

Citizens for Community Action

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Residents on the 2100 block of North Marmora Avenue have petitioned city officials to repair their crumbling street (above). The street, only half of which is paved, has been in disrepair for several decades, according to several residents. (Photo by Sandy Bertog)

Block wants curbs, paving; not country road, gravel

By DIMITRIOS GATSIOUNIS
Staff Writer

At first glance, the 2100 block of North Marmora Avenue looks like a country road: It's without curbs, and the edges, including the parking lanes, are filled with gravel instead of paved with asphalt or concrete.

Several residents on the block have complained that the situation — which has involved broken windows caused by cars riding over the gravel and sending it flying into other cars — has existed for decades.

"We haven't had anything done to this street," said Neville Cartwright, a resident of the block for more than 25 years. "And I've talked to a lady who has lived here for nearly 50 years, and since then nothing was done here, and people who have lived here before her have said that. I've called Streets and Sanitation, but nothing's been done."

The area's alderman says it's just a matter of time before improvements are made, but residents of the block say they've already been waiting too long.

Pam Myers, a resident of the block for 47 years, said the street

'If I had done that (work) at that time, spent \$160,000 on that one street, I would not have been able to do a lot else up there.'

Ald. Ike Carothers
29th ward

has remained in a state of disrepair for as long as she can remember.

"We go (south on nearby Austin Avenue to) the other side of the viaduct, we have sidewalks and sod," she said. "We have nothing out here. It's a mess. We're the only street around here that doesn't have those things, and yet that's what we pay taxes for."

The sidewalks, she added, are so crumbled in certain parts that kids dig in them as if they were sandboxes.

The reason for the lack of improvements, some residents say, is because the 2100 block lies at the north end of the 29th Ward and has repeatedly ended up in a new ward after decennial remaps by the city, meaning an alderman is not as reliant on or worried about the votes of the

people in that part of the ward because they will soon be reassigned to another.

Wayne Strnad, a resident of the 2300 block of North Monitor Avenue, has helped take up the cause of frustrated residents on Marmora. His group, Citizens for Community Action, recently obtained signatures from all but one member of the 2100 block. Strnad said the petitions, which request "new concrete sidewalks, curbs, gutters and sod on both sides of the street," were submitted to City Council and local Ald. Isaac Carothers (29th) two months ago. Still, nothing has been done.

"All but one person signed, and he didn't because he thought his property taxes would increase," Strnad said. "For those people, I want to see streets and curbs and sidewalks."

Elected to a first term in 1999, Carothers said he looked into the matter last year and that necessary repairs on the street could be performed by the end of this year or early next year.

The problem, he said, lies with the roughly \$1 million allotted annually from the city to re-

Paving

Continued from Page 1
pair streets and sidewalks in his ward. The Marmora project is expected to run about \$160,000 to put in curbs, sidewalks, pave the street and work on sewers.

"If I had done that at that time, spent \$160,000 on that one street (in 1999), I would not have been able to do a lot else up there, and then everyone else says 'What about my street?'" Carothers said. "It's unfortunate we only get so much money. No one else wants to hear how you're spending money on another

street when their street needs repairs."

Countering claims that the street is a political orphan, Carothers said he spent more than half his aldermanic allotment in 1999 on streets and alleys in the northern part of the 29th Ward.

During the city's budget process now under way, he is requesting additional funding for the project from the city's budget office to make sure the Marmora project gets done.

"I'm pretty sure I'm going to get that funding," he said. "But it's going to get done either way."

See PAVING: Page 4

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