At 5 p.m. today: Volunteer shovelers heading to Elmwood, in Syracuse

South Avenue and the Elmwood neighborhood, in its 1950s heyday: No quite so easy to traverse by foot today. *(Courtesy Onondaga Historical Association)*
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By Sean Kirst | skirst@syracuse.com
Email the author | Follow on Twitter
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Readers may remember, in the late 2000s, the passionate response to what we called 'The Elmwood blog.' A reflection by a city resident who'd moved away, wistful about the heyday of the old Elmwood neighborhood - at the crossroads of Valley Drive, Glenwood Avenue and South Avenue in Syracuse - led to thousands of comments from readers who recalled when that area was essentially a bustling little city "downtown," unto itself.

Elmwood has changed, and it is hardly the walker-friendly place it was in the 1950s or '60s - especially in the winter. The big intersection is treacherous enough in any weather, and haphazard civic planning over the past 40 years or so has made it even harder for pedestrians to get around.

The absolute worst is after the kind of snow we've had in recent days: Sidewalks in front of boarded-up storefronts get buried. Intersections get walled in. A median that usually offers shelter for schoolchildren trying to cross the street instead becomes a barrier that forces them into the road. Some businesses still plow snow on top of sidewalks, or don't bother to clear them off.

It epitomizes the problems we're having in this town with unshoveled sidewalks.

Today, at 5 p.m., Syracuse Common Councilor Bob Dougherty - a guy who's battling for a new emphasis on clearing snow-covered sidewalks in what's traditionally the snowiest large city in the nation - will bring his volunteer shovel brigade to Elmwood. If you've got an hour or so of time and energy to spare, we'll be there, trying to open up some walkways in that area.

A suggestion, based on prior experience: Bring a shovel and a pick, to cut through ice.

- Sean