



West 7th Street Is 'Steepest Brick Street In The World:' Expanded Protection Discussed For Alton

by Dalton Brown, News Reporter
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ALTON - Next year will mark the 50th anniversary of the Alton Brick Street Ordinance, but some of the city's 10 miles of brick streets remain unprotected by the ordinance. The Alton Historical Commission held a public meeting on March 7 to discuss the possible expansion of the Protected Brick Street List.

"We are having a meeting tonight to consider one, whether we have found all of the brick streets in Alton, and also, to determine whether or not the Protected Brick Street List should be expanded," Alton Historical Commission Chair Douglas Bader said at the meeting.

A few people spoke publicly at the meeting, including William Perkins, who suggested adding West 7th Street to the Protected Brick Street List - and said that according to his research, West 7th Street is the "steepest brick street in the world."

"Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania brags that they have the steepest street in the country, which is Canton Avenue," Perkins said. "The gradient on is 31.37%, W. 7th is 22.7%."

"Canton Avenue, though, about one-third of that is concrete and the rest of its cobblestone. W. 7th is brick - and from my research, that makes W. 7th the steepest brick street in the world."

He added that this gives the city some new "bragging rights" and said it's always fun to take "out-of-towners" down W. 7th Street.

A complete list of brick streets in Alton is available on the [Historical Commission webpage under “2023 Brick Street Material.”](#) Bader said if Alton residents are aware of any brick streets that are not on this list, to call the Alton Building & Zoning Department at (618) 463-3532 and let them know about it.

Terry Sharp, president of the Alton Landmarks Association, said the association supports adding new brick streets to the ordinance, which he said was passed at an important time for Alton. Sharp also asked the public with spare bricks to consider donating them for brick street repairs.

“The 1970s were a pretty important decade for Alton - that was when this ordinance was begun and when many of the three historic districts were begun also,” Sharp said. “If people have bricks, contribute your bricks and maybe you’ll save a street.”

Bader said brick streets actually save taxpayers money because of their superior durability to asphalt streets.

“Bricks are incredibly durable. Much of the brick streets in Alton are well over a century old and they have survived,” he said. “Most asphalt streets need to be repaved every 20 to 30 years ... and so that actually has been a real savings to taxpayers over the years that those brick streets don’t have to be repaved all the time.”

He added that people who live in areas with brick streets also appreciate their ability to slow traffic.

“With all of the kind of wild stuff sometimes that happens on streets with speeding and people running through stop signs, brick streets also are very traffic-calming, which people who live on those streets appreciate a lot,” he said. “They aren’t really designed to carry lots of heavy truck traffic, and so they really are ideally suited to residential streets, and that’s where the overwhelming majority of them are.”

The full interview with Bader is available at the top of this story or on [Riverbender.com/video](#).