TRAIL & SIDEWALK DEVELOPMENT TECHNICAL BULLETIN

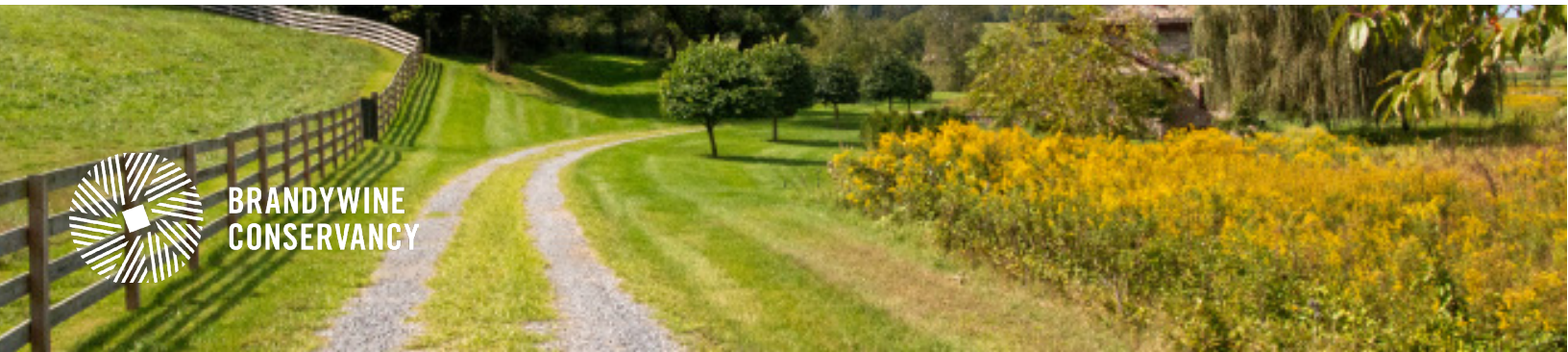
Trail development criteria are generally codified within a municipality's Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO). These standards establish expectations for trail alignment, required surface treatments, minimum widths, and associated amenities such as landscaping, lighting, benches, and refuse receptacles. They also define permitted modes of recreation and transportation, including walking, bicycling, equestrian use, e bikes, and scooters, and assign responsibility for long term maintenance. Collectively, these regulations safeguard public welfare and support a connected, multimodal transportation network that serves both local residents and regional users.

During the Subdivision or Land Development review process, applicants are typically obligated to integrate public improvements into their plans. These improvements may include open space dedication, erosion and sediment control measures, and pedestrian infrastructure. A municipality may require sidewalks on both sides of newly constructed streets within residential subdivisions. Comparable standards often apply to nonresidential development, mandating sidewalks along internal roadways and parking facilities to enhance pedestrian mobility and reduce conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians.

This technical bulletin summarizes the process and key elements involved in the adoption of amended language to a Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance seeking the implementation of public infrastructure. While the purpose and benefits are similar in Delaware, the development and acceptance process may vary, due to the differences in the structure of local government.

BENEFITS

- Increasing Safety: The expansion of transportation infrastructure enhances mobility opportunities for individuals of all ages, abilities, and skill levels. Through appropriate facility design and comprehensive public engagement, communities can achieve meaningful reductions in pedestrian and bicycle incidents.
- Alternative Transportation Opportunity: Providing pedestrian and cyclist routes gives residents additional ways to reach local and regional goods and services, beyond recreational use. Expanding these alternative transportation options helps reduce the number of single occupancy vehicles on the road. With fewer cars, traffic congestion can decrease, leading to shorter travel times.
- Enhancing Public Health: Improved access to active transportation gives residents of all ages and abilities more chances to be outdoors, strengthening community health and wellness.
- Supporting the Local Economy: Expanding existing and potential networks that



connect neighborhoods to downtown areas improves access to jobs and commercial spaces, bolstering the vitality and economy of a community.

- Increasing Access and Mobility: Not everyone has access to a vehicle or the ability to drive. By expanding opportunities for active transportation, more people can safely reach essential destinations—jobs, grocery stores, and healthcare—at little to no cost.
- Improving Air Quality: Active transportation is a zero emission way to travel, avoiding greenhouse gas emissions. Adding more trails, sidewalks, paths, and bike lanes decreases the need for single use car trips and motivates residents to use cleaner, alternative transportation options.

MISCONCEPTIONS

- **Not a Requirement of Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance:** These provisions are not mandated for municipalities under their SALDO. Rather, they serve as an optional mechanism that municipalities may use to encourage the development of trails and sidewalks. By offering these incentives, municipalities can expand alternative transportation options, close gaps within the existing trail network, and enhance recreational opportunities for local residents.

WHAT CAN BE INCLUDED

Sidewalk and Trail provisions are not a requirement in the Pennsylvania Municipalities Code (MPC).

Features identified in SALDO's throughout Chester County include:

- Requirement for sidewalk to be designed and constructed following criteria of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA)



A sidewalk in Marshallton, with pedestrian crosswalk for safety of users.

- Requirement for sidewalk to be designed and constructed following criteria of PennDOT's Publication 408.
- Requirement for sidewalks, paths or trails during any subdivision or land development process, for residential or nonresidential development.
- Minimum width for sidewalk or path.
- Surface material for sidewalk or path.
    - Poured concrete.
    - Asphalt.
    - Permeable pavers.
    - Boardwalk.
    - Natural surface or gravel.
    - Wood chips.
- Location of sidewalk or path. Municipalities often require sidewalks on both sides of the street in a residential subdivision plan. In the case of nonresidential land development, sidewalks are often not required.
- Slope sidewalks toward the street to establish a gradient into the proposed driveways or the subdivision or land development plan.
- Grade of sidewalks for safety when walking in between sidewalks and driveways.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- An adopted Comprehensive Plan should recommend strategies incentivizing sidewalk, trail or path development during the subdivision and land development processes.
- Robust public engagement and education should be included during development to address goals and objectives, along with misconceptions about the term “active transportation” throughout this process. It can be helpful to engage property owners, business owners and other community stakeholders early in the process. Proactive transparency is key.
- Amendments to a SALDO Plans typically takes 8 to 12 months to develop.
- Financial and technical support may be offered through county planning commissions.

ENABLING LEGISLATION

Pennsylvania and Delaware Planning Code

Provisions for sidewalk development in a municipal SALDO is not a requirement in the Pennsylvania Municipalities Code (MPC) or Delaware State Code.

EXAMPLES

Chester County

- *Tredyffrin Township*
  - Requires pedestrian amenities, sidewalks, crosswalks, paths and trails in ever subdivision and land development plan application.
  - Sidewalks are to be designed and constructed with the criteria in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- *Upper Uwchlan Township*
  - Requires that subdivision and land development plan applicants continue trail for pedestrian or equestrian recreational usage, if it abuts an existing trail or path.
  - No trail may be designed for motorized vehicles.
- *West Goshen Township*
  - Sidewalks are requred for all subdivisions or land developments, for residential and nonresidential development.
  - Sidewalks must be constructed with consistency of standards from PennDOT Publication 408.

Delaware County

- *Chadds Ford Township*
  - Sidewalks are required along new streets in any subdivision or land development plan where the lot sizes are 1 acre or less or for multifamily residential development.
  - Sidewalks must be constructed with consistency of standards from PennDOT Publication 408.
- *Newtown Township*
  - Sidewalks are generally required for nonresidential and commercial areas, with waivers for low-density residential areas.



A paver path in Marshallton allowing pedestrians to walk downtown as an alternative mode of transportation.

- *Radnor Township*
    - Sidewalks and pedestrian paths are to minimize pedistrian-vehicle conflict.
    - Minimum width of all sidewalks and paths is 4 feet.
    - Sidewalks and paths require lighting.

Montgomery County

- *Horsham Township*
    - Sidewalks should be provided alogn all collector, local and cul-de-sac classified streets and along major and mino arterial classified streets, unless safety concern is presented and accepted by the Board of Supervisors.
- *Lower Merion Township*
    - Sidewalks, along with other pedestrian amenities, are required along all exisiting and proposed public and private streets, common driveways, and common parking areas.
    - Off-road pedestrian pathways may be constructed if natural features and physical constraints prohibit sidewalk construction.

DEVELOPMENT AND ADOPTION

Identify Goals

- Determine the purpose, features for implementation, such as location, surface materials, width, amenities (landscaping, lighting, trash receptacles, benches, etc.), permitted recreational uses (bicycling, equestrian activities, walking, e bikes, scooters, and more), and long term maintenance responsibilities.

Preliminary Steps

- Identify a budget and potential funding sources.
- Determine Responsible Body: Determine whether the governing body will oversee this process or if it will be delegated to the Planning Commission or a project task force.
- Technical Support: Determine if a consultant will be needed to support the development of the ordinance provisions.

Identify Features to be Mapped

- Determine the most critical features to include within the ordinance. These features should be well documented in the Comprehensive Plan and other Township planning documents.

Draft Ordinance

- The ordinance should clarify the intent and purpose of the sidewalk and paths provisions, specifying requirements for the different subdivision and land development processes, including during the sketch plan, preliminary land development plan and final plan stages.
- A planning consultant or the Township Solicitor should assist with producing the draft ordinance.

Landowner Outreach

- Engaging landowners, business owners and other community stakeholders early in the process is essential for promoting transparency, fostering a clear understanding of the process, and developing support for the plan's goals.



The Chester County Active Transportation Plan (2020) reviews the existing Zoning and Subdivision and Land Development ordinances related to transportation in all 73 Chester County municipalities.

- Holding dedicated meetings with designated stakeholders and the public provides an opportunity for them to ask questions and fosters open dialogue between residents and the municipality, especially if such communication has not yet been established.

Public Review and Input

- For zoning or subdivision and land development ordinance amendments or adoptions, the MPC requires a 45-day review period, providing opportunity for County Planning Commission and surround municipal review.
- The draft ordinance should also be available for public review prior to adoption.

Adoption

- Once the 45-day review period (Act 247) is over and comments are collected, the municipality is required to hold a Public Hearing prior to adoption.
- If the Public Hearing does not lead to any changes or only minor corrections to the ordinance, the governing body can proceed with adopting the floodplain management provisions, contingent on any minor corrections.
- If significant revisions are proposed, such as substantial additions or deletions of features, a new Act 247 Review and Public Hearing should be conducted before adoption.
- Upon completion of the public hearing, the governing body may vote to adopt the ordinance.
- Within 30 days of adoption, the ordinance must be sent to the surrounding municipalities.
- After adoption, the ordinance must be submitted to the county recorder of deeds within 60 days of acceptance.



Credit: Above Ground Level Droneworks
Sidewalk development inbetween residential and nonresidential districts.

Next Steps

- Amend existing ordinances to reflect and reference the sidewalk and path development provisions.
- Update the online version of the municipalities zoning ordinance to include the new/amended subdivision and land development provisions either on the Township's website or on eCode.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania - Department of Transportation Publication 408*