

# Sidewalk Requirements



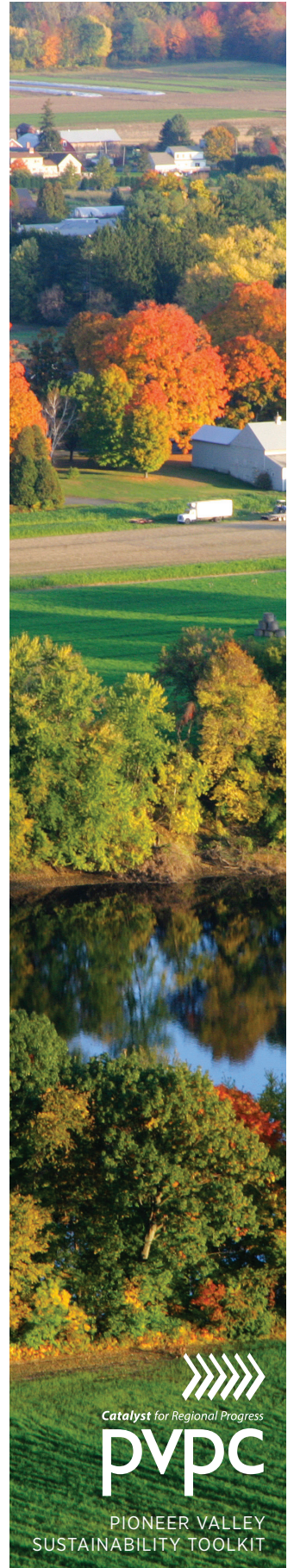
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## What are the objectives of sidewalk requirements?

Sidewalk requirements ensure that a community builds and maintains adequate facilities for pedestrians. Pedestrians of all physical abilities and ages need functional sidewalks to safely access goods and services, move freely, and get exercise while carrying out day-to-day activities. Furthermore, sidewalk requirements can promote an attractive streetscape--one that is in harmony with a community's natural, historic, and aesthetic features.

## Why do we need to encourage sidewalk requirements in our communities?

In 2012, there were 4,743 pedestrian fatalities and an estimated 76,000 pedestrian injuries in traffic crashes in the United States which equates to a pedestrian killed every 2 hours and injured every 7 minutes<sup>1</sup>. High quality sidewalks can improve the safety of pedestrians and reduce the number of pedestrian deaths and injuries. In addition, improving sidewalks encourages more pedestrian traffic which has numerous personal and community benefits. A recent study has noted that by increasing pedestrian traffic, pedestrians in turn become safer<sup>2</sup>. This is known as the safety in numbers hypothesis. As pedestrian traffic increases, deaths and injuries decline as motorists are more aware of pedestrians in the area. Pedestrians also contribute to eyes on the street which can reduce crime.



Sidewalks bring foot traffic to businesses, which can increase the value of real estate and improve a community's tax base. And finally, walking has numerous health benefits. Sidewalks are created in several ways. They may be created by a governmental body as part of road construction. They may be built by a private entity as part of a development project or subdivision. With the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, public entities are prohibited from designing new facilities or altering existing facilities--including sidewalks--without making them accessible to people with disabilities. However, communities can enact policies and regulations to speed implementation and fill gaps.

### **How do sidewalk requirements work?**

Sidewalk requirements may be incorporated into a municipality's zoning code and/or subdivision regulations, and/or design guidelines, and/or as an administrative policy. Sidewalk requirements include regulations on where sidewalks shall be constructed within the community. This should include a) Areas where there are not sidewalks in existence and where pedestrian traffic is not adequately accommodated by existing sidewalks; b) Areas where there is an opportunity to make connections between existing or proposed sidewalks; c) All new developments and redevelopment, construction or reconstruction; and, d) Areas where the health, welfare, and safety of the public require that adequate sidewalks be provided for public convenience, including safe routes for school children to and from educational facilities.

Sidewalk regulations include standards that specify the dimensions and layout of sidewalks. These standards include minimum width requirements in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, as well as slope and grade requirements, and standards that detail curb ramps, how to deal with intersections, driveway crossing, curb extension, crosswalk design, pedestrian signals, etc.

A pedestrian circulation plan may be required for all proposed subdivisions, site plan reviews and special permits. A pedestrian circulation plan includes a) The locations of streets and roads adjacent to the site and proposed roads within a site; b) The location of walkways, road, transit, parking infrastructure and all destination facilities; c) The links between sidewalks and pathways within the development to neighborhood destinations and existing sidewalks in the surrounding area; d) A description of estimated daily and peak-hour pedestrian trips to be generated by the site as well as the flow patterns for pedestrians showing adequate access to and from the site as well as circulation within the site; and, e) An interior traffic and pedestrian circulation plan designed to minimize conflicts and safety problems.

Within the subdivision rules and regulations a paragraph may be inserted in the Design Standards section to provide a direct way for the community to benefit. Requirements may include sidewalks on both sides of all public ways wherever topographically feasible, the inclusion of buffer strips and shade trees, and pedestrian and bicycle connections in cul-de-sac or oddly shaped blocks to enhance circulation. In areas where a sidewalk is limited to one side of the street, provisions may be made for the developer to install or repair an equal number of feet of sidewalk in another area of the community.

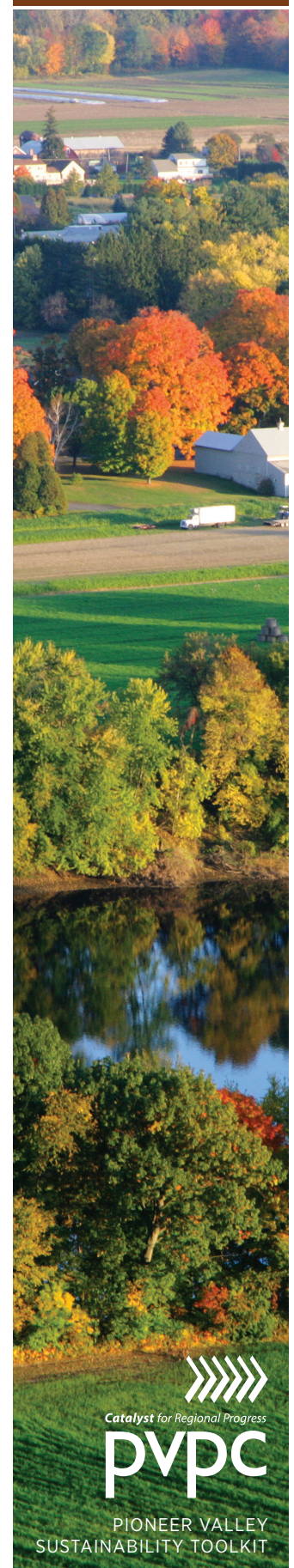
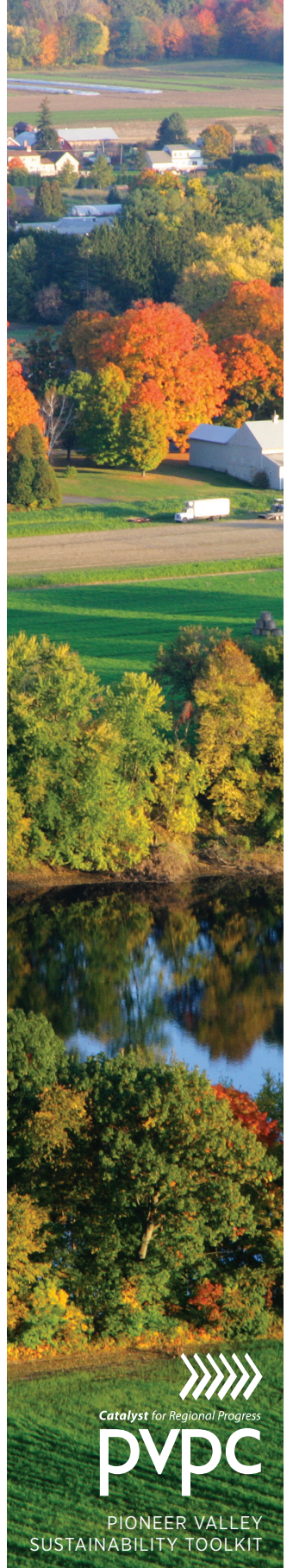




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### DID YOU KNOW...

That there were 62 pedestrian fatalities in Hampden County and 11 pedestrian fatalities in Hampshire County between 2003 and 2012. The vast majority of these fatalities occurred on roadways of 40 miles per hour and over. (Source: Smart Growth America, *Dangerous by Design* 2014)

## EXAMPLES FROM THE PIONEER VALLEY

Many communities in the Pioneer Valley have realized the benefit of encouraging walking through infrastructure improvements. The Town of Ludlow constructed sidewalks within a mile of every elementary school. With children walking to school the town revamped its crossing guard program and saved money on busing. With local funding sources in short supply, many communities have had to “get smart” when it comes to pedestrian improvements. To lower costs, East Longmeadow developed a prioritized sidewalk infrastructure improvement plan and began incorporating the cost of sidewalk improvements into larger roadway reconstruction projects. In the Forest Park neighborhood of Springfield, public works officials replaced painted crosswalks with new long wearing thermoplastic designs. While more expensive initially, the new crosswalks will last 5 times as long as painted crosswalks.

1 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. (2014). Traffic Safety Facts: 2012 Data. Retrieved from: <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Cats/listpublications.aspx?Id=A&ShowBy=DocType>

2 Jacobsen, P. (2003). “Safety in Numbers: More Walkers and Bicyclists, Safer Walking and Biking.” *Injury Prevention* (2003): 205-209.

A model bylaw or strategy is included in the Pioneer Valley Sustainability Toolkit.

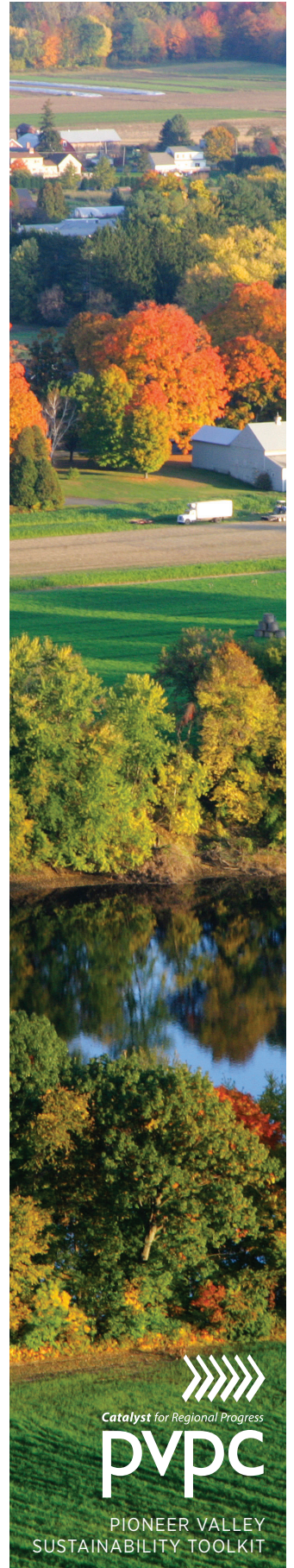
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