

2025 Election Candidate Statements



At Bike Falls Church, we value an active two-way dialogue with our City leaders. We're here to advocate for better bicycling, walking, and other transportation in the City but also to listen, learn, and advise. Candidates for City Council are invited to join Bike Falls Church events and to submit answers to questions relevant to our mission. You can find answers from this year's candidates below in the order they were received.

For ease of reference, we first show an AI-generated “structured summary of the Falls Church City Council candidates’ positions based on the statements they submitted to Bike Falls Church”. Please consult their full answers as well.

Candidate Comparison Table

Issue	Marybeth Connelly	David Snyder	Arthur Agin	Laura Downs	Brian Pendleton	James Thompson
Personal Use of Biking/ Walking	Bikes occasionally; husband is longtime W&OD bike commuter. Finds connections difficult. Walks, drives as needed.	Walks frequently; some biking in family. Uses Metro. Drives mainly for EMT volunteering and errands.	Walks often; bikes W&OD recreationally. Sees city's potential for model bike/walk infrastructure.	Bikes W&OD for exercise; kids don't bike to school due to safety/distance. Walks locally to stores/restaurants.	Walks daily; drives too. Concerned about unsafe biking/pedestrian interactions.	Busy family of seven. Walks and bikes when safe but relies heavily on cars/carpooling. Kids bike locally but not to school due to safety.
Street Safety View	Some streets safe, but connectivity weak. Advocates for protected bike lanes, Vision Zero, traffic calming, biking mindset in planning.	Generally safe but needs improvement. Advocates shift from car-centric to people-centric design . Strong supporter of electronic enforcement .	Streets decent but inconsistent. Pushes for Complete Streets program for safety and predictability.	Getting better, but gaps remain. Supports Complete Streets, Vision Zero , systematic sidewalk fixes, faster traffic calming.	Thinks official safety stats don't reflect reality. Calls for more police enforcement against unsafe driving/biking behavior.	Streets unsafe due to traffic and blocked sidewalks. Advocates for regional truck reduction, better sidewalk upkeep, vegetation trimming plus long-term planning.
Managing Growth & Traffic	Push for slower speeds, traffic calming, regional collaboration (e.g., W&OD connections). Opposes reliance on garages.	Supports regional transit and bike projects (W&OD widening, Route 7 BRT). Balances car use with safety.	Differentiates between local, destination, and through traffic . Advocates targeted fixes, not one-size-fits-all.	Supports public transit investment, micromobility (e-bikes, scooters), better parking signage . Notes Route 7 limits local control.	Says city is already mired in traffic. Opposes public spending on garages , but open to private-sector solutions.	Calls for balanced approach: invest in bike/walk, but recognize cars will remain essential. Opposes extremes of overbuilding parking or ignoring alternatives.
Funding & Maintenance	Acknowledges limited resources, favors gradual balanced investment , and leveraging grants.	Secured \$55M+ in grants ; will push for more funding for roads, sidewalks, Bike Master Plan.	Advocates full DPW funding, ADA compliance, timely Bike Master Plan execution . Warns against costly delays.	Wants budget discipline with steady investment. Track ADA/sidewalk fixes systematically. Bike Plan requires tough trade-offs.	Skeptical of cited infrastructure data. Says residents mostly care about property taxes . Infrastructure plans always subject to change.	Calls for phased, prioritized safety/maintenance fixes, accountability for property upkeep, leveraging outside funds, and realistic timelines for Bike Plan.

Marybeth Connelly (www.marybethconnelly.com)

How you and your household get around the City and nearby, what do you like and not like about that experience, and what role does biking and walking play in that if any?

My husband and I selected Falls Church as our home in 1995 because of bike access on the W&OD trail from Falls Church to Washington, DC. He has been a bike commuter to DC for his whole career in government service. Access to the W&OD trail made this possible, and it has been a good home for a bike commuter. However, getting to and from the W&OD trail from our home is the most difficult part of the commute.

Biking is one of the ways that we get around Falls Church - but not as often as we would like to. We also drive and walk. Many residential roads are comfortable and easy to bike on, and busier roads are less comfortable. From our house in Greenway Downs, we joke that it is uphill both ways.

I'd like to bike more often than I do, but carrying groceries and other things on a bike isn't as easy as plopping numerous bags into a car.

During family vacations in Cape May, NY, we love that bikes are everywhere. Roads are shared among cars, bikes, pedestrians and golf carts. It is flat, and people are on vacation so there isn't as much commuting stress. There are still a lot of cars, but the expectation is that the roads are shared.

Are Falls Church City streets safe and comfortable for everyone to use, regardless of transportation mode, age, or ability? If they fall short, what should we do about it?

Some streets are better than others. It is hard to cobble together a bike route through Falls Church that feels 100% safe.

Thinking about the length of the City, I occasionally ride my bike to the high school, and it is a challenge - partly because it is uphill, and partly because of all the traffic, without protected lanes. I ride on sidewalks and cut through parking lots, or cross W. Broad Street to reach the W&OD entrance along Shreve Road. I have never ridden a bike to Eden Center, because there is no route that feels safe to do that.

In the middle, except for Broad & Washington, most roads are bikeable for seasoned riders, but not for all ages and abilities. It is a joy to see families biking together, and parents teaching children the rules of the road.

I am excited about the traffic garden coming to Mt. Daniel Elementary School - which will be a great addition to the school and community. However, getting to Mt. Daniel by bike on the weekends for families to practice includes the uphill challenge as well. The proposed bike garden at Lincoln Park will be a welcome addition.

I love the stories of Paris and Amsterdam where the government intentionally closed roads to cars and trucks, making bicycles the preferred method of transportation. While this exact approach won't work in Falls Church, these are models that we can learn from to improve the bikeability of our roads. Another model we have is next door in Arlington County. It is easy to know when you've entered Arlington along Lincoln Ave. because the marked bike lanes appear at the border.

Our Council and staff need to have a biking mindset, and there should be more protected bike lanes where possible, along with a commitment to look at everything through a bicycle lens when redesigning roads.

This fall we will be taking up Vision Zero as a way to make our streets safer. It includes a toolkit for communities to address their traffic safety for all modes.

Additionally, volunteer work from groups like Bike Falls Church, and individual citizens is effective in keeping safety for all modes at the top of mind for the City staff and Council.

How are we going to deal with a growing regional population and expectations for a growing Falls Church population without being mired in traffic and spending millions on parking garages?

Falls Church is an oasis in the midst of a busy region, and we are not immune to the traffic. Even if we had decided 25 years ago not to build any mixed use in Falls Church, the traffic would still be streaming through.

Have you ever heard of Falls Church Time? We always think it will take 5 minutes to get anywhere within the City in a car, but it actually takes 10-15

minutes, which means drivers are always running behind and rushing. Additionally drivers who are passing through the City to another destination are often in a hurry. One solution is to reduce speeds. As we work on traffic calming, many of the features (bulb outs, speed tables and humps, narrowing lanes), are designed to slow drivers down so that the road is safer for all modes of transportation. We can do more here, and I would like to see a community campaign that announces the expectation that drivers should slow down in Falls Church.

The Council has taken many steps to make Falls Church a more walkable & bikeable community, but there are many steps to go. Density along Broad & Washington Streets contributes to the sense of walkability, but it doesn't make it easier to bike.

We need regional collaboration and the City has partnered with Fairfax County in several ways to improve the bike access. One example is improvements connecting the W&OD trail along Shreve and Haycock. This is coming soon.

DPW has been sounding the alarm about failing roadways due to under-funding maintenance for 15+ years, our 2012 ADA transition plan has seen little progress on sidewalk obstructions, and our 6-month old Bike Master Plan is already looking at a 20-year delay in implementation. At the same time the last two community surveys found traffic, roads, and sidewalks at the top of residents' concerns. Tax bills on like-for-like homes (excluding tear downs/remodels) have grown slower than construction inflation. The problem keeps getting bigger. What should we do?

As a small city, Falls Church struggles to do everything at the same time. Streets are one of many areas that need work. This includes stormwater, schools, streets, parks, public safety, environmental stewardship, affordable housing. Every year the building of the budget is a balancing act, and some areas are better funded than others. I am very proud of the track record of Council over the past 12 years that I have served. Through thoughtful investment, we've been able to improve school facilities, complete stormwater projects, set aside funds for affordable housing, improve and add parks.

Staff have done an amazing job obtaining grants to fund a lot of the big transportation needs. Some roads and sidewalks have improved in those 12 years, but not all of them. We need to keep up with the rate of growth.

Unfortunately I don't think there is a magic solution to fixing everything all at once. The nature of being a small city means that we need to keep chipping away at it, one street at a time.

David Snyder (davidfsnyderforcitycouncil.com)

How you and your household get around the City and nearby, what do you like and not like about that experience, and what role does biking and walking play in that if any?

All members of our family walk a great deal throughout Falls Church to patronize the City's businesses and use its recreation facilities. At least one member of my extended family living here also bikes. We take public transit, and particularly Metro, whenever we can. When we drive, it is most often to destinations outside the City and beyond public transit to access necessary health care, for jobs, and, in my case, to volunteer at the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad as an emergency medical technician (EMT) or transport food to serve unhoused persons, as I do every weekend.

Are Falls Church City streets safe and comfortable for everyone to use, regardless of transportation mode, age, or ability? If they fall short, what should we do about it?

As an EMT, I have been on the scene of dozens of serious motor vehicle crashes. For me, safety is not a theoretical goal but my passion and life-long commitment. Like other citizens, we find the City quite walkable, but parts of the sidewalks are less than ideal. We also witness frequent examples of bad behavior by motor vehicle drivers, such as running through stop signs.

While I generally believe our streets are safe, I recognize that improvements are necessary if we are to truly provide a safe system for citizens, regardless of transportation mode, age, or ability. We are in the process of retrofitting the City's transportation infrastructure to move from a car-centric to a more people-centric design.

Such a conversion takes both time and money. Striking a balance is difficult but essential; we must recognize current realities, such as the necessary use of cars by City residents and nonresidents whose patronage is essential to our businesses and whom we welcome at City events, yet weigh that need with our

desire to progress toward greater safety and attractive alternatives, including bike/pedestrian infrastructure and public transportation. I have strongly supported these alternatives locally and regionally through my service to the City.

How are we going to deal with a growing regional population and expectations for a growing Falls Church population without being mired in traffic and spending millions on parking garages?

Regionally, as chair and vice chair of Northern Virginia's transportation planning and funding agencies, I have consistently supported funding for bike/pedestrian and transit projects, including the W&OD Trail widening and the Route 7 Bus Rapid Transit project.

Locally, I have supported funding for bike/pedestrian infrastructure and, if reelected, will continue to do so. As the chair of the City Council's Legislative Committee, I have advocated for the strongest possible commitment to safe and efficient transportation, including expanded authorization of electronic speed and redlight enforcement. Unfortunately, the electronic enforcement goal has been frustrated by politics in Richmond, which only fuels my commitment to achieve it.

DPW has been sounding the alarm about failing roadways due to under-funding maintenance for 15+ years, our 2012 ADA transition plan has seen little progress on sidewalk obstructions, and our 6-month old Bike Master Plan is already looking at a 20-year delay in implementation. At the same time, the last two community surveys found traffic, roads, and sidewalks at the top of residents' concerns. Tax bills on like-for-like homes (excluding tear downs/remodels) have grown slower than construction inflation. The problem keeps getting bigger. What should we do?

Our citizens are saying we need to focus on and provide more funding for transportation. I hear them and am committed to effective actions in response. In the course of my service to Falls Church, I have spearheaded the City's receipt of \$55+ million in state and regional transportation grant funding and have advocated regionally in support of electric vehicles, transit, bike/ped projects, and the reduction of vehicle miles traveled. If reelected, I will continue to do all I can locally and regionally to increase the dollars available to address on a timely basis maintaining our roadways, eliminating sidewalk obstructions, and implementing the Bike Master Plan.

Arthur Agin (agin4fallschurch.com)

How do you and your household get around the City and nearby, what do you like and not like about that experience, and what role does biking and walking play in that if any?

Like many things in life, how I get around depends on what I'm doing and where I'm going. But living in Falls Church offers a wide range of choices.

Whenever possible, I walk places. It's great exercise and allows me to experience Falls Church up close. However, sidewalk maintenance, utility poles, and overgrown vegetation are issues that need cooperation between the city and property owners. Sometimes I'll bicycle on the W&OD Trail for recreation. The W&OD is fantastic, and the city is becoming a trail destination. The new theater and restaurants at Founders Row show the potential.

With our compact geography and excellent metro access, Falls Church could become a model for walking & cycling infrastructure that reduces emissions, improves public health, and strengthens our small-town character.

Are Falls Church City streets safe and comfortable for everyone to use, regardless of transportation mode, age, or ability? If they fall short, what should we do about it?

Falls Church's streets are good but have room for improvement. We need a comprehensive Complete Streets program to bring more consistency, efficiency, and safety. Currently, we suffer because each maintenance project requires its own design instead of adapting proven, standardized solutions.

The current approach takes time, consumes resources, and creates an unpredictable streetscape for residents and visitors alike. For years, as a member and chair of the city's Citizens Advisory Committee on Transportation (CACT), I have been advocating for a Complete Streets program.

How are we going to deal with a growing regional population and expectations for a growing Falls Church population without being mired in traffic and spending millions on parking garages?

Accommodating a growing regional population and local expectations while avoiding traffic gridlock is difficult. It starts with understanding three distinct traffic types that exist in our city.

- Local traffic supports community vitality. With 87% of residents concerned about parking access in commercial areas, we must ensure residents can easily reach city amenities.
- Destination traffic drives economic sustainability. Our city cannot support five (soon to be seven) grocery stores and over 100 restaurants without the surrounding community. As a vibrant commercial and entertainment hub, visitors to Falls Church fuel our diverse economy.
- Through traffic is where we face challenges. Vehicle volume on Broad and Washington has declined over the last 15 years, while we have seen an increase in concerns about traffic on neighborhood streets. I don't believe this is a coincidence.

Rather than one-size fits all solutions we need to focus on targeted improvements. Success will mean preserving the economic benefits of local and destination traffic while managing through traffic more effectively, supporting our vision as a walkable, economically vibrant community.

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I share your frustration with the funding shortfalls. During my time as chair of the CACT, we urged the City Council to fully fund DPW's paving budget. While Council doubled FY2025 roadway maintenance funding to \$1.5M — a major step forward — we're still far from the money needed to restore our streets and sidewalks. We have dug a deep hole and it will take a lot of work to climb out.

- Accelerate ADA compliance of our streets, sidewalks, and buildings: The city is completing a new ADA compliance survey. We must aggressively respond to shortfalls identified in the new evaluation.
- Implement the 2024 Bike Master Plan which includes a specific action plan. This latest update intends to increase bikeability but projects are

already facing delays. We need to ensure that the first priority routes (A safe route to the middle & high schools, N West Street & S West Street) are moving forward and the second set (E Broad Street, Great Falls Road & Park Avenue) are not forgotten.

- Ensure non-city work meets future standards as described in Complete Streets standards. Repaving due to construction and utility work should not add to our roadway backlog.

The reality is that deferring maintenance costs much more in the long run. Every year we delay sidewalk and infrastructure investment, we make walking and biking less safe. Falls Church's walkable and bikeable character should be a defining part of our character. We must invest accordingly.

Laura Downs (www.votelauradowns.com)

How you and your household get around the City and nearby, what do you like and not like about that experience, and what role does biking and walking play in that if any?

We live at the east end of Falls Church City, near Dulin Methodist Church so there are not as many things that we can walk to quickly except for the new Whole Foods or Clare and Don's restaurant. We do ride bikes but mostly on the W&OD trail for exercise. Our boys don't usually ride their bikes to the secondary campus as the distance would mean they would need to leave a lot earlier than if they took the bus. And our youngest son who is in eighth grade doesn't feel confident riding his bike to the secondary campus. I look forward to completing the bike route to the secondary campus. We are very happy that Whole Foods moved in, as we now have a grocery store that we can walk to. We are also thrilled with the new traffic HAWK signals at our end of town which makes it much easier for us to cross Broad.

Are Falls Church City streets safe and comfortable for everyone to use, regardless of transportation mode, age, or ability? If they fall short, what should we do about it?

Falls Church streets are getting better but we have a long way to go. The City Council is working on two programs- "Complete Streets" and "Vision Zero" that would define what makes a street complete- bike lanes, no missing sidewalk links, crosswalks, etc. and emphasize pedestrian safety. Recently the CC discussed ending the use of bricks for sidewalks as we have at the community

center because those get slippery in bad weather. Some of our sidewalks are still impassable for those who are in wheelchairs as there are telephone poles in the middle of the sidewalks. I'd like to press the staff to start a spreadsheet of those so that we can tackle that issue more efficiently. As Bike Falls Church has reminded the CC many times, traffic engineers plan with cars and easing traffic in mind, not necessarily for pedestrian and biking safety so a different lens needs to be used when developing streets- like narrowing them to slow down vehicles. In addition, I feel we need to fix the Neighborhood Traffic Calming process so that it does not take so long to get improvements made. Noland Street, a classic cut through street that connects to my street, wanted speed bumps and it took years to finally get them installed. There should be extra priority given to streets, like Noland, that have bus stops.

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I think we need to invest in public transportation. It is my understanding that we once had a bus that went back and forth on Broad and people could hop on and off. The traffic situation is something that will remain a challenge as Broad street is actually a state route so our hands are tied in many respects as to what we can do with that street. But due to I-66 now having hot lanes, more and more people are using Route 50/ Broad Street as a way to get to Tysons in the morning and back home to Arlington and DC in the evening. We do have adequate parking, but we need to do better at showing the public where our parking spaces are. In Fairfax City, their main parking garage has a sign that indicates the number of free spaces in the garage. Underground garages that are built by developers are one way to address parking and continuing to focus on walkability and having more options like electric bikes and electric scooters will also help reduce vehicular traffic.

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The City Council did earmark \$700,000 for road improvements this fiscal year. But we are very behind. It is going to take budget discipline to put money every budget cycle towards road construction. The sidewalk obstructions could be something we could attack with a spreadsheet and get quarterly updates as we do the CIP. The Bike Master Plan is a little bit more complicated because of working with neighbors who are upset about possibly losing parking in front of their homes. We have a discussion on the Master Plan scheduled for our November 10 meeting. I look forward to finding ways to make progress with the Master Plan- whether that is budget, more staff time, or tough conversations with neighbors who will be impacted.

Brian Pendleton (www.pen4fcc.org)

How you and your household get around the City and nearby, what do you like and not like about that experience, and what role does biking and walking play in that if any?

It depends on the time of day and what I'm doing but I will either drive or walk to where I am going. Here's my thoughts on both:

Driving is fine if you're not driving in the mornings or the afternoons. Many of the streets shouldn't allow parking on both sides of the street because the streets are very narrow with cars parked on both sides. This causes delays in traffic flow because some people are scared to get too close to parked cars, so they hold up traffic to allow oncoming traffic to have the right of way. We definitely need something similar to "don't block the box" in Falls Church as far too many people will block roads and intersections.

Walking is fine too as long as you are watching for bikes and cars because, in my general experience, neither of them care about pedestrians. I've been hit by a bike at the intersection of West and Park, and I've had too many near misses with cars coming into crosswalks to count. Far too many bikers don't use bells or announce themselves to pedestrians and will enter or exit the road or sidewalks without paying attention to pedestrians and pets. Cars often only pay attention to lights and not who is around the intersection. Many drivers in Falls Church no longer actually stop at stop signs, they do a slow roll through them, and they ignore pedestrians or try to gun through a crosswalk before a bike or pedestrian enters the crosswalk.

Are Falls Church City streets safe and comfortable for everyone to use, regardless of transportation mode, age, or ability? If they fall short, what should we do about it?

There's reported accidents safe and then there's reality safe. If you ask the city, I'm sure they say that the streets are safe because I don't believe there's many reported accidents over the years. However, as someone that usually walks at least an hour a day out in the community and drives around quite a bit as well, I see unsafe behavior, from bikes, cars and pedestrians, every day.

To solve a lot of the bad driving and biking that I see, it would require the police to be out in the community a great deal more than they are now. People will continue to ignore stop signs and crosswalks if there's no punishment for doing so.

How are we going to deal with a growing regional population and expectations for a growing Falls Church population without being mired in traffic and spending millions on parking garages?

We are already mired in traffic. Between new construction along Broad St./Rte. 7, drivers clogging intersections, too many stop lights along Broad St./Rte. 7, and a school zone that drops speed to 20 during the mornings and afternoons, we are mired in traffic. As for the millions on parking garages, the city shouldn't be doing that though if they wanted to take over an already built parking garage, I wouldn't be opposed to that. If a private enterprise wants to build a parking garage for their project, that's their prerogative and it shouldn't be seen as a negative.

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I would have to know where you get the numbers you're citing for road and sidewalk maintenance and I would remind everyone that the Bike Master Plan, like all plans in the city, are always subject to change as new situations arise with funding, regulations, etc. Additionally, I'd have to see which surveys you're

referring to because as I been speaking to citizens and business owners over the last four or five months, I would agree that traffic has repeatedly come up, but I can't think of anyone asking about the road and sidewalks. The biggest concern that I've heard is about residential property tax bills. If we want the city to be able to provide basic services and maintain infrastructure, I'm not sure how we can also manage to significantly reduce residential property taxes without a big change in our commercial tax base.

James Thompson (www.thompsonforfcc.com)

How you and your household get around the City and nearby, what do you like and not like about that experience, and what role does biking and walking play in that if any?

We're a busy family of seven, active in our schools, sports, and community activities. We try to walk as much as possible and bike when it's safe, but with overlapping schedules we also rely on two cars — sometimes with additional carpooling — to make everything work. A couple of our kids ride their bikes to Oak Street, but the route from Winter Hill to the Middle/High School campus isn't ideal, so our middle schooler takes the bus. Traffic near OSE, made worse when Broad Street backs up, often spills into neighborhood streets and creates unsafe conditions. Just today I saw a child nearly hit by a truck while navigating a sidewalk closure during roadwork. We love that Falls Church is compact enough to make walking and biking realistic options, but safety and connectivity still need improvement so families can feel confident choosing them more often.

Are Falls Church City streets safe and comfortable for everyone to use, regardless of transportation mode, age, or ability? If they fall short, what should we do about it?

Right now, our streets aren't as safe or comfortable as they should be. Rapid development both inside and outside the City has increased daily traffic, and too often that burden falls on our neighborhood streets. We need to work with regional partners to reduce through traffic if possible, especially large trucks that make Broad Street and surrounding areas unsafe. Locally, a simple step would be enforcing sidewalk and intersection upkeep. Too many walkways are narrowed or blocked by overgrown trees and bushes, making it difficult for pedestrians to pass safely and for drivers to see clearly. Cutting back vegetation and maintaining sightlines would instantly make our sidewalks and crossings safer. We should pair these small, immediate fixes with long-term planning to ensure our streets work for everyone, regardless of age or ability.

How are we going to deal with a growing regional population and expectations for a growing Falls Church population without being mired in traffic and spending millions on parking garages?

We need to be realistic about what Falls Church can achieve as a small city. Making our streets more walkable and bike-friendly is absolutely possible, and we should continue to invest in those improvements. At the same time, most residents will still rely on cars for daily errands, activities, practices, and commuting. Approaching growth with that perspective allows us to find balanced solutions, encouraging walking, biking, and transit where feasible, while also acknowledging that cars will remain a part of life here. By aiming for a middle ground, we can improve mobility, reduce congestion, and avoid the extremes of overbuilding parking or ignoring alternative transportation altogether.

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Master Plan is already looking at a 20-year delay in implementation. At the same time the last two community surveys found traffic, roads, and sidewalks at the top of residents' concerns. Tax bills on like-for-like homes (excluding tear downs/remodels) have grown slower than construction inflation. The problem keeps getting bigger. What should we do?

This is a problem that has been building for years, and residents feel it every day. Safe roads, accessible sidewalks, and functional bike infrastructure are core city services. To tackle this, we need a realistic, phased approach. We should prioritize safety and critical maintenance first, ensuring sidewalks, intersections, and roadways that pose the greatest risk — like Gundry Dr. and Annandale Rd. — are addressed promptly. At the same time, the city should enforce accountability for property and business owners to keep sidewalks clear and maintain sightlines. We should also leverage regional, state, and federal funding where possible to supplement our budget while avoiding building just to build. Long-term plans, like the Bike Master Plan, should be phased into achievable steps with measurable milestones, so we don't promise timelines that frustrate residents. By pairing practical, immediate fixes with disciplined long-term planning, we can improve mobility, safety, and accessibility while staying fiscally responsible and responsive to residents' top concerns.