

Dear Jonesboro City Council Members:

I am writing to ask your support for Jonesboro's sidewalk ordinance as it stands and to deny the request of the chamber of commerce to allow businesses in the industrial park to be exempt from building sidewalks. Here are my thoughts on that proposal:

- 1) The previous statement claiming sidewalks would create a liability and would pose a danger if built are specious at best. Sidewalks remove pedestrians from the road, the shoulders of the road, the ditches along the road, and the mowed and unmowed grassy areas along those roads. Forcing people to walk in those places is what creates liability issues by endangering pedestrians, trucks, and other vehicles. Furthermore, I can think of no safer way to navigate the two-lane roads, their intersections, and the railroad crossings than to have appropriate infrastructure that makes it safe for both vehicles (those "10,000 trucks", for example) and pedestrians to navigate the industrial park in a safe manner.
- 2) Consideration for connectivity for JETS riders between home and work should not end on the shoulder of the road with nowhere to walk. Employees of those businesses should not have to grapple with whether they can safely navigate their last few yards to work. Our JETS system is intended to transport people safely, but we discount its value as a community asset when we do not support the other features necessary to make public transportation safe. Not providing for a safe passage from bus stop to factory door is about as short sighted and ignorant as laying fiber optic but stopping short of the school that needs it.
- 3) It was also stated that there are residential areas in or adjacent to the industrial park. When it comes time for other areas of the industrial park to be developed or undergo redevelopment, wouldn't we want those residents who work in nearby industries to have safe options for commuting to work as well? (And by safe options, I include: walking to work, if they so choose; taking public transit to work – with safe access to the entrance to their place of work; or driving to work – without the liability of running over some one walking in the road because there are no sidewalks.) Why would we not want to plan for the future?
- 4) I would encourage everyone not to confine ourselves to comparisons with other Arkansas cities if our goal is to compete with the best.
- 5) Businesses who choose not to come here will not come for other reasons. It will not be because we made them build a sidewalk. Let's not kid ourselves. Their not coming here is because we DON'T have sidewalks or any number of other features that are fundamental to communities with a rich and vibrant quality of life.

The mayor appointed a citizens committee to review the original ordinance and make recommendations. That is what it did, with the industrial park included. The City Council voted to approve it. It is not a perfect ordinance, by any means, but it is helping us move the needle on getting sidewalks built. Let us not regress and cave to business interests. These businesses accepted the terms of the ordinance when they chose to build in our industrial park. It will be a sad and slippery slope if the Council votes to exclude industrial areas. Now THAT'S a liability for a lot of reasons.

Thank you for listening and for your service to our city.

Regards,

Pam Alexander