

# 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 goal of the sidewalk implementation is to provide enhanced pedestrian safety by providing a safe space to walk. New residential construction projects must now include sidewalks. The Sidewalk Program is funded to bring older communities in compliance with current safety standards and make Montgomery County neighborhoods more walkable.

Community feedback allows us to understand concerns, provide alternatives where possible, and adjust the sidewalk proposal to best-meet community needs and preferences. However, the decision to install sidewalk is made considering the benefits, safety enhancement, and constructability as primary criteria. The County right-of-way adjacent to residential properties is intended for public use and benefit. Input from the community is used to mitigate concerns as much as possible.

## Why was my community selected for potential sidewalk installation?

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.

## What will happen to the trees in the right of way adjacent to my property?

The County Arborist will provide a tree report for information purposes only to pinpoint which trees will need special care to be preserved during sidewalk installation, if the sidewalks are ultimately approved. Each resident residing adjacent to a right of way tree that has been slated for removal or air excavation will have the following options:

- Right of Way Tree Preserved – Depending on the tree's size and location, most mature right of way trees can be preserved by aligning the sidewalk behind the tree with an augmented greenspace. We also may need to grade the landscape up in the area of the critical root zone so as to further insulate the roots buried beneath from the installation activities. A flexible, porous pavement may also be used around the critical root zones of trees.

Depending on the tree's size and location, younger trees may be preserved by aligning the sidewalk at the back of curb with no greenspace.

- Right of Way Tree Removed – Because we understand that some residents may not want the sidewalk behind the trees and closer to their private property, the property owners may opt to have the tree removed and replacement trees planted.

### **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 in the right of way from which the original tree was removed will depend on the resident's species preference and the spatial requirements of that species. Any trees that do not fit back into the right of way from which the original tree was removed will be planted elsewhere under the Neighborhood Tree Planting Program. Residents may request that trees be planted in their neighborhood under the Neighborhood Tree Planting program by contacting Montgomery County's 311. 311 can be reached by dialing 311 or 240-777-0311.

(<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/mc311/>)



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. If the residents is not available when the Arborist calls, a postcard will be left with contact information so a mutually convenient meeting at the property can be scheduled.

### **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.



### **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) If needed, a drainage pipe may be placed in the swale and backfilled. 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's Construction Representative, Juan Berrios, so that reparations can be coordinated if the sidewalk is approved and constructed. A field meeting may be requested by emailing Mr. Berrios at [Juan.Berrios@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:Juan.Berrios@montgomerycountymd.gov) .**

### **Have any traffic or pedestrian count studies been performed on the proposed roadways? What about speed bump installation instead of sidewalks?**

Past public testimony indicates that many residents do not walk or allow their children to walk in the community because of a lack of sidewalks. This is supported by the daily traffic surrounding nearby schools, as parents drive their children to and from school rather than allowing them to walk. A pedestrian count before sidewalk installation would not provide meaningful data since the facilities that allow people to safely walk are absent. Additionally, commissioning a study of the traffic speeds within the roadway would not impact a sidewalk project, as the threat of a car hitting a pedestrian at any speed is a concern.

Speed bumps may be requested by emailing the Division of Traffic Engineering & Operations Division (DTEO) at [TrafficOps@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:TrafficOps@montgomerycountymd.gov).

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

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandates that all sidewalks be installed at 5-feet-wide. To install a narrower sidewalk, a Federal waiver must be approved. The resident's desire to have a narrower sidewalk is not an approved reason to waive the 5-foot-wide sidewalk.

### **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? How do I request sidewalk repair?**

Repairs and maintenance of sidewalks are the responsibility of the Division of Highway Services. Residents may request sidewalk repair by contacting Montgomery County's 311. 311 can be reached by dialing 311 or 240-777-0311.

(<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/mc311/>)



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

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

**Thank You!**