



Legislation Text

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Authorizing City Council's Committee on Streets and Services to hold hearings regarding the City's growing problem of damage to shared driveways and retaining walls, and the need for the City to develop a solution.

WHEREAS, Shared driveways and retaining walls are a major concern because many of the homes in our City were built in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and after several decades of use, many are in desperate need of repair; and

WHEREAS, This issue is not only a public health and safety crisis; it is also having a negative impact on overall home stabilization and preservation, with some residents finding their homeowners insurance cancelled due to the state of their driveways or retaining walls; and

WHEREAS, Shared driveways are not City property but are owned collectively by the property owners on both sides of the driveway. Generally, the cost to repair these driveways is between \$60,000 and \$250,000, and the average cost per property owner is between \$1,000 and \$6,000. Considering these costs, it has been difficult for neighbors to come together to raise the money to repair shared driveways; and

WHEREAS, Even though the driveways are not City property, their deterioration is being exacerbated by City trash trucks that use them on trash pickup day. In looking at common driveways served by sanitation vehicles, almost 170 miles of driveways are used by trash trucks, with about 56 miles in the 9th Council District, 32 miles in the 4th, 23 miles in the 6th, 16 miles in the 8th, 13 miles in the 7th, 11 miles in both the 2nd and 10th, and under 10 miles in the other Districts; and

WHEREAS, The state of many shared driveways is not a new issue. In 2003, City Council authorized the City to spend \$1 million of funds from the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative to do an analysis of the City's driveway problem and to develop a pilot repair program. The City never spent these funds; and

WHEREAS, In regards to retaining walls, each wall is different, with some affecting only a few homeowners and others stretching multiple blocks and affecting dozens of households. The major concern with many crumbling retaining walls is that they are potentially undermining the structural integrity of the adjoining properties. Again, while the retaining walls are technically the property of the homeowner, the repair costs are often well outside what the average resident can reasonably afford; and

WHEREAS, Shared driveways and retaining walls are a City-wide issue that cannot reasonably be addressed on a neighbor-by-neighbor, block-by-block, driveway-by-driveway, or retaining-wall-by-retaining-wall basis. The City needs an overall strategy to address this growing problem that is only getting worse, particularly with

another winter of freezing and thawing on the way; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby authorizes City Council's Committee on Streets and Services to hold hearings regarding the City's growing problem of damage to shared driveways and retaining walls, and the need for the City to develop a solution.