

# 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.

## 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. 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. Upon receipt of a replacement tree request, the County's Arborist will contact the resident and work with them to select their preferred species and placement of the replacement tree. The County Arborist's contact details will be provided to residents at a later date if the sidewalks are approved. 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 that do not fit back into the right of way in your community, they will be planted elsewhere throughout the County.

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.

Property Owners may request a shade tree 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?

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.

### **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 (CO<sub>2</sub>) per year, according to the EPA. The average car, however, creates 4.6 metric tons or 10,141.26 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> per year. According to CarbonPirates.com, an international climate activist group, a baby tree or sapling absorbs 5900 grams, or 13 pounds, of CO<sub>2</sub> per year. Thus, three saplings absorb approximately 39 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> 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 CO<sub>2</sub> 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, CO<sub>2</sub> 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 CO<sub>2</sub> 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 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?**

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 risk of being hit by a car.

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](mailto: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 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](mailto:Lori.Main@montgomerycountymd.gov)

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

**Thank You!**