways
 - Within 500 feet of a school, playground, an occupied factory, or a church
 - Within 500 feet of a dwelling without the owner's consent
- These rules combined make it essentially impossible to hunt crows within the City. Hunting of crows, where possible, is subject to the following restrictions (by state and federal law):
 - Crows may not be taken with traps or snares
 - Crows may not be baited or poisoned
 - Hunting is only allowed on Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday between September 1st and March 31st
 - Crows may not be hunted at night
 - There is no bag limit
 - Electronic bird calls may be used
 - Rifles may be used.
- The Auburn crow hunt was not sponsored or endorsed by the City of Auburn, and all hunting presumably took place outside the city.
- On review of news reporting, it appears that the largest haul from the Auburn crow hunt was about 1,000 birds over two days in February 2004—less than 3% of their flock, having no apparent long term impact on the flock size.
- Auburn currently uses similar hazing techniques on their flock, although they have a DPW crew trained for the work rather than a contractor. As of 2011, the program cost Auburn between \$10,000 and \$13,000.
- Flocks are not static and tend to move around throughout the winter. The crows that roost here in December may be a completely different set of birds than the ones that show up in February.
- In the late 2000's, West Nile Virus had a major negative impact on crow populations. The recent perceived population explosion may be an effect of the reproductive rebound after the epidemic. There is a chance that the long term crow population will stabilize at a lower level than the present numbers.

What else can the City do aside from the current hazing program?

There is some evidence that crow flocks choose to roost in urban areas because the street lighting allows them to see their main predator, the Great Horned Owl, which has far superior night vision to the crow. They also may choose to roost in areas with an easily accessible but low-

quality food source, so they can have an easy breakfast before leaving to forage elsewhere for preferred foods.

The city could make efforts to reduce light pollution and reduce the incidence of open garbage vessels left out at night. Over time this may make the city less attractive as a roost, especially if hazing continues concurrently.

Because the City's hazing program is necessarily limited to public assets, educational resources could be provided to private parties to encourage private small-scale hazing. For instance, many homeowners call the complaint line to report a few dozen crows in their back yard. While these reports are helpful in tracking the flocks, sending Loomacres to such a location would be similar to using a City plow to clear someone's driveway.



CITY OF WATERTOWN
ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT
MEMORANDUM

DATE: 8 October 2014

TO: Sharon Addison, City Manager

FROM: Justin Wood, City Engineer

SUBJECT: Sidewalk Program Report

At the July 15, 2014 City Council meeting, staff was directed to look at different options available to the City to make sidewalk improvements in 2015. This included a resumption of the Sidewalk Program, with the possibility of a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) component.

The Sidewalk Program (SWP) was implemented in 2003 as a means to improve sidewalks throughout the City to protect the interests of both property owners and the City of Watertown. To date, nine (9) Sidewalk Districts have been completed, at budgets ranging from \$50,000 to \$200,000 and in size from 5,000 square feet (sf) to 25,000 sf. SWP District #10 was cut from the '14-'15 Adopted Budget, but should the program resume, this district could be presented for next year's SWP, or alternatively, a new district could be developed.

Another mechanism that could be utilized to make sidewalk improvements in the City is the use of CDBG funds. The current CDBG plan allocates \$100,000 for Capital Sidewalk Improvement Projects, in areas located in a census block group that is pre-qualified for low to moderate income (>50% on attached map). A few ideas for sidewalk improvement projects include:

1. Install sidewalks in residential neighborhoods that are the City's responsibility. (i.e. At City facilities, parks, handicap ramps at intersections, etc.)
2. Sync Capital Sidewalk Improvements Projects with planned CHIPS street projects located in prequalified census blocks.
3. Target a street or neighborhood within a prequalified census block and do a sidewalk improvement project on its own.

It is important to differentiate the types of sidewalk improvement projects that can be performed using CDBG funds versus the SWP. The SWP targets the replacement of deficient sidewalk blocks only, and aims to keep as much "good" sidewalk in place as possible. CDBG funded sidewalk projects, on the other hand, are required to be either new sidewalks corridors, or replacement of all sidewalk blocks in a given area. If the latter is chosen, even "good" sidewalks must be replaced, so we would want to target areas where a majority of sidewalks are "bad" to get the biggest bang for the buck. Also, the City cannot recapture the cost through a special assessment charge, as is done in the SWP.

Regardless of whether a CDBG component is incorporated into plans for sidewalk improvements in 2015, the Special Assessment Charge established for deficient sidewalks in the SWP should be evaluated for adjustment. At the inception of the SWP, the Special Assessment Charge was established at \$5.00 per square foot. In the first few years of the program, the City recovered approximately 75% of the actual cost of each district based on the \$5.00/sf charge. That rate was increased only once, in 2011, to \$5.25/sf, and has remained the same since. Based on numbers compiled from the last five completed districts (since 2009), the City has seen a downward trend in the costs it recovers from each district. In fact, the City recovered only 50% of total costs from the last two districts. It is evident the continued increase in costs for labor and materials has resulted in the City picking up a larger portion of the total bill for each district. If the SWP is to return to the original cost distribution it was conceived upon, (a 75% property owner – 25% City split) the rate charged for deficient sidewalks inevitably has to be adjusted to reflect today's cost of performing such work.

With an eye toward resuming city sidewalk improvements in 2015, there are a few different options to consider, which include standalone SWP and/or CDBG projects, or a combination of the two.

1. Standard Sidewalk Program

A. No Change

- Resume the SWP, at similar funding levels, and in the same capacity it has been operating under the past several years.
- Annual funding is \$150,000 and sidewalk replacement rate is \$5.25/sf.
- Average district size includes 17,500 sf of total sidewalk replacement.
- Cost distribution remains at approx. 50-50 split with property owner and City.
- Net cost to City is \$75,000.
- Proceed with SWP District #10, or propose a new district.

B. Adjust Sidewalk Replacement Rate

- Increase sidewalk replacement rate to \$6.50/sf
- Cost distribution returns to 75–25 split as originally intended.
- Keep annual funding at \$150,000,
 - 17,500 sf of total sidewalk replacement
 - Net Cost to City is \$37,500.
- Increase annual funding to \$200,000-\$250,000
 - 23,000 sf – 29,000 sf of total sidewalk replacement
 - Net Cost to City is \$50,000 - \$62,500.
- Proceed with SWP District #10 or propose a LARGER district.

2. Stand Alone CDBG funded Capital Sidewalk Improvement Project

- Requires plans and specifications developed by Engineering Dept. for public bid.
- Increased costs associated with prevailing wages, bonding, and insurances, and mobilization equates to less sidewalk installed by hiring a contractor.
- Select a project for asphalt trails or concrete sidewalks based on anticipated CDBG funding of \$100,000.

3. Combination of SWP and CDBG funded Capital Sidewalk Improvement Projects

**** Utilize City forces to complete both components ****

Sidewalk Program Component

- May need to consider reducing SWP district size \leq 17,500 sf.
- Proceed with District #10, or propose a new, possibly smaller district.

CDBG Component

- If Concrete Sidewalk Project:
 - SWP crew will complete concrete sidewalk improvements.
 - Project can begin in April-May 2015 since funding for the SWP will not be available until July 1, 2015.
 - Aim to keep total sidewalk replacement of SWP plus CDBG to 25,000 sf.
- If Asphalt Sidewalk/Trail Project:
 - DPW forces will complete asphalt sidewalk/trail project
 - Scheduling will be dependent on DPW's availability.

The Sidewalk Program and its crews have been providing an excellent product to the City for over 12 years, during which time operations have been streamlined and efficiency has improved. The typical funding levels of \$150,000 per fiscal year, have allowed creation of districts large enough to make a significant improvement in surrounding neighborhoods, but haven't exceeded the capability of what the SWP can complete in a given construction season. The use of SWP forces to complete CDBG funded Capital Sidewalk Improvement Projects is a logical choice to maximize the dollars spent on infrastructure, instead of prevailing wages and overhead to a contractor. Depending on the CDBG project(s) selected, we will have to evaluate the impact on the SWP's schedule to determine what can or can't be accommodated in a single construction season.

One other thing to note; If new asphalt sidewalks/multipurpose trails are selected as a CDBG project, we would have to put the project out to public bid, unless Council directs DPW to perform the work. The SWP crew specializes in concrete sidewalk installation, and do not have the equipment or means to install asphalt trails.

I would like direction from City Council on what type of sidewalk improvement plan they envision moving forward with to anticipate budgeting and staffing levels. Based on that input, we can put together a detailed plan for a proposed SWP District, and if desired, a Capital Sidewalk Improvement Project(s) utilizing CDBG funds.

Enc.

Cc. Ken Mix, Planning and Community Development Coordinator
Gene Hayes, Department of Public Works Superintendent
Jim Mills, City Comptroller

Sidewalk Program

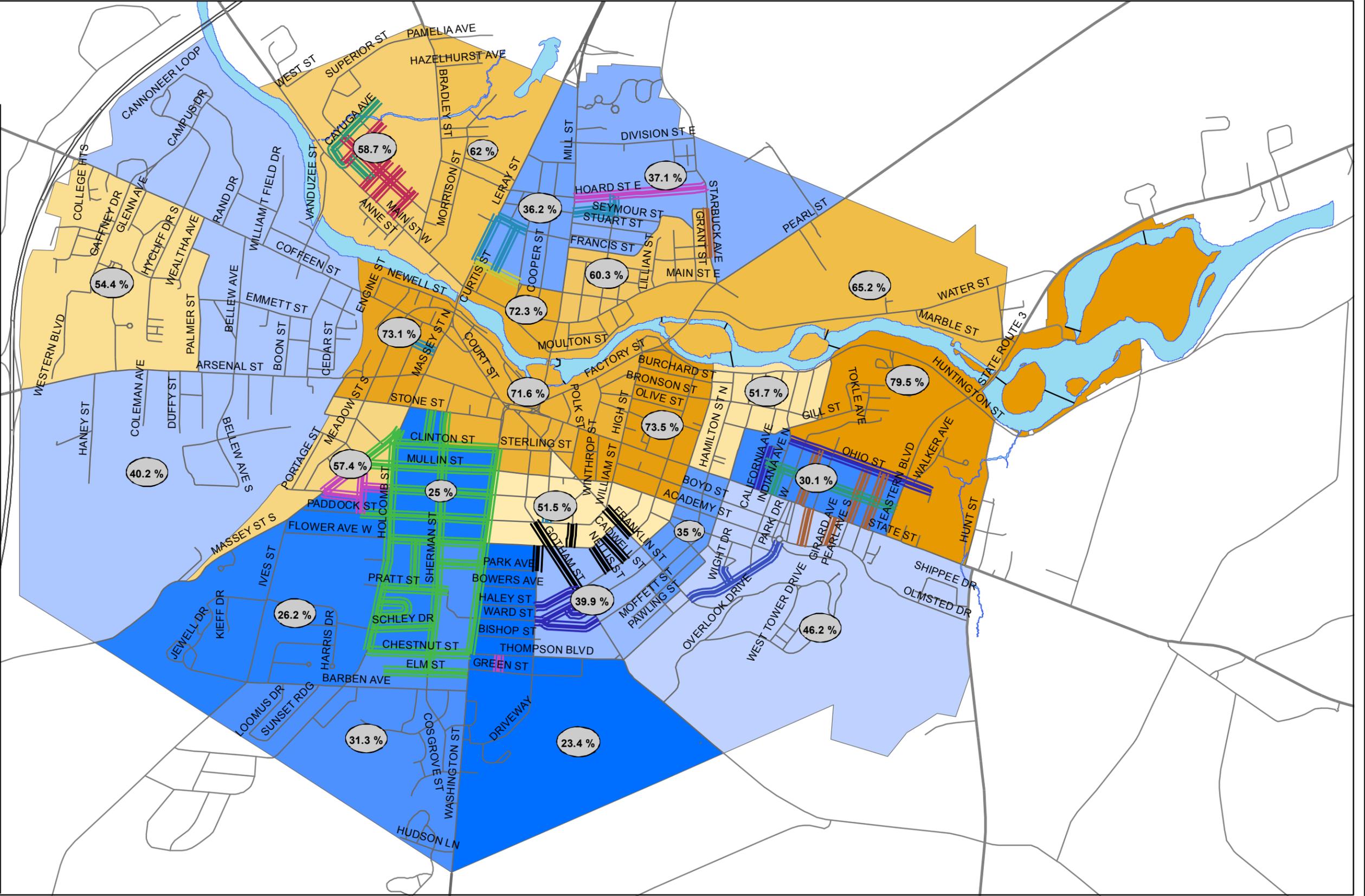
Districts

- District 1; 2003 - 2005
- District 2; 2006 - 2007
- District 3; 2007 - 2008
- District 4; 2008 - 2009
- District 5; 2009 - 2010
- District 6; 2009 - 2010
- District 7; 2010 - 2011
- District 8; 2011 - 2012
- District 9; 2012 - 2013
- Proposed District 10

Census Block Groups

Percent Low-Mod Income Households

- 23.4
- 25
- 26.2
- 30.1
- 31.3
- 35
- 36.2
- 37.1
- 39.9
- 40.2
- 46.2
- 51.5
- 51.7
- 54.4
- 57.4
- 58.7
- 60.3
- 62
- 65.2
- 71.6
- 72.3
- 73.1
- 73.5
- 79.5



Revision:	Description of Revision:	Date:	By:

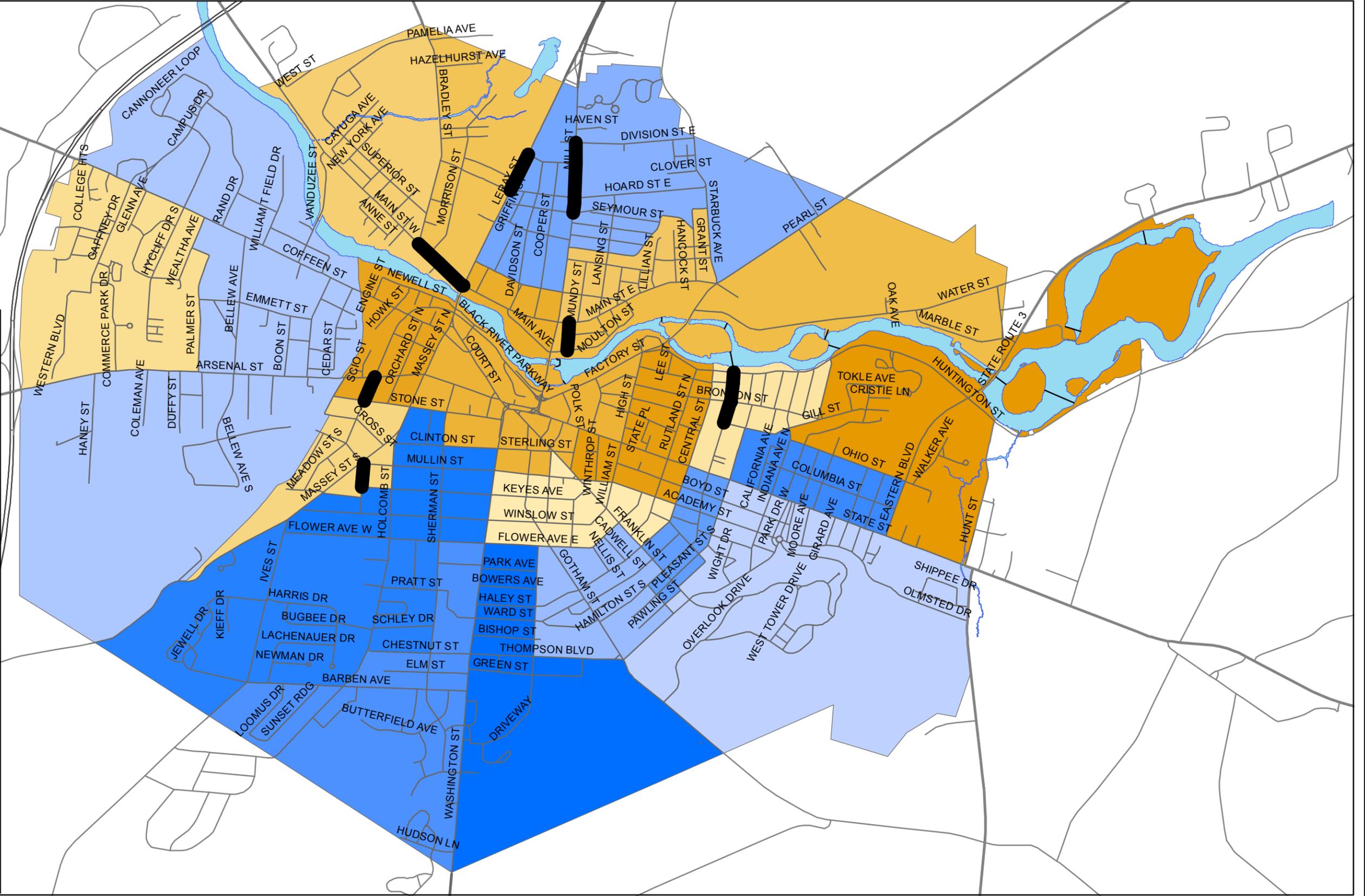
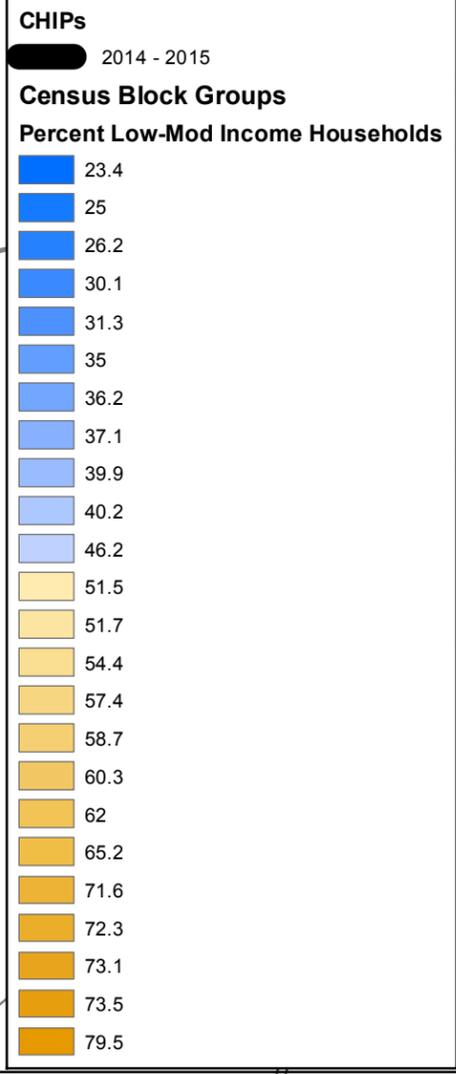
Project: City Sidewalk Program

Title: 2003 - 2014

CITY OF WATERTOWN, NEW YORK
GIS DEPARTMENT
 ROOM 305B, MUNICIPAL BUILDING
 245 WASHINGTON STREET
 WATERTOWN, NEW YORK 13601
 TEL: (315) 785-7793



City Sidewalk Program Districts	
Designed By:	Approved By:
Drawn By:	Date:
Date: 10/8/2014	Date:
Scale: 1 inch = 2,000 feet	
Title: 2003 - 2014	



Revision:	Description of Revision:	Date:	By:

Project: Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPs)

Title: 2014 - 2015

 CITY OF WATERTOWN, NEW YORK
 GIS DEPARTMENT
 ROOM 305B, MUNICIPAL BUILDING
 245 WASHINGTON STREET
 WATERTOWN, NEW YORK 13601
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CHIPs 2014 - 2015	
Designed By:	Approved By:
Drawn By:	Date:
Date: 10/9/2014	Date:
Scale: 1 inch = 2,000 feet	
Title: 2014 - 2015	

**FISCAL YEAR 2014-2015
CAPITAL BUDGET
INFRASTRUCTURE
CHIPS-STREET PAVING PROGRAM**

STANDARD STREET PAVING BY CITY CREWS			
STREET	FROM	TO	COST
Grove Street	Main Street East	Moulton Street	\$ 35,277
		Total:	\$ 35,277

SURFACE MILL, CURBING AND PAVING BY CITY CREWS			
STREET	FROM	TO	COST
Leray Street	Burdick Street	Highland Street	\$ 65,154
Mill Street	Katherine Street	Division Street East	\$ 98,064
Hamilton Street N.	Gill Street	Huntington Street	\$ 86,614
		Total:	\$249,832

SURFACE MILL AND PAVING BY CITY CREWS			
STREET	FROM	TO	COST
Main Street West	Leray Street	Bradley Street	\$ 99,005
		Total:	\$ 99,005

BASE REBUILD AND PAVING BY CITY CREWS			
STREET	FROM	TO	COST
Dimmick Street	Mullin Street	Ten Eyck Street W.	\$ 71,157
Meadow Street S.	Stone Street	Arsenal Street	\$ 72,272
		Total:	\$143,429

TOTAL CHIPS STREET PAVING PROGRAM:	\$527,543
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