

# CITY MANUALS AND STANDARDS REVIEW

## RESOURCES AND STANDARDS

As part of the Master Plan process, a review and evaluation of current City documents and policies relevant to sidewalk infrastructure planning was completed. Through this process, the following documents were reviewed in terms of the following aspects: sidewalk requirements, sidewalk connectivity, sidewalk accessibility, sidewalk design, City processes, sidewalk funding, sidewalk construction, or sidewalk maintenance:

- City of Georgetown Unified Development Code (April 2012)
- City of Georgetown Overall Transportation Plan (June 2004)
- Zoning Regulations for Mixed Use Developments (January 2008)

- Georgetown Downtown Master Plan Update (February 2014)
- Georgetown Parks, Recreation and Trails Master Plan (June 2009)
- City of Georgetown ADA Transition Plan (March 2014)
- City of Georgetown 2030 Comprehensive Plan (May 2009)
- Williams Drive Gateway Redevelopment Plan (April 2006)
- City of Georgetown Construction Standards and Details (June 2006 and March 2014)
- City of Georgetown GIS Files (Accessed June 2014)
- Texas Accessibility Standards (March 2012)
- Proposed Accessibility Guidelines for Pedestrian Facilities in the Public Right-of-Way (July 2011)

Table 15 summarizes the City and policies and aspect of sidewalks to which they apply.

**Table 15. City Plan Content**

	Unified Development Code (April 2012)	Georgetown Overall Transportation Plan (June 2004)	Zoning Regulations for Mixed-Use Developments (Jan 2008)	Georgetown Downtown Master Plan Update (Feb 2014)	Georgetown Parks, Recreation and Trails Master Plan (June 2009)	City of Georgetown ADA Transition Plan (March 2014)	City of Georgetown Construction Standards and Details (June 2006)
Sidewalk Requirements	X						
Sidewalk Connectivity	X			X	X		
Sidewalk Accessibility					X	X	
Sidewalk Design	X	X	X	X	X		X
City Processes	X						
Sidewalk Construction	X			X			
Sidewalk Funding	X						
Sidewalk Maintenance	X						

## Sidewalk Requirements

The UDC requires new developments to provide for the provision of pedestrian facilities to ensure orderly growth of the City. The UDC allows for exceptions to sidewalk installation:

- 80% Rule - Sidewalks will not be required for a residential development of four or fewer lots, when 80% of the adjacent lots are developed.
- Deferred Installation - The installation of residential sidewalks may be deferred until the construction of a residential unit on each lot.
- Alternative Sidewalk Plan – Sidewalks will not be required for sites with unique and extraordinary conditions. These sites may qualify for alternative routes, fee-in-lieu of construction, or delays in construction.
- City Participation – Developments may request City participation in the cost of pedestrian improvements.

Sidewalks near school facilities, parks or sidewalks prioritized in the Master Plan may not utilize these exceptions.

## Sidewalk Connectivity

A connected sidewalk network is recommended throughout many of the City documents. The importance of connecting sidewalks to neighborhoods, elementary schools, parks and playgrounds, churches and shopping centers is highlighted. The Downtown Master Plan recommends connectivity along major thoroughfares, connecting Downtown Overlay District to Southwestern and providing connections to the San Gabriel River Trails. It is also noted that new sidewalks should be tied into existing facilities, preventing sidewalk gaps

that currently can be seen throughout the City.



*Incomplete sidewalks are a disruption to a connected pedestrian network.*

## Sidewalk Accessibility

The Georgetown ADA Transition Plan states that ADA standards should be followed for public buildings and public areas. Pedestrian facilities within the City of Georgetown are required to follow state (Texas Accessibility Standards) and federal (Proposed Accessibility Guidelines for Pedestrian Facilities in the Public Right-of-Way) guidelines to maintain ADA-compliance. An update to the Georgetown ADA Transition Plan is expected in 2015 that will provide additional detail on bringing existing facilities up to ADA-compliance.

## Sidewalk Design

Several documents reference sidewalk design standards. These documents are generally consistent in their recommendations, though they can make the requirements difficult to follow. A flow chart has been provided in the Appendix to document the existing design

requirements for sidewalk width. Sidewalk width requirements varied between 5' and 12', depending on the location and functionality of the sidewalk. Similarly, the recommended setback between the sidewalk and the adjacent roadway varied between 2' and 25'. In most cases, the recommended setback was not clearly defined.

### City Processes

The Unified Development Code addresses several aspects of sidewalk construction, referred to as “city processes” for the purposes of this study. The preparations of plans, permit applications and licenses-to-encroach are generally discussed in relation to sidewalk construction.

### Sidewalk Construction, Funding and Maintenance

The construction of new sidewalk facilities is required upon development of individual lots. The UDC notes that the subdivider is



*Retaining walls utilized to create sidewalk facilities.*

responsible for payment of all costs and materials and installation of infrastructure of public improvements such as sidewalks. Exceptions to this rule are discussed in general above; further details on the funding implications to these exceptions are described below.

- **Deferred Installation** –Deferred installation of sidewalks requires a 20% payment of sidewalk construction costs to the residential sidewalk fund. These funds are held for the specified subdivision for a period of five years. After five years, the City will use the funds to complete the remaining sidewalks.
- **Alternative Sidewalk Plan** – Sidewalks qualifying for an Alternative Sidewalk Plan may require fee-in-lieu of construction if no alternative pedestrian route is identified. These payments are equivalent to the construction cost of the sidewalk. Sidewalks listed as top priority in the OTP are required to pay an additional 25%.
- **City Participation** – Developments may request City participation in the cost of pedestrian improvements.

There is no current documentation assigning sidewalk maintenance responsibilities to the City of Georgetown. However, maintenance is implied to be the responsibility of the City. The following exceptions to sidewalk maintenance are defined:

- Public improvements, such as sidewalks, may be accepted by the City after the applicant submits record drawings and a one-year maintenance bond.
- A Property Owners Association (POA)



may be established and approved by City Council for the continuous operation, maintenance and supervision of common physical facilities, such as sidewalks.

- The City shall not repair, maintain, install, or provide any streets or public utilities in any subdivision for which a Final Plat has not been approved and filed for record.

## 2001 SIDEWALK STUDY

Pursuant to the recommendations in the 2001 Sidewalk Study, progress has been made within the City of Georgetown towards the presented recommendations. The bullets below detail the 2001 Sidewalk Study recommendation and the documentation of progress made since the original study.

- Sidewalks should be located on at least one side of every roadway within the City. Some roadways, in particular the major arterials, should have sidewalks located



*Steps are impassible for pedestrians in wheelchairs.*

on both sides of the roadway throughout the developed portions of the City.

- Approximately 50% of 2001 Sidewalk Master Plan Phase 1 Sidewalks have been installed.
- The City should continue working towards installing sidewalks on one side of every roadway within the City and both sidewalk on the roadway on arterials and throughout the Downtown Overlay District.
- Sidewalks should be separated from the curb and/or edge of roadway wherever possible. This separation provides for much safer movement of pedestrians through all areas.
  - The Georgetown Unified Development Code and the Georgetown Overall Transportation Plan recommend separation of the sidewalk from the curb and/or edge of the roadway for sidewalks on arterials.
  - The Georgetown Parks, Recreation and Trails Master Plan recommends separation of the sidewalk/trails from the curb and/or edge of the roadway on all facilities.
  - It is recommended that the minimum separation be defined for the following sidewalk types:
    - Minor Arterials – 5'
    - Major Arterials – 5'
- Sidewalk segments that are currently missing should be filled in as soon as possible. Filling in these areas will provide for quick and relatively easy upgrades to the current sidewalk system.
- Approximately 50% of 2001 Sidewalk Master Plan Phase 1 Sidewalks have been installed.

- Prioritization should continue to be given to these missing segments to move towards a more complete sidewalk system. This Master Plan determined there are 152 sidewalk gaps in the City. For the purposes of this study, a sidewalk gap is defined as a segment with missing sidewalk less than 200' in length that will provide connectivity between existing pedestrian infrastructures when completed.
- The prioritization process considered the location of sidewalk gaps when developing priority projects. Priority projects could not incorporate all sidewalk gaps. The City should continue to fill in the sidewalk gaps as funding becomes available outside of the priority project list.
- Well-marked crosswalks should be provided at all points where sidewalks meet street intersections. This is especially critical where intersections are signalized and where the pedestrian movements continue on beyond that intersection.
- Marked pedestrian crosswalks are provided at 70% of signalized crossings at City-operated signals. In addition, mid-block crossings are currently striped at locations with significant pedestrian activity.
- Striping of pedestrian crosswalks at unsignalized intersections and mid-block crossing should be considered on an as-needed basis and be included with the annual maintenance budget.
- The Georgetown Downtown Master Plan Update provides specific

recommendations for crossing designs in the Downtown Overlay District.

- The striping of pedestrian crosswalks and upgrade of pedestrian ramps to ADA compliance at City-operated signalized intersections was included as a Priority 1 recommendation in this Master Plan.
- Sidewalks should be constructed in new subdivision areas when there is enough critical mass to complete the pedestrian linkages. Isolated segments should be avoided. As new subdivisions develop, the City could request that an “escrow” of funds be started for the desired sidewalks to be constructed. Once continuous lengths of sidewalk forming a pedestrian link could be constructed (because the development patterns have matured in that area), then sidewalks could be built from the escrow funds and function better for overall pedestrian movements in the City.



*Example of a well-marked crosswalk at a traffic signal.*

- The Unified Development Code states that “all developments must provide pedestrian and vehicle facilities, specifically sidewalks and streets, to serve the development and ensure the orderly growth of the City.”
- The Unified Development Code establishes a residential sidewalk fund. Developers may defer construction of a sidewalk segment by paying 20% of the total costs of the uninstalled sidewalk segments to the City fund. Five years after the first building permit was issued, the City will use these funds to construct any remaining sidewalks. Any remaining funds roll over into a general sidewalk fund. Developers may also participate in an Alternate Sidewalk Plan in which the developer may pay a fee-in-lieu of sidewalk construction due to unique and extraordinary conditions preventing sidewalk construction at the time of approval of construction plans.
- The City currently accepts developer fiscal for deferring sidewalks. However, there is no process for tracking these funds or utilizing the funds for the needed sidewalk construction. It is recommended that a tracking process be installed with a separate sidewalk fund such that developer contributions are not combined with the City’s general fund.
- The City should continue to monitor existing sidewalks on a regular basis and update the conclusions of this report annually.
- Consistent monitoring and Plan implementation has not yet been established.

- It is recommended that the City update the Sidewalk Database GIS file when sidewalks or ramps are constructed or repaired in the field. This database will serve as a monitoring system for the progress made on the prioritization plan.
- The City should pursue a meeting with TxDOT officials to review the findings of this Plan and determine a comprehensive course of action that accommodates their concerns and/or requirements.
- TxDOT was consulted in the initial stakeholder meetings for the Master Plan.
- The City will continue to identify opportunities for partnering with TxDOT to enhance pedestrian infrastructure on shared facilities.
- The findings of this Plan should be shared with the City’s Parks and Recreation Department. Every



*Accessible Pedestrian Signal (APS) units are required at new traffic signals.*



opportunity to collaborate on projects that enhance pedestrian movements within the City should be pursued by all City agencies.

- The City Parks and Recreation Department was consulted in the initial stakeholder meetings for the Master Plan. Parks and Recreation Department input was included in the prioritization process.
- New sidewalks should be required for all new developments within the City (especially for multi-family residential and commercial developments).
- The Unified Development Code states that “all developments must provide pedestrian and vehicle facilities, specifically sidewalks and streets, to serve the development and ensure the orderly growth of the City.”
- Proximity of facilities to multi-family residential and commercial developments was considered during the prioritization process.
- The City should continue to collaborate with GISD officials, particularly as concerns sidewalks for school-aged children to use going to and returning home from their schools.
- GISD was consulted in the initial stakeholder meetings for the Master Plan. GISD input was included in the prioritization process.
- The City should document all barriers to accessibility within the existing sidewalks in the City and begin a program of removing these barriers in conjunction with ongoing sidewalk maintenance budgets. This would include the correction of all ADA deficiencies as well.

- Progress has been made towards this goal as several new ADA-compliant sidewalks and ramps exist within the City of Georgetown.
- A comprehensive ADA review of the Downtown Overlay District was completed as part of this study. Repair of non-compliant pedestrian facilities in the Downtown Overlay District is included as a priority project.
- Sidewalk maintenance budgets should be used for sidewalk and pedestrian curb ramp ADA repairs, outside the Downtown Overlay District.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made based on a review of relevant literature:

- The City should continue working towards installing sidewalks on one side of every roadway within the City and both sidewalk on the roadway on arterials and throughout the Downtown Overlay District.
- Enforcement of the UDC requirements for sidewalk installation should be



*Wide sidewalks can accommodate pedestrians and cyclists.*

continued to ensure new developments are contributing to the sidewalk network.

- The City should continue to fill in the sidewalk gaps as funding becomes available outside of the priority project list.
- It is recommended that the City update the Sidewalk Database GIS file when sidewalks or ramps are constructed or repaired in the field. This database will serve as a monitoring system for the progress made on the prioritization plan.
- A unique sidewalk fund should be established within the City of Georgetown to track all fee-in-lieu payments by developers who utilized the Deferred Installation or Alternative Sidewalk Plan. This will ensure the fees are dedicated to the identified sidewalk facilities or sidewalks prioritized in the Master Plan.
- Sidewalk maintenance budgets should be used for sidewalk and pedestrian curb ramp ADA repairs, outside the Downtown Overlay District and Priority 1 projects.
- The City will continue to identify opportunities for partnering with TxDOT to enhance pedestrian infrastructure on shared facilities.
- Minor rewording of the UDC will ultimately be required to capture the prioritized sidewalk analysis completed in this Master Plan. Rewording includes modifying references to the Master Plan Priority 1, 2 and 3 projects rather than priority projects in the OTP.
- The City should develop a single document that clearly identifies sidewalk width and setback requirements. This should be reviewed and agreed to by all applicable City departments.

- In general, the following requirements meet the intent of all City plans and design standards:

**Table 16. Sidewalk Design Recommendations**

	Minimum Sidewalk Width	Minimum Sidewalk Setback
Local Street	5'	0'
Residential Collector	5'	0'
Minor Arterial	5'	5'
Major Arterial	5'	5'
Freeway	N/A	N/A
Alley	N/A	N/A
Multi-Use Path	10'	N/A
Downtown Street	6'	0'

- Sidewalks in the Downtown Overlay District should refer to the Georgetown Downtown Master Plan Update for additional requirements on an individual block level.
- Sidewalks in Mixed-Use Developments should refer to the Zoning Regulations for Mixed-Use Developments for additional design recommendations.



*Pedestrian access to GISD schools is a priority.*