

Resident Guidelines for Requesting New Sidewalks

The Lexington Sidewalk Committee offers the following guidelines to help interested citizens successfully engage in the process of requesting new sidewalks. Other venues for new sidewalk construction do exist, but they generally involve external funding where the entire project is handled through Town Engineering Division. In either case, this is a lengthy process that can take several years and requires input from numerous town boards and committees. At any point along the process, the petitioners may drop their request for a sidewalk or the project may lose the support of committees, abutters, and Town Meeting.

It should be noted that the Sidewalk Committee's charge regarding proposed new sidewalk installations is to make recommendations to the Board of Selectmen. Town Engineering makes recommendations on the location for any new installation. The Board of Selectmen makes the final decision regarding new sidewalk installation.

1. Review existing references for Lexington Complete Streets (<http://bostoncompletestreets.org>) and Lexington Safe Routes To School programs (<http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/state/srts-in-your-state/massachusetts>) in order to better understand new sidewalk construction accepted criteria.

2. Download a copy of the New Sidewalk Request Form from the Town Website (<http://www.lexingtonma.gov/committees/sidewalk/NewSidewalkRequestFormAug2011.pdf>) or pick-up a copy at the Selectmen's office. Contact the Sidewalk Committee at sidewalkcmte@lexingtonma.gov to arrange a meeting for a preliminary discussion. At this first meeting, only a few petitioners need be present to outline the request. If the project seems feasible, the Committee will work with residents and town departments to initiate the process and serve as a point of contact for residents, be they for or against the project.

3. Complete Petition Form and collect signatures from as many neighbors in the area as possible. The petition should focus on pedestrian activity in the area, vehicular traffic, and potential connectivity to existing sidewalks and footpaths. Petitioners should try to contact all the abutters to the proposed sidewalk as well as residents in the wider neighborhood who might use the proposed sidewalk, making note of the number of attempts/date per household. An abutter's list can be obtained online from the Town's Geographic Information System (GIS) database by visiting <http://www.lexingtonma.gov/towngovernment/gis-maps.cfm> . If residents cannot get enough support from the neighbors in the area, the proposal should be dropped until enough support can be gathered.

4. Schedule a second meeting with the Sidewalk Committee to discuss the request in more detail. The petitioners should take on the task of performing due diligence in communicating this meeting to abutters both for and against the project. Petitioners should bring a map of the proposed project area if available. This presentation will be a prelude for a similar presentation to be given at a Selectmen's meeting soon thereafter. At that time, the Selectmen will ask for the opinion of the Sidewalk Committee and then decide whether the project is to move forward.

5. Maintain contact with the Sidewalk Committee. The Sidewalk Committee will follow the process and will keep the petition organizers informed of the status of the request.

6. Be prepared to address Town Meeting. If the request for funding a feasibility study is brought forward at Town Meeting, the petitioners should be prepared to speak to explain the importance of having a sidewalk installed. (If the funding is not approved, the proposal will not move forward.)

7. Await completion of the study. The Town Engineering Division will coordinate the feasibility study and develop a cost estimate for the project. Once these are completed, the Selectmen and Town Meeting will determine if the project is feasible.

8. Attend the project-specific publicized meeting hosted by the Sidewalk Committee. While the Committee cannot hold a public hearing, it will advertise a public meeting for the sole purpose of petitioners making a public proposal presentation and to afford a platform to hear public opinion. An attempt to contact all abutters will be made by the Town Engineering Division.

9. Continue to gather neighborhood support. The petitioners should meet again with the Selectmen in order to gather and demonstrate public support for the project. It may also be necessary to again address Town Meeting to gain their support.

10. Anticipate funding. If Town Meeting approves funding for the design and construction of the sidewalk project, the project will be designed, bid out and scheduled for installation.