

WALKABILITY IN PAOLI

The public involvement process described in the previous section provided the basis for identifying physical and functional gaps in the pedestrian network in downtown Paoli. A sidewalk inventory of all streets in the study area was also conducted. Locations without sidewalks or with sidewalk obstacles were cataloged and considered for potential improvements. The walkability audit by Township staff and Study Committee members was particularly useful in identifying pedestrian challenges to be addressed.

As a result, potential improvements to walkability in Paoli were developed in four categories, described more fully below.

1. **Fix it first**
2. **Fill in the gaps**
3. **Bring in more people**
4. **Create a downtown**

The ultimate goal is to complete a network of Complete Streets in Paoli. Complete Streets are thoroughfares that accommodate all users – drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders – in a way that supports community vitality and livability.

1. Fix It First

The first of these categories focuses on small, low-cost, high-impact projects that ensure the existing pedestrian network is in good repair and accessible. Typical projects include sidewalk, curb ramp, and driveway upgrades.

As noted above, a sidewalk inventory was performed to identify sidewalk in need of maintenance or areas that are not accessible to all users, such as those in wheelchairs or pushing strollers. Items inventoried included sections of sidewalk in poor condition, non-accessible or non-existent curb ramps, and non-compliant driveways. A driveway is considered non-accessible when the portion of the driveway that also acts as the sidewalk has a cross-slope of greater than 2%. In order to flatten the cross-slope, the driveway reconstruction may need to extend behind the sidewalk. In areas of steeper existing driveway slopes, a tie in to existing grade may extend beyond the right-of-way and require a temporary construction easement.

The inventory also assessed sidewalk pinch points. A pinch point occurs when an obstacle such as a utility pole or mailbox is located in the sidewalk. Designing for all sidewalk users involves providing a clear width of at least 32 inches. In many cases it is more efficient and economical to extend the sidewalk around the object rather than move the object, especially for utility poles. An easement is generally required at locations where the sidewalk extends outside of the right-of-way.

Staff and the Study Committee recommended improvements in the following areas under this category. They are listed in random order, not by priority.

- Central Avenue from the western Township boundary to Bear Hill Road (SR 252)
- South Valley Road, Chestnut Road, and Darby Road
- US 30 (Lancaster Avenue)

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2. Fill In the Gaps

The second category is similar to the first, but addresses larger individual projects to address physical and functional gaps in the sidewalk network. A physical gap is a location where a segment of sidewalk is missing. A functional gap is a location where sidewalk exists, but is not accessible for all users in its current state.

Staff and the Study Committee recommended improvements in the following areas under this category, again listed in random order.

- Craig Avenue between South Valley Road and Darby Road.
- SR 252 at Greenlawn Road
- North Valley Road at Central Avenue

Building these sidewalk segments will essentially complete the central Paoli pedestrian network along major streets.

3. Bring In More People

The third category includes identifying missing network connections and expanding the sidewalk network in key areas. By expanding the existing network, more residents and transit users will have access to the Paoli business district. This category also includes recognizing the potential of existing informal connections. The installation of new sidewalks must be sensitive to the context of the area in order to gain community support.

Improvements were recommended by staff and the Study Committee in the following areas.

- Circular Avenue
- South Valley Road, Devon Road, and Darby Road

Public workshop attendees commented both for and against provision of sidewalks within residential neighborhoods. Staff and the Study Committee agreed that resources available for construction of sidewalks should be allocated to facilities that serve the community as a whole, especially in areas of mixed residential and non-residential land uses.



4. Create a Downtown

The goal of this final category is to make general recommendations beyond the scope of the pedestrian study, establishing urban design guidelines to better make Paoli a downtown. Redevelopment of the Paoli Transportation Center site, including relocation of the existing SEPTA station, provides an excellent catalyst for rethinking Paoli as a downtown. The guidelines below and previous pedestrian project recommendations should be considered for inclusion in the Paoli Transportation Center development agreement.

Much of the real estate in downtown Paoli consists of suburban-style commercial structures with large setbacks, parking between the sidewalk and the building, and poor pedestrian connections to the surrounding community. Over time, as land values increase, these properties will be redeveloped. Putting the pedestrian first, both in written policy and in practice, will ensure that future development enhances Paoli’s walkability, thereby enhancing economic vitality and quality of life. The Township Code already provides robust standards for pedestrian facilities. The concepts described below may be used by the Township as a framework for development of additional supportive policies and ordinances.

Sidewalk Standards

Previous work in Paoli resulted in adoption of a “three-part” sidewalk design for properties along Lancaster Avenue. (See Section 181.46.M.11 of the Code, and photo to left.) This design consists of (1) a six-foot brick strip that contains lighting, signs, and other roadside elements, (2) a six-foot concrete strip that forms the primary pedestrian path, and (3) a landscaped area behind in areas where buildings are not constructed to the back of the sidewalk. In the few



areas where it has been implemented, this design provides a high-quality pedestrian environment and illustrates a high level of community investment. This same design should be continued as all properties along Lancaster Avenue are redeveloped over time.

Although evaluation of a reconfigured Lancaster Avenue was beyond the scope of this study, the Study Committee remarked on several occasions that 11-foot travel lanes on Lancaster Avenue would provide an additional five feet of potential sidewalk width, either on one side of the street or divided between both sides.

Build-To Lines

One of the most effective tools in defining a community as urban is establishing continuous building lines on both sides of a street. Wayne and Ardmore, along Lancaster Avenue east of Paoli, provide excellent examples. The current Town Center District zone that covers most of downtown Paoli already establishes a build-to line. In areas where the distance between the curb and the right-of-way line allows for full implementation of the “three-part” sidewalk design, for example, this setback would be zero feet. In other areas an additional setback may be needed to fully develop the necessary sidewalk width, but the building must be placed at the back of that sidewalk.

The Township may wish to apply similar standards to the Paoli Shopping Center properties at the southeast corner of US 30 and Chestnut Avenue. This could be done by establishing an overlay for street design standards in this area or, if appropriate in the future, rezoning those properties to the Town Center District classification.

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100% Corner

The “100% Corner” is a real estate term that denotes the most important intersection in a downtown. In Paoli’s case that is the intersection of Lancaster Avenue and Valley Road. Development or redevelopment of the properties at this corner is critical to the success of downtown Paoli. The buildings along the south side of Lancaster Avenue in this area, though in varying states of occupancy and repair, are built to the sidewalk and provide a defined street edge. On the north side, however, Lancaster Avenue is lined by parking lots. Relocation of the train station parking lot, currently located at the northeast corner of Lancaster and Valley, provides a golden opportunity. The Township should consider urban commercial or mixed-use development of this site as an alternative given the property’s high value and landmark location. Members of the Study Committee related past discussions of a “Village Green,” a high-quality pedestrian-oriented open space, at this site.

The northeast corner of the intersection poses additional challenges. Paoli Plaza, a street parallel to Lancaster Avenue, intersects North Valley Road only about 100 feet from Lancaster. In addition, North Valley is steeply sloped to provide clearance over the SEPTA tracks to the north. Any redevelopment plan for the properties in this quadrant of the intersection should evaluate the potential for removing Paoli Plaza, providing continuous building frontage along both Lancaster and North Valley in this area. This will require reevaluation of access points along the north side of Lancaster Avenue between North Valley and Greenwood Avenue.

Access Management and Block Size

Access management is control of the width and spacing of driveways and cross streets along a major street. As is typical of suburban development, Lancaster Avenue in Paoli is characterized by a variety of driveway treatments, including long stretches of continuous depressed curb. In some instances perpendicular parking spaces must be accessed directly from Lancaster Avenue. These poorly defined driveways don’t work well for either pedestrians or drivers. Well-defined, widely spaced driveways make it easier for pedestrians and drivers to see where vehicles will turn.

Because most of Paoli is fully developed, side street spacing has been established and there is limited flexibility in reorganizing driveways. However, as a guideline, driveways and side streets should be spaced as far apart as possible. Curb radii should be minimized to shorten pedestrian crossing distances.

One key area noted by the Study Committee is on Lancaster Avenue between Darby Road and the Paoli Shopping Center signal. An unsignalized pedestrian crossing was suggested at Chestnut Road, in the middle of this segment of Lancaster Avenue. Although such a crossing is not feasible at this time, as the properties on the north side redevelop, it may be possible to consolidate their driveways into one opposite Chestnut. At that point a signal may be warranted, giving pedestrians a protected crossing.

Partnerships for All of Paoli

Although most of downtown Paoli is in Tredyffrin Township, portions are located in neighboring townships. Developing all of downtown Paoli in a walkable, livable manner works to the advantage of all study area municipalities and the region as a whole. During the Study Committee process, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission indicated willingness to facilitate a partnership to achieve that goal.