



## Office of the Will County Board

Herbert Brooks, Jr., Speaker

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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# **Board works to improve Fairmont neighborhood infrastructure**

*New sidewalks provide safe passage for school children*

JOLIET, IL- Will County Board members today toured the unincorporated Fairmont neighborhood, located between the City of Lockport and the City of Joliet, to survey the completion of its first sidewalk improvements. The community has been without any sidewalks for its entire hundred year history.

"We are excited to now see sidewalks line one street of Fairmont and provide a safe place for children to walk to and from school," said Democratic caucus chair Diane Zigrossi (D-Crest Hill), whose district includes Fairmont. "These improvements are a given in most subdivisions in our county. The 2,500 residents of Fairmont have waited long enough to see this concrete poured."

The sidewalk project is several years in the making. In 2010, the county applied for a "Safe Routes to School" grant through the Illinois Department of Transportation and was notified late last year that they would receive funding to install sidewalks to Fairmont School along Green Garden Place. Without sidewalks in their community, students must walk directly on the streets or get a ride to school. There is no bus service available. The approximately 1,000 feet of sidewalk recently poured now provides a safe passage for the school's 250 to 300 students.

"Fairmont faces many challenges, but there are also great opportunities to help the community improve and move forward," said board member Walter Adamic (D-Joliet), whose district includes Fairmont.

"The county has worked proactively to develop a plan with the input and collaboration of community residents and stakeholders, and the sidewalks we see today are an important piece of that vision."

The Fairmont community was first developed in the early 20th Century, primarily to provide workforce housing for industries in Lockport and Joliet. The neighborhood was never fully developed and currently contains a wide variety of homes from various historical periods mixed with vacant, undeveloped lots. Fairmont is one of only a handful of unincorporated tracts in Will County to be classified as an urban area by the county's long-range plan. As such, no single unit of local government has primary responsibility for the community.

"We should leave no community in our county behind," said Speaker Herbert Brooks, Jr. "Although the issues of governance are complex for Fairmont, we must be deliberate and purposeful in working with all relevant government agencies to bring Fairmont basic infrastructure such as sidewalks, street lights, curbs and gutters on streets, and garbage pickup."

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Improvements have become more visible in recent years with the county's land use department and Steve Lazzara, a senior planner for the department, overseeing a coordinated effort by a variety of governmental entities. In 2010, three new bus shelters were installed along Green Garden Place. A community garden came next on a 1,000-square-foot plot of land next to the Fairmont Community Center. With the sidewalk project now complete, the county is looking into addressing drainage issues to alleviate reoccurring flooding problems in the community. In addition, water lines might be extended from the former Joliet Correctional Center's two wells in order to provide a better source of water for Fairmont's 850 homes.

"The board is very grateful for the hard work of the county's land use department as well as Lockport Township and our municipal partners," said board member Denise Winfrey (D-Joliet). "Together we can truly make a difference for Fairmont's residents. We are hopeful infrastructure improvements, like these, will lead to a revitalization of a community that has a long and rich history in Will County."



*Will County Board members Diane Zigrossi, Walter Adamic, Denise Winfrey and Herbert Brooks, Jr. join other officials and Fairmont residents while surveying the new sidewalks in front of Fairmont School.*



*A "Safe Routes to School" grant provided the funding for Fairmont's first sidewalks located in front of Fairmont School.*