

Sidewalks

Paved sidewalks are “pedestrian lanes” that provide people with space to travel within the public right-of-way separated from motor vehicles and on-road bicycles. Sidewalks provide places for children to walk, run, skate and play, and are often used by young bicyclists. Continuous and accessible sidewalk networks improve mobility for all pedestrians and are particularly important for pedestrians with disabilities.

As in most cities, property owners in Durham are responsible for keeping sidewalks and planting strips abutting their property in good repair and free of plant debris that could be hazards for pedestrians and people with reduced mobility. **Property owners must maintain sidewalks even if they are on the other side of a fence or wall or next to Upper Boones Ferry Road.**

Property owners are required to keep trees and bushes from blocking sidewalks and obstructing drivers’ visibility at corners. Property owners must cut back vegetation that is encroaching on sidewalks, streets, street signs, and streetlights. There are several locations in the city where plants overgrow sidewalks, debris has piled up, or street signs are blocked.

Trees or shrubs on your property cannot interfere with street or sidewalk traffic. Minimum height clearance is 8 feet next to the sidewalk and 14 feet next to the street so that the street sweeper can clean curbs and gutters and garbage trucks can pick up bins without damaging trees. Vegetation and debris should not narrow the sidewalk clearance.

If your sidewalk needs to be repaired or replaced, you will need to obtain a permit from the city. The permit requirement ensures that new sidewalk panels meet design standards and protects property owners from substandard work. When sidewalks are replaced, a 2-inch base of compacted $\frac{3}{4}$ minus crushed rock is required. The concrete must be at least 4” deep and expansion joints must be installed between panels. The City inspects all new sidewalk panels to ensure the work is done correctly. If a sidewalk were not installed correctly, it would need to be removed and replaced.

The City responds to complaints about sidewalks by notifying the property owner to trim vegetation, sweep up debris, or repair concrete. If overgrowth is an issue, neighborhood “pruning parties” or friendly reminders from residents of the neighborhood can inform property owners about the need to maintain landscaping. Usually, the property owner addresses the issue in a timely fashion. However, failure to do so may result in the City having the work done and billing the property owners.