

To the members of London City Council,

I would like to ask you to reconsider the exceptions you have provided for the developments of Runnymede Cr., Fox Mill, and Camden Cr. as it pertains to the decision to allow these communities to maintain an inaccessible environment by exempting these areas from having sidewalks.

I ask you to reconsider this based on what we expect are unintentional consequences of the request, which are to continue to foster an environment of exclusion and to establish a worrying precedent that encourages future actions that will compromise accessibility.

To begin, as part of the City's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, The City of London commits to "removing systemic barriers to accessibility as experienced by our community by listening and responding to the voices of those who are marginalized." However, a community is only as inclusive as the ability of its residents to access it permits.

Regardless of how much traffic an area receives, forcing people with mobility challenges into the streets is reflective of an ableist vision of community. Sidewalks are a priority for our community and Council has taken steps to improve accessibility through its commendable support of increased snow removal policies. This move to exempt communities from having sidewalks seems to run counter to the spirit of that previous decision.

It may be true that there are no people with disabilities in these communities and that sidewalks are seen as an unnecessary luxury based on the demographic. But these actions also serve to create a barrier that prevents people with disabilities from moving to these communities. Currently, the absence of sidewalks is the result of an unintended barrier -- allowing these exemptions will now create an intentional barrier that runs counter to the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

It is also important to note that accessible community design benefits all. It is not only people with visual challenges or in wheelchairs who benefit from sidewalks. It is elderly people with mobility challenges, it is young parents pushing their children in strollers. These are not populations that you want to force onto the street.

As for our concerns about establishing a precedent, we see evidence that this has already taken place. Following your decision to exempt Runnymede, we now have two more streets following this lead. Our concern that it becomes harder to enforce accessibility when these exemptions are in place -- and that has borne fruit in a shockingly quick amount of time. Today we have three -- and our worry is that this sets the foundation for more communities in the future to deprioritize accessibility.

Trees can be replanted. They are a symbol of growth and renewal in the City. People are harder to replace. However, we believe that fostering an inclusive environment, where Londoners of all

ages, abilities, and backgrounds can come together in a community -- one that allows access to all, is a true symbol of London's growth, renewal, and promise.

Accessibility, at its heart, is about community. When you allow barriers to that inclusion that prevent people from fully participating in the community, you are making a clear statement about who can participate in our community -- and who is forced to the sidelines.

I appreciate your consideration of this matter and we do hope that you err on the side of inclusion and accessibility for all.

Sincerely,

Jay Ménard