

Sidewalk Program FAQs

Who can request a sidewalk?

A sidewalk request can originate from an individual, elected official or an association.

Is installation of a sidewalk contingent upon approval of the adjacent property owners?

No. The decision is made based on public use and need for the community-at-large.

Are residents responsible for snow and ice removal in inclement weather?

Yes, residents are responsible for removing snow and ice on any sidewalk, other walkway on or adjacent to property that the person owns, leases, or manages, including any walkway in the public right-of-way, to provide a pathway wide enough for safe pedestrian and wheelchair use within 24 hours *after* the end of the precipitation that caused the condition. Residents may choose to wait to remove the snow and ice until after the road has been plowed so as not to duplicate efforts. See Montgomery County Code Section 49-17 Accumulation of snow and ice on property prohibited.

What if I am elderly or disabled and cannot clear snow and salt ice in inclement weather?

All local middle and high school students have Student Service Learning (SSL) hours to complete as a requirement of graduation. You may contact your local schools to arrange for a student to clear your walks to earn their SSL hours for free. You need only sign their Student Service-Learning hours form. You may also wish to contact your local Regional Service Center to see what programs or assistance they may offer. Alternatively, many communities with a homeowner's or civic association, begin a "Village Program," where able-bodied residents volunteer to assist their neighbors who are less able to clear the snow and ice in inclement weather.

Is there any additional cost or property tax assessment with the installation of a new sidewalk?

No. There are no assessments or costs to the property owner when a new sidewalk is installed. Further, sidewalks are statistically proven to raise property values due to the safety and connectivity the sidewalks add to your community. The augmented value is benefit to you alone.

Will the replacement trees be planted in my community or elsewhere in the County?

The County's Arborist tries to fit as many trees as possible back into the County's public right of way from which the previous trees were removed. If there are overflow trees, they will be planted in available space on alternative, nearby streets **within** your community. If there are trees remaining once there is no available space left in your community, the trees will then be planted elsewhere within the County.

If the sidewalks are approved and constructed following the public hearing, residents will have the option to submit a request for the species of replacement tree(s) they would like to have planted. During construction of the sidewalks, please contact Planning Specialist, Lori Main, via email at Lori.Main@montgomerycountymd.gov to learn how to submit your tree replacement request. The County's Standard Tree lists, from which you may select your preferred species, can be found at <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dot-highway/tree/TreePlant.html>. If there are power lines above the right of way, replacement trees must be selected from the Minor tree list. If there are no power lines above the right of way, replacement trees must be selected from the Major list.

With Climate Change a priority, how can you justify removing mature trees? Have any environmental studies been performed in relation to rainwater drainage?

The Sidewalk Program is a minor projects program; the modifications that we implement are considered minor disturbances, and as such, do not tickle requirements for environmental impact studies or special permits. This allows MCDOT to install life-saving safety improvements that are requested by and benefit the public without expending hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars on studies that would reveal what we know; that the

sidewalks pose a minor disturbance to existing conditions. Installed at a 2% pitch, the sidewalk works with the existing drainage system by directing the rainwater into the existing swale or storm drain system. The installation also allows us to repair any minor drainage issues such as standing water puddles. If the sidewalks are ultimately approved and installed and if you are aware of any locations of puddling, please alert us so that we can make reparations while in the community.

Sidewalk installation is part of the County's Climate Action Plan. While it would seem counter-productive environmentally considering the addition of non-permeable surfaces and trees that would need to be removed to make way for the sidewalks, the installation of sidewalks promotes the use of public transportation and walking to nearby facilities such as schools, bus stops, the local CVS or Safeway grocery store; releasing us from the tether to our polluting cars. In addition, the County plants 3 trees for every 1 tree removed, benefiting the environment by tripling the number of trees and rainwater drinking roots in the area. The new, replacement trees will provide basically the same CO2 absorption as the one tree that was removed, and far more as the trees grow in the years to come, adding triple the beauty, shade, CO2 absorption and roots to absorb rainwater.

May we request the sidewalk be constructed in the road rather than in the County's public right of way?

Requests for sidewalk installation in the roadway will be considered, however, the new standard width for residential streets is 28-feet-wide. If the sidewalk is placed in the roadway, decreasing the road to less than 28-foot-wide, parking will be restricted on **both** sides of the roadway.

How will the sidewalk be constructed in relation to rainwater drainage issues?

Sidewalks are typically constructed in one of two ways:

- 1) The sidewalk will be constructed between the swale and road at a 2% pitch so that the rainwater will flow into the swale; or
- 2) The culvert pipe at the driveway apron may be replaced if damaged. A drainage pipe may be placed in the swale and backfilled, if needed. The sidewalk will be constructed over the backfilled area at a 2% pitch to direct the rainwater away from private property.

In some cases, the swale may need to be realigned or adjusted. **If you have a concern regarding standing water or existing drainage issues along the proposed area, please inform the Sidewalk Program so that reparations can be coordinated if the sidewalk is approved and constructed.**

Have any traffic studies been performed on the proposed roadways? What about speed bump installation instead of sidewalks?

The Sidewalk Program exists within the Transportation Engineering Division. Traffic studies are performed by the Traffic Engineering and Operations Division and are not shared with the Sidewalk Program. You are welcome to contact the Traffic Division at TrafficOps@montgomerycountymd.gov to inquire about any studies that may have been performed or to request speed bump installation. That said, a traffic study or speed bump installation will have no influence on the decision whether or not to install sidewalks. Traffic studies and any subsequent installations such as speed bumps slow traffic. Sidewalks, however, are a proactive measure which provides pedestrians a safe, separated place to walk without risk of being hit by a car. A pedestrian collision with a car, even if that car is traveling 25 mph, can cause lasting and debilitating injuries.

Have any pedestrian count studies been performed in our community?

Many residents who have requested sidewalk installation report that they do not walk within their community because of the lack of sidewalks. As such, a pedestrian count on a roadway without sidewalks will not provide meaningful data toward a decision whether or not to install sidewalks.

Why does the sidewalk have to be 5-ft-wide?

The State of Maryland has adopted the width of 5 feet for all new sidewalks based on the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) recommendations and guidelines. Montgomery County follows the State of Maryland design standards.

What will happen to my mailbox?

All mailboxes are removed and reinstalled the same day as the sidewalk is constructed. In some locations, field conditions do not allow enough space for the mailbox to be installed with the mailbox's door facing the road. In this instance, the mailbox will be installed parallel to the roadway, with the door to the mailbox facing your driveway.

What is the Sidewalk Program's Budget?

The Sidewalk Program is an ongoing Capital Improvement Project. Please visit the Office of Management & Budget's website for current annual funding figures:

<https://apps.montgomerycountymd.gov/BASISCAPITAL/Common/Project.aspx?ID=P506747&CID=3&SCID=8>

Does the Sidewalk Program repair and maintain sidewalks once installed?

No, repairs and maintenance of sidewalks are the responsibility of the Division of Highway Services.

How do I request repairs to a cracked or crumbling sidewalk?

If you would like to request sidewalk repair, please contact Montgomery County's 311 and request that a service ticket be opened with the Division of Highway Services for sidewalk repair. You can reach Montgomery County's 311 by dialing 311 from any phone in the County or, outside of the County, by dialing 240-777-0311. There are also many services that can be requested online via 311's website:

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/mc311/top-services.html> .

Does the Sidewalk Program install curbs and gutters?

The installation of curb and gutter must be requested and is typically installed to resolve drainage issues. You may request curb and gutter via Montgomery County's 311. 311 can be reached by dialing 311 or 240-777-0311. Please also feel free to peruse our Drainage Assistance website.

If adjustments to the existing curb and gutter are to be made with the potential sidewalk installation, such adjustments will be described in the Construction Impacts sent with the sidewalk proposal.

Please feel free to email Planning Specialist, Lori Main, with any additional questions you may have.

Lori Jean Main, Planning Specialist · 240-777-7271 · Lori.Main@montgomerycountymd.gov

Sidewalk Request Link: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dot-dte/forms/sidewalk.html>

Thank You!