Takoma Park City Council Meeting – March 10, 2021
Agenda Item 1

Presentation
Complete Safe Streets Committee Recommendations on Traffic Calming and Sidewalks

Recommended Council Action
Provide feedback and direction.

Context with Key Issues
The City Council reestablished the Safe Roadways Committee as the Complete Safe Streets Committee by Ordinance 2019-15 to advise and assist the Council on transportation-related issues including, but not limited to, pedestrian and bicycle facilities and safety, traffic issues, and transit services.

When the Committee presented recommendations to Council in spring, 2020, the Council requested the Committee provide more detail regarding procedures, priorities and criteria for the recommendations.

Committee co-chairs, Jessica Landman and Emanuel Wagner, and Committee member David Cookson will present the Committee recommendations.

Council Priority
A Livable Community for All; Engaged, Responsive & Service-oriented Government

Environmental Impact of Action
Actions that increase the safety and convenience of alternative means of travel will expand the range of choices individuals make about their mobility, thereby decreasing reliance on single-occupancy vehicles.

Fiscal Impact of Action
N/A

Racial Equity Impact of Action
Data indicates that racial disparities exist regionally regarding use of, and reliance on, various options for mobility. For instance, ridership on WMATA and Ride On buses is disproportionately people of color. Procedures that increase equity in providing safe and convent options may expand the reasonable choices that residents can make regarding their needs.

Attachments and Links
Report: How to Prioritize Traffic Calming and Sidewalk Installations - Recommendations of the Complete Safe Streets Committee, January 2021

Prepared by: Rosalind Grigsby, Community Development Manager Posted: 2021-03-03
Approved by: Suzanne R. Ludlow, City Manager

Webpage: Complete Safe Streets Committee

Prepared by: Rosalind Grigsby, Community Development Manager Posted: 2021-03-03
Approved by: Suzanne R. Ludlow, City Manager

Recommendations of the Complete Safe Streets Committee to the City Council:

HOW TO PRIORITIZE TRAFFIC CALMING AND SIDEWALK INSTALLATIONS

Takoma Park - Complete Safe Streets Committee

JANUARY 2021

Contents

Summary

The Committee has developed a set of recommendations we believe are necessary for informed decision making and prioritization.

Additional information and tools needed to provide data for an informed decision:

1. Creation of an inventory of City sidewalks in GIS starting with the 2009 GIS data from Toole Design Group. City staff currently use an excel spreadsheet. Updating the GIS file would take an estimated one week to compete by a skilled GIS staff person.
2. Creation of a GIS-based inventory of current traffic calming installations, including, but not limited to, stop signs, speed bumps, traffic circles, one-way streets, bike lanes, etc. Data appears difficult to access.
3. Creation of an overlay of the inventory of *community-requested* traffic calming and sidewalk installations.
4. Creation of an overlay of the inventory of *staff-recommended* traffic calming and sidewalk installations.
5. Publication of the maps on the city page.

Once you these tools are in place, the city will be better able to view pending projects and gain a better understanding of unmet needs and expenditures. The size/cost of the backlog will provide insight into the level of needed prioritizing – if everything can get done in a short time then prioritization is less important.

Trigger consideration of installation:

The CSSC presented recommendations in the spring of 2020 to the Takoma Park City Council. The Council requested the committee to provide more detail regarding criteria and prioritization. The committee believes a request should simply trigger consideration, as a starting point for this process. Following are our recommendations for process, criteria, and prioritization.

Spring 2020 Recommendations

Procedural Consistency:

Make the process the same for requesting traffic calming and sidewalk installation.

Procedural simplification and equity:

The process for requesting action should reduce the burden on residents seeking safer streets or improved mobility. To that end, consider (a) removing the requirement for a petition, or (b) the following reforms:

- Reduce the percentage of residents required for triggering consideration.
- Add new simplified options for triggering consideration, such as creating a simplified request form with which someone can:
    - Ask a council member, who would either give them the simplified request form or fill it out for them.
    - Ask a designated city staff member, who could either give them the simplified request form or fill it out for them.
    - Allow city staff on own initiative to complete a simplified request form.

- Appeal to city in case of denial (petition) with a small number of interested parties (not one single resident)

Transparent and evidence-based decision making to enhance equitable results:

To be equitable, make the criteria and basis for decision about where/whether to adopt traffic calming or sidewalk installation data-driven and evidence-based.

Spell out the criteria that will be applied to any request/proposal, so that people can see in advance what criteria will be applied and decisions can be transparently and readily explained/ justified. They can then use the criteria to fill in the simplified request form.

Consider using a point / rating system based on appropriate factors such as volume of complaints; volume of pedestrians/cars/bikes usage; accident/near miss data; proximity to schools or school walking routes; inputs from relevant experts like crossing guards, police, and emergency services; PTA concerns.

Traffic data proactively evaluated:

Takoma Park Police's recorded accident data needs to be merged with County data so that the full scope of accidents can be considered in evaluating proposals. Additional consultation between Public Works and TP Police regarding observational accident and safety data should also be considered, as well as predictive models under development by Parks and Planning (Vision Zero Predictive Planning Model) or other data sources as available.

Community engagement in decision and design:

If a request or city-initiated proposal meets the criteria for action and scores high enough to merit action, the City should have a predictable process for *posted notification* at proposed site and for *community consultation* at or near the site so that neighbors can easily learn about and offer feedback on proposals.

Creative Approach to achieving Enhanced Mobility:

Change the current language for 'speed hump" policy to be 'traffic calming' or 'mobility/safety' measures; requesters should call for action using viable options, and not necessarily be asked to or encouraged to specify which measures to install/remove.

Be Proactive in Evaluating Measures Holistically:

Consideration of large area scope approach vs. individual measures for problem streets/neighborhoods offers opportunities to avoid pushing a problem from one street to another; act systematically to avoid ripple effects.

Be Innovative and Cost Conscious:

There is a broad array of low-cost options for traffic calming and mobility enhancement. Be more creative and inclusive in considering them to enable the City to satisfy more requests that meet the transparent criteria.

Be specific and wise about the budget available for mobility measures and how it is spent:

There should be an annual budget that can be seen by all. Where multiple less expensive actions have to be weighed against fewer more costly options, there should be an open and

transparent process for selecting among these options with extra consideration given to underserved populations and neighborhoods.

To set priorities:

Priorities should be data-driven and have a racial equity lens. We therefore propose the city council:

- Use the overall criteria laid out in the Toole report (which was primarily focused on ADA compliance, but is generally applicable to traffic calming and sidewalk installation).
- Review and adjust the weighting of these criteria based on experiences of other jurisdictions and active city policy/guidelines.
- Reducing the weight of 'public input' and increasing the weight of other criteria, foremost 'racial equity'.

No substitute or shortcut for outreach and education

- Affected residents need to be kept informed and be consulted, early on in the process.
- City staff and elected officials are responsible for initiating outreach to residents and businesses, as well as responding to requesters within a pre-determined reasonable period of time.
- A variety of methods should be used to reach affected residents, and to gather their input (e.g., posted signs, emails, virtual and in-person meetings, social media, local paper, and local communication platforms. All communications should be accessible and strive to be translated to meet resident communication needs.)

Criteria for prioritizing sidewalks

Presented below are two tables outlining criteria for prioritization of sidewalk requests. Criteria are weighted to yield a score in which to rate the sidewalk requests. Two options are presented, a one-stage process and a two-stage process. In both processes, a high score equates to higher priority, greater need.

Stage 1

Criteria for Prioritizing Sidewalks - Single Stage Process					
Criteria Number	**Criteria Name**	**Weighting Factor**	**0-10 (Max Score 70)**	**Weighted Score**	How to score. Each criteria is scored on a 1 to 10 scale, cost score is scored on a 0,5,10 scale.
1	Safety	25%	10	25	Does the project mitigate the actual or potential risks of death or injury? Projects that mitigate in hot spot locations (i.e. sites with high incidence of speeding, aggressive driving violations, pedestrian and bike injuries), or road sections with speed limits above 35 MPH, or with prevailing speeds above limits, using advice from police as well as accident reports since incident reports are not filed for minor accidents) get a higher score.
2	School Access	15%	10	15	Does the project mitigate a gap in the sidewalk network in a school walk zone, projects that address gaps in the direct path score higher than projects that are not in the direct path or provide redundancy.
3	Transit Access	15%	10	15	Does the project provide access to a transit facility from the nearest intersection? New access scores higher than upgrades to existing facilities.
4	Key Destinations	10%	10	10	Does the project provide access to schools, parks, houses of worship, groceries, medical offices, commercial centers? The larger the user numbers for the facility served, the greater the score.
5	Public Input	10%	10	10	Project with high number of requests/support would score higher.
6	Equity	15%	10	15	Enhances mobility for lower income/ higher minority Takoma Park wards, and focusing on higher density/low auto access areas within those wards (This criterion may require refinement and should be refined so that it can use existing databases wherever feasible) Suggest using the concept of 'vulnerable populations index', as developed by regional planning agencies. This would need to be refined to be more granular for the city. See https //bmc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=b1e22c0caa7644ccb58484b00610712f) We recommend giving this criterion a significantly higher weight to redress existing/past inequities and serve underserved areas of the city better.
7	Cost	10%	10	10	Projects with low cost to implement get a higher score. Staff will need to asses the level of utility relocation, ROW and Environmental impacts and assign a combined score. None-10, Minor-5, Major-0.
	Score	**100%**	**70**	**100**	

Stage 2

Criteria for Prioritizing Sidewalks - Two Stage Process					
Stage 1					
Criteria Number	**Criteria Name**	**Weighting Factor**	**0-10 (Max Score 60)**	**Weighted Score**	How to score: Each criteria is scored on a 1 to 10 scale, then weighted. Cost score is scored on a 0,5,10 scale.
1	Safety	25%	10	25	spot locations (i.e. sites with high incidence of speeding, aggressive driving violations, pedestrian and bike injuries), or road sections with speed limits above 35 MPH, or with prevailing speeds above limits, using advice from police as well as accident reports since incident reports are not filed for minor accidents) get a higher score.
2	School Access	20%	10	20	Does the project mitigate a gap in the sidewalk network in a school walk zone? Projects that address gaps in the direct path score higher than projects that are not in the direct path or provide redundancy.
3	Transit Access	15%	10	15	Does the project provide access to a transit facility from the nearest intersection? New access scores higher than upgrades to existing faciltities.
4	Key Destinations	15%	10	15	Does the project provide access to schools, parks, houses of worship, groceries, medical offices, commercial centers? The larger the user numbers for the facility served, the greater the score.
5	Public Input	10%	10	10	Project with high number of requests/support would score higher.
6	Equity	15%	10	15	density/low auto access areas within those wards (This criterion may require refinement and should be refined so that it can use existing databases wherever feasible) Suggest using the concept of 'vulnerable populations index', as developed by regional planning agencies. This would need to be refined to be more granular for the city. See https //bmc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=b1e22c0caa7644ccb58484b00610712f) We recommend giving this criterion a significantly higher weight to redress existing/past inequities and
	Score	**100%**	**60**	**100**	
Stage 2					
	Utility Relocation	None-10, Minor-5, Major-0.	5		This allows a more refined approach to costs. Projects with low cost to implement get a higher score. Staff will need to asses the level of utility relocation, ROW and Environmental impacts and assign a score for reach factor.
	ROW Need		10		
	Environmental Impacts		10		
	Total Project Score		**125**		

For Reference

Sidewalk and Traffic Calming Criteria Development

Summary

The Subgroup of the CSSC was tasked to develop initial criteria for review by the full CSSC on a data driven approach for both traffic calming and sidewalk improvements across the city. Based on the discussion with Jennifer Toole, whose company developed a sidewalk assessment and ADA compliance plan in 2009, it is clear that sidewalk development has been a priority in some areas, but it is not clear that the data from the Toole Design group is being used by city staff. The group finds the following:

Sidewalks

1. Inventory of sidewalks across Takoma Park

   The city has a GIS file, developed by Toole Design, that outlines the 2009 status of sidewalk inventory across the entire city. While the data set is 11 years old, it is fully editable and is available to city staff to be updated to reflect current inventory. See Appendix A.

2. Development of criteria

   A catalogue of 7 different criteria was developed by Toole Design, each of which follows a point system, which then is weighted on priorities, see Appendix B.

   This template ought to be updated but can easily be used as a starting point. Transit access and cost could be elevated while public input could be reduced to reflect this committee's desire to be more metric driven and less "squeaky-wheel" driven.

   The assignment of point values would have to be further developed, perhaps by City planning staff, to provide a specific set of criteria. Toole used a standard set of criteria; e.g., for equity factors the following were used: locations of minority population, locations of transit, 0-car households.

   Toole conducted such an assessment for the city and identified three tiers based on priority for sidewalk and ADA installation. Appendix C shows that prioritization, but also includes the need for ADA improvements with need for sidewalks in general.

3. Next Steps

   The CSSC would be happy to assist city staff to:

   - update this inventory,
   - update the criteria for sidewalk installation, and
   - reassess the prioritization of sidewalk installation across the city, especially in previously under-served neighborhoods, and recognizing the eventual arrival of the Purple Line and related changes in walking patterns in the city.

   The committee recommends that the City make the sidewalk tool and the data inputs publicly available, so residents can see where their street resides in terms of priority (and why!).

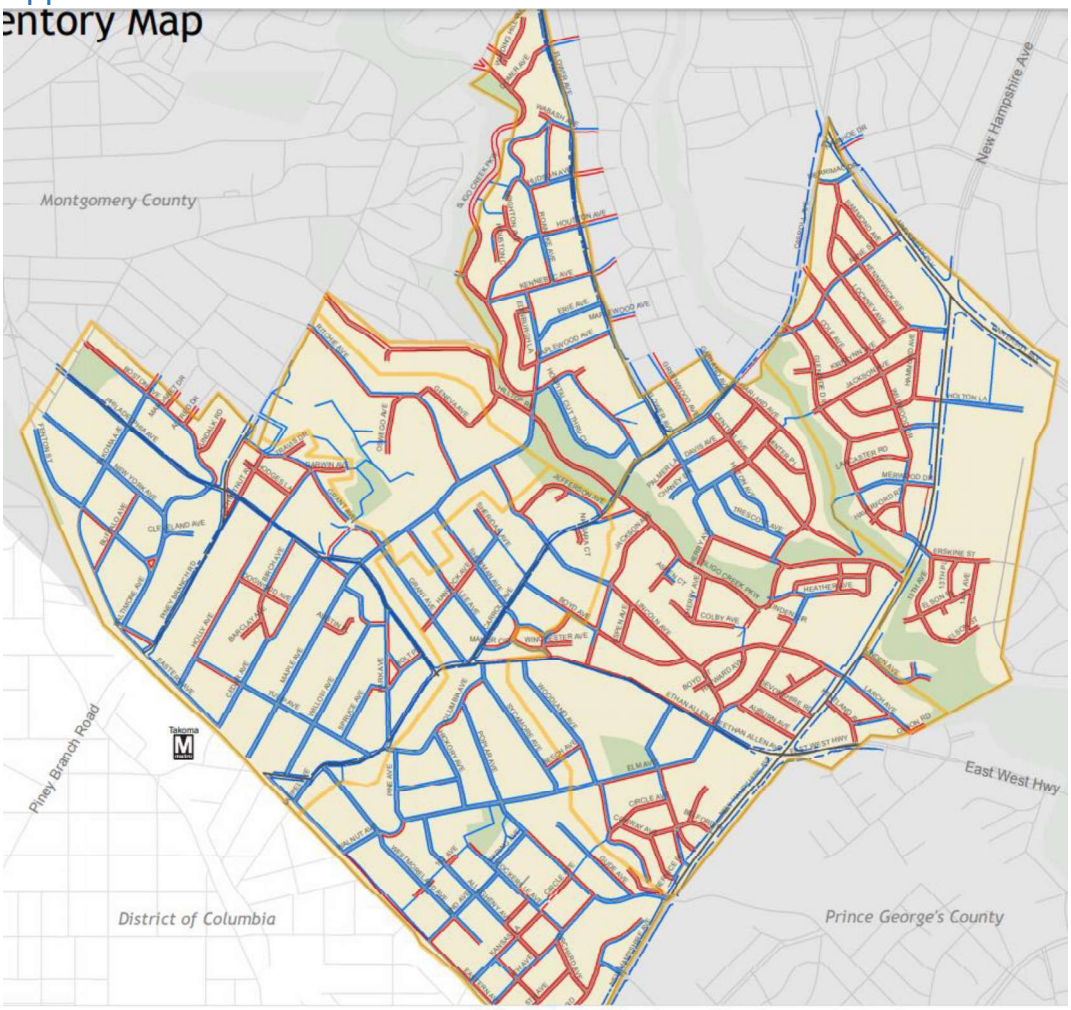
A review these recommendations for sidewalk installation might be warranted in future, if it becomes evident that sidewalk installation has been completed on most streets already. Moving away from a petition-based process, or reducing its importance in decision-making, may improve the equity of sidewalk placement.

Traffic calming

1. Inventory
    a. There does not seem to be an inventory of traffic calming measures across the city, nor a study to determine traffic patterns, speed and volume. Only safety related information (accident data) is available.
2. Development of criteria
    a. Similar to the sidewalk criteria, traffic calming criteria need to be developed. An example that might be adapted as a model is from Coral Gables, Florida (https://www.coralgables.com/trafficcalming). A score of 10 is their threshold for calming, see Appendix D.
    b. City staff could amend this in light of local traffic volume and speed and their ability to measure it. Also, the CSSC and City staff might consider whether these criteria are sufficiently holistic, for example consideration of pedestrian volume, and are weighted appropriately to meet our goals.

Appendix

Appendix A



Appendix B

Figure 1 - Template for a Criteria-Scoring-Weighing Tool

Appendix C

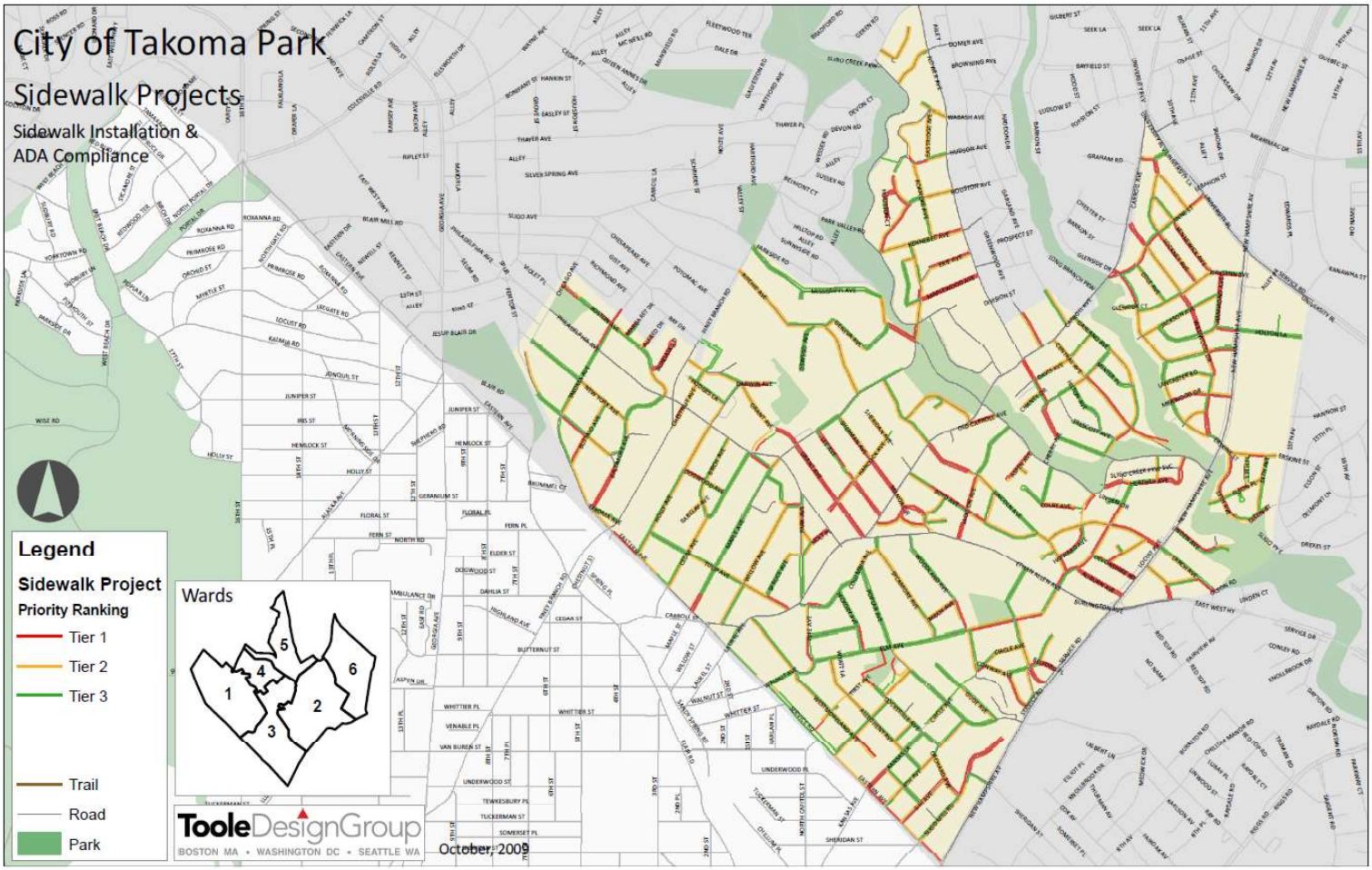


Figure 2 - 2009 Prioritization of Sidewalk Installation in the City

Appendix D

	Narrow Residential Local Street	Residential Local Street	Residential Local Collector Street	Points
Daily Volume	0 to 500 VPD	0 to 1,000 VPD	0 to 2,000 VPD	0
	501 to 750 VPD	1,001 to 1,250 VPD	2,001 to 2,500 VPD	1
	751 to 1,100 VPD	1,251 to 1,750 VPD	2,501 to 3,000 VPD	2
	1,101 to 1,700 VPD	1,751 to 2,500 VPD	3,001 to 4,000 VPD	3
	1,701 to 2,300 VPD	2,501 to 3,000 VPD	4,001 to 5,000 VPD	4
	> 2,300 VPD	> 3,000 VPD	5,001 to 8,000 VPD	5
85th Percentile Speed	0 to 1.0 MPH > speed limit			0
	1.1 to 2.0 MPH > speed limit			1
	2.1 to 3.0 MPH > speed limit			2
	3.1 to 4.0 MPH > speed limit			3
	4.1 to 5.0 MPH > speed limit			4
	5.1 to 6.0 MPH > speed limit			5
	6.1 to 7.0 MPH > speed limit			6
	7.1 to 8.0 MPH > speed limit			7
	8.1 to 9.0 MPH > speed limit			8
	9.1 to 10.0 MPH > speed limit			9
	> 10.0 MPH > speed limit			10
Presence of Pedestrian Facilities	Both sides			0
	One side			1.5
	None			3
Pedestrian Generators	Schools within 0.5 mile (each)			1
	Parks within 0.5 mile (each)			0.5
	Transit lines with stops within 0.5 mile (each)			0.5
Driveway Density	≥ 10 Driveways per 500 feet (Circular driveways should be considered as one)			1
Number of correctable crashes	≥ 3 per year		≥ 6 per year	5