

Sidewalk Widening Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Why is the Georgetown BID proposing wider sidewalks?

Georgetown has the highest street-front vacancy rate in the last 20 years - nearly 14% and growing. Wider sidewalks help with social distancing, provide outdoor dining to help restaurants survive COVID restrictions, and create a more lively and inviting pedestrian experience. They also accommodate more pedestrians, a key metric for retailers looking to open businesses in a competitive leasing environment.

What is the proposal?

The BID is proposing building approximately 5,000 linear feet of sidewalk expansion panels. Each 4'x8' panel section will be level with the curb and extend out 8', so a sidewalk that is now 9.5' wide will be 17.5' after the extensions are installed. There will be heavy concrete barriers at the end of each run of extension panels, and a mix of metal and concrete barriers on the traffic side of the extensions.

How long will the sidewalk extension be in place?

The BID is applying for a permit to run concurrently with the Mayor's Streatery program which is set to expire at the end of 2021.

What will the sidewalk panels and barriers look like?

The panels will be built with composite decking on top of a wood frame. There are two prototypes at Clyde's Restaurant on the 3200 block of M Street, and at Bodega on the 3000 block of M Street.

Where will the panels be built?

The panels will be installed on M Street between 35th Street and 29th Street, and on Wisconsin Avenue between South Street and Q Street.

Will the platforms be ADA accessible?

The extension panels are designed to be accessible to those in wheelchairs and with other disabilities.

How many on-street parking spaces will be eliminated and where will cars park?

There will be approximately 224 metered parking spaces eliminated on M and Wisconsin. There are still over 3,000 off-street parking spaces in lots and garages, and over 4,500 on-street short term parking spaces in the neighborhood. The BID will also be adding bike and scooter parking spaces at the ends of most sections of the sidewalk extensions and dedicated space for ridesharing vehicles. We believe wider sidewalks also create an opportunity to improve visibility and accessibility of off-street parking, and better management of on-street short term parking.

Where will trucks making deliveries to my businesses be able to park?

We are preserving existing loading zones to the greatest extent possible and there will be a commercial loading zone on almost every block that is receiving wider sidewalks. Side street loading zones will not change. We anticipate that there will be some double-parking during deliveries as there always has been, and we encourage businesses to take deliveries during off-peak hours to the extent possible. The BID will also work on a curbside management plan for Georgetown in 2021.

What will happen during rush hour?

We do not anticipate rush hour returning until 2022, however the BID's traffic engineers have looked at historic traffic data and concluded that there was so much blockage of the third travel lane during pre-pandemic rush hour periods that the elimination of this travel lane will have minimal effect on vehicle throughput (the time it takes to go through the neighborhood by car), so long as the prohibition on double-parking during rush hours is strictly enforced.

Can non-restaurant retailers use the sidewalk extensions?

The BID is working with the Mayor's office to get permission for non-restaurant retailers to be able to get permits to do sales from the new wider sidewalks.

What will the BID do to solve unanticipated problems with sections of sidewalk extensions?

There will inevitably be conflicts and problems with certain sections of the extensions. The BID will work with DDOT to make modifications when necessary by removing some sections of barriers or adding others, as indicated by real-world conditions.

What if the community really likes the wider sidewalks and wants them to stay in place after 2021?

The BID would have to apply for a permit to keep the sidewalk extensions in place after 2021. If there is strong community sentiment for this, the BID would work with the ANC and CAG and approach the city for a permit that would also require going through the Old Georgetown Board and Commission on Fine Arts process.

Who is paying for this and what will it cost?

The current budget for this project is approximately \$1.1 million. The BID received a grant from the DC Council in the FY 2021 budget for \$500,000. The remainder will be paid for by the BID out of its capital projects budget.

What will happen with buses and bus stops?

On M Street, most buses will stop in the travel lane and passengers will get on and off the bus from the extended deck. Buses often stop in the travel lane now. Bus stops will be accessible for riders with visual or mobility impairments. On Wisconsin Avenue, most bus stops will remain as they are, and the bus will pull to the bus stop at the curb.

What will happen during snow storms?

For small snow events, the BID and adjacent property owners will remove all furnishings from the extension panels and pull the metal barriers onto the panels so that they are not damaged by de-icing activities. For large events, the metal barriers will be pulled back up to 7' from the roadway so that snow plows can push the snow onto the extension panels.

Who is responsible for keeping the sidewalk extensions clean and safe?

The BID and the businesses that have permits to set up on the sidewalk extensions will be responsible for keeping them clean. The BID will have a full-time clean team member responsible for monitoring the conditions of the sidewalk extensions and ensuring that any unclean or unsafe conditions are immediately addressed.

Who can I contact for more information or to share my views?

You can be in touch with Joe Sternlieb at jsternlieb@georgetowndc.com and Jamie Scott at jscott@georgetowndc.com to ask questions or provide comments.