

## **Chapter 147 Streets and Sidewalks**

### **Article IV Complete Streets**

**147-14. Complete Streets defined.** Complete Streets are defined as facilities that are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users. Persons with disabilities, pedestrians, bicyclists, freight, motorists, and transit riders are able to safely move along and cross a complete street.

**147-15. Commitment and Scope.** The City of Rensselaer is committed to implementing Complete Streets throughout the community because of its benefits to the entire City. Complete Streets increase opportunities for economic development city-wide and make transportation safer for all. They support the City's most vulnerable populations including children and seniors, in all neighborhoods, especially those adjacent to schools.

The City of Rensselaer shall establish criteria to encourage funding prioritization for Complete Streets implementation in order to support broader efforts to enhance our growing city's economy, connect existing infrastructures together, and create additional connections to community assets. This policy is meant to implement projects that expand infrastructure for modes of transportation other than car and broaden the transportation needs for neighborhoods with limited connectivity to community assets.

#### **147-16. Implementation and Exceptions.**

- A. The City of Rensselaer shall design, build, operate, and maintain a safe, reliable, efficient, integrated, and connected multimodal transportation network that will provide access, mobility, safety, and connectivity for all users.
- B. The City of Rensselaer shall include facilities that users of all ages and abilities can use to travel safely and independently in all new street construction, street reconstruction, street maintenance, public works, and park projects undertaken, subject to the exceptions contained herein.
  - a. Accommodations for all modes of transportation shall be made to continue to use the road safely and efficiently during any construction or repair work that infringes on the right of way and/or sidewalk.
- C. The City of Rensselaer shall review each new street construction, street reconstruction, and street maintenance project undertaken and shall provide requirements regarding its implementation as a complete street in each project's Request for Proposals.
  - a. The City of Rensselaer shall create a committee to oversee implementation. This shall include both internal and external stakeholders to include representatives from groups that advocate for: underinvested communities, vulnerable



populations such as people of color, older adults, children, non-native English speakers, those with limited access to cars, and those living with disabilities. The committee shall meet ad hoc to discuss implications of new projects as they relate to Complete Streets.

- b. For private development projects, the City of Rensselaer shall review and evaluate site plan applications and designs in order to ensure that all new development in the city consider the incorporation of Complete Streets design elements. The City of Rensselaer shall reduce each review to writing and file it with appropriate supporting documentation.
  - c. The City of Rensselaer endeavors to identify and mitigate unintended consequences, such as involuntary displacement due to the cost of living, to the greatest extent possible. It will consider community context as well as how transportation intersects with broader land use decision. As a result, all new or revised land use policies, plans, zoning ordinances and other documents shall be required to specify how they will support Complete Streets.
- D. The inclusion of complete street facilities shall be mandated in all new street construction, street reconstruction, and street maintenance projects undertaken by the City of Rensselaer unless one of the following conditions exists:
- a. Bicyclists and pedestrians are prohibited by law from using the facility. In this case, alternative facilities and accommodation for pedestrians and bicyclists shall be provided within the same transportation corridor as determined by the City of Rensselaer. If the City of Rensselaer makes said determination, they shall reduce it to writing and file it with appropriate supporting documentation with the Planning Commission for its information and review.
  - b. The cost of establishing Complete Streets would be disproportionate to the need **or probable use** for complete streets facilities, **especially if it causes financial hardship for the City of Rensselaer**. Costs shall be considered disproportionate for purposes of this section if the cost of including complete streets facilities exceeds 40% of the cost of the larger project. If the City of Rensselaer makes said determination, they shall reduce it to writing and file it with appropriate supporting documentation with the Planning Commission for its information and review.
  - c. Where the existing right-of-way does not allow for sidewalks, bike lanes, paths or other improvements. In this case, the City of Rensselaer shall explore alternatives including but not limited to: crosswalks, additional lighting, streetscaping, curb bump-outs, or bicycle parking to accommodate pedestrians, cyclists, and persons with disabilities. If the City of Rensselaer makes said determination, they shall reduce it to writing and file it with appropriate supporting documentation with the Planning Commission for its information and review.



- d. Where the City of Rensselaer determines that the inclusion of complete streets facilities on a roadway could constitute a threat to the health, safety, and/or welfare to the motorists and/or pedestrians and bicyclists of the City of Rensselaer. If the City of Rensselaer makes said determination, they shall reduce it to writing and file it with appropriate supporting documentation with the Planning Commission for its information and review.

If the City of Rensselaer determines any of the above exceptions exist, they shall be filed with appropriate supporting documentation with the Planning Commission for its information and review. Public notice of the exception will be provided at a public meeting and/or online posting with opportunity to comment.

**147-17. Planning, design, maintenance and measured success of facilities.**

- A. Complete Street facilities shall be planned, designed, developed, and maintained in accordance with guidelines adopted by the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT), New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) and the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) or other guidelines approved by the City of Rensselaer. Recommended design guidelines include: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach: An ITE Recommended Practice (ITE); Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG) (United States Access Board); Urban Bikeway Design Guide (NACTO); and Guide for the Planning, Design, and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities (AASHTO). Internal design policies and guides will be reviewed for efficacy once a year. See *"Rensselaer Complete Streets Checklist,"* for current criteria as of 2026.

- B. Performance measures shall be developed and used to track project implementation, prioritize projects, and evaluate designs. These include Safety and Public Health (i.e. number and location of fatalities, serious injuries by road type and mode of travel), Economy (access to opportunities, retail vibrancy) and Access (pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure elements).

The City of Rensselaer will develop comprehensive measures within 12 months of policy implementation using Smart Growth America's *Evaluating Complete Streets Projects* as a guide. The data collected from these measures will be shared with the public once per quarter at minimum during Planning Commission meetings.

