

Pilon, Janet

Subject: Wealthy property owners not clearing walks

From: Lauren Stephen

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To: Farr, Jason <Jason.Farr@hamilton.ca>; clerk@hamilton.ca; Ward 8 Office <ward8@hamilton.ca>

Subject: Wealthy property owners not clearing walks

Hello Jason Farr,

Too many wealthy property owners in our Ward are not clearing their sidewalks in a timely manner.

I do not accept the stereotype of the elderly, low-income, homeowner who has trouble clearing their walk themselves or paying for it. My neighbours who fit that profile are among the most diligent at clearing their walks.

The past few winters it seems rather the wealthiest property owners who do not clear their walks. Last winter I spoke via video intercom doorbell to a homeowner at Bay and Markland who said they were out of the country; they had made no arrangements to clear their walks. I have friends who work clearing sidewalks in the winter--they are in desperate need of work this winter!

The house at [REDACTED] was assessed at just over \$1 million a couple years ago. The homeowner is a deck contractor, a healthy and reasonably well off man in the prime of his life, whose business name is right on the vehicle. How diligent is he in his business practices if he doesn't even clear his walks?

Around Mohawk (Cc: Ward 8 Councillor), it seems absentee landlords are the big problem. These people have the capital to invest in property, but some are not willing to hire the labour to maintain the properties.

Small businesses are typically diligent at clearing the walks around their business, if I note to them they are responsible for clearing something they are not clearing. In a few cases, I hear "the city is responsible for clearing that" but that is usually pretty easy to check, and once it is confirmed things are mostly fine. The southern strip of sidewalk on Duke, at James and Duke (in front of Royal Pizza, near La Piazza Allegra) approaching but not including One Duke... is one example that was not being cleared and now is.

Condo developments are an interesting case. There may be an office or model unit that is not 'manned' all the time and overlooks clearing a walk. Typically, these businesses are very fast at clearing things if I mention it to them, and do not want me to call the city. I typically say that there are several condo developments in the neighbourhood, and they're hurting sales for themselves and others if it looks like this is a neighbourhood that doesn't clear its walks.

Condo developments are interesting in another way. The presence of a condo development lets me put pressure on nearby property owners. If the sidewalks are not cleared of snow and ice, people are not going to want to buy property in the area. It hurts property values. It hurts sales. It hurts the biggest industry in our city.

Recently, I have learned that a Google Maps review is one of the most important things you can do to lend support for a business. You can find my 5-star review of La Luna Express on Google Maps. This is my review of the 5-Star cafe: "Good bar. Cheap pints. Friendly crowd and server. I give it four stars."

My point here is that I intend to incorporate snow clearing information to my Google Maps reviews. Example.

The CIBC branch at 667 Upper James doesn't clear the walks in front of its business (facing Upper James). How careful are they going to be with your money? They say that they're not responsible, that it's the landlord that's responsible. To

that I say, they are paying for a service with their rent and they are not receiving that service. Again, how careful can they be with your money? This is something that can significantly affect customers trying to get into the branch, and in years past they have seemed totally oblivious to it. How carefully is this branch looking out for its customers interests, if they let that go?

I plan to balance bad Google Maps reviews with strong recommendations, so not hurting business overall, and not seeming like an unreasonable crank.

The City of Hamilton's complaints-based system depends on diligent citizens like me holding my neighbours to account. I believe I have reached the limit of what I can do by contacting bylaw enforcement. It's a lot of work. This year, I will be contacting more property owners directly, and publicly naming scofflaws.

Best,

Lauren Stephen