

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.

Why was my community selected for potential sidewalk installation?

Planning for capital improvements is tied to the County's continuing development and growth in population, number of households, and businesses. To be fair and equitable in the prioritization of the vast number of sidewalk installation requests received each year, a data-driven priority rating will be assigned to all sidewalk requests. The priority rating will be generated based on GIS-location data evaluating the following factors:

- Safety (50%) – Pedestrian Level of Comfort and Crash History
- Trip Generators (30%) – Schools, Shopping Centers, Community and Recreation Centers, Parks, Pools, Library, Bus & Metro Transit Stops
- Equity Emphasis Area (20%) – Is the requested sidewalk in an equity emphasis area?

During project selection each year, the requests with the highest priority ratings will be proposed for sidewalk installation.

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

All replacement trees are planted back into the County's public right of way. The number of trees planted back into the community is based on species preference and spatial requirements. It is our goal to fit as many back into the community as possible. If the sidewalks are ultimately approved and constructed, a list of all tree removals will be provided to the County Arborist. The Arborist will visit each property on the list to discuss replacement tree species selection and placement. A postcard will be left with contact information so a mutually convenient meeting at the property can be scheduled if the property owners are not at home when the Arborist visits. The County Arborist's contact details will be provided following sidewalk installation. Any overflow replacement trees will be planted throughout the County in furtherance of the County's climate action goals.

Where may I view the replacement tree options?

The County's Standard Tree lists, from which you may select your preferred replacement tree 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.



Property Owners may also request at any time a shade tree to be planted on their private property through the TreeMontgomery.org website (<https://treemontgomery.org/request-a-tree/>)



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?

Communities with a homeowner's or civic association often create a "Village Program," where able-bodied residents volunteer to assist their neighbors who have requested assistance to clear the snow and ice in inclement weather. If you do not have an association, you can create a civic association in your community

(<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/eastcounty/resources/files/toolkitfinal1.pdf>).



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 bring to your community. The augmented value is benefit to you alone.



With Climate Change a priority, how can you justify removing mature trees?

Sidewalk installation is an integral part of the County's Climate Action Plan, setting up the micromobility infrastructure to promote active transportation, i.e., walking to local attractions such as school, daycare centers, shopping centers, and to public transportation amenities for longer distance trips.

Mature trees are beautifully majestic, each one providing shade and removing 48 pounds of carbon dioxide (CO₂) per year, according to the EPA. The average car, however, creates 4.6 metric tons or 10,141.26 pounds of CO₂ per year. According to CarbonPirates.com, an international climate activist group, a baby tree or sapling absorbs 5900 grams, or 13 pounds, of CO₂ per year. Thus, three saplings absorb approximately 39 pounds of CO₂ annually. The replacement trees are not saplings, however, but instead are 2-inches in diameter and roughly 5 or 6-feet tall, absorbing far more CO₂ than a mere sapling. As you can see, therefore, the three trees replacing each tree removed will absorb basically the same amount of, if not more, CO₂ as the one mature tree that was removed.

Sidewalks provide a clear and separated safe path for pedestrians promoting walking instead of driving to local destinations such as schools, daycare centers, shopping centers, parks, playgrounds, and other pedestrian attractions and public transportation facilities. The three replacement trees planted for every one tree removed will grow, providing triple the CO₂ absorption, shade, rainwater drinking roots, homes and nourishment for animals, birds and insects as well as beauty. While the County sincerely empathizes and completely understand that the loss of your tree(s) feels devastating, it is a small, temporary sacrifice to make for our environment, setting up the infrastructure that promotes healthy living and walking while reducing pollution from vehicle use. The sidewalks will reduce harmful emissions by promoting walking and public transportation use while the three replacement trees for every one tree removed will triple the absorption of harmful emissions in addition to tripling the shade, rainwater absorbing roots, creature homes and beauty in your community.

Have any environmental studies been performed in relation to rainwater drainage?

According to the federal Council on Environmental Quality, sidewalk installation is categorically excluded from environmental study requirements as a ". . . a category of actions which do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment . . ." (Part 1508 Terminology and Index, Section 4 Categorical Exclusion (CFR 2010 Title 40, Volume 32, Section 1508.4). Since no studies are required, no studies are performed.

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 repairs 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?

A traffic study or speed bump installation will have no influence on the decision 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 vehicle collision risk.

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.

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 would 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.

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 sidewalk repairs?

Please contact Montgomery County's 311 by dialing 311 or 240-777-0311 and request that a service ticket be opened with the Division of Highway Services for sidewalk repair. 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 by dialing 311 or 240-777-0311. Please also feel free to peruse our Drainage Assistance website (<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dot-dte/drainage/index.html>).



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 Program Website: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dot-dte/sidewalk/index.html>

Thank You!