



6. TOWN OF PHILIPSTOWN - PHILIPSTOWN CENTER in North Highlands

6.1 Problem Statement

The hamlet of North Highlands in the Town of Philipstown lacks a walkable hamlet center, partly because the community-oriented destinations are on each side of Route 9, a New York State Highway. A newly reconfigured intersection has solved the geometric problems that had previously existed, but a lack of traffic control and pedestrian amenities makes this area difficult to navigate for pedestrians.

6.2 Study Area

The study area is centered on the intersection of Route 9 and Fishkill Road. The project limits extend south on Route 9 to East Mountain Road South, and north to the Gift Shop across from the old Fishkill Road alignment. A gas station and retail center known as Philipstown Plaza are also located within the project limits. Consideration was also given to the section of Fishkill Road that extends to the firehouse and ball fields approximately 1,000 feet from Route 9.

6.3 Existing Conditions

The intersection of Route 9 and Fishkill Road (County Route 10) has recently seen some significant improvements, which are the beginnings to a hamlet center. The most substantial change is the reconfiguration of Fishkill Road, which intersects Route 9 from the west. The improvement entailed changing the “Y” configuration to a “T” configuration with a 90 degree approach to the intersection. The intersection is controlled by a stop sign on Fishkill Road, so it is still difficult for pedestrians to cross Route 9 safely. The current lack of traffic control on Route 9 requires pedestrians to wait to cross in the shoulder until there is a sufficient gap in traffic.

During the time of this study, Putnam County has conducted a traffic signal warrant analysis for this intersection. The intersection meets traffic signal warrants, and the County is now working with NYSDOT on implementation. The recommendations in this report are based on the assumption that this traffic signal will be installed.

The other major improvements that contribute to the viability of this area becoming a hamlet center are the redevelopment of Philipstown Plaza (formerly known as Perk’s Plaza) on the east side of Route 9, and the expansion of the firehouse on Fishkill Road.

Philipstown Plaza was an existing strip mall, which has been renovated and expanded to include additional retail space. The area was under construction at the time of this study. Many retail spaces remained vacant during construction, although a deli and gas station were open for business. The developers have direct access from Route 9, and have installed curbs along the shoulder of Route 9. There is a free-standing curb which separates Philipstown Plaza and the adjacent gas station. This prevents vehicles from passing from one parking lot to another, limiting the possibility of shared parking and access.

The Philipstown firehouse expansion was also underway during the time of this study. In addition to adding garage space, the expansion provides for a large meeting room, which will be made available to local community groups. West of the firehouse are two baseball fields,

which are heavily used in the warm months. The current lack of a sidewalk along Fishkill Road requires community members to drive the 1,000 feet distance in order to patronize nearby Philipstown Plaza.

While this stretch of Route 9 is zoned Commercial (B-2 per the Philipstown Zoning Code), there are several non-conforming uses, which existed prior to the rezoning. The result is an inconsistent set of land uses, which presents a challenge for this area as it develops as a retail center. The recent expansion of Philipstown Plaza is a positive and important step to the viability of this hamlet center.

6.4 Analysis

With a new traffic signal at the intersection of Route 9 and Fishkill Road, it is reasonable to expect increased pedestrian volumes in warm weather months. However, the current lack of pedestrian infrastructure, such as sidewalks, crosswalks and signage needs to be addressed. The easement on which the new section of Fishkill Road was built was acquired from the landowner south of the new road. There is a runoff retention basin to the north, which may have limited the width of the easement. Regardless, the shoulders and excess right-of-way on this new section of road should provide enough space for a raised curbed sidewalk on one side of Fishkill Road.

The intersection of Route 9 and Fishkill Road together with the gas station operates as a 4-way intersection. However, the gas station driveway does align with Fishkill Road, presenting a potential for head-on conflict.

Southbound traffic on Route 9 approaches the study area on a decline, which increases motor vehicle speeds. Anecdotes from the stakeholder group indicated that the pressure of oncoming traffic from behind in the southbound direction makes it difficult to make the right turn onto Fishkill Road heading westbound. Without a traffic control or dedicated turn lane, turning vehicles must slow down significantly, holding back the flow of through traffic.

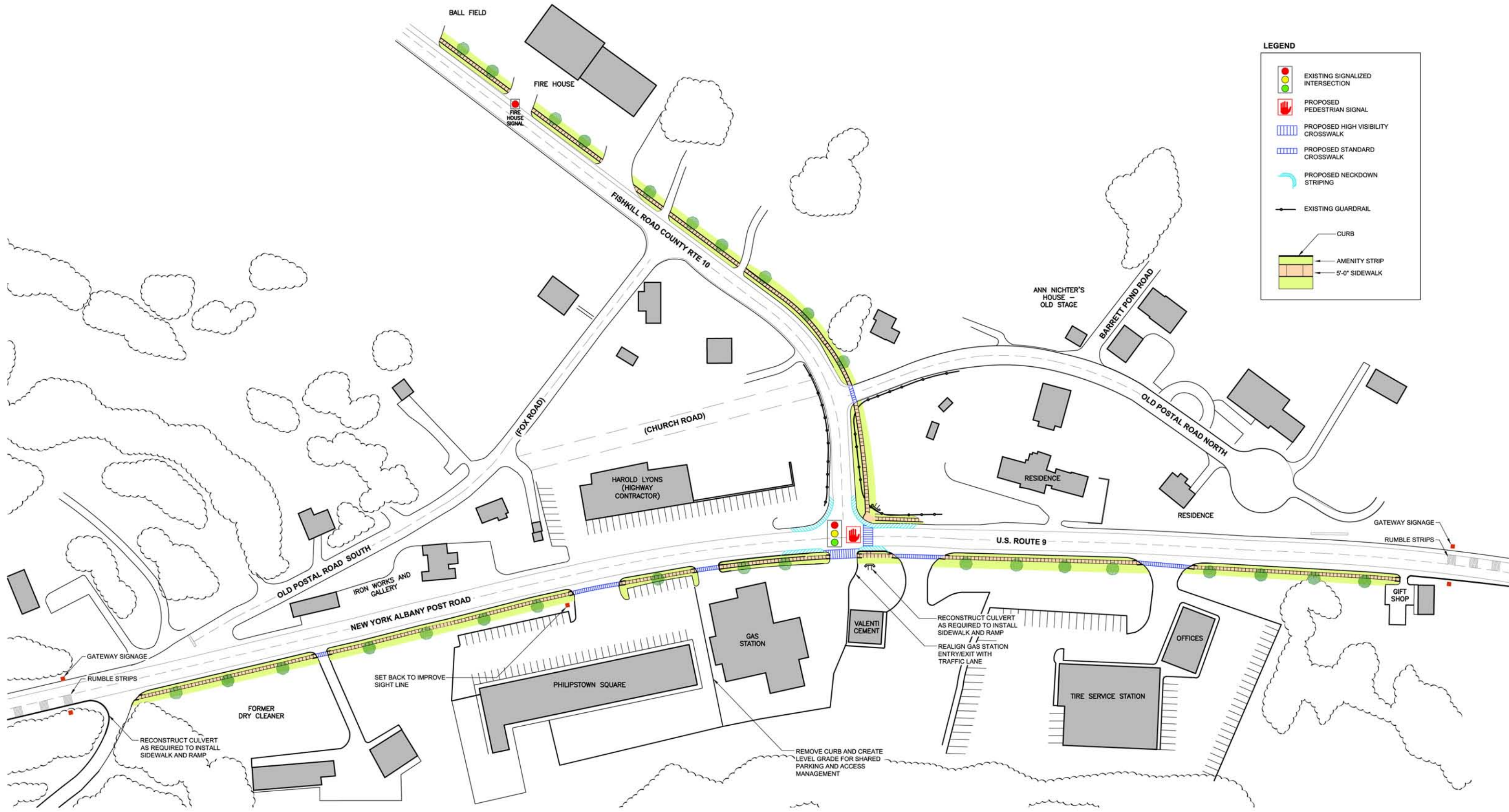
6.5 Recommendations

The recommendations below are based the assumption that a traffic signal will be installed at the intersection of Route 9 and Fishkill Road. Without this signal, pedestrian crosswalks are not recommended due to the volume and speed of traffic on Route 9. At the time of this study, the County and NYSDOT had already engaged in a discussion about how partial funding from the County could expedite the installation of this traffic signal.

6.5.1 Traffic/Pedestrian Access

The recommendations below can be referenced by referring to Figure 6.1.

The shoulders of Route 9 are wide enough to accommodate a standard 5-foot wide sidewalk with a 3-4 foot amenity strip and raised curb which will act as a buffer from the moving lane. With these improvements, there is still enough room for a narrow shoulder, to accommodate disabled vehicles, and which could also accommodate cyclists. In the amenity strip, street trees and plantings would further improve pedestrian conditions and the overall visual environment. With a storm water retention basin on the northwest corner of this intersection, the necessary drainage system could be incorporated easily.



LEGEND

- EXISTING SIGNALIZED INTERSECTION
- PROPOSED PEDESTRIAN SIGNAL
- PROPOSED HIGH VISIBILITY CROSSWALK
- PROPOSED STANDARD CROSSWALK
- PROPOSED NECKDOWN STRIPING
- EXISTING GUARDRAIL
- CURB
- AMENITY STRIP
- 5'-0" SIDEWALK

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 Figure 6.1: Philipstown Proposed Improvements

At all driveway and road crossings, ADA compliant pedestrian ramps should be installed. Reflective thermoplastic paint should be used to stripe high-visibility “ladder-style” crosswalks at these locations, as well. This treatment could be carried along the east side of Route 9 from East Mountain Road South to the Gift Shop, and along the north and northwest side of Fishkill Road. At this time, only the east side of Route 9 has the necessary retail development to justify the installation of a sidewalk. Similarly, it is not necessary to have a sidewalk on both sides of Fishkill Road. The logical position for a sidewalk is the north side of the road, which connects pedestrians from the ball fields and firehouse to Philipstown Plaza. With one sidewalk on both Route 9 and Fishkill Road, only two crosswalks are needed at this intersection. Fewer crosswalks make pedestrian crossing more predictable for drivers.

To address the pressure on vehicles turning westbound onto Fishkill Road, a right turn lane could be installed in the southbound direction, which is the west side of Route 9. This would not conflict with proposed sidewalks, although it would make the crossing distance slightly longer for pedestrians crossing Route 9.

To further calm traffic at this intersection, some additional measures are recommended. First, at the northern and southern approaches to this area, the North Highlands hamlet center, rumble strips should be installed to indicate to drivers that they are entering the hamlet. The rumble strips will prompt drivers to look for additional cues, such as gateway signage, which marks the identity of the place and should be installed.

In an added effort to slow traffic at the intersection of Fishkill Road, thermoplastic painted neckdowns in the shoulders would visually narrow the road, and prompt slower speeds. Consideration should also be given to pedestrian-scale, pole-mounted street lights. While these are very expensive they should be considered if evening pedestrian volumes are anticipated.

6.5.2 Public Space/Placemaking Opportunities

Many of the operational improvements also have benefits that contribute to the sense of place for North Highlands. It is not uncommon for a state highway to run through a downtown area, but it does take some effort to ensure that through traffic respects the place and the people that use it. Sidewalks and street trees at this section of Route 9 will be a clear indication of pedestrian presence. While much of the surrounding areas are wooded, plantings in an amenity strip bring them closer to moving traffic, creating a buffer for pedestrians.

The rumble strips are intended to catch the attention of drivers, but the gateway signage (see Figure 6.2), placed immediately after the rumble strips, will provide an aesthetic compliment with relevant information. This is key on a highway, which many drivers travel on for relatively long distances, and often times on a daily or weekly basis. A gateway sign not only indicates that a driver has entered an established place, but it has the potential to connect the businesses and destinations to the place. Flowering, drought tolerant native ground cover and shrubbery at the base of the gateway sign is a low-maintenance but very desirable treatment.

Finally, once implemented, the community will begin to make the connection between ball fields, firehouse and Philipstown Plaza on foot. With a consistent pedestrian presence, drivers passing through will recognize the activity, which further instills a sense of place. All of the



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Figure 6.2: Philipstown Gateway
Rendering

recommendations, together, build on one another to enhance and create a retail center and gathering place in North Highlands.

6.5.3 Long-Term Recommendations

The recommendations below can be referenced by referring to Figure 6.3.

Over time it is possible that additional retail development could follow in some of the parcels that are currently industrial uses. Pending the success of the recent development, as well as strengthening economic conditions, it is feasible to suppose that the real estate values for some of these non-conforming parcels could increase. Should this be the case, those industrial businesses that do not need to be in a downtown area may be inclined to redevelop or sell these parcels to make way for additional retail development. The Town could also create an overlay district, allowing residential units above ground floor retail. This would activate the west side of Route 9, making it feasible to install a sidewalk on that side and further expanding the hamlet and its sense of place.

In the event of such future development, consideration should be given to the realignment of the intersection of Route 9, East Mountain Road South and Old Postal Road. Over the past decade, there have been community requests for traffic control, but NYSDOT has concluded that this location does not meet warrants. While East Mountain Road South intersects Route 9 almost at a 90-degree angle, Old Postal Road South creates a very skewed, sharp angle with Route 9. To realign and normalize this intersection, the southernmost 200 feet of Old Postal Road South would need to be shifted west and then curved to intersect Route 9 at a perpendicular angle across from East Mountain Road South. This would require significant coordination with property owners to acquire an easement. But ultimately, if this area were to become significantly more populated, this measure would be desirable and worthwhile. The additional space between Route 9 and Old Postal Road South would create a moderately sized parcel that could also be developed.

6.6 Phasing and Cost Estimate

The first step to improving this area for pedestrians as well as drivers is a traffic control at the intersection of Route 9 and Fishkill Road. The crosswalks and painted neckdowns would be installed at the same time as the signal. The rumble strips could also be installed at that time.

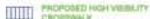






The gateway signs and plantings could be done at any time, since they are relatively low cost to purchase and install. The plantings should be coordinated after the sign installation, at the following planting season.

Because Fishkill Road is a County road, it is possible begin design for the sidewalk along the north side of the road as soon as the traffic signal installation is confirmed. That sidewalk could be built anytime after the traffic signal is installed.

The sidewalk along Route 9 is likely to be somewhat further on the horizon, because it would need to make its way to the NYSDOT project cue. It is possible that if the County invested in the sidewalk on Fishkill Road, NYSDOT would look favorably on the project and therefore work with the County to implement the sidewalk on Route 9.



LEGEND

-  PROPOSED HIGH VISIBILITY CROSSWALK
-  PROPOSED STANDARD CROSSWALK
-  EXISTING GUARDRAIL
-  FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES
-  CURB
-  AMENITY STOP
-  5'-0" SIDEWALK

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The following describes order of magnitude costs for installing gateway signs and sidewalk along one side of Fishkill Road from the firehouse to Route 9, and one side of Route 9 from the gift shop to East Mountain Road South. These two sections of sidewalk are separated so that implementation may be considered individually.

WORK OR ITEM DESCRIPTION	Unit Price	Unit	Area or Quantity	Approximate Cost
<i>General Improvements</i>				
Striping	\$ 4.00	L.F.	400	\$ 1,600
<i>Gateway Signage</i>				
Signs	\$ 5,000.00	EA	4	\$ 20,000
Raised planter- wooden construction	\$ 1,500.00	EA	4	\$ 6,000
Flowering shrubs, groundcover, mulch, topsoil (no irrigation)	\$ 1,200.00	EA	4	\$ 4,800
			Gateway Signage Subtotal	\$ 30,800
<i>Fishkill Road Sidewalk</i>				
Concrete Curb	\$ 70.00	L.F.	1,050	\$ 73,500
Detectable Warning Surface ³	\$ 20.00	S.F.	64	\$ 1,280
5" Concrete Sidewalk	\$ 15.00	S.F.	5,250	\$ 78,750
Street Tree Planting	\$ 1,000.00	EA	6	\$ 6,000
Crosswalk Striping	\$ 4.00	L.F.	1,600	\$ 6,400
			Fishkill Road Sidewalk Subtotal	\$ 165,930
Pole Mounted Lights (not included in total)	\$ 15,000.00	EA	9	\$ 135,000
<i>Route 9 Sidewalk</i>				
Concrete Curb	\$ 70.00	L.F.	1,650	\$ 115,500
Detectable Warning Surface ³	\$ 20.00	S.F.	192	\$ 3,840
5" Concrete Sidewalk	\$ 15.00	S.F.	8,250	\$ 123,750
Street Tree Planting	\$ 1,000.00	EA	24	\$ 24,000
Crosswalk Striping	\$ 4.00	L.F.	140	\$ 560
			Route 9 Sidewalk Subtotal	\$ 267,650
Pole Mounted Lights (not included in total)	\$ 15,000.00	EA	14	\$ 210,000
<i>Maintenance and Protection of Traffic</i>	\$ 8,000.00	L.S.	1	\$ 8,000
			Subtotal	
Subtotal				\$ 473,980
Contingency (20%)				\$ 94,796
Construction Inspection (10%)				\$ 47,398
Design (10%)				\$ 47,398
Mobilization (5%)				\$ 23,699
Total				\$ 687,271

Notes

- 1 Assume 144 S.F. per Corner Quadrant
- 2 Assume 20 L.F. per Corner Quadrant
- 3 Assume 8 S.F. per ramp and 2 ramps per Corner Quadrant

* Sidewalk area for known replacement segments. Additional segments may be necessary.