DPS | Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services
YOUR PROJECT PARTNER
2425 Reedie Drive, 7th Floor
Wheaton MD 20902
Montgomerycountymd.gov/dps

Guidelines for Placing a Little Free Library in the Public Right-of-Way

A Little Free Library (LFL) is a "take a book, return a book" community book exchange, typically sponsored by an individual, family, or neighborhood group. An LFL is a small, weather-resistant structure where neighbors and visitors may take a book or leave a book for others to read.

No permit is required when Little Free Library is placed entirely on private property. However, placing one within the public right-of-way (ROW) requires a permit but no fee will be charged. The permit ensures proper placement, a safety review, and compliance with County standards.

Location and Safety Requirements

To protect pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicle safety, all LFLs in a right-of-way must meet these standards:

- May only be placed at a location approved by DPS ROW staff.
- Must not obstruct:
    - Sidewalks or pedestrian access routes
    - Bicycle lanes
    - Vehicle travel lanes or sightlines
    - Traffic control devices
    - ADA ramps
    - Bus stops or loading zones
    - Fire hydrants or utility access points
- Must be accessible from the sidewalk without stepping into the street.
- Must not be attached to public infrastructure (e.g., utility poles, traffic signs, street trees).

Size and Construction Standards

- Maximum exterior size: 20 in. wide × 22 in. high × 16 in. deep

- Constructed so that no person (child or adult) can physically enter the structure
- Mounted on a sturdy, breakaway post to minimize injury risk if struck
- Weather-resistant and designed to keep contents dry
- Door must close securely

Maintenance and Stewardship

The permit holder (steward) is responsible for:

- Regular maintenance to keep the LFL safe, clean, and accessible
- Prompt repair of any damage
- Removal of graffiti and debris
- Ensuring books are always offered free of charge
- Ensuring no advertising or commercial use is permitted

Permit Revocation

The permit is subject to revocation and may be revoked if:

- The LFL becomes unsafe, damaged, or structurally unsound
- It obstructs access or creates a hazard
- It fails to meet placement or design requirements
- The steward does not maintain the installation
- County staff identify a condition requiring removal for public safety or ROW operations

If revoked, the steward must remove the LFL within 30 days of written notice

ROW Permit Application Process

Submit the following to DPS:

- A simple placement sketch or site photo showing the proposed location
- Basic dimensions and a brief design description
- Steward contact information
- A statement confirming willingness to maintain the structure

For more information, to find existing Little Free Libraries, or to register your LFL, visit:
www.littlefreelibrary.org