

# SIDEWALK PRIORITIZATION



The prioritization process was initiated to answer three primary questions asked in the original Sidewalk Study:

- ❶ *What factors most dramatically affect pedestrian movement in the City?*
- ❷ *What land uses or pedestrian attractors generate the most pedestrian traffic?*
- ❸ *What improvements would most impact pedestrian safety and connectivity in the City?*

In addressing the three questions above, a project list was developed for the Master Plan. The prioritization process allowed for consideration of several elements, including pedestrian attractors, pedestrian safety, demographics, government, stakeholder

and public input, which were weighed into a final prioritization tool. The prioritization tool is a transparent methodology for selecting sidewalk projects without inputting bias into the selection process.

## PRIORITIZATION CONSIDERATIONS

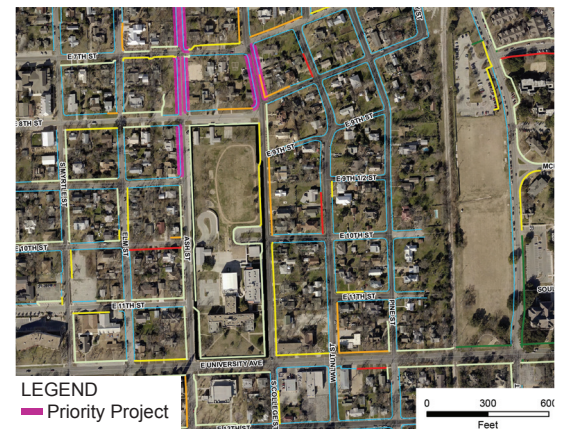
Major considerations for the prioritization of sidewalk facilities were stakeholder input, public input, residential demographics, pedestrian safety and existing sidewalk conditions. Government and stakeholder meetings were conducted to obtain a list of key sidewalk projects considered important to the functionality of that agency. In general, stakeholders identified critical routes, missing sidewalk segments and safety concerns. The first public open house facilitated similar input from the public on key sidewalk projects as well as preferred pedestrian attractors. This qualitative data was combined with a quantitative analysis of pedestrian safety and demographics within the City of Georgetown. Results from this public outreach were included in the prioritization process.

## GOVERNMENT AND STAKEHOLDER INPUT

Multiple stakeholders meetings were conducted in order to engage representatives in discussions about sidewalk infrastructure challenges within the City. Stakeholder meetings included discussions with:

- Texas Department of Transportation
- Georgetown Independent School District
- Williamson County Transportation Department
- City of Georgetown City Manager's Office
- City of Georgetown Facilities Department
- City of Georgetown Parks and Recreation Department

- City of Georgetown Transportation Department
- City of Georgetown Planning and Housing Planners
- City of Georgetown Transportation Advisory Board
- Georgetown Village Public Improvement District
- City of Georgetown 2015 Road Bond Committee
- City of Georgetown Historic Architectural Review Committee
- Southwestern University



*An example of GISD sidewalk prioritization around Williams Elementary.*

These meetings encouraged feedback regarding sidewalk priorities, facilitated the development of a process to address those challenges and increased support for the Master Plan. Location-specific input was incorporated into the prioritization process.

## PUBLIC INPUT

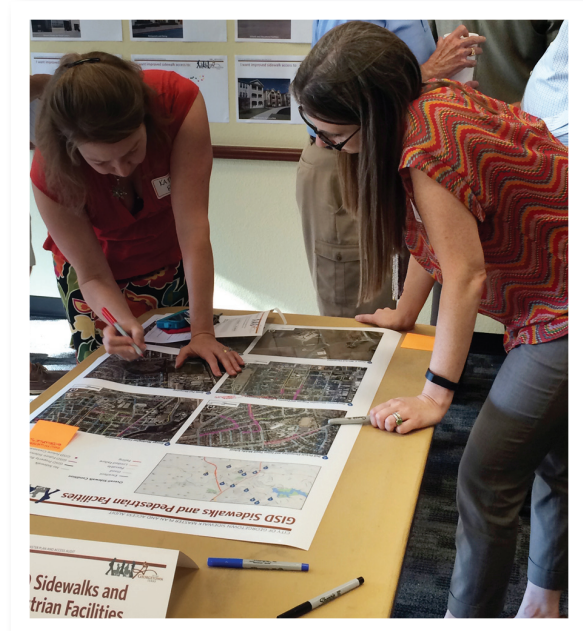
Two open houses were held over the duration of the project to create opportunities for residents to provide feedback during different stages of the project. The first Master Plan public open



house was conducted after completion of the data collection and field inventory phases. The second Master Plan public open house was conducted after completion of the prioritization process and development of a preliminary prioritized project list. Public and stakeholder input submitted outside of the open houses during the project's duration were also incorporated into the prioritization process and the resulting Master Plan. An email blast list along with print media was published and a project website was developed to encourage public input. Residents provided information on the current conditions of sidewalks in their community and priority needs.

### Open House #1

This public meeting communicated the purpose of the Master Plan and gathered input from attendees regarding safety and the location of desired sidewalk infrastructure improvements. Exhibits



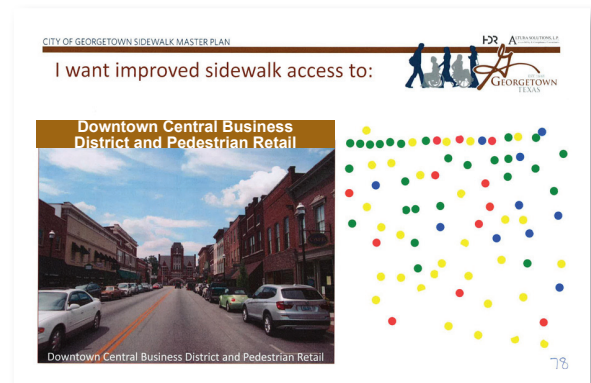
*Discussing access to GISD facilities at Public Open House.*

displayed sidewalk inventory results, City land uses, City facilities, GISD schools and priorities, parks and trails locations and priorities, recent pedestrian-automobile crashes, pedestrian safety issues and provided information on ADA-compliance.

Several locations were deemed important to the public, including:

- Shell Road
- Southwestern University
- University Drive
- Maple Street
- DB Wood to Overlook Park
- 6th, 7th and 8th Street to Southwestern University
- 2nd Street
- 15th Street

An interactive land use “dot-voting” exercise took place at the open house that asked attendees to choose their preferred sidewalk location by associated destination. The results of this exercise are shown in the pie chart on this page. The dot-voting exercise gathered preferences from approximately 80 attendees, representing private citizen interests as well as several community partners.

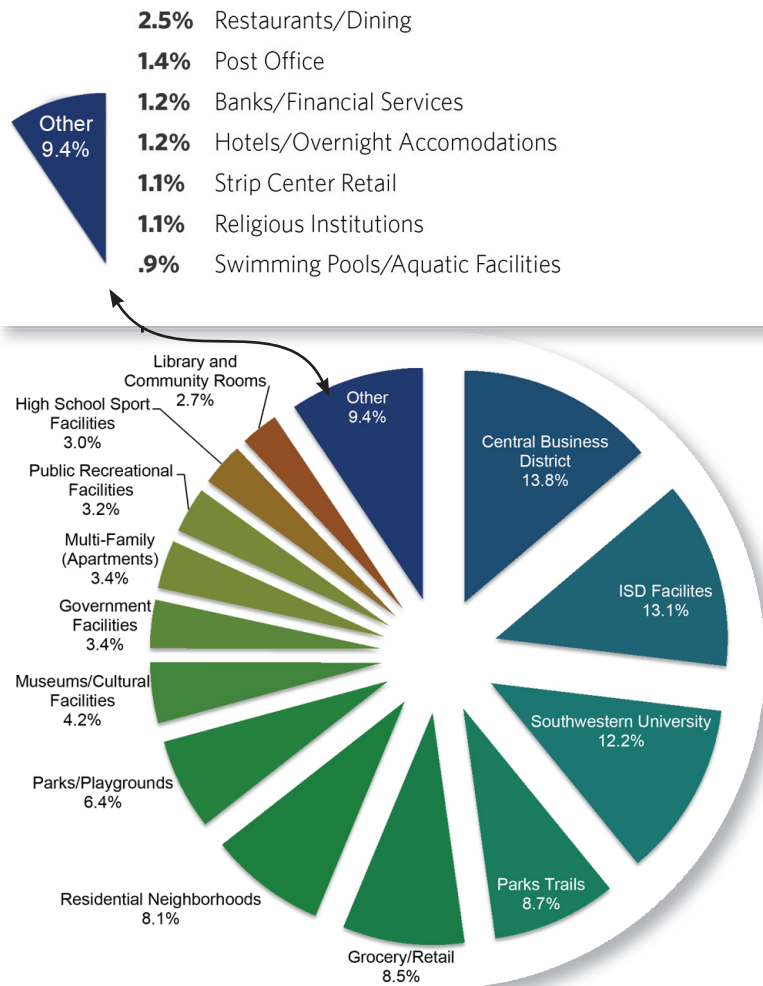


*Attendees prioritized access to the Downtown Overlay District.*

Attendees gave the highest priority to sidewalk access to Southwestern University, Georgetown ISD facilities and the Central Business District.

Pedestrian Access Survey forms were distributed at the open house and were available online for those who could not attend the meeting. The survey asked participants to rate the importance of improved access to four different types of amenities: City Buildings and Facilities, City Parks and Trails, Retail Centers and Schools. The results of this survey aligned with the dot-voting exercise, with participants ranking improved pedestrian access to schools as well as City parks and trails as important planning considerations.

Public comments provided valuable insight into existing sidewalk infrastructure challenges and improvement priorities. Comments were



*Sidewalk Location Preference by Land Use Type.*



*Examples of ADA-compliance were presented to increase awareness.*



*City trail and parks were ranked 4th in priority by attendees.*

tabulated and incorporated into the prioritization process as weighted criteria.

## Open House #2

The second Master Plan public open house was conducted after completion of the prioritization process and development of a prioritized project list. Exhibits displayed information regarding implementation strategies, the planning process, prioritization methodology, public input from the first open house, plan purpose, sidewalk inventory results, implementation timeline and projects designated as Priority 1 and Priority 2. Attendees provided feedback on Priority 1 and 2 projects and additional projects to be considered.



*Attendees at the Open House reviewed prioritized projects.*

## Moving Forward

Future public comments received on deficient or missing sidewalk infrastructure should be documented, within the sidewalk database GIS file. Managing these comments will make for easier prioritization of projects in future reviews.

An inventory of public input received during development of the Master Plan is included the Master Plan Appendix.

## PRIORITIZATION METHODOLOGY

A prioritization methodology was developed based on a literature review of sidewalk prioritization methodology developed in other U.S. cities, input from stakeholders and public input. The Georgetown sidewalk prioritization methodology evaluated four major categories: pedestrian attractors, pedestrian safety, demographics and special considerations. Within each category, several elements were weighed as described below.

### Pedestrian Attractors

#### Downtown Overlay District

Downtown Georgetown is a vibrant district with places to work and play. The Downtown Overlay District has the highest concentration of pedestrian activity in the City. It is important that the sidewalks in the Downtown Overlay District are complete and accessible.

#### Georgetown Independent School District

Georgetown Independent School District (GISD) has 24 facilities within the city limits. Providing safe routes to schools provides a better quality of life for families in the City.

#### Southwestern University

The Southwestern University campus serves more than 1,500 students in the heart of the City. Students and faculty often walk between the University and Downtown Georgetown. A safe sidewalk system will facilitate these routes.



### Trails

The City of Georgetown has nearly nine miles of trails and 25 park facilities. The City of Georgetown Parks Master Plan calls for equitable access to the City parks, indicating they should be readily accessible, no matter where residents live. Ten minutes on foot in dense areas and ten minutes apart by bicycle in suburban areas is recommended. A complete sidewalk network to trail heads will help facilitate this goal.

### Parks and Playgrounds

The City of Georgetown maintains 25 park facilities. City parks vary in size from neighborhood “pocket” parks to the San Gabriel River Park, following the existing trail system.

### Retail

Approximately 8% of Georgetown is zoned for retail use. While not all retail developments are conducive to walking, some are enhanced by quick trips from adjacent residential developments. For example, complete sidewalks between restaurants and adjacent offices enhance the convenience of employees. For the purposes of this study, restaurants are categorized as retail due to a common zoning.

### Single Family Residential

With a population of 47,400, 38% of the City of Georgetown is zoned single family residential. A significant portion of walking trips will generate from the residences in the City. Older parts of the City of Georgetown severely lack sidewalk facilities. It is necessary to consider the single-family residences in the study, as they will serve as a frequent origin.

### Multi-Family Residential

Multi-family residential areas can generate more pedestrian trips than single-family residential neighborhoods, as the population

density is much greater. Multi-family units were considered as a unique attractor.

### City Facilities

The City of Georgetown operates and maintains several facilities that are frequently accessed by the public. Providing accessible routes to these public locations is critical. Facilities considered in this study were:

- Airport
- Animal Shelter
- Art Center
- City Hall
- Community Center
- Council Chambers
- Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Fire Stations (5)
- Georgetown Communications and Training Building
- Georgetown Municipal Complex
- Grace Heritage Center
- Mary Bailey Head Start
- City-Operated Parking Lots (3)
- Public Library
- Parks Administration
- Recreation Center
- Tennis Center



*City-owned historical buildings create ADA-compliance challenges.*

## Pedestrian Safety

The safety of existing pedestrian facilities is paramount to providing a walkable City. Sidewalks should not only be provided, but well-maintained and accessible for all citizens. To better evaluate the existing sidewalk network, the following categories were evaluated.

### Roadway Classifications

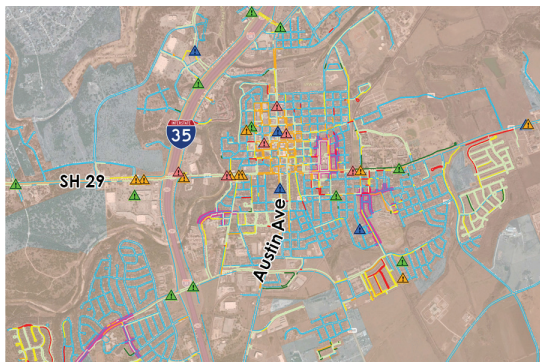
The Georgetown Overall Transportation Plan includes the following classifications for roadway facilities in the City:

- Local Streets
- Collectors
- Minor Arterials
- Major Arterials
- Freeways/Expressways

Traffic volumes and vehicle speeds increase correspondingly with the roadway classification. Vehicle speeds can be correlated to the severity of pedestrian injuries in pedestrian-automobile crashes.

### Pedestrian-Automobile Crashes

A history of pedestrian-automobile crashes can be an indicator of an existing safety concern. Texas Department of Public Safety crash records were reviewed to determine hot-spots and focus pedestrian



*Pedestrian crashes were concentrated on University Avenue (SH 29).*

infrastructure upgrades. 59 pedestrian related crashes were reported between 2011 and 2014. 25% of these crashes occurred on University Avenue (SH 29) and 9% occurred on Williams Drive.

## Demographics

### Median Household Income and Affordable Housing

Recent studies have shown that lower income neighborhoods experience higher pedestrian crashes. These increased pedestrian safety concerns can be linked to an increase in pedestrian activity and lacking pedestrian infrastructure. Median household income and location of affordable housing developments were reviewed as a metric.

### Population Density

Pedestrian activity increases in more urban areas with higher population densities.

## Special Considerations

Special considerations were included in the sidewalk prioritization methodology to capture unique factors impacting sidewalk prioritization that fall outside the categories defined above. This category allows inclusion of recommendations identified in previous City of Georgetown studies. It also incorporates feedback received through government and stakeholder meetings and feedback received in the public comment period.

### GISD Priorities

The planning team met with GISD Construction and Facilities at the onset of the project. GISD identified critical sidewalk needs adjacent to school facilities within the City of Georgetown.



*Several park facilities lack pedestrian infrastructure.*

### **Parks And Recreation Priorities**

The City of Georgetown Parks and Recreation Department identified important pedestrian routes to City trails and pocket parks in an early planning meeting. These priorities were input to the prioritization matrix.

### **2001 Sidewalk Study**

The 2001 Sidewalk Study identified both Phase 1 and Phase 2 sidewalk projects. Several of these projects have been completed since 2001. Sidewalk facilities recommended, but not installed, since the initial study were given additional weight for consideration.

### **Downtown Master Plan**

The Downtown Master Plan identified prioritized pedestrian routes. These routes were given additional weight in the development of new projects.

### **Public Input**

The residents of Georgetown are most familiar with the conditions of the existing

network and pedestrian needs. Public input received through Open House I, Open House II, email and the project website were incorporated into the prioritization process.

### **Sidewalk Gaps**

Sidewalk “gaps” were identified as missing sidewalk segments, less than 200’ in length, that will provide connectivity between existing pedestrian infrastructure when completed. The location of facilities with sidewalk gaps may not have highest priority; however, completing these gaps will provide for quick and relatively easy upgrades to the current sidewalk system.

## **PRIORITIZATION TOOL**

The prioritization tool assigned a score to each sidewalk segment within the City of Georgetown based on their relation to each element described above. The four major categories were each weighted as follows:

- **Pedestrian Attractors.** Sidewalks were assigned points based on their proximity to pedestrian attractors (within 1/4 and 1/8 mile). A distance of 1/4 mile is commonly considered an acceptable walking distance to a pedestrian attractor. Sidewalk segments were then weighted between the various attractors based on the public input received in Public Open House 1.
- **Pedestrian Safety.** Points were assigned to sidewalks on arterials and collectors based on higher volumes and speeds of vehicles experienced on these roadways. The final pedestrian safety score was based on both the functional classification of adjacent streets and pedestrian-automobile crash history.
- **Demographics.** Sidewalks within areas



with high population density and areas with lower incomes were prioritized. The proximity of affordable housing developments was also considered for a final demographics score.

- **Special Considerations.** Each special consideration was documented to ensure input from the public, stakeholders and previous City planning efforts were equally considered.

Ultimately, each of the four major categories were weighted and a final ranking score was assigned to each segment. A detailed prioritization matrix is provided in the appendix. Sidewalk segment priority rankings ranged from 0 to 73 points. Initial output from the prioritization tool did not consider existing sidewalk conditions. The priority ranking for each sidewalk segment was compared with the existing conditions analysis to develop a prioritized project list.

Analysis results from the prioritization methodology identified individual sidewalk

segments. These segments were then grouped with adjacent sidewalk needs to provide sidewalk “projects”. Through this grouping, the sidewalk projects are better able to provide a connected, destination-oriented sidewalk project list.

## PRIORITIZATION RESULTS

Three tiers of projects were identified through the analysis: Priority 1, Priority 2 and Priority 3. Through the analysis process, sidewalk segments with 40 or greater points were considered Priority 1 and 2 projects. Segments with 30 to 40 points were considered Priority 3 projects.

### Priority 1 Projects

The Priority 1 Projects are anticipated to be completed in a 10-year timeframe with potential funding from a \$10 million bond program, pending approval by City Council and authorization from City residents in a potential May 2015 referendum. If the

**Table 8. Priority 1 Projects and Preliminary Costs**

Priority	Location	Description	Estimated Fee
1	Citywide	APS Signal Upgrades	\$710,000
1	Citywide	Ramp and Crosswalk Upgrades at Signals	\$150,000
1	Citywide	Accessible Routes to Government Facilities	\$200,000
1	Downtown Overlay District	Accessibility Repairs	\$1,730,000
1	Downtown Overlay District	New Sidewalks and Curb Ramps	\$1,890,000
1	Old Town Northeast	New Sidewalk and Curb Ramps, Sidewalk and Curb Ramp Repairs	\$1,180,000
1	SH 29 Central	New Sidewalk and Curb Ramps, Sidewalk and Curb Ramp Repairs	\$2,070,000
1	2nd St.	New Sidewalk and Curb Ramps, Sidewalk and Curb Ramp Repairs	\$410,000
1	South Austin Avenue	New Sidewalk and Curb Ramps, Sidewalk and Curb Ramp Repairs	\$370,000
1	Old Town Southeast	New Sidewalk and Curb Ramps, Sidewalk and Curb Ramp Repairs	\$1,470,000

referendum is not successful, the project team recommends budget administrators appropriate funds to cover Priority 1 projects across the same 10-year timeframe as the Master Plan through the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) process. Priority 1 sidewalk projects and estimated costs are presented in Table 8.

In addition to the priority projects identified through this process, three other pedestrian accessibility projects were identified. Descriptions of each project follow.

### Citywide Signals

The City of Georgetown currently operates and maintains 18 traffic signals with four additional signals planned within the city limits. TxDOT operates and maintains 37 additional signals within the city limits. Safe pedestrian crossings at signalized

intersections can be accomplished through traffic signal equipment, signing, striping and ADA-compliant curb ramps.

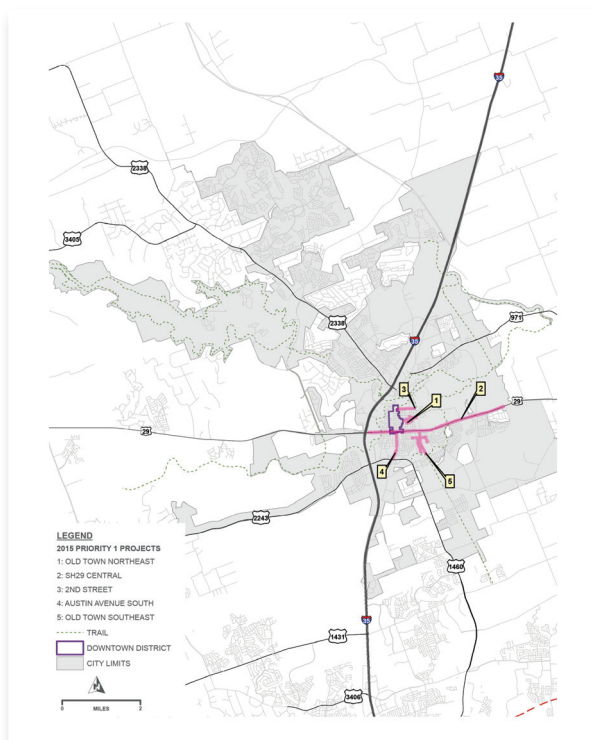
Accessible Pedestrian Signal (APS) units are audible push-button units with speech message capability and audible locator tones. These units are required by federal law when traffic signals are modified or upgraded. It is recommended that upgrades to existing pedestrian signal equipment be included as a Priority 1 project. During the APS upgrades, pedestrian curb ramps at signalized intersections should be brought to ADA-compliance. This includes repair of non-functional ramps and crosswalks.

The recommended Priority 1 project includes upgrades at all City operated and maintained traffic signals. While not included as part of the Priority 1 projects, improvements to TxDOT signals could be achieved through partnership between the two agencies.

### Accessible Routes To Government Facilities

Through a separate project, 16 City-operated facilities were reviewed for ADA compliance. These reviews included an evaluation of pedestrian routes between provided parking spaces and building entrances. Several of these routes did not meet ADA-compliance. Ramp repairs, new parking space signing and striping, addition of handrails and removal of protruding objects are included in this Priority 1 Project to provide fully accessible routes.

The following additional six projects were identified as Priority 1 Projects through the prioritization methodology.



*Recommended Priority 1 Projects in the City.*