

## **Norristown Traffic Calming Policy**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this policy is to establish the Traffic Calming Guidelines in the Borough of Norristown. Traffic calming devices can include, but are not limited to: Speed Humps, Traffic Islands, Traffic Circles, Speed Tables, Chicanes, Neck Downs, Bulb Outs, Speed Timing Signage, and other available speed control devices.

This Traffic Calming Policy reflects the commitment of Norristown to address a wide range of community goals and objectives, which include transportation mobility, efficiency and safety and harmonizing transportation mobility with other community values.

This Traffic Calming Policy identifies the procedure that will be followed in determining whether traffic calming measures will be implemented on a road or at a particular location. This policy in no way limits the Municipality's authority to erect traffic control devices in accordance with Pennsylvania Law and Municipality Code.

The preferred traffic calming device for the Municipality are speed humps. The rubber-type speed humps that are bolted down on the street pavement and are easily removable will be primarily used under this policy.

### **PURPOSE AND GOALS**

Norristown's Traffic Calming Policy is designed to address traffic concerns in residential areas of the Municipality, such as speeding or cut-through traffic. The Municipality's traffic calming program, working in cooperation with neighborhoods, promotes the preservation of the residential character of the Municipality's neighborhoods and helps to improve the overall quality of life.

The Traffic Calming Program incorporates the following goals:

- Create and maintain safe and attractive streets;
- Reduce the negative effects of motor vehicles on the environment; and increase the quality of life in the Municipality;
- Promote safe and pleasant conditions for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists; and
- Maximize the efficiency of the local road network.

Traffic calming goals are achieved by including the following objectives:

- Achieve safe, slow speeds for motor vehicles;
- Reduce cut through or transient traffic;
- Improve the safety and the perception of safety on the street;
- Reduce and redirect the need for traffic police enforcement; and reduce crash frequency and severity; and
- Increase access for all modes of transportation.

The Municipality's traffic calming goals and objectives are achieved by meeting minimum criteria in the following principles and planning concepts to ensure proper implementation:

- Traffic calming planning and development process must be community-based and supported;
- Traffic calmed streets incorporate a degree of self-enforcement of motor vehicle speeds through the design of physical features;
- Traffic calming directly affects driver behavior;
- Traffic calming improves the safety of the street for all roadway users, including pedestrians and bicyclists; and
- Traffic calming must not unduly hamper access by emergency services.

## **DEFINITIONS**

“85th Percentile Speed” shall mean that speed at which 85% of the free flowing vehicles are traveling, or below.

“Arterial Road” shall mean a roadway of considerable continuity used primarily as a main traffic artery and having the capability of carrying high volumes of traffic. Arterial roadways within Norristown are not eligible for traffic calming features through the Traffic Calming Policy described herein. Traffic calming features may be constructed on an Arterial roadway as part of a Municipality sponsored streetscape or similar enhancement project.

“Collector Road” shall mean a road that carries traffic from minor roads to arterial roads and may include the principal entrance roads of a residential development and roads for circulation within such development.

“Consensus Plan” shall mean a proposed traffic calming plan detailing the locations of specific traffic calming features developed by the Municipality. The consensus plan will become the traffic calming plan proposed for the neighborhood during a final vote.

“Generally Affected” shall mean all properties within a neighborhood area, the boundaries of which are determined by Municipality staff, petitioning for traffic calming including those adjacent to roads on which traffic calming features may not be located.

“Local Road” shall mean a roadway with relatively low traffic volumes that serves short trips at low speeds. For purposes of this program, local roads are typically residential roadways.

“Primary Access Route for Emergency Services” shall mean those roadways, determined by The Chief of Police in consultation with the Fire Marshall that serve as primary access into neighborhood areas requiring their services. For purposes of the Traffic Calming Program, “Primary Access Routes for Emergency Services” shall not be eligible for traffic calming features that include vertical deflections such as speed humps and speed tables. These routes shall be shown on a map maintained by the Municipality Engineer.

“Property Owner” shall mean the person(s) or agency that possesses title to a parcel of land, as determined by the Municipality. Renters or residents other than the property owner are not included.

“Specifically Affected” shall mean properties adjacent to roadways within a neighborhood area, as determined by Municipality staff, that are directly affected by traffic problems and/or the installation of traffic calming features. A specifically affected property must have at least one side or portion of the parcel abutting the roadway on which traffic calming features are being considered, or the only access to said property is by way of said street (e.g., cul-de-sacs).

“Speed Humps” can be made from varying materials– asphalt, concrete, recycled plastic, metal, or vulcanized rubber. The height of speed humps is between 3-4 inches, and the length is about 12 inches. The width is usually the width of the street, with provisions for drainage at the ends of the humps. Speed humps are the preferred traffic calming measure available under this policy.

“Traffic Calming” shall mean the combination of mainly physical features that reduce the negative effects of motor vehicle traffic use, alter driver behavior and improve conditions for non-motorized street users. Traffic Calming features are not traffic control devices, but rather physical parts of a roadway's design characteristics.

“Transient Traffic” shall mean non-local vehicular traffic using neighborhood streets as a shortcut to other areas or to by-pass an alternate route on a main collector and/or arterial; also referred to as “cut-through” traffic.

### **APPLICABILITY**

Norristown residents are often very concerned about traffic problems, real or perceived, in their neighborhood. Reports from citizens are sometimes the only way the Municipality becomes aware of specific traffic concerns in residential areas. These concerns may involve speeding, transient traffic, real or potential risk from vehicle crashes, safety, or other issues. Because the character of residential neighborhoods is a Municipality-wide concern, and because traffic calming programs affect daily living patterns of area residents and may involve public safety issues, the generally affected area (the whole neighborhood) should be informed and involved in the development of any plan which involves a major change or expenditure of public funds. All residents in a neighborhood area are provided opportunities to offer their opinions on proposed traffic calming plans. A minimum number of specifically affected properties must then formally agree by voting on the proposed traffic calming plan in order for it to be implemented. Specifically affected residents are eligible for the formal vote because they live directly along the roads most affected by traffic problems and traffic calming.

### **ELIGIBLE STREETS**

A street will be considered for the installation of traffic calming features, provided that the street meets all of the following criteria:

The street is located in an area zoned residential.

Traffic calming features should not be considered for installation on streets classified as collectors or higher, in the Municipality's General Plans.

Residential alleys will be considered under this policy on a case-by-case basis.

The posted speed is 25mph or less.

The block is at least 1000 feet in length and the road grade is 8% or less (if vertical deflection measures are proposed).

Where cut through traffic is a concern -The street has an average daily traffic (ADT) volume which exceeds the calculated average weekday trips based on the ITE Trip Generation Manual (8th edition or latest) for the number of units along the street being considered or the peak hour volume exceeds the calculated average peak hour of adjacent street traffic trips based on ITE Trip Generation Manual (8th edition or latest) for the number of units along the street being considered.

Where speeding is a concern, the 85th percentile speed is 30 mph or greater.

The proposed measures cannot impact public transportation route, without public transportation stakeholder input.

The street is owned and maintained by the Municipality.

### **LOCATION GUIDELINES**

Speed humps shall be located at the middle of a street block when one is determined by the Chief of Police to be sufficient, or at locations of 25% or 75% of the length of the block if two are determined to be needed.

There will be no more than two speed humps per block.

Speed humps shall not be placed on streets with more than one lane in each direction.

The rubber bolted speed hump is the preferred traffic calming device at all locations.

The minimum distance from an intersection to a traffic calming device shall range from 150 feet for unsignalized intersections to 250 feet for signalized intersections.

Any traffic calming feature shall be visible to oncoming traffic for at least the minimum safe stopping sight distance based on the 85th percentile speed. Traffic calming shall take into account existing drainage features and bicycle facilities.

Where feasible, the features shall be located near street lights for improved nighttime visibility of the feature and required signage should be placed on property lines as opposed to directly in front of a residence.

When possible, a required sign will be placed on an existing light pole/utility pole. Where feasible, the features shall be located to minimize impacts to on-street parking.

Diverters should not be installed where traffic is likely to be rerouted to other residential streets.

## **AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT**

Traffic calming measures must be designed to accommodate all people in the community. To accomplish this goal, features that are implemented to improve pedestrian safety, or have an effect on pedestrian travel, must be designed to meet the requirements of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act.

## **TRAFFIC CALMING FEATURES**

### **TRAFFIC CALMING MEASURES, DESIGN GUIDELINES AND SIGNAGE**

The Municipality adopts and incorporates herein by reference Chapters 5 and 6 of "Pennsylvania's Traffic Calming Handbook," in their entirety, as if set forth fully herein. The latest edition of the Handbook will apply unless specifically modified by the Municipality.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

### **PROCESS**

The following eight steps are followed throughout the Traffic Calming Program:

- 1. Inquiry:** Initial contact made by specifically affected property owners inquiring about traffic calming; petitions, forms, and other documents will be available for distribution, or the Municipality itself identifies an area that may benefit from traffic calming measures.
- 2. Informational Presentation:** If requested by **50% of the specifically affected property owners**, staff will schedule a preliminary meeting to present background information on traffic calming and explain the Municipality's traffic calming policy. This will be a meeting open to the public.
- 3. Petition:** After staff reviews minimum petition requirements (**75% of generally affected property owners**) with residents, petition submitted.
- 4. Traffic studies:** Accident history reviewed, and speed and volume traffic studies performed.
- 5. Develop Plan:** Neighborhood traffic calming plan developed by Municipality staff.
- 6. Public meeting:** Public information meeting(s) held with all generally affected residents to disseminate information on proposed traffic calming plan and receive input, after which the neighborhood traffic calming plan will be finalized.
- 7. Vote:** Specifically affected property owners' vote. **75% must vote in favor of project** to proceed with implementation.

**8. Construction:** If result of vote is favorable, at the Municipal Administrator's discretion, the neighborhood traffic calming plan is placed on a schedule for the installation of the traffic calming features. The traffic calming plan will be constructed as funding allows, subsequent to Council passing a resolution in favor of implementing the plan.

### **1. Inquiry**

Upon initial contact made by a specifically affected property owner inquiring about traffic calming in their neighborhood, Municipality staff will discuss the program procedures and petition requirements. The property owner will be required to submit a Traffic Calming Inquiry form to the Municipality. Staff will then determine the area affected and neighborhood boundary lines. Typically, a resident will have concerns with traffic problems on one specific roadway section. However, if the implementation of traffic calming on one roadway section may transfer the problems to a parallel local roadway, the affected neighborhood area shall be addressed as a whole. This affected neighborhood area is called the generally affected area and will be determined by Municipality staff, taking into consideration the natural, constructed, and traffic boundaries of an area. The generally affected area will be determined based on proximity to the proposed traffic calming feature, likelihood of traffic diverting onto adjacent roadways as a result of the proposed traffic calming feature, and roadways where residents will be impacted by the feature.

Municipality staff will then discuss with the inquiring parties the minimum petition requirements, as well as the boundaries of the generally affected area and the specifically affected area via the telephone. A preliminary field review by Municipality staff may be required and a meeting with the inquiring parties may also occur if needed. Petition forms, informational brochures and maps detailing the generally affected area boundaries shall be provided to the inquiring party. In the alternative, the Municipality may identify a potential need for traffic calming measures, in which case the Municipality will initiate the process at Step 2.

### **2. Informational Presentation**

Staff will provide a public informational presentation to present background information on traffic calming and explain the Municipality's traffic calming policy if requested by 50% of the specifically affected property owners, by completing and submitting a Petition for Informational Meeting, which will be available at the Municipality building. Notification of the public meeting by the Municipality will be made through the Norristown webpage and by notifying the contact person identified on the Petition form. In addition, the residents initiating the request for traffic calming may produce and distribute flyers at their own cost with the Municipality's approval. Any other advertisements initiated and paid for by neighborhood residents must be approved in advance by the Municipality.

### **3. Petition**

Staff will provide information on the boundaries of the generally affected neighborhood, minimum petition requirements, petition forms, and any informational brochures to residents wishing to pursue traffic calming in their area.

Once a qualifying petition is submitted, the Public Works Director or his designee will act as the liaison that serves as the main contact person between the Municipality and the property owners of the neighborhood. The Public Works Director or his/her designee will, among other duties, coordinate with Municipality staff on the development of the traffic calming plan, help contact property owners adjacent to potential traffic calming feature locations, distribute appropriate information to neighbors as needed, be available to answer questions from area residents about traffic calming, help organize the public meeting, and present the proposed traffic calming plan to their neighbors.

In order for a neighborhood to proceed with the traffic calming program, a petition shall be submitted to the Municipality signed by property owners from a minimum of 75% of the total number of generally affected properties within the neighborhood boundaries determined by Municipality staff. In the event there are multiple owners of a property, only one property owner shall be counted for that parcel. The purpose of obtaining signatures from owners of a minimum of 75% of the generally affected properties is to verify there are a significant number of residents interested in traffic calming before proceeding through the remainder of the traffic calming program. Although only specifically affected property owners may vote on the final traffic calming plan, all generally affected property owners should remain informed during the development process and be provided opportunities for input.

#### **4. Traffic Studies**

After the petition has been received, Municipality staff will schedule traffic studies on the critical roadways to determine average 85th percentile speeds and average daily traffic volumes as funding permits. A review of the crash history will also be performed for a period of three (3) years. Municipality staff will analyze the traffic data and evaluate it based upon the criteria set forth in this policy.

If the criteria to qualify for traffic calming measures are met, the Municipality will also analyze the impact of potential traffic calming measures on other roadways in the neighborhood. A committee formed by Municipality personnel to include the Police Chief, Public Works Director, Municipality Engineer, and others as Municipality sees fit, will develop a recommendation as to whether traffic calming measures are appropriate, and if so, to what extent.

#### **5. Develop Plan**

If it is determined that a road qualifies and is appropriate for traffic calming measures, Municipality staff will develop a proposed traffic calming plan. For a particular roadway section, traffic calming features may be most effective if applied in a series. The locations will be determined by Municipality staff and will depend on several factors, including but not limited to adequate spacing between features, driveways connections to road right-of-ways, intersecting side streets, horizontal or vertical curvature of the roadway, and drainage. Selection of locations must also take into consideration existing infrastructure such as fire hydrants, drainage inlets, utility boxes, manholes, poles, etc.

The property owners will be informed of where traffic calming features are proposed to be located and how the locations were determined. Input from residents and field reviews or meetings may occur as needed.

Where applicable, Municipality staff will coordinate development of the traffic calming plan with representative of PENNDOT and adjacent municipalities. If required, additional traffic studies will be completed to assess the impact of constructing traffic calming measures and to obtain any required permits.

## **6. Meeting open to the Public**

If the Municipality committee finds that a road is appropriate for traffic calming measures, all generally affected property owners within the neighborhood area being considered for traffic calming will be given notice of a meeting open to the public hearing through a Municipality mailing so that their views and opinions may be expressed regarding the proposed traffic calming plan for their neighborhood. The notice will include the purpose of the meeting and a description of the proposed traffic calming plan for the neighborhood.

Notification of the meeting will also be published on the Municipality webpage and emails as available. In addition, the residents initiating the request for traffic calming may produce and distribute flyers at their own cost with the Municipality's approval.

All Municipality residents are welcome to participate in the meetings and offer comments/opinion.

Municipality staff will conduct the meeting. Municipality staff will:

- Briefly present background information on traffic calming in general and the Municipality's traffic calming program and process;
- Review the boundaries of the generally affected area and identify specifically affected properties;
- Review results of the traffic studies from the affected area and other applicable data as needed;
- Explain the further steps required to implement the plan.
- The Municipality Administrator or his/her designee will:
  - Review the neighborhood concerns which initiated the traffic calming process and any other background information as needed;
  - Help present the proposed traffic calming plan developed for the affected area.

Official minutes may be taken if deemed necessary by Municipality staff. Municipality staff present at the meeting will receive and record any concerns of the residents in the generally affected area. After the meeting, Municipality staff will consider any concerns brought up at the meeting and investigate any issues necessary before the neighborhood traffic calming plan is finalized.

## **7. Vote**



A notice which describes in detail the finalized proposed traffic calming plan will be mailed by the Municipality to the owner of each parcel of property in the generally affected area, defined by the boundaries previously determined by Municipality staff. Those specifically affected parcels eligible to vote will receive a ballot along with a copy of the finalized traffic calming plan. Property ownership will be determined from the most recent general update of the records of the Municipality. The notice will contain the following information as applicable:

- written and graphic description of the proposed traffic calming plan;
- summary of data which support implementation of traffic calming;
- description of boundaries of the generally affected area;
- identification of specifically affected properties;
- estimated cost of the traffic calming plan and funding sources;
- 75% of the specifically affected properties must vote in favor of the project for it to go forward;
- an official voting ballot form for specifically affected properties eligible to vote to be returned to the Municipality, and the voting deadline.

All notices and voting ballots will be mailed by the Municipality through regular United States Postal Service to the mailing address on record for the property owner. In order for the proposed traffic calming plan to be implemented, at least 75% of the specifically affected properties must be in favor of the proposal. Each specifically affected property parcel shall be counted as one vote. In the case of multiple property owners for one parcel, only one vote signed by one of the owners shall be counted for that property, and if conflicting votes are received for that property, it shall be counted as in favor. In the case of a property owner owning multiple properties within the specifically affected area eligible to vote, one vote for each property owned will be accepted. If an agency or group entity (such as a real estate company) is the official property owner on record other than an individual person, an official agent of the company may sign the official voting ballot.

Only original signatures will be accepted. A replacement ballot may be provided upon the property owner's request. Votes are final once received by Municipality staff. If a property owner wishes to change his or her vote after submitting the official ballot to the Municipality and it is within the voting period, the property owner may request a replacement ballot as previously described. No ballots or replacement ballots shall be received after the official voting deadline has passed. Votes mailed to the Municipality must be received before the expiration of the voting period.

The voting period shall be 60 calendar days from the date of mailing of the official ballot. No votes will be accepted after the expiration of the voting period.

Voting ballots may be returned by mail or hand delivered directly to the Municipality prior to the voting period deadline. At the conclusion of the voting period, official ballots received by Municipality staff will be verified. If at least 75% of the specifically affected properties are in favor of the traffic calming plan, the neighborhood traffic calming project will be forwarded to the Municipal Administrator to be considered at a business meeting as well as prioritized against other approved projects.

If 75% of the specifically affected properties are not in favor of the proposed traffic calming plan, the area shall not be reconsidered for traffic calming for a period of three (3) years from the date the petition was received by Municipality staff, unless the Municipality determines that a significant change in area conditions affecting traffic has occurred. Such significant changes may include new construction, roadway improvements, changes in land use, or similar changes creating regional impacts. A new petition will be required after the three-year waiting period to initiate the traffic calming process again.

## **8. Construction**

If the Council votes in favor of the traffic calming, the neighborhood traffic calming plan is placed on a schedule for the installation of the traffic calming features. The traffic calming plan will be constructed as funding allows, subsequent to Council passing a resolution in favor of implementing the plan. If there are multiple neighborhoods that have voted for traffic calming, a waiting list may be developed by Municipality staff until such time as the features can be constructed.

During the initial stages of construction, necessary temporary signs or other warning devices may be installed as needed to alert drivers to an upcoming traffic calming project or that traffic calming features have been installed in a neighborhood.

The Board may decide to implement temporary measures on a trial basis to gauge effectiveness or receptiveness of the measures by the community.

## **FUNDING**

The Municipality supports the Traffic Calming Program on an on-going basis by allocating funds, when available, through the budgetary process. All projects are conditioned on funding being available. A successful vote does not guarantee the installation of a traffic calming measure.

Developers may also contribute funding on a voluntary basis to a specific project in an effort to address community concerns. For a development or redevelopment project that impacts an adjacent residential roadway in a neighborhood that has petitioned for traffic calming, the developer may install one or more traffic calming features, such as an enhanced speed hump feature, mini-traffic circle or other during the construction of the project. If it is not feasible for a developer to install traffic calming as part of their project, the developer may donate funds to the Municipality that will be reserved for use when the Municipality installs traffic calming in the adjacent affected neighborhood area. Any contributions to the traffic calming program by developers will be on a voluntary basis.

## **OTHER TRAFFIC CALMING PROGRAM ISSUES**

### **CONTINUAL MONITORING**

After the construction of each neighborhood traffic calming plan is complete, the Municipality should make efforts for follow-up traffic studies to monitor the project for effectiveness and any remaining traffic problems, which efforts shall be documented.

### **REMOVAL OR MODIFICATION OF TRAFFIC CALMING FEATURES**

The Municipality, on its own initiative, may modify or remove any installed traffic calming features in the interest of public safety. The property owners of an area in which traffic calming has been implemented may also request the removal of the traffic calming features. A petition to remove the traffic calming features may be considered by Municipality staff, subject to the following conditions:

- The traffic calming features have been in place for at least three (3) years;
- 75% of the of the specifically affected property owners must vote in favor of the removal; and the removal of one or more traffic calming features may not make the remaining overall traffic calming plan less effective unless the entire traffic calming project is being petitioned to be removed.

### **GENERAL DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

In an effort to encourage motorists to slow down and drive responsibly, traffic calming purposely introduces additional self-enforcing physical features in the design of the roadway to effectively change the design speed. Traffic calming features are generally implemented retroactively, and traditional design standards may require interpretation and modification. A set of guidelines and policies to follow, engineering judgment and coordination with neighborhood property owners are key elements in the development of traffic calming plans.

Traffic calming measures are design features, intended to modify the character of the roadway. They are not traffic control devices, and therefore State or Federal specifications, warrants or regulations may not apply.

### **EMERGENCY SERVICES**

Studies show traffic calming features may cause delay in emergency response times to residences in neighborhood areas where traffic calming projects have been installed. Property owners participating in the Traffic Calming Program will be provided information regarding the potential delay of emergency services due to traffic calming features. However, traffic calming features and reduced vehicular speeds may also reduce the number of incidents requiring emergency services, due to the increased safety on the roadways within a traffic calmed area.

### **LIGHTING**

Street lighting installations shall not be required with the installations of traffic calming features in neighborhoods. Adequate signing and pavement markings will be installed with each feature that will be reflective at night to sufficiently warn and guide motorists traveling over a traffic calming feature.

### **SUMMARY**

The Traffic Calming Policy allows Municipality staff and property owners in Norristown to work together to develop neighborhood traffic calming plans. It also provides a streamlined procedure for the development of traffic calming plans.

This Traffic Calming Policy shall serve as the supporting guidelines for Norristown Traffic Calming Program. It supports Norristown transportation, planning, environmental, economic and social goals, objectives and principles.