



Townsend Walkable Community Workshop

July 12, 2021



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For more information on Walkable Community Workshops, visit:

<http://www.wilmapco.org/walkable/>

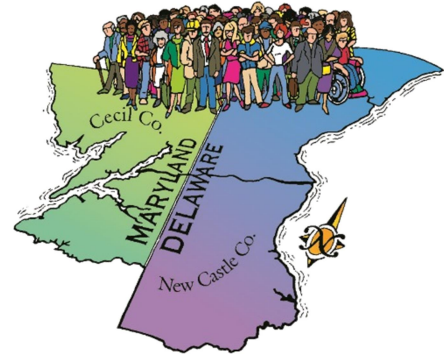
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Introduction

Who is WILMAPCO?

The Wilmington Area Planning Council (WILMAPCO) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Cecil County, Maryland and New Castle County, Delaware. We are charged with planning and coordinating transportation investments for the Wilmington region.

The Wilmington region is home to more than 660,000 residents, most of whom (84%) live in New Castle County. Wilmington, a financial hub supporting a population just over 70,000, serves as the principal city. Urbanized development stretches outside of Wilmington along the I-95 corridor, from the Town of Elkton to the Pennsylvania border. Natural and rural landscapes, sprawling suburbs, and small towns blanket the rest of the region.



WILMAPCO's mission is to create the best transportation plan for the region, one that meets all the requirements mandated by the Federal Clean Air Act and its Amendments (CAAA) and the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act.

About the Workshop Series

WILMAPCO's *2050 Regional Transportation Plan* calls for improving quality of life, efficiently transporting people, and supporting sustainable economic development and goods movement. Making our communities more walkable achieves all of these goals.

WILMAPCO was selected for the Walkable Community Workshops (WCW) program – part of the *National Center for Bicycling & Walking* – to work directly with communities. Walkability considers how well an area facilitates safe foot traffic. The WCW program seeks to ensure that people of all ages and abilities can walk, as well as bike, easily, safely, and regularly.



Why Walkable Communities are Important

We are all pedestrians. Whether we think so or not, we are all pedestrians. We may walk to work, walk for exercise, walk to do errands, or simply walk from the car to the store. We all need safe facilities for walking.

Walking is crucial to give those who don't drive a travel choice. Many in our region are too young to drive, have a permanent or temporary disability which prevents them from driving, have no access to a car, or choose not to drive. In Townsend, Delaware, 33% of the population is under age 18, 6% are 65 or older, and 6% of the population has a disability (2019 American Community Survey). Many people in these population groups need to walk in order to lead active and independent lives.

Walkable communities are healthier communities. North Americans' waistlines are getting wider, triggering a rise in related illnesses including heart disease and diabetes. In Delaware, 34% of adults are obese; 75% of adolescents do not engage in the recommended amount of physical activity for any given week; only 49% of adults get the recommended amount of physical activity; and 27% of adults engage in no leisure-time physical activity at all (according to the Centers for Disease Control, 2019). Pedestrian-friendly communities make it easier for people to integrate physical activity into their daily lives.

Everyone benefits from walkable communities. Even if you don't enjoy walking, you still benefit from living in a walkable community. More people walking and bicycling reduces overall levels of vehicular congestion, which benefits drivers too. Less driving also reduces air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. There are also economic benefits with walkable communities, including higher property values and greater sales in commercial areas.



Walkable Community Workshops

A WCW is typically a three-hour session that includes an educational presentation on what makes a community walkable, a walking audit of a specific area, and a mapping session, where participants engage in brainstorming solutions. Focusing on a particular area's walkability, participants study sidewalks, pathways, inviting streetscape, crosswalks, destinations, etc. The process gives everyone the tools for making a community walkable and provides realistic next steps that can be used to achieve their goals.

There are **three main parts of a workshop:**



Part 1 – The presentation reviews topics such as sidewalk design, crosswalks, traffic calming, community design, and other tools that communities need to create a walkable environment.



Part 2 – The walking audit gives participants a chance to survey the area, identify issues and think about how to apply what they learned from the presentation. Getting out and walking is key to illustrating the challenges that people face when pedestrian facilities are not available.



Part 3 – In the mapping exercise, people share ideas for improving walkability. Participants end the session by committing to specific next steps to continue the process started at the workshop.

Background

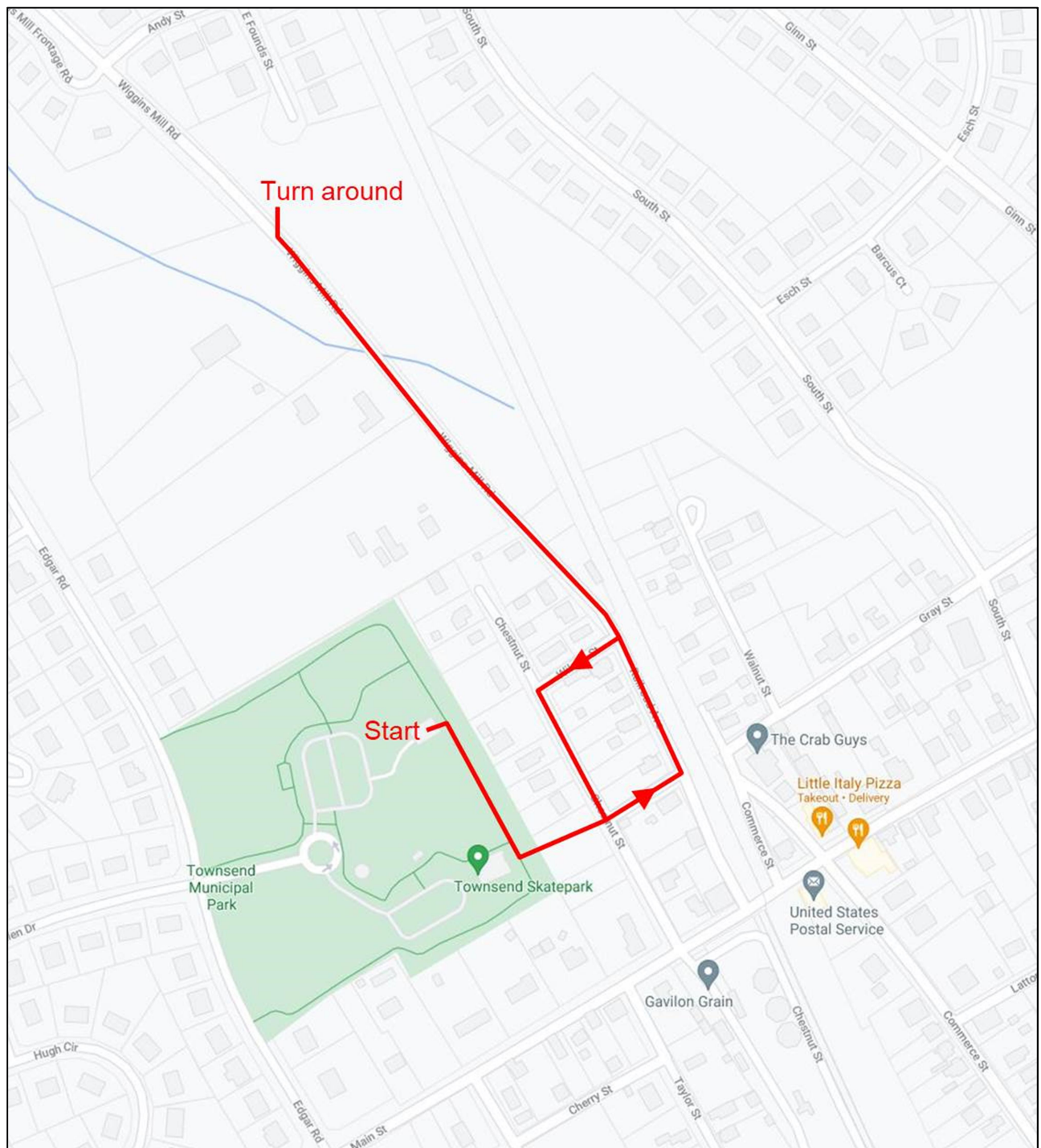
Townsend is the most rapidly growing municipality in Delaware. It is home to more than 2,400 residents, and several planned housing developments will welcome more people to the town in the coming years. Townsend's Main Street features local businesses, restaurants, a post office, and the Town Hall. Townsend Municipal Park is a short walk away and offers several recreational amenities, including walking and biking paths, a pavilion, gazebo, skate park, and basketball court. Most residents of the one-square-mile town are within a short walking distance to Main Street and the park.

The Townsend Walkable Community Workshop was held on July 12, 2021 at the park pavilion. It was attended by 11 people, including residents, town officials, and WILMAPCO staff. The walking audit route (shown on the following page) began at the park pavilion, heading south on the park path to a vacant, but maintained, lot near the skate park. The route continued one block east on Gray Street to Railroad Avenue, then north on Wiggins Mill Road, stopping at the open space on the southern end of the Townsend Village II housing development. The group then turned around, following the same route in reverse, but taking Wilson Street instead of Gray Street back to the park.

Due to the high traffic speeds and lack of shoulders or sidewalks on Wiggins Mill Road, this portion of the walk was accompanied by a police escort. The group identified several challenges and opportunities to improve walking along the route. During the mapping exercise at the pavilion, the group took a broader look at all areas within the town to identify solutions to improve walkability throughout Townsend.



Townsend Municipal Park walking and biking path, with the pavilion in the background

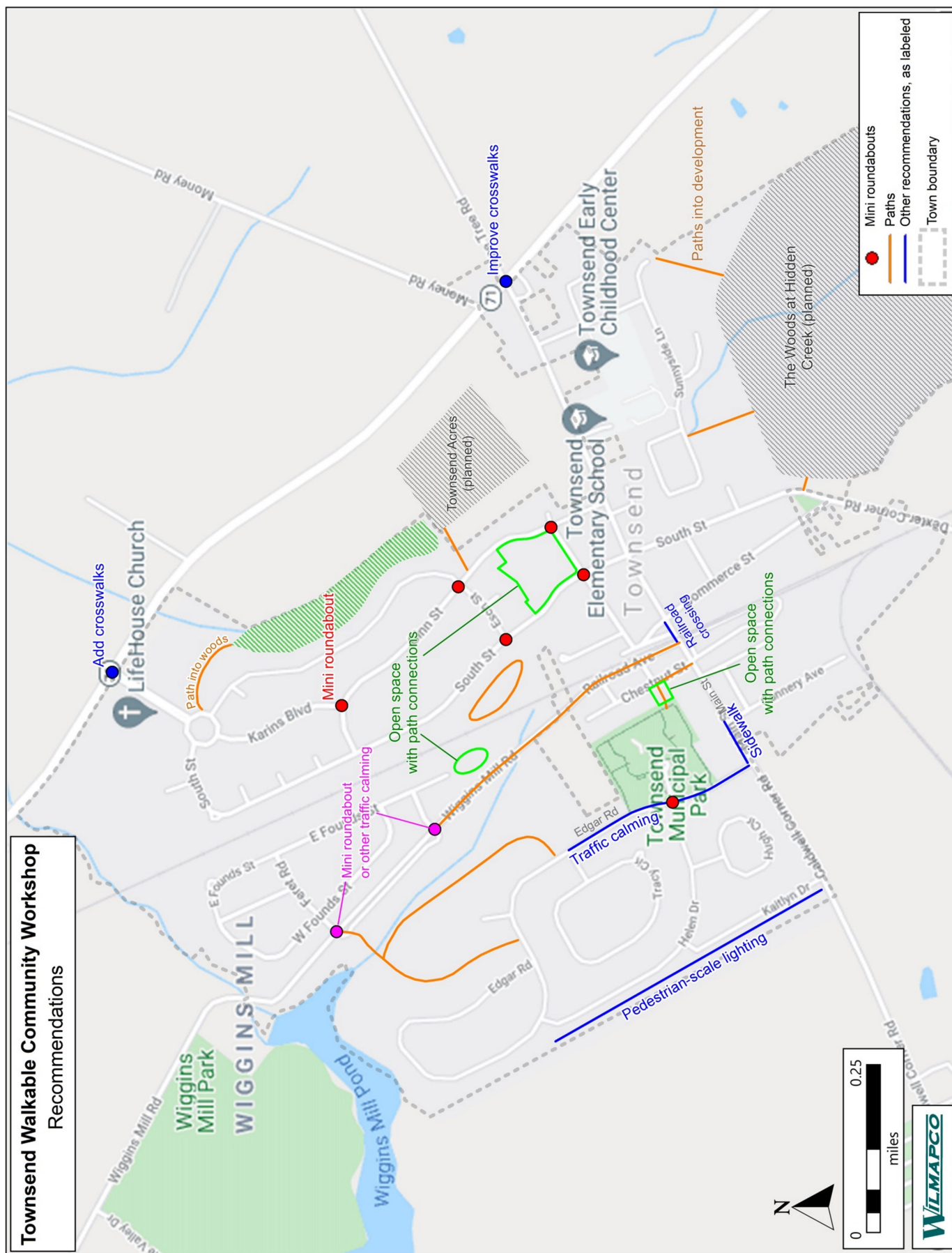


Walking Audit Route

During the mapping exercise, the group discussed challenges to walking around town and shared ideas to improve walkability, resulting in the map below. These ideas included filling in gaps in the sidewalk network, creating new paths to connect between neighborhoods and to open spaces, implementing traffic calming measures such as mini roundabouts, and acquiring a vacant lot near the park to improve access between the park and Main Street. This map is formalized on the next page, and the following pages describe the recommendations in more detail.



The group discussed walkability ideas during the mapping exercise.



New Public Open Space on Chestnut Street

Across from the intersection of Chestnut Street and Gray Street is a vacant lot, directly adjacent to Townsend Municipal Park. This lot is clean and well-maintained, and it is frequently used as a shortcut to the park from Chestnut Street and Main Street, as shown by paths worn in to the ground in the gaps between the trees. The group recommended that the Town acquire this property and designate the lot as public space. This process would present many opportunities for future uses of this land, such as path connections to the park, tables, benches, or recreational facilities.



[The vacant lot between Townsend Municipal Park and Chestnut Street](#)

If this land is acquired, the group recommended creating a new path from the existing park path near the skate park, through this lot, then south on Chestnut Street to Main Street. This new path connection would significantly shorten the legal walking distance from Main Street and nearby neighborhoods to the park, as well as enhance opportunities for bicycling and other recreational activities.

Path on Wiggins Mill Road

Wiggins Mill Road is a primary artery running north-south through the town, connecting Townsend Village II and Wiggins Mill Park to Main Street. The road currently consists of one traffic lane in each direction, with narrow shoulders for most of its stretch, and there are no sidewalks. The shoulders disappear as the road continues south of Townsend Village II, and the road becomes Railroad Avenue as it approaches Main Street, parallel to the railroad. The road has a speed limit of 25 mph, but most traffic exceeds that limit. High traffic speeds and the lack of wide shoulders or sidewalks make this corridor very dangerous for walking. However, it is the only legal walking route from Townsend Village II to Main Street.

The group recommended creating a sidewalk, walkable shoulder, or pathway along Wiggins Mill Road, from Townsend Village II to Main Street. This path may begin at Wiggins Mill Road and Andy Street, connect to the public open space south of Townsend Village II, and continue as a pathway through the undeveloped woods on the east side of the road, possibly with an unpaved, all-weather surface compatible with the natural setting, such as stone dust.

As shown on the following page, a small portion of this stretch consists of a one-lane bridge over a culvert. The path may need to divert further from the roadway into the woods at this location, or it could consist of a small wooden bridge over the culvert, adjacent to the bridge. Pathways should be at least 5 feet wide in residential areas, but 8 feet or wider is preferred if it is to be shared with people on bicycles.



Wiggins Mill Road, looking north



Wiggins Mill Road briefly narrows to a one-lane bridge over a culvert.



Example of a path retrofitted to a bridge (Source: Rural Design Guide)

New Path Connections

In addition to the new paths described on the previous pages, the group recommended several other path connections between neighborhoods and to open spaces. As shown in the map on page 9, these include the following:

- A path connecting to the woods from Karins Circle, near Esch Street
- A path around the pond near South Street and Esch Street, including path connections to nearby roads
- A path from Ginn Street, near Esch Street, connecting into the planned housing development, Townsend Acres
- Paths connecting into the planned Woods at Hidden Creek housing development from Belmont Circle, Sunnyside Lane, and South Street
- Paths (or nature trails) connecting from Wiggins Mill Road, near Feret Road, to Edgar Road
- Path connections in the open space on the south end of Townsend Village II (between Wiggins Mill Road and Founds Street)
- Path connections to the open space bounded by South Street, Ginn Street, and Gray Street

These new paths would significantly enhance connections between neighborhoods, shorten walking distances to businesses and amenities, and expand opportunities for active and passive recreation in public spaces and natural areas.

In particular, the open space on the south end of Townsend Village II could be enjoyed by residents for dog walking, sports, or community events, with new paths serving both transportation and recreational uses.



Public open space near Townsend Village II

Traffic Calming Measures

Traffic calming measures can help to reduce excessive vehicle speeds, which can help increase safety and comfort for people walking, especially on roads without sidewalks or shoulders.

Mini roundabouts, also known as mini traffic circles, consist of a small, circular island in the center of an intersection. These islands require drivers to slow down and navigate around them. They can be accompanied with either stop signs or yield signs. Yield signs would require drivers to yield to traffic that is already in the intersection.



A mini roundabout (Source: City of Long Beach, CA)

The group recommends the installation of mini roundabouts at the following intersections: Edgar Road and Helen Drive (the entrance to the park), Ginn Street and Karins Boulevard, Ginn Street and Esch Street, Ginn Street and Gray Street, South Street and Esch Street, and South Street and Gray Street. These mini roundabouts would calm traffic, making it safer and more comfortable to walk along these roads. They would also increase visibility of pedestrians crossing at intersections, as drivers must slow down and pay more attention.

Mini roundabouts could also be installed on Wiggins Mill Road at Feret Road and Andy Street, the two entrances to Townsend Village II. Alternatively, these T-intersections could feature narrower alternative traffic calming. Alternatives might include narrow splitter islands or oval mini-circles. Examples of these are shown on the following page. They can increase comfort and safety for people walking along the street in addition to crossing by slowing speeding traffic and can incorporate crosswalks with median refuge islands.



A crosswalk with a median refuge island (Source: NACTO)



T-Intersection Traffic Calming (Source: WILMAPCO, Centreville Village Plan)

In addition, the group expressed concern about high traffic speeds on Edgar Road. The recommended mini roundabout at Edgar Road and Helen Drive may help calm traffic, but other traffic calming measures could be implemented as well.

Other traffic calming measures include painting white lines for shoulder markings, which decrease the perceived width of the road. Delineated shoulders could become comfortable places for walking and biking, without having to eliminate street parking. A more costly, but more effective, change could include textured pavement, which emphasizes a change in environment from the travel lanes to the shoulders.

Similarly, advisory shoulders are designed with a narrow center area for motorists and marked shoulders for walking and biking. With advisory shoulders, motorists only enter the shoulder when no pedestrians or bicyclists are present to allow oncoming traffic to pass. Widely used in Europe, this design is still new and would require DelDOT to submit a Request to Experiment. An example is shown on the following page.



Delineated shoulders with textured pavement (Source: Alta Planning)



Advisory shoulders (Source: Rural Design Guide)

Curb extensions, also known as bump-outs, could be installed at intersections and midblock crossings. Curb extensions help to calm traffic as well as reduce the distance to cross the street.

High visibility crosswalks, consisting of bright white “piano keys”, can make drivers more aware of people crossing the street and increase the comfort of pedestrians crossing the street.



Curb extensions with a high visibility crosswalk (Source: Minnesota Department of Transportation)

Pedestrian-Scale Lighting

The group noted a need for lighting along Helen Drive and Kaitlyn Drive on the west end of town. Compared to overhead street lights, pedestrian-scale lighting is more conducive to walking and better for lighting up sidewalks and paths. This type of lighting has already been installed on much of Main Street, and it is recommended for any walking route to improve public safety and personal comfort.



Pedestrian-scale lighting (Source: Alta Planning)

Improvements to Main Street

Walkability on Main Street is being improved through an ongoing streetscape improvement project. The second of three phases of this project was completed in 2020. This work has included ADA-compliant sidewalks and curb ramps, bump-outs, and pedestrian-scale lighting. Phase 3 will cover the stretch of Main Street from Commerce Street to Kaitlyn Drive, but it is pending funding.

During the mapping exercise, the group noted the need for sidewalks on Main Street from Edgar Road to Cannery Lane, as well as a marked crossing across the railroad tracks between Railroad Avenue and Commerce Street. These improvements should be included as part of Phase 3 of the streetscape improvement project.



Main Street looking east from Edgar Road (Source: Google)



Main Street railroad crossing, looking west (Source: Google)

Pedestrian and Bicycle-Friendly Development

Pedestrian and Bicycle-Friendly Development is a form of efficient land use, i.e. Complete Communities or Smart Growth. It refers to policies that result in development that encourages trips by walking, biking, and transit.

This type of land use can help provide easier access within places, improve transportation choices, create more livable communities, and reduce public service costs. These Land Use patterns go by many different names — Complete Communities, Traditional Neighborhood Development, Transit Oriented Development, Walkable Communities, etc. — but all use a similar toolbox of policies. Strategies include:

- Mix land uses.
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.
- Build connected, walkable (and bike-friendly) neighborhoods.
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place.
- Support the rural landscape by preserving open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas by promoting clustered and compact building design.
- Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective.
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.



Davidson's Rural Area Plan (Source: www.cnu.org)

Next Steps

The Town of Townsend should pursue acquisition of the vacant lot on Chestnut Street and reach out to community members to determine the best use of this public space. The Town should also ensure that the planned Phase 3 streetscape improvement project includes the recommended upgrades to Main Street.

Funding for the recommended improvements can be pursued through several mechanisms, including the Capital Transportation Program (CTP), the Community Transportation Fund (CTF), and the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), which includes Safe Routes to School (SRTS).

WILMAPCO, in coordination with DelDOT, administers the Safe Routes to School program in this region. This program can provide limited funding for walkability improvements near schools, including working with staff, faculty, and students to determine the best improvements to meet each school's needs.

Community members are encouraged to think about which of the recommendations are most important and to work with New Castle County, DelDOT, WILMAPCO, and local elected officials to begin addressing some of the issues discussed during the workshop.

Funding and Implementation Resources

FUNDING PROGRAMS AND CONTACTS

Town of Townsend

Town of Townsend is a good starting point for most recommendations from the Walkable Community Workshop. The Town Manager can be contacted at (302) 378-8082.

DelDOT

DelDOT administers the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). TAP offer funding opportunities to help expand transportation choices and enhance the transportation experience, formerly known as the Transportation Enhancements (TE) Program. TAP Activities must relate to surface transportation. Eligible projects most related to Walkable Communities include:

- Construction, planning, and design of on-road and off-road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other nonmotorized forms of transportation
- Construction, planning, and design of infrastructure-related projects and systems that will provide safe routes for non-drivers, including children, older adults, and individuals with disabilities to access daily needs
- Safe Routes to School programs (<http://www.wilmapco.org/saferoutes/>)

In Delaware, TAP projects require a twenty percent funding match and the maximum funding amount is \$1 million.

The Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements Program funds the design and construction of pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Funds can support projects too costly for the TAP program.

Delaware Transportation Alternatives Program Coordinator

Mike Hahn, DelDOT Planning & TAP

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State Elected Officials

Community Transportation Fund (CTF) funding provides a fixed amount of funds annually to each State Senator and House Representative to be used as they and their constituents believe is best for transportation improvements within their district. Legislators may also fund their own project ideas and they have the option of banking a portion of their yearly CTF budget for up to three years in order to fund a larger transportation improvement.

https://deldot.gov/Publications/brochures/pdfs/ctf_brochure.pdf?cache=1630086607516

Pop-Up Demonstration Projects and Quick Build Pilot Projects

Temporary projects to test potential designs are effective at soliciting community feedback and avoiding costly design mistakes. Projects may last anywhere from less than an hour to many months. Some suggested approaches include:

- Local governments should establish a process for collaboration between agency staff and the public, which encourages community pop-up requests and establishes parameters for acceptable designs, permitting, and organizational partners.
- Communities should proactively pursue demonstration projects and direct them to locations with the greatest needs. Equitable distribution of projects should engage a variety of communities and financially support these diverse projects to level the playing field.
- Engaging the community will bring fun, energy, and creativity to the planning process. Residents, local organizations, and businesses are also effective partners at getting the word out about the demonstration.
- Evaluate the tested design, collecting information like speeds and volumes of bicycles, pedestrians, and vehicles. Also, seek out community feedback.

- Use information gained to adjust the project's design and pursue more permanent implementation.

Supported by the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT), Living Lab is a research collaborative among the Institute for Public Administration, Biden School of Public Policy & Administration, and the Landscape Architecture program at the University of Delaware (UD). It seeks to catalyze community-driven, active transportation pop-up demonstrations that test the viability of long-term built-environment improvements and placemaking initiatives in Delaware.

University of Delaware Living Lab - <https://living-lab-1-udel.hub.arcgis.com/>

Other Useful Links

- Small Town and Rural Multimodal Networks - www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/publications/small_towns
- Designing for All Ages & Abilities - nacto.org/publication/urban-bikeway-design-guide/designing-ages-abilities-new
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center - www.pedbikeinfo.org
- League of American Bicyclists - www.bikeleague.org
- National Center for Bicycling and Walking - www.bikewalk.org
- Federal Highway Administration - www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/index.cfm
- Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) - mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov
- NACTO Urban Street Design Guide - nacto.org/usdg
- WILMAPCO - www.wilmapco.org/walkable