

# GENESEE TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

## Bicycle and Pedestrian Supportive Code Language

# Sidewalks Adjacent to New Residential Development

Providing sidewalks adjacent to new residential development is one way that communities can improve mobility for all users including the elderly, the young, people with disabilities, and others without access to an automobile. Sidewalks improve pedestrian safety and convenience by providing a firm, stable, and slip resistant surface separate from the roadway.

### Benefits of Providing Sidewalks

In addition to improved pedestrian safety, providing sidewalks to serve residential neighborhoods facilitates access to nearby parks, schools, and commercial activity centers and promotes public health through daily physical activity.

### How It's Done

Communities that seek to provide sidewalks adjacent to new residential development can utilize several approaches, including:

- Requirements based on residential density.
- Requirements based on the roadway's functional classification.
- Sidewalk requirements based on nearby land use.
- Policy-based requirements.

### Examples

#### Requirements based on residential density

The Town of Malta, New York requires sidewalks to be provided within all new residential and commercial projects within the Town. The code specifies that the sidewalk shall have a minimum width of five feet and be constructed of concrete designed to serve pedestrians.

For residential development with more than four dwelling units per acre sidewalks are required on



*Sidewalks in new developments can improve safety, mobility, and convenience for all users.*

both sides of the roadway. Sidewalks are required on one side only when the density of development is less than four units per acre.

#### Requirements based on the roadway's functional classification

The Town of Rhinebeck, New York requires that all streets designated as through roads shall be provided a pedestrian path, sidewalk, or bikeway on at least one side of the street.

Sidewalks must include a four-foot buffer between the sidewalk and the street. Bikeways (combined bicyclist/pedestrian paths) must also meet this buffer requirement and be at least four feet in width.

Sidewalks can also be required based on the ownership of the road. This approach is followed by the Town of Guilderland, New York which requires sidewalks on both sides of all state and county roads wherever properties abutting such roads have access to municipal waterlines (unless adjacent to agriculturally zoned property).

#### Sidewalk requirements based on nearby land use

The Town of Perinton, New York requires that sidewalks or pedestrian ways be constructed along

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lands fronting both sides of collector or arterial street(s), within Pedestrian (PED) Zones as shown on the Town's Official PED Map.

A "PED Zone" is defined as land within a 4,000-foot radius of the central point of a public school, public park, or active commercial area.

### Policy-based requirements

The Town of Penfield, New York Sidewalk Policy requires all new development approved by the Town to include sidewalks along both sides of all local roads.

Developers may seek a waiver from the policy subject to the payment of a \$500 per dwelling unit fee placed in the sidewalk capital account specifically for the installation of sidewalks in locations identified by the Town Board.

### **Summary**

There are several options available to communities that wish to provide sidewalks adjacent to new residential development and/or support the development of "complete streets" within these areas.

Code language linked to roadway classification and adjacent land use may support pedestrian travel between neighborhoods (along collector roads to and from schools and local shopping centers, etc.) but is unlikely to support improved pedestrian facilities along local streets unless local streets are included in the requirements.

Two options that might also be considered by jurisdictions seeking to improve pedestrian accessibility include providing between-lot pedestrian easements to connect residences with parks, schools, neighborhood shopping facilities, and similar destinations and limiting the length of cul-de-sacs to provide more direct pedestrian access between destinations.

### **Resources**

Federal Highway Administration, *Pedestrian Facilities Users Guide*, FHWA-RD-01-102, March 2002.

New York State Department of State, *Creating the Community You Want: Municipal Options for Land Use Control*, June 1998.

Office of the New York State Comptroller, Division of Local Government Services & Economic Development, *Smart Growth in New York State: A Discussion Paper*, May 2004.

The Rockefeller Institute of Government, *Local Governments in New York State*, May 2003.

State of New York, *Local Government Handbook*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, January 2000.

### **About the Project**

The objective of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Supportive Code Language project was to develop information on and identify examples of noteworthy zoning code and site planning language and guidance that enhance access and safety for bicyclists and pedestrians.

The project is a joint effort between the Genesee Transportation Council (GTC) and the Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council (G/FLRPC).

GTC staff surveyed county planning departments in the nine-county GTC region to identify those topics related to supporting bicyclists and pedestrians that could be addressed within the scope of the project. The survey identified the following key areas: (1) sidewalk requirements adjacent to new and existing development; (2) bicycle parking requirements; and (3) automobile parking design.

Within the identified key areas, research was conducted and relevant codes obtained through the G/FLRPC library and internet-based resources. Fact sheets and presentation materials were developed to provide examples that may be considered by jurisdictions that seek to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety, accessibility, and attractiveness within the community.

- Genesee Transportation Council - August 2007