

MAKING A MENU MONEY REQUEST

How to advocate for better walking & biking infrastructure in your ward

Every year the City of Chicago allocates \$1.32 million dollars in “menu money” to each alderman for use on capital improvements in his or her ward. This budget is a main source of funding for critical biking and walking improvements like street repaving, sidewalk repair, pedestrian countdown signals and traffic calming infrastructure.

Aldermen receive recommendations from the Department of Transportation (CDOT) and the Department of Water Management on how to prioritize the menu budget, but they also depend on people like you to suggest projects that would improve your neighborhood.

Ward and contact information for all 50 members of the City Council can be found at ChicagoElections.com.



1. Document your problem

Before making your menu request, be sure to gather all necessary information you'll need to share with your alderman's office. A general description of the issue, an exact location, and any available photos are all helpful pieces of information to have on hand.

2. Contact your alderman at the right time

Projects are identified year-round, but the menu budget is typically allocated in the first few months of the year. January, February and March are the best months to make a request.

Make your request in-person or on the phone to your alderman's ward office. Most offices have a staff person who manages the menu budget, so make it clear you're interested in making a menu request. Always be respectful and courteous when working with ward staff. Building strong relationships can lead to more effective advocacy.

NOTE: Larger projects like changes at an intersection or adding a new bike lane may require study, input and approval from CDOT or other city agencies. Traffic studies take about 3 months, so get your request in as soon as possible.

3. Partner with Active Trans, local constituents and organizations to build support

Aldermen are eager to fund projects that have broad public support. So you're more likely to be successful if you partner with others to help make the case. Talk and meet with your neighbors and encourage them to contact your alderman too.

Aldermen routinely work with community organizations and schools so ward staff may have suggested community contacts. Active Trans can also put you in touch with members and supporters that live in your ward.

4. Follow-up to make sure your alderman follows through

Keep in touch with your staff contact as the menu budget is compiled. Ask about the status of your request, and continue to highlight the need locally and demonstrate community support.

Don't be discouraged if your project isn't included in the menu budget for the year. With such limited resources, wards are forced to prioritize projects. Through persistent advocacy, however, you will ultimately influence those priorities to reflect the needs and values of you and your neighbors.

WALKING & BIKING INFRASTRUCTURE SAMPLES:

IN-ROAD PEDESTRIAN CROSSWALK SIGN



ONE SIGN: \$350; TWO SIGNS: \$600 — Reminds drivers of existing state law to stop for pedestrians at crosswalks.

SPEED HUMPS



\$3,700 — A speed hump on a residential street encourages moving vehicles to slow down.

TRAFFIC CIRCLE



\$11,000 — A circular intersection where vehicles travel in a counter-clockwise direction, forcing them to slow down.

ADA RAMP AND CROSSWALK



\$20,000 — Provide pedestrian access between the sidewalk and roadway for people using wheelchairs, strollers, walkers, crutches, handcars, bicycles, and pedestrians who have trouble stepping up and down high curbs.

CURB BUMP-OUTS



\$11,000 — Shortens crossing distance and increases pedestrian visibility while decreasing vehicle speed.

BIKE LANES



\$30,000 & UP — A wide, striped lane marked with a large white bicycle on the pavement, and restricted to bicycle travel.

COUNTDOWN PEDESTRIAN SIGNAL



\$14,000 — Provides information on the amount of time remaining to cross street.

CUL-DE-SAC



\$25,000 — A cul-de-sac closes off vehicle access at one end of the street, reducing vehicle traffic traveling through neighborhoods.

PEDESTRIAN REFUGE ISLAND



\$60,000 — Reduces crossing distance and allows pedestrians to cross only one direction of traffic at a time.

NEW TRAFFIC SIGNAL



\$350,000 — A set of automatically operated lights for controlling traffic at road junctions and crosswalks.

A growing number of Chicago wards use Participatory Budgeting to allocate menu money via a democratic, community-led process. Find a complete list of wards that use Participatory Budgeting and learn more about the process here: <http://www.pbchicago.org>