

Safer sidewalks

The Concord Park Neighborhood Association obtained a \$135,000 grant for a project to improve sidewalks on Detroit Avenue. The city has applied for a \$45,000 grant to make up the difference.



Neighbors collaborate to get sidewalk fixed

Local group works to make Monument Corridor neighborhood safer for pedestrians

By Bruce Gerstman
STAFF WRITER

CONCORD -- A stretch of asphalt wide enough for one pedestrian hugs the edge of Detroit Avenue. It's riddled with cracks, uneven in some places and slopes into traffic.

"Usually, I just see people come through the streets," said David Pitman, chairman of the Concord Park Neighborhood Association, as he walked along sidewalk that has unpatched divots filled with puddles of water.

But this section of Detroit Avenue may soon change. The as-

sociation wrote a proposal for federal funds that the city administers and obtained a \$135,000 grant to help build a new sidewalk along the east side of Detroit Avenue between Walters Way and Monument Boulevard, city officials said. And the city applied last month for a \$45,000 state grant to make up the rest of the money necessary for the project, officials said, with the intention to start construction in the summer.

Pitman and his group of about 65 neighbors had decided that the path along Detroit Avenue threatened too many pedestrians. Children walk to Meadow Homes Elementary School, people use wheelchairs, parents push babies in strollers. All have to navigate

See SIDEWALKS, Page 3



KRISTOPHER SKINNER/STAFF

DAVID PITMAN WALKS along a portion of Detroit Avenue where the sidewalk and street blend together. Pitman is chairman of the Concord Park Neighborhood Association, which obtained a grant to build new sidewalks.

Sidewalks

FROM PAGE 1

around cars parked on the side of the road, forcing them to contend with vehicles whizzing a few feet away.

"It's hard for people to get over this," Pitman said, pointing out a chipped curb that is inaccessible for wheelchairs and awkward for strollers.

In some sections, pedestrians walk at the same level as the street.

The portion of sidewalk will be the second phase of a project that began in 2001 and has so far

connected Lynn Avenue with Walters Way. For that phase, city officials said the association received \$57,000 and the city came up with about \$200,000.

But this time, city officials said Concord did not have the extra money and had to raise it from grants. Teri House, Concord community services manager, helped coordinate the association's grant and said the city's engineering department served as the neighborhood association's fiscal agent. She added that the association initiated the idea.

"I don't know if (the city) would have done that if the neighborhood association hadn't

come forward and said they really wanted it," House said.

The association received input on the grant proposal from Independent Living Resource, an agency that serves people with disabilities. Roger Acuna, a spokesman for the organization, said he often found himself walking with his guide dog in the middle of Detroit Avenue, against traffic. He said he was glad the city began improving the walkway.

"It was all dirt," said Acuna, remembering the sidewalk in the first phase before it was built. "People in wheelchairs would get stuck in the mud."