



# CITY OF COLUMBUS, WI

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

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DPW APPROVAL: 11/18/2025

DATE: NOVEMBER 11, 2025

C.C. APPROVAL: 11/18/2025

SUBJECT: SNOW AND ICE EMERGENCY CONTROL POLICY

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## **1. Goal**

Snow and ice control on roadways and public property is an essential municipal service necessary for public safety, and commercial and personal mobility. The City's goal is to keep the City's roads and municipal parking lots passable during and after periods of snow or ice accumulation at minimal cost. This can be accomplished by the judicious use of mechanical and chemical means under the jurisdiction of the Public Works Department.

It is not the City's goal that bare pavement will be achieved immediately after each snowfall or ice storm. Motorists will be expected to modify their driving practices in accordance with the road conditions as they exist.

Since weather conditions constantly change, it is impractical to establish one method for controlling snow and ice. Procedures set forth in this policy are intended as guidelines and are not intended to limit the exercise of discretion and judgment on the part of officials and employees who are charged with responding to winter weather conditions.

## **2. Jurisdictional Responsibilities**

DPW Street Crews salt and plow city roads and municipal parking lots, State and County highways within the city limits, while Columbia County Highway Department salts and plows State and County highways outside the City of Columbus limits.

## **3. Snowplow Crew Availability**

If a crew member is unavailable to report for duty due to a vacation, illness, funeral leave or other valid reason, or if the snow event last for 24 hours or longer, the DPW Maintenance I Worker will assign salting and plowing duties to other crew members to maintain coverage, or if necessary, will request that the Director of Public Works to seek the assistance of qualified personnel from other departments.

- Members from the Wastewater Plant will assist DPW when there is a personnel shortage for a snow emergency, based on need.
  - Wastewater Plant employees will assist during off hours, then return to their normal duties at the Wastewater Plant by 8:00a if possible. DPW will try to limit the total hours of snow removal to four (4).
- Members from the Columbus Utilities will assist DPW when there is a personnel shortage for a snow emergency, based on need.
  - Utility employees will assist during off hours, then returning to their normal duties at the Columbus Utilities by 8:00a if possible. DPW will try to limit the total hours of snow removal to four (4).

## **4. Training**

The Director of Public Works will schedule an annual training session for all plow operators to review equipment and operating procedures for snow plowing and salting. The training session will normally be conducted in early December, shortly after vehicles have been set up for winter operations.

## **5. Equipment**

City equipment available for snow and ice control operations is described in Appendix B.

Calibration of salt spreaders and other equipment is essential for efficient salt use – eliminating unsafe roads from lack of salt, costly waste from excessive use, and environmental problems from overuse. Because individual spreaders can vary widely in how much salt they apply even at the same control setting, and because spreaders operate in harsh conditions, spreaders need to be checked and calibrated every year. The DPW Maintenance I Worker and each driver will calibrate their spreaders early each winter season, using the procedure provided by the manufacturer. Calibration results will be kept on file.

## **6. Equipment Maintenance and Safety**

Regular maintenance and safety checks of the equipment are the prime responsibility of each crew member. Each crew member is expected to:

- a. Check all equipment before each use (see Appendix C). Verify that lights, brakes, wipers, tires, exhaust system, plows, spreaders, brooms and augers are all safe and in good working condition.
- b. Report any mechanical issue to the Director of Public Works for immediate repairs if necessary.
- c. Load salt into trucks prior to use, to avoid unnecessary loading of the springs and to minimize the duration of salt contact with the vehicle. Make sure any salt spilled on the pavement during loading is pushed back into the shed.
- d. Unload unused salt from equipment after each snow event, including vibrating and scraping out as much rock salt as can be placed back into the salt shed for reuse. Following removal of all reusable salt, thoroughly wash equipment to remove as much residual salt as possible.
- e. Monitor the health and alertness of yourself and other drivers. If a driver notices themselves becoming inattentive due to being overly tired or ill, they should notify the Maintenance I Worker or Director of Public Works immediately.

Crew members are expected to report to the Police any vehicle crash, so that a police officer and EMS personnel can respond quickly.

Crew members are expected to communicate with safety in mind, with radio use preferred over cell phone use, and to stop their vehicle when feasible for communications that could distract from attentive driving.

## **7. Weather Monitoring**

The Maintenance I Worker and On-Call Employee will monitor road conditions and weather forecasts and will be responsible for initiating snow and ice control operations. Current conditions and short-range forecasts will be used to anticipate the need for plowing and application of road salt or abrasive material. The Police Department may assist by providing timely information on local conditions, particularly outside of normal work hours. It remains the responsibility of the Maintenance I Worker and On-Call Employee to observe road conditions, consider the timing, duration, amount, rate and type of predicted snowfall, monitor air and pavement temperatures

and the dew point, and consider wind conditions to aid in determining the appropriate snow removal and ice control measures to be implemented.

Before leaving work, the Maintenance I Worker will notify the Police of plans to plow or salt that evening and will notify the Police again when salting or plowing is finished.

## **8. Snow Emergency**

The Director of Public Works, or designee, is hereby authorized to declare a snow emergency in advance of forecasted heavy snow or blizzard like conditions. The amounts of snow fallen will be “based on the weather forecast” provided by the National Weather Service at [nws.milwaukee@noaa.gov](mailto:nws.milwaukee@noaa.gov)

When a snow emergency is declared, the City’s Information Officer, will notify the public of the snow emergency declaration by:

- Posting a notice on the City’s web site, including display of an emergency banner message.
- Emails/Texts notifications will also be pushed out to those who have signed up for those notifications.

The public will be notified of the end of the emergency through the same measures noted above.

- The duration of each snow emergency will be based on the expected length the severe weather forecasted by the National Weather Service.

The National Weather Service will be used as the weather forecast source. An example of the City’s website posting is as follows:

### **Snow Emergency Declaration Template (Example Only)**

December 19, 2024. The National Weather Service has issued a winter storm watch for Columbus, WI., and surrounding areas. Snow is expected from Thursday morning through Friday morning. The potential snowfall accumulations for the Columbus area are currently forecasted at 3"-6" with hazardous conditions for the morning and evening commutes.

“As per the National Weather Service and its forecast – The City of Columbus has declared a Snow Emergency.” All residents should remove their vehicles from all city streets prior to the start of this event. Parking restrictions on city streets, alleys, and parking lots as per ordinance will be enforced starting at 12:00PM Thursday, December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024, and will be enforced until Snow Emergency is complete (48 hours) or has been rescinded. For the safety of traffic and snow removal operations, the City of Columbus requires all residents to remove all vehicles from all city streets starting by 12:00PM Thursday, December 19, 2024

During a snow emergency, it shall be unlawful to:

- Park any vehicle on any public street or alley in the downtown area of the city between the hours of 12:00 midnight and 6:00 a.m. after a snow emergency is declared. For purposes of the section, “downtown district” is defined as follows:
  - James Street from Dickason Blvd. To Water Street
  - Ludington Street from Mill Street to Harrison Street
  - Dickason Blvd. from James Street to Church Street
  - Mill Street from S. Ludington Street to S. Spring Street; and
  - Harrison Street from S. Water Street to S. Dickason Blvd.

- Park any vehicle on any public street or alley in the remainder of the city at any time after a snow emergency is declared and until after the snow emergency is lifted. This applies to all parking spaces within the limits of the City, except for eight (8) designated angle parking spots on Dickason Blvd. to accommodate Amtrak overflow parking from November 15 through January 15.

For all parking lots owned by the city, beginning at midnight of November 30<sup>th</sup> through midnight of March 31<sup>st</sup>, alternate side parking rules shall apply in that on odd days vehicles are to be parked in odd rows and on even days vehicles are to be parked in even rows. The date after midnight shall determine if parking should be in odd or even rows.

## **9. Emergency Response Support**

If a Police Officer, EMS or Fire response is required during plowing operations, and roads are not yet passable, the emergency responder should notify the listed On-Call employee who will dispatch the plow closest to the location to ensure that the emergency response vehicle is able to travel roads as needed.

## **10. Salt Application**

Sodium Chloride (salt) will be used as both an anti-icing and deicing agent on City streets. When weather conditions and timing are favorable, the City will typically apply liquid salt brine to streets in advance of snow events to prevent the snow from bonding to the pavement (see Appendix F Maps of City Snow/Salt Routes). In other weather conditions, the City will typically apply pre-wetted rock salt early in the storm event. Dry rock salt may be spread if the pavement surface is already wet, and temperatures are not expected to cause refreezing. Deicing operations will typically begin when streets and/or bridges become slippery.

Because salt's effectiveness is directly related to pavement temperatures, salt will usually be applied when pavement temperatures are expected to remain at or above 15°F.

The truck/equipment operators may modify the application rates based on field conditions and may selectively apply salt to problem areas after snow plowing.

In rare cases, sand maybe spread where salting is ineffective in controlling slippery road conditions.

It is important to apply the proper amount of salt to address the specific weather conditions and make roads operational, but the City will limit salt use to prevent costly waste from excessive application and environmental problems. Because melting action spreads across pavement to lower areas, salt should be applied at the center of roadway. Salt will be applied primarily on:

- Main roads and connector streets
- Bridges
- Steeper ingress/egress grades at intersections

Low volume residential streets without grade problems will not routinely be salted.

The "On Call Employee" will maintain a record of all salt and brine used during each event. The inventory form will be kept on file at DPW office and will be made available to WisDOT or their authorized inspection representative upon request.

## **11. Snow Plowing**

Each week from late November to late March, DPW will assign a different employee to be the “ON Call” person for a predetermined week (See Appendix – E). That employee will be given the “On Call” phone which will be used to receive calls from the City Police Department or Director of Public works to notify other DPW employees of snow events, and snow plowing responsibilities and assignments.

Plowing will consist of pushing snow to the sides of streets, clearing them as near to the curbs as practical without the plow hitting the curbs or mailboxes (generally about 1'-2' from the curb face). In normal plowing operations, snow and ice will be deposited along the full length of the streets, including across driveways and sidewalk curb ramp openings.

DPW plow crews will “drop plow” after an accumulation of 1-1/2” of snow, unless drifting is occurring.

Plow drivers are expected to drive only as fast as necessary to accomplish the task of removing snow from the street. The speed of the truck necessary to achieve that goal is directly related to the following factors: (1) the volume of snow on the street; (2) the consistency of the snow; and (3) the height of the snowbank on the side of the street. The plow truck must travel fast enough to keep forward momentum and to throw heavier and/or deeper snow over higher banks. It is the City’s goal that snow cleared from the street will be deposited largely in terrace areas, with minimal deposition of snow on sidewalks.

City snow plowing operations will generally be prioritized as follows:

1. Plow roads. In the interest of public safety, more heavily trafficked streets will receive a higher level of snow and ice control service than streets with lower traffic volumes. Priority of street plowing will generally follow:
  - a. Main roads and collector streets (see map in Appendix F). These streets carry higher traffic volumes and are the primary routes used by police, EMS and fire vehicles to respond to emergencies. It is the goal of the city for these streets to be kept open for travel at all times and to be cleared to bare pavement as feasible.
  - b. Local streets and in school zones. It is the goal of the city for school zones to be kept open for travel when District school buses will be running.
  - c. All other local streets. For operating efficiency, some local streets may be plowed at the same time as main roads and collector streets while equipment is in the area. It is the goal of the city for local streets to open to traffic within 12 hours after a snow event. It is not the goal of the city that these streets be cleared to bare pavement.
  - d. Cul-de-sacs and public alley. It is the goal of the city for these streets and alley to open to traffic within 12 hours after a snow event. It is not the goal of the city that these streets be cleared to bare pavement.
2. Plow municipal parking lots. Lots will typically be plowed at night or early in the morning, as it is often difficult to plow parking lots in the daytime.

## **12. Snow Removal**

Over the course of winter, snow piles may accumulate at intersections and in municipal parking lots. Snow will periodically be removed to improve intersection sight distance and provide for more parking. Snow pile removal will generally be prioritized as follows:

1. Remove snow piles from intersection corners to restore sight lines. The following criteria will be considered in prioritizing snow removal at intersections:
  - Geometrics of the intersection (hills, curves, etc.)
  - Traffic control at the intersection (signals, stop signs, uncontrolled)
  - Volume of traffic at the intersection
2. Remove snow piles from City parking lots.

The snow dump site is the Kiwanis Park parking lot located on E. School St.

## **13. Depositing Snow in Street**

It is a violation of City Ordinance 758-21, Section 86-227 for anybody to clear snow from his premises onto any street in the city.

## **14. Refuse / Recycling Carts in Street**

Carts placed in the street require solid waste collection vehicles to operate further away from the curb lines, which creates a conflict with through traffic. Carts in the street also do not allow snow to be cleared to the fullest extent of streets for safe passage of traffic, including school buses and emergency vehicles. Carts should be placed in the driveway opening or an area cleared of snow on the grass terrace area between the sidewalk and street. Damage to carts placed in the street is the responsibility of the property owner.

## **15. Fire Hydrants**

During a snow plowing operation, snow will be deposited on and around fire hydrants. A 36" clear space shall be maintained around the fire hydrants, and it is the responsibility of the adjacent property owner to clear snow from around hydrants.

## **16. Stranded Vehicles**

Snowplow operators will not tow or push stranded vehicles unless directed to do so by the Police Department in case of an emergency. Snowplow operators may not provide rides for stranded drivers but are encouraged to contact the Police for assistance.

## **17. Damage to Items in the Right-of-Way**

Items installed within any City right-of-way may be subject to damage from snowplows. Per City policy, property owners may be compensated for damage to mailboxes if they were properly installed so as not to project forward of the curb, were well maintained, and were directly struck by City equipment (not, for instance, damaged by the weight of snow or ice coming off a plow blade).

## **Appendix A** **Pre-Season Actions and Discussion**

### September

- Review of policy by DPW Staff
- Review salt and plow route maps. Verify new roads, lots and sidewalks are shown
- Route drivers check all manholes, culvert markers, branches, mailboxes, signs, hazards, etc.
- Trim hazard trees

### October

- Update equipment list in Appendix B
- Inspect equipment/trucks (see Appendix C) and write up any necessary maintenance needs
- Test brine tanks and sprayers
- Order new blades and curb guards if needed.

### November

- Confirm drivers have valid CDL licenses
- Fit trucks with spreaders

### December

- Calibrate spreaders and file calibration sheets
- Winter operations training session for all plow operators:
  - Review of call-in procedure
  - Salt application rates (effective and efficient)
  - Truck fueling / washing / waxing expectations
  - No salt stored in trucks
  - Review of drowsy driving information
  - Review inattentive driving / no cell phone use while moving / limit radio use
  - Plowing speeds
  - Traffic laws
  - Stop at least 100' from approaching vehicles on narrow streets
  - Report individuals / contractors putting snow out onto streets
  - Report mailbox damage
  - Determination of major snow event and review of goals

## Appendix B

### Equipment Available

#### DPW Vehicle/Equipment Description & Attachments

#04 – 2006 International 7400

- Front Plow
- Wing
- Salter
- Brine Tank

#06 – 2019 Case 521 F End Loader

- Front Plow
- Wing
- Bucket

#07 – 2003 International 7400

- Front Plow

#08 – 2018 4700 SB Wester Star Tandem

- Front Plow
- Wing
- Salter
- Brine Tank

#09 – 2009 Sterling Dump Truck L7500

- Front Plow

#14 – 2018 Polaris UTV

- Front Plow
- Brine Tank

#16 – Bobcat Tool-Cat

- Snow Blower
- Broom
- Bucket
- Salter

#23 – 1994 Case Front End Loader 621 B

- Bucket

#24 – Bobcat Skid Steer

- Bucket
- Rage Cage

#37 – 2019 Ford F250

- Front Plow
- Salter

#47 – 4700 SB Wester Star Single Axle

- Front Plow
- Wing
- Salter
- Brine Tank

#1504 – John Deere Tractor

- Broom
- Snow Blower
- Salter

**Appendix C**  
**Equipment Checklist**  
**& Driver**  
**Responsibilities**

**Pre-Trip – before snow:**

- Fuel truck
- Fill brine tanks
- Check hydraulic couplers
- Check plow hook-up
- Check lights – yellow and regular
- Check tires
- Check wipers
- Check for leaks – address right away if issues found
- Check all bolts & nuts – including main pivot bolt on plow

**Post-Trip – after snow:**

- Check plow & bolts, hydraulics – repair as needed
- Check main pivot bolt on plow
- Wash vehicle – inside and out
- Report any damage
- Grease vehicle and plow
- Check for leaks – address as needed if issues found
- Fuel truck

Truck # \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

***Note any equipment problems on the back of sheet and report those problems to the Director of Public Works for the necessary repairs.***

**Appendix D**  
**Snow Plow**  
**Meeting**

**2025/2026 Snowplow Meeting**

**1. On-Call Schedule**

- Go over schedule and discuss conflicts
- Who does the call out
- Who makes the call to have everyone come in after hours

**2. Plow Routes**

- Assigned routes
- Review Maps
- Route priority when called in
- Communication when done with route-help others
- Salt/brine-center of roadway
- Run routes prior to first snowfall

**3. Sidewalks**

- Priorities
- Install markers where needed

**4. Parking Lots**

- Priorities
- Where to pile the snow
- Install markers where needed

**5. Dumpsites for snow**

- Kiwanis (main disposal site)
- River Road
- Cemetery

**6. Damage**

- Write down damaged property
- Write down damaged Equipment

**7. Pre-Trip & Post-Trip Inspections**

- Do a complete walk around
- Report any issues
- Fill out inspection/responsibilities sheet

**8. Snow Ordinance**

- Sidewalks
- Snow emergency
- Vehicles parked in the road/parking lots

**9. Any other suggestions or concerns**

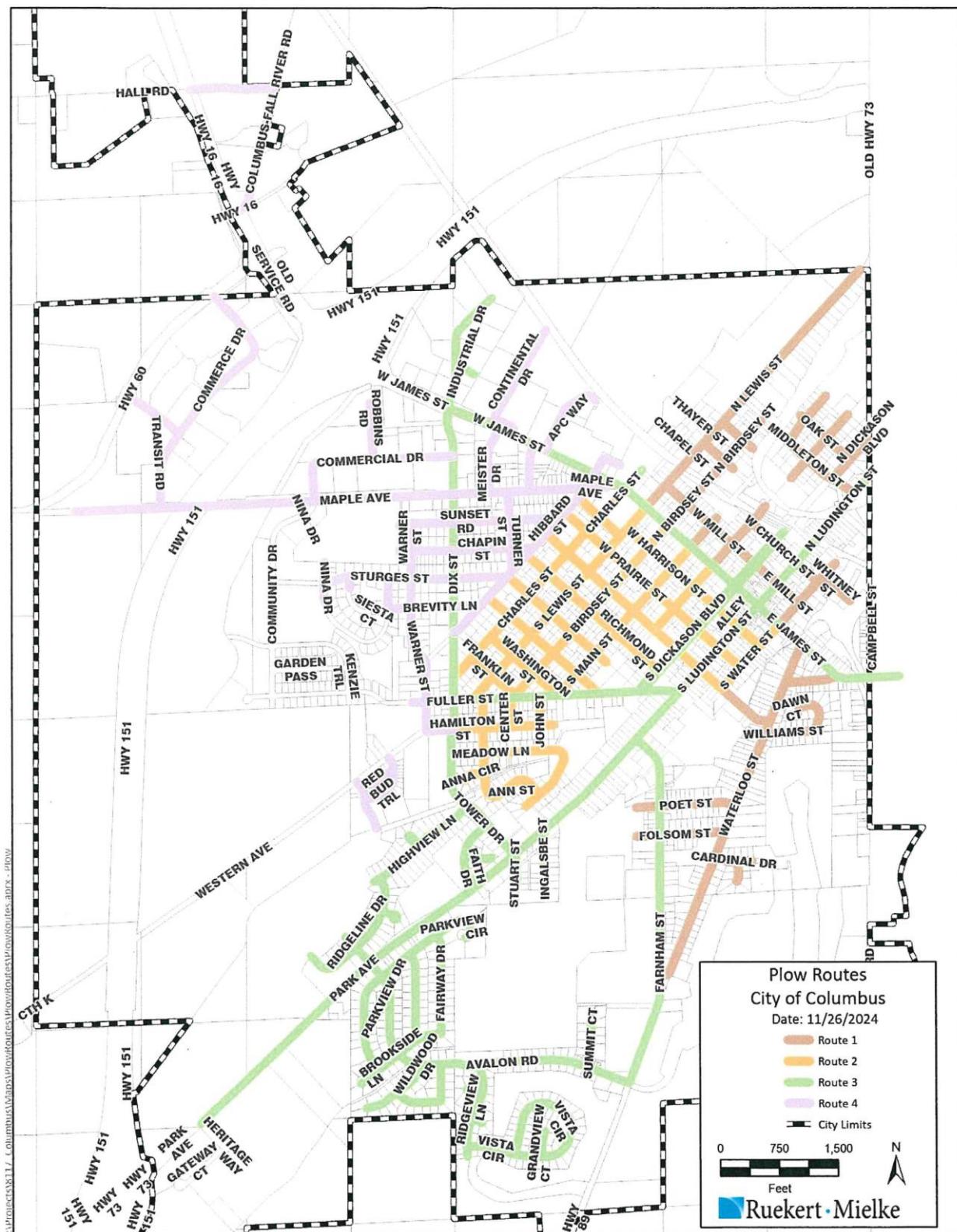
Appendix E  
On-Call List

**2025-2026 Winter On-Call Schedule**  
*A Week is Friday to Friday*

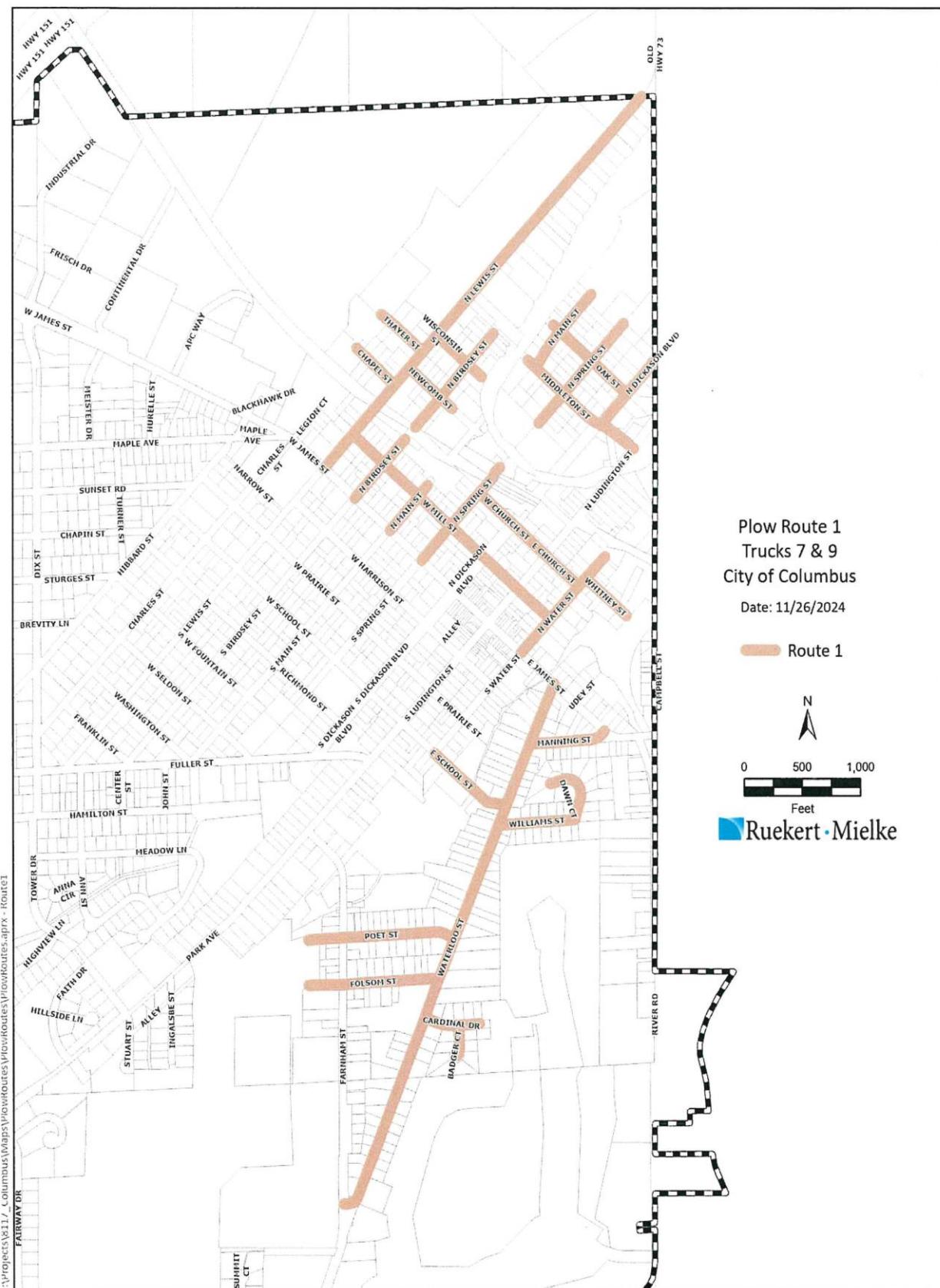
*Redacted phone chart due to staff's personal cell phones*

## **Appendix F Map of Plow Routes**

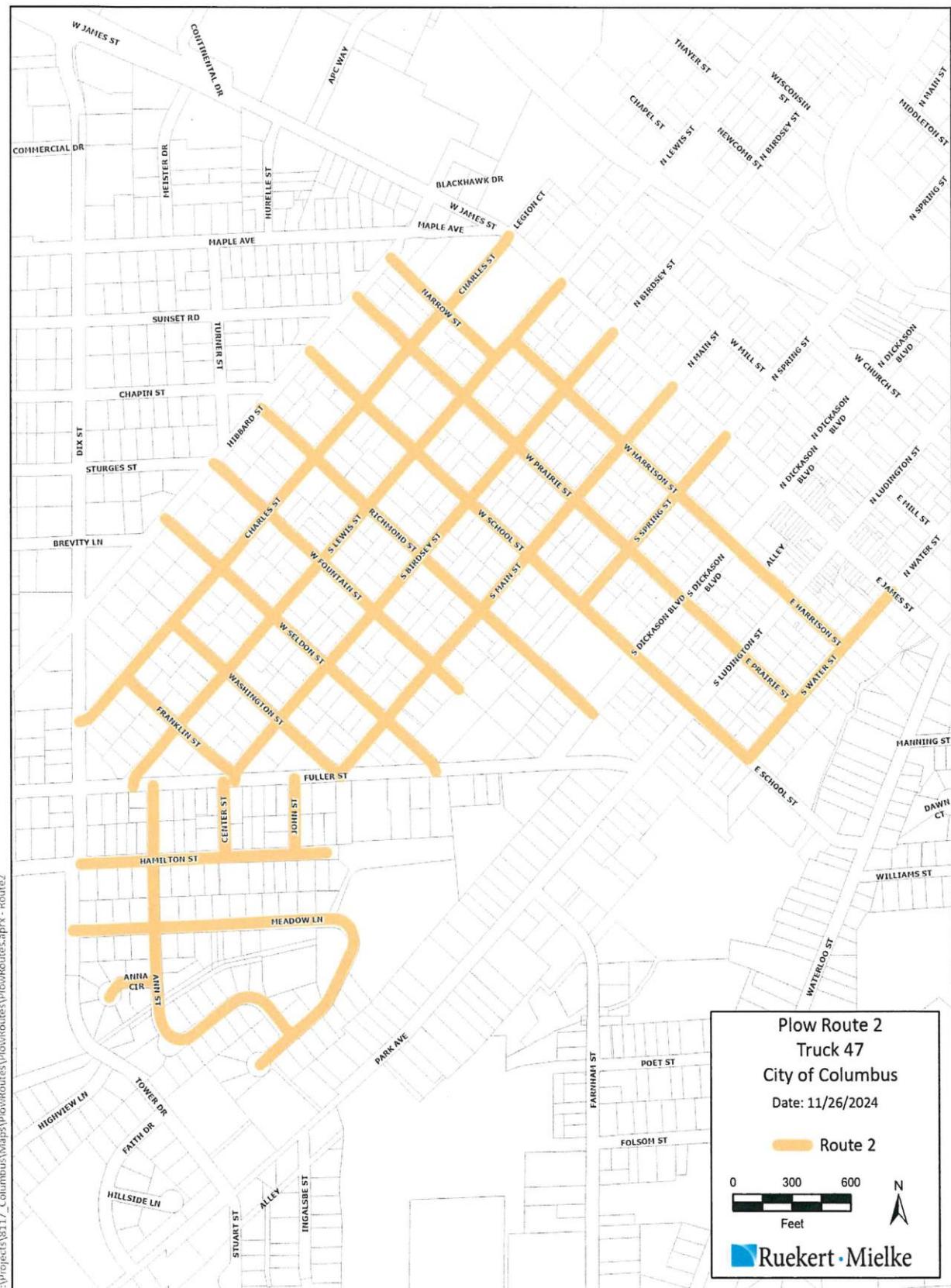
## City of Columbus Plow Routes



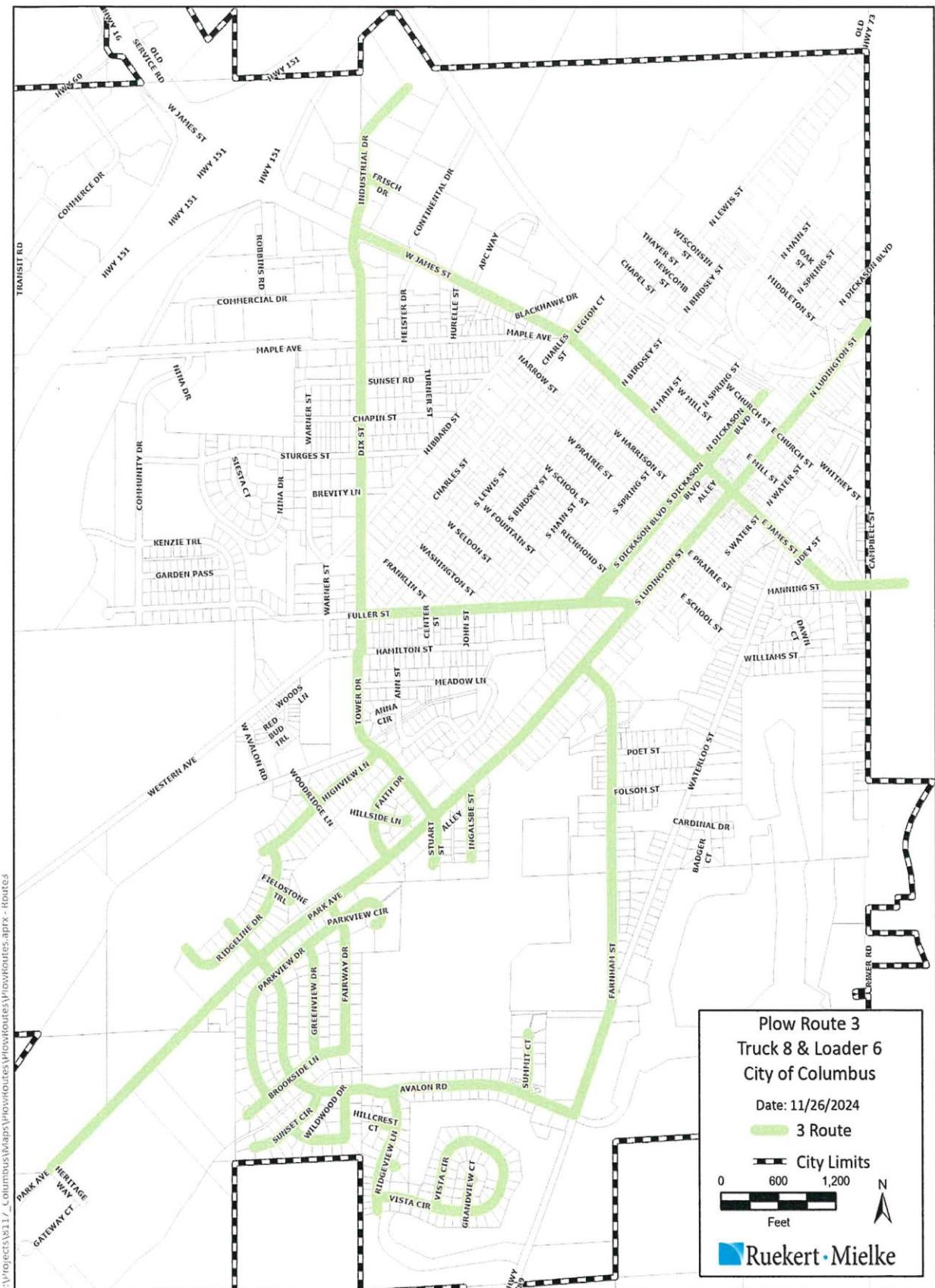
## Plow Route 1



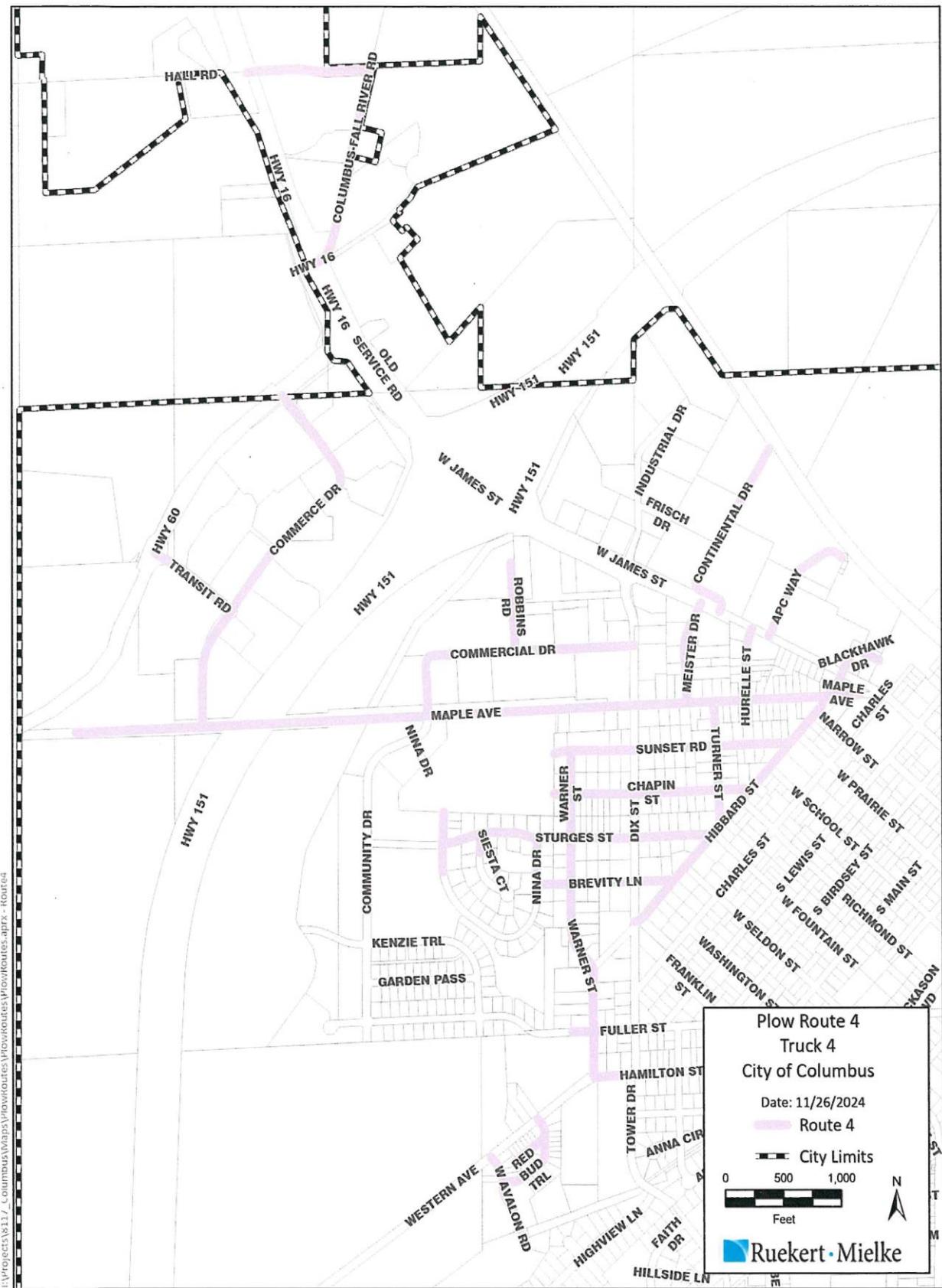
## Plow Route 2



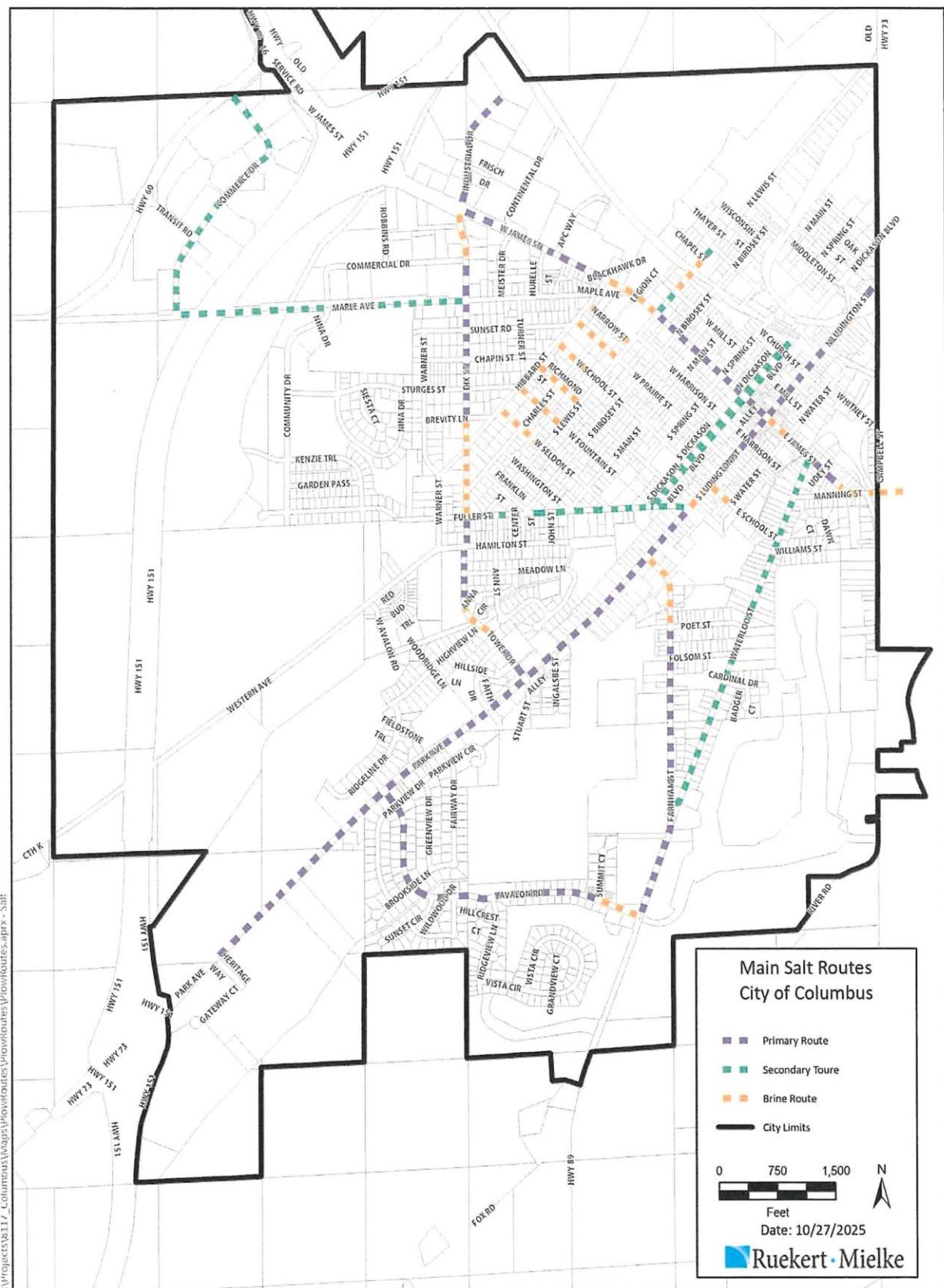
## **Plow Route 3**



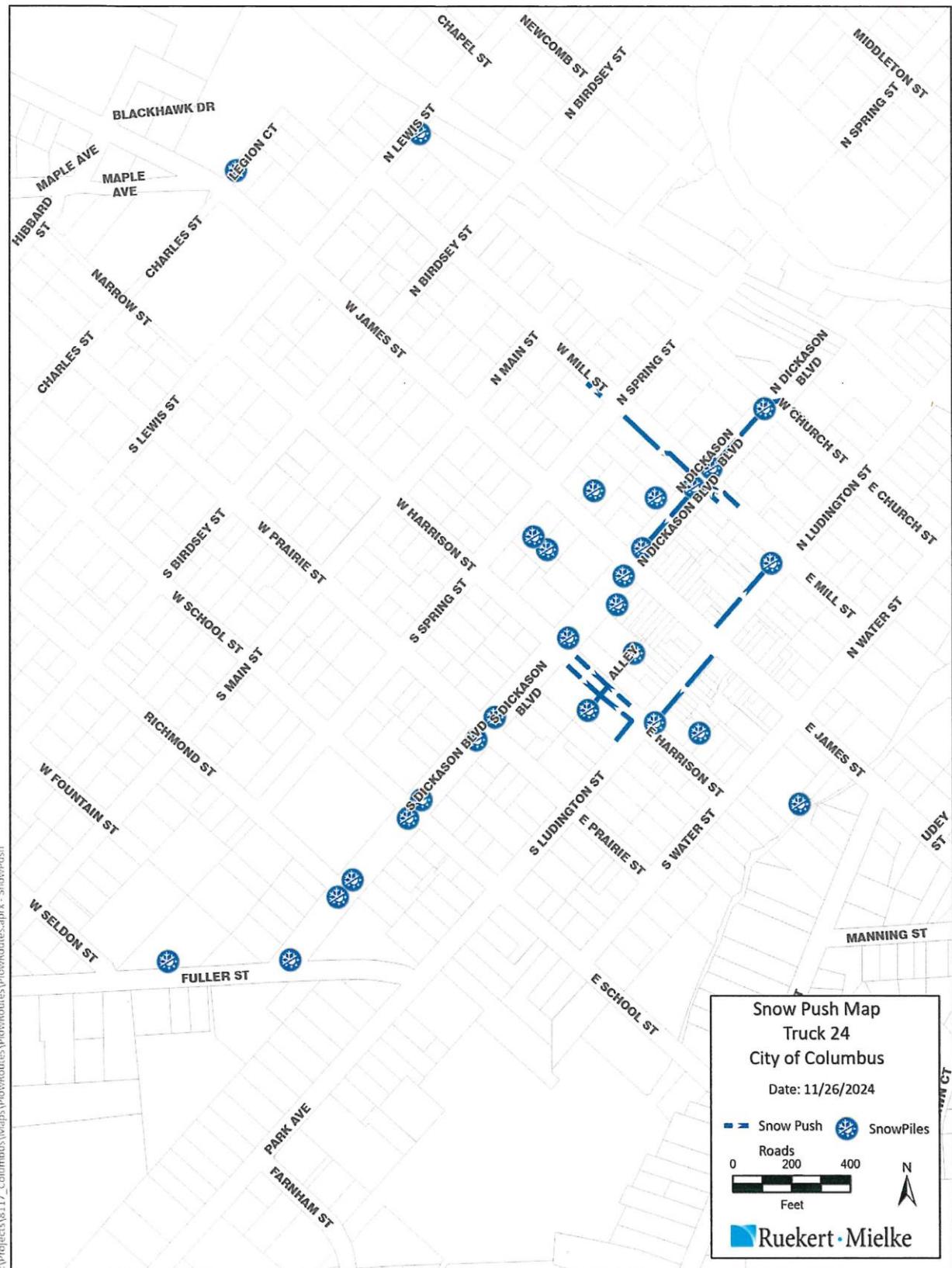
## Plow Route 4



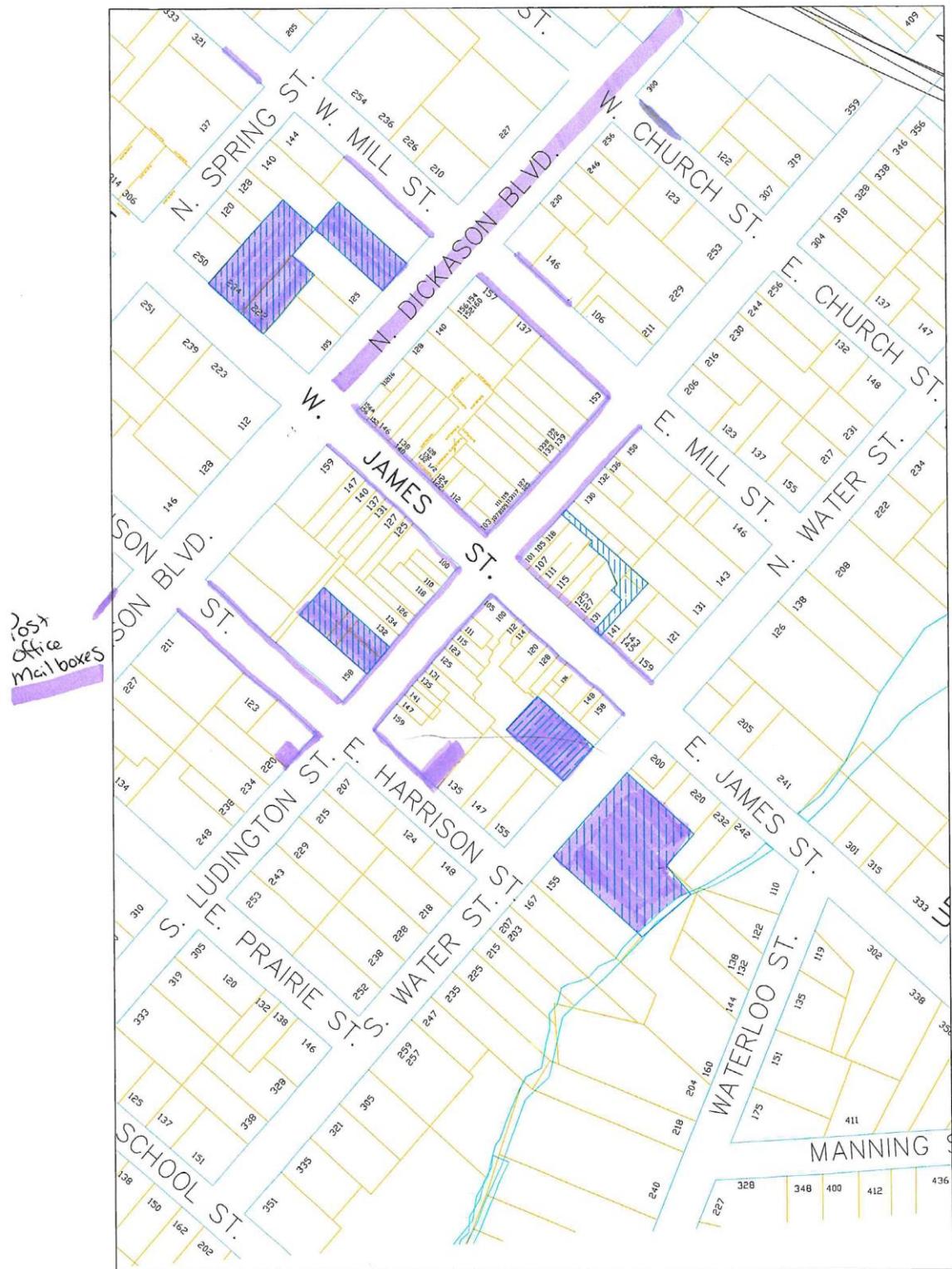
## Salt and Brine Routes



## **Snow Push/Pile Locations**



## City Parking Lots



## Appendix G

### **Post-Season Action and Discussion Topics**

#### March

- File Tier II form
- Meet with State inspector at salt shed for inspection
- Discuss with street crew any issues or ideas to consider for next year

##### Route Problems

- Areas that didn't drain
- Areas that continually froze-up and needed lots of salt
- Manhole lid adjustments, guardrail ends, tree limbs, other obstructions
- Street sign obstructions
- Street sequence
- Length of route
- Efficiency of routes

##### Equipment Problems

- Major problems
- Breakdowns / Repair items
- Need for different equipment

##### Personnel Problems

- Crew access during storms
- Working together as a team
- Shift lengths / Adequate Breaks
- Is training adequate?

##### Public / Media Relations

- Complaints by type and frequency / Possible remedies
  - Snow on sidewalks
  - Mailbox damage
  - Distance from curb (too far / too close)
  - Stop at least 100' from approaching vehicles on narrow roads
- How could we improve resident cooperation?
  - Parking off street after major events
  - Keeping refuse/recycle bins behind curb

#### April

- Order last of contracted salt
- Submit rock salt quantity for State bid of next year's salt
- Repair any terrace turf grass damage caused by snow plowing
- Inspect trucks/equipment