

CITY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA  
**COUNCIL POLICY**

CURRENT

SUBJECT: DISTRIBUTION OF STREET IMPROVEMENT COSTS  
POLICY NO.: 200-01  
EFFECTIVE DATE: February 12, 2021

BACKGROUND:

1. General

Adequate streets to serve San Diego’s developing neighborhood communities are essential to the orderly development of the City. This Council Policy describes when property owners, communities, and the City share the cost of improving the City street system.

2. Definitions

These definitions are used throughout this Policy:

ABUTTER: Property that is next to or touches a street, sometimes referred to as “Abutting Property.”

MAJOR STREET: A street that has the purpose of connecting Collector Streets and Primary Arterials to the freeway system. Major streets also provide access to commercial and industrial Abutting Property.

PRIMARY ARTERIAL: Often referred to as an Arterial Street, a street that connects Collector Streets to the freeway system, but provides limited access to Abutting Properties.

COLLECTOR STREET: A street that primarily connects Local Streets to Arterial and Major Streets and provides access to Abutting Property.

COMMUNITY: A geographical area served by a Collector or Arterial Street. No single parcel should be included in more than one community area. The City Council (Council) designates Community areas based upon traffic and land use studies.

LOCAL STREET: A street that primarily provides direct access to Abutting Property. It carries low vehicular movement, low-to-heavy pedestrian movement, and low-to-moderate bicycle movement.

PLANNED URBANIZING AREA: This area is defined in the Council adopted Progress Guide and General Plan as newly developing communities not included in the Urbanized Area. The Planned Urbanizing Area is delineated on the Council adopted General Plan map.

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**URBANIZED AREA:** This area is defined in the Council adopted Progress Guide and General Plan as the central portion of San Diego as well as the remaining older sections of the City. These areas are more specifically delineated on the Council adopted General Plan map.

**UNIMPROVED STREET:** A street, which is part of the City's official streets system, that is paved with less than 2 inches of hot mix asphalt, not graded or paved for drainage, and lacks a sufficient underlying base.

**UNIMPROVED ALLEY:** A public way that is no wider than 25 feet, which is paved with less than 2 inches of hot mix asphalt, is not graded or paved for drainage, and lacks a sufficient underlying base.

**POLICY:**

1. **General**

Division of the cost involved in improving the City street system is based upon the following fundamental considerations:

- a. **Responsibility of Abutting Property Owners.** Owners of Abutting Property on Local Streets receive the benefit of the street and are therefore responsible for the costs involved in improving Local Streets. Such improvements include right-of-way, grading, drainage structures, curbs, sidewalks, paving, streetlights, and landscaping. Abutting Property owners are also responsible for that portion of Collector and Arterial Streets, which include up to a 40-foot curb to curb width in a 60-foot right-of-way providing two 12-foot travel lanes and two 8-foot parking lanes in residential and commercial areas, and a 50-foot curb to curb width in a 70-foot right-of-way providing two 12-foot travel lanes and two 13-foot parking lanes in industrial zones.
- b. **Responsibility of the Community.** Collector Streets which facilitate the movement of through traffic, or serve in a collector function, are of benefit to the general area, and the Community is therefore responsible for the costs involved in improving these streets. The Community identified with a street is responsible for the cost of improving any street to a four or six lane width. Such improvements include 24-foot to 62-foot right-of-way, depending upon the number of lanes required and width of median area, and associated grading, drainage facilities, structures, paving, streetlights, median curb, channelization lanes, and streetlights. The Community is also responsible for the cost of improving sections of a street crossing another right-of-way, such as a state freeway, railroad, or power transmission line, which has been determined not to be the responsibility of another agency. \_

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- c. Responsibility of the City. Arterial Streets expedite the movement of traffic and provide major service for other areas and are therefore of general benefit to the City and its residents. In the Urbanized Area, the City is responsible for traffic control features and costs of providing more than four travel lanes. Such improvements include right-of-way in excess of a standard four lane street, associated grading, drainage facilities, structures, paving, streetlights, traffic signals, signs, and lighting. In the Urbanized Area where traffic signals are required to accommodate a single major development, it may be appropriate to share the cost with other government agencies, organizations, or individuals. The City is not responsible for costs associated with the Planned Urbanizing Area unless the City determines there is an existing unmet need that it wishes to address with City resources.
  - d. A specific capital improvements program and financing plan adopted by Council supersedes this Policy.
  - e. Sections a through d are general policy guidelines. The distribution of costs for street improvements may be considered on a case-by-case basis for more detailed cost allocations consistent with the San Diego Municipal Code and any other relevant legal authority.
2. Unimproved Streets and Unimproved Alleys.

City funds may be used to bring Unimproved Streets and Unimproved Alleys to City standards, and include them in the City's street resurfacing program in order to increase public safety and provide general benefit to the City.

- a. Improvements to Unimproved Streets and Unimproved Alleys shall be contingent upon the availability of funding. The decision to allocate funds to such improvements will be in the City's sole discretion. City improvements to Unimproved Streets and Unimproved Alleys may also be contingent upon Abutting Property owners constructing and funding improvements to their private property. Projects for the improvement of Unimproved Streets and Unimproved Alleys may be considered in accordance with the processes for evaluating Capital Improvement Projects as set forth in Council Policy CP 800-14. Funding for Unimproved Streets and Unimproved Alleys shall be determined during the City's annual budget process for Capital Improvement Projects as set forth in Council Policy CP 800-14. No decision by the City under this paragraph shall have any impact on any obligation by any property owner to construct at their sole cost any abutting public facilities, including street and drainage improvements, required by the San Diego Municipal Code.

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- b. Abutting Property that contains unpermitted improvements must either obtain a permit required under the San Diego Municipal Code or remove the unpermitted improvements to be considered for street or alley improvements under this Section 2. The City will not make improvements to Unimproved Streets and Unimproved Alleys where the Abutting Property contains unpermitted improvements.
- c. Level of Maintenance for Unimproved Streets and Unimproved Alleys. Unless or until they are improved, all Unimproved Streets and Unimproved Alleys will continue to be maintained at the level of service set forth in Resolution R-107424. If an Unimproved Street is improved to the City's standards, that street thereafter shall be included in the City's street resurfacing program.

3. Reconstruction To Gain Access:

Where a street has already been constructed as a Primary Arterial with access from fronting property denied, owners may elect to widen the street entirely at their expense in order to gain access as allowed by the City of San Diego Street Design Manual, the San Diego Municipal Code and any other applicable legal authorities. The extra costs involved include the excess right-of-way, removing and revising existing improvements as required, plus grading, drainage structures and paving for additional lanes. All such costs are the responsibility of the Abutters participating in the project.

HISTORY:

Adopted by Resolution R-135374 – 09/15/1956  
Amended by Resolution R-169943 – 03/15/1962  
Amended by Resolution R-173507 – 11/15/1962  
Amended by Resolution R-205514 – 05/04/1972  
Amended by Resolution R-212001 – 11/14/1974  
Amended by Resolution R-250028 – 08/13/1979  
Amended by Resolution R-313435 – 02/12/2021