

# Citations

## 3 Voting Options Basis:

**P (Public ROW)** → Legal basis: Illinois Municipal Code on street/alley dedication & vacation (65 ILCS 5/11-91-1).

- P1: Maintains emergency access compliance.
  - International Fire Code §503.1.1 (150 ft access rule); City of Crystal Lake UDO Appendix A-400(E)(6).
- P2: Prevents property damage claims in case of vacated alley limiting access.
  - Illinois Municipal Code, 65 ILCS 5/11-91-1 (vacation of streets/alleys requires showing public interest and assessing damages).
- P3: The City claims non-maintained alleys are not their responsibility.
  - [missing citation] City's letter does not cite precedent with unimproved ROWs.

**C (City Maintains)** → Precedent: other Crystal Lake alleys in the same subdivision (E.E. Vail) are improved/maintained; city ordinances on alley acceptance; equitable treatment.

- CM1: Improves property values (data shows paved alleys improve rear access and safety).
  - Urban Land Institute & APA studies on alley improvements (e.g., "The Value of Alleys" – APA Planning Advisory Service Report).
- CM2: Reduces resident liability for accidents in unimproved alleys.
  - See appendix point C4.
- CM3: Cost to the City for paving and ongoing maintenance.
  - City of Chicago alley paving program cost estimates (~\$150,000 per block, depending on material).

**B (Barricades)** → Fire Code basis: IFC 2018 §503.4 (obstruction of access roads), Crystal Lake Unified Development Ordinance Appendix A-400(E)(6).

- B1: Reduces through-traffic, potential for crime/dumping.
  - [missing citation] FOIA request proved a resident made a phone call requesting barricade installation without citing reason, while the City failed to make a work order for installation.
- B2: Violates fire access requirements if >150 ft to rear garages/structures.
  - IFC 2018 §503.4 (obstruction); adopted in Crystal Lake Municipal Code Ch. 251.
- B3: Blocks utility maintenance, prolonging outages.
  - ComEd being blocked aligns with utility company best practices requiring unobstructed access (ComEd vegetation management / alley access policies).

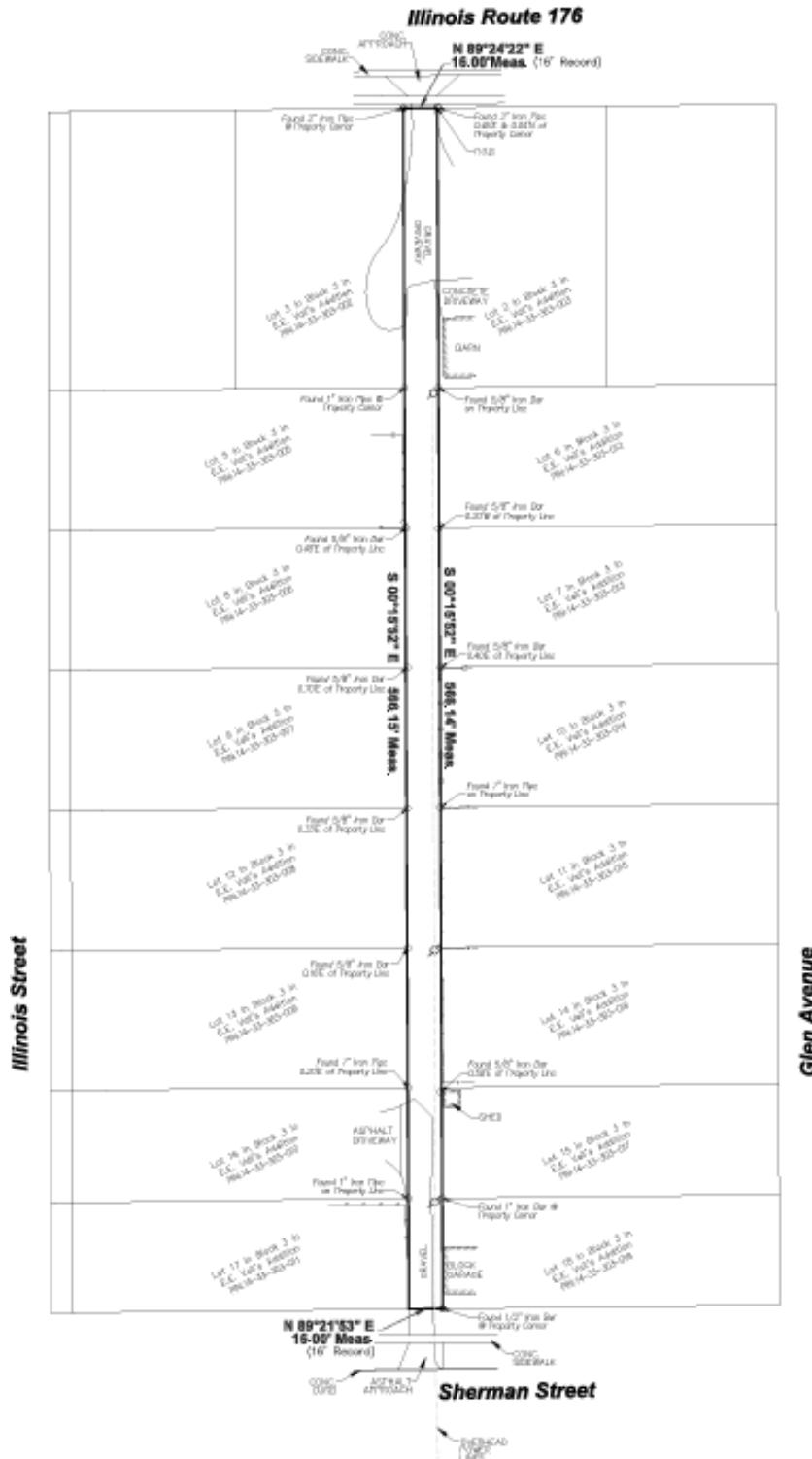
## Cost-Benefit Analysis:

B1: Expected lift in your property value from historic average

1. **Unmaintained Rear Alleyways Decrease Home Sale Prices ([Dallas-Fort Worth Study](#))**
  - a. A regression analysis of 1,672 home sales found statistically significant effects of rear-entry alleyways on home values—often a discount of about 5%, particularly where alleys are improperly maintained or pose safety concerns.
2. **Alley Activation and Neighborhood Value ([Sacramento Case Study](#))**
  - a. A case study and cost-benefit analysis of alley activation in Sacramento showed that well-managed, activated alleys can yield economic benefits (e.g., increased sales tax revenue and gains in surrounding property values), alongside public safety and aesthetic improvements.
3. **Walkability and Neighborhood Vitality Drive Property Value ([arXiv:1808.02547](#))**
  - a. Research on urban environments demonstrates that increased walkability and neighborhood safety—including the quality of alleyways—can contribute significantly to housing value (up to 20% in some models representing neighborhood vitality).
4. **Well-Maintained Alleys Boost Adjacent Property Appeal ([centercityphila](#))**
  - a. Philadelphia's analysis of its alley network emphasized how clean, well-managed alleys enhance walkability, attract residents and businesses, and unlock adjacent property potential.
5. **Home Price Regression with `alley_paved`, `alley_gravel`, `alley_nan` Features ([Kaggle](#))**

## B2: Your property access via alley, Contractor property access via alley

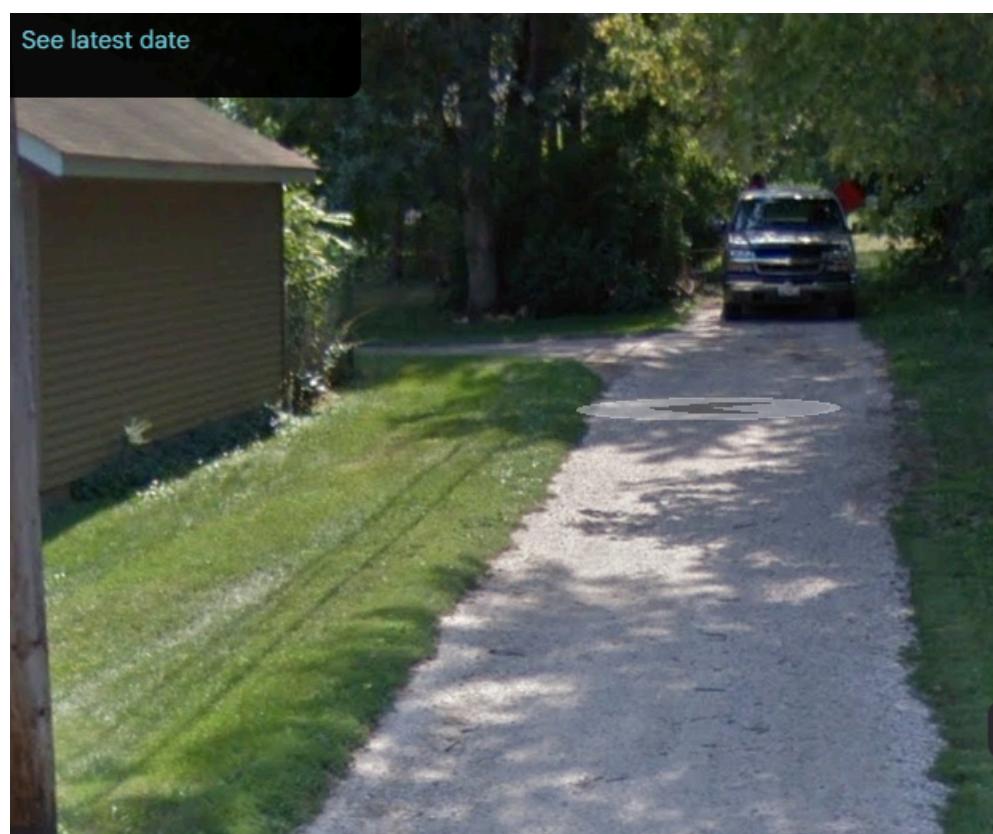
1. Luco Surveying shows current home owner access via alleyway. Their survey did not include the barricades installed between Lots 3 and 5 on the north end and lots 13 and 16 on the south end.



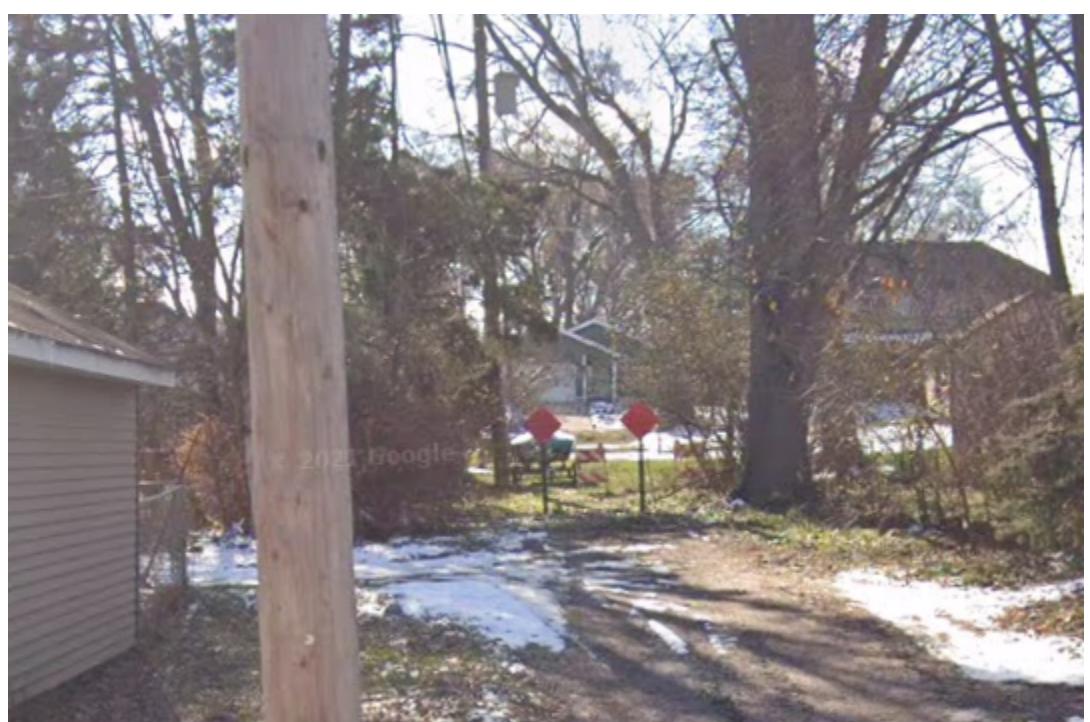
a.

B2. Your property access via alley

1. Alley barricades prove home owner vehicle access has been blocked by the barricade's installation.
  - a. 2012



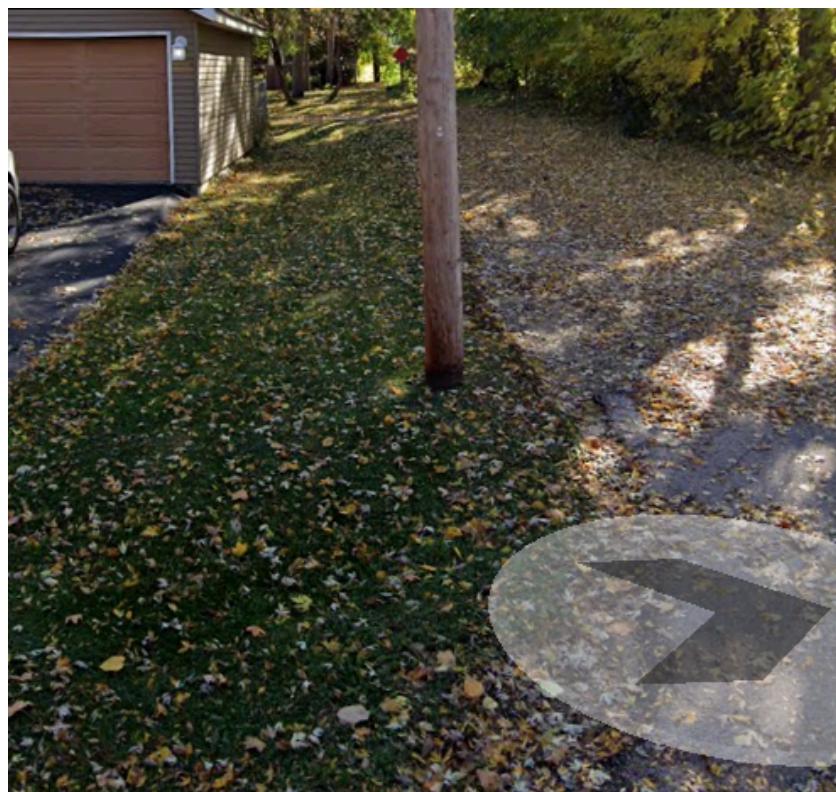
b. 2018



c. 2022

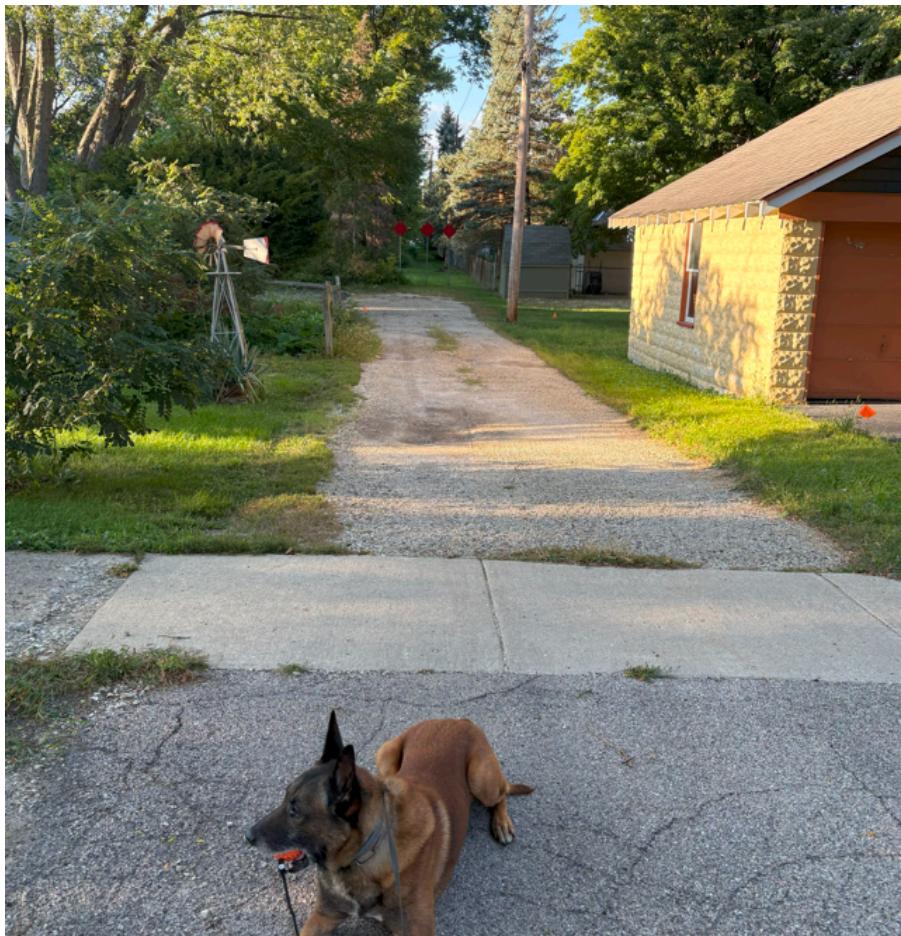


i.



ii.

d. 2025



i.

B3: Utility company property access via alley

1. On 8/28/2025, homeowners within the E.E. Vail plot experienced a power outage. ComEd utility vehicle alley access was blocked by a resident's vehicle, the City's barricade, and brush left unmaintained by Utility companies and the City. A utility truck separate from the one pictured was seen navigating along the paved alleyway west of Illinois Street heading northbound, until reaching 176, where it headed southbound on Illinois Street to meet the truck with utility access blocked, pictured here. Maintenance was significantly delayed by this obstruction which materially impacted the time to fix the outage.



B4: Residential walking path in alley

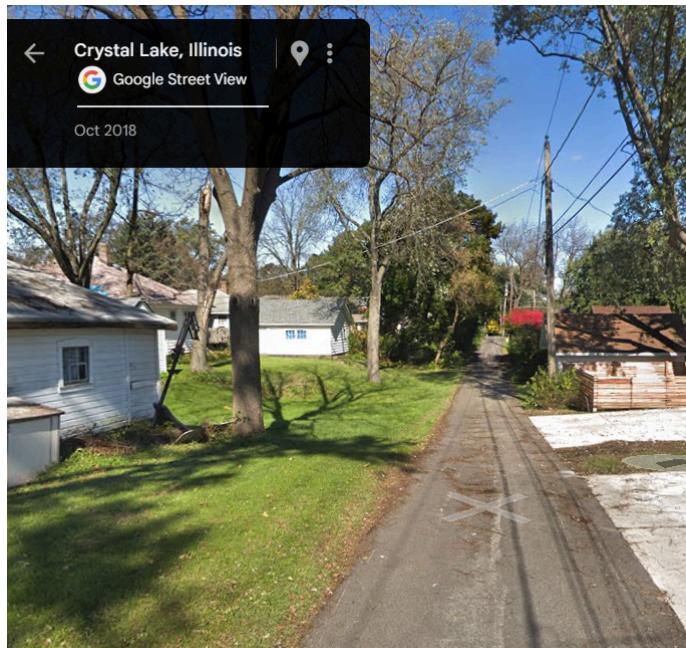
1. I walk my dog without fear of trespassing.



g.

B5: Routine City brush maintenance

1. Other E.E. Vail alleyways with identical "alley" classifications on the 1909 plot are well maintained, paved, and receive maintenance from the City.



h.

B6: Deeded utility easement to owner

- The City offered homeowners ownership of 6 ft. of alley ownership with a utility access clause.

**CITY OF Crystal Lake ILLINOIS**

August 6, 2025

Re: "Alley" South of E. Terra Cotta Avenue (Route 176), west of Glen Avenue, north of Sherman Street, east of Illinois Street

Dear Resident,

On May 12, 2025, the City sent you a letter regarding the ownership of the "alley" behind your home. The land survey is now complete. The letter and the land survey is attached for reference. The alley is not public right-of-way and the City is not responsible for this property.

At this time the City would like your opinion on options to move forward. Please complete the below with your preference from the following options by August 29, 2025:

- Option A: Open the "alley" in time between E. Terra Cotta Avenue and Sherman Street by removing the diamond signage. The "alley" would remain private.
- Option B: Vacate the portion of the "alley" behind your home. The "alley" is 16 feet long and result in an additional 8 feet of land being added to the properties on each side of the "alley". A utility easement would be reserved across the vacated property for ComEd facilities.
- Option C: Do nothing (red diamond signage and grave remains).

We will keep you informed with the results. Should you have any questions, please reach out to me at [awlgreen@crystallake.org](mailto:awlgreen@crystallake.org) or (815) 356-3615.

Sincerely,  
Abigail Wiggreen, PE, CFM  
City Engineer

Please complete this form by no later than August 29, 2025. You can email it to [awlgreen@crystallake.org](mailto:awlgreen@crystallake.org), drop off at City Hall or mail it to 100 W. Woodstock Street, Crystal Lake, IL 60014.

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

MY PREFERRED OPTION IS:  OPTION A  OPTION B  OPTION C

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address and Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**CITY OF CRYSTAL LAKE • 100 W. WOODSTOCK STREET • CRYSTAL LAKE, ILLINOIS 60014 • (815) 459-2020**

**CITY OF Crystal Lake ILLINOIS**

May 12, 2025

Re: Alley Vacuation South of E. Terra Cotta Avenue (Route 176), west of Glen Avenue, north of Sherman Street, east of Illinois Street

Dear Resident,

In 1909, the E.E. Addition Vail's Subdivision, which includes your property, was platted. This plat also included an alley behind your property; however, the plat did not designate the alley as a public right-of-way. At this time, this alley has evolved into a grassy area. The City is not responsible for this property.

The City is proposing to revise the plat and vacate the platted alley, with the exception of the utility easement. The vacated portion of the alley will be returned to the adjacent property owners (half each). As the alley is currently 16 feet wide, this would result in an additional 8 feet of land being added to your property.

The first step in this process is for a City-hired surveyor to conduct a survey to determine the precise location of the alley and any existing utilities. The surveyor is expected to be on site in the next few months. Please note that there will be no cost to you for this survey work.

We will keep you informed as we proceed with these updates. Should you have any questions, please reach out to me at [awlgreen@crystallake.org](mailto:awlgreen@crystallake.org) or (815) 356-3615.

Sincerely,  
Abigail Wiggreen, PE, CFM  
City Engineer

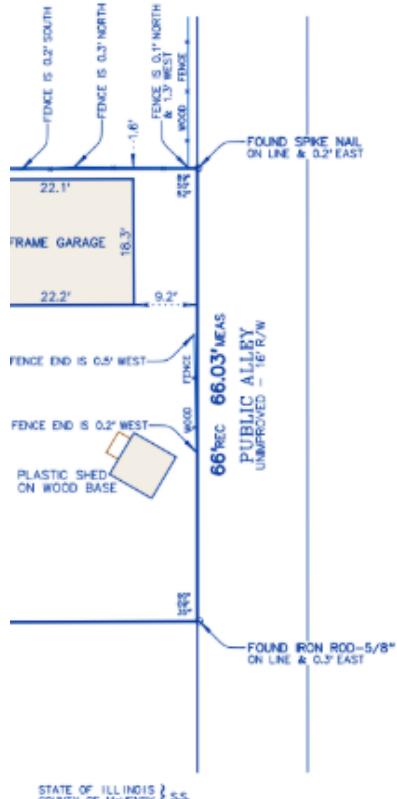
**CITY OF CRYSTAL LAKE • 100 W. WOODSTOCK STREET • CRYSTAL LAKE, ILLINOIS 60014 • (815) 459-2020**

B7: Option to improve (pave) alley

- The alley involved in this vote bears the exact classification of the currently improved alleys within the 1909 E.E. Vail survey from 1909.



- k. Furthermore, the alley is classified as a Public Alley in an Illinois Land Surveyor's survey from 2024.



Mark A. Bolender  
 MARK A. BOLENDER  
 ILLINOIS PROFESSIONAL LAND SURVEYOR 035-2785  
 MY PROFESSIONAL LICENSE EXPIRES ON NOVEMBER 30, 2026.

i.

1. Because the alley the City requested a public opinion on, is a public alley not maintained to the same level as other E.E. Vail addition alleys, a public FOIA request has been made to understand the process to improve the alley of focus in appendix B7.
- m. "There are sections of other alleys in the City that are maintained by, and under the jurisdiction of, the City. In these instances, there are garages or parking areas that can only be accessed from the alley." - City Engineer
  - i. This validates the option to improve the alley in question because its western alley neighbor has a near-mirrored layout of garages requiring garage access via alleyway and also garages not requiring alley access due to driveways.

B8: Option to no longer mow the alley's grass yourself, Option to no longer clear the alley's brush yourself, Option to introduce alley snow removal.

2. Homeowners considered in this vote have been forced to maintain the public alleyway's grass and brush costing them time and money on fuel and supplies. This contrasts with comparable residents on improved public alleyways in the E.E. Vail addition.
3. Comparable residents on improved public alleyways in the E.E. Vail addition receive snow removal services along their entire alley lengths, despite - for instance, 4 homes relying on garage access via alley while on the west block of Illinois Street north of Sherman, while the unimproved alley in question has a comparable 3 homes requiring garage access via alley.

C1: Insurance cost increase from your average

1. Insurance companies use access parameters (distance, obstructions, quality of access) in risk assessment.  
[reisingerinsurance.com](http://reisingerinsurance.com)
  - a. A loss of City responsibility + presence of barricades or poor alley maintenance increases risk. Therefore it's reasonable to expect insurance premiums to rise.
  - b. Poor access, obstructions, or delays from barricades increase risk. That tends to drive up premiums.
  - c. If an alley is blocked or not maintained, or City responsibility is removed (so that the alley may fall into disrepair or become overgrown or fenced off), these factors could degrade fire access and thereby increase insurance risk / cost.
  - d. If insurance underwriters see blocked access or an 8-foot alley portion no longer maintained or owned by City, they might classify the property as having reduced fire protection, increasing premium by some %.

C2: Vehicle access ordinance violation due to you, Fire code violation due to you

1. [Crystal Lake Unified Development Ordinance](#) – “Emergency Vehicle Access” (A-400, 6.a.ii)
  - a. A fire lane at least 20 feet wide required when a portion of a building is >150 feet from nearest street right-of-way and structure ≤30 feet tall.
  - b. The Fire Chief can require a fire lane also if site characteristics (e.g., steep grade, configuration, hydrant distance) inhibit rapid fire extinguishment.
2. [Crystal Lake Fire Code](#) (2018 / adopted) — “Obstruction of Fire Apparatus Access Roads”
  - a. Section 503.4, Obstruction of fire apparatus access roads, is amended to add the following: Any person found guilty of violating the provisions of this subsection shall be fined as set forth in Chapter 248, Fines. In addition to the fine, all tickets paid more than 30 days after issuance shall incur a late payment administrative fee charge as set forth in Chapter 248, Fines.
  - b. This applies to any obstruction, including parked vehicles, barricades, vegetation, or other impediments. If the alley is considered an access road, barricading it may violate this section.

C3: Utility work delays

1. Refer to B3

C4: Additional liability exposure to owner

1. Premises Liability
  - a. Illinois Premises Liability Act (740 ILCS 130/) establishes that landowners owe a duty of reasonable care to lawful visitors.
  - b. If the alley becomes private, homeowners would be considered landowners of their portion, and could be liable if someone is injured due to unsafe conditions (e.g., trip hazards, ice, poor lighting, fallen tree limbs).
2. Tort Liability for Maintenance
  - a. As private owners, residents may be held liable for accidents related to poor maintenance (e.g., failure to clear snow, repair potholes).
  - b. Currently, as a municipal right-of-way, liability typically rests with the City unless gross negligence by a utility or contractor is involved.
3. Attractive Nuisance & Children
  - a. Under Illinois law (Restatement (Second) of Torts §339, followed in Illinois case law), landowners can be liable if children are injured on a property feature that attracts them but poses danger (e.g., barricades, overgrown brush, utility structures).
  - b. If the alley is private, this duty shifts from the City to the homeowners.
4. Insurance Implications
  - a. Homeowners insurance may not automatically cover newly transferred property rights, especially if the additional land is used for public access or utility easements.
  - b. Owners could face increased premiums or be required to purchase an umbrella policy to mitigate exposure.
  - c. Industry sources (e.g., Insurance Information Institute) note that liability coverage applies only to areas you own and control — so extending property ownership increases exposure.
5. Utility & Emergency Access
  - a. If utilities or emergency services need to cross the alley and damage occurs (e.g., fire truck rutting ground, utility trench collapse), the property owner could be liable for repairs or injuries unless easements are clearly defined and indemnification exists.
  - b. Without City ownership, indemnity shifts toward private owners.

C5: Non-resident right-of-way

1. With a public alley, non-resident citizens are generally permitted to drive or walk on the alley. This fact should be considered by home owners.
2. "The City's study of this alley is based on complaints from property owners at the north end of the alley and is an attempt to resolve what are conflicting opinions on what should be done. The City has not received any complaints regarding other alleys and is not looking to vacate alleys in other neighborhoods." - City Engineer

C6: HOA possibility

1. Illinois HOA / Common Interest Law
  - a. Under the Illinois Common Interest Community Association Act (765 ILCS 160/), if property owners share ownership of a common area (like a vacated alley that no single owner can realistically fence or maintain individually), they may be required to form a homeowners' association to handle:
    - i. Maintenance (snow removal, grading, brush clearing)
    - ii. Insurance coverage (general liability for shared use)
    - iii. Assessment of dues to cover costs
2. Precedent in Alley Vacations
  - a. When alleys are vacated, cities often require abutting owners to assume full responsibility. If multiple properties share access or use, private coordination is needed — often via HOA-style agreements or covenants.
  - b. Example: Chicago and other Illinois municipalities have vacated alleys with conditions that adjacent owners "assume maintenance and liability," which in practice often requires HOA structures if costs are pooled.
3. Added Costs
  - a. Legal fees to set up covenants or HOA documents.
  - b. Recurring dues for maintenance, liability insurance, or capital improvements.
  - c. Administrative costs (accounting, compliance with the Illinois Condo Act or Common Interest Act if dues cross certain thresholds).